THE PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF EXODUS.

THE

Preacher's Complete Homiletical

COMMENTARY

ON THE

OLD TESTAMENT

(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN).

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

BY

VARIOUS AUTHORS.

New York
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HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

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BY

REV. J. S. EXELL.

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HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON

EXODUS.

Introduction and Preface.

Exodus is a Greek word applied to the Second Book of the Pentateuch by the Seventy, on account of the chief event which it records (*Exodus*—the going out or departure from Egypt). It continues the history of Genesis, and is connected with it by the conjunction *and*. In one book we have Biography, in the other History. In one we have the fortunes of a family, in the other its growth into a nation. One is the promise, the other the fulfilment. This nation is chosen to be the depository of God's will, to preserve His worship pure amid idolatrous peoples. Eternal truths lost to the world, or buried beneath the customs of men, were to be revived – illustrated by fresh facts—set forth in a written law and a visible polity. These truths are most important: belong not merely to one nation, but concern the welfare of mankind. This book asserts the supremacy of Jehovah over the gods of the heathen, demands the freedom of Israel from Egyptian tyranny, and inaugurates a new era by miraculous signs and wonders. It asserts the prerogatives of God as Creator of the universe, Arbiter of nations, and Redeemer of His people. Deliverance from Egypt is a type of moral deliverance from sin Israel's exodus and wanderings prefigure our life and entrance into rest. In the manna and the smitten rock we learn our moral need, and are pointed to Christ, the provision for that need. These things were our examples *(types)*, happened unto them for ensamples *(typically)*, and were written for our admonition (1 Cor. x. 1-11). In this light we seek to expound this book; to refrain from unnecessary criticism, and to economise space as much as possible. It embraces the period from the death of Joseph to the rearing of the Tabernacle; chiefly comprises two parts—the Historical, chap. i. to xi., and the Legislative, chap. xii. to xxxi. We have striven to make our homiletics as brief and suggestive as possible. In their preparation we have consulted the best writers on the Book of Exodus, especially are we indebted for many of our comments on the verses to a work of considerable antiquity by the Rev. George Hughes. Our aim has been to help the reader in the application of Eternal Truth to the moral life of man.

CHAPTER I.

ISRAEL OPPRESSED IN EGYPT.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. With Jacob.**] These words are strongly emphatic in the orig. "WITH JACOB EACH MAN AND HIS HOUSE came in." Thus at a single stroke—the whole story of the aged patriarch's coming down into Egypt is recalled: thus at once does "Exodus" strike its roots into "Genesis." **5. For Joseph**] This is obscure. A more exact rendering makes all clear: "But (so *waw* freq. when w. an emph. nominative, as here) JOSEPH had already come into Egypt." A mark of exactness: "Count him in the seventy; but remember HE had come before. **11. Pithom**] P.="a narrow place:" a city of Lower Egypt, situated on the eastern bank of the Nile: Gr. *Patoumos* (Gesenius). **Raamses**] Prob.="son of the sun:" "should be looked for at the site of the modern *Belbeis*, called *Pelusium* in old time; a day's journey N.E. of Cairo, on the Syro-Egyptian road. As the name R. appears as a royal name, the city and province may have been called from it" (Fürst). **15. Hebrew midwives**] It is curious, though it may not throw light on the precise relation in which these women stood to the Hebrew women, that their names should be of a like sig. (according to Fürst): *Shiphrah*="beauty;" *Puah*="gracefulness." **16. Upon the stools**] Perhaps *a low seat* employed by the midwives; or the word may be used for *a washing vessel of stone*, in which they used to wash infants (Ges.) But the explanation of Fürst appears to be, contextually, more forcible: "Look to the two sexes."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—6.

GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF MAN'S DOMESTIC LIFE.

I. He knows the Children of the Family. "Reuben, Simeon." He knows the peculiarity of their mental life—of their moral character—of their disposition—no matter how large the Family. He knows the friendly relations, or otherwise, that exist between the members of the home, and the intentions of each. This thought ought to subdue all discord—inspire fervent sympathy—and lead the family to purity of life. **II. He watches the journeyings of the Family.** "Which came into Egypt." The Family may be called to journey in search of commercial employment—in search of health—pleasure—or to enhance the interests of divine truth—in all such wanderings every member is noted by God, who recognises their place of settlement. We should not journey into "Egypt" without an indication of the divine will. All family changes should be under the instruction of heaven. This insures—safety—protection—development—though sometimes discipline. Such was the case with this family, they were shielded while in Egypt, they multiplied under disadvantageous circumstances, they were prepared by sorrow for their important future. **III. He marks the Death of the Family.** "And Joseph died and all his brethren." Not one member passes from the family circle without the divine knowledge. God permits it—and ordains it to be a means of good to those remaining. This should hush the voice of complaint. God knows all about our home-life—a consolation in trial.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1. Family life is at the basis of all history and religious progress.

Family life has frequently to pass through continued discipline to prepare it to exercise a holy influence upon the nation, and to make it a channel for the divine purpose:—This discipline is 1 Painful—Taskmasters. 2. Deceptive—the King. 3. Accumulative—Taskmasters—then the Midwives—lastly the River. 4. Harmonious—all tended to one end. 5. Completive—their freedom.

A life can sometimes be compressed into a name.

Men gather permanent record from an incidental connection with the progress of the Church.

Relationship to the Church, at certain crises of its history, has given immortality to many names that otherwise would have been lost in obscurity.

Some names are omitted in this history that their silence may lend emphasis to these spoken.

The small and feeble beginnings of the Church. *An old man on a journey, changing his place of residence, surrounded by his kindred:*—1. *A pathetic sight*—leaving old associations—the scene of old and happy memories—going into a strange country. 2. *Unusual*—it is not often that we see old men leaving a place in which they have spent a life-time—they like to end their days amid familiar scenes and companions.

Verse 5. "*For Joseph was in Egypt already.*" This sentence contains a volume of history. Why was he in Egypt already?—1. Because it was the refuge from the folly of an over-indulgent parent. Jacob would have spoiled Joseph—would have pampered him—weakened his moral energies—therefore God sent him into Egypt—a better school for his moral education. 2. Because of the deception of jealous brothers. 3. In order that he might welcome the Church shortly to come there. 4. Because of the kindly providence of God. The providence that sent Joseph to Egypt was kindly:—(i.) Because it elevated his social position. (ii.) It taught his brethren the guilt of deception. (iii.) It saved a nation from the horrors of famine. (iv.) It taught a king the divine philosophy of a dream. (v.) It placed a godly life in the midst of a wicked court. (vi.) It ultimately brought Jacob's family to unity, peace, and prosperity.

Thus Joseph in Egypt was the punishment of parental indulgence, the victim of a brother's hatred, the child of a merciful providence, the Ruler of a vast Empire.

There may be wrapped up in the history of one absent member of your family circle the fortune of a kingdom, and the sequel of your early life.

God generally sends a Joseph into Egypt to mitigate the force of all our trials.

Verse 6. I. Death removes the most useful men. "Joseph." 1. *He had instructed his brethren.* 2. *He had enriched his father.* 3. *He had saved his nation.* 4. *He had taught the world an eternal lesson*—Yet he died. II. Death removes the largest families. "All his brethren." III. Death removes the proudest nations. "Pharoah." 1. *Pitiable.* 2. *Irremediable.* 3. *Admonitory.*

The Death of a Whole Family.—I. It was a very large family. There were twelve sons. Of the largest family that gladdens the house, or that mingles in social intercourse, each member must go the way of all the earth. II. It was a very diversified family. "Joseph and all his brethren" are words few and easily recorded; but each one of those twelve had a history distinct from any other, experiences unlike, and many altogether unknown to his brother:—1. They were diversified in their sympathies. 2. They were diversified in their social position. III. It was a very tried family. Every family has its own sorrows. Tried:—1. By bereavement—Rachel dies. 2. By discord amongst the brothers. 3. By a grievous famine. IV. A very influential family. In addition to the influence, beneficial as it was vast, which Joseph wielded over Egypt, each of the twelve sons of Jacob was the source—the head—of one of the twelve tribes. These tribes have been the great religious teachers of the race, the priests and the prophets of humanity, the people especially chosen by God to reveal Himself—to foretell the Messiah—to be the ancestors of His own Son. V. A very religiously privileged family. The instructions of Jacob. We have here in their death:—1. A rebuke to family pride. 2. A warning against seeking satisfaction in family joys. 3. A lesson as to the right use of family relationships. 4. A reason for expecting family meetings after death. [*Homilist.*]

Families pass away—independent of domestic love and care. Nations pass away—independent of legal constitution or military prowess.

Generations pass away—independent of their number, wealth, or genius.

This generation is but the new spring rising from the winter of the past.

Joseph died—God deprives the Church of her comfort and stay: 1. That she may gain the power of self-reliance. 2. That she may shew her ability to be independent of all human instrumentalities. 3. That she may move into the exigencies of the future.

Men die; the Church progresses: God is eternal.

Sometimes the new generation is not equal in moral character to the old—the new king knew not Joseph.

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

I. That a large population is of great advantage to a nation 1. *It gives an impulse to civilisation.* The larger the number of people in a nation the greater likelihood of genius—business tact—invention—authorship—competition—and therefore of a complete civilisation. 2 *It augments the force of the national prowess.* A large population will be able to supply a large army. It will hold in terror the enemy. 3. *It invests the nation with importance in the estimation of surrounding kingdoms.* **II That a large population sometimes excites the suspicion and envy of neighbouring kings.** (Verses 8, 9.) 1. *He was jealous of the numerical growth of Israel.* 2. *He was suspicious of what might befall his country in future exigencies.* **III. That this suspicion frequently leads kings to practise the most abject slavery.** (Verse 11.) 1. *It was cunning.* He first got the Israelites to promise heavy rents—which they were unable to pay—this brought them into servitude—had some appearance of fairness on his part. 2. *It was unjust.* What right had this new king to interfere with the rapid growth of the Israelites, and still less to make it the occasion of their bondage. He should have rejoiced in their joy. A tyrant is insensible to any prosperity but his own. 3. *It was painful.* They had to pay heavy tribute—they were harshly treated. Slavery always occasions pain—mental, if no other—especially to those who have once enjoyed the happiness of freedom. 4. *It was apparently productive of gain.* "And they built for Pharoah treasure cities, Pithon and Raamses." But what the Egyptians and their king gained in public buildings—they lost in sensitiveness of conscience—in force of manhood—in worth of character. No man can keep slaves without weakening the sensibilities of his moral nature—which are far more valuable than any property attained through the serfs. Slavery involves a loss of all that is noble in human nature—it leads to murder. (Verse 22.) **IV. That slavery is an incompetent method of conquest.** (Verse 12) 1. *Because it does not gain the sympathy of the people it conquers.* 2. *Because it arouses the indignation of those who are subject to its cruelties.* What would be the feelings of the Israelites as day by day they were made to build the treasure cities of Pharoah?—they would curse his very reign. Such treatment would offend their reason—affront their humanity—excite their passion—such people would be dangerous subjects to any ruler. It would have been a wiser policy to have made them his friends. 3. *It does not save a Ruler from the calamity he seeks to avert.* The slavery of the Israelites did not hinder their numerical increase—it alienated the sympathies of the increasing nation—and prepared the way for all the conflicts of the future history.

We may take this passage in a symbolical sense

AS SHEWING THE INCREASE OF THE CHURCH.

I. Notwithstanding the removal of its chief officer. (Verse 6) Joseph was dead—his example would be gone—his authority in the nation would be no longer on the side of Israel. Many will go to church when the chief Ruler of the nation does, who would never go otherwise; religion is fashionable then. His influence would be gone. His counsel would be inaccessible. To-day the church loses its chief officers, but it still grows. **II. Notwithstanding the decade of the generation.** (Verse 6.) The generation contemporary with Joseph was dead. A vast army of human beings had marched into the grave, yet Israel grew. So to-day men die, but the Church, by making new converts, multiplies her progeny to an almost incredible extent. **III. Notwithstanding the persecution to which it was subjected.** (Verse 11.) Israel was severely persecuted—was reduced to slavery. Kings have tried to reduce the Church—the truth—the Bible—the pulpit—the religious press to bondage—but the fiercer their despotism, the more savage their atrocities—the firmer and stronger has the Church become. The Church can never be put down by force. The Infinite Power is on her side. This is more than all that

can be against her. IV. Notwithstanding the artifices by which it was sought to be betrayed. (Verses 15, 22.) The king tried to get the midwives to kill, at the birth, all the male children of the Israelites. Ultimately, an edict was passed that they were to be cast into the river. Both failed. So the Church has been in danger of losing many of its members through the treachery of the outside world, and through the daring cruelty of meddlesome men. Still it grows. May it soon fill the world, as the Israelites did Egypt. ... All Church increase is from God —not from men—not from means. ... God has promised to multiply the Church.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 7. That under favourable conditions of climate and health, nations have, within themselves, a great power of numerical increase. That the blessing of God is the great secret of true prosperity.

That there are times when the Divine promise appears to reach more rapid fulfilment.

The larger the population of a nation, the greater are its capabilities of sympathy, mutual dependency and help, and oftentimes the greater difficulty in its right government.

The Divine goodness is seen in the prosperity of nations.

A New King.

Verse 8. I. He was out of sympathy with the purpose and providence of God. He endeavoured to diminish a people whom God wished to multiply, to oppress a people whom God had led under his authority. Many kings, by their conduct—their enactments—their selection of counsellors—shew themselves to be out of sympathy with the Divine King. II. He was out of sympathy with the conduct of his predecessors (Verse 8.) He knew not Joseph—and had no desire to aid or succour the people whose history was associated with that revered name Kings are not often harmonious in their method of government—under one reign the Church is safe and peaceful— under the next it is probably persecuted. One king unbinds the legislation — discards the friendship, and religious toleration of another. III. He was envious in his disposition. (Verse 9.) He envied and feared—the number —the strength—the military prowess of the Israelites—fears unfounded. But, by the force of his own envious disposition, and its consequent despotism, he made an otherwise peaceable people his enemies. Envious men generally bring on themselves the evils of which they suspect the innocent to be guilty. An envious spirit is sure to bring a king into difficulty. IV. He was cunning in his arrangements. (Verse 10.) He involved the Israelites in heavy debt—tried to depress their spirit—to enervate their moral nature—to degrade their humanity—and so to deprive them of the time—opportunity—means—or disposition of joining, in case of war, another nation against himself. A cunning king is sure to outwit himself. Policy is a weak basis for a throne—it invites suspicion—alienates respect—leads to ruin. V. He was cruel in his requirements. (Verses 11, 12.) The Israelites were to pay tribute—Taskmasters were set over them—they had to build treasure cities without remuneration. They were deprived of the right and value of their own labour—this not to serve any philanthropic, or heroic purpose—but to satisfy the envious passion of a cruel monarch VI. He was thwarted in his project. (Verse 17.) The midwives spared the male children, contrary to the wish of the king. Mere power cannot always command obedience. It is sometimes defeated by weakness. Cunning is sometimes overcome by the Godly simplicity of a few women. Despotism is subdued by womanly tenderness. Heaven is on the side of the oppressed.

The difference in character, intention, and disposition, between the successive occupants of official position.

Changes in the official positions of a country often affect the Church. God can make the cunning envy of a cruel

king subserve His purpose, and aid His Church. ... Good men, when dead, are frequently lost sight of, and their deeds are forgotten.

Nothing sooner perisheth than the remembrance of a good turn [*Trapp*].

The vicissitudes of power:—1. Are independent of past services. 2. Are independent of moral character. 3. Are frequently dependent upon the arbitrary caprice of a despotic king.

When forsaken by the king, a good man still has God to fall back upon. It is often at such times that he finds religion the most helpful — then the Divine consolations more than make up for the loss of the human.

Verse 9. A bad king will make a wicked people:—1. He will influence the weak by his splendour. 2. Terrify the timid by his power. 3. Gain the servile by his flattery. 4. Gain the simple by his cunning. 5. Sometimes gain the good by his deception.

An envious spirit magnifies its difficulties.

Moral goodness is the only thing worth envying in the life of a nation —power and numbers generally excite the ambition of monarchs.

Many wicked rulers cannot bear to witness the prosperity of the Church.

The prosperity of the Church is apparent to her enemies.

Verse 10. Kings ought to know better than to convene councils to oppose the intentions of God. Such conduct is:—1. Daring. 2. Reprehensible. 3. Ruinous. 4. Ineffectual.

The end and design of the council was:—i. To prevent the numerical increase of Israel. ii. To enfeeble the military power of Israel. iii To detain the Israelites in permanent bondage.

Wicked rulers encourage all under them to set against the Church.

Policy and strength are combined in the world to vex God's people.

The design of worldly wickedness is to keep God's Church from growing.

It is usual with worldly powers to suspect God's people of treachery.

Sinful rulers project wars, and then blame the innocent for them.

Worldly powers are solicitous that God's Church may not get out of their hands ... Earth and Heaven are frequently in conflict over the Church.

It has been the policy of tyrants to represent the Church as dangerous.

Cunning the worst, the most degrading, and unsuccessful policy of kings.

Kindness is the most effective argument. Had the new king shewn sympathy with the Israelites, they would have become his willing allies in war, his obedient citizens in peace; whereas now they are his most inveterate enemies. A cunning policy is a losing one.

Verse 11. The taskmasters of the world:—1. Sin is a taskmaster. 2. The rich are often taskmasters. 3. The ambitious are often taskmasters. These taskmasters are: — i. Authoritative; "They did set over thee." ii. Painful; "To afflict thee." iii. Inconsiderate; "Burdens."

That God allowed his people thus to be enslaved and afflicted:—1. A mystery. 2. A problem. 3. A punishment. 4. A discipline.

God can make a nursery for His Church anywhere.

God knows where to put His Church to school. ... God knows the best preparation for the future of the Church.

The Church must not measure the love of God towards her by the affliction she endures, but by His purpose therein.

Subtle counsels against the Church soon bring forth cruel practices.

Verse 12. Moral growth proportionate to affliction. 1. This is true of individual moral character. 2. This is especially true in the developement of the Church.

Why does persecution and trial operate thus:—1. To manifest the love of God towards His Church. 2. To manifest the power of God over His enemies. 3. To fulfil the promise of God made to the good. 4. To manifest His providence towards the Church. 5. To strike terror into the hearts of tyrants. 6. To manifest the divinity of truth, and pure moral character.

God can soon find taskmasters to afflict an idolatrous church.

Tyrants find grief where they expected joy.

God is with the Church, even in her bondage.

The land of shelter becomes the house of slavery.

The place of our satisfaction may soon become the scene of our affliction.

The divine chastisements tend more to growth than to destruction. ... All true growth and progress are characterised by pain. ... Comfort and sorrow, growth and slavery, are made to unite in the discipline of the Church.

Welcome, bondage! if it is only accompanied by increased moral energy.

As the ground is most fruitful that is most harrowed. The walnut-tree bears best when most beaten. Fish thrive best in cold and salt water than in warm and fresh [*Trapp*]. The Egyptians were grieved:—1. Because their plots were a failure. 2. Because their cruelty was unavailing. 3. Because they had exasperated an enemy they could not subdue. ... Half the grief of the world is occasioned by the failure of wicked and cruel purposes.

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

THE DESPOTISM OF SIN.

I. That it commences by suggesting a small tribute to the sinner. The Egyptian King, no doubt, suggested to the Israelites that great advantage might arise to them if they would enter into certain engagements or investments under his authority. This they did—paying heavy tribute—which they were unable to meet—and so placed themselves in his power. 1. *Sin generally commences its tyranny by suggesting the probability of gain under its rule.* It wins us by the hope of a good investment—whereby we may secure wealth—prosperity—fame. But when we commence to work out the contract we find that we have been lured by a false hope—a deceptive promise. We find ourselves involved in difficulties—numerous—complicated—depressing—ever increasing—until we are reduced from the position of tenant to that of slave. Never enter into any bargains with sin. They are sure to end in woe. They promise liberty—they give chains. The world is a great prison-house full of the dupes of sin. (1.) *Sin is cunning.* (2.) *Sin has many counsellors.* (3.) *Sin has many agencies.* You are not a match for it.

II. That it succeeds in getting the sinner completely within its power. The Egyptians succeeded in getting the Israelites completely under their authority 1. *Sin gets the sinner under its rule.* It makes him obey the laws of hell. It makes him work the purposes of Satan. He must violate every holy instinct of his nature. He must reject the counsel of the Infinite. He becomes a subject of the infernal realm of being. 2. *Sin makes the sinner subject to its counsel.* The Israelites were enslaved as the result of a national consultation between the Egyptian king and his near advisers. Satan holds a council in reference to the moral servitude of human souls—the sinner yields to the unjust and unholy requirements of his fiendish companions. 3. *Sin makes the sinner responsible to its authority.* The Israelites were responsible to the king of Egypt for the kind and amount of service they rendered. He made them feel obligated to build the house, and to serve in the field. So the devil tries to bring men to do his work as though they were obligated to follow his bidding, so completely is the soul brought under Satanic power. It is conscious of its burden. It has not the energy to cast it away.

III. That it ultimately imposes upon the sinner an intolerable servitude. 1. *The servitude of a bitter life.* How sad the lives of these abject Israelites. Every day spent in unrequited toil—subject to heavy tribute—savage taskmasters—a fierce king—an envious nation—without hope of deliverance. Without free social intercourse—without happy domestic life. Sin renders life bitter—destroys friendly companionships—breaks up family comfort. Fills life with grief. 2. *The servitude of hard work.* The Egyptians made the Israelites build cities, and attend in the fields. The devil gives sinners hard work to do. Sinners often work harder than saints. Their toil is far more exhausting and fatiguing. Nor

are sinners recompensed for their toil; Satan makes them build houses for other people! The unprofitableness—the folly of sin. 3. *The servitude is degrading.* The Israelites came into Egypt as a godly family, brought there by Joseph, who was distinguished as a God-fearing man. They were honoured by the king. They were respected by the people—Yet a few years afterwards they are employed as field-servants. What a transition in their position, and all because they yielded to the cunning allurements of a wicked king! So sin brings men from respect to derision—from plenty to beggary—from moral rulership to servitude. Repulse the first attempt of Satan to bind even a golden chain around your wrist, for, when fastened, you will find the gold to wear off, and disclose a steel manacle that will bruise your flesh. Sin degrades individuals—and nations.

The Spiritual Bondage of Men.

I. It was an entire and universal bondage. The dominion of the oppressor had no merciful limit, nor mitigation. Every Israelite in Goshen was the bond-servant of the Egyptians. The bondage of Satan knows no limit—no mercy:—1. The understanding is depraved. 2. The will is perverted. 3. The affections are depraved. II. The Israelites under a severe and cruel bondage. III. The Israelites were in a helpless bondage. Every refinement of policy, every effort of power, every device of craft, was practised against them by the might and subtilty of a nation unrivalled in arts and arms. They could not escape of themselves. Satan has a close alliance with every appetite and affection of our nature. Difficult to get from under his tyranny [*Buddicom's Christian Exodus*].

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 13, 14. The sufferings of Israel were rendered more intense:—1. As a punishment for their idolatry. 2. To inspire within them a deep hatred toward Egypt, so that through their perils in the wilderness they might not wish to return thither. 3. That the prospect of Canaan might animate and refresh their souls. 4. That after such excessive and unpaid labour they might fairly spoil the Egyptians on their departure. 5. That they might be aroused to earnest prayer for deliverance. 6. That the power and mercy of God might be more forcibly displayed in their freedom. Here is a true picture of tyranny:—i. Its rigour increases with failure. ii. It becomes more impious as it is in evident opposition to the Divine providence. iii. It discards all the claims of humanity. iv. It ends in its own defeat and overthrow.

It is the cruel design of persecutors to make God's freemen their slaves.

Wicked persecutors are the more rigorous to those whom God favoureth.

Some men take a delight in making the lives of God's people miserable.

Men are slow to be taught that, by their mad schemes, they are fighting against God.

By the work of this bondage the Israelites, getting instructed in civilized life, were being prepared for their future home.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15—21.

High Social Position used for the Furtherance of a Wicked Purpose.

I. That sometimes high social position exerts its authority for the accomplishment of a wicked and cruel purpose. (Verse 15.) 1. *The king commands the murder of the male children of the Israelites.* What could be more diabolical than this? They were to be murdered in the birth. They were innocent of any plot against the Egyptian government. They had in no way injured the country—yet they are to be put to death—almost before their first experience of life. None but the king dared to have uttered such a cruel mandate. Kings seem to have an idea that they can do what they like. What an abuse and degradation of regal power. It is this kind of thing that brings them into contempt.

2. *He seeks to accomplish this by bringing the innocent into a participation of his murderous deed.* These Hebrew midwives were of godly moral character. They feared Jehovah; they sympathised with the enslaved Israelites; they had no thought of doing their comrades any harm; as for murdering the offspring of those whom they attended in childbirth, the very suggestion was most revolting to them. Thus, the king tries to enkindle within the hearts and minds of these midwives the same envy, and unholy thought that occupied his own. It is almost unpardonable to suggest sin to those that have no previous occasion for, or idea of committing it, and especially when the suggestion is rendered authoritative by power and national supremacy. This suggestion was not only *cruel* and *murderous*, but it was *subtle*. In this way the king would be concealed as the murderer. It would be done by the midwives, and they even would not be detected in the act. Thus many simple lives would have been plunged into awful crime—and innocent victims would have suffered for the guilty. Tyrants are generally cowards, and seek such means for the accomplishment of their designs as are more likely to involve others than themselves.

II. When high social authority is used to further a wicked design we are justified in opposing its effort. (Verse 17.) 1. *We are not to do wrong because a king commands it.* Many weak-minded people will do anything a king tells them. They think what he says must be right; they are flattered by his personal attention to them; they are awed by his pomp and splendour; they are bribed by his offer of reward (the king would no doubt promise these midwives ample recompense). When the highest personage in the realm needs an accomplice to aid in an evil deed, never help him, however humble or poor your station in life may be. It will be your ruin if you do; he will soon want to dispatch you, to shield himself from the possibility of detection. Right is the supreme monarch of the soul, and claims obedience before any temporal power. To oppose murder, when advocated by a king, and when it could be accomplished unknown—and when, if known, would win the applause of a hostile nation, is *heroic*—*benevolent*—divinely *rewardable*, and is the duty of all who fear God. 2. *Such opposition must embody the true principle of piety.* The midwives feared God—more than they did the king. This opposition to the cruel intent of the monarch was not obstinate, but it was the outcome of a conscience influenced by the Divine Spirit. We must always reject the idea of sin in a pious spirit—from Christian motive. 3. *Such opposition will secure for us the Divine protection.* The king summoned the midwives to himself again. He asked why they had neglected his command. They replied fearlessly. No harm came to them. God will protect brave souls that dare to defy a wicked king.

III. That for such opposition we shall be Divinely Rewarded. 1. *God dealt well with the midwives.* 2. *God made the midwives houses.* 3. *Men lose nothing by serving God in preference to a cruel king.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 15. Sin often brings men into companionships that otherwise they would despise.

It is a mercy that tyrants are often dependent upon others, of more tender sympathies, for the accomplishment of their designs.

The plan of murder is not so easy after all; there are persons to be consulted who may turn round upon us, and, on some ground, deny our authority. What if the midwives set themselves against Pharaoh? Two humble women may be more than a match for the great king of Egypt. No influence, how obscure soever, is to be treated with contempt [*City Temple.*]

Verse 16. When burdens do not effect the will of tyrants on the Church, murder shall.

Cruelty on the first onset seeks to shed blood by subtilty.

Tyrants will make helps for life to be instruments of death—midwives to be murderers.

Bloody powers suborn either such as

be of the Church, or strangers to destroy them.

Subtle tyrants order the best opportunity at first, to hide their cruelty.

It is devilish to set a tender soul upon such bloody designs [*Hughes*].

Satan, in all his instruments, hath always aimed at the death of Israel's males [*Hughes*].

No greater argument of an ill cause than a bloody persecution [*Trapp*].

Why were the males to be put to death?—1. Because they were the most capable of insurrection and war. 2. Because the Israelitish women were fairer than the Egyptian, and so might be kept for the purposes of lust. 3. Because the Israelitish women were industrious in spinning and needlework, and so were kept for service.

Verse 17. The tyrant-projects of a wicked king may be thwarted by the piety of his subjects.

God has instruments in the world to aid His Church, as well as to persecute it.

Religion will deter men from the most terrible sins.

God gives courage to timid souls, to enable them to resist kingly wrong.

God makes them save life whom men appoint to destroy it.

The good hand of God doth keep the males, or best helps of the Church's peace, when persecutors would kill.

Still the conflict rages between God and the tyrant king. On which side are we found?

Those who fear God are superior to all other fear. When our notion of authority terminates upon the visible and temporary, we become the victims of fickle circumstances; when that notion rises to the unseen and eternal, we enjoy rest amid the tumult of all that is merely outward, and therefore perishing. The men who fear God the most save their country. They make little noise, they hold no open-air demonstrations. All great workers in society are not in the front [*City Temple*].

Verse 18. That tyrants are sometimes disappointed in those whom they expected to fulfil their designs.

That tyrants can call those who disappoint them to account:—1. In anger—the king was in a rage that his purpose had failed. 2. In disquietude—the king was perplexed as to the issue of Israel's growth. 3. In astonishment—that two women should have set at naught his royal commands. He did not know the great force of true womanhood.

Verse 19. Faith in God enables men to give a reason for not doing wrong.

Tyrants are foiled by little instrumentalities in their efforts to destroy or injure the Church.

God can make His persecuted creatures more lively and strong to bear than others.... Religion fires a timid soul with heroism.

Verse 20. Persons who are instrumental in the saving of human life are pleasing to God.

Persons who render ineffective the designs of a tyrant, and preserve the Church from harm, are Divinely blessed.

All who fear God will be favourably dealt with—now and hereafter.

They who serve God serve a good master. Was God indifferent to the character and claims of the midwives who bore practical testimony for Him in the time of a nation's trial? His eye was upon them for good, and His hand was stretched out day and night for their defence. They learned still more deeply that there was another King beside Pharoah; and in the realization of His presence Pharoah dwindled into a secondary power, whose breath was in his nostrils, and whose commands were the ebullitions of moral insanity. No honest man or woman can do a work for God without receiving a great reward [*City Temple*].

There are times when nations are called upon to say "No," to their Sovereigns. Such times are not to be sought for with pertinacious self-assertion, whose object is to make itself very conspicuous and important; but where they do occur, conscience is to assert itself with a dignity too

calm to be impatient, and too righteous to be deceived [*City Temple*].

The Church must grow, even though the king seeks its death.

Verse 21. God makes sure houses for the sons of His Church when persecutors destroy them [*Hughes*].

Our reward is proportionate to our fear of God.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 22.

The Last Edict of a Tyrant King.

I. It was public in its proclamation. 1. *How men advance from one degree of sin to another.* The last murderous intention was only made known to two midwives; it was private—it was subtle. This is public; this is unconcealed; he fearlessly and untremblingly announces himself as the murderer of all the males of Israel.

II. It was cruel in its requirements. 1. *It was an edict requiring the death of the young.* Why should a tyrant king fear the infant sons of Israel?—He knew that they would be his enemies of the future if spared. There is a power in young life—it is the hope of the Church—the terror of despots. If the world only gets hold of the young, the Church will soon cease its growth.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSE.

Verse 22. A very easy plan, was it not? Whom you fear, destroy; that is a brief and easy creed, surely. This was turning the river to good account; it was a ready-made grave. Pharaoh did not charge the people to cut the sod, and lay the murdered children in the ground; the sight would have been unpleasant, the reminders would have been too numerous; he said, "Throw the intruders into the river: there will be but a splash, and the whole thing will be over. The river will carry no marks—will tell no stories—will sustain no loadstone—it will roll on as if its waters had never been divided by the hand of the murderer!" All bad kings have feared the rise of manhood. Nothing better than murder occurred to the mind of this short-sighted king. He never thought of culture, of kindness, of social and political development; his one idea of power was the shallow and vulgar idea of oppression [*City Temple*].

An unkingly argument used for an unkingly purpose.

Bloody powers desire to make executioners enough to destroy the Church.

Persecuting kings do not entreat, but command their people to be instruments of cruelty.

God suffers persecutors to go to the utmost of their appointed bounds.

ILLUSTRATIONS FOR CHAPTER I.

Verses 1—6. As trees growing in the wood are known—some by difference of their trunks, and some by the properties of their branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits; but this knowledge is had of them only whilst they stand, grow, and are not consumed; for if they be committed to the fire, and are turned into ashes, they cannot be known. It is impossible that, when the ashes of divers kinds of trees are mingled together, the tall pine tree should be discerned from the great oak, or the mighty poplar from a low shrub, or any one tree from another: even so men, whilst they live in the wood of this world, are known—some by the stock of their ancestors, some by the flourishing leaves of their words and eloquence, some in the flowers of beauty, and some in the shrub of honesty, many by their savage ignorance, and some by their kindness; but when death doth bring them into dust, and hath mixed all together, then their ashes cannot be known—then there is no difference between the mighty princes of the world and the poor souls that are not accounted of [*Cundray*].

Verses 8—11. If the mountains overflow with waters, the valleys are the better; and if the head be full of ill-humours, the whole body fares the worse. The actions of rulers are most commonly rules for the people's actions, and their example passeth as current as their coin. The common people are like tempered wax, easily receiving impressions from the seals of great men's vices; they care not to sin by prescription and damn themselves with authority. And it is the unhappy privilege of greatness to warrant, by example, others', as well as its own sins, whilst the unadvised take up crimes on trust and perish by credit [*Harding's Sermons*].

Verse 11. As we say of fire and water, and as the Romans said of Caligula, "Nemo melior servus, nemo pefor dominus," we may say of the Church's enemies—"They are very bad masters, executing their own lusts and cruelty against God's people, yet very good servants, if the Divine hand makes use of them for the Church's service;" just like the good husbandman, who makes use of briars and thorns which, though they be fruits of the curse, and cumber the ground, yet he will suffer them to grow in hedges, that he may make them a fence unto his fruitful ground [*Strickland*].

Verse 12. Even as the palm-tree, the more it is laden and pressed down, the more it groweth and stretcheth out, or spreadeth its boughs in length and breadth: so, likewise, the Church, the more she is persecuted and afflicted, the more force, courage, and liveliness she taketh to herself. Like as roses and lilies are accustomed to flourish and to increase among thorns: so is this a common thing for the Church to flourish in the midst of persecutions.

Verse 17.—
The conscience, that sole monarchy in man,
Owing allegiance to no earthly prince;
Made by the edict of creation free;
Made sacred, made above all human laws,
Holding of heaven alone; of most divine
And indefeasible authority [*Pollock*].

Verse 22. There is a woful gradation in sin. As mariners, netting sail, lose sight of the shore, then of the houses, then of the steeples, and then of the mountains and land; and as those that are waylaid by a consumption first lose vigour, then appetite, and then colour; thus it is that sin hath its woful gradations. None decline to the worst at first, but go from one degree of turpitude to another, until the very climax is reached.

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL NOTES.—3. Bulrushes] The well-known Eg. *papyrus* or *paper-reed*. 4. Stood] "Stationed herself." 6. She saw the child] This verse is surpassingly delightful for simple vividness, when rendered in oriental fashion: "And she opens, and beholds him—even the child, and lo! a boy, weeping!" 9. Take] More exactly: "Take away." Prob. not said with aversion, but prompted by the child's danger and her own prudence. The time was not yet come for M. to be called "the son of P.'s daughter." 10. Moses] Heb. *Mosheh* (מֹשֶׁה): if of Heb. origin, undoubtedly an active—not a passive—participle="drawing out," not "drawn out." There is no difficulty in this. The starting point of the naming is from the *act* of "drawing:" the passive "being drawn" wd. necessarily be implied. But the *active* touches God's providence at *two* points instead of one,—the "drawing" of the individual son "out" of the Nile, and the "drawing" of the national son (*Hos.* xi. 1) "out" of Egypt: Jehovah "drew out" M. by Ph.'s daughter, and Is. by M. While preferring the derivation just named, we need not decisively reject that adopted by some scholars, after Josephus, from the Coptic="Water-saved." It is certainly striking, that whereas "*Mo*" in Copt. sigs. "water," Ph.'s d., according to this ver., laid *stress* on the water:—lit. "OUT OF THE WATERS did I draw him." Thus rich in resources, we can assure Fürst that we see no reason why the etymol. given in Ex. ii. 10 shd "*not* be taken seriously": certainly we need not give it up for his *conjecture* that M. is="son of Osiris!" 18. Reuel] It is common to say that *R.* is="God's friend" (Ges. Dav.); but the theory of Fürst that the giving of these "El-" names (and others) was a sort of worshipful recognition of Divine Providence, leads him to modify the rendering of the combined roots to "El is friendship." We have paid some little attention to this theory in its results on the meaning of Bible names, and deem it well worthy of further consideration. 21. Zipporah] Here we come upon a pleasant touch of human nature. This name sigs "little bird" (cf. Scottish "birdie.") Pronounced with the sharp hissing sound of the Heb. initial letter (=tz, ts, ss), we may hear the "chirping" of the "little bird" in the name. The Bible is full of human as well as divine beauties. For a suggested relief of M.'s married life from the gloom allowed to gather round it, *see* C. N. ch. iv. 24-26. Between the "well" and the "mountain" we have years of domestic history spanned over with two or three hints. At least, let us make the best of these.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **1-4.**

THE BIRTH OF MOSES.

I. As occurring of noble parentage. 1. *They were of moderate social position.* Amram, the father of Moses, was the son of Kohath, who was the son of Levi. He espoused Jochebed, who was also of the tribe of Levi. They had three children, Aaron, Miriam, and Moses. Josephus says that Amram was of noble family. Not much is known about him. The social position of a child has a great influence upon its life—education—habits—and associates. Many sons rise higher in social grade than those who gave them birth—either through fortune—Providence—or industry. Moses was taken to be the son of a monarch's daughter. He was to become the supreme Lawgiver and Ruler, not merely of a vast nation, but of the moral life of the world. 2 *They were of strong parental affection.* They took great notice of their children, especially of Moses. The mother thought him a goodly child. This was mother-like. She was anxious for the safety of her infant. Hence she tried to evade the cruel edict of the king. She concealed him in the house. Then she hid him on the waters of the Nile. She may have had a strange presentiment that her young child was destined to be connected with the fortunes of Israel. This made her solicitous for his preservation. Few mothers but would have acted likewise. Would that mothers were as anxious for the moral preservation of their offspring as for the physical. Many mothers will hide their children from a tyrant king, who would not conceal them from a wicked companionship. There are many edicts for the moral slaughter of the young—the edict of a wicked press. Parents should hide their children therefrom. 3. *They were of good religious character.* "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents." (Heb. xi., 23.) Thus the parents of Moses were truly pious. They had faith in the unseen Jehovah—not weak—lifeless—inoperative—but powerful—so that it influenced their life—in its most tender sphere—in its most sacred relations—in its brightest hopes—in its truest joys—it made them willing to give up their child to the guardianship of the Nile — nay — to the guardianship of God. Here is a pattern for parents. Have such faith in God that you can trust—even your children — in the most perilous circumstances of life—to His care. Such trust on your part may enhance their temporal good — it may put them in the way of a monarch's daughter. Many a child has obtained social position through the piety of his mother. Happy the infancy that is linked to the providence of God by a mother's faith. We cannot tell how much the faith of the parents had to do with the future of their child. Faith in God is the preserving influence of a threatened life—physically—morally—eternally. **II. As happening in perilous times.** 1. *When his nation was in a condition of servitude.* That this servitude was severe—exacting—grievous—disastrous—murderous—is evident from the last chapter. Thus Moses was not born to freedom—to comfort—but to unrewarded toil—and unmitigated sorrow. His earliest experiences would be of cruelty and degradation. It seems a pity, and an injustice, that young children should be born to slavery. 2. *When a cruel edict was in force against the young.* How were the parents of Moses enabled to conceal him from the officers of Pharoah? Given a loving mother—a kindly providence—we cannot wonder at the result. **III. As involving momentous issues.** 1. *Issues relating to the lives of individuals.* The birth of Moses made Miriam a watcher—gave her an introduction to a king's daughter—and has given immortality to her name. It brought Aaron into historical prominence in relation to the Exodus of Israel, inasmuch as Moses lacked the eloquent tongue possessed by his brother. The life of Moses touched these names into fame,

gave them an impulse, invested them with a greater meaning than otherwise they would have had—they derive lustre from his work. 2. *Issues involving the freedom of an enslaved people.* That ark upon the Nile waters contains a power that shall break the fetters of Israel—and lead the nation to a land of promise. Infant lives are linked much more to the interests of freedom than of serfdom. People are little conscious of the instrumentalities that are to give them liberty. The freedom of a kingdom may be involved in the birth of a child. We know not the influence one infant life may have upon a nation. 3. *Issues relating to the destiny of a proud nation.* That child—the object of a mother's care—of a sister's vigilance—will one day be the occasion of a monarch's fear—torment—overthrow. Now the Nile carries on its tranquil waters a power that shall defeat the Pharaohs. The edict is vain. The slaughter of the young is useless—*One* has escaped the horrid massacre; that is enough! Egypt is in peril. Israel may strike her first note of freedom. In the life of one child there may be wrapped up the destinies of an Empire. The potentiality of infant life! IV. As exhibiting the inventiveness of maternal love. 1. *In that she devised a scheme for the safety of her child.* The mother was more clever than the tyrant king and his accomplices. Tyranny is too calculating to be clever. Maternal love is quick, and spontaneous in its thought, and sees a refuge where tyrants never suspect. The refuge chosen was unlikely—carefully selected—vigilantly guarded—evidently sufficient. She was amply repaid. Only a mother would have thought of it. V. As eluding the edict of a cruel king. The mother of Moses was justified in eluding this edict—because it was unjust—murderous—it did violence to family affection—to the laws of citizenship—and to the joyful anticipations of men.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1. Providence is preparing good, while wickedness is working evil to the Church—Times, tribes, and persons are appointed by God, by whom He will work good to His people.

In the desolations of the Church's seed, God will have His to marry and continue it.

Tribes cursed for their desert, may be made instrumental of good by grace.

Marriages are always to be accounted lawful by God's will revealed about them.

The greatest instruments of the Church's good, God ordereth to bring in the common way of man.

The Divine Being orders instruments of salvation to be born in times of affliction.

Verse 2. No policies, or cruelties of man, can hinder God from sending saviours to the Church.

God uses instrumentalities in accomplishing the freedom of the slave, and the welfare of the Church.

God maketh sight serviceable to faith for preserving His own. "She saw."

That infant life sometimes contains the prophecy of its future. Faith hides the child it wishes to save—

1. As evidence of a holy courage.
2. As using means to secure its end.
3. As manifesting a sacred skill.
4. As embodying the germ of a brilliant hope....Discretion is not cowardice.

Pharaoh's laws were against all the laws of nature, or, more properly speaking, against the laws of God; and nature was slowly working against Pharaoh; he had made God his enemy. Against these laws of Pharaoh a mother's heart revolted [*F. W. Robertson.*]

In many cases in the scriptures you find the enemy seeking by death to interrupt the current of divine action. But, blessed be God, there is something beyond death. The entire sphere of divine action, as connected with redemption, lies beyond the limits of death's domain. When Satan has exhausted his power, then God begins to show Himself. The grave is the limit of Satan's activity; but there it is that divine activity begins. This is a glorious truth. Satan has the power of death; but God is the God of the

living; and He gives life beyond the reach and power of death—a life which Satan cannot touch [*C.H.M.*]

Death is often the edict of man, when life is the promise and ordination of God.

Verse 3. That the loving ingenuity of a mother has its limit; "She could no longer hide him."

The divine Providence is the refuge of a good, but perplexed parent.

In times of extreme difficulty it is well to venture upon the providence of God [*Henry and Scott*].

God teaches the good the best way of saving those by whom He intends to deliver His Church.

Tyrants use the river for a grave; God uses it as a cradle for infant life.

Reed and slime, and pitch and flags, shall preserve God's darlings at His pleasure.

The mother of Moses laid the ark in the flags by the river's brink. Ay, but before doing so she laid it on the heart of God! She could not have laid it so courageously upon the Nile, if she had not first devoutly laid it upon the care and love of God. We are often surprised at the outward calmness of men who are called upon to do unpleasant and most trying deeds; but had we seen them in secret we should have known the moral preparation which they underwent before coming out to be seen of men [*City Temple*].

Verse 4. An entire family moving within the circle of an infant's life.

Faith always waits to see the issue of events.

Society needs watchers as well as workers. Had we been passing the spot at which the sister of Moses took up her position of observation we might have condemned her as an idler standing there and doing nothing. We should be careful of our condemnation, seeing how little we know of the reality of the case. In doing *nothing*, the girl was, in reality, doing everything. Mark the cunning of love. The watcher stood *afar off*. Had she stood quite close at hand, she would have defeated the very object of her watching. She was to do her work without the slightest appearance of doing it. *(City Temple.)*

The beautiful ministry of a youthful life — 1. Loving. 2. Cautious. 3. Obedient. 4. Reflective. 5. Courteous. 6. Successful.

The mother remained at home, shewing—1. The dignity of her faith —she could wait away from the scene of trial. 2. Her supreme hope in God—the issue was to be divine. 3. Her happy confidence in her little daughter —children do their work better when they feel that they are trusted with it entirely.

How many brothers would be kept from moral injury and peril if they were thus guarded by a loving sister.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5-9.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN RELATION TO THE YOUNG.

It is a great mercy that there is a kindly, and special Providence resting upon the lives of young children. They are so helpless—thoughtless—so constantly exposed to danger—in the home—in the street—in the school—that, but for the divine care they would come to woe. God is very near to infancy and childhood —much nearer than many imagine. **I. As rescuing them from the peril of unhappy circumstances.** 2. *Moses was rescued from murder*—in the Egyptian palace he was safe. 2. *Moses was rescued from slavery*—in the Egyptian palace he was free. It sometimes happens that young children, from the circumstances of their birth, are placed in peril—by orphanage, at a disadvantage in the race of life—these are especially under divine protection. **II. As ensuring an education necessary to fit them for their future engagements.** 1. *As the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses had the opportunity of a good scholastic education.* Had Moses remained at home, had his nation been free, he might have had a moderate education —but certainly not so liberal and advanced as he got in Egypt, the very seat of learning. Thus, Providence placed him in the best school of the day. So it very often happens that God, in some remarkable manner, places a good education at the disposal of children of unfortunate circumstances, who otherwise would grow up

ignorant, and unfit for the duty of life. Providence attends to the education of young children much more than many of us imagine. 2. *As the son of Pharaoh's daughter he would be prepared to undertake the freedom of his nation.* Mere book knowledge is the poorest—and least useful. Men require another education than that of the academy. They need to be trained in the meaning of life. Especially was this needful to Moses. Hence the discipline of the court was as necessary to his future usefulness as that of the school. In the palace he saw, in all its force, the tyranny of the king—the degradation of Israel—and the prowess of the nation he would have to combat. This, pre-eminently, was the school of his life, and he was made its scholar by Providence. So, many destitute young men are educated by Heaven—not merely in the facts of history and science—but in the duties that pertain to their distinct avocation, whatever it may be. **III. As employing the most unlikely agency.** The tyrant's daughter was the means of rescuing Moses from peril, and of educating him for his future calling. Unlikely means :—1. *Because her father had issued an edict for the death of all Israelitish children.* All the newly-born children of Israel were to be thrown into the river. So Pharaoh had decreed. Yet his daughter saves, and educates the very child that is to prove his overthrow. The tyrant is defeated by his own daughter. How thoroughly wicked men are in the hand of God. So, young children of unfavourable early circumstances are often educated by the most unlikely instrumentalities. 2. *Because it appeared unlikely that a royal daughter should wish to adopt the son of an Israelite.* All hearts are in the divine hand. God can direct our sympathies to the most unlikely persons, and objects. He can put those who need our help into such an attitude that our pity must be awakened. The babe wept. These tears overcame all the improbabilities of the case. Providence uses instrumentality in the accomplishment of its purpose. **IV. As employing the most efficient instrumentality.** 1. *The mother of the boy*—who could better teach him the wrongs of his country than she—that hundreds had suffered the fate he had managed to escape—the slavery of his people—the tyranny of the king—and that during the most sensitive time of his life. His mother instructed him during the earliest days of his youth—her instruction would, therefore, be enduring—hence he would go to the Egyptian court with a knowledge of his country's woe—and of his father's God. His murder of the Egyptian was the outcome of the former. His choosing to leave the royal court was the result of the latter. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." 2. *The daughter of the king.* Under no other tuition could he have gained a better preparation for his work of the future. Here he would learn sympathy with the oppressed—hatred of the oppressor. When Heaven undertakes the education of a life—it does so thoroughly and completely. **V. As requiring the utmost human effort possible.** 1. *His mother did the best for Moses that she could.* She did not put him on the Nile directly he was born. She had the power to conceal him under her own care then. But when all her means of self-help were exhausted, then she gave him into the Divine care. So, as a rule, God does not educate the children of indolent parents. He moves in the line of the mother's best effort. When she has done her best—put him on the river—not forgotten him—prays for him—then God will send Pharaoh's daughter to save, and educate the boy. 2. *His mother was judicious in her conduct towards Moses.* She did not let maternal affection endanger his safety—her mother's heart no doubt wished to keep him at home longer—had she done so, the officers of the king might have found him. Many parents ruin their children by excess of love. Moses was placed on the Nile at the right time—she was a wise mother—regarded his welfare—sacrificed her own feeling—at this point the safety of Moses commenced. Let parents do their best for the safety of their children—physically—morally—in wisdom—and Providence will find the means for their temporal—and eternal rescue—education—destiny. **VI. As perfectly consistent with the free agency of individuals.** The daughter of the king undertook the training of Moses

at the suggestion of her own sympathy—under a perfect knowledge of the case—there was no coercion brought to bear upon her. The providence of God uses willing instrumentalities.

THIS CRADLE ON THE WATERS TEACHES:—

I. **The power of young life to endure hardship.** (Verse 3.) The mother of Moses made an ark, in which to put her boy, and then placed him on the waters of the Nile. There are few mothers in these days who would put their babes in such a cradle, much less on the waters of a river. They wrap them up—they give them medicine—they treat them as though they had only got a spark of life in them; such codling treatment is foolish—unhealthy—the boy will be far more healthy out on the Nile. Young children are stronger than we imagine—the vital principle in them is not so easily put out. There are few, in these days, who begin life under the same condition as Moses—it would be better if there were more. **II. The use that one member of a family may be to another.** (Verse 7.) The sister of Moses was equal to the occasion; her love for her infant brother carried her through the difficulties of her duty. She was not timid at approaching a king's—a tyrant's daughter. She knew when to make her suggestion—God told her anxious heart—the babe had wept—the womanly instincts of Pharaoh's daughter were touched, "she had compassion on him"—at this moment Miriam stepped up, and suggested the need of a nurse—she was wise beyond her years; the idea was accepted—the boy's mother was fetched, and received the commission of nurse, with the unnecessary promise of wages. Miriam must have had a good home training; she appears in the scene as a bright—happy—ingenious—loving girl. Thus we see how the younger ones of a family can help each other in their perils—necessities of life. And very extensive this help may be in its influence. Miriam, in helping Moses, rendered possible the freedom of her nation. The little kindness shewn by a sister to a brother may have an unexpected effect upon thousands. Thus we see the loving dexterity of a little girl. **III. The pathetic influence of a babe's tears.** (Verse 6.) There is a great power in tears; they are tokens of sorrow — weakness — helplessness; but they are potent — they invite help — they especially touch a woman's heart—they defeat a monarch's cruelty—they aid the intentions of Heaven—they prophesy the sorrows of the future—they render welcome the tearless home. The tears of Moses won the compassion of the Monarch's daughter; they were a fit emblem of his nation's grief. She was perhaps unmoved by the story of Israel's bondage—it was old—as she might think deserved; but the tears of Moses were new—pathetic—were concentrated upon the tender sympathies of her nature. They conquered. Many are moved by the sight, or record of personal grief, who can look unmoved upon a national calamity. So inconsistent are we in the bestowal of our sympathy. **III. The sensitive conscience of a tyrant's daughter.** "This is one of the Hebrew's children." (Verse 6.) She needed no voice to tell her to whom the child belonged, the silent monitor within was sufficient. Tyranny does not necessarily run from father to daughter; many a cruel parent has a tender-hearted child. The command of conscience is more authoritative than that of a king—a father. She saved the child—all honour to her memory.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 5. Divine Providence sometimes unites the utmost peril with the best means of safety.

Divine Providence sometimes uses the most unlikely agency for the working of its holy purpose.

The pleasures of individuals are embraced by the wide scheme of Divine Providence.

Tender-hearted women are generally honoured by, and entrusted with, the finding of those who are to be the world's patriots.

Divine providence generally uses an

instrumentality that is completive:—1. Saw the ark—many see objects of pity, but do nothing more. 2. Took the ark—practical side of pity. 3. Ordered a nurse. 4. Welcomed the child to her own home.

The renewed mind enjoys one of its sweetest exercises while tracing the Divine footsteps in circumstances and events, in which a thoughtless spirit sees only blind chance or rigid fate [*C. H. M.*]

VERSE 6.—I. **The claims of the orphan.** 1. *The first claim on her compassion was the claim of infancy.* "She saw the child." That sentence contains an argument. It was an appeal to the woman's heart. Rank, caste, nationality, all melted before the great fact of womanhood. This feeling was spontaneous. She did not feel compassion because it was her duty, but because it was her nature. God has provided for humanity by a plan more infallible than system, by implanting feeling in our nature. 2. *Consider the degradation of the child's origin.* "Hebrews' children." The exclusiveness of the Egyptian social system was as strong as that of the Hindoo—slave—enemy—to be slain. Princess brought up with these ideas. She was animated by His Spirit who came to raise the abject, to break the bond of the oppressor. 3. *The last reason we find for this claim was its unprotected state.* It wept; those tears told of a conscious want—the felt want of a mother's arms.

II. **The Orphan's education.** 1. *It was a suggestion from another.* This woman brought up in luxury—had warm feelings—not knowing how to do good—was told by another. Results of this training:—1. *Intellectually.* He learned to ask "*Why*" "the bush is not consumed." 2. In the *moral* part of his character we notice his hatred of injustice [*F. W. Robertson*].

Even a king's daughter is the richer and gladder for this stoop of love. Some of us have been trying to reach too high for our enjoyments; the blooming fruit has been beyond our stature; we have therefore turned away with pining and discontent, not knowing that if we had bent ourselves to the ground we should have found the happiness in the dust, which we attempted in vain to pluck from inaccessible heights [*City Temple*].

The Church's children, though destroyed by some, yet are pitied by others.

The compassion of the daughter condemns the cruelty of the monarch-father. ... The child:—1. The moment of its degradation. 2. The moment of its sadness. 3. The moment of its hope. 4. The moment of its unknown future. 5. The moment of a mother's recompense.

Verse 7. A good suggestion:—1. Made at a proper time. 2. Made in a proper spirit. 3. Made for a proper purpose.

Society would be enriched by many more good deeds if only Christian people would watch their opportunity, and suggest conduct to well-meaning but ignorant people.

Are there not sorrows that enable us to overcome the petty difficulties of etiquette? [*City Temple*].

If we really cared for lost children we could find ways of speaking for them in high quarters [*City Temple*].

Hebrew nurses are most desirable for Hebrew children.

Where God moves the question for saving his little ones, he prepares an answer of peace.

A mother the best guardian of infancy.

Verse 8. The Princess gave a prompt reply to the inquiry of the little maid. She did not promise to consider the subject. If she had, the probabilities are that Moses would not have been rescued from the waters of the Nile.

God's Providence excludeth not man's prudence [*Trapp*].

Providence can bring a mother to nurse the child she had concealed, because, through the edict of a cruel king, she could not longer keep it undetected in the house. ... When we save the lives of children we should see to their education afterwards.

Verse 9. The king's daughter is made a mother, while the mother is made a nurse.

"And the woman took the child and nursed it." What her self-control, in that hour of maddening excitement, cost, no tongue can tell. She took the child as a stranger might have taken it, and yet her heart was bursting with the very passion of delight. Had she

given way for one instant, her excitement might have revealed the plot. Every thing depended on her calmness. But love can do anything! The great question underlying all service is a question not so much of the intellect as of the heart. We should spoil fewer things if our love was deeper [*City Temple*].

The power of a mother's love:—1. To control its impulse. 2. To school its utterance. 3. To make self-denial for the good of her child. 4. To enter into the method of Providence concerning the future of her boy.

A beautiful pattern of self-control:—1. Not arising from indifference. 2. Not arising from hard-heartedness. 3. But arising from the calm indwelling of faith.

This mother a model nurse:—1. Because she taught her son to have sympathy with the slave. 2. Because she taught him to despise injustice (verse 12). 3. Because she taught him the folly of anger (verse 13). 4. Because she taught him to defend the weak (verse 17).

A mother the best nurse:—1. Because she has truest sympathy with the circumstances of the child's life. 2. Because she is more truly concerned for the right developement of its moral character. 3. Because then she will have gladdening memories of its infancy and childhood.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 10.

The Birth of Moses and its Lessons.

More wisdom and blessing may be got from the contemplation of the birth of a truly great man into the world than from the tracing of the mightiest river to its source. In following up this, you may have to ascend among "the overlasting hills;" in tracking a great soul, you must rise to God. All souls come from God. Some souls are broader mirrors, are greater lights than others, they disclose more fully the way from one eternity to another. Consider the man Moses, specially as illustrating God's method of raising up souls on earth for Divine use and service. I. God gives and sends them as they are needed, they have their appointment according to the times. The reader of history cannot but see that the great parent Spirit creates and sends forth souls—of Teachers, lawgivers, deliverers, prophets, poets, kings—at the right time. There was need of Moses. *See previous chapter.* The greatest revelations come in the times of greatest need, that we may be well assured whose they are. The world owes much *to little children, little children coming into it by God.* II. That they may be fully trained and prepared for their work, they "are made like unto their brethren." Moses is born a child of the people that he may be a true brother and saviour of his people. III. The very family and people that sought to destroy Israel are made instrumental in nourishing and rearing the deliverer of Israel and the avenger of his brethren's wrongs. God makes evil powers, evil men, evil counsels, and deeds serve Him, contrary to their own nature and intent, and when they have come to their highest pitch, work their own just retribution and overthrow. So Huss, Wickliffe, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Knox were trained in the monasteries and colleges of the Romish Church, to be the leaders in another Exodus out of Egyptian darkness and bondage. Injustice and cruelty are made to avenge themselves in the end. IV. In the raising up of the man Moses we have a most instructive exemplification of the doctrine and working of the Divine providence. God's providence does its mightiest works through human hearts. V. In Pharaoh's daughter, and the part she takes, we have the proof that human nature, the human heart, is one; and that all classes of mankind, all nations, are destined to become one in God's great saving plan. [*Pulpit Analyst.*]

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSE.

Verse 10. Child-growth—physically—mentally—morally. 1. Important to families—leaving home. 2. Interesting to strangers—Princess. 3. Important to nations—Egypt.

Child-nomenclature. 1. Perpetuating the memory of a cruel edict. 2. Perpetuating the memory of a loving mother. 3. Perpetuating the memory of a kindly Providence. 4. Perpetuating the memory of a compassionate stranger. Home life exchanged for palace life.—1. It would be at first unwelcome—stranger. 2. It would gradually become a temptation—its gaiety. 3. It would forcefully become a discipline. Providence is pleased sometimes to raise the poor out of the dust, to set

them among princes (*Ps.* cxiii. 7, 8.)

Under Providence, parents of the Church may be forced to give up their children to strangers.

Acts of pity from earthly powers to the Church's children, may give them liberty of naming them.

We have now the Church under state patronage—the patronage of a tender-hearted princess.

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

THE OPPRESSOR SLAIN; OR, A WRONG WAY OF REPROVING INJURY.

I. There are many instances of cruel oppression in the world. Slavery is almost obsolete. We have not now to build treasure cities for a tyrant king. Our lives are not made bitter by unrequited labour. Yet the spirit of tyranny and injustice is not yet gone. 1 *There is oppression in the commercial life of men.* The rich smite the poor—the fortunate the unfortunate—the defrauder the honest tradesman. There are many scenes enacted daily in the commercial life of men in which we see "an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew." 2. *There is oppression in the social life of men.* The haughty frown upon the humble—the lordly render servile the poor. 3. *There is oppression in the political life of men.* There is the oppression of an unjust king—of a politic statesman—of an unruly crowd—of an unrighteous edict. 4. *There is oppression in the Church life of men.* The man of little religion wishes to dictate—to perplex—those who are more devout than himself. In the sanctuary we find "an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew." II. It is the duty of a good and patriotic man to oppose these manifestations of oppression. 1. *Because he should have sympathy with the burdens of the oppressed.* "And looked on their burden." We little dream of the burdens occasioned by the cruel oppressions of this land. How many homes are rendered sad by the despotism of a cruel husband. How many tradesmen are kept in want through the demands of an unthinking landlord. The good man should have sympathy with these in their grief—and strive to relieve it—by the press—by the power of birth—by the influence of a kindly example. 2. *Because he should recognise the brotherhood of men.* "One of his brethren." This argument of humanity should enlist all godly souls against every kind of oppression. 3. *Because he should recognise the claim of nationality* "Smiting an Hebrew." While the claims of brotherhood are co-extensive with the universe—those arising from nationality render them more emphatic. A Hebrew should defend a Hebrew—under the relation of citizenship, as well as that of brother. Piety intensifies the national relationships of life. III. That a good man must be careful as to the spirit and manner in which he resents oppression, or he may be as cruel as those whom he reproves. "He slew the Egyptian." Moses was right in sympathising with the burden of the Hebrew, in resenting an injury done to one of his own nationality, but he did wrong in murdering the offender. In defending the oppressed, he became an oppressor himself. He meant right—the impulse was heroic—but it was not under sufficient control. A good man ought to be indignant at the sight of oppression—but not passionate—not revengeful. 1. *His conscience told him that he was doing wrong.* "And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man," &c. If we cannot rebuke oppression in the presence of others, our method of rebuke must be imprudent or sinful. Do not be afraid to let the world see you reprove a social tyrant. The sympathies of all good citizens will be with you. Embody your conscience in your rebuke. 2. *The spirit and manner in which the oppressor should be reproved.* (1) Boldly. (2) Firmly. (3) Sometimes kindly. (4) Make him feel the wrong of his conduct.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 11. Though Moses was elevated to a princely position, he was not unmindful of his enslaved brethren. He was not so charmed with the luxury and gaiety of his own surroundings as to forget theirs. He was

not so selfish as to be merely content with his own happiness. The mother's training had naturally linked his soul to the history of his nation.

Some people will never look on the burdens of their brethren:—1. They pretend not to see them. 2. They have no sympathy with them. 3. They fear lest their purse, or energy should be taxed. 4. They miss the luxury of relieving them.

The servants of God must have the experience of growth.

When the Church is oppressed, the heroic good must run to her aid.

Verse 12. The inquiring look of conscience:—1. It was anxious. 2. It was suspicious. 3. It was troubled. 4. It was perplexed. 5. It was mistaken.

The inquiring look of conscience:—1. Gives a moment for reflection. 2. Indicates the moral evil of the deed. 3. Suspects an unhappy issue from the deed.

HIDDEN SIN.—"*He slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.*" I. Hidden by fallacy. "The Egyptian." He was cruel—unjust; had I not a *right* to kill him? Moses might reason thus to convince himself. A man must bury sin out of the sight of his own conscience, before he can be happy—by false argument or true. II. Hidden by folly. "In the sand:"—1. Would leave traces of his deed. 2. The dead body would be easily discovered. So all our efforts to bury sin are equally futile. God sees it. He can lead men to its grave. Sin leaves traces. It is better not to be under the necessity of making the soul into a grave, or any spot of life into a tomb. If we do, there will sure to come a resurrection. A man who is going to commit sin, requires to have all his wits about him.

The absence of human observation is a poor argument for, and a wretched consolation in sin.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse **13, 14.**

A GOOD MAN'S INTERFERENCE WITH A QUARREL.

I. That it is the duty of Good Men to try to subdue any quarrels they may be called to witness. 1. *Because they recognise the common grief of Men.* This quarrel was between two Hebrews. They were both the slaves of a tyrant king. Both felt the misery of their condition. See, then, the folly of their quarrel. It would augment their woe. Their own unity ought to have been the relief of their serfdom. So there are many people to-day who increase their trials by a factious spirit. The most abject slave may, and ought to, enjoy the luxury of peace—ought to live on friendly terms with his comrades in suffering. Moses felt this. Good men should recognise the suffering of humanity as an argument for friendliness. 2. *Because they recognise the claim arising from the brotherhood of men.* 3. *Because they ought to be superior to the passion of strife.* A good man should be brave—and true bravery is always calm. He is above entering into the paltry and foolish quarrels of men. He may therefore endeavour to stay them, without personal injury. By so doing he will put an end to quarrels that might have resulted in a sad and murderous consequence. He may thus benefit the factious individual by freeing him from the life-long memory of injustice; and society at large, by preventing a public spectacle of immorality. **II. That in this endeavour good men should make moral considerations the basis of their appeal to the quarrelsome.** "And he said to him that did the wrong." Perhaps, in some quarrels it is difficult to determine which party is in the wrong. Very often both are blameworthy. Moral considerations should be made the basis of appeal. 1. *Not favouritism.* It is just possible that Moses may have seen these two men before. He would no doubt cultivate the acquaintance of his enslaved countrymen. And if he had not he was open to the impressions of the moment. When we see a quarrel we almost instinctively take sides. The one man appears more calm—he is more open in physique—the other appears more fierce and brutal—Our sympathies go with the former. This is not just. Nor can a good

man base his appeal on any such predilection. Which is in the right?—this question contains the secret, and points to the method of settlement. 2. *Not greater physical strength.* In our effort to subdue a quarrel we must not necessarily side with the stronger—true, he may be more likely to come away conqueror. But if the weaker is right, our question must be directed against him that did the wrong, even though he be the stronger. In this case great Christian fortitude will be needed. Worldly men will often aid the strong in their conflict. The world likes to be on the winning side. Christianity must aid weakness when associated with rectitude. She must wait for her victory. It will come. 3. *Not hope of reward.* Many, in the event of conflict aid the side on which there is the greatest likelihood of plunder or spoil. The influential and the rich seldom lack comrades in their quarrels. The Christian man, in trying to stay the quarrels of men, must put aside all thought of vested interest, of temporal emolument, or transient applause - he must join himself to the right, unmoved by the promise, or hope of reward. His reward is from God—is brighter than gold—is more enduring—the reward of a satisfied conscience. III. That good men, in trying to subdue the quarrels of others often get little thanks, and may involve themselves in trouble. "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us." 1. *They imagined that Moses assumed unrightful authority.* True, Moses had rightful authority over these slaves. As the Son of Pharaoh's daughter this would be permitted to him. But the right of the good to interrupt a quarrel does not depend upon social or national supremacy, but upon moral. A king might not be a proper person to rebuke a quarrel. Sainthood is the true qualification for such a work. A man who lives much in communion with the unseen, and who has power with God, will have influence to hush the passion of his fellows. 2. *They reminded Moses of, and taunted him with, past sin.* "Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killest the Egyptian?" Moses thought that no one had seen his act of murder. The sin of a good man's past life often weakens his present ability for doing good. When men are in the passion of strife, they are not choice as to their invectives. Hence, it requires a blameless life to rebuke evil. 3. *The heroic interference of Moses lacked moral continuity.* "And Moses feared," &c. His own sin made him a coward. 4. *Moses incurred the hatred of Pharoah.* The two Hebrews would no doubt spread the story of Moses' wrong-doing—it was corroborated by his flight from the palace—the king was amazed—his hospitality had been abused—the commencement of a life struggle between Egypt and Israel. The flight of Moses was the signal for the defeat of Pharoah. Thus, though endeavouring to stay this quarrel, Moses lost position, comfort, but it was the means of putting him upon the track of duty—divinely inposed—that would win him world-wide renown. Thus he did not lose much, according to a true computation, by the exchange. To stop a quarrel is a good man's duty, regardless of consequences.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 13. "*Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow.*" Apply this question, 1. To the domestic circle. 2. To society at large. 3. To the Church.

Some find reason for their conduct—1. In revenge. 2. In impulse. 3. Necessity. ... God's faithful instruments leave courtly pleasures to visit God's afflicted ones ... In visiting for good the oppressed Church, sad contentions may appear among the members.

Duels in the Church, and among its members, are sad things to record. They are reprovable.

Moses did not say, "You are both Hebrews, and therefore you may fight out your own quarrel;" nor did he say, "The controversies of other men are nothing to me; they who began the quarrel must end it:" Moses saw that the conditions of life had a moral basis; in every quarrel, as between right and wrong, he had a share, because every honourable-minded man is a trustee of

social justice and common fair play [*City Temple*].

The reproof Moses gave on this occasion may still be of use, wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? Smiting our fellows is bad in any, especially in Hebrews; smiting with tongue or hand, either in a way of persecution, or in a way of contention. Consider the person thou smitest, it is thy fellow, thy fellow creature, thy fellow Christian; it is thy fellow servant, thy fellow sufferer [*Henry and Scott*].

Verse 14. Offending parties are often insolent to those who rebuke them.

Wicked men are always impatient of authority.

Quarrelsome men are glad to involve others, that they may escape themselves.

Good men are sometimes frightened at the threats of the wicked.

Factious men are slow to acknowledge those who would do them moral good.

Wicked men are more willing to plead the cause of oppressors, than acknowledge just deliverers.

What authority did Moses assume in thus gently reproving a manifest outrage? Does one need a commission to perform an act of real kindness, and to endeavour to make friends of apparent enemies. It is rare virture ingenuously to confess our faults, and to receive correction with meekness [*Bush*].

Men know not what they do, nor what enemies they are to their own interest, when they resist, and despise faithful reproofs and reprovers. When the Hebrews strove with Moses, God sent him away into Midian, and they never heard of him for forty years [*Henry and Scott*].

The best friends of the Church often meet with the most discouragement. 1. Their authority is rejected. 2. They are not understood. 3. Their safety is endangered. 4. The welfare of the Church is imperilled.

The good man must not be turned aside from duty by circumstances. 1. Moses was not offended by this treatment. 2. He did not give up in despair. 3. He worked out the training of his boyhood. 4. He worked out the providence of God. 5. He worked out the dictates of his conscience

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 15.

The Meditations of a Perplexed Soul.

"And he sat down by a well." This calls to our mind a New Testament scene. These meditations—**I. They occurred at an important crisis in the life of Moses.** 'But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh." 1. *Moses had vacated a good home.* He had left the wealth—luxury of an Egyptian palace—the kindness of a royal mother who was deeply interested in him. He knew not where he was going—what he was to do for a daily livelihood—how his future was to be spent. All before him was mystery—he might well be perplexed. 2. *Moses had incurred the anger of Pharaoh.* This might well fill him with terror—he knew the influence and cruelty of that monarch—his hatred was to be feared. Had Moses been permitted a faint insight into his future relations with the Egyptian court, probably his meditations, near this well, would have been more prolonged than they were. There are times when all young men have to spend an hour in contemplation, especially when they are going, alone and unbefriended, into an unknown future of grave importance, not merely to themselves, but also to others. The past sweeps before them like a dream. The future is all mist. They must think for themselves—they must obtain the Divine guidance. The temporary rest by the well marks a crisis in their history. **II. They afford an opportunity for determining on a new course of life.** Moses is thinking about the future. He would naturally ask himself, "What am I to do?" Return to Egypt is impossible. —Heaven would, no doubt, influence his thought on this occasion. But a thoughtful spirit will not be long without employment—will not be long without a home. God will send the daughters of the priest of Midian to its aid. Providence has unnumbered agencies for the guidance and help of perplexed souls.

III. They are soon interrupted by a call to new activities. (Verse 17.) The daughters of the priest of Midian were attacked by hostile shepherds. Moses sees this. Will he interpose? Has he not had enough of meddling with the feuds of others? Is he not now a wanderer for so doing? But he cannot remain the quiet spectator of injury. The same spirit and impulse that made him kill the Egyptian shows itself again in his defence of these women. He could not but defend the weak. He is not to be daunted by failure. He is successful now. Good men may be dispirited sometimes. They may need times of thought. But it is not their destiny to rest long by the wells of life: theirs is the conflict with oppression and evil. There is work in Midian as well as in Egypt, for them. IV. They were indulged in a very favourable place. The well in olden time, a fine scene for rest and contemplation. Christ, when he was tired, sat on a well. His rest was broken by the advent of a woman whom he ultimately led to himself in contrition of heart.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSE.

Verse 15. Criminations of God's servants are soon carried to the ears of persecutors. ... An evil report often awakens the anger of men.

It is well sometimes to exchange the excitement of a royal court for quiet thought by the well.

God is in the solicitude of those whom he intends for great service.

God provides a Midian to save what Egypt would destroy.

Never take the responsibility of communicating evil news to a tyrant.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16 to 22.

The Reward of a Kindly Action.

Moses had defended the daughters of the Priest of Midian from the attack of hostile shepherds. In these verses we see the reward of a kindly action. I. The hospitality of a kind family. (Verse 20.) 1. *This hospitality was much needed by Moses.* He was an outcast. He had excited the anger of a tyrant king. Therefore, the provision and protection of a quiet home, the sympathy of tender hearts, would be most welcome to him. Nor was this generosity unmerited on his part. He had protected a family in a time of peril—he had therefore shown himself worthy of help—that he was of good character—of sympathetic and heroic nature—by defending the weak. Such men have a right to the best hospitality of society—they should be welcomed to our homes. See what a refuge of peace—what resources of joy—one little act of kindness may open up to a man. 2. *This hospitality was prompted by Parental inquiry.* (Verse 20.) Parents should always teach their children hospitality, especially in return for any kindness shown them. We should never leave any man who has benefitted us, in the enterprises of life, sitting by a well. This is often the way of the world—it is ungrateful—unthoughtful—reprehensible. A good and considerate father often turns his home into a sanctuary for the servants of God. By welcoming a heroic stranger to it, he may bring himself into harmony with great histories, and sublime providences. II. Employment for every day life. It would seem that Moses entered into the occupation of the family whose hospitality he had been called to receive (chapter iii. 1). When a young man is thus welcomed by a kind family he must expect to share their work, as also their food—their perils, as also their repose—their anxieties, as also their hopes. The study of Moses in Egypt had not raised him above hard work. III. A wife. (Verse 21.) A man who will defend a woman is worthy of a wife. The greatest and most important events of our lives depend upon little deeds of kindness. IV. Another advance in the intention of Divine Providence. Moses has finished his education in the Palace. He now commences that of the desert. Providence has changed

his academy. And men, by shewing a kindness to their fellows, advance themselves in the great destiny of their lives.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 16. A large family—1. Of sacred station. 2. Of womanly influence. 3. Of industrious activity. It is often the joy of priests to receive those whom tyrant kings reject and seek to slay.

Providence employs varied agencies. 1. Princess. 2. Priest.

Providence orders the coming of help to the place where the good are waiting for it—1. The king's daughter to the river. 2. The priest's daughter to the well.

Domestic toil.—1. The employment of true womanhood. 2. The test of true womanhood. 3. The glory of true womanhood.

What a contrast between the young ladies of to-day, and the industrious daughters of this primitive family.

Verse 17. Wherever the providence of God casts us, we should endeavour to be useful. ... Even honest and industrious labourers sometimes meet with opposition.

There is a great tendency in society for the strong to oppress the weak.

Two classes of men are typified by the conduct of these shepherds, and Moses. The former—1. Oppose the honest. 2. Persecute the industrious. 3. Hinder the diligent. The latter — 1. Co-operate with the weak. 2. Sympathise with the persecuted. 3. Defend the imperilled. 4. Win the Victory. 5. Receive hospitality.

Verse 18. Fathers' houses are just habitations for children doing their commands.

Honest, labouring creatures, are carried out, and returned home safely, under Providence.

God's providence may make speedier returns in mercy to his children than they expect.

Unexpected returns of common mercies may justly raise wonder in the hearts of men.

The providence of God orders means to speed mercies unto creatures at His will.

The hand of strangers is made sometimes a deliverer from the hands of oppressing neighbours. ...God takes the weak sometimes out of the hand of the strong.

Verse 20. Men of kindly soul, and heroic deed are sure to be inquired after.

Good men would not have the man who has done them a kindness forgotten.

"*Why is it that ye have left the man.*" This question may be asked in reference to the world's philanthropists, preachers, who are striving to defend the weak. 1. Is it because you do not understand him? 2. Is it because you do not believe in him? 3. Is it because you are selfish. 4. Is it because you have not been taught better. 5. Fetch him to your home as soon as possible.

Verse 21. A contented resident.—1. A wondrous sight—accustomed to a palace. 2. A happy sight—pastoral toil. 3. A scarce sight—men are restless.

He was content—1. With his daily companionships. 2. With his daily occupation. 3. With the scene of his residence, 4. With his matrimonial alliance.

A good man can be content anywhere the providence of God may place him.

Honest work is perfectly consistent with the dignity of those who are to be pioneers of the Church.

Providence may change a servant to a son, and a master to a father.

It is the father's right to bestow his children in marriage.

Verse 22. Sons born in the time of affliction, are often memorials of help and mercy.

It is the father's right to name his child.

The best and grandest men reckon themselves but strangers in this world.

A pilgrim life the best for preachers. 1. Good for their health. 2. Good for their moral training. 3. Good for their moral usefulness. 4. Good for the enlargement of their social friendships.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **23, 25.**

THE KING DYING, THE PEOPLE SUFFERING, GOD REIGNING.

Whether this king was the same as the one mentioned in chapter i. 8 is uncertain. Probably he was the Pharaoh from whom Moses fled. This new king was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. On his accession the Children of Israel had reason to hope for a change in their oppressed condition, in which hope, however, they were bitterly disappointed. They renewed their earnest prayers for deliverance, and God heard them. I. The King dying. Review the moral character of this monarch: —1. *He was despotic in his rule.* He encouraged a wholesale system of slavery. He employed every possible agency for the entire subjection of Israel He was unmoved by human suffering. 2. *He was vindictive in his temper.* He sought to slay Moses—Moses was the adopted son of his royal daughter—he was an inmate of the palace. Pharaoh would therefore be interested in him—would regard him with more than ordinary affection. Yet, because he killed an Egyptian, he seeks his death—not that he cared so much about the death of one of his subjects—He was animated by the passion of revenge. 3. *He was altogether out of sympathy with the Providential arrangements of God.* Did he enslave the Israelites?—They were the chosen people of Jehovah. Did he seek the death of Moses?—He was the representative of an oppressed nation, and an instrument appointed for the accomplishment of the purposes of Heaven. The rule of Pharaoh was thus altogether out of harmony with the moral history of the persons and events with which it had to do, and was counter to the authority of God. *Yet this man dies.* The despot meets with his conqueror. The revengeful is met by one who is heedless of the threat of passionate temper. The man who has contended with the Divine providence must leave the scene of his hopeless conflict, and intricate confusion, to appear before the God whose authority he has sought to dethrone. What an awful thing to die under such circumstances. How completely wicked men—no matter what their station in life—are in the hand of God. The folly—the woe—the eternal ruin of sin. A king in this world may be a lost spirit in the next. II. The People Suffering. (Verse 23.) 1. *Their suffering was tyrannic.* "By reason of the bondage." They had lost their freedom. They were made to work beyond their strength. The heroic tendencies of their nature were subdued—They were broken-spirited by the injustice—the pain of slavery. 2. *Their suffering was intense.* "And the Children of Israel sighed." 3. *Their suffering was long continued.* 4. *Their suffering appealed to the Infinite.* "And their cry came up unto God," The suffering of the universe in all its speciality and collective woe is known—and appeals to God—it pleads for the mitigation of its pain—the removal of its grief. Suffering should link our souls to God—it should be an inspiration to prayer—then it will ultimately merge into the highest freedom. It is the delight of heaven to work the freedom of human souls. III. God reigning. (Verse 24.) 1. *God reigns though kings die.* Pharaoh died—God is eternal—the folly of trusting in kings—the wisdom of trusting in the Infinite. Pharaoh thought more about his own reign than of God's. That kingdom is the strongest—the purest—the happiest, which makes the Divine reign the basis of its legislation. The Israelites thought more of the kingship of Pharaoh, than of Jehovah—the grandeur of the former was seen—its power was felt—the Divine King was invisible—God had to educate the heart of the people to Himself. Now the nation is crying to heaven for release. 2. *God reigns though men suffer.* The Israelites were in bondage—in grief—yet God reigned. It is sometimes

difficult when we are in sorrow—perplexed—oppressed, to realise the Divine Rulership. It must be realised by faith, God rules above to stay the fury of impious monarchs—to protect the injured—to sustain His Church—to soothe the pain of the world. He will ultimately remove the Pharoah—the trouble of a pious soul. 3. *God reigns in harmony with His covenant made with the good.* "And God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." He had entered into a covenant with the Father of the Faithful, to give his posterity an inheritance in the land of Canaan. In his seed all nations were to be blessed. Four hundred years had passed. God had not forgotten. The time of deliverance is near. The benefit of a pious ancestry—their piety has a tendency to work our freedom. The Divine will is not capricious; it is in harmony with settled principles; it has respect to moral character—to past distinguished service; it is benevolent in its design—continuous in its operation. Let every nation—every family—have a covenant with God. Learn—1. *Do not despond in times of affliction.* 2. *Afflictions are designed to bring us into harmony with the requirements of God's covenant for our good.* 3. *It is the purpose of God to work the freedom and welfare of men.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 23. God makes succession of times—of rulers– to serve the welfare of His Church.

Time appears long to the sorrowful when deliverance is delayed.

Oppressors may die, and yet persecution not die with them. ... Cries to heaven are often extorted from God's persecuted children. ... If men want freedom they cannot do better than direct their attention to God.

Verse 24. There is a pitch of oppression which will not fail to awaken the wrath of heaven.

This last is a precious scripture. My soul, put a note upon it. No sigh, no groan, no tear of God's people can pass unobserved. He putteth the tears of His people in His bottle. Surely, then, He can never overlook what gives vent to these tears, the sorrows of the soul. Our spiritual afflictions Jesus knows, and numbers all. How sweet the thought! The spirit maketh intercession for the saints, with groanings which they cannot utter. And do, my soul, observe the cause of deliverance. Not our sighs, nor our groanings, nor our brokenness of heart; not these, for what benefit can these render to a holy God? But God hath respect in all to His own everlasting covenant. Yes, Jesus is the all in all of the covenant. God the Father hath respect to Him For His sake, for His righteousness, for His atoning blood, the groanings of His people find audience at the mercy seat, and also obtain redress. [*Dr. Hawker.*]

God's ear is close to the strong cries of His oppressed people.

Secret groans are as audible with God as loud cries.

God hears when creatures think Him deaf.

Covenant remembrance with God is covenant performance.

Verse 25. God hath ears, and memory, and eyes, and knowledge to help His people.

The sons of Israel are looked on, and regarded when they pray to God.

God's inspection of His oppressed is a comfortable visitation.

ILLUSTRATIONS FOR CHAPTER II.

Verses 1-10 Stronger far than education—going on before education can commence, possibly from the very first moments of consciousness, parents begin to impress themselves on their children. Our character, voice, features, qualities—modified, no doubt, by entering into a new being, and ruling a different organization—are impressed upon our children. Not the inculcation of opinions, but much rather the formation of principles, and of the tone of character, the derivation of qualities. Physiologists tell us of the derivation of the

mental qualities from the father, and of the moral from the mother. But, be this as it may, there is scarcely one here who cannot trace back his present religious character to some impression in early life, from one or other of his parents—a tone, a look, a word, a habit, or even, it may be, a bitter exclamation of remorse [*F. W. Robertson*].

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 be shown then 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 instructions, by your spirit, or by your example, something which will remain, and be exhibited for or against you at the judgment day [*Dr. Payson*].

Even as a plant will sooner take nourishment and thrive better in the soil where it first grew and sprung up than in any other ground, because it liketh its own soil best: so, likewise, children will sooner take instruction and good nurture from their parents, whom they best like, and from whom they had their being, than from any other [*Cawdray*].

Verses 5-9. The wheels in a clock or a watch move contrary one to another, some one way, some another, yet all serve the intent of the workman, to show the time, or to make the clock to strike. So in the world, the providence of God may seem to run cross to His promises: One man takes this way, another runs that way; good men go one way, wicked men another; yet all in conclusion accomplish the will and centre in the purpose of God, the great Creator of all things [*Sibb's Sermon*].

Verses 11-14. In the ringing of bells, whilst every one keeps his due time and order, what a sweet and harmonious sound they make! All the neighbouring villages are cheered with the sound of them; but when once they jar and check each other, either jangling together or striking preposterously, how harsh and unpleasing is that noise. So that as we testify our public rejoicings by an orderly and well-timed peal, when we would signify the town is on fire, we ring the bells backward in a confused manner. It is just thus in the church: When every one knows his station, authority, and keeps his due rank, there is melodious concert of comfort and contentment: but when either states or persons will be clashing with each other, the discord is grievous and prejudicial [*Hall's Occasional Meditations.*].

Verse 13. In most quarrels there is fault on both sides. A quarrel may be compared to a spark, which cannot be produced without a flint as well as a steel, either of them may hammer on wood for ever, no fire will follow [*Cotton.*]

Verse 15. Revenge commonly hurts both the offerer and the sufferer; as we see in a foolish bee, which in her anger envenometh the flesh and loseth her sting, and so lives a drone ever after [*Bishop Hall*].

Wax, when it is laid in cold places, becomes so hard and stiff that it will break rather than bow; but being laid in the sun, becomes soft and pliable, fit for any impression. So, when we neglect the duty of meditation on good things, our hearts, being changed from God, wax hard and obdurate; but when, by meditation, we draw nigh unto Him, the beams of His favour, shining upon our hearts do make them soft and flexible and fit for any holy impression that He may please to stamp upon them [*Downham's Guide to Godliness*].

Moses gave up the palace to share the fortunes of Israel:—"Mrs. Hannah More," says her biographer, "after pointing out to us some of the many beautiful objects to be seen from the room in which we were sitting, conducted us into an adjoining apartment, which was her sleeping room; and pointing to an arm-chair, 'That chair,' said she, 'I call my home.' 'Here,' looking out of window, 'is what I call my moral prospect. You see yonder distant hill which limits the prospect in that direction. You see this tree before my window directly in range of the hill. The tree, you observe, from being near, appears higher than the hill which is distant, though the hill actually is much higher than the tree. Now this tree represents to my mind the objects of time; that hill, the objects of eternity. The former, like the tree, from being reviewed near at hand, appears great. The latter, like the distant hill, appears small'" [*Trench*].

Verse 23. The Romans, in a great distress, were put so hard to it, that they were fain to take the weapons out of the temples of their gods to fight with them; and so they overcame. And this ought to be the course of every true Christian, in times of public distress, to fly to the weapons of the Church, prayers and tears. The Spartan's walls were their spears, the Christian's walls are his prayers. His help standeth in the name of the Lord, who hath made both heaven and earth [*Callamy's Sermon*].

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. Kept**] Not merely once upon a time; but statedly, as his usual occupation: *lit.*, "he had come to be shepherding," the participle denoting continuance. **Backside**] That is, "to the west:" the east being the quarter towards wh. one is supposed to look (Gesenius, Fürst, Davies). **2. A bush**] *Lit.*, "the thorn-bush." According to Brugsch, the *thorny acacia*. The definiteness may be accounted for on the ground of either (*a*) local notoriety—"the well-known thorn-bush of the neighbourhood;" or (*b*) historical familiarity—"the particular thorn-bush of wh. M. had so often spoken." Prob. the humble thorn-bush represented Israel in the fire of affliction. **Burned**] Render, more vividly: "was burning" Note also the repetition of the noun; who both for this reason, and because of its position in the Heb., is emphatic, as if asking to be reiterated with the tone of surprise: "Behold the THORN-BUSH was burning with fire, and yet the THORN-BUSH was not consumed!" **3. Is not burnt**] Better: "does not burn up:" the imperfect tense. **5. Shoes**] That is, "sandals." This command "may be accounted from the custom, in the East, of wearing shoes or sandals merely as protection from dirt. No Brahmin enters a pagoda, no Moslem a mosque, without first taking off at least his overshoes; and even in Grecian temples, the priests and priestesses performed the service barefooted. When entering other holy places also, the Arabs and Samaritans, and even the Yezidis of Mesopotamia take off their shoes, that the place may not be defiled by the dirt or dust upon them." (Keil). **14. I am**] That this Divine declaration is an exposition of the meaning of the great and gracious name, JEHOVAH, must be obvious at a glance over the context. From this follows the need of all possible care to understand the exposition itself as it falls from the mouth of God, and is here recorded for our instruction. Let us briefly state the essential points—with all reverence, while yet, as far as possible, with due freedom from the yoke of timid tradition. (1.) What is the radical meaning of the root *ha-yah*—the great verb of the sentence? Usage decides that, in the language of Dr. J. W. Donaldson (Heb. Gram. p. 59), *ha-yah* is essentially a "verb of becoming:" not merely of *coming into being*, but *coming into relationship*, i.e. *becoming this or that* to some one. We may say, in brief, that it primarily means (*a*) of *persons*—TO BECOME; (*b*) of events—TO COME TO PASS; the concordance will prove this. Then (2.) What is the force of the tense in wh. *ha-yah* here twice appears? *Eh-yeh* is the "imperfect" tense of *ha-yah*; i.e., as that tense is understood by the best Heb. scholars (Ewald, Roediger, Driver, Prof. A. B. Davidson), "imperfect" in the broad sense of the *incomplete*, the *incoming* tense—the "*incipient*" (Murphy) Applied to the verb under consideration, this tense yields the following rendering: "I am becoming," or, "I will become." As our future suits well here, let us say, simply, "I will become." Then the declaration will run: "I will become what I will become." (3.) Nothing, surely, can exceed the sweetness, the fitness, and the simple grandeur of the clause when thus rendered. (*a*) It is full of promise: "I will become"—to Israel, disheartened, timid—"what I will become"—all that it is in my heart to become to them, all that they need. Their redemption is in me; and, therefore, out of the fulness of my nature, shall it be unfolded act by act, step by step, stage by stage. Not apart from me can they enjoy it. I must work it out for them—in them—through them: drawing them ever nearer to myself, coming ever nearer to them—becoming more and more to them. The promise is unlimited. And, further, though we can scarcely realise its richness without some attempt at paraphrase, yet (*b*) it is very general, to the verge of vagueness—a vagueness, however, adapted to elicit faith. It seems to say: Trust me; leave the future in my hands: I will become to you more than you can yet know: "I will become what I will become." (4.) How does this exposition of the Name prepare us for the Name itself? For we assume the now generally admitted derivation of JEHOVAH (more exactly, YAHWEH) as the third person singular imperfect of *ha-wah*, an old form = to *hah-yah*; and thus conclude that the Name literally gathers into itself the force of the previous Divine announcement. In other words, we take YAHWEH to mean: "He who is becoming—purposes to become—will become" = "The Becoming One." In this way we have *first* the verb repeated in a clause; *then* the verb once by itself; lastly the noun, cognate with the verb: "God said unto Moses, *Ehyeh asher ehyeh*, 'I will become what I will become.'" "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *Ehyeh*, 'I will become,' hath sent me unto you." "And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *Yahweh*, 'The Becoming One,' God of your fathers, &c., hath sent me unto you." Well

might the gracious Promiser add: "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." Must not that Name relate *to* us through which God will be remembered *by* us?

Possibly the evangelical German expositors have not expressed themselves in precisely the above manner in their exegesis of this great matter; but how fully they have led the way to our main conclusions may be seen in the following extracts from Kurtz: "Jehovah is the God of development, who Himself enters into the development, condescends into it, embodies Himself and co-operates in it, in order to conduct it safely to its destined goal." "*Ha-yah* is equivalent to φῦναι, γενέσθαι, εἶναι; it indicates concrete, not abstract being—such being as makes its appearance, manifests itself in history, and, so to speak, becomes historical. This meaning comes out more fully and prominently in the imperfect form of the name derived from it. Hence יהוה is God outwardly manifesting Himself, revealing Himself, living, working, and reigning in history, *ever unfolding there, more and more, His character and being.*" (Hist. O. Cov. I. i. sec. 13.)

It remains only to say that even if *Yah-weh* be considered as formed in the conjugation Hiphil (as, with this pronunciation, Dr. B. Davies seems to think it must) the substance of the above account will remain untouched. The fullest possible justice would be done to that causative conjugation by rendering the name, "He who brings to pass" = "The Fulfillor." In point of fact, He BRINGS TO PASS His purposes by Himself BECOMING all that He designs to BECOME. However, Dr. Kalisch considers the name, pronounced YAH-WEH, as formed in Kal; thus, in this matter, fully sustaining our primary explanation.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—6.

MAN IN RELATION TO MYSTERY.

I. That sometimes men meet with mystery in the pursuit of their daily calling. "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro." Very often, in the pursuit of daily work are good and heroic men—who are in the path of Providence—called upon to witness great sights, such as are not permitted to weak, restless, and unthinking souls. The daily avocation of a good man may lead into mystery—or break into heavenly vision at any point—which shall conduct him into a higher sphere of toil. The calling may be humble, it may not be that of preacher—student—philanthropist, but simply that of shepherd; yet, if prosecuted in quietude—in prayerful spirit—with an outlook toward God—it is not far from the mystery of the burning bush. God always rewards diligent and faithful men—gives them great sights—of truth—of hope—calls them to a higher service—renders them conscious of a Divine companionship—holds converse with them. 1. *This vision was unexpected.* There was nothing to indicate its advent—the desert was silent—unbroken by the sound of heavenly messenger—the bush casually attracted the attention of Moses. As a rule, the Divine Being does not warn men of vision and mystery—else they would make unusual preparation to welcome it. The design of mystery is to test—appeal—to the normal condition of our manhood, hence the need of always having our moral nature in the calm, quiet exercise of its power, ever ready for communion with the spirit-world. 2. *This vision was educational.* It taught Moses the solemnity of life—the crisis of his nation's suffering—the solution of his own past history—the destiny of his prior training—in the palace and in the desert—it gave him a glimpse into his great future—it showed him that his life was deeply allied to that of his brethren—to the divine administration of Heaven. The symbolism of the vision was most impressive—it would awe his soul—he was in personal contact with God—which is always educational to man. He is made conscious of a Divine commission to his future work—this a source of strength—comfort—inspiration to him. This communion with the mystery of the burning

bush was most important — gave a new impetus to his being — awakened new thoughts—emotions—prayers—which never died away from the great temple of his soul. The vision was educational to him in the very truest sense of the word. **II. That sometimes mystery is associated with things of a very ordinary character.** "Out of the midst of a bush." Here it is associated with a *bush* of the desert. The flame did not descend and rush along the great mountains, near the lonely shepherd, lighting up the desert with a grandeur altogether magnificent: this might have been more tragic—more wild—imposing—but it would not have been so divinely educational as this unconsumed bush—Moses would have been startled—would have fled—the turbulent energies of his soul would have been awakened. Whereas this vision was calm—it made him peaceful—it was full of the heavenly—it elevated his spirit to sublimity—it was progressive—the bush burning—then the voice directing him how to approach—and lastly the revelation of its indwelling Divinity. Thus, the instruction in this case would be more gradual—effective. God knows the best methods of communication with human souls. And so it is now. The smallest—the most trivial—the apparently unmeaning—things—events of life—are full of mystery—contain a heavenly presence—a divine voice—will teach a reflective spirit—will become an impulse to a higher life—avocation. The bushes of life are full of mystery. The world is a great secret—is vocal with messages of freedom to listening souls. **III. That mystery should be investigated with the utmost devotion of soul.** "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet." 1. *There must be devotion in opposition to levity.* 2. *There must be devotion in opposition to curiosity.* Why this devotion:—(1) *Because mystery is holy.* It is holy ground—the Divine indwelling in the bush consecrates it—it leads to moral elevation—must therefore command reverence. (2.) *Because mystery is authoritative.* It commands us to take off our shoes. Its authority is Divine—will be recognised by true manhood. **IV. That sometimes good men are favoured with a grand unfolding of mystery.** "I am the God." &c. 1. *God observes the conduct of men in relation to mystery.* "And the Lord saw that he turned aside to see." What a subduing—inspiring thought—that God knows all the efforts of our souls in their investigation of mystery. 2. *God speaks to men who are anxious to investigate mystery.* "God called to him out of the midst of the bush." God speaks—allows us to investigate. It would have been a poor modesty on the part of Moses had he not tried to understand the meaning of the sight before him—so we may look into mystery—and the longer we gaze—the more we shall see and hear of it—Heaven will direct our thinkings and inquiries. Mystery has a definite bearing upon individual life. "Moses." 3. *God reveals Himself as the great solution of all mystery.* "I am the God of thy fathers." God is the explanation of all mystery. He teaches listening—humble—devout souls the secrets of life's burning bushes.

The Burning Bush Unconsumed.

I. Make some remarks on the Burning Bush, by way of Illustration. A shepherd's life friendly to contemplation. Why this appearance?—To give Moses the most sublime conception of the glory and majesty of the Supreme Being, and to fit him for his future mission. Nothing could be more conducive to this, than the fire in the bush. Among the Hebrews, and ancient nations, fire was considered a very significant emblem of Deity—in this instance it would represent the majesty—purity—power of God—it would show that He was going to bring terror—destruction upon His enemies, and light—comfort—salvation to His people. The burning bush an emblem:—1. *Of the state of the Israelites in their distress.* Consider their trials—persecutions—severe—likely to consume them—yet Israel was not diminished—the burning bush a fit emblem of them. 2. *Of the state of the Church in the wilderness of the world*—by the Church we mean all true Christians, independent of sect. This world a wilderness—nothing in it to suit the taste of a spiritual mind—the Church must pass through the wilderness to reach Canaan—has many enemies. It has passed through the fires of persecution—has never been consumed in numbers—or piety. 3. *Of the state of every true Christian.* What is true of the Church is true of the individual—trials not so general—tempted by the powers of darkness—fire of affliction

—yet is unconsumed. II. Consider why the bush was not consumed? The reason obvious, Jehovah was in the midst of it. This true in the emblematical signification of the bush:—1. *Jehovah was present with Israel.* 2. *With the Church in all ages.* 3. *With Christian life in all its grief.* Learn:—1. Religion does not exempt from suffering. 2. The certainty of Divine protection in trial [*Lay Preacher*].

Moses and the Burning Bush; a Picture of a True Student and the Bible.

The circumstances connected with this incident suggest four general facts. 1. *That God's purposes are punctual in their accomplishment.* God declared to Abraham that his seed should go into a strange land—that they should be slaves there—and come out with great substance. The clock of time had now struck the 400 years, and God began to redeem His pledge. 2. *That God's purposes, in relation to our world, are generally accomplished by the agency of man.* The Almighty could have emancipated the Jews by His own immediate volition, or he might have selected other instrumentality than human; but He elected man for the work. This is God's plan of raising humanity—wise—loving. 3. *That the men whom God employs for the carrying out of His purposes, He qualifies by a special revelation.* The work to which Moses was now called required dauntless heroism—self-sacrifice—power—he was to confront Egypt's proud king. Whence was he to derive the power? This power of the human mind depends upon the thoughts and ideas it receives from the Divine, as the vitality and power of the branch depends upon its connection with the root: all moral mind is powerless without ideas from God. Hence this special revelation. 4. *That this special revelation, which he vouchsafes, is frequently symbolical in its character.* Frequently made thus to the Jews. All nature is a symbol. Truth in symbol is palpable—attractive—impressive. It symbolised God's presence. Observe the Student:—I. Directing His earnest attention to the Divine Revelation. "And Moses said I will turn aside," &c. 1. *Moses directs his attention to it, under an impression of its greatness.* A marvellous object—a bush burning, away from the habitation of men—bursting into flame at once—ignited by no visible hand—unconsumed. This is but a faint shadow of the marvellousness of the Bible—the fact of its existence—its contents. 2. *Moses directs his attention to it in order to ascertain its import.* "Why the bush is not burnt." So the student of the Bible must not be satisfied with a mere acquaintance with the forms and circumstances of the Bible, he will enquire into their import. II. Holding intercourse with God through the Divine Revelation. "God called to him." &c. 1. *God's communications depended upon his attention.* The Bible is the great organ of Divine intercourse; but it is the devout student only who *looks* and *inquires*—that hears in it the voice of God. *God's communications were consciously personal to him.* "Moses." There are few in these days who hear the voice of God to *them* in the Bible, 3. *God's communications were directive and elevating.* "Draw not nigh." III. Realising the profoundest impressions through the Divine Revelation. "And Moses hid his face." 1. *These impressions are peculiarly becoming in sinful intelligencies.* 2. *These impressions are necessary to qualify men for God's work.* 3. *These impressions are consonant with the highest dignity and enjoyment* [*Homilist*].

The Angel in the Burning Bush.

Here we see:—I. An old man called to go out on the great errand of his life. The education of Moses lasted 80 years. Egypt—Midian. When the brightness of his life was gone, and the hopes of his youth were dead; when his fiery spirit was tamed into patience, and his turbulent passion stilled into repose, at last he came out of school. Man in haste—God never; the former looks to results—the latter to preparations. II. The Burning Bush from which that call was sounded. 1. *It was a sign to indicate the peculiar presence of God.* 2. *God's people.* III. The angel who uttered this call. IV. The covenant under which the angel gave him his commission. V. The angel's name. "I am that I am." He asserts His *real* existence—His *underived* existence—His *independent* existence—His *eternity—unchangeableness—ineffability.* VI. The effect to be wrought by the remembrance of His name. 1. *Profoundest reverence.* 2. *It reveals the infinite sufficiency of a Christian's portion.* 3. *It gives encouragement to evangelical enterprise* [*Symbols of Christ*].

I. The employment in which Moses was engaged. "Kept the flock." II. The sight which he witnessed. "And the Angel of the Lord." III. The resolution he made. "I will now turn aside." IV. The prohibition he received. "Draw not nigh," &c. V. The announcement he heard. "I am the God of thy father" [*Expository Outlines*].

I. The Learned Shepherd. 1. Humility. 2. Patience. 3. Fidelity. II. The Great Sight. 1. Where. 2. When. 3. Wherefore it appeared. III. The Present God:—1. *With them in trouble.* 2. *Sustains them in trouble.* 3. *A source of Instruction* [*Class and the Desk*].

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1. Moses:—A faithful son. 2. A diligent worker. 3. A true worshipper.

Solitude: — 1. Needful for toil. 2. Useful for moral preparation. 3. Favourable for heavenly visions.

The desert:—1. The sheepfold of a Priest. 2. The School of Providence. 3. The Temple of the Eternal.

It is not a subsidence into commonplace that we find in this verse; it is going into the severest and most useful of schools—the school of lowliness, meditation, self-measurement, and fellowship with God. Fiery natures must be attempered by exile and desertion. . . . . We must exchange rough and romantic chivalry for the deep, calm, vital revelation which emancipates and purges the spiritual nature of mankind [*City Temple*].

God's determination to deliver His Church and people is soon followed by the execution thereof.

God's instruments of deliverance are not altogether laid aside, although they are long in preparation.

It is God's use to take shepherds of flocks to make them shepherds of men.

God's great instruments may be servant-shepherds, not masters of their own flock.

Church deliverers, God orders to be nurtured, sometimes under priests, amongst strangers.

The Divine Being leads good men to places the most favourable to heavenly visions.

Shepherds seeking pasture for their flock, may find better for themselves.

Places are rightly called by God's name, wheresoever He appears.

Deserts are sometimes ordered for saints to meet God in.

Those who descend from riches to poverty, from the palace to the desert, should be patient in their temper and toil.

"*Came to the mountain of God.*" It was here:—1. That God appeared to Moses in the bush. 2. That He manifested His glory at the delivery of the Law. That Moses brought water out of the rock. 4. That, by lifting up his hands, he made Joshua to prevail against Amelek. 5. That he fasted twice forty days and forty nights. 6. That from thence he brought the tables of the Law. 7. That Elijah was vouchsafed a glorious vision.

"*Even to Horeb.*" We know not the precise place. Tradition, reaching back to the sixth century of the Christian era, fixes it in the same deep seclusion as that to which, in all probability, he (Moses) afterwards led the Israelites. The convent of Justinian is built over what was supposed to be the exact spot where the shepherd was bid to draw his sandals from off his feet. The valley in which the convent stands is called by the Arabian name of Jethro. But, whether this or the other great centre of the peninsula, Mount Serbal, be regarded as the scene of the event, the appropriateness would be almost equal. Each has at different times been regarded as the sanctuary of the desert. Each presents that singular majesty which, as Josephus tells us, and as the sacred narrative implies, had already invested "the Mountain of God" with an awful reverence in the eyes of the Arabian tribes, as though a Divine Presence rested on its solemn heights. Around each, on the rocky ledges of the hill-side, or in the retired basins, withdrawn within the deep recesses of the adjoining mountains, or beside the springs which water the adjacent valleys, would be found pasture or herbage, or of aromatic shrubs for the flocks of Jethro. On each, in that early age, though now found only on Mount Serbal, must have grown the wild acacia, the shaggy thornbush of the *Seneh*, the most characteristic tree of the whole range. So natural, so thoroughly in accordance with the scene, were the signs in which the call of Moses made itself heard and seen; not in any outward form, human or celestial, such as the priests of Heliopolis were wont to figure to themselves as the representatives of Deity; but out of the midst of the spreading thorn, the outgrowth of the desert wastes, did

"the Lord appear unto Moses" [*The Jewish Church, by Dean Stanley*].

Verse 2. The burning bush:—1. As an emblem it instructs. 2. As a miracle it astonishes. 3. As a magnet it attracts. 4. As a monitor it warns. When a workman is busily engaged in his work, we say he is in the midst of it. For the same reasons, God, whose workmanship the Church is, is said to be in the *midst* of the Church.

A beautiful conjunction of the natural and the supernatural. A bush turned into a sanctuary. Though the heavens cannot contain the Great One, yet he hides Himself under every flower, and makes the broken heart of man his chosen dwelling-place. Wherever we are, there are gates through nature into the divine. Every bush will teach the reverent student something of God. The lilies are teachers, so are the stars, so are all things great and little in this wondrous museum, the universe [*City Temple*].

The burning bush gave light in the wilderness, and so ought the Church to do in the world.

This "*Angel of the Lord*" is afterwards called Jehovah and God (ch. iv. 6). The shekinah, or luminous glory, was not only Jehovah Himself, but was the Angel-Jehovah. The very word "Angel," signifies messenger, or one sent; and though it generally designates a personal being, yet as a term of office it may be applied to any medium by which God makes communications to man. This Angel was—1. Eternal. 2. Omnipotent. 3. Self-existent. 4. Commanded the moral activities of men.

This Angel in the bush a prophecy of the Saviour's incarnation.

After long-expected deliverances, God appears at length to help.

God sometimes mercifully appears to men, and comes to their deliverance, as in a flame of fire.

God's sweet appearances are usually in desert conditions. ... God's visions of old have had real demonstrations by eye-witnesses.

God's bush habitation is in order to show good will unto His Church.

God can interdict the power of fire to consume (Dan. iii.)

God works miracles upon lower creatures, in order to show the Church His power.

The preserving and sustaining influence of true religion.

Verse 3. Many a man has been led through the pale of curiosity into the sanctuary of reverence. Moses purposed but to see a wonderful sight in nature, little dreaming that he was standing, as it were, face to face with God. Blessed are they who have an eye for the startling, the sublime, and the beautiful in nature, for they shall see many sights which shall fill them with glad amazement. Every sight of God is a "great sight;" the sights become little to us because we view them without feeling, or holy expectation [*City Temple*].

St. Austin, who came to Ambrose to have his ears tickled, had his heart touched. It is good to hear, howsoever. Come, said Latimer, to the public meeting, though thou comest to sleep; it may be, God will take thee napping. Absence is without hope. What a deal lost Thomas by being but once absent [*Trapp*].

A great sight:—1. Occasioned by a Divine agency. 2. Illumined by a Divine Presence. 3. Given for a Divine purpose.

Great sights:—1. Desired by the world. 2. Sought by the pleasure-seeker. 3. Found only by the Christian. 4. The inspiration of a good life.

The moral preparation, and condition necessary for the beholding of heavenly visions—1. We must turn aside from the gaiety of the world. 2. From the futility of merely human reasonings. 3. From the commission of moral evil in daily life. 4. From following the instruction of incompetent teachers. 5. They are largely dependent upon our personal willingness of soul. ... God speaks to all men who reverently turn aside to hear Him.

Unusual apparitions of God may well put the best men upon self-reasoning.

Observing hearts are inclined more to turn into the inquiry of God's discoveries than from them.

All revelations from God should be carefully looked into.

Verse 4. God sees our first desire to investigate the truth, and our earliest effort towards a religious life.

God calls truth-seekers by name—"Moses,"—Nathaniel. 1. To indicate His delight in them. 2. His favour toward them. 3. His hope of them. 4. To prepare them for further revelations.

The name of a good man vocal on the lips of God—1. An honour. 2. A destiny. 3. A prophecy. 4. A vocation.

The truth-seeker's response:—1. His personality. 2. His place. 3. His willingness. We should always respond to the calls of heaven.

The soul's turning aside *to see* often leads to visions of God. 1. In His Book. 2. In His works. 3. In His Providences. 4. In His Church and sanctuary.

Such visions: — 1. Obtained by prayer. 2. Refreshing to the soul. 3. Strengthening to manhood. 4. Related to human suffering.

God looks to them who turn into His discoveries, with a purpose to show them more.

God gives to His servants not only a vision, but a voice for them to know His mind.

God doubly calleth where he doubly loveth, and stirreth into double duty.

Those who are truly called by God, ought to be willing to offer themselves either to do, or suffer His pleasure.

Verse 5. All places are holy, but some are especially so:—1. Because they are hallowed by the supreme residence of God. 2. By happy memories. 3. By holy friendships. 4. By moral conquest.

There must be an occasional pause in the investigation of truth, and in the devotion of our religious life.

Curiosity must not merge into familiarity.

Put off thy shoes of sensuality, and other sins. Affections are the feet of the soul; keep them unclogged [*Trapp*].

The putting off the sandals is a very ancient practice in worship; Pythagoras enjoins it. The rabbis say that the priests perform their service with bare feet, in token of purity and reverence. Among the Greeks, no person was admitted to the Temple of Diana, in Crete, with shoes on. All Mohammedans, Brahmins, and Parsees worship barefooted to the present day [*Dr. Nevin*].

May we all learn to tread Jehovah's court with unshod feet.

We must come to God; we must not come *too near* Him. When we meditate on the great mysteries of His word, we come to Him; we come too near Him when we search into His counsels. The sun and the fire say of themselves, "Come not too near;" how much more the light which none can attain to. We have all our limits set us. The Gentiles might come into some outer courts, not into the innermost; the Jews might come into the inner court, not into the temple; the priests and Levites into the temple, not into the holy of holies; Moses to the hill, not to the bush. The waves of the sea had not more need of bounds than man's presumption. Moses must not come close to the bush at all; and where he may stand, he may not stand with his shoes on [*Bishop Hall*].

The access of honest hearts to the place of God's appearance may be rash.

Such hasty and unadvised access God forbids unto His servants.

Due preparation must be made by those who wish access to God.

Verse 6. The Divine Being here reveals Himself as:—1. The God of individual men. 2. The God of Families. 3. The God of the immortal good.

There is something inexpressibly beautiful in the idea that God is the God of the father, and of the son, and of all their descendents; thus the one God makes humanity into one family [*City Temple*].

God does not say, "I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," but "I *am*." The Patriarchs still live so many years after their dissolution. No length of time can separate the souls of the just from their Maker [*Henry and Scott*].

Let a man but see God, and his plumes will soon fall [*Trapp*].

God's gracious dicoveries may prove terrible to those who are not acquainted with them.

Consciousness of self-guilt is enough to make creatures hide from God. Like instances:—1 Kings xix. 13, Isaiah vi. 2.

Men fear to look upon God:—1. Because of the greatness of His Majesty. 2. Because of the awfulness of His revelations. 3. Because He is the Arbiter of their destinies.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—10.

THE CALLING OF A GREAT DELIVERER.

I. His call was rendered necessary by intense national suffering. (Verse 7). 1. *The sufferings to which the Israelites were exposed.* "I have seen the affliction of my people." They were afflicted by a tyrant king—a hostile nation—oppressive taskmasters—unremunerative work. Surrounded as we are by all the advantages of freedom, and Christian influence, it is almost impossible for us to realize their sorrow. Oppression occasions the worst—most degrading—most painful suffering to men. These ancient people had happy memories still lingering in their minds—memories of a godly ancestry,—which would intensify the grief and degradation of their present condition. (i.) *Politically they were prisoners.* (ii.) *Socially they were bondmen.* (iii.) *Commercially they were ruined.* (iv.) *Religiously they were degenerate*—hence their suffering. The grief of legal slavery is now almost banished from the world. 2. *The Divine attention to the sufferings of the Israelites.* God has deep sympathy with the sorrowful. (i.) *God sees the pain of the oppressed.* "I have surely seen the affliction of my people." He knows the occasion of it—the men who augment it. He is cognisant not only of the secondary agencies of grief, but also of the primary—not only the cruel taskmasters—but also of the tyrant king who has commissioned them. (ii.) *God hears the cry of the oppressed.* "And have heard their cry." The Divine Being is not deaf to the voice of human sorrow, especially when it comes from a penitent heart. This is testified by the moral experiences of the universe. The cries and prayers of the suffering not merely gain help—relief—but also expose those by whom they are occasioned to the Divine displeasure. God saw the oppression of the Egyptians, and we cannot but connect this with their final overthrow in the Red Sea. We cannot occasion sorrow to others, without rendering ourselves liable to severe retribution—especially if we afflict the people of God. (iii.) *God relieves the pain of the oppressed.* He does not merely look in pity—hear with compassion—speak in accents of tenderness—but He devises means for the destruction of the oppressor—for the freedom of the slave. He raises up a deliverer, whose life and heroism He joins to the sorrow-stricken people for the removal of their woe. **II. He was called to his mission by the immediate agency of God.** (Verse 10.) 1. *His free agency was consulted.* God does not force men into Christian service—into heroic and philanthropic effort. He does not employ unwilling agents. He merely calls—sometimes by loud voices—by the urgency of the case—by a providential opening. Man has the ability to object—refuse. Thus the Divine Being comes into intimate contact with the lives of destined deliverers—to refine their sympathies—awaken their enthusiasm—to urge them to their great avocation. Such a call is *honourable;* it links men to the mercy and power of God—it is *responsible*—it links men to the sufferings of humanity. By willingly—cheerfully responding to it we become, in a very high sense, co-workers with God, for the truest benefit of the race. Such calls to pious souls are varied and numerous—may they always find us obedient thereto. 2. *His adaptability was considered.* The divine calls

to service are dependent upon moral character—intellectual power. God does not call wicked men to achieve the freedom of the suffering. He would not give them the vision—nor would they have the faith to believe it—necessary to awaken them to the conviction of such great service. God does not call weak-minded men to this work of liberation—but those well learned in the literature—science—history of their country—whose moral nature has been well disciplined by solitude—through long years—and who have been previously lifted up to the elevation of the call He gives, and the service He requires. There was not another man in the whole nation more thoroughly qualified for this work than Moses. All his life had been one constant preparation, and an unconscious waiting for this hour. So that when the call of God sounded in his soul, all the discipline of his life became intelligible to him. And so, to-day, in calling men to the varied offices of Christian service, the Divine Being strictly contemplates their moral and intellectual qualifications Social considerations are subordinated. A shepherd may be called to accomplish the freedom of Israel. Hence the Divine call to human souls is—(1) *Emphatic.* (2) *Judicious.* (3) *Hopeful.* **III. He was definitely made acquainted with the mission he had to undertake.** (Verse 10.) 1. *He was to pay a visit to royalty.* He was commanded to go unto Pharaoh. There seems an apparent incongruity for a shepherd of the desert to demand an interview with the monarch of Egypt—there was a great disparity in their social position. But what Moses lacked in the social accidents of life, he more than made up in the moral. God had given him a vision—had held audience with him. Hence he was well qualified to meet Pharaoh. Any man who holds intimate communion with God, is fit companionship for the grandest king of the universe. The vision of the bush would awaken Moses to a strong sense of his manhood—to a consciousness of Divine aid—hence he will go bravely to Pharaoh with the requirement of freedom. The visit was not to be one of mere courtesy—but to demand the citizen rights of an enslaved nation. Christian men, in these days, are reluctant to visit kings on the errands of God—they are timorous—they have not vision enough to inspire them with fortitude — at such times they should gather strength from their Divine communion and commission. 2. *He was to achieve the freedom of Israel.* "That thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." What a commission for one man to fulfil—with no armies but the unseen legions of heaven. Apparently unaided, he goes to the task. God sometimes calls men to arduous duties—in which there appears but little likelihood of success. He clearly defines the duty of Christian service. He forewarns of its difficulties—that they may not surprise or overwhelm. This arrangement is—(1) *Merciful.* (2) *Considerate.* (3) *Accommodated to our weakness.* **IV. In the performance of his mission he was animated by the highest hopes.** (Verse 8.) 1. *He anticipated the freedom of Israel.* 2. *He anticipated conquest in the event of war* 3. *He anticipated residence in a land of beauty and fertility.* God always animates those engaged in great service by great hopes. **Lessons.**—1. *That God knows how to prepare men to become the deliverers of the good* 2. *That a divine call is requisite for the mission of life.* 3. *That human sorrow is pathetic and powerful in its appeal to God.*

A Picture of Human Sorrow.

I. That God knows the sorrows to which His people are exposed. (Verse 7.) 1. *Because of the relationship He sustains to them.* "My people." Ancient Israel was a Divinely chosen nation—peculiarly favoured by heaven. This is but a faint type of the Divine regard for all devout souls. "My people:"—(1.) *It indicates ownership.* (2.) *It indicates endearment.* (3.) *It indicates astonishment.* We should imagine as the people of God, so truly loved, that Israel would have been shielded from sorrow altogether. We should have thought that their lives would have been pre-eminently jubilant. Are we not frequently surprised to find the choicest of God's saints in circumstances of great trial? This is a

problem the next world will better solve. 2. *Because His omniscient eye is upon them.* He sees their trials. 3. *Because they are in the habit of making known their sorrows to Him by prayer.* **II. That at the proper time God will deliver His people from sorrow.** (Verse 8). 1. *Sometimes after it has been long continued.* 2. *Sometimes when least expected.* 3. *Sometimes by agencies once despised.* Moses had previously tried to awaken within the Israelites feelings of brotherhood—but he had been repulsed—his authority had been denied—yet this is the man Divinely sent to achieve the freedom of the nation. So, instrumentalities that have been rejected by us may one day be instrumental for our good. Let us despise no effort for our welfare, we may *have* to meet it again in the future. **III. That God uses human instrumentalities in the deliverance of His people from sorrow.** God sends man to comfort his fellow-man. 1. *Prepared by life's discipline.* It requires great preparation to fit man for the work of sympathy. 2. *Encouraged by Heaven's vision.* Any man who is destined to aid, or mitigate the suffering of his fellows must have visions of the other world—of the painless life—of God—to prepare his soul for contact with woe, that he may not be depressed thereby. Heaven only can teach a human soul how to console troubled hearts. 3. *Called by God's voice.* God knows where to find men who are the most fitted to undertake errands of mercy and consolation—appeals to their sympathies—at the same time authoritatively commissions them to the work.

The Typical Character of Moses considered, as the Deliverer, Mediator, Lawgiver, and Guide of Israel.

It will be our aim, in the present discourse, to exhibit Moses as the representative of our gracious Lord; and to shew, in a connected view, that the benefits conferred by the one upon Israel, are emblems and shadows of these spiritual mercies, which the other was manifested to bestow upon mankind.

I. Moses claims our first regard as a Deliverer. While Israel was groaning in Egypt, God was preparing the means of their deliverance. When we were dead in sin His compassion provided for our redemption. When the Israelites were arrayed to leave their captivity they numbered 600,000 on foot, besides women and children. Yet, in this vast multitude there was no deliverer, Moses only excepted. Nor could one be found, to redeem the world, from amongst its numbers. Moses was a man like unto his brethren, experienced the wants, and sympathized with the sorrows of Israel. He was well learned in the wisdom of Egypt. The rod of the Lord was put into his hand. Christ partook of our nature—possessed unsearchable wisdom—wrought miracles. Moses made sacrifice to fulfil the duty with which God had charged him. Having "respect unto the recompense of the reward." Christ made "himself of no reputation," &c. **II. He is a type of Christ when we regard him as the appointed mediator between God and Israel.** So overpowering in greatness did the Most High appear upon Mount Sinai, that the people placed Moses between themselves and the majesty of Heaven. Moses was qualified for this office—by cordial love—meekness—long suffering—disinterestedness—ever watchful zeal; so God could have no interest with men except through Christ, who is far more qualified for the office of mediator than Moses. **III. When we regard him in his office of Lawgiver to Israel.** Israel had forgotten the sanctions and demands of the Divine covenant with Abraham amidst the rigours of their servitude. During the first part of their wilderness journey they were rather a band of fugitives, without order and regulations, than a people restrained by the influence of judicious legislation. It was necessary that some mode of government should be given to them. This was given by the Most High—through Moses. So, in the mournful captivity of the soul, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, oppose the will of God; and the fallen creature becomes a fatal law unto himself. Even when the condemnation of impiety is removed, and the fetters with which it bound all the passions, and faculties, and principles of the mind are broken, the liberated bond-servant needs a revelation of the Word of God, by which his conduct may be governed. Christ a law-giver—assisted at the formation of the law—can best explain it—best enforce it. The temporal deliverer could only give the law; he could not infuse a principle of holy obedience into its injunctions. He could not subdue the enmity of carnal affections. The Son of God alone can form us, by His grace, to the holiness of his own demand. **IV. When we regard him as the Leader and Guide of Israel.** Israel did not at once reach the promised land—toilsome journey. Moses was their guide. So, the Christian, who is journeying from the house of moral bondage toward heaven, has Jesus for his guide [*Buddicom's Christian Exodus*].

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 7. "*My people.*" 1. Therefore we must love Him. 2. Therefore we must serve Him. 3. Therefore we must aid His Church.

"*I know their sorrows.*" I. The Person. 1. *He can help.* This is demonstrated by all history—experience—from the greatness of his power—the fulness of His resources — from the sympathetic ministries He has at command. 2. *He will help*—Hagar—David—Peter—prove this. He has promised to succour the tired—has told men to cast their heart-burdens on Himself. The whole scheme of salvation is based on this fact. His arm brought salvation. He will therefore freely give us all things. What a mercy that troubled souls are not left to follow blind impulse—reason — we have a Divine Helper 3. *He delights to help.* Sympathy is the natural—happy out-come of the heart of God. He heals the withered flower by the new life of spring tide. He heals troubled souls by imparting new spiritual energy. It is His joy to do so.

II. The knowledge. 1. *It is certain.* God knows the trials of humanity—from whatever cause they may arise—unerringly. He cannot be deceived, or mistaken. What a consolation for the afflicted. 2. *It is unlimited.* God knows *all* the sorrows of the heart—those unwhispered to our nearest friend—no matter to what sphere of life they relate—no matter how trivial or how great. 3. *It is compassionate.* He does not investigate our sorrow—to satisfy curiosity—to become officiously acquainted with our circumstances — but to soothe — to relieve. Religion does not present to the troubled soul a stoical—merely philosophical deity—but One who is touched with the feeling of our infirmity.

III. The Sorrow. 1. *It may be long continued.* Israel had been in bondage four hundred years. Our trials may be continuous — like a long winter night — like a long polar winter — without a ray of sunlight —but God has not forgotten to be gracious. His delay is part of the discipline — the dawn of morning will come. 2. *It may be deeply oppressive.* As the poorest are not below God's cognizance, neither are the greatest beyond His check. 3. *It may be widely experienced.* "*I know their sorrows.*" 1. Therefore do not complain. 2. Therefore wait His time for deliverance. 3. Therefore seek His grace.

Israel's bondage and freedom, a type of the world's sorrow and Christ's redemption:—1. Because Christ came down from heaven. 2 Christ came at the call of the world's sorrow. 3. Christ came to achieve the world's moral freedom. 4. Christ came to destroy the kingship of sin. 5. Christ came to lead men into happiness. 6. Christ came to awaken holy agencies for the spiritual welfare of the race. ... God usually speaks kindly to his servants to remove their fear at His appearing.

Jehovah resents the oppression of the Church. 1. Surely. 2. Speedily. 3. Continually. 4. Retributively.

Egypt is seen by God in all its oppression of His people.

Cruel exactors make God's people cry aloud to Him in complaint and prayer.

Verse 8. "*And I am come down to deliver them,*" God is said to descend —1. In accommodation to a human form of speech. 2. To show judgments on the wicked (*Gen.* 18.) 3. Perhaps to indicate the situation of Egypt, which was a low country. 4. To indicate some notable event about to follow. Babel.

"*To bring them up out of that land.*" 1. Of bad rulership. 2. Of wicked companionships. 3. Of hostile religious influences. 4. Of servile bondage. 5. There are many countries in the world where it is dangerous for God's people to reside.

"*Unto a good land, and a large.*" 1. Canaan was large compared with Goshen. 2. God exchanges the situations of His people for their good. 3. God does not intend His people to remain long the slaves of any earthly power. 4. The spiritual Israel will in eternity enter into the fulness of these words.

"*Unto the place of the Canaanites.*" The Canaanites were the same whom the Grecians called Phœnicians. 1. The Septuagint in the fifth of Joshua, for Canaanites reads Phœnicians. 2. The woman whom our Saviour dispossessed

of a devil, by Matthew is called Canaanitish, by Mark a Syro-Phœnician. 3. These Canaanites are said to dwell near the sea (*Numbers* xiii. 30), as did the Phœnicians. 4. The Phœnicians were noted for their deceit in buying; so the Canaanites are noted in scripture for their craft (*Hos.* xii. 7).

"*The Canaanites and the Hittites,*" &c. A disinherited people:—1. Disinherited by God, as the Supreme Disposer of all territory. 2. As under a special curse. 3. As guilty of unrepented sin. 4. A warning for nations to-day.

Flowings of milk and honey are in the inheritance of the Church.

The place of wicked nations God can make the inheritance of His people.

God will make good his promise to the uttermost to give the Church its inheritance.

Verse 9. God demonstrates that He hears the cry, and sees the oppression of His people and Church.

In times of hearing the cry of His Church, God watches the conduct of enemies toward it.

Verse 10. "*Come now therefore.*" The Divine call to service:—1. It is persuasive, "come." 2. It is immediate, "now." 3. It is logical, "therefore."

"*I will send thee unto Pharaoh:*"—1. A vocation. 2. A preparation. 3. A commission.

"*That thou mayest bring forth My people.*" &c. A God-given task:—1. Arduous in its requirement. 2. Responsible in its exercise. 3. Glorious in its issue. 4. Unique in its character.

In the eighth verse God says, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians;" and in the tenth verse He says, "I will send thee unto Pharaoh." Is there not a discrepancy here? If God Himself came down to do a work, why did He not go and do it personally? One word from Himself would surely have done more for the cause which He had espoused than all the words which the most gifted of His creatures could have used. Looking at this incident as standing alone, it does undoubtedly appear most remarkable that God did not personally execute what He had personally conceived. The thinking was His, so was the love; all the spiritual side of the case belonged exclusively to God; yet He calls a shepherd, a lonely and unfriended man, to work out — with painful elaboration, and through a long series of bewildering disappointments — the purpose which it seems He Himself might have accomplished with a word. We find, however, that the instance is by no means an isolated one. Throughout the whole scheme of the Divine government of the human family, we find the principle of *mediation.* God speaks to man through man. Undoubtedly, this is mysterious. To our imperfect understanding, it would seem that the direct personal revelation of His presence and glory would instantly secure the results which are so desirable, and yet so doubtful. It is here that Faith must lead us. Moreover, this principle of individual selection in the matter of all great ministries, is in keeping with the principle which embodies in a single germ the greatest forests. It is enough that God gives the one acorn, man must plant it and develope its productiveness. God works from the one to the many [*City Temple*].

God's call—is instant, and suffers no delay.

Though God needs no man, He calls some for the help of His people.

Such as God calls, He sends to bring about deliverance.

The mission of God may be of the poorest man to the greatest potentate.

God's command is enough to empower the weakest man for the strongest work.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11-12.

MINISTERIAL TIMIDITY.

I. It is sometimes occasioned by undue and depreciating thoughts of self. (Verse 11.) *By undue thought of our social position.* "Who am I, that I should

go unto Pharaoh?" Moses might imagine the need of social position, in order to obtain an interview with the King. Some of the best ministers of the gospel have come from the most humble scenes of social life. There are times in ministerial labour when good social position may aid the mission of truth and freedom—but it is not an absolute necessity. Men from the lower ranks of humanity may do as much to subdue the tyranny of a king, as the most refined aristocrat of the realm. A man of great soul, independent of social standing, may successfully accomplish a campaign against moral evil. 2. *By undue thought of our intellectual weakness.* "Who am I?" True, Moses was well educated—still his mental discipline would hardly appear to him as equal to the present crisis and undertaking. He would have to fall back upon his knowledge of the Egyptian court, and upon other matters, of important bearing on his mission. So, may ministers of to-day feel their inability to combat the error—scepticism—and refined sin of the age—through their lack of brain power. They have not had the advantages in their early days that even Moses had. Of what little information they possess, they make the best possible use. It requires a well disciplined mind to go to the Pharaohs of the world, and to demand efficiently the moral freedom of their slaves. 3. *By undue thought of our moral inability.* A man requires not only a strong mind—but much more, a strong soul—of devout impulse—large sympathy—and strong determination, to perform such a commission as that now given to Moses. Equally so, with the minister of Christ. And, when the true preacher looks into his heart in moments of depression, he feels his lack of great moral qualities—and cries, "Who am I," &c. **II. That it is sometimes occasioned by an undue estimation of the difficulties of the work.** 1. *This may arise from the depressing experiences of youth.* When young—living in the palaces of Pharaoh—Moses had striven to interrupt a quarrel between two Hebrews by referring them to the fact of their common brotherhood and suffering—he had been repulsed. No doubt a remembrance of this fact now lingered within his mind—as there are certain experiences that never leave us—they become the constant, and great educational influences of our souls. This reminiscence would give Moses to feel the difficulty of the task now imposed upon him. So, with ministers of the Gospel—it may be that the experiences of boyhood and younger manhood, have introduced an element of difficulty, perplexity, into their toil, that they almost shrink from the call. 2. *This may arise from the removal of friendly aids.* Moses once had friends in the court of Pharaoh—he was the adopted son of the King's daughter—had he retained her friendship—it might have been of use to him now; but he had lost it by flight. So, it sometimes happens that ministers often lose earthly, accidental friendships, aids to the achievement of their mission, and hence their timidity as to its issue. **III. That it is sometimes occasioned by our not appreciating, as we ought, the Divine Presence and help.** 1. *The Divine Presence is our Guide.* God would teach—guide Moses as to the best methods of approach to Pharaoh. So, the same Jehovah will equally guide all true ministers who are seeking the moral freedom of men. This guidance makes up for any scholastic deficiency—is our truest help. 2. *The Divine Presence is our sustaining influence.* It would sustain Moses under his memory of youthful failure to subdue the quarrel of the two Israelites. It would sustain him in the performance of all arduous toils—in the event of suffering—rebuff, either from Pharaoh—his courtiers—or his bondmen. So, the Divine Presence sustains the minister of Christ—under the bitter memories of past failure—misdirected effort—wanderings—loneliness—and opposition, from whatever source. But for this he would be unequal to the task for an hour. 3. *The Divine Presence is our victory.* It gave Moses an insight into the future history of Pharaoh—it enabled him to work miracles—it empowered his moral nature—rendered it superior to the conflict. So, with the minister of truth—though he cannot work miracles—the Divine Presence is the pledge of moral conviction in the minds of others—and of final victory. **IV. It should**

be removed by the hopes with which it is animated. 1. *By the hope of achieving the freedom of a vast nation.* Moses was to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. So, it is the hope of the gospel ministry to bring the universe from under the reign of sin—to freedom—happiness—hope—what a sublime anticipation! 2. *By the hope of leading a vast nation into the land of promise.* Moses was to lead the Israelites into Canaan: (i.) *Fertile.* (ii.) *Abundance.* (iii.) *Beauty.* So, the minister of Christ has to lead men to heaven—this is the hope by which he is animated—and ought to subdue all timidity—and inspire him with holy joy.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 11. The man who in youth slew the Egyptian, and was willing to undertake the emancipation of his nation, now modestly shrinks from the task.

The power of increasing age—1. To change the views. 2. To calm the temper. 3. To humble the soul.

No wonder that he so inquired. The message seemed to be much greater than the messenger. He works best who magnifies his office. Preachers, and all ministers of good, should see their work to be greater than themselves if they would work at the highest point of energy. Let a man suppose his work to be easy, to be unworthy of his talents, and he will not achieve much success [*City Temple*].

It is far better to partake of the spirit of Moses as manifested in this verse, than to too rashly seek the dignity and position of ministerial work.

Worth is modest: the proud man asketh, who am I not? [*Trapp*].

God may sometimes be denied by the best of men in their infirmity.

The best souls are apt to have the lowest thoughts of themselves for God's work.

Visible difficulties in the Church may dishearten men to work.

The power of Egyptian oppressors may startle weak instruments of deliverance.

The redemption of men from the house of bondage is a startling fact.

Verse 12. "*Certainly I will be with thee.*" *The Divine companionship realised by the good in the service of the Christian life:—*

I. It was considerate. Never did Moses more need the Divine companionship than in this exigency of toil. The work is great—he feels his inability for it—it is at the time of his weakness that the Divine companionship is promised. This promise will stand true for Christian workers during all time.

II. It was emphatic. "Certainly." The promise—in tone—manner—could leave no doubt on the mind of Moses as to the likelihood of its fulfilment. Its emphasis satisfied his utmost requirement—left no room for doubt. So, now the promise of the Divine companionship is emphatic—becoming even more so by the accumulating experiences of the good.

III. It was sympathetic. "With thee." Not I will *follow* thee—not I will go *before* thee—not I will be *near* thee—but *with* thee— as a companion to cheer thy soul; as a friend—to give thee counsel; as a God—to make thee victorious. How can a mission fail when God is with the worker. How refreshing to a timid soul is the sympathy of Heaven. Our sufficiency is of God.

THE GUARANTEE OF SUCCESS.

I. "Certainly I will be with thee." Then man is servant, not master. He should know his place, or he can never keep it. As servant—1. He should *consult* his master. 2. *Speak in the name of his master.* 3. Be jealous of *the honour* of his master.

II. "Certainly I will be with thee." Then the work must succeed. The guarantee of success:—1. *Not human cleverness.* 2. *Not skilful organisation.* 3. *But the word of the Lord.* "My word shall not return unto Me void."

III. Certainly I will be with thee. Then the servant is to be received for the master's sake. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." The Romans were to receive Phebe *in the Lord.*

IV. "Certainly I will be with thee." Then there need be no lack of grace or power. "If any man lack wisdom," &c. "Lo, I am with you alway." God is with His servants for, 1. Their *comfort.* 2. *Justice.* 3. *Safety* [*City Temple*].

"*This shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee.*" Tokens that a minister is Divinely commissioned:—1. That he reflects the light of heavenly vision. 2. That he is conscious, and his life gives evidence, of Divine companionship. 3. That he seeks to proclaim the name of God, as connected with the moral freedom of men. 4. That some amount of spiritual success attends his labours. 5. Sometimes special evidences of favour given in answer to prayer.

We render the highest honour to God when, relying on His proffered aid, we seek no ground of confidence out of Himself, when in the deep sense of our own impotence we count it enough that He is with us and for us [*Bush*].

God is not moved from His purpose by the objections of men.

To all human appearance Moses is to undertake the responsibility of this mission, whereas he is only a secondary agent. God is invisible. ... God's goodness satisfieth the plea of His unwilling instruments for His work.

God's presence is always with those who are engaged in His redemptive work.

God will answer the objection, and solve the difficulties of His workers.

Redemption promised by God will surely be performed.

The worship and service of God is the great end of His people's freedom.

The true worship of God in the place appointed by Him is the best return for deliverance.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 13-18

MINISTERIAL DIFFICULTIES TO BE ANTICIPATED—AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM.

I. That ministers must anticipate difficulties in the performance of their life mission. (Verse 13.) 1. *Arising from prejudice in reference to the man.* Moses felt that he would be liable to the prejudice of Israel—through his residence in the palace of Pharaoh, and his supposed connection with a despotic government. He had not shared their bondage—they would prefer one as the leader of their destinies, who had been more thoroughly identified with their condition of woe. Moses anticipates these difficulties, and asks the Lord how he should reply to them. So ministers of the gospel have to combat innumerable prejudices—of truth—education—capricious—weak—hence the difficulty of their work. They must be divinely commissioned to overcome them. 2. *Arising from scepticism in reference to the truth.* Moses feared that the Israelites would not credit the doctrine of freedom he had to proclaim to them. They would rather remind him of Pharaoh's army, and the impossibility of their escape. Moses would find great difficulty in getting them to believe in the promise and power of God. So, ministers to-day have a large amount of scepticism to overcome, in relation to the apparent difficulties of the truth they preach. They must exhibit their Divine credentials. 3. *Arising from lethargy in reference to the mission.* Moses found the Israelites in a state of utter destitution—morally weak—incapable of great effort—almost willing to die, rather than live. He would have great difficulty in awakening them to action, equal to the requirements of the case—and to secure their co-operation. So, it is with ministers of the gospel. They come—preach to men, who are inervated by sin—to arouse them to a sense of their manhood—to seek their co-operation in the mission of freedom they announce. The moral weakness—indolence of men is the greatest difficulty the true minister has to contend with. II. That to overcome these difficulties, ministers must seek direction from God (Verse 13). That God will give this direction is seen from:—1. *The Divine recognition of ministerial difficulty.* The Divine Being admitted all that Moses had said about the difficulty of his mission to Israel. No word of reproach was uttered—no rebuke expressed—but directions were given in response thereto. Equally does God recognize the perplexity of ministerial life—hence He will not reject any who seek His aid. 2. *The Divine Sympathy with ministerial difficulty.* (i.) *Manifested by the gift of heavenly*

vision (Verse 2.) (ii). *Manifested by the gift of needful instruction* (Verse 15-17). (iii). *Manifested by the gift of holy companionships* (Verse 12). Such a manifestation of divine sympathy ought to inspire every minister with spirit and fortitude for his work. They that are for him, are more than all that can be against him.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 13. But Moses puts another question; for the human heart is full of questions [*C.H.M.*]

It is clear that Moses anticipated the greatest difficulties from the degenerate condition of his countrymen.

Why did Moses ask the name of God?—1. Not to instruct his ignorance. He had not forgotten God in Egypt. 2. Not to gratify his curiosity. 3. But to satisfy Israel. Error has many Gods, he therefore wanted to know how he might prove to the enslaved nation that he came in the name of the true One.

It is good for a minister to know on whose business he is going.

God's answer to one objection oftentimes begets another in His servants.

Dissatisfaction of men about God's instruments is very probable.

God's servants very reasonably expect that He will clear up all doubt as to His name, and their duty.

A Question for the Pulpit.

I. "What shall I say unto them?" **Shall I say unto them truths that are in harmony with their depraved condition?** Moses might have told the Israelites to remain peaceful in their bondage—to make the best of their circumstances — that they were not responsible for their situation—it being the fault of their ancestors for coming to Egypt. He might have told them not to trouble about any effort for freedom—as it would require time—means —armies — beyond their command. And perhaps many of the Israelites—although they would feel the sorrow of of bondage—might think his advice wise. But no; he went to them with the tidings of freedom. The pulpit may take a pattern here, not to preach doctrines in harmony with the depraved tastes of men—but to awaken them from their sin, by the proclamation of the Divine Name and freedom.

II. "What shall I say unto them?" **Shall I give them an argumentative discourse?** It would be necessary for Moses to convince the Israelites that he was divinely commissioned—and the chief use that a minister can make of logic, is to prove the divinity of his call to the ministry. This once proved to Israel—they will be ready to follow him. So, congregations will hold but little argument with a man whom they feel to be called to free them from the power of sin—they will follow him. His heart speaks to them.

III. "What shall I say unto them?" **Shall I give them a sensational discourse?** Had Moses gone to the Israelites in this way, I would not have given much for his real success. He might have "got his name up." He would have attracted a few wearied slaves to himself. He might have aroused a wave of feeling, but it would soon have subsided into calm. The freedom of the nation would not have been achieved in this way. The sensational preachers of the world, are not doing the most towards the moral freedom of the race.

IV. "What shall I say unto them?" **Shall I say unto them how clever I am?** Moses might have told the Israelites that he had spent so many years in the Egyptian colleges—that he had been brought up in a palace. But he did not. He would never have achieved the freedom of Israel if he had adopted this course. He had humbled himself before God. And men humble before God, are generally so before their fellows. Ministers should not make a display of their learning—such conduct will never accomplish the freedom of souls.

V. "What shall I say unto them?" **Shall I tell them about the Cross of Jesus?** "Yes;" replies the penitent sin-

ner, "that is what I want" "Yes," replies the aged believer, "that is the charm of my Soul." Let ministers preach the Cross as the emancipation of the world. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord.

THE DIVINE NAME.

Verse 14. **I. As only revealed by the Divine Being Himself.** Only God can give a revelation of His name—character—attributes—will. Human reason cannot, by searching, find out God. The human heart may search for God—but unaided, will never find Him. He that dwelleth in the bush—that calleth His servant to arduous toil - must speak—must make himself known—or the world will be eternally ignorant of His name.

II. As only partially understood by the grandest intellec s. Although we have such an abundant revelation of the name of God—how little of it is comprehended by man. It appears to us as the faint glimmering of a light placed in the cottage window on a dark night. God is mystery. Man's intellect can read the histories of the stars, can trace the wonders of the globe—but, at the threshold of Heaven's temple, it must bow in reverent acknowledgment of its inability to understand the things presented to its vision.

III. As sufficiently comprehended for the practical service of the Christian life. Moses did not fully understand the meaning of the revelation given to him of God—yet he recognised sufficient for his mission to Israel. He could *speak* the name of God—and that name, vocal on a human lip, has a power to inspire and free the slave. All ministerial power lay in the utterance and hope of the Divine Name: it touches human hearts—awakens solemn thoughts—and makes men think of destinies. We know enough of God to give strength—responsibility—hope—to our Christian work and life.

God announces Himself:—1. As personal. 2. As independent. 3. As self-existent. 4. Immutable. 5. What an element of sublimity this imparts to the mission of Christian service. 6. What an inspiration it furnishes for the toils of life. 7. How superior to any gods of the Egyptians.

The true knowledge of God is the power of deliverance to the enslaved. The revelation that a greater than Pharaoh cared for them was to be the stimulus to snap their fetters and be free. Nothing but a true knowledge of God will ever move men to fight against corrupt principles, vicious practices, evil habits. We are creatures of love and faith, and need something to move our faith into vigorous exercise; we need an unchanging object worthy of our love. "This is life eternal, to *know* Thee—the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" [*Homilist*].

God's reply is at hand to show His name unto those that seek to know it.

Perfect Being—the cause of all other being—is the name of God.

God's Being, well-known and considered, is enough to answer all objections.

It is good for God's servants to go out to duty under the protection of His name.

Verse 15. God's will is that He makes revelation to His instruments that they may make them known to the Church.

The first general cognizance of covenant relation to a Church was to the Fathers of Israel.

The relation of God to Fathers is declared for the comfort of children.

That we are commissioned by God is enough for men to know about our mission.

I. An eternal name.

II. An eternal memorial.

Verse 16. *The wisdom of gathering the few; or the considerateness of the Divine Being in reference to the mission of His servants:—*

I. This would be the most effective method of enlightening the mind of the nation in reference to the Divine intention. Moses was to gather the elders of Israel together—not the elders as regards age—but the officers and influential men. The nation was not without these while in Egypt, as would appear from (chap. v. 14.) 1. *This afforded Moses a good opportunity for personal explanations.* Moses would have greater influence with these few elders than with the nation at large. The respect he had paid in thus calling them to be the first recipients of his message—their intuitive feeling that what he said was true—their superior intelligence—candour—attention—would give him a splendid opportunity for impressing them with the need—reality—success of his mission. Thus a gathering of this kind would admit of explanations so helpful at the commencement of all great enterprises, to remove suspicion and avert peril. 2. *It was a good precaution against the ignorance and fanaticism of the common people.* The elders would be amongst the most judicious men of the nation — would therefore not only be able to enter into the important matter requiring their attention, but would have influence with their comrades; and hence, if they accepted the proposal of Moses, the nation at large would be more likely to do so. Had he carried the Divine message immediately to the enslaved people — apparently alone — without army — without sceptre — it would have aroused their indignation, their rejection; they would have derided his pretensions—his dream of freedom; they would have regarded him as a fanatic—an impostor. But all this opposition was averted by calling the elders—and making them the medium of appeal to the nation—and his companions in the effort of liberation. The more agencies a man can bring into his life work the better.

II. It would be the most effective method of gaining the sympathy of the nation. Moses was a comparative stranger to the Israelites. The elders were well known to them — were associated with the traditions of their religious life —had shared their persecution—were one with them in all the phases of life. They would, therefore, be far more likely to win the sympathy and help of the Israelites than Moses. He would have to influence them from without, they from within. They can previously educate their thought to the idea of freedom, then the nation will be ready to welcome any Moses who will work it out into history. All great workers should be judicious in their movement.

III. It would thus be the most effective method of working out the Divine project in reference to the nation. 1. *How considerate of the Divine Being to give Moses this idea of working.* Moses would have spent hours in devising the best method of approaching the Israelites —and after all might have been most injudicious in his arrangements. But there are times when God tells a good man *how* to do his work—compassionate —helpful—the secret of success. Many men will not listen to the Divine instructions. This is the occasion of the great failure of so much religious energy. 2. *How numerous are the agencies put in motion for the performance of Divine projects.* God is the source of all commissions for the moral good of man. He calls Moses—tells Moses to call the elders. God empowers His ministers to awaken new instrumentalities for the good of the enslaved world. 3. *All great workers may find a pattern here.* Not to trust their new and divine enterprises to the tide of popular opinion—storms may gather—may be wrecked. Launch them first on the more tranquil waters of the few—afterwards they will be more likely to weather the national gale. Let men in authority, knowing the influence they possess, take care to welcome all men of heavenly commission, and themselves to set a good example to the public.

This was a greater honour done to the Patriarchs than if God had written their names in the visible heavens, to be read of all men [*Trapp*].

The Divine commands require the obedience of all who know the Divine name.

The Divine errands require despatch.

God's will is that all His servants should declare His name as their Divine warrant.

Jehovah, the God of Abraham alone can warrant good men in their work.

When God appears it is generally to make known some deliverance for His people. Divine visitations:—1. Penal. 2. Judicial. 3. Merciful.

An inferior motive for a Religious Life.

Verse 17. I. Some people are religious because they hope thereby to be saved from affliction. "I will bring you out of the affliction of Egypt." 1. *They hope to escape the affliction of a bad name.* 2. *They hope to escape the affliction of a retributive providence.* 3. *They hope to escape the affliction of moral banishment from God.*

II. Other people are religious because they hope thereby to better their condition, and gain greater enjoyment. "Unto a land flowing with milk and honey:"—1. *Because they imagine religion will free them from slavery.* 2. *Because they imagine religion will give them an advantage over their enemies.* 3. *Because they imagine religion will give them rich possession.*

III. That while the land flowing with milk and honey may be one motive for a religious life, the superior is love to God and moral freedom.

At God's own will, He changeth His church from bondage and misery to enlargement and plenty. The resolution of Divine mercy:—1. Awakens instruments to convey its message. 2. Prepares Churches to welcome its tidings. 3. The giving of a new impulse to history.

The encouragement God gives to Christian workers:— 1. Divine aid in the work. 2. Bright hope in their future. 3. Glad success in their toil.

A happy residence:—

1. A land of plenty. 2. A land of beauty. 3. A land of promise. 4. A land of freedom. 5. A land of rest. 6. A land typal of heaven.

Verse 18. "*Now let us go, we beseech thee.*" We see here the opportunity God gives men to be virtuous. Pharaoh was asked to let Israel go:— 1. That he might have the credit of a good action. 2. That he might take the responsibility of a bad action. 3. That he might render just any calamity that came upon him. 4. That he might shew the real nature of his character. 5. The Divine Being could have wrought the freedom of Israel without the consent of Pharaoh, but He did not, for the foregoing reasons.

"*The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us.*" The Divine wish was the only reason assigned to Pharaoh for the outgoing of Israel. 1. Not the wish of the enslaved nation. 2. Not that his predecessors had murdered their children. 3. Not that he had no right to detain them. 4. The Divine claim must take precedence of any human. "*And now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness.*" Why are only three days named?—1. That, if they went further Pharaoh had no right to complain, they not being his subjects. 2. This was all that God revealed unto Pharaoh, reserving His good pleasure till afterwards. 3. That in refusing so small a request, his obstinacy might appear the greater, especially after the service Israel had rendered him.

Sacrifice in the Wilderness.

I. It would have shewn the willingness of a freed man to worship God anywhere.

In the wilderness—with poor supply of animals for sacrificial purposes. After tired by a three days' journey, just out from bondage—yet they were to worship God. Cannot we sacrifice to God in the varied scenes of life after the hard toils of the day, especially after freedom from sin?

II. It would have shewn the need of rendering gratitude to God for what would have been a merciful interposition. They would have been away from Pharaoh—slavery behind them; they would have been free—greeted by the

joyful appearances of nature. To sacrifice would have been their duty; it is ours.

III. It would have evinced the return of a better manhood. No longer idolaters—they would have sacrificed to the true God. It is God's work to make men hear and obey the message of salvation He sends to them.

Upon God's encouragement the instruments and subjects of redemption must move thereunto.

Hearts wrought upon by God not merely hearken, but use means for deliverance.

Under God's commission His oppressed ones shall face their oppressor.

God's message must never be withheld from oppressors.

The Lord owns His people under their most despised name, "Hebrews."

God will have His people use humble address, even to their persecutors.

Liberty is to be sought by the good —1. It is commanded by God. 2. He raiseth instruments for its accomplishment. 3. No man has a right to enslave them. 4. It is necessary to the duties of our religious life.

God, who can command all from tyrants, is pleased to order His people to beg small things.

Wilderness service is desired by God rather than mixtures with Egypt.

The end of all deliverance to the Church is God's worship.

Man can largely hinder his neighbour from a convenient worship of God.

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

THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUCCESS OR OTHERWISE OF MINISTERIAL WORK.

I. That God is thoroughly acquainted with the moral obstinacy of men. "And I am sure that the King of Egypt will not let you go." 1. *There are many people who act like Pharaoh in relation to the commands of God.* As Pharaoh treated Moses and the Israelites with contempt—manifesting pride— obstinacy—so there are men and women to-day as proud and obstinate in reference to the requirements of Christ and His Gospel; ministers address Divine messages to them—urge the Divine claims—all in vain. God knows such people. Their names are vocal on His lips. He tells His servants about them. He indicates judgments in reference to them. Such people are almost beyond the reach of ministerial influence. The minister is not altogether responsible for the success of his mission. He cannot force men to be good. 2. *In all the commissions of human life God recognises the free agency of the wicked.* God could with ease have set the Israelites at liberty, as He did Paul and Silas. Such was not the Divine will. He desired to use moral instrumentalities, in harmony with the volition of man. Is it not a mystery that man has the ability to oppose the will of God? 3. *We may inquire into the utility of employing Christian agency where the result will be ineffectual.* What utility could there be in the mission of Moses to Pharaoh, when God knew right well that it would be unavailing, and informed Moses of the fact? Why, then, was Moses sent; and would not this knowledge discourage and introduce an element of weakness into his effort? He went at the sovereign command of God to teach Pharaoh the Divine will, that he might be without excuse, that he might be acquainted with the designed freedom of Israel—for the sending of Moses had reference to Israel as well as to the king. It also commenced a series of events that ultimately issued in the overthrow of Pharaoh, and the victory of the Supreme Being on behalf of His people. So ministers are sent to nations—people—to-day who will remain finally impenitent. Such is the method of the Divine arrangement—such the attention of Divine mercy to the worst of characters—such the power of right that it will conquer, if in judgment. II. That God is thoroughly acquainted with the method He will pursue in reference to the morally obstinate. 1. *God deals with the morally obstinate after the method of a consecutive plan.* First, He prepares the messenger to visit and teach them; then gives him the message; then tells him how to make it known; then smites in judgments, successive, severe. Thus God does

not deal with the morally obstinate according to the impulse of the moment—fitfully, incidentally, but according to a harmonious, merciful, self-consistent plan—a plan that will admit of the repentance and faith of the sinner. 2. *God sometimes meets the morally obstinate with demonstrations of His power.* "I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders," etc. Here, then, we have human power in conflict with the Divine—the King of Egypt against the King of Heaven. Which will conquer? The sequel. So sometimes God meets the obstinate sinner with tokens of power, (1) *afflictive*, (2) *convincing*, (3) *subduing*. **III. That God can thwart the intention of the morally obstinate by their own wickedness, and by the conduct of their comrades.** (Verse 22.) 1. *Pharaoh's obstinacy was thwarted by his own wickedness.* The Egyptians aided the escape of Israel—gave them articles to facilitate their journey. So the purposes of obstinate men are often thwarted by those who share their sin and determination. The work of defeating and subduing obstinate sin is not left wholly to ministers. Often the Egyptians help them. 3. *How thoroughly all agencies are at the disposal of God.* His ministers are not the only instrumentalities at his call. All events, all persons cluster round them as a centre, and, under Divine direction, accomplish the moral freedom of the good.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 19. God declares the worst as well as the best that meet His servants in the way of salvation.

God knows what the powers of the world will do against the Church, and yet He tries them.

It is incident to worldly powers to deny the humblest request from God.

God in His wisdom suffers worldly powers to wrestle with His mighty hand.

Their sin is aggravated who ever contend with the mighty hand of God.

The madness of sinners is so great, that they will put God's power to the test.

Verse 20. God is at hand to deal with them that contend with His power.

God's hand put forth will startle the arm of flesh.

Upon God's putting forth His hand to vengeance, great smitings are on His enemies.

Wonderful vengeance God's hand giveth forth sometimes to quell the resistance of adversaries.

God will certainly work wonderful plagues where He threatens them.

The very midst of God's enemies shall have experience of His wonderful plagues.

Where grace will not prevail with wicked men, force shall.

Sin endures its plagues to no purpose, as it is obliged to yield.

Verse 21, 22. There is a grace of favour which the world may show unto God's Church.

It is God's only work to incline the hearts of enemies to favour His people.

Fulness, as well as freedom, yield to God's people at His Word.

God's Church is neighbour with a wicked world till His time. Even the world has some valuable things that it can give to the Church.

Sometimes God makes the sons and daughters of the Church carry away the treasures of enemies.

At God's command, the Church shall spoil the enemies that spoiled her.

A great part of the gold and silver now obtained was afterward used in building and furnishing the tabernacle.

The relation of God:—1. To human outgoings. 2. To human hearts. 3. to human treasures.

God is the proper owner of all treasures, and can dispose of them as He will.

The word rendered "borrow" means simply to ask (Psalm, 2—8, *ask*), and should be so translated. Israel had, after their toil for the Egyptians, a right to ask their help on their departure.

That "spoiled" does not imply robbery or injustice is evident from its use by Laban's daughters (Gen. xxxi. 16.

The Egyptians would be so overcome by abject distress as to be ready to part with a considerable portion of their wealth, in order to get rid of a people whose presence menaced them with utter extermination.

God has many ways of balancing accounts between the injured and the injurious—of righting the oppressed, and compelling those that have done wrong, to make restitution; for he sits upon the throne, judging right [*Matthew Henry*].

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER III.

Verse 1. No vessels that God delights so much to fill as broken vessels, contrite spirits. "He resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Jam. xiv. 6. The silver dews flow down from the mountains to the lowest valleys. A humble soul that lies low, oh, what sights of God has he! what glories does he behold, when the proud soul sees nothing. He that is in the low pits and caves of the earth sees the stars of the firmament, when they who are upon the tops of the mountains discern them not [*T. Brooks*].

Verse 2. The Church has been subject to much persecution. The first was under the Emperor Nero, thirty-one years after our Lord's ascension. Multitudes were apprehended; they were covered by the skins of wild beasts, torn to pieces by devouring dogs; fastened to crosses, wrapt up in combustible garments, that, when the daylight failed, they might, like torches, serve to dispel the gloom of night. For this tragical scene Nero lent his own gardens; and thus the shrieks of women burning to ashes supplied music and diversion for their circus. The second was under Domitian, in the year 95, and forty thousand are supposed to have perished. The third began in the third year of Trajan in the year 100. The fourth under Antonius. The fifth began in the year 127, under Severus, when great cruelties were committed. The sixth began in the reign of Maximus, in 235-7. The seventh, which was the most dreadful ever known, began in 250, under the Emperor Decius. The eighth began in 257, under Valerian. The ninth was under Aurelian in 274. The tenth began in the nineteenth year of Diocletian, in 303. In this dreadful persecution, which lasted ten years, houses filled with Christians were set on fire, and whole droves were twisted together with ropes and cast into the sea. It is related that seventeen thousand were slain in one month. In this fiery persecution it is believed that not fewer than one hundred and forty-four thousand Christians died by violence, besides seven hundred thousand that died through the banishments, or the public works to which they were condemned [*Beaumont*].

Persecutions are beneficial to the righteous. They are a hail of precious stones, which, it is true rob the vine of her leaves, but give her possessor a more precious treasure instead [*Anon*].

The Church has sometimes been brought to so low and obscure a point that, if you will follow her in history, it is by the track of her blood; and, if you would see her, it is by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burnt. Yet hath she still come through, and survived all that wrath, and still shall till she be made perfectly triumphant [*Leighton*].

A Roman Catholic king, who was bitter in his opposition to the Protestant cause, had been speaking of its downfall, and how it would be brought about. A celebrated Protestant replied, "Sire, it assuredly behoves the Church of God, in whose name I speak, to endure blows and not to strike them; but may it please you also to remember that it is an anvil that has worn out many hammers."

As the flowers of water betony, with the leaves and sprigs, though they die often, and yearly; yet the root is aye-lasting from which they come and to which they belong: so though discipline and the outward beauty of the Church change and often die, yet the Church is aye-lasting and of all continuance.

Like as when trees are hewn down, much more imps (offshoots) do spring up than the boughs were that were cut off; so now, after the slaughter of many godly men, more did run into the Gospel, and that day by day, than ever did; yea, and the blood of the slain bodies was a certain watering of the new plants springing up in the Church; so that a martyr in suffering doth not suffer for himself alone, but also for every man. For himself, he suffereth to be crowned; for all men he suffereth, to give them an example; for himself to his rest; for every man to his welfare.

As the fiery bush that Moses saw in the Mount Horeb, which bush, for all that it was on a flaming fire, yet did it not consume; or as the shining worm, that being cast into the fire, doth not perish nor consume, but contrariwise, is thereby purged of filth and more beautiful than if it were washed with all the waters of the world; even so such Christians as are cast into the fire of affliction are not consumed, but purged, tried, and purified.

"Far seen across the sandy wild,
Where, like a solitary child,
He thoughtless roam'd and free,
One towering thorn was wrapt in flame—
Bright without blaze it went and came,
Who would not turn and see?" [*Keble*].

Verses 3-5. It is recorded of one Sir William Champney, in the reign of King Henry III., that, living in Tower-street, London, he was the first man that ever builded a turret on the top of his house, that he might the better overlook all his neighbours: but it so happened that not long after, he was struck blind, so that he who would see more than others, saw just nothing at all. A sad judgment! And thus it is just with God, when men of towering, high thoughts must needs be prying into those arcana Dei (the hidden secrets of God), that they should be struck blind on the place, and come tumbling down in the midst of their so serious inquiry. At the ascension of Christ, it is said that he was taken up in a cloud; being entered into His presence chamber, a curtain, as it were, was drawn to hinder His disciples gazing and our further peeping; yet, for all that, a man may be pius pulsator, though not temerarius scrutator—he may modestly knock at the door of God's secrets, but, if he enter further, he may assure himself to be more bold than welcome.

Verses 7 and 8. As the bees, although they sometimes sting the hands and face of the owner and master of them, yet they be profitable in providing for him the sweet honey and wax: even so an enemy, although he persecute, injure, and wrong a good Christian, yet is he very profitable unto him, in furthering him to heavenward, if so be that by patience he possess his soul, and do pray for him, as our Saviour Christ and Stephen did.

The fish distressed, slides into the water, and is relieved; the bird flies to the dam, and is shrouded under her wings; the child runs to its parents; strike the dog, and he runs to his master; wound the soldier and he flies to the army; and by way of antiperistasis (the opposition of a contrary quality, by which the quality opposed acquires strength), cold makes the heat retire into the fire, and the force thereof is greater. Thus, if mere natural causes, whose goodness is finite, do cherish their effects, how much more shall God, whose goodness is infinite! It is He, and He only, that is the object of His people's trust in the midst of their distress,—He is the first cause of all things, and all things have recourse unto Him.

Verse 9. Like as a father, having a young infant sick of some sore disease, though the child can speak never a word, is ready to help it; and if it can speak, yet, being full of pain, cannot call for things as it ought, yet, if the mother can by any signs guess at the meaning of it, she will accept as much of it as if it had spoken very plentifully—yea, though it should say one thing and mean another, she would give it according to the meaning of it: even so the Lord, who is filled with the bowels of compassion towards us in Christ, far above any father or mother, though he delighteth to hear us pray unto Him, yet, when, as by the extremity of our miseries, we are oppressed or distracted, so that we cannot in any orderly manner pray unto him as we ought, he alloweth of the sighs and sobs that we offer up unto Him, and grants not so much our words (which are none or few) as the meaning of His Spirit, which is plentiful in us [*Cawdray*].

Verse 10. As Samson, though he had strength given him that he was able to have defended the Israelites, and revenged them of their enemies, yet he could not take upon him the government of the people until such time that the Lord had called him unto it: so, likewise the ministers of the Word, albeit they have never so notable gifts of knowledge, utterance, etc., yet they are not in any case to intrude themselves into the ministry, unless they have a particular calling from the Lord [*Cawdray*].

Verse 12 There is an excellent story of a young man that was at sea in a mighty, raging tempest, and when all the passengers were at their wits' end for fear, he only was merry; and when he was asked the reason of his mirth, he answered that the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew that his father would have a care of him. The great and wise God, who is our Father, hath from all eternity decreed what shall be the issues of all wars, what the event of all troubles. He is our pilot, He sits at the stern; and though the ship of the Church or State be in a sinking condition, yet be of good comfort, our pilot will have a care of us. There is nothing done in the lower House of Parliament on earth but what is first decreed in the higher house in heaven. All the lesser wheels are ordered and overruled by the upper. "Are not five sparrows," saith Christ "sold for a farthing?" One sparrow is not worth half a farthing, and there is no man shall have half a farthing's worth of harm more than God hath decreed from all eternity [*Calamy's Sermon*].

Verse 14. Tully relateth how Simonides, being asked by Hiero, the king of Sicily, what God was, desired one day to consider of it; and after one day being past, having not yet found it out, desired two days more to consider of it; and, after two days, he desired three; and to conclude, he had at length no other answer to return unto the king but this, that the more he thought upon it, the more he might; for the further he waded in the search thereof, the further he was from the finding of it. And thus Plato: "What God is," saith he, "that I know not; what He is not, that I know." Most certain it is that God only, in regard of Himself, knows Himself as dwelling in the light inaccessible, whom never man saw neither can see. Here, now, the well is not only deep, but we want a bucket to draw withal. God is infinite and never to be comprehended essentially. Oh, then, that we could so much the more long to enjoy Him, by how much less we are able to apprehend Him [*Spencer*].

Though the sun is the source and fountain of light, there is little good in gazing at the sun, except to get blinded. No one ever saw the better for looking the sun directly in the face. It is a child's trick, grown up people know better. We use the light which the sun gives, to see by, and to search into all things —the sun excepted. Him we cannot explore, beyond what he reveals of himself in the light and heat which he sheds upon us, and in the colours by which he is reflected from the earth. There is no searching of the sun, our eyes are too weak. How much less can we search the sun's Creator, before whom the myriads of suns are but as so many cloud bodies! His revelation of Himself in His works and in His word, in His Son and in our souls, is more than enough for us. Persons who dare to go as they say in a directer way to Himself, are like children looking at the sun, who, instead of getting more light and better eyes, get less light and an infatuated eye [*J. Pulsford*].

Hilary, an ancient Christian writer, says these words charmed him, and gave him a high opinion of Moses, before he became a Christian, there being nothing so proper to describe God by as this name [*Orton*].

Many heathens, copying from this expression, have inscribed it, or something like it, on their temples. On the Delphic temple was inscribed, according to Plutarch, the Greek word Εἶ, which signifies "Thou dost exist." [*Howe*].

Who ever conceived a more beautiful illustration of this sublime text than the following by Bishop Beveridge,—"'I am.' He doth not say, I am their light, their guide, their strength, or tower, but only 'I am.' He sets His hand, as it were to a blank, that His people may write under it what they please that is good for them. As if He should say, 'Are they weak? I am strength. Are they poor? I am all riches. Are they in trouble? I am comfort. Are they sick? I am health. Are they dying? I am life. Have they nothing? I am all things. I am wisdom and power. I am justice and mercy. I am grace and goodness. I am glory, beauty, holiness, eminency, supremacy, perfection, all sufficiency, eternity! Jehovah, I am! Whatever is amiable in itself, or desirable unto them, that I am. Whatever is pure and holy, whatsoever is great and pleasant, whatsoever is good or needful to make men happy, —that I am.'

"When God would teach mankind His name,
He calls Himself the great, 'I am,'
And leaves a blank; believers may
Supply those things for which they pray."

Verse 17. Like as, if a man were assured there were made for him a great purchase in Spain or Turkey, so, as if he would but come thither, he might enjoy it, he would not forbear to adventure the dangers of the sea, and of his enemies also, if need were, that so he might come to his own; even so, seeing that Christ Jesus hath made a purchase for us in heaven, and there is nothing required of us, but that we will come and enjoy it, we ought to refuse no pains or fear in the way, but carefully strive to get in [*Cawdray*].

Verses 19-20. Like as, if a man's foot, leg, or arm be broken, with how great pain the same is restored to its former estate all men know; but if any member of our body should be broken twice or thrice, or more often, in one and the self-same place, every man can then judge how hard a thing it were for that part to recover its perfect strength and health again: even so fareth it in the ruptures and wounds of our soul. If a man do commit sin once or twice, and do unfeignedly, without dissimulation, make his refuge to the medicine of repentance, he doth out of hand obtain health again, and that sometimes without any scar or blemish of the disease past; but if he begin to add sins upon sins in such sort that the wounds of the soul do rather putrefy within him, by covering and defending them, than heal, by repentance and confession, it is to be feared such a one shall not find repentance at commandment when he wisheth for it [*Cawdray*].

Verse 20. As the course of a stream, being stopped, it gathereth a great dam, and being let suddenly go, it overfloweth all in its way; even so God's anger, being stayed a time, the windows of heaven being opened, it will (shortly, it is to be feared) pour down on our heads plentifully for the manifold sins that reign in every estate throughout the whole land.

As wet wood, although it be long burning, yet will burn faster at last; so the anger of God, although it be long coming, yet it will come the fiercer at the last.

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—25. **A bloody husband.**] An unfortunate rendering, bearing an opprobrious tone foreign to the Hebrew which is more exactly (with Benisch, Keil, Young, and others), "A bridegroom of blood," or "blood-bridegroom," "art thou to me." Coupling the expressive Hebrew plural "bloods" with the circumstances of the case, we might perhaps render the original, "A spouse by bloody rites art thou to me." As Kurtz well puts it: "Moses had been as good as taken from her by the deadly attack which had been made upon him. She purchased his life by the blood of her son; she received him back, as it were, from the dead, and married him anew; he was, in fact, a bridegroom of blood to her." And thus the expression, while very naturally showing a mother's instinctive repugnance to a painful rite, is mainly charged with the warm and tender emotion of revived nuptial love. Moses himself ought to have performed the ceremony before. He had failed—very possibly out of undue regard to the Midianitish aversion of his beloved Zipporah. No longer can such Gentile laxity be allowed: Israel's leader must die to all neglect of the holy Abrahamic covenant. Hence this arrest on the way—this fiery ordeal. How natural it all seems, and how well it all ends. Moses is purified, and in a manner new born for his mission. His son is consecrated to Jehovah. His Gentile wife is taught a valuable lesson, becomes more fitted for her noble husband than before, is drawn to him with a deeper and purer love, and yet is reconciled to a most prudent return for a time to her father's house. She shall have her reward: a little while and she shall be honourably brought back to find, in the lone fugitive of her first love, the acknowleged leader of a ransomed nation (chap. xviii). It is not the child that is the "bridegroom." It may be true, as Aben Ezra says, that "It is customary for women to call a son when he is circumcised, bridegroom"—the custom itself may have sprung from a misunderstanding of this very passage; but surely it is very forced to attribute such an application of these words to Zipporah. That would involve too sudden a rebound on her part from the feeling of repugnance to that of an almost mystical admiration. Besides, the words "to me" are fatal to such an exposition: they decisively determine the exclamation to the *winning back* of Moses *to herself*, rather than to the *giving up* of the child to *Jehovah*.

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

THE DEGRADATION OF USEFUL THINGS.

Moses held a rod in his hand—useful for support—for help—for advancement—for protection—as a token of office—which, being cast upon the ground, lost all capability for usefulness, became offensive, injurious, poisonous; but the Divine command restored it to its original condition of utility and worth. This incident is typical of much that is going on around us in every-day life, where useful things, intended for the political, social, and moral good of men, are so cast upon the ground and degraded, that they become positively inimicable to the welfare of the race. Also, there is in the world a Divine power whereby all this degradation is divested of moral injury, and restored to its original condition of utility. We wish to regard this incident in a parabolic light:—I. That man has, to an alarming extent, the ability to degrade useful things. "And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent." 1. *He has the ability to degrade Divine Truth.* Heavenly truth and doctrine, as made known by God—as enunciated in the Bible—when held as a rod in the hand of man for his moral direction, guidance, and advancement—is most useful and absolutely needful to his salvation; but when, by profanity, by unholy doubt, by wilful rejection, by cold scepticism, it is cast on the ground, it becomes a serpent, the enemy of man, to predict his ruin. Who can look out upon the world without seeing to what an alarming extent the sublime truths, books, people of God, are degraded by the worldly and the sceptical? We wonder that the men who occasion such degradation do not flee from before their own profanity. 2. *He has the ability to degrade the pulpit.* All must admit the great utility of the pulpit, especially when they

consider how it instructs the mind of the nation, how it appeals to the consciences of men, and how it quickens and cultures the spiritual life of the Church. Yet, how frequently is it cast upon the ground, by giving forth uncertain doctrine, by pandering to the sensational requirements of the age, and by ministerial inconsistency. At such times it becomes as a serpent to inflict moral injury upon the weak and scoffing. How many have been brought to reject religion by the unhallowed conduct of its professed teachers. May the Christian Church be delivered from the venom of this serpent! 3. *He has the ability to degrade the press.* None will deny the utility of the press. It is the great instrument of civilization—has done more than any other agency of human invention to instruct the world in the truth of the Bible, in the mystery of science, in the philosophy of history. If you were to remove the printing press out of the world, men would soon return to the darkness of the middle ages. Yet, how has this valuable instrumentality been degraded. Think of the pernicious literature that it annually circulates, with inaccurate views of life—exciting, false, unhealthy—altogether enervating to the manhood of those who read it. This degradation of the press is one of the most solemn and lamentable facts of the age. It has indeed become a serpent of the most formidable character, and is doing more to injure the mental life of the young than perhaps anything else. 4. *That men are often terrified by the degradation they have occasioned.* "And Moses fled from before it." No doubt many an infidel has fled from before the phantoms of his own unbelief. and from before the dark abyss toward which his conscience has pointed him. Many a fallen minister has fled from before the enormity of his own sin and ruin. And who will say that many a novel writer and newspaper contributor has not, in quiet moments of reflection, trembled at the result of his own profanity. All men will one day experience a desire to flee from before their sins, to escape their terrible retribution. **II. That there is in religion a restoring influence, whereby useful things that have been degraded may be uplifted to their proper condition.** "And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand." 1. *This restoration is exclusive and extensive.* It is exclusive in that it can only be accomplished by religion. Nothing can re-change the serpents of daily life into rods but the Word of God, and Divine influence working in the line of human effort. God told Moses to put forth his hand and take it by the tail. Men must do their part, then Heaven will help them in this great work of restoration. *Legislation* cannot make a sceptic into a believer of Divine truth. It may do much to suppress a pernicious literature, but with great difficulty, as men immediately cry out for the freedom of the press; it will never remove the desire for a mental stimulant in the shape of unreal fiction. *Education* may do something towards taming the serpents of human life, but it will leave them serpents—it cannot change them into rods. This Christianity alone can do; and happily her influence is co-extensive with the degradation. Not one serpent in the universe is beyond the charm of her voice. She can uplift the press. She has done much already to purify it. Her Bible has already done much to reclaim the literature of our land. It has, in fact, created a heavenly literature of its own, which is exerting a most salutary influence upon thousands of human souls. Thus the restoring influence of Christianity is not only exclusive, but all-extensive in its capability. 2. *This restoration is sympathetic and happy.* God has great sympathy with the world, afflicted by these degradations, and sends the mitigating influence of a peaceful religion to relieve its woe. And this token of pity and help—this prophecy of hope—is welcome to, and happy in its effect upon, humanity. A mind permeated with Divine truth, a pulpit refulgent with true piety, a press sending forth to the world the messages of Heaven, are happy results, and are the chief outcome of Divine grace as purifying the heart of society. LEARN—1. *That the creation of evil is within the power of man.* 2. *That our highest gifts may be prostrated to the lowest ends.* 3. *That it should be the aim of men to elevate everything with which they are brought into contact.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

THE LAMENT OF THE PULPIT.

Verse 1. I. The Preacher has frequently to lament the scepticism of his congregation. "But behold they will not believe me." Moses feared the Israelites would not credit the probability of the freedom he had to declare unto them. Insuperable difficulties would appear in the way. They would not sufficiently take God into the matter. Ministers have now to complain of this kind of thing. Sinners are told that the intention of Heaven in reference to them is their moral emancipation. They reflect upon their natural wickedness—upon their wilful departure from the law of God—and regard the proclamation as visionary. They despair of freedom from sin, self, and Satan. Ministers frequently carry glorious tidings to their congregations—the willingness of God to save them there and then—the ultimate conquest of goodness; and yet are treated with practical unbelief.

II. The Preacher has frequently to lament the inattention of his congregation. "Nor hearken unto my voice." Nothing is worse on the part of a congregation than inattention, and disobedience to the messages of God. The Divine claims are of the first importance, and demand immediate attention. They respect our future—they are for our spiritual good—they design our eternal freedom. To such a message all men ought to give the most earnest heed.

III. The Preacher has frequently to lament the querulous spirit of his congregation. "For they will say the Lord hath not appeared unto thee." How many congregations practically question the announcements of the pulpit. They challenge the inspiration, the Divine preparation, the Divine qualification, the heavenly visions of their teacher. And often they do this in an unkind, factious spirit. They should rather welcome him as from God, sent and wishful to achieve their moral freedom. This would be more to their credit.

IV. That this conduct on the part of congregations has a most depressing influence on the minds of ministers. How can a man preach to people whom he knows are in the habit of practically denying, or refusing his statements of the Divine willingness to save them. He needs the attention, sympathy, prayers, help of those whom he seeks to free from the tyranny of sin. He has enough to contend with external hindrances, with the opposition of Pharaoh, without having added to it that of the slave whose fetter he seeks to break.

Human distrust is a difficulty which every preacher, teacher, and holy labourer has to encounter. All great movements are carried by consent of parties. God himself cannot re-establish moral order without the concurrence of the powers that have rebelled against His rule. ... After all, the spiritual labourer has less to do with the unbelief of his hearers than with the instruction and authority of God. We have to ascertain what God the Lord would have us say, and then to speak it simply and lovingly, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. The preacher must prepare himself for having doubts thrown upon his authority; and he must take care that his answer to such doubts be as complete as the authority itself. God alone can give the true answer to human doubt. We are not to encounter scepticism with merely ingenious replies and clever arguments, but in the power and grace of the living God [*City Temple*].

How indisposed is man to believe the testimony of God! Whether He denounce vengeance upon obstinate offenders, or promise acceptance, assistance, and salvation to the returning sinner, we are ever prone to question His truth. Thus some are hardened in presumption, others sink into despondency, and others are discouraged, and through unbelief continue heartless in all they attempt. But the Lord deals not with us according to our sins; else the strongest believer upon earth,

instead of being saved by his faith, might righteously be condemned for his unbelief [*Henry and Scott*].

Moses objects that in all probability the people would not hearken to his voice; that is, they would not take his bare word, unless he shewed them some sign, which he had not yet been instructed to do. God empowers him to work miracles. Miracles are the most convincing proof of a Divine mission. But those who are employed now to enforce the authenticated revelation need not such testimonials; both their character and their doctrine are to be tried by the Word of God, to which they appeal [*Henry and Scott*].

We might suppose that Moses had seen and heard enough to set his fears entirely aside. The consuming fire in the unconsumed bush, the condescending grace, the precious, endearing, and comprehensive titles, the Divine commission, the assurance of the Divine presence—all these things might have quelled any anxious thought, and imparted a settled assurance to the heart. Still, however, Moses raises questions, and still God answers them; and each successive question brings out fresh grace [*C. H. M.*].

1. Present discouragements often arise from former disappointments. 2. Wise and good men have sometimes a worse opinion of people than they deserve. Moses said "they will not believe me," and yet we find (verse 31) "the people believed."

Dissatisfaction is incident to good souls in difficulty, even after God has answered all their questions.

Infirmity of faith may make men suggest things contrary to the promise of God.

Men may tax others with unbelief, and yet be unbelievers themselves.

The obstinacy of the human heart often makes God's ministers despair of success.

It is incident to sinners to deny the appearance of God to His ministers; and God's ministers are apt to regard such denials as discouragements to their work.

Why did Moses imagine that the Israelites would not believe him? 1. Because he knew that they were a stiff-necked people. 2. Because he considered himself of insufficient authority to command their respect. 3. Because the power and tyranny of Pharaoh would deter them from believing him. 4. Because they would think it unlikely that God, who had never been seen by man, should appear to him.

Verse 2. "*What is that in thine hand? And he said, a rod.*" A staff—a shepherd's crook—the staff which indicated his return to the pastoral habits of his fathers—the staff on which he leaned amidst his desert wanderings—the staff with which he guided his kinsman's flocks—the staff like that still borne by Arab chiefs—this was to be the humble instrument of Divine power. "In this"—as afterwards in the yet humbler symbol of the cross—in this, the symbol of his simplicity, of his exile, of his lowliness, the world was to be conquered [*The Jewish Church, by Dean Stanley*].

"A rod"—probably the shepherd's crook—among the Arabs; a long staff, with a curved head, varying from three to six feet in length. ... God followeth expostulations with resolutions to satisfy the troubled souls of His servants.

God sometimes exercises His power in connection with small things—a rod.

A rod:—1. The subject of Divine inquiry. 2. The token of a shepherd's office. 3. The symbol of a leader's power. 4. The prophecy of a nation's freedom.

A Trivial Possession.

I. God frequently makes inquiry about the most trivial possessions of men. 1. *Have they been honourably gained?* 2. *Are they being put to their proper use?* 3. *Are they in a line with Divine power?*

II. God frequently makes the most trivial possessions of men teach great truths. 1. *This shews the Divine adaptability to the circumstances of men.* 2. *This shews the Divine wisdom in making insig-*

nificant things teach Divine truth. 3. *This shews the Divine simplicity of the plans and purposes of Heaven.*

III. That the most trivial possessions are useful to others as well as those to whom they belong. This rod taught the Israelites that God was with Moses. So the smallest treasure possessed by a man may at times be instructive to other lives around him.

IV. That the most trivial possessions of men prove after all the most useful, and ought therefore to awaken human gratitude. We are taught here not to calculate the worth of things by their market price, but according to their adaptation to the circumstances of life in which we may then be placed. At this moment, and throughout the conflict with Egypt, this rod was the most valuable thing that Moses could have possessed. There are times when the smallest things become of the greatest value. This is true when they are used by God for the moral conviction and freedom of others. Moses would, throughout his life journey in the wilderness, be thankful for the rod. So we ought to be grateful to God that, whether we have great possessions or not, yet we have our little treasure which renders happy and effective our entire life mission.

God takes up the weakest instruments to accomplish his mightiest ends. "A rod," "a ram's horn," "a cake of barley meal," "an earthen pitcher," "a shepherd's sling," anything, in short, when used by God, will do the appointed work. Men imagine that splendid ends can only be reached by splendid means; but such is not God's way. He can use a crawling worm as well as a scorching sun—a gourd as well as a vehement east wind [*C. H. M.*].

Verse 3. Varied suppositions as to the meaning of this miracle:—

1. That hereby Pharaoh is set forth, who, at the first entering of the Hebrews into Egypt, was as a rod, easy to be handled, but afterwards as a serpent; and again, at the time of their going out, he was as a rod, gentle and harmless 2. That hereby the state of the children of Israel was set forth, who at the first, under Joseph, had dominion, signified by a rod, but afterwards were cast down, and hated, as a serpent; but finally, at their going out of Egypt, returned to their power and authority again.

3. That hereby was signified the honour of God's judgments; till they be brought none fear them; but, being brought, the very best are made to tremble; but, being renewed again, all fear is taken away.

4. That Moses was set forth by this staff: for he in himself, being but a shepherd, obscure and living in exile, was no more to Pharaoh to move him than a staff in a shepherd's hand; but, going to him at the command of the Lord, he became as the staff at his command cast upon the ground—a terrible serpent to him—he should not need any other armies to terrify Pharaoh; but, going with this staff, by a Divine virtue, he should be made to flee before him. But in that being laid hold upon by Moses again, it is turned into a staff, it was signified that the same which should be terrible to Pharaoh should be a comfort to Moses and to Israel [*Calvin*].

5. That hereby Christ crucified is set forth, and by his death, subduing the devil that he cannot hold the people of the Lord any more in bondage, as Pharaoh could not hold the Israelites [*Augustine*].

The serpent is entirely under the hand of Christ; and when he has reached the highest point in his mad career he shall be hurled into the lake of fire, there to reap the fruits of his work for ever [*C. H. M.*].

From the story of Moses' rod the poets invented fables of the thyrsus of Bacchus, and the caduceaus of Mercury. Homer represents Mercury as taking his rod to work miracles, precisely in the same way as God commanded Moses to take his.

There are many serpents in the world from which a good man should flee.

When God commandeth small things he worketh miracles to confirm them.

The true transubstantiation of creatures is the alone work of God.

God's miracles may be terrible to his

servants, when intended to be comfortable.

Sense is terrified at the miraculous tokens of God.

Verse 4. Faith in God's word dare meddle with the most terrible signs from God.

God can make staves into serpents, and serpents into staves, terrors to enemies, and supports to His own.

"*Take it by the tail.*" Which was dreadful to be done, because of the antipathy and likely danger; but faith fortifies the heart against the fear of the creature, and carries a man through the difficulty of duty [*Trapp*].

I. That men have often to come into contact with the morally sinful and dangerous. Moses is brought into contact with a serpent. Dangerous to him. So good men are frequently obliged to encounter the morally sinful—for commercial—ministerial purposes—they are thus rendered liable to the sting—contagion of sin—and will, unless careful, receive spiritual injury.

II. That good men should not enter into contact with the morally sinful and dangerous, except by the direct permission of God. "And the Lord said unto Moses," etc. The good are permitted to have intercourse with worldly men, for ministerial and commercial purposes—but they must remember that the Divine sanction does not extend to anything but the furthest point of contact. Moses was only told to take the serpent by the tail. There are many things in the world that the good man is only to touch. They are poisonous.

III. That when good men are brought into contact with the morally sinful and dangerous, they should endeavour to aid its reformation. "And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand." The good may not take hold of serpents for play, or for imagined gratification, but only that they may co-operate with the Divine power and mercy in the holy work of restoration.

IV. That when good men achieve the reformation of the morally sinful and dangerous, they find ample reward in the result. "And it became a rod in his hand." How many a good man has found that the sinner converted by his instrumentality has become a help—a stay—a moral power—in the spiritual life and journeyings of his own soul! Especially do ministers find that their converts become instruments in their hands for great good to others.

Things that Frighten.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, put forth thy hand, and take it by the tail."—Ex. iv. 4.

We may learn from the text, and the words immediately preceding, that—

I. In passing through life we must expect to meet with many things that will frighten us.

II. We shall gain nothing by running away.

III. The best thing we can do is to grapple with them.

IV. Acting thus we may always rely upon Divine aid [*Christian World Pulpit*].

Verse 5. Miracles are given by God to turn from unbelief to faith in the Divine word.

True miracles are the only work of the true God, the God of Abraham.

That God does much to render easy and successful the mission of the true preacher.

That the great thing for a preacher to demonstrate to his people is that God has appeared to him.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH—Verse 6—7

Leprosy as Emblematical of Doubt.

I. That as leprosy was the worst disease that could have been permitted to the hand of Moses, so doubt of the Divine Word is the most hurtful that can overtake the human mind. 1. *Both are small in their commencement.* Leprosy first manifests itself as a little spot upon the skin. Then it is not accompanied by any pain. Any one, unacquainted with the malady, from seeing its first indication would have no idea that it was leprosy,

and that its end would be so terrible. And so it is with doubt in reference to divine truth. At first it presents itself to the mind in a very innocent form, as a question, or as a suspicion. There is no mental grief or conflict. The soul has no idea that a terrible moral sickness is coming upon it, but regards the little indication of unbelief as an effort of investigation, and brave progress. Whereas if it was acquainted with the reality of the case it would see the first spot of mental leprosy. 2. *Both are progressive in their development.* That spot of leprosy does not long remain such—it grows larger—spreads wider—from limb to limb—until the entire system is full of it—and the whole man is covered with it. So it is with doubt. It does not long remain as a question—or as a suspicion of the truth—it advances to great uncertainty—to dimness of moral vision—until the mind is plunged into an impenetrable gloom. The man no longer doubts one truth, but all truth; the entire habit of his soul is rendered sceptical to heavenly things. 3. *Both are gloomy in their forebodings.* What dark and terrible forebodings would naturally occupy the soul of the leper, after the first terror and consciousness of the disease had come upon him. He would feel that certain death was before him—that no remedy—care—skill could attain his recovery. The grim shadow of the future would ever rest upon his soul. Life would be a burden to him. And who can describe the painful forebodings which fill a sceptical mind. There are the inner reasonings of the soul—there are bitter cries for light and truth. In quiet moments the conscience reveals another life—an eternal destiny—toward which the man is travelling, and the thought of its mystery fills him with awe. In fact all the doctrines of the Bible are turned by his scepticism into phantoms, which haunt him ever, and torment him with a sad prophecy of his awful future. 4 *Both are isolating in their tendency.* The leper had to be separated from his family—from his neighbours—friends—companions—he had to go into solitude and loneliness—away from all the active scenes of life In all probability his malady was contagious. Equally has doubt an isolating tendency—how often has it broken up families and near friendships. Scepticism throws a man in upon himself too much—it alienates his sympathy from those who differ from him in opinion—it places him without the spiritual enjoyments of the church—and renders him intensely lonely in spirit. Doubt is also contagious—it spreads not only from subject to subject—but from person to person—by speech—by argument—and thus, if it does not isolate itself—the community ought to demand its removal—especially from near the young. 5. *Both are paralysing in their influence.* How thoroughly paralysed are the limbs of the leper. They are withered. They are incapable of activity. They are almost useless to him. And so what a paralysing influence has doubt. It paralyses the mental faculties of man, rendering them almost incapable of a healthful and vigorous investigation of truth. It paralyses the sympathies of men—rendering them almost incapable of pity. It paralyses the activity of men—rendering them almost incapable of spiritual effort in the church of Christ. 6. *Both are deadly in their result.* In the system of the leper all vitality is destroyed—there is no play of physical energy—all the streams of life have been one by one dried up—its ultimate issue is the grave. Equally deadly is the issue of scepticism. It destroys mental vitality, and its sad destiny is the second death, far more awful than the first. **II. That as leprosy comes upon men unexpectedly, so does doubt upon the human mind.** The leprosy generally comes suddenly and unexpectedly upon the individual afflicted thereby, although it might have been lurking long within his physical constitution. And so it is with scepticism and doubt. It comes unexpected upon the mind, it may have been hiding there for months; the thinker knows not where he has imbibed it, from what book, conversation, or series of mental reasonings. The germ of scepticism often remains long concealed in the human mind, its workings are subtle, and we know not what will be the extent of their future harvest. **III. That as leprosy could only be removed by the Divine touch, so human doubt**

can only be removed by communion with God. We read in the New Testament of a leper coming to Christ, and being healed by the Divine touch The coming of that wretched man to the Saviour must be typical of the advent of all doubting sceptical souls to him, and the result will be equally beneficial and happy. Such a mental and moral attitude will not be healed by logic—by argument—by entreaty—by persuasion—but only by a personal and spiritual interview with the Saviour. True prayer is the only cure for unbelief. LEARN: 1. *To watch the first outgoings of the mind in relation to Divine truth.* 2. *Not to cultivate a captious spirit in relation to heavenly things.* 3. *To spend much time in communion with the Eternal Truth.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 6. Varied suppositions as to the meaning of this miracle– 1. Some give it a moral signification—as that the leprous hand of Moses sheweth the works of the law that justifieth not 2. Some give it a mystical signification —that the leprous hand of the synagogue of the Jews was cast off as the leprous person out of the house, and the hand restored betokeneth the Gentile Church adopted instead of the Jewish [*Augustine*]. 3. Some refer it to Christ, that he being the hand, that is, the power of his Father, by taking our nature upon him, became as it were leprous, that is deformed, by his sufferings and passion, but by his resurrection and ascension His glory appeareth 4. Some give it an historical signification—by the leprous hand they understand the miserable state of the Hebrews in the time of their cruel servitude, who in their deliverance received their former liberty. 5. Some think that the leprous hand signifieth the pollutions of Egypt, wherewith Israel was defiled, who being delivered were restored to the true worship of God. 6. That the first sending of Moses to the Israelites brought upon them more cruel treatment, but his after ministry brought them joy and deliverance. 7. That the hand being the instrument of working, betokeneth the ministry and authority of Moses, and that God would use a weak instrument to effect His will, Moses having lived a long time in banishment seemed a thing leprous and vile, yet God should in this His service make him a glorious vessel and instrument. 8. That as the leprosy is only cured by God so their deliverance was only God's work, and to humble Moses by the remembrance of his own infirmity. 9. As far as the intrinsic significancy of the sign is concerned, it was evidently calculated to teach that whatever is new, vigorous, vital, and flourishing, may at once be withered at the word of Omnipotence; and again with equal facility restored to its pristine condition [*Bush*].

Power for God's service:—1. Human hands weak and unfit for service. 2. Sanctified power is only attained from God. 3. Hence the worker must be humble, but not impotent or paralytic in hand.

"*Leprous as snow.*" The white leprosy was that form with which the Hebrews were best acquainted, and the most difficult of cure.

God sometimes commands His servants in order to disease and try them.

A sudden change from soundness to leprosy is God's miracle.

That there are times and circumstances when the use of legitimate things may prove injurious.

LEPROUS AS SNOW.

I. "Leprous as snow." Then our moral condition is a picture of woe. What more pitiable sight than a leper—with a fearful disease running through his veins. An outcast in the world. Contemplate the sinner. His natural bias to evil. Surrounded by his vices. He is restless. He is grief-stricken. He is without virtuous friendship. Truly he presents a sad spectacle. Contemplate the world—its passion and pride —its heathenism — superstition — and crime—it is "leprous as snow."

II. "Leprous as snow." Then our

moral condition is an argument and a plea for Divine help. Would not a leper excite the pity of all who saw him. So our moral woe is a forceful appeal to the Divine mercy. Our grief is a prayer for the exercise of Divine power. Human aid is ineffective here. Men may pity the sinner. Only God can heal his leprosy. Every sinner in the universe is an object of Divine compassion. But wicked men will not allow the argument of their misery to find its conclusion in their moral reformation; they will not permit the prayer of their grief to be answered, they refuse the pardon it would obtain.

III. "Leprous as snow." **Then our moral conversion is a triumph of Divine grace.** What a conversion for a leper to become a healthy, vigorous man. What a change in all his surroundings. How happy. How benevolent. So it is equally a marvellous transition for the sinner. Spiritual life courses richly through his soul. He is surrounded by heavenly companions, and animated by new hopes. His unrest is calmed. His grief is removed. His moral disease is healed. He is indeed a trophy of Divine grace.

IV. "Leprous as snow." **Then the greatest sinner is within the reach of Divine restoration.** Your leprosy may be of the worst kind—may have been long continued—yet there is hope. For the sympathiser is Divine. The healer is God. Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost, etc.

Verse 7. After trial God commands His servants again in order to healing.

God answers the obedience of His servants with wonderful healing.

It is God's prerogative alone to send disease and healing to his creatures, miraculously by His word.

SOUL-INSTRUCTION.

I. As undertaken by a Divine Teacher. The Divine Being is here instructing Moses about his mission to Israel. There are many instructors of human souls in the world. God is the supreme. There are lessons for every man to learn which heaven only can teach. Happy the soul that receives the lesson of its life from God. Ministers who aim to *instruct* the souls of men are in true sympathy with the Divine.

II. As employing the most impressive symbolism. The burning bush. The rod turned into a serpent. The hand made leprous. The Divine teaching is always suggestive, never exhaustive. Heaven has always fine illustrations at command in which to convey truth. Hence our attention is gained. Our souls are impressed. We are made to feel that duty is imperative and responsible, and to prepare for its discharge. The pulpit would be much more effective in its work of soul-instruction if it employed more impressive imagery.

III. As occupying but a short space of time. The Divine Being was not long in giving these signs to Moses, they followed in quick succession. Heaven is spontaneous in its teaching. It can teach a soul an eternal lesson in a moment. Ministers in these days are too long in their communication of spiritual truth. They spend too much time on detail.

IV. As preparing for important duty. God is preparing Moses to achieve the freedom of Israel. The Divine instruction always has a definite result in view. It is not aimless. It is not random. It is designed not merely to make men clever, but to give them the power of moral emancipation. God teaches human souls not merely for their own welfare, but that they may make a practical use of their knowledge by striving to enhance the spiritual condition of humanity.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 8, 9.

THE DIVINE TREATMENT OF HUMAN DOUBT.

I. That the Divine Being recognises the probability that men will not welcome the truth upon its first presentation to them. "And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign,"

etc. If this history had not been complete before us, we should have imagined that the Israelites would at once have welcomed the message which Moses had to declare unto them, and that they would immediately have received him as their deliverer. 1. *The message he proclaimed was adapted to their condition.* They were slaves; he preached to them of freedom. Their lives were saddened by oppression; he announced the removal of their tyranny. They were degraded; he proclaimed to them moral elevation. In this light how astonishing is their unbelief. We should have expected that the Israelites would have gladly responded to his voice, and have followed him to demand of Pharaoh their release. Equally surprising is the unbelief of men to-day in reference to the Gospel. It announces the moral freedom of humanity, of release from the tyranny of sin, from envy, from disappointment, from degradation, and in place thereof to give enjoyment, rest, and ultimately heaven. Yet men hesitate to believe the glad news, or to receive those who bring it. Is it not surprising that men should reject a Gospel so thoroughly adapted to their moral need. See the folly of unbelief, in that it will not accept a divine freedom of soul when benevolently offered. The tendency of all unbelief is to intensify the slavery of the moral nature. 2. *The message he proclaimed was wonderfully simple.* It was simply a message of freedom. True, at certain points this proclamation of Israel's freedom bordered on the supernatural and sublime, as when associated with the mystery of the burning bush, with the progressive revelation of the name of God, and with the difficulties to be overcome in the future; yet this was but natural, as freedom, wherever found, must inevitably be connected with mystery, as it is the work of God. Yet the message of freedom to Israel was simple. Their bondage was acknowledged. Here is a leader. They have the power of numbers; They have the aid of Heaven. What great mystery, then, in its practical side, could their freedom present? And so the truth of the Gospel presented for the credence of humanity is simple. It is but a message of moral freedom. True, there are points at which it enters into the mystery of God; but this fact ought to make the freedom more probable, as it is an indication of Divine thought and energy. But unbelief is associated with prejudice, sees difficulties in the most simple truth, and even rejects a freedom which one effort to attain would demonstrate to be true. 3. *The message he proclaimed was Divinely authenticated.* The Israelites were not called merely to receive the tidings of their freedom upon the bare word of Moses, although that ought to have commanded their attention, but upon the evidence of the Divine power. Moses was empowered to work miracles before them, so that, reasoning from the evidence of sense, they might attain ultimately to the evidence of faith. But miracles will not convince a sceptic. His unbelief will question their reality. Scepticism is well-nigh invincible. It is certainly unreasonable. The gospel of freedom now proclaimed to men is well authenticated by prophecy, and miracle, by its internal consistency and purity, and by its external achievements and progress. It bears Divine credentials. Yet men will not believe it. They call it fable Truly God might well tell Moses that the first sign would not win the confidence of Israel, even though the message he proclaimed was what they needed, was simple in its meaning, was well authenticated in its evidence, and sublimely grand in its destiny. Ministers of Christ know right well, and may truly wonder, that their hearers do not more often embrace the truth upon its first presentation to them, impelled not only by the woe of sin, but also by the well-authenticated grace of God. II. That the Divine Being mercifully makes provision for the conviction and persuasion of men in reference to the reality of the truth proclaimed; notwithstanding their confirmed unbelief. "And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken to thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river," etc. 1. *This method of treatment is considerate.* It would be considerate towards the Israelites; it recognised their degraded position, and their consequent difficulty of entering into a message of freedom, however simple in its terms. Much of the unbelief

of the Gospel arises from the moral degradation of men. They consider the freedom of a degraded soul an improbability. This method of treatment is considerate toward the mental and moral condition of the race, and gives men repeated opportunities for examination in reference to the truth. The truth is not arbitrary in its demand of credence. It gives every facility for complete investigation. In fact it is often much more considerate than many who pretend to advocate its claims. 2. *This method of treatment is merciful.* The Divine Being might have required the Israelites to have credited the message of their freedom on the bare word of Moses; or, He might have given them one token of approval, and then have left them to their own reasonings and effort. But not so. He gave sign after sign, to convince them of the necessity and likelihood of their freedom as declared by Moses. So, we have been repeatedly urged to welcome the salvation of Christ, the glad tidings of the Gospel. Have we not had many tokens of its divinity? Truly we have. God might have left Himself without a witness, but He has not done so, and this merciful arrangement is in harmony with the holy and kindly freedom He offers to our souls. 3. *This method of treatment is condescending.* **III. That the persistent unbelief of men is likely to awaken evidences of truth indicative of the Divine displeasure.** "And the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land." 1. *Evidences that recall past sorrows.* Moses was to take water from the river, and it should be turned into blood. This would remind the Israelites of the murder of their children in those waters. So if we are persistent in our unbelief, God can make recollections of past grief come anew to our minds with deep significance of woe, to give emphasis to the Gospel He wishes us to welcome. 2. *Evidences prophetic of future woe.* Who can tell the depth of meaning there would be to Israel in this miracle of the water being turned into blood? It would indicate a strange and unhappy transition in their condition, if they embraced not the message of Moses. And so God will send evidence of the truth to convince the unbelieving which shall but faintly foreshadow their end if they obey not the Gospel.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 8. These signs were spoken to the ear of reason, if not of sense:—"*They will believe the voice of the latter sign.*" This is not, perhaps, to be understood as a positive affirmation; for the next verse intimates the possibility that they may require still further evidence. The words appear designed to express the *intrinsic adaptedness* of the signs to produce belief, or the effect which might be reasonably anticipated from their exhibition. The circumstance strikingly shews the extent of the Divine indulgence. The perverse rejection of the great sign alone would clearly show them unworthy of being favoured with another. But God multiplies mercies, even when judgments are most richly deserved. He gives sign upon sign, as well as line upon line [*Bush*].

That a true minister, notwitstanding 1. His call. 2. His spiritual preparation. 3. His knowledge of the Divine name. 4. His supreme moral power—and, 5. Intimate communion with God — is exposed to the unbelief of those whom he seeks to benefit.

Miracles at first may miss their end, and not persuade men to faith.

Second miracles may do that which the first failed to effect.

God's word and promise alone can make miracles themselves effectual means of faith.

Miracles have voices which should command faith and obedience.

"*The voice of the first sign:*"—I. It speaks of the thraldrom of man. II. It speaks of the inability of man to liberate himself therefrom. III. It speaks of the agency that God has provided for the freedom of man. IV. It speaks of the strange unwillingness of man to credit the tidings of freedom.

Verse 9. "*Take of the water of the river*"— that is, of the river Nile. Thus, it would appear, was a miracle to be wrought for the confirmation of Moses' calling before the Israelites, and not before the Egyptians; for in that mentioned (Chapter vii. 17), the waters *in* the river were to be turned into blood; here the water *taken out* of the river, this was done before the elders of Israel; but that was turned into blood before Pharaoh, and continued so seven days, to his great annoyance.

The Nile was venerated as a divinity, under the name Hapi, cognate, if not identical, with Apis. Its waters were therefore regarded as sacred, and highly esteemed as salubrious to the drinker, and fertilizing to the soil. If Moses was endowed with the power to turn these waters into blood, it was a pledge that his delegated power should prevail over all the power of Egypt.

This sign also denoted that the time was now at hand when God would judge the Egyptians for the death of the Hebrew infants, whose blood they had shed in the waters.

Some would yield to the evidence of the first miracle; others would hesitate till they had seen the second; and others would not believe till they had seen the water of the Nile turned into blood, when poured upon the dry ground [*A. Clarke*].

The obstinacy of unbelief:—It will reject the truth. 1. In opposition to the word of Him by whom it is brought. 2. In opposition to the Divine power by which it is accompanied. 3. In opposition to the benevolent design it contemplates. 4. In opposition to accumulative demonstration.

God trebleth His indulgence to help the infirmities of His servants.

It is natural to sinful man to mistrust the wonders of God.

Such incredulity may discourage God's wonder-working instruments in their work.

God knoweth this evil of men, and permits it— but not approves it.

God works not only strange, but terrible signs to make sinners believe

When God giveth forth His word, water shall blood the land, not water it.

When waters are made blood-guilty, they are justly turned into blood.

Signs demonstrative of God's power, unto His servants, are vindictive unto His enemies.

God is willing more abundantly to show the truth of His word, and is not sparing in His proofs; the multitude and variety of the miracles corroborate the evidence.

Unbelief shall be left inexcusable, and convicted of a wilful obstinacy.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH —Verses 10—14.

THE OBJECTIONS MADE TO RELIGIOUS SERVICE.

I. These objections were made after God had given him a full insight into the nature of the service required. 1. *The insight given to Moses was infallible.* It had been Divinely imparted. God had appeared to him in the burning bush, had informed him of the bitter servitude of Israel, and of His intention to achieve their freedom through his instrumentality. Moses could not be mistaken in all this. His observation and hearing had not been deceived. He could retrace his own mental and moral experience occasioned by the phenomenon. Nor was the burning bush the only token that he had received, but he had also long communion with God. The Divine name, in all its significance and grandeur was unfolded to the vision of his soul. And the sacred presence before which he stood, had made him feel that his mission to Israel was a solemn reality, requiring all the energy and devotion of his nature. Thus, had an insight into the nature —requirements—success—and method of his work been Divinely and infallibly communicated to him. And good people in these days have an equally infallible insight into the religious service that is required of them. It is found in the Bible. It is given in the life of Christ. It is seen in the moral want of

humanity. They learn it not from the burning bramble-bush, not from the audible voice of God, not from the miraculous turning of rods into serpents, but in hours of quiet communion with the Infinite; in times of severe grief the soul is infallibly taught the meaning of these great calls to service. 2. *The insight given into the nature of this service was forceful.* What could have been more sublime, more instructive, more impressive, and consequently more calculated to command attention and obedience, than a service made known by such a grand display of heavenly glory, of the Divine name, and of the Divine power. This was designed to lend moral force to the duty made known to the desert shepherd. And so in these days our calls to spiritual service come to us full of heavenly meaning and grandeur. They gather emphasis from our lonely and dependent condition, from the fact that they come from God, from the fact that they plead the cross of Christ as a claim upon our obedience, from the fact that all the motives of the Bible are on their side, and from the fact that there is given a Divine inspiration to enable us to perform them. Every enlightened conscience knows the forcefulness of these Divine appeals. Let us not be found disobedient to duty so impressively made known, so solemnly required, and so awful in its possibility of eternal retribution. 3. *The insight given into the nature of this service was sympathetic.* God did not merely tell Moses of the work he had to perform in relation to the freedom of Israel, and then withdraw Himself from the vision of the bewildered shepherd, but remained for a length of time in conversation with him, answering questions, dispelling doubts, removing difficulties, giving a new revelation of the Supreme life, and finally delegating to him the Divine power. Hence the Divine Being manifested the truest sympathy, the sympathy of friendly intercourse and help, with Moses in his very arduous undertaking. "Certainly I will be with thee,"—nothing could have been more sympathetic than this. And so, to-day, good men have given to them a sympathetic insight into the service that is required of them. God bears with their moral weakness. Answers their objection. Forewarns them of difficulty. Inspires them with bright hopes. Announces Himself as their unerring Friend and Guide. II. These objections frequently arise from an undue consciousness of self. 1. *From a consciousness of natural infirmity.* "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent," etc. Moses has now narrowed the mission to himself and his own ability for it, leaving altogether out of calculation his heavenly preparation, and the Divine promise of help. And here is the weakness of an undue consciousness of self, in that it tends to put God out of our service. Unaided human ability cannot achieve the service of God. If Moses had been eloquent he could not have accomplished the freedom of Israel without the Divine aid. In undertaking moral service, men must not think *too much* about their own physical, mental, or moral capabilities, but mainly of Him who has called them to the work. He can make provision for all their defects. It is quite true that many good people have a natural hindrance to religious work—they are slow of speech—they find it difficult to pray in a prayer meeting—or to undertake any duty requiring publicity—but this does not place them outside the range of service. God sometimes calls such to achieve the freedom of the slave. It ought to inspire within them a more thorough determination to rely on Divine help. Silence is often more eloquent and valuable than speech. 2. *From a supposition of moral incapacity.* Moses did not think himself capable of securing the freedom of a vast nation like Israel, a nation of such historic grandeur, and of such holy moral relationships and covenant, hence distrustful of self, he cried, "Who am I?" And this feeling of incapacity is frequently shared by good men when they are called to the performance of religious service. And apart from the Divine call, preparation, and help, all men are totally unfit for such work, but the vision of heaven and the revelation of God are calculated to lift them above their natural infirmities, to place them on a level with their duty, and enable them to rise superior to difficulty. The call of God is calculated to educate all the sublime tendencies of the soul, and

render men fit for heroic toil. 3. *That rather than self, God must be the supreme idea of the soul when about to enter upon religious service.* At such times the good man must forget his natural infirmity for service in the all-absorbing thought of the Divine love, companionship, and power. His soul must rest in the arms of the Infinite, and catching the smile of the Divine face, it will ever be cheered, and inspired for duty, and in the happiness of such an experience, all painful thoughts of self will be excluded from the mind. The Christian service of men in these days retains too feebly the thought of God, hence its unrest, its inefficiency. Our hearts should be a temple in which every act of service should be rendered to the Infinite. **III. These objections do not sufficiently regard the efficiency of the Divine help that is promised in the service.** "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." 1. *The Divine help is adapted to our natural infirmity.* God promised to aid the speech of Moses. And so it is now. God always meets men, in the performance of their religious service, at the point of their weakness. The natural powers of men are used in the missions of God. The Divine plan is to strengthen them if weak; to guide them if strong. If our natural infirmity is diffidence, God will give us courage. He sends power and help to men in that department of soul where it is most needed. It is far better to have God joined to our infirmity, than to have the eloquent tongue without Him. Thus there are times when an infirmity may be of inestimable advantage to a Christian worker. 2. *The Divine help is adapted to our full requirement.* God did not merely promise to aid the speech of Moses, but also to teach him what he should say. So in the Christian service of to-day, good men are not merely aided in the line of their natural infirmity, but also to the extent of their requirement. See the *variety* of the Divine help given to Moses: the vision of the bush; the revelation of the great Name; an insight into the success of his mission; the miracle. Thus, not merely was he aided in speech, but in all the need of his soul. A grand encouragement for Christian workers to-day. God is with us to the full extent of our want. **IV. These objections are a reflection on the propriety of the Divine selection for the service.** "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth," etc. 1. *This method of conduct is ungrateful.* Instead of mentioning this one natural infirmity, Moses ought to have been thankful that he had so many aids to the work required of him. Was the impediment of speech more to him than the vision, revelation, and miracles with which he had been favoured? Certainly not. Hence his ingratitude. Moses has many imitators to-day. Men are called to religious service. But instead of reviewing their favourable circumstances, the holy qualifications that have been imparted to their souls, they fix their attention upon one drawback until they complain and become discontented. What ingratitude! 2. *This method of conduct is irreverent.* Moses ought to have remembered that he was in converse with God, that he was commanded by God to this work. This ought to have subdued his mind. It ought to have silenced objection. He is not now paying sufficient deference to the Divine presence. So, good men should ever remember that it is God who calls them to service, and that therefore they must merge all their natural reasonings into a faithful compliance with His will. We must be more reverent in our service-relations with Heaven. **V. These objections do not sufficiently recognise the dignity and honour which the service will command.** 1. *There was the honour of achieving the freedom of a vast nation.* 2. *There was the honour of conquering a tyrant king.* 3. *There was the honour of becoming the Lawgiver of the world.* All religious service is honourable, and this is especially shewn in the history of Moses. It elevated him from the sheepfold to the throne. Instead of the crook it gave him the sceptre. And many a man, whose name is known to fame and history, has gained eminence through co-operation with the providence of God, and undertaking a work for the moral good of men. If men did but realise the dignity of religious service, they would never be deterred from it by their own natural infirmities. **VI. These objections are liable to awaken the**

Divine displeasure. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." 1. *This anger may be manifested in our removal from service.* 2. *This anger may be manifested by the positive infliction of penalty.* 3. *This anger may occasion our moral ruin.* It is dangerous to trifle or contend with the Divine call to religious duty. There is a point beyond which God will not permit a human soul to do so. Our prompt obedience will be the most welcome to heaven, the most effective in service, and the most kindly to others, whom our disobedience might have called into perilous prominence. Aaron. LEARN:—1. *Good men ought to know better than to object to the service of God.* 2. *That in the service of God, men find the highest reward.* 3. *That in the service of God, men attaineth divinest immortality.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 10. 1. Some suppose that Moses being astonished with God's glory, since his beginning to talk with Him, which they gather was three days, one after another, was thus disabled in the use of his tongue, and though eloquent before, yet now in this Divine mission he seemed a child unto himself, and unable to speak to men. *(Philo, Origin, Gregory).* But this supposition is plainly against the meaning of the text, which is as if Moses had said, "I have not only wanted eloquence heretofore, but ever since thou has spoken to me. I have not found this fault amended." And if he had only at this time been taken with a lack of words, there would have been no need for the oratorical help of Aaron afterwards.

2. Some imagine that Moses had been a shepherd so long that he had, to a large extent, lost the power of words.

3. Some imagine that Moses meant his inability to speak to Pharoah in the Egyptian tongue.

4. Some imagine that Moses had a natural impediment in his speech.

5. Probably Moses found a difficulty in readily expressing his thoughts. He was slow of speech. And such an instrument did God choose for his own greater glory; and thus doth Moses write of himself, laying open his imperfections, and backwardness in obeying God's calling in humility; whereby we must also learn to lay open and confess our own faults, that they may be forgiven unto us out of God's mercy [*Mayer*].

Moses had not that first, second, or third of an orator, elocution, or pronounciation. And yet God made choice of him rather than eloquent Aaron to pray (Exodus xvii. 12). Not gifts but graces prevail in prayer [*Trapp*].

Moses still continues backward to the service God had designed him for; we can no longer impute it to humility and modesty, but must own that there was too much of cowardice, slothfulness, and unbelief in it. Moses pleads that he was no orator. He was a man of clear head, great thought, and solid judgment, but had not a voluble tongue, or ready utterance. We must not judge of men by the readiness and fluency of their discourse. What he said distilled as the dew. Christ's disciples were no orators, till the spirit made them such [*Henry and Scott*].

God does not always make it appear that he hath furnished men for services till they are actually called to engage in them, but we may depend upon Him to qualify us for whatever He commands us to do. All knowledge, wisdom, and utterance, with every good gift, are derived from Him; but many endowments are supposed needful or useful in the public service of God and His Church, which He pours contempt upon, as mere tinsel, worthless, if not pernicious. Such are all the *studied* and *affected* arts of human oratory, which the great apostle would not condescend to employ, "that the faith" of the people "should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God" [*Scott*].

Let a man look unto himself, and measure his work by himself, and the movement of his life will be downward and exhaustive. Let him look away from himself to the Inspirer of his life,

and the Divine reward of his labours, and he will not so much as see the difficulties which may stand ever so thickly in his way [*City Temple*].

Infirmity of faith maketh those called by God to object to the service He commands of them.

Miracles sometimes will not silence such objections of doubting souls.

Unwilling souls for God's work are apt to plead real infirmities for excuse.

Weakness of faith will urge against God's call, not only self-insufficiency, but also the lack of Divine supply in the direction of infirmity.

Infirmity in speech may be an argument to men against the work of God, but it is not to God Himself.

Eloquence.

I. "I am not eloquent." Then true eloquence may have its use:—1. *To explain Divine Truth.* 2. *To inspire men with the thought of freedom.* 3. *To manifest the perfection of the gift of speech.*

II. "I am not eloquent." Then do not condemn men who are. Some people are in the habit of condemning in others what they do not find in themselves. Many public speakers denounce their eloquent compeers for the simple reason that they are not so gifted themselves.

III. "I am not eloquent." Then do not envy those who are acknowledged to be so. Nature has unequally distributed her gifts. She has given the thinking power to one, the speaking power to another. If we have not eloquence we have some other equally valuable talent in its place. Let us therefore be thankful, not envious.

IV. "I am not eloquent." Then the Lord can use a feeble instrumentality. We should have antecedently imagined that God would have selected Aaron for the work of Israel's freedom. But not so. God can send a great message by a man of slow tongue. This will enhance the Divine glory.

V. "I am not eloquent." Then words are not the chief conditions of service. In the service of the good, ideas—thoughts—emotions—and moral influences occupy a more prominent place than mere words.

VI. "I am not eloquent." Then do not grumble, but seek the Divine aid in your infirmity. If the time spent in lamenting our natural infirmities was only occupied in prayer to God for help in our work, and for his blessing thereon, the world would soon be emancipated from the bondage of sin.

Slowness of Speech.

"*But I am slow of speech.*" **I. An Infirmity. II. A Discretion. III. A Discipline.**

Verse 11. The Hebrews, in giving a reason why the Lord speaketh of His making dumb, and deaf, and blind, as well as giving a mouth to speak, say, that these things were spoken in allusion to His past operations with Moses; because, when he had slain the Egyptian that wronged the Hebrew, and was by Pharaoh therefore committed to the gaoler, the gaoler was immediately smitten with blindness, and so Moses had opportunity to escape from him, and the King, seeing that he fled, was stricken dumb, so that he could not speak nor make any sign to have him apprehended again. But whether this is true or not, it is certain that God can thus in judgment smite whom it pleaseth Him, as He did the Sodomites with blindness [*Mayer*].

To balance the weakness of Moses, God here reminds him of his own power. To encourage him in this great undertaking. He repeats the promise of His presence, not only in general, but in particular [*Henry and Scott*].

By this appeal to Moses respecting the origin of the human faculties, God would have him to infer, that he who bestowed them upon the first man, could, with infinite ease, endow him with those which were lacking, and remedy those which were imperfect [*Bush*].

How sublime is the rebuke of God! Cannot the Maker of man's mouth

touch with eloquence the lips which He has fashioned? What is human eloquence but the expression of Divine music? Pedantic rhetoricians may fashion rules of their own for the refinement of human speech; but he who waits diligently upon God, and whose purpose is to know the will of God, that he may speak it to men—will be entrusted with an eloquence rhythmic as the sea, and startling as the thunder. Rhetoric is the gift of God. Eloquence is not a merely human attainment. The secret of convincing and persuasive speech is put into the hearts of those who forget themselves in the homage of God and truth [*City Temple*].

Jehovah indulgeth his weak servants to object, that he may multiply satisfaction to their doubts.

God teacheth and checketh his servants sometimes by questioning with them.

Man's mouth is from God, and so ought the use of it to be.

Defects of speech and senses are incident to some amongst men.

The Divine Creatorship.

I. Should silence the voice of complaint under natural infirmities.

II. Should become an argument for the ready performance of any mission on which we may be divinely sent.

III. Should lead us reverently to acknowledge the Sovereignity of God in the varied allotments of life.

Natural Infirmities in Relation to Moral Service.

I. That God does not always see fit to remove natural infirmities from those who are commissioned to important service:—1. *They keep us humble.* 2. *They remind us of God.* 3. *They prompt us to prayer.*

II. That God renders natural impediments effective to the clear manifestation of His power and glory:—1. *Should win our submission.* 2. *Should gain our confidence.* 3. *Should inspire our praise.*

III. That God so far compassionates our natural infirmities as to relieve them by congenial and efficient help:—1. *Fraternal.* 2. *Adapted to need.* 3. *Constant.*

Verse 12. There is no mouth into which God cannot put his words. Balaam's ass was enabled by God to convince his master [*Trapp*].

God's injunction of duty justly follows his satisfaction to doubts.

God utters successive injunctions to duty, even though men try to withdraw from them.

God's promise of presence and influence aids his injunctions, and renders them more welcome to his servants.

A mouth divinely instructed, is mighty in the word of wisdom.

I. The Divine Commission.

II. The Divine Companionship.

III. The Divine Instruction.

Verse 13. Does not this hold up to us a faithful mirror, in which we can see our hearts reflected? Truly it does. We are more ready to trust anything than the living God. We move along, with bold decision, when we possess the countenance and support of a poor frail mortal like ourselves; but we falter, hesitate, and demur, when we have the light of the master's countenance to cheer us, and the strength of His omnipotent arm to support us [*C. H. M.*]

Send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." 1. Some think that Moses meant his brother Aaron, who was older, and of more eloquent speech; but no mention had yet been made of Aaron, whom Moses knew not to be alive till the Lord told him. (Verse 18).

2. Some think that Joshua was meant, whom God revealed to Moses as the Leader of Israel into the Land of Promise. This would make Moses appear somewhat envious of Joshua.

3. The majority of the ancient writers think that Moses here speaks of the Messiah.

4. The meaning of Moses is, that

whereas God might find out many more fit than himself, He would send by their hand, whoever they might be.

Unbelief has still something to oppose against God's call and promise.

A weak faith is ever willing to avoid the difficulty of work.

Infirm believers are willing to put off God's work to any from themselves.

The weak in faith would yet have them to be of God's sending that shall be employed for the freedom of the Church.

An Evasion of Spiritual Work.

I. He recognised the necessity that the work should be accomplished. Moses did not cast a doubt upon the need, utility of the mission given to him; yea, he virtually acknowledged that it was worthy of more able instrumentality. Like many to-day. They acknowledge that certain work in connection with the Church ought to be done. But that is all.

II. He manifested a disposition to shrink from achieving the work himself. There are hundreds in our churches who acknowledge the need of certain religious enterprise, but they do nothing to it themselves.

III. He expressed a desire that some other person should be called to, and entrusted with, the work. This course is often pursued by people. The very enterprise that they refuse to undertake themselves, they propose should be carried out by another. They hope thus to relieve themselves of its difficulty.

IV. He was in danger of losing the honour of the work to which he was called. God might have refused to send Moses after all this indolence and unbelief. People do not know the moral good and honour they miss by refusing the work of the Church.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH—*Verses* 14—17.

Mutual Aid in Religious Work.

I. That sometimes good men are called to undertake a work, against the performance of which they imagine themselves to have a natural impediment. Moses was called to go and achieve the freedom of Israel. But he says that he is a man slow of speech, and that as he is unlikely to succeed in such an undertaking, he asks that God will send another in his stead. Thus Moses was designated to a work, against the performance of which he imagined himself to have a natural infirmity, the lack of ready utterance 1. *Men should be certain that their so-called impediment is a real hindrance in the service to which they are sent.* Was Moses certain that his lack of speech would prove a real hindrance in the performance of his mission, especially when he considered the preparation he had already received, and the miracles he had been empowered to work? If so, he was mistaken. He looked more on the surface of things than into their depths. He probably regarded his own comfort more than the real bearing of his infirmity upon his mission. He wanted an excuse, and found one in his natural deficiency of language. He probably wanted to appear before Israel as some great one. He wanted to accomplished his mission without encountering difficulty. He looked more at secondary causes than at primary, more at himself than at God and his promised help. And men who do this will be sure to have infirmities, fancied or real. Thus we are not quite so sure that Moses was right in supposing that his lack of speech was a *real* hindrance to his mission. If he had been gifted in the direction of language, he might have been in danger of betraying his mission by indiscretion. It is a dangerous thing for a man that has moral power and a great mission to have the gift of language, he will almost be sure to talk too much about the honour of his calling, and the power he has to work miracles. Many such enterprises have been wrecked by so-called

eloquence. True, the public like a man that can talk; he is more likely to become a general favourite; he may win their pleasantry, but will he achieve their moral conviction? Many a minister would have been more successful in his work if he had been more slow of tongue. Thus, before we lament our natural impediment to service, and say that God has called the wrong man for the work, we must look into the reality of things, and see whether our infirmity is a real hindrance or not. In these days when people are called to work, they at once refer to their infirmity and unfitness for it, but their real infirmity is not so much their slowness of speech, as this unbelief and unwillingness to follow the Divine command. They have not the moral courage to encounter difficulty. They think more of Pharaoh and his army than of the Divine companionship that has promised to be with them. 2. *But we admit that sometimes men are called to religious service against the performance of which they have a natural impediment.* Sometimes men of little courage are sent on errands which require them to be brave; sometimes men of little faith are sent on errands which require them to have strong confidence in the Unseen; sometimes men of slow speech are sent to give the law of God to the assembled multitudes at Sinai. And why this apparent anomaly and invertion of things. (1.) *Is it not an injustice on the part of the Divine requirement.* Can God fully expect men of small courage to go to Pharaoh and demand the freedom of a nation. It is just, because with the command He gives the moral energy necessary for its execution. He gives the timid man the stimulus of the vision. He gives him the inspiration of a miracle. (2.) *Its design is to educate man on the side of his weakness.* The man lacks courage. The mission requires it. God awakens it. Hence the man who left home a coward, returns a hero. Moses hesitated to undertake the journey to Israel; he did not hesitate to take that still more formidable journey up the mountain of Nebo, into the arms of death. No; the discipline of the mission has been effectual. He has been educated thereby on the side of his weakness. Thus the calling of men to work for which they are antecedently unfitted, is purely educational in its design. (3.) *It is to render the mission all the more triumphant when accomplished.* The strong man is familiar with victory, it has ceased to awaken him to enthusiasm as once it did. But for the weak to be the victorious is a new thing, it occasions a new experience, and renders the occasion worthy of more triumphant plaudits. It is the distinguishing glory of Christianity that it makes provision for the victory of the weak who have within their souls the grace of God. **II. That at such time good men require the aid of others whose talents compensate for their infirmity.** Sometimes the Divine discipline requires that the weak shall go alone to the mission, for their greater spiritual good and honour, but in the case before us so arduous was the duty, so destitute were the times of religious light, and so vague were the ideas of men on moral service, that God responded to the implied wish of Moses, and gave him the direct help he needed. God does not entirely leave men of natural infirmity alone in their Christian service, but sends them external aid, most helpful and welcome. 1. *This help was adapted to the infirmity of Moses.* "Is not Aaron, the Levite, thy brother? I know that he can speak well." Moses was a thinker. So there is a variety of gifts and talent in the Church. Some have the gift of wealth. Others have the gift of originality. Others have the gift of legislation. Others have the gift of great influence. One star differeth from another star in glory. How happy when the whole system of Christian work is revolving in harmony, giving light and hope to the universe. Thus the weak catch the light and impetus of the strong, and the lack of talent in one direction is made up by its supply in another. It is by this combination of Christian talent that all great enterprises will be carried to their successful issue. Let no Christian speaker refuse to aid a Christian thinker. The one is the complement of the other. 2. *This help was arranged by the providence of God.* "And also, behold He cometh forth to meet thee." (1.) *As to the time of meeting.* (2.) *As to the place of meeting.* (3.) *As to*

the purpose of meeting. Thus the useful combination of talent in the enterprise of human emancipation from moral evil has the Divine sanction, its blending is arranged by the providence of God, and its entire out-working is superintended by Him. "I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do." 3. *The help was founded upon and rendered welcome by family relationship.* "Thy brother." God did not bring a stranger to the aid of Moses. Moses could not well have communicated his history, his moral experiences to such an one, but he was glad to meet his brother, the sadness of his new mission was removed by the joyful interview, and together, animated by new impulses of hope, they would look over their work and enter into each other's feelings respecting it. The talents of a family are variously distributed, and when all are consecrated to the Divine service, one may aid another in the great spiritual enterprise of his life. III. That such co-operation renders religious work much more jubilant and successful. 1. *It is happy.* It is adapted to our weak conditions of faith. God is unseen and we are liable to think him distant from us in our work. His companionship seems unreal, and communion with Him is, at times, very difficult. Our unbelief robs us of the great repose and hope we ought to experience in His presence. But Aaron was seen by Moses. They could converse one with the other. They could walk together, not by faith, but by sight. And in converse with each other they might rise into higher communion with God. So mutual help in religious service is happy, it links soul to soul. and becomes the inspiration of richer communion with heaven. 2. *It is sympathetic.* 3. *It is hopeful.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 14. The literal rendering of the clause is, "Is not Aaron thy brother, the Levite"? which we cannot but understand as implying, that in consequence of Moses' unbelieving waywardness on this occasion, the distinguishing honour of the priesthood, and of being the official head of the house of Levi, the person in whom the dignity of that name should be especially centred, which would otherwise have been bestowed upon him, should now be conferred upon his brother Aaron, and perpetuated in his family. In this fact the expression of the Lord's anger consisted. Otherwise, how was Aaron any more the Levite than Moses? We find accordingly the forfeited privilege of Moses thus secured to Aaron (1 Chron. xxiii, 13). This, we suppose would have been the honour of Moses, had he yielded a ready obedience to the divine mandate. The event teaches us that those who decline the labour and hazard connected with the call of God to a special service, may thereby forfeit and forego a blessing of which they little dream [*Bush*].

Thus Moses forfeited the dignity of being Jehovah's sole instrument in that glorious work He was about to accomplish.

No wonder that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. Where God commandeth, there to ask a reason is presumption; but to oppose reason, is a kind of rebellion [*Trapp*].

Moreover, God condescended so far to the weakness of Moses, as to find him a coadjutor in his mission to the children of Israel and to the King of Egypt. Aaron could speak well. Moses was a thinker; Aaron was a speaker. Aaron was to be to Moses instead of a mouth, and Moses was to be to Aaron instead of God. Thus one man has to be the complement of another. No one man has all gifts and graces. The best and ablest of us cannot do without our brother. There is to be a division of labour in the great work of conquering the world for God. The thinker works; so does the speaker; so does the writer. We are a chain; not merely isolated links; we belong to one another, and only by fraternal and zealous co-operation can we secure the great results possible to faith and labour. Some men are fruitful of suggestion. They have

wondrous powers of indication; but there their special power ends. Other men have great gifts of *expression*; they can put thoughts into the best words; they have the power of music; they can charm and persuade. Such men are not to undervalue one another; they are to co-operate as fellow-labourers in the Kingdom of God [*City Temple*].

Multiplied oppositions to God's call may provoke Him to be angry with His servants.

When the Divine promise cannot persuade, God's anger drives His servants from their excuses.

When one refuseth God's work in redeeming His Church, He knoweth others to use for it.

God indulgeth the weakness of His servants to give associates, when they decline to go alone.

God's knowledge of persons, relations, and conditions, puts them in a capacity to do His work.

God moveth the hearts of people sometimes to the same work when they are in remote places.

Some hearts are more ready to move about God's work than others.

Providence moveth persons to meet, for carrying on His work, when they are at a distance.

God appointeth meetings of friends to enhance the welfare of His Church.

God useth the gladness of some to help on the deadness of others in His work.

The Two Brothers.

I. As educated by different methods. Moses was educated in the palace of Egypt. In the desert. By the vision. By the miracles. Aaron was educated by his parents. Little is known of his early training. He was incidentally called into history. One good natural gift may be fortune and fame to a man. Moses was the greater man, yet Aaron, though of less moral energy, was useful to him. Smaller souls have their mission. Small souls are often gifted with speech. The education of these two brothers had led to different results. It is not the tendency of education to bring all men to one level of talent, but to draw out their distinctive gifts, for the common good of humanity.

II. As meeting after a long separation. 1. *The meeting was providential.* 2. *The meeting had a moral and national significance.* 3. *The meeting was welcome to the brothers.* What is more pleasing than the reunion of the members of a family after a long absence? What narratives each brother would record to the other. Especially would they talk about their new mission, and its likelihood of success. These brothers met in a wilderness. Joy and friendship is independent of locality. The brethren of the Christian Chuch will one day meet again, not in the wilderness, but in the paradise of God.

III. As uniting in a grand enterprise. These two brothers are going to accomplish the freedom of Israel! To the world, a folly; to faith, a victory. Brothers should always join in the enterprises of moral freedom. They should unitedly place themselves in a line with the providence of God.

IV. As entering upon an important future. What will be the issue of this meeting? Who can tell? It will have an influence upon both lives. All the casual meetings of life are important in their bearing upon present work and future destiny.

V. As reflecting commendation upon their family. Was it not a great honour to Amram and Jochebed that two of their sons should be called to be the deliverers of Israel? Sons honour their parents when they undertake an enterprise for the good of men. Brothers cannot be better united than in the cause of God.

The Divine anger:—1. Often righteously provoked. 2. Often gentle in its reproof. 3. Truly benevolent in its disposition.

"*I know that he can speak well.*" **I. Then God takes knowledge of the varied talents of men.**

II. Then God will hold men responsible for their talents.

III. Then the talents of men cannot be better employed than in the service of the Church.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 18.

A True Recognition of Filial Duty.

I. It consists in a true recognition of Parental Authority. "And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt." Thus we find that Moses acknowledged the authority of his father-in-law, by asking his consent to a journey into Egypt. 1. *Moses was animated by honesty.* This Midianitish family had been very kind to him, they had given him a home when he was a wanderer; especially had the father of the family been his friend, in prompting the daughters to fetch the man who had protected them, in retaining him under his roof, and in his employment. Hence Moses could not honestly have left Jethro without his consent. He had become his servant, he must therefore acknowledge him as a master. He had become his son, he must therefore recognise him as a father. He had received his hospitality, he must therefore manifest gratitude in return. We have here a pattern worthy the imitation of all young men. Be honest in all your dealings with your parents. They have great claims upon you. Their attention to you in times of peril, the education they have given you, and the happy future they are opening to you, prove them to be your best friends, and therefore you ought in common honesty to recognise their authority over you. Especially should young men recognise the authority of their parents in the matter of leaving home; when the time come for them to quit the abode of their youth, it should be with the knowledge and consent of those who are so interested in them. The young man who leaves home with the blessing and prayer of his father carries a rich treasure with him, more valuable than gold. It will be the happiest remembrance of his after-life. Young men cannot be too open in their conduct with their parents. 2. *Moses was related by marriage.* He had married the daughter of Jethro, and was therefore under obligation to consult with him in the important movements of his life. Moses was evidently very sensitive to the claims of others. Many would have said that Jethro was only their father-in-law, and that therefore they were under no obligation to tell him their intentions. Marriage introduces a man into new relationships, it gives him new joys and new hopes, and also imposes new duties, which will ever be recognised by the true-hearted. Men cannot better show the worth of their social character than by recognizing the claims and opinions of those who may be distantly related to them. Let young men imitate the example of Moses, and consult the wish of their distant relatives prior to entering upon any great enterprise which may involve the welfare of those committed to their care. 3. *Moses was obligated by kindness.* As we have seen, Jethro had shewn him great generosity in providing him with a home, at the most destitute moment of his life. This required every return that Moses was capable of making. But Moses might have said that he had worked, that he had kept the flock of Jethro, in return for this kindness, and that this freed him from all obligation. He might have argued that Jethro was old and unacquainted with the requirements of life, and that he was man enough himself to know what was the most likely to enhance his future good, without consultation with anyone else. Many young men of the present day would have reasoned thus. But not so Moses. He was always responsive to kindness. He was a man of meek spirit. He knew that he had won the confidence of Jethro, and that therefore the old man would have no hesitation in allowing his daughter to accompany him on the destined journey. Some young men know that their parents cannot trust them, and this is one great reason why they seldom ask them to. Moses knew that the Divine claims were per-

fectly consistent with his recognition of the human responsibilities under which he was placed. God never requires a young man to go contrary to the prayerful wishes of a good and pious parent. A man is never too old to ask, and follow the judicious advice of his father. II. **It is compatible with silence in reference to the inner experiences of our spiritual life and work.** Moses only asked the consent of his father-in-law to visit his brethren in Egypt; he did not name the primary object of his journey. This was quite consistent, under the circumstances, with a true recognition of filial duty. 1. *Silence is not necessarily cunning.* Moses was not animated by a sinful motive to conceal from Jethro the object of his visit into Egypt, but by a prudential. He had no purpose o serve in acting clandestinely in the matter. He was going do nothing of which he would be ashamed; on the contrary, he was about to undertake a work required by heaven. Had he been actuated by a spirit of treachery, he would probably never have consulted with Jethro at all, but would have taken the matter entirely into his own hands. Cunning is always wicked, but never more so than when found in the family circle. In the home there should be freedom and frankness; one should never attmpt to impose on, or deceive, another. And when there is need of retaining in silence the deeper experiences of the soul, this can be done in perfect integrity, and in harmony with all the duties and requirements of filial love. 3. *Silence may be discreet.* It was so in the case of Moses. He had been favoured with a heavenly vision of remarkable significance. He had held communion with God. He had been divinely commissioned to undertake the freedom of Israel. If he had communicated all these experiences and facts to Jethro, he might have awakened prejudice, and rendered difficult his departure. Jethro might have derided his vanity. He might have considered him vain and deluded. He might have refused to permit him to go on such an errand. So, Christian workers must be careful how they talk about their soul-experiences; they are sacred, their meaning is not easily comprehended by the outer world, and even our nearest friends and companions are not always prepared to enter sympathetically into the visions, prayers, and toils of our moral life. Hence it is best to retain them within the privacy of our own hearts. These things penetrate deeper than any natural relationship, they enter into a realm where the spiritual and eternal take precedence of the natural and transitory. They are soul-histories; they cannot be uttered even by a child to his parent, and silence in reference to them, so far from being wilful, is discreet and consistent with filial duty. 3. *Silence may be self-protective.* Moses was about to enter upon a great work. It was an enterprise involving the destinies of empires. Had he communicated this fact to anyone, he might have put obstacles in his own path which would have been difficult to remove. Moses knew that the work with which he was entrusted had claims upon him as well as his father-in-law; he knew also which were the more authoritative. Hence this silence was needful to protect himself from misapprehension, to give his mission the opportunity of exerting its destined influence upon Israel, and to retain definite and influential the vision of heaven within his own soul. Many toils of Christian workers have been brought to naught by the lack of precautionary measures on the part of those who have been entrusted with them. **III. It should awaken kindly and judicious parental consideration and response.** "And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace." 1. *Sometimes the request should be granted.* Jethro made a favourable reply to the request of Moses. He did not unduly assert his parental authority. He recognized the age, the intelligence, the moral character, the wish of Moses, and felt that the request he made was likely to be right and reasonable, especially after so long an absence from his country. Some parents take a delight in an arbitrary assertion of their authority. They put no confidence in the moral rectitude of their children; they imagine evil where there is none;

they regard their movements with suspicion, and but seldom grant their requests. This kind of treatment is a fruitful source of disobedience on the part of children who, if they were properly managed, would be most dutiful. Parents should make it easy for their children to consult them in all their movements. They should not keep them in constant awe. They should take a delight in granting their requests, when for their good. By refusing a son permission to leave home you may be intercepting the agency which is to give freedom to a nation. You should recognise the probability that he is acting under a spiritual inspiration unknown to you. Jethro, in allowing Moses to go into Egypt, gave Israel a deliverer. Many a kind and judicious parent has given the world a true hero. 2. *Always goodwill should be expressed.* "Go in peace." Jethro did not manifest any token of disappointment or anger. Moses had been very helpful to him; had looked after his flock, and been useful to him in the way of service. We may presume therefore that Jethro would have been glad to retain him. Moses had also married his daughter, and on this account his departure would be regretted. But Jethro was generous. He rose above every feeling of regret into a full expression of goodwill. Parents cannot deal too generously with their children. A generous parent will make a generous child. Especially should parents express goodwill to their sons when they are about to leave home for the more active engagements of life; a kind word at such a time may be productive of a grand result in the future. 3. *Supremely should self be forgotten.* Jethro did not allow his own opinion or welfare to stand in the way of the departure of Moses. He forgot himself, sacrificed all his hopes and feelings of parental affection for his daughter, in the wish to grant the request of his son-in-law. Moses became the emancipator of Israel. And parents who are self-forgetful when the interests of their children are concerned may thereby bring them into the line of great usefulness and fame. The self-forgetfulness of the father will shine out and find its reward in the noble character and achievements of the son.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 19.

THE DIVINE PRECAUTION FOR THE SAFETY OF CHRISTIAN WORKERS.

I. It is sometimes manifested by removing good men and great workers from dangerous associations. The Divine Being uses every precaution for the safety of those employed in the great moral enterprises of humanity. He does not achieve their safety by miracles, but by prudence, even though it may involve delay in the completion of His plan. Sometimes we hear Christian workers say that they can go fearlessly into danger, because they are assured of the protection of heaven; they are not warranted in talking or acting thus, for, as a rule, God gives the truest safety to those who keep the furthest from peril. It is the Divine plan to take Moses away from Egypt until those who would will him are dead, rather than expose him to their continued rage. 1. *Christian workers are sometimes removed from the pride of high society.* Moses was providentially removed from the pride and splendour of the Egyptian palace, in order that he might retain the simplicity of a true servant of God. Gaiety is a great temptation to a Christian worker. It has ruined many men of early promise. How many workers in the world and in the Church to-day owe their utility and success to the fact that God removed them from the social allurements of their youth. True, the change from the palace of Pharaoh to the solitude of the desert may not have been welcome at first, but now it is the gladdest recollection of your life. 2. *Christian workers are sometimes removed from the contamination of great sin.* The palace of Pharaoh was most unfavourable to the cultivation of a pure life. It was the seat of despotism, and

despotism is generally allied to almost every other sin. In this royal court Moses was in danger of contamination, and that at the most susceptible period of his life. Hence God removed him from this school of vice, and brought him into the primitive simplicity of a desert family. Many a youthful worker for God has been ruined by a bad example. 3. *Christian workers are sometimes removed from the pedantry of great learning.* In the Egyptian palace Moses had every facility for acquiring knowledge, and there was a possibility that he might become mentally proud, and think the claims of religious service beneath his talent and education. Multitudes have been turned aside from moral service by the conceit of imagined wisdom. 4. *Christian workers are sometimes removed from physical peril.* **II. It is sometimes manifested by informing good men and great workers of the removal of danger.** God informs Moses that the men who sought his life are dead. See the folly of men who oppose themselves to the plans of heaven; they will soon die, and their death will be the signal of victory to the servant whose moral fitness has been enhanced by the solitude rendered necessary by their rage. Time aids the enterprises of heaven. Death subdues the hatred and passion of men. God is interested in the mission of His servants, so that He aids them in its fulfilment. **III. That the Divine Precaution does not allow an abandonment of the work committed to the good.** Moses was to go to his work again. Temporary perils and hindrances are not to entirely set aside Christian toil. Israel must be emancipated. The servant of God must fulfil his calling, even though he has to wait years in the desert before he can commence it.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 20.

The Journey to Egypt.

I. That a good man journeying on the service of God should take his family with him. "And Moses took his wife and sons," &c. When a man is going on the errands of God he should always take his family with him, that they may participate in his work, its responsibility, its sorrow, and its victory. Never go on any good errand without your family; it is well to teach the youthful feet to walk in obedience to God. Many a young man has learned the art, and gathered the spirit and desire for Christian service, by being taken to it by a godly parent. Are you journeying to heaven? Take your family with you. **II. That a good man journeying on the service of God should take his rod with him.** Never go on a journey of moral service without God. Especially if you are a minister of the Gospel, take the rod on your journey to Egypt. 1. *It will keep you humble.* It will remind you of your humble occupation in the desert, when you are tempted to pride, in the great service to which God has called you. Every Christian worker needs to have something within his soul to inspire humility. 2. *It will make you happy.* When you are desponding and sad, when the work does not open up to your effort as you would wish, the rod will remind you of the vision at the bush, and of the miracles wrought at the commencement of the mission. The reason why there are so many unhappy workers in the Church is because they have left the rod at home. 3. *It will make you powerful.* With this rod Moses was to work miracles. So if Christian workers had the rod of God in their hand, they would be able to show to the world much more effectively than they do, the holy tokens of their mission. To all the emancipators of the souls of men we would say, Never journey to Egypt without your rod. God has given it to you. He has consecrated it by His promise. He has made it the symbol of his power. You cannot afford to travel without it. No other rod can supply its place.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21–23.

THE ANTICIPATION OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

I. That very frequently God causes good men to anticipate Christian service. 1. *It is often anticipated as the hour of severe trial.* "See that thou do all those wonders *before Pharaoh*." It is almost instinctive in man to anticipate the future, especially if any important duty is awaiting him. And the mental experiences awakened by the thought of future service are often more painful than those which come upon the soul in the hour of its performance. It is right and wise of good men to anticipate religious work, that by prayer and thought they may get prepared for it, that it may not take them by surprise. This kind of anticipation will make them strong in their appearance before Pharaoh. But at such a time it is distrustful of the Divine promise and aid to harbour feelings of timidity and painful anxiety, as they will cover a Christian worker with defeat before he comes to the battle. Good men should not doubtfully anticipate the hour of service, they have everything on their side indicative of victory and success. The joyful experiences in the service, of vision and communion with heaven, will compensate for the difficulty of the work. 2. *It is often anticipated as the moral crisis of life.* Sometimes a man views a certain service demanded of him as most difficult and important—as more so than any before undertaken. All his fears are awakened, and surround the future toil with a gloom into which there scarcely gleams one ray of hope. The Pharaoh of difficulty is far more prominent in the picture than the God who has promised to help him. Moses no doubt felt that this conflict with Pharaoh would decide his entire future; if successful, he will proceed on the mission of Israel's emancipation; if not, he will return, a runaway from duty. Christian workers know what this means. They have frequently undertaken work with the feeling that its issue would have a very happy or injurious effect upon their lives. The destiny of a man has more than once depended upon the performance of one act of important service. 3. *It is often anticipated with a desire to make the best use of all the means placed at the disposal of the worker.* Moses feels that he must employ in the act of service all the instrumentalities that he can command. God has abundantly prepared him for the task. The Divine Being never sends any man to a great mission without placing at his disposal all the necessary aids to it, and he who neglects to make use of them is guilty of supreme folly and sin. When God sends Christian workers to appear before Pharaoh, He always provides them with a rod to take with them. If we spend much time in thinking over the agencies that are calculated to give success in the approaching mission, we shall be more likely to use them well, than if our only thought be of the difficulty of the work. 4. *It is often anticipated as shewing the intention of Providence in reference to the future.* After Moses had appeared before Pharaoh, and had passed through his hour of trial, his work would not be ended as the servant of God in the emancipation of Israel. But the result of this interview with Egypt's monarch would indicate new work. One service is always suggestive of, and leads into, another. Men, if they are willing, will find employment in the service of God to occupy the whole of their lives.

II. That when God causes good men to anticipate Christian service, He often informs them of their probable difficulties, and of the best method of work. 1. *Moses was informed of the moral obstinacy of Pharaoh.* The Divine Being is here said to harden the heart of Pharaoh. In subsequent chapters it is said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. We must therefore view both sides of the case, and find a principle of underlying harmony. God works directly and indirectly: the former when He exerts His own power in any undertaking, the

latter when He employs a secondary agency, or when He permits anything to be done. God presented his wish to Pharaoh in reference to the freedom of Israel, accompanied by evidences which ought to have wrought a conviction of duty within his heart, but, being rejected by him, they tended to moral obstinacy. The sun melts some substances while it hardens others, and so it is with the revelation of the Divine will in its effect upon human hearts. Pharaoh had the power to let Israel go free, but he had not the disposition. Moses was informed that he would have to contend with the unwillingness of this monarch. He was thus prepared to meet it. 2. *He was told to make use of all his resources of work.* "See that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand." The Christian has more resources of work than any other workman. They are God given. They were at one time miraculous. Now they are of a purely moral character, and are far more influential, and adapted to the present requirement of human experience and thought. If Christian workers would but make use of all the resources at their command, they would not so frequently have to lament failure, but they would achieve great victories of service. 3. *He was told of the method of argument which he was to employ.* "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." This language was authoritative in its demand, pathetic in its mention of Israel, and terrible in its threat to Pharaoh if he refused to grant the request of Moses. LESSONS. 1. *It is not wrong to anticipate Christian service.* 2. *That the voice of God should ever be heard by Christian workers.* 3. *That a remembrance of God should give hope to all our anticipations of great toil.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 21. God is at hand to instruct servants who are willing to undertake His work.

God alone can put it into the power of creatures to work miracles.

It is God's will that His servants should see and consider that power delegated.

God's will is that His miracles should be wrought before His proudest enemies.

Miracles sometimes will not prevail with persecutors to dismiss God's people.

Hardness of heart is that which makes men resist God's wonders.

When men harden themselves by sin, God often hardens them by judgment.

Moral obstinacy:—

1. A great sin of man.
2. A common sin of man.
3. A sad judgment on man.

MOSES BEFORE PHARAOH.

There are, of course, many difficulties, by us insoluble, in connexion with the sovereignty of God. This must be distinctly recognised, and no man must expect to have all mysteries dwarfed to the measure of his own understanding. The greatest of all mysteries is God himself, yet we are not therefore to doubt His existence, or to deny His loving Providence. The mere fact of any question being mysterious does not alter its truthfulness. Look at the text in this spirit; generally in relation to Divine sovereignty three things are clear.

I. That all nations are not equally honoured. This difference amongst the nations is not made by the Bible, or by any system of theology; it is simply a matter of fact. One nation is highly civilized, another is in the lowest condition of barbarism; yet all nations are under the government of the same gracious God. Every day the sun sees some nations worshipping the true Spirit, and others bowing to idols. This is matter of fact, however we may account for it.

II. That all individuals are not equally endowed. We are all men, and yet no two men are alike. In every history you find the great man and the little man, yet all are men, and acknowledge the same God.

III. That Divine judgment is regulated by Divine allotment. We open the Bible and find that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required, and that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for nations which enjoy a fuller revelation of Divine purpose and requirements. First of all, and last of all, it must be

our unalterable conviction that *God must do right*, or He is no longer God. Israel was under the sovereign control of the King of Egypt. He had property in them. Moses in the name of the Lord suddenly asked Pharaoh to give Israel their freedom. He was startled. He did not acknowledge the Lord. A political petition was presented to him, and he dealt with it on political grounds. It was not a spiritual question which was proposed to Pharaoh. It was exclusively a political question. It was therefore within this sphere that the Divine action was taken, and that action is fitly described in the text as a hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The question will then arise, what the meaning of that hardening was, and what useful results accrued from a process which appears to us to be so mysterious. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart, as involving the development of a merely political scheme, may amount in effect to no more than this, "I will delay the process, this request shall not be granted at once; and I will prolong the process in order that I may bring out lessons for Pharaoh himself, for the children of Israel, and for mankind at large; were Pharaoh to let the children of Israel escape from him at once, the result would be mischievous to themselves; therefore in mercy, not in anger I will harden Pharaoh's heart. So far, the question is not a moral one, except in the degree in which *all* questions have more or less of a moral bearing. It has been supposed by some that in the case of this exercise of Divine sovereignty, the sum total of Pharaoh's wickedness was increased. Not so. There is the greatest difference between wickedness being localized and wickedness being increased. As the history proceeds, we see that the political situation enlarges itself into a spiritual problem. Pharaoh made a promise to Moses, which he did not keep. Thus he hardened his own heart. Apply these lessons to ourselves as sinners, I have now to teach that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, and that whosoever will may avail himself of the blessings secured by the mediation of the Saviour. If any man who now hears me is excusing himself on the ground that God has hardened his heart, I charge that man with trusting to an excuse in the most solemn affairs of his being, which he would not for a moment tolerate in the region of family or commercial life. Were your servant to tell you that she is fated to be uncleanly in her habits, you would justly treat her with angry contempt. Were your travelling companion to tell you to make no attempt to be in time for the train, because if you were fated to catch it there would be no fear of your losing it, you would treat his suggestion as it deserved to be treated. Yet men who act in a common-sense manner in all such little affairs as these, sometimes profess that they will not make any attempt in a religious direction, because they believe in the doctrine of predestination. Wicked and slothful servants, they shall be condemned out of their own mouth, "Whosoever will let him come."—*City Temple.*

THE PRIMOGENITURE OF THE GOOD.

Verse 22. "Israel is my son, even my first-born."

I. That the good have a Divine Father.

1. He is *merciful* to the children. *God* was merciful to Israel. Though they had rebelled against Him, and given themselves up to idolatry and degradation, yet in the time of their sorrow, He came to deliver them from slavery. Is there a good man in the universe who can say that God has not been merciful to him? His mercy has been seen in the forgiveness of sin, and in our adoption into His spiritual and heavenly family.

2. *He vindicates the children from their foes.*

II. That the good have heavenly privileges.

As the sons of God. 1. *They have the privilege of high birth.* Men may boast of their descent from a renowned ancestry; what ancestry so ancient and renowned as that of the heavenly Father. When a man is born of God, he is allied to the grandest spirits of the unseen universe. Only they who are the subjects of this new birth know the privileges it confers upon them. Nor can the meanest ancestry of earth be excluded therefrom.

2. *They have the privilege of good moral culture.* In God's family all the children are well disciplined. They are not exempt from sorrow and pain. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. We are made perfect through suffering. This culture of our moral nature is designed to fit us more thoroughly for the high relationship into which we are called, that we may be responsive to all its duties, and in harmony with its sacred destinies.

III. That the good have inspiring hopes.

1. *The hope of a happy death.* The children of God can die happily. When passing through the valley and shadow of death they are conscious of a companion who can chase away all their fears. He comforts them. In this trying hour the good man joyfully breathes his spirit into the hand of God who

gave it. Instance Stephen. The end of that man is peace.

2. *The hope of a vast inheritance.* There is reserved in heaven for the good a vast inheritance, that is undefiled, and that can never pass away.[25] This inheritance of our moral life is the animating hope of our soul.

3. *The hope of a sublime future.* A future to be spent in eternal communion with God, in perpetual study of His character, in a happy solution of the dark mysteries which so perplexed the soul on earth, and in a service ever welcome. They serve him day and night. In this future we shall be in companionship with the good of all ages, and with them shall hold inspiring converse. Christians are the sons of God.[26]

1. *Live worthy of your Great Parent.*
2. *Act worthy of your noble ancestry.*
3. *Embrace your glorious privileges.*
4. *Let nothing dim your bright hopes.*

Verse 23. The Divine intention in the moral freedom of man. "Let my son go, that he may serve me."

I. That God has a definite purpose in the moral freedom of men.

He does not relieve men from one kind of slavery that they may go into another—not that they may spend life in inactivity. Indolence is not freedom. His great aim is to bring men from the tyranny of passion, pride, covetousness, and self, into the freedom of a tranquil, humble, and self-denying service. Hence the Divine preparation that is given to the varied agencies that are to achieve this freedom.

II. That the purpose of God in the moral freedom of men is that they should serve Him.

1. *That we should serve Him in our business.*

2. *That we should serve Him in our social life.*

3. *That we should serve Him with all our energies.*

Why should we serve Him? (1) *Because we are His sons.* 2. *Because of the freedom He has wrought for us.*

The service of God is perfect freedom. Would that men were as earnest about their moral freedom as they are in reference to their civil. In the service of God we gain the highest remuneration.

God's ambassadors, though never so mean, must speak to kings what God enjoineth them.

God's name must be attached to His message, that kings may stoop to hear it.

God's Church is His first-born.

Jehovah requireth His first-born from the hand of all oppressors.

The wicked powers of Hell will deny the dismission of God's Son as long as they can hold him.

The sons of the world God will slay for the redemption of His own.

God's first-born sons are dearer to Him than all the first-born of the world.

A Divine threat:—1. Claims attention. 2. Certain of Execution. 3. Stern in requirement.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 24—26.

NEGLECTED DUTY A HINDRANCE TO THE PERFORMANCE OF RELIGIOUS WORK.

I. Moses had neglected the duty of circumcising his son. It was divinely required of the Israelite that he should circumcise all his sons, and this Moses had neglected to do up to this time. Probably his wife was averse to a rite so bloody, and while living in her country and at her home, he yields the matter in deference to her wishes. But the claims of duty are not so easily dismissed. They are Divine and therefore imperative. If neglected they will follow a man through life and present themselves to him under every variety of circumstances, often with appalling effect and unhappy result. Service always finds out the weak point of our character and conduct, therefore if we would be ready for the

work of God we must see to it that we are not guilty of neglected duty. One duty unperformed may nearly ruin us. We must never allow domestic relationship to hinder the performance of a Divine command; the wife that hinders her husband in the performance of religious duty is endangering his life, and her own comfort and safety. The day of retribution will come, and perhaps when it will be the least welcome. The Divine claims are supreme, and in their performance we find our truest safety and comfort. **II. That this neglect of duty introduced an experience of pain into his life.** "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." This does not mean that Moses and his family came to a house or building in which they could abide, but simply indicates a favourable place for halting and remaining for the night, perhaps under a tent, or in the open air. But here he was destined to pass through a very painful experience, which would probably make a lasting impression upon him and his wife. Some writers suppose that he was nearly slain by an angel; others, that he was smitten with a terrible disease which nearly caused his death. However, all this came upon him as the penalty of neglected duty, and that in the presence of his family, who would see that the anger of God rested upon them. We all know the power of neglected duty to introduce painful experience into our lives, which put out all our lights of hope, and fill our souls with an impenetrable gloom, indicative of Divine wrath and judgment. The bitterest moments of our history have been caused by a neglect of the commands of God. If we want a happy, peaceful life, we must perform every duty that presents itself gladly and at once A good conscience is a continual joy. **III. That this neglect of duty endangered the performance of his religious work.** Many men have endangered the great religious enterprises of the world by their past neglect of an apparently trivial duty. The work of God requires that he who is called to it should be of pure soul, enabled to rebuke sin without rebuking himself. Unless able to do this, his mission will be vain. Many a Christian worker is rendered feeble to-day by the sin of his past life. Let us beware how we imperil the freedom of men and the work of God by our own neglect. Freedom from sin is the great essential to the success of Christian work. **IV. That the neglect of this duty was most foolish, as it had after all to be performed.** "And Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son." God had prepared Moses for his work in Egypt as far as he could. He had given him a vision, had conversed with him about the perplexities of his work, and had empowered him to work miracles; but God will not by a miracle overcome the defect arising from neglected duty. This must be removed by a moral method. As a rule, God does not work miracles to rid men of their sins; yet He does sometimes place man in such a position that a vivid impression of sin is made upon his mind, so that he must either perform the neglected duty, or die. Men will have to face their neglected duties again, if not for performance in this world, yet for judgment in the next.

The Preparatory Experiences of Service.

I. The experiences preparatory to Service are solemn. This eventful circumstance in the inn is connected with everything that can invest it with solemnity. Moses is prepared for his work. There is only one duty that requires doing. Then he can go to Pharaoh and demand Israel's freedom. Will he circumcise his son? Will he make amends for the past? His future position, character, work, and relation to mankind, all depend upon the issue of this event, designed to prepare him for the future. The experiences in the inn are solemn. **IV. The experiences preparatory to Service are painful.** These experiences are very intense. They penetrate our inmost heart. They reach

wherever sin is to be found, that it may be removed, that it may not impede our destined toil. Even we who have to work upon the lower planes of moral service know somewhat of the deep soul-anguish occasioned by the conflict prior to our entrance upon it. **III. The experience preparatory to Service are instructive.** This event in the inn would teach Moses the wickedness and folly of neglecting duty, no matter what excuse might appear for so doing. It would show him that God is cognizant of all the moralities of life; and probably he would argue from his own case to that of Pharaoh, and feel that the claim of God would be equally imperative upon him. We have sometimes learned more while waiting anxiously on the threshold of service than we have learned during years before. **IV. The experiences preparatory to Service are varied.** The joy of the vision, the inspiration of the miracles, and the arrest in the inn. These experiences relate to man in every department of his life and service.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 24. After great encouragements many bitter discoveries are made by God to his servants.

In the way of obedience God's servants may meet with the sharpest trials.

The place intended for rest by us may be turned into a place of trouble by God.

Jehovah may sometimes meet His dearest servants as an adversary.

It is a sad defect in God's servants that puts Him to the necessity of calling them to pass through such painful experiences.

Verse 25. When God threatens death to His servants, He sometimes allows means of escape.

It is the duty of the wife to save her husband from perishing at the hand of God.

God bears long with the sinful neglects of His people, but not with approval.

It is dangerous to neglect an initial sacrament ordained by God; it is safe to observe it.

Verse 26. Deliverance is very near at hand to the obedience of God's servants.

God ceaseth from plaguing when men cease from sinning.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 27—28.

The Meeting of Two Brothers.

I. It was in a strange place. The wilderness would not be a very favourable place for the meeting of these two brothers. It would be wild and lonely. But brotherly affection is not dependent upon time and place; it can turn a wilderness into a father's hearth; it can make the dessert blossom as the rose The friendship of these brothers was real Some men are only brotherly before the crowd; in privacy or solitude they are social despots The wilderness will test our affection. **II. It was characterised by warmth of affection.** They kissed each other. Brothers do not often act in these days. They think it unmanly to do so. The age is cold at heart. It is a token of courage as well as love that a brother will thus greet his brother. But let the kiss be accompanied by kindly attentions, otherwise it is a mockery. **III. It was the occasion for religious talk and consultation.** "And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him." No doubt a word was passed about their aged parents, about the memories of

youth; but the chief theme was their future mission. It is well for brothers to converse together about the work and words of God. All other themes are of minor import.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 27, 28. Christian Brothers:—1. Called by God to work. 2. Joined by God in work. 3. Conversing together about work. 4. Learning their respective work

God may call the elder brother after the younger.

God can bring brethren together which were as lost to one another.

God makes the desert a place to meet in for the deliverers of His Church.

It is best for brothers to meet at the mount of God

It is just for Supreme Powers to open their commission from God to inferiors.

God's wonderful works as well as His gracious works must be showed at His command.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 29—31.

THE FIRST INTERVIEW OF MOSES AND AARON WITH THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL, AND THE WELCOME THEY RECEIVED.

I. They acted upon the Divine suggestion. "And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the Elders of the Children of Israel." This is what God told them to do. All Christian work should be undertaken according to the Divine suggestion, and in harmony with the Divine will. God generally tells men how to work as well as what to do. If we were left to mark out our own methods of toil, we should often involve both ourselves and the enterprise entrusted to us in great danger. **II. They spake according to the Divine dictation.** "And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses." In a great mission the sayings of a man are as important as his doings: hence these must be divinely directed · Great workers require to be taught by God. In this consists their safety and success. A man who speaks to the world the messages of God will always be listened to. **III. They succeeded according to Divine intimation.** "And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the Children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." Thus Moses and Aaron awakened the—(1). Faith; (2). Hope; (3). Direction—of Israel. Moses had previously said that Israel would not believe him. We mistake our missions. We cannot form an estimate of success. If we act and speak according to the instruction of God, we must succeed.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 29. The declaring of God's will is suitably united to the assembling of His people.

God's spokesmen made by Him are the best to declare His mind to His people.

God may unfold His mind more fully to one servant than to another.

Verse 30, 31. The faith of the people should closely follow upon the word of God ministered, and by His works confirmed.

All professed believers receive not God's word with the same faith.

God's gracious visitation of His Church, and providential sight of its afflictions are made known by His servants, and are welcome to them.

The tidings of God's visiting love

and redeeming providence must affect God's Israel.

Worship is the most suitable return to God for His redemption.

HUMAN AND DIVINE ATTITUDES.

I. The attitudes predicated of the people:—

1. *Their belief.* 2. *Their reference.* 3. *Their devotion.*

II. The attitudes predicated of God:—

1. *He saw the affliction of Israel.* 2. *Visited Israel.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IV.

BY THE

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Page 53.—Bible Degraded!—Some men imagine that they could do well enough without the Bible, the Church, the ministry. Conceive a patient with a shattered limb coming to the sage conclusion that the best way to become whole is to thrust the skilled surgeons and their surgical splints out of doors. They did not fracture the limb; they only propose to set it. The Bible did not dislocate the human intellect, it only proposes to restore it to soundness. Far better to have the leg set than to leave the shattered bone to heal unsplintered.

"The Lamp of Revelation not only shows
What human wisdom cannot but oppose,
That man—in nature's richest mantle clad
And graced with all philosophy can add,
Though fair without, and luminous within,"

cannot heal his own malady—cannot restore his fractured soul, but it offers to effect the cure. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Page 54.—Infidel Terrors!—Paine boastfully vaunted that he had gone up and down through the Christian garden of Eden, and with his simple axe had cut down one after another of its trees, until scarce a sapling remained to weep over the chaos of ruin. He lived to flee from his own guilt, and amid agonies of remorse to exclaim that he would give worlds never to have published his "Age of Reason," never to have moulded his "simple axe," never to have lifted its edge upon the Tree of Life. So it was with Bion, the atheist philosopher, who on his deathbed offered up prayers to God for mercy and recovery—

"And as he writhed and quivered, scorched within,
The fury round his torrid temples flapped
Her fiery wings, and breathed upon his lips
And parched tongue, the withered blasts of hell."—*Pollock.*

Page 54. — Christianity! — Quaint Thomas Fuller says that Charnock met with a very sad disaster in his efforts to discover the philosopher's stone; for just as he was on the point of completing the grand operation, his work fell into the fire. As this is a calamity which has happened to all alchymists; so is it always the misfortune of legislators. They are always on the point of discovering the grand panacea for all evils, yet they never succeed. Christianity steps in, and succeeds.

"Religion! Providence! an after state!
Here is firm footing; here is solid rock!
This can support us; all is sea besides:
Sinks under us; bestorms, and then devours."—*Young.*

Page 54.—Christianity Beneficent!—Ancient tradition records a contest said to have taken place at Rome—in the presence of the Emperor Constantine and his mother, the Empress Helena—between the Jewish and Roman philosophers on the one hand, and Sylvester, the Christian patriarch, on the other. The leader of the philosophers showed the superiority of their system over Christianity by miraculously KILLING a fierce bull with uttering in his ear a single word. Sylvester, with a word, not only restored the wild animal to LIFE, but raised it tame and gentle as if it had been in the yoke from birth. Christianity is happy in its effects upon untameable human nature—raising it to life—and making it to sit clothed and in its right mind at the feet of the Founder.—

"As when a wretch, from thick polluted air,
Darkness and stench, and suffocating damps,
And dungeon horrors, by kind fate discharged,
Climbs some fair eminence, where ether pure
Surrounds him, and Elysian prospects rise,
His heart exults, his spirits cast their load,
As if new born, he triumphs in the change."

Page 54.—Christianity *versus* Philosophy!—Tillotson says that philosophy has given us several plausible rules for attaining peace and tranquillity of mind; but these fall very much short of bringing men to it. They have expanded our ideas of creation; but they neither inspired a love to the moral character of the Creator, nor a well-grounded hope of eternal life.—

"Philosophy did much, refining and exalting man;
But could not nurse a single plant that bore
True happiness. From age to age she toiled;
Shed from her eyes the mist that dimmed them still,
Looked forth on man: and then retired far back
To meditation's silent, shady rest.

Like Moses who must DIE on Pisgah, philosophy enables us to ascend to the heights of human discovery—there to PERISH. Christianity is the medium, and the only medium, by which "death" can be turned into "life."

Page 55.—Depression!—Dr. Stevens narrates how an eminent minister was very much depressed by the unbelief of his congregation, and how his spirit of depression was shaken off. He dreamed that he was working with a pickaxe on the top of a basaltic rock, which remained non-riven in spite of repeated strokes of his arm of muscle. When about to give up in despair, a stranger of solemn and dignified demeanour appeared on the scene, who reminded him that as a servant he was bound to go on whether the rock yielded or not. "Work is your duty; leave the results to God," were the last words of his strange visitor. The result was that the discouraged pastor resumed his work, and was abundantly rewarded by "the shattering of the rock of unbelief and indifference" among his flock. For

"Perseverance is a virtue
That wins each Godlike act, and plucks success,
E'en from the spear-proof crest of rugged danger.—*Havard.*

Page 55.—Prayers!—An anecdote is told concerning a popular preacher who gradually lost his influence and congregation. The church officials were authorized to wait on him with the frank avowal that the whole blame was at his door. With still more frankness the condemned pastor acknowledged his failure, adding that in former times his flock had been a praying people, that many had joined in prayer that his preaching might be blessed to the conversion of souls, but that now prayer had been abandoned. The result, he added, of such restraint in prayer was the failure of his church, and he begged them to renew their pleadings in his behalf. For

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day,
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."—*Tennyson.*

Page 56.—Miracles!—Fuller calls them, in his quaint method of expression, the swaddling clothes of the infant churches. They are not, says Trench, the garments of the full-grown. They are the bright clouds which gather round and announce the sun at his first appearing; but the midday splendour knows not those bright heralds and harbingers of his rising. Such were miracles at the dawns of the Mosaic, Prophetical, and Christian dispensations; they were like the framework on which the arch is rounded, and which is taken down as soon as it is completed. Beecher thinks that they are midwives of young moral truths—like candles lit up till the sun rises, and then blown out. While Macmillan declares that they are not only emblems of power in the spiritual world, but also exponents of the miracles of nature—experiments, as it were, made by the Great Teacher, on a small scale, to illustrate to mankind the phenomena that are taking place over longer periods throughout the universe.

Page 56—Ministerial Difficulties!—Simeon says that he had been used to read the Scriptures, to get from them rich discoveries of the power and grace of Christ, so that he might learn how to minister to a loving and obedient people; but that now he was studying the Word of God in order that he might know how to minister to a conceited, contentious, and rebellious people. "Two qualities," he adds, "I am sure are requisite—meekness and patience; I have been used to sail in the Pacific, but I am now learning to navigate the Red Sea, which is full of shoals and rocks, with a very intricate passage."

"Toil on, faint not, keep watch and pray;
Be wise, the erring soul to win;
Go forth into the world's highway,
Compel the wanderer to come in.
The toil is pleasant, the reward is sure,
Blessed are those who to the end endure."—*Bonar.*

Page 56.—Faith!—Faith is the mainspring of a minister.—*Cecil.*

"Beware of doubt—faith is the subtle chain
Which binds us to the Infinite; the voice
Of a deep life within, that will remain
Until we crowd it thence."—*Smith.*

Page 56.—Gifts!—The discussion about gifts, says a glowing divine, amounts very much to a discussion whether the rifle, the carbine, the pistol, or the cannon is the best weapon. Each is best in its place. The great point is that every one shall use the weapon best suited to him—that he charge it well—and that he see it is in a condition to strike fire.

"The solemn trifler, with his boasted skill,
Toils much, and is a solemn trifler still;
Blind was he born, and his misguided eyes
Grown dim in trifling studies, blind he dies."—*Cowper.*

Page 58.—Serpent-tail!—Bishop Patrick notes that Moses found his rod was a serpent until he took it by the tail, and then it became what it was before; and if we lay hold of things only by their END, we should find many things that seem terrible and noxious to be benign and salutiferous. But the hand was that of faith; for

"Never was a marvel done upon the earth,
but it had sprung of faith."—*Tupper.*

Page 59.—Leprosy!—In the rabbinical books of the Jews there is a curious tradition about the growth of leprosy, that it began

with the walls of a man's house—then, if he did not repent, it entered his garments—then it affected his body, until it spread over every part—

"His skin grew dry and bloodless, and white scales
Circled with livid purple covered him.
And then his nails grew black, and fell away
From the dull flesh about them, and the hues
Deepened beneath the hard, unmoistened scales."

So with unbelief, it first affects the walls of the mind—thence extending its corruption to the heart—and onwards through the entire inner man; until death ensues.

Page 59.—Sceptic Fears!—History relates of David Hume that, having visited the family of the worthy La Roche, where the consolations of the Gospel were practically evidenced, he was afterwards heard to confess that there were moments when, amid all the pleasures of philosophical discovery and the pride of literary fame, he wished that he had never doubted—

"And evermore his eyes about him went,
As if some proved peril he did fear,
Or did misdoubt some ill, whose cause did not appear."—*Spencer.*

Page 59.—Doubt-Paralysis!—We may as well, says Shepherd, expect a singing bird to be vocal in a receiver where it has little or no air to respire, as expect the genuine exercise of real goodness from the paralysed doubter. As leprosy is the destitution of those physical powers by which sound health can be sustained; so doubt of Divine truth is the destitution of those efficient principles of which the moral and spiritual life can be sustained. The experimentalist may display a vessel from which air has been more or less exhausted, and may tell us that there is nothing pernicious in it, but if we discover a deficiency of support for animal and vegetable life, we shall charge him with a paltry equivocation. Doubt is that air-void vessel, in which the mental, moral, and spiritual life cannot subsist—

"Doubt is the eternal shade by evil cast!
'The vision and the faculty divine'
Fail when the spirit o'er its empire vast
Throws appetite and crimes."—*Harris.*

Page 60.—The Divine Touch!—In healing the leper by a *touch*, our Saviour not only showed His power, but claimed a right that belonged only to the priest, and asserted His own exemption from ceremonial defilement; while in saying "I will, be thou clean," He assumed a still higher prerogative, and pointed to a more thorough purification of the whole nature:—

"He took a little water in His hand
And laved the sufferer's brow, and said,
'Be clean!'
And lo! the scales fell from him, and his blood
Coursed with delicious coolness through his veins,
And his dry palms grew moist, and on his lips
The dewy softness of an infant's stole.
His leprosy was cleansed, and he fell down
Prostrate at Jesus' feet, and worshipped Him."—*Willis.*

Page 60.—The Healer!—It is related that a student once visited Dr. Hodge regarding some doubts entertained by him as to the divinity of Christ, when the venerable man of God at once counselled: The best way to remove your doubts and guard yourself from future and greater troubles is to have Christ in you: learn His life—to trust in Him more—to love Him more; become identified with Him, and your doubts as to His Divinity will disappear:—

"Abide in me, I pray, and I in Thee;
From this good hour, Oh! leave me never more,
Then shall the discord cease, the wound be healed,
The life-long bleeding of the soul be o'er."—*Stowe.*

Page 60.—Sinner Leprous!—What a pitiable, repulsive sight! We pass by a leprous stone unnoticed; it is unconscious of its state, and meant to be trampled under foot. But rising, says Trench, to a step higher in the scale of creation—to an unclean, leprous plant—we become conscious of a slight emotion of dislike; because we see that which might have pleased the eye disfigured. But a leprous human being excites our loathing more than all. It presents our nature in a light so disgusting, that it lessens our pity for him if he be miserable, and excites in us ideas of disease, contamination, and pain:—

"Depart, and come not near
The busy mart, the crowded city, more;
Nor set thy foot on human threshold o'er;
And stay thou not to hear
Voices that call thee in the way."

But a leprous soul—a sinner—how loathsome above all things! It is the most unclean object in the universe—the soul and essence of pollution—the spectacle which appals angelic hosts and excites deep abhorrence in the mind of God.

Page 61.—Nil Desperandum!—The healer is God; and who can tell what God can do? A man utterly despairing of his soul's salvation thought that he might as well be in the woes of hell's abyss at once. He therefore went to a river, designing to throw himself in; but as he was about to commit the mad deed, he seemed to hear a voice saying to him, "Who can tell?" His thoughts were arrested, and thus began to work on what he had heard. "Yes, who can tell what God

can do? Who can tell what purposes God will serve in my recovery?" By such thoughts as these, it pleased God to enable him to shake off the delirium of despair, and to throw himself into the arms of hope in Christ as able to save to the uttermost.

"He came—a leper all unclean and foul:
He left, as fresh as freshest infancy.
So come I to Thy feet, unclean in soul,
So leave I, Lord, cleansed and restored by thee."

Page 61.—Illustrations!—Robert Hall, on one occasion, when criticising a sermon in the hearing of the preacher, said: "You have no *likes* in your sermon! You tell us what they are, 'but not what they are *like*.'" As Hood says, there can be no doubt that, for the purpose of teaching, one illustration is worth a thousand abstractions; a sentiment reciprocated by a famous judge of the Supreme Court, who exclaimed to a divine: "I am glad that you employed that touching story 'to illustrate your thought.'" Analogies are the windows of speech; through them truth shines. Ordinary minds fail to perceive truth clearly, unless it is presented to them by expressive imagery, which appeals both to the reason and to the imagination. It is Salter who says that illustrations are like the painting on canvas which, while it charms the eye, also interests the mind. They resemble the incense which flamed on the Jewish altar, and which, while it arrested the eye with its cloudy pillar, regaled the senses with its fragrance—

"Wherefore, it is wise and well—to guide the mind aright—
So to talk of spirit by analogy with substance:
And analogy is a truer guide than many teachers tell of.
Similitudes are scattered round to help us—not to hurt us;
MOSES in his every type, and the greater than a Moses, in His parables,
Preach in terms that all may learn the philosophic lessons of analogy."—*Tupper*.

Page 61.—Definite Result!—Look at that parent bird picking at the nest which she has built for her tender offspring! See how she breaks off one twig after another—exciting her brood to leave their nest and soar on high amid the sunshine of heaven. And if they will not leave it, she will break it further and further until it is utterly broken up, and they are forced to fly or fall. They would prefer to linger in downy ease; the mother would teach them to fly. Her aim is definite—her purpose one. So God teaches; and never without a design worthy of Himself. And that design is His own glory in man's everlasting good—

"Oh! I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the sun."—*Tennyson*.

Page 62.—Human Folly!—One can hardly conceive a poor wayworn wretch, as he lies on the arid waste, panting with blackened lips and swollen tongue, striking the kind traveller's flask from his hand, and spilling the precious water among the blistering sands. The slave boy—now an African bishop—exulted gleefully when a British cruiser snapped the fetters from his youthful limbs and bore him to free Liberia. Can folly surpass that insensate madness which makes the sinner spurn the clear, cool, crystal drops of life, and perversely traverse the wilds of sin? Can madness outrival that supreme folly which leads the hapless bondsman of sin to hug the chains of condemnation, and obstinately kiss the fetters of wrath?

"Woe; woe to the sinner who lives in his sin,
Unrighteous without, and unholy within:
Each thought of his heart, and each look of his eye
Is tainted with sin, and his doom is to die."—*Hunter*.

Page 62.—Unbelief and the Bible!—An infidel said that there was one thing which marred all the pleasures of his life: whereupon a friend enquired of him what it was. He quickly responded, "I am afraid the Bible is true; if I could know for certain that death is an eternal sleep, I should be happy; but the thought that, if the Bible is true, my soul is lost for ever, stings me like a thorn—pierces me like a sword."

"The avenging horror of a conscious mind,
Whose deadly fear anticipates the blow,
And sees no end of punishment and woe;
But looks for more, at the last gasp of breath;
This makes a hell on earth, and life a death."—*Lucretius*.

Page 62.—First Sign!—Few but have observed a startling picture suspended on the walls of our metropolitan and suburban railway stations. It is a lion—with shaggy mane, and eyes glaring half with anger, half with fear. Around its agile form are the meshes of a net.—1. That net speaks of the thraldom of the monarch of the forest. 2. That net speaks of the inability of the lion-king to free himself. And, 3. That net speaks of the agency by which the wild beast is to have liberty; for a tiny mouse is busily employed nibbling the meshes one by one. None can mistake the expression of that animal's eye—its eagerness to escape—its gleesomeness as it feels one mesh after another give way. Alas! That picture does not speak of what "the voice of the first sign" does:—unwillingness to believe in freedom:—

"He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes confederate for his harm
Can wind around him, but he casts it off."—*Cowper*.

Page 64. — Obstinate Unbelief! — Away at sea, the mariner will sometimes come upon a bottle floating upon the wide waste of waters. For months—ay, years—the waters have been surging round and round it, and yet not a drop is within. So it is with our hearts, unbelief closes them so that that the water of life cannot fill them; and no matter how numerous and copious mercy's showers, they remain persistently sealed. The Orientals have a proverb—

"The cocoa-palm leaves infidels without excuse,
For nine and ninety are its common uses;
In hardened carelessness they wait a hundredth use,
Until some new discovery introduces!"

Page 65. (1)—**Hesitation!**—A youth crossing a narrow tree-trunk bridge kept looking at the gorge below, down which foamed and thundered the mountain cataract. His conductor saw that he was turning giddy and faltering: whereupon he counselled him to fasten his eye on the lovely scenery in the front. A boy climbing the ladder of ropes leading to the top mast began to tremble as he looked down at the deck and yawning waters, which, when his father noticed, he endeavoured to prevent by shouting: "Look up!" Moses hesitated; therefore God tells him two things: 1. To look up to Him: and 2. To look at the holy land whither He would bring His people from Egypt—

"With eyes turned upward, whence her help descends,
She waits expecting till the tempest ends."
—*Holmes.*

Page 66. (2)—**Worthlessness.** — The meek Moses lost sight of the fact that God does not of *necessity* require good material. The paper manufacturer is not nice in the choice of his materials. He does not, writes Arnot, reject a torn or filthy piece as unfit for his purpose. All come alike to him; for he knows what he can make of them. The filthy rags can be made serviceable. So God needed not a man highly endowed with mental gifts and intellectual energies, with commanding presence and persuasive eloquence. His providence and grace could prepare Moses for his mission. Yet

"No mortal eye the manner sees,
The imperceptible degrees,
By which our Lord conducts His plan,
And brings us to a perfect man."—*Wesley.*

Page 66. (3)—**Try and Trust!**—The missionary John Williams once said that there were two little words which were able to make the most lofty mountains melt: "Try" and "Trust." Moses had yet to learn the use of these words. God taught him. The sailor has to be taught that he must not look on the dark and troubled waters, but at the clear blue heavens where shines the pole-star. Moses was gazing at the surging sea of Egyptian wrath, and God taught him to direct his gaze heavenward. Then to *try and trust*, for greater is He that is with you than all that be against you. As an early Christian writer enjoins, let us not forget—as Moses did at first—that all God's biddings are enablings, and that it is for us not to ask the reason but to obey. As Luther said, "I would rather obey than work miracles."

Page 66. (4)—**Success!**—Moses was looking at himself, not at God, who was issuing the commands, and therefore was responsible for its fulfilment. With the issue Moses had nothing to do—with the execution very much. Certain officers, says Dr. Scudder, once spoke in the presence of the Duke of Wellington of the missionary enterprise as though there could be no rational prospect of its success. The old iron Duke replied by asking them what they had to do when the commander-in-chief issued marching orders? On receiving their ready response, "To march," he quickly enquired for a Bible. Opening it, he told them that the marching orders of the chief of the missionary army were: Go ye into all the world and preach. He added, "Your duty is to march and fight. The responsibility of success lies with the commander, not with you. If you do not march I shoot you"—

"Let me to Thy wisdom leave
When and what thou art to give:
All Thy works to Thee are known,
Let Thy blessed will be done."

Page 68. (5)—**Disinclination!**—When Palamedes came to Ithaca to invite Ulysses to join in the expedition against Troy, the latter, unwilling to engage in the undertaking, betook himself to ploughing the sand, as an evidence of insanity, and consequent unfitness. Moses pretended unfitness to excuse himself from the duty to which God was calling him, but upon the discharge of which he was very unwilling to enter:—

"Be not too fast, be not too slow;
Be not too early, not too late;
Go, where His orders bid thee go;
Wait, when His orders bid thee wait.'
—*Upham.*

Page 68. (6)—**Gifts and Graces!**—The meanest grace is above the highest intellectual gifts, as the smile of a sunbeam is more powerful to chase away the grim and sour darkness of the night than the sparkling of a million diamonds. As Beecher says, mere eloquence is like the light of shavings, which burn with a sudden flash, blazing for an instant, and then going out without leaving either coals or heat behind. It is like the harp which, while the wind touched its chords, discoursed harmonious strains; but music and breeze died away together. Man's eloquence is mighty, but it is transient.

"Could I command with voice or pen
The tongue of angels and of men,
A tinkling cymbal, sounding brass,
My speech and preaching would surpass;
Vain were such eloquence to me
Without the *grace* of charity."—
Montgomery.

Page 69. (7)—**Divine Help!**—Changes take place above and around the fortress; but its massive buttresses still stand unmoved, and its battlements frown defiance at the strength of the foe. Certainly I will be with thee. The clouds above are fleeting past, it may be in pall-like gloom The leaves are budding or fading according to their seasons upon the earth. There, however, stands the Rock of Ages, upon which is rooted the Fortunes of Truth and Faithfulness:—

"And truth shall live for ever,
And through endless ages give
Her blessings to the sainted,
And fail them never—never."

Page 70. (8)—**Work!**—Moses was evidently at ease, and disliked action. Evidently his mind was in a dangerous condition, for, as Cecil says, a man who gets into the habit of enquiring about proprieties and expediencies, and occasions, often spends his life without doing anything to purpose. The state of the world is such, and so much depends upon action, that everything seems to say loudly to every man: Do something—*do it.* Moses was well nigh forgetting all about Egypt in his quiet and happy home in Midian:—

"Offer thy light on the altar;
In the high purpose be strong:
And if the tired spirit should falter,
Then sweeten thy labour with song."—
Punshon.

Page 70. (9)—**Duty!**—Duty is first; pleasure comes second. God first; then self. His glory; then our own ease. The welfare of Israel's host before the comfort of the shepherd Moses. When Pompeius Magnus prepared and freighted a ship with provisions for beleagured Rome, his friends endeavoured, with persistent importunity, to dissuade him from so doing. With great vehemence he responded: "It is necessary that I should go, not that I should live." Moses needed not to be concerned about his own safety, so long as the freedom of Israel was accomplished.

"Away, then, causeless doubts and fears,
That weaken and enthral;
Wipe off, my soul, thy faithless tears,
And rise to duty's call."—*Lyte.*

Page 71. (10)—**Moses and Aaron!**—The cobbler, writes Smith, could not paint the picture; but he could tell Apelles how to put in the shoe-latchet. Two neighbours—one blind and the other lame—were called to a place at a great distance. It was agreed that the blind man should carry his lame friend, who would help his human horse with his eyes;

"The lame man with his crutches rude
Upon the blind man's shoulders broad;
United thus achieved the pair
What each would have accomplished ne'er."
—*Gellert.*

Moses and Aaron had each their defects. Moses and Aaron also had their qualifications. Moses was earnest. Aaron was eloquent. Moses had a bold heart. Aaron had a beautiful voice. Both aided each other. Mutual help.

Page 71. (11)—**Gifts!**—Well does Salter put it when he points out that flowers, while they captivate us with their beauty, no less astonish us with their variety. Every country has its peculiar species. Some of these love the burning suns of India; some the barren deserts of Africa. America and New Holland are equally distinguished by the variety of its animals as by the diverse flowers of singular and rare beauty. Then again there are some flowers which are the natives only of temperate climates, and a few are confined to the snowy regions of the north. All these are remarkable for their different qualities; since some have fragrance—others beauty—and others again the properties of medicine. So in the Christian Church, the gifts and graces of its members differ widely.

"And yet what godlike gifts neglected lie
Wasted and marred in the forgotten soul!
The finest workmanship of God is there."
—*Willis.*

Guthrie aptly remarks that in Christians there are differences of character, which—springing from constitutional peculiarities or early education—grace will modify, but never altogether eradicate on this side the grave. But there are also differences which imply no defect; just as there are in countenances which are very unlike, and yet, be the complexion dark or fair, are very beautiful. We do not expect all good men to be alike, any more than we would have all the members of a family alike, or all the flowers alike. The Church of Christ—like the meadows below, or the star-spangled heavens above—owes its beauty to that variety in unity which marks the works of God and mars none of them.

"Everywhere about us they are glowing,
Some like stars, to tell us Spring is born;
Others, their blue eyes with tears o'erflowing,
Stand like Ruth amid the golden corn."
—*Longfellow.*

Page 72. (12)—**Reward!**—There is a beautiful tradition illustrating the blessedness of performing our duty at whatever cost to our inclination. A lovely vision of our Saviour had appeared to a monk. In silent rapture and bliss of ecstacy he was gazing upon it, when the hour arrived at which it was his duty to feed the poor of the convent. He lingered not in his cell to enjoy the vision, but left it to perform his humble duty On his return, the legend runs that he found the vision still waiting for him to salute him with the words: "Had-st thou staid, I must have fled." Ancient history (says Pilkington) stories of Dionysius that he caused a band of musicians to play before him on the promise of reward—and that he told them when they came for their reward that they had already had it in their hopes of it. Not so does God fulfil his promise. Moses had respect unto the recompense of the reward, and he now enjoys it.

"So do thy work; it shall succeed
In thine or in another's day;
And if denied the victor's meed,
Thou shalt not lack the toiler's pay."—
Whittier.

Page 72. (13)—**Mutual Help!** — Conceive a chain whose uppermost link was surely fixed in the living rock as your only hope of escape; would you not venture your body's weight upon its strength? But what would be the result if the links were not within one another; but only attached externally by some brittle thing? You would simply be exchanging a slippery place of danger for inevitable death. No; the links must be within each other, and this is done in the *fires*. They were brought to a white heat ere they could be welded in. Moses and Aaron had thus to be welded together in the furnace of affliction—ere attached to the Eternal Rock—they were safe holding for the imperiled host of Israel.

"Steadfast and sure it cannot fail,
It enters deep within the veil,
It fastens on a land unknown,
And moors me to my Father's throne."
Wesley.

Page 74. (14)—**Parental Respect!**—It is reported of George Washington that, when quite young, he was anxious to enter upon a seafaring life against his mother's wish. She, however, yielded to his going as a midshipman. When all was in readiness—when his trunk had been put on board—he went to bid her good-bye. The tears welled up in her eyes, and stealthily stole down the maternal cheek. Seeing how broken-hearted his mother was, he called to the servant to bring back his box, for he could 'not go away to break his mother's heart." His mother assured him that since God had promised to bless those who honour parents, He would assuredly bless her son for his filial obedience.

"One lamp—thy mother's love—amid the stars
Shall lift its pure flame changeless, and before
The Throne of God burn through eternity."
Willis.

Page 74 (15)—**Filial Memory!**—It is only when we have lost our parents that we see how far short we came in filial obedience. An amiable youth was lamenting the death of a most affectionate parent. His companions endeavoured to console him by the reflection that he had always behaved to the deceased with duty, tenderness, and respect. This far from really comforting him only increased his self-reproach: "Whilst my father lived, I thought that I was a good son, but now, alas! I recollect with pain many instances of disobedience and neglect" How similar were the sentiments of Richard the Lion, when he stood in the church of Fontevraud, and gazed upon the face of his broken-hearted father's corpse, upon which the broad light of noon was flung.

Page 74. (16)—**Gratitude!** He that has nature in him must be grateful—

"'Tis the Creator's primary great law,
That links the chain of being to each other,
Joining the greater to the lesser nature,
Tying the weak and strong, the poor and powerful,
Subduing men to brutes, and even brutes to men."

Page 76. (17)—**Parental Dealing!**—On one occasion a minister of God was counselling a little girl to evince gratitude always for the kind father whom God had graciously given her, when she looked up in his face with her soft, blue eyes, and exclaimed, "He never speaks *kind* to me." Can we wonder if that child grows up undutiful—disobedien—void of all confiding tenderness towards her parent?

Page 76. (18)—**Presumptuous Christian!**—That sailor is a fool who wilfully runs his vessel among the foaming breakers because his ship is stout—bears a lifeboat on her deck, and can be rescued by watchers on the shore. Trench relates the visit of a gentleman to the scene of a colliery explosion. The mine was full of chokedamp; and yet his guide persisted in entering it with his Davy-lamp. That light was invented to protect miners, and not to make them presume. Christians presume on the providence of God when they rush recklessly and uncalled into danger.

"Whate'er our thoughts or purpose be,
They cannot reach their destined end,
Unless, oh God, they go with Thee,
And with *Thy* thoughts and purpose blend.

Page 76. (19)—**Confidence!**—Luther, when making his way into the presence of Cardinal Cajetan, who had summoned him to answer for his heretical opinions at Augsburg, was asked by one of the cardinal's minions where he would find a shelter if his patron the Elector of Saxony deserted him. His immediate reply was, "Under the shield of heaven." Under that shield Moses was to enter Pharaoh's presence.

"A strong tower is the Lord our God,
To shelter and defend us;
Our *shield* His arm, our sword His rod,
Against our foes befriend us."—*Luther.*

Page 78 (20)—**Hope!**—Dr. Judson was once asked whether the prospect of the speedy conversion of the heathen was bright; whereupon he immediately responded: "as bright as the promises of God." On these promises Moses was to rely. On these divine assurances Moses was to hope; for God assured him that He would certainly be with him. This hope—as Smiles has it—is like the sun which, as we journey towards it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us. So Moses found when he laid hold of the Divine Assurance. The islanders of St. Kilda gain their

subsistence by searching for nests along dangerous heights and down precipitous cliffs. Their waists are girdled with a cord let down from above. Moses girdled his heart with the golden cord of God's promises, ere he lowered himself from Horeb's frowning heights to Egypt's dark abyss.

"With him went Hope in rank, a handsome maid,
Of cheerful look, and lovely to behold;
In silken samite she was light array'd,
And her fair locks were woven up in go'd."
Spenser.

Page 79. (21)—**Wonders!**—The scientific man asserts as the latest generalization of his science that there is in nature the uniformity of natural sequence—in other words, that nature always moves along the same path, and that law is a necessity of things. He thus indirectly asserts the probability of miracles—indeed *admits* them; for where there is no law there is no transgression, and the very belief in miracles depends upon this uniformity. In nature there are deviations from this law of uniformity; and so it is in grace. God has a certain course of dealing generally with man, and He is pleased to diverge from that course at times—that the exception may prove the rule:—For

"Order is heaven's first law—a glorious law,
Seen in those pure and beauteous isles of light
That come and go, as circling months fulfil
Their high behest."—*Milton.*

Page 79. (22)—**Fear!**—Fear secretes acids, but love and trust are sweet juices. Who has not learned this as truly as Moses did? The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso trusteth in the Lord, mercy encompasseth him on every side. It is like a hedge which keeps off the wild beasts; like the coral reef, which baffles the angry waves in their recurring daily attempts to leap over and disturb the calm still lagoon of tropical islands.

"The saints should never be dismayed,
Nor sink in hopeless fear;
For when they least expect his aid,
The Saviour will appear."

Page 79. (23)—**Divine Sovereignty!**—Bishop Hall says, "I leave God's secrets to Himself: it is happy for me that God makes me of His court, and not of His counsel." As another expresses himself, it is not given to man to discover all the works and ways of God, either in nature or in grace. Perhaps those of nature—notwithstanding all our boasted discoveries and pride of science—lie as unknown to us as the wide forest to the microscopic insect, whose life is a day, and whose world is a leaf. Laplace wrote that it was the little that we knew, the great that remained unknown. And Newton's matchless imagery of the pebbles on the seahorse displays the profound conviction of the Christian philosopher that we are ignorant of far more than we know. Nor is the warning of puritan Adams out of date when he monishes that he who will be sifting every cloud may be smitten with a thunderbolt:—

"Those puzzled souls of ours grow weak,
With beating their bruised wings against the rim
That bounds their utmost flying, when they seek
The distant and the dim."—*Ingelow.*

Page 79. (24)—**Mysteries!**—It is for man to accept them. Grosart remarks that he could drink of the clear, cool spring, though he might not hope to pierce the awful foundation of granite from whence it came gushing up. I can rejoice in the shining sun, and fan my cheek with the breathing wind, though I am ignorant as an infant of the great palace of light, and know not whence the wind cometh. Believing, where we cannot prove—

"As sinks the moaning river in the sea,
In silver peace, so sinks my soul in Thee."
Stowe.

Page 81. (25)—**Future Hopes!**—Moses had respect unto the recompense of the reward. God's reward is exceeding great. When Zelilaus lost his hand in the service of his master, the king of Poland, he received from him a golden hand in its place. Agrippa had suffered much for Caligula at Rome, who therefore upon his elevation to imperial power presented him with chains of gold equivalent in weight to the iron fetters he had worn in the dungeon. God's reward reserved in heaven is a vast inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, a crown of righteousness, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And as the workman is paid after his work is done; so the Christian is rewarded when life is ended—

"For loss, nor shame, nor grief, nor sin, His promise may gainsay;
The name Divine hath spoke within, and God did ne'er betray.—*Adams.*

Page 81. (26)—**Eternal Prospect!**—Melvill likens it to a glorious morning, with the sun rising higher and higher—one blessed springtime, and yet richer summer, every plant in full flower, but every flower the bud of a lovelier. It would, however, be a poor prospect which such beings as ourselves could comprehend or anticipate. Give me, says one, the majestic cloud—the oracular veil—the mighty shadows which recede as we advance, filling the mind with amazement. I wish, when I have climbed the highest pinnacle that sanctified conception can soar to, to be compelled to own that I have not reached the base of the everlasting hills, whence to survey the *eternal prospects*:—

"Go, wing thy flight from star to star,
From world to luminous world as far
As universe spreads its flaring wall:
Take all the pleasures of all the spheres,
And multiply each through endless years,
One minute of heaven is worth them all."—*Moore.*

CHAPTER V.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. Hold a feast**] That is, of course, a religious festival,—a "holyday," as the same word is rendered Ps. xlii. 4; "with processions and dancing," if we keep close to the primary meaning of the Hebrew word *châ-ghagh* "to move in a circle." However open to abuse, we cannot afford to let slip the propriety of joy in worship. The infinitely blessed Jehovah would be served with gladness. His own holy joy seeks to overflow into the hearts of his saints; and this it does if ever, in those direct acts of homage which he himself has instituted. **2. Neither will I let Israel go**] Or, rather: 'And certainly I will not let ISRAEL go,"—the language of tyrannical determination and bold defiance. As much as to say: "I know not Jehovah; but even if I *did*, THAT would make no difference." **3. Hath met with us**] And this may be an adequate rendering. But the construction (with the preposition, *'al*, "upon"), and the context, rather strongly favour the more forcible meaning attributed by *Fürst* and *Davies* to *qâ-râ* (see under *qâ-râ*, No. II), 'to strike upon, or hit against a thing." This hint might lead us to interpret the words thus: "The God of the Hebrews has encountered us;" *i.e.*, "has laid an arrest upon us"—'His call is imperative." It is a wrong done to God, which he must needs resent, when the leisurely joy of worship is denied him. What an affliction to any people to be too hard worked to render God this service. The Pharaohs who impose such an affliction cannot complain if the wronged Jehovah call them very sternly to account. **3 Let us go**] The cohortative mood: almost='We must needs go" (comp. Ewald. Gr. § 228); but here blended with the particle of entreaty *nâ*, "pray:" "We must needs go—pray let us!" The joyful, leisurely worship which God demands is needful for us as well as due to Him. **5. Now are many**] The connection between this fact, and the easing of the people's burdens is not at first sight apparent; but, on reflection, becomes clear. From chap. i. 11 we learn that the building-tasks exacted of the Hebrews were demanded under the idea of *tribute*; for the words *there* rendered "taskmasters" (cf. below, on ver. 6) namely *sâ-rey miççim* mean, "princes of tribute" Now it is evident that a given sum-total of tributary building would gradually become a lighter burden as the Hebrews multiplied. Hence the meaning of Pharaoh in this place seems to be: "The work has not been increased in proportion to the increase of the people: permitting this, you have allowed them to find ease by the mere fact of multiplying." It may not have been convenient or desirable to begin building *more cities:* so Pharaoh would have the labour of finishing those in hand most vexatiously augmented. By the way, we thus get a glimpse of the *process* by which the sons of Israel were enslaved. Their yoke was imposed under the specious name of "tribute:" this tribute was imperiously exacted: then the payment was made gallingly hard to render. The enslavement was complete. **6. Taskmasters**] A good rendering of the Hebrew *nô-ghèsim*, which literally means "exactors," and is, in Job xxxix 7, used of the "drivers" of asses. The *Sept.* rendering of this word is exceedingly expressive: *ergodiôktai* (ἐργοδιώκται), "work-pursuers," "work-persecutors." These "taskmasters" seem to be the same as the "princes of tribute" mentioned chap. i. 11 (comp. previous note), and manifestly were Egyptians acting under Pharaoh and looking but too well (ver. 14) after his interests. **Officers**] These were evidently Hebrews (vv. 14—20) who were set over their brethren, and were held responsible for the performance of the required work. Theirs was indeed an unenviable position: they had to wring Pharaoh's demands out of their own kinsmen, or be beaten themselves. **23. Neither has thou delivered thy people at all**] This, though strong, is scarcely so bold as the original, which here makes an effective use of its preplaced *infinitive absolute*: "and—as for delivering—thou has not delivered thy people."

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

THE FIRST ATTEMPT AT RELIGIOUS SERVICE.

What a long time it takes to get men fairly into any work that is required of them. This is true in the secular sphere of daily life. Men put off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day. Especially is this the case in reference to the duties that pertain to our moral life; there is much delay before men are willing or ready to undertake them.[1] It is now some time since the first indication had been given to Moses that it was the Divine will that he should achieve the freedom of Israel. Yet he has been objecting to the service, reasoning with God, wishing to be liberated from it, and in fact, only now, when he finds escape impossible, is he about to commence it. Men little suspect the time they waste, the energies they weaken, and the unnecessary difficulties

they occasion, by such unbelief and delay. Every day we neglect the mission it becomes harder to accomplish. We honour God by speeding immediately upon His errands. They are important, and may be endangered by delay.[2] Israel is suffering the hardships of a cruel bondage all the time we are reasoning and objecting to free them, and therefore a tardy obedience is cruel and unwarrantable. The woe and sorrow of the world demands that Christian workers should be immediately brave and active. It is all very well to linger for few moments by the bush, burning but unconsumed, to get a vision of heaven, and to hold communion with God, that the soul may be refreshed and strengthened for the arduous work before it, but the act of worship must soon and naturally break into the act of service, or we shall be guilty of unnecessary delay. In obedient work men hold communion with God quite as truly as when standing near the burning bush. We have here illustrated the first attempt made at religious service. **1. That this first attempt at religious service was made responsive to the call, and in harmony with the will, of God.** "And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." 1. *Thus there was a great necessity that the work now attempted by Moses and Aaron should be accomplished.* It would be almost impossible to realize the condition of Israel at this time. They had been the slaves of a tyrant king, many of them from their birth. They were ignorant. They were heavily worked. They knew not the glad meaning of freedom, nor did their slavery accomplish any worthy political end; it had been achieved by deception, and was marked by severe oppression. Here then was a grand sphere for a brave and heroic man. It is a sphere greatly needing his attention, worthy of his deepest sympathy, and it will require his most potent effort. Hence we see that Moses and Aaron were not seeking to remove a fancied evil, with which a few people were afflicted, but a wide-spread and long-continued woe, which rendered sad the life of a vast nation. Some men seek to remove imaginary evils and fail, and with their failure society at large has little sympathy. They are objects of merriment rather than of serious thought. We shall expect then of these two men entering upon a work so eminently needed, that they will in all probability succeed. It is a source of great strength to a Christian worker to have the consciousness that he is attempting a work that really needs doing. There are hundreds of good men animated by this conviction to-day, and we all know that in the great world round us, there are many enterprises requiring their effort. Humanity is in a condition of servitude, of moral servitude far more dreadful and despicable than that of ancient Israel.[3] It is in need of moral emancipation. Are there not many of us willing to make our first effort in such a cause? That wicked alley is without a tract distributor, will you not offer to take it? That class in the Sunday-school is without a teacher, will you not endeavour to instruct it? That pulpit is without a minister, will you not make an effort to deliver the Gospel from it? That heathen town wants a missionary, will you not leave your home to take it the freedom of the cross? The work is a necessity, will you not make an attempt at it? You can go to the tyrant Sin, and demand the freedom of his slaves. This is a work that the world needs doing, and at once. It is rendered imperative by the passion of men, by the pain of society, by the obligations of the cross, and by the distinct call to Christian service. 2. *Moses and Aaron were the right men to undertake this work.* In the first place, Moses had been directly called by God to do it; also Aaron had been providentially conducted to this sphere of work. In this we see the different methods by which God enjoins work upon good men. He sometimes speaks directly to to the soul in such a manner as cannot be mistaken; at other times, He quietly opens up our way to duty, and unexpectedly we find ourselves in the presence of work

demanding our immediate attention. *I believe in a special call to, and preparation for, Christian work.* Unless a man has heard the voice of God, unless he has beheld the vision of the burning bush, unless his soul has held communion with heaven, unless he has learned to speak the deep name of Jehovah, he has no right to go on the errand of Israel's emancipation. He cannot teach to others the meaning of a name he does not understand himself. He cannot reflect the light of a vision he has never seen. A call from God is an absolute necessity of Christian service. We are getting too lax in this matter. We fear that the Church is sending men on errands of freedom whom God has not commissioned. We cannot expect them to succeed. *Then, think of the moral preparation that Moses and Aaron had received for this work in relation to Israel.* We know right well the discipline through which Moses had passed up to this hour. It is written. The prior life of Aaron is unwritten. God does not always disclose the process by which his servants are prepared for their toil. They are prepared in different ways. Solitude prepares one man; publicity will prepare another; the preparation must be in harmony with the temperament of the man, and the work that he has to perform. The Church requires to think less of results, and more of the methods by which they are to be attained. Sometimes we see a great worker. He conquers every difficulty. He is always successful. We at once regard him as ideal. We laud his talent. We say that Christian toil is easy to him. We only view the result. Had we seen him years ago, we should have seen him curious at the bush, objecting to the service, asking that another may be sent in his place; then he was a feeble, trembling worker, but the Divine preparation and heavenly grace has, through long years, made him what he is. The call to Christian work is of God, and likewise all the qualifications for it.[4] The reason why there is so much failure in the toil of good men is because they do not entirely submit themselves to the holy discipline which would qualify them for it. Christian workers seek to be prepared of God for your toil. Thus Moses and Aaron were well qualified for this work. And we have workers in the Church to-day almost equal to them; divinely cultured in soul they are making their first attempt at service. This very day they are standing before Pharaoh. They are seeking the freedom of the morally enslaved. May God prosper them in their mission. 3. *Moses and Aaron undertook this work in the proper manner and spirit.* There is a right way and a wrong in the performance of any kind of work; but especially when it is of a moral character; then the greatest results are dependent upon the utmost trivialities. It sometimes occurs that God gives a man a pattern of work, and shows him how to execute it. This was the case with Moses and Aaron. They were told to gather the elders of Israel together, and then to proceed to Pharaoh with the request of freedom. The Divine mind is capable of infinite suggestions to moral service, which are always helpful and welcome to the earnest worker, and which should be carefully wrought out. The direction of heaven is needful in the work of spiritual emancipation. There are so many methods to be considered, so many interests to be regarded, so many emergencies to be expected, so much impulse required, and so many difficulties to be encountered, that only God can render us any aid in such a work. But often the gentle methods of service are the most effective, and we want to obtain the sublime and happy art of Christian work, to win men into acquiescence with the Divine will by a word of love, almost unconsciously to themselves. We should strive to present the message of God to them in such a voice and manner as shall the most entice their attention and obedience. Many a good enterprise has been ruined by the lack of a little loving and considerate art, which would have rendered it successful. But there are times when Christian art is of little use, as in the case now under review; Pharaoh will not yield his profitable slaves to the courteous request of two strangers. Hence Moses

and Aaron are bold and determined in their request for the freedom of Israel they plainly make known the word of God in reference thereto.[5] So, when we have to attack time-honoured custom, unholy vested interests, and to deal with men who are deaf to all the righteous claims of God, the only method of service is to say, "Thus said the God of Israel, let my people go." Thus we should imagine that the work attempted being greatly needed, of divine appointment and preparation, it will be almost certain of success. But how disappointing is the sequel. **II. That our first attempt at religious service is often met by open profanity and ignorance.** "And Pharaoh said, who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." 1. *Moses and Aaron were met by a manifestation of ignorance.* Pharaoh seems to know nothing about the God of Israel; or, if he was aware of His existence, to hold Him in very inferior esteem. Perhaps he thought that Jehovah was unable to aid the people in their bondage, or He would have done so long before. And so it often happens, when Christian workers commence their toil, that they are met by wilful and lamentable ignorance,—ignorance of the very first principles of religion, by a rejection of moral restraint, of the claims of God and humanity. Such a dark condition of mind is very difficult to contend with, and is a great hindrance to philanthropic toil. Only a Monarch ignorant of God would permit slavery within his realm. Where there is the most religion there will be the truest freedom. But the sequel of the history will show that Pharaoh could not much longer remain ignorant of Jehovah, and that he had reason to tremble before His power. 2. *That Moses and Aaron were met by deep profanity.* It would seem that Pharaoh had very loose notions about gods; he thought no doubt that one was as good as another. His own country abounded with them. And he had not much regard for those whom he had been brought up from childhood to fear rather than to respect. Besides, he had got to regard himself of as much importance as they were. In short, he was a god unto himself, and wished to be unto his people. He was not therefore prepared to show any consideration for the claim of a Deity of whom he was comparatively ignorant. Yet he must have known something of Jehovah, he would gather indications of his power and supremacy from the enslaved Israelites and their national records. It is great profanity for a man to slight the faintest indication of the Supreme Ruler of the universe, even though he be comparatively ignorant of his true existence. After hearing the request of Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh ought to have thoughtfully and seriously enquired into the matter, and a moment's serious reflection would have shown him that he was putting himself in antagonism to the God of the despised Israelites. But, instead of this, he becomes insolent, opposes his authority to that of the most High, and refuses the request of the emancipators of Israel.[6] So there are people in these days who have very loose conceptions about the deity, they are comparatively ignorant of Him, they treat His claims with contempt, they regard His servants with scorn, they imagine that they are free from His dominion, and with this profanity Christian workers are frequently called to contend. 3. *That Moses and Aaron were met by unwarrantable pride.* Pharaoh speaks in the second verse as though he were the supreme monarch of the world, as though there were none to rival his grandeur, or to defeat his power. And thus his pride led him to an unwarrantable defiance of Jehovah. It exposed him to imminent peril, for in a moment the Divine Being could have crushed him as a moth in his hand; so lamentable is the pride of man. And yet this ancient king of Egypt is but a type of many to-day, whose pride, the outcome of ignorance, brings them into open hostility to the will of God, and renders them antagonistic to His servants. Frequently are Christian workers met by manifestations of pride which they find very difficult to conquer. Thus the fact that we are sent by

God to our first effort of Christian service, that we are prepared for it by the heavenly discipline of years, and that it is a work greatly required at our hands, does not remove from before us all the difficulties of the case. We have as thoroughly to contend with the ignorance, profanity, and pride of men as though we had never received our commission at the hand of God. It is not the economy of heaven to remove all obstacles out of the way of Christian service, else there would be but little for man to do in the way of sacred toil. **III. That our first attempt at service is often misunderstood, and its motive maligned.** "And the King of Egypt said unto them, wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens." 1. *Pharaoh was not sensitive to the claims of duty.* He was a king, and had learned through a long series of years, by continued practice, to despise the claims of others, nor would he make an exception in the case of Jehovah. He was hardened in heart. He was darkened in mind. He was surrounded by all that could flatter his vanity, or aid him in the event of conflict: hence he was not much troubled by the moral questions of life. He would be far more perplexed by the invasion of a foreign king than by any command from God. And so Christian workers have to appeal to men who are almost destitute of religious feeling and sensibility, to convey to them the stern messages of God. We cannot wonder then that they are so often misunderstood and rejected. Pride always renders men insensible to the claims of duty. 2. *Pharaoh was not a disinterested interpreter of the claims urged upon him.* Moses and Aaron demanded that the tyrant monarch should announce freedom to all his slaves. But these slaves were of great service and profit to him and his nation: hence Pharaoh could not put a disinterested interpretation upon the demand thus made upon him. And so it is now, Christian workers have frequently to undertake work, and to enunciate requirements which are opposed to the secular interests of men. Can they wonder if these requirements should be rejected, and their motives misrepresented? It is difficult to get a man to do the will of God when it is in apparent antagonism to the interests of his trade or profession. Thus Christian workers can generally explain the opposition to which they are subject; they know that it arises from the enmity of the carnal mind, and from the dictation of self interest, rather than from any rejection of them personally. This misrepresentation may give rise to persecution and slander, but from this God will ultimately deliver those who toil for Him. Their aspersed character will be cleared. Their safety He will ensure, or the service of earth shall break into that of heaven. **IV. That sometimes our first attempt at religious service appears to be more productive of harm than good, and to have the very opposite effect to that designed.** "And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves," &c. Thus it would appear that Moses and Aaron instead of accomplishing the freedom of Israel, rather increased the pain of their slavery. But we know not by what methods God will accomplish His will, and even this intolerant conduct of the king may be part of the discipline which shall occasion his defeat. How many Christian workers have been in like circumstances to these, apparently having done those whom they sought to benefit more harm than good. And this has been a cause of great regret and discouragement to them. We would urge such not to be discouraged by apparent failures, for after all, these may contain the germs of future success. LESSONS:—1. *Begin at once some enterprise for the moral freedom of humanity.* 2. *If in the first attempt at service you meet with difficulty and rejection, do not be dismayed.* 3. *That you must be finally successful in your efforts:*—(1.) *For they are appointed by God.* (2.) *You are upheld by heaven.* (3.) *You have the sympathy of all good men.*

Verse 1. **That Christian Workers should go boldly to their duty.** "And afterwards Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh." These two men had been set about their God-given work; they do not hesitate; there is no manifestation of timidity; they stand before the King of Egypt as equal to him, and as equal to their duty in every respect. So Christian workers should go to their work in a bold spirit, as supported by the Supreme Power.[8] They have no need to tremble in the presence of any difficulty. The Lord is their Helper.

II. That Christian Workers should present the direct claims of god to men. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go." We must never go to moral service in our own name, nor must we use our own authority. All our messages and demands must be presented under the authority of God, and only His words are we warranted in uttering. Never leave out the "Thus saith the Lord" in your effort of service.[9]

III. That Christian Workers should aim, in harmony with the will of God, to bring the enslaved to a grand moral festival of freedom. "That they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness."[10] All service should have reference to moral festivities; (to times of gladness and hope the world is called.) But the festival which is the accompaniment of the freedom wrought by God is characterised by devotion.

Why did God send Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, when He could have destroyed him with a stroke, and have wrought the freedom of Israel:—1. That God's power might appear in shewing his wonders. 2. That the Israelites might see the great care God had over them. 3. To exercise their patience, not being delivered at once. 4. To leave Pharaoh without excuse. God's ambassadors must proceed orderly in delivering their message—first to Israel, secondly to Pharaoh.

Order of persons as well as time is observable by God's servants.

The poorest persons under God's authority may come into the presence of the proudest king.

God's ambassadors must declare His will to the greatest potentates.

God's messengers must go in His authority, and vouch His name.

A proclamation of God:—1. His name. 2. His authority. 3. His regard for His people. 4. His desire for the freedom of man.

The freedom of men:—Earnestly desired. 2. Effectively undertaken. 3. Divinely approved. 4. Successfully achieved.

The end of all redemption is that God's people should serve him.

The true service of God is a festival of joy.

It is better to serve God in the wilderness than Pharaoh in Egypt.

Verse 2. *Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?*"

I. Who is the Lord?

1. *Thy Creator.* 2. *Thy Benefactor.* 3. *Thy Redeemer.* 4. *Thy Governor.*

II. How may we hear His voice? (11)

1. *In the works of nature.*
2. *In the dispensations of Providence.*
3. *In our spiritual perceptions.*
4. *In the Bible.*

[*Pulpit Analyst.*]

Pharaoh's Impious Interrogation.

The text is the language of the Pagan and impious Pharaoh. A person whose history and character are fully presented to us in the Divine Word.

I. God has spoken to mankind.

1. *He has graciously spoken by His works.* "The heavens declare, &c., Rom. 1. 20. Here the existence, majesty, power, and wisdom are all declared.

2. *He has spoken continually by His good providence.* The admirable provision made for all creatures, &c. Hear Paul's address to the inhabitants of Lystra: Acts xiv. 15, 17.

3. *He hath spoken awfully by His judgments.* How terrible His voice to the antediluvians—Pharaoh. By war—by pestilence by famine—by earthquakes.

4. *He hath spoken distinctly in His word.*

By the ancient prophets—by His own Son. Hear the Apostle: Heb. i. 1. The Saviour also instituted the Christian Ministry, to convey the words of God to all the world.

II. Why and how you should hear

1. *Why you should hear His voice.* Because of His right in and over you. He is your God, Creator, Lawgiver. Because of his condescension to you. It is infinite condescension on the part of Deity to stoop and speak to you. How angels hearken. Because of the design of His speaking, which is your present and eternal welfare.

2. *How we should hear His voice.* With awe, sacred attention, with holy anxiety to understand and obey it.

III. The impiety and folly of refusing to hear the voice of God. But who are guilty of it? The sceptic, sensualist, worlding, sinner. Pride of heart leads to it.

1. *It is flagrant contempt of God.*
2. *It is open rebellion against the authority.*
3. *It must be eventually ruinous to the sinner.*

[*Sketches of Sermons, by Dr. Burns.*]

Proud imperious spirits are hasty to reply roughly to God's messengers.

Idolators are apt to despise God in the true revelation of Him.

Hardened souls vent their contempt upon God Himself more than on His Church.

Contempt of Jehovah will not suffer men to hear His voice.

Disobedience to God ushers in oppression to His people.

Scorners of God:—1. They hear not His voice. 2. They perceive not His revelation. 3. They recognize not His claims. 4. They insult His servants. 5. They enslave His people. 6. They are obstinate in their denial.

THE REASONINGS OF AN ENSLAVED SOUL WITH ITS TYRANT OPPRESSOR.

Verse 3. There are times when men deeply feel the pain and degradation of their slavery; they are awakened, by the messengers of God, to a desire for freedom, when they utter their sentiments in the language of this verse:—

I. They urge the Divine uprising on their behalf. "The God of the Hebrews hath met with us." God had awakened within Israel the desire and hope of freedom, had urged them to achieve it, and had promised to aid them in so doing. Pharaoh little knew the events that had happened prior to this visit; he was ignorant of the revelation which had been given to Moses and Aaron; but so it is, imperious sinners walk to their doom, ignorant of the agencies that would achieve their ruin. There is another history than that which is seen by the world at large; it is behind in the shade, only known to the favoured servants of God. The meeting of God with his people is an argument for freedom, and should be recognised as such by the proudest monarchs of earth.

II. They urge their own desire for freedom. "Let us go, we pray thee." Probably many will not consider this could have been a very great argument with Pharaoh for the freedom of Israel; but it ought to have been. A desire for freedom, on the part of those who are destitute of it, should be a strong plea for its bestowal with all who have it in their power to snap the fetters of the slave. Heaven always respects our wish for freedom.[12] True kinghood always will.

III. They urge their desire for solitude. "Three days' journey into the desert." They had been so long in the crowded cities of the Egyptians, so painful and sad had their condition become, that they longed for the solitude of the desert to refresh their souls, that they might drink in new life and hope.

IV. They urge their desire for devotion. "And sacrifice unto the Lord our God." Their better manhood had returned to these Israelites. Their old feelings of worship are awakened. They have struggled through their pain and slavery, to God. They wish to worship him. This is a strong argument for liberty.

V. They urge their fear of pestilence. "Lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." Slavery in any nation is more productive of calamity and retribution than almost any other sin. That country will, in all proba-

bility, be the most exempt from pestilence and war which is the most free. There is a healing influence in liberty: hence this is an argument for it.

Just mark the contrast between the Egyptian king, and the Hebrew or Christian messengers. Being threatened, they threatened not; reviled, they reviled not again. They took meekly his remarks; they entreated, but threatened not; for they said immediately, "The Lord God of the Hebrews," etc.; speaking calmly, as if not one insulting expression had been used.[13] Now here is a precedent for us. If Pharaoh forgot his place, Moses and Aaron were not to forget theirs. [*Dr. Cumming.*]

God's ambassadors must not forsake His message upon man's denial.

Further arguments must urge the message of God, when its mere proposal is not enough.

The God of the Hebrews must be owned by them, though despised by Pharaoh.

Although God commands powers, yet it is fit that his people should entreat them.

To sacrifice to God and to feast with Him are synonymous.

Pestilence and sword are God's judgments, exacting the neglect of His service.

These plagues are incident on all that neglect God, but much more on them that forbid others to serve Him.

The fear of these judgments should awe souls from slighting His message to them.

Verse 4. Good men are often wrongly judged:—1. In respect to their motives. 2. Actions. 3. Writings.

Persecuting powers return rough answers to humble petitions.

Oppressing kings make nothing of despising, checking, and menacing God's messengers.

Wicked powers censure the motions for God's service to be detractions from their work.

Oppressing rulers are angry with men who move souls to serve God.

Cruel masters drive God's people from serving Him to bear their burdens.

RELIGION NO EXCUSE FOR THE NEGLECT OF DAILY WORK.

There is much daily work carried on that is both against the law of God and man; this, religion will suspend, and, instead, will give a man work to do, the performance of which will be in harmony with conscience, and beneficial to the commonwealth.[14] True religion is no friend to indolence. Religion is no excuse for the neglect of daily work:—

I. Because it commands men to provide things honest in the sight of all men. It gives a man an employment to fulfil, in one station or another, in lowly social grade, or otherwise. It makes men willing to earn their daily bread, to answer the purposes of labour, and to enhance the general welfare of the nation. If men are idle in their daily avocation, it is from the lack of religion, not from the possession of it. True piety consists as much in pursuing our daily toil as in attendance upon the services of the sanctuary. We should render both as a service to God. We must be diligent in business.

II. Because it provides men with forceful motives to work. True religion brings forceful motives to bear upon the souls of those who are animated by it. It animates men to do their work from love to an unseen God, from faith in an unseen Saviour, and from fear of a coming judgment and eternity. Hence the motives of religion are calculated to make men earnest workers. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth," &c.

III. Because it enlarges man's sphere of work. Besides working in the world for daily bread, it opens up to him an enlarged and holy sphere of toil in the church, for the moral welfare of men. Nor will the duties of the one interfere with those of the other; both will admit of careful attention. St Paul wrought at tent making, and also had the care of the churches upon him.

Verse 5. From the multiplied numbers of the church, tyrants expect multiplied labours.

It is the envy of persecutors to see God's servants have rest from burdens.

It is incident to wicked powers to suggest, that God's ministers move His people to idleness and sedition.

Verse 6-7. God's commands, and the interests of his people, are bitterly opposed by wicked powers.

Persecuting powers delay not to vent their malice against God and his people.

Wicked rulers have their agencies by whom they afflict the people of God.

Cruel powers stay the hands of ministers from doing justice to such as they will oppress.

It is savage cruelty to deny means, and expect work and advantage.

Former justice is forgotten where future oppression is intended.

Wicked powers will lose no gain, though they allow poor souls nothing to get it with.

They used straw in making brick.—1. To temper the clay, that it might be firmer. 2. There was a great use for brick in Egypt, not only because they wanted stone, but because the buildings made of brick were durable.

In the pyramid of Fayoun there are found bricks which have been hardened in the sun, containing short particles of chopped straw mixed with the clay, their just idea being that straw would give cohesion to the mass, the brick not being submitted to the action of fire, but only to the heat of the sun. Whilst these bricks would not be suitable for our buildings, you can see their appropriateness in Egypt, where there is no rain. In a dry and sunny clime the bricks would last for thousands of years, whereas in our climate they would be of no use.

Verses 8-9. **The world and Satan opposed to the Christian's Spiritual Progress.** "If thou come to serve the Lord," saith the wisdom of the Son of Sirach, "prepare thy soul for temptation. This caution too often neglected. Young converts imagine that the victory over Satan will be won at once, by the first blow. The children of Israel had sighed by reason of their bondage. The Lord heard their groaning. Sent Moses and Aaron to the Elders. The people believed. Did the chains of their bondage then fall off at once? Far otherwise. They were now in the way from slavery, towards the liberty for which they panted: but toil, privation, and affliction lay before them in long succession, ere they could sit down every man under his own vine, and every man under his own fig tree, within the consecrated borders of Canaan. Have you listened to the gracious pleading of the Spirit of God, in sincere anxiety for a complete and eternal deliverance? You will meet with hindrances, one of the first will arise from those who make a mock at sin, who deride the privileges and duties of pure and undefiled religion (15) Such a rock of offence is represented by Pharaoh in this chapter, where we find emblematically pourtrayed:—

I. The prejudice of the careless and worldly against sincere and vital Godliness. 1. *It is regarded as the dream and vision of a heated and enthusiastic imagination.* When the wonders of redemption first break in upon the mind, when the inquirer first beholds the Son of God dying for him, he is ready to exclaim, "Whom have I in heaven but thee!" Are these feelings visionary; or have they been enkindled within his heart by the Spirit of God? 2. *It is regarded as inconsistent with a proper attention to the duties of active life.* I grant it possible that the eye of a Christian's soul, first open to behold the glories of the Gospel, may be dazzled with their transcendent brightness, and become indifferent to objects of an importance merely temporal; as the natural eye, which has gazed for a moment upon the sun, sees nothing but dimness in the things of earth: but such an exclusive view of eternal things is of rare occurrence.

II. Another temptation which Satan employs to oppose an entire devotion of the heart to God, is by exaggerating the importance of worldly pursuits. "Let there be more work laid upon the men." What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, if he shall lose his own soul! A double caution may be deduced:—1 *To those who would hinder the spiritual freedom of others whom they may control or influence; as Pharaoh would have impeded the political deliverance of Israel.* You must settle from Scripture and prayer whether the resolutions and desires you oppose arise from the inspiration of God, or the imagination of men. Woe to him that striveth with his Maker. 2. *You who are thus hindered, remember that Scripture addresses you with a cautionary voice.* Be not slothful in business.

[*Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*]

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

THE TRUE PICTURE OF A GREAT TYRANT.

In the Word of God we have many patterns of human life and moral conduct. We have depicted the proud man in his gaiety, the covetous man with his wealth, the foolish man in his folly, and the tyrant in his cruelty. These pictures of life are eminently calculated to answer a useful and practical purpose. When the picture is of moral goodness and virtue, it is calculated to inspire with its beauty, and to lead men to an imitation of it. When, however, it is of tyranny, as in the case before us, it is likely to awaken supreme contempt, and deep abhorrence for it. There is in man a certain intuition which always utters a response to these representations of conduct, especially when they are presented in a pictorial form, as then they appeal to the imagination, and make a far deeper impression upon the mind than any mere precept could. In these pictorial representations of character there is real life; we feel that we are in contact with men who exhibit feeling, who speak, who act, whose bearing is in harmony with our own inner experiences: hence they take deep hold of your souls. We hope that the picture sketched in the verses of this paragraph will give us such a vivid realization of the cruelty and horror of tyranny that we shall flee from it ourselves, and endeavour to repress it in others. We observe—**I. That tyrants generally take offence at, and make the slightest interference with their conduct the occasion of additional hardship to their slaves.** The narrative informs us that Moses and Aaron had been divinely commissioned to go to Pharaoh, and rebuke his treatment of the Israelites, and to demand their freedom. 1. *Thus we see that it is the duty of good men to rebuke tyrants.* God calls men, and especially qualifies them, to rebuke tyrants who are oppressing humanity. It would appear as if Pharaoh had almost had his own way in the oppression of Israel. Egypt had not intercepted him, nor had the Israelites risen in rebellion against him, nor had any heroic champion undertaken their cause; they were the slaves of a monarch who acted towards them according to the arbitrary and cruel impulse of his iron will. And this had been the case for years. He has, therefore, grown impatient of rebuke, and especially when administered by comparative strangers. It does sometimes happen that tyrants are allowed long to pursue their course of cruel oppression without interruption; hence they are imperious. But God will one day arrest them by a stern message. He will send an heroic servant, qualified by heavenly vision and a clear insight into the purposes of the future, who shall meet the tyrant in his own palace, and reveal a power supreme and unconquerable, before which he will have to yield. Some good people think it best to let tyrants alone, to let them work their own cruel purpose until they come to their sad end, when they will die unpitied.[16] They imagine it foolish to arouse their rage by interference, to awaken them to further cruelties to those already under their charge. We say that this is a wrong and cowardly method of viewing the matter. We are unwarranted in allowing tyrants to reign for a day; in standing near while multitudes are suffering the agonies of a bondage they have not power to resist. In such an emergency we must be men; above all, we must be Christian men. It is our duty to demand the freedom of the oppressed, and, if necessary, to use stringent measures to obtain it. We must be fired with a holy courage, and go as angels to snap the fetters of the bondmen, and bring them into sweet liberty. 2. *That good men who rebuke tyrants are likely to involve themselves in anxiety and conflict.* Moses and Aaron who have just rebuked Pharaoh for his cruelty to, and demanded the freedom of, Israel, have, by so doing, commenced a struggle that will involve them in life-

long trouble and anxiety. And so it is now. To rebuke a tyrant is a difficult matter, and especially if he occupies a high social position. There are always men of policy, place-hunters, who will defend such a man as Pharaoh, animated by the hope of future gain: hence such hollow-hearted hypocrites are the first to insult, and, if possible, to defeat, the earnest endeavours of the good to relieve the slave of his chains. A few such sycophants as these can contrive plots, circulate slander, and awaken animosities very difficult to be overcome. Many a man has rendered sad his life by interfering with a tyrant in the interest of humanity at large. Such a sacrifice of personal comfort is hard to make, but is often required at the hands of those who would be the heroic emancipators of the enslaved. Such will get their reward. They will win a calm peacefulness of soul which outward clamour will not be able to disturb, and the gratitude of the world. Instance Wilberforce. 3. *That good men by their rebuke often awaken tyrants to further animosity.* We are painfully conscious that the attempts at freedom are not at first successful; they require long-continued operations, which are likely to augment the rage of the despot they seek to dethrone: hence during the process of emancipation all slavery is rendered more cruel and despicable.[17] But this is only the prophecy of ultimate freedom, and will soon obtain its fulfilment in the songs of ransomed Israel. The heroic good are not responsible for this additional cruelty, but it is a tribute to the energy of their effort; and instead of discouraging those who are called to endure it, it should inspire them with hope, as the darkest part of night is that just preceded by the dawn. All tyrants are impatient of the interference of others. **II. That tyrants generally employ others to carry their messages and to execute their purposes of cruelty.** Probably Pharaoh seldom saw the enslaved Israelites, or the burdens they were made to bear, and the cruelty to which they were subjected. He only knew the treasure-cities they were building, and the way in which they enriched his royal coffers. He simply gave his orders to the task-masters and they executed them. He had little or no personal oversight over his slaves. 1. *Tyrants are generally too indolent and indifferent to take a personal oversight of their slaves.* Pharaoh would prefer lounging about in his royal palace to the trouble of a personal inspection of his slaves. The walk to them would be too much for him. Besides, he would not risk the consequences of such a visit. The condition of Israel was so sad, their work so hard, their scourging so brutal, and their bondage so severe, that even his heart, stone-like as it was, might feel regret at their woe. The human heart in the worst of wretches, and in the greatest tyrants, will assert its natural feeling of pity, even though it be unwelcome to those within whom it is awakened. The remembrance of Israel's wrongs might haunt him in the day time, and disturb his slumbers by horrid dreams at night. He would, therefore, keep at a distance from his slaves, that he might not hear their cries, and that he might live on almost unconscious of their woes. There are few men who can visit the wrongs and woe they occasion; they prefer to live at a distance from it. True, there are some hardy sinners who can stand unmoved surrounded by the victims of their tyranny. 2. *Tyrants generally prefer the excitement of pleasing amusement.* Pharaoh in the Egyptian Palace, and, as the centre of an Oriental court, would not be wanting in amusements and occupations congenial to his passionate desires. He would much more prefer the pleasantry and magnificent entertainment of his royal surroundings than visiting his slaves. Hence he employed others who should exercise a direct supervision over them. Tyrants like to make others responsible for the injuries they inflict. **III. That tyrants generally demand work under conditions that render it almost impossible.** Pharaoh commanded that henceforth the Israelites should make bricks without the regular provision of straw. The officials were forbidden to find it for them: hence they were scattered about the country to obtain it for them-

selves. This occupied much of their time, and yet the same amount of work was required from them. So tyrants are unjust and inconsiderate in their demands. They are unreasonable. There are many of this kind in the world to-day. There are some in the commercial world; they expect their servants to make bricks without straw, to make money without capital. There are some in the Church: they expect Ministers to make bricks without straw, to fill the chapel when no one will help him, to save souls when no one prays for him. There are lots of people in the world who expect those under them to do the impossible, and this is the essential spirit and demand of tyranny. Only a despot will require of a man more than he can happily and reasonably render. **IV. That Tyrants bring grief upon the lives of others without the slightest regret, and are utterly destitute of human feeling.** Who can imagine the condition of Israel at this time? Their slavery throughout has been one of calamity and woe, but never has it been more severe than now. This is the supreme moment of the tyrant's rage. The burden of Israel's work is unbearable. Their lives are full of grief. All public spirit is crushed out of them. And this is always the result of despotic rule; it brings misery upon a nation; it crushes the energy out of a people; it makes them incapable of noble impulse, or of heroic action. The saddest pictures of past history are those connected with the records of tyranny.[18] The tear and voice of sorrow cannot move the heart of a despot, he is accustomed to their wail.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

The Taskmasters of the People.

Verse 10. **I. As coming out from the presence of a cruel monarch.** The taskmasters and officers were, no doubt, some of them chosen from the Israelites, as they would be more likely to find out any plot that might be contrived for their freedom, and they would have more influence with their brethren in the event of a rebellion. They had been in companionship with Pharaoh. They would be no better for this. Men are always morally the worse for spending an hour with a tyrant. They almost unconsciously imbibe his spirit. They become familiar with his vocabulary.

II. As uttering from Pharaoh a cruel message. When you see a man coming out from companionship with a tyrant, you may expect that he will soon speak a message of cruelty. When tyrants are together, their counsel generally has reference to the oppression of the weak.

III. As imposing from Pharaoh a cruel task. Israel was to make bricks without straw. Tyranny is very inventive. It is never at a loss for a method whereby to augment the woe of those whose slavery it has achieved.

"*I will not give you straw.*" Cold comfort! Things commonly go backward with the saints before they go forward, as the corn groweth downward ere it grow upward. Hold out, faith and patience; deliverance is at next door. When things are worst, they will mend. (*Trapp.*)

The cruel commands of despotic monarchs are quickly obeyed by their instruments.

Instruments must do and say what persecuting powers command.

Some messengers may deliver glad tidings to God's people with gladness, others with regret.

A sad message:—1. Sent by a tyrant, 2. Sent through his servants. 3. Sent to the people of God. 4. Sent under permission of Providence.

Means necessary to work.

Verse 1. **I. That man cannot accomplish work without means.** Israel could not make bricks without straw. Nei-

ther can men undertake any work without the means necessary to its accomplishment. A man cannot write a book without intellect. He cannot build a church without money. He cannot save souls without intimate communion with God. He cannot gather riches without industry. He cannot influence social without moral purity. Men cannot make bricks without straw. The great folly is that they try. They are men trying the impossible. They are of weak intellect, yet they want literary fame; they are of feeble sympathies, yet they long for the honours of emancipation; they are animated by a dream, they pursue a phantom.

II. That one man has often the power to intercept the means by which another man works. Pharaoh had the power to take away the straw from the Israelites, which afore-time had been given to them to make their bricks. So, one man has the power to intercept the methods by which the intellect, the genius, the activities, of another are accustomed to work. We can take away the straw by which our brother has been accustomed to make his bricks. And many, animated by envy, covetousness, and despotism, render those around them almost incapable of toil. Hence many bright visions are dispelled, many long-indulged expectations are disappointed, and many hours are beclouded with sorrow, through the interference of such overt tyranny.

III. That when men are robbed of their means of work they are thrown into great straits. The Israelites were scattered all through the land of Egypt, to seek stubble instead of straw, whereby to fulfil their toil. Men must work. They are not to be entirely stopped by hindrances, but they are greatly impeded by them. They are rendered unhappy. They know not where to supply the place of that they have lost. Their amount of work is greatly diminished. One man has the ability to render the task of another difficult.

IV. Any man who intercepts the work of another takes a fearful responsibility upon himself The man who takes away the straw whereby another man works is involving himself in terrible responsibility. The poorest workman can make a brick if he cannot build a house. Do not impede his labour; if you do, God will measure out to you a just retribution. Many men who are now dead would have left the world a far richer legacy of thought and labour, if the straw had not been taken from them in the day of their effort. Woe to the Pharaoh who gave orders for its removal, and who sent these great minds to gather stubble in the broad universe, anywhere where they could meet with more kindly shelter and aid.

The Church Cast upon her own Resources.

Verse 12. **I. That the Church is often cast upon her own resources.** There are times when men withdraw the aid they have long given to the Church. They issue orders that no more straw is to be placed at her disposal. Men of the world do not give the Church her due. She is thrown back upon her own resources, upon her own originality, suggestiveness, and, supremely, upon her God. She has to go into the wide world to seek aid in the performance of her holy toil. She has to make use of the meanest agencies, even of stubble, now that her straw is withheld. These are times of dark depression.

II. That when human aid is thus withdrawn, men expect from the church the same amount of work that she accomplished before. Pharaoh expected from the Israelites the same amount of work daily after the straw was withheld, as before. So, notwithstanding that the Church has to go in search of new agencies, and awaken new instrumentalities, yet in the time of her depression men unreasonably expect that she will achieve the same amount of toil. Let our business men give the Church the straw, the wealth,

the consecrated talent she needs, and ought to have from them, and she will soon double her diligence and duty.

III. That when the Church does not accomplish her work as fully and speedily under these difficult circumstances, she is persecuted and slandered by the world. Verse 14. Thus the Church, in the most trying moments of her history, is misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered, and persecuted by those to whom she has rendered unnumbered and incalculable service.[19]

Cruel commands of persecuting powers are obeyed by afflicted souls.

Dispersion from fellow workers is a hard burden on them, from whom work is exacted.

It is a contradictory thing to drive men from work, and yet expect daily labours.

Such hard undertakings are the servants of God sometimes called to bear.

Verses 13, 14. Reasons why men do not perform their work.

Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and to-day, as heretofore?

I. Some men say that they do not work because they cannot see any to do. They say that no one will employ them to make bricks. When men make this excuse we seldom believe them. In a country like this, where every kind of industry is carried on, no honest, intelligent, and diligent worker need be without employment. This excuse is generally the plea of the idle vagrant, rather than the statement of real fact. It may occasionally and for a time be made with truth.

II. Some men do not work because they are physically incapacitated. They are unable to make bricks. They may have been born with the defective use of their bodily limbs, hence they are not able to enter upon the industrious pursuits of a busy life. Such cases are numerous. They are deserving of special asylums for their benefit. They should always excite our sympathy, and the best aid we can render.

Some men do not work because they are indolent. They will not make bricks. They say there are no bricks to be made They are idle. Such men are a curse to themselves, to their families, and to the nation at large. The law ought to have power to make them work, and earn honestly their daily bread. They are the cause of half the woe that comes upon our country.

IV. Some men do not work as they would because they are prevented from doing so by the injustice of others. These Israelites did not make as many bricks as they otherwise would have done had Pharaoh supplied them with straw, as was his duty. There are multitudes of good workmen kept from the full and complete performance of their daily work by the injustice and tyranny of their superiors or even by their comrades. Not even kings ought to have the power to prevent the easy and happy workmanship of their subjects. What a vast amount of profitable labour would be lost to Egypt through this conduct on the part of Pharaoh. That nation, as a rule, will be the strongest and happiest in which there is the greatest facility for good and joyous work.

In the absence of help, cruel taskmasters are hasty to call for work.

Full work is called for by wicked exactors, where means of doing it are withheld.

Daily work is commanded by oppressors when they deny daily bread.

Hard blows as well as harsh words cruel powers inflict upon God's harmless ones.

Tender officers are made to smart by superiors, because they dare not oppress others under them.

Unreasonable demands are the best reasons which oppressors give for their cruelty.

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

Requiring the Impossible.

I. That there are some people in society who strive to make those under them do the impossible. Pharaoh tried to make the Israelites do the impossible, when he commanded them to make bricks without providing them with straw. This demand of tyranny is heard to-day in our large factories and amongst our agricultural population. 1. *All require men to do the impossible who wish them to work beyond their capabilities.* Every man has a degree of capability for work peculiar to himself, and can only execute that kind of work in a given time, according to his own ability. To require more at his hands is to require the impossible. *To require men to work beyond their physical strength is to require the impossible.* Some employers have no regard for the physical manhood of those engaged in their service. They give the same amount of work alike to the strong and the weak, and expect it accomplished. The thin, pale countenances of many who are daily seen wending their way to our busy hives of industry are indices to sad tales of heart and home. They are overworked. They are sinking into the grave. How often is the buoyant life and energy of youth quenched, and almost extinguished, by toil in an overcrowded and ill-ventilated office. All who require young men to prosecute their daily business under such conditions are, in effect, seeking the impossible. *To require men to work beyond their intellectual ability is to require the impossible.* There are hundreds of men in our country who occupy positions beyond the power of their mental ability to sustain happily, and with comfort to themselves. This is the case with many who indulge in large financial speculations; with many in the daily haunts of life who occupy a higher position than they are qualified for; and with many popular ministers. Those in authority over them, and an exacting public, are ever urging them to make bricks without straw. Hence their work becomes a burden and a sorrow. *To require men to work beyond their moral energy is to require the impossible.* There are some men of little souls and small sympathies who have great churches, and who have in their congregation men of large hearts These large-hearted hearers get but little help in their sorrows and conflicts from their minister and his sermons; they ought not to expect otherwise, for even a minister cannot make brick without straw. How can a preacher give to his congregation the sympathies of an overflowing heart of love, when his soul is hardly large enough to contain even himself, when he is of cold temperament, logical in thought rather than deep in emotion. Never require your minister to do the impossible; to visit all the parish in a day, to know that people are ill when he has never been told, to attend half-a-dozen committees at the same hour, to lead a prayer-meeting when he is preaching elsewhere, or expect sympathy from him when he has none to give. If you have chosen him as your pastor, do not expect him to make bricks without straw. 2. *All require men to do the impossible who wish them to work beyond their opportunity.* Every man must have time, and a proper *time*, to do his work. He must not be expected to do two things at once. He must not be expected to work when nature requires that he should be in bed asleep. But men must not only have the opportunity of time in which to accomplish their work, but also the opportunity of *place* and *means*. Every workman should have a place adapted to his employment, and should be readily supplied with means whereby to carry it on. He should have a shed to make his bricks in, as well as straw to make them with. 3. *Contemplate the method employed to get men to do the impossible.* These methods are various. Some will condescend

to flattery and cant to get men to do that for which they are totally unadapted. Others will use force and persecution. (1.) *They set taskmasters over us.* To watch our conduct. To inspect our work. To insure our diligence. To augment our burden. To darken our sorrow. How many managers in our large factories, inspired by the tyrant spirit of their masters, act the part of these Egyptian officers. How many deacons in small churches are more like them than they are like Christ, who gave rest to the heavy ladened. (2.) *They abuse us.* They say we are idle, and that even after we have made the best attempt within our power, to fall in with their unjust demands. (3.) *They mock our religious sentiment.* "Therefore, ye say, let us go and do sacrifice unto the Lord." They impeach our religious motives. They insinuate that we are hypocrites. These, then, are the ways and methods in which we are treated, when tyrants endeavour to compel us to do the impossible. (4.) *Some people will attempt to accomplish the impossible.* It would seem that these Israelites did. They were scattered abroad, and went seeking stubble wherewith to make bricks. Never attempt to do what you cannot, either in response to the order of the tyrant or the smile of the flatterer. It will involve you in utter failure and distress at last, when you will get no sympathy from those who urged you to it. The world is full of men who are trying to do the impossible. They are trying to make wealth too fast, they are giving out energy they will never be able to repair.

II. That the people who strive to make those under them do the impossible are throwing society into an attitude of pain and complaint. "Then the officers of the Children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?" 1. *The requirement of the impossible tends to throw society into an attitude of pain.* When men are required to do the impossible, their physical and moral energies are exhausted by what they know must be fruitless labour. Hence they become weary. They despair. Most of the social pain of our country is occasioned by tyrannic and covetous spirits, who are in haste to get rich out of the cheap and stern labour of those who are unfortunately in their service. National happiness is to a very large extent the outcome of a free and sympathetic employment of the working classes. 2. *The requirement of the impossible tends to throw society into an attitude of complaint.* When society is in pain, it is almost sure to render vocal its anguish in the language of complaint. Men feel, when they are required to do the impossible, that they are unjustly treated. And nothing will sooner give rise to complaint than a sense of injury and wrong. When society is complaining, it cannot be happy or prosperous. A tyrant king can destroy the very life of a nation. "Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants." 1. *Is it from the sheer motive of tyranny?* (2.) *Is it as an additional assertion of authority since the demand of Moses and Aaron?* (3.) *Is it with a cruel delight in our woe?* (4.) *It certainly cannot be justified.*

III. That the people who strive to make those under them do the impossible, and who throw society into an attitude of pain, are but little affected by the woe they occasion, and generally resent any mention of it to them. "Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks." 1. *Notwithstanding the outcry of the oppressed the tyrant demands renewed work.* "Go therefore now, and work." 2. *Not withstanding the outcry of the oppressed, the tyrant adheres to his cruel measures.* "There shall no straw be given you." 3. *Notwithstanding the outcry of the oppressed, the tyrant mocks their woe, and treats them with contempt.* LESSONS: 1. *Never require the impossible.* 2. *Never attempt the impossible.* 3. *Adapt methods to ends.* 4. *Cultivate kindly dispositions toward your employers.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Reasons Required for Moral Conduct.

Verse 15. "*Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants.*"

I. There are times when men are required to give reasons for their method of moral conduct. They have been oppressive in their conduct. They have to give a reason for their oppression. They have been dishonest, they have to give a reason for their deception. They have occasioned pain to others, and any man who gives pain to his fellow creature ought to be rigorously questioned about it. Public opinion often calls a man to its tribunal. Sometimes *men* are the questioners. Sometimes *God* is the Questioner. Kings are not exempt from these interrogations. The world will one day have to give a reason for its conduct at the solemn bar of God.

II. It is highly important that every man should be able to allege heavenly principles and motives as the basis of his conduct. Men must not rest their methods of conduct upon the dictate of their own pleasure, convenience, or arbitrary will, but upon the spiritual law of God. Revenge, envy, and selfishness are vile reasons for conduct, and will meet with severe retribution. Love to God and man is the only true and loyal principle and motive of human action, and only will sustain the scrutiny of infinite rectitude.

III. That a man who can allege heavenly principles as the basis of his conduct will be safe at any tribunal to which he may be called. 1. *He will be safe at the tribunal of his own conscience.* 2. *He will be safe at the tribunal of God's Book.* 3 *He will be safe at the tribunal of public opinion.* 4. *He will be safe at the final tribunal of the universe.*

Oppressed souls cannot but complain of cruel and unjust smitings.

Addresses for relief are fittest from the afflicted to the highest power oppressing.

Access, cries, and sad speeches are forced from the oppressed to oppressors.

The execution by instruments is justly charged upon their Lord's.

The Oppressor:—1. He has often to give audience to his slaves. 2. He has to hear the cry of his slaves. 3. He has to listen to the complaint of his slaves. 4. He has to give a reason for his conduct to his slaves.

Verse 16. The Expostulations of the Slave.

I. They expostulate that the means necessary to the accomplishment of their daily work were withheld. "There is no straw given to thy servants."

II. They expostulate that they were brutally treated. "Thy servants are beaten."

III. They expostulate that they were not morally culpable in their neglect of work. "The fault is in thine own people"

True servants may justly expostulate about hard dealings from their rulers.

To give no straw and to command bricks is a most unreasonable exaction.

To punish innocent servants when others sin, is a most unjust oppression.

Such wicked dealings sometimes make God's servants to complain to earthly powers.

The tyrant:—1. Unreasonable in his demands.

2. Cruel in his resentment.

3. Mistaken in his judgment of guilt.

Verse 17—19. Cruel oppressors of God's people are deaf to complaints.

Crimination, though false, instead of acceptation, is returned to the appeals of the oppressed by cruel powers.

Double labours are branded for idleness by unreasonable oppressors.

Persecutors do not only charge men but God, for making His people idle.

Inhuman persecutors drive the appealing oppressed out of their sight to work.

Cruel oppressors double their denial of help unto sad plaintiffs.

Complaints of exaction upon God's servants are usually answered by adding more.

Cruel exactions of persecutors may make deep impressions upon God's servants.

Good overseers are more afflicted when they see themselves forced to oppress the innocent.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20—23.

CHRISTIAN WORKERS; THEIR DIFFICULTIES AND DISCOURAGEMENT.

We do not as a rule fully appreciate the difficulties with which Christian workers have to contend. We are apt to imagine that their toil is comparatively easy, that they are aided in it by the ministry of heaven, and that therefore everything yields to their touch. Any man who talks thus shows that he has never been engaged in moral service, or his own experience would have taught him otherwise. *Christian work is more difficult and perplexing than any other;* it requires and calls into exercise the higher faculties of our being, which in most men are but feebly and partially developed; it brings into complicated social relationships; and often ends in apparent failure. The Christian worker must be permanently a man of faith, or he will despair in his toil, as nearly all that is seen is in opposition to his mission. Also, *he is uncertain as to the time of his success;* he knows not when he will come to the glad termination of his work. The men who toil in the secular spheres of life for their daily bread, and for the accommodation of society, know almost to an hour when their task will be completed. They have to deal with the inanimate things of nature, with wood and stone, which have no power of resistance, or remonstrance, These lifeless blocks must yield to the piercing of the chisel and the stroke of the hammer. But not so with the material on which Christian workers try their art. Human souls are not inanimate. They have the power of thought, of emotion, of will, and can resist, not only the earnest efforts of man, but also the influences of the Divine Spirit, when He strives to make them new creatures in Christ Jesus. Hence, when God calls Moses, or any other man, from ordinary toil to undertake some special mission for the moral welfare of humanity, He calls him to a task at once the most difficult and honourable. Let us then endeavour to appreciate and sympathize more with the perplexities of Christian service than we have hitherto done, that we may be patient, calmly awaiting the outcome of Divine Providence in its relation to the conduct of men. We observe:—

I. That Christian workers have frequently to contend with the obstinacy and ridicule of men in high positions. Moses and Aaron had to contend with the moral obstinacy of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. And not only had they to conflict with his obstinacy, but also with his ridicule, and with his misrepresentation of their motive and conduct. He said that the design of these holy men, in their demand of freedom, was to indulge the indolence of Israel. And how frequently, in the history of Christian and philanthropic service, have kings and those in authority been the greatest hindrance to its progress. When the godly heroes of the Church have sought the emancipation of men, the pride of some haughty king, or the prejudice of some ignorant nobleman, or the vested interest of some rich autocrat, have thwarted their efforts. It is hard for a desert shepherd to contend with an impious king; the latter will have many allies, the former will rather have the legions of heaven to aid him than those

of earth, as his cause is more popular with angels than men. Nor is it easy to endure the ridicule of those in high position, for when a king laughs and mocks at religious service, there are always a lot of servile spirits who will try to imitate his grin and raillery at our toil. We imagine that ridicule is almost the severest trial the Christian worker has to endure Thus we see that it is not the Divine plan to shield men from the ridicule and insult incurred by their effort of moral service, but rather to give grace that they may endure as serving him who is invisible. The ocean of Christian service is rocky and stormy, but we have a good pilot and a safe chart to guide us to our destined port.

II. That Christian workers have frequently to contend with the discouragement of a first defeat, and apparent failure. Moses and Aaron had been to Pharaoh according to the Divine command, and had met with a severe repulse. Their God was rejected. Their requirement of Israel's freedom was haughtily refused. Their visit was followed by a servitude of increased rigour. It was to them a great failure They had no doubt, after the revelation God had made to them and the words He had spoken to them, but that they would meet with immediate success. But at once the fires of their enthusiasm were extinguished; their best efforts were without effect upon the king. Their statement of fact was useless. Their arguments were futile. Their entreaties were vain. The proud monarch defies them, and their God. All Christian workers will be able to enter into the bitter experiences of these two men. Their disappointment has often been yours. You heard the call of God; went forth to noble toil on behalf of the moral welfare of humanity, your heart was warm with glad excitement, visions of grand freedom came upon your soul, but they were all dispelled by the first attempt to snap the fetter. You were disappointed.[20] You were sad. Your energy was gone, and you found it difficult to summon enough strength to make a second effort. Failure is always a woeful experience. It is to the scholar. It is to the voyager. It is to the soldier. It is especially so to the Christian worker. Never be disheartened by apparent failure; it may be but the shutting of a door, which will open widely upon your next approach.

III. That Christian workers have frequently to contend with the misapprehension of those whom they seek to benefit. Moses and Aaron had not merely to contend with the ridicule and resistance of Pharaoh; with their own sad consciousness of failure; but also with the misrepresentation and ungrateful reproaches of the slaves they sought to free. This is certainly one of the most remarkable features of Christian service. We should have thought that the Israelites would have been so tired and oppressed by their long-continued slavery, that they would have joyfully welcomed any agency likely to release them from it. But so far from this, they reproach Moses and Aaron upon the very first opportunity, accusing them of having augmented their burdens rather than relieved them. These Israelites had not the judgment to discern that this severe oppression was but the prelude to their release. They had not the patience to wait for the Divine Advent which would be the signal of their freedom. They had not the fortitude to endure their suffering calmly, even for a while. They immediately give vent to reproachful language, even to those who have given up all to relieve them in their trying circumstances. And this picture finds its reproduction in connection with much of the Christian service of our own day. How many of the slaves of sin, whose lives are full of misery and woe, resent any Christian effort that is made to recover them to purity and peace, because of the momentary increase of pain that is occasioned by the effort to become morally better. They desire, in response to our call, to leave King Satan, and to enjoy the freedom of King Jesus; hence Satan becomes more fierce in his temptations, he endeavours to make more secure their fetters,

to increase their burdens; and in bitterness of soul they are liable to indulge in ungrateful words, and regard their expected deliverer as their foe. An increase of slavery generally precedes freedom, hence the slaves of sin should be prepared for anguish before they can chant the sweet anthem of liberty. These misrepresentations are however hard for the Christian worker to endure; they are not merely ungrateful, they are cruel, they wound his soul. Happy if they lead him to God in prayerful spirit.

IV **That Christian workers have frequently to contend with their own misconception of the Divine method of working, and their inability to rightly interpret the meaning of events in relation thereto.** Moses and Aaron no doubt thought that when Pharaoh had rejected their message, and when the Israelites had reproached their conduct, that their mission was at an end, and that it was a failure.[21] This is evident from the prayer of the next verse or two. They could not interpret the meaning of events; they could not understand the increased burden of Israel's slavery. They could not look beneath the surface of their daily history; and only few men can. Hence the difficulties of Christian workers. They have not the power to interpret events. They lack intuitive perception and penetration. They cannot work out historical problems; from the given equation of to-day they cannot find out the unknown quantity of to-morrow. Hence they err. They imagine that increased burdens mean failure, when in reality they are the first indications of success. For if the monarch did not fear that he would soon lose his slaves, he would not require more work from them than usual. So, the Christian worker has to contend with the many disadvantages occasioned by his own misreading of daily history. LESSONS:—1. *Not to be discouraged by apparent failures in Christian service.* 2. *Not to yield to the scorn of the Mighty in our attempt to improve the moral condition of men.* 3. *To interpret the reproach of the slave in the light of his augmented slavery, and not to be dismayed by it.* 4. *To prayerfully study daily events, so as to find God's purposes of freedom developing themselves therein.*

THE APPARENT FAILURE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

I. Our surprise that Christian Service should be a failure. It is a matter of surprise:—1. *Because the workers had been Divinely sent, and prepared for their toil.* Had Moses and Aaron undertaken the emancipation of Israel at their own wish, or at the instigation of their friends, we could not have been astonished at their failure; but they were sent by God. They had been instructed by vision They had been enriched by life's discipline. They had gathered impulse from holy communion with heaven. They were invested with the power to work miracles. They were given the message which they were to deliver unto Pharaoh. We cannot but wonder at this failure. 2. *Because the workers had received all the accompaniments necessary to their toil.* They did not go a warfare in their own charges. They did not go in poverty. All the resources of heaven went with them. The two brothers found glad companionship in each other, and their all in God. We should have imagined that as the Divine Being had so equipped them for their mission, that he would have given them immediate success. Hence our surprise at their apparent failure. 3. *Because the workers had arisen to a moral fortitude needful to the work.* Once they were cowardly, and shrank from the mission, but their cowardice had broken unto heroism; their tremor was removed by the promise of God. Their objections to the service were removed. They went to it with brave heart. They were brave, because they had confidence in God. Hence we should have expected them to have succeeded at once, as a brave soul is never far from victory.

II. Our sorrow that Christian Service should be a failure. It is a matter of

sorrow:—1. *Because the tyrant is unpunished.* Men who in any way imprison their fellow creatures deserve the severest penalties that can be inflicted either by earth or heaven. It is a matter of regret when the agency designed for the infliction of retribution is frustrated in its stroke. Let the world rejoice when a despot is removed from his throne. 2. *Because the slave is unfreed.* We had anticipated the freedom of Israel from the sacred heroism of these two servants of God. We are apparently disappointed. But though the immediate effort is unsuccessful, God will achieve their freedom. The failure of moral service is only temporary. 3. *Because the workers are disappointed.* Moses and Aaron expected immediate success. Their communion with God had inspired them with this hope. Hence their dejection.

III. Our hope that the failure of Christian Service will not be ultimate. 1. *Because the Divine call will be vindicated.* Moses and Aaron were the right men to achieve the emancipation of Israel. God will demonstrate this, in the history of the world, by their success. The moral selections of heaven are capable of vindication, and one day will be vindicated to humanity. 1. *Because service for the good of men cannot ultimately fail.* This thought should inspire Christian workers with fortitude and patience. You are employed in a work that commands the obligation of the race, and the final blessing of God. LESSONS:—1. *Do not be alarmed at the temporary failure of Christian work.* 2. *The apparent failure of Christian work answers some wise purposes.* 3. *Those who occasion the temporary failure of Christian work are liable to the retribution of heaven.* 4. *Let Christian workers to hold on to the word and promise of God.*[22]

THE COMPLAINTS OCCASIONED BY CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

I. There is the complaint of the King, that the people are idle. The effort of Christian service always awakens complaint, and especially of those toward whom it is directed. Men are sure to imagine themselves injured by it, if they are to lose their slaves through it. People do not like the Gospel to interfere with them in the enjoyment of their sinful pleasures.

II. There is the complaint of the people, that they have been deluded. Moses and Aaron had inspired them with the bright hope of liberty, they were acting and living under the glad influence of this anticipation, when suddenly their slavery is rendered more intolerable by the revengeful oppression of Pharaoh. Sometimes impatient people who have been led to expect gifts from God imagine themselves deluded, because those gifts are delayed in their bestowal A true soul will wait, without a word of reproach, till heaven comes to open its prison door [23]

III. There is the complaint of the workers, that they were defeated. Sometimes people, who ought to know better, complain about the ways of God. There are times when Christian service happens to please nobody but God. How many imperfections attach to the efforts of good men. We do not much wonder at the complainings of the King, or even of the Israelites, but we expected better things from Moses and Aaron. Christian men are too often found in the same attitude of soul as men of the world.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 20—21. Sense of evil from tyrants may make the oppressed fall into complaint against their best friends.

Providence orders his servants sometimes to meet with friends after sad usage by oppressors.

Ministers of salvation want to meet God's afflicted, when they look not after them.

Instruments of deliverance may desire a good egress of the oppressed from tyrants, and not find it.

Sense overcharged with oppression

may make men reproach God, and curse his ministers.

Unbelieving souls are ready to set God against His own word, and instruments sent by Him.

Hasty unbelievers under cross providences are ready to charge the cause upon God's ministers.

Foolish souls charge God's instruments of life to be causes of death.

These charges:—1. Unbelieving. 2. Ungrateful. 3. Untruthful. 4. Unhopeful.

Thus we have seen dogs in the chase bark at their best friends.—(*Trapp*).

Now comes a severer trial than any which these servants of the Lord had had to go through. The Lord's people may expect to receive hard words from the people of the world; they may expect to be regarded as troublers of Israel; they may expect to have it said of them, as it was said of the Apostles, that they have "turned the world upside down." But there is a harder trial to the Lord's servants, when from professors themselves they meet with such treatment as Moses and Aaron met with from the officers who were set over the people of Israel. These men meet Moses and Aaron, and they say, "It is all your fault—Pharaoh would not have done us any harm but for you." Now, brethren, we have seen and known something of this. If the Lord's servant is faithful, he does trouble the world. He disturbs the monotony of things. A member of a family receives the truth; his former practices are abandoned; the whole course of his life is altered. It may be worldly prospects are affected by such a change as this: it disturbs the every day worldliness of the family of which this individual is a member, and this causes more or less uneasiness to those who are not like-minded. But instead of inquiry being made as to the cause of all this—instead of asking whether it is wrong, or whether it may not, after all, be right, ill feeling is vented against the instrument, who was the means of bringing the truth home to that heart, and who was really made a blessing to that family. Brethren, the Man of God must make up his mind to this, and not only to this, but one of the most painful things a servant of God meets with is to hear it said, "He is doing damage to the Lord's cause." If we are told, you have no business to stand against the world and sin, we can bear that, for it is the commission we have received from our Master, but we do find it a painful trial when we are told, if you were a little more judicious in your way of stating the truth of God, you would not offend the people of the world, and your preaching would be much more acceptable than it is. Still this ought not to affect the minister of God as to his statement of the truth; for if he has learned the truth, he knows that the message never was, and never will be, recommended by anything in the instrument. If a man had the silver tongue of an angel, he would never bring a soul to Christ; nor can any disqualification on the part of the instrument hinder the Lord's work.[24]—(*Lectures by Rev. W. H. Krause, A.M.*)

Verses 22—23. The prayer of a disappointed worker:—1. It is indicative of disappointment. 2. Of injustice on the part of God. 3. Of cruelty. 4. Of contradiction.

Unjust criminations from God's people make the ministers of God may quail and recede from their duty.

God's faithful instruments, though they do retreat of weakness, yet it is unto the Lord.

God's faithful ones under pressure may charge God foolishly for doing evil to His people.[25]

In such workings of flesh the spirit may humbly expostulate with God by prayer.

Sad events in ministering may make God's servants question their mission.

In such questioning, souls may humbly deprecate the frustration of their ministry.

"*And Moses returned unto the Lord.*" He turned aside, as it were, to speak with a friend, and to disburden himself in God's bosom. This is the saint's privilege.—(*Trapp*).

The language in this twenty-second verse is very remarkable, and explains other passages of Scripture. Moses said, "Lord, wherefore hast Thou evil entreated this people?" But it was the taskmasters who evil entreated them, not God. And this explains that passage to which I referred last Lord's day morning, about God hardening Pharaoh's heart. In the Hebrew idiom, God is often said to do a thing which He is only the occasion of its being done. It is said, for instance, that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart; that is. He applied those means, that, if not successful in subduing that heart, would necessarily, by their reaction, evenuate in the hardening of that heart. So here, God did not evil entreat the people; but He used these means to effectuate their exodus, which at first added to the weight and pressure of their burdens.—(*Dr. Cumming.*)

The prayer of Moses:—

I. A right act.

II. Done in a wrong spirit.

III. At a serious time.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER V.

BY THE

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Page 93. (1)—Ready!—A gentleman's dog having gallantly rescued a drowning child, the spectators were eager to know the name of his master, in order to publish it. The owner at once exclaimed, "Never mind my name; but that of the dog is 'Ready!'" Ready! aye, ready! Such was the response of the brave officer to his anxious commander's enquiry whether he was prepared for the fight. We ought to be ready for every good work.

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly."—*Shakespeare.*

Page 94. (2)—Delay!—Every day we neglect the mission it becomes harder to accomplish both as regards ourselves and it. We are less and less disposed towards it It is more and more inveterate. As with travellers on the Alpine heights overtaken by the pitiless snow-storm at different stages of the mountain ascent, numbness is creeping over one, and the longer the other delays to help his friend by rubbing his limbs, the more profound becomes the torpor of both. Instant action will save both. Activity will give them both a glow.

"There is a firefly in the southern clime,
Which shineth only when upon the wing."

Motion is developing heat. Magoon says that it is good policy to strike while the iron is hot; but it is still better to adopt Cromwell's procedure, and to make the iron hot in striking. As one has said, Be active and expect Christ to be with you; be idle and the thorns and briars will grow so quickly that He will be shut out. Delaying to obey the call, the ice forms upon our feelings—gradually freezes to greater thickness, until total indifference results. Delaying to obey the call, the slave's condition becomes more wretched, the drowning man sinks the deeper, the enfevered patient is entangled more pitiably in the meshes of delirium. The motto of each servant of God must be that of the indomitable mind of Edmund Burke in his address to his constituents at Bristol: For God's sake, let us pass on. There is no time to be lost.

"Wake ere the earth-born charm unnerve thee quite,
And be thy thoughts to work divine address'd:
Do something—do it soon—with all thy might—
An angel's wing would droop if long at rest."—*Wilcox.*

Page 94. (3)—Humanity!—The whole world lieth in bondage; and no man in his senses will venture to assert that man is to-day just as man originally way. Even Moncure Conway, who dethrones Jehovah and enthrones his own de fication (or definition) of Reason, is perforce ready to acknowledge that man is a dismantled fane—a broken shrine, with some gleam of departed glory about him sufficient to give an idea of what he once was, and with (he says) some germs of the original perfection which may be cultivated and developed. It is not now a question how this came about, or why it was allowed to happen. We have the *fact* that the whole world is in servitude to the wicked one—that from time to time Jehovah has raised up deliverers, either prospective or retrospective of the one great Deliverer, Christ, who was to appear,

"He came the prisoners to release
In Satan's bondage held,"

and now calls upon every man to be the deliverer of his fellow-man. Had Moses refused to obey the call in the spirit of Cain, he would have met with Cain's doom, viz., loss of the Divine approbation.

Page 95. (4)—Qualifications!—Bishop Wilson wrote that the great secret of the ministry consisted in three things: 1. Christ: 2. Immortal souls: and 3. Self-humiliation. But self-humiliation springs from discipline—that three-fold discipline of which Luther

spoke when he declared that the three requisites or qualifications to do God's works were prayer, meditation, and temptation. All these Moses had abundance of for years—aye, more than forty long years. God instructs and qualifies as well as calls; for (says Bishop Reynolds) if no prince will send a mechanic from his loom in an honourable embassage to some other foreign prince, is it likely that Jehovah will send forth unqualified instruments about so great a work as the perfecting of the saints?—

"For well he knows, not learning's purest tides
Can quench the immortal thirst that in the soul abides."—*Little.*

Page 96. (5)—**Decision!**—Even a foolish man may utter a wise sentiment, as Colton did, when he said that men ought to deliberate with caution, *but act with decision.* Hood calls attention to the decided man. He may be a most evil man, a grasping, avaricious, unprincipled man; still look how the difficulties of life know the strong man, and give up the contest with him. He walks by the light of his own judgment; he has made up his mind, and having done so, henceforth action—action is before him. He cannot bear to sit amidst unrealized expectations. To him speculation is only valuable that it may be resolved into living and doing. There is no difference, no delay. To this Jehovah had to bring Moses, so that his spirit was in arms, all in earnest. As Pompey, when hazarding his life on a tempestuous sea in order to be at Rome on an important occasion, said that it was necessary for him to go, not for him to live. Thus Cæsar, when he crossed the English Channel, burnt his ships on the Anglican shores, that there might be no return. And so Cortes decided to break up the ships which had brought his soldiers to Mexico from Spain. This daring act had the effect of bracing his men, says Trench, to a pitch of resolution all but supernatural.

Page 96. (6)—**Pharaoh *versus* God!**—This imperious monarch had never been accustomed to be thwarted. Men who have always thrust obstacles as de come to think their power invincible, and to make them a battering ram against fate and circumstances. When Jehovah came down to oppose Pharaoh in his despotic behaviour towards Israel, he tried to wrestle with Him, and paid dearly for his folly. A bantam may crow in the face of a fighting-cock once too often; and woe to the frail boat that rashly contends with the powerful tail of the whale. As one says, God never wrestles with a man without throwing him; so that we might apply Pollok's description of the atheist to Pharaoh—

"The unbeliever
Despising reason, revelation, God,
And, kicking 'gainst the pricks of conscience, rush'd
Deliriously upon the bossy shield
Of the Omnipotent."

Page 97. (7)—**Moral Freedom!**—Behind the physical and national freedom of Israel was their moral and spiritual disenthralment. The hidden is oftimes most important. It was so here. Moral freedom is everything. All sinners are represented as being in bondage, bound with the chain of their sins, servants of him whom they obey, led captive by the devil at his will. He is the great Pharaoh—that old dragon, the serpent. He gilds the yoke, and you are not conscious that you wear it; but there are times when you feel its fretting notwithstanding. That giant passion masters you. But a Deliverer has come to the shores of our world—proclaiming liberty to the captive and freedom to those who are fast bound in the misery and iron of sin-thraldom. From the strongest and most frowning fortress, in which tyranny can bind its captives, this Saviour can deliver. He will deliver: for if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed.—And

"A day—an hour of virtuous liberty
Is worth a whole eternity of bondage."

It is Dr. Caird who asserts that no language—no emblems can be found to convey any adequate idea of the blessedness of such a deliverance. Not the poor timid struggling bird springs forth from the snare with a note of more thrilling joyfulness—not the despairing heartsick captive casts the first look of freedom on the bright heaven, or treads with bounding steps the greensward of home with a more exulting throb of happiness. And never was that ancient song of deliverance sung with a deeper meaning than when the soul, morally freed from the galling tyranny and oppressive yoke of Satan, exclaims: Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler—

"'Tis liberty alone that gives the flowers
Of fleeting life their lustre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it."—*Cowper.*

Page 98. (8)—**Fearless!**—Moses had a duty to discharge, and no dangers must deter him. When God sends men on a work for Him, He virtually undertakes the responsibility of "breakers ahead." His ministers and deliverers must not look askance and hesitate in the fulfilment of their labours because they see "a bombshell" coming. It is related of Charles the Twelfth of Sweden that—whilst besieged in Stralsund he was one day dictating a letter to his secretary, when a bomb from the enemy's outworks fell through the roof of the house where they were. The report of the shell alarmed the secretary so much, that the pen fell from his hand; whereupon the king enquired what was the matter. The trembling secretary could only ejaculate: "The bombshell." The monarch's stern response was: "What has the bomb to do with the letter? Go on with your writing." So what had Moses to do with Pharaoh's wrath? It was for him to go on with the work of deliverance which God

had authorized, and as he had been pleased to appoint. Then

"Work, though the enemies' laughter
Over the valleys may sweep,
For God's patient workers hereafter
Shall laugh when their enemies weep."

Page 98 (9)—Divine Authority!—Canon Ryle mentions an incident in the life of Whitefield, which illustrates the authority. When preaching on one occasion, an old man fell asleep and some of the audience became listless. Suddenly changing his manner, Whitefield broke forth in an altered tone—declaring that he had not come to speak in his own name, otherwise they might lean on their elbows and go to sleep. "No; I have come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, and I must, and will be heard." The sleeper started wide awake—the hearers were stripped of their apathy at once—and every word of the sermon was attended to. It was thus that Moses addressed Pharaoh. It was thus all witnesses for God should address the listeners, with authority:

"By Him inspired, they speak with urgent tongue
Authoritative, whilst the illumined breast
Heaves with unwonted strength."—*Jenner.*

Page 98. (10)—Freedom's Sweets!—The Christian deliverer is all the more active and energetic in his work, because he was once himself a slave. A traveller stood one day beside the cages of some birds which, exposed for sale, ruffled their sunny plumage on the wires, and struggled to be free. Sadly he gazed on these captives till tears stood in his eyes; and turning round to their owner, he asked the price of one. As soon as the money was handed over, he opened the door and set the prisoner free. This he did with captive after captive, till every bird was away, soaring to the sky, arising on the wings of liberty. The crowd stared and stood amazed; but his remark soon cleared up their difficulty: "I was myself *once* a captive, and know the sweets of liberty."—Liberty! What heart is there that does not feel its pulse quicken at the sound? All instincts beat in unison here. Even the dullest, we are told, kindle into rapture, and the most craven for freedom's sake would strike the unwilling blow—

"Ah! There lives not a victim of pride and power
But hopes in the future to win *release;*
But dreams of some bright and golden hour,
When the reign of oppression and wrong shall cease.
Not a toiler who plods 'neath a burden of care,
But dreams of relief and liberty there."—*Dewart.*

Page 98. (11)—Voice of God!—There are many ways in which God causes us to hear His voice! and the first of all His voices is that of His works. Eliza Cook has in glowing terms written:—

"God has a voice that ever is heard
In the peal of the thunder, the chirp of the bird;
It comes in the torrent all rapid and strong,
In the streamlet's soft gush as it ripples along;
Let the hurricane whistle, or warblers rejoice,
What do they tell thee but 'God hath a voice.'"

How many have heard Him calling in His Providence, amid the sunshine of prosperity and the shadows of sorrow—amid the chimings of the marriage bells and the solemn toll of the funeral knell. But His sweetest voice is that of His Evangel. Pharaoh had heard the Divine voices of nature and Providence, but, like Samuel, he did not understand them. Now he hears the "Evangelic" voice, and, like the deaf adder, stops his ears. Yet no voice sounds sweeter. As Dr. Hamilton says, on the gospel tree there grow melodious blossoms—sweeter bells than those which mingled with the pomegranates on Aaron's vest. The idea is borrowed from Oriental poetry, which tells of a wondrous tree on which grew golden apples and silver bells. Every time the breeze went by and tossed the fragrant branches, a shower of those yellow globes fell, and the living bells chimed and tinkled forth their airy ravishment. When Moses spoke to Pharaoh the bells rang unheeded in the monarch's ears; so the golden fruit of joy and peace fell among the brick-kilns of Egypt for Israel's nurture.

Page 99. (12)—Liberty a Divine Right!—Dr Webster tells a story which admirably illustrates this axiom. In times past, a slave, starting in the darkness and stillness of the midnight hour, and taking the north-star for his guide, toiled on his weary way, resting by day and travelling by night until he reached Vermont. He was pursued by his alleged owner, and seized with the intention of returning him to slavery. The case was brought before Judge Harrington; and the slave-owner, in proof of his claim, called the attention of the judge to a bill of sale. It was returned with an intimation that it was not satisfactory evidence of the sale and purchase; whereupon the indignant slave-owner asked what would be sufficient proof. The judge at once replied that a bill of sale from GOD ALMIGHTY would alone satisfy him. Such God will never give; for freedom is His life—

"Oh, freedom! terribly thou springest forth,
As springs the flame above a burning pile;
And shoutest to the nations, who return
Thy shoutings, while the pale oppressor flies."

Page 100. (13)—Wisdom!—Nearly every opinion and advice may be stated in a gentle or in an offensive way. An Oriental prince asked two interpreters to explain his dream. One said that he would lose all his relatives, and then himself die. The monarch

ordered this prophet of evil to be beheaded. The other assured him that he would survive all his relations. The prince loaded this one with favours, though both interpretations were the same. Moses was gentle in his demand to Pharaoh: Let us go three days' journey and sacrifice to our God—

"Speak gently! it is better far
To rule by love than fear,
Speak gently! let not harsh words mar
The good we might do here."—*Bates.*

Page 100. (14)—**Law of Work!**—Work is necessity, says Exell. Work gives a feeling of strength, cries Müller. Work is triumph, as Richard Burke exclaimed shortly after an extraordinary display of powers in Parliament by his brother Edmund: "When we were at play, he was always at work. But work is also a law. There is such a thing as the Law of Work; and from the particle of dust at our feet to man—the last stroke of God's great and sublime handiwork—all bear the impress of the law of labour. The earth is one vast laboratory, where decomposition and re-formation are constantly going on. As has been aptly added, the blast of nature's furnace never ceases, and its fires never burn low. The lichen of the rock and the oak of the forest each works out the problem of its own existence. The earth, the air, the water, teem with busy life. Onward unceasingly—age after age—the world pursues its course; a perpetual lesson, with all it contains, of industry to man. Even the rolling spheres join the universal chorus of labour. Therefore

"Work though the world would defeat you;
Heed not its slander and scorn;
Nor weary till angels shall greet you
With smiles through the gates of the morn."—*Punshon*

Page 101. (15) **Christian Hindrances!** The tyrant's malice cannot suffer the saints to be in peace: hence the Saviour's farewell monition that they must expect tribulation. The Biblical Treasury narrates the case of a soldier in the East Indies—a stout, lion-hearted man—once a noted prizefighter, and a terror to those who knew him. When freed from the bonds of his own passions and guilt the change in his character became most marked and decided. The lion was changed into a lamb, but the lamb had to submit to persecution. One of his comrades, stirred up by Satan, ridiculed him, and taking a basin of hot soup threw it into his bosom. Instead of springing like a tiger upon the insulting comrade he wiped his scalded breast and calmly said, "This is what I must expect as a Christian." Every means will be employed—every effort and device made—every subtle snare enlisted to injure the soul and retard its spiritual enjoyment of Christian freedom—yet not without the Divine permission—as with Israel and Job. God allows the tyrant's agents and emissaries to surround us with perils, beset us with troubles, and confront our footsteps with red-hot ploughshares as necessary discipline:—

"If from Thy ordeal's heated bars
Our feet are seamed with crimson scars,
Thy will be done."

Page 102. (16)—**Tyrants!**—Such is the policy of statesmen in these days. The King of Dahomey has been allowed year after year to indulge in the most horrid and repulsive acts of tyrannic cruelty on the plea that if you give a man rope he is sure to hang himself. Similarly the Emperor of Abyssinia was permitted to practise the most perfidious persecutions, until the *honour* of England was touched. The lion remained quiet whilst the hyena destroyed other animals, and only aroused himself when the wild beast's foot touched his mane. A similar policy of non-intervention led to increased despotism on the part of King Bomba, and to the aggravated tyranny on the part of Spain over the inhabitants of Cuba. So odious have been the cruelties perpetrated by the Spaniards, that heaven is rejected by the natives as a place likely to contain Spaniards.

"The natural bond
Of brotherhood is severed as the flax
That falls asunder at the touch of fire."
—*Cowper.*

Page 103. (17)—**National Liberty!**—Numerous and bright are the laurel wreaths with which poetry has decked the names of such patriots as Wallace, Tell, Kossuth, Cavour, and Garibaldi. Yet, after all, men may be patriots, men may achieve their country's freedom, and yet themselves be slaves. Some have been still themselves bondsmen to their own passions, bondsmen to sin—

"Who then is free? the wise who well maintains
An empire o'er himself."—*Horace.*

No word has been more prostituted. The theme of every factious demagogue, the watchword of every traitor, liberty becomes a name which the honest and well disposed almost tremble to hear. As though lawlessness were freedom, and submission to good government slavery. The slave of his every passion will proclaim himself the worshipper of liberty. The man who would sweep away religion from a State makes a boast of seeking its freedom. So that, in a sense in which it was not designed, we may use the lines of Edwards—

"Like Sicily's mountain, whose fires never die,
Thy presence on earth is confest;
A beacon of wrath when it flames on high,
And a mighty fear when at rest.
Like thee it awakes from its terrible sleep,
And o'er the dark rock and green valley sweep."

Page 104 (18)—**Records of Tyranny** Many are familiar with those recorded in the Bible from Pharaoh and Adonibezek to Herod and Nero. The records of secular history are even darker still. The emperor Trajan was

called in his day the best, so that the prayer was: "May you have the virtue and goodness of a Trajan." Yet his chief pastime was in the arena of the gladiators. In his tortures of the Christians he called into requisition fire and poison, daggers and dungeons, wild beasts and serpents. Clemens Romanus he cast into the sea with an anchor round his neck, while Ignatius was cast to the famished lions in the amphitheatre. The Emperor Commodus took pleasure in cutting off the feet and putting out the eyes of such as he met in his rambles through the city. Dr. Leland writes that nothing could exceed the cruelty of the Spartans to their slaves. It was part of their policy to massacre them on stated occasions, in cold blood, by forming ambuscades in thickets and clefts of rocks. They received a certain number of lashes annually to remind them of their condition—

"Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn."—
Burns.

As witness the bloody pictures of Russian tyranny in regard to the Poles and Circassians with the cruel knout; or the more extended and aggravated cruelties of the Roman despotism upon the Vaudois of the Valleys of the Piedmont, as well as of Germany, Bohemia, France, Spain, and England. And that tyrants come at last to be indifferent to the sorrows and sufferings of their slaves appears from the account given by Arvine of feminine cruelty in the West Indies. Educated in this country, she returned to her home at the age of fifteen to be married. After some years, she again paid a visit to her old friends in Ireland, who were appalled to listen to her sentiments upon slavery, and to her statements as to the way in which West India ladies treated their slaves. She confessed that she had often snatched their baby from their bosom, run with it to a well, tied her shawl round its shoulders, and pretended to be drowning it. As she told this she was convulsed with laughter. Domitian could not have practised more refined cruelty. Not that these are the only aspects of tyranny. As Byron asks—

"Thinkest thou there is no tyranny but that
Of blood and chains? The despotism of vice—
The weakness and the wickedness of luxury,
The negligence, the apathy, the evils
Of sensual sloth—produce ten thousand tyrants."

Page 106. (19)—**Church Work!**—This is specially true of missionary enterprise. We sometimes hear complaints of the slow progress of missions, as though nothing had been done. These charges invariably come from men who have wilfully withheld the straw. And yet the wonder is that the tale of bricks has been so good. Judson began his Burmese mission in 1814, but the Americans who supported him then were by no means liberal in their supplies. Yet in 1870, a hundred thousand converts could be counted. If the progress was slow we see that it was also sure. It was none the worse for being progressive. Peter's lengthened shadow did not fall on all the gathered sick at once in Jerusalem; even so is Christianity going through the earth—lengthening as she advances.

"Over the winter glaciers
I see the summer glow,
And through the wide-piled snowdrift,
The warm rosebuds glow."—*Emerson.*

Page 111. (20)—**Christian Life!**—When a man among the Grecians, writes Dr. Boyd, entered the Olympic Games to run for the prize, he had to lay aside all ideas of ease and self-indulgence, and prepare himself for a severe contest. To listen to the voice of indolence and loiter by the way would cover him with deepest disgrace. And the more frequent he contended for the prize, the more experience he acquired—the more prospect had he of winning the reward. The Christian life is a struggle from first to last with the powers of darkness within and without. When the truth as it is in Jesus arises in its full-orbed grandeur upon his mind—when the chains of his bondage are snapped asunder by Him who proclaims liberty to the captive—when the burden of his guilt is removed, and sweet serenity and peace takes its place—when the soul begins to get a glimpse of its high privileges and lofty vocation, then the Christian is apt to think that this is to continue for ever. The maiden thinks that the joy of her first married experience is to be always steadfast; but she soon finds out from discipline of life that her notion is premature. So the Christian's life becomes overcast with dark and threatening clouds—the enemy collects all his forces to assail the fortress of Man-soul—the world scowls with clouds and tempests upon him—and the tyrant lets loose his hell-hounds of temptation to bring back the escaped bondsmen. As Cowper says:—

"He who knew what human hearts would prove,
How slow to learn the dictates of His love,"

ordained that the Christian life should be a continuous warfare—an unceasing struggle—an unwearied contention with evil. And thus

"Our blasted hopes, our aims and wishes crossed,
Are worth the tears and agonies they cost."—*Taylor.*

Page 112. (21)—**Patient Work!**—In the museum at Rotterdam is the first piece painted by the renowned Rembrandt. It is rough, without marks of genius or skill, and uninteresting except to show that he began as low down as the lowest. In the same gallery is the masterpiece of the artist, counted of immense value. Work! Patience! Years of work! Years of patience! If all have not genius, all have the power to work for the glory of God and spiritual disenthralment of man. This is greater than genius; and especially if it be the work of moral freedom—the work of a Divine call to holiness.

"How beautiful is genius when combined
With holiness! Oh! how divinely swell
The tones of earthly harp, whose chords are touch'd
By the soft hand of piety, and hung
Upon religion's shrine.

Page 113 (22)—**Promises!**—God had said. And Moses might know that He was able to perform what He had spoken. Men's promises may be like pie-crust, made to be broken; not so is it with those of Jehovah. What He promises, the gates of hell cannot hinder its performance. Therefore Christian workers may well stay themselves on this rock of infinite assurance: I am God, and change not. By so doing they will find to their unspeakable comfort that no music is half so sweet, no eloquence so entrancing, no picture at all so attractive, as the promises of God. Like the *aurora borealis*, they would shine on the frosty and sombre sky of Moses' discouragement, tinging it with brilliant colours, and relieving it with beautiful rays; even as with the pious old slave on a Virginia plantation, who, when asked why he was always so sunny-hearted and cheerful under his bondage, responded that it was owing to his custom of "laying flat upon the promises, and then praying straight up to my heavenly Father." Even so with Moses, he reclines on the assurance of deliverance whilst he pleads with God. Turn thy face sunward!

"Watch though so long be the twilight delaying,
Let the first sunbeam arise on thee praying;
Fear not, for greater is God by thy side,
Than armies of Satan against thee allied."

Page 113. (23)—**God's Times.**—Moses had expected an immediate deliverance; but that God had not promised. Freedom He had solemnly declared that Israel should soon enjoy, but the "when" and the "how soon" were hidden in the dark. Gurnal fitly expresses the thought that, as the herbs and flowers, which sleep all winter in their roots underground, when the time of spring approaches forthwith start forth from their beds where they had lain so long undisturbed, so the promises of God will in their season efflorese and fruiten. Every promise is dated with a mysterious character, and as the gardener knows when the different seeds will come up, and arranges accordingly, so God knows the budding-time of His promises. Moses must wait. For want of skill in God's chronology, we are prone to think that God forgets us, when indeed we forget ourselves in being so bold to set God a time of our own, and in being angry that he comes not just as we wish and expect.

"Be patient! oh, be patient! though yet our hopes are green.
The harvest fields of freedom shall be crown'd with sunny sheen"

Page 114. (24)—**Means!**—Moses forgot that God does not require great means—small means—or any means. He can work by little or nothing; though He is pleased to work by means. A ship struck on a reef of rocks distant from the shore, while the wind was roaring, and the wave was raging—

"Dreadful was the rack
As earth and sky would mingle. Nor yet slept the winds
Within their stony caves, but rushed abroad
From the four hinges of the world."

The dwellers on the land could not reach the ship, and the sailors on the sea could not reach the shore. But the captain had a *little* dog on board—quick and intelligent. To tie a string to its neck—point it to the distant dimly-dark beach, with its shadowy group of spectators—and to fling it into the abyss to breast the foaming billows, was the work of an instant. The tiny terrier knew its errand and loved its master, and so fought its way buoyantly. No man could have triumphed over the angry waters, but the dog did. The cord had its rope, which was pulled ashore—then a hawser—then a cradle; by which means the crew were saved. What can God not do with little means?—

"Let us be content to work
To do the thing we can, and not presume
To fret because it's little."

The more helpless Moses was, the more glory accrued to his God. Just as with the bridge across the Falls of the Niagara. A kite bore a cord—the cord held a rope—the rope drew a cable—the cable hauled the first material necessary for the construction of the bridge. The insignificance of the means employed only redounded to the engineer's praise.

Page 114. (25)—**Discipline!**—The dove in the fable, annoyed because the wind had ruffled its feathers, foolishly wished for a firmament free from air, through the empty space of which it vainly dreamed that its unimpeded wing would dart swift as the nimble lightning. Silly bird! without that air it could neither live nor soar. Do not ignobly wish every breath of opposition away. Difficulties, asserts Coley, met and mastered, upbear us to the high reaches of honour. Difficulties, Beecher notes, are God's errands; and when we are sent upon them we should esteem it a proof of Divine confidence, as a compliment from God. As in the Napoleonic wars, the general was wont to give the post of danger, or the command of a forlorn hope, or the defence of some strategic pass or bridge to a favourite subordinate.

"He holds me that I shall not fall,
And so to him I leave it all."—
Rediyast.

CHAPTER VI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. Then the Lord]** We can scarcely err in saying that this verse should go with chap. v.; and, as furnishing the immediate answer of Jehovah to the complaint of Moses, it brings the narrative to a resting place. Verse 2 begins a new section. **2 By my name Jehovah was I not known to them]** We here come upon what appears to be a grave difficulty. It does not at once approve itself to our minds as consistent with fact to say that the fathers of the Hebrew people were not acquainted with the divine name Jehovah. It would seem from the sacred text itself that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not only knew this name, but were familiar with it, and even made special use of it on some occasions. For proofs of their acquaintance with it, see Gen. xii. 8; xiv. 22; xv. 8 (Lord GOD = Adonai Jehovah); xxi. 33; xxiv. 3; xxvi. 22; xxvii. 27; xxviii. 16; xxix. 18, etc. As an example of special use of it, "Jehovah Jireh" (Gen. xxii. 14) at once comes to mind. Here is the difficulty. Where is the solution? Happily, it is near at hand. It may be found by simply giving to the statement before us its full value. (1) The word "name" should be taken in full biblical significance, as denoting *what is revealed* by the name—the *attributes* of Him to whom the name belongs in so far as those attributes are symbolised by the name; in fact, '*the internal essence*, as far as it is outwardly revealed and known as operative" (Fürst, under *shêm*). In other words, we must pass from the *sign* to the thing *signified* (cf. Ps. v. 11; Prov. xviii. 10; with Ps. xlviii. 10.) Apply this to the matter in hand, and we at once catch the idea that the meaning must be, not that the elder patriarchs did not know *of* such a name as Jehovah, but that God had not revealed himself to them in any considerable degree according to the *import* of that name. Now this naturally leads us to anticipate for the name "Jehovah" a very distinctive meaning; moreover, a meaning less fully verified to God's people at one time than another. Let this be well observed. (2) For the *import* of the name "Jehovah" we must refer to the "Critical Notes" on chap. iii. 14. To bring from that place to this the crowning idea of "Fulfiller," let us ask whether this, after what has been said above, does not fully meet the present difficulty. Is it not most obviously true to say that, broadly speaking, God made himself known to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, rather as PROMISER than as FULFILLER. We say "rather," purposely qualifying our language for a reason to be stated presently. [Under "(3)"] Certainly, one of the most marked features of the Divine dealings with Israel's progenitors is the lavish abundance and astounding magnitude of the promises made to them,—made, but, for the time, most of them left UNFULFILLED. The *land* was promised (xiii. 14, 15; xv. 18—21) but the promise was not fulfilled; an *innumerable seed* was promised (xii. 2; xiii. 16; xvii. 6), but this promise was unfulfilled, and for a time the first steps towards its realisation were tardy; and the blessing of all the families of the earth in the seed of those wanderers was promised (xii. 3; xxii. 18), and this again we need not say had not even now been accomplished. Most true, therefore, it is, that God had not made himself known, as characteristically "the Fulfiller," to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: a truth now intimated with admirable fitness, when the *land* is just about to be given, and the *seed* has already swarmed from a family into a nation, and the bonds of that holy covenant are shortly to be entered into, by virtue of which the *nations* of the earth should at last be savingly *blessed*. (3) We have only to add that the *context* here altogether confirms this solution of the difficulty. If we mistake not, it does so in a manner not a little remarkable. All must perceive how forcibly the main fact—that the God of Abraham was now about to FULFIL as he had never done before—tells in favour of this exposition. We now advance to an argument in its support drawn from the syntax of the entire passage, which has, we presume to think, been most strangely neglected. In other words, the *fitting in* of the difficult statement to its contexts has received almost no attention whatever. And yet how strongly it calls for notice. (a) Note the *foregoing* words. "I am Jehovah: AND I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as God Almighty, but," etc. "AND I appeared": what means this "and"? The Hebrew punctists have not hesitated to throw all their weight on the conjunction, having marked it as the strong *waw consecutive* (wâ-êrâ) and thus given us the hint to *make the most* of it, which, on the admitted principles of Hebrew Grammar, we are entitled to do. Availing ourselves of this hint, we may render thus: "I am Jehovah: AND, indeed, I used to appear (*imperfect, incoming* tense, here probably *reiterative* [cf. Driver § 26]) unto Abraham, etc., as El Shaddai, although, by my name (or, to the extent of my name) Jehovah, I did not make myself known to them." In point of fact the "strong" conjunction (it is either 'strong" or *superfluous!*) has the effect that, so far from setting the names EL SHADDAI and JEHOVAH in opposition to each other, it actually makes the former a stepping-stone to the latter,—makes the verification of *that* an anticipation of *this*. We may paraphrase the connection between them, something in this way: "I am *Jehovah*, 'The Fulfiller;' and, indeed, I did, in a measure, make this manifest to your fathers, by again and again giving them proof of my power and of my goodness, thus fully bringing out and making good that other name of mine, *El Shaddai*, 'God Almighty,' (or, as some [Gindle-tone: *O. T. Syn.*] render) 'God All-Bountiful': although as *Jehovah*, 'The Fulfiller of my promises, I did not so familiarise them with my character, in that I suffered them to fall asleep with my great promises yet

unfulfilled." (b) Now observe the words that *follow*. "Moreover also (w^e^ gham, I set up my covenant with them," etc.,—as if resuming the record of *Jehovah anticipations*,—as if still keeping *an eye* to fulfilment. So, verse 4:—"Moreover also I myself)—true to the memory of my covenant, and resolved to *fulfil* it—heard," etc. "Wherefore say . . . . I am Jehovah (the Fulfiller) . . . . AND THEREFORE will have brought you (*waw consecutive* again, though now, most fittingly, with the *perfect* [the *complete*] tense, in which promises and prophecies delight). And thus both preceding and succeeding context fully confirm the main statements of our solution; and, for our own part, we honestly think that not a shred of the original difficulty is left. "Name is to be taken as signifying *revealed character*. The name "Jehovah" is to be regarded as emphasised: it had not *at all adequately* been verified, so far. Yet, as *All-mighty* and *All-bountiful*. God has given many tokens that He *would* ultimately shine forth as *Jehovah (Yahweh)* "*He will bring to pass*," "*He will become all He has said*." That purpose, He now renounces. "I am Jehovah: the which *ye* shall know as *your fathers* never did." **14. The heads of their fathers' houses]** It is obvious that verses 13—30 form a distinct section: indeed verse 30 resumes the very words of verse 13. The interjected portion might seem to interrupt the flow of the narrative; but on closer examination the conclusion that it could ill be spared is easily arrived at, since the genealogy given relates directly to the leading actors who are coming on the scene. The houses of Reuben and Simeon are given for the sake of introducing Levi; and Levi and his house are brought forward mainly for sake of exhibiting the tribal and family connections of Moses and Aaron. Note, accordingly, the climax attained in verses 26—27; and the return, then, to the point departed from at verse 13.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—8.

God's Reply to the Prayer of a Disappointed Worker.

It is evident that the first few verses of this chapter belong to the last chapter, being the response to the prayer which Moses had uttered in reference to the augmented burdens of Israel. Moses had said, "Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." Then came the Divine reply, "You are mistaken, Moses. The failure of a first attempt—if failure you choose to call it—is no proof that a second experiment will not succeed. At all events, it is your duty to follow out what your God says: It is My glory to see that what I have promised and predicted will come to pass." We are apt in all things to intrude on God's province, thus losing force, instead of concentrating all our disposable energy within the province that God has assigned us. It is not ours to question for a moment that God will fulfil His promises; it is ours always and everywhere to fulfil the obligations that He has laid upon us. God says, that so far from Pharaoh succeeding, he will be glad to let these poor brickmakers and slaves go forth from his land. This was a most encouraging statement to Moses, and was given in sympathetic spirit.

I. This reply to the prayer of Moses intimated that God would bring the true result of his mission more thoroughly within the cognizance of his senses, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou *see* what I will do to Pharaoh." 1. *The mission had hitherto been a great tax upon the faith of Moses.* True, he had beheld the vision of the burning bush, but he had been unable to interpret its meaning. He had held communion with God, but no man hath seen God at any time. His was eminently a mission of *faith*. Reason would never have led him to it. Sense was utterly opposed to it. He had in youth seen the hosts of Pharaoh, he remembered their prowess, and would feel that it would be the extreme of folly to place himself in antagonism thereto, in so mad an enterprise. But God told him to go. Faith in God sustained him. Hence the mission commenced at its highest point, and was being prosecuted in truest motive. But the weak soul of man cannot work long in this high realm of service without tremor and wavering; he is liable to wander into the realm of sense. Such was the case with Moses. The first repulse made

him cry out for the visible and the tangible. Hence the sphere of service was lowered. God does frequently adapt the work to the varying capacity of the workman. He sympathises with our weakness. He promises to let us *see* His dealings in reference to our mission. It is far better for man to work in the higher realm of service. The vision of faith is more ennobling. It is more refreshing. It gives a stronger power of endurance. It is better to trust the promise of God than to see prematurely God's dealings with Pharaoh. The moral labour that taxes faith is beneficial to man eternally. 2. *Now the mission is lowered to the sensuous vision of Moses.* He was to see what God would do unto Pharaoh. Some men can work well in the region of the seen, but are impotent at moral service in the unseen realm. They ascend only to the mountain peaks of earth whither they can climb, they do not rise on the pinions of faith into the great world beyond, where the service is the most sublime. But sometimes the best of men lower their energies into the sphere of the sensuous, either through the imperfection of their energies, either in despair, or for rest from the constant tension of faith. God bears with their weakness. Let them return as soon as possible to the higher level of service.

II. This reply to the prayer of Moses vindicated his conduct against the recent insinuations and reproach of the Israelites. "For with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land." Pharaoh had said that the design of Moses and Aaron in making their demand of freedom was to encourage the Israelites in idleness The Israelites said that Moses and Aaron had deluded them, and had been the means of their augmented burdens. God now tells Moses that he had done his duty, and that its ultimate issue would be the liberty desired. Men often take a wrong view of our conduct. God always takes the right view. He is infallible. He knows when His servants are doing what He tells them. He sends them messages of approval for so doing. This vindication: (1.) *It would reassure Moses in his work.* His prayer indicates that his soul was growing weary in the work of Israel's freedom. He was yielding to the sad influence of doubt and uncertainty as to the issue of things. The outworking of his past effort was discouraging to him. Hence this reply to his prayer would reassure him in his work God generally sends such answers to our prayer as shall strengthen us for His service. In the attitude of devotion we always get visions of future toils. (2.) *It would clear his conscience from all condemnation.* This reply to his prayer would give him to see that he had done the Israelites no wrong, and that their reproaches were ungrateful. This conviction would chase away his sorrow. It would a source of strength to him in his labour. A peaceful conscience is the truest joy of a Christian worker. (3.) *It would enable him to interpret his apparent failure.* Moses, hearing of the burdens of Israel subsequent to his appeal to Pharaoh, regarded his work as a failure. He would now view it under a new light, under a brightening aspect. God only can give to men the true interpretation of their service, and this He does in answer to their prayers.

III. This reply to the prayer of Moses indicated how thoroughly the work announced by God should be accomplished. "For with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land." 1. *This shows how wicked men are, under the providence of God, brought to do that which they had once resolutely refused.* Pharaoh had told Moses and Aaron that he ignored their God, and that he would not give the Israelites their freedom. Yet the time will come when he will drive them forth into liberty. The sinner knoweth not the future, or he would act with greater wisdom in the present. 2. *God makes these revelations in response to prayer that He may reanimate the dispirited worker.* What a reviving effect this communication

would have upon the soul of Moses; he would be immediately ready for new conflict with Pharaoh.

IV. In reply to the prayer of Moses, God vouchsafes a new and sublime revelation of His character. "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by the name of Jehovah was I not known to them," &c. 1. *There was a sublime revelation of His name.* Here the question occurs, was not this name known to Moses. There are two classes of commentators on this very text. Some say that the name of Jehovah was not known prior to the appearance of God in the burning bush. You answer that statement by referring to the vision that Abraham saw—the ram caught in the thicket—when he called the place *Jehovah-jireh*, "The Lord will provide." Well, then, if Abraham used the very name Jehovah, and if the word Jehovah occurs several times besides in the course of the previous chapters, how can it be said that this name was not known to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? Those who hold the opinion that it was not literally known to them, say that, as Moses did not write Genesis till some 2000 years after the facts recorded in it, he used the name Jehovah because it was known to the Jews at the time he wrote, though it was not known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the years in which they lived. But this would seem to be irreconcileable with some passages where the name Jehovah must have been used, because it was given with reference to special circumstances to which the other names of God would not seem to be applicable. And besides, it would seem on this supposition that Moses did not write strictly and literally what was true, but wrote the past with a borrowed light from the present, which would not be the duty of a faithful historian. The other opinion—and I think it is the just and only interpretation—is, that the name Jehovah was known to Abraham; but that its pregnant meaning, preciousness in its application, and comfort, was so little known, that, in comparison, it was not known at all; that is, God had not manifested all His glory as Jehovah to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as he would do to Moses, and to the children of Israel in after generations. Pharaoh had made a new and more terrible revelation of himself to Moses and to the Israelites, and therefore the Divine Being opened up to them in comfort the inner glories of His Name. God's name is more potent than all the hosts of Pharaoh. That name is revealed to human souls, the most beautifully, in prayer. 2. *There was also a comforting reference to His covenant.* "I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers." God thus reminds Moses of His covenant, which should prevent all fear on his part as to the ultimate success of his work. 3. *There was also a pathetic reference to the sorrow of Israel.* "And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage." LESSONS:—1. *That God speaks to disappointed souls in prayer.* 2. *That the Divine communings with a disappointed soul have an uplifting tendency.* 3. *That God deals compassionately with the weakness of Christian workers.*

A TRUE PATTERN OF GOSPEL REDEMPTION. Verses 4 to 8.

I. That Gospel Redemption comes to the soul after a period of moral bondage and distress. 1. *It finds the soul in a condition of moral bondage.* "Whom the Egyptians keep in bondage." The bondage is most severe. It is the bondage of sin. It has been long continued, through many years of our lives. It has been degrading. It has been fruitless to ourselves. We have all the time been working for another master, from whom we have received no good reward.

The bondage seems almost hopeless to us. We have no token of moral liberty. Our thoughts, emotions, and energies are all in the slavery of sin. In this condition the Gospel of Christ finds the soul. 2. *It finds the soul in a condition of anxious grief.* "And I have also heard the groanings of the children of Israel." The soul is awakened to a sense of the bondage and consequent degradation; and eagerly awaits the freedom of the Gospel Its tears are those of repentance. Its cries are those for pardon. Its looks are toward the cross. In this condition the Gospel of redemption comes in all its mercy to the believing soul. 3. *It is generally preceded by some Christian agency.* Moses had been to the Israelites in their bondage, and had instrumentally awakened their desire for freedom. So the souls of men are often influenced by Christian agencies prior to their cry for the redemption of the cross. It is the aim of the Christian ministry to awaken within men the desire for moral freedom.

II. That Gospel Redemption comes to the soul by virtue of a Divine covenant and promise. "And I have remembered my promise," verse 5. 1. *God through Christ has made a covenant of salvation with all who trust in the atonement.* There has been the covenant of works. That is no longer possible to man. By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified. We are under the covenant of grace. By grace are ye saved through faith in Christ Jesus. By virtue of this covenant all contrite and believing souls may find rest in, and pardon from, God. There is no other covenant that can confer these blessings. (1) *This covenant is unique.* (2) *This covenant is merciful.* (3) *This covenant is of long standing.* There is none other like it. It is the hope of man. It was made with the oldest saints, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

III. That Gospel Redemption brings the soul into holy and responsible relationship to God. "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God," verse 7. 1. *It constitutes the soul a Divine possession.* It then belongs to God, its rightful owner. All its thoughts and affections are to be His. Thus the redemption of the Gospel brings back our moral manhood to God, brings us into sympathy with all that is divine and heavenly. *It places the soul under the peculiar guardianship of the Infinite.* God will then guard the soul. Aid it in its struggles. Open up its future. He will be its sun and shield. Oh! blessed redemption.

IV. That Gospel Redemption leads the faithful unto the inheritance of Canaan. "To give them the land of Canaan." Thus what a change this redemption works, from slaves to freemen, from servitude to an inheritance. The redeemed are the inheritors of the universe. All things are yours.

Reasons for Human Redemption.

I. The Burden of Man is a reason for human Redemption. "The burdens of the Egyptians," verse 6. Sin is a burden. It presses heavily on man. No human hand can remove it. Only Christ can. He says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." His burden is light. The pain occasioned by man's burden of sin is a reason for its removal by Christ.

II. The Lordship of Christ is a reason for human Redemption. "I am the Lord." Only the Supreme Ruler of the universe could achieve the redemption of man. He only could fulfil the violated law. He only could forgive the past neglect of it. He only could enable us to keep it in the future. Only the God of the soul can redeem it.

III. The Covenant of God is a reason for human Redemption. "I have

remembered my covenant." God desires the salvation of men. Promise—Type—Symbol. On Calvary the covenant was fully and eternally signed. The world was redeemed by price, only they are redeemed by power who believe in Christ.

Discouragement in Religion Productive of Unbelief in the Promises of God.

The school of experience is the only state of moral discipline in which a Christian can learn the nature of his warfare with the powers of darkness. When first convinced of spiritual captivity, he rises up to escape from it with an alacrity derived from much ignorance of the difficulties that await him in the road to heaven; not less than from a sense of peril by which he is surrounded. Engrossed by one idea, he overlooks the trials of his approaching conflict. The Israelites were anxious for deliverance. They were defenceless. It would be difficult to escape. The loss which God permitted threw them into despondency. There came an increase of burdens. They taunt Moses. He prays to God. A pattern of the Christian life. **I. The promise made by God to His afflicted children** 1. *He again declared His purpose of redeeming them from their captivity.* Pharaoh upon his throne was mighty. Israel was feeble. God had pledged Himself for their deliverance. The ransom He was about to effect was to be attended with a manifestation of Almighty power the most unquestionable. They were not to go forth as fugitives, but as conquerors. Such an engagement has God, in spontaneous mercy, made with you. Are you seeking deliverance. It is promised. 2. *The Most High declared that Israel should be adopted as His peculiar inheritance.* Separated by customs, institutions, by temporal privileges, and spiritual distinctions, they were to become the family of Jehovah, and not to be reckoned amongst nations estranged from Him. A like declaration is made to all who wish to quit the state in which they are enslaved. "Ye are a chosen generation," &c. 3. *God also condescended to reiterate His promise of giving the possession of Canaan to Israel.* Little would it have availed that the Israelites were to be redeemed from bondage, if the help had ended there. We should be ineffectually called from the death of sin, unless we are led on to eternal rest. **II. The unworthy manner in which these promises were received.** It is comparatively easy to repose in God in the sunshine of peace. But when He comes in sorrow we cry out for fear. We refuse to walk any longer by faith. The word has declared, "That the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion." Yet how often has God to remonstrate with us when He sees us sinking into doubt. Events appear to frustrate the promise. The burdens are increased. Satan taken advantage of this severe discipline. He endeavours to make us repine. If you would resist, rest not till ye have obtained practical acquaintance with God your Saviour, under the titles by which He revealed Himself to His ancient people. (1) *Knew him as El Shaddai, all sufficient to bless and save you with a present and everlasting salvation.* (2.) *Knew Him as Jehovah, the glorious name by which He was revealed to Israel.* He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.—(*Buddicom's Christian Exodus*).

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

The Judgments of God upon Wicked Men.

Verse 1. **I. That God sends severe judgments on men who reject His Commands.** "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh":—

1. *Notwithstanding his kingship.* The judgments of God are not averted by the exalted social position or great power of kings. The proud monarch of Egypt cannot exempt himself from the retributions of heaven. There are none to deliver him 2. *Notwithstanding his obstinacy.* Moral obstinacy cannot shield men from the judgments of God. He can subdue the man of iron will. Suffering has a great effect upon obstinate souls. 3. *Notwithstanding his despotism.* The despot must yield to the sceptre of God. He may defy the vast nation Israel, but now he is in conflict with *One* who will defeat his armies.

II. That these judgments are often witnessed by Christian people. "Now shalt thou see."

1. *They are seen clearly.* These judgments are seen in all their terrible force. In all their meaning. The dead king and his drowned army are washed upon the banks of the great waters. Retribution is clearly visible in their ruin. 2. *They are seen retributively.*

The overthrow of Pharaoh and his host was no mere accident. It was not the outcome of Divine caprice. It was not designed merely to vindicate the prophecy of Moses. It was punitive. 3. *They are seen solemnly.* These judgments are sad. They awaken thought and moral reflection. We dare not smile at the overthrow of the tyrant. His destiny makes us weep.

The good Lord sometimes promiseth sight of His great works, when His servants scarce believe Him.

In granting them sight God reproves the unbelief of His servants.

God's strong hand is doubly engaged to work deliverance for His Church.

God chooseth to force deliverance from tyrants, to make His work conspicuous.

There is a great difference between looking at things from a distance, and seeing them drawing close upon us, or actually beginning.

Verse 2. 1. God speaking to man. 2. God speaking to man a condescension. 3. God speaking to man a judgment. 4. God speaking to man an instruction.

God usually joineth the promise of grace unto His people with that of force upon His enemies.

God's promise of grace is plainly declared and revealed to His servants.

God useth to convey these promises of grace by a mediator to His people.

The highest promise of grace is that God will be Jehovah to His people.

Where God is Jehovah, all His promises are put into effect.

Verse 3. It is not merely in the actings of God that He would cause the heart to find rest, but in Himself—in His name and character.

God joins one encouragement to another to help the weak in faith.

God's appearances are designed to work faith in creatures.

God's appearances have been gradual in manner and measure till now.

Fullest discoveries of God require the greatest faith, and aggravate the sin of unbelief.

Knowledge of God's name is needful to make souls trust it.

God's name:—1. Not a mere word. 2. Not an abstraction. 3. But a power. 4. A tower of strength. 5. A shield of protection. 6. The hope of the soul.

Verse 4. God's covenant to His people:—1. Stated. 2. Settled. 3. Kept. 4. Happy. 5. Restful.

How much the Lord says of His covenant and His oath; and if you consider, there was something in this more suited to encourage hope and trust, than in any other ground for it He could have mentioned. When you are in distress, if you are told of a man who is kind and liberal, it gives you hope of relief. If you hear, moreover, that he has assisted many poor afflicted creatures exactly in your situation, your hopes are raised still more; and if, besides, you know he has promised help to all the needy who apply to him, that is better still; yet even that would not give you so much confidence as if you had it under his hand that he would help you, and you knew he had taken a solemn oath that he would give you all you stand in need of. He would then have bound himself, and his honour would be so engaged that he could not draw back. Now this is exactly what God had done to Israel; and by reminding Moses of it, He showed He did not mean one jot or tittle should pass from His covenant till all was fulfilled. And believers have the same security now. In His new covenant He has pledged Himself to those who have the faith of Abraham. In this covenant He has assured His people of pardon. (*Anon.*)

Verse 5. God hears the groans of His people.

God remembers the cruelty of the oppressor.

God remembers the covenant of His grace.

Verse 6. God's appearance to His

Ministers is in order that He may make himself known to the Church.

Ministers must speak to the Church all that God reveals to them.

The main matter that must be revealed to the Church is that God is Jehovah.

God's being Jehovah sets His Israel free from all Egyptian burdens.

The meaning of Jehovah is to rid the Church from bondage, temporal and eternal.

The redemption of Israel is Jehovah's work.

Verses 7—8. Adoption of Israel to Himself is Jehovah's work next to redemption.

Souls are adopted when they are God's, and God is theirs. Jehovah does all this that Israel may acknowledge his saving power.

God's people:—1. Taken by God. 2. Knowing God. 3. Serving God. 4. Redeemed by God. 5. Happy in God. 6. Will live with God.

God's oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is in order to successive generations.

Introduction into such signal privileges is a good step to the full blessing.

Jehovah's donation of the inheritance promised surely followeth this introduction.

"I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God." What follows is only one advantage among many, flowing from that blessed relation. The yoke of the oppressor shall be broken off your necks, for My people must not serve another master: freedom, protection, guidance, victory, wise laws, liberty to make known your requests to Me at all times, are among the many blessings of the people whom I take for My peculiar heritage; and then, "I will be to you a God." This is better still; for in these words God gives Himself to them. His favours are precious, His gifts are valuable. He excels them all. Power, wisdom, patience, faithfulness, love infinite and everlasting, are all in Him; and those who have Him for their God, have all these for their portion. Well might David say, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord."

"I will be to you a God." 1. Then my life should be devout. 2. Then my heart should be grateful. 3. Then my tongue shall be tuneful.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 9.

Physical Destitution Stifling Spiritual Life.

This fact has long since passed away; but its lesson remains ever new. Its body is dead, and has returned to the dust; but its spirit survives immortal. God gave it a body in the actual history of the Hebrews that its meaning might become articulate to human ears. A permanent principle of our nature, and a distinctive feature of the Divine government are here embodied in an example.

I. The Fact which embodies the Principle. 1. *The message addressed to Israel.* "Moses so spake unto the Children of Israel" (ver. 1—8). This message, in its substance and in its circumstances, was fitted to arrest the people's attention and win their love. In that message, whether you regard its author, its bearer, or its nature, everything tended to entice; nothing to repel them. The time was also fitting, when their burdens were unbearable. Before the slave a prospect of liberty is opened; before the weary a prospect of rest. Will the drooping spirits of the multitude revive at this intelligence? 2. *The neglect of the message.* No; the promise, although it was rich and precious, stirred not the sluggish mass. It was a spark of fire that fell, but it fell on wetted wood, and kindled therefore no flame. "They hearkened not unto Moses." Why? No people could be in deeper affliction, no kind message could be better authenticated. They neither denied the truth of the message, nor injured the person who bore it. When God's great salvation was provided, the people neglected it. This the head and front of their offending. They said nothing against it, but they let it alone. 3. *Examine the specific reason of their apathy.* The cause of their indifference to liberty was the extreme severity of their bondage. They hearkened not "for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage." Here is a paradox: the slavery excessively severe, and therefore the slave does not care for freedom. One would say, **the force of the reason goes all the other way. We would rather expect that in proportion to**

the cruelty of the yoke would be the alacrity of the captives in rising at the Redeemer's call. Had Pharaoh lavished kindness and luxury upon Joseph's kindred, this might have been a reason why they treated with indifference the proffered method of escape. But because prosperity makes people callous to the voice of freedom, it does not follow that the extreme of adversity will put courage into their hearts. Extremes meet. Both great prosperity and great distress often crush every aspiration of freedom. Plenty extinguished the desire, and oppression the hope of freedom. Afterwards the same Hebrews shook off the iron yoke that had lain so long upon their bodies, and sunk so deeply into their souls. A door of hope was opened to them.

II. The principle embodied in the fact. The story of this ancient incident may seem to have no more affinity with modern character than the mummies which travellers dig from the tombs in Egypt have with the living men of to-day. Speaks to all. 1. *The message.* To us, as to them, it is a message of mercy. Specifically, it proclaims deliverance to the captive. God recognises all men as slaves, and sends an offer for freedom. Christ is the messenger of the covenant. A greater than Moses is here, publishing a greater salvation. We are redeemed from one master to serve another. "Let my people go that they may serve me." He allures them into the wilderness, and abides with them there. The glory of the Lord goes before them during the journey, and settles on the mercy seat when they reach the promised land. 2. Such is the proposal, *but it is not heeded.* But few disbelieve or revile the messenger. They neglect him. 3. *The reason of this neglect.* Anguish and cruel bondage. Let us beware of mistake here. Both with them and us the true cause of the listlessness is the carnal mind. The evil is in the heart, but outward things become the occasions of specific disloyalties. Learn :—(1.) *The duty of Christ's disciples to a careless neighbourhood.* Abject poverty in these favoured exacts a heavy task from many. Bad dwellings. Hunger. Oppression. Their souls are soured to the bottom, and they care neither for God nor man. They are reckless. They are destitute of fear and of hope. They care not for the future. I am not palliating sin. A fact. What shall be done? Disciples of Christ should not give less attention to spiritual teaching, but more to the material well-being of fallen brothers. (2.) *The second lesson applies more directly to ourselves.* Anguish of spirit, whether it comes from God's hand in the form of personal affliction, or from man's hand in the form of unjust oppression, may become the occasion of neglecting the salvation of Christ. We regard sorrow as a time of spiritual revival. Thanks to God, it often is. But the day of anguish is not the sinner's best day for seeking the Saviour. Sorrow is not seed ; it may conspire with other means to make the seed grow. Beware of neglecting your spiritual state while you are well. (*Rev. W. Arnot.*)

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 9. God's faithful messengers do speak His will speedily and fully to whom God sends it.

Former discouragements from men must not hinder God's ministers further to declare His will.

After all God's promises and commands perverse spirits may refuse to hear or believe.

God's message to people in such straits is to ease their pain and enlarge their spirits.

Sense of pain makes some souls unreasonable, even to reject their mercies.

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

The Successive Services of the Christian Life.

I. That the successive services of the Christian life are required notwithstanding the apparent failure of past efforts. (Ver. 10-11.) Moses and Aaron had so far failed to induce Pharaoh to release Israel. But the service did not terminate here. The commission of Moses is again renewed. Failure never does remove men from the obligation of a divinely-imposed task, but must only be regarded as an incentive to new courage and effort. If Christian service were to yield to transient failure, there would be little of it remaining in the world to-day. There is not a church but has, one time or other, been defeated in Christian enterprise. There is not an individual but has experienced the disappointment and grief of failure. It is the dark heritage of man in this life. How many nights have Christian workers spent in their boats, upon the waters, with outspread nets, and have caught nothing! Christ only can relieve our

moral service from such disappointment. He alone can fill our empty nets. 1. *This service must be continued by Moses and Aaron because the command of God has not yet been executed.* Men can never leave moral service until the command of God has been completely fulfilled. His entire will must be accomplished. God has issued many commands in reference to those in the slavery of sin. Christian workers cannot regard their toil as ended till they are all fulfilled. 2. *This service must be continued by Moses and Aaron because their duty has not been accomplished.* Christian service is not merely a command, it is likewise a holy duty. It is an unchanging and imperative duty, and therefore admits of no cessation until it is entirely achieved. A sense of duty should be the great impulse of Christian work. It is your duty to seek the liberty of the slave. 3. *This service must be continued by Moses and Aaron because the slaves must be freed.* The Israelites must be liberated from the bondage of Pharaoh. God could achieve it by one blast of death which should send the tyrant and his hosts into the grave. This is not His method of working. He employs human instrumentality. That instrumentality must not stay its effort while the fetters of one slave are left unbroken. The Christian worker may not cease his toil while one sinner remains in the bondage of Satan. The entire freedom of humanity is the destiny of Christian effort. *We find that Moses and Aaron were sent on exactly the same work as before.* It is not the Divine plan to greatly vary the Christian service of men. When God calls a man to a particular work He generally expects him to spend his life in its execution. Each man has his own sphere of labour, and it is best for him to remain in it. There is much waste of effort in the Church, because men are so restless and changeful in their toils. We need determination, concentration, and patience in our effort to free the slave. A nobler sphere for the energy of man cannot be found. Failure is no excuse for fickleness in Christian service.

II. That the successive services of the Christian life are more difficult in their requirements. The first injunction given to Moses was to call the elders of Israel together that he might communicate to them the Divine will in reference to their nation. Now he is told to go direct to Pharaoh. The language of the 12th verse shows that Moses regarded the service as increased in rigour. 1. *This increased rigour of service is surprising.* Moses had failed in the lower and easier realm of service. He had exhibited despairing temper. Israel had reproached him. He had reproached God. If, then, he was unequal to the smaller service, is it not surprising that he should be called to the greater? Must the scholar who has failed in the alphabet be put to the declensions of service. 2. *This increased rigour of service is disheartening.* It was to Moses. He knew the difficulties he had to encounter in reference to Israel. But he felt that greater would meet him now that he must go direct to Pharaoh. If men would regard things in a right light the greater service is in reality the easier. It gives a greater inspiration. It excites brighter hope. It brings diviner help. Failure ought not to occasion retrogression in Christian service, but advancement. Christian service is a progress even to the weak. 3. *This increased rigour of service is a discipline.* It would show Moses that he still retained the call and confidence of God. It had not been forfeited by his failure. It would test his moral energy for the work to which he was sent. It would be a prophecy of future hardship. The successive services of the Christian life are a heavenly discipline to our souls. Increased work has often made a bad workman into a good one. It has increased his responsibility. It has awakened him to reflection.

III. That the successive services of the Christian life sometimes awaken the expostulations of men. (Ver. 12.) 1. *These expostulations make mention of natural infirmities.* "Who am of uncircumcised lips." Moses again

pleads his unfitness for the task assigned to him. He has narrowed the mission down to his own ability for it. It is unnecessary that men should inform God of their natural impediments to religious service. He knows them. He is acquainted with those whom He sends on His errands, with their weakness and strength. If He calls, it is yours to obey. 2. *These expostulations make mention of past difficulties and failure.* "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me." When men do not want to undertake the service of God they will keep up arguments to excuse themselves. If one will not answer, they are soon ready with another. In this attempt the logical faculty of man exhibits wonderful acuteness and development. Man is a good logician in this court. 3. *These expostulations are presumptuous.* "And Moses spake before the Lord saying." These expostulations were made to the Lord! Men, and especially Christian workers, ought to welcome the commands of God without question. He is all-powerful. He is all-wise. Before Him we ought to stand in awe and sin not. LESSONS:—1. *Not to shrink from the successive services of the Christian life.* 2. *To leave all the moral work of our life to the choice of God.* 3. *Not to imperil our welfare by expostulation with the providence of heaven.* 4. *To concentrate our energies patiently on one Christian enterprise.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 10—11. God sometimes joineth harder work to the discouragement which his ministers have from men.

When Israel heareth not, God will have his ambassadors go unto Pharaoh, from friends to enemies.

God will have his messages delivered to the proudest kings that dare oppose Him.

Though powers oppress God's Church, He makes them know that they will have to give it freedom.

Verse 12. Infirmity of faith may cause God's best servants to plead excuse from hard work.

The refusal of the Church to hear and believe God's message is a remarkable evil.

Israel's unbelief may make God's ministers fear that strangers will much more refuse His will.

Powers and wickedness together make the greater obstruction against hearing God's word.

Weakness in ministers for speaking, may discourage them from speaking to powers beneath.

Good men are apt to forget that God circumciseth lips, and gives a tongue, to do his message.

Verse 13. Excuses will not serve God's instruments, for God will have His work done.

God joins instruments under His charge to encourage unto His commands.

Redemption of God's Church from bondage is the end of all his revealed will.

The recapitulation of moral service: 1. To those called to work. 2. With clearness. 3. With authority.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—30.

THE GENEALOGY OF THE CHURCH.

I. That it was, humanly speaking, of very unpretentious origin. The human origin of the Church was very humble. It was not born of kings. It was not the conquest of a renowned warrior. It was not the discovery of a bold adventurer. Its primitive social position was poor. Its numbers were few. Its ancestors were men of moral greatness. They were eminent for faith. Instance Abraham. These men are now the rulers of the world. The few in the days of the old patriarch have multiplied as the stars of heaven.

II. That it was, morally speaking, of a very miscellaneous character. We have names in this list of very varied moral worth. Some noted for their piety, others remarkable for their profanity. At this time the Church was almost co-extensive with the Jewish nation. Nominally there was no line of separation. The religion was one of ceremony, and in this all the people could join. There were a few great and good souls who obtained a deeper insight into moral truth, and whose lives were rendered beautiful and powerful by an anticipation of some all-sufficient sacrifice in the future ages. But these were the exception. The spirit of the common multitude was confined within the conventional system of their grand worship. The Church has now a mixed genealogy. All down through the ages the tares and wheat have been growing together, and they will do so until the harvest, which is the end of the world. The miscellaneous character of the Church is accounted for:—1. *By the diversified temperaments of men.* 2. *By the diversified thinkings of men.* 3. *By the diversified character of men.* 4. *By the diversified alliances of men.*

III. That it was, socially speaking, of very great influence. 1. *It had a great political influence.* The Jewish nation was for a long time a theocracy. God was its king. Heaven was its parliament. The priests were of supreme influence in the nation. The community was eminently religious in idea and sentiment. Hence from the names here recorded there comes out a great stream of social, moral, and political influence upon humanity to-day.

A Panoramic Glance at History.

I. We see the mass of lives that are crowded into a brief era. We have here a great mass of names, each representing a distinct life of peculiar type and condition; they are all heaped together in ten or fifteen verses. They all lived within a comparatively brief period. The world is crowded with life. The ages are crowded with men. They soon empty their contents into eternity.

II. We see how the minute details of individual life are lost in the aggregate of history. There is very little recorded of the many lives that are here mentioned. In a few ages after death, the lives of men diminish into a mere name. The heroes' battles are forgotten. The remembrance of our great calamities is no more. The life of the greatest King is summed up into a sentence on the page of the world's history.

III. We see the great effort of life to culminate in, and give prominence to, the birth of its heroes and emancipators. The whole of these lives were preparatory to the lives of Moses and Aaron. All before them were introductory. There is a gradual process in life. Life is ever trying to find emphatic expression in the conduct of the good. History makes this apparent.

IV. We see here that individual lives derive their greatness from the call of God to service, rather than from social considerations.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 14. Sacred genealogy is made by God's spirit to make clear the line of His Church.

Natural primogeniture may be allowed to such to whom the spiritual may be denied.

The multitude of the churches seed did arise from small beginnings.

Verse 15. Order in genealogy is useful to give right understanding of the line of the Church.

Heads of families in the Church have been too prone to mingle themselves in strange marriages.

Verse 16. The line of Levi is remarkable by God's spirit. A poor stock may yield noble instruments for the salvation of the Church.

The fathers who lived long saw not all the promises fulfilled.

Verse 17—19. Gradually God increaseth His Church. Third generations under God may add much more seed unto His Church.

Verse 20. Incestuous marriages are not good, though by God sometimes passed over.

God can bring out His instruments and work from the sins of men.

Verse 20—25. From generation to generation God continueth the succession of His Church.

God hath various ends in recording the good and bad in the genealogy of His Church.

Verse 26—27. God would have His Church know the instruments, whom He calleth, though of low descent.

God's commission maketh poorest instruments eminent for greatest deliverance of His people.

It is God's work to make shepherds lead armies.

God entitles His poorest instruments to honour, even to face kings at His pleasure.

God honours His weak instruments to deliver His Church out of the hands of kings.

In God's record, and at His pleasure, the poorest names are made eminent.

Verse 28—30. In the day of instruments drawing back, God repeats His charge to quicken them.

Place as well as time for duty God orders in His charge.

The name of Jehovah carrieth enough in it to support His ministers.

Weakness of faith puts God's servants sometimes upon their shifts to brave His work.

Bodily infirmities may discourage the minds of God's servants from their work.

It is weakness to urge infirmities against God's charge, who can heal them.

The Minister to declare the whole Counsel of God.

"*Speak thou unto Pharaoh, king of Egypt, all that I say unto thee.*" Ministers must declare the whole counsel of God :—

I. Notwithstanding the unwillingness of the people to hear it. Pharaoh would be displeased with the message that Moses delivered. It would excite his royal anger. Yet it must not be withheld. Prudence must be respected. Courage must be sought.

II. Notwithstanding the social position of those who hear it. Moses was to deliver his message to the king of Egypt. Wealth, fear of man, wish for fame, must not deter us from proclaiming the entire counsel of God.

Excuses :—1. I am slow of tongue. 2. I am low in purse. 3. I am feeble in energy.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VI.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Divine Dependence! Ver. 1. Moses and Aaron had made an alliance with God; what, then, had they to fear? If God be for us, who can be against us? If the Lord had not been on their side. He *was* on their side. He had entered into covenant with them. Three hundred years ago, says history, about a million of people in Holland were fighting for freedom from the tyranny of Rome. William, the Prince of Orange, a man who feared God, was the champion of the *righteous cause*. In the heat of the struggle, one of his generals sent an urgent despatch to know if he had succeeded in forming an alliance with any foreign power

such as France or England. The brave deliverer's reply thrilled the heart of the general as he read it: You ask me whether I have made a treaty with any great foreign power. I have. When I undertook to achieve the freedom of the oppressed Christians in these provinces, I made a close alliance with the King of Kings, and I doubt not that He will give us the victory.

"For who that leans on His right arm
Was ever yet forsaken?
What *righteous cause* can suffer harm
If He its part has taken."—*Whittier.*

Appointed Work! Ver. 2. Moses would not have disliked the reaping, but to plough. Ploughing is hard work, and, to our notions, soiling work; and so we will not plough for Christ. It is hard work, says Power, to lift one foot in the heavy clay—to set it down often only to lift it up with greater difficulty still. Even that would perhaps not have deterred Moses; but the delay was trying. If we had a speedy return for our toil, perhaps we might undertake labours for Jehovah. If in the fields around us, as we turned up the furrow, we were sure of finding treasure—of the reaper overtaking the sower; if, as we sweated and toiled in ploughing, the sprouts became headed with grain, and our fevered brows were cooled with the breezes which undulated the waving corn, perhaps we would be ready to plough in hope. But such is not earthly ploughing, and such is not that of heaven. Moses had to plough and *plough;* and we have to labour and *labour* in hope, for

"Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And hope without an object cannot live."
—*Coleridge.*

Divine Decision! Ver. 2. Moses forgot that the triumph of the wicked is always short—that the restrained flood is sure to pour forth with force proportionate to the length and strength of its restraint—and that time and tide are nowhere before the word of God. God had said. Each hindrance, therefore, on the part of Pharaoh—each refusal on his part to let Israel go—each oppression formed to intensify their bondage, and certify their serfdom to himself would only be treasuring up wrath. The waters were continually rising; and, just as with the great Canadian rivers, the more buttresses men expose to stem its current and icefloes, the more certainly are they bringing ruin upon their bridges and banks; so the hindrances of this despot were only culminating towards destruction. Therefore

"Let not guilt presumptuous rear her crest,
Nor virtue droop despondent; soon these clouds
Scorning eclipse will brighten into day,
And in majestic splendour He will rise,
With healing and with terror on His wings."
—*Bally.*

Groanings! Ver. 4. How bitter are the tears of penitence! How agonising are the cries for pardon! It is with conscience then as if a messenger from God, as Dr. Todd represents, were to take us by the hand, and lead us up the steps of a great building, and, as we entered the porch, it should begin to grow dark. Suppose he should then open a door into a very large hall, which he called a "picture gallery." As we enter, we find it dark as night; but as the angel touches a spring, light flashes in and fills the room. We now see that the walls are hung with pictures—so many and so large that they cover the walls. On these are painted all the sins that we have ever committed. What pictures of sins—open sins—secret sins—heart sins—life-long sins! We cannot bear to look at them; they fill us with horror and anguish. That picture gallery becomes a judgment hall. Conviction of sin is there—contrition follows. And from contrition must spring confession and concision; for if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

"All powerful is the penitential sigh
Of true contrition; like the placid wreaths
Of incense, wafted from the righteous shrine
Where Abel ministered, to the blest seat
Of mercy, an accepted sacrifice."—*Hayes.*

Anxiety! Ver. 5. A certain man, who had been listening to an awaking preacher during a season of revival, was heard to say with emphasis that he did not like the preachers of the present day, because "they make one feel so bad." A representative of many sleeping in the chains of moral bondage, that human slave did not like to be reminded of his condition. Whilst the preacher dealt in beautiful things—dwelt upon the beauties of Nature and the bounties of Providence, all went well; but so soon as spiritual servitude was brought on the arena, the listener was made uneasy. Conscience, that witness in the soul which never dies, did its terrible duty—and the bondsman began to feel that he was verily guilty concerning his own fetters. He began to see that he was not the "freedman" which he had imagined himself in the spirit of self-delusion to be. That is the first dawn of conviction; but it is not full conviction. It may be stifled; and no groanings—no anxiety of soul—follow upon this first sensation. That emotion may be as the early dew—as the foam upon a billow—as the swift glance of a meteor—as the snow-flake on a river. It is the aim of the Christian ministry, says Exell, to awaken within men the *desire* for moral freedom, and that desire is the deepening of conviction—which anxiety ends in conversion, when a man enjoys the liberty of Christ. Therefore, the ambassador for Christ desires to "make men feel so bad"—to arouse them to the consciousness of their pitiable condition as bond-serfs of sin, in the hope of persuading them to embrace the Divine overtures of liberation from satanic thraldom, and of leading them out of the Egyptian bondage into the Land of Freedom—the Gospel of free grace.

"The listening throng there feel its blessed effect,
And deep conviction glows in every breast."

Covenant of Grace! Ver. 5. It is of long-standing—going back not merely to David, or Moses, or Abraham—but to Adam. And thus the New Covenant is a development of the Old. The seed of Adam in Genesis became the giant Tree of Life in Revelation—while the bud of Sinai appears in the full-blown flower of Sion. In the Law, this covenant of grace is buried as the coal deposit which miners only reach by piercing the various intervening strata—or as the pearls of great price which divers only secure by plunging through fathoms of water. In the Gospel, this covenant of grace lies open—as a casket of gems whose lustre dazzles the natural mind—or as a parterre of flowers whose fragrance charms the sense. The covenant of the Old Dispensation is as real—because it is the same—as that of the New Dispensation; only it was pavilioned round with clouds—wrapped in many a folded leaf. In the Law of the patriarchs, priests and prophets, this unique, merciful, and ancient covenant of grace was like the secret writing of which Stainforth speaks, and which is invisible to the reader till held before the flame, when it gives forth the precious truth for which the soul was longing. The Divine fire brings out the conditions of the covenant of grace as penned by God in invisible but indelible and imperishable ink upon the pages of the moral and spiritual history of Adam, Enoch, Noah, and others.

"Across the ages they
Have reached us from afar,
Than the bright gold more golden they,
Purer than the purest star."—*Bonar.*

Heirs! Ver. 6. A pious man was one day walking to the sanctuary with a New Testament in his hand, when a friend who met him said Good morning, and enquired what he was reading so earnestly. "I am reading my Father's Will," was the prompt response; "and I find that He has bequeathed me an hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting." The redeemed are the inheritors of the universe, 1 Cor. iii. and xxi. :—

"Rise, my soul! and stretch thy wings,
Thy better portion trace;
Rise from transitory things
Towards heaven thy native place."
—*Seagrave.*

Experience! Ver. 6. The old saw declares that it teaches wisdom; while the French have a proverb that the ass does not stumble twice over the same stone. Sydney asserts that all is but lip-wisdom which wants experience. Caussin expresses himself that a hundred thousand tongues may discourse to a man about the sweetness of honey, but he never can have such knowledge of it as by taste. In spiritual things, experience is that sense of taste. Carlyle likens experience to a schoolmaster—an excellent schoolmaster, who charges dreadful wages. But suppose it is a costly education, only think of the future benefits. Solomon went through a peculiar experience of his own—an experience which many of us shudder at—a school in which we are reluctant to be trained: and this is the very man whom God chose as the schoolmaster to teach us the vanity of the world when it is made the portion of a soul. A smooth sea, so runs our English proverb, never made a skilful mariner. The young Christian sets sail under fair balmy breeze and clear sunny skies; but soon the clouds gather—the waves foam—the darkness deepens.

"And these vicissitudes tell best in youth;
For when they happen at a riper age,
People are apt to blame the fates forsooth,
And wonder Providence is not more sage."

Why? Because one dram of experience is worth a whole hogshead of "dreams that wave before the half-shut eye"—for, as Dr. South says, practical sciences are not to be learned but in the way of action. It is experience that must give knowledge in the Christian profession as well as in all others. Alas! to most of us experience is like the stern-lights of a vessel which illumine only the track it has passed. God would have them to be the bow-lights—for adversity is the first path to truth.

Righteous Retribution! Ver. 7. God's mills grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small. And judgment comes at last, for forbearance has an end. Then these judgments often assume the form of retribution. It is recorded in ancient oriental history that an oppressor introduced a company of elephants into his army, whose appearance and power were expected to win the day. But the huge animals took fright when the opposing forces approached each other, turned tail, and, plunging amid their own ranks of infantry, spread dismay and defeat everywhere. Very similarly we are told that the old war chariots, whose wheels were armed with steel scythes to mow down the ranks of the enemy, instead of bringing destruction upon the opposite host, were not unfrequently dragged by the fiery, furious, frightened steeds into the lines of their friends, leaving a line of death behind them. Pharaoh's oppressions are to recoil upon himself.

"In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice."

Not so with God. His sun of justice may withdraw its beams from earthly notice for awhile; it may, as it were, sit concealed in a dark recess, pavilioned round with clouds. But it is coming. Dr. Thomas says that society is like the echoing hills—giving back to the speaker his words, groan for groan, song for song. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. God's forbearance, says Brooks, is no quittance. He hath leaden

heels but iron hands; and the further He stretches His bow, or draws His arrow, the deeper will He wound. Even Anne of Austria, the Queen of France, could express as much to her implacable enemy, Cardinal Richelieu, when she exclaimed: My Lord Cardinal, God is a sure paymaster; He may not pay at the end of every week, month or year, but remember that He does pay in the end. In all time,

"All circumstances, all state, in every clime,
He holds aloft the same avenging sword;
And sitting on His boundless throne sublime,
The vials of His wrath, with justice stored,
Shall in His own good hour on all that's ill
be poured."—*Percival.*

God's Name! Ver. 3. Swinnock has it that travellers who are at the top of the Alps can see great showers of rain fall under them, but not one drop of it falls on them. They who trust in the name of Jehovah are in a high tower, and thereby safe from all troubles and showers. With such confidence in Him, their spiritual life is like the deep calm which prevails beneath, while above the waters are lashed into a foaming, boiling caldron. They which trust in the Lord shall be like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but which standeth fast for ever. A legend says that a rich and powerful king, troubled in heart in spite of all his possessions, went to a holy dervise and asked him for the secret of happiness. The dervise led him forth in front of a high rock, on the top of which an eagle had built her nest. Pointing to the lofty home of the king of birds, the aged recluse directed the monarch to imitate its wisdom by building on the rock of heavenly truth. And surely if a heathen could assure the terrified bird which flew from the hawk into his bosom for shelter that he would neither kill nor betray it, much less will God either slay or give up the soul that takes sanctuary in His name. The righteous runneth into this strong tower, and is *safe.*

"I all on earth forsake,
Its wisdom, fame, and power,
And Him my only portion make,
My shield and tower."

Ministers! Ver. 6. Ministers must speak to the Church all that God reveals to them. When they feel it their duty faithfully to speak pointedly to sinners, and to expose the hypocrisy of professors, let them not be condemned, even though their words condemn you. The pastor is God's Moses to you, and it is at the peril of his soul that he must preach what his Master bids him. Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel—*i.e.*, the good news of pardon and salvation. But the bad news of guilt and damnation precede—indeed are wrapped up in—this proclamation of glad tidings of great joy. Moses must arouse Israel to sense of their bondage, before the clarion of jubilee could ring its silver tones full and clear. A minister, Dr. Boyd says, was once asked not to preach so hard; for if he did, certain persons would leave the church. "Is not the preaching true?" responded the man of God. "It is." "And does not God bless it?" "He does." "Well, then, the devil has sent you to me, to get me to let down the tone of my preaching, so as to ease the minds of the ungodly." We must speak all that God reveals to us. As there were bells as well as pomegranates on Aaron's robes, so must the ambassador not only speak words of peace, but sound the bell of alarm. There is a proverb which says that more flies are caught with sugar than vinegar; but it belongs to the proverbial philosophy of the three authors—the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. As God gives, so must His servants—the vinegar of the law first, and then the sweetness of the gospel. The Almighty thus

"Makes known His sacred will, and shows His
power;
By Him inspired, they speak with urgent
tongue
Authoritative, whilst the illumined breast
Heaves with unwonted strength."—*Jenner.*

Tuneful Tongues! Ver. 7. Philip Henry says that thanksgiving is the rent which the saints owe to God. And if Christ dwell in our hearts—dwell, we say, not sojourn—we shall always be glad to pay that rent. Our praises will go up, writes Guthrie, as the incense continually. It was the law of some of the old monasteries to carry out this idea of "incense continually floating upwards to heaven," by having constant change of choir. The chanting of praise was thus never interrupted; for as soon as one set of monks had done their service others supplied their place, so that, as Pilkington expresses it, both by day and night an endless hallelujah went up to God. It is a tradition of St. Francis that on one occasion he felt himself so penetrated with joy and consolation by the song of a nightingale that he began to sing, whereupon the bird of music stopped its strains. When the monk ceased, Philomela renewed her joyous chant: and thus they sang alternately until St. Francis was exhausted. So ought the saints to rejoice with them that do rejoice, when they themselves have apparently no cause to rejoice in themselves. Time may stop—the world may stay—the universe may cease its cycles; but Christians ought not to stop their songs—never! never!

"He that to praise and laud Thee doth
refrain,
Doth not refrain unto himself alone,
But robs a thousand who would praise
Thee fain,
And doth commit a world of sin in one."—
Herbert.

Bondage Effects! Ver. 9. Every man has a right to freedom. Of all earth's hapless ones we pity him the most who languishes in

hopeless bondage until he has lost all note of time, and looks through the rayless eyes of idiocy upon any change that gleams through the despairs of his dungeon. Very near to this had Israel sunk. They had a right to be free, but long oppression had sunk them into hugging the chains that fettered them. They were slow to seize the offered boon of freedom—so slow that Pharaoh was emboldened to resist the demand of Moses and Aaron to give liberty to the slaves.

"Yet while he deems thee bound,
The links are shivered, and the prison walls
Fall outward."—*Bryant.*

Vitality! Ver. 9. The sunbeam shines upon the entombed seed, and lo! a flower all beautiful with rainbow brightness—all fragrant with spicy perfumes rises from the grave. The same light will shine upon a rock, and leave it still a rock after a thousand years. Why? There was no life. The Spirit of God plants the germ of life in the softened soul, and the sunlight of the Saviour's beaming countenance energizes. The rock remains unaffected by all the radiance of the Gospel until affliction pulverizes its hardness, and the Spirit implants the germ of life.

"We welcome clouds that bring the former rain,
Though they the present prospect blacken round,
And shade the beauties of the opening year,
That, by their stores enriched, the earth may yield,
A faithful summer and a plenteous crop."
—*Swain.*

Working for God! Ver. 10. Moses had looked upon the work as hard, but when his eyes were opened to perceive what a privilege it was as work for God, then he not only went to it with resolute mind, but with a merry heart. Christian service is hard for flesh and blood, but as work for God it becomes light. There is the story of a witty American who, after his men had been working all day building a house, asked them, when they were extremely exhausted with their labour, to come and play a game of digging the cellar. Readily they went; but if they had looked at it as *hard work* they would very likely have directed their steps homeward. So with labour for Jesus. Look not at it in the light of hard work, but look at it as a delightful thing—as a privilege to be allowed to do it. The work will be diminished of its toil.

"And Truth and Love, with their beauty and might,
Shall banish the sombre-hued shadows of night."

God's Ways! Ver. 11. Though all the ways of God are ways of light, yet many of them, says Caryl, are in the dark to man. Oh! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.

"Reason's brightest spark,
Though kindled by His light, in vain would try
To trace His counsels infinite and dark."

But faith understands that they are counsels of love—ways of wisdom. As Dr. Krummacher has expressed himself, God's dealings with His people are easily discernible with the eye of faith. He often lets His people reach the shore as on the planks of a shipwrecked vessel. He deprives us of the cisterns, in order to make us drink of the fountains of waters. He frequently takes away our supports, not that we may fall to the ground, but that He may Himself become our staff and rod. The embarrassments of His people are only the festive scaffoldings on which His might, faithfulness, and mercy celebrate their triumphs. To this God was bringing Moses and Israel. Moses was hoping partly in the enthusiasm of Israel—in the awakening of their feelings of patriotism and natural love of liberty. He is soon undeceived: soon taught to repose wholly in God. And yet the way of teaching was contrary to all human ideas, and appears wrong; just as when we put a straight stick into the water, it appears crooked. Why? Because man looks at God's ways through two media—flesh and spirit.

Church's Redemption! Ver. 11. On this principle, says Wylie, we firmly look for the Providence of God culminating in a grand and universal deliverance of the Church. Like some mighty Alp—some monarch of mountains — which keeps in the traveller's eye after every surrounding hill has sunk beneath the horizon, this deliverance will be seen above the Church's horizon through all coming time. Every one of her former deliverances from Pharaoh downwards was a step towards this final deliverance. The Truth will continue in her from age to age; and as the night cannot return while the light of the sun continues, so the darkness of slavery and error cannot be felt while Truth, like a never-setting sun, shines within her and around her. This will be the great Exodus of the Church. And when on this day she ransoms her marshalled host, and begins her mighty song, she will find that her members are escaped serfs from every land on earth, and that her triumphal hymn is pealed forth by every tongue and kindred.

"Hallelujah! like the voice
Of the mighty thunder-roar;
Hallelujah! for the Lord
Reigneth now from shore to shore."—
Bonar.

Growth! Ver. 14. Earth and sea and sky furnish illustrations of the growth of Christianity. 1. Earth! Go forth by day, and count if you can the blades of grass on the surface of the field, their bristling spears flashing back the gleam of heaven's sunshine like swords of steel; converts to God are green in the city as grass upon the earth. 2. Sea! How do the waters cover the sea? Do they not flow into its most profound caverns and

secret recesses? And so the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. 3. Sky! Go forth by night, and gaze upon the jewelled heavens, whose diamond pointless are thickly set on the purple-hued ring that wreathes Jehovah's finger! Attempt to enumerate those constellations rising tier above tier—vast beyond the utmost stretch of imagination! Even these are made witnesses to us of the growth and numbers of the Church of Christ, who are to become as innumerable and glorious as the stars in the everlasting firmament.

"Yes! countless as the stars of heaven,
Or as the early dew,
And entering the eternal halls,
In robes of victory,
That mighty multitude shall keep,
The joyous Jubilee.

Church! Ver. 14. Very humble was the origin of the Church, whether we look at "the father of the faithful"—or at the "founder of the faith." Abraham was a cipher till God put the figure one before him: Jesus was the child of a village maiden, till the Spirit of the Lord anointed Him; while the fishermen of Galilee were ignorant and unlettered. But how great has been the influence of the Church, which humanly speaking was of very unpretentious origin! Humble as is the sand-reed which grows on the sandy shores of Europe, how great is its influence! Its roots penetrate to a considerable depth, and spread in all directions, writes Hartwig, forming a network which binds together the loosest sands; while its strong, tall leaves protect the surface from draught, and afford shelter to small plants, which soon grow between the reeds, and gradually form a new green surface on the bed of sand. But for this sand-reed, the sea wind would long since have wafted the drift far into the interior of the country—converting many a fruitful acre of England and France into a waste. Lowly as is the origin of the Christian Church, vast have been its influences in preserving society, humanity, and morals from desert draught and wilderness waste. Its roots have penetrated deep, and spread far and wide into the civilization of every country; and in the great blast of Satanic wind which soon will endeavour to engulf the human race beneath the drift-sand of infidelity and godlessness, the Church will evidence how wondrously extensive her influence is.

"Nations shall seek her pillar'd shade,
Her leaves shall for their healing be;
The circling flood that feeds her life,
The blood that crimson'd Calvary."

Genealogies! Ver. 14. Dr. Hamilton likens these to rugged cliffs, which claim more than a sterile grandeur. Bleak and barren though they seem, there is a well-spring at their foot. It is from these dreary crags that the fountain of Christ's manhood takes its rise. And as you follow the stream from Ur of the Chaldees to the manger of Bethlehem, you find how faithful the promises—and how watchful the Providence which through all the eventful centuries kept afloat and guided on the ark of the advent.

"For that wondrous Ark
Lived in the safeguard of Jehovah's eye;
His power secured it, and his wisdom guides."
—*Grant.*

Generations! Ver. 20. This successive flow and swell of the Church in her generations has been likened by Miss Cobbe to the Nile. Doubtless if we could stand—as so many brave hearts have striven to do—beside the fountain of the Nile, it would be hard to think that little trickling stream was actually the same as the great river of Egypt; and that it should grow and swell deeper and stronger, receiving the floods of heaven and the tributes of earth, till at last it rolls in resistless seas of water, bearing fertility and blessing over the land. Were a being from some far stellar world—unfamiliar with Nature's growth—to find his way to earth, how hard would it be for that visitant to realise that from the acorn which you held in your hand there had sprung that giant oak with its gnarled trunk of a thousand circles, ten thousand boughs and million-tongued leaves, amid which the birds carolled their notes, and beneath whose extensive shade man and beast found shelter and repose. So with the Church. But before ONE EYE, both river, tree, and church were self-evident. Jehovah sees them all mapped out from their source and entrance in weakness to their summit and end in power. The successive generations of the Church are all part of one mighty plan, which has its climax of loftiness and acme of perfection in that majestic benediction rising on the bosom of the universe of eternity, and reflecting on its ever-swelling surface the infinite glory of Jehovah, who says, I am the LORD.

"Let us then rejoice and sing;
'Tis the marriage of the Lamb;
And the Bride is ready; raise—
Raise the everlasting Psalm."

CHAPTER VII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**3. I will harden Pharaoh's heart.**]—Elsewhere also is the act of hardening Pharaoh's heart attributed to Jehovah, as in iv. 21 ; ix. 12 ; x. 1, 23, 27 ; xi. 1 ; xix. 4, 8 ; so that although Pharaoh is in several places said to have hardened his *own* heart—*e.g.*, in viii. 15, 32 ; ix. 34 ; yet we cannot well deny the existence of a difficulty. The ground of the difficulty consists in the glorious truth of the absolute holiness of God, in virtue of which he so exclusively loves what is right and good, and so sincerely and intensely hates all evil, that he separates himself from sin, wholly, everywhere, always ; frowns upon it, forbids it, denounces it ; is not the author of it, and never can be. His highest praise, with those who are nearest to Him and know Him best, is that He is holy—thrice holy. Hence the difficulty created by any statement, coming to us as authoritative, which seems to attribute the causation of sin to HIM. Our best way out of the difficulty, as it presents itself in this account of Pharaoh, may be said to depend upon the settlement of a single question—Was the hardening process essentially sinful on Pharaoh's part ? If *not*, Jehovah may have positively and directly caused it ; if it *was*, then only in an accommodated, and, in fact, a figurative, sense, can Jehovah have effected it. 1) We can conceive of a hardening of heart which involves no sin in its subject—as when a surgeon hardens his heart against such an influx of feeling as would unfit him for his stern but righteous and even benevolent duties. Was the hardening of Pharaoh's heart of this nature ? Did it consist solely in such an accession of firmness, of courage, as—without being in itself bad—allowed him to act out to the full the badness that was otherwise in him, such as his despotic cruelty, his self glorification, etc. ? If we could thus conclude, the difficulty would be at an end. We could then say : The badness was Pharaoh's own ; but the courage to act it out—a quality morally indifferent—was directly given him by God for ends high and holy, which he would secure through means of the fully developed wickedness of this wicked king. Something may be said in favour of this solution. *a.*) As truly as life is from God, so truly are health, strength, courage from him. *b.*) Many evil purposes fail of accomplishment solely through failure of life, of health, of physical courage to go through with them. A man may in heart be a murderer, and yet simply because he turns coward he may not take away life. Had Pharaoh thus failed, Israel would have more easily escaped, and the power of God been less signally displayed. But God was not minded that the king should so fail, and, therefore, gave him courage to work out all the evil that was in him. *c*) The Hebrew terms employed to express the hardening of Pharaoh's heart denote, primarily, physical qualities : as *châ-zaq*, "hold fast," "be firm," ("strong," 2 Sam. x. 11, "strengthened," Jud. iii. 12, "be of good courage," 2 Sam. x. 12) ; *kâ-bhêdh*, "heavy," (1 Sam. iv. 18 ; v. 11 ; Ex. xvii. 12 ; "slow," Ex. iv. 10) ; *qâ-shah*, "dry, hard, harsh," ("roughly," Gen. xliv. 7, 30, "sorrowful," 1 Sam. i. 15). These considerations appear to us to have so much weight that they ought in no case to be overlooked, even although they may need to be supplemented. Nevertheless, we are free to confess an absence of entire confidence in them. Were "firmness" of heart, in the sense of "courage" all, no more might require to be said ; but it would be rather venturous to affirm that, in biblical style, either "heaviness" or "harshness" of HEART can be taken as free from moral evil. Hence it may be well to ask (2.) Whether the divine causation may not to some extent have been indirect and figurative—amounting to permission and occasion, rather than positive cause ? And, in point of fact, this cannot be denied. The respite which Jehovah gave to the Egyptian king became an OCCASION of the further hardening of the heart of the latter. (See ch. viii. 15 ; ix. 34). Here we get a glimpse into the divine procedure much fitted to satisfy. Having struck a blow, Jehovah pauses, he does so again and again. Is this unworthy of him ? Yet Pharaoh makes these divine pauses an occasion of deeper sin. We cannot blame God for this ; and yet had blow followed blow in quicker succession Pharaoh might have sooner yielded. Just here then Jehovah shews His holy freedom. He does as it pleases Him ; never pleasing to do wrong, yet pleasing, for reasons which as yet we may not always comprehend, to permit the human wrong that He may overrule it for His own glory and His people's weal. We conclude then that only thus did God harden Pharaoh's heart : He gave him the physical courage to do his worst ; and He gave him—not the disposition but—the permission, the opportunity, the occasion, in the process of reaching his worst, to turn good int evil, and add sin to sin. This is what God DID ; this in clear foresight of how Pharaoh would act, is what God MEANT TO DO ; this is what God, for Moses' guidance FORETOLD as His intention. **9. Miracle**] A splendid or conspicuous deed : Sept. "sign or wonder ;" vulg. "sign." **Serpent**] Prob. of a large species ; and in vv. 10, 12, called *tannîn* (lit. "extended"); but v. 15. *nâ-châ sh*. **II. Sorcerers**] Whisperers, mutterers, practisers of magic. **Magicians**] Sacred scribes, skilled in sacred writings (hieroglyphics).

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

THE MORAL POSITION IN WHICH SOME MEN STAND TO OTHERS.

God made Moses to be a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron to be a prophet. There are many good and noble men in the world to-day, who are the gods, the instructors and rulers, of their fellow-creatures.

I. This exalted moral position is the result of Divine allotment. "And the Lord said unto Moses, see, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh." 1. *Men are not to place themselves in this moral position to others.* A man is not to make himself a god unto his fellows. Some ambitious spirits do this, and in the attempt become as Satans to their comrades. They become imperious. They make unjust demands on those they rule. The man divinely appointed to this position, will never usurp social influence, though he will always yield it, because it will be the natural accompaniment of his holy life. He will not pander to popular sentiment. He will speak to humanity the messages of God. 2. *Men are not to be placed in this moral position merely by the suffrages of their fellow-creatures.* The Israelites did not call Moses to the work of their freedom. Pharaoh did not place Moses and Aaron in these relations to himself. The appointment was of God. Society determines its own mental and social gods, and inshrines its men of wealth and genius as deities, but the moral gods of the universe are of Divine appointment. Society would make a wrong selection of gods, if left to its own choice. It would prefer the morally indulgent to the heroic and the true. It would be in danger of making a mistake and of crowning the ambitious rather than the lowly. Hence the selection must be Divine.

II. This exalted moral position involves arduous work and terrible responsibility. 1. *The true gods of society have something more to do than amuse it.* The visit of Moses to Pharaoh would be no great source of amusement to either party. The gods of humanity are comparatively withdrawn from the vulgar and secular matters of life, the bearing of their efforts is eminently moral. It has reference to souls, to man's life in its relation to the Infinite. A man whose highest aim is to excite the merriment of society, is too far removed from divinity to be mistaken for a God. 2. *The true gods of society find their employment in communicating to men the messages of God.* Moses and Aaron were to communicate God's message to Pharaoh. God frequently has distinct messages for individual men in reference to their moral conduct. These are carried by the divinely-appointed prophets of society. They come to teach us. To awaken us. To enable us to fulfil the will of God. Hence their work is arduous and responsible.

III. This exalted moral position is the most efficiently employed in seeking the freedom of men. But for the slavery of Israel Moses would not have been a god unto Pharaoh. The position is the outcome of a condition of things it ought to remove. It is not for self-aggrandizement. It is to give men the freedom of a divine salvation.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1—2. In the Hebrew Scriptures, magistrates, as representing a portion of the jurisdiction of God, are called gods. The expression was very commonly applied to those who were possessed of dignity or official power, "Ye are gods;" and in this sense Moses is said to have been made a god

unto Pharaoh; and Aaron his brother was to be his prophet. You are already aware of the reason of this distinction between the two brethren. Moses complained that he had no power of eloquence, or was of uncircumcised lip; and God's reply to that was, "You, Moses, shall be the oracle or depository of truth; and Aaron, who has the gift of eloquence, shall unfold and express it." God did not alter their constitutional characteristics; but he made use of their existing constitutional peculiarities to do his great work. So, still, when God employs men to execute His purposes, He does not re-create them, but He sanctifies them, He uses them as they are. Any body reading the New Testament, will see that each writer has a style of his own; so much so, that if you were to read a few verses from one or the other of the writers, I should be able to say whether they were written by Matthew, or Paul, or Peter. God did not destroy the idiosyncracies of the sacred penman, but he retained their variety of style, and consecrated that variety to be the more elegant vehicle of important and precious truth. So, when God sent Moses and Aaron to do his work in Egypt, He did not make Moses eloquent, which he was not, nor did he make Aaron learned, which he was not; but he made Aaron the eloquent man, draw upon the stores of Moses, the learned man, and thus each did efficiently and naturally the work that God had assigned them. So, at the era of the Reformation, Luther's eloquence and energy would have been extremely defective, if he could not have fallen back upon the rich stores of Melancthon's learning. So in the Acts of the Apostles, the energy and boldness of Peter were shown in his speaking; and the love, patience, and piety of John, were shown in his keeping silence. God thus takes different men of different constitutional peculiarities for different purposes.—*(Dr. Cumming.)*

Great is God's goodness and patience to reason with, and encourage His backward servants.

Men judging themselves as uncircumcised, may be made by Jehovah as gods.

Prophets are merely God's mouth and lips to His Church.

God orders one instrument from another to utter His mind to worldly powers.

At God's word poor despicable creatures command oppressing powers to release the oppressed, and it shall be done in time.

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

MORAL OBSTINACY; OR, PHARAOH THE TYPE OF AN IMPENITENT SINNER.

I. That the impenitent, like Pharaoh, reject the Divine command. Moses and Aaron had made known to the Egyptian king the will and command of God in reference to the freedom of Israel. But he refused to comply with that command. In this respect he is a type of the impenitent sinner. God has revealed his will to men in His book. He has commanded men everywhere to repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This the sinner refuses to do. He continues in sin. Heeds not the law of God. 1. *Pharaoh rejected the Divine command with contempt.* He inquired, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" So many impenitent sinners contemptuously reject the Divine claim to their life and service. They intimate that they have no wish to enter upon the gloom of a religious life. They declare themselves happier amid the sport and passion of the world. They are in good social position, and do not wish to think of anything beyond the present. They treat the messengers of God who come to teach them better, with scorn, and reject all their offers of salvation. How often have we treated the spirit of God with contempt. 2. *Pharaoh*

rejected the Divine command in a spirit of proud self-sufficiency. He thought of himself as the King of Egypt, as having at command vast resources of men and money, of luxury and pleasure. He imagined himself able to defy Jehovah, and that no one would be able to injure him. And, in this respect, Pharaoh is a type of many impenitent sinners. They pride themselves on their fancied security. They think that their temporal prosperity will shield them from future terror. Pride haughtily dismisses the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

II. That the impenitent, like Pharaoh, though rejecting the Divine commands become obstinate in disposition. We find throughout this narrative that the longer Pharaoh resisted the Divine command, the more determined became his resistance. And so is it with the impenitent sinner. He rejects the command of the scriptures, the ministry of the pulpit, the solicitations of friends, and the strivings of the Divine Spirit, and every time he does so, he becomes more obdurate in soul. He gets less susceptible of heavenly influence, until ultimately he is given up to the hardness of his heart. This is a terrible condition to be in. 1. *An obstinate disposition is opposed to the good of the soul itself.* It prevents the shining of heavenly light upon the soul. It renders cold the emotions that once were fervent. It destroys all the vitality of the moral nature. Obstinacy will ruin the soul eternally. 2. *An obstinate disposition is antagonistic to the purposes of redemption.* The object of redemption, of the Church and all its agencies, is the salvation of the souls of men. This is frustrated by moral obstinacy. Men say that they have not the power to be saved. The hinderance is not in any heavenly decree, it is in their own unwillingness to give up sin. 3. *An obstinate disposition is insensible to all the appeals of heaven.*

III. That the impenitent, like Pharaoh, obstinate in disposition, invite the Divine anger. 1. *This anger is manifested in the exhibition of Divine power.* "That I may lay my hand upon Egypt." When God lays his hand upon a nation who can predict the result. The plagues of Egypt are but the sequel of this. The hand that created and upholds the world, can inflict terrible woe upon the impenitent. 2. *This anger is manifested by causing the tyrant to liberate his slaves.* Pharaoh now loses all his profitable slaves. This would be a terrible blow to his covetous spirit. He would have to acknowledge Jehovah as conqueror. The impenitent have ultimately to give up their wicked pleasures. 3. *This anger is manifested by the destruction of the king and his army.* Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the raging billows of the Red Sea. So the finally impenitent will be lost in the eternal fires of hell. LESSONS :—1. *That God sends many ministries to invite us to obey his commands.* 2. *That our truest wisdom and safety consist in a penitent condition of soul.* 3. *That the final doom of impenitence is the abiding wrath of God.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 3. A hardened heart :—1. Permitted by God. 2. Effected by sin. 3. Cruel to the slave. 4. Unmoved by signs. 5. Smitten by heaven.

God instructs Moses and Aaron as to what they shall do ; but He adds, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." I explained to you on a former occasion, that God is often said in Scripture to do things directly, when the context shows that He did them indirectly. To be the *occasion* of a thing, is totally distinct from being the *cause* of a thing. I build an hospital for the cure of the sick ; but in the course of its erection, a scaffolding gives way, and a workman is killed. The hospital was not the cause, but the occasion of

that death. Jesus came into the world, not to send peace, but a sword. He came directly to send peace; but He came indirectly and incidentally to send war. The gospel is not the cause of war, but the occasion of it. And so when God said, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart," it implied, "I will show such signs, and bring to his conscience such motives that if he is not moved, melted, and subdued, the reaction of that influence will end in his being hardened more and more." Nothing can be so absurd as to say that God showed to Pharaoh reasons for repentance, which He prevented him by physical power from accepting.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Signs:—1. Multipled. 2. Penal. 3. Rejected.

Verse 4. "*But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you:*"—

1. Because he is proud, and will reject a lowly shepherd. 2. Because he is cruel, and will not free the slave. 3. Because he is obstinate, and will not yield to Spiritual influence.

God knows those who will not hearken to His word:—1. To tell His servants about them. 2. To send judgments upon them. 3. To entice them by loving discipline.

"*My people:*"—1. Because God knows them. 2. Because He saves them. 3. Because He redeems them. 4. Because He guards their welfare.

"*My people:*"—1. Therefore He will hear their prayers. 2. Therefore He will relieve their sorrows. 3. Therefore He will free their souls. 4. Therefore He will vindicate their rights.

A Knowledge of God.

Verse 5. "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt."

I. That the worst of men will one day have to recognize the reality of the Divine Existence.—"And the Egyptians shall know," &c.—1. *Men of bad moral character shall know this.* Men whose lives are now spent in utter disregard of the Divine Being shall one day awake to the fact of His awful existence. This awakening will be the end of their pleasure; the commencement of a new and unalterable life. In hell the wicked will know that God is the Lord. 2. *Men of sceptical dispositions shall know this.* Some men profess to disbelieve in the existence of God. They call it a philosophical absurdity. They say in their hearts that there is not. The wish is father to the thought. In another life the sceptic will know that God is the Lord.

II. That they will be brought to a recognition of the Divine Existence by severe judgments.—1. *Some men will listen to the voice of reason.* The Egyptians would not. They would not learn the reality of the Divine existence from the mouth of Moses. They would not be gently led to behold the Great Parent of the universe. They are like men to-day. They will not give heed to the messengers that proclaim the Being of God. They reject them. They neglect the Bible. They interpret nature on atheistic principles. 2. *Such will learn the existence of God by judgment.* Some men will never learn anything while life goes well with them; they will only study heavenly themes when they are in sorrow and perplexity. They will one day be visited with overwhelming judgments, which will demonstrate the existence, and moral government of God, but which will be no time for repentance.

III. That the existence of God is a guarantee for the safety of the good. "And bring the children from among them." As truly as God exists shall all good men be finally brought out from moral and temporal bondage into the Canaan of peace and quiet.

Obedience to God.

Verse 6. **I. It must be rendered by the servants of God.** "Moses and Aaron." All men who are called to moral service by God must obey Him: 1. *Because He gives them their com-*

mands. 2. *Because He gives them the power to do so.* 3. *Because He rewards obedience.*

II. It must be co-extensive with their mission. 1. *It must be entire.* 2. *It must be cheerful.* 3. *It must be holy.*

III. It will render their mission effective. 1. *Because it will lead to the best mode of service.* 2. *Because God will delight to honour it.* The Divine commands: — 1. Rightfully given. 2. To be faithfully executed. 3. To be diligently obeyed. To be supremely regarded.

Verse 7. The bearing of a man's age upon his work.

We are here informed that Moses was at this time eighty years of age, and that Aaron was eighty-three. Their ages would have an important bearing toward the work of these two men.

I. Their ages would indicate that they were not likely to be misled by the enthusiasm of youth. The Israelites would probably not have placed much confidence in the statement of a very young man had he gone to them with the message of their freedom. They would have doubted his word. They would have imagined him a wild dreamer, or a mistaken enthusiast. Hence the maturer years of Moses and Aaron would prevent such an interpretation being put upon their prophecy. The world is slow to take young men into its confidence. It soon smiles at their visions, and laughs at their enthusiastic hopes.

II. Their ages would be likely to command the respect of those with whom they had to do. Had they been more youthful they would have awakened the merriment of Pharaoh. Egypt's king would not have given up his slaves at the request of two boys. Heaven is always judicious in the selection of its messengers. The Church ought to be likewise. It should look even for incidental qualifications, as well as the primary and the moral. Youthhood would not have had much influence with the slaves of Israel. The world wants men of tried energy and long experience to achieve its moral emancipation; men in whom hot passion has calmed into a settled force.

III. Their ages would be an incentive to fidelity, as they had spent the younger part of life, and would be forcefully reminded of the future. After men pass the meridian of life, they begin to regard life as a stern and solemn reality, if they have any pious sentiment within them at all. The past has gone like a dream. The brief future is before them. They wish it to be characterized by fidelity.

At this time, we are told, Moses was eighty years of age, and Aaron eighty-three. This was not old age. Moses lived to be one hundred and twenty. He was, therefore, now just at the close of the meridian of life. I mentioned also before, that there is no evidence in the Bible that man's life has been shortened since Moses' death; and that, as far as we can gather from Divine interposition, one hundred and twenty is the proper age of man. The 90th Psalm describes an abnormal state of life in the wilderness. There Moses himself complains that their life was shortened to threescore and ten, by the existing severity and pressure of their circumstances, not by the ordinance of God. And it remains a problem, whether, if men were not less oppressed by anxious cares and thoughts, ambition, vainglory, and pride, and wrath, they would not live to a much greater age; and whether it be not true, that in proportion as Christianity gains in its sanctifying influence on the soul, the whole social and physical system will but be correspondingly elevated and ameliorated also.—*Dr. Cumming.*

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

MAN'S EFFORT TO REPUDIATE THE MESSAGE OF GOD BY AN IMITATION OF ITS MIRACULOUS CREDENTIALS.

I. That man has a right to expect that any special revelation from God should be accompanied by infallible and unimpeachable credentials. "When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you; then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent." When men come and present Divine messages to us, we have a right to expect that they will produce something more than their own mere word for the divinity of their mission; they make great demands upon our conduct, they appeal to us in the supreme realm of our life, and the greatest results are dependant upon the manner in which we welcome them, hence we may expect substantial proof that they are sent from God. God never expects men to credit any mission that is not authenticated by sufficient evidence, he does not require that they should do such violence to their intellectual manhood. Hence when any claims are presented as from heaven, we are justified in demanding sufficient proof of their holy origin. 1. *We require these credentials to vindicate the authority of the speaker.* Who were Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh? They had no human accidents connected with them to gain his attention and obedience. Socially they were greatly inferior to him. Probably they were almost unknown to him. They had no armies to enforce their request. Their request was great, and of importance to his nation. He might regard these two men as enthusiasts or imposters. It is natural that he should immediately seek to know by what authority they were sent to him. He would have acted the part of a lunatic had he not done so, as no wise man will heed all the claims which are urged upon him by those by whom he may be surrounded. Hence Moses and Aaron wrought a miracle before him, to convince him of the divinity of their remarkable mission. And this was evidence sufficient to the belief required, and the conduct solicited. Now humanity has a Divine message sent to it, not brought in exactly the same method as was that to Pharaoh; it is contained in a remarkable book, the Bible, it asks men, not to give up their slaves, but their sins, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This book has been given to the world, and requires the world's credence and obedience. We at once require to know by what authority this volume comes, why it makes a greater claim to attention than any other, and what right it has to control our actions These questions are natural, and they are wise. No sensible man would receive the book, as it requires, without making them. We search this book and find that as Moses and Aaron carried their Divine credentials in their hand, so it contains the evidences of its Divine origin on its own pages, for on every page we see the miracle repeated, the rod is turned into a serpent. And the miracles which the book contains, and the miracle which it is in itself, are sufficient token to the honest mind that it comes from God. This evidence is equal to the case It leaves disobedience without excuse. It is adequate to its Divine authority. 2. *We require these credentials to vindicate the credibility of the speaker.* Pharaoh might even believe that Moses and Aaron were divinely sent to him; but the question would arise in his mind, whether they were uttering their message without falsehood or mistake. Were they not making too great a demand upon him, had not these Israelitish slaves been of great service to his nation, and was it likely that God would require their freedom? No doubt

much objection to the statement of these two men would arise to his mental vision, and therefore he required it to be certified that they were speaking the truth. And we conceive that the miracle they wrought would cover the whole case, the entirety of his request. Because God would never give men power to work a miracle to authenticate a lie. The miracle not only demonstrated the authority of these men, but also the unimpeachable honesty and verity of their statements. And so men take the Bible to-day, they perhaps say that in general terms the book has come from God, and has His authority, and yet how many question the verity of much of its contents. They call one part of the message a myth, another part a fable, until, indeed, there is very little remaining as true. We need scarcely say that this method of criticism is contradictory, for if men once admit the Divine authority of the book, they cannot but accept its contents as veritable, for the same miracle that demonstrates its heavenly origin, likewise demonstrates its moral truthfulness, that the Bible is not merely from God, but that it speaks the word of God. Of this the world has sufficient evidence. 3. *That God anticipates these requests on the part of man, and provides his messengers with the needed credentials.* The Divine Being did not send Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh without the credentials necessary to sustain their authority, and their veracity. We may reverently say that He could not rightfully have done so, as it would have left unbelief on the part of the king quite excusable, and it would have exposed these men of God to certain and needless scorn. And so in reference to the Bible, which is God's message to the race, its Divine Author has condescendingly anticipated the mental and moral requirements of man in accepting it. He did not send it forth without sufficient credentials to commend itself to human reason. He did not permit it to appeal to men as other books have done; it differed from them in contents and claims, and therefore needed a correspondingly higher vindication. Had any man gone to Pharaoh on the ordinary business of life, he would have needed no miracle to commend him to that monarch. But when Moses and Aaron go to him with a Divine command, their different and higher position requires the higher credential. And so with the Bible, it does not merely come to men with a message about the common affairs of human life, it speaks about the duties and destinies of their soul, and needs a vindication equal to its dignified claims. The revelations of God do not do violence to the mental habitudes of man. The Being who has made man, conforms to the mental laws under which He has placed him, one of which is that he cannot believe a statement without sufficient evidence. Hence, prior to any cry on the part of man for evidence of the Divine origin of the Bible, God provided and made it clear to all who sought it. They were there in all their possibility, only awaiting the interrogation of the human mind, upon which the rod would be transformed into a serpent, and demonstrate beyond doubt the divinity of the book. Hence it is the way of God to win the credence of men to his book by convincing evidence, not by arbitrary command, and any man who rejects the claims of the Bible rejects the highest proof, the most reliable evidence, hence his condemnation will be awful as that of the rebellious king. 4. *The spirit in which these credentials should be investigated and received* How did Pharaoh receive the credentials which were presented to him by Moses and Aaron in reference to the divinity of their mission; he received them with unbelieving heart. He was antecedently prepared to denounce them as untrue, and to reject them. He did not come to the investigation of them with unprejudiced mind, but with a bias against them. And no doubt his moral conduct induced within him this mental bias; he did not wish to give up his profitable slaves, hence he tried to disprove the credentials of these holy men. And in this we have a pattern of the way in which multitudes approach the

investigation of the Divine credentials of the Bible, they have no wish to find them true, rather, the moral character and habit of their life awaken within them a desire to find them false. Hence we believe that much of the scepticism of men in reference to the Bible as a divine revelation arises from moral considerations rather than mental. The probabilities are that if Pharaoh had had no slaves, supposing Moses and Aaron to have been sent to him, he would have believed their miracle. And if men had no sins to charm them they would welcome the Bible as the Word of God. They are not disposed to give up their sins, and so they are not inclined to receive the truth sent to them. (1) *These credentials should be thoughtfully received.* (2) *These credentials should be devoutly received.* (3) *Never receive them in sceptical mood.* 4 *We must remember that the messengers of God can only offer the credentials divinely permitted to them.* Moses and Aaron could not work any miracle they liked to the astonished gaze of the Egyptian king; they could only cast down the rod as God had told them to do. Men cannot decide upon, nor can they make of their own device or ingenuity, the credentials of their heaven-given mission. Nor does the Bible, in its credentials, conform to all the arbitrary and vain requests of the sceptical mind, it does not work one miracle after another only to awaken yet further demands, and continued incredulity. Its credentials are divinely arranged. They are the outcome of the will and permission of God. They are clear as a fact. They are emphatic as a claim. They can be investigated by men. The credentials of the Bible are such as God has permitted. The minister of the gospel has no right to present or enforce any other in his sacred embassy. If the legitimate credentials of truth will not gain the credence of men, we may rely upon it that no others will.

II. That men have recourse to many devices to weaken and nullify the credentials which are presented to them in token and support of a Divine message and claim. "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments." 1. *We find that men in the investigation of a Divine message are not satisfied with the evidence they themselves propose.* It would appear from the Divine statement and prediction made to Moses and Aaron, although we do not find the definite words used by Pharaoh, that the king wanted a miracle to confirm their request; and yet when it was wrought he rejected and refused to believe it. And this is just what men do in reference to the Divine credentials of the Bible; they enquire for certain evidences of its Divine authority, and when presented, they disbelieve and reject them. Men ask us to show them the internal harmony of the Bible, although it is written by so many men of varied mental type, and when we shew it them in incident after incident, they commence at once to weaken our evidence by suppositions of collusion between the authors, or of plagiarism. It is little use complying with their request for credentials, they seek them not to believe, but to cavil. A sceptical mind will not yield even when it has attained evidence for the truth of its own seeking. It is most criminal in its unbelief. 2. *We find that men in the investigation of a Divine message often seek others to supply them with sceptical arguments they are not clever enough to produce themselves.* It would appear that Pharaoh was not able of himself to refute the miraculous logic and credential of Moses and Aaron. Kings are not always gifted with the logical faculty, they are not generally remarkable for brain-power; nor are they in need of much, as the abilities of others are readily at their command. If a king wants an argument to disprove a divine message, there are always plenty of logicians in the realm ready to furnish him with it. And some men have the happy art of making logic prove anything to suit the craving of regal desires. Hence as Pharaoh could

not refute the miraculous evidence of these two holy men, he sent for the "wise men and sorcerers," and it would seem that the magicians of Egypt in some way imitated the miracle of the transformed rod. And so it is in reference to the credentials of the Bible; when one man cannot disprove them, he will get some one else to help him, and perhaps the two together may succeed in hardening each other in their sin. How one man may confirm another in scepticism to the rejection of the plain message of God. But though hand join in hand, he wicked shall not go unpunished. It is a pity that men of good mental ability should aid men of inferior brain in their sceptical effort; they might find better employment for their genius. 3. *We find that men endeavour to confirm their comrades in scepticism by imitating the credentials of the messengers of God.* Moses and Aaron had turned their rods into serpents; when the magicians of Egypt were called they to all appearances did the same. Very likely they did it by cunning trickery with their enchantments, and they may have been assisted by the devil. He is a willing ally to all who wish to refute the credentials of heavenly messengers. And has it not been so with the Bible? Men have cast down their own rods, and they have produced their own books, and apparently there has been but little difference between the human production and the divine. The Bible is very much like all other books, is printed with the same type, on like paper, in the same language, and is bound in the same material, and it is only on looking inside and reading the contents that we can announce the difference. Man's genius endeavours to rival God's power. But in vain. The truth-seeker can distinguish between the productions of the two; he never mistakes the enchantment of the Egyptian for the miracle of Moses. 4. *That the men who endeavour to confirm their comrades in scepticism respecting the Divine credentials are subject to the truth.* The rods of the Egyptian magicians were swallowed up by Aaron's rod. And so in reference to the Bible. All who reject its claims will one day be swallowed up by the retribution it proclaims. Truth has power over error. Pharaoh would not attach much significance to the fact that Aaron's rod swallowed up the rest; he would merely attach importance to the fact that his own conjurors had done the same as had Moses and Aaron. In the arguments of life men will only allow their minds to be impressed by those the most favourable to their case.

III. That the men who reject the credentials of Divine messengers commence a conflict which will be productive of great woe and of final overthrow to them. "And he hardened Pharaoh's heart that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said." This was notably the case with the king of Egypt. The plagues which follow are but the outcome of this rejection of the Divine message; and the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea was but the end of the struggle, the victory of an alarming Providence. And men who oppose the credentials of the Bible, who cultivate a sceptical habit of mind in reference thereto, and who seek others to confirm them in their rejection of the truth of God, commence a conflict which will be most destructive in its issue. The truth must conquer, and if men will not accept its credentials, they must fall beneath its power. It is vain for man, however he may be aided by human art or cunning, to contend with the messenger of heaven. LESSONS: 1. *That the messengers of God can always produce Divine credentials.* 2. *That Divine credentials are often rejected by men of high social position.* 3. *That a continued rejection of Divine credentials will end in destruction.* 4. *That the servants of God are often perplexed by the conduct of men in rejecting Divine claims.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 8—9. After God has won His servants to willing obedience, He commands them to duty.

God forewarned His servants that worldly men would investigate their authority.

Wicked men generally expect the ministers of God to work miracles before they believe the truth.

One instrument may God set over another to do his purpose.

A miracle has always been regarded as the evidence of a revelation from on high. It is not itself the revelation, but the evidence of it. The wax upon the deed, and the seal of one of the parties, is not the deed; but it is the evidence that that deed is accepted and identified by the party whose seal is attached to it.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Verse 10. When God enjoineth his servants to work wonders, He is sure to effect them.

Dead sticks become dragons at the word of God, to awaken sinners.

God by His word and work leave sinners without excuse.

The poorest workers animated by God, dare face oppressing kings.

It is only safe for the servants of God to do as he commands them.

Small actions in obedience are ordered by God to great issues, though despicable to men.

Not a word of God shall fail, but the very nature of creatures shall change to verify the same.

God's miracles are in truth, to confirm His authority among men.

Verses 11—13. Miracles from God will not persuade wicked hearts to believe.

Unbelieving sinners are apt to call in all instruments of Satan to gainsay God.

Providence has of old suffered wisdom to be abased to pernicious acts.

Under God's permission Satan may work strange changes in creatures; but not miracles.

God's true miracles devour all the lying wonders of Satan.

Christ hath swallowed up death in victory.

UNWORTHY IMITATIONS OF THE GOOD.

Verse 11. "*They also did in like manner with their enchantments.*" There is a great deal of imitation in the world. It is found in all spheres of life and employment. It especially obtains in the moral realm of life. And in some cases it may be commendable, the effort of a true soul to emulate the character and zeal of some godly neighbour whose life inspires with holy aspirations after something better. But in many cases it is a mockery, sometimes the homage which vice pays to virtue, and not unfrequently the daring effort of the natural mind to rival its divine results. In the incident before us the imitation of the work of Moses and Aaron by these Egyptian magicians was inspired by this latter motive.

I. This imitation of the good was by men of high social rank. The miracle wrought by Moses and Aaron was not imitated by the lower orders of Egyptian society, but by men in the highest rank of the nation, and in the presence of their king. And so it sometimes happens that men of intellect and learning, that men of high social standing, that men in important occupations, find it necessary and remunerative to imitate the actions of the good to serve their own impious purpose. It is probable that had those magicians refused, or had they announced themselves unable to imitate the miracle of the two servants of God, they would have been displaced in their art, and banished from the presence of the king. It is ill to be employed in a bad occupation. A man who is a sorcerer by profession, may at any moment be

called to compete with divine phenomena, and to involve himself in conflict with God. A man's known character has much to do with his temptations. Some men are too pure to be asked to do an unholy deed.

II. This imitation of the good occurred at a most solemn crisis. It occurred at a crisis in the life of Pharaoh. If he had now felt the reality of the appeal of Moses and Aaron, had he recognized it as from God, and yielded to it, his life and futurity might have been very different from what it was, And men who give themselves up to an unworthy imitation of the good, often cause those who trust to them to miss the most favourable opportunity of moral welfare. It was also a crisis of great importance to the entire nation as the after history abundantly demonstrates.

III. This imitation of the good was productive of dire result. It caused Pharaoh to discredit the message of Moses and Aaron; still to retain his slaves; and it was instrumental in the hardening of his heart. And so those who seek to imitate the good in order to nullify the claims of God upon men, bring woe upon all who credit their agency.

IV. The imitation of the good is always discernable. The rods of the magicians were swallowed up by the rod of Moses and Aaron. The imitation is not so good, so true, so beautiful, so spontaneous as the reality, hence all intelligent and conscientious men are able to detect it, and need not be deceived by it. If men are deceived by it, it is because they wish to be.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **14—25.**

THE RIVER TURNED INTO BLOOD; OR, MAN'S CHIEF PLEASURE AND PRIDE MADE THE MEDIUM OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION.

I. That Divine Retributions are sent when other and merciful measures have failed to accomplish the purpose of God in man. Moses and Aaron had now more than once communicated the Divine will to the impious monarch of Egypt, and had met with stern and determined rejection, he would not heed their message. The gradation in the appeal of these servants of God is worthy of observation:—1. *Moses and Aaron appealed to Pharaoh as men of noble heart and purpose.* They came bravely and without ostentation to the king and asked him in the name of Jehovah to give freedom to the Israelitish slaves. They urged the plea of right and manhood. They simply mentioned the name of Jehovah. They wrought the miracle. There are some messages which need no miraculous evidence to confirm them, they are so in harmony with the dictates of an enlightened conscience, and the sympathies of a true soul. When we ask for the liberty of the slaves, we make a request which should win a ready response from the instinctive pity of the human heart. Such was the first appeal made to the King of Egypt. It was an appeal to the natural sentiments of his manhood. It gave him an opportunity to be generous, and to announce the freedom of the slave without any coercive measures being brought to bear upon him. And so it is, generally, the messages of God appeal first to the natural instincts of the human heart, to our pity, we are inspired to duty by the sheer force of natural manhood, awakened by the common ministries around us. 2. *Moses and Aaron appealed to Pharaoh with the credentials of heaven to sustain the message.* These two men now advance a stage in the method of their address to the Egyptian king, they do not merely try to reach him through the sympathy of his own heart, or by the mere announcement of the Divine will, this has failed, they now render their demand apparent to his reason and judgment, so that escape from it may be intellectually impossible. They wrought a miracle in support of

their mission. This ought to have convinced the mind of Pharaoh that they were uttering the Word of God. And so it is now, the human soul has given to it unmistakable proof of all the heavenly messages which come to it, and of all the duties which require its attention. God often strengthens the credential in proportion to the unwillingness of men to accept it. Such is His merciful condescension. Man has no excuse for rejecting the service of heaven. 3. *Moses and Aaron now appeal to Pharaoh with the retributive anger of God.* They had presented the Divine claim in reference to Israel, to his pity, to his judgment, and now with terrible retribution. And hence when the credentials of heaven are wilfully and continuously rejected, they are not altogether withdrawn, but they become retributive. Thus the retributions of heaven are not wilful, they are for the combined purpose of convincing and punishing the unbelief of men. They are not sent until every other method of appeal has been exhausted.

II. Divine Retributions often consist in making the source of man's truest pleasure into the cause of his greatest misery. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone." Thus the principal subject of the first great judgment was the river Nile. "The River," as it was emphatically called, or "the River of Egypt," for the name Nile is not to be found in Holy Scriptures, was the chief source of wealth and prosperity to the Egyptians, by whom it was regarded with superstitious reverence as the birthplace of the gods. Let us endeavour to form some idea of the appearance it presented in the days of the Pharaohs. The source of the Nile was, even at that early period, the subject of much speculation and adventure, and it is only within the last few years that it has been ascertained. It takes its rise from a great lake or basin in central Africa, and traverses a rich and beautiful country on its way northward to the sea. It is the largest river in the world. In some parts of its course it flows gently and peacefully, fertilizing the land upon its banks; at others it rushes with great swiftness between lofty and precipitous rocks; broken here and there by mighty cataracts, or by a series of rapids extending over many miles. In lower Egypt, the Nile flowed through a rich plain, bordered by the desert and extending to the sea. On either side, as far as the eye could reach, luxurious crops of corn or barley grew, and ripened in the sun. Groves of sycamore and palm trees cast their grateful shade over the banks and paths; high rocks or hillocks rising from the plain were crowned with ancient cities, villages or temples, of which a few crumbling ruins alone remain, or whose memorial is altogether perished. Broad dykes, with roads running along them, served to connect those towns or hamlets at all seasons, even when the fields were overflowed. The less frequented parts of the river were lined with reeds and flags, and the far-famed papyrus, while the richly scented and variegated flowers of the sacred lotus floated upon the surface. The waters abounded in fish, some of which were regarded with superstitious awe, while others were in estimation only as articles of food (Num. xi.—5). There are but few fish in the river now, and the lotus and papyrus are scarce (Gen. xix. 6). In the time of the Pharaohs, the River of Egypt presented a gay and animated scene. Boats, formed for the most part of reeds, "arks of bulrushes," were continually passing over its waters, some of them carrying anglers, or groups of sportsmen armed with the bow and arrow, in pursuit of wild fowl; others laden with merchandise. About the middle of August, the river, after a gradual rise of many weeks, poured forth through the

channels prepared for it, and covered the lowlands with broad sheets of water, depositing upon them the rich alluvial soil brought down in its course from upper Egypt. As soon as the river has spread itself over the lands, and returned to its bed, each man scatters the seed over his ground, and waits for the harvest. It is not surprising that a river which was the source of such incalculable benefits to the Egyptians, should become an object of their religious veneration. By the miraculous change of the waters into blood, a practical rebuke was given to these superstitions. This sacred and beautiful river, this benefactor of their country, this birthplace of their chief gods, the abode of the lesser deities, this source of all their prosperity, this centre of all their devotion is turned into blood. The Nile, according to Pliny, was the only source from whence the Egyptians obtained water for drinking. This water was considered particularly sweet and refreshing; so much so, that the people were in the habit of provoking thirst in order that they might partake more freely of its soft and pleasant draught. Now it was become abominable to them, and they loathed to drink it. Apart from the suffering occasioned by this plague, there was something awful in the very nature of the miracle: it was not merely a "wonder," but a "sign." Prodigies of this kind were always looked upon as very fearful, and the Egyptians were addicted, more than any other people, to observing omens. It would remind them of their cruelty in casting their infants into the river (Ex. i.) (*See Plagues of Egypt by Millington*). Here we see the method of the Divine retribution which is to make the things to which men obey, and from whence they derive their enterprise and pleasure the channel and medium of pain. 1. *Sometimes the religious notions of men are made the medium of retributive pain.* It was so in the case of this miracle, when the river regarded with such superstitious reverence was turned into blood. What a shock this would give to the devout sentiments of the Egyptians. Their gods were desecrated, and were unable to vindicate their supremacy. The people were shown that there was a Supreme Being of whom they were ignorant, but with whom they were in conflict. They felt themselves in circumstances in which their fancied religion was of no avail to them. Truly, then, their religious ideas were made the medium of severe pain, yea of terrible retribution to them. And so when men rebel against God, He can make their religious notions the channel through which to pour grief into their hearts. And this occasions pain of the most unbearable character, as it touches man in the most sensitive part of his soul. 2. *Sometimes the commercial enterprises of men are made the medium of retributive pain.* The river Nile was the chief strength of Egypt's commerce, and when its waters were turned into blood, the enterprise of the nation would be largely suspended. It never pays men in a commercial point of view to reject the commands of God, for they are enriched by unwilling slaves, they are impoverished by the river unfit for use, and the river will be of greater service than all the slaves they can possess. But men dare the Divine Being, and so invite His retributions, and how often do these retributions flash their messages of grief along the wires of a man's business or trade. And he who might have been prosperous if he would have obeyed the behest of God, is ruined by his folly. If men will not obey God, He will turn their rivers of enterprise into blood. 3. *Sometimes all the spheres of a man's life are made the medium of retributive pain.* It was so in the case of the Egyptians, when their river was turned into blood; not merely was this river affected, but their religion was outraged, their commerce was suspended, and a hundred little inconveniences were the result. And so it is with human life to-day. If man gets wrong with God, it affects the entirety of his life. Moral questions penetrate into every realm and department of being, and affect the whole of them, either gladly or woefully, all being dependant upon the attitude

of the soul toward the Eternal. Hence it is wise for men to obey the command of God if they would be prosperous. 4. *Thus we see how easily and completely God can make human life a retribution to the evil doer.* God has access to every avenue of life, and can soon start a messenger of pain along any of them. His word or touch can turn all our rivers of enjoyment, happiness, prosperity, and peace into blood. He can make our chief delights unwelcome. He can turn our glory into shame. One wicked ruler may bring a plague upon a vast nation. Righteousness is the exaltation of national life. Let men not sin against God, for retribution will be certain. He can make the pleasure of men to be bitter to the taste, undesirable to the eye, and offensive to the smell. Thus the retributions of God are effective.

III. That the Divine retributions are extensive in their effect, and are operative before the impotent presence of the socially Great. "And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood." 1. *Thus the Divine retribution extended throughout all the land of Egypt.* Perhaps some may imagine this somewhat unfair, and a token of injustice on the part of God, and that it was making the nation suffer for the disobedience of the king, in which they had taken no active and immediate part. But the whole nation of Egypt were a consenting party to the slavery of the Israelites, and were to a certain extent reaping the temporal advantage of it. And besides if they were not guilty on this score, they were guilty of idolatry, and so were justly punished by the change which had come over their idol. Proud men in a nation often attract the retribution of heaven towards a wicked people, they are the connecting links between heaven's wrath and man's sin. They get our national rivers turned into blood. 2. *This Divine retribution, in the act of infliction, was witnessed by Pharaoh, and he was unable to prevent it.* The proud Monarch beheld these two men before him, and saw his beautiful river as it changed into blood. What a spectacle it would appear to him. He was impotent. He could not prevent it by any means. He could not alter it by any strategy. And so wicked men stand in the very presence of the ills which occasion their retributive pain, and are unable to remove or mitigate them. At such a time the king is one with the pauper in his woe. Men are never more weak than in the presence of the Divine retribution.

IV. That the Divine retributions are not always effectual to the subjugation of the wicked heart. "And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them: as the Lord had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also." 1. *Thus we see the hardihood of a disobedient soul.* The entire land of Egypt was stricken with one common woe, which it was in the power of Pharaoh by repentance, to have removed. He prefers that it should remain rather than that he should yield to the command of God. He was indeed a man of hardy soul. 2. *Thus we see the resistance of a tyrannic will.* The will of Pharaoh's was as iron. It was not influenced by a trifle. It could resist the utmost moral energy. It was not to be coerced. Even a national woe could not make it yield its pride. It could repel the most awful suffering. Truly man is capable of moral freedom. 3. *Thus we see the effort of men to mitigate the retribution of God.* "And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink." Vain is the effort of men to attain relief from the retribution of God, they may dig their holes, but they cannot long fill them with pure water.

V. That Divine retributions sometimes evoke presumptive conduct on the part of the wicked. The Egyptians endeavoured to imitate the miracle wrought

by the servants of God; this was the greatest presumption on their part; it would have been more to their credit if they had removed the blood from the river. Sometimes men grow desperate. They are hardened beyond recovery. They work the moral destruction of others. LESSONS: 1. *That Divine retributions are often merited by men.* 2. *That God can soon turn our joy into pain.* 3. *That obedience is the wisdom of man.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 14. God quickly observes what effect His word and work have upon the hearts of men.

God shows the unbelief of men to His servants.

Unbelief renders the hearts of men unwilling to duty, and hastens judgment.

Man has the ability to reject the commands of God:—1. Mysterious. 2. Responsible. 3. Influential to destiny.

Moral obstinacy:—1. Known to God. 2. Unsubdued by reason. 3. Averse to the purpose of God. 4. Prejudicial to the true welfare of man.

OPPORTUNITY IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

Verse. 15. *Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water,*" &c.

I. That there are favourable times at which to approach men with the messages of God. "Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning." There are times when Christian service can be more readily accomplished, and when it is more likely to be successful, when opportunity is favourable, and gives it an advantage. Many ministers would be much more effective in their holy work if they would only be more timely in their appeals to men, and if they would judiciously seek the best time in which to announce the message of God. To everything there is a time. The true worker for the moral good of men will endeavour to render circumstances favourable to his toils. He will be an early riser. He will be always on the outlook for those to whom His mission is addressed.

II. That there are favourable places in which to approach men with the messages of God. "And thou shalt stand by the river's brink." As there is a favourable time for Christian service, so there are places where it may best be accomplished. A wise minister will carefully select the place in which he declares to individuals the message of God. Moses met Pharaoh near the river, alone, and in case the proud monarch should refuse obedience to the will of heaven, he would be able at once to turn the river into blood. His position was favourable to the retribution to be inflicted. It is well to speak to men alone about their sins.

III. That the servants of God are often divinely instructed as to the best opportunity of Christian service "Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning." By a deep conviction, by a holy impression, and by keen moral vision, God unfolds to good men the most favourable opportunity in which to declare His message to the wicked. The Divine voice within us, prompting to duty, should always be carefully heeded, and the opportunity willingly embraced.

Verses 16—18. Hard hearts shut all ears against the message of God.

Sinners offended with God's word and judgment turn from Him unto their own ways.

Unbelief will not allow a man to heed either miracles, persuasion, or vindication.

THE RIVER CHANGED INTO BLOOD.

Verses 19—25. **I. That God can change the scene of life into death.** The great river of Egypt was considered as the giver of life to the people, its waters were life-preserving and fertilizing. Yet it was turned into blood

by the stretching out of a rod. The fish died. God can soon and easily change all our life-inspiring energies and joys into the current of death.

II. That God can change useful things into useless. The river was in manifold ways useful to Egypt. It was refreshing to the taste, and would be used for domestic purposes. It was also the centre of the nation's commerce. By the rod of God the most useful things we possess, as nations and individuals, are deprived of their utility. Hence all life is dependant upon the Divine will.

III. That God can change beautiful things into loathsome. The river of Egypt, so beautiful to the eye, was turned into blood. And so the most beautiful things of country, of home, of person, may by the outstretching of the Divine rod be rendered unlovely and hateful.

When necessity comes upon sinners they would rather dig for relief than ask God for it.

The devil may delude into difficulty, but cannot help men out of it.

Moses and Aaron may smite with the rod, but God effects it.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VII.

BY THE

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Divine Favour! Ver. 2. If we saved, remarks Faber, the life of the queen's child, we would not easily forget the grateful look of the royal mother's face. It would be long before her burning words of thanks died away in our ears—a sovereign's tears, and those tears of joy, are not things to be readily forgotten. But what a very unimportant thing this is compared with being allowed to please God by obedience to His commands. There need therefore be no reluctance on our part. Let us not be backward servants. Well may we adopt as our own the dying prayer of Usher, "O Lord, forgive me my sins, especially my sins of *omission*."—By such omission we become the losers—we lose the sweet approving smile of God.

I'm sure it makes a happy day,
When I can please Him any way.—*Hewitt.*

Insensibility! Ver. 3. "As hard as a stone," says the adage.—Yet the hardest stones submit to be smoothed and rounded under the soft friction of water. Ask the myriads of stones on the seashore what has become of all their angles, once so sharp, and of the roughness and uncouthness of their whole appearance. —"Water wrought with us, and none resisted."—The very stones cry out against the obstinate disposition, which is insensible to all the appeals of heaven.

You may as well bid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and make no noise,
When they are fretted by the gusts of heaven,
As seek to soften that sinner's heart.
— *Shakespeare.*

Hardened Heart! Ver. 3. A scholar once inquired of his teacher whether it was not wicked to punish Pharaoh and Judas for what God knew they would do. A bright thought struck the perplexed teacher: "When you were born, your papa looked at you and loved you, but he knew that bye and bye you would sin, and have to be punished: he did not *make* you naughty, but he knew that you would be."—God did not make Pharaoh sin, but he had to punish him for it. From righteous retribution for obdurate impenitence there is no escape.

Aye! when thou hast drained a swallow's milk, and
Seen rocks bear olive nuts, the sand pomegranates yield:
A harder task to try thy vaunted force remains—
To shield a wicked man from retributions pains.—*Oriental.*

Remorse! Ver. 4. In the early part of this century Pomare reigned as king in the islands of Tahiti and Eimeo. Many of his subjects were enraged at his recognition of Christ. Among them was a man called Upufara, who was regarded as the chief of the kings foes. He had often heard of the true God, but would not believe in him. One night he had a dream, in which he saw an immense oven with a very great fire, and in the midst of it a large fish, twisting itself in agony, and trying to get out, yet though in the fire, not consumed but still living. Such will be the guilty conscience,—the fires of remorse will scorch it and make it writhe in pang and anguish, without destroying its sensitiveness. In another life, and to his cost, the sceptic will know that God is the Lord, as scorched within

The fury round his torrid temples flaps
Her fiery wings, and breathes upon his lips
And parched tongue the withered blasts of hell.
—*Pollak.*

Visitations! Ver. 5. A man was confined in a cell with seven windows, and the only furniture a pallet of straw. Each morning he found a loaf of bread and a jug of water by his side. He was relieved from the fear of starvation; but when his eyes sought the windows, he counted one less. The fearful truth flashed upon him that the floor and wall of his cell were being pressed together slowly and surely, and that he would be crushed to death. The sinner like Pharaoh is inclosed in the earth-cell of impenitency, and the hour approaches when his last hope will be crushed and mangled in the ever-narrowing entombment. He will then learn how real is the moral government of God—only *too late* to repent—

As when a fire has raged, the smokes that rise
In useless lamentations drape the skies.—*Alger.*

Obedient Service! Ver. 6. In evil times it fares best with them that are most careful about *duty*, least concerned about safety. Many a general, whilst discharging his duty in the battle, has borne a charmed life. Moses was preserved whilst pursuing the path of Providence. The author of "From Dawn to Dark in Italy," contrasts the constant harassing perils of Montalto, a timid, compromising Lutheran, with the freedom from persecution of Old Clarice, a fruitseller at Naples. The one was continually in tumult and danger—the other kept on the even course of her Christian profession in the very jaws of the lion for thirty years. Many a hunted Protestant found shelter in her house excavated from the precipitous rock. Many a wave of bitter papal persecution swept over Naples, but old Clarice, who never sheltered herself beneath any compliances, seemed to prosper in her very fearlessness. The bold policy is not always the worst, and Moses was no loser by the unflinching courage with which he confronted Pharaoh in obedience to the Divine command. Luther lived, whilst some who temporized were lost. And of John Knox who lived to a good old age, it was said, "Here lies one who never feared the face of man."

So we would bravely live for Thee,
And Thy bold and faithful servants, Saviour,
we would henceforth be.—*Havegal.*

Serpents! Ver. 9. Among the Egyptians and also the Phœnicians, the serpent was an emblem of Divine wisdom and power, and as such it was reverenced. The asp was sacred to Neph, and is often represented upon the head of that deity. The asp is represented in the tombs of Thebes guarding the winepresses and granaries of Egypt. Herodotus speaks of a species of snake in the same neighbourhood with two horns upon its head, and says, when it dies it is buried in the temple of Jupiter, to whom it is said to belong. The transformation of Aaron's rod into a serpent, and the swallowing up of all the other serpents by it was therefore calculated to impress the Egyptians with the greatness and supremacy of the God of Israel. But Pharaoh did not concern himself about the Rod of Moses, and it was enough for him that his sorcerers had been able to imitate the miracle.

"To steal the livery of the court of heaven
To serve the devil in."—*Pollok.*

Truth-Light! Ver. 9. When Alexander the Great visited Diogenes the cynic, he asked whether there was any favour or gift, which the Grecian philosopher would wish to receive at his hands. To this, the philosopher curtly responded that he wished for nothing, but that the monarch should stand from between him and the sun. A very similar answer might with more justice and propriety be given by devout Christians to the sceptic—placing himself between the Bible and man, and seeking to hide the truth behind error: "Let me see the Sun of Revelation, for his beams alone have given light and life and warmth. The credentials of the Divinity of the Bible are as full of moral and spiritual light and life and warmth as

"Yon dazzling sun, at noontide hour,
Forth from his flaming vase,
Flinging o'er earth the golden shower,
Till vale and mountain blaze."—

Moses and Aaron! Ver. 10. The history of Moses and Aaron, appearing thus together at the Court of Pharaoh, may have given rise to the traditions of the Greeks and Romans, in which Jupiter and Mercury—both of them Egyptian deities worshipped as Hammon and Thoth—are described visiting the earth in a similar relationship. The latter was represented with the caduceus, a rod twisted abouts with serpents, and was the god of speech or eloquence

"That with the strong rein of commanding
words,
Doth manage, guide, and master th'eminence
Of men's affections, more than all their
swords."

—*Daniel.*

Bible! Ver. 10. Suppose that you have been sick for years and years, and all medical treatment had failed in your case, and some skilful one should come along and examine the symptoms of your disease, and write a prescription, saying: "I am going into a far country, and you will never see me again. But do not lose this prescription; for if you take the medicine which it prescribes all will be well." Would you not preserve the document? Would you not be careful to have it made up in the right shape, and to take it as ordered? But suppose you had misgivings; and at the time of receiving the prescription inquired as to the physician's credentials. He would take you to one patient after another—all of whom were in the enjoyment of good health—and all of whom acknowledged their indebtedness to the prescription and its pre-

scriber. When we question the efficiency of God's remedy for sin, He takes us to the crowd of credentials in the Word of God. You may be justified in demanding the proofs, but *not* in refusing to accept the evidence, which is adequate to the Divine authority. Here

Thy goodness, glory, wisdom, strength and power
Shine clear as stars in frosty skies.

Prejudgment! Ver. 11. A gentleman was one day stoutly asserting that there were no goldfields except in Mexico and Peru. A nugget dug up in California was presented to him as evidence against his positive assertion. He was not in the least disconcerted, but persisted that the metal was not gold. "It cannot be gold, because gold comes only from Mexico and Peru." He had fixed in his mind that gold existed only in those countries; and from it, he would not swerve. So with a certain class of sceptics. They have, to borrow Newton's figure, placed an extinguisher upon the candle of their judgment; so that when the light of convincing evidence is placed before them, all is in vain. They are not honest doubters, like Lord Lyttleton, the historian, and his friend Gilbert West. Agreeing to write something in favour of infidelity, they determined to study through the sacred records. Being honest in their studies, these ended in conviction. Both took up their pens and became its champions. How different the malevolent spirit of Strauss—the mocking tone of Darwin and Spencer. These act the part of the owlet atheism, who

"Sailing on obscure wings across the moon,
Drops his blue-fringed lids and shuts them close,
And, hooting at the glorious sun in heaven,
Cries out: "Where is it?"—*Coleridge.*

Adaptability! Ver. 11. We say: "If the cap fits, wear it. Hence admirably does the Bible fit our case! It is so framed as to be adapted to us entirely. Thus when a Dutch farmer in South Africa told a poor Hottentot that the Bible was not meant for such creatures as blacks, the simple minded native replied that he was sure that it was. "Why are you sure," jeeringly inquired the selfish white man? "Because it fits me exactly." "And how so?" Opening his Bible the humble soul placed his finger on the description of what a sinner is, and exclaimed: "There! sinners! that's my name." A similar illustration of the perfect adaptation of the Bible to all cases is furnished of a missionary, who records that, after reading the first chapter of Romans to a heathen congregation, they gathered round him saying that he himself had written that part for them. And from Dr. Dean of China we learn that, after conversing with a very intelligent Chinaman upon our Bible as being of great antiquity, he gave his listener a copy to take away for perusal. But not long after the inquirer returned, and with a look of triumph and accusation exclaimed, "You told me that your book was very ancient, but that chapter (pointing to Rom. I.) you have written with your own hand since you lived among us Chinese." Thus conscience does her work

"And to the mind holds up reflection's glass—
The mind, which starting, heaves the heart-felt groan,
And hates that form she knows to be her own."—*Churchill.*

Magicians! Ver. 11. Pliny the historian speaks of the magicians of Egypt, and numbers Moses among them. In one of Lucian's stories he introduces a man of Memphis—a person of amazing wisdom—and a real adept in all the learning of the Egyptians. It was reputed that he had lived no less than three and twenty years in a cave underground, and during that time was instructed by Isis herself in magic. There were jugglers in those days, as there are now. It is a common trick with them to produce living serpents from the cornices, or other parts of the rooms, which by handling they cause to become stiff and lifeless—restoring them again to animation at their pleasure. Witchcraft and sorcery were, however, possible crimes, and prevailed among the Gentiles, so that it is possible that these wizards looked upon Moses as an adept in the black art greater and more skilful than themselves:—

"You have by Fortune and your own skill's favours,
Gone slightly o'er low steps, and now are mounted,
Where powers are your retainers more than us."—*Shakspeare.*

Imitation! Ver. 11. Folly is as living as wisdom, and the human mind produces its fantasies from age to age as naturally and rifely as the earth produces its thistles. So that we find ourselves often perplexed with fragments of exploded notions, which keep buzzing in our ears like the sounds of insects on a summer's evening, and it is hard to get rid of them. Yet just as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the Egptian magicians, so does wisdom in the end devour the multiform and multiplied developments of folly, as imitations of Divine truth. Lo! they are no more:

They pass away, like wax in the fierce flame,
Or to the thick mists that frown upon the sun,
Which he but glances at, and they are gone.—
Borov.

Human Theories! Ver. 12. The wizards of Pharaoh's court produced what to all appearance were serpents—as grand and graceful as that of Moses. The speculations of Tyndal are in a sense grand and graceful—grand and graceful as those cumulous clouds that are piled above a mountain range in the far West. There is hardly anything in nature, art, or imagination, that may not be found among them. They assume the appearance of mountains and rocks—peaks and precipices. Castles and cities spring up as if by magic on the

aerial plains—torrents and waterfalls pour down their sublime heights—far perspectives of unknown shores open up through vistas within the withdrawing portals. The Genesis and apocalypse of scepticism resemble—and at first sight appear to be as real as the Genesis and Apocalypse of Revelation. Even the very bodies seems to have the same brilliant and varied hues and stripes. Thus man's genius has endeavoured to rival God's power; but in vain. The magnificent spectacle melts before the mighty influence of the sun. The gorgeous day-dreams of the students of scepticism vanish like the rods of the soothsayers before that of Aaron. Of that apparently solid mass of gorgeous splendour not a vestige remains; and the Word of God stands alone as the rod of Moses stood.

"It standeth, and will stand,
Without e'er change or age,
The Word of Majesty and Light,
The Church's heritage."—*Bonar.*

Biblical Evidences! Ver. 12. On board the ship which carried the great Napoleon to his campaign in Egypt there were French *savants*, who had convinced themselves, and thought they could convince others that there is no God. The great commander found them discoursing boastfully on their favourite theme, and, calling them upon deck, while the heavens above were bright with innumerable stars, he said to them: "Tell me who made these?" Napoleon was no philosopher, and it may be said, no metaphysician, no theologian. But he was a man of great common sense. He knew well enough that none of the boasters, whom he was so effectually rebuking, could place those stars in the firmament. They might send up rockets to imitate the stars, but the mimic pageant would fade, leaving the stars still to shine. Just so with the firmament of the Bible. It is crowded with the stars of truth—miracles—credentials of Divine creation. Atheists may send up rockets and Roman candles, as if to rival and outshine them, but in vain. All human miraculous imitations explode and disappear; while the stars of Truth abide. O ever stedfast stars!

"Unchanging in their light,
Unfaltering in their race,
Unswerving in their round."—

Calls! Ver. 13. Did you ever try to awaken a sleeper? At first perhaps you spoke softly—then as you failed to arouse him, you called louder—and when calling was all in vain, you seized and shook the sleeper to attain your object. God calls many times to men. At first His voice is gentle, but when they refuse to listen His appeals becomes more startling painful. Pharaoh had thus been urged by Jehovah softly and gently; now He is speaking louder and more urgent tones. So that the ruin, which advanced upon him with successive strokes, and which finally destroyed him, was nothing more than he had merited a thousand times over before God hardened him, and he himself became

"The man whom Fortune and the Fates betray,
Predestined to precipitate decay."—
Theognis.

Precursors! Ver. 14. Away amid the lovely tropical forests at the foot of the Andes lives a cinnamon brown bird, with head and neck of dark olive. No feathered songster gives forth more sweet and harmonious strains, yet those delicious notes forebode a coming storm. When the traveller, who has amid the excitementof the scene forgotton all about time, is suddenly aroused to reflection by the bird-music of the *Organista*, he at once looks up to catch a glimpse of the sky between the trees. He sees there signs of the coming storm—hurries on! Soon it bursts—the wind roars—the mighty trees rock to and fro, as if they were but reeds—the thunder rattles in deafening peals, and the lightning flashes vividly in every direction. Hark! what a tremendous crash! There goes a tall tree—one of the giants of the forest—riven from crown to roots. These merciful miracles wrought by Moses and Aaron were so many liquid-voices monishing Pharaoh to hasten on to repentence, before the retributive tempest burst overhead. Their warblings ought to have induced the heedless monarch to look up to the sky of Justice, and mark the dark clouds gathering.

"And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought.—*Coleridge.*

Omniscience! Ver. 14. When Pharaoh turned away into his palace, Moses could *guess* from the frown upon his brow that the monarch's heart was set against the request; but he could not *see* it. God alone could gaze upon the darkest, innermost recesses of that despot's stubborn will. Had Pharaoh forgotten what even his idol-faith taught him, that the gods know what is in the heart? God's eye, as a flame of fire, lights up a clear and searching day in his soul, and around his steps; and shows in sunbeams the iniquities he devises, utters, perpetrates. He unfolds the whole state of the despot's mind to Moses, and enjoins on him the further execution of judgments. Moses obeys!

"The mystic mazes of Thy will,
The shadows of celestial light,
Are past the power of human skill—
But what the Eternal acts is right."

Retributive Justice! Ver. 15. As that storm roars the loudest which has been the longest gathering, so God's reckoning day with rebellious sinners, by being long coming, will be the more terrible when it comes Upon the beach, the pilot often pauses—with glance turned upward to that vast expanse, which is slowly darkening into gloom intense—because well he knows the ominous sign of the terrible tornado

soon to burst. So Moses often paused—fully conscious that the steadily gathering storm of retributive justice would soon melt down the verge of heaven. But Pharaoh saw not the approaching tempest of successive judgments.

"On earth 'twas yet all calm around,
A pulseless silence—dread—profound,
More awful than the tempest's sound."—
Moore.

Obduracy! Vers. 16 and 23. Sinners offended with God's Word and its requirements betake themselves to their follies. The Indians of South America told the missionaries who went among them proclaiming the truths of the Christian Religion: "You say that the God of the Christians knows everything, that nothing is hidden from Him, that He is of almighty power, and can see all that is done; but we do not desire a God so mighty and sharpsighted; we choose to be our own masters, to live with freedom in our woods, without having a perpetual observer of our actions over our heads." Men may disown the Divine Being, but they cannot destroy His attributes. He still rules over them, and still marks out all their ways. This was what Jehovah was teaching the proud and obdurate oppressor in his Egyptian palace, but in vain.

"Yon massive mountain-peak
The lightning rends at will;
The rock can melt or break—
I am unbroken still."—*Bonar.*

Nile-God! Ver. 17. This river was one of the principal Egyptian deities, and was worshipped under the name of "Hapi Mou." There was a temple to this deity; who is generally represented as a fat man, of blue colour, with water-plants growing on his head. A festival was held at the commencement of the rise of the Nile in the middle of June. It was probably on this occasion, when a solemn sacrifice was to be offered by the Egyptian priests that Moses stood by the brink; and as he smote the sacred waters with his mighty rod, so did Jehovah smite

"The prince of darkness, couch'd
In symbol of the great leviathan,
The dragon of the river-floods of Nile."—
Bickersteth

Judgments Ver. 18. The Egyptians subsisted, says Cook, to a great extent on the fish of the Nile, though saltwater fish was regarded as impure. A mortality among fish was a plague much dreaded. In a hymn to the Nile, written by the scribe Enmer, it is said that the wrath of Hapi, the Nile-god, is a calamity for the fishes. By Moses' avenging rod, this food supply is cut off. And how often does Jehovah turn the very necessaries of life into putridity and death—that the sense of our want may humble us under the sense of our forgetfulness of Him from whom all goodness flows. When, therefore, we are the subjects of His correcting providence, we must acknowledge the necessity and wisdom.

"If in this bosom aught but Thee,
Encroaching, sought a boundless sway,
Omniscience could the danger see,
And mercy took the cause away."
—*Chatterton.*

Divine Transformings! Vers. 19—21. A man idolizes his wife. He is proud of her beauty; and when at the ball she is the admiration of both sexes, his heart overflows with self-gratulation. As she stood in the centre of the floor, her beautiful face flushed with a rosy colour, her glossy hair twined with delicate pearls, her tall figure enhanced in its gracefuluess by the rich folds of drapery which fell softly round her, more than one admiring voice complimented him upon the beauty of his wife, and pronounced her the loveliest woman, fairest of the fair in all that lovely throng. She was his idol. A few days after, she lies upon her bed, with blotted and disfigured features, loathsome and repulsive as the Syrian leper, for small-pox has swept all trace of beauty from her face—as Moses' rod brushed all beauty from the clear, glassy countenance of Nile. The Divine rod had rendered unlovely and loathsome his "goddess"—the only and supreme object of his adoration. And just as the river was all the more repulsive from its previous loveliness, so

"Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."
Shakespeare.

Vain Effort! Ver. 24. As you stood, remarks Guthrie, some stormy day upon a sea cliff, and marked the giant billow rise from the deep to rush on with foaming crest, and throw itself thundering on the trembling shore, did you ever fancy that you could stay its course, and hurl it back to the depths of ocean? Did you ever stand beneath the leaden, louring cloud, and mark the lightning's leap, as it shot and flashed, dazzling athwart the gloom; and think that you could grasp the bolt, and change its path? Still more foolish and vain his thought, who fancies that he can arrest or turn aside the purpose of God. Pharaoh's folly was the essence of madness. He thought to counteract the retributive agency of God—heedless of the truth taught by his own Egyptian creed that

"No wrath of men or rage of seas
Can shake Jehovah's purposes."—*Herrick.*

CHAPTER VIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**2. Frogs**] Heb. צְפַרְדְּעִים "marsh-leapers" (Gesenius): "**marsh-croakers**" (Ewald, Fürst, Davies). **9. Glory over me**] Or, "Explain thyself." So Gesenius and Fürst: similarly, Sept. and Vulg. **14. Upon Heaps**] Lit. "heaps, heaps,"—with beautiful simplicity and expressiveness. **15. Respite**] Lit. "breathing"="breathing time." **16. Lice**] "Gnats"—Ges. Fü. Dav. **24. Swarms**] Heb. הָעָרֹב "a species of fly, the gad-fly" (Ges.) "a scorpion-like and stinging" animal, "a beetle, scarabæus" (Fü.); "prob. the gad-fly, so called from its sucking the blood" (Dav.) **26. Not meet . . . the abomination of the Egyptians**] Those who can consult the original should mark the vigour thrown into it by the incisive way in which the words here quoted are placed first in their respective clauses: "THE ABOMINATION OF THE EGYPTIANS we shall sacrifice," &c. He takes for granted it will be so; and vigorously asserting this, paves the way for the question that follows:—**Lo, shall we sacrifice**] This is scarcely an easy rendering. The imperfect tense (happily now seldom called the "future"—better still could it be called, unambiguously, the *incomplete* tense!) readily lends itself to the expression of the subjunctive and potential moods (Ges. Gram., § 127, 3, *a*, *d*; Ewald, § 136, ii. 2; A. B. Davidson, § 46, 4): hence we may more tersely bind together the crowning question thus:—"Lo! can we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and they not stone us?" **27. Shall command us**] "May say unto us." See previous note, **on the imperfect tense.**

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

THE PLAGUE OF FROGS; OR, THE SOCIALLY GREAT SMITTEN WITH THE SUPREMELY CONTEMPTIBLE.

The great River of Egypt has now been smitten for seven days, and has rolled in one vast torrent of blood, indicative of the wrath of God against an impious king. But this did not move the heart of Pharaoh, as probably a sufficient supply of wholesome water was obtained for him by digging round about the river, and as long as this might be the case, he cared not for the affliction of his nation. But God was more merciful than the king, and caused the river to return to its usual pure and welcome condition. But though this judgment was removed, the Divine requirement was not withdrawn, the freedom of Israel was still demanded. And to urge this, the messengers of God are sent again to the king with the threat of new penalty if he refuse. Now the plague of frogs is sent, and the sacred river is again the scene of dire retribution. Out of its bed and numerous water-courses, Moses called up an overwhelming swarm of frogs, and upon the stretching forth of Aaron's rod these creatures issued forth in such numbers that the land was full of them. This was evidently a miracle, for they came and departed suddenly at the command of Moses and Aaron, and their advent in such numbers could not be accounted for on any other supposition. It is evident that Pharaoh regarded it as such, for he besought its removal from the servant of God. The Egyptians considered it a necessary part of their religion to purify themselves by frequent washings in the river. But now these ablutions would be rendered impossible. There is no doubt that frogs were in Egypt the objects of superstitious regard; they were numbered among the sacred animals of the Egyptians. They were often regarded as omens of evil. This punishment was not a mere inconvenience, it was a destruction. (Ps. lxxviii. 45.)

I. That the socially great sometimes provoke the judgments of God. 1. *That the socially great provoke the judgments of God by rejecting His claims.* Pharaoh had held Israel in dire bondage for a long time, when God had commanded their freedom. He had refused to heed the Divine voice in this matter. And all the great potentates of the earth who hearken not to the

requests of heaven, as they are from time to time made known, are involving, and will bring unwelcome retribution upon themselves and the people they govern. And not only kings, but all, whatever their social rank, who slight the claims of God, either in reference to themselves or their companions, will be visited with punishment. 2. *That the socially great provoke the judgments of God by slighting His servants.* The king of Egypt had slighted Moses and Aaron, had rejected their word, had derided their mission, had disobeyed their God, and had doubted their unmistakable credentials. He will not be held guiltless for so doing. Men cannot illtreat the messengers of God and be blameless. He will defend the rights, and give emphasis to the message of those who speak in His name, and by His authority. He will not allow, even the socially Great to illtreat his ministers; they are the representatives of heaven's King, and must be received as such. Nations and individuals have brought severe retribution upon themselves by their wicked persecution of the messengers of God. 3. *That the socially Great provoke the judgments of God by rejecting His credentials of truth and duty.* Pharaoh had not merely slighted the message of God, and the servants of God, but had done so after the clearest evidence of Divine authority and duty. And all those who neglect the inspired word and its holy teaching, the providence of God and its sacred indications of duty, are likely to be visited with dire retributions.

II. That the socially Great have no means whereby to resist the judgments of God. Pharaoh had no means whereby to resist the inroad and march of these slimy and croaking frogs. They came into all his borders, into his house, and into his bedchamber; his food was not free from their intrusion. He could not protect himself from these contemptible creatures. In this service his army was useless, and strategem was without avail. Hence this judgment was (1) *afflictive,* (2) *loathsome,* (3) *extensive,* (4) *irresistible.* Pharaoh was a proud man, but now his pride is humbled. His armaments are great and numerous, but the armaments of God are seen to be far more numerous, more capable of woe, and more readily at command. And so there are times when God afflicts men with judgments that are the result of contemptible agencies, and even the greatest kings are thus visited and tormented. Their power is defeated by frogs; not by lions. They are the prey of the worthless and despicable. They are not stricken by an overwhelming pestilence; they are troubled by some trivial malady which under ordinary circumstances would yield to easy remedy; but which now defies all skill. God can soon humble the sinner, even though it be the proud monarch of Egypt. These judgments yield (1) *not to social position,* (2) *not to wealth,* (3) *not to authority.* (4) *not to force.* If the frogs are to depart from the land of Pharaoh, it must be upon the express command of God; until this is uttered they must remain as a plague.

III. That the socially Great often involve others less guilty, in the retributions they invite. These frogs came not merely upon Pharaoh, but upon his people and nation. The socially Great are seldom alone in their retributions, they have so many dependants, and sustain so many relations to those by whom they are surrounded, that they generally involve a multitude in their sins and condemnation. The frogs covered the land of Egypt. Every home was afflicted by them, and every individual was annoyed by them. And so, the socially Great who are guilty of disobedience to the claims of God, bring suffering upon multitudes.

IV. That the socially Great are always surrounded by those who are willing to strengthen them in opposition to the Divine claims. The magicians were called and by their enchantments brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

It would have been far more to the point if these sorcerers had done something to remove the frogs, but in this they were utterly impotent. There are always those who are willing to strengthen the wicked in their evil doings. LESSONS :— 1. *That the socially Great ought to be in sympathy with the requirements of God.* 2. *That the socially Great ought to know better than provoke the wrath of the Great King.* 3. *That social position will not avert the retributions of God.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 1, 2. Jehovah orders new dispatches unto his enemies upon their obstinacy.

God doubles and trebles His demands upon His enemies to persuade them.

God warns His adversaries against refusing His message.

God's goodness warns sinners before He brings vengeance on them.

It is God's work to smite with frogs and plague sinners by His creatures.

Verses 3, 4. At God's word the waters which produce creatures to nourish, abound with creatures to destroy.

Prodigious are the armies of frogs when God raiseth them.

Houses and persons are easily overcome by poor frogs when God commands them.

But it strikes one as a strange thing to speak of frogs going into ovens. As our ovens are, of course, the approach of a frog would be impossible from the intensity of the heat with which the oven is charged, and its height from the ground. But an Egyptian oven was a hole in the earth, in which they put wood for fire, over which they put an earthen pitcher, and the bread was placed inside that, and baked by the action of the fire in the hole beneath. It seems to us a barbarous mode, but it was the Egyptian one. And you can conceive that when this hole was filled with frogs, the preparation of bread would thereby become utterly impracticable.—*(Dr. Cumming.)*

Verses 5—7. God's command for execution surely follows that of His threatening.

God's word of execution has its extent and bounds.

God's executioners are ready and obedient.

Aaron's arm stretched out with God's word works mighty plagues.

The devil by his instruments may find frogs, but can make none.

God makes magicians to afflict His enemies, but not to ease them.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8—15.

THE TRANSIENT REPENTANCE OF A WICKED SOUL.

I. That moods of transient repentance are sometimes awakened by the retributive judgments of God. "And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people." From this speech of Pharaoh we should imagine, either that the plague of frogs did only afflict his own people, or that he cared not for its removal from Israel. He is, however, now in deeply penitent mood. But it is the penitence of the hypocrite and not a godly sorrow. It was induced within his heart by the infliction of retribution rather than by the gentle convictions of the Divine spirit. It was selfish. It desired not a new life, but simply the

removal of the judgments that had come upon the nation. Why did not Pharaoh manifest repentance before this? Probably because this plague was more severe than any that had preceded it, and there was no escape from it as from the first, when the people obtained water by digging near the river. Some men will never repent of sin while they have any mitigation of its woe, they are only subdued by the utmost extremity. How many sinners act as did Pharaoh in this incident. They are obstinate in their evil practices; they resist the word of God, the messages of God, and many of the milder retributions of God, and are only touched into transient contrition of soul by the harsher judgments of life. Many repent when in sorrow, and amidst the solemnities of a sick room. In this way they seek to get rid of the consequences of wrong doing. A repentance inspired by the dread of penalty is but of momentary duration, and is generally of but little worth. True repentance will have reference to God and to the violated law, rather than to self comfort and immunity from pain.

II. That in moods of transient repentance men call for the ministers of God whom they have previously despised. "Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron." As we know, Moses and Aaron had interviewed the proud monarch of Egypt several times before, they had presented to him most faithfully the claims of God, and had met with defiance and contempt; but now, when the soul of Pharaoh is subdued by the retribution of the hour, he sends for these two servants of God, and asks them to pray for him. This is an every day picture. Men reject the claims of God, they neglect his word, they pay no heed to his ministers, but in the experiences of trouble they immediately send for those whom they have formerly disregarded. We read that Moses and Aaron yielded to the request of Pharaoh, they went to him and prayed for the removal of the plague by which he was tormented. They were true ministers of heaven. They might have treated the call of the monarch with contempt, they might have left him to the agony of his own mind. They might have asserted their independence. They might have exhibited an unforgiving disposition. But no, they seek to aid him in his perplexity. Ministers must be forbearing toward their people, and embrace any opportunity of leading them to the mercy of God. But the repentance that sends for the minister under the impulse of fear, will be likely to dismiss him when the plague is removed. It is well to heed the voice of the servant of God before the hour of retribution.

III. That in moods of transient repentance men make promises of amendment they will never perform. "And I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord." It is hard to determine whether Pharaoh was sincere when he made this promise. He was probably driven to despair, and was prepared to make any immediate concession if only the plague might be removed. As to the redeeming of any pledge he might give under the pressure of these circumstances, that was altogether an after consideration. The word of Pharaoh was worth but little, and this Moses knew right well. But we must give the worst of men credit for any tokens of repentance they may show, as at this stage it is difficult to determine the false from the real. How many men have made the promise of moral amendment in time of trial, on beds of sickness; they have said that if their lives were spared they would yield to the claims of God, but the sequel has proved the futility of their vow. We should remember in joy the vows made in sorrow, in health, those made in sickness, and then painful discipline will become happy and glorious.

IV. That in moods of transient repentance men will acknowledge that prayer to God for mercy is their only method of help. "Entreat the Lord that he take the frogs from me." Thus it would seem that the proudest

monarchs know the value of humility and the efficacy of prayer. Pharaoh does not now send for the magicians. He forsakes all human methods of escape from his perplexity, and seeks the merciful aid of heaven. In this he was right. He appears now to be entering upon a better manhood. But alas, the prophecy of this penitent mood was never fulfilled. Men of to-day may learn a lesson from the conduct of this heathen king, that prayer to God is the best method of escape from trouble.

V. That in moods of transient repentance men sometimes obtain the removal of the judgments of God. "And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields." This shows the influence upon life and circumstances of even a transient repentance. But did not God know that the contrition of Pharaoh was only for the hour? He did. But the removal of the plague was a token of mercy toward him, was a discipline of love calculated to lead him to duty, and which being ultimately despised enhanced his condemnation.

LESSONS:—1. *That trials are calculated to lead the soul to repentance.* 2. *That under trials the repentance of men may be transient.* 3. *That the mercy of God is rich to the proudest sinner.* 4. *That the servants of God should be helpful to penitent souls.* (1.) *By fidelity.* (2.) *By sympathy.* (3.) *By prayer.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 8. When the first judgment has no effect, the second may make sinners yield.

The judgments of God make the proudest potentates acknowledge Him.

In the confession of the wicked God only can remove their judgments.

Verses 9, 10. God's servants are ready to help their oppressors in their misery.

Great sinners will have their boasting turned into reproach.

God in His providence may offer time and means of deliverance to his enemies.

In removal of plagues from the wicked God makes His own limitations.

Under Providence wicked men may choose such time of mercy that may justify God and condemn themelves.

God condescends sometimes to give the wicked their desires, in order that they may glorify Him.

God enables ministers to assure souls of the certainty of His promise.

PROCRASTINATION.

"*And he said to-morrow.*" Pharaoh had sought Moses to come to his aid, to ask God to remove the plague of frogs. Moses, guided by the Holy Spirit, had promised that the monarch's desire should be granted. "*Glory over me.*" You have now forsaken the magicians, command me, I only wish your good. Thus in effect did Moses address the king. But Pharaoh delayed the removal of the plague until the morrow. In this incident we see the reluctance that there is on the part of men to yield to the claims of God, and to bid adieu to their sins. Why did Pharaoh delay? The king hoped that by the morrow the plague might disappear by natural means. He had a latent feeling that after all this miracle of frogs was a natural phenomenon, and might be removed by a favourable wind.

I. By delay the sinner prolongs his moral suffering. The king of Egypt might have had the frogs removed from himself and people at once; but on account of his delay they remained to torment him longer. God's mercy offers the wicked immediate relief from sin and its painful consequences; but they prefer to retain their woe rather than to accept immediate release upon the moral conditions imposed.

II. By delay the sinner abuses Divine mercy. Pharaoh had no claim to the mercy of God. Yet it was shewn him. Had he at once embraced it, he would have proved himself more worthy of it. He continued in self-sufficiency. Men who neglect the mercy of God for a single day abuse it, and deserve it to be withdrawn from them.

III. By delay the sinner can obtain no other method of help. Pharaoh might delay the removal of the plague in the hope that it would pass away without the Divine intervention; but in vain. Only the word of God could remove it. Men may anticipate salvation in some other way than through Christ; but they are deluded by a false hope. Christ only can pardon their sins.

IV. By delay the sinner may be eternally lost. Delay is dangerous. To neglect salvation for a day may be fatal to the eternal welfare of the soul. We are asked when we would like to be rid of our moral plagues. Let us respond promptly to the question of God's servants. LESSONS: 1. *Delay is unnecessary.* 2. *Delay is common.* 3. *Delay is criminal.* 4. *Delay is fatal.*

Verses 11—15. Deliverance for extent and limitation must be according to the promise of God.

Instruments seeking God for the wicked had need to depart from them.

Prayer may be made for those who are wickedly bent against the Church.

Good men do faithfully entreat for sinners that their judgments may be removed.

God hears the prayer of His servants for the good of men.

The death as well as life of judgments are at God's disposal.

Heaps of memorials may be left to sinners after plagues are removed.

Respite from judgment.—1. Marked by memorials. 2. Allowed to the worst of men. 3. Abused by sinners. 4. Hardening of heart.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16—19.

THE PLAGUE OF LICE, OR, AN ENFORCED RECOGNITION OF A SUPREME POWER IN THE DIRE RETRIBUTIONS OF HUMAN LIFE.

The third plague was now sent upon the land without any warning. The two previous plagues arose from the river, this arises from the dust of the earth which was quickened into life, by a miraculous power. Here was another blow aimed at the false deities of Egypt. The priests were very particular not to harbour vermin, and considered it a profanation of their temples if any animalcule were carried into them. This plague was general (Ps. cv. 31). The Egyptians were accustomed to humble themselves in many of their religious ceremonies, and especially in their acts of mourning, by throwing dust upon their heads. This plague was a rebuke to their superstition. The magicians were baffled by this retribution. The finger of God was sufficient to curb the power of Satan.

I. That men are slow to recognize the Supreme Power in the retributions of human life. As we read the history of those plagues we cannot but wonder that Pharaoh and his people should have been so long in recognizing the finger of God. The first plague was enough to subdue their haughty spirit, and to give them to see that they were in conflict with the power of the Most High. They ought to have recognized the hand of God in these retributions:—1. *Because of the warnings given by the servants of God.* Moses and Aaron had warned the king that if he did not give Israel their freedom, he and his nation would be smitten with sore plagues. But these indications of woe were neglected and

despised, and in no way rendered Pharaoh sensitive to the claims of duty. And there are multitudes in our own day warned by the ministers of the Gospel of dire retribution to come upon them if they give no heed to the commands of God, to repent and believe in Christ, and even when the sorrows of life come upon them they see not the finger of God. There are many warnings of retribution in this life to those who persists in doing evil. But men see them not. 2. *Because of the miraculous element in the retribution they were called to experience.* The great River of Egypt was turned into blood. Their homes were filled with croaking frogs. The dust of their land was smitten into lice. True these occurrences were apparently brought about by the effort of Moses and Aaron, but the Egyptians must have seen that these two men were but the agents of a higher Power. But even when the events of life are striking and evidently the outcome of Divine intervention, men will not behold in them the finger of God. 3. *Because of the suffering through which they were called to pass.* We should have thought that the suffering through which the Egyptians were called to pass would have made them readily acknowledge the finger of God. In the hour of pain men generally turn their souls to heaven. But in affliction men will not always see the retribution of God. Why are men so slow to recognize the hand of God in the retributions of human life? 1. *Because they have not right views of the character of God.* They may have theoretical notions of the Divine character, correct and true, but not such as to influence moral conduct. Men want not merely to know that God is just in His method of government, but to feel that He is. If they were deeply impressed with a sense of the Divine justice they would see retribution written in large letters upon many of the circumstances of life, which now they regard with complacency. 2. *Because they have not a due consciousness of sin and its demerit.* Men know that they have sinned against God and against the moral good of the community, but they contemplate not the great injury they have done, the offence of which they are guilty. They have no deep consciousness of personal sin. Hence they do not regard the events of life as a rebuke to them. They link not the pain of society to their own demerit. Hence when the retributions of heaven come upon them, they are more ready to acknowledge their own improvidence or indiscretion, the unfavourable working of natural law, the fortuitous combination of circumstances, rather than the finger of God. In this we see the moral blindness of the unregenerate soul.

II. That wicked men are made by continuous retributions ultimately to recognize the Supreme Power against them. "Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, this is the finger of God." These sorcerers endeavoured to imitate the retribution of heaven. In so doing they were prompted and aided by Satan. But the power of Satan is limited by the Divine will. Heaven can show men the delusions of hell. Hence the deluded are without excuse. Sometimes the servants of the devil are made unconsciously to minister to the truth. The sorcerer may announce to his dupe that the hand of God is against him. It may be asked, how came these magicians to make this confession to Pharaoh? It is not unlikely that they made it upon a sudden impulse, prompted by the Holy Spirit. And so there will come a time when all the artifices which bind men, and prevent them from seeing the retributive hand of God, will be made known, defeated, and brought to an open shame. God sometimes plagues men until they acknowledge Him. The events of life are charged with retributions which cannot be hidden by the art of the sorcerer.

III. That when wicked men are made to acknowledge the Supreme Power in the retributions of life they may nevertheless continue in open opposition to it. "And Pharaoh's heart was hardened." The magicians by their recogni-

tion of the finger of God did not wish to undo the moral injury they had done to Pharaoh. They had established him in obstinate rebellion against God, and they had no wish that his obstinacy should cease. The agents of Satan do not wish to nullify the evil influence of their hellish art. Unbelief remains when the lies that wrought it are made known. The magicians here refer this calamity to a Providence of God altogether beyond their control. They regard it as the outcome of Divine power. They did not intend by this confession to give glory to the God of Moses, but simply to protect their own honour. LESSONS: 1. *That the retributions of life are designed to lead men to the performance of moral duty.* 2. *That there are many deceptions calculated to blind men to the hand of God in the events of life.* 3. *That wicked men are not able to contend with God, and are at times brought to acknowledge His supremacy.* Many commentators think that the magicians referred to the gods of Egypt when they made mention of the "finger of God." But we cannot accept this interpretation, as the gods of Egypt were defeated by this retribution; and, moreover, Pharaoh had previously identified Moses with the God of Israel in asking him to seek the removal of the plagues.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 16—19. At God's word dust shall become lice to torment proud sinners.

God's servants are obedient in executing His commands for vengeance.

All creatures are at God's command to plague His enemies.

The poorest creatures armed by God hath power enough against greatest kings.

The devil will try his utmost to counterwork God.

The devil is impotent upon the least check from God.

There is not the least doubt that the creatures here named is the mosquito gnat. In the Greek Septuagint the word is σκνιφες, which denotes gnats. And in a warm climate we can imagine what a terrible infliction this would be.

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

THE PLAGUE OF FLIES; OR, AN EXCEPTIONAL METHOD OF THE DIVINE ADMINISTRATION IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE.

It is somewhat difficult to ascertain in what this plague consisted. The Hebrew word is very indefinite; but the Septuagint gives it as the κυνόμυια, or dog-fly. This insect is, in some seasons, a far worse plague in Egypt than even the mosquito. Its bite is sharp and painful, causing severe inflammation. Some consider that the beetle is the insect signified; in which case the plague could hardly fail to be a rebuke of the reverence paid by the Egyptians to that creature. To make this retribution more apparent to Egypt, in the land of Goshen there were no flies. In this we have an exceptional method of the Divine administration in the affairs of this world, in that protection from injury was given to good moral characters.

I. It is a general rule of the Divine administration that the good and bad shall alike participate in the painful dispensations of this probationary life. If we look out upon the world we find that the good and the bad suffer alike, that both are liable to the discipline of pain. In this life nothing is more evident than that one event happeneth to all, and that moral character is not exempt from ills often retributive in design. **1.** *The good and bad suffer alike*

because both are guilty of sin. The unholy sin wilfully and thoughtlessly. They almost regard sin as no sin. They understand not its turpitude. Even the good sin. The enmity of the carnal mind is not subdued. They are not always pure in the springs of thought and action. The race has only known one sinless man. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Hence the retributive events of life happen to those who are striving to be pure in heart as well as to those who are content to remain unholy. 2. *The good and bad suffer alike because both need correction and improvement in moral character.* The retributions of God are corrective. They are designed to turn sinner into saint, and to transform the earthly into the image of the heavenly. They are intended to make the sinful penitent and the converted all beauteous in Christ. Hence they happen alike to both. 3. *The good and bad suffer alike because life is a probation and a discipline.* The worst characters are on probation; equally so are the best. Probation is co-extensive with the mundane life, and is designed to prepare men for immortality. Hence pain will improve character, when accompanied by the influence of the Divine Spirit; it is well that all men should be tried by it, and be subject to it. The dispositions we manifest under the judgments of God will determine our destiny.

II. It is an exceptional method of the Divine administration to exempt the good from the trials and retributions of this life. "And I will put a division between my people and thy people." 1. *Thus we see that there are times in this life when moral character gives exemption from severe retribution.* Swarms of flies were sent upon Egypt. No place was free from them. But from this plague the land of Goshen was exempt. This was a marked interposition of God. No one could refuse to observe it, not even the king himself. And so in this life good men often have an advantage in certain events and circumstances, over those who reject the claims of God. The former are free from pain while the latter know not how to rid themselves of it. This is the honour God places upon true moral goodness. In this way He occasionally shows His approval of it. Piety shields the house. It will protect a nation from the plague of God. 2. *Thus we see that there are times in this life when God manifests to men His care for the good.* God showed Egypt that he cared for Israel, and that He was able to protect His people. The world has an idea that heaven has but little regard for the good, and that it is but little advantage to be a christian; but in this incident we see that God will protect those who put their trust in Him, and that He will ultimately deliver them from the peril of His anger. 3. *Thus we see that there are times in this life when God gives men a prophecy of the social equity in the world to come.* In this life men are sometimes given to see that the good are delivered from sorrow and retribution; and in this they have a prophecy of the eternal adaptation of circumstances to moral character in the life to come. Then Egypt will be ever separate from Goshen in character, as in retribution and reward. Heaven will adjust the moral relations of the universe. LESSONS: 1. *That continued sin must be visited by continued retribution.* 2. *That the providence of God is over the good to save them from pain.* 3. *That the wicked must see the worth of goodness.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 23. Reiterated unbelief and hardening, is followed by renewed plagues.

God will have all His ministers early striving to meet His adversaries.

God fits time and place best to deal with and reprove his enemies.

Multiplied demands does God make of his right to the church.

Kings and people, houses and lands shall suffer in rebellion against God.

It is God's own prerogative in pouring out payments to discriminate between man and man.

The habitation of the first is preserved by God.

Neither fly nor creature shall touch them for harm whom God secures.

In the day of God's discrimination, redemption shall be for His people, and distruction for His enemies.

There is a great distinction between the people of God, and the people of an earthly king.

God's goodness may give to the worst of sinners time to repent.

Verse 24. Jehovah himself pleads sometimes in vengeance against his enemies.

It is a grievous plague when God arms flies against kings.

Corruption and destruction accompany the wroth of God upon wicked men.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25—32.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF COMPROMISE IN A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

It would appear that the plagues with which Pharaoh was smitten were progressive in severity, and that he could endure them no longer, hence he suggests a partial obedience to the commands of God. The king says that he will allow Israel to sacrifice providing that they will do so in Egypt. Moses shows the impossibility of this, by stating that if they sacrificed in Egypt they would have to do it after the manner of the Israelites or the Egyptians, if after the manner of the latter it would be an abomination to God; if after the manner of the former, it would be an abomination to Egypt. Here was a dilemma which the suggestion of Pharaoh would involve. Moses told him that he could not thus compromise the claims and worship of God.

I. That there can be no compromise in Christian morality. "And Moses said it is not meet to do so." Moses had been sent by God to make known to the king of Egypt the Divine will in reference to the freedom of Israel. Pharaoh was told his duty. He ought to have understood it. Moses as the servant of God can admit of no compromise. The claims of God upon moral conduct are supreme and unalterable. They yield to none other. They yield not to policy. They yield not to self interest. They yield not to social position. They are divinely royal. They are immutable. How many people suggest to the servants of God a compromise in the mortality of the Christian life. They are convinced of their duty to God, and wish to combine it with the service of Satan. And why? 1. *Because they do not like to give up their sins.* Pharaoh did not like the idea of giving up his bondmen. They had formed part of his nation for many years. They were profitable to him. Hence he did not wish to give them freedom. And how many people are kept from entering into the complete morality and duty of the christian life by an unwillingness to give up the pleasures and fancied emoluments of sin. 2. *Because they will not summon resolution enough to break the force of old and continued habit.* Pharaoh had long resisted the claims of God upon him, and every successive judgment had had a hardening effect upon his heart. It would require some energy on his part to subdue the sinful habit of his life. And there are multitudes who have the convictions of duty, who do not work them out in character because they do not in prayer seek strength to overcome the enervating habits of the past. An uncompromising attention to Christian duty requires great power of soul, and great courage. 3. *Because they do not enter into the complete and lofty idea of the Christian life.* Pharaoh had no idea of the dignity and enjoyment of a complete surrender of himself, in all his relations, to God. He simply regarded it as a deprivation. And if men would only have enlarged views of Christian morality, if they would only see that in

giving up all they truly gain all, that by obedience to the law of God and the claims of duty, they realised the perfection of character and enjoyment, then there would be but little attempt at compromise in the Christian life.

II. That there can be no compromise in Christian worship. "We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as He shall command us." Pharaoh wanted Moses to worship in Egypt rather than go into the wilderness for that purpose. It is not enough to worship God; we must worship Him in the manner He has made known. We must not worship God in Egypt, or we shall be likely to offer a sacrifice that shall be an abomination to Him. Men should not place themselves in temptation by going to unhallowed sanctuaries. The temples of Egypt are unworthy the presence of the good. 1. *Christian worship must not be compromised by idolatry.* Pharaoh asked Moses to sacrifice in Egypt. No doubt the king would have placed magnificent temples at the disposal of Israel if they would have consented to worship God in the land of bondage. But Moses refused. He preferred the wilderness as his sanctuary. It is better to worship God in the wilderness than in the heathen temple. Prayer is independent of locality. Men cannot worship God and Baal at the same time. 2. *Christian worship must not be compromised by Ritualism.* We must not compromise the externalism of worship, and especially not the spirituality of devotion. It is possible that the rising incense may hide God from the eye of the contrite soul. The worship of God should be simple as life in the wilderness can make it. 3. *Christian worship must not be compromised by levity.* The worship of God must be reverent. The frivolities of life must be hushed in the presence of the Eternal. Secular thought must be banished. Prayer must be the dominant impulse of the soul.

III. That the servants of God must reject all attempts at religious compromise. 1. *Because religious compromise brings contempt upon the Christian life.* The world watches the Christian with vigilant eye, and soon detects any inconsistency of conduct. And when it sees the good faltering in their obedience to the laws of God, it is tempted to ridicule the Christian life. 2. *Because religious compromise brings contempt upon Christian worship.* The world knows that Israel has no right to worship God in the temples of Egypt; and eagerly watches the devotion of those who sacrifice to the true Deity, and will only admire it when simple and devout. The servant of God must defend the worship of the sanctuary from the evils of compromise, even though he oppose a king.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 25. Plagues upon the wicked from God make them hastily call to God's servants for help.

Men yielding to God under His plagues are unwilling to give Him all His desire.

Persecutions in giving liberty to the Church try to impose restrictions.

It is iniquity to act God's worship in place or manner inconsistent with God's will.

Verse 26. God's worship must not savour of the abomination of idolaters.

Idolaters abominate the true worship of God, and persecute those who engage in it.

Justly do God's servants refuse to expose His worship to the scorn of men.

Verse 27. It becomes God's ministers to be resolute for His worship after His mind.

God's word and command is the only rule of worship, not the will of powers on earth.

Ministers must be bold to state and faithful to maintain the claims of God.

Verse 28. In God's over-powering plagues, yet the wicked would limit His demands.

Persecutors do not like the Church to go far out of their power.

Plagues make the wicked ask the prayers of God's servants whom they oppress.

Removal of plagues and not of sins is the desire of the wicked.

The Caution and Restriction of Sin.

"Only ye shall not go very far away."

I. There are times when men wish to get away from the tyranny of sin Even wicked men have moments of reflection, when they long to get away from Satan, and to cast off the pain of sin. They are awakened by the truth to a consciousness of their depraved condition, and they wish to go and sacrifice to God. Satan is loth to lose them. They grow impatient. He yields, but with cautious reservation.

II. That Satan is anxious to retain men in his power. Satan knows the better moods of the soul, and endeavours to prevent the freedom sought. He will not allow the sinner to go far away. 1. *Lest he should feel the joy of freedom and never return.* How glad the moment when the slave is free. How welcome the time when the soul's bondage is at an end. And Satan fears that if men once experience the impulse of moral freedom they will not return to him. 2. *Lest he should see the beauty of religion and never return.* Sin is a deformity. Piety is beautiful. Its truths are flowers. Its character is pure. Its visions are heavenly. And if the awakened sinner sees the worth of religion he will not return to the devil. Hence Satan does not like him to go far away. 3. *Lest he should seek protection from Satan in the cross of Christ.* Christ can bring the sinner out of bondage, and give a freedom Satan cannot touch.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 29. God's servants are ready to help persecutors in misery.

Prayers do the righteous make for the removal of plagues from the wicked.

God's faithful ministers do not only pray for the wicked, but warn them against sin.

Where prayers are heard warnings against sin must be observed.

Verses 30—32. God's servants not only promise, but perform to the worst of men.

God fails not to do what His servants speak from Him.

God removes swarms of judgment when His servants pray to Him.

Princes and people are healed as well as plagued together.

The Removal of Penalties.

"There remained not one."

I. They are removed in answer to prayer.

II. They are effectually removed.

III. Their removal is often followed by renewed sin.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VIII.

BY THE

REV. WM. ADAMSON

Frogs! Ver. 2. A frog sitting upon the sacred lotus was symbolical, says Millington, of the return of the Nile to its bed after the inundations. Seated upon a date stone, with a young palm leaf rising from its back, it was a type of man in embryo. Mungo Park describes the lively sensations of gratitude and joy with which he was affected during one of his excursions in the desert, on hearing the croaking of innumerable frogs at a short distance from him. By such sounds the traveller, when nearly perishing with thirst, was guided to the spot where the life-restoring water was to be found :—

'For as he wandered in the burning plain
Fainting, he heard a low amphibious strain,
And guided by the hoarse refreshing sound,
Came to the place where, from the reedy ground,
The cooling waters spread their life around."
—*Anthol Grec.*

Divine Finger! Ver. 3. The plagues have an Egyptian groundwork. They present to Pharaoh no utterly new and unknown phenomena, but show the obstinate despot that the various natural agencies at work in the land were under the sole and entire control of Jehovah, and that He was as much the God of Egypt as of Israel. The low, marshy ground in the neighbourhood of the Nile naturally abounds in frogs, and at the time of the inundation in September, their numbers become formidable. These leave their haunts at God's command, and swarm over the land a great army. Pompey boasted that, with one stamp of his foot, he could rouse all Italy to arms ; but God, by one word of His mouth, can summon the creatures of the earth and sea and sky to do His strange work of judgment.—Therefore

"Let not guilt presumptuous rear her crest,
Nor virtue droop despondent."—*Bally.*

Frog-symbols! Ver. 5. On the ancient coat-of-arms of the French kings was a curious heraldic device of three frogs from the Gallic swamps. In Rev. 16, v. 13, we have three frogs, the unclean tenants of fenny ground, those vermin which love the glimmering twilight, coming forth from the marshy lands bordering the great river of spiritual Rome. Those loathsome frog-demons are represented as tormenting and disturbing the "despotic autocracy of Christendom. But, they are the judgment of God upon the tyrant-spirit of absolutism ; and His servant summons them fearlessly.—

"Such is the fearless confidence of love,
And such amazement fearless love compels—
So Moses stood unmoved 'fore Pharaoh's face."

Pharaoh! Ver. 8. A child watches with observant delight the thunder-cloud rising in tumultuous silence :—but no sooner do the clouds open, the peals rattle, and the flashes burst forth, than it screams and hides. At a distance, this haughty monarch could survey the threatened judgment philosophically ; but no sooner was it outpoured than fear takes hold upon him, and like a child calling for its mother, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron to his help. The requisite deliverance was secured, yet

"His inmost soul seemed steel'd,
Cold and immovable."

Pharaoh's Penitence! Ver. 9. A little girl sat at twilight in her sick mother's room, busily thinking. All the day she had been noisy and troublesome, and had many times worried her poor tired mother. At length she asked her parent what it was that made her begin to be good just about dark each day, adding: "I think it must be the dark ; I am afraid of it; I begin to recal all the naughty things that I have done to grieve you, and so am good till daylight." How many are like this child. Pharaoh was good when the dark came in the form of suffering and trouble ; but no sooner did the daylight come than he was as bad as ever.—

"And wilt thou, now, that God hath raised thee up,
The vows—the promises thy conscience made,
Wilt thou in health forget?—*Mant.*"

Procrastination! Ver. 9. Among other inscriptions on the walls of the temple of Delphos were these two, of both of which Pharaoh was entirely ignorant: "Know thyself," and "Know thy opportunity." The opportunity was now given him for yielding obedience to the Divine Purpose of Freedom ; but he said : "To-morrow." How many characters, says a living divine, seem to float before our eyes in Scripture, as having been visited with opportunities for repentance ; but who alas ! have only been like ships which, when night is spread over the sea, emerge for a moment from the darkness as they cross the pathway of the moonbeams, and then are lost again in gloom. Among these, stands in the foreground the figure of the king of Egypt—now in the moonlight of partial penitence—anon flitting into the gloom of lost opportunities.

"Ah ! we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures."—*Shakespeare.*

Convictions! Ver. 10. I have reclined on a bank by the river on a day when its waters were half in shadow and half in sunshine; and when the whole surface has been ruffled by the summer breeze. A leaf has fallen

from some tree, and there it floated upon the surface—now seeming to hasten out to the broad land of sunlight which lay warmly across the brook—and anon drawn to some little cataract on the shadow which threatened to bury it. Would the deep pool draw it down—down to its dark depths? Or would the pure sweet stream move it on little by little to the bright sunny sheen beyond? To and fro—to and fro—first subject to one force, then to the other. Would the slight breeze ruffling the stream be victor, or the sucking cataract? Such was Pharaoh's heart under the contending influences of the breath of Divine forbearance and the shaded whirlpool of human impenitency. To and fro that heart moved—now apparently wafted to the glorious shining band of gold which spanned the stream of life—anon drawn towards the cataract within the shadow, until it grew like adamant,

"And led him to assay the ocean depths,
And satisfy his lust on Israel there."—
Bickersteth.

Fatal Delay! Ver. 10. The ill-fated Central America was descried one night in a crippled state. The night was closing in—the sea was rolling high; but the captain of the other vessel hailed and lay to by the sinking ship. "I am in a sinking condition," shouted the America's skipper; whereupon the other urged him to send the passengers on board directly. To this reasonable request the foolish sailor demurred—requesting the other ship to lie by him till morning. This was at once and readily yielded, with a still more urgent solicitation to send the passengers on board *at once* in case of contingencies during the night storm. But all in vain! The captain had made up his mind to wait till to-morrow before putting his passengers in safety. During the next hour the wind increased to a furious gale—the sea swelled into a heavy roll, which compelled the sound vessel to move away to a distance; and shortly after, the vessel with its living freight went down. All found a grave in the great deep. The captain's delay was fatal to himself and to others; and so was that of Pharaoh.

"Delay not! delay not! The Spirit of Grace
Long grieved and resisted may take his sad flight:
And leave thee in darkness to finish thy race,
And sink in the vale of eternity's night."
—*Hastings.*

Self-Will! Ver. 13 Without the cross-piece, the longer piece is not a cross. It is only when the cross-piece is added that a cross is formed. The longer piece represents God's will. Our will, which always desires to cross God's will, is represented by the shorter piece. Pharaoh placed the short piece of his own self-will athwart the Divine purpose, and so made a cross for himself; but when he removed the cross-piece, there was no cross. The plague was stayed. Even so is it with many a man. Nothing but self thyself from Him divides.

"Ask ye how I o'er passed the dreary gulf?
One step beyond myself, and nought besides."
—*Alger.*

Prudence versus Penitence! Ver. 15. Some years ago, a captain, notorious in South Seas for kidnapping the natives was led to see the folly of his ways—to renounce the paths of sin, and to give himself to the Lord Jesus. He at once evidenced the sincerity of his repentance by resigning the command of his ship, and betaking himself to a more humane and honourable employment than the Australian traffic in human flesh Last year, a captain, hearing that it was the Queen's determination to put down the iniquitous trade, by placing men of war in those seas, gave up his employment, and resorted to commercial pursuits. Was this repentance? Would not this man return to his old nefarious practices if the English Government withdrew their surveillance? So was it with Pharaoh, he hardened his heart, and returned to his folly, as soon as the restrictions were removed.

"All treasures did the Lord impart
To Pharaoh, save a contrite heart."—*French.*

Lice! Ver. 16. Travellers speak of the dust of Egypt as in itself almost a plague. Yet the soil of Egypt was worshipped. The black mud of the Nile was especially an object of superstitious veneration; and to throw this dust over them was to give a special sanctity to their fasting and mourning. When it became dry under the rays of the sun, it generated this vermin, concerning which Mr. Lane says in very thrilling terms that they are a sort of tick, not larger than a grain of sand which, when filled with blood, expands to the size of a hazel nut. Sir Samuel Baker says that at certain seasons these prevail to such an extent that it is as though the very dust were turned into lice. Oftentimes God sends innumerable minute sufferings before He sends greater ones; but great and small are alike designed to lead us to repentence.

"Oh! let me suffer, till I find
What plants of sorrow can impart,
Some gift, some triumph of the mind,
Some flower, some fruitage of the heart."
—*Uphan.*

Finger of God! Ver. 19. At the time of the battle of Waterloo, the Iron Duke was still without an experimental knowledge of true religion. Yet God prompted him—upon a sudden impulse, perhaps by the Holy Spirit, to pen a few brief words, which have come down to posterity. When the dreadful fight was over, the Duke's feelings, kept so long at the highest tension, gave way. As he rode among the dying and wounded on the field of battle—saw the reeking carnage—and heard the shout of conquerors and vanquished fainter and fainter through the gloom of night, he

wept. Soon after he wrote these words: "I have escaped unhurt; the Finger of God was on me." Alike are the preserving mercies and judicial visitations the Finger of Jehovah. It is in such seasons that even the most godless feel their frail mortality, and acknowledge that a Supreme Being guides and governs all things:—and

"That man, who madly deems himself the lord
Of all, is naught but weakness and dependence."—*Thomson.*

Struggle! Ver. 20. At sea, when the enemy's ship is sighted in full flight, a gun loaded with powder only is fired by the pursuer to bring the fugitive to. When this fails, the cannon is charged with a ball, but it is designedly fired so as not to strike the vessel, in the hope of inducing it to furl the sails. But when this attempt has failed, then the captain of the pursuer orders the gun to be fired straight at the ship attempting to escape. It may be that many shots have taken effect in her rigging and hull before she ceases her flight. Such, too, is the forbearance of God. The first miracle of Moses was harmless—the second came nearer home, in expectation of the stubborn despot's compliance. When this stern summons proved ineffectual, God's dread artillery fired volley after volley, until *nolens volens* Pharaoh hauled down his flaunting flag of pride, and acknowledged that the Will of Jehovah had conquered.

"Ye nations, bend—in reverence bend;
Ye monarchs, wait His nod,
And bid the choral song ascend
To celebrate your God."—*White.*

Fly-gods! Ver. 21. The Egyptians worshipped the four elements: Water, Earth, Air, and Fire. From the water came the frogs—from the earth came the lice—and now from the air came the fly-gods. These came at a time of the year when they were least expected, viz., the cold season. The fly-god was a special favourite with the Egyptian devotees, and was known in Bible times by the name of "Baalsebub." Elijah reproved King Ahaziah for sending to enquire of this deity—the god Acchor. Millington says that there was in Egypt, near the Lake Moeris, a city called Achoris, where the fly-god temple stood. Lucian mentions a priest of the same name at Memphis:—

"The chief in honour, and the best,
Was old Achoreus, the Memphian priest."—
Pharsalia.

Superstition! Ver. 24. Upon a part of the shore of Rurutu, an island in the region of the Southern Cross, knelt a few native servants of God. The spot was sacred to the great idol of that island; and the natives gathered round expecting that the desecrators of their holy place would be struck lifeless. The Rurutans looked earnestly at them—as the barbarians of Melita did at St. Paul—anticipating some dreadful calamity—that the bodies of the profaners would swell, or fall down dead suddenly. But no harm came to them. Still they felt sure that in the night the gods would come and kill them. In the morning they found the new-comers all well and safe; whereupon they began to suspect that their gods were deceivers. They were accordingly given up for destruction. But we have no record that the Egyptians gave up the worship of the *scarabæus.* On the contrary, we find from monuments erected subsequent to this visitation that the Egyptians continued to worship the sacred beetle, in spite of the exposure of its utter helplessness. This pitiable worthlessness of their fly-god was all the more conspicuous from the fact that it was kept far away from the children of Israel. The Egyptian gods plagued their own worshippers, and spared their enemies.

"Gods of the ruined temples, where, O where
are ye?"—*Bethune.*

Compromise! Ver. 25. As Hitchcock remarks, objects may be seen through a semi-transparent mineral. But there is no distinctness of outline, as in gypsum, selemite, and quartz. This half-clear, half-cloudy character, is no uncommon one. Pharaoh admired it, and advised Moses to practise it. Everything about such persons is indistinct and cloudy. They have no clear and definite ideas about the Christian religion or its duties and principles. They conform very much to worldly maxims and practices, and yet they cordially unite in every good work. They see very great convenience in harmonizing—as they imagine—the church and the world. Moses would have none of it. Any such compromise would only evidence insincerity of heart—would only betoken a mere outward religious profession. Such compromises are often like irised minerals, which give a splendid exhibition of most of the colours of the spectrum. But this is produced by a mere superficial film, while all beneath is opaque, as in a specimen of anthracite coal. The religion of Moses was something deeper—something that would admit of no conceivable compromise between Christ and Belial.

"Thou must be true thyself,
If thou the truth would'st back."—

Opportunity! Ver. 25. Trench says of the Spanish proverb: That which the *fool* does in the end, the *wise* man does in the beginning. The wise man does with a good grace what the fool has to do with an ill. This was a hint which Pharaoh might have laid to heart. The familiar story of the Sibylline books offered to the Roman emperor illustrates to perfection the case of the Egyptian monarch. The same thing to be done in the end—the same price to be paid at the last; with only this difference, that much of the advantage—as well as the grace—of an earlier compliance has passed away. The nine precious volumes have shrunk to six—and these dwindle to three, while the

same price is demanded for the few as the many. Pharaoh had successive opportunities of doing the will of God; but each day it was put off—only at last to be forced to do with an ill grace what he might have done with a good one.

"After-wits are dearly bought,
Let thy fore-wit guide thy thought."—
Southwell.

Inconsistency! Ver. 26. The world is lynx-eyed enough to detect any compromise of religious principle in the course or conduct of Christian professors. A Christian when he makes a good profession should be sure to make his profession good. No doubt Pharaoh and his subjects would have been the first afterwards to taunt Moses for his compromise. The worldling is inconsistent, yet loves to see, and insists on seeing consistency in Christians. Christ's soldiers need to be consistent, to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering. As Jay says, the whole complexion of a negro is less noticed than a single stain on the features of a white countenance. Pharaoh would very soon have reminded Moses of the "blot of compromise" on his religious profession of devotedness to Jehovah. This Moses did not forget, conscious that he who cleanses a blot with blurred fingers will make a greater blot. To him the maxim was not unknown:—

"Live *truly*, and thy life shall be
A great and noble creed."

Pharaoh's Penitence! Ver. 28. In some rural districts, when the winter frost has been long and severe, the little pools are sheathed in ice until the spring. When the sun has gained power its beams dissolve the hard, thick coating of ice—but only to expose the loathsome, stagnant, miry waters. God's judgments melted the icy crust of self-will upon the heart of Pharaoh—only to disclose the mass of floating corruption, which it had hitherto concealed:—

"What seest thou here? what marks't? observe it well—
Will, passion, reason, hopes, fears, joys, distress,
Peace, turbulence, simplicity, deceit,
Good, ill, corruption."—*Polloh.*

Delay! Ver. 32. It is always easy, writes Smith, to obey God at the very first moment of apprehension of duty. A moment afterwards it becomes less easy; and the longer that obedience is deferred, the more difficult it becomes. Pharaoh would have found it no very difficult matter to let Israel go at the outset; but each delay increased the difficulties of yielding obedience to the Divine command:

"Works adjourned have many stays,
Long demurs breed new delays."—
Southwell.

CHAPTER IX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**3. Murrain.**] Lit. destruction. **8. Furnace**] "For burning lime or smelting metals, and for the preparation of glass, out of which, while it is heated, a thick smoke ascends (Gen. xix. 28) and in which ashes and soot rest."—Fürst. **9. A boil breaking forth with blains**] Or, "A burning sore breaking out in pustules." **10. Raised thee up**] Not necessarily "Brought thee into being"; but much rather, judging from the tenor of the entire narrative,—"Raised thee to the throne, given thee sovereign power in Egypt;" or, better still,—"Enabled thee to stand firm." This indeed is the most literal meaning of הֶעֱמַדְתִּיךָ, the causative form (Hiphil) of עָמַד, to stand. How entirely this rendering accords with the observations on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart offered under chap. vii. 3, may be seen by a reference to what is there said.—This seems the place to remind the reader of the care displayed by the Apostle Paul in his comments on cases like Pharaoh's, in Rom. ix. 22: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction:"—*i.e. already* fitted, *previously* fitted (κατηρτισμένα), as the *perfect* participle implies. The Greek word, indeed, is indifferently either middle or passive voice; and so is quite consistent with the idea that the vessels of wrath had fitted *themselves* for destruction, or had given themselves over to Satan, and had been *by him*, as the result of their own guilty surrender, fitted for destruction. In any case, the Apostle does not say that GOD had fitted them for destruction; which is all the more satisfactory when we notice how, in everything else, the Divine activity reigns throughout the passage; and most satisfying of all when we observe that in the following ver. (23) it is God who is expressly said to have "afore prepared the vessels of mercy unto glory." God, in certain cases, ENDURES (not takes delight in) the vessels of wrath; ENDURES them for a while longer, permitting them to multiply their acts of tyranny or other wickedness, *instead of* AT ONCE *smiting them down in death*, and so preventing their doing any more wrong and harm;—when they have already *become* vessels of wrath, and are *ripe* for their doom. **23. The fire ran along upon the ground**] Rather: "Then came fire towards the earth." **24. Fire mingled with the hail**] More exactly: "Fire catching hold of itself in the midst of the hail." **31. Bolled**] "In flower."

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

THE MURRAIN OF BEASTS; OR, THE SUFFERING THAT COMES UPON THE BRUTE CREATION IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE SIN OF MAN.

This plague was upon the cattle of Egypt. They were smitten with "a grievous murrain," which was a consumptive disease. Our English word murrain is derived from the Greek *μαραινω*, which means to wither and fade away; or it may be derived from the French word *mourir*—to die or perish. The Egyptians venerated a great variety of animals; but oxen were among their chief deities. Hence the grievous murrain which now fell upon all the cattle of the Egyptians was another and more direct blow aimed at the monstrous idolatries of that benighted people. In modern times murrain is a not unfrequent visitation in Egypt; but the disease in Pharaoh's day was different from every other manifestation of it, as well in the extent as in the suddenness and swiftness of its effects. In one day all the cattle in the field died. This disease was not confined, as murrain usually is, to one species of animal; it destroyed alike the oxen and the sheep, the asses, and the camels. Thus their beasts of burden, and the only animals they had for locomotion, were cut off. It has no parallel. It was a mark of the special displeasure of God.

I. That wicked men often act in reference to the claims of God in such a manner as to provoke His judgments. In this plague the rod of Moses was not used. It was accomplished without human intervention. This would show Pharaoh and his magicians that these calamities were not produced by magic, or by human ingenuity. God can flash His judgments direct from heaven upon the wicked. This plague upon the cattle would be a just punishment for the over-loading of the Hebrews with burdens and tasks. Thus we see how wicked men provoke the judgments of God. 1. *That men are disobedient to the claims of God.* This is seen in the case of Pharaoh. He would not obey the Divine command. And disobedience to the law of God is common amongst men, and always invites the retribution of heaven. God has claims upon the race. He is Creator. He is Preserver. He is Moral Ruler. He is merciful. He has revealed His will. But men regard it not. Hence they invite Divine retribution. 2. *That men are obstinate in their rejection of the claims of God.* This is evident in the case of Pharaoh. He did not merely manifest a temporary disobedience to the Divine command, but a continued and wilful rejection of them. And in this respect he is typical of men in our own age. They are morally hardened. Their souls are in determined opposition to God. They invite the retribution of heaven. 3. *That men are hypocritical in their rejection of the claims of God.* Pharaoh was so. He pretended to Moses that if he would entreat the Lord to remove the plagues by which he was afflicted, that he would yield to the Divine commands. But this was only a pretence. The promise was not redeemed. And so men in our own age, in moments of retributive pain, deceive the servants of God with the pretence of amendment. They cannot thus deceive God. He sees their subterfuge. 4. *That men are presumptuous in their rejection of the claims of God.* It is impossible to find words in which to express the presumption of Pharaoh in his opposition to Jehovah. Kings have not the weapons wherewith to resist the great God. Heaven could have smitten Egypt with a stroke, and have prevented continued opposition; but the methods of the Divine government are patient and merciful. Hence we see that the way in which men treat the claims of God provoke His judgments.

II. That men who thus reject the claims of God often involve the brute creation in pain and woe. Man has in his keeping the welfare of the entire universe, with all contained therein. The world was made for man, and it depends for its welfare upon his rule. It is affected by his moral conduct. It is unseparably connected with him. God has ordained it so. When man was driven out of Paradise, the brute creation followed him. If man sins he involves all those below him in disorder and pain. Here is a mystery. The infidel regards it with scorn. Scripture proves its certainty. The sin of Pharaoh and the Egyptians was visited upon the brute creation. Here we see that these retributions were coming nearer and nearer to those who had invited them. They have passed from the river and the land to the animals. And thus the sin of man affects all nature, animate and inanimate. This is clearly shown by the history of these plagues, the pain in which the brute creation is involved by the sin of man:—1. *It is Divinely inflicted.* "Behold the hand of the Lord is upon the cattle." Thus the brute creation is not directly stricken by the hand of man, but its pain is the consequence of his sin. The hand of God is potent both to afflict and to heal the cattle. The beasts of the field are under a Divine providence. 2. *It is grievously effective.* 3. *It is sadly comprehensive.* 4. *It is proudly certified.* "And Pharaoh sent and behold there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." He was anxious to disprove the word of Moses.

III. That the men who thus involve the brute creation in pain and suffering, are often unmoved by the devastation they occasion. "And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened." He knew the suffering and loss his conduct had wrought amongst the cattle, yet he was not moved to pity or regret. Some men are never influenced by the pain they observe in the brute world. They regard not the suffering of animals as worthy of momentary thought. Pharaoh did not ask Moses to remove this plague, because it did not affect himself as the former ones had done. Tyrants are only moved by personal inconvenience, and then only for a time. Wicked men little know the elements of pain they introduce into the universe, and perhaps if they did they would be but little affected by the knowledge. LESSONS: 1. *That the retribution of sin does not end with those who occasion it.* 2. *That the brute world is affected by the conduct of man.* 3. *That men should endeavour to banish pain from the universe by attention to the commands of heaven.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1. God follows the proudest sinners with new messages when they break faith with Him.

God's powerful work gives entrance unto kings.

God still owns His despised Church.

God demands His right in His Church as often as persecutors deny it.

Verses 2, 3. God's goodness abounds in letting obstinate sinners know the danger of keeping sin.

God's severity is great, threatening such as refuse His word and hold their sin.

God declares to the wicked the evil they must expect if they persist in obstinacy.

God's hand is immediately put forth in vengeance to terrify enemies.

Verse 4. Signal judgments of God to the wicked are set with discrimination to the good.

God works wonderfully sometimes to secure the good from the plagues of the wicked.

Life and death of all creatures is in the hand of God.

Not the life of a beast is in danger when God takes the protection of it.

Verses 5, 6. The patient God at last sets a time for sinners, when He will bear no longer with them.

The morrow has been God's time of reckoning with sinners and may be now.

God faileth not to execute judgment as well as mercy as He hath spoken.

Verse 7. Providence orders wicked men to inquire whether God's word be true in judgment and mercy.

Providence answers the inquiry of men that the Divine word shall stand in life or death.

Aggravated rebellion follows such heart-hardening in wicked men.

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

THE PLAGUE OF BOILS; OR, THE PHYSICAL SUFFERING BROUGHT UPON MEN BY SIN.

Now the plagues of Egypt begin to assume a more serious character. Hitherto they had been an annoyance. Now they are an affliction threatening life. This sixth plague is ushered in with a peculiar ceremony. Moses appears before Pharaoh with a censor in his hand, filled with ashes from the furnace. He scatters the ashes and they are carried by the wind in all directions. They become small dust and afflict the Egyptians with boils. This ceremony was well calculated to remind Pharaoh that this plague was retributive. He had compelled the Israelites to labour in the brick-kilns, and had made their lives bitter with hard bondage in the heat of the furnace. Hence the ashes now smite the oppressor. Even the beasts of the Egyptians were thus afflicted; even those that escaped the previous plague. It not unfrequently happens that when men injure others, they are injured some time or other in the same way themselves. This is the abundant teaching of history. In the first three plagues the natural resources of the land were made the medium of retribution; but in the sixth God showed Pharaoh that He could bring ruin upon him from the very workshops which had been used in the erection of his splendid edifices.

I. That there is much physical suffering brought upon men by sin and disobedience. Through the disobedience of Pharaoh and his people they were smitten with boils. Their suffering was directly traceable to their sins. Had they been obedient to the commands of God, as uttered by Moses and Aaron, they would have been spared this affliction. And the commands of God come to men in our own day. They are uttered distinctly in the Bible. They are made known faithfully from the pulpit. They are silently made known by many pious lives. But they are disobeyed. And in this we find the true explanation of much of the pain and physical suffering that comes upon men. Their ailments are the outcome of their sins. And thus bodily pain is given to punish and correct moral transgression. There are multitudes in our land in continued suffering who would be healthy if they would be good. Moral considerations are at the basis of health. If men would be physically well they should obey the laws of God as revealed in His Book, and recognize all His claims upon them. Sin will always make a man want medicine. The body is influenced by the moods of the soul. Piety is restorative. It gives eternal life.

II. That the physical suffering consequent upon sin comes upon men independent of their social position, or of their scientific attainments. The king, the magicians, and all the people of Egypt were smitten by the pestilence. None were exempt. 1. *Hence we see that social position does not exempt men from the physical suffering consequent upon sin.* Men who occupy high station in

society, have frequently every facility for sin. They have time. They have money. They have every opportunity of concealment. But there are times when the sins of the monarch are made known in his physical manhood, and when nature speaks to him in retributive voice. Royalty is subject to the same laws of physical life as the pauper, and must equally pay the penalty of transgression. The purple and fine linen are not proof against pain. Suffering is not bribed by money. 2. *Hence we see that scientific attainment does not exempt men from the physical suffering consequent upon sin.* The boils were upon the magicians. These magicians were men of scientific knowledge. They were the king's advisers. Their position in the nation was dependent upon their education and skill. Hence their trickery. But the suffering consequent upon sin, is not to be warded off by scientific prescriptions; nor is it to be deluded by cunning. Thus men who have strengthened others in sin are themselves overtaken with the retributions of heaven. All men are in the hand of God.

III. That the physical suffering consequent upon sin does not always lead men to moral reformation. This terrible pestilence did not work repentance in the heart of Pharaoh, but only rendered him more wilful in his obstinacy. And so men are often unsubdued by the most alarming consequences of their conduct. They are afflicted. Their families are ruined. Their reputation is gone. Yet they show no token of penitence. Their calamities only appear to harden them. In this mood of soul they are taken on to destruction, to eternity. Pain is not necessarily regenerative in its influence. It does not always humble the spirit. It does not always conquer the tyrant. Man has a wonderous power of moral resistance. He can reject the severe discipline of God. LESSONS: 1. *That God permits suffering to come upon wicked men to reprove and correct their moral character.* 2. *That the laws of physical manhood are in harmony with true well-being of the soul.* 3. *That pain should lead us to review the meaning of our lives.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 8, 9. Upon former warnings despised God falls suddenly upon the wicked.

Though God can plague His enemies without instruments, yet sometimes He will use them.

God gives command out of ashes to bring fiery plagues on the wicked.

Handfuls of ashes are to note full measure of vengeance on God's enemies.

Signal actions God sometimes uses for men to see and fear

God can make ashes dust, and dust boils, to plague His enemies.

Divine retributions:—1. Transformative. 2. Diffusive. 3. Afflictive.

Verse 10. Exact obedience must God's instruments give as to matters and actions in executing God's plagues.

Exact performance does God make of His word upon the obedience of His servants in plaguing His enemies.

Man and beast in Egypt are the memorials of God's faithfulness in His vengeance.

THE INSIGNIFICANT COMMENCEMENT OF GREAT CALAMITIES.

I. That great calamities are often insignificant in their commencement. This plague was caused by the sprinkling of a few handfuls of ashes. None of those who witnessed the performance of this ceremony by Moses and Aaron would imagine that so great a calamity could have proceeded from so trivial a cause. But in reality there is no such thing in the universe as a trivial cause; all causes are potent to great effects. A trivial ailment may work death. A little misunderstanding may break up a

church. A little sin may ruin a soul. Let us remember that a few handfuls of ashes are productive of great woe. A little anger breaks into a great fire, and may end in murder. A little slander spreads a long way, and may injure the best reputation in the world, and nullify the toil of the best Christian worker.

II. That great calamities are often mysterious in their infliction. Moses and Aaron simply sprinkled the ashes in the air, and they became afflictive with this sore pestilence. How was this accomplished? What was the method of its working? The result would astonish Pharaoh and his magicians. And so it is astonishing how apparently trivial causes are influential to such great results. Men are at a loss to explain how little sins are so far-reaching in their effects. This cannot be explained on any principle of science. It must be recognized as the wondrous ordination of God, and as the efficient law of moral life, designed to keep men right.

III. That great calamities are often irrepressible in their progress. These ashes were sprinkled in the sight of Pharaoh and his magicians; but the proud monarch was impotent to prevent or stay the curse. And so when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and when little causes are working out their punitive issue in the lives of men and nations, they cannot be restrained by pride or power. And thus we see how the smallest ashes in the hand of God may become afflictive to a vast nation.

THE HELPLESSNESS OF WICKED MEN IN THE HOUR OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION.

Verses 11, 12. Men exhibit their principles in the hour of retribution and pain; then it is that character is made manifest. In this verse we see how helpless were the magicians under the retributions of heaven.

I. They are helpless because they have not the ability to avert the retributions of God. These magicians had not the ability to avert the pain with which they were afflicted. They had not the power to contend with God. Nor could Satan throw around them a shield to quench the darts of a retributive Providence. The devil gets men into trouble, and then leaves them in it without help. The sinner is helpless before the anger of God. In the Great Judgment he will be unable to avert the sentence of the Judge. Sin ever makes men helpless.

II. They are helpless because they have not the courage to endure the retributions of God. These magicians had not bold manhood enough to bear the plague defiantly, and to shake off its pain by apparent insensibility. Sinners are generally the most sensitive to the judgments of God. Sin makes men cowardly. Hell cannot inspire the wicked heart with courage in the hour of trial.

III. They are helpless because they lack those moral qualities which alone can aid men in the hour of retribution. If man is to stand in the presence of God during the time of pain, he must be strong in faith, in prayer, and hope, and in a desire to work the Divine will. But of this strength, the sinner is destitute, and he is therefore given over to the weakness of the moment. LESSONS: 1. *That though men have experience of Satan's inability to help them in their trouble consequent upon sin, they will not desist from it.* 2. *That all Satan's instruments are vanquished by the plague of God.*

HEART-OBDURACY.

I. It is permitted by God.

II. It renders men deaf to the voice of God.

III. It calls for the continued retribution of heaven.

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

THE DIVINE NAME AS MANIFESTED IN THE HISTORY OF A WICKED AND REBELLIOUS SOUL.

We must clearly understand the teaching of the sixteenth verse of this paragraph, or we shall be apt to have a wrong view of the character of God, and to indulge unholy thoughts in reference to the method of the Divine administration over the human soul. We must not imagine that God made Pharaoh obstinate on purpose that He might show His power on him, and thereby get glory to Himself; for God needs not man's malice for the setting forth of His glory. We must not understand by it that God decreed Pharaoh to be rebellious, and that it was therefore impossible for the proud monarch to be otherwise. The verse does not mean that God *created* Pharaoh for the purpose of manifesting His power in him. The king of Egypt had been passing through great afflictions, which were enough to be the death of him, and from these God had raised him up to manifest His power and mercy. The same word occurs in James v. 15. We have here the principle clearly established—viz., *that God reveals His name, character, and method of moral government, in the lives of individual men.* God not only reveals Himself in the inspired volume which He has caused to be written; not only in the material universe around us; but also in the experiences and soul-histories of the race. Human society gives us an insight into the character of God, and enables us to understand the method of the Divine procedure. We see the laws of heaven operating in the lives of men. This is an interesting study. It is likewise admonitory.

I. From the history of Pharaoh we see that it is not the way of God to remove a wicked soul by the immediate stroke of power. We know right well that the Divine Being need not have held any controversy with the king of Egypt in reference to the freedom of Israel; as far as power was concerned He could easily have stricken Pharaoh into the grave at the outset. But this would have been contrary to the ordinary method of the Divine government, which is not to subdue men by power, but to win them by moral considerations and by manifestation of Divine mercy. Force is a token of weakness in the moral sphere of life. Hence God does not annihilate the sinner. He does not immediately inflict death upon him, but mercifully prolongs his life through many retributions, until mercy is useless and justice is imperative. Then the sinner meets his just doom, which he might have averted by deep and true repentance. We sometimes wonder that God allows the criminally sinful to live, to reject His claims, and to pollute His universe. His mercy is the only explanation that can be given of their continued existence. Hence the mercy of the Divine name is declared in the prolonged life of the sinner.

II. From the history of Pharaoh, we see that it is the way of God to surround the wicked soul by many ministries of salvation. God did not make known His will to Pharaoh in reference to the freedom of Israel, and then leave him to his own rebellious inclination without further warning. But he sent messenger after messenger to the impious monarch. He sent Moses and Aaron time after time, who uttered the word of the Lord to him. He authenticated the word they uttered. He sent plagues to enforce it. But all in vain. Hence we behold the merciful manner in which God deals with the sinner. How many ministries has heaven sent to lead men to salvation and to the cross. There is

the ministry of truth, the ministry of the pulpit, the ministry of conscience, and the ministry of daily events; the sinner is indeed surrounded by messengers who would lead him to repentance.

III. From the history of Pharaoh, we see that it is the way of God to follow the wicked soul with continued judgments. Pharaoh was followed by the judgments of heaven. They came in quick succession. They were grievous in their infliction, and awful in their retribution. The sinner cannot be happy. He is in conflict with God. All nature is against him. He is exposed to innumerable perils. Sin is always associated with plagues. It is punished in this life. But this is ever a merciful arrangement, in that the soul may be led to repentance, and thus escape the retribution of the life to come. We cannot but see in the entire history of Pharaoh, the disasters that overtake a wicked life, and that by Divine permission. The sorrows of the wicked are not fortuitous or casual, but Divinely arranged and continuous. No man need envy the penalties that follow sin. Hence in the life of the sinner is seen the power of the Divine hand. LESSONS: 1. *That God permits wicked men to live in the universe, notwithstanding the continued rebellion against Him.* 2. *That a life of sin is a life of judgment.* 3. *That the sovereignty, mercy, power, and justice of God are seen in his dealings with men.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses, 13, 14. God pursues persecutors early in multiplying His plagues upon them.

Seven times, yea and seven, will God demand His church out of the hand of oppressors, until he deliver them.

God has a time of mustering up all His plagues together, when single ones are despised.

God makes hearts sick with smiting, when blows will do no good upon the outward man.

Heart-evils are more grievous plagues from God upon men.

Heart-plagues are signal to make proud sinners acknowledge the supremacy of God.

God will be known by His judgments to be the one Lord in all the earth.

HEART-PLAGUES.

I. The time when they are sent They are sent when the soul is rebellious to the claims of God, and when those claims have been continuously rejected. These heart-plagues follow other judgments less severe. They are the emphatic voices of heaven. They are indicative of the soul's ruin. The time of their advent is generally predicted.

II. In what they consist. They consist in the inward suffering of man's moral nature. Not in external affliction, however terrible, but in the inner agony of the spirit. It is better to be tormented in the body and in the circumstances of life than in the thoughts, sentiments, and affections of the soul.

III. For what they are sent. They are sent to teach men the supremacy of God, and their duty in relation to the Supreme Being. How many are apparently unmindful of the only true God, and are only brought to acknowledge Him by agony of soul.

Verses 15, 16. Pestilence:—1. The outcome of Divine power. 2. The outcome of Divine anger. 3. The indication of final destruction.

Though God spares sinners a time, he will manifest His power in them at last.

God will have the whole earth know His name in his judgments.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17—21.

THE PLAGUE OF HAIL THREATENED; OR, ATTENTION TO THE WORD OF GOD THE CONDITION OF SAFETY IN THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF LIFE.

Here is a particular prediction of the plague of hail, and a gracious advice to Pharaoh and his people, to send for their servants and cattle out of the field, that they might be sheltered. When God's justice threatens ruin, His mercy at the same time shews men a way of escape from it, so unwilling is He that any should perish. We take this threat, the mercy by which it was accompanied, as typical of the final judgment of life, and the opportunity given to men to avert its awful terrors.

I. That there is a great and awful judgment threatened upon man in the future. The plague of hail was to come upon Egypt on the morrow. But it is not made known *when* the final judgment will dawn upon the race. That time is known only to the great God; and it does not become the human mind to be inquisitive on the subject. The fact is certain; and that is enough for all the varied purposes of moral conduct. 1. *That as the plague of hail was threatened before its occurrence; so the final judgment is previously made known to the world.* The plague of hail was threatened upon the Egyptians before its descent, in all its severity. It was made known to Pharaoh and to those in league with him. And so the fact of the future judgment is made known to the world. It is revealed clearly in the inspired volume. It is enforced by the conscience. It is prefigured by tribunals of earthly justice. A day is ordained in which Christ will judge the world in righteousness. That day will be on the morrow of the world's history. It ought not to take men by surprise, as it is so emphatically predicted. 2. *That as the plague of hail was grievous in its infliction; so the future judgment will be woful to the wicked.* The hail was to be very grievous. We read that it smote the flax and the barley. And how grievous the final judgment will be no tongue can tell, or pen describe. We have descriptions of it in the Word of God, but only the dread reality will disclose to the soul its real terrors. Then the hope and joy of the sinner will be smitten, and the unholy life will be an eternal wreck. 3. *That as the plague of hail was unparalleled in severity; so the final judgment will be unique in its method and horror.* The Egyptians had been afflicted with many plagues, and had passed through many experiences of retribution, but none more grievous than this. This was unique in its method and severity. It was fatal to many. It was injurious to national prosperity. And so, humanity will pass through many judgments prior to the final one, through much painful discipline, designed to be corrective, but none will be equal or similar to that of the last great day. It will be unparalleled, such as will not have been known from the foundation of the world.

II. That there is a shelter provided from the final judgment of the future. 1. *Divinely made known.* When the plague of hail was threatened, at the same time the possibility of safety was made known. And so when the danger of man's moral condition was made known in the garden of Eden, the remedy was immediately announced. The shelter of the soul from the final retribution of life is the one great theme of the Bible. Man is urged to flee to it at once. 2. *Mercifully sufficient.* All those who heeded the word of God in reference to the plague were freed from its alarming consequences. They found shelter in

their homes. Christ is the home of the soul. In Him it is secure. In Him it will rest peacefully amidst the final judgment of the universe. 3. *Gratefully welcomed.* We can imagine how welcome to the Egyptians who were obedient to the word of God, would be the shelter of their homes during this terrible storm. Much more welcome will be Christ as the refuge of the soul in the final hour of life.

III. That only those who heed the warning of God, and avail themselves of the shelter provided, will be safe in the final judgment of life. All the Egyptians who remained in the open field were destroyed by the hail. And all who remain in the open field of sin, of carnal pleasure, and of wilful scepticism will be awfully smitten by the final judgment of God. They will have no mode of escape. They will perish in their disobedience. Then no refuge will be available. And so those who have neglected to flee to Christ, will in the last day have no mitigation of the penalty they have deserved. Then no plea will avail them. They will be lost.

IV. That many through unbelief or through neglect of the word of God, will perish in the final judgment of Life. Many Egyptians died through their unbelief. They heeded not the warning of God. And so, many at the last day will be in a like condition. They had every opportunity of salvation. But unbelief will be their ruin. LESSONS: 1. *Believe in the judgment to come.* 2 *Believe in the mercy of Christ.* 3. *Flee from the wrath to come.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.—Verse 17.

A SELF-EXALTED MAN.

I. That a self-exalted man often treats with contempt the claims of duty. Pharaoh was commanded to give Israel their freedom. This was his duty. But he regarded it with great contempt. And so many people, who are great in their own conceit, reject the claims of God upon them and their service. They imagine themselves above all morality, and as superior to those laws and principles of conduct which more humble spirits regard as the rule of life.

II. That a self-exalted man often treats with contempt the people of God. Pharaoh treated Israel as slaves, and Moses and Aaron as vile imposters, unworthy his notice. And how often do self-exalted men oppress and malign the church, and how often do they ill-treat the ministers of God.

III. That a self-exalted man is often humiliated by the sad discipline of life. Was it not so in the case of Pharaoh? Who can read the history of his self-exaltation without seeing his self-defeat. True is it that men who exalt themselves shall be abased. Self-conceit is self-destruction. Pride invites a severe discipline. The plagues of Egypt are evidence of this.

Self-exaltation:—1. In what it consists. 2. How it is punished.

God expostulates with highest powers on earth for injury done to His church.

Such injury draws on more vengeance upon proud persecutors.

Verse 18. God demonstrates judgments to the wicked before He sends them.

Jehovah is the author of rain in judgment as well as in mercy.

God has time in his hand to determine events of judgment at His pleasure.

The morrow-events for judgment are only in God's hand, unparalleled judgments does God inflict upon unparalleled sinners.

Verse 19. God's advice to escape judgment goes along with threatenings of it to the sinner.

God teaches men providence to hide themselves from the stroke of judgment.

God foretells that all despisers of providence, and presumers on God shall perish.

Salutary Fear.

Verse 20. Threatened judgments test men. There was a difference even among the Egyptians: some would defy God to the last, others were ready to yield to Him. Men in all conditions and climes, differ much with respect to their measure of power to resist God. Religious impressionableness varies. Some are more susceptible to the presence of God than others.

I. These men feared God's threatened judgment. They had seen that the Divine words spoken by Moses had previously come to pass, and believing his words now, *they feared.* Fear often arises from faith in God's word. If sinners believed the judgments threatened against them they would be in *great* fear. "There is enough terror in the Bible to make the sinner's hair stand on end." Fear is a blessing to the sinner and often serviceable to the saint; though perfect love casteth out fear. If we are His children we are as safe in times of judgment as in times of mercy. Fear is the alarum of the soul. It is frequently the first emotion in a new life. Bunyan represents his pilgrim starting from the "City of Destruction" because he *feared* its overthrow. Fear often brings in love "as the needle draws in the thread"—*Adams.* God often awakens sinners by judgments, before he reveals to them His mercy. Fear however may be slavish, and not lead to higher experiences. When calamities threaten, such as famine, war, or pestilence, how the sanctuaries are crowded! Some receive life, others go back to death. These Egyptians may have been led by their fears to recognize the claims of the true God, and to serve Him. They might have been among those who left Egypt with the Israelites. Their goodness also may have been like the morning cloud on early dew. It is a serious hour when men are awakened out of the sleep of sin by fear. They may then take the first step towards heaven or increase the condemnation which previously rested upon them.

II. Their fear led to appropriate action. They prepared for the coming storm. What discussions would arise among the servants of Pharaoh respecting this overhanging judgment! Ridicule might have been heaped upon some for their faith in God's word. Some doubtless acted merely to secure themselves from loss; others because they recognized the supremacy of Jehovah. Fear often leads to right action. There would be far more sin in the world if there was less fear. Men remember a coming judgment, and turn into the ways of righteousness. There is a storm yet to break upon the earth far more terrible than even this which struck terror into the hearts of the Egyptians. "*Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup.*" Are we making preparations for that day? Have we fled for refuge, and laid hold on the hope set before us in the gospel? Christ is the hiding-place from this coming storm. There is shelter for all in Him. The wise are warned and hide themselves in Him. *God's threatenings are sure to be fulfilled.* The simple neglect the warning and are destroyed.

III. Their fear led to welcome safety. Obedience brought its reward. Men's property would be safer if they had greater respect for the word of God. God cares for the cattle. The animal creation has suffered much for man's sins. Religion in the master benefits the whole circle of the home. God-fearing masters are a great blessing to their servants. No one liveth to himself. Our influence is the boundary line of our responsibility. The actions of masters often affect the eternal welfare of their dependents. Masters should use loving constraint. They should seek to make their households

flee into Christ the house of refuge to escape the coming storm. Many masters are guilty of great neglect. Well may they ask in the trenchant words of Wesley,

"Shall I through indolence repine
Neglect, betray, my charge Divine,
My delegated power?
The souls I from my Lord receive
Of each I an account must give
At that tremendous hour!"

W. O. Lilley.

Verse 21. Belief of the Word of God:—1. Makes men tremble. 2. Makes men wise. 3. Makes men safe. 4. Makes men singular.

Wicked men through fear may flee from temporal plagues but not eternal.

Disregard of God:—1. Ruinous. 2. Presumptuous. 3. Foolish. 4. Common. 5. Inexcusable.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22—26.

THE PLAGUE OF RAIN, HAIL AND FIRE; OR, GOD'S COMMAND OVER THE ELEMENTS OF THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE.

Moses had uttered the solemn warning, and now goes forth into the fields, and stretches out his hand toward heaven; and the windows of heaven are opened, and the wrath of God pours down. That firmament which had rained water upon the old world, and fire upon Sodom, now sends forth both fire and water upon the land of Egypt (Psalm cxlviii. 8; Job. xxxviii. 22; Psalm cv. 32, Psalm lxxxviii. 47, Psalm xviii. 13). A plague of hail, with lightning and thunder, must have been more awful and portentuous in Egypt than in any other country; for there rain was almost unknown, thunderstorms were of rare occurrence, and lightning, when it appeared, was generally of a harmless kind. The Egyptians were much given to the observance of all unusual phenomena, and looked upon them as portentuous. Fire was esteemed a mighty deity. And thus we see here these plagues were directed against the worship of Egypt. This plague was evidently miraculous. It fell in Egypt which was not a country subject to tempests. There was fire and water together, the rain not extinguishing the fire. It was all over the land of Egypt; yet Goshen was free. Also the time of the storm was predicted.

I. That the material universe is gifted with numerous and contrary agencies and elements. 1. *The elements of nature called into exercise by this plague were numerous.* There was rain, hail, fire and thunder. These are a necessity of the material universe. They are useful and beneficial; but they are also capable of great devastation and woe. The world has hidden within itself the elements of its own well-being, or of its woe. These elements of nature are often symbolical. The rain, of heavenly blessing; the fire, of the Holy Spirit; the thunder, of the voice of God. 2. *The elements of nature called into existence by this plague were contrary.* The rain was contrary to the fire. There are very opposite elements in the great universe around us; yet all exist in harmony. One element counteracts and yet co-operates with another. The elements of nature blend in one glorious ministry for man; though sin often turns them into messengers of justice. 3. *The elements of nature called into existence by this plague were emphatic.* When the elements of the material universe are arrayed against man they are emphatic in their message. The thunder speaks in loud voice. It has a message to the soul. There is a moral significance in the storm. Jonah in the tempest. The elements of nature are sometimes sent after men to bring them to God. God speaks to man through nature.

II. That God has complete control over all the elements of the material universe. 1. *So that He can commission His servants to use them according to His will.* God told Moses to stretch out his hand toward heaven, and there should be hail in all the land of Egypt. And so the Divine Being operates upon the laws of nature by the intervention of man. He can give man power over natural phenomenon. Hence we see that not merely has He the power to rule nature Himself, but also to delegate it to an inferior creature. 2. *So that He can make them rebuke the sin of man.* The elements of nature frequently rebuke the sins of men and nations. They afflict the proud monarch and his people. God can arm the universe against a wicked soul. He can torment the sinner in this life, and that by natural phenomenon. He can breathe a pestilence into the air. He can plague men by the sometimes refreshing rain. The gentle ministries of nature are fierce when sent on warlike errands to conquer the sin of man. 3. *That God can prevent them from working injury to the good.* "Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail." Moses would be out in, and exposed to, this terrible storm, as the lifting up of his hand had instrumentally brought it from the heavens. But good men are safe in tempests. Nature can do them no harm. God protects them. The hairs of their head are all numbered. A kind Providence watches over the good. And thus we see how God governs the agencies of the natural world. The heathen imagined that divers gods were over divers things; some ruling the air, some the fire, some the water, some the mountains, and some the plains. But God here demonstrates to the Egyptians His complete authority over the *whole* of nature. This truth is consoling to the good.

III. That the material prosperity of a nation is greatly dependent upon the elements of nature, and that therefore God alone can give true prosperity to a people. 1. *The fields and gardens of Egypt were ruined.* "And the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field." The Egyptians bestowed great care upon their gardens, which were ornamental, and were very carefully watered. Flowers and fruits were presented upon the altars of the gods. Amongst the fruits of Egypt were the date, grape, pomegranate, olive, fig, and various kinds of melons. Gardens and fields were now destroyed. The Egyptians worshipped the produce of the soil, even garlic and onions. 2. *The flax and barley of Egypt were ruined.* "And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled" (ver. 31). The mention of these productions enables us to ascertain the time of the year when the storm occurred—about the beginning of March. This would be a great blow to the commerce of the country. Egypt had always been famous for fine linen (1 Kings x. 28; Prov. vii. 16; Ezek. xxvii. 7). The destruction of the flax deprived the people of the material for their chief manufacture, and put a stop to the trade which they carried on with neighbouring nations, who sent their treasures into the country to pay for it. The ruin of the barley was equally injurious. Egypt was from early times the granary of the world (Gen. xli. 57). And thus we see how the prosperity of a nation is dependent upon the natural government of God in the material world. Let rulers remember this. And let not the people forget it. Sin is a curse to any nation. National righteousness is national prosperity and elevation. LESSONS: 1. *That the material universe is under the rule of God.* 2. *That the good are divinely protected in danger.* 3. *That national prosperity is the gift of heaven.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 22. When God's warnings are not regarded He soon gives the command for execution. To encourage faith, God calleth His servants to assist in working vengeance. God makes use of signals to induce

judgments sometimes by the hand of His instruments.

God's word maketh such signs effectual that they may be feared.

God's word creates hail for vengeance, as sometimes in mercy. Man and beast, herbs and all to the utmost extent, are subjected to God's hail, at His command.

Verses 23—26. God's servants are ready with hand and sign to prosecute His commands exactly.

God's hand is with the hand of His servants to effect the work which they signify.

Jehovah alone hath thunder, hail, and fire at command to give, and send on enemies which he pleaseth.

Showers of hail and fire God can command to come and run upon the earth at His pleasure.

Contrary elements God useth together to make His judgments more terrible. Fire and hail.

Most grievous and unparalleled vengeance God hath determined on Egypt literal and spiritual.

The posterity of sinful nations, may see greater plagues than all their fathers from the beginning of them.

God's avenging hail is smiting hail even to destruction. Man, beast, herb, trees shall perish by hail and fire when He commands it.

Discrimination of persons in judgment is God's peculiar prerogative.

No avenging hail or fire shall burn God's Israel. God's people are kept in peace and safety, when His hail and fire fall upon the world.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 27, 28.

REPENTANCE INSPIRED BY FEAR.

We now see Pharaoh as a penitent. The proud King is humbled. He confesses his sin. He resolves to amend his conduct. He sends for the ministers of the truth. We have seen him in this mood before, and we thought that it was a hopeful token. But the repentance then manifested passed away with the pain that awakened it. How frequently do moods of repentance come upon the soul, but how soon are they over, and leave no lasting benediction behind. God awakens men to repentance by varied agencies. Sometimes by the stroke of retribution, and sometimes by the look of love and compassion; men who repent under the influence of fear are very likely to relapse into sin when the fear has passed away. We have an instance of this in the incident before us.

I. That repentance inspired by fear is experienced by men of the proudest moral character. Pharaoh, the proud monarch of Egypt, was overtaken by the repentance of terror. He was the last man we should have expected to find in such a condition. He is haughty, he will not submit to God. He is bold, he will withstand the Divine message and plague. But no, he is suppliant before the servants of God. And so it is, the worst men, the most stubborn, the proudest and the most unlikely, are sometimes rendered penitent by the discipline of life, and by the corrective judgments of God. This shows the all-conquering power of the truth, in that it can subdue the tyrant-heart. It also shows the mercy of God, in that the most degenerate life is blessed with the refreshing mood of repentance. No heart is utterly destitute of better feelings. The worst men are often on the borders of a new life, but even then they are not beyond the reach of Satan. Bad men are capable of good emotions, and of open confessions, which seem well, but which are the outcome of unhallowed motive.

II. That repentance inspired by fear anxiously seeks the aid of the servants of God. Here we have the great King of Egypt sending for

Moses and Aaron the despised servants of God. Moses and Aaron have no social accidents to commend them to Pharaoh, but they are known to be the servants of heaven, and that is their recommendation to him. When men are in moods of repentance they are glad to find the poorest child of God, and to obtain any help he can render. Deep repentance is oblivious of social distinctions, and looks only at moral qualifications. When wicked men are in trouble they generally send for good men to help them out of it, and thus render an unconscious homage to the worth of piety. But it not unfrequently happens that the servants of God are called to aid a repentance inspired by fear of pain rather than by a conviction of sin. At such times they need true wisdom and fidelity.

III. That repentance inspired by fear is just in its condemnation of self, and in its acknowledgment of sin. "I have sinned this time." Thus we find that Pharaoh made an open acknowledgment of his sin. This was right. This was humiliating as it was made to men whom he had previously despised. Here is some token of a right spirit. And wicked men in the agony of repentance, under pain and calamity, often confess their wrong doing. They are prompted to do so by the sheer force of conscience, they hope by such a confession to appease the anger of God, and to avert the calamity under which they suffer. There are times when confession is a necessity of the soul. When sin is as a fire, which must burn through all subterfuges and manifest itself to the public eye. Hence open confession of sin is not an infallible token of repentance; it may be the outcome of necessity or of terror.

IV.—That repentance inspired by fear is just in its vindication of the Divine character. "The Lord is righteous." This was the acknowledgment of Pharaoh; and certainly it appears strange language for him to utter, as he had but poor notions of righteousness, and but little inclination a short time ago to predicate it of Jehovah. But wicked men, in moments of repentance are loud in their talk about the rectitude of the Almighty. But the words spoken at such a time are deeper than the heart imagines. To a truly penitent soul the righteousness of God is the supreme thought. His law appears righteous. His government is righteous. The soul is unrighteous and is consequently opposed to God. It is possible for wicked men in moments of repentance, inspired by fear, to utter beautiful words about the great God, and about sublime truth without any adequate conception of their meaning. Repentance is not to be gauged by the utterance of the lips.

V. That repentance inspired by fear promises future obedience to the claims of God. "And I will let you go." Thus Pharaoh promises to submit to the command of God in reference to the freedom of Israel. This was the outcome of self-conflict, wicked men do not like to give up their sins. It is not easy for them. But in moods of repentance inspired by fear they promise future attention to the word of God. Fair promises are not infallible tokens of repentance.

VI. That repentance inspired by fear is much more anxious for the removal of a calamity than for the removal of sin. "Intreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail." And thus we see that Pharaoh was much more anxious that the temporal perils by which he was afflicted should be removed, than that his sin and guilt should be pardoned. And so it is ever with those whose repentance is inspired by fear. They seek not Jesus. They seek exemption from pain. True repentance is not generated by thunder and hail. It is produced by the gentle dew of the Spirit of God. LESSONS: 1. *How difficult to tell true repentance from false.* 2. *How wicked men are humbled by the power of God.* 3. *How promises of amendment are broken by the sinner.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 27, 28. God's discriminating vengeance considered makes the vilest sinners seek help.

The most cruel persecutors are sometimes obliged to call in the persecuted for their helpers.

Justification of God is wrested out of the mouths of His bitterest enemies.

Prayers from the righteous to God may be desired by the wicked in their difficulties.

The liberty of the Church will be granted when God oppresses the oppressor.

"*I have sinned*":—1. A good confession. 2. A simple confession. 3. A faithful confession. 4. A welcome confession. 5. Sometimes an unreal confession.

"*The Lord is righteous*":—1. Then admire His administration. 2. Then worship His glory. 3. Then fear His justice. 4. Then vindicate His operations. 5. Then make known His praise.

A wicked people and a wicked monarch:—1. Sad. 2. Afflicted. 3. Repentant.

"*Intreat the Lord*":—1. For He hears prayer. 2. For He has respect to the good. 3. For wicked men need Divine help. 4. For He is merciful.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 29—35.

Wise Ministerial Treatment of an Obstinate Sinner.

Moses was a true minister. He was a real and worthy servant of God. He had to deal with an obstinate sinner in Pharaoh. We see in these verses the manner in which he treated him when he pretended to be sorry for his rebellion against God.

I. That the true minister is willing to render help to the vilest persecutor in the hour of imagined repentance. Moses did not remain away from Pharaoh in the hour of his penitence. He did not treat him with contempt, as unworthy of further effort. He went to him at once. Ministers are never justified in leaving even the vilest men to themselves in their time of perplexity. They should visit them and render them all the aid in their power. The true minister of the cross will be generous and forbearing. He will have too much sympathy with the souls of men ever to leave them, even though he has little faith in their professed repentance or their final salvation. The hypocrite must never be forsaken by the servant of God.

II. That the true minister will pray for the most obstinate sinner in the hour of distress. "As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord." 1. *The prayer will be offered in private.* "Out of the city." Did Moses go out of the city to pray because it was idolatrous, and because he would not mix the worship of God with the profane superstitions of the Egyptians? Moses went out from the presence of Pharaoh; he would give the king time to fully consider his promise, and to test the motive of his repentance. Also Moses wanted to be alone with God. Solitude is favourable to prayer. The minister should seek solitude. It is well for him to go outside of the city to meditate and to pray about obstinate men. 2. *It will be offered with earnestness.* "I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord." The ministers of God should employ their hands and hearts in prayer to heaven for the souls of wicked men.

III. That the true minister may assure the most obstinate sinner of the mercy of God toward him. "And the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be anymore hail." Thus Moses makes known to Pharoah the abundant mercy of God. And this should be the method of a true minister in his treatment of wicked men. He should assure them of the compassion of the Infinite Father for the truly penitent. A contrite heart shall not hear the thunder of retributive judgment.

IV. That the true minister must assert the unbending Sovereignty of God to the most obstinate sinner. "That thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's." The divine sovereignty must be asserted to the most obstinate man, even though he may be the proud Monarch of Egypt. True repentance will be led to acknowledge the royal supremacy of God in the material as well as in the moral universe. Ministers must seek to give repentant souls rightful views of the Character and Rulership of the Eternal.

V. That the true Minister will deal faithfully with the most obstinate sinner who may manifest tokens of repentance. "But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God." This language was most faithful on the part of Moses. It was plain. It was fearless. He knew Pharaoh too well to imagine that his repentance was genuine. He knew his reformation would not be permanent. In this way will the wise and true minister deal with the obstinate sinner who manifests repentance and seeks the removal of woe. LESSONS: 1. *That ministers are often perplexed as to the best method of conduct toward obstinate sinners.* 2. *They must pray for them.* 3. *They must be faithful to them.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 29, 30. Under God's revelation His ministers may assure the wicked of His mercy.

Such discoveries are made to wicked men that they may acknowledge the sovereignty and ownership of God over all.

Though God's servants know how the wicked will afterwards behave, yet they may pray for them. Wicked men may tremble under vengeance, but never fear the Lord when it is removed.

"*The earth is the Lord's*:"—1. Then admire its beauty. 2. Then participate in its bounty. 3. Then tread it reverently. 4. Then use it generously.

"*I know that ye will not fear the Lord God*:"—1. Because your mind is dark. 2. Because your heart is hard. 3. Because your conscience is seared. 4. Because your will is rebellious. 5. Because your sin is a pleasure.

Verses 31, 32. God in His prerogative determines what creatures to destroy for the punishment of man. When creatures grow nearest for man's comfort, he takes them away for man's sin.

The smitings of God.—1. The outcome of Divine anger. 2. The punishment of man's sin. 3. The richest growths stricken. 4. The immature things left unhurt.

PHARAOH'S CONDUCT AFTER THE STORM.

Verse 34. Mercy makes some men worse. Let the rod cease to strike and they will rebel the more basely. Some need judgments continually to keep them from sin. Pharaoh's vices were only kept down by his terrors, as soon as they ceased his vices sprang up again most vigorously. The storm over and God is forgotten.

I. Pharaoh's conduct is often resembled by men of our day. There was a great deal of common human nature in Pharaoh. Those who visit men much in their afflictions know how transitory are the impressions made upon them at such seasons. Vows made then are seldom kept. To estimate men by their sayings on a bed of suffering, or amid the crash of bankruptcy, or under the bitterness of bereavement, is altogether misleading. Men's views of themselves and life change as the dark clouds roll away, and the sun breaks forth to gild their path again. This has become proverbial. How often have the ironical words of Rabelais been quoted concerning *men!*

> "The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be:
> The devil was well, the devil a monk was he!"

An old Puritan relates that, "It is storied of a merchant, that in a great storm at sea, vowed to Jupiter, if he would save him, and his vessel, he would give him a hecatomb. The storm ceaseth and he bethinks that a hecatomb was unreasonable; he resolves on seven oxen. Another tempest comes and now he vows again the seven at least. Delivered then also, he thought that seven were too many, and one ox would serve the turn. Yet another peril comes, and now he vows solemnly to fall no lower, if he might be rescued an ox Jupiter shall have. Again freed, the ox appears too much, and he would fain draw his devotion to a lower rate; a sheep was sufficient. But at last being set ashore, he thought a sheep too much, and purposeth to carry to the altar only a few dates. But by the way he eats up the dates, and lays on the altar only the shells." —*Adams*, vol. i., p. 112. This is how many act towards God. Terrors are soon forgotten. Virtues begotten in the hour of trouble are short-lived. Men would live well if they always lived as they purposed in their hours of sorrow.

II. Pharaoh's conduct reveals that his heart had been unchanged. Afflictions do change some sinners into saints. They effect a permanent reformation. Some have found an affliction a divine epoch in their lives. They have come out of the storm new men. But it often produces no radical change. It does not change the heart. Unless men's dispositions towards God are rectified in the hour of affliction no lasting good is effected. Men cannot change their own hearts, but they can give them up into the hands of God to be changed. Love only ensures future allegiance. Love only awakens permanent resistance to sin. Pharaoh's heart was unrenewed though the words of penitence had been upon his lips. Sin had been checked, but it was still loved. The weeds had been trampled down for a moment, but not uprooted; the disease was controlled, but not cured; the fire was covered over, but it yet smouldered. Men reveal what effects have been produced in them during the storm by their actions in the subsequent calm.

III. Pharaoh's conduct manifested the basest ingratitude. Sin is always lamentable, but more so in the face of Divine mercy. As God had heard the prayers of Moses on Pharaoh's behalf, and had withdrawn the fierceness of His anger; the king ought to have humbled himself by obedience. Common feelings of gratitude would have prompted to this. But Pharaoh was so hardened that he could find in God's goodness a fresh incentive to sin. The goodness of God manifested to obdurate sinners often leads them to further transgression and not to repentance. Such insensibility to mercy is sure to bring another judgment.

IV. Pharaoh's conduct was most presumptuous. He had again and again suffered for his rebellion. He ought to have feared the consequences of another attempt to resist the will of Jehovah. Sin thus deludes. It infatuates him so that he runs madly upon the "thick bosses of God's buckler." Sin after both judgment and mercy is madness. How many that know the judgment of God against their sins, yet sin on, because they will not see the eternal blackness which is gathering around them.

V. Pharaoh's conduct shows the amount of depravity that may lurk in a human heart. Pharaoh had a stubborn nature. All have not the same gigantic lusts to overcome. Every man has some depravity. God estimates a man's nature in dealing with him. Every man may overcome the evil within him if he will seek for Divine help. God's grace is sufficient for the most obdurate. Wonderful is the power of some men to resist God. Neither judgment nor mercy will affect them. They "sin more and more." There is a terrible momentum in evil. Some seem driven by their own evil hearts to hell. Our only safety is in humbling ourselves before the Lord and seeking for his grace to overcome our own stubbornness and sins.—*W. Lilley.*

The performance of ministerial duty :—1. Immediate. 2. According to promise. 3. Divinely sanctioned. 4. Greatly abused.

The cessation of penitential sorrow :—1. When calamity was removed. 2. When mercy was bestowed. 3. When gratitude was expected.

God spares wicked men in answer to the prayers of the good.

Mercy may prove the occasion of hardening to wicked souls.

Heart-hardening :—1. After mercy given. 2. After promise made. 3. After prediction uttered.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IX.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Sacred Bulls! Ver. 1. The Hindus still pay reverence to the ox as a sacred animal. One particular kind of cattle, having a hump upon the shoulders, is consecrated to Siva. They are allowed to roam at large, and may destroy the most valuable crops with impunity. One day an English gentleman entered one of their market places, and saw a fat bull busily employed eating up the rice, fruit and sweetmeats, which the poor women had been trying to sell. None of them durst touch the sacred animal; but the Englishman at once drove him away with a stick. The men, who crowded the market, looked fiercely at the insulter of their Bull-god, and enquired of him what he meant. A Brahmin priest came up, saying, "Do you know that you struck a god?" To this the missionary replied that he had understood from their own Hindu books that God was honest and just; "Was it honest for that bull to take the property of these poor women without payment?" The Brahmin was silenced; whereupon the servant of Christ addressed the people about the only God :—

The effluence of whose light Divine
Pervading earth from England's shores shines where
The mighty Indus rolls its tide of wealth.

Animal Worship! Ver. 3. The priests of Egypt held bulls in great veneration, and renewed their mourning for Osiris over the graves of those beasts. When Cambyses the Great was at Memphis, Herodotus tells us that the god Apis (bull) was conducted to his presence with much ceremony by the priests, the Egyptians following him, clothed in their richest apparel, and making great rejoicings. Cambyses, indignant at their folly, inflicted a mortal wound upon the beast with his dagger. Then turning to the priests, he exclaimed, "Wretches, think ye that gods are formed of flesh and blood, and thus susceptible of wounds." This murrain was, therefore, another and more direct blow at the monstrous idolatries of Pharaoh's benighted people; and a foreshadowing of the hour when all the idol-gods of earth should be cast down, and

"No more at Delos or at Delphi now,
Or e'en at mighty Ammon's Lybian shrine,
The white-robed priests before the altar bow.—*Bethune.*

Humaneness! Ver. 4. The regard which we pay to the brute creation must always be considered a test of disposition and character. The wise man says that a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast. No individual can be trusted for his humane feelings to his own species, who is not humane in his feelings towards the brute tribes. It is recorded that, when an ancient senate of the Areopagites were assembled in the open air, a small bird—to escape a larger one of prey—took refuge in the bosom of one of the senators, who being of a cruel disposition hurled it from him so rudely that he killed it. The senate instantly banished him from their presence, declaring that he, who was destitute of humanity to a helpless and confiding bird, was unworthy the honour of a seat in their body.

"Oh! do not lightly take away
The life thou canst not give."—*Gisborne.*

Cruelty! Ver. 6. An indulged propensity o cruelty to insects or larger animals—as Hogarth has finely illustrated—has often ended in the perpetration of crimes of the deepest dye. Those who have wantonly sported with life in inferior creatures have come to sport with life in beings of a higher and nobler order. There was a lad strolling through the fields with his sister when they found a nest of rabbits. The brother, in spite of his sister's entreaties and tears, flung them one by one into the air, laughing as each fell dead upon the stones. Ten years after, that sister was again weeping by the brother's side, not in the open fields with the golden sunshine making balmy the spring air, but in a dungeon. He was in chains, sentenced to be hung for shooting a farmer while poaching on his preserves. As they were waiting for the awful procession to knock at the cell-door, he confessed to her that, ever since the wanton destruction of the helpless rabbits God had forsaken him, and left him to follow his own inclinations.

"Yea, all the pity upon earth shall call down
a curse upon the cruel;
Yea, the burning malice of the wicked is their
own exceeding punishment."—*Tupper.*

Ashes! Ver. 8. At one time, it was common in Egypt to burn strangers and captives alive, and to sprinkle their ashes far and wide in the air. As the little ones of Israel were cast into the Nile-god, a cruel holocaust; it is as likely that they were thrown into the furnaces, and their dust scattered to the winds to invoke blessings. Moses was directed to take the dust of the brick-kilns, and throw it into the air for a curse instead of a blessing. The sprinkling of ashes was also an ancient sign of purification. Its meaning was now reversed, and it became the instrument of corruption. Modern science has taught us that what would have formerly seemed only a figure of speech is literally possible; and that a few handfuls of ashes can be divided into particles so inconceivably minute as to fill the air over a whole country. Professor Tyndal's valuable experiments—as well as those of other scientists—incontestably shew that invisibly small particles may be poisonous germs of infectious plagues. Therefore

"Regard no vice as small,
That thou mayest brook it."—*Oriental.*

Boils and Blains! Ver. 9. Boils were an inflamed ulcer; whilst blains were an angry tumour, or malignant swelling in the skin. The one was an aggravation of the other; for in v. 9 the expression "breaking forth" means literally to *vegetate—i.e.* to put forth flowers like a plant or tree. In Deuteronomy it is called the "botch of Egypt;" and it is used in Job ii. and vii. to express the disease with which Satan was permitted to afflict Job. Whether this plague upon the Egyptians was associated with habitual uncleanness cannot be decided; but it may very well be inferred that Satan's malignant purpose was to blacken the pure and spotless moral life of the Chaldean patriarch. Smith says that this plague was black leprosy—a fearful kind of elephantiasis. Whatever it was in character, it was evidently a terrible infliction on the religious purity of the people; and designed to teach them that the heart was wholly corrupt:—

"Idols of mind, affection, will,
The power of darkness triumphs there."—
Montgomery.

Little Things! Ver. 10. A small flaw in a cable—a slight error in a chart may cause the loss of a ship. The communication of a spark led to the burning of the Goliath training ship. The careless handling of a small box led to the disastrous explosion at Bremerhaven. Only a few ashes led to the wholesale plague of boils! As Bishop Hopkins says, it is not the greatness or smallness of the coin, but the royal image stamped upon it, that gives it authority and power; so truly, the stamp of God being on little means will produce results as great, as though mighty means were employed. Even in man's hand, the tiny keen-edged axe can soon demolish what it has taken the springs and summers and showers and snows of hundreds of years to raise. As has been said, it is but the littleness of man that sees no greatness in a trifle. What a greatness there was in the Divinely-prepared *worm*, which laid low that bowering gourd, beneath whose green and grateful shade the prophet of Nineveh sat. Even

"The little mountains, humble though they be,
Make the mighty ages of eternity."

Boil-symbolism! Ver. 11. In Rev. 16 v. 10, we find that the Roman Vatican, while smarting from the effects of the extreme castigations and heavy shocks received under the preceding four vials from God's righteous indignation, are visited with a plague of boils and blains. They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores. It is remarkable that these sores are associated with spiritual adulteries, with the harlot of fornications. They can signify nothing else than the hideous blotch of infidelity or atheism, which has spread with infectious virulence to the ends of the Papal earth. As vicious humours taint the blood, poison the body, and break out in unsightly and ulcerous sores upon the skin; so with the principles of Roman atheism. This moral ulcer has spread far and wide—corrupt in its principles—vicious in its manifestations—destructive in its tendencies; if we are to believe the Pontiff's own confessions as to the religious sentiments of Papal nations:—

"Withering their moral faculties, and breaking
The bones of all their pride.—*Lamb.*

Impenitence! Ver. 12. Shakespeare says: "Bow, stubborn knees! and heart with strings of steel, be soft as sinews of the newborn babe; all may be well!" But Pharaoh would not bow. Of the antitypical Egypt, it is also said that they repented not of their deeds: Rev. xvi. v. 10. All are as hardened as at the beginning. Like Pharaoh they are impenitent to the end. The cumulative combination of retributive justice—so far from inducing repentance—only raises the blasphemy to a higher pitch:

"Egypt forbear! no more blaspheme:
God has a thousand terrors in His name,
A thousand armies at command,
Waiting the signal of His hand."—*Watts.*

Sinner's self-will! Verses 13—16. It is not "Raised thee up"—but "made thee stand." The meaning is that Jehovah permitted him to live and hold out until His own purpose was accomplished. This did not make the monarch's heart any worse. He might have let Israel go without being in the least degree better. The soil from which the hardness sprang would have been just the same. When the clay has not the sunbeams to indurate, it may yet be hardened quite as much by being placed in a furnace. Once hardened, it is easier to break than to soften a brick. Pharaoh had hardened his heart in the fire of self-will, and every fresh message from God—like a warm sunbeam—only made it harder. Pharaoh afterwards *could not relent.* The fakirs of India keep their arm or leg stretched out, until it becomes stiff; and they are unable to draw it back again. The Egyptian tyrant held out his heart so long against God that at last it was unable to yield. Standing in the Divine way, it must either bend or break:—

"The whole creation's strange and endless dealing,
In spite of shields, and veils, and arts concealing,
Proclaims that whosoe'er is long a sinner,
Can only be by it of woe a winner."—
Oriental.

Truth's Power! Ver. 14. When Pilate was brought close to Incarnate Truth, there seems to have been a momentary giving way of his former scepticism. The personal presence of the Truth, his bearing under the long and terrible trial—the serenity of soul—the calm, unwearying patience under insult—all seem to have awakened in Pilate a feeling as though he was dealing with a Being of superhuman powers. It was but a flash; for when the Truth uttered His testimony, the sceptic had gained the victory over the rising conviction, and with a sneer said: What is Truth? Equally transient were the emotions of conviction aroused in the heart of Pharaoh. All the miracles—convincing though they were—could not effectually satisfy His prejudiced mind: Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?

"I feel these piercing pains—
Yet still I sin—I sin."—*Bonar.*

Divine Power! Ver. 17. In Canada there are times when the mighty St. Lawrence sweeps down with irresistible might. When the vast surface of ice has broken up before the rushing waters and beneath the spring sunbeams, the huge floes roll down the stream, bearing away all that opposes. If a bridge spans the river, the force with which the waters bring the massive ice-blocks against the arches and piers proves overwhelming. Pharaoh stood—set himself up as a dam or mound to resist the stream of Jehovah's power; and was swept away by its omnipotent tide. None can withstand His will!

"Who then would wish, or dare, believing this
Against His purposes to shut the door?"

Cattle! Ver. 19. When the Romans were about to make a league with Ptolemy, king of Egypt, the treaty was broken off owing to a Roman soldier having chanced inadvertently to kill a cat. Although the Egyptians were themselves most anxious to have the treaty, yet so enraged were they at the act that they ran in tumult to seize the offender; and in spite of the persuasion of their own Princes they vented their fury upon the soldier. Such was the superstitious veneration of Egypt for their idol-beasts that Porphyry declares, they would rather feed on human flesh than the flesh of a heifer. So that this plague of hailstones was more than ever a direct blow aimed at the monstrous idolatries of that nation, all of which are discernible upon the ruins,

"When the classic pilgrim sweeping free
From fallen architrave the desert vine
Reads the dim names of their divinities."—
Bethune.

Safety! Ver. 19. During the recent Malay insurrection, when Mr. Birch had been savagely massacred, his companion, Lieutenant Abbott, made his escape in a remarkable manner. He succeeded in reaching a boat—in pushing it out into the Perak river—and in steering it in the middle of the stream towards the residency. The banks were lined with Malay rebels—who kept up an incessant fire upon the fugitive; but their efforts to kill proved futile, for in the centre of the river, the gallant sailor was beyond gunshot. He reached the Fort in safety. Is there no escape from the persistent attacks of the enemy? Yonder flows the river, by its brink rests the canoe: launch on that stream, and it will bear you beyond reach of foe. You will be borne safely down; though fierce savages may crowd the bank, and shoot their poisoned arrows as a thick cloud. The stream is wide: steer your barque in the middle, and no harm can betide:—

"Soon shall the ark in safety rest
On some eternal height;
The hills shall be with verdure drest,
And bathed in quenchless light."

Divine Shelter! Ver. 20. When travellers are overtaken on the mountains by the storms of the Cordilleras of South America, they seek shelter till these pass away in caves and beneath jutting cliffs. Dark clouds gather; dense mist masses float about; flashes of forked lightning dart across the path, ploughing up the ground, while peals of thunder seem to rend the mountain tops. Flash succeeds flash, the very atmosphere quivering with the uninterrupted peals, repeated a thousand-fold by the mountain echoes. Rocks and earth come hurling down from the lofty peaks. Those out in the forest are stricken by the vivid gleams of fire, or smitten by the massive blocks of hail, or crushed beneath falling trees, riven by the same power. But those in the shelter of caves and crevices are safe; and when the storm is over, they may come out and resume their journey. Those who shelter beneath the Rock of Ages, amid the storms of life are safe; and, like Israel leaving Egypt, they get beyond the storm, amid the sunlight on the other side of the Red Sea.

"So I, by faith, with sin oppressed,
Would refuge take, O Christ, in Thee;
Thou art my hiding place and rest,
From every evil shelter me."

Hail-plague! Ver. 22. The Psalmist says that the vines, and sycamores, and fig-trees—yea. and all the trees in their coasts, were destroyed by the hailstones and coals of fire. Hail was an unheard-of thing in Egypt, while fire was esteemed a mighty deity. Porphyry declares that at the opening of the Temple of Serapis the worship is made by fire and water, for they reverence fire and water above the elements. Thus the deities which they adored were employed by Jehovah to destroy the things in which they delighted. Gardens were a source of pleasure and profit. Everywhere flowers abounded, and every visitor received a bouquet of real flowers, Wilkinson asserts, as token of welcome on entering a house. The Egyptians even worshipped the green herbs of the field, if we are to believe Pliny—an author whose assertion in this instance is supported by the sarcasm of Juvenal, when he says of Egypt:—

"O holy nation, sacro-sanct abodes!
Where every garden propagates its gods."

Hail Symbols! Ver. 25. The invasion of the *temporal* Roman empire by Alaric and his Goths is likened to a storm of hail and fire mingled with blood, by which a third part of the power, princes and populace were destroyed under the figure of earth, trees and grass. As Gibbon says, the conquering Alaric made three descents upon Italy urged forward—according to his own assertion—by a secret preternatural impulse. He and his hordes came from the *frozen* regions of the north in a winter of unusual severity; and many years afterwards the deep and bloody lines of their march could be traced by the traveller. They spared neither feeble age nor gentle sex. The tall sycamore trees of pride, grandeur and nobility were overthrown; while the lowly and tender grass of the commonalty was beaten down. But more disastrous were the results of the appalling showers of hail that began to fall upon the *spiritual* Roman empire from the French Revolution. In Rev. xvi. v. 21 the stones are represented as of a great weight, and coming once more from the frozen regions of the north. They have been considered to symbolize—(1) The enormous cannon balls of modern warfare, or —(2) The terrible atheistic and revolutionary theories of modern times, or—(3) The oppressive cruelties to be inflicted by Russia and her dependencies upon Palestine or Rome. Because of these men are represented as blaspheming God because of the plague of the hail. The beast, with all his confederates and supporters, like **Pharaoh**, dies impenitent; and, like Pharaoh,—

"Sinks as sinks a millstone
In the mighty waters."—*Bickersteth.*

Divine Control! Ver. 26. The present Emperor of Abyssinia, Prince Kassai, is always attended by tame lions. When he is seated upon his throne, to receive foreign ambassadors in state, these unchained monarchs of the wild crouch at their lord's feet. No courtier or guest need fear these beasts, so long as the king restrains them; but, when he is offended with prince or visitor, he has only to utter the word, and at once the quiet, crouching lions spring up and devour the offender. God's judgments are harmless to the saints, but they are terrible to the wicked rebels. And they are all the more terrible because they are not the outcome of caprice or despotic influence, but of righteous and inflexible justice and truth.

"Angels of life and death alike are His;
Without His leave they pass no threshold o'er.—*Lowell.*

Retraction! Ver. 28. A great prince once had a sick son. He was the only child—a Benoni—the offspring of his father's sorrow, for his beautiful queen had died in giving birth to his royal heir. When the physicians from all parts pronounced the child's recovery hopeless, the stricken father found refuge in a solemn vow, that if God spared the babe's life, he would present a magnificent golden chalice adorned and filled with dazzling diamonds to the neighbouring church. Gradually day by day, the son gained strength—in spite of the medical testimony of hopelessness, and by the time the presentation-cup arrived from the goldsmith, there was no longer danger. But the gift was too costly—with its rare engraving and its glittering gems; so that the father had another of an inferior character made and presented. No doubt his vow was so far sincere at the outset; and probably that of Pharaoh was equally so: "I will let you go." But the pressure over, the man died. As Matthew Henry says, there was a mighty struggle between Pharaoh's convictions and corruptions.

His convictions said; Let them go. His corruptions said: Not very far away. But he sided with his corruptions, and decided not to let Israel go.

"Said I not so—that I would sin no more?
Witness my God I did;
Yet I am run again upon the score."
—*Herbert.*

Ministerial Pity! Ver. 29. Very recently off our south-eastern shores, a German ship collided with an English vessel known as the Strathclyde. This collision was apparently done of set purpose and deliberation. But the captain of the Franconia roused a storm of indignation against him in Europe, when it was discovered from the evidence that he had relentlessly sailed away, and left the sinking vessel and drowning wretches to their fate. No such reckless want of feeling do Moses and Aaron display. Of set purpose had they driven the prow of Judgment sheer into the hull of Egypt's national life—cleaving it amidships; but no sooner did they hear the cry for help, then at once they hurried to the rescue. It is the duty of the ambassadors of Christ to collide against the conscience of the sinner; but, like their Divine Master, they are eager to bind up and to heal. They crush the decayed timbers of the sinner's ship of self-deception and indifference; but it is only that they may receive the sinner's soul on board that noble vessel—the ark of Salvation—whose beams never decay, and whose prow breasts the wildest waves.

"High billows are upon the deep,
And all the sky is dark,
But faithfulness and mercy keep
The covenanted Ark."

Contrast! Ver. 30. How remarkable the difference between Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, both oppressors of Israel! What produced this contrast in the effects of the Divine chastenings on these two monarchs? A surgeon has two patients suffering frem the same disease, and requiring to undergo the same operation. He performs both cases with the same surgical instruments, and with an equally firm hand and admirable skill. Yet one dies, while the other lives and recovers. How is this? Their bodies were in a different condition. That of the one was highly favourable; that of the other was full of gross humours from self-indulgence. The heart of the conqueror of nations was wicked, but still the Divine judgments wrought a successful cure; while the condition of Pharoah's heart was so corrupt and perverse that Jehovah's visitations failed to bring him to a saving repentance. He repented not, though—

"Deep in his soul conviction's ploughshare rings,
And to the surface his corruption brings."
Holmes.

Divine Care! Ver. 33 The Lord preserveth the souls of His servants. And so, as has been said, this man of God went forth into the field, walking without fear through the storm of hail and tempest of fire. Moses knew that he was safe—safe, though all around might be destroyed. Standing then under the canopy of heaven, bareheaded, in the attitude of prayer, he wrestled until the hail ceased. None that trust in Him shall be laid waste. The just man fears not in the midst of dangers.

"Let God's dread arm with thunder rend the spheres,
Amid the crash of worlds undaunted he appears.—*Horace.*

Contrast! Ver. 34. If the sea has its sorrows, the llanos have their sufferings. Nothing can be more remarkable than the contrast between the immeasurable plains of Venezuela and New Grenada and the watery plains of the sea. Like the ocean, their limits melt in the hazy distance with those of the horizon; but here the resemblance ceases, for no refreshing breeze wafts coolness over the desert, and comforts the drooping spirits of the wanderer. It is true that the llanos have their storms, when the dust of the savanah, set in motion by conflicting winds, ascends in mighty columns and glides over the desert plain; as the sea has its tempests, when the waterspout, raised by contending air currents, rises to the clouds and sweeps over the floods. But no cooling zephyr fans the burning temples, or allays the irritation of the blistered skin of the traveller on the land—and indeed, the glaring sand suspended in the air only increases the sultriness of the atmosphere. Such is the difference between the repentance of the good and the remorse of the bad. Pharaoh's contrition was as the tropical llanos—there was no water. The storms swept over his heart, but it remained dry.

"What time, beneath God's chastening rod afraid,
He drank coercive of affliction's cup."—
Mar:

CHAPTER X.

CRITICAL NOTES —**2. What things I have wrought]** A special word is here used, and it is used in a special conjugation, and both circumstances unite to give life and beauty to the expression in the original. The verb עלל is "not applied to working off, forming or doing a thing at once, but to constant, repeated turning and moving about in work or action."—Fürst. How beautifully this suits the infliction of plague after plague on Egypt, any one can see at a glance. And then the form of the word התעללתי puts it in the reflexive conjugation, one of the uses of which is to show that the action is done *to* or *for oneself;*—thus keeping up the avowal of Jehovah that in his visitations on the Egypt he sought to glorify himself in the eyes of men. It is difficult, many times, to translate all that is in the original without resorting to paraphrase; as, here, we are tempted to render: "What I wrought out for myself by a series of acts." We shall be glad if, by these notes, we can kindle in some minds the determination to spare no pains requisite to be able to repair to the fountain-head. **4. Locusts]** *'Arbeh* (ארבה): prob., the *gryllus gregarius*—Ges., Dav., Fü.; G. & D. understanding the word to *mean* "swarmers,"—F., "browsers." **8. But who are they that shall go?]** One is ready to smile at the simplicity of this speech. It will be seen that there is no conjunction in the Heb. answering to our "but," thus showing an almost amusing precipitancy in the interrogatory, as if the speaker would retract his permission before it is well uttered: *mi' wa-mi' ha-ho-lekhim'*, "who and who are the going ones?" **9. We will go, etc.]** Again would we call attention to the *style* of the Hebrew: here to the *arrangement of the words*—to the vigourous *inversion* by which the full demand of Moses is made to smite the ear of Pharaoh with the utmost force. "WITH OUR YOUNG AND WITH OUR OLD will we go: WITH OUR SONS AND WITH OUR DAUGHTERS, WITH OUR FLOCKS AND WITH OUR HERDS, will we go; for A FESTIVAL TO JEHOVAH [is] ours!" **10. As I let you go]** "As certainly as I let you go;" or, "whenever I let you go." It is clearly the language of defiance. **11. For that ye did desire]** It is necessary to lay stress on "that" and "ye" successively, to bring out the true meaning: "For—THAT—YE—did desire"=for THAT is what YE were desiring." **21. Darkness which may be felt]** Fürst takes the Heb. to mean: "to grope about in the dark."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 1.

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

Moses and Aaron are once more commanded to visit Pharaoh, even though they are told that he will not yield to their entreaty. This is the method of Heaven to render rebellious sinners unexcusable. The ministers of God are not readily to abandon a wicked soul. It is here said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. How?

I. By a manifestation of rich mercy that ought to have melted the heart of the King. God had indeed manifested great mercy and forbearance towards Pharaoh; He had spared his life through a long series of plagues, and through continued sin. The King had no claim to such mercy. Yet it was given in abundant measure. And when mercy is abused by the sinner it has a hardening effect upon his moral nature. No man can reject the love of the great Father, the cross of Jesus Christ, and the warnings of the pulpit, without becoming more and more obdurate in heart. This is a natural law of man's spiritual life. The soul of man is so constituted that the rejected mercies of truth leave it less sensitive to them. This is the experience of men. How many who have sinned through a long life, and who have resisted many gospel appeals, now feel they are less sensitive to Divine influences than ever they were. This is the ordination of God, and hence when He is said to harden the heart of man, it is by mercy that ought to have produced repentance, and not by any arbitrary decree.

II. By a manifestation of great power that ought to have subdued the heart of the King. The Divine Being not merely brought His mercy to bear upon the heart of Pharaoh, but also His power. Some men are more sensitive to power than they are to the appeals of mercy. They are not likely to be touched into tears by compassion; but they are awed by the exhibition of power. They are men of inferior moral temperament. They are influenced by the lower motives. They are wrought upon by fear. Pharaoh was evidently a man of this kind. A plague was more likely to subdue him than a word of tender pity, than a message of love. Hence, God tried this method, but it was only productive of a temporary repentance. Frequently is the soul of man brought to feel the power of God, in affliction and in pain. But the power of God ever recognises the free agency of man, and when it does not conquer, it hardens the sinner.

III. By a manifestation of severe justice that ought to have rebuked the heart of the king. God had shown Pharaoh that Heaven was just in its demands, and that it would come to the relief of the oppressed. This ought to have awakened a feeling of equity within his own heart, which should have ended in the freedom of Israel. All the plagues exhibited the justice of the Divine rulership, and rebuked the cruelty of the proud king. They were calculated to humble him. God does sometimes give sinners terrible visions of His justice, which are designed to lead them to rectitude of life. When men resist the manifestations of Divine justice, they are correspondingly hardened in soul to the rightful claims of heaven.

IV. By sending his servants to influence the heart of the king to the right. God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh to influence him to the freedom of Israel. They were sent continuously. Moses was a good worker. Aaron was a good speaker. They wrought miracles. But wicked men will not yield their unbelief, their sin, to the best Christian talent, to the most faithful Christian service; but by rejecting the servants of God they become hard in heart. Hence, God did not harden the heart of Pharaoh by a sovereign decree, by omnipotence, so that the king *could* not obey His command, but by ministries appropriate to salvation, which were calculated to induce obedience, and the constant neglect of which was the efficient cause of this sad moral result. There was no alternative but the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. God could not withdraw his demand for the freedom of Israel. It was not consistent with the ordinary methods of the Divine government to remove the king by death; nor would this have answered the purpose, for probably his successor would have been equally rebellious. Hence there was none other course open than the hardening of Pharaoh, which was the outcome of his own rebellion, and which would prove to be his eternal ruin. LESSONS: 1. *That man has the ability to resist the saving ministries of heaven.* 2. *That when man resists the saving ministries of heaven he becomes hard in heart.* 3. *That hardness of heart is itself a natural judgment from God.* 4. *That hardness of heart will finally work its own ruin.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1. God sends His minister to hardened souls:—1. Often. 2. Mercifully. 3. Uselessly. 4. Significantly. 5. Disastrously.

The means which God sends to save wicked men aggravates their sin, and hardens their spirits.

Hardened sinners: 1. In companies. 2. Patterns of judgment. 3. Tokens of indignation. 4. The cause of plagues. 5. The curse of the world. 6. Still followed by the minister of God.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 2.

THE SIGNS OF GOD TO THE GENERATIONS OF THE FUTURE.

God respects the general good of the race in multiplying retributive evils upon individuals. Hence the plagues sent upon Pharaoh and his nation were calculated to instruct the generations of the future, as well as to punish Pharaoh. Children must be instructed in the ways of God, and neglect of this tuition is sinful and contrary to the Divine command. What are the signs of God made known by the plagues of Egypt for the moral instruction of future generations?

I. That God is supreme over the kingdom of nature. The plagues that came upon Egypt would give to future generations abundant demonstration of this fact, that the rivers, the dust of the ground, the atmosphere, the thunder, lightning and the hail are all at the immediate control of God. Man may have a certain power over nature, but it is limited, and subject to the Divine. Science places the natural universe under the command of man. This is the Divine ordination. But man's power over nature is derived; God's is underived and independent. Hence, 1. *He can inflict pain on the wicked.* 2. *He can protect the good from harm.* 3. *He can send famine or plenty.*

II. That God is supreme over the cunning and power of the Devil. The magicians of Egypt were agents of the Devil. They were inspired by him in their opposition to Moses and Aaron. They were aided by his cunning. Their defeat was his defeat also. Satan cannot work a miracle. He may perform a marvel. He is subject to the control of God. This is evident in the history of the plagues. If he could have resisted the power of heaven, it would have been to his interest to have done so, and he would have done so. He may deceive men. He cannot protect them from the wrath of God. Hence: 1. *God can deliver men from the power of the Devil.* 2. *God can destroy the works of the Devil.* 3. *God can frustrate the designs of the Devil.* Teach this blessed truth and glorions fact to the youthful; that the good agencies of the universe are more potent than the bad. This will lead youthhood to confide in God.

III. That goodness is happiness, and that conflict with God is the misery of man. This is clearly taught by the plagues of Egypt. In them we see the history of a man in conflict with God; and what a record of pain and woe! When men contend with God they are sure to be plagued. Life is happy in proportion as it is good, and as it is in harmony with the Supreme Being of the universe. When men commit sin they must expect to be plagued. This must be taught to the youthful, that purity of life and true enjoyment are inseparably connected. To be happy we must be at peace with heaven. The Divine supremacy over nature, the Divine power over Satan, the greatness of God, the safety of the good, and the misery of sin, are God's signs, manifested in the history of Pharaoh to the generations of the future. LESSONS: 1. *That in the lives of individuals we have signs of God.* 2. *That all the signs of God in human life are to be carefully noted and taught to the young.* 3. *That all the signs of life are evidence of the Divine supremacy.*

THE MINISTRY OF SIN.

God makes Pharaoh "to stand" for the benefit of Israel, and in them for the benefit of humanity. It was for Pharaoh in the first instance to resist

Divine light and grace, and oppress Israel,—it was then for God to economize the tyrant and his wrath. The conduct of the Egyptian king served—

1. To reveal God. "*That ye may know how that I am the Lord.*" The cloud of evil in its very nature is calculated to eclipse the Divine glory, and hide the Divine One from the eyes of mankind, but as the sun overmasters the clouds of the sky, and makes them to enchance his splendour, so God causes the cloud of evil to become the back ground on which His glorious shape and infinite perfections are the more clearly and forcibly displayed. Pharaoh's perverseness revealed all the more fully. 1. The Divine *love*. The more the Children of Israel were wronged the more God's grace and kindness were demonstrated to them. 2. Divine *righteousness*. Each successive miracle exhibited more impressively the righteousness of God's administration. 3. The Divine *power*. Each judgment, rising in severity, declared the more unmistakeably the absolute sovereignty and awful power of God. And so throughout the whole world, and throughout all life, sin which would hide God, reveals Him, sin which would dethrone God only shows the strength and splendour of His awful throne. Evil was not necessary for the revelation of the Divine Being, but since evil has invaded the universe, such is the perfection of God's wisdom and might, that devils become the heralds of His glory, and the dissonant voice of evil swells into fuller power the pœan of His praise. And the perverse conduct of the Egyptian king serves—

II. To further the interests of Israel. Their *highest* interest was furthered by their attaining a fuller knowledge of God, and their *permanent* interest was secured by these wonders impressing themselves on the popular mind. "*And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt.*" Sin was not necessary to the development of mankind, but since it has forced its way into the universe, God overrules it to high and happy issues. From the sin of Egypt came the higher education of Israel, and through them the higher education of mankind at large, and from sectional evil God still educes general good. God reigns, and confounds evil, making that serve which was designed only to blast and destroy. Bad man are apostles, missionaries, martyrs, redeemers of society; but, alas! apostles whom Christ will deny, missionaries without Heaven's smile, martyrs without the palm, redeemers to whom pertains the cross without the crown. Unconsciously, unwillingly, they glorify God, and serve society. Let not the Church fear, let the sinners be afraid. He "that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Ps. ii. 4—7.)—*W. L. Watkinson.*

Transmitting the Knowledge of the True God.

The world had then nearly lost the knowledge of the True God. The ordinary operations of his hands did not reveal him to men's callous hearts. Idols usurped his throne. He therefore manifested himself by "signs." The silence of uniformity was broken. He wrought wonders.

I. Jehovah made himself known to the Israelites in Egypt as the only true God by signs. He separated Himself form the idols of Egypt by overthrowing their power and bringing them into contempt. His wondrous acts revealed His supremacy. Miracles manifest the presence of the True God. Acts reveal character. The Bible, which contains the fullest revelations of God, is a record of His acts. The plagues did not however fully reveal the character of God. Judgment is His strange work. God adapts Himself in His

revelations to the spiritual condition of men. The Israelites were in a state of of spiritual infancy. God revealed to them his power and faithfulness. He asserted His supremacy over all false deities, His power over nature and ability to protect his chosen people, and His truth in "remembering His covenant" with their forefathers. He revealed himself more fully in after years. Christ is the fullest revelation of the true God.

II. That this knowledge is to be transmitted from generation to generation. God would have Himself known. He delights to reveal Himself to men. He acts in one age for all time. Divine knowledge must not be hidden. *Men* have to transmit it. Posterity should be cared for. The knowledge of useful inventions, scientific discoveries, social achievements is gladly transmitted, how much more this which is far more valuable! The young should be instructed in this knowledge above everything else. This is a public duty. Society should make provision for the transmission of the knowledge of the true God. Especially is this a parental duty. Tell it "in the ears of thy son and of thy son's son." Relationship, peculiar affection, and the tender solicitude which every parent feels for the welfare of his children should lead him to instruct them in Divine knowledge. *To shew them His acts is to reveal Him.* To give to them a clear conception of the true God is to bestow upon them the greatest of all blessings. Parents can impart no higher good. It is eternal. It is greater than wealth, or rank, or any other temporal advantage. Parental influence the most potent in telling of God's acts. No lips teach like the lips of loving authority. Some parents neglect this solemn duty. Ever ready to speak about worldly enterprises, the acts of great men, their own, but they are silent about God's. Such neglect is ruinous to their children, and dishonouring to God.

III. In the transmission of the knowledge of the true God is the hope of the world. Wherever the knowledge of the true God prevails, righteousness and peace are found. Idolatry has ever been the bane of mankind. A false conception of God debases. Worship becomes a degradation. Men's ideas of God affect not only their religious views but their moral principles and social customs. In knowing the true God is true life. "*This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.*" Just as men acknowledge and serve the God that revealed himself by Moses in Egypt, and afterwards more fully by Jesus Christ are they elevated, saved, and blessed. In the spread of this knowledge is every uplifting influence. Superstition, violence and error will disappear. The Heavenly Jerusalem will be built on earth. God being known will be loved and obeyed. "Men rising from the ruin of the fall" will be "one with God, and God be all in all." For the sake of future ages God's mighty acts should be told in "the ears of thy son and of thy son's son." In the instruction of the young is the truest hope of the advancement of mankind. The future of the world depends upon how much knowledge of the true God is possessed.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSE.

Verse 2. The acknowledgment of God in His Church is the main end of His wonderful plagues.

By signs:—1. Showing the woe of sin. 2. The folly of human malice. 3. The justice of God. 4. The safety of the Church.

The Divine supremacy:—1. Rejected by the proud. 2. Received by the good. 3. Revealed by the works of God. 4. To be acknowledged by all.

The signs:—1. Their nature. 2. Their locality. 3. Their design.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 3.

THE DELAY OF SOUL-HUMILITY.

I. In what does soul-humility consist? 1. *Soul-humility does not consist in mournful verbal utterances.* Pharaoh had given utterance to sad and mournful words. He had spoken in doleful language of his afflictions and of his sin. But he was at the same time far from being humble in soul. His pride was not subdued. Nor was he willing to yield to the demands of heaven. And so we cannot judge the temper of the soul from the utterance of the lips. A humble word may conceal a proud spirit. And it often happens that those who talk the most about humility have the least of it.

2. *Soul-humility does not consist in the outward manifestations of repentance.* Pharaoh had, to all outward appearance, been a true penitent. But humility of soul does not consist in loud confessions of evil, or in sending for the minister of God in the hour of peril. It is rather evinced in calm resignation to the will of God as revealed in His Word, and as made known in the conscience by the Holy Spirit. True humility of soul is unpretentious. It is modest. It seldom speaks of self. It does not parade its religion. It yields implicitly to the will of heaven.

II. How is soul-humility to be obtained? 1. *By having a clear conception of the will of God and of the beauty of truth.* Those who see clearly the will of God in reference to their life and being will have a real incentive to humility. They will view the power of God as contrasted with their own weakness; the wisdom of God as contrasted with their own ignorance; and the littleness of their life will indeed beget a proper spirit of humility. And let men get but a clear vision of the unveiled Truth, and they must be humble. A proud soul cannot have beheld the inner glory of truth, or it would pay immediate homage. 2. *By allowing the varied discipline of life its due effect upon the soul.* If Pharaoh had allowed the sad discipline to which he had been subjected its proper influence upon him, he would indeed have been humble before God. The plagues were sent to humble the proud Monarch. But in vain. And so, the discipline of life is intended and calculated to humble the soul; and if men would reverently submit to it, and co-operate with its holy purpose, they would attain this glorious issue. Pain ought to humble a man. It should remind him of his mortality, and of his return to the dust. 3. *By submitting to the gentle influences of the Holy Spirit.* A man who has the Divine Spirit within him, will be humble in all his dispositions and activities. Spiritual influences produce humility; they permeate the discipline of life, and render it effective and remedial; they lead the soul to the cross, where humility is the condition of all good. Are we clothed with humility?

III. Why is soul-humility so long delayed? 1. *Because men will not give up their sins.* Sin as a dominant influence cannot co-exist with true humility. If sin is in the soul humility will be absent. Pharaoh was covetous; he did not wish to give up his profitable slaves. He was self-willed, and did not like to be defeated in any of his national plans. Unless sin is given up, humility will never be put on. Humility is the outcome of purity. 2. *Because men will not yield to the claims of God.* God has claims upon men. They are unheeded. They are rejected. They are rejected in a spirit of defiance and self-sufficiency. They are the most humble who accept the claims of God and obey them. They give proof of their humility. 3. *Because men are rendered proud by exalted social position.* Kings are in danger of pride from the fact of their elevated position, and from the servile flattery to which they are exposed. Hence social position may delay the advent of humility to the soul. 4. *Men can give no satisfactory*

reason for the delay of soul-humility. Humility is the richest and best ornament of the soul, and no good excuse can be assigned for neglecting to wear it. This ornament is but seldom seen in this vaunting age. It is welcome to the eye of heaven.

LESSONS:—1. *Soul-humility should be manifested by man.* 2. *God's ministers should enforce it.* 3. *God's people should cultivate it.* 4. *Its absence cannot be excused.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 3. God's true servants make no delay in keeping His commandments.

God's servants use His name in their message, which the wicked make a reproach.

God by His ministers expostulates bitterly with sinners for their delay of humbling themselves under judgments.

God will never cease demanding His Church from the wicked world, till it be freed.

How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself? 1. Till I plague thee more? 2. Till thou art destroyed? 3. Till thou hast no opportunity to do so? 4. Have you not delayed long enough? 5. Can you gain any advantage by delay?

MAIN HOMILETICS ON THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4–11.

THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS THREATENED.

I. It was threatened in case that Pharaoh would not give the Israelites the freedom demanded by God. (Verse 4.) God has now been in controversy with Pharaoh for a long time, and we should have thought that the latter would have experienced quite enough of retribution to make him yield. But now another plague is threatened. God will continue to plague men till they give up sin. He will not yield the welfare of His own despised people to the obstinacy of a wicked ruler. The good have in God a stern Defender.

II. That some men are much more sensitive to the threatenings of God than others. (Verse 7.) The servants of Pharaoh give tokens of submission; but they are more fearful than penitent. They endeavour to persuade the king to come to terms with Moses. Pharaoh consents to their wish. Calls the two servants of God. He endeavours to bargain with them. But in vain. He wants to retain the young children of Israel in bondage. He knew that they would grow up to be of value to his nation. Satan does not like to let children go out of his service. Parents should not leave their young ones behind when they set out in the service of heaven. If men were sensitive to the threatenings of God, what judgments would they avert!

III. That Divine threatenings must make ministers faithful in the discharge of their duty. (Verse 9.) Moses gives the king to understand that there would be no compromise in the matter; that he must either let Israel go, or suffer the penalty of disobedience. Moses was fearless. He was faithful. He was true to his mission. And so in the times of threatened retribution it behoves the minister of God to be faithful, to denounce all attempts at moral compromise.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 4–6. To-morrow:—1. A judgment. 2. A mystery. 3. A crisis. 4. An anxiety. 5. A hope.

If thou refuse:—1. Then man can refuse to obey God. 2. Then man can dare the judgments of God. 3. Then

man takes a great responsibility upon himself.

The locusts:—1. Very grievous. 2. Darkening the light. 3. Devouring the fruit. 4. Entering the houses.

Good men should leave sinners when they have declared the message of God:—1. As a reproof. 2. As a contempt. 3. As a prophecy. 4. As a relief.

Verse 7. A REMONSTRANCE AGAINST SIN.

I. It was addressed by inferiors to their Superior. Pharaoh was remonstrated with by his servants, by the chief men of his realm. Hitherto they appear to have been silent. Now they become impatient of the suffering brought upon them. How much good would be accomplished if advisers would always remonstrate with kings in conflict with the Eternal! The conduct of these men was, (1) *bold;* (2) *wise;* (3) *needed;* and if inferiors would endeavour to check those above them when they are about to do evil, they would prevent much crime, they would render themselves blameless, and would do a brave and a faithful thing.

II. It was inspired by a deep feeling of terror. The servants of Pharaoh were concerned for their own safety as well as for the welfare of the nation, which was endangered by the plagues. They regarded Moses as a snare unto them. And so men are animated by varied motives in their remonstrances against sin—sometimes pure and lofty, at other times mean and selfish. These servants did not feel sin to be sin, but a punishment, and hence their entreaty with the king. But it is well for men under any circumstances to cry out against moral evil.

III. It was influential for temporary good. Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh. The king saw that his chief advisers were against him, and regarded their utterance as representative of the national feeling. He had misgivings. The remonstrance made him halt in his rebellion. And many a remonstrance since has made the sinner hesitate in a course of evil, even though it has not reformed his life. Some men are apparently more accessible to the advice of their comrades than they are to the commands of heaven. The wicked servant may preach the gospel to his despotic master.

IV. It was ultimately disregarded. The servants had given Pharaoh good advice, they had influenced him aright, and they had uttered an unconscious prophecy of his future; yet they were finally disregarded. When a man disregards God, he is not likely to pay much heed to the remonstrance of his comrades. Many a wise man has had the pain of seeing his good advice rejected by the sinner. LESSONS, 1. *Remonstrate with the sinner.* 2. *Show him the folly and woe of sin.* 3. *You are not responsible for the result of such a remonstrance.*

Verse 8. RENEWED OPPORTUNITIES OF MORAL GOOD, "*And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh.*"

I. Consequent upon the faithful rebuke of friends. The king was led through the rebuke of his servants to seek another interview with Moses and Aaron, and hence to have another opportunity afforded him of yielding to the command of God. Men have repeated opportunities given them for moral improvement in their lives; often through the plain fidelity of a friend.

II. Through contact with a holy man. Pharaoh was again brought into the companionship of Moses and Aaron. He would feel the influence of their characters upon him. Every time we are brought into contact with a bright and beautiful moral character we should seek to catch something of its radiance. Such contact is an opportunity for soul improvement.

III. May be left unused through the perverseness of the soul. Pharaoh was none the better for this renewed interview with these two servants of God. He only manifested his obstinacy more

fully. It is awfully possible to allow all the renewed opportunities of the soul for moral good to pass away unimproved.

Verse 9. Captious questions from wicked men are plainly answered by God's servants.

Ministers must faithfully declare the purpose of God with regard to His Church.

Little ones as well as great must be carried along with the Church of God to their rest.

The work of the Church after redemption is to serve Jehovah, and to keep a feast to Him.

Verses 10, 11. Proud persecutors terrified with judgments, though they yield a little to God, yet scorn to give Him His terms.

It is the policy and cruelty of persecutors to keep in thraldom the little ones of the Church.

Persecuting powers threaten the Church with evil, as God threatens them.

Whatever persecuting powers seem to yield to the Church, they resolve it shall not be so as God would have it.

Persecuting powers shall tell God who shall serve Him, and allow no more.

God's servants are driven out with contempt from powers, when they serve not their turn.

Driving away the servants of God :—

1. It is to drive away a good friend.
2. It is to drive away a faithful monitor.
3. It is to drive away a real benefactor.
4. It is to drive away an angel of God.

THE THREATS OF THE WICKED, verse 10, latter clause.

God's servants need to be courageous men. They have often to stand before rulers for His sake, and oppose them. They are surrounded by the machinations of powerful adversaries. They are often threatened.

I. Evil men often seek to retard God's servants in their works by threats. God's purposes often come into collision with the actions of wicked men. They often regard His servants as their enemies. Divine work always opposes evil. God's servants have to break in pieces the deceptions, wrongs, and tyrannies of their age. Evil is often entrenched in triumphant positions. Men find their interest in upholding it. Wicked men defend it, and attack those who assail it. They think that they can terrify God's servants and hinder their work, but their threats are vain. God sustains all whom He sends. No opposition, however virulent, can retard them from doing His work. They may be weak and few, but He is their strength. The lives of reformers, martyrs, and philanthropists attest this. His presence has made them valiant and persevering.

> "But saved by a Divine alliance
> From terrors of defeat.
> Unvauntingly, yet with defiance,
> One man the world may meet."

II. That the threats of evil men need not be feared. Moses and Aaron were safe though Pharaoh might threaten evil. They were, humanly speaking, but the champions of slaves, and he was a mighty potentate; yet they were stronger than he, and had less cause for fear. We may fear evil just in proportion as we separate ourselves from God and resist His purposes. Tyrants have often proved their powerlessness to injure God's ambassadors. God has His eye upon them, and a "hook for their jaws." Nothing can really harm God's servants. They may have to suffer, but suffering will be turned into triumphant joy. They may be cast into prison, but their prison walls will gleam with celestial splendour; and like the saintly Rutherford, they will find that their enemies have only sent them to reside for a while in one of God's palaces; they may be robbed of their earthly possessions, but their true riches will be increased; they may be put to a cruel death, but this will only hasten them home from their toils to receive an eternal reward. Real evil cannot befall them. Those who are doing God's work are invincible. They are covered with the

shield of the Almighty; and their work ever goes on. No fulmination of malice can stop it. They and their work are alike secure. They have no cause to fear evil.

III. That the evil threatened, menaces the threatener. Threats often fall upon those who utter them. What evil was before Pharaoh! Thus evil men, deceived by their pride, lose sight of their own dangers. They threaten when they ought to fear. Secure in their own fancied strength, they have hurled their malice upon the servants of the Most High; but their words have recoiled upon themselves. They have digged a pit and have fallen into it. The gallows that has been erected for Mordecai has borne the body of Haman. They proudly boast,

> "But an hour comes to tame the mighty man
> Unto the infant's weakness."
>
> *F. Hemans.*

They forget God. As Luther said concerning the Potentates of his day, who did not remember the overruling might of God in their projects: "Our Lord God says unto them: For whom then do ye hold Me? for a cypher? Do I sit here above in vain, and to no purpose? You shall know that I will twist your accounts about finely, and make them all false reckonings." So it was with Pharaoh when he threatened Moses and Aaron.—*W. O. Lilley.*

THE IMPERIOUSNESS OF UNBELIEF, seen ("*And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence*" ver. 11):—

I. In its reluctance to grant concessions. Impressed by the terrible evidences of Jehovah's power, and urged by his terror-stricken advisers, the proud king seems willing at length to release the people. But half repenting the permission, he asks "But who are they that shall go?" (ver. 8.) So is it ever with unbelief. When compelled to make admissions, it does so with hesitation and with regret. They are wrung from a mind too proud to admit defeat.

II. In its irritable impatience in listening to the voice of reason. Moses claimed that the whole nation should depart, male and female of all ages, along with their flocks and herds. There was nothing unreasonable in this. Even the Egyptians held religious festivals at which it was customary for the women to accompany the men. But the capricious monarch, in the most indignant and scornful manner, swears the little ones shall not be allowed to go, nor any other than the men (ver. 10.) Thus he showed his contempt, not only for Jehovah's ambassadors, but for Jehovah Himself. So is it ever with unbelief. It is impatient of control; inaccessible to reason, especially of the highest kind; and manifests an impotent rage against the arguments it cannot answer.

III. In its ignominious treatment of religious teachers. The wrath of the tyrant king rose beyond all control, and he imperiously waved Moses and Aaron out of his sight. "And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence." Foiled and confounded by the simple but unanswerable presentation of the truth, unbelief vents its passion in spiteful invective.

The utmost rage of unbelief is powerless to daunt the courage of God's messengers. When Valens, the Arian Emperor, threatened Basil with bonds and banishment, the fearless bishop exclaimed—"Let him threaten boys with these. The Emperor may take away my life, but not my faith: my head, but not my crown."—*G. Barlow.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12–15.

The Plague of Locusts; or, the Residue of Human Comfort and Enjoyment destroyed by the Retribution of God.

It has been observed that the plagues of Egypt, as they succeeded each other, were characterised by increasing severity. This one appears an exception to the rule. But only on first sight. The very name of locust was a terror to the Egyptians. They were an awful infliction (Joel i. 6–12). There were various species of locusts, which are called in the Bible by various names; the name in this place signifying "multitudinous:" and it is probable that the visitation consisted of several different kinds. Hence the land that had previously been visited by hail and fire, must now have been utterly desolated. Hence we see how human joys are devastated by the retributions of heaven.

I. That sometimes the retributions of God leave a residue of comfort to the lives of men. We read that though the flax and the barley were smitten by the hail and the fire, the "*Wheat and the rie were not smitten.*" Hence there was something valuable left to Egypt after the severe retribution had ceased. And so it is generally with individual life; the retributions of heaven do not take all away from a man at a stroke; they leave some hope and comfort behind. It is so in bereavement; if the wife is taken, the child is left. It is so in business; if the capital is lost, it may be the reputation is saved. It is so in personal attributes; if one sense grows dim, another remains yet more active. If the flax and barley are destroyed, the wheat and the rie are left. This is more than is deserved. It is merciful. But it is the kind way of heaven.

II. That upon continued sin the residue of human comfort may be entirely removed by the retributive anger of God. If the hail and the fire do not accomplish their mission to the soul of man, the locusts will be sent to "*eat the residue of that which is escaped.*" "They shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field." His method of retribution appears pitiless and destitute of consideration for the consequent woe of man; but it is the just outcome of obstinate sin. How many lives have been spoiled of their comforts and left in solitary and defenceless pain by such a retribution! Sin is the explanation of much of the calamity we find around us. If men will not heed the voice of God, the locust will succeed the hail, and complete their woe; then all their glad things will vanish.

III. That upon continued sin the remaining comforts of man may be destroyed by the co-operation of primary and secondary causes. "And the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts." Hence the retributions that are intended to destroy the remaining joys of the wicked are sent through the ordinary agencies of nature, and along the ordinary channels of life. God sends them by the agency of the east wind. The sceptic may say that the east wind alone brought the locusts upon his green things; but this is unreasonable and atheistical. Men in these days have too much Scripture knowledge to regard nature as the origin of their trouble. God commissions the wind that works desolation upon the hope of the wicked.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 12. When persecutors drive out God's servants, He hastens determined plagues on them.

The hand of man, stretched out at God's word for plagues, is a terrible sign to His enemies.

The plague signified shall come by God's word to verify the sign given.

The plague coming shall do full execution upon God's enemies and creatures for their sakes.

God can make a latter plague finish that which a former plague only began to destroy.

Verses 13–15. At God's command of signals to denote His word His servants must use them.

God's true ministers show readiness and exactness in giving forth signs commanded by Him.

At God's set times His plagues do come and are not delayed.

Locust plagues, as well as others, extend themselves and rest where God will have them.

Incomparable vermin God can create to plague persecutors of His Israel.

Locust plagues and the like cover over and transform the face of the earth at God's word.

Devouring and killing plagues to creatures, God sends upon wicked persecutors.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16–20.

A False Repentance.

Pharaoh had driven Moses and Aaron from his presence, but now he recalls them in great haste, and with much respect. The day will come when all rebellious souls will be glad to engage the intercessions of the good; even though they may despise them now. Hence the plague of locusts made a great impression upon the king, and he became very anxious for its removal. A False Repentance :—

I. It proceeds from the impulse of the moment, and not from conscientious conviction. This token of repentance was the outcome of impulse. The king was awe-stricken by the plague of locusts, and for the moment was bowed in repentant mood. His confessions of sin were prompted by the feeling of the hour, and would be silenced by the removal of the plague. His repentance was not a matter of deep conviction. His soul felt no agony for sin. It had no vision of an offended God, of a broken law, or of a woful destiny to come. It saw only a temporary retribution. A truly penitent spirit will look through all the pain that occasions its grief to that Being who alone can pardon its sin. Conviction rather than impulse must mark the commencement of a new life, and can alone give it permanent reality. The repentance of impulse is but of short duration.

II. It is marked by selfish terror, and not by a godly sorrow for sin. Pharaoh evinces a slavish dread, and a fear of death. He had no thought about the sin he had committed. He was not filled with genuine sorrow on account of his wilful rejection of the Divine claims. His cries were those of a despairing soul; they were not the utterances of a contrite heart. He felt the force of the retribution that rested upon him. He had no means whereby to escape it. Death was before him. He saw little hope of mercy; in fact, mercy in the true sense of the word he did not seek. And a false repentance has always a large element of terror in it, and that sorrow for sin, which is so true and refreshing, is unknown to it.

III. It craves forgiveness of an immediate offence rather than a thorough cleansing of the heart. Pharaoh sought the forgiveness of his sin this once; he did not ask for the purification of his moral nature. He had spent a long life in sin, he had been guilty of continued opposition to God, and his repentance ought to have had reference to his entire life. But he cared not for the cleans-

ing of his soul, he only wanted the removal of the plague. A false repentance only contemplates the sin that is nearest the trouble that has come upon the sinner, and which seems to have brought it. It does not imagine that the cleansing of the heart is the first condition of freedom from retribution. One plague may be removed, but if the soul is unchanged in its mood, another will succeed it. The heart must be pure before the plague will cease, before heaven will smile upon the soul.

IV. It confides in the intercession of a fellow-mortal rather than in the personal humbling of the soul before God. Pharaoh asked Moses to pray for him, but was not much inclined to pray for himself. False repentance always substitutes the petitions of others for its own pleadings with the Almighty. It has more faith in the supplications of the good than in its own selfish prayers. In the work of repentance the soul must be intensely personal. It must think for itself. It must feel for itself. It must pray for itself. The ministers of God may direct and aid a soul in the hour of sorrow for sin, but beyond this they are useless. The soul must come direct to God if it seeks mercy. Christ is the only mediator. A human priest usurps the Divine prerogative.

V. It regards God more as a terrible Deity whose wrath is to be appeased, than as the Infinite Father whose love is better than life. Pharaoh regarded the great God as a Despot whose wrath he had awakened, and whose retribution he had invited. He saw the Divine character through the medium of retribution. He beheld not the mercy of the Infinite. A false repentance always has wrong notions of the character and government of God. It sees the tyrant where it ought to see the Father. It sees the despot where it ought to see the Judge.

VI. It expresses a promise of amendment which is falsified by previous dissemblings. A false repentance is always loud in its promises of reformation, which are generally falsified by the subsequent conduct of the sinner. Some men have appeared penitent so often that it is difficult to know when their sorrow is real and whether it is likely to be abiding. Repentance is such a beautiful thing that Satan is sure to try to imitate it, and satisfy men with its counterfeit if he can so delude them. LESSONS: 1. *To be sure that our repentance is genuine.* 2. *To bring forth fruit meet for repentance in daily conduct.* 3. *Not to pass a hasty judgment on the repentance of men.* Half the Revivalists of the day would have called Pharaoh a true convert; time tests conversion.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 15-17. Vengeance may make persecutors call in God's servants for help as hastily as they drove them out.

Double confession of sin many hypocrites make under plagues, yet not in truth.

Proud persecutors may be forced to acknowledge their guilt against man and God.

It is only death which troubled sinners deprecate.

Verses 18-20. The winds are in the hand of God. God spares the wicked in answer to the prayer of the good.

God can make winds take away plagues as well as bring them.

Miraculous is God's healing, as well as plaguing, at the desires of His servants.

Judgments of removing and heart hardening from God may be coupled together in the wicked.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21-23.

THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS; OR, A TYPE OF THE SAD MORAL CONDITION OF UNREGENERATE HUMANITY.

The land of Egypt is now covered in palpable darkness. We cannot tell how this darkness was produced. It was a miracle. It may have been produced by a deprivation of sight (Deut. xxviii. 27-29). It may have been caused by a storm, or by a thick cloud resting upon the earth (Exod. xiv. 20). The Egyptians worshipped the sun under the name of Osiris. Thus their god had forsaken them, or he was dethroned. This darkness was not relieved by any artificial light; but the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

I. That unregenerate humanity is in a condition of moral darkness. This is abundantly evident to a devout and thoughtful mind. It is demonstrated by the pages of inspiration, by the record of history, and by the experiences of human life. Darkness is upon the face of the earth. 1. *The unregenerate are ignorant.* Darkness is an emblem of ignorance. All unregenerate men are ignorant. They may be men of science, or students of the mysteries of the material universe; they may be versed in all secular knowledge; yet they are ignorant, they are ignorant of God as their Father, of Christ as their Saviour, of the Holy Spirit as their Comforter, and of the glories of the moral universe in which their souls are called to live. 2. *The unregenerate are miserable.* How miserable would be the Egyptians during these days of palpable darkness; a true emblem of the moral wretchedness of the sinner. He is destitute of the glorious light of heaven, the true illumination of the soul. He gropes in darkness to an awful destiny of woe. He knows not the higher enjoyments of being. He lives in a dark world. 3. *The unregenerate are in danger.* Men in the dark are in danger. This is true of the soul. Without the light of truth and without the light of the Eternal Spirit, it must perish. It is under the condemnation of heaven.

II. That unrenewed humanity is in moral darkness through sin. As the darkness was brought upon Egypt by sin, so it has been brought upon mankind. The race was born into the glad enjoyment of moral light. The light was lost by disobedience. Hence all men are now born in soul-darkness. They only emerge into light as they come to the cross, where they are illumined by the Sun of Righteousness. Then they walk as children of the light.

III. That unrenewed humanity is in great straits through, and has no artificial alleviation of, its moral darkness. 1. *The moral vision of humanity is impeded.* The Egyptians were not able to see each other. If men were pure, with what visions of soul would they be enriched; they would see the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descending upon them. But, alas! they are in darkness because of sin. 2. *The moral activity of humanity is suspended.* The Egyptians were not able to rise from their places. Sin imprisons the activities of the soul. It renders men unable to accomplish the mission of life. This darkness of the soul can only be removed by Christ. No artificial light can chase it away. LESSONS:—1. *To seek to relieve the woe of those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.* 2. *To see the effect of sin.* 3. *To seek light from the cross of Christ.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 21-23. God falls upon sinners without warning, when they deal falsely with Him.

The same signal God may command for several uses.

Palpable darkness is a judgment from God.

Chains of darkness can God make to hold fast sinners in prison.

God executes His judgments on

the world with discrimination to His people.

Egypt's darkness is Israel's light.

LIGHT IN THE DWELLINGS OF THE GOOD.

I. In the dwellings of the good there is the light of revealed truth.

II. In the dwellings of the good there is the light of providential guidance.

III. In the dwellings of the good there is the light of moral character.

Home light, ver. 23—last clause. The light which the Israelites had in their dwellings during this plague was doubtless supernatural. God still gives light to His people while the world around them dwells in darkness. Earth has no light in itself; neither has man. All light is from God. All may possess spiritual light. Some prefer darkness. The true Israel still have light in their dwellings. Light in the heart brings light in the home.

I. There is supernatural light in the dwellings of God's people. Light may be regarded as an emblem of spiritual truth. There is a light brighter than the light of the sun. God's people dwell in it. The light of the glory of God has shone in upon them.

"'Tis not the morning light
That wakes the lark to sing;
'Tis not a meteor of the night,
Nor track of angel's wing;
It is an uncreated beam,
Like that which shone on Jacob's dream."
—*Montgomery.*

"God is light." He dwells with His saints. Christ is the true Light. He riseth upon them as the "Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings." God's Word is a light: this Divine lamp ever shines in their homes. Light is an emblem of love, of purity, of knowledge, of joy. These virtues ever brighten and beautify domestic duties and parental anxieties. No other light, but that which comes from God, and is apprehended by the eye of the soul, can truly illumine our dwellings. No creations of worldly wisdom, wealth, or philosophy can give this heavenly light. There is darkness that may be felt where it does not shine. Approaching the metropolis one winter's evening in the train, the lights gleaming from its myriad houses as we dashed along attracted the notice of the passengers. "Ah," said a poor woman, "the houses look bright enough, but the true light is where the love of God is." She had been taught of God. This is the truth. Only those who have His love have "light in their dwellings."

II. That this light is the source of manifold blessings. Comfort under trial; strength in weakness; peace in disquietude; lessons of resignation, patience, and fortitude: sanctification of affliction; sympathy with the suffering members of the household; preservation in calamitous times; sustaining trust in God under perplexing circumstances; hope of eternal felicity. Happy is the home where this light shines. Men from such homes have a celestial brightness about them; children reared in such dwellings become "burning and shining lights in the world. Happy is the people that is in such a case." (Ps. cxliv. 12–15.)

III. That this light is a foregleaming of that glory which will be enjoyed by God's people for ever. The light that shines in pious homes is the same that brightens heaven. When John saw that holy dwelling-place he says, "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." God's love in Christ is the light of every true Israelite's dwelling on earth, and that is the light of heaven. Christian homes ought to be "spangles of celestial brightness on this darksome earth." The light here is sometimes dimmed. Heaven is its native sphere. It suffers *there* no eclipse. Our vision too will be clearer. Every spiritual truth which natural light symbolises, and is but its material shadow, will be seen in all its harmonious sympathies and grandest proportions. We shall see light in God's light. The light will penetrate us more fully: we shall be glorified by it. We now know in part, but then face to face. The light is the same; but it

has now to pass through the murky atmosphere of our sinfulness. This light gleams upon us to prepare us for its fuller manifestations in heaven. The home of the true Israelite is bright with the celestial glory: it has much of heaven in it: it is distinguished by heaven's light; and those who pass from such dwellings into heaven go from one Divine glory to another; going from God's light on earth to His light in heaven.

The dwellings of the good:—1. Their light. 2. Their beauty. 3. Their protection.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 24-26.

THE RELUCTANCE WITH WHICH MEN YIELD A COMPLETE OBEDIENCE TO THE IMPERATIVE CLAIMS OF GOD.

I. The fact of this reluctance on the part of man to yield complete obedience to the claims of God. 1. *This reluctance is seen in the judgments that are sent to overcome it.* What judgments were sent to overcome the reluctance of Pharaoh to a complete surrender to the claims of God! How varied! How numerous! How afflictive! And yet all in vain. He continued to defy the servants of heaven. He sought to make a compromise with God and duty. There are many like him in our own times. They are afflicted by a providence designed to bring them to the performance of duty; yet they refuse subjection to the will of heaven. 2. *This reluctance is seen in the mercy that is despised.* 3. *This reluctance is seen in the faithful ministries that are rejected.* Moses and Aaron were many times sent to urge the king to compliance with the commands of God; but in vain. How many faithful and persuasive appeals have been made to us to give up all sin, and to render an unreserved service to the King of heaven! That men resist these judgments, these ministries, and the abundant mercy of God, is complete evidence of their great reluctance to surrender all for Him. (1.) *This reluctance is a matter of revelation.* (2.) *This reluctance is a matter of history.* (3.) *This reluctance is a matter of experience.*

II. The reasons of this reluctance on the part of man to yield complete obedience to the claims of God. These reasons are obvious:—1. *Depravity of nature.* Man is depraved in soul. He has fallen away from God. He has lost the love of God from his heart. Hence he has an aversion to the Divine service. He is at enmity with the Being who demands obedience. This is one reason of man's reluctance. 2. *Pride of heart.* Man is proud and does not like to be humiliated by surrendering all to God. Pharaoh likes to keep his slaves. He fancies that they augment his importance, and the prowess of his nation. Men imagine that sin is an exaltation; hence they are unwilling to give it up. 3. *Selfishness of motive.* Pharaoh was selfish. He would not give up the wealth brought to his treasury by the energies of his slaves. Men imagine that sin is a gain and a profit; hence they are reluctant to make an entire surrender of it at the call of heaven. 4. *Obstinate in will.* Pharaoh was obstinate. He did not wish to yield to Jehovah, of whom he had but little knowledge. Men obstinately resist a fancied invasion of their rights, and hence will not yield to the claims of God.

III. The folly of this reluctance on the part of man to yield complete obedience to the claims of God. 1. *Because it provokes painful judgments.* 2. *Because it is useless to contend with God.* 3. *Because final overthrow is its certain outcome.* Surely we see the folly of this reluctance in the case of Pharaoh, in the plagues it brought on him and his people, in the useless conflict he con-

ducted with the Infinite, and in his final overthrow in the Red Sea. Men who will not yield to the claims of God are ultimately overtaken with sad calamity. Are we reluctant to yield entire obedience to the claims of duty? LESSONS:— 1. *That man will consent to any terms rather than yield a complete submission to the will of God.* 2. *That God will only be satisfied by an entire surrender to His will.*

THE WAY IN WHICH MEN ENDEAVOUR TO COMPROMISE THE SERVICE OF GOD.

I. That men endeavour to compromise the service of God by nominal allegiance. Pharaoh consented that Moses and the Israelites should worship God in the land of Egypt (Exod. viii. 25). He would then have rendered any assistance for the service, as it would not much have interfered with his selfish and despotic purpose. After the worship the slaves could have returned to their bondage and toil. There are many who seek thus to compromise the service of God. They consent to the worship of God, but they wish to do it in their own way, and at their own time, and so to nullify its design. They seek to pay homage to heaven and yet to retain their sins. Their homage is only nominal. It is the outcome of fear or policy.

II. That men endeavour to compromise the service of God by an occasional performance of duty. Pharaoh told Moses that Israel might go into the wilderness and sacrifice, provided they did not go very far away; so that they might afterwards return. And so some people try to satisfy the claims of God by going occasionally into the wilderness to sacrifice to Him. They go to the wilderness for this purpose once a month, and then spend all the rest of their time in rejection of the Divine will. This is mockery. It shows that men know better, but that they have not sufficient moral resolution to do better. The service of heaven cannot be compromised in this manner. Men cannot serve God and Satan.

III. That men endeavour to compromise the service of God by a public profession of it accompanied with private reservations. Pharaoh gave permission for the men to go with Moses to sacrifice to God (Exod. x. 10, 11). But the little ones were to remain in bondage. Thus he hoped to satisfy the Divine claims upon him. He no doubt thought this a great concession. And there are people who seek to be religious by letting their great sins go, but they reserve their little faults. They make outwardly a great pretence of goodness, whereas inwardly there are reservations of heart displeasing to God.

IV. That men endeavour to compromise the service of God by excluding it from their worldly pursuits. Pharaoh gave Moses permission to go and sacrifice to God, only he was to leave the flocks and herds behind, in the possession of the tyrant. And how many business men, who feel the claims of God's service resting upon them, seek to let all go but the flocks and the herds! They are not willing to bring religion into their business. They think that they would suffer loss by so doing. Such a compromise can never be allowed. LESSONS:— 1. *That men must not compromise the service of God.* 2. *That ministers must warn men against compromising the service of God.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 24-26. God's instruments of redemption seek not only liberty of persons but of means to serve Him.

True worship and true sacrifice to God, is the duty of God's redeemed people.

God's ministers must be resolute, and not abate a jot of what God requires.

All the exactions of ministers must be made for God's service.

God's servants know not themselves, but depend upon His discovery for what they must offer to Him.

THE PICTURE OF AN UNREGENERATE SOUL.

I. It is opposed to the service of God.

II. It is loath to part with its evil possessions.

III. It is slow to heed the voice of the servants of Truth.

"*Every hoof to be brought out*"—part of ver. 26. Evil personified in Pharaoh. Egypt our sinful condition that clings around us, and brings us into bondage. God's will is that we should be completely set free. This will be accomplished. Repeated conflicts first.

I. The truth suggested that our deliverance will be complete. (1.) *Our natures will be entirely freed from the thraldom of sin.* Every power of body, mind, and soul will ultimately escape from the dominion of evil. The body shall be delivered from the grave. Every faculty—even the lowliest—shall be set free for God. Not a hoof, &c. (2.) *Our families shall be saved.* Often there is much anxiety about the wayward and the fallen; but every truly pious parent should expect the salvation of his children. No child that is sincerely prayed for and worked for will be left to perish in Egypt. (3.) *The whole Church will be saved.* Christ will deliver all who believe in Him. Not one of His true followers shall finally be left in the bondage of evil. The weakest, the most desponding, the poorest and most insignificant, shall all escape. Not one faithful soul shall be missing: for *Not a hoof, &c.*

II. The encouragement that may be derived from this truth. We need encouragement. The bondage is often bitter, and hope fails. The enslavers powerful and the chains strong. We groan to be delivered from our bondage, and deliverance is delayed. But a deliverance, *complete, triumphant,* and *eternal,* is sure. This ought to lead us —1. *To live in the expectation of perfect freedom from all evil.* 2. *To continue to strive, believe, and pray for it.* 3. *To pray and labour zealously for the salvation of our families.* 4. *To sympathise with and aid the weak and lowly in the Church.* Nothing is too hard for God; He can overthrow the most direful bondage. He has declared by His servants that He will bring His people, and all that they possess, out of the land of Egypt.

W. Osborne Lilley.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 27–29.

THE INTERCOURSE OF LIFE.

I. That good men are often brought into contact with bad men. Moses was brought into constant contact with Pharaoh. Thus we see:—1. *That good men are brought into contact with bad irrespective of moral character.* The degraded tyrant and the faithful servant of God meet together in the common intercourse of life. Sometimes on errands of moral significance. What a diversity of character is observable in the throngs of life. The pure soul shines all the more brightly for its contrast with the unholy by whom it is surrounded. 2. *That good men are brought into contact with bad irrespective of mental temperament.* Pharaoh and Moses were opposite in mental temperament. The one was selfish, the other was generous; the one oppressed the weak, the other defended the weak (Exod. ii. 17); the one was proud, the other was humble; the one was deceptive, the other was conscientious and faithful; the one was hard of heart, the other was meek in disposition. And so, men of the most divergent temperaments and dispositions are brought together in the ordinary intercourse of life. 3. *That good men are brought into contact with bad irrespective of social position.* The

despised Hebrew is brought into contact with the proud King of Egypt; the humble shepherd is brought into the presence of the great monarch. And so, men of the extremes of social position are brought together in the ordinary intercourse of daily life. And why? 1. *That men may be imbued with the ideas of a common manhood.* 2. *That class prejudices may be destroyed.* 3. *That charity may be developed.* 4. *That life may become a unity.*

II. That when good men are brought into contact with bad men the meeting should be educational to both. 1. *The companionship of the good should be influential to the moral improvement of the bad.* Pharaoh ought to have been morally improved by his contact with Moses and Aaron; he ought to have profited by their instruction, by their fidelity, and by a study of their characters. Their method of life ought to have been a rebuke to him. Bad men should gather inspiration from the actions, words, and silent but holy influence of a godly life. These are educational. 2. *The companionship of the bad should inspire the good with feelings of gratitude and humility.* Would not Moses and Aaron be grateful that they were different in moral disposition from the tyrant Pharaoh? They would adore the distinguished mercy of God to them. A sight of the conduct of a wicked man ought to awaken a pure soul to a remembrance of the mercy of heaven. It also ought to produce deep humility; in that good men might have been far otherwise than they are.

III. That when good men are brought into contact with bad men, the meeting is not always valued as it ought to be, and its opportunity for good is often unimproved. Pharaoh did not value as he ought to have done the companionship of Moses and Aaron, who were divinely sent to influence him aright. He did not make a good use of the opportunity they presented to him of understanding God and truth. He was the worse for their advice. And so it is, if wicked men do not profit by the companionship of the good, they are morally injured by it. LESSONS:—1. *That a good life is a heavenly ministry.* 2. *That good men should seek to influence the bad aright.* 3. *That good men may learn lessons from wicked lives.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 27–29. The more persecutors are hardened the more they oppress God's Church.

Hardened sinners command God's ministers to depart from them when they faithfully speak for God.

The way in which hardened sinners treat the messengers of God:—1. With contempt. 2. With threatenings of evil. 3. With banishment.

The way in which messengers of God treat hardened sinners:—1. They scorn their taunts. 2. They impart to the language of the wicked a deeper significance than was intended. 3. They are courageous. 4. They bid them a sad farewell.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER X.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Soul-Humility! Ver. 3. It is not that God exults in showing us that He is greatest, and we must yield. Rabshakehs and Cæsars may take pleasure in forcing rebels to humble themselves; but it affords Jehovah no satisfaction to put the conqueror's foot upon the captive's neck. Such is not the treatment which humble souls receive at His hands. Cyrus and Antiochus might want to get the princes of surrounding sovereignties, where they could lord it over them, and show their power. Not so God. He could do that better by our continued resistance than by our surrender; by our contending in strife against

Him with all our power to the last. But He sought to bring Pharaoh and his subjects to a real spirit of soul-humility, that He might exalt them—that He might extend towards them the sceptre of gracious acceptancy—and that He might shower down upon their homes and hearts—not plagues but privileges.

"Complete Thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, O our Lord and God."

Locusts! Ver. 4. There are several species. They are described in Jamieson's Commentary as resembling a large, spotted, red-and-black, double-winged grasshopper, with two hind legs working like hinged springs of immense strength and elasticity. They are frequently referred to in the Bible as one of the great scourges of the East, and the details concerning them have been verified by numerous travellers—justifying Pharaoh's exclamation in v. 17, "*this death.*" No doubt, the distance which these dark locust masses had come would whet their naturally voracious appetites, and aggravate the appalling desolation which they were accustomed to leave behind. In one of the papyri, the locust is mentioned as the common enemy of the husbandman. In the province of Nejed, in Arabia, having destroyed the harvest, they penetrated by thousands into the private dwellings, and devoured even the leather of the water vessels. Major Moore describes a cloud of locusts extending over 500 miles, and so compact on the wing that, like an eclipse, it completely hid the sun. Such are the judicial visitations of Divine Providence upon the godless nations of the earth, the devouring appetites of the moral and social locust-hosts of anarchy, the God-obscuring properties of the cloud-throng of infidelity. See Joel i. 6 and Nahum iii. 15. And these judgments are appointed

"Thus to keep daring mortals more in awe."
—*Young.*

Wicked Heart! Ver. 10. A sceptic once asked Dr Nettleton how he came by his wicked heart? The Christian replied, "That is a question which does not concern you so much as another, viz., how you are to get rid of it." As the man manifested no wish to hear anything on that point, but still pressed the question of how he came by his wicked heart, Dr Nettleton told him that his condition resembled that of a man who is drowning, while his friends are attempting to save his life. As he rises to the surface of the water, he exclaims, "How came I here?" From the bank one of his friends shouts, "Never mind that now; but take hold of the rope." Suppose the infatuated man repeated his inquiry as to how he got into the foaming torrent, and spurned all proffered aid until his question was answered; what would be said as he sank to the bottom? What, but that he caused his own death, and deserved the doom? Thus

"Whether we drive, or whether we are driven,
If ill, 'tis ours; if good, the act of Heaven."
—*Dryden.*

Repentance! Ver. 11. In the Greek it means a change of mind; and in the Hebrew it implies comfort of heart. There can be no abiding consolation of spirit, where there has been no genuine transformation of the mind. This is twofold:—attrition, as when a rock is broken by the springing of a mine; contrition, as when an iceberg floating southward, gradually melts beneath the warm of the gulf stream and the genial rays of the sun. The repentance of Pharaoh had not this latter. His heart resembled that asphalte pavement of our streets, which is softened temporarily under the potent influences of the summer noontide sun, but which is all the harder at the midnight hour for the previous partial softening.

"'Tis to bewail the sins thou didst commit,
And not commit those sins thou hast bewailed."—*Quarles.*

East Wind! Ver. 13. Locusts generally came into Egypt from Libya and Ethiopia; as Diodorus says, "In the spring-time, the south winds rise high, and drive an infinite number of locusts out of the desert of an extraordinary size." But on this occasion they were brought from Arabia. Keil says that the fact of the wind blowing a day and a night before bringing the locusts shows that they came from a great distance, and therefore proved to the Egyptians that the omnipotence of Jehovah reached far beyond the borders of Egypt. How often God sends judgments from remote and far-away places to convince them that He is Jehovah afar off as well as nigh at hand!

"Soul of the world, supremely High,
Where—where shall man Thy potence fly?"
—*Peter.*

Locust-Symbols! Ver. 15. In Rev. ix. 3, the Apocalyptic seer beholds locusts coming out of the smoke upon the earth. Unto them was given power as the scorpions of the earth. Their teeth were the teeth of lions, and their power was to hurt men. The locust was esteemed sacred in Greece, and the Athenians wore golden cicadæ or grasshoppers in their hair to denote the antiquity of their race. It was King James who said: "By locusts and grasshoppers understand monks and friars, who seem to fly a little from the earth, but are great devourers. They go in swarms, and seize upon the meadows, the fat and pleasant parts of the land." As Volney says, The Tartars themselves are a less destructive enemy than these little animals. One would imagine that evil had followed their progress. Wherever they went, they caused the dreary image of winter to succeed in an instant to the rich scenery of spring. But Elliott shows that not of the myriad-hosts of monks are locusts a scriptural symbol. The locust-woe was really the invasion of the Saracenic armies, and the pest Mohammedanism which they brought with them. And just as through the forbearance

of God, the plague passed off from Egypt without annihilating all; so the aggressive character of the Saracenic woe rolled away. As Gibbon says: The passion of the Saracens for war ceased. The luxury of the Caliphs, now established (712 A.D.) quietly at Bagdad, relaxed the nerves and terminated the progress of the Arab empire.

"It floats awhile, then floundering, sinks absorbed
Within that boundless sea it strove to grasp."
—*Bally.*

Help! Help! Ver. 16. How intensely dark the night was, as a traveller started on his journey along an unfamiliar road. It was a broad way—smooth and pleasant enough to all appearance, and the man was hopeful and void of apprehension. As he went on, he was encountered by a stranger, who very urgently begged him not to proceed further, as ahead the road was rough and dangerous—passing through a lonely wild—with bogs and quagmires on each side. But the traveller laughed to scorn the sage advice, and proceeded on his way. The darkness deepened — the hedgerows disappeared—and the road could no longer be discerned from the rest of the surrounding country. Lonely cries were heard, which the traveller recognised as the call of the marsh-birds; so that he knew there were fenny places—possibly deep ditches and gloomy tarns around. Scarcely had he arrived at this conclusion than he plunged into a morass. The more he struggled to free himself, the more did he feel his limbs sinking in the mire, and his head and arms becoming entangled amongst the flags and rushes. Worn out and alarmed, he uttered a loud cry for help. It is answered, and presently a man with a lamp in hand appears to help him out. The foolish mocking traveller recognises his monitor on the earlier part of the road; but he does not now scorn his assistance. Pharaoh had ridiculed the remonstrances of Moses against pursuing a path of antagonism to God; now he appeals to Moses for help. Moses' intercession prevailed, and so often do the prayers of the saints, urgently solicited by sinners, avail for the removal of Divine judgments.

"And beneath the great arch of the portal,
Through the streets of the City Immortal,
Is wafted the fragrance they shed."
—*Longfellow.*

Locust-Lessons! Ver. 17. These insects are used for food. John the Baptist fed on them, and the Hottentots are glad when the locusts come, for they fatten upon them. Thus as locusts gathered, prepared, and eaten, prove a common and nutritious food; so trials properly used may become blessings. Out of the eater went forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness, is as true of the locust as the lion, and may be as true of the judgments of God as of the locusts. It is well for men to derive all the good they may and can from the trials of Divine appointment.

"Sometimes the souls He loves are riven
By tempests wild, and thus are driven
Nearer the better land."—*Perry.*

West Wind! Ver. 19. Orosius mentions a locust plague about 125 B.C., which happened in Africa, and adds that, after these living vermin had consumed all the herbage of the field, and had gone so far as to devour the bark and solid timber of the trees, a violent wind came and wafted them away in different portions ultimately to plunge them in the sea. Pliny states that the winds carry them off in vast swarms, upon which they fall into the ocean and seas of waters. Oh! when the breath of the Spirit of the living God is wafted upon the serried ranks of the locust-devourers of infidelity, how these voracious and selfish principles are swept away into the sea of oblivion! As a scourge upon the nations God uses them; and when their ungrateful task is done, He drowns them in the deep ocean of forgetfulness.

"A wave of dark oblivion's sea
Then sweeps across their place."—*Gould.*

Darkness-Symbolism! Ver. 21. It has been remarked by Salter that darkness is the proper image and metaphor by which to represent moral ignorance. At midnight all that is fair and beautiful in nature is concealed. There are fields and forests, brooks and fountains, rivers and valleys; but gloom and confusion rest upon all this loveliness. And in like manner, as long as a man continues in moral darkness, there is a veil and confusion (as it were) upon God and Christ, upon heaven and eternity. These, bright and glorious in themselves, and bright and glorious in their radiance to the believer who walks in the light, are hid from the eyes of the walker in darkness. He sees—but how? As the traveller in the night, who mistakes some lovely rosebush for a demon being of unholy birth.

"Reason may strive, but reason strives in vain;
It cannot break the adamantine chain."

Darkness-Lessons! Ver. 22. Men in the dark are in danger. Sailing once along a coast where a friend had suffered shipwreck, the scene which recalled his danger filled us with no fear. Why was this? Because, while his ship, on the night she ran ashore, was cutting her way through the gloom of a dense fog, we were ploughing the waters of a silver sea, where noble headlands, and pillared cliffs, and scattered islands, and surf-beaten reefs stood bathed in the brightest moonshine. There was no danger just because there was no darkness. The robe of night

"With sparkling brilliants guide the vessel on,
And now the land appears—the port is won."—*Mark.*

Artificial Light! Ver. 22. Herodotus records that at the sacrifice at Sais the

assembly is held by night. They suspend before their houses in the open air lamps, which are filled with oil mixed with salt; a wick floats on the top, which will burn all night. The feast is called the Feast of Lamps. Such of the Egyptians as do not attend the ceremony burn lamps in like manner before their houses; so that all Egypt is illuminated. When, therefore, the great horror of darkness chained them to their seats, these worshippers would bethink themselves of the brilliant illumination of their artificial light. But in vain! They could have no lights whatever. And, when God leaves the hardened sinner in the outer darkness of condemnation, all artificial lights of human reason and philosophy falsely so called will be of no avail. They will be beyond the sinner's reach, and will also themselves be quenched in the blackness of darkness. So that whatever show of courage sinners may display whilst their artificial lights gleam, yet all self-assurance will forsake them—

"As heroes, dauntless in the thickest fight,
At phantoms tremble in the darksome night."

Darkness-Effects! Ver. 23. Modern discoveries have shown that the seeds of epidemic and miasmatic diseases are generated and exert their activity during the night, and in places unvisited by the solar beams. Darkness is favourable to their development. This is a true picture of the cause of sin's development and growth. In proportion to the density of the gloom of mental and moral ignorance is the increase and fructification of sin. The Jews have a tradition that there were terrible alarms under the Egyptian canopy of darkness; that the devil and his angels were let loose during those three dreadful days, and that they had a wider range, a greater liberty than usual for working mischief. Such a thing seems to be referred to in Ps. lxxviii. 49. He sent, *i.e.*, He permitted, evil angels among them. Certainly wherever moral ignorance prevails, there Satan and his spirits of evil are busily employed.

"'Tis dark—that dreary, witching hour of night,
When restless spirits steal in mortal sight,
And grisly spectres stalk their dreary round."

Light-Lessons! Ver. 23. A young prince having been chastised by his royal parent for doing something wrong, was full of discontent and displeasure. Passing, by and by, through the palace gate, he encountered a street-Arab, who had left his father's home, but who, however free from chastening, was lean and wretched, miserable and woebegone. The young prince dried his tears very quickly with the reflection that it was far better to be a chastened prince than a wretched beggar-boy. He looked down upon the ragged urchin's condition with the greatest conceivable pity and thankfulness, even though he himself was smarting from the rod. God had chastened Israel, and they had expressed displeasure. By and by, when they saw how the hearts and homes of the Egyptians were draped in darkness, while they themselves, as the children of the Heavenly King, were enjoying light, doubtless they would compare their own condition with the misery of the oppressors, and would look upward with gratitude to Almighty God, who, though He chastened them, nevertheless crowned their lives with the light of His countenance. And thus—

"Their streams of joy would more enriching grow,
As they adored the source from whence they flow."

Pride! Ver. 24. On the shore of the Scandinavian Peninsula stands the ancient city of Bergen, facing the prevailing winds from the west and south-west. Behind it rise the towering rugged peaks and mountains of Norway. These attract the clouds charged to the full with moisture, and force them to pour their torrents of rain on the surrounding country. Thus what, from its position, facing the rainy quarter, ought to be abundantly supplied with rain, is comparatively rainless. How often do the lofty mountains deprive the soul of those divine droppings of grace which refresh the spiritual life!

"So keen the grasp, so vast is human pride,
When pampered most—the least 'tis satisfied."

Conscience! Ver. 25. The manager of a cotton-mill received a complaint from the girls in the weaving-room that they could not make the bobbin-boys hear them call for more bobbins. Having bought several bells, he instructed the boys to answer these when rung by the girls. For a time all went well. No matter where the boys were, the bells were heard above the clatter of the looms. But by and by the girls began to complain that the boys were getting careless, and hindered them more than before; while the boys answered that the girls did not ring loud enough. The manager therefore went to the room, and experimented by ringing one of the bells again and again; yet, though the bobbin-boy was not far off, he paid no attention. Suddenly it flashed across the manager's mind that the bells must be at fault. On inspection, he found that the girls had been in the habit of snatching up the bells by the metal instead of the handles, and that they had thus covered the bells with oil from the machinery. The bells were accordingly cleaned, and all went well. To how many people has the clear voice of conscience become a dull sound? Not at once; but gradually—gradually as the bell decreased its tone—gradually as Pharaoh progressed in sin—

"Till, like a frozen mass, his heart was chilled,
Its upward movement stayed, and conscience stilled."

Heart-Hardness! Ver. 27. Away on the wide ocean, at the midnight hour, when the winds howled and the clouds loured heavily, floated a man clutching a plank riven by the storm from the deck of the gallant barque which but twenty-four hours before he had commanded, but which now was buried fathoms deep within the heart of the ocean. A godless and profane captain had he been; but he lifts up his anguished eyes to heaven, and amid the gloom and tempest vows that, if the offended Majesty of heaven will but send a ship to his rescue, oaths shall never again pass his lips. Scarcely had he solemnly pledged himself to be a humble servant of God, than a ship hove in sight—a shout was heard, for some one had perceived the dark spot floating, and guessed its cause. The vessel's course was changed—the lifebuoy was flung to the drowning mariner—the crew easily dragged him on board. The vows were soon forgotten, and the reckless sinner revelled in his profanity and godlessness as soon as he was once more in safety. Such was the position of Pharaoh. His resolutions declared under the pressure of suffering perished when the judgment was removed—

"And his regrets were like the flitting light
Which feebly glimmers in despair's dark night."

Obstinate Folly! Ver. 28. Traversing the sandy wastes at the noontide hour beneath the burning sun, horsemen became aware of a dark cloud in the distance, as if rising from the earth. It is the sandrift swept before the whirlwind; and it comes on like a black wall, rising higher and higher till sky and sun are obscured. Whole caravans have been buried beneath that heavy canopy; and the great question is how to escape? There are two possibilities: 1. To flee; and 2. To fight. The first is chosen. The spurs are applied, and the horses, seemingly conscious of the danger, urge themselves to their utmost speed. On and on they spur! The riders look back, only to perceive the dark mass in swift pursuit, from which it is vain to flee. They turn their horses' heads to face it. On comes the dense cloud! The horses press towards it, with th ck-drawn breath from the particles of sand. They pant and press; but all in vain. What folly to contend! When the last breath of the fierce whirlwind passes by, and the sun shines forth bright and clear upon the sea of glittering sand, the dark wall has settled down in a line of undulating mounds, beneath which lie horsemen and horses in death. Pharaoh first fled from the cloud of Divine judgment; now he attempts to fight with it. A vain contention!

"As crime increased, so swelled the threat-
'ning storm,
The clouds assumed a still more awful form."

Moses! Ver. 29. The calmness of Moses is conspicuous all through the contest. The Divine discipline of adversity had accomplished this in him. No more was his spirit to be like the stream which, though coursing through verdant meads, chafes at every pebble, and from its own shallowness murmurs and frets as it flows. Adversity had deepened the channel. Purer, calmer, clearer it rolled on. If it had to plunge down into depths of sorrow in the wilderness wanderings, it had yet sunshine resting upon it; and even from tears was that rainbow formed which—unshaken by tumult, undimmed and unbroken—like that spanning the cataract's verge, shines with all the soft tints of the skies—

"Whose fleecy clouds, in radiant splendour glow,
While heaven is mirrored in the sea below."

CHAPTER XI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—1. Said unto Moses.] Kalisch renders the verb here as a pluperfect, "had said;" and concludes that the object of these verses is to account for the utterance of the final threat before Moses leaves the presence of Pharaoh:—as though God had previously said this to Moses; and now, the fit moment having come, Moses repeats it to Pharaoh. But it seems doubtful whether the Hebrew *imperfect tense* with *waw consecutive* can ever be understood as a pluperfect (see Driver, "Hebrew Tenses," § 76, *Obs.*); and the necessity so to understand it in this place is not very apparent. It should be observed that the narrative has not yet recorded the actual departure of Moses from Pharaoh's presence,—this it postpones to ver. 8 of this chapter; nor does there seem to be any good reason why we should not accept the view declined as "unnecessary" by Kalisch, viz., that "God spoke to Moses whilst he stood before Pharaoh; for the revelation came suddenly upon him." This is surely far more probable than that the writer should have put an unnatural strain on the idiom of his own language.—**2. Borrow.]** Rather, "ask." No one meeting with the Heb. verb שׁאל, by itself, would think of "borrow" as its primary or ordinary meaning. It is true that we may "ask" with intent

to "borrow," and the latter notion may accordingly be sometimes inferred from "context and circumstance;" but to put that notion into this place, just to calumniate the record, or those appearing therein, is more wanton than wise.—**5. The mill.**] Literally, "the two millstones," *i.e.*, the upper and lower:—the characteristic position of the drudge of the family in the East.

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

THE EVE OF FINAL RETRIBUTION

The first three verses of this chapter are a parenthesis, either referring to something that had previously been said to Moses, or to some communication that was made to him while he was in the presence of Pharaoh; they are inserted in order to give a full explanation of the narrative. After Moses had said that he would see the face of the king no more, he continued the utterance of the fourth verse. This was the last interview between the two men, and as such, it was most solemn and affecting. It appears to have made but little impression on the haughty king; but truly this was not the fault of Moses. After the servants of God have rendered their best service for the moral good of men, they may fail of the result they desire; but the husbandman cannot give the desired harvest, he is only responsible for the sowing.

I. On the eve of final retribution God reveals to His servants the things that are shortly to come to pass. God had privately told Moses the judgment He would send upon Egypt and its king, if they did not yield to His command. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. Moses repeated the message to Pharaoh, that the proud monarch might be without excuse in the event of disobedience. Good men are sent by Heaven to announce to the world the retributions of the future. Thus they are saddened; thus they are honoured. God does not generally startle men by retribution; He predicts its advent by the ministry of the good.

II. On the eve of final retribution the servants of God must direct the activities of the Church. (Ver. 2.) Moses was told upon the eve of the threatened plague to direct the conduct of the children of Israel. To the Israelites the retribution was a crisis; it was the supreme moment of their national history, and upon the promptitude and wisdom of their conduct great issues were dependent. Hence they needed direction. And so all the retributions that come upon mankind have an important bearing toward the life and history of the Christian Church; they are related to its moral freedom, and hence it becomes the Church to act wisely in them, that it may receive the full advantage of the hour. The Church has lost the benediction of many a political revolution by sloth and lack of prompt action. All the struggles of nations are destined to work the freedom of the Church. Hence in times of national retribution the Church has need of strong-souled heroes, to awaken its intelligence, to inspire its activity, to guide its energies, and to make it victorious over all its foes, that it may go forth from bondage with the treasure it has earned through many years of unrequited service.

III. That on the eve of final retribution the servants of God become the great men of the times. "Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (ver. 3). Pharaoh had not taken the advice of his servants (chap. x. 7), and it is evident that he had lost the sympathy of his people to a large extent. The nation was weary of its suffering. Israel was growing in favour with Egypt This the outcome of a gracious providence. Sometimes God gives the Church favour in the eyes of the world, for the accomplishment of His purpose. In times of national retribution, then warriors are forgotten, then artists are neglected, and the servants of God start into unexpected fame. Men who do

their duty, even to a hostile multitude, are sure, in the long run, to be respected, even though at first they are regarded with scorn. Goodness and fidelity make men great. The world in its truer conscience knows in what real dignity consists. LESSONS:—1. *That times of retribution are revealed to the good.* 2. *That the servants of God must gather strength to act in important times.* 3. *That all things tend to the freedom of the Church.*

ONE MORE PLAGUE.

I. It shows that Heaven will terribly plague the sinner. "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh." Many people cant about the mercy of God and the kindness of Heaven. This is their most prominent theology. They consider the Infinite Father as incapable of plaguing men. Did He not send terrible retributions on the land of Egypt, and were they not compatible with the Divine character and government? And the one plague more to come upon the impenitent sinner will be awful, it will be just; it will be the natural outcome of a wicked life, and will be inflicted by God.

II. It shows that Heaven has a great resource of plagues with which to torment the sinner. Heaven had already sent nine plagues on Pharaoh and his people; and yet its retributive resources were not exhausted. The material universe, in its every realm, is the resource of Heaven for the plaguing of men. Men ask how God can punish the sinner in the world to come. He will not be at a loss for one plague more whereby to torment the finally impenitent. How foolish of man to provoke the anger of God!

III. It shows that Heaven gives ample warning of the plagues it will inflict upon the sinner. The king of Egypt had ample warning of the death that was to overtake the first-born of the nation. God has revealed to the sinner the severity and certainty of the one plague more; and if it falls upon his guilty soul, it will be through wilful disobedience. Men do not walk ignorantly to hell.

IV. It shows that Heaven has a merciful intention even in the infliction of its plagues. It designed the moral submission of Pharaoh by the threatened plague, and also the freedom of Israel. And so God plagues men that He may save them, and those whom they hold in the dire bondage of moral evil.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1. One plague may do more than nine that have preceded it.

Combined persecutors are joined in God's plague.

In God's own time He will get victory over His enemies.

At God's word oppressors shall release his Church fully and readily.

Verses 2, 3. God may command His servants to ask and have of their very enemies.

It is no wrong to ask and take what God commands His people.

God can give the silver and gold of enemies to His Church.

When God moves the Church to ask He moves hearts to give.

The freedom of the Church:—1. After long struggle. 2. Welcome. 3. The commencement of development. 4. The earnest of victory.

The Church of God:—1. Favoured by enemies. 2. Enriched by tyrants. 3. Freed by Heaven.

God can make men favourable to others:—1. By inspiring beauty of character. 2. By awaking guilty despisers. 3. By bestowing deep sympathy. 4. By enabling them to render efficient help.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4-10.

THE LAST PLAGUE THREATENED.

I. It was to be solemn in its advent. "About midnight I will go out into the land of Egypt." This plague was threatened (chap. iv. 23), and is at last to be executed. God is slow to anger. Human life is precious in His sight. But now the Divine forbearance has reached its limit. The time of the terrible plague is at hand. The first-born are to sleep the sleep of death, not silently and insensibly, but so as to rouse their families at midnight to see them die. The silence of the midnight hour is to be broken by the agonies of the dying, and that in every Egyptian home in the land. The destroying angel will slay the first-born of Egypt. How sad the scene! How solemn the hour! How beyond description! God often plagues the sinner at midnight. When darkness is all around him, then the plagues of Heaven come, and are rendered more awful by the time of their advent.

II. It was to be fatal in its issue. "And all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die." Thus the last plague was to be intensely real. It was not to affect the events of nature; it was to slay man. It was no mere sickness; it was death. Egypt had destroyed the first-born of Israel. Now they meet a just retribution. No doubt those who suffered death were sinners, and deserved the calamity that came upon them. The first-born of beasts were also included in the devastating plague. Thus the Egyptians were punished for their idolatry, and were deprived of their property. The plagues of Heaven are sometimes fatal—fatal to the temporal and eternal welfare of man.

III. It was to be comprehensive in its design. "From the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of beasts (ver. 5). Thus the prince who was to succeed to the throne was not too high to be reached by it, nor the slave at the mill too low to be noticed. It was to extend from the most honourable to the meanest in the realm. The prince is spoken of as sitting upon the throne because he was the next heir to it; or it may be that he was even crowned, as was Solomon while David lived. From the palace to the dungeon would this plague travel. The king is helpless at a time like this. Sometimes the plagues of God are comprehensive; they embrace a vast nation, thousands of homes and families.

IV. It was to be heartrending in its cry. "And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more." The cry of those bereaved would be heard in every direction. Parents who had lost their only child would thus proclaim their grief. The voice of this cry should never die away from our hearing; it makes known the penalty of sin. There are many heartrending cries in the world occasioned by sin.

V. It was to be discriminating in its infliction. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (ver. 7). Thus Israel was to be protected during the terrible retribution. They should be silent. They should be hopeful. The pestilence that walketh in darkness should not come near them. The dog, the most vigilant creature, should not bark at them. The Divine protection of the good is minute; it defends from the most trivial enemy. God will protect the good in the final retribution of the universe. Piety is the best protection against woe. It averts the judgment of God.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 4–6. God takes His time at midnight sometimes to visit sinners.

God's midnight visitations:—1. Terrible to His enemies. 2. They aim at destroying the choicest possessions of the wicked. 3. They are painful. 4. They are almighty. 5. They are irreparable. 6. They are irrespective of social position. 7. They awaken the anguish of men.

Verse 7. A contrast:—1. The wicked crying—the good quiet. 2. The wicked dead—the good living. 3. The wicked frightened—the good peaceful. 4. The wicked helpless—the good protected.

In executing judgments God makes a difference between His elect and His enemies:—1. Wonderful. 2. Pleasing. 3. Inspiring. 4. Prophetic.

Verse 8. Divine vengeance will make those come to God's servants who have despised and discharged them.

Highest anger against sin becomes the best of God's servants.

God makes His despicable servants victoriously to scorn the powers that scorn them.

The Righteous Anger of a Christian Minister.

"*And he went out from Pharaoh in a great rage.*"

Anger is not of necessity sinful. There are times when it is righteous to be angry. Moses was not in an unholy passion. He was grieved at the perversity of a wicked soul:—

I. Because the claims of God were rejected. How many of the servants of God are made angry by the wickedness of men! Men are morally perverse. They will not give up their sin. They refuse repeated offers of mercy. They repulse many judgments. They despise many ministers of truth. They awaken the holy indignation of those who have sought their welfare.

II. Because his Christian work was apparently a failure. Moses had seen Pharaoh penitent. He had perhaps indulged a hope that the terrible retribution he had announced would have awakened the wicked king to calm thought and change of purpose. But in vain. His last interview was apparently a failure. How many Christian ministers are grieved by the failure of their best energies to induce men to moral goodness!

II. Because the freedom of Israel was yet unaccomplished. Moses was perhaps too hasty in expecting the accomplishment of his task. Men who are working for the freedom of souls must be patient and hopeful in their spirit and temperament. Ministers are human in their feelings.

Verses 9, 10. God foretelleth, and sometimes maketh known, that wicked sinners will not hear His ministers sent to them.

Such refusal of the wicked to hear God's word foreruns usually some strange plagues.

God sometimes aims at the multiplying of prodigious judgments upon multiplied unbelief.

God's ministers do but His work and deliver His word, and sinners harden themselves by the same.

Ocular demonstration of God's strongest plagues will not persuade sinners to believe.

Upon such wilful hardening against His word, God justly hardens to destruction.

Sinners hardened by God will do all the mischief against Him and His people.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XI.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Persistent Effort! Ver. 1. In Howe's Cave, in the New World, is a vast stalagmite, thirty feet high and broad. Listening intently, you can hear a drop of water falling from the high limestone roof at intervals of about one minute. Drop by drop, steadily, slowly, surely, the work is done. Each drop contained an almost infinitesimal particle of limestone, so that thousands of years must have been spent in the formation of this giant stalactite. The relation between the Gulliver result and the Liliput cause is in such contrast, that any one must feel the lesson of persistent effort, patient doing, as well as the confident expectation of large results, and the certainty of duty ending in reward. So with Moses; patiently and persistently had he, step by step, struggled for his nation's freedom, and now he is to receive his reward. Pharaoh is to let Israel go, not under conditions, limitations, and restrictions, but free and unfettered altogether. Jehovah thus assures Moses that even now

"The waves of the ocean are ceasing to swell,
And the tempest has whispered its last farewell."

Divine Favour! Ver. 3. When Luther first began to demand the freedom of the Church, their oppressor, and his cardinals and tributary princes, despised and scorned the humble monk; but as, step by step, he persistently demanded their liberation from moral tyranny, and gained triumph after triumph in the intellectual and theological struggle, his enemies began to look upon the Reformer with different eyes. The Roman Pharaoh and his courtiers feared and hated him, while God gave him favour in the sight of the people; and now at Augsburg, then at Worms—

"Unquailed by frowns, unchecked by human fear,
Before the monarch stands the holy seer."
—*Mark.*

Divine Interposition! Ver. 4. In this last plague God is represented as descending in person. "I" will go out. This was designed to impress Pharaoh with the terrible character of the next inflictive judgment. When a great Eastern monarch sent his general to restore order in an insurrectionary province, the rebels would not heed his authority, but attacked and routed the royal troops. This aroused the king's indignation, and he sent a message that he himself would appear in person at the head of his army, and punish their persistent contumacy. Jehovah warns the Egyptian rebel against His sovereign commands, that He would now personally interpose to secure submission to His supreme authority. If the paw of a bear meet with so thin a substance as the caul of a man's heart, how easily is it torn to pieces. Pharaoh had fitted himself for the interposition of Jehovah in person, and His judgment would be as fire rushing through the dried prairie grasses.

"Stay, wretched monarch, in thy sinful path,
And hear this message of avenging wrath;
Hear it and *tremble*—it is GOD'S, not mine!"

First-Born! Ver. 5. It is computed that more than one-half of the human race die under five years of age. Think of the millions that constitute one generation! Think of the generations that have come and gone!

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there."

It has been remarked, that as there are more blossoms upon trees in spring-time than ripe fruits in autumn, so there are more infants than adults that fall away from the circles of earthly affection. Like those flowers which grow on frail, slender vines—disclose their beauties for one hour in the morning, and then fold them to their hearts from the gaze of earth for ever—so our first-born pass swiftly and beautifully away,

"In their spirits young prime,
E'er earth has profaned what was born for the skies."

Righteous Anger! Ver. 8. High and gusty passions, says Beecher, are sometimes like fierce storms that cleanse the air, and give the earth refreshment by strong winds and down-pelting rains, provided always that such are justified by the occasions of them. The wrath of Moses was that righteous indignation which noble Christian souls are—under certain contingencies—justified in displaying towards wicked and perverse oppressors. This anger of Israel's leader was the reflection of Jehovah's majestic brow—the wrath of truth and love. It was not a current flowing through oozing marshes, gathering foulness from its foul and stagnant waters; but it was a divine stream—

"It did through wild and rock-bound valleys run,
Like glittering dewdrops in the morning sun."

Sin-Sirens! Ver. 9. In an Exhibition of Art Treasures held in Manchester some years ago, there was a picture by Haydon, entitled, "The Song of the Syrens." It represented a ship in full sail passing by an island on whose

beach were some beautiful women, slightly clothed, singing (as the spectator might imagine), most melodiously to attract the attention of the men on board the vessel. Lashed to the mast, and making eager and almost frantic gestures, was a man dressed in military armour; but the sailors — utterly heedless—seemed as though they cared for nothing but to get past the island as quickly as possible,—all the more as the beach was strewn with dead men's bones. That group of women was Circe and her siren-nymphs! That warrior was Ulysses, the hero of Troy, returning from its capture! He had resolved to prevent his destruction and that of his crew as they sailed past the island by filling their ears with wax, and then ordering them to bind him so firmly to the mast that it would be impossible for him to set himself at liberty. Thus deaf to all his cries—as well as to the song of the sirens—the sailors passed safely out of sight and hearing of their tempters. Pharaoh listened to the Siren's song, and when Moses and Aaron tried to dissuade him, he refused to heed their prudent counsel, and chose to listen to the tempter's song—

"False as the smooth, deceitful sea,
And empty as the whistling wind."

Heart-Wickedness! Ver. 10. However wild the wind and wave, there is stillness far beneath. The waters may surge as mountains to the skies — and sink as valleys in the seas; but away down below the troubled surface of the waters a dead calm prevails, where hideous blind monsters swim, and where loathsome repulsive reptiles crawl. The surface of Pharaoh's heart was tossed and disquieted, for the wicked are like the troubled sea; but the depths are still—the drear, dread calm of the death of sin reigns—a haunt for the ravenous and ugly monsters of sin. His heart was hardened—

"And, like the billows of the stormy deep,
Onwards he rushed, with desolating sweep,
Until ONE ROCK opposed his crested pride."

CHAPTER XII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—3. The house of their fathers.] More exactly: "a father's house." The designation naturally imports "family" in the larger sense of "family of families," the entire group formed by the union of grown-up sons and daughters with their children under the ancestral roof. Only in the event of this group being too small for a lamb, were mere neighbours to unite.—**6. Whole assembly of the congregation.]** Here, at the very outset of Hebrew national history, is an illustration of the truth that, fundamentally, all Hebrews were priests (cf. chap. xix. 6),—a truth which lives on in its interest when connected with unfulfilled prophecy (Is. lxi. 6), and with the antitypical realisation in the Christian *ecclesia* (1 Pet. ii. 9). Moreover, it is observable that the first Passover was a domestic observance, and that the Lord's Supper was instituted as a part and an outgrowth of such an observance in an upper room.—**In the evening.]** Literally, "between the two evenings," "probably," says Dr. Davies (Heb. Lex.), "between sunset and dark (cf. Deut. xvi. 6), as the Karaites and Samaritans hold, or perhaps the time between the sun's declining and its actual setting, as the Pharisees insisted and the Jews now hold." Kalisch, deeming the former view "the most rational," translates the expression "at dusk," and quotes with approval the following from Ebn Ezra: "We have two evenings; the first, the setting of the sun, that is, the time when he disappears beneath the horizon; and the second, the ceasing of the light which is reflected in the clouds: and between both lies an interval of about one hour and twenty minutes."—**11. Passover.]** Heb., *Pesach*, "a stepping over," "sparing;" from *pa-sach*, to move away from, to move forward from, to move over from one object to another (Furst). The noun *pesach* occurs forty-eight times in the Old Testament, always rendered "passover" in the "Authorised Version;" and reappears in the Septuagint under the form *pascha*, which is then used in the New Testament twenty-nine times, most notably in connection with the Messiah's death in the Gospels, when the New Feast was instituted, also, with more direct application to the same great fact, by the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. v. 7 (lit. "for OUR PASSOVER ALSO was slain [even] Christ"). The verb *pa-sach* is rendered "pass over" in verses 13, 23, and 27 of this chapter, and in Is. xxxi. 5.—**12. Gods of Egypt.]** "Which words," says *Kalisch*, "evidently mean that the uniform and general extirpation of all the first-born of the Egyptians, which calamity their gods will be powerless to avert, will be a manifest proof to those who have hitherto worshipped them that they are a vain support and an idle refuge: thus the authority of the idols will be destroyed in the eyes of the Egyptians, and this was the severest 'judgment' which the omnipotent Lord of the Universe could exercise against them"—**35, 36. Borrowed...lent.]** Render: "Asked," and "let them have what they asked;" and cf. "Critical Note" on chap. xi. 2.

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

THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR.

The nations of the globe have regarded various periods as the commencement of the year. The Athenians reckoned the commencement of their year from midsummer; the Romans from the middle of winter; the Arabians from the spring; and the Egyptians from the autumn, as then the Nile returned within its banks, and seed-time began. It would appear that Israel, during their bondage, had recognised the Egyptian calendar, which commenced in autumn. They are henceforth to reckon the commencement of the year from the spring; this was their ecclesiastical year. The civil year began in the seventh month (Lev. xxv. 9).

I. The first month of the year is a good time for religious contemplation and devotion. In this beginning of months the Israelites were to celebrate the Passover. They were to undertake all the services described in this chapter. They were to celebrate their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and from the sword of the destroying angel. This was pre-eminently the month of their religious life, when its holy memories were awakened, when its impulses were quickened, when its experiences were enriched, and when God was especially near to them as a people. And so the first month of the year is a good time for religious meditation, and for the public devotion of the people of God, the spiritual Israel. It should indeed be in this respect the beginning of months with them. The old year has gone, the new year is opening to the vision of the soul. It is, therefore, pre-eminently a time for thought and prayer. Then the flight of time, the events of life, and the mortality of man, may all furnish topics for reflection. Then especially should the Passover be celebrated, the blood of Christ anew be sprinkled on the soul; and in this spirit of trust in the Saviour should the year begin.

II. The first month of the year is eventful in the history of individual and collective life. Truly this first month of the year was eventful in the history of the Israelites. In it they were brought out of Egyptian bondage; in it they went over the river Jordan, and came into the land of Canaan (Josh. iv. 19). Thus it was eminently eventful in their national history. And the first month of the year is important in the history of the soul. How many souls, awakened by the circumstances of life, have been led to the Cross at this solemn period of the year! How many men have been converted in special religious services held at this appropriate time! Truly this has been a period when many immortal souls have come out from the bondage of sin into the liberty of God's dear Son; and when many have crossed the Jordan of death into the land of rest, to pass, not time, but eternity, with the God who has redeemed them. Hence the first month of the year is important in the history of the soul. What we are then, we are likely to remain throughout the year; we then get an impulse for good or evil which will affect our moral character to the end. The first month is the keynote of the year's moral life. It is the rough sketch of the soul's life for the year. We should therefore seek to observe it unto the Lord.

III. The first month of the year is important in its relation to the commercial prospects of men. The first month of the year was spring-time, answering to part of our March and April. The Hebrews in their months followed the course of the moon, every new moon being to them the beginning of a month. Hence at the commencement of the year all things began to flourish and to revive in strength and put on the beauty of spring. And so with men now. The first month of the year has much to do with the vitality and

energy of their commercial life. Then trade may receive an impulse or a check. The new year may mark the advent of new energy, or it may witness the continuance of the old indolence. LESSONS:—1. *That the ordering of months and of years is of God.* 2. *That the first month must remind us of the Advent of the Saviour.* 3. *That the first month must be consecrated by true devotion.* 4. *That the Church must pay some attention to the calendar of the Christian year.* 5. *That God usually by His ministers makes known His mind to His Church.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **3–13.**

THE INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER.

I. The circumstances under which the Passover was instituted. The king of Egypt and his people had rebelled against the command of the Lord, as made known by Moses and Aaron, in not consenting to give Israel their freedom. Mercy had been tried, judgment had been inflicted, all to no purpose. The heart of Pharaoh was still hardened against the Divine request, and now Heaven is driven to the last extremity of retribution, and has determined on and announced the death of Egypt's first-born. The Divine edict has gone forth. At this crisis the Passover was instituted for the safety of the children of Israel. How would the destroying angel know the homes of Egypt from the homes of Israel? and what token should he have of the safety of the latter? This was the question. The Passover was the answer. Blood was to be sprinkled on the upper door-post of the houses occupied by the Israelites. And so the world of unregenerate humanity is under the dire sentence of death, and the sentence is soon to be executed. But how shall the good escape the sword of the avenger? By taking immediate refuge in the Cross of Christ. This is the only refuge of man from moral and eternal death. The Cross was instituted to save men from the edict of moral death. (1) *It was instituted under perilous circumstances.* (2) *It was instituted under exceptional circumstances.* (3) *It was instituted under painful circumstances.* And so the Cross of Christ was instituted under circumstances morally dangerous, morally exceptional, and morally painful, but under circumstances which rendered it most welcome to the true Israel.

II. The proceedings by which the Passover was characterised. 1. *A lamb was slain in the houses of the Israelites* (ver. 3, 4). Every householder was to take a lamb, without blemish, of the first year, and, after keeping it four days in the house, was to kill it. This was emblematical of things in the Christian economy. Christ is the Lamb of God. He was taken from amongst the flock in the vigour of manhood. He was ordained to be slain from the foundation of the world. He was without moral defect. He was slain on Calvary. 2. *The blood of the lamb thus slain was to be sprinkled on the upper door-post of the houses of the Israelites* (ver. 7). It was not enough to kill the lamb; its blood must be sprinkled on the upper door-posts of the house, if the inmates are to be safe. And it is not sufficient for the safety of men that Christ died; His precious blood must be sprinkled on their hearts. The blood was not sprinkled on the threshold of the door, but high up on the posts. The blood of Christ is sacred, and must not be trampled under foot of men. The mark of a Christian life is to be evident to the world and easily discernible. There would be no difficulty in knowing the houses of the Israelites. The house of a good man should always be known by the token of the Cross upon it. 3. *The slain lamb was eaten by the Israelites in an attitude of pilgrimage and haste* (ver. 11). The slain lamb was to be eaten by the Israelites. It was not to be eaten raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire. None of the animal was to remain. All were to eat of it. During the repast, their loins were to be girt and

their feet were to be shod. And so the soul must appropriate Christ; it must cultivate an attitude of moral haste, and it must be mindful of its pilgrim condition, if it is to be saved by Him.

III. The results by which the Passover was followed. (Ver. 13.) 1. *After the celebration of the Passover the Israelites were safe.* After the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-post of the house the Israelites were safe from the stroke of the avenging angel. They were protected because they complied with the ordinance of God for their safety. And so men are only safe when they have yielded obedience to the terms of salvation which God requires. The Israelites might have done many wise things, and availed themselves of many preventatives against the destruction of the angel; but if they had not sprinkled the blood upon the door-posts they would have perished. Men may strive to do many things to ameliorate their condition as sinners, but the Cross of Christ is their only real protection. 2. *After the celebration of the Passover the Israelites were free.* After the destruction of the first-born the Israelites were commanded to leave Egypt. The proud tyrant gave them their freedom. He had no wish, at that sad moment, to prolong the conflict with Jehovah, of whose power he had received sufficient demonstration. The souls of men are only free when they are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and when they have made a personal appropriation of the Saviour. Then they are free from the tyranny of pride and passion; they enter upon the long and trying pilgrimage of moral goodness. 3. *After the celebration of the Passover the Israelites were joyous.* They were pleased with their freedom and the prospects before them. They were grateful for the terrible retribution they and their families had escaped through the abundant mercy of God. And so when the soul has received Christ, its first experiences, as it steps out into the new and mysterious life, are those of joy and gratitude. LESSONS:—1. *That every household should have an interest in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* 2. *That to experience the saving benefit of Christ's death the soul must personally receive Him.* 3. *That Christ as dying is the only hope of the soul.* 4. *That Christ died for all.*

THE PASSOVER AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE ATONING WORK OF CHRIST, AND OF ITS RECEPTION BY THE BELIEVING SOUL.

I. In the victim it provides. "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house" (ver. 3). Thus the victim provided for the celebration of the Jewish Passover was a lamb. Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God (John i. 29). He was innocent; He was meek. He was Divinely appointed to be a sacrifice for sin. 1. *This lamb was to be a male of the first year* (ver. 5). Because after that it would be no lamb, but a sheep, and because it must be perfect and strong. And so Christ was mighty in strength. He required to be strong. He had a great task to accomplish, and many hindrances to overcome. He had perfect strength (Ps lxxxix. 19; Isa. xix. 20; Tit. ii. 13). Men must render to God the activities of youth. 2. *The lamb was to be without blemish* (ver. 5). It was not to be lame or blind or sick, or in any way defective. So Christ was a perfect offering. He was pure. Sin strove in vain to soil Him. His enemies could find no fault in Him. He was sinless (1 Pet. i. 19). 3. *The lamb was to be set apart four days* (ver. 6). They were commanded to set apart the Paschal lamb four days, because if they had delayed it till the moment of their departure from Egypt, they might in the haste of other business have forgotten it; in order that they might detect any blemish in the lamb; that they might by a sight of the lamb be awakened to a grateful expectation of their approaching

deliverance; and that they might repose a sure trust in the help of God against their enemies. And so Christ was ordained from eternity as the offering for human guilt. He was in every way tested.

II. In the sacrifice it requires. "And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (ver. 6). Thus the lamb was to be slain, and by all Israel. The continued life of the victim would not have ensured the needed safety. Its death was a necessity. And so in reference to Christ; we are saved by His death. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. He was slain by the entire congregation. The world, Jews and Gentiles, cried out, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" The Paschal lamb was roast with fire. In this we have set forth the sufferings of Christ. No pain equal to that occasioned by burning. Christ in the agony of the garden and on the cross.

III. In the duty it enjoins. "And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it" (ver. 7). The blood appointed to be a means to preserve the Hebrews from death is emblematical of the blood of Christ, whereby men are delivered from sin and everlasting death. True the destroying angel would know the houses of the Israelites without this sign on the door-post, but this shedding of blood was the Divinely-appointed method of safety, and was the token of God's care over them. Christian families must have the blood of Christ sprinkled on the lintels of their doors. They must remember Christ when they go in and out; they must confess Christ to the unbelieving world; then they will be safe from the minister of vengeance. The blood of Christ is the only protection of the soul, and must be sprinkled as well as shed (Rom. v. 11). The soul must make a personal appropriation of Christ. To know Christ will profit little. We must feast on Him by faith.

IV. In the spirit it demands. (Ver. 22.) The bunch of hyssop signifies faith and humility. David said, "Wash me with *hyssop* and I shall be clean" (Ps. li. 7). Hyssop is a lowly herb growing in rocky places. In the reception of Christ the soul must be humble. The Paschal lamb was also to be eaten with *unleavened bread and with bitter herbs* (ver. 8). Here we have shadowed forth the need of repentance and sincerity. And if the soul is to receive Christ, it must be with a contrite heart and with a deep sense of demerit. The Paschal lamb was to be eaten *in the attitude of haste* (ver. 11). The loins must be girded, the feet must be shod, the hands must hold the staff. The redeemed soul must sit loose to earthly things. The good are pilgrims in the world; they must be ready to go to Canaan.

V. In the peril it averts. "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you" (ver. 13). Thus we see the peril escaped by the Israelites through the proper observance of the Passover, and in this we have an emblem of the dangers averted from men by a believing interest in the atonement of Jesus Christ. They are delivered from the power of the second death. They escape the stroke of the destroying angel. Their safety is welcome and happy.

VI. In the extent it contemplates. By a proper observance of the Passover *all* Israel would be preserved from the blow of the destroying angel, not one soul excepted. And so by application to the atonement of Jesus Christ the whole world may receive an eternal salvation from the awful penalties of sin. LESSONS:—1. *That Christ crucified is the only hope of moral safety.* 2. *That Christ appropriated is the only refuge of the soul.* 3. *That Christ must be received by repentance and faith.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 3–13. God alone can ordain sacraments in His Church. Set times or days for duties can only be constantly appointed by God.

God leaves to prudence some smaller circumstances of worship, which nature and reason may judge fit (ver. 3, 4).

The Passover is an evening sacrifice, sweet and real. . . . The blood of the Passover must be sprinkled to give benefit. . . . Houses in the law, but souls in the Gospel, must be sprinkled with blood.

The night of death to enemies God makes the night of feasting to His Church.

God's rules must qualify persons at all times for His Passover communion.

Speed in the use of God's ordinance must be used when God commands it.

The occasion of festival to the Church:—1. The destruction of God's enemies. 2. The destruction of false gods. 3. The deliverance of souls from bondage. 4. The demonstration of the Divine existence.

God sees and answers His own signs, and will spare His people in destroying sinners.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 14–20.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

I. It is the memorial of a glorious fact. The Passover was commemorative of the safety of the children of Israel when the destroying angel passed through the land, and also of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. And so the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is commemorative of important facts in the moral history of men. It is a memorial of the death of Christ upon the cross, and of the freedom then rendered possible to human souls. God will have the great facts of the Church's history well remembered; hence He provides monuments of them to succeeding generations.

II. It is the token of abiding mercy. The Passover, whenever it was celebrated, reminded the Israelites of the abounding mercy of God to them, and in after-years this would be pre-eminently the case. And surely no true soul can draw near to the table of the Lord to partake of His Holy Sacrament, without being sensitive to the continued mercy of the Infinite. Hence the Sacrament is not merely a monument of bygone history, but of the continual compassion of God to the penitent sinner. His mercy endureth for ever.

III. It is the time of joyous festival. The Passover was not merely a sacrifice; it was also a feast. The sacrificial part of it found its counterpart in the death of Christ, but the eucharistic part still pertains to the Supper of the Lord. Hence it is only priestly arrogance and pretence that turns the table of the Lord into an altar of sacrifice; only superstition will be deceived by such artifice. The Supper of our Lord is a glorious festival, where men of varied customs, experiences, and temperaments are united in deepest sympathy. This feast is a bond of union. It celebrates the most jubilant memories of the soul.

IV. It is of perpetual obligation. The Passover was binding upon the Jew. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is obligatory upon the Christian, and that to the end of time. Its obligation will never be removed by Christ, and no other authority is able to remove it. Let all Christian people realise not only their obligation, but the joy of coming to the table of the Lord; there they obtain the richest feast the soul can have. LESSONS:—1. *That the Sacrament of*

the Lord's Supper is a Divine institution. 2. *That it is commemorative of great facts and truths.* 3. *That it is to be observed by all Christly souls throughout the universe.*

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD; OR, THE ORDINANCES OF GOD, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY SHOULD BE OBSERVED.

The feast of unleavened bread was a distinct ordinance from the Passover, though following immediately upon it. At this feast the Israelites were to eat unleavened bread; probably to commemorate the fact that they had left Egypt in such haste that they had no opportunity to leaven their dough, and were consequently obliged to eat unleavened cakes. It would also remind them of the power of God in bringing them out of Egypt when they were without provision for their journey, and it would teach them a lesson of trust in the Divine providence. This feast was an ordinance of God. We observe in reference to it—

I. That the ordinances of God are clearly made known and enjoined upon man. This feast of unleavened bread was clearly made known and enjoined upon the Israelites. And so all the ordinances of God are plainly revealed in the Scriptures, and require the observance of man. 1. *They are Divinely authorised.* This feast of unleavened bread was authorised by God. It was not established by Moses; he was but the exponent of the Divine will in the matter. And so the ordinances of the Christian life have higher authority for their existence than the injunction or desire of man; they are ordained of Heaven. Hence their authority is unquestionable, and will only be set aside by open profanity. 2. *They are morally beneficial.* The feast of unleavened bread was morally beneficial. It carried back the thought of Israel to the old days of bondage, and also to the mercy of God as displayed in their freedom. It was associated with memories the very reproduction of which in the soul could not but have a beneficial tendency. And so all the ordinances of God are morally elevating and instructive. They remind us of great truths, of glorious experiences, and animate with brilliant hopes. The ordinances of God are the banqueting places of the soul. They remind of the past; they strengthen for the present; they prepare for the future. 3. *They are wofully neglected.* In this respect the Jew furnishes a great contrast to the Christian. Few Jews would neglect the feast of unleavened bread; many more professing Christians neglect the ordinances of God. This neglect is prevalent; it is fearful; it is inexcusable; it is morally injurious; it will ultimately meet with its due punishment.

II. That the ordinances of God are to be observed in a spirit and temper free from sin. The Israelites in observing this feast were to put away all leaven; none was to remain in the house. And all who wish faithfully to observe the ordinances of God must put away all moral leaven from the soul. All who partake of the Passover must put away leaven; all who have been sprinkled with the blood of Christ must put away sin (1 Cor. v. 1–8). 1. *The ordinances of God must be observed in a spirit free from hypocrisy.* While observing the ordinances of God, the soul must be pure, free from all duplicity of motive, and perfectly in harmony with the solemn duty in which it is engaged. God seeth the heart, and knows whether the leaven of hypocrisy is expunged. He cannot be deceived. Hence the need of sincerity. 2. *The ordinances of God must be observed in a spirit free from malice and bitterness.* Those who observe the ordinances of God must not be of cruel heart, of unrighteous character, infected with error, or filled with vexation. They must be compassionate; their dealings must be characterised by equity, their minds by true wisdom, and their souls by peacefulness. 3. *The ordinances of God require that the home life be in sympathy with them.* There must be no leaven in the house. A man who has leaven in his house cannot join in the feast of unleavened bread. What

we are at home we shall be in the ordinances of God. The home life and the ordinary worship are inseparable; they are part of the same service, and must be pure.

III. That the ordinances of God are to be observed with solemnity and propriety of moral conduct and demeanour. "And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you." It may be asked why the Israelites were to eat unleavened bread for seven days. The number seven is not used here for an indefinite time, but probably to denote the length of time between Israel going out of Egypt and the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Seven days elapsed between these two events, and hence during this time they were to eat unleavened bread, as their freedom was not complete. *The ordinances of God are solemn, and must be characterised by appropriate conduct.* It was a holy convocation. This feast was set apart from all profane use, and consecrated unto God. Two days of it were not to be profaned by secular toil. On the first day of the seven, appropriate sacrifices were offered (Num. xxiii.) During this time it was lawful to prepare food, which was not the case on the Sabbath (Exod. xxxv. 3). The first and last days were regarded with peculiar sanctity; the intervening days, work could be done. All the ordinances of God are holy, they should be observed with appropriate sacrifices of the heart; but they are not intended to interfere unduly with the time allowed for our secular duties.

IV. That those who profane the ordinances of God are unworthy of them, and should be denied the privilege of them. "That soul shall be cut off from Israel." Some interpret this to mean capital punishment; more probably it signifies the excommunication of the offender from the society and privileges of the chosen people, either by the public act of the proper officers, or by the direct hand of God (Gen. xvii. 14). And so men who neglect or abuse the ordinances of God are unworthy of them; they will derive no benefit from them; they will injure others in the use of them, and ought to be excluded from them until they return to a better state of mind. But such discipline was more rigorous in the Jewish Church than it is in the Christian. There ought, however, to be strict attention paid to the moral fitness of man for the ordinances of God. LESSONS:—1. *That there are in connection with the Church of God many ordinances to be observed by men.* 2. *That these ordinances should be observed with due solemnity and appropriate conduct.* 3. *That neglect of these ordinances is disobedience to the command of God.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 14–20. Passover mercies and unleavened duties are joined together by the Lord.

God's full time must be kept in unleavened duties toward Him. . . . . Unleavened services are appointed as a feast to Jehovah. . . . . Such festivals in type and truth are aimed by God to holiness. . . . . Holy convocations are intended to sanctify the name of God and His people by holy duties.

None of man's own works must come in to interrupt God at any time.

The strict service of God denies not daily food to His servants, but allows it.

Days of deliverance by God should be days of unleavened feasting to Him.

Memorials of such days are suitable to the generations of the Church.

God's statutes alone must make such time to be observed by His people.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21–28.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER.

I. In this incident we have a clear recognition of the principle of vicarious suffering. The lamb was slain instead of the Israelites; the life of the former was taken instead of that of the latter. In this there was substitution. The death of the one secured the safety of the other. If the lamb had not been slain on behalf of the Israelites, and its blood not sprinkled on their door-posts, they must have perished by the stroke of the destroying angel. Hence in this incident we have the principle of vicarious suffering; and this principle extends all through the social life of men. It is seen in the birth of the infant, in the history of the family circle, in the events of everyday life, but supremely in the Cross of Christ. In the Cross of Christ it is seen in its highest embodiment, in its truest meaning, and in its most glorious possibility. There is the innocent dying for the guilty, the God-man suffering for the race. Sometimes this principle is denounced as unjust, but it is a habitual ordination of life, the inevitable outcome of our social and moral relationships. But as regards the Cross of Christ, the principle of substitution, as there manifested, is unique, and has no parallel in the history of men. It is not right for any man to die for another, because no man has a life of his own to give; it does not belong to himself, but to his country and to his family; but Christ, being Divine and from heaven, possessed a life inherently His own, and therefore could lay it down for mankind. Hence the sublime justice and mercy of the act, and the glory of the cross; of this instance of vicarious suffering the Paschal lamb was but a faint emblem.

II. In this incident we have a clear recognition of the need of falling in with all the requirements of the great scheme of salvation. The method whereby the Israelites were to be protected from the stroke of the destroying angel was Divinely originated, clearly revealed, and imperative in requirement. The Israelites would never have invented it themselves; such an idea would never have entered their minds. It was made known to them by Moses and Aaron, and that with due authority and proper emphasis. And by no other way could they have been saved. No doubt many of the Israelites would consider this a very peculiar method of deliverance; they would hardly be able to understand it; but they must obey or die. They may pursue some other course. They may stock the house with medicine ready for pestilence; but vain is their effort. They must obey the Divine command, and that to the very letter; for even if they kill the lamb and omit to sprinkle its blood upon the lintel of the door, they will perish in the coming doom. In all this we are clearly taught the necessity of falling in with *all* the requirements of the Divine method of human salvation. The sinner must be saved in God's way, and not after his own. He may reason about the peculiarity of the method of salvation; he may think that other means will be more effective to the end desired; but if he at last is found out of the Divine way of safety, he will inevitably be lost. The blood of Christ sprinkled on the heart is the only sign the destroying angel will recognise, and regard as the token of safety.

III. In this incident we have a clear recognition of the fact that the Divine method of salvation will avert the most awful peril. By being obedient to the requirements of God, as made known by Moses, the Israelites were saved from the destruction that came upon all the first born of Egypt. Not one of the Israelites perished in the awful retribution. Hence we see that the method of God is effective to the salvation of men. And the way of human redemption

by the Cross of Christ is effective to the moral safety of all who comply with its conditions. Not one soul has ever been lost that reposed its confidence in the atonement of the Saviour. The trustful soul shall not be hurt by the second death.

IV. In this incident we have a clear recognition of the fact that the efficacy of the Divine method of salvation should be associated with public religious ordinances. (Ver. 24.) Thus the Israelites were to associate their safety through this great danger in after-years with their religious ordinances; in this way they would be reminded of their past condition; they would be grateful for their present circumstances, and hopeful of the future. Hence the deliverance wrought by God for the soul of man should be commemorated by public ordinances in the house of God.

V. In this incident we have a clear recognition of the fact that the good should be able to give an intelligent explanation of their moral safety. (Ver. 27.) The Israelites would be able to explain the method of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage and from the stroke of the avenging angel; and so those who are safe through the redemption of Christ should be able and willing to explain and make known the rich mercy of God to them.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 21. Faithfulness in God's ministers binds them to present obedience and discharge of trust.

Men called of God to rule and teach the Church may call others to assist them.

Multitudes of souls cannot be informed of God's rule without cause, order, and arrangement for their instruction.

Passover preparation and administration must be made by God's rule.

Verses 22, 23. Faith is the true bunch of hyssop to sprinkle souls with Passover blood.

Doors and posts are sprinkled only with regard to souls within.

Such as expect God's salvation must keep in that place where God will give it.

God has His pass of vengeance as of mercy.

God's eye is upon His covenant when obediently observed for good.

No destroyer can smite until God grant a commission to him.

Verses 24, 25. God's redeemed Israel are bound to observe His statutes.

All that God's law requires must be returned to Him without failing in anything.

The ordinances of God are for all generations.

God's performance is exact, according to the word that He has spoken.

God's promise performed requires souls to observe the duty commanded.

Verses 26, 27. God's wisdom foreseeth the succeeding generations of His Church and provides for their instruction.

It is accounted meet by God that children should ask and receive instruction about His holy worship.

It is God's mind that the children of the Church should from infancy be taught to serve God with intelligence.

Parents are bound to know the nature of God's ordinances, and to teach their children.

The doctrine of sacraments must be declared, as well as the signs used, to make them true.

Not only worship, but the reason of it, must be known by all who will render God reasonable service.

THE NEED OF AN INTELLIGENT APPREHENSION OF THE SERVICE AND WORSHIP OF GOD.

I. It is necessary in order to the true performance of religious service and worship. Merely going through

the service of God is not worship. There can be no devotion without an intelligent understanding of the service performed; without this, it is superstition. Knowledge is an essential element in devotion, as men cannot be in the highest sense devotional unless they know what they are about, and the meaning of the service in which they are engaged. There are thousands in the sanctuary engaged in a worship they do not really and fully comprehend; they are too careless to inquire into, they are too slothful to study, the solemn truth and ordinances of God.

II. It is necessary in order to the true performance of parental duty and instruction. Children will ask questions; it is right they should, and careful attention will ever be paid to them by the true parent. They will ask questions about God and about His worship; the answers to these inquiries should be instructive and explanatory, and in order to this, parents must themselves be acquainted with the meaning of the Divine service and worship. In many instances such home instruction is neglected because of the sad ignorance of the parents concerning the things of God.

III. It is necessary in order to refute and silence the sceptical reasonings of men. There might in the future be those in Israel who would object to the reasonableness and necessity of the celebration of the Passover, and to silence these it would be necessary to have a thorough knowledge of the ordinance in its origin and meaning. Christian people ought to be able to explain and defend their service and worship. There would be much less infidelity in the land if Christian people were instructed as they ought to be in the ordinances of God.

Verse 28. God's revelation of Himself in grace and ordinances deserves praise from His people.

Worship of God and obedience to Him are well coupled.

Despatch in obedience is very requisite to God's Israel.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 29–32.

THE DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN OF EGYPT.

I. We see here that God's vengeance is as certainly executed upon the rebellious as it is threatened. The death of the first-born was threatened to Pharaoh some time ago, and he had had ample opportunity of obeying the Divine command, and of averting the dread penalty. But no, he still remains obstinate in heart, and will not yield to the will of God; hence the time of destruction has come. The first-born of Egypt are slain, in every house they are dead. There is great mourning in the nation. Nor has the household of the king escaped the common woe. This is not occasioned by pestilence or plague, but by the sudden stroke of Heaven. And thus are the threats of God against the sinner abundantly executed. They may be delayed, but they will not be forgotten. They are awfully certain. The greatness of the calamity will not prevent its final execution; even though it require the death of a vast multitude, the threat of Heaven will come to pass. Let not the sinner imagine that he can escape the retributions of God, either through the inability or unwillingness of God to inflict them, or through his own ability to resist them. Men cannot elude the stroke of Heaven.

II. We see here that God's vengeance is upon all sinners, no matter what their social position, whether king or beggar. There was death in the palace as well as in the dungeon, in the family of the king as well as in the midst of

the slaves. The judgments of God are characterised by equity; they are without partiality. They are no respector of persons. They are not turned aside by social accidents, nor are they bribed by cunning and winning arrangements. Moral considerations determine the retributions of human life. There is no impediment in the way of Divine justice and the execution of its sentence upon all men. God can send His messengers into the palace as well as into the dungeon; bolts and bars, guards and sentinels, cannot keep out the subtle angel of death. Death has many doors into the homes of men. He takes the rich from their wealth, the poor from their misery; and perhaps in the next life the relations of men may be inverted—the poor man may be the prince, and the prince the slave in the dungeon.

III. We see here that God's vengeance comes upon sinners when they least expect it, and in their moments of fancied security. It was night. All Egypt was in slumber. Men were not even dreaming of approaching ill. There was nothing to disturb their usual repose; when suddenly a cry arose, which every moment gathered volume until it became a piercing wail. Mothers were attending to their loved ones, and watching them pass into the silence of death. And this was the scene throughout the homes of Egypt. And so, the judgments of Heaven often come upon sinners when least anticipated, in the midst of carnal repose and fancied security. Then they awake, but for a moment, and too late, to find that the stern messenger of eternal justice has seized upon them. It often happens that when men are the most insensible to the retributions of Heaven, they are the nearest to it. God sometimes comes to the wicked soul in the midnight hour. The darkness cannot hide from Him. We know not what will be in the approaching night.

IV. We see here that God's vengeance may make the most obstinate sinners yield to the demands of Heaven. 1. *We see that Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron.* The terrible stroke of death had indeed done its sad work; and the Monarch of Egypt, alarmed, was glad to get rid of those who had occasioned him and his nation so much calamity. And thus the purpose of Heaven is at last accomplished. Israel is free; and the two servants of God are rejoiced to see the glad result of their long and anxious toil. It was a moment of deep humility for the king; it was a moment of triumph for Moses and Aaron. How strangely are the scenes of life blended in this world, even at one and the same time! This midnight hour was to Egypt the hour of death, but to Israel it was the hour of freedom. The same hour brings different and varied events and emotions even to the same people. 2. *We see that Pharaoh yielded to the demand of Heaven.* He gave the Israelites their freedom, and so regarded the claim of God as enforced by severe retribution. True there was not much virtue in the obedience of Pharaoh, as it was occasioned by awful plague. But do we not in this incident see the supreme folly of sin and rebellion against God? The sinner will have to yield to the demands of Heaven, and hence the wisdom of an immediate compliance thereto. Why suffer so many dreadful plagues to no purpose? Surely it is better to fall in with the Divine arrangement at first, than to have such painful visitations of vengeance only to yield at last. It is well to avoid the penalties of sin, though this is the very lowest motive for obedience to the will of Heaven. The submission of Pharaoh:—(1) *It was immediate upon the plague.* (2) *It was complete in its obedience.* (3) *It was comprehensive in its injunction.* (4) *It was welcomed by the Egyptians.* And thus culminated the judgments of Heaven upon the land of Pharaoh; the sufferings of Israel in a cruel bondage; and the toils of His devoted ministers in reference to a proud king.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 29, 30. It is God's miraculous distinguishing judgment to kill the first-born only.

Choice of beasts, as well as men, God strikes for man's sin.

Vengeance makes a terrible rousing to the wicked from their midnight rest.

God's wrath makes the wicked howl in their midnight wakings.

It is God's eminent stroke when no house escapes without the slaughter of some.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 31–36.

THE ISRAELITES GOING OUT OF EGYPTIAN BONDAGE; OR, THE FREEDOM OF THE CHURCH.

I. That the Israelites were given their freedom by those who had long oppressed them; and so the Church shall be freed by those who have long enslaved it. The king and his people urged the Israelites to depart from their country, and to be gone at once. The Egyptians were alarmed at the recent judgment, and were afraid lest they should all become dead men. The retributions of Heaven strike the wicked with terror. And so shall it be in reference to the ultimate liberty of the Church; its oppressors shall be made by the severe providence of God to give it its destined freedom. This freedom is promised. Many agencies are working for it. The good earnestly anticipate it. It will then more fully realise its mission. The Church has long enough been in bondage to cruel tyrants and wicked men; they have oppressed it, they have persecuted it, they have reproached it, they have maligned it, and they have plundered it; but the time comes when Heaven shall interfere on its behalf, and by signal judgments bring it out from the hands of the evil oppressor. And thus we see the tyrant contradicting his own fancied interests, his own prior conduct, and giving freedom to the slave he had determined should remain in lifelong bondage.

II. That the Israelites, in availing themselves of their freedom, had to make many temporary shifts; and so the Church, in stepping into liberty, will have to encounter many perplexities. The Israelites, in the moment of freedom, did not immediately enter upon the enjoyment and rest of the promised land, but they had quickly to leave their home of bondage without due preparation, and then were years in the wilderness as weary pilgrims. They had to take with them dough before it was leavened, and to bind their kneading-troughs up in their clothes, and carry them on their shoulders. The first experiences of freedom are always perplexing, even though they may be mingled with joy at the thought of liberty and exemption from a cruel servitude. A wise Church will rather carry its food than leave it, and it is a more welcome burden than the making of bricks without straw. And so when the Church enters upon its destined freedom, it will have to experience many straits and perplexities; it will require wisdom to act in them, fortitude to meet them, and perseverance to make them contribute to its ultimate well-being and glory.

III. That the Israelites, going into freedom, took with them all the wealth they could get from the Egyptians; and so the Church, in entering upon its liberty, should avail itself of all the valuables it can obtain from the world. The Israelites obtained from the Egyptians jewels of silver

and gold, and all the raiment they could obtain from them. Nor was this an injustice, as it had all been duly earned by the slaves who were now free. These valuables were not borrowed with the idea of returning them. The word rendered "borrowed" may be rendered *asked*—they asked of the Egyptians these jewels as payment for their work. *And these jewels were in after-days used in making vessels for the sanctuary of the Lord.* Ornaments of gold and silver were worn by the Egyptian women, and even by the men, in great profusion. There, as in Eastern countries now, where the tenure of property is insecure, it was customary to invest all spare money in jewellery, which could be easily concealed. And so the world has many valuables which would enrich the Church, to which the Church is justly entitled, and which it should seek to attain. The world has ornaments and raiment which should be sought by the Christian Church in the hour of its freedom. The Church should ask for the gold and silver of the world; it has helped to make and earn it, and has a claim upon it. It should seek the moral and intellectual ornaments of the world—men who are of high moral principle, who are of cultured thought, and of splendid business tact and ability. The Church of Christ should seek to win these ornaments in the hour of its freedom, as they will enhance its true worth and utility in the future. All these can in future days become the vessels of the sanctuary. Like the jewels of the Egyptians, they can be turned from their old and inferior use to a new and glorious purpose in the Tabernacle of the Lord. This service will appropriate and consecrate them. The Church has yet to learn more fully that the jewels of Egypt may become the vessels of the Lord.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 31–33. Vengeance from God can make His rejected servants to be called by His enemies.

Persecuting powers may command liberty to those whom they have oppressed.

God's prediction of the liberty of His Church is exactly performed in due time.

God can and will make worldly powers give liberty of conscience to His Church for worshipping of Him.

God at His pleasure giveth not only persons, but estates and substances, for His Church.

Verses 34–36. The Church is very ready to go out of bondage when urged by the world to do so.

God's people, to have their liberty, will be glad to go out with raw dough.

Gold, and silver, and precious things God allows His people to look after by His word.

It is God's prerogative to turn the hearts of enemies to favour His Church.

The wicked sometimes minister, by the providence of God, to the wealth of the Church.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 37–39.

THE NOMINAL FOLLOWERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH; THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THEY ARE ACTUATED, AND THE PERPLEXITIES BY WHICH THEY ARE TESTED.

The children of Israel are now going out of Egypt, the land of bondage, freed by the remarkable interposition of Heaven. They were allowed to leave *openly*, being even thrust out by Pharaoh. They had not to go out by stealth. God does not encourage craft in His people; He renders it unnecessary, as He will give them an open freedom in due time—a freedom which their enemies shall

witness, but not be competent to hinder. The Israelites *went out on foot.* They did not go out of bondage in chariots, conveyed easily by welcome method. They had to go out as pilgrims. The early experiences of the soul in freedom are sometimes hard and trying. The Church is often footsore in its pilgrimage through this life; but it is sustained by the thought of liberty on which it is entering yet more and more. The Israelites *went out in great numbers.* When we remember that only seventy persons went down into Egypt, we may well be astonished that in about 215 years so great a multitude should go out. Dean Alford computes the number to be 2,400.000 in all. Nor would this be a miraculous increase during seven generations. God can multiply His Church in bondage, and the Church of seventy shall become innumerable. The little one becomes a great nation. No weapon formed against the Church can prosper. The Israelites went out from Egypt *early in the morning.* The destruction of the first-born of the Egyptians occurred at midnight, then the Israelites were commanded to depart from bondage. It would take some time to make known to them the tidings of Pharaoh, to collect them into one vast host, and to be ready for so great a journey. And when the soul leaves the bondage of sin, it is morning, the night is far spent, and the full shining of the Sun of Righteousness is at hand. Morning joys come upon the freed soul. The Israelites went out from Egypt *followed by a mixed multitude.* In this multitude were to be found heathens who were deeply impressed by the wonderful works of Jehovah as seen in the history of Israel, many who were tired of the despotic rule of Pharaoh, and many more who were animated by curiosity, and who desired to see to what end this vast nation would be led; and no doubt many families who had intermarried with Israel would follow their relatives, animated by mingled feelings of love and sorrow. We have in the allegiance of this mixed multitude to Israel a type of the manner in which many ally themselves to the Christian Church.

I. The motives by which the nominal adherents of the Christian Church are animated. That there are many nominal adherents to the Christian Church is beyond all doubt or question. There is a mixed multitude following the Church in its earthly pilgrimage. These join in the external services of the Church. They aid the financial enterprises of the Church, and they swell the numbers of the Church, but they are not of the true and spiritual Israel, and very soon grow weary even of a nominal adherence to the Church of Christ. Let us look at the motives by which they are actuated in thus following the Church. 1. *They are acquainted and impressed with the history of the Church, and hence are induced to follow it.* This mixed multitude was acquainted with the history of the Israelites, with their degrading bondage, and with the marvellous interposition of God on their behalf. They had seen the miracles that had been wrought in order to secure the freedom of the enslaved people; they were inspired with reverence of soul, and thought it well to be associated with a people so highly favoured. Hence they followed Israel on their journey. And so men join the Church. They have read the history of the Church of Christ, they have been instructed in the power of the great God who defends the good, and they think it a grand and profitable thing to be associated with those people whose God is the Lord. They follow the Church more for its history and temporal success, than because it is a glorious privilege and duty to be pure in heart, and to be spiritually united to those of kindred moral aims and sentiments. 2. *They have an inner conviction that the Church is right, and hence they are sometimes led to follow it.* No doubt there were amongst this mixed multitude those who had a deep insight into the life and history of Israel; they had received instruction and convictions in reference to Jehovah which now were potent within them, and which led them to

follow the Israelites in this exodus. And there are men who ally themselves to the Christian Church after this fashion. They are rightly instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, they have received convictions and impressions in reference to the claims of God upon the worship of the soul, which they find it difficult to dismiss; and hence, to quiet conscience, they give a nominal adherence to the Christian Church. This is the way of many. They lack the one thing, hence they lack all. 3. *They are associated by family ties with those who are real members of the Christian Church, and hence they are induced to follow it.* There can be no doubt but that the Israelites had intermarried with Egyptian families, and now that they are departing, many relationships would be severed, and many intimate friendships; and perhaps some would even prefer to accompany their loved ones as far as they could on their march of freedom. This was well. It is well to follow our relatives when they are engaged in the enterprises of the Church; but we should follow them in right motive and spirit. Natural affection is not the true basis of Church life, but true love to God in Christ Jesus. There are multitudes in the Church to-day who are there from no other motive than because their parents are. The son goes to church because his father goes, and not from any intelligent conviction of duty, or from any desire to pay homage to the Eternal Father. 4. *They are troubled by ideas of the retributive providence of God, and so are induced to seek shelter in the Church.* No doubt many who were now numbered amongst this mixed multitude had seen the devastation wrought in Egypt by the retributive judgments of Heaven, and so were induced to follow the Israelites, lest further destruction should come upon their native land. And men in these days have been instructed in reference to the retributive providences of God, and are anxious to avert them or to seek a refuge from them, and so they yield a nominal allegiance to the Christian Church, hoping thereby to share the safety of the good. 5. *They have an idea that it is socially correct to be allied to the Church, and therefore are induced to follow it.* True, this idea would hardly enter into the minds of the Egyptians. They would not imagine that they were to gain in social status by going out into the wilderness with these liberated slaves. Here is the contrast. In our own time the Church occupies more lofty station and is in greater popular esteem, and many imagine that they gather dignity and reputation from resting under its shadow. They consider a man an infidel or of bad moral reputation who is connected with no Christian Church; and hence men join to win social respect. 6. *They always follow the multitude.* No doubt many followed the Israelites simply because there was a great crowd going out of Egypt. There are some people who will always follow a crowd, without being able to give any adequate reason for so doing; and so when men see the crowd going to the Christian Church, they join without knowing why!

II. The perplexities by which the nominal adherents of the Christian Church are tested. We read elsewhere that "the mixed multitude that was among the Israelites fell a lusting" (Num. xi. 4). Their unhallowed desires were not gratified. Their deliverance had not been so glorious as they had imagined. Trial was before them, and they rebelled against the first privations of the wilderness. And so it is, nominal members of the Christian Church are soon tested, and they often yield to the trying conditions of the pilgrim Church life. 1. *The nominal members of the Church are tested by the outward circumstances of the Church.* If the Church is rich and in favourable social conditions, then the mixed multitude will follow on most assiduously; but if, on the other hand, it is in the wilderness, sorefooted, without food and without prestige, then they fall away. The temporal condition of a Church is often a test of the moral sincerity of its adherents. Only true and faithful souls will follow a Church in the wilderness, trusting only to the providence of God for

needed help and succour. 2. *They are tested by the pilgrim difficulties of the Church.* The pilgrim difficulties of the Church are numerous and varied; and they will only be overcome by a brave and trustful spirit. There is no bread. How is it to be obtained? And few indeed will follow the Church when it is apparently destitute of bread. That is the time when the mixed multitude falter and become weak. They have not faith to meet the emergency. 3. *They are tested by the pilgrim requirements of the Church.* The Church in its pilgrim condition requires strong faith in God, great courage to meet the difficulties of the wilderness, and perseverance so that it may not grow weary of the march. Nominal adherents have not the needful moral qualities to meet the requirements of the time, and hence they fall away.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 37 39. The sons of Israel are in a pilgrim state here below.

From countries and cities with habitations God sometimes leads His people to pitch in booths.

Men, women, and children God numbers with his Church or Israel.

Providence so ordering, all sorts of people may join themselves to God's Church, though not in truth.

God's word fails not in giving His Church great substance when He seeth it good.

Liberty from Egypt is Israel's good portion with unleavened cakes.

In working liberty for his Church God may put it upon some hardship.

God sometimes prevents the providence of His Church, that He may provide for it.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 40-42.

THE PILGRIM CONDITION OF GODLY SOULS IN THE PRESENT LIFE.

I. That the pilgrim condition of godly souls in this life often involves long-continued suffering and bondage. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and this was part of the discipline through which they had to pass prior to their entrance on the promised land. Their bondage was severe, and it was long-continued. It was somewhat inexplicable that the heirs of promise should be called to endure such pain; but the children of God are not exempt from even the most painful discipline of life. The time of such discipline is Divinely ordered and arranged, and at the longest soon comes to an end, though the hours and days are lengthened when spent in sorrow and woe. But even in this condition the pilgrim soul has rich promises on which it can rely, and which tend to brighten its future with hope. This captivity is productive of moral growth, as it was of the numerical growth of Israel. Hence godly souls in the present life are in a pilgrim condition; they are passing through great sorrows, they are subject to much painful discipline, but the time will come when they shall be free from all such oppression and woe.

II. That the pilgrim condition of godly souls in this life is often called into the glad experience of freedom, and to realise the fulfilment of rich promise. The Israelites are now freed from the bondage of Egypt; by a wondrous providence they are led out from the tyranny of Pharaoh. They realise the promise of God concerning them. And so the pilgrim condition of the soul does not preclude moments of glad release from suffering, even though the suffering may come in another way, for the pilgrim only exchanges the perils

of Egypt for those of the wilderness. The conditions of pilgrimage change in this life, though the fact of pilgrimage is unalterable. But kind Heaven makes ample and welcome provision for all the needs and exigencies of the pilgrim life. The soul is guided in its wilderness march. It has manna given. It has the refreshing waters of Horeb. But many souls faint and fail in the desert life; only two of the great multitude of the Israelites were permitted to enter Canaan. The journey of life is a test of character.

III. That the pilgrim condition of godly souls is frequently associated with religious ordinances of a pious character. The Israelites were to celebrate their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt by the observance of the Passover. The night was to be much remembered by them in all the generations of the future, and was to be consecrated by the strict performance of religious ceremonies. And so the soul in its pilgrim condition has many pious ordinances established by Heaven to remind it of glad experiences, and to inspire it with continued hope. In the journey of life there are many feasts unto the Lord, in which a pious soul can take a part.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 40-42. The heirs of Canaan may sojourn in Egypt.

The time of sojourning is determined by God for His Church below.

The longest time of suffering here has its appointed end.

The night and day of the Church's redemption is a time of observation toward God.

The children of the Church are obligated to observe God's redemption of His people.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 43-51.

MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS IN REFERENCE TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THE PASSOVER.

I. That God not only institutes ordinances for men, but also shows in what way they are to be observed. God had instituted the Passover, and now He gives to the Israelites clear injunctions as to the manner in which they are to observe it. The ordinances of Heaven are not to be kept according to the fearful and arbitrary dictates of the human mind, but according to the revelation and will of God. God tells men how they are to keep His ordinances. Thus they are protected against unwisdom and presumption in reference to them. Men are liable to error in the worship of the Eternal, especially at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This is a solemn feast, and must be observed after a pattern Divinely made known.

II. That God will not allow any stranger to the death of Christ to partake of His Holy Sacrament. "There shall no stranger eat thereof." It would be impossible for a stranger to enter fully into the meaning of the Passover; he would know but little or nothing of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt by the mighty hand of God. He would not, therefore, be in sympathy with the ordinance. And so those who are strangers to the death of Christ ought not, and cannot, truly come to the sacramental table of the Lord. That sacrament finds its explanation in the Cross, and no one can enter into it who has not realised in his inner nature the deliverance and blessing consequent on the death of Christ. The believer in the atonement alone can fully realise the blessing of the Lord's table.

III. That a mere hired and nominal relation to the Church does not give

a true right to the Holy Sacrament. "And an hired servant shall not eat thereof." There would be many sustaining this relationship to Israel, as there are in relation to the Church in our own age. There are many hired servants of the Church; they are nominally, and perhaps officially, connected with Christian people, but they are not of the true Israel, either by birth or by circumcision; hence they have no right to take part in the Passover, or in the Supper of the Lord.

IV. That circumcision of heart is necessary in order to partake of this Holy Sacrament. (Ver. 48.) If the stranger wished to keep the Passover, he was to be circumcised; no uncircumcised person was to eat thereof. Nor should any one eat of the Supper of the Lord unless he be circumcised in heart, and be brought into deep sympathy with the sign of the Christian life, the Cross. None are excluded from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper who are willing to comply with the moral requirements of the service.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 43–51. Faith and obedience make all proselytes as home-born, as the children of the Church.

The table of the Lord must not be profaned by unhallowed communicants.

All God's Israel must observe His ordinance of worship, especially His Passover.

One law of God unites them that be nigh and afar off in Passover worship.

One law of God makes one heart of His people in obedience.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XII.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

New Year! Ver. 2. Hamilton relates how the last words of Mr Hardcastle, when dying, were: "My last act of faith I wish to be, to take the blood of Jesus, as the high priest did when he entered behind the veil; and when I have passed the veil, I would appear with it before the throne." So in making the transit from one year to another, this is our most appropriate exercise. We see much sin in the retrospect. We see many a broken purpose, many a misspent hour, many a rash and unadvised word, when we calmly sit down to reflect. There is nothing for us but the blood of the Lamb. With that atonement, let us—like believing Israel—begin the New Year. Bearing that infinitely efficacious and precious blood, let us pass within the veil of a solemn and eventful future, which none of us can read. Then if, as Israel's host, we have to pass the swellings of the sea within the year, that crimson tide will be with us—

"Soothing the trembling Christian's parting breath,
And whispering life amidst the waves of death."

Passover-Relics! Ver. 7. Millington says that the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts probably gave rise to certain traditions and customs among other nations. Pliny tells how houses may be preserved from the perils of sorcery, by sprinkling the door-posts with the blood of the hyæna; while in another place he relates how the newly-wedded bride was in the habit of anointing the door-posts of her home with the blood of a wolf. These, like many other heathen relics of Scripture customs and ceremonies, are sad declensions from the lofty and sublime ideals in Revelation. Though, after all, beneath their floating nebulous vapours there lies the solid germ of truth: the human conviction of the necessity of mediation and atonement for safety and preservation. So that, even these pass over-relics echo one voice—

"The Cross unfolds the mystery,—Jesus died;
The sinner lives; the law is satisfied."
—*Conder.*

Passover-Safety! Ver. 13. The Israelites had to sprinkle the blood, and this involved an act of faith. By grace were they saved,

through faith. A gentleman, crossing a dreary moor, came at length upon a solitary cottage. Glad of the shelter, he could not help pondering upon the loneliness of its inmates, and wondering at their self-security. In the morning, when about to proceed on his way, he inquired of its occupant, whether she was not afraid to live in this lonely place. "Oh no!" responded his humble and aged hostess; "for faith closes the door at night, and mercy opens it in the morning." Having by faith sprinkled the atoning blood upon the lintels, Israel's host could repose securely until Mercy opened the door, with the cry: "The hour of deliverance has come." And so can the Israel of God!

"Who know not where His islands lift
His fronded palms in air;
Who only know they cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."—*Whittier.*

Types and Shadows! Ver. 3. When the miner, in the American prairies, sinks a shaft to strike the coal formation, he finds far down the images of beautiful plants, lying like lacework spread out upon tables of ebony; images of ferns, and leaves, and flowers, which millions of years ago perhaps ceased, from some change of climate, to open in the cold spring-time, and hence to fall into autumn. There these pictures lie, telling us of a time when perpetual summer-time reigned, and that where the drifting snows of December fall, tropical birds sang and fluttered in palm-trees, and flowers filled the whole day and night with perfume. In our own land, when men of scientific skill ascend the lofty mountains, they perceive traces of a time when huge icebergs grazed their peaks, just discernible above the waters of an Arctic Sea. Yet all these, whether tropical or arctic, dimly shadowed forth more perfect adaptations in nature and nature's growth; and so all the Bible vegetation—the ritual growth, as well as moral and vicarious development—were images of good things to come; shadows of more glorious and blessed realities of life and salvation in Christ. But just as there are certain more clearly-defined type-memorials perceived by the scientific student, so, in Revelation, are there certain rites and ceremonies more distinctly prefigurative of the atoning blood of the Lamb. Such is the Passover—dim and shadowy memorial of that wondrous Paschal sacrifice—

"That sovereign balm for every wound,
That cordial for our fears."—*Watts.*

Jewish Passover! Ver. 7. Bonar and M'Cheyne record a visit paid to a family of Jews at Jassy. It was the night preceding the day of Atonement; on the eve of which solemn day it is the Jewish custom to kill a cock for every man, and a hen for every woman. In the morning, the "Shochet" or slayer, going round to the houses, arouses the inmates to bring out the fowls to be killed in a proper manner. This, says Trench, is the only blood that is shed in Israel now. Even the paschal lamb is no more slain. A cock and hen, killed by the knife of the Shochet, is all the sacrifice which Israel knows. It is for this wretched, self devised sacrifice that Israel rejects the blood of the "Lamb of God," which taketh away the sin of the world!

"Dear, dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power."—*Cowper.*

Shelter! Ver. 13. In the East Indies there grows a tree, which is called a non-conductor of lightning. When the dreadful thunderstorms burst in those tropical regions, the lightnings would strike the surrounding trees of the forest, but never touch this non-conductor. It was some time before the natives discovered this peculiar property; but, once ascertained, they invariably gathered their flocks and families beneath these singular trees, as soon as they saw the storms gathering. No matter how loud the thunder, how vivid the fiery gleams, the refugees were safe under its far-spreading arms. There was only one danger, which arose from the falling of some forest giant upon it, crushing it beneath the weight of the fall. If, however, this tree was stronger than the falling trunk, it stood firm. So amid the storms of life there is the Tree of Life, the Saviour of sinners, beneath whose extended wings fugitive penitents are safe. No lightnings of Divine wrath can injure that sacred Tree; and such is its almighty strength, that no riven, blasted trunks can crush it beneath their falling weight. Israel's first-born, safe under the spreading branches of Divine providence and truth, were types and teachers of penitent sinners, who avail themselves of the salvation promised and presented beneath the outspread arms of the Cross of Calvary—

"We have no shelter from our sin,
But in Thy wounded side."—*Alexander.*

Memorial Feast! Ver. 14. A lover on the west coast of Scotland, when about to leave his heath-clad hills and shaggy woods for India, led his betrothed to a rugged glen, through whose precipitous channel flowed a foaming stream. Clambering down its steep and rocky sides, amid the calls and tears of the maid, he reached the edge of the flood, where grew a lovely "forget-me-not." Obtained at the peril, though not the cost, of his life, he presented it to her, begging that she would preserve it as the memorial of his love. Far more wonderful is that "Crimson Passion-Flower," which, in the form of the Lord's Supper, seems to say, "Forget-Me-not;" this do as a memorial of Me. As Thomas Watson says, "If a friend give us a ring at death, we wear it to keep up the memory of our friend." Much more, then, ought we to keep up the memorial of Christ's death in the Sacrament

"Where flowers of heaven, divinely fair,
Unfold their happy bloom."—*Bonar.*

Supper-Songs! Ver. 14. If ancient history is worthy of credence, Cleopatra once made a great feast or banquet of wine. Into the cup which she presented to her guest she placed a jewel worth a kingdom. Into the sacred cup which Jesus presents to His people, filled with His precious blood-shedding, He has put a pearl of great price—His Divine love. With such eucharistic joyfulness does this cup fill the believing recipient, that, like the Church in the Canticles, he exclaims: "Thy love is better than wine,"—

"That wine of love can be obtained of none
Save Him, who trod the wine-press all alone."
—*Trench.*

Ordinances! Ver. 14–20. Fuller says that as it was necessary for the patriarchs to fix their residence near a well, so is it for believers to fix their residence near ordinances. They are morally beneficial. They refresh and strengthen. Yet not in themselves. As M'Cheyne puts it, when a man goes thirsty to a well, his thirst is not allayed merely by going there. An English sailor having escaped from his Moorish captors in Africa, found himself thirsty in the desert. Night came on, and his thirst increased. Amid the shadows he wandered on; then lay down under a tree with his thirst still unquenched. Had it been day, he would have perceived that he was lying beside a cooling spring. He had come to the well, but his thirst was not allayed by that act; on the contrary, his thirst was increased by every step he took. In the morning, it was by what he drew out of the well that he was refreshed and strengthened. Just so, it is not by the mere act or exercise of coming to ordinances that souls obtain life and joyfulness; but by the tasting of Jesus in the ordinances, Whose flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed—

"His fountains are deep, His waters are pure,
And sweet to the weary soul."

Commemorations! Ver. 14–20. During the reign of the Stuarts over the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, the youthful scion of a powerful Scotch house, whose family had once coerced their youthful monarch, was in revenge and fear confined in a dungeon. After upwards of twenty years' solitary seclusion, where he beguiled his imprisonment with the education of a mouse, he was liberated. On the night previous to his liberation, he and the person through whose mediation his freedom had been secured, partook of a humble feast, which they always afterwards celebrated on the successive anniversaries of his liberty. With some such feelings of joyfulness and commemorative gratitude must Israel have feasted year by year. Year by year, it stirred the ashes of memory in the Jewish heart, and kindled them up into a flame of hope; while it taught them to look for a greater prophet than Moses, to long for a grander sacrificial lamb than that of the passover, and to hope for a more glorious salvation than freedom from temporal oppression and bondage. So Christians commemorate with grateful praise the Feast of that great Paschal Lamb, looking in joyful anticipation to that full and final freedom in the Heavenly Canaan—

"Where peaceful hills and holy vales
Sleep in eternal day."

Sprinkling Symbolism! Ver. 23. A most significant allusion to the figurative significance of the passover-blood occurs in the prophecies of Ezekiel (chap. ix.), where the man clothed with linen is directed to set a mark upon the foreheads of the godly to preserve them from destruction. The same symbolic reference and command occur in the Book of Revelation (chap. vii.), in regard to those who have been sealed as the servants of our God in their foreheads. As has been aptly remarked, Egypt was but a symbol—a glass, into which, if we steadfastly look, we shall see a greater tragedy enacting. We see the great drama of the apocalypse—not the valley of the Nile, with its pyramids and temples; but Europe, with its ten kingdoms and white Alps. We see, not Moses demanding the liberty of the Hebrew captives in the name of Jehovah; but the Reformation walking along the highway to the seven-hilled city, and requiring the liberation of Europe, as he stands on the marble threshold of the Vatican. We see not the ten successive plagues culminating in the slaughter of Pharaoh's first-born; but the fearful judgments of God upon her ten vassal-states. And we see not Egypt's first-born; but that crowning scene of terror—the last awful and nameless plague, prior to the Final Exodus of God's Church, whose members are sealed with the "Blood of the Lamb," to secure them from the coming slaughter, and to ensure their entrance—

"Into the new Salem's palace hall,
Their everlasting home."—*Bonar.*

Crisis-Emotions! Ver. 21. The night before any decisive conflict is a solemn and anxious season. On the night before the battle of Ivry, says Hamilton, which was to decide whether Henry should lose his life, or gain his crown, as he sat pondering a map of the battle-field, the hair on one side of the king's head turned grey. We know also how the commanders felt on the night which raised the siege of Leyden—on the night before Pharsalia, and on the eve of Blenheim or Waterloo. Moses has not told us how he felt on the night before the Exodus; but he has given us some interesting glimpses of the scene, or rather the data for introducing it. Chief amongst the natural facts is that it was April, and the night of the full moon. The

soft and silvery light fell on the white backs of the African mountains far away, and streamed almost perpendicularly on the mighty pyramids, which, like the spells of the old necromancers, invoke a host of spectres from the shadowy graves of the past,

"Far in whose realm withdrawn,
Old empires sit in sullenness and gloom,
And glorious ages gone,
Lie deep within the shadow of whose tomb."—*Bryant.*

Hyssop! Ver. 22. When an eastern traveller visited the city of Sidon, its French consul, who was an enthusiastic botanist, exhibited two varieties of hyssop, one of which he thought was the plant used by Israel. It was a very small green plant, like a moss which covers old walls in damp places. Another, called by the Arabs Z'atar, and having the fragrance of thyme, with a hot pungent taste, and long slender stems, looked more suitable for sprinkling the paschal blood on the lintels, &c. This also grows on garden walls, and is distinct from the hyssop of English druggists and herbalists—a neat, fragrant, labiate plant. It is not found growing on the walls of Palestine, but wild on barren and dry spots of land. Rosenmüller said that the true hyssop was in reality a marjoram—an aromatic plant with white flowers. But Dr. Boyle regards the caper-plant as the missing hyssop, which certainly is to be found in Lower Egypt, where Israel was, as well as on Mount Sinai, and plentifully around the ruins of the Holy City. It is a trailing shrub with broad smooth leaves and white flowers, and hangs in festoons from rocks and walls. Perhaps it was employed not only to denote lowliness of spirit, but likewise to signify cleansing property, since from the time of Hippocrates, the caper-plant has been regarded as having cleansing properties useful in curing diseases closely allied to leprosy. Here, however, it implies humility. Each Israelite who grasped it with the hand of faith, as he sprinkled the door-posts of his house, seemed to say—

"Give me the lowest place; not that I dare
Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died."—*Rossetti.*

Religious Tuition! Ver. 27. Moses might well have been daunted in his mission to instruct Israel in Religion. To teach a set of wild, ignorant boys is no easy matter. The teacher may have received many hints and practical suggestions from his pastor; but the task will still be arduous. Just so with Moses: God had counselled him in many points, and furnished him with useful data of instruction; still it would prove up-hill work. We find, however, that he grappled to the difficulty with spirit. Arthur Madden did the same, when divinely sent to instruct a class of roughs in the hamlet where he lived. The most discouraging feeling to him was that he was only breaking up fallow ground for another to sow in; that he was only commencing a work which another would be privileged to complete. And if Moses thus felt, he was able to grasp the fact that his was a great mission of instructing Israel, one great work to be carried on from age to age, employing many generations of workers; and that therefore his duty was to work with might and main, uprearing in the midst of Israel's vast host an edifice or temple of religious principle, which would last longer than the pyramids, those gray piles of hieroglyphic grandeur beneath whose shadows they were then in slavery, and which have survived the language which the Pharaohs spoke—

"Preserving its dead emblems to the eye,
Yet hiding from the mind what these reveal."—*Montgomery.*

Divine Dealings! Ver. 29. It is no use to coax or flatter the tiger, which has seized your babe, and whose teeth have met in its little thigh. You must thrust the flaming brand or the glittering spear into its face; then it will howl and drop its victim in the shock of sudden pain. How fondly will you staunch the bleeding wounds, and undo the cruel injury inflicted on your child! God found that mild measures would not influence Pharaoh to release his prey, that he only snarled, and bit all the more cruelly. No wonder that He hurled His flaming brand or glittering sword in the Egyptian lion's face, and forced him to let go his bruised and palpitating victim. How tenderly God bound up Israel's wounds when He had allured their host into the wilderness! So does He deal with our oppressors and ourselves. On them He pours His righteous judgments; while on His own He showers deliverances: Why? That we may become holy as He is holy—

"Complete thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, O our God and Lord."

Divine Distinctions! Ver. 30. Israel's first-born were unharmed. Side by side stood two houses. The one was that of a publican of worthless character, who took pleasure in giving every annoyance to God's people, and inflicting injuries upon those who were earnest Christians. The other was that of a family which honoured God—hallowed their roof-tree and daily life with prayer, and hoped for an inheritance in heaven. One night, the publican's house caught fire, and being chiefly of wood, it burnt like tinder. The family at the castle and the people of the village gathered in groups to arrest, if possible, the progress of the flames. It was soon apparent that their efforts were fruitless, and that the fire would speedily spread its ravages to the neighbour's cottage. When all were anxiously watching the fiery element, which had now almost wholly consumed the publican's haunt, suddenly a tremendous torrent of pelting rain fell, hissing and steaming on the burning wreck and the fire-cracked ground, and soon driving many of the crowd to seek shelter within their homes.

That Providence saved the next house from sharing the fate of its neighbour; and thus, as God preserved Israel while He punished Pharaoh, so was the home of Abner Stone protected, whilst that of the godless Dan Ford was wholly destroyed—

"Angels of life and death alike are His;
Without His leave they pass no threshold o'er."—*Lowell.*

Moral Freedom! Ver. 31. A traveller, who was both a scholar and a high-born gentleman, fell into the hands of pirates, and was carried off to some robber nest on the Barbary shore. There for the rest of his life was he left to languish, rowing the galley, grooming the charger, and tending the cattle of his Moslem master. Could ought be more bitter and heart-breaking? He had tastes which could no longer be cultivated, longings which could no longer be gratified, relations who could no longer be visited, and spiritual emotions which could be confessed only to incur taunts and mockery. Something like this was the experience of free-born Israel, and how welcome freedom! Certainly similar to this was the condition of Adam when he fell into the bondage of sin, until he became familiarised with his serfdom. Even then, there comes across the human mind a longing to taste the sweets of the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Paschal Lamb pledges our deliverance from sin-tyranny. The Blood of Sprinkling gives a happy exodus from the Egypt of Satan's domination. We have redemption through His blood—

"Dearly are we bought, for God
Bought us with His own heart's blood."
—*Hart.*

Kneading Troughs! Ver. 34. The Egyptians, so we are told, used large troughs for their dough—kneading it with the feet; and it is probable that the Israelites had been accustomed to the same. But in anticipation of their journey, they had no doubt prepared small wooden bowls, such as are used by the Arabs in their wanderings now, and which serve also to contain the cakes when baked. Harmer says that the Arabs use these very troughs—which in travelling they carry in the loose folds of their burnous—to prepare cakes for strangers in the very desert through which Israel journeyed. And thus did Israel teach a lesson of prudence and foresight of providing for the future—

"Each morn the bees fly forth to fill the growing comb,
And levy golden tribute of the uncomplaining flowers;
To-morrow is their care; they work for food to-morrow;
But man deferreth duty's task, and loveth ease to-day."—*Tupper.*

Jewels! Ver. 35. The gift of these treasures was a tribute from the conquered to the conquered. They were employed by Israel in making beautiful the place of holiness. Sometimes, writes Spurgeon, after great battles, monuments are raised to the memory of the fight; and of what are they composed? They are composed of weapons of death and instruments of war surrendered by the defeated foe. The Egyptians yielded up their bravery to Israel's triumphant host, who turned them into silver trumpets and pillars—golden bowls and tables. And the day is coming when the fury, and wrath, and hatred shall all be woven into a song—when the weapons of our enemies shall serve to make monuments to the praise of God—

"The piercing thorns have changed to flowers;
The spears have grown to sceptres bright."
—*Upham.*

National Migration! Ver. 37. There are numerous migrations of great Asiatic and Tartar tribes on record; but none to equal this in its stupendous character. Scotland was a kingdom in Europe for almost a thousand years before its union with England in 1707. It shows a long line of kings. It made wars—fought great battles—and concluded treaties. Yet, when at the beginning of the last century, it became entirely united to England, its population was little more than the half of that which Moses led out of Egypt. Had the whole Scottish people removed *en masse* into the adjoining realm of England in one night, what a stir it would have created! It would have been for ever recorded as one of the most remarkable in European history; and yet it would have been vastly inferior in importance to Israel's national migration, inasmuch as that people were far more numerous, while their flocks and herds were *five times* as many as all Scotland could have produced—

"What sought they thus afar!
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine!"
—*Hemans.*

Pilgrim-Path! Ver. 37–39. Watching the heavy mist or rain clouds rising up from the horizon towards the zenith, we naturally expect them to obscure the deep blue vault overhead. Sometimes this is not the case. The up-soaring masses disappear as if by magic on nearing the zenith. This is owing to these water-clouds coming in contact with a region of warm air, which greedily devours the moisture they contain. Such is the power of the Divine Life in the soul to appropriate the water-drops of refreshment in the clouds of affliction. Sorrows are rain-clouds, and from them the believer eagerly draws all spiritual moisture for his soul's clearer outline and more entire conformity to the image of Christ. Whatever injuries these thunder and lightning clouds of suffering may cause to the godless, they can only prove abounding

mercies to God's children. That which proves a bane to the sinner, procures a blessing on the saint—

"Confirming, cleansing, raising, producing
Strong thoughts, grave thoughts, lasting to the end."—*De Vere.*

Affliction! Ver. 40. When Moses and Aaron failed in their first attempt with Pharaoh, and brought increased oppression upon them, the Israelites looked at their position as dark indeed. Thus, when from a distance we look upon a thick forest, it appears one mass of gloomy shade—dark, unbroken, impenetrable. But as we draw near and enter it, we find it intersected by paths, rugged perhaps, and narrow, yet safe. So was it with Israel, as they passed within the dark wood of adversity; they found paths in the plagues of Egypt—winding and rugged for them, it may be, but safe. They looked up, and the light from above struggled through like a soft, green twilight; while here and there brilliant sunbeams of Divine truth and love glanced like diamond-shafts through the foliage, and showed them that what once appeared all gloom, was instinct with life and liberty—less with bane than blessing. So that

"Dull is the heart that loves not then
The deep recess of the wildwood glen,
Where roe and red-deer find sheltering den,
When the sun is in his power."—*Scott.*

Prompt Obedience! Ver. 41. When a general commands his army to march at the midnight hour, and stand their chance of finding shelter and sustenance on the morrow, if the soldiers refuse, they are not an obedient, disciplined host. But if, at the reading of the orders, they at once break up quarters, however dark the night, and however dreary the prospect, then they march in obedience. The obedience must not be forced, but cheerful. It must be rendered with alacrity, not amid discontent and murmuring. Israel's host received their orders to march at the midnight hour, and they at once yielded. However apparently unreasonable the requirement of the father, it is the little child's duty to obey; and so God's children readily obey the pilgrim-call—

"Only guided by His light,
Only mighty in His might."
—*Wesley.*

Freedom! Ver. 51. Stretching from one end to the other of the mighty continent of South America are the lofty mountains of the Cordilleras. On the summit of a spur of the main chain, at a distance from the city of Lima in Peru, was perched a house of ancient construction, originally built as a fortification to command the pass through the mountains. Behind it rose range above range of mountains, the more distant towering to the sky, and covered with eternal snows; while from its windows could be seen the fertile plains of Peru stretching away to the ocean, distinguishable on clear days by a silvery line in the horizon. During the rebellion of the hapless Indian descendants of the Incas of Peru against the cruel oppressions of the Spanish conquerors, this building, occupied by an English merchant, became the centre of a terrible struggle. While the army of the Incas rushed impetuously down the mountain side, the Spaniards pressed up to gain possession of the building, as the key to the mountain pass. The English owner and his family remained passive spectators, feeling that the first to reach would be the masters of the situation. The Spanish soldiers gained first the house; but no sooner had they barricaded their positions, than the Indian warriors surrounded and besieged them. Desperate was the struggle; but, step by step, the oppressed natives gained possession of the outworks, walls, gardens, and at last of the building itself. All this was through the bravery, prudence, and resolution of their noble leader Manco. Thus, step by step, did the oppressed people of Israel gain their liberty, through the undaunted courage, matchless judgment, and iron resolution of Moses, their leader; who depended, however, not on human arms, but on weapons from the Divine Armoury, and the dread artillery of heaven. A like deliverance, after prolonged struggles, is at hand for the Christian Church—

"Already she is on her august way,
And marching upward to her final goal."
—*Percival*

CHAPTER XIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—4. The month Abib.]—The "*month of the ear-time*, according to tradition the month *Nisan* in the later Hebrew, corresponding to April" (Fürst). **16. Token.**] The same as "sign" in ver. 9. **Frontlets.**] "Bands" or "fillets" (Gesenius, Fürst, Davies). Probably explanatory of the more general word "memorial" in ver. 9. It seems equally unwarranted either, on the one hand, to assert that these passages (verses 9 and 16, with Deut. vi. 8, and xi. 18), were intended to bear an exclusively metaphorical meaning; or, on the other hand, to make them a warrant for the elaborate phylacterial ceremonialism developed by Hebrew tradition. Why should not injunctions of this nature be left just where Divine wisdom has left them? If

they point to external memorials, well: these need not be indiscriminately condemned. But if God has left *time, manner,* and *degree* unordained, why should human authority step in and bind what God has left free? Hence, when Kalisch says, "Tradition has made the most extended use of the liberty left to it with regard to the Tefillin by the indistinctness of the text, and has compiled very minute precepts concerning their arrangement and their use," we admit the fact of the "extended use," but we altogether demur to the assumed justification of it from "the indistinctness of the text." The indistinctness of general divine laws, when rightly construed, means the FREEDOM OF THE SUBJECT from any "minute precepts" as to the precise method of obeying. How sad that Christians as well as Hebrews should be so slow to learn this lesson! We are surprised that even Davies (Heb. Lex. under טוטפת) should draw upon Hebrew tradition for his explanation of this Biblical term. We agree with Tregelles, in Gesenius' Heb. Lex. (Bagster), that "it requires proof that the Jewish phylacteries are here intended by these fillets or bandages." Those who care to know what the Jewish phylacteries were, how they were worn, what virtues were ascribed to them, and about the best things to be said in their favour, should by all means consult Kalisch's long and interesting note on this chapter. Above all, let any, disposed to ultra-ritualism, ponder well the woes denounced in Matt. xxiii. **21. A pillar of cloud.**] Most interesting is it to trace the Scripture allusions to this pillar. How completely the Hebrew camp was controlled in its movements by it may be seen in Num. ix. 15–23, x. 33–36: hints as to its form may be found in its name and in Ps. cv. 39, and 1 Cor. x. 1 (cf. Isa. iv. 5): that God spoke from it is directly affirmed in Ps. xcix. 7, and may be more fully seen in chap. xl. 34–38 (where, however, observe the definite article, הֶעָנָן, *the* [well known, familiar] cloud," the cloud of guidance which had gone before them hitherto). (Lev. i. 1, Num. i. 1,) &c. Some have thought there were two pillars, one of cloud and the other of fire; but, judging simply from a comparison of the various passages, we are led to conceive of the whole matter thus:—That within the outer shrine of *cloud* was placed the central symbol of *glory* more immediately betokening the Divine Presence; that in the darkness of night, this inner glory shone forth through the cloud as fire, visible from afar; that, when the tabernacle was completed, the cloud rested above it, and the glory entered within it, and ultimately took up its abode beneath the outspread wings of the cherubim; and that when the camp was to move forward, and the tabernacle therefore needed to be taken down, the glory resumed its original place of enshrinement within the cloud. In this manner, too, chap. xiv 19, 20, may be quite simply understood.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1–16.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE FIRST-BORN TO THE LORD.

The Israelites are now marching out of Egypt. It was a great exodus, and Moses would not have undertaken the leadership of it but for the consciousness which he had that God was with him. This was the appropriate time to remind the children of Israel of their moral obligation to the Divine Being who had so wonderfully and mercifully delivered them from a condition of degrading slavery. Hence we find in the commencement of this chapter that God spoke through Moses to the emancipated nation, imposing upon them ordinances and duties suitable to their new condition of life. All the deliverances of the soul are associated with religious duties and obligations expressive of gratitude and devotion.

I. That the good are required to sanctify their first-born unto the Lord. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto Me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is Mine." Thus it is the duty of the good to separate unto the Lord the first-born, that is to say, the most excellent of their possessions, the most valuable, and that which is viewed with the greatest regard. 1. *This sanctification of the first-born was required by the Divine commandment.* God told Moses that the Israelites were to sanctify their first-born unto Him. It was not left to their option. It was not the outcome of human device. It was not the unauthorised suggestion of a grateful heart. It was commanded by heaven, otherwise it would never have occurred to man to sanctify his best things to the Lord; and if it had, he would probably have resisted the idea as antagonistic to his temporal welfare. This duty is founded upon the Divine Creatorship, and needed to be clearly and authoritatively revealed, or it would have been mis-

understood and neglected. Men do not like religious duties to make demands upon their property; they prefer a cheap religion, and many would rather do without any than sanctify their first-born to the Lord. The Divine command to man is that he give the best of his possessions—territorial, physical, domestic, mental, moral, and spiritual—to the Lord. 2. *The sanctification of the first-born was a grateful acknowledgment of the Divine mercy in sparing the first-born from the midnight destruction.* The first-born of the Israelites had been mercifully preserved from the stroke of the Destroying Angel, which had inflicted death upon the first-born of Egypt in the silent midnight hour. Hence what more reasonable than that the life that had been thus spared should be separated unto the Lord. God does not arbitrarily and unjustly demand the property of men; He only requires what He has given, and what He has preserved from the grave. And those who refuse to devote their best things to the service of the Lord show that they are insensible to the richest mercy, and therefore to the highest claims. Heaven never asks more than it gives, or more than is consistent with the gratitude of a devout heart to bestow. All its requirements are based upon the bestowment of past mercy. 3. *The sanctification of the first-born was to be associated with the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt* (ver. 15). By the separation of the first-born unto the Lord an Israelite would have many and varied memories awakened within him; he would be reminded of the eventful night on which death visited every Egyptian family, of the departure of his nation from a cruel bondage, and of the wondrous power and providence of God. And even when the multitude that came out from Egypt were dead, in the history of the nation of Israel, the separation of the first-born would always be associated with the idea of national deliverance. And so with the good, the gift of their best things and most excellent property to God is always connected with their soul-deliverances. They are glad to dedicate their first-born to the Lord in remembrance of the hour of their moral freedom. They regard this duty as a memorial of the past.

II. That the good in sanctifying their first-born unto the Lord are not called upon to give up the sole use of their property, but to redeem and to put it to a lawful use. "But all the first-born of My children I redeem." The Israelites were not required to give up their first-born literally to the Lord, to His service in the Temple. They were to dedicate them to the Lord by sacrifice. And in this we have set forth a sublime truth, namely, that a true sanctification of property does not altogether consist in giving it literally to God, but in using it for Him, and thus, in a higher sense, giving it to Him through the sacrifice of the cross. If men were literally to give their first-born to the Lord, much of the commerce and activity of the world would be interrupted; but by the redemption of the cross the giving consists in the using what we have for the highest moral purposes of life. Who would not desire his first-born to be the Lord's? God is worthy of the best we can give Him.

III. That the good are required to connect the sanctification of their first-born with sacrifice. "And all the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem (ver. 14). This redemption was to be by sacrifice. Thus we find that Hannah, presenting Samuel unto the Lord, brought a sacrificial offering with her, that he might be accepted (1 Samuel i. 24). So with the mother of our Lord. That which is born in sin cannot become the Lord's but by this constitution of mercy, everywhere set forth, and having its fulfilment in Christ. St Peter contrasts the redemption of the first-born under the law with the redemption which is by Christ (1 Peter i. 18, 19). If the first-born died there was to be no redemption. Christ seeks our *life*. He wants no dead thing in His service. Such provision was made for Israel even from infancy; what an encouragement to present our children unto the Lord in early life! But parents need

reminding of this duty. 1. *Because they are liable to forget the service which past mercy requires of them.* 2. *Because they are apt to be selfish in the use of their property.* 3. *Because they are not sufficiently spiritually minded to see God in their prosperity, and therefore forget His claims.* 4. *Because they do not like to pay the redemption price.*

IV. That the good are to teach the right of God to the first-born, to their posterity (ver. 14, 15). Children are very inquisitive. They will ask questions, even about religious matters. At such times they should be carefully and solemnly instructed in Divine truth. The family is the best school for the young. These questions must not be evaded. Their true explanation must be given, and in an interesting manner. Children should be brought up to the ordinances of the Lord, and to the obligations of religion. They should early be taught the meaning of self-sacrifice, and the moral grandeur of giving to the Lord. Even the young have their first-born, which they can be taught to give to the Lord; and if they grow up in the spirit of this obligation they will, in after days, impart to it a truer meaning, and give to it a more solemn influence than before they were capable of. LESSONS: 1. *That the good must sanctify their best things to the Lord.* 2. *That this can only be done by the redemption of the cross.* 3. *That the young must be early taught their obligation to the Lord.*

THE ORDINANCES OF THE LORD. *Verses* 5-16.

We read that Moses had previously instituted the Passover, and had made known to the people all the duties connected therewith. This repetition was, however, quite necessary. Men are dull students of the Divine requirements; they are very liable to forget the mercies of God, and their consequent duty. They need to be constantly reminded thereof. God bestows great care on the moral instruction of the Church. Let us strive to be more mindful of the ordinances of Jehovah.

I. That the ordinances of the Lord must be observed in the times of prosperity. "And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month" (ver. 5). In the wilderness the Israelites could not keep this feast, as they were fed with manna, and had neither leavened nor unleavened bread at their command. But there was a danger lest when they got into the fruitful country they should forget the estate from whence they had come, and therefore Moses, in anticipation of better days for the nation, again enjoins this service as obligatory. The changing fortunes of Israel were to be no impediment to the celebration of the Passover. How many people in meagre temporal circumstances attend well to all the ordinances of the Lord, who in times of prosperity are altogether unmindful of them! They forget God and the mighty deliverance He has wrought for them in the splendour and plenty of their success. Prosperity sometimes leads to atheism. The land flowing with milk and honey ought to lead men nearer to God in thought, ought to render them more grateful to Him, and ought to find them more willing to celebrate the glory of His wondrous name. The sacrament of the Lord should not be neglected in the prosperous days of life. The soul needs Jehovah then as much as heretofore.

II. That the ordinances of the Lord must be observed with great sincerity of heart. "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters" (ver. 7). And so those who attend to the solemn ordinances of the Lord must do so with sincerity of heart, without reservation

or duplicity of motive. They must purge out the hidden corruption of the soul. They must avoid the appearance of evil; no leavened bread must be seen with them. And those who come to the sacramental table of the Lord must be sincere in their desire to be pure, must be reverent in their disposition as they commemorate His death, and they must be truly grateful for their deliverance from the bondage of sin. Their entire life must be in sympathy with the service they are anxious to keep worthily.

III. That the ordinances of the Lord must be observed with true intelligence. "And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt" (ver. 8, 9). The ordinances of the Lord are to be intelligently observed. They are to be thoroughly understood by the Church, in their intellectual and moral significance. It may be to the advantage of some to surround their Church rites with the supposed glory of mystery, but this is more allied to heathenism than to Christianity. Superstition can render but scant worship. The sacraments of Christianity are simple and intelligible; all may understand their import, and ought to do before they venture to observe them. They have interesting associations. They are allied to the most eventful histories and experiences of the soul.

IV. That the ordinances of the Lord must be observed with parental solicitude. "And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage" (ver. 14, 15). Parents should studiously seek to instruct the young in the rites and ceremonies of their religion, and in the reasons on which they are founded (Ps. lxxviii. 5-8). Children should early know the stories of sacred writ, and should be taught their moral significance. The honour of God demands this. The good of the youthful soul requires this. God has appointed the family the moral nursery of the young. LESSONS:—1. *To attend to all the ordinances of the Lord.* 2. *To attend to them at the most appropriate time.* 3. *To attend to them in right spirit and temper.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 1, 2. In the day of deliverance God judgeth meet to give ordinances to the Church.

Jehovah must Himself be the Author of all ordinances tending to His service.

God by His ministers may make known His ordinances to His Church.

The first-born are God's proper portion in the world, and He will have them holy.

"*Sanctify unto Me all the first-born.*" 1. A command. 2. A duty. 3. A privilege. 4. A benediction. 5. A prophecy.

THE DIVINE RIGHT TO THE BEST THINGS OF MAN.

"*It is Mine.*" This is the language of God in reference to each one of us. **It is Mine:—**

I. Because I created it.

II. Because I preserved it.

III. Because I endowed it with everything that makes it valuable.

DAYS TO BE REMEMBERED.

Verse 3. "*And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day.*" There are certain days in the history of each one of us which are worthy of pre-eminent remembrance, because they are influential in our history, and will be to our destiny. Such was the case with the Israelites; the day on which they were delivered from Egyptian bondage was memorable.

I. There are days in the history of individuals which ought to be celebrated. As the day of Israel's free-

dom would be remembered, so the day of the soul's freedom from the captivity of Satan should be celebrated. It is well to observe as a joyous festival the day on which the soul found peace with God. The returning of the day should be marked by a return of the first enthusiasm and devotion of the soul.

II. There are days in the history of Churches which ought to be celebrated. There are days in the history of every vigorous Church in which it came out of some bondage, in which it emerged into new life, in which it entered upon some great enterprise, and these are worthy of remembrance. The very commemoration of such times would awaken glad memories and beget new strength.

III. There are days in the history of nations which ought to be celebrated. There are days when the nation came out of stern bondage, when it entered upon an improved civilized life, when a spirit of devotion seemed to possess the national heart; such times ought to be remembered.

Verses 5–7. Future times of God's mercy must be times for Israel's duty.

The Canaanites shall be abolished, and Israel shall flourish.

It is well to consider God's oath to His Church for all good promised.

The Church has a good portion in store.

Verses 8–10. The instruction of children is a duty upon parents.

God commands the celebration of ordinances, and that children shall be instructed in them.

The reasons of Divine ordinances must be understood by parents and children.

Sacramental signs, and memorials of God, He is pleased to give His Church.

God would have His signal memorials at hand, and before the eyes of His people.

The Passover was a true sacramental sign and seal of God's covenant.

By sacraments rightly used God's covenant is confirmed on hearts and in profession.

God's mighty and gracious redemption is a just cause of such memorial.

It is God's prerogative to make anniversary memorials of His mercies.

Verses 11–13. Jehovah is the beginning and end of His own ordinances.

All that God requires must His people make to pass from them to Him.

God has a property in all creatures, be they ever so unclean.

God has ordered redemption for unclean by putting the clean in their stead.

A price has God set for man's redemption to gain a Church for the first-born.

The law of the first-born has its truth and accomplishment in Christ Jesus (Col. 1–15).

Verses 14–16. Ancient ordinances may be justly questioned in succeeding ages to know the meaning of them.

Reason is to be given of our religion to such as reasonably demand it.

Redemption mercies are to be recorded and reported as just ground of God's ordinance.

Oppositions against redemptions are justly declared to make the work glorious, and God's people obedient.

God's redeeming mercies ought to work in the Church eternal memorials of Him.

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

THE WAY OF GOD IN CONDUCTING THE LIFE OF THE GOOD.

The children of Israel have now passed from the hand of Pharaoh into the

immediate care of God, a transition new to them, which they did not understand, and which would be a long, and not always welcome, discipline to them. This discipline commences at once in that they are not to travel the nearest way to Canaan, but the furthest. We observe:—

I. That it is the way of God to bring the good to a place of rest. Canaan had been promised as an inheritance to the Israelites. Thither was the Lord to lead them. And to weary human life, which has been long enslaved by sin, but which has entered into the freedom of the gospel, there is promised a destiny of repose, sweet and sacred. Heaven is the destined resting-place of the soul, and thither it is being conducted by God. This is the design of God, to lead the souls of the good into eternal repose. This is the end of all the discipline of life.

II. That it is the way of God to bring the good away from the things that would be unfriendly to their welfare. "Not through the way of the land of the Philistines." The Philistines were a warlike people, and would certainly have interrupted the march of Israel to Canaan. And so the Divine Being, in leading the soul to its destined rest, conducts it out of the way of its enemies. The soul is not wilfully to go into peril. Many men have not been led by the way of fortune, or social distinction, because that would have been as the way of the Philistines to them. God selects the life-path of the good. He selects it wisely. He selects it kindly. We often question His providence, but it is because of our ignorance and impatience.

III. That it is often the way of God to bring the good a circuitous route to their destination. "But God led the people about." Had God so ordained it the Israelites might have reached their destination in five or six days. But the nearest way is not always the best. This is true in commerce. This is true in worship. This is true in moral character. The shortest way to be rich is not always the best; the quickest way to be good is not always the best. Wisdom often calls men to the longest life-route. It is often ordained by heaven that the soul shall go the tedious wilderness journey. Thus is it prepared for Canaan. Thus is it humbled. Thus is it taught to confide in God. This way is not the most pleasant, but it is morally the most profitable. The Israel of God needs the discipline of the long way.

IV. That it is the way of God to bring the good along unwelcome paths. "Through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea." The children of Israel, had they been consulted, would not have chosen the wilderness as their destined path. They would not have chosen to face the Red Sea. They would, no doubt, have preferred the shorter route. It is well that we have not to be the guides of our own lives, that we have a heavenly Guide. But why did God expose the Israelites to the perils of the wilderness when He was so anxious to shield them from the Philistines? Because the wilderness was a preferable and needful discipline; and because it is impossible to get to Canaan, whichever route is taken, without perplexities. But God is always with the good in their wanderings in the wilderness.

V. That it is the way of God to bring the good into a better and more thorough knowledge of themselves. The children of Israel were not taken to Canaan immediately after their freedom from bondage; they had to pursue a rong journey in the desert. And so it is with the young convert, he is not taken to heaven at once, but is conducted through the discipline of life, that his zeal, love, and faith may be tested. The wilderness life will reveal him to himself. The further the good get on in the journey of life, the more and more they see the depravity of their hearts. This is the Divine purpose. Men know little of themselves when they commence the Christian course. They get to know more

in the desert. Some Christians are taken to heaven through a long route of pain. They long for home, but the journey is prolonged. It is hard to see the reason of their protracted existence. The Divine purpose is not yet accomplished in them.

VI. That it is the way of God to bring the good into a wise exercise of their own strength. "And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt." It is somewhat difficult to give the exact interpretation of the term "harnessed," but it probably intimates that the Israelites were arranged in five grand divisions. They walked in battle array. And so, while it is the way of God to conduct human life to its destination, it is also the duty of man to exercise his own wisdom and strength, so that he may do all to aid the plans of God concerning him. LESSONS:—1. *That God leads men from Egypt to Canaan.* 2. *That men must give themselves up to the guidance of God.* 3. *That life is often through a long wilderness.* 4. *However long the journey, men must trust in God.*

THE TENDER CONSIDERATION MANIFESTED BY GOD TOWARDS THE ISRAELITES.

The Christian life is a growth, and if assailed by some temptations in its infancy, the consequences might be fatal. He, therefore, who commences and maintains the process of our salvation, gradually accustoms His soldiers and servants to the difficulties of their warfare. Their faith, love, zeal, and self-denial are thus *exercised* rather than *oppressed.* The text confirms this consolatory view of the Divine procedure.

I. The circumstances of the Israelites. The deliverance of the chosen tribes was at this moment like the first rays of the morning spread upon the mountains. They had been redeemed from bondage. They were commencing their journey to the promised land, every spirit filled with pleasure. They were confident of their power to endure the trials of the way. The heart-searching God knew their deficiencies; and a variety of circumstances connected with their feeble faith determined Him in wisdom to divert their feet towards Canaan by a devious path. (1.) *The Philistines, who lay between them and the promised inheritance, were a brave and warlike people, against whom the sons of Jacob, numerous as they were, could not hope to succeed in battle.* Wisely therefore did the Lord judge that they would shrink from such enemies. Such are the Christian's foes. They are well practised. Satan has triumphed over man in every age, over the philosophy of Greece, the wisdom of Rome, and the refinement of Britain. And thinkest thou, Christian, that the enemies of thy soul are enfeebled? No! What, then, would be the consequences if God led thee past them to Canaan? Wisely and graciously are you led by the wilderness. 2. *The Israelites were disarmed, and therefore utterly unable to cope with the Philistines, who were prepared with every means of defence which a people whose delight was in war could invent.* The young believer just escaped from the house of bondage is defenceless. His enemies are armed. He cannot expect to wield the sword of the Spirit with the full energy of one who has been accustomed to fight with it. 3. *In thus estimating the goodness of God towards the children of Israel in their need, we must add that their spirits were bowed down by long captivity.* The hard bondage in mortar and brick was not the school in which to learn courage. Hence Israel was not fitted to match against the free soldiers of Philistia. The slavery of Satan unfits for conflict with the foes of the soul.

II. The dealing of God towards them. God might have made Israel at peace with the Philistines; or have given them courage to defeat their foes. But this procedure would have comprehended less of moral discipline. 1. *He avoided the nearest way to the promised land, and led them by the way of the wilderness.* The

Israelites would be astonished at the line of march; they would be disposed to murmur. Has not God often contradicted your desires? You ought not to impugn His wisdom. The passenger ignorant of navigation cannot direct the course of the ship. The shipmaster knows the rocks; God knows our path best. 2. *The Most High saw fit, not only that His chosen tribes should avoid the shortest way, but that they should pass through the dangers of the Red Sea, and sojourn in the wilderness of Zin.* Could this be the result of wisdom. Clouds and darkness are round about Him. It is the exclusive province of unerring wisdom to draw a line between the discipline necessary for our moral good, and that severity of affliction, which might overwhelm us with despondency. We must confide in our heavenly Father. 3. *Never then, should it be forgotten, that although the journey of the Israelites was contrary to their expectations, their wishes, and their clouded judgment, it was the safest and the best path to Canaan.—Buddicom's Christian Exodus.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 17. After the redemption of His Church, God provides for guiding it to rest.

Nearest ways to rest with men are not always approved by God for His people.

God will not put His people upon war or hard trial, until He train them for it.

God's special care of His Church is to keep it from a retreat to bondage after redemption.

"*Although that was near.*"—1. Yet it was not a wise way. 2. It was not a safe way. 3. It was not a selected way.

Verse 18. The way of the wilderness:—1. Rough. 2. Circuitous. 3. Unexpected. 4. Testing. 5. The best.

The way of the wilderness:—1. Men are divinely led in it. 2. Men must expect difficulties in it. 3. Men will realise many comforts in it. 4. Men may develop patience in it.

God orders salvation to His people as it pleaseth Himself, and for their good.

God in wisdom sometimes translates His Church from the house of bondage to a wilderness.

Wilderness and Red Sea paths are the ways of God's people here below.

Verse 19. **An interesting incident of Israel's departure from Egypt.**

The Israelites did not neglect to take the bones of Joseph with them in their march out of Egyptian bondage. In this we have—

I. The discharge of a sacred trust. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Gen. l. 24, 25). Thus it was the wish of the dying patriarch that his bones should, in the day of Israel's freedom, be carried in the great procession of emancipated slaves. This wish was regarded. Christianity teaches us to pay some heed to the last requests of departing friends. Many people are heedless of the wishes of the dead, and any promise made to them is speedily forgotten. Not so with Moses, he revered the sainted dead. How many young men are unmindful of the requests of their buried parents?

II. The fulfilment of an ancient prophecy. "And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." Good men often turn prophets in their last hours, as though their insight into the plans and purposes of God, which will be given in heaven, commenced on earth. The last few words of life are often more valuable and impressive than all that have preceded. God can kindle the fire of prophecy in the soul of a dying saint, that the sorrowful may be encouraged.

III. The giving of a timely encouragement. When it was announced amongst the Israelites that the bones of Joseph were in their procession they would be inspired and encouraged by the fulfilment of the ancient prophecy, and they would regard this as a pledge of all that was to follow.

IV. The bestowal of an appropriate honour on an illustrious ancestor. Joseph was an illustrious ancestor, and was worthy of the regard thus paid to his remains. The dead bones of some men are worthy of more respect than the entire lives of many who are living, and who are esteemed great in the world.

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

THE DIVINE LEADERSHIP OF THE GOOD.

The children of Israel have now left Egypt, and are boardering on the edge of the wilderness. They have left Succoth, the place of booths. They are now commencing the hardships of their journey. The young convert has soon to encounter the stern realities of the Christian life, and strangely different are they from those anticipated. But in all wanderings he has a Divine Guide.

I. That the good are divinely led in the wanderings of life. "And the Lord went before them." The cloud here named was the symbol of the Divine Presence (Exod. xvi. 10). In the New Testament, clouds are often spoken of in reference to Christ (Acts i. 9; Rev. i. 7). 1. *The Israelites were not left to guide themselves in the wanderings of the desert.* If they had they would have been lost in the wilderness. When men are freed from the bondage of sin it is eminently needful that they should be led by the same hand which has wrought their freedom. They can no more lead than free themselves. The good are dependent upon God in every circumstance of their life, both in Egypt and in the wilderness. They are led by Him through the wilderness of affliction and woe. They are led by Him in the pillar of His Providence, by the pillar of His Book, and by the pillar of His sacraments and ordinances. The good are not left to the guidance of reason or impulse, if they were they would often go astray; they are led by an unerring Guide. They have a Divine companionship in all their travels. Hence they are safe, and ought to be trustful and cheerful at all times. 1. *The Israelites were led by a visible guide.* The pillar of cloud and fire was visible to the whole camp of Israel. What a huge phenomenon it must have been, thus to be within view of such a multitude. Christ the Guide of the soul has appeared to men. His Divine glory was wrapped in the cloud of human nature, else none could have endured the splendour of His appearing. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John i. 14). He was seen by men, women, and by little children. He sought to guide their feet into right paths. But He is no longer seen by the bodily eye. He has entered within the veil. He is now only visible to the inner eye of the soul. Faith brings Him near to us, and His guidance is as real and reliable as ever. The leadings of the Unseen are more in harmony with the spiritual dispensation under which we live, and tax the nobler energies of the soul. 2. *The Israelites were led by a competent guide.* The pillar of cloud and of fire was sure to pursue the right way, so that the children of Israel would not be lost in the desert. It would protect them from the shining of the sun and from the scorching of the wind. It would give them the illumination they needed in their journeyings at night. Hence it was indeed a competent guide. The good have a Guide, quite as competent, who knows the best way in which they should travel, so as to culture them for their future inheritance and to enhance the glory of God. They are often brought

into perplexing circumstances, but the hand which leads is always able to provide deliverance from enemies, and from hunger and thirst. The good are also protected by the canopy of Divine love, which is carefully spread over their lives (Isa. iv. 5, 6; Ps. cxxi. 5). They have Divine illumination in the night time, as they must travel day and night to the promised land. They may truly say in reference to their life journey, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me (Ps. xxiii. 4). 3. *The Israelites were led by a faithful guide.* The Israelites were always conducted in paths which were ultimately best for their true welfare, even though they were at the time unwelcome. The pillar of cloud and of fire never left them while they were in the wilderness. And so the Divine Guide of the Christian life is faithful to the moral interests of those whom He leads. He yields not to their murmurings, He bears long with their rebellion, He remembers His covenant, though often His anger is kindled. But notwithstanding the wayward conduct of the good the Divine Leadership is still permitted to them (Ps. xlviii. 14). God will not leave His Church. He loves it. He has redeemed it. There is none other to help it. He will guide it to the end, till the Church militant comes to the Church triumphant.

II. That the good are often divinely led during the wanderings of life into varied and unexpected paths. "The edge of the wilderness." The Israelites would no doubt be greatly perplexed and astonished at the way in which they were being led to the land of promise. They would know it to be circuitous. They would see it to be dangerous. They had made no provision for it. Their food was nearly exhausted. What were they doing? Where were they going? Their circumstances were getting more critical every hour. They were obliged to look only to the pillar of cloud and of fire. Hence we see—1. *That God sometimes leads His people contrary to their expectation.* No doubt the children of Israel had indulged glowing expectations of the freedom that was to be theirs, and of all its consequent privileges. But how greatly were they mistaken. And young Christians often form very erroneous notions of what their subsequent life will be; they little expect, in the glow of their first experience, that a great wilderness is stretched out before them. 2. *That God sometimes leads His people contrary to the dictates of their reason.* If the best men of Israel had been consulted as to the path they were to take to Canaan, not one of them, not even Moses, would have selected that divinely chosen. The good are often led in ways that they know not, and which they consider to be contrary to the reasonable line of march, but faith in the Lord is the highest reason, and this they must continually exercise. 3. *That God always leads His people into those paths which shall yield the most sacred and safe discipline to them.* The wilderness journey was a way of severe discipline to the children of Israel, whereas the shorter route would have been a discipline beyond their present strength to endure. God was considerate to them. But the discipline of a freed life advances in severity with the journey. First there is the discipline of the tents, then of the edge of the wilderness, and then of the Red Sea, each manifesting anew the power and love of God. If the way were not rough and perplexing there would have been no pillar of cloud and of fire, there would have been no manna, there would have been no Horeb. The sorrow of life is permeated with the love of God, and hence relieved of its severity, and made a benediction to those who are prayerful and patient under it. If we are Christians, we must follow the cloud, though sometimes with weary step, yet with obedient heart.

III. That the method of the Divine Leadership is adapted to the changing circumstances of the good. "By day in a pillar of cloud, by night in a pillar of fire." The life of the good has its alternations of day and night, and consequently needs that the guidance of heaven shall be peculiarly adapted thereto. When the night is dark then the Divine Leadership is as a fire, can be readily

seen, is sublimely majestic, and gives evidence of solicitous care for those who are in need of it. There are times in the history of the soul when the Bible is all aflame to it, and when it shines with a lustre hitherto concealed. Hence the Divine guidance is adapted to the special need of life. In the dark night of sorrow how many promises have passed, in majestic grandeur, through the heavens of the soul with warming and consoling influence. God does not guide the good in the day time of prosperity and then leave them in the hour of grief: He says to them, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "At eventide there shall be light." But sometimes the light is at the back of the Christian soul, and cannot well be seen, but he may be always sure that it is somewhere near him, even in the darkest providence, even though it may be hard to find (Exod. xiv. 20).

IV. That the Divine Leadership should not be mistaken in association with the ordinary agencies of life. No Israelite would mistake the ordinary cloud for the pillar of cloud divinely given. He would distinctly recognise, and without the slightest difficulty, the cloud he was to follow. If he went the wrong path it would be through wilful neglect. And no really good man need mistake the fancied voice of conscience for the voice of God, the two are distinct phenomena, and may be readily recognised apart. He may always know the cloud he is to follow. The principles and precepts of a true life are clearly revealed, are before each heart, and only the foolish will go astray. The truth is always known from the natural inventions of men, by the fire it gives forth to the soul in trouble. The clouds of earth are minus the fire. They cannot give light. They lack the Divine glory. Fire is an emblem of God.

V. That the Divine Leadership is solicitous to lead the good to the promised and peaceful destiny. The pillar of cloud and fire was given to lead the children of Israel to Canaan. And it is for this purpose that God now guides His people, not to lead them into the secrets of human learning, not to lead them into the wealth of commerce, but into the eternal rest of the soul; and how welcome will it be after the fatigue of the wilderness life.

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah!
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven!
Feed me now and evermore!

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside,
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises
I will ever give to thee!

THE CLOUDY AND FIERY PILLAR A SYMBOL OF THE BIBLE.

I. As the pillar of cloud was given to guide and comfort, so the Bible is designed to lead the thought and console the sorrow of man. The cloud-pillar was given to guide the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness, and to comfort them in all their exigencies. To this end it was admirably adapted. So the Bible is designed to guide the mind into all the rich heritage of heavenly truth, and without it man would be lost in the wide waste of error. It is also intended to console the human heart in all the troubled moods of life, when its joys grow dim, when it is rendered lonely by bereavement, and when it comes to death. At such times the Bible is our chief consolation, it enables us to sorrow in hope, it shows us One who is the Resurrection and the Life.

II. As the pillar combined both cloud and fire, so the Bible unites illumination and mystery. The Israelites saw the cloud, but it concealed more than it revealed. God dwelt in that cloud. He dwelleth in light which no man can approach. Yet there was light in the cloud. And thus it seemed to combine natural and miraculous phenomena. Thus is it with the Bible. There is

mystery in it which the finest genius cannot attain, which angelic intelligence cannot interpret, and which eternity may not simplify. Deity dwells in the volume, and we expect that clouds and darkness will be round about Him. This is the God-ward side to the revelation. But there is fire in the book, which illumines the doctrines and morality of the Christian life. This is the man-ward side of the revelation. The Book was inspired by God, and was about God, here is the supernatural; it was written by man and was about man, here is the natural.

III. As the pillar of cloud aided the outgoing of Israel from bondage to rest, so the Bible is the best help man can have in walking through this life to the next. What could the Israelites have done in the wilderness without the pillar of cloud and fire? they would never have reached Canaan. And man without the inspired Word of God would be in utter ignorance and danger. Moral freedom would be a mockery to him, for there would be nothing to take the direction or culture of his emancipated energies. They walk the best in the wilderness of life who pay the most heed to the Word of God (Ps. cxix. 105). LESSONS:—1. *Be thankful for the Bible.* 2. *Follow the directions of the Bible.* 3. *Seek the consolation of the Bible.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 20. God's redemptive work is progressive, from state to state.

Whenever God brings His people in the way of redemption, they are encamped.

The encamped Church:—1. Christ is Captain. 2. The battle before it in the wilderness. 3. Slavery left behind. 4. Secure. 5. Progressive. 6. Finally triumphant.

At Etham:—1. We know not the sorrow of the future. 2. We know not the wondrous events of the future. 3. We know not our sins of the future. 4. On the edge of the wilderness we are on the verge of a great mystery.

Verses 21, 22. Visible signs will God give of His presence with His Church.

Signs do not comprehend God, but represent Him graciously to His Church.

The pillar of cloud and fire is a standing memorial of God's care over His Church.

Day and night Providence equally takes care of the good of God's people.

Guidance, protection, comfort, and sanctification are in the use of God's signals.

Israel's cloud and fire are eminently distinct from those of the world.

Neither the hottest day nor the darkest night shall stop the redemption of the Church.

God is not mutable in His purpose and work of grace to His redeemed people.

The pillar:—1. The same in substance, so is Christ. 2. Firm and solid, yields not to the storm. 3. All could see it, all can see Christ. 4. It was upraised, the life of the good must be upward. 5. It never failed. 6. The boundless grace of Jesus. 7. Whom do you follow?

The Divine Guide:—1. Acquainted with the way. 2. Accessible. 3. Friendly. 4. Willing. 5. Safe. 6. Continuous. 7. Supreme.

Some can guide through the difficulties of the day, but they cannot guide through the dangers of the night; but here is One to whom the night is as the day, "To go by day and by night." What if He awake thee to travel through the night! what if the cloud move when the world is asleep, or when enemies, as the army of Pharaoh, are behind and in pursuit! Thou hast a light, and that light is darkness to them: they cannot come nigh thee all

the night. It is a sweet view of the condition of the Church in all these seasons of trial, when she cannot sleep and rest for her enemies, but is awake to the midnight march, or the midnight watch. There is a light within the camp, the light of heaven, the fire of the Lord flaming over every tent. And the light that guides is the light that comforts. Who minds travelling in the night that can see his way? And who should fear following the shining of the Lord?—(*W. Seaton.*)

The pillar is taken away, the cloud is no more by day, nor the fire by night, yet is there light in the Church, a directing light, a comforting light, a protecting light—day-light and night-light. And serene the night, and cheerful the day, that has this light.—(*W. Seaton.*)

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIII.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Exodus-Symbolism! Ver. 4. This was a new life for Israel. As it had its new scenes, new wants, new duties, and new occupations, so does the "new life" of John iii. The world's fair and alluring landscape, with its great cities, fruitful fields and gardens, were left behind; while the sandy waste and wild mountain fastnesses of the pilgrim path to the Heavenly Canaan take their place. But they were FREE. When the great patriot and martyr-president of the United States contemplated the liberation of the African slaves in the Southern States, he was met by the argument that by freedom the negroes would lose much worldly comfort and pleasure conferred on them by their masters. His response was brief: "They will be free." Though Israel lost the vision of fertile vales, of sacred sycamore groves, of richly-laden fruit orchards, &c., they gained their freedom. Liberty was more sweet, more priceless than the splendours and luxuries of Egypt. Christian freedmen prefer the bleak and barren pilgrim-path to the "pleasures of sin; and, like Israel, they look forward to the climax of liberty, that rest which remaineth for the people of God. When the Church has reached the *ultima thule* of her wilderness-way, then in the Celestial Canaan—

> "The jubilant bell
> Will ring the knell
> Of slavery for ever."—*Whittier.*

Christian-Obedience! Ver. 17. Bunyan places the "Slough of Despond" between Christian's slavery and Christian's soldiery. While in Egypt, the Israelites were slaves; so soon as they escaped from Egypt, they became soldiers. The Christian life is a warfare, and there is no discharge in this war. Once enlisted, Israel's hosts must march under the banner of the Captain of their Salvation. And so is it with the sinner saved through grace. He is bound to follow the emblazoned heraldry of the "Pillar of the Truth," whose folds wave in the breezes of the Spirit. Like the soldier, who dies in harness, all his armour buckled on and his powers gathered up for a last encounter, the Christian is prepared to fight to the last. His Pharaoh can follow him to the brink of the river, but no farther. Therefore he obeys—

> "I have no plan! My will in meekness bowed,
> I trust the sign that will not let me stray."

The Right Way! Ver. 18. Two centuries ago, a gallant knight was commissioned to conduct a noble lady from the Royal Court to a southern province in France. Not long after he had set out on his journey, they put up at a quiet hostelry, where the lady and her maid of honour found private apartments. During the course of the evening, an unknown friend warned the cavalier not to take the shorter and best road next morning, but to select the longer and more rough way, on account of an ambushment which had been formed. Thanking his kind monitor, he next morning proceeded by the winding and difficult route. Much shaken by the stumbling of the horses, the lady and her attendant vented their displeasure upon the knight for preferring the worst and longest way; but when they arrived after tedious and exhausting struggles at their destination, and learned what a narrow escape they had had from the jaws of death, they acknowledged the prudence and perception, the foresight and faithfulness, of their leader. The Church of God may think the short way to eternal perfection the best; but when she knows as she also is known, then will her song be on the borders of the jaspar-sardine sea, Just and true are Thy ways, O King of Saints!—

> "Thou must pass through this tangled, dreary wild,
> If thou wouldst reach the city undefiled,
> Thy peaceful home above."

Fire-Pillar! Ver. 20, 21. The speaker's Commentary gives an inscription of the ancient empire of Egypt, in which the general is compared to a flame streaming in advance of his army. On a well-known papyrus, the commander of an expedition is called a flame in the darkness at the head of his soldiers. Burning lights were carried before the armies of Egypt and other ancient nations on the march to battle. The march of Alexander the Great—in his burning, eagle-like swoop eastward—was preceded by an altar of silver, on which flamed "the sacred and eternal fire;" and by huge torches raised on lofty poles, the fire of which was visible by night, and the smoke by day. The Divine Fire-Pillar eclipsed the gleam and glow of these masses of light; while it announced to Pharaoh that Israel was God's army. Its appearance—more especially when it moved from the front to the rear—was a challenge of defiance to Pharaoh, as well as an admonition not to contend with Jehovah. When God arouses a people to defend their rights with the Fire-Pillar of the Holy Bible, there is little fear of the result. The Vaudois of the Valleys fought under the shelter and guidance of this divine pillar; and their foes were discomfited. So—

"Mine enemies behold it,—so with fears
They pause, and hesitate to venture on."

Pillar-Guidance! Ver. 21. When Leech the painter was a boy, he was placed at a boarding-school where he had to spend his vacations, as well as his schooldays. His mother pined to see her boy, but the rules of the school precluded her from gratifying this desire. She therefore hired an upper room in one of the houses overlooking the playground. Here she watched her little boy. He did not know that any one was looking down upon him; but that eye followed him wherever he moved. Within the cloudy canopy was the omniscient eye of Israel's ever-watchful God. True, as Law remarks, the eye of nature sees not a moving or a halting mass; but, nevertheless, the eye of faith can realize the Divine watchfulness, can trace the unseen hand of heavenly guidance, and can read the monitions of loving faithfulness. When thou goest, says Solomon, it shall *lead* thee; when thou sleepest, it shall *keep* thee; when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee: for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light. The Light of Scripture is the Light of Life. It is the hand of Christ; aye, it is the *heart* of Christ.

"Welcome alike, when on mine eyelids beat
Red scorching rays, or fades the evening light."

Cloud-Shade! Ver. 21. So long as Israel remained in Egypt, Nature furnished them with cool shadows. It is true that there were no groves of patrician trees or fresh plantations, such as make up the beauty and richness of an English landscape; but still, its scenes were adorned with tamarisks and palms, which are to the Egyptian what the bread fruit-trees are for the Polynesian. Even on the border land of the desert there bloomed bright, sweet gardens of jessamine and orange. In the beautiful valleys myriads of roses burdened the air with fragrance. So that as long as Israel continued in Egypt there was abundance of natural shade. But no sooner did they enter upon the sandy barrenness than God gave them supernatural shades in the pillar of cloud by day. M'Cheyne, referring to Isaiah xxv. 5, affords some idea of the importance of this cloud in sandy deserts, where little or no vegetation existed, so that the sunbeams glance along the level waste of the wilderness, scorching hands and faces. He says that about mid-day, when the heat was very oppressive, a small cloud, scarcely observable by the eye, passed over the disc of the burning sun. Immediately the intense heat abated, a gentle breeze sprang up, and the travellers were refreshed. So God wards His pilgrim-church from the scorching rays of the sandy desert of sin, in fulfilment of His promise in Psalm cxxi. 6,

"He is a shadow from the noontide heat,
Although a burning fire in gloom of night."

Night and Day! Ver. 22. Samuel Rutherfurd quaintly remarks that as night and shadow are good for flowers, and moonlight and dews are better than continual sun, so Christ's absence is of special use. It has some nourishing virtue in it, and giveth up sap to humility. It furnishes a fair occasion for faith to put forth her hand, and lay hold on what it does not see. And yet God was not absent during the night, for the column shone as a flaming fire. So Christ is never really absent from the true Israel of His Church. True, the night often recurs to them as to the typical Israel; but such night is good. When its mantle wraps the "spiritual life," the Pillar is clad in robes of fire, and a glory is seen which before was invisible. When gloom oppresses the believer on his pilgrim way, then unwonted glories illumine the road. The smiling face of Jesus glows from out the deep and darkling shadows, speaking silently, yet forcibly: Fear not, for I am with thee.

"The gleaming token from afar appears,
To show God's pilgrims are not left alone."

Home-Longings! Ver. 18. Imagine some poor, shipwrecked mariner cast ashore upon a lonely island in mid-ocean. The climate of the island may be perpetual summer—the flowers may blossom and fruits ripen through all the year—the forests may be full of singing birds, with bright plumage, flashing like meteors in the shadows of the tropical glades—the air may be daily loaded with sweet perfumes, wafted by the balmy breezes—the skies may be genial, and the whole year one continued season of growth and

bloom; but will that castaway sailor be satisfied? Alone, the seeming paradise will be a prison. He will long for his distant home beyond the melancholy main. Night and morning he will climb the rocky height, and scan the wide, watery horizon for some friendly ship. And at last, when the white sail is seen, it looks to him as the white wing of an angel flying to his rescue. So ought Israel to have felt in Egypt! And so ought Israel's host to have welcomed the "Ship of Providence" sent to convey them across the Arabian Sandy Sea to their home in Canaan! But man is thus cast away by his own folly, and to him the ship of Salvation is sent to bear him across the stormy sea of life to the land of rest, the home of the soul.

"Dreams cannot picture a land so fair—
Sorrow and death may not enter there."
Hemans.

Bible-Guidance! Ver. 21. A traveller relates that he embarked on a steamer one beautiful evening, but towards morning a dense fog enveloped them. No observations could be made, and the vessel was directed by the compass alone. They were lost in the fog on a dangerous coast, and dared not proceed except by the guidance of the compass. In an hour they heard a fog-bell, knew whereabouts they were, and soon safely reached the desired haven. What the compass was to the mariners the pillar of fire was designed to be to Israel—to direct them in the right way. And such is the Word of God. It is my compass, my pillar of fire, which guides me safely to the haven of rest.

"I have no choice! The pillar of the cloud
Precedes me, hour by hour, to mark my way."

Desert-Shadows! Ver. 22. Three travellers in Egypt decided to reach the Holy Land by traversing the sand-wastes which separate them one from the other. Day by day the heat increased its oppressiveness. The hillocks of sand—between which they slowly moved at the usual pace of the camel—reflected the sun's rays upon them until their faces glowed, as if they were beside a burning, fiery furnace. Here and there were tufts of verdant plants and stunted shrubs, but too small to afford a shadow from the heat. How great a blessing the pillar of the cloud must have been! Towering over the camp, it cast a delightful shadow upon the sand, over over which they moved. The true Israel—wandering in the wilderness of the world—are similarly circumstanced. They have nothing to relieve the burning beams of the sun save the cloud of shadow which the Word of God casts. And it is associated with the assurances that in the Promised Land of Rev. chaps. 21 and 22, there shall be no hunger, thirst, or burning sun; but green shady pastures and living fountains of waters—

"Shaded on either side by trees of life
Which yielded in unwearying interchange
Their ripe vicissitude of monthly fruits."
Bickersteth.

Pillar-Stability! Ver. 22. Whether at sea or on land, the vast phenomena of water or sand columns are unstable. The cloudy sea or sand masses bend quickly before a driving breath; or the storm beats on them, and they vanish. A vivid account of such water-pillar instability is given in "The Young Castaways;" while a similar illustration of the transitory character of the desert sand-columns is supplied by the author of "The Tropical World." In the burning deserts of Peru, when a strong wind blows, huge sand-spouts rise to a height of one hundred feet, advance whirling through the expansive waste, encompass the laggard traveller over these solitudes, and overweighted at the summit totter and fall from top to base. All earthly pillar-shadows or shields, guides or guards, are uncertain and unstable; but the Divine Pillar of Truth mocks the lash of desert-hurricane or water-floods. Amidst the uproar and upheaval of elements, it smiles immovable; for against it, the gates of hell cannot prevail. No assaults can shake this magnificent column of salvation, so that as ancient Israel, God's true people may trust in the Lord Jehovah, for in Him is everlasting strength, and He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—

"E'en in the wilderness, He gives sweet sense
Of sure protection, when by dangers press'd."

CHAPTER XIV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—2. Pi-hahiroth.] Probably a Coptic word, meaning "the place of sedges"—Gesenius, Fürst, Davies, Kalisch. We can scarcely expect to determine the precise route taken by the Israelites in their march out of Egypt, or the exact spot at which they crossed the Red Sea. "Positive identifications," says Kalisch, "of ancient localities are the more precarious in this region, as it is certain that the northern part of the Gulf of Suez has formed itself, in the course of centuries, into firm land, a fact which, besides other reasons, is indisputably established by the circumstance that towns, as Muzza, which are mentioned by

the ancients as sea-places and harbours, are now situated in the interior of the land." Two or three points alone, bearing on the Israelite's line of march, seem to be of any real importance; viz., (1) that the passage through the sea must have been at a spot where the bed of the sea was narrow enough to be crossed by the Hebrew host in one night; (2) that the breadth of the waters must yet have been great enough to make the passage on "dry land" the evident result of Divine interposition; (3) that, relatively to the ancient extension northward of the Gulf, the line of the Israelites' approach to it must have been observably and notoriously too far to the south, to consist with the most southerly caravan route around the northern point of the Gulf; (4) that the route actually taken was a deflection from that on which the Hebrews started, so as to disappoint natural anticipation, and give the Egyptians the impression that their late slaves were entangled in the (Egyptian) desert, and had lost their way; and (5) that all this took place under express Divine guidance (ch. xiii. 17, 18, 21, 22), indeed there can be little if any doubt that Jehovah Himself, by His angel, in the "cloudy pillar," assumed the Leadership of the departing host at least as far back as where the short north road to the land of the Philistines was left. To attribute the ordering of the whole line of march to the Red Sea to *the sagacity of Moses*, as Kalisch does, is as little complimentary to him, who by this hypothesis missed his way, as it is reverential to the sacred narrative, which it thus hopelessly contradicts. **25. Took off their chariot wheels.**] "And made glide out their chariot wheels"—Kalisch. "And turneth aside the wheels of their chariots"—Young. The original word means to "make depart," "turn away," "put aside," "remove," &c. Hence, and from the incongruity of supposing *any further* progress made in wheelless chariots, it may well be doubted whether the rendering of the English version conveys the true meaning of the narrative. More in keeping with the context would be the more general notion of removing the wheels from their track, causing them to slip away so as to make progress extremely difficult. Only, this effect should clearly be connected with the Divine troubling of the Egyptian host. Precisely how the cause produced this effect we are not told: it is a matter of little or no importance.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1-4.

THE GOOD IN THE TRYING SITUATIONS OF LIFE.

The children of Israel had now arrived near the head of the Red Sea, and at the limit of the three days' journey into the wilderness, for which they had appealed to Pharaoh. It was a critical time with them. Will they return to Egypt? Will they go forward on their march of freedom? At the command of God, as made known to Moses, they continue their journey, and soon find themselves in very perilous circumstances. We cannot advance far into life without meeting with things to perplex us. The Israelites are commanded to change the direction of their march; now they go south to a place called Pi-hahiroth. They could not have been in a more trying position, and yet here they are Divinely led.

I. That the good are often brought, by the providence of God, into the most trying situations in life (ver. 1). The children of Israel were commanded by God to encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon (ver. 1). Here they are led south, in an opposite direction to the Land of Promise. How often are the good conducted along paths which are apparently contrary to their high destiny. This is a trial of their faith. If, at such times, they obey the Divine word, they go right, even though they may seem to be going wrong. No situation could have been, to all appearance, more adverse to the Israelites than that into which they are now Divinely led. The white crest of the great billows was before them. The huge mountains, which they could not climb, were on either side of them Pharaoh and his enraged hosts were behind them. It was indeed a trying situation for them. They could not help themselves. Their best prowess was vain, they could not defeat their enemy. Their best ingenuity was futile, they could not level the mountains. Here they are brought by God; this is to the carnal mind a mystery. Thus, *we have a type of the trying circumstances into which the good are sometimes conducted by the wondrous providence of God.* They are in search of moral freedom. They are led by Heaven, and yet are brought into great

peril. Had they been led by their own judgment, they would have avoided the southward route, and have escaped the sorrow in which they now find themselves. But the sequel of this history proves that God's way is the wisest, even though it be the roughest, for if between Migdol and the sea we realise our greatest peril, we also realise His richest mercy and His most glorious help. It is in the trying situations of life that we get the best revelations of the love and power of God. When men feel that they cannot help themselves, then God helps them. Thus they are humbled. They are brought to despair of creature aids. Then the promises become precious. The circumstances of life are all divinely ordered with immediate reference to the moral culture of the good; the Israelites were taught a great lesson before Pi-hahiroth. When God fixes our position, it is sure to be a salutary one, even though it be perplexing.

II. That the trying circumstances into which the good are providentially brought are vigilantly observed by the wicked. "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, they are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in" (ver. 3). It is probable that Pharaoh had employed spies to report to him the movements of the Israelites; at all events, he would be kept well informed in reference thereto. Thus we see how soon the wicked repent of any good action they may have done: they give up their sins, but soon go after them again. The besetting sin of the King was only subdued for a time by judgment,—affliction is not necessarily regenerative. It would seem as though the Spirit of God had now ceased to strive with Pharaoh, and that he is given up to pride and malice. With the keen eye of a warrior he sees the position of Israel in the wilderness. 1. *The wicked are vigilant observers of the life and circumstances of the good.* Pharaoh watched with the utmost vigilance the flight and circumstances of the Israelites, and all connected with their march was eagerly reported to him. Satan sets the wicked to watch the good, with malicious intent, that they may observe the most favourable opportunity of doing them moral injury. He is politic in his effort to ruin the soul,—he not merely leads a host against it, but seeks to render circumstances helpful to its overthrow. Hence, when the good are in difficulty, they are generally pursued by the devil. 2. *The wicked are malicious observers of the life and circumstances of the good.* Why did Pharaoh follow the Israelites in this great haste? Did he wish to render them assistance in their perplexity, and to aid them in their march of liberty? No! he came to render their circumstances more trying, and, if possible, to complete their defeat. But malice is not always right in its calculations; it cannot always achieve its unholy purpose, especially when seeking the ruin of the good. It cannot pierce the shield which Heaven throws round about the life committed to its care. 3. *The wicked are politic observers of the life and circumstances of the good.* Pharaoh watched the march of the Israelites, and when he saw them surrounded by the mountains and the waters, he sought by his army to put the final obstacle in the way of their escape. And so Satan watches the best opportunity of frustrating the march of the soul into freedom. But the wicked often misinterpret the providence of God in reference to the good, and hence pursue their plans to their own ruin.

III. That the trying situations into which the good are brought are designed ultimately to enhance the glory of God, and the retribution of wicked men. "I will be honoured upon Pharaoh," "That the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." God could have conducted the Israelites through the Red Sea before Pharaoh came to their encampment, but that would not have so fully glorified His name,—it would not have shown the terrible retribution of sin. The Divine Being so works the deliverance of the good as to destroy their enemies, and to teach a lesson of trust for the future. Men learn much about God when they are shut in by the land, and when earthly succour is denied

them; they learn their own weakness and the all-sufficiency of Jehovah. God is honoured in the overthrow of the sinful. He teaches nations by terrible judgments. Thus all the trying circumstances in which the good are placed will work the glory of God. LESSONS:—1. *Rest patiently in the circumstances in which God has placed you.* 2. *God is greater than all the hindrances to your true freedom.* 3. *Follow God, even though it be through the great waters.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 1–4. God alone orders the Church in all its varied movements.

God's orders to the Church are generally made known through His ministers.

Ministers must speak, and Israel must hear the mind of God in reference to them.

God's charge sometimes draws the Church back again when they are forward in redemption.

In the way of redemption, God brings His people into straits overwhelming to sense.

God is pleased to give a sufficient account of the perplexity of His people beforehand.

The plans of wicked persecutors are foreknown to God.

Upon such wicked prospects of persecutors, God gives them up to heart-hardening.

God provides for His own glory in the ruin of such persecutors.

Upon the discovery of God's will, the Church may submit calmly to sit down in straits.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5–14.

THE GOOD PURSUED BY OLD ENEMIES.

I. That the good, in seeking to come out of the bondage of sin, are frequently pursued by old enemies. Thus was it with the children of Israel. They had not gone far on their march of freedom before Pharaoh made ready his chariot and pursued them. He pursued them with great hatred. He reproached himself for letting them go free. And thus is it with those who have just entered upon the freedom of the soul, and who are setting out for the Land of Promise. They are pursued by old enemies before they have passed three or four days' march. 1. *The good are pursued by Satan.* As Pharaoh pursued the Israelites with his best armaments, so Satan gathers his chosen chariots and Captains and follows the young Christian with all the energy and skill he can command. At first Satan appears defeated, like Pharaoh; but he does not like to lose his profitable servants, he will not without a desperate struggle. He will employ the flower of his army. He will try error. He will try despair. He will tempt to sin. He is powerful. He has great resources. He is gifted with cunning genius. He will arouse indwelling corruption. To sense all seems dark. To faith all is bright. We cannot get to the Promised Land without much resistance from the devil. 2. *The good are pursued by wicked habits.* When the good enter upon the march of the new life, they soon see the old sinful habits coming after them. In the first joy of freedom, the young Christian imagines that all his sinful past is overcome, and that he will be troubled no more by the depraved habit of the soul, but a march of three days in the wilderness will convince him of his error. Habit pursues men with great pertinacity, even to the end of life. The habits of youth are not easily conquered, hence they should be carefully formed, or they may impair the Christian career of the future. 3. *The good are pursued by wicked companions.* When the good are first freed from the companionship of Egypt, they may imagine that they leave them behind for ever, and perhaps will be a little surprised to find them shortly afterwards in hot pursuit. The friendships of a wicked life are not easily got rid of,—they follow

with taunts and slanders even to the banks of the Red Sea. These are a terror to many a godly soul. Thus we see that Satan pursues the good with a great army, with many allies, in splendid array, and often strikes fear into their hearts.

II. That sometimes the circumstances of life appear to favour the pursuit of the old enemies of the soul. "And overtook them encamping by the sea," &c., (ver. 9). Thus Pharaoh and his hosts overtook the Israelites when they were entangled in the land, and when they had not the opportunity of equal conflict. The host of Pharaoh was well armed. The Israelites were without arms or drill, they were a disorderly crowd. Hell always pursues the soul when it is least prepared for the attack, in the hour of unusual difficulty, and when all its resources are weak. When it is entangled by temptation, by the deceitful allurements of the world, or by the providential circumstances of life—then Satan comes to work ruin. How often do circumstances favour the pursuit of our old enemies when they would awaken passion, pride, or selfishness within us. The world in which we live is a Pi-hahiroth, and the devil knows it; but the God who has brought us from Egypt can bring us from before Pi-hahiroth, if we trust in Him,—He is greater than the pursuing enemies.

III. That the pursuit of the old enemies of the soul often awakens the sorrowful apprehension of the good. "And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid" (ver. 10). Thus, when the Israelites saw the Egyptians pursuing them, they gave way to fear and panic, they thought only of the advancing foe and their own certain destruction. They did not remember the mercy and power which had redeemed them from the tyranny of Egypt, they did not call to mind the promise which had been given them of Canaan, they did not even look to the pillar of cloud above them. And thus, how often does it happen that when the good are followed by their old enemies, they forget the mercies of the past, the power of God, and look only to the on-coming foe. They think they will have to yield to the prowess of Satan, and go back to the old bondage of the soul. But we see in this narrative, the folly of allowing the advance of old enemies to awaken terror in the heart of the good, for they are only advancing that the power of God may be seen in their defeat. Good people of melancholy temperament sometimes think that they made a mistake in coming out of Egypt, and that they will never reach Canaan. Such fears are dishonouring to the grace of God.

IV. That the pursuit of the old enemies of the soul must be met under the guidance of Heaven. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord which He will show you to-day." Thus the Israelites were to leave all to God. They could not defeat their enemies, they were not required to do so. They could not dry up the sea. It was just the moment for Heaven to interfere, and to win a glorious victory; and so with the good who are pursued by sin and Satan. They must not look so much at the mountains by which they are encompassed—at their inward corruption, as at the salvation of God; they must be content to let God work for and in them to the destruction of Satan's devices. The human soul is restless and likes to be doing something to escape its enemies; God only can give the needed aid. The penitent sinner cannot deliver himself from the enemies which pursue; the believer cannot deliver himself from the corruption of the evil heart of unbelief; God must work in both cases. Hence in thinking of victory over our spiritual enemies, we have not to contemplate our own ability to repulse them, but the Divine. It is a blessed fact that God adapts the method of His redemption to the weak condition of His people. 1. *The enemies of the soul are overcome by God.* He alone can give salvation from the enmity of Satan, from the

weakness of self, and from the perilous circumstances of the wilderness life. 2. *The soul must wait patiently the outcome of this aid.* Neither Moses nor the Israelites knew in what way the Lord would deliver them from their advancing enemy; they had to *wait* in order to see the salvation of God. The good know not by what method of discipline the Lord will deliver them from their old habits of evil. We see here the advantage of having God as our Helper, in that He can make a way for our feet through the sea. LESSONS:—1. *That the good, being pursued by the enemies of their old life, are in constant need of Divine grace.* 2. *That progress in the freedom of the soul is in spite of the enmity of Satan.* 3. *That all moral progress is the outcome of the help of God to the soul.*

THE FOOLISH WAY IN WHICH MANY PEOPLE ANTICIPATE DIFFICULTIES. —*Verses* 10–14.

I. That many people meet anticipated difficulties in a spirit of great fear. "And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid." Thus, when the Israelites saw the Egyptians advancing towards them in battle array, they gave way to fear. They imagined immediate destruction. They saw only the warlike host. And in this way men anticipate sorrow now. They see all the circumstances which conspire against them; and at once imagine that the worst will befall them. They look to self; they look not to God. They are filled with gloom. Religion ought to make men brave and trustful in the face of advancing perplexities; God is more than all that can oppose.

II. That many people meet anticipated difficulty in a spirit of complaint against those who have generously aided them in their enterprise. "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt." Thus, when the Israelites saw the Egyptians coming after them, they began to complain against Moses. How ungenerous! He had led them out of bondage. He was their best friend, yet they blame him for a peril he could not help. And this is often the way of men, when all goes well in the enterprise they have undertaken little of praise is spoken, but when difficulties are seen coming much of blame is given. The best friend is derided in the hour of danger. The Israelites not merely murmured against Moses, but against God. And any man who murmurs at approaching difficulty is not merely in conflict with secondary agencies, but with what may turn out to be a sublime providence of heaven. Unbelief sees graves where there are none. Men over-estimate sorrow in meeting it before it comes upon them. It is base to turn upon men who have spent their best energy and wisdom in our service, when trouble seems to threaten. But this is the way of the world, a momentary cloud will eclipse a lifetime of heroic work.

III. That many people meet anticipated difficulties in a spirit which degrades previous events of a glorious character. The Israelites now reproach Moses for bringing them out of Egyptian bondage,—they intimate that death would have been as well in the land they had left as in the wilderness. They had no public spirit. They had been slaves almost too long to learn that death in freedom is preferable to life in slavery. And thus men who meet the approaching difficulties of life in a spirit of fear and unbelief, are very likely to bring contempt upon the most glorious events of their past history, they will even darken the glad memoir of national freedom. All the events of life tend to a unity, and it is impossible to murmur at the present without maligning the past. Sometimes weak people will, in the hour of anticipated trial, refer to their past advice as the wisest that could have been followed, and which if taken

would have averted the threatening danger; thus they unknowingly make their folly their glory.

IV. That anticipated difficulties should be met in a spirit of confidence in God. As the difficulties advance we must wait and see the salvation of God. We must not allow anticipated trial to shut out the vision of God from the soul. View the Divine purpose in the sorrows of life, that they are a discipline for our good; contemplate the promises of God to the perplexed; and in all probability the enemies, fears, and circumstances which harass you shall be drowned in the sea in a vain pursuit. LESSONS:—1. *That when trials threaten we should trust in God.* 2. *That fear weakens men in the hour of trial.* 3. *That it is ungenerous to murmur against those who earnestly seek our good.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 5. Under providence, tidings of the difficulties and fears of the Church may come to the enemy to move them.

Wicked tyrants take occasion from tidings of the straits of the Church to plan against it.

The hearts of the wicked are soon turned from forced favours to hate God's Israel.

The wicked do not like to see the freedom of the good.

Verses 6, 7. Hardened persons against God not only consult but are the first to lead in persecuting the Church. . . . Horses and chariots are the best strength of earthly powers.

Wicked men want no auxiliaries for their work of injurying the Church.

An attack on the Church: 1. Well calculated. 2. Grand in array. 3. Terrible in defeat.

Verse 8. Ten times hardening in sin calls for ten times hardening in judgment.

Such tenfold hardening drives men to tenfold more wickedness in persecution.

The high hand of God in favouring His Church will not persuade hardened sinners from persecution.

When pride of enemies sets them against the Church, God's hand will be above them.

THE INFATUATION OF SIN.

And he pursued after the children of Israel."

I. The infatuation of sin is seen in that favourable circumstances often awaken in men their old desires to do evil. The King of Egypt had allowed the Israelites to go out on their march of freedom, but when he saw them entangled in the wilderness, his old passion came back, and he immediately sent his army to regain possession of them. This appeared a favourable opportunity for the accomplishment of his evil purpose. And there are many men who yield to the better impulses of their nature, but they commence a life of sin again upon the first temptation. The heart must be renewed, or the old sins will come forth again at the first opportunity.

II. The infatuation of sin is seen in that it takes no thought of God, or of consequences. We read that Pharaoh took his chariots and captains on the errand on which he was bent. He did not think of that God with whom he was in conflict, and whose anger he was provoking. He thought not of what might be the disastrous consequences to himself and nation. He little imagined that not one of his splendid army would ever return from the conflict, and that he was making all the preparation for destruction. And so those who despise the good impulses of their nature, and who pursue a course of sin, think not of God, or of the probable consequences of their conduct.

III. The infatuation of sin is unmindful of the past painful discipline it has experienced. Had not Pharaoh

endured enough punishment in the plagues which had been sent upon him in the past? Had they not destroyed the wealth and hope of the nation, and yet they do not deter him from setting out again on his old sinful course. Some men will not learn wisdom by past experience, and thus they pursue their sins to eternal destruction. Sin is a terrible infatuation.

Verses 9–12. Providence may allow terrible enemies to pursue and overtake the pilgrim Church.

God's mighty hand may order enemies to see His Church in their camp, but not hurt them.

God may open the eyes of the redeemed to see approaching dangers.

Such discoveries of danger may affect unbelieving souls with amazing fear.

Unbelief in danger:—1. It cries out for fear of death. 2. It unjustly charges the ministers of God. 3. It gives men longings after bondage. 4. It seeks to be reckoned a prophet. 5. It forecasts danger which never will happen.

Direction in Dilemma.

Verse 13. God's great design in all His works is the manifestation of His own glory. Any aim less than this would be unworthy of Himself. It is His will to manifest His glory to man. But how? Vanity covers the eye of man, and puts a high estimate on self. Self must stand out of the way that God may be seen; and this is why God brings His people into straits that, seeing its weakness, it may behold the majesty of God. A smooth life will see but little of the glory of God. Among the huge Atlantic waves of bereavement and reproach we learn the power of Jehovah. Trouble gives a wealth of knowledge to be obtained no other way. Our text exhibits the posture in which men should be found in trouble.

I. A picture of the believer when he is reduced to great straits. "Stand still," &c. Here are two things conspicuous:—1. *What is to be done?* The man is in difficulty. He cannot retreat. What to do? *Despair* says, "Die." Not so, saith the God of our salvation; He loves us too well to bid us yield to despondency. *Cowardice* says, "Retreat." Better to go back to Egypt. Relinquish the ways of God. The sun turns not back when the clouds veil its splendour. *Precipitancy* cries, "Do *something*, there is no time to be lost." *Presumption* says, "Neck or nothing." March into the sea. Expect a miracle. But we are to stand still,—we are to wait in prayer. 2. *What is to be seen?* I cannot deliver myself. I cannot see how God can deliver me. Soon you shall see all nature and all providence subservient to God's love. You shall be a wonder to yourself. You shall see your enemies utterly destroyed.

II. I take the text in reference to the sinner brought into the same condition in a moral sense. You are being brought out of the Egypt of your sins, and to feel the Divine awakenings. You have as yet found no peace. Your sins are around you? What are you to do? Stand still! The sinner cannot keep the law. See the salvation of God—ordained of old—wrought by a mediator. Then look—trust—now. —*C. H. Spurgeon.*

The ministers of God must reason quietly with a froward people in the time of trial.

God seeks by His ministers to remove the unbelief of His people.

The salvation of God is worth looking unto by His poor creatures in faith.

Salvation:—1. Needed. 2. Present. 3. Offered. 4. Sufficient. 5. Divine. 6. Visible. 7. Neglected.

Causes of fear which hinder faith God removes at His pleasure.

"*For the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.*"

I. Then wicked men shall perish in the very hour of their splendour and pride. "The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day." Now Pharaoh and his army are advancing in all their strength and splendour, perhaps on no previous occasion had they been seen in such array. But the hour of their strength

was to be the hour of their weakness, —the hour of their pride was to be the hour of their downfall. When sin has collected all its forces, and when it is apparently in best array, then will the providence of God cause it to be seen no more. There will come a time when sin will be buried in the waters into which it has pursued the good. The collapse of sin is always sudden and unexpected. What a joy when the sin we see to-day shall be seen no more for ever. All the providences of God are working to this end. The wicked perish in the very act of sin.

II. Then wicked men are often powerless to inflict the injury they desire upon the good. Pharaoh and his army were stern foes of Israel, and they were viewed with great terror. The enemies of the good are powerless to injure whom God protects. Their pursuit is vain. The Church is often pursued, but the injury is often upon those who give it chase. If we will but trust in God, the enemies we see to-day,—the scorn of the world, the pain of life, the inward corruption of the soul, and our doubts and fears,—shall be seen no more for ever: they shall be overwhelmed in the atoning sacrifice of the cross, as were the Egyptians in the Red Sea. If we are injured by these enemies of the soul, it is because of our unbelief.

III. Then the wicked and the good will be eternally separated in the life to come. As the freed Israelites were to see Pharaoh and his army no more, so the good in heaven, after the final deliverance of life, shall see the wicked no more for ever. In heaven this separation will be complete and eternal. Now, the wheat and tares grow together; not so then. There are separations going on in this life based on moral character, in society, in commerce, and in the State. This is a prophecy of the future. An awful thing to be for ever in the company of the lost. A sublime privilege to be for ever in the company of the pure. Nothing that can defile shall enter heaven.

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

PROGRESS UNDER DIFFICULTY.

The children of Israel are now commanded, in their perplexing circumstances, to move forward into the waters of the Red Sea. A soul anxious to go forward will find paths where least expected and in the most unlikely places.

I. That in the perplexing circumstances of life, progress is often the highest wisdom, and gives the best solution of difficulty. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." When men have learnt to "stand still," then they are prepared to "go forward." Men must be patient before they can be truly active and energetic. God expects men to co-operate with His plan and purpose in reference to their deliverance from enemies; He will open a path in the waters, but they must walk in it. To move forward under difficulty is generally to find it vanish at every step. To stand still looking at the mountains is not the way to get beyond them. But progress at such a time must be guided by the providence of God, and not by the reason or inclination. Men must stand still till God tells them to go forward, then they will be defended by His power and led by His wisdom. God always gives men clear indications when they are to go forward; the cloud moves and must be followed through the great waters.

II. That in progress under difficulty there are times when action is more needful than prayer. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Thus it is evident that Moses had been praying unto the Lord, not in public but in the secret place of the heart. The good man can pray without removing from the

busy crowd. The prayer is not recorded—hence was, no doubt, offered silently. Certainly, it seemed an appropriate time for prayer on the part of the great Leader, as his position in reference to Israel became more critical every moment. It is sometimes difficult to know when to pray and when to act; certain it is that there are times in life when the former must be merged in the latter. Men require to go forward at the right time as well as pray at the right time; and success in any enterprise will depend upon the right combination of the two duties. It is folly to stand praying when surrounded by mountains, armies, and seas, without seeking to overcome our difficulties. Prayer without action will not remove physical disease, will not improve social position, will not give mental culture, and will not strengthen moral character. Men must go forward as well as pray. The energetic character will be more likely to neglect the latter, the meditative character will be more likely to neglect the former;—combine both. Progress under difficulty needs strenuous effort. At such times effort must be *brave*—must go into the waters; *obedient*—according to the word of God; *constant*—must not halt in the midst of the sea.

III. That in progress under difficulty there are times when the most trivial instrumentalities are useful, and are apparently associated with great results. "But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." Thus the rod of Moses was, in the providence of God, used as an instrument for the dividing of the Red Sea. We know right well that the rod did not in reality produce the result here recorded; that was done by the omnipotent arm of God, of which the lifting up of the little rod was but the symbol. It would be evident to all that a miracle was wrought. And so, in the progress of men, under difficult circumstances, God often makes use of little instrumentalities, to enhance their welfare, that the power of heaven may be visible in the events of earth,—that there may be an appeal to sense, and that the result may appear more sublime in contrast with the petty means with which it has been associated. Thus providence links small agencies with important issues. God can employ our smallest possessions for our welfare. Thus He dignifies them.

IV. That in progress under difficulty there are times when the wicked are obliged to recognise the supremacy of God. "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." Thus the progress which the good make under difficult circumstances bears a relation to the wicked who are pursuing them. The progress of the good is the destruction of the wicked, the providence which secures the one also secures the other. In these issues men cannot but recognise the supremacy of God, they show that God can bring to naught the enmity of the wicked, that He can subdue the proud, and that He can make the weak to confound the mighty. God reveals Himself in the judgments as in the mercies of life. LESSONS:—1. *That difficulties are not to prevent progress.* 2. *That Heaven can enable men to overcome the greatest hindrances to progress.* 3. *That the progress of some may be the destruction of others.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 15. **Soul-Progress.**

I. The soul should go forward because enemies are in pursuit. Pharaoh pursued the Israelites. The souls of the good are eagerly pursued by moral evil, and hence are under the necessity of ever keeping in advance of it. The good must never allow sin to overtake them in the journey of life. Progress is needful to moral safety.

II. The soul should go forward because glad experiences await it The experiences of the soul increase in joy as progress is made in all that is good

and pure. The good must go forward if they would sing the hymn of triumph on the other side of the river, when their enemies are destroyed. Onward there are grander visions of God to be obtained, there are richer fields of truth to be explored, and there are nobler things of character to be obtained. Then onward to Canaan.

III. The soul should go forward because God gives abundant grace to help it. God has made the soul capable of infinite moral progress; it cannot be satisfied with the present. He gives grace to enable progress, food to sustain progress, hope to inspire progress, and Himself as the destiny of progress. Nothing in the universe stands still. Shall the soul of man be an exception?

Verses 16–18. It is God's pleasure sometimes that His ministers should use signals for working miracles.

The sea shall be dry ground to the Church when God doth promise it.

Promises to the Church become threatenings to the wicked.

God is glorified in the destruction of persecuting enemies after their heart-hardening.

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

THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN ITS RELATION TO THE LIFE OF THE GOOD.

The angel of God went before the camp of Israel. Who was this angel? It was no created messenger. It was none other than the Son of God (ver. 24). The same appeared to Moses in the burning bush. The same wrestled with Jacob. All who set themselves against the good are in reality in conflict with the Son of God. They are engaged in a hopeless task, as we shall presently see.

I. That the Divine presence is not always straight before the inner eye of the Christian, and its apparent absence may occasion a momentary perplexity. "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them." So far on the journey the pillar of cloud had remained in front of the Israelites, so that all could easily see and derive comfort from it. And so the presence of God is generally before the eye of the pure soul, that it can be closely followed; and if it remove from this position anxiety is awakened. When life is an uneventful march in the desert, the Divine presence is ahead; but when the march becomes eventful, then the movements of God are adapted thereto. Christ adapts the manifestation of Himself to the circumstances of the Christian life. He is interested in the welfare of the people He guides. Why is He absent from the eye of the soul? has sorrow come between? has sin grieved Him? or has He only removed for our good? He is lovingly near, even though we see Him not.

II. That though the Divine presence be removed from before the eye of the Christian, yet it is somewhere near him, exercising a beneficent ministry toward his life. "And stood behind them." Thus, though the Divine presence had removed from before the eye of the Israelites, it had not forsaken them. Christ never leaves His people while they are in the wilderness: He knows that they cannot do without Him. Sorrow may come. All may be dark. Christ may be unseen. We may be sure He is somewhere near us. If we look in the rear we shall find Him. He does not always sustain the same position to our life. He thus educates His people to seek for Him. All His movements are for the good of the life He leads. He goes to the rear to hide our enemies from view.

III. That loving adaptations of the Divine presence to the need of the Christian life is the comfort, protection, and illumination of all pilgrim souls. "But it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the

other all the night." Thus the movements of the Divine presence are adapted to the need of the Christian life. The Egyptians were following Israel. God came between His people and their foes. So He does now. He comes between us and our sins and difficulties, or they would overtake and ruin us. See His mercy. See His power. We know not what blessings we receive through the movement of the Divine presence to the rear of us. We get light in the night of sorrow. We get comfort in the hour of trial. We get protection in the time of danger. The presence of Christ is always found where His people most need it. Few earthly friends come between us and our troubles; Christ our best friend.

IV. That the Divine presence presents a different aspect to the good from what it does to the ungodly multitude. "It was a cloud and darkness to them." Thus, to the good, the Divine presence is always as a beauteous, refreshing, and guiding light; but to the unholy crowd it is ever as gloomy and mysterious as a dark cloud. We cannot wonder that the men of the world call religion a thing of sadness: they do not get a right vision of God. Religion is a joy. It lights up the darkest night of the soul. We see God from the standpoint of our own character. To the sinful He is as a cloud; to the pure He is as a light. Truth has a dual aspect. The cross has a dual aspect,—to some foolishness, to others wisdom. The Gospel is to some the savour of life, to others the savour of death. All the great objects of the moral universe are seen as lights or clouds. Our state of heart will determine the vision. Only a pure heart can see God. LESSONS:—1. *That the Divine presence is near to each one of us.* 2. *That the Divine presence is especially the comfort of the good.* **3.** *That the Divine presence is adapted to the need of the soul.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 19, 20. The movements of Christ:—1. Adapted to the need of the Church. 2. Discomforting to enemies. 3. A signal for victory.

The interposition of God keeps the wicked world from destroying the Church.

The same means God makes to darken His enemies which lighten His people.

Verses 21, 22 God's instruments must be obedient to doing signs for working salvation when God commands.

Jehovah assists the signal obedience of His servants to give them salvation.

All miracles of raising winds and cleaving seas must be attributed to Jehovah.

The drowning waters are made walls to God's people at His word; so all afflictions are good by promise.

Waters may be made walls; dangers may be made by the grace of God into safeguards.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 23-29.

THE DIVINE TROUBLING OF THE WICKED.

I. That the Divine troubling of the wicked takes place in the midst of their presumption and sin. "And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea" Thus we see that the Egyptians were at this time in full pursuit of the Israelites, and were presumptuously following them into the miraculously divided waters. Hence they were in direct opposition to the command of God,—they were seeking the bondage and ruin of a vast people. They were animated by their besetting sin,—an intense spirit of selfish despotism. Sin has immense power of will. It is careless of the greatest peril, it will pursue its design into the waters of the Red Sea, and will venture on paths which are only

safe for the people of God, and in which it can easily be destroyed. It does not always act with sufficient calculation and caution; it rushes blindly to its awful destiny. It was when the Egyptians were in the midst of the waters that they were troubled by God. *It is easy for God to trouble the sinner in the midst of his sin.* When the sinner is hottest in pursuit and surest of success in his unholy aim, then the Divine Being can trouble him through the cloud. Belshazzar was thus troubled in the hour of his impious feast (Dan. v. 9). Thus the wicked are troubled when they are engaged in their most desperate attempts at evil; when they are least expecting disaster, they are troubled by the smitings of an alarmed conscience,—they are troubled by the hand of God. The Divine eye looks through the cloud upon the exploits of the wicked.

II. That the Divine troubling of the wicked causes the mad schemes in which they are engaged to drag heavily. "And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily." The Egyptians had got their best armaments with them,—their strongest chariots, their finest horses, their most skilful men, and all was in splendid battle array. And yet their chariots drave heavily! Why? Were they not well made? Were they not well managed? Yes; but they were troubled by God. Thus God can bring to naught the best preparations of the sinner for his cruel designs; He can render useless the finest chariots. The sinner finds it hard work to drive his car. The Divine troubling is an impediment to the enterprise of the evil-doer; in this way the success of evil to an alarming extent is prevented, and the safety of the Church is attained. Sin cannot prosper, because it is against God. It is a mercy that the chariots of sin drag heavily, or men would ride to hell more quickly than they do.

III. That the Divine troubling of the wicked sometimes causes them to wish to retreat from their evil designs when it is too late. "So that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians." Why did the Egyptians wish to flee? Were they not well armed? Was not their King with them? Were they not brave? Were they not near to the slaves they wished to recapture? There are times when sinners are obliged to see that their wicked enterprises are vain, and that they cannot succeed. They are obliged to acknowledge the failure of their best energies. They soon know when they are troubled by the Lord. Then they wish to make the best escape they can, *but it is too late.* Let us beware of the folly and danger of pursuing a life of sin so long that there can be no escape therefrom. It is dangerous to delay conversion. Some men will never retreat from sin till they are troubled by God, and then perhaps they cannot.

IV. That the Divine troubling of the wicked will in all probability culminate in their utter ruin and destruction. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. . . . There remained not so much as one of them." Here, then, we have a picture of what will be the end of those who sin against God, and who provoke His troubling ministries. God can employ many agencies to work their ruin. The waters will obey His behest. There are many rods by which they may be smitten. Then the display of sin, the best strength of sin, and all the allies of sin will yield to the retributive hand of God. The end of sin is to be buried in the great waters. The sinner is walking to an awful destiny. LESSONS:—1. *That the wicked are sure to be Divinely troubled.* 2. *That it is vain to seek to bring the Church into bondage.* 3. *That the end of sin is death.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 22, 23. The Church is pursued:—1. By cruel tyrants. 2. By combined enemies. 3. Into hazardous places. 4. By intense hatred.

The folly of sin:—1. It will rush into dangerous places. 2. It will risk all its best agencies. 3. It will go beyond the possibility of retreat.

The enterprise of the wicked:—1. Divinely observed. 2. Easily troubled. 3. Terribly defeated.

Sinners are troubled:—1. By the voice of conscience. 2. By the painful discipline of life. 3. By the failure of their best concerted schemes.

Verses 25-28. Morning and evening may not be the same to the wicked for their hopes.

God will stop the movements of persecuting powers in His due and proper time.

Persecutors always find that Jehovah fights for His Church.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 29-31.

THE SALVATION OF THE GOOD.

I. That the good are saved while in the very midst of agencies which might be hostile to them. "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea." Thus the Israelites were saved while they were surrounded by the waters of the Red Sea. Their situation was perilous, yet it was safe. The waters were made into a wall of protection. And so the good are saved in this world, even while they are surrounded by sinful men, by influences and maxims which are naturally prejudicial to their moral safety. They are saved in the waters. God makes safe paths in this wicked world for the good to walk in; He makes even the adverse influences of life to minister to the defence of His people. The Israelites were not drowned even though they were surrounded by the waters; the good need not be lost because they are encompassed by sin. Religion enables a man to walk circumspectly in the midst of moral perils, and to go where duty leads. The salvation of God does not take men out of the difficult circumstances of life, but guides through them.

II. That the good are saved notwithstanding all the hindrances and enemies which may pursue them. "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore." The Israelites had many enemies to their deliverance; they had by Divine aid to overcome many obstacles. And every man has many impediments to his salvation by the grace of God,—he has a carnal mind, a corrupt heart, a wicked companionship, and even the temporal circumstances of life may conspire against him, yet all these shall be overcome by the help of God, as were the Egyptians. The salvation of God is co-extensive with all hindrances and with all enemies,—it gives a man to see all his past sins dead upon the sea-shore of a new life.

III. That the good are inspired by their salvation with trustful and reverent feelings toward God. "And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses." Thus salvation of the soul is a great work, because sin is great, because mercy is great, and because the enemies overcome are great. God is its Author; He only can destroy the Egyptian of sin. Salvation inspires reverence. It awakens trust. It animates with a respect for the ministers of God; the people believed Moses. This is the end of God's dealings with men, to increase all good duties within them to Himself. Let us never distrust God, or wrong His ministers. Thus we see that the Red Sea which threatened destruction to the

Israelites proved the greatest benefit to them. And the pain of correction of sin ends in the joy of salvation. LESSONS :—1. *That the way of salvation is opened up by Christ as was the path to the Red Sea.* 2. *That men may be saved from all their moral enemies.* 3. *That the salvation of God should beget reverence and trust within the soul.* 4. *Are you saved?*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 29–31. The divided sea is a type of baptism, and, consequently, of all that which is requisite to purify the soul from sin. The Red Sea of the Redeemer's blood is the abyss into which the sins of believers are so deeply plunged that, if sought for, they can never be found; the sea which swallows up and overwhelms Satan with all his host, and the old man, and quickens in us a new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This precious blood of Christ, who offered Himself to God by the Holy Spirit, is that which alone perfectly cleanses our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Not, indeed, as indispensably necessary as this blood, and the vivifying Spirit inseparably united with it, yet serviceable for the purification from sin, and the mortification of corrupt nature, are the various trials which are not wanting to the true Christian. (*Krummacher.*)

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIV.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Exodus—Route! Ver. 2. It is supposed that Moses started from Rameses with the main body—that other divisions took their route from different points in the land of Goshen. If so, all would meet at Succoth—the place of booths. Thence, they proceeded to Etham (Pithorn) on the edge of the wilderness, about three or four miles west of the head of the Gulf of Suez. Thence their natural route would be round its head into the Sinaitic peninsula. But God ordered them to turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth. There were two ways by which Israel could reach Canaan: the near through Philistia—the far by the wilderness. The near or direct route to Palestine and to Sinai itself lay between Lake Timsah and the Bitter Lakes. These lakes at that time formed part of the Gulf of Suez, and near them stood the frontier city of Etham. They are now distinct from the gulf, but communicate with it by means of the Suez Canal—that wonderful structure which runs across the straight course of Israel to Palestine and to Sinai. These lakes were a kind of salt water marsh—the higher grounds being dotted on the eastern side with tamarisk shrubs, and strewn with shells, presenting almost the appearance of a sea-beach. Through this region Israel wished to pass as the nearest, and, therefore, the most natural route to Syria and Sinai; but God selected for them the far path. 1. Israel was incapable of contending with the warlike hosts of the Philistines. 2. Israel must acquire vigour and experience through the moral discipline of the wilderness. 3. Israel must receive instruction in the great principles of Divine morality and truth at the foot of Sinai. Therefore, at Etham, the way was suddenly changed; and Israel was directed to march towards Pi-hahiroth, *i.e.*, the place where sedge grows—or, the bed of reeds. Clearly this was a more or less marshy locality, and would prove a terrible barrier to any beleaguered host. Behind it stood the frontier watch-tower of Migdol, and on the other hand was Baalzephon, another watch-tower towards the sea. Thus surrounded and entangled, they would seem an easy prey for the vengeful and pursuing foe, who, with twin-horsed chariots, drove madly over meads and sands in fierce array. Like the prophet's servant, Israel saw but the human foe; while Moses, like the prophet himself, descried the Divine Friend. The eye of faith saw

> "The distant hills with flaming chariots gleam,
> The wild waste valleys with God's legions teem."—*Shipton.*

First Steps! Ver. 2. An emigrant's first night at sea, or in the remote backwoods, how dreary the scene! How lonely his heart! How weary the frame! How full of home-longings the heart! Often during the silent night-watches, he hears the fitful moaning of the wind and wave at sea, or the

screech and howl of the beasts of prey on land, he wishes himself back in the old country—wishes that he had never left the familiar haunt, even though but the land of brown heath and shaggy wood. The emigrant host of Israel were thus circumstanced. The first joy of setting out had subsided; the terrors of the desert, the mounts, and the sea—the weariness, the hunger, and thirst of their long march over yielding sand and amid soaking marsh, now made them long for Egypt. The green pastures of Goshen—the waving palms—the blooming gardens—the shining water-courses of their forsaken homes rise up before them. They become heartsick. So the Christian pilgrim—as he plunges into the Slough of Despond, falls heavily on the jagged rock, and cuts himself cruelly, or is pursued by armed robbers—wishes himself back in the city, with its palaces of marble and gold—its halls of beauty and light—its homes of gaiety and merriment. It is the first backwater of temptation—the early subsidence of the flood of spiritual enthusiasm!

"When the sky is black and lowering, when the path in life is drear,
Upward lift thy steadfast glances; 'mid the maze of sorrow here."—*Luther.*

Entangled! Ver. 3. History tells too vividly the story of Flodden field. The strongly embattled host of Scotland, with its Royal leader—the well-nigh impregnable position, which made Surrey's heart sink as he led his English ranks within sight of it—the inexplicable folly of the brave monarch in forsaking the place of safety, and placing his army in such a position as to make defeat certain, are all too familiar to the schoolboy. The Scottish soldiers wondered, yet obeyed. Israel wondered at the course their leader took, but they followed. They do not know where they are going, or why they are being led into an inextricable network of difficulties. Well might Pharaoh, trained in all the art of military tactics, feel confident that the vast host were at the mercy of his panoplied warriors. It is said that when the gallant six hundred were bidden ride into the jaws of death at Balaclava, they looked at each other significantly and obeyed. Each read his fellow-soldier's glance to mean: "A mad act, ending in our death; but English soldiers always obey." The Russian chronicler has left on record that the Muscovite generals and staff were confident of the total hemming in of the English armies upon the Crimean sea-shore. Pharaoh had a similar conviction that an easy triumph, ending in the complete extirpation of his hated serfs, was before him. He was soon to learn that

"Morning is ever the daughter of night;
All that is black will be all that is bright."

Christian Life! Ver. 5. Israel probably thought that, once freed from bondage, all persecution from Egypt was over. When they were deceived they expected nothing but death. A party sailing down the Amazon bivouacked on an open glade near the bank. Whilst resting here, they were suddenly aware of an approaching foe in the shape of a group of shaggy, naked savages, armed with bows and spears and blow pipes. They rushed at once to the canoe, and pushed out from the shore, only in time to escape a flight of poisoned arrows. Once more on the river they thought themselves safe from all pursuit. Quietly they paddled down the stream attracted by the lavish tropical vegetation, and the brilliantly-plumaged birds. Night came on, and as they were preparing for slumber, they were alarmed to find three large war-canoes in hot pursuit. They had reckoned themselves entirely free from their pursuers. So with the young Pilgrim! When he left the City of Destruction, he looked to have no more persecution; but he soon discovered his mistake. Israel is pursued! But the discipline is good: for are not the winds and tempests the school of the sailor-boy? Sharpe remarks that it is not every calamity that is a curse, and early adversity is often a blessing. It was so with youthful Israel; and it is so with the young Christian.

"Many a foe is a friend in disguise,
Many a trouble a blessing most true,
Helping the heart to be happy and wise,
With love ever precious, and joys ever new."
—*Tupper.*

Misgivings! Ver. 10. 1. Who does not admire and appreciate "Swiss Family Robinson"? It is perused and reperused with avidity and ever fresh interest by the young; and yet, too often its beauties are lost sight of. One of the most touching scenes in the book is where the father, exhausted by toil, distracted by anxiety, gives way to despair, and ventures to question whether he had at all acted rightly and wisely in leaving his native Switzerland. It was a time of great dread and danger. 2. The emigrant finds himself in the Brazilian forest. He has been struggling to hew down the giant trees, twisted and fastened together with the tortuous and tough lianas, in order to make a clearing for corn or maize. He finds himself unequal to the task, surrounded by difficulties, and succumbing to the enervating effects of extreme exertions in a tropical climate. Withal, he hears that the native Indians are in an unsettled condition, and likely at any moment to attack his humble wooden home. He wishes himself safe back in Old England! 3. It is said of Luther that there were moments when he half-regretted having launched on the Reformation path. Firm as the Eddystone Lighthouse while the waves toss, and roar, and leap against its base and sides, the solitary monk stood at the Imperial Diet of Worms, unawed by the presence, unterrified by the power of emperor, princes, and cardinals. But when alone, how he was ready to sink—to wish himself back in the quiet cloistered seclusion of

his monastery. All Christians have this strain: especially

"When truth is overborne, and error reigns,
When clamour lords it over patient love."
—*Bonar.*

Red Sea fears! Ver. 11. As the Passover showed how guilt might be expiated and judgment escaped, so this passage shows how those whose guilt is removed shall be redeemed from all evil. "And if God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not much more with Him freely give us all things?" But Israel had not yet learned this great truth. They were ignorant, credulous, and impulsive, as bond-serfs always are—whether as the Helots of ancient Sparta or the Negroes of modern America. They had never been accustomed to habits of order, reflection, or self-command. The bondage-life had shut them up in religious ignorance, if not absolute indifference. They could not, therefore, rest, as Moses did, upon "the Great Redeemer." Already, they felt themselves back among the brick-kilns and slime-pits of Egypt, with the cruel lash now become a scourge of scorpions. Had Pharaoh's host rushed forward, what a confusion would have ensued. When the great theatre of Santiago in Chili took fire on the Papal Feast day, the vast throngs trampled each other to death in the effort to escape. Had the chariots and chivalry of Egypt rushed upon the undisciplined host, how they would have trodden upon one another in desperate struggle of flight! But Pharaoh, confident of his prey, is willing to wait till the morrow's dawn. The sun has already set. The moon, which was full on the night of the departure out of Egypt, will not rise for three or four hours. Egypt's host encamps for the night. Egypt's monarch bids sentinels to be posted to watch the fugitive camp, and summons his nobles and officers to a council to decide whether the Israelites shall be driven, at dawn, into the depths of the sea, or back again to their former bondage. And of Israel it might be said—

"Yet with despairing face
Their way they would retrace;
Or on this desert place
Sink down and die."—*French.*

Sure provision! Ver. 13. Isaac was young in the Divine life, and perplexed himself sadly about the sacrificial lamb; but Abraham, who had more than once experienced the Divine faithfulness, was content to "wait on the providence of God." The Israelites were comparatively inexperienced in the ways of God; whereas Moses, who had learned their mysteries often during the Midianite exile, could exhort his trembling host to stand still and see the salvation of God. He knew that God had become their salvation in the wonderful works and feast in Egypt; therefore, he was confident that He would not forsake them now. A carrier hastening homewards through the drifting snow came upon a human form. It was that of a mother frozen to death in seeking to save her infant's life. Tenderly he bore the babe home, adopted it as his own child and brought it up in comfort and kindness. As the child grew up, he felt that the one who had rescued and saved him would never fail to keep him in time of need. So with Moses, he was sure that God, who had delivered and adopted Israel as "His firstborn," would not suffer His chosen child to be without sufficient succour.

"Then rouse thee from desponding sleep,
Nor by the wayside lingering weep;
Nor fear to seek Him farther in the wild."

Pharaoh's army! Ver. 7. Dr. Kitto comments that to the student of Egyptian antiquities, there is something of much interest in these allusions to the forces of Egypt. They were composed solely of chariots; and this is entirely in accordance with the existing testimony of the monuments, which exhibit no kind of military force but war-chariots and infantry. In a hot pursuit like this, the infantry could, from the nature of the case, take no part; and there being no mounted cavalry, the matter was left entirely to the chariot-warriors. On the other hand, Millington assumes that there were horsemen as well as charioteers, since Moses and Miriam speak of cavalry in their hymn in Exod. xv. 21. Satan knows well the forces wherewith to hunt the fugitive slave. He will not willingly suffer one poor slave to escape. Even when we have turned from our sin-serfdom to follow the guidance of God's Word, he pursues with manifold temptations—not feeble ones, from whose pursuit we can escape, but charioteers which come thundering down upon us. Even as the eagle swoops upon the newly fledged dove, for the first time pluming its pinions in the sunny air—even as the tawny lion or spotted panther springs upon the slender, untried, sylphlike fawn; so Satan's legions rush down upon the believer's soul, confident of an easy triumph. But the Christian must not despond.

"Oh! bear me up, when this weak flesh despairs,
And the one arm which faith can lean on is the Lord's."

Divine paths! Vers. 9–12 Krummacher relates how a wanderer had to go a long and dangerous journey over a rugged and rocky mountain. The road was pointed out to him by a guide clearly and distinctly, together with all the bye-ways and precipices of which he must beware. He gave him also a leaf of paper describing the way exactly. The wanderer observed all this attentively; but as he journeyed the rocks grew steeper—the path seemed to lose itself in lonely dreary ravines. Discouraged, he meditated a return by the way he came, when he heard a voice exclaiming, "Take courage, and follow me." He

looked round and beheld the guide. They walked on between the ravines, and precipices, and rushing mountain torrents, until they reached a lovely valley, where blossomed myrtle and pomegranate trees. Thus was Israel led. There they were, a sea before them far wider than their familiar Nile, and with the wild tumult of its waters very terrible: a sea before them, and on their rear, with his jingling chargers and sounding chariots, an angry and ruthless despot. Unarmed and unused to conflict, to face round and fight was for a flock of sheep to charge a pack of wolves or lions, and across that gulf they had neither wings to fly nor boats to ferry. In their moment of despair came their Deliverer. The man of God

"O'er the wide waters lifts his mighty rod,
And onward treads,—the circling waves retreat." —*Heber.*

Providence! Ver. 13. A small boat on the wide sea! A crew of three shipwrecked mariners in the Eastern seas! In the distance, a Malay prow heading straight for the boat with long sweeps. The boat sees the foe, and struggles desperately by hard rowing to escape; but the pursuer gains fast. The effort is useless:—the oars are unshipped, and soon the pirates have seized the boat, fastened it to the clumsy stern of their war-prow, and dragged the sailors on board. Hardly is this done, and the head of the native vessel once more headed East, than a fearful hurricane comes on. Those who have never been in the seas of the East Indian Archipelago can form little idea of the appalling fury of these tornadoes. They last only for a short period, but the wildness of the tempest passes expression. The natives struggled with the winds and waves,—every moment expecting to be hurled beneath the vast mountain-masses of water. Again and again, had they given up all hope, when mast, and sail, and bulwarks were wrenched away, and, borne on by the breeze, fell at some distance into the foaming deep. But the storm lulled as quickly as it arose: the vessel was borne towards the shore of an island, and all landed. As soon as the Malays had restored their vessel, they set sail, leaving the mariners behind. They had been saved their cruel fate in having fallen into the hands of the pirate crew, but they now realised that this very capture was a great blessing. Their own frail shell of a boat was shattered to pieces at the first onset of the blast, so that had they been in her, they must have inevitably perished. The Christian often finds himself pursued by foes, or surrounded by dangers; but let him hold fast to the conviction that all things work together for good, and he will soon find, like Israel, that the very things which seem to bar his progress and mar his prospects, become the means of safety and deliverance.

"His love can turn earth's worst and least
Into a conqueror's royal feast." —*Keble.*

Forward! Ver. 15. "To stand still when the voice of God's Providence cries: 'Go Forward,' quenches the light of hope in the heart, and opens every avenue of the soul for the incoming of the powers of darkness." Sometimes it does a man good to be brought into such a strait that he must choose one of two courses immediately and for ever. In the days of persecution, the threat of instant martyrdom has induced some to stand up for Jesus, when they might have lived and died without making the choice, had they supposed they could have a long and peaceful lifetime to choose in. Viewed from the under and imperfect human side, Israel's crisis was a pitiable position, but from its Godward side none could have been more profitable. It was the making of Israel's after life for God. Even so with young Christians; a great crucial trial is often their lifelong salvation. Old Humphrey has a good paper against wandering from the path of duty, suggested by a notice at the entrance of a park: "Take notice! In walking through these grounds, you are requested to keep the footpath." Bower says that Bunyan has supplied the same theme for solemn warning, in the pilgrim's straying into Bypath-meadow.

"Keep your right-hand path with care,
Though crags obstruct, and brambles tear;
You just discern a narrow track—
Enter there, and turn not back."
—*Barbauld.*

Red Sea Obedience! Ver. 15. Quaint but truthful was the sentiment of a negro preacher, whilst discoursing on the duty of implicit obedience: "If the Lord tells me in His Book that I am to jump through a stone wall, I will do it; for jumping at it belongs to *me*—going through it belongs to *God*." Moses receives a command to cross the Rea Sea: his duty was obedience—God's promise was deliverance. So felt the noble Swiss champion Zwingle. To go forward appeared terrible, but God required obedience. He stood on the edge of the Red Sea—the very point to which the guiding-pillar of Providence brought him; and, like the pursuing Egyptians, the Romish myrmidons closed upon him, ramping and ravening for his death. But just as they were about to clutch their prey the sea sundered, the host was troubled, and as the waters stood up on either side, the fervent, high-souled Switzer passed through into Gospel Freedom.

"Let not my peace be broken when the wrong
Conquers the right; but let me still wait on;
The day of right is coming, late, but long."

Confidence! Ver. 15. Mariners speak of a "frigate bird"—to be seen in all climes, yet never to be observed near the earth. This bird of heaven floats grandly on; so that while men in the far north see him at midnight floating amid the northern coruscations,

men in the tropics observe him at hottest noon, sheening his plumage all a glow, with the out-flashing sunbeams, while they shelter from the burning heat beneath the cool verandah-shade. Such should be the Christian's hope—no diversity of atmosphere should affect its life and vigour. Far above storms and tempests, whether ice or heat prevail, it should soar serenely on, until God swallows it up in Love. As Samuel Rutherfurd puts it: "Faint not, for the miles to heaven are but few and short."

"Thou must not stop—thou must not stay—
God speed thee, pilgrim, on thy way."

Go Forward! Ver. 15. This is the watch-word of progress for the world. Obedience to it is the salvation of the soul. It makes all the difference between success and failure—life and death—redemption and perdition. It is the vigorous pilgrim that climbs the dangerous steep—that bridges the mighty stream—that opens fountains in the desert—that makes the wilderness blossom as the rose. Obedience discovers and tames the most terrible forces in nature; and puts them into iron-harness to work for man. Obedience is the might hand that lifts the cloud of ignorance from the human mind—the majestic presence that scares away the horrid spectres of fear and superstition—the mysterious power that stretches the iron nerve for the electric thrill of thought to pass with lightning speed over the mountains and seas. Go Forward—

"To see avenging wrath in heaven above—
A gathering tempest—clouds of blighting woe—
Teeming destruction on the vanquish'd foe."
—*Mark.*

Rescue! Ver. 16–18. A boy found himself in a field, pursued by an infuriate bull. Conscious that his only chance of escape was to hasten to the gate, he turned and fled. Nearer the animal came, until he fancied that he could feel its hot breath. In a moment he realised that there would be no chance to open the gate in time to escape the angry animal's rage. On the point of yielding himself up as lost, he was surprised to see the gate suddenly open. Gathering fresh energy, he sprang forward, and sped through the open way. Quickly the gate closed, and just as the strong bar fell in its place, the mad beast's head crashed against the wood-work. What an escape! A friend had seen his danger—had hurried along the road—and had reached the gate just in time to open it, and save the youth. God's Great Hand (see ver. 31) divided the mighty waters—opened the gateway for Israel's fugitive legions, who passed along as through towering walls of crystal. The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. They moved aside to Israel's host, who trusted in God to deliver them.

"And such the trust that still were mine,
Though stormy winds swept o'er the brine,
And though the tempest's fiery breath
Roused me from sleep to wreck and death."
—*Willard.*

Divine Interposition! Ver. 20. The pillar symbolised the Bible. As the pillar interposed divinely between Israel and their foes, so the Bible steps in, and protects God's people. At the battle of Frederichsburg, a soldier carried a Bible in his pocket. During the engagement a ball pierced the book through the whole of the Old Testament, and stopped at the Gospel of St. Matthew. His life was thus spared; as but for the interposition of the Bible, the bullet would have penetrated his heart. The presence of Christ in the Word, makes it to the righteous a light to their feet and a lamp to their path. How dark to the unbelieving Pharaoh and his host of mail-clad charioteers! On what a scene that night did the light from the fire-pillar shine—did the darkness from the cloud-pillar shadow! Safely the little feet of Hebrew children trod the coral-strewn depths, where never before a living foot had left its impress. Not so Pharaoh's host in the gloom, deep and intense, that brooded over them. Ignorant of God—enveloped in darkness, they did not know that the waters had been riven, and that the ground over which their chariots were rapidly rolling was the bottom of the Red Sea covered with large trees or plants of white coral. How often the Word of God is dark to unbelievers! They cannot see the miraculous workings of God's Great Hand. Blindly they grope on in their relentless persecution of God's people, until the dawnlight of eternity flashes on them; and too late they discover their perilous position, as the Waves of Judgment roll in and over.

"How sinks his soul!
What black despair—what horror fills his heart!"—*Thomson.*

Refuge! Ver. 21. Many figures are employed to convey the shelter which sinners have from the fires of wrath—as well as which saints enjoy when waves of temptation sweep over a nation or community. Others have also been hailed to enforce the hairsbreadth escape of which the apostle speaks as being saved yet so as by fire; or as our English proverb of homely phrase says, "by the skin of his teeth." All these might be illustrated of the incident of a prairie-fire. Schomburgh describes such a scene. We had not penetrated far into the plain, when we saw to the south-east high columns of smoke ascending to the skies—the sure signs of a savannah conflagration. As the burning torrent would most likely roll in our direction, we were full alive to the extreme peril of our situation, for in whatever direction we gazed, we nowhere saw a darker patch in the grass plain announcing the refuge of a water-pool. We could already distinguish the flames of the advancing

column—already hear the bursting and crackling of the reeds, when fortunately the sharp eye of the Indians discovered a small eminence in front of us only sparingly covered with vegetation, and to this we now careered as if death were pursuing us. Half a minute later we could not have been alive to relate this hairsbreadth escape from a fiery fate. As the smoke and flames overtook us, we reached our vantage ground, to await the dreadful decision. We were in the midst of the blaze. Two arms of fire encircled the base on the little hillock on which we stood, and united before us in a waving mass, which—rolling onwards—receded farther and farther from our gaze. We were saved—the fire having found nothing at the base or on the slopes of the eminence upon which to feed. When the sinner's eyes first descry the advancing flames of wrath, he looks around for water in which to plunge, but all in vain. There is no salvation in man, and he is ready to despair. His attention is called to the rock, whereon is no guile or defilement of sin upon which the fires of hell can lay hold. To this he hastens: when my heart is overwhelmed, I will look to the Rock that is higher than I. Here standing, all is well; the flames and fumes of judgment roll on their way; and while whole swarms of voracious vultures, which have followed in circling flight the fiery column, pounce upon the half-calcined buffaloes, antelopes, and agotis, the sheltered sinner, saved through grace, retraces his steps—striking towards the city of the living God. What a picture also of the Last Judgment, when all who are not found in Christ, become the prey of evil angels; and while the redeemed know no alarms—

"Though heaven's wide concave glow with lightnings dire,
All ether flaming, and all earth on fire."
—*Thomson.*

Convictions! Ver. 23–29. Away on the Pampa dell Sacramento roam wild tribes of Indians. Of all, the Cashiboos are the most savage and warlike. Equally cunning as fierce, when they see the traveller they do not attack him at once in the broad day. They watch and track him to his sleeping-place, and when he is locked in slumber deep, they spring upon him for the cannibal feast. Sometimes the sleeper is aroused in time to defend himself. When these wild, subtle savages find that they have no chance of success, they retire. But it is only to watch and wait, until some other night arrives when they may renew the attack with more success. Pharaoh's lusts sought his destruction. Again and again, did they spring upon him in his sleep of self-indulgence; but he awoke to timely—though alas! transient—repentance. With cruel craft and confidence did they persist, until at last they accomplished their remorseless purpose—

"Until, at last, the crushing torrent fell,
And swept from earth the pampered child of hell."

Wheels Dragging! Ver. 25. It is sometimes of God's mercy, remarks Beecher, that men in the eager pursuit of worldly aggrandisement are baffled. They are like a train going down an inclined plane—putting on the break is not pleasant, but it keeps the car on the track. A man was driving furiously down a hill in the direction of the seaport, where he was to embark for California. The carriage wheel struck against a stone, and was shattered to pieces. Bruised and angry, he curse his adverse fate, which forced him to trudge for miles along the road, only to find on arrival that the vessel had sailed. But this "drag upon the wheel" proved a mercy in disguise; for the same night, the stormy wind arose, and swept the departed ship beneath its mountain waves. How often, God makes a man's chariot wheels drag heavily in mercy to his soul, when he will not see it. Persisting in his course, he finds himself at last sinking beneath the Waves of Woe, like Pharaoh—

"Whose heart of adamant,
Had led him to assay the ocean depths,
And satisfy his lust on Israel there."
—*Bickersteth.*

Death! Ver. 28–30. Pharaoh and his charioteer had the same watery grave. What a pill for pride! Napoleon the Great must die as well as the meanest of his camp-followers. When Xerxes wept over his three million warriors as the sure prey of relentless death, he probably forgot for the moment that his own ambitious heart would be pierced by the same sharp dart. The waters of death lie before us all—whether proud or poor, prince or pauper. Monarch and slave alike are swallowed up there, as the waves of the Red Sea make no distinction between mighty Pharaoh and the meanest of his host. What then will be the gain?

"Can storied urn, or monumental bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can glory's voice awake the silent dust?
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?"

Contrast! Ver. 23. In some respects Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar resembled each other. Both held the Israelites in captivity—both were of mighty and lofty spirit—and both oppressed the children of the captives—both were warned by a holy prophet—and on both dread judgments descended. But here the resemblance stops. In Pharaoh, we behold a man whom no chastisement could reclaim—whom no grief could effectually humble. He had trembled at the awful thunder from heaven—and started as the fierce fire ran along the ground. He had seen the clouds of locusts darken in the sky—had beheld the river running blood—and had swelled the wail of a nation when his first-born was smitten with death. Yet Pharaoh never truly repented. His heart, like the hardened rock, returned sparks of fire for the blows that

struck it. He died, as he had lived, in open rebellion against God.

"Mercy's boon refused
Shall fall in judgment on the soul perverse
That slights the gift."—*Mant.*

Pharaoh's body! Ver. 30. At dawn, the surf-beaten shore was strewn with the carcases of Egypt's chivalry. Among them lay the corpse of the proud and stubborn monarch—a prey to the hosts of vultures that darkened the air, and to the motley groups of wild beasts that lined the shores. The Egyptians considered this as the greatest of all misfortunes; and it was supposed that the soul could find no rest until the body was interred. The ancient poets frequently represented these souls as visiting their friends on earth to announce where their bodies were to be searched for that they might be buried. In Egypt these burials were associated with remarkable ceremonies; but were such for Pharaoh? Apparently, the Israelites took the golden ornaments and jewellery, as well as the richly wrought weapons of the dead; so that Pharaoh's body would share the fate of the others. The jackals of the desert and the vultures of the air—symbolised by the jackal and vulture-headed colossal stone gods of Thebes—would soon devour them. Near Thebes, the Lybian hills for nearly five miles have been converted into a labyrinth of sepulchres, where all the kings lie in glory—every one in his own house. Among them is the tomb of Pharaoh, the wide extent of whose dominion, at the time of his destruction in the Red Sea, is indicated by five lines of tribute bearers—offering gifts of ivory, apes, leopards, skins, gold, and other valuables. On it are sculptured pictures of masons at work upon monstrous sphinxes—no doubt captive workmen, perhaps Israelite slaves—masses of masonry

"Which now are turned to dust,
And overgrown with black oblivious rust."
—*Spenser.*

Deliverance! Ver. 31. Mr. Bower says that temptations resemble the rocks which rest their jagged sides above the waves when it is low water. No vessel dares come near them. But after a while the tide comes sweeping into the bay, and buries the rocks under a flood of water, so that the largest ships may ride in safety above their teeth of death—as well as the lightest skiff. No doubt Israel thought their difficulties of deliverance very great—incapable of being surmounted; but when the sea of God's Providence swept in upon the land of Egypt, they were borne high above the jagged rocks towards the haven where He would have them be. Therefore—

"Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
For e'en an angel would be weak
Who trusted in his own."—*Cowper.*

Sin's End! Ver. 13. There is a marvellous tenacity of life in sin, which has therefore secured for it the simile of the fabled Hydra destroyed by Hercules. The sea-anemone is not unlike sin: 1. In its beauty; 2. in its voracity; and 3. in its tenacity of life. It would be difficult to find anything more beautiful than the sea-anemones, emulating the daisies of the field when they expand their lustrous discs. Yet this wonderful daisy of the waters—this flower-like creature which charms the dullest eye, is a very shark for voracity. Crustaceans larger than itself are gulped into its miser-stomach, and woe to the nimble cyclops and annelide which comes within its reach. But its voracity of appetite seems almost surpassed by its uncommon tenacity of life. Dip it into water warm enough to raise blisters on the skin—expose it to the frost of winter—place it under the exhausted bell of an air-pump, its powerful vital principle will triumph over all these ordeals. Cut off the tentacles, and new ones sprout forth; nay, divide the animal in two, and like the Lernean hydra, it will produce a reduplication of itself. Possessing such wonderful powers of reproduction, there is, however, one means of destruction; for these apparently indestructible creatures die when plunged into fresh water. And such is sin—oftentimes graceful and bewitching in beauty; always voracious, devouring all good that comes in its way; yet susceptible only to destruction when plunged in the pure river of the water of life—when placed under the mortifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

"Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flow'd,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."
—*Toplady.*

CHAPTER XV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. This Song.**]—In order fully to appreciate the exquisite beauties of this Song, several conditions must be observed; among them we may name the following:—

(1.) The existence of parallelisms should be made evident to the eye:—

(Ver. 6.) THY RIGHT HAND, Jehovah! has become famous in vigour:
THY RIGHT HAND, Jehovah! dashes in pieces the foe.

(2.) The vivid sequence of the two Hebrew tenses, the Perfect and the Imperfect, should be noticed :—

(Ver. 5.) ROARING DEEPS cover[1] them. ([1]Imp. the act of covering passes before the eye.)
They have gone down[2] into the raging depths like a stone.
([2]Perfect: result, they are not to be found.)

(Ver. 12.) Thou hast stretched forth thine hand. (Completed act.)
Earth swallows them up. (Sequel: abruptly thrown in, as next following.)

(Ver. 14.) Peoples *have heard*, — they tremble. (How much vividness in a single line.)

(3.) Rapid changes of arrangement, adding immensely to the life and movement of the poem, should be observed :—

(Ver. 15.) | Then have been amazed || the chiefs of Edom. (Verb first: then nominative.
| The mighty ones of Moab || there has seized them—a quaking!
(Object first, abruptly set alone, with great boldness; then verb, with objective pronoun; then subject last.
| They have melted away || all the dwellers in Canaan. (Same as first line.)

(4.) The force of particular terms, giving a poetical colouring to the composition, should be noted; as, ver. 5, תהמת, "roaring deeps;" מצולת, "raging depths;" ver. 10, "they sank," rather, צללו, "they rolled, like lead," they were bowled in from the Egyptian side, clean down into the sea, the verb *tzalal* strikes the ear with the *roll*.

(5.) Special beauties remain, too numerous to be named. Conspicuous among them is the breathless haste with which stroke follows stroke in ver. 9.

Said the foe: I will pursue! overtake! divide spoil!

(6.) The prophetic element of the poem fitly crowns the whole. "It has always appeared to me," says Dr. Margoliouth, on verse 17 ("Poetry of the Hebrew Pentateuch," p. 72), "that this is the verse from which we may most clearly discover the inspiration of the ode. Very splendid and very striking is the description of the past scene, but this vision of the future it is which stamps the composition as Divine. I know of nothing equal to it in the whole range of poetry. The contrast is so beautiful and yet so natural. Amidst the outpouring of gratitude and triumph, hope and faith are kept in view. And from the consideration of what had been achieved, the poet feels assured that the Holy One would not 'suffer his truth to fail.'" No wonder that determined rationalism should stumble against this prophetic rock. "The language implies," says Dr. S. Davidson ("On a Fresh Revision of the English Old Testament," pp. 120-1), "that the passage across the Jordan had taken place, that Jerusalem was occupied by the Israelites, and Solomon's Temple built. The verbs refer to things done; and the poem, Jehovistic in its present form, is much later than Moses." Alas! that "weak faith" should "choose the harder side!" With sad satisfaction we leave our English scholar to the German-Jewish scholar Kalisch, who says—"We must call attention to the prophetic instinct, with which the poet, just at this moment, when the Israelitish nation happened to be between Egypt and Palestine, both as regards time and place, when they left the land of their ignominy with mixed feelings of joy and apprehension, and impatiently longed to reach the promised abode of their future glory, that he just then described that double relation with so firm a hand and such characteristic traits. And thus has that which many critics consider as a historical anticipation, carrying us into the times of David and Solomon, been enobled into a poetic beauty by the sanctity of prophetic inspiration."

27. **Elim.**]—Probably="palms," Ges. Fü. Dav. By many identified with Wadi Gharendel, "situated 2½ miles S. of Howarah, and 2 miles N. of Tor, in a very beautiful valley of almost one English mile in length, and abounding in good water. Even according to the most recent travellers, excellent fountains, and a great number of trees, especially tamerisks and palm-trees, are still found in that valley, so that it is generally chosen as one of chief stations on the journey to Sinai."—*Kalisch.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1-22.

THE SONG OF THE SOUL AFTER A TIMELY DELIVERANCE FROM DANGER.

We can almost realise the scene which this chapter brings before us. There are warriors and their horses struggling in the midst of the returning waters. But soon all is over. The dead are washed by the swelling tide to the feet of the rejoicing Israelites. God is victorious. His people are free. They sing His praise. The mercy of God should always awaken the soul to jubilant song.

I. The Deliverance of Israel. *The Israelites had been in great and alarming danger.* They were encamped against Pi-hahiroth. Mountains were on each side of them. The Egyptians were pursuing behind them. The sea was before them. They had, humanly speaking, no method of escape. The foe was proud and determined. They had not courage or the means of war. God came to their aid in this extremity, and delivered them in wondrous fashion. He is the best Helper of the good in the hour of perplexity. His mercy is rich. His power is great. *It is not the way of God to leave His people to their fate when they are exposed to terrible dangers.* He might have told the Israelites to give battle to their enemies. He might have intimated that they should help themselves out of their difficulty. He had brought them out of Egypt, and was it not right that henceforth they should protect themselves? It is ever the way of Heaven to help the defenceless out of the hand of their fierce foe. This deliverance was *wondrous.* The Israelites were brought on dry land through the midst of the sea. This was the last way of escape they would have expected. They would as soon have expected to see the mountains levelled to a plain, to have seen the hosts of Pharaoh vanish into air. God is never at a loss for a method whereby to deliver the good out of the hand of their enemies. He can do it in the most unexpected manner. All the agencies of nature are ready to aid His Divine purpose. Has He not many times in your life made a way for your feet through the sea? This deliverance was *joyous.* Who can imagine the feelings of the Israelites as they went down into the path opened for them in the waters. Their first steps would probably be taken in fear, but they would soon gain courage, and each heart would feel the presence of God. And when they saw their enemies dead on the banks of the river a sense of glad relief would rise in each heart. We all know the joy of deliverance from a great danger. This deliverance was *effective.* "Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank into the bottom as a stone." God never works for His people a questionable deliverance. Their foes shall never trouble them again if He takes them in hand. This deliverance was *awe-inspiring.* When the Israelites reflected on their march through the sea, and on the scene of panic and death which they had witnessed, we can conceive how reverent would be their feeling; they would fear that God who had wrought all this destruction. They would feel that if He had been merciful to them He had likewise treated His enemies with terrible justice. Surely Israel would learn a lesson here never to be forgotten. And all our deliverances from danger should tend to give us clear views of the character of God, and should lead us to reverence the Divine name.

II. The Song of Israel. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song." This song was dictated by the Infinite Spirit. It was not only sung to the Lord, but it was composed by the Lord. The grandeur and beauty of its construction exceed beyond comparison the greatest intellect of man. The song is descriptive. It is historic. It is prophetic. It will never die away from human lips; the Song of Moses and the Lamb will continue in heaven. It is the first of inspired celebrations, and it will be the last. How sweet will be the heavenly song when all the foes of the soul are for ever defeated! This song is composed of many parts; it combines vengeance and grace, destruction and deliverance. It sets forth God's final victory over all enemies. His power shall triumph over the pride and presumption of man. This victory shall be celebrated by all the redeemed. The world sings not hymns like these *It is well to express gratitude in song.* The Israelites did not thanklessly or indolently receive the deliverance which God had wrought out

for them. They gave thanks for it (Gen. xiv. 18; Judges v. 2). The healed cripple praised God (Acts iii. 8). It is well for the soul to sing the praises of God. It is well to celebrate His name in verse. Verse is more expressive. It is more inspiring. It embodies deeper pathos. It is better remembered. It is more tuneful. The mercy of God fills the soul with poetic emotion. It renders song spontaneous. *The Israelites sang this hymn immediately after their deliverance.* They permitted no delay. In this they acted wisely. There should be no delay in praising God. The song should go up to Him while the deliverance is had in lively remembrance, and when the heart is hot with gratitude. We should sing quickly after mercy. Delay will render the music of the soul less sweet. *The individuality of the song,* "I will sing unto the Lord." Each Israelite sang this hymn, he did not loose his sense of individuality in the great congregation. Each heart uttered its own gratitude. Others cannot give thanks to God for me. *The reality of the song.* The Israelites did not merely utter the words here recorded, but intensely felt them. They sang with the spirit. They felt the gratitude they expressed. *This song ascribes all the praise to God for the wondrous deliverance wrought for Israel.* "I will sing unto the Lord." This is the chief feature of the hymn. God is the best theme of spiritual song. The Israelites did not praise Moses their noble leader; they did not celebrate their own energy or fortune; but God alone. All our praise is due to the Divine name. They celebrated the *holiness, power, glory, mercy,* and *supremacy* of God. *This song is expressive of love to God.* "The Lord is *my* strength," "my salvation," "my God," "my father's God." Here is faith, relationship, hope, love, pathos; these elements should be found in all the songs of the soul. *This song recognises the duties of the soul.* "I will prepare him a habitation." "I will exalt him." Song is not enough; it must be followed by activity and by a holy life. We must exalt God in the life as well as in the hymn. LESSONS:—1. *Let no deliverance pass without praise.* 2. *Let all the praise of the soul be directed to God.* 3. *The Divine character should be celebrated by the Church.* 4. *Make life a constant hymn.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1. The ministers of God should lead the praise of the Church.

Permanent resolutions of praising Jehovah are becoming His Church.

The exceeding excellency of God in Himself is the true subject of praise.

The judgment of God on persecuting powers must be celebrated by the Church.

Verses 2, 3. **The Living God.**
"My Father's God, and I will exalt Him."

I. Who was the God of our Fathers?

1. A pure Being—not the "chance" of the atheist. 2. A conscious Being, not the "mere law" of the deist. 3. A personal Being, not "the all" of the pantheist. 4. A perfect Being, as revealed in the Bible. **5. An emotional** Being, as manifested in Christ. 6. A communicative Being, as imparted by the Holy Spirit.

II. What is it to exalt Him?

1. Not by tall spires. 2. Not by gorgeous ritual. 3. To adore Him as the object of our worship. 4. To give Him the chief place in our affections.

(*W. W. Wythe.*)

THE PATHOS OF THEOLOGY.

"*My Father's God.*"

I. "My Father's God."—**Then religion was no new thing to them.** They were not surprised when they heard the name of God associated with their victory. Religion should not be an originality to us; it should not be a novel sensation; it should be the common breath of our daily life, and

the mention of the name of God ought to excite no amazement.

II. "My Father's God."—**Then their fathers' religion was not concealed from them.** They knew that their fathers had a God. We know nothing of the religion of some men until we are informed of it by public advertisement. We cannot read this book without being impressed with the fact that the men who made the world's history were men who lived in communion with the Unseen. Is it possible that your child is unaware that you have a God?

III. "My Father's God."—**Yet it does not follow that the father and the child must have the same God.** Religion is not hereditary. You have the power to sever the connection between yourself and the God of your fathers. You may shut God out from your heart.

IV. "My Father's God."—**Then we are debtors to the religion past.** There are some results of goodness we inherit independently of our own will. The age inherits the civilisation of the past. The child is the better for his father's temperance. To-day we are inheriting the results of martyrdoms, which stretch far back into the grey past of history. (*City Temple.*)

Jehovah's relation to the good:—1. Near. 2. Sweet. 3. Joyful. 4. Saving. 5. Faithful.

Praise to God:—1. Cheerful. 2. Grateful. 3. Mighty. 4. United.

The best answer of Israel's relation to God is to make a habitation for Him.

High praises from the Church to Jehovah are suitable to His exalted mercies.

Jehovah alone is the mighty warrior for His Church in the world.

Verses 4–8. The right hand of Jehovah is glorious in saving Israel.

The same enemies that rise against Israel rise against God.

Wicked persecutors are as stubble, God's wrath as fire.

Such great things hath God done and will do for Israel's deliverance.

Verses 9, 10. The pride of persecutors makes them utter their boastings in defiance of God.

Madness and folly makes wicked enemies to threaten what they cannot do.

The blast of God's mouth defeats all the boastings of enemies.

Irrecoverably can God destroy all enemies that seek to destroy His Israel.

Verses 11–13. God's future providence as well as past deliverance is matter of praise.

Mercy is the rule of all God's conduct to His Church here below.

God has saved and will redeem His Israel out of all their troubles.

God's holy habitation is the destiny of all providential guidance.

God's strength secures the conduct of the Church to His holy habitation.

Verses 14–16. Tidings of God's appearance for His Church against enemies will make nations fear.

Princes and powers shall be astonished at God's vindicating His Israel.

Trembling shall hold fast mighty enemies when God sends word of vengeance.

God's possession of His Church is the ground of all His appearance against enemies for them.

Verse 17. Israel's Lord alone makes and establishes their place of rest for them.

Israel's last rest is God's mountain of inheritance, His own sanctuary.

God's mercy is to make His dwelling with Israel.

Verses 18, 19. The eternity of Jehovah's kingdom in Christ is a most undoubted truth.

The everlastingness of Christ's Government must be the burden of the song of the Church.

God, by His judgments, makes known His kinghood.

Verse 20. Women also have their place and work in the spiritual worship of God.

The Old Testament had its peculiar rites in service not to be followed now.

Verses 21, 22. After worship done in memory of mercies, the Church must go on in its pilgrimage.

From Red Sea deliverances to wilderness travels is Israel's motion.

Hard travels and piercing thirst is sometimes the lot of the Church.

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

THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF HUMAN LIFE.

The children of Israel are now in joyful mood. God has won for them a great, and, as it would appear, a final victory over their inveterate enemy. They appreciate the deliverance, and have celebrated it in song. The last notes of the hymn have died away. The Israelites are now travelling onwards. But new needs arise. They require water to quench their thirst. Life is not a long-continued song of triumph, it soon turns to want again. The experiences of life are varied and changeful, and soon pass from joy to sorrow.

I. That the disappointments which men experience frequently occur in connection with the apparently trivial things of life. "They could not drink of the waters of Marah." The Israelites had passed three days in the wilderness without finding water. The march long. The climate hot. The fatigue great. *And so men have frequently to pursue life for a time in the absence of needful things.* This shows them their dependence upon God. If man never lacked any good thing, he would imagine that life was self-supporting, and that he could do without the aid of heaven. The absence of needful good teaches men to value its return. In this country we have plenty of water, it comes to us through unnumbered channels. If we were called to journey without it we should prize it more. The common gifts of God are beyond price. Israel, no doubt, watched eagerly for water. Men soon become anxious when the temporal supplies of life fail. Now it is found. What joy in the camp, as the news is conveyed from one rank to another. But *the water is bitter! We cannot judge of earthly things according to their appearance.* The water looked all right. It tasted bitter. Many things in the world look well, but experience proves them bitter to the taste. The world itself appears as though it would quench the moral thirst of man, he welcomes it with song, but soon finds it bitter to his soul. It is well that some things are bitter, or men would take them in poisonous draughts. All the waters of life are embittered by sin. They look well, but are vanity and vexation of spirit. Thus we see that men are disappointed in reference to the ordinary things of daily life. We are not often disappointed in great things. Life has not many great occasions in it. Little things fret and perplex us. We are disappointed by the appearance of things; the business, the friendship, and the pleasure looked well, but taste badly. Sin looks well; but tastes bitter. Men are deceived in the commonest things of life. Israel did not expect trial, they had only just finished singing their hymn of praise. Disappointment comes soon upon joy. It is the way of God thus to exercise the faith and patience of His people. At Marah the cloud was before Israel. God is with the good in their sorrows.

II. That the disappointments of life seem far more frequently to lead men to murmuring than to prayer. "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" Thus the Israelites gave way to murmuring; only one man amongst them prayed. And in the disappointments of life only one man in a crowd will seek communion with Heaven. Grumbling is more natural than prayer. The former is folly. The latter is healing. Man likes to have all his own way. He ought to submit to the will of God. The best servants

of God are complained against. *The healing ministries of life are revealed to the praying spirit.* When men murmur they are deaf to the voice of God; they are blind to the remedy He would disclose to them. Prayer will sweeten bitter waters more quickly than aught else. *Men murmur at the disappointments of life, recall not the desponding memories of past help.* Men soon murmur when they are displeased. Would it not have been wiser if these Israelites had called to mind the deliverance which God had wrought out for them in the past? Had He not brought them out of Egypt, and through the waters of the Red Sea as on dry land, and saved them from life-long enemies? Had He done this that He might destroy them with thirst a few days afterwards? Certainly not. But unbelief views things on the dark side. It only looks at the bitter waters it cannot sweeten. And shall we murmur at the disappointments of life, when we remember the Divine mercies of the past? *Men often murmur about the disappointments of life to those who are the least to blame for them, and who perhaps are likewise suffering from them.* The Israelites murmured at Moses. He was a good man. He was their best friend. He had not made the waters bitter. He was as thirsty as any of them. How cowardly. How cruel. How discouraging. But Moses was a true man, and found his refuge in prayer. Ministers should imitate his example. Crowds are fickle in their moods.

III. That the disappointments of life are often removed and made a blessing to them by the kindly aid of Heaven. "And the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Moses prayed when the people murmured. He did not hold an altercation with them. In answer to prayer the remedy was revealed, and the waters became all the sweeter for having been bitter. The tree had no healing virtue in it. It was the means used by God, and shows His rule over all the things of His universe. We must not abuse a single tree in God's universe, it contains sacred possibilities. Men must employ secondary causes to heal their disappointments. Prayer shows where they are to be found. God can make a way out of the greatest trial. We must do as Heaven tells us in the hour of grief, for if we refuse to cast the tree into the bitter waters they will not be sweetened.

IV. That when the disappointments of life are removed, then God admonishes men in reference to their future conduct. "And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee."

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Versus 23, 24. After worship done in memory of mercies, the Church must go on its pilgrimage.

Monuments of trial God sometimes sets up in the names of places for posterity.

Carnal Israelites soon exchange worship for discontent.

Foolish unbelieving creatures are running to creatures for drink rather than to God.

Verses 25-27. When unbelievers are murmuring under trial, God's servants are praying.

God's faithful ones shall never seek His face in vain.

God will show His servants how to turn bitter into sweet, when they truly seek Him.

Obedience must use the appointed means to receive the desired issue.

Where God gives mercies to His people, He also gives laws and judgments.

Marah and Elim. The alternating experiences of human life.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XV.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Red Sea! Ver. 1–22. One dark and stormy night, a vessel was wrecked on a rocky island off the coast of Scotland. The crew had watched with terror the white waves as they dashed on the stately cliffs, and felt that to be driven upon those rocks was to seal their doom. The cabin was filled with water, and the captain's wife was drowned. The sailors climbed into the rigging and prayed as they never had before, that God would have mercy upon them. But the cruel waves drove the vessel on and on, till the very foot of the awful cliff was reached. Oh! if they could only reach its top! There would be safety, and, no doubt, friendly hands to help them. But how was the top to be gained. Alas! there they were—fated and doomed to perish. Despair had fastened hard upon them—their escape was hopeless. See! their attention has been aroused to something on the face of the cliff. It is a slender rope ladder, up which they climbed in succession as rapidly as their benumbed fingers would permit. Israel's escape seemed as hopeless: when the Lord showed them the path through a crystal gallery with a blood-red gate.

"With limbs that falter, and with hearts that swell,
Down, down they pass, a steep and slippery dell."

Pathway! Ver. 19. Israel's way through the Red Sea has been called a crystal gallery with a blood-red gate. The gate was the Paschal Feast. It is through the gateway of the Lamb of God's bleeding sacrifice that believers pass ere they can enter upon the crystal pathway of spiritual baptism. Both are supernatural—Divine. Some have supposed that Israel crossed the fords near the head waters of the sea at low tide, and that Pharaoh and his hosts were overwhelmed by the returning tide. But this is untrue. An English gentleman and author who had committed himself publicly to the defence of this theory, on examining the ground, abandoned it as utterly untenable and absurd. Dr. Aiton says that Napoleon at Suez attempted to establish this by crossing the waters at ebb tide. In regard to his effort in this way, it has been remarked by the author of "Eothen" that Napoleon and his horsemen managed the matter more after the failure of the Egyptians than the success of the Israelites. It is said that Napoleon fell from his horse into the sea, and was only dragged out by the assistance of the natives on shore. True or untrue, it is clear that Napoleon was wrong. No ebb tide was this "dividing of the waters;" but, as in ver. 31, "the power of the Great Hand." It was the Great Hand of God which had done this; as the dukes of Edom and the mighty men of Moab, and all the inhabitants of Canaan realised, as—

"Far over the sea,
In its melody,
The shout of the free
Sounded merrily!"

Freedom! Ver. 2. I have seen the caged eagle beating violently against the iron bars of his prison—his plumes soiled and torn, his strong wings drooping, the light of his glorious eye dimmed, the pulse of his proud heart panting in vain for conflict with the careering clouds and mountain blasts. At first Israel demurred to freedom when Jehovah proffered it by Moses, but gradually longings for freedom sprang up, and they struggled hard to be free. And as the eagle when the bars are broken, or the links are shivered, springs into the air, rejoicing in the freedom of his mountain home, so Israel was glad when their hosts marched forth from Egyptian bondage,—like the proud denizen of the air

"Clasping the crag with hooked hands,
Close to the sun in lonely lands."

Sea! Ver. 10. Some idea—faint, we admit—may be formed of the effect of the sea suddenly plunging back into a channel ten or twelve miles broad, by comparing it with that of the stupendous Falls of Niagara,—one of the wonders of the world. This cataract, whose name signifies "the thunder of the waters," is divided by an island into two distinct falls; and more than 113,000,000 of gallons of water are precipitated down these falls in one minute. Little in comparison with this mighty waterfall upon Pharaoh. Never had such a scene been witnessed since that awful time when all the fountains of the great deep were broken up at the Deluge! Down on the warriors of Egypt—down upon chariots and horsemen—fell the accumulated heaps of crushing waters, foaming, roaring, sweeping away the pomp and pride of the mighty, as straws are swept whirling down the rushing cascade. The magnificent display of power more than justifies verses 10 and 11.

"Lord! list to the voice
Of those that rejoice,
Ascribing to Thee
All the victory!"

Chariots! Ver. 9, 10. What a contrast between the gilded car of Pharaoh and the golden chariot of Elijah. Its circling wheels woke no echos amongst the rocks, and left no impression on the sands. It came from heaven, and heaven was its bourne. Not a

drop of the chilly waters of the grave dimmed its brilliant surface. It was the chariot of devotion, as was Pharaoh's that of ambition. The spirit of devotion descends from heaven; it is sent by our God to bear His servants upwards towards Him. Not all the waters of death shall quench or dim its glory. His people are safe.

"They onward tread; the circling waves retreat,
In hoarse deep murmurs from their holy feet."

Deliverance—Joy! Verses 11–13. On the last day of April 1687, ten thousand French and twelve thousand Sardinian troops pursued the Vaudois of the Valleys until they had hemmed them, to all appearances hopelessly, in the Balsille. The French General De Catinat burned to revenge previous defeats of his troops, and vowed complete extermination of the fugitives:—"Every one of them shall be hanged in the evening." So burned Pharaoh as he pursued after Israel, and hemmed their host in upon the sea. But by and by came to Pignerol the tidings that twenty thousand of the choicest chivalry of France and Sardinia, with their destructive artillery, had been unable to injure as much as *one* of the Vaudois fugitives. Whilst the broken and shattered columns fled,—their labours frustrated, their schemes disconcerted, their valour mocked and insulted; the little band of Waldensians, with heads uncovered and hands clasped towards heaven, chaunted in strains of deep and thrilling melody their triumph of praise. Every rock and mountain echoed back the wild glad chorus—

"Supported by our living Head,
And by the God of battles led
To life and victory!"

Timbrels! Ver. 20. These were a kind of tambourine, called by Kalisch, "hand-drums." It consists of a hoop of wood or metal, of about one handsbreadth, and covered over with leather. It is still a very favourite instrument in the East on festive and sacred occasions. Dancing invariably accompanied their use. Miriam seems to have been the leader; as appears to have been the case with David hundreds of years afterwards. M'Cheyne mentions that this is done in Poland to this day; and he himself witnessed, on one occasion, a venerable Jewish Rabbi lead off a whole company of Jewish devotees in this fashion in the "procession of the law." He began his dance with the words, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Lady Montague, in her letters, mentions the same of Jewish females, stating that the great lady leads the dance, and is followed by a troop of young girls who imitate her steps. If she sings, they make up the chorus. And, as Hamilton remarks, perhaps there never was a gush of purer gratitude than poured from the lips of all as Miriam's timbrel led the dance. As one after another the swell bore helpless to their feet the steed in gorgeous housings, or his stiff and stalwart panoplied rider, the exultation leaped up a-new, "Shout, Israel! for the Lord hath triumphed."

"How solemn and sweet,
As the waters meet,
Was pealing along
The triumphing song!"

Music-influences! Ver. 21. Despondent soldiers on the march have been known to stop and listen to music stealing far over the waters, and to be aroused to vigorous effort in the march. Travellers, hearing strains floating from the windows of some palace or mansion, have been cheered to increase their pace homeward. So, saints, as they war or journey, listen to the exultant symphonies poured over the walls and battlements of heaven, and, setting their feet to the measure of the eternal hymn, press onwards towards the city, within whose fadeless palace halls shall be sung the everlasting jubilee.

"Hark! how th' adoring hosts above
With songs surround the throne,
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their hearts are one."

Marah-waters! Ver. 23. Captain Palmer says that for three days' journey southward along the coast, the desert plain is, practically speaking, waterless, there being only a few wretched brackish springs, about one in every hundred square miles, of which the water is unfit for use. It was after three days that the minstrels became murmurers for water. The sensation which we call thirst is no more like the mad and raging fever-thirst of the desert, than our cool and verdant plains are like the baked and blistering rocks of that burning wilderness. So that Israel might well be bitter in their spirit when they came upon a bitter spring. There is still a salt and bitter fountain here. The "Speaker's Commentary" says that Wellstead tasted the waters and muttered the word "Marah!" whereon his Bedawin guide exclaimed, "You speak the word of truth; they are indeed marah." The early Christian Church met with their marah as they first entered on the pilgrim-way. That marah is still in the wilderness-life of the Church, so that her successive members taste and cry, "Marah!" But there is a tree whose leaves drop sweetness, and whose taste is balm. Bedawin had no tree to cast into Wellstead's marah, but the Christian has. Jesus, the Tree of Life, extends His bending branches to the anxious touch, making each stagnant marsh a rivulet of health, turning the bitterest brook into a fountain of living waters—

"The Cross on which the Saviour died
And conquer'd for His saints,
This is the tree, by faith applied,
Which sweetens all complaints."

Marah-bitterness! Ver. 25. Pure, cool, and pellucid water is the gift of God. As it

comes from heaven, it is always clear and uncontaminated. It is only in earth's reservoirs that it sometimes gets muddied. There are salts of copper in the soil through which the current percolates—the smoke and soot of city-life defile its excellence—the manchineel sheds its deadly fruits into the fountain. Adam's life was a pure gift from God; but he defiled it. Man sullies the purity of God's blessings—turns them into Marah-bitterness. The blessing was good enough till once it came to man; but the bitter soil made the fountain bitter. If the cup which catches the morning shower was clear as crystal, and if the atmosphere were not already contaminated by the smoke and soot of human desires, the blessings would remain pure. But man makes them marah.

"Yet there's a wonder-working wood,
I've heard believers say,
Can make those bitter waters good,
And take the curse away."

Elim—Symbolism! Ver. 27. This is now called "Gharandel." It is still a pleasant place, having water in abundance, grass, and palm-trees. Kalisch beautifully applies Elim to the Lord's-day. The traveller, on a rough and dusty road, when from time to time he finds by the wayside a quiet green resting-place, from which he may look back on the way he has come, and also forward to the end of his journey, will surely stop at it for a little with thankfulness. And what are Thy Sabbaths, O Lord, with their sweet services and their solemn hours, but fresh and peaceful oases such as these, inviting me to put away for a moment the troubles and the fatigues of the highway of life, that I may breathe awhile and gather new strength for my journey. Ye giddy crowd, who run and run on, without looking round, until ye slide into the grave, Oh! look at these oases provided for you by God, who pities you more than you do yourselves: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning!" says the Psalmist. And "let my right hand forget its cunning, and let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth," if I ever forget you, ye solemn, holy hours prepared for me by God in the place where His glory dwells, and where He invites me to enjoy His own rest!

"Elim! sweet foretaste of rest and of blessing,
Soon must be left for the lengthening way;
But it is well that Thy pilgrims should gather
Courage and strength for the wearisome day."

CHAPTER XVI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**13. Quails.**] Heb. שְׂלָו. "so called from its fatness" (Gesenius). According to all accounts, the "quail" abounds in those regions.

15. Manna.] It is evidently premature to take the Heb. מָן as a proper name in this place, although afterwards it became that. Our choice lies probably between the two renderings given in the margin of the authorised version. "What is this?" or, "This is a portion." Kalisch and Young decide for the former; Davies adopts the latter. Kalisch enlarges considerably on various natural productions analogous to the substance on which the Israelites were sustained, and which he distinguishes as "air-manna" and "tree-manna;" but, after all, he has to admit that a miracle is here recorded. Dr. Tregelles (in Ges. Heb. Lex. on the word) says: "No one who simply credits the inspired history of the giving of the manna can doubt that it was something *miraculously* given to the Israelites, and that it differed in its nature from anything now known." The following are all the occurrences of the word "manna" in the Old and New Testaments: Exod. xvi. 15, 31, 33, 35; Num. xi. 6, 7, 9; Deut. viii. 3, 16; Josh. v. 12; Neh. ix. 20; Ps. lxxviii. 24; John vi. 31, 49, 58; Heb. ix. 4; Rev. ii. 17. The type was "hidden" in "the golden pot" inside the ark; was carried into Canaan, and preserved there as a memorial of the heavenly food so long supplied in the desert; for which, however, there was no further need, and therefore it was no longer given, and what was preserved was *not* "eaten." The antitype—Christ, the true heavenly bread—is eaten both in the desert (John vi.) and in Paradise (Rev. ii.). Christ as the bread of life can never be superseded.

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

MURMURINGS.

We find the Israelites now in a very important and interesting stage of their great journey between Elim and Sinai; the former the place of joyous rest, and the latter the place of stern law. This period of their march is marked by much ingratitude, and by the abundant mercy of God. The Israelites are murmuring for want of bread. We observe—

I. That people will murmur immediately after the happiest experiences of life. The children of Israel had left Elim as the last stage of their march; they had only just left the wells of water and the three score and ten palm trees, and yet immediately after this they commence to murmur against the servant of God. And so it is with men in our own time, they will murmur after the richest mercies have been permitted to them. 1. *The murmurings of Israel were general.* The complaint seems to have been expressed by the princes of the people as well as by the people themselves. The elders murmured. We should certainly have thought that they would not have been guilty of such conduct,—they ought to have known better, and ought to have set the people a better example. They ought to have helped Moses in this perplexity. The best men, and the most useful, are sometimes given to the sin of complaining against the Divine providence of daily life. The lack of temporal resource awakens them to discontent; man is very sensitive on the side of his physical nature. 2. *The murmurings of Israel were ungrateful.* The Israelites had just seen the goodness and severity of God in their own deliverance and in the destruction of the Egyptians. The wrecked army ought to have made them afraid of murmuring against the Author of such desolation: their own safety ought to have banished all thought of distrust from their minds. But the judgments and mercies of life do not deter men from discontent; the most afflicted and the most wealthy alike share this unholy sentiment. Even after the bitter has been made sweet, the soul will indulge ungenerous thoughts of God. What ingratitude for a son to murmur against his father, for a scholar to murmur against his teacher, and for a slave to murmur against his benevolent emancipator; yet this is but a faint emblem of the vast ingratitude men show to God day by day. How soon the mercy of God is forgotten; we soon forget our Red Sea deliverances,—the mercies of the night are forgotten in the morning. If we forget the Divine mercy to us, we shall be sure to indulge a murmuring spirit. 3. *The murmurings of Israel were inconsiderate.* The Israelites did not think that they were in a condition of life in which they should expect some hardship. They were only freed slaves travelling in a wilderness. Their hope was in the future, in the promised Canaan. And so all the murmurings of men should be silenced by the fact that this life is probationary, and that it is only preparatory to another, in which every real need will be eternally supplied. Discontent is an evidence that we centre our thoughts too much on this world. How inconsiderate are men in their murmurings; some want bread, some want rain, some want gold, and others want social position, as though it would be well for each to have that which he desired. Want is a salutary discipline. If we were considerate of the providence of God, of the discipline of life, and of the welfare of others, there would be much less grumbling in the world. 4. *The murmurings of Israel were Divinely regarded.* God heard the murmurings of Israel and sent them food. It would have been better if prayer had done the work which seems to have been accomplished by discontent. God sees the discontent of the soul. He sometimes answers its cry in anger, and sometimes in compassion. How mercifully He bears with the murmurings of men!

II. That people will murmur against those who are rendering them the greatest service. The Israelites thus murmured against these two ministers of God. These men of God had only a little time ago brought them out of bondage, and given them a freedom in which they greatly rejoiced. And ministers have often to contend with murmuring congregations. The things regarded as joys at first are afterwards by discontent turned into sorrows. At first conversion is welcomed as a great blessing, but when the difficulties of the wilderness are experienced, then the soul commences to murmur at the truth which set it free. Men often grumble at the agencies which have given them freedom.

They think more of secondary agencies than they ought, they think more of Moses and Aaron than of the God whose servants they are. This is cruel and foolish, for the secondary agents are in need of bread quite as much as the multitude they lead, and cannot produce it without Divine warrant. 1. *Thus the conduct of Israel was unreasonable.* 2. *This conduct of Israel was cruel and culpable.* 3. *This conduct of Israel is often repeated in the world now.* And thus discontented people often murmur at those who do not deserve it; they often murmur to those who can render them no assistance; they often act as though there were no God to help them; and they present a sad spectacle of weakness to those who behold them in this unhappy mood. (1.) *They are unmindful of happy memories*—of freedom from slavery. (2.) *They are unmindful of helpful service*—Moses and Aaron had aided them in their march. (3.) *They are unmindful of happy destiny*—they were being led to Canaan. Yet they murmured at the men who were thus befriending them. We are not to interpret our life work by the murmurings of others. Discontented people do not know their true friends.

III. That people when murmuring often manifest a degrading inclination of soul. "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full" (ver. 3). As though they had said, We care not for our deliverance out of Egyptian bondage, we are no better even under His guidance than we were under the rule of Pharaoh. 1. *Thus the Israelites were blind to the advantages of their new condition of life.* They thought that they had not bettered their condition by exchanging Egypt for the wilderness. They measured their welfare by their temporal circumstances; they could not see through these a sublime improvement in their method of life. How many men measure their success in life by the condition of their flesh-pots. They prefer well-filled flesh-pots and slavery to hunger and freedom. And often is it thus with the Christian; he is rendered sad by the difficulties of the wilderness-path to heaven. He experiences longings after the old life of the soul. *Then* there were times of *enjoyment.* Then food was abundant. There were not all these constant difficulties which are now realised. True, sin was a hard service, and at times was followed by severe mental anguish, but it was soon appeased and removed, and thus the young Christian is tempted in gloomy mood to think the present incomparable to the past. He sees not the worth of moral freedom. He sees not the glory of being led by God. He sees not the shield by which he is protected. He sees not the splendid destiny awaiting him. If he saw these things as he ought, neither a temporary trial, nor the flesh-pots of his sinful life, would lead him to cast a longing look to the past. Satan often tempts the soul to apostacy, by presenting the past life of sin in all its attractiveness, and by magnifying the difficulties of the Christian journey. 2. *Thus the Israelites were in danger of a degrading and cowardly retreat to their old condition of life.* If they had returned to Egypt, how degrading and cowardly would have been their conduct. What an utter lack of confidence would they have shown in the Supreme Being. And if men, who have once entered into the freedom of the Christian life, return to their old habits, they will indeed degrade their manhood, and beat a cowardly retreat, which will gladden hell, and which will awaken the ridicule of the world. God has provided for the pure soul something better than the flesh-pots of its old life. Some men always make the past brighter than the present; they love the flesh-pots.

IV. That people when murmuring often anticipate evils which never will happen. "For ye have brought us forth into the wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (ver. 3). Here was *unbelief* on the part of Israel. They had no more trust in God than to suppose that He was making all these deliverances for them simply to lead them to a grave. Truly God does not

save men to destroy them. When men are converted it is that they may be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and not that they may perish ultimately in their sins. Here was *hopelessness* on the part of Israel. The Divine help they had received in the past should have made them hopeful in the moment of trial. Men want to be more hopeful in their spiritual life than to imagine that they are going to die in this way; they have everything to inspire hope. And thus many murmuring Christians anticipate perils they will never experience; a murmuring spirit fills life with fictitious evils, it will dig graves in the most fragrant gardens. LESSONS:—1. *Let us have more respect for the joys of the Christian life than to murmur at its sorrows.* 2. *Let us be too grateful to the helpers of our spiritual life than to grumble at them.* 3. *Let us never cast a degrading look at the fancied joys of the old life of the soul.* 4. *Let us look to God rather than to our difficulties.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 1. Comfortable stations in this life God will have His Church to leave (Matt. xvii. 4.)

Dreadful and barren deserts does God appoint for His Church, instead of better places, for trial.

The saddest deserts are but the way of the Church into the mountain of God.

The days of the travel and redemption of the Church are punctually remembered by God.

Verses 2, 3. Multitudes of sinners are usually stirring up all to murmur upon changes.

Wilderness trials put unbelievers in the visible Church to the test.

God and His ministers suffer all indignities from unbelieving sinners.

Unbelieving sinners are ready to imprecate destruction on themselves in time of temptation.

God's most gracious acts are changed by the wicked to be their destruction.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4–21.

THE FALLING OF THE MANNA.

It is indeed an oft-repeated saying that life is a pilgrimage, but how seldom do we thoroughly realise the entire meaning of these words. We seldom realise the fact that physically we are passing from one stage to another, from infancy to childhood, from childhood to manhood, and from manhood to old age. The bright dreams of childhood are for ever gone. The privileges and difficulties of school life are now but a recollection. The business activities of life have broken upon us in all their stern reality. And it may be that the dim vision and sombre shades of old age are upon us. Thus life no sooner opens its petals to the sun than it passes into the grave from whence it sprang. We have physically no continuing city here. *Intellectually, life is a pilgrimage.* In our mental life we are constantly passing from one stage to another, from ignorance to dawning knowledge, from dawning knowledge to a perception of the infinity before us, and so on until the part knowledge of earth shall break into the unveiled splendour of truth in heaven. *And morally, life is a pilgrimage.* Our souls are ever travelling from one experience to another; it may be from one bondage to another, or from a wretched past to a pure and sublime future. All pure souls are migratory. They rest not long in one condition. They prefer entering upon the mysteries and visions of the future to lingering on the things and scenes around them; they are inspired by a holy desire after progress. They press forward to the Canaan of being, to the land flowing with milk and honey. And thus the life of man in every department is one great pilgrimage, often tiring and trying, but never far from the presence and leadings of the great

God, otherwise the pain and mystery of the pilgrimage would be more than we could endure. God is before the life of each one of us, whether we recognise Him or not. *That in the pilgrimage of life there is a wondrous interchange of glad and sad experiences, all consistent with true progress.* The Israelites had only a little while ago stood in terror on the banks of the Red Sea; they had murmured in disappointment at the bitter waters of Marah; they had rested in joy at the wells and under the welcome shade of Elim; and now they hunger in the wilderness of Sin. Thus we see through what a diversity of experience they were brought, both hopeful and sad, in the line of their progress. And progress is always thus characterised. There is no progress without pain; the progress of the body into the full vigour of life, the advancement of the mind into the heritage of knowledge, and the effort of the soul to attain its high destiny, is inseparable from anguish. In the pathway of each advancing spirit there will be many bitter waters, there will come a time when it will hunger in the wilderness of Sin. But if progress is a pain it is also a joy, it leads past Elim as well as through the wilderness of Sin, and though the transition from one to the other may be unwelcome, it is permitted in the mercy of God, it is a healthful discipline, and it will render the soul all the richer in sublime experience of Divine help. And thus joy and sorrow alternate in a progressive life. Monotony of feeling is misery to a great soul. Some men always feel alike. They have no great tide within which breaks into billows on the shore of their souls. Their life is stagnant. Sorrow lends to joy its richest meaning, gives to it its rainbow hue, and places in its hand the instrument from whence comes its sweetest music. It is part of the complement of the inner life, and without it a great joy would be impossible. Both joy and sorrow exercise an improving ministry toward human life, the former as the day, in which the ordinary work of duty is accomplished, and the latter as the night, in which the stars of promise burn brilliantly, and the gentle dews descend upon the soul. Sorrow often reveals men to themselves, and gives them in their murmuring mood a hint of the corruption yet remaining within their soul. We observe—

I. That the temporal supplies of life are the gift of God. "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you." 1. *This supply of bread was miraculous.* Some would have us believe that the supply of manna in the wilderness was a natural phenomenon; they tell us of the manna of Arabia which was sold in apothecaries' shops. They say that out of the earth there issued a certain sweet vapour, which, being drawn up by the heat of the sun, was purged from its earthliness, and made pure, then with the cold of the night it was hardened, and before morning fell upon the earth like dew, and so was kept for man. They say it was small, white, sweet, and that it fell with the dew. But whether this wondrous kind of food or medicine was known at the time of the falling of the manna we are not careful to inquire; we are certain it could not have been the bread which is here said to have come from heaven. The manna on which Israel fed was previously announced by God to Moses, was independent of all the conditions of climate or weather, continued in great abundance for forty years, fell not on the Sabbath, and ceased when it was no longer needed. Surely here, if anywhere, we must recognise the miraculous hand of God. In all this we have a type of things spiritual. *Christ is the true manna of the soul, and is not He a miraculous gift?* He came down from heaven. He came into the world after a miraculous fashion, and was in Himself the highest embodiment of miracle. Have not men endeavoured to explain His Person, His work, and His life on natural hypothesis? Have they not said that He was the product of the age in which He lived, and that all the apparent grandeur of His life was attributable more to the superstitions of the folk then living than to the inherent Divinity of His own soul? But as the manna was not the out-

come of the earth on which it was found, as it was not the outcome of the physical laws of the universe, neither was Christ the product of the earth on which He trod, or the imagined hero of a deluded people. Fancied manna cannot feed men, and the natural manna of the world cannot nourish the immortal soul; hence if Christ had not been what He professed to be, the Divine Saviour of men, He could not have satisfied their moral nature, He could not have won their confidence; their soul-hunger would have proved Him false. Does Christ satisfy your soul in all the extent of its need? if so, this is a proof to you far stronger than any logical argument could be, that He is what He professes to be, and that He is, in a unique and unfailing sense, from heaven. Was the manna *white*, and was not Christ innocent? Was the manna *small*, and was not Christ small amongst men? He was not found amongst the Herods and the Cæsars, but amongst the humble and the poor. He was despised and rejected of men. Was the manna *sweet*, and is not Christ sweeter than honey and the honeycomb? Was the manna *round*, and is not Christ without termination in His life and resources? 2. *This supply of bread was adapted to the need of Israel.* The Israelites are in need of something to sustain their lives, and, unless it is speedily sent, they will perish in the wilderness. What course did the Divine Being pursue? Did He cause beautiful flowers to spring up around the starving people? Did He rain pearls from the skies? Did He light up the landscape with unusual glow, to charm the sufferers out of the thought of their peril? No. He sent them bread, which was suited to the oldest as well as to the youngest, and in sufficient quantity to supply the want of all. And this is the way in which the Divine Being responds to the need of man. He does not mock it. He does not disappoint it. He meets it in the best and wisest manner. *God supplies the temporal need of the universe.* The eyes of all living wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season, &c. God gives the world its bread. You would not think so, though, to look out upon the conduct of men. Some men deny His existence. Some profane His name. The great multitude reject His rule; and thousands downright abuse the gifts of His hand. When the Great of the earth spread a banquet, they are approached with respect, they are courted by favour, and all sit together in happiness and joy; not one discordant voice is heard. But, alas! the munificence of Heaven is met in a very different spirit. I say to every rebel soul, You are fed by God; and I ask, if you do not owe Him something of gratitude? Is it wise to reject Him who could in a moment hurry your life into the grave? Men look to the fields and say, "Thou hast given me corn;" they look to the hills and say, "Thou hast given me water;" they look to the seas and say, "Thou hast brought me merchandise;" and they look to their own industry and say, "Thou art my stay." But who clothed the smiling fields with corn? who caused the silvery rill to flow? who meted out the great waters? and who gave thee thy brain and thine hand? You say, "I sowed the seed." Yes; but who made it grow? You say, "The sun." But who kindled the fires of that central orb? We need to be more spiritually-minded in the reception of the ordinary gifts of life, to look through secondary causes to the great First Cause of all our temporal good. *And does not the Divine Being equally meet our moral need?* As the Israelites were in need of bread to preserve them from starvation, so was not mankind morally in great need of Christ? The soul was, indeed, perishing of hunger, and then it was that Christ was given to appease it. The need was great, man could not satisfy the cravings of his moral nature,—the philosophy and the conventional doctrine of the old teachers were exhausted and vain; and in this moment of the world's unspoken anguish, the Bread of Life was given. "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Christ is suited to all; has enough for all. 3. *This supply of bread was undeserved by Israel.* When the

Israelites began to feel their need of food they commenced to murmur. They were murmuring against Moses, and in reality against the God he represented. Thus we see how the temporal perplexities of life test men, and often reveal the hidden corruption of the heart. Many who would sing loudly and joyously the hymn at the banks of the Red Sea, and who might imagine that they would no longer sin against God, and that all evil was removed from their hearts, would find that there was unsuspected evil within them. Trial often makes terrible revelations to men of their inward heart; it is often as the surprise in nature, which suddenly opens up to the vision a lonely and rugged path which before had been unobserved. These people were murmuring; *would it not have been better if they had been praying?* The former could not avail them much, the latter would. Many men in trouble murmur when they ought to pray. And yet, strange to say, these murmurings were answered, and apparently discontent had the same effect as devotion. But it was only in outward appearance that the effect was the same; inwardly and really it was very different. The manna came the same, but the inward feeling of Israel was not what prayer would have made it. If they had substituted prayer for murmuring, their hearts would have been penitent instead of hard,—thankful instead of dubious. We should always regard not merely the outward answer to prayer, but also the inward feeling which is awakened by it, else we may imagine that it is as wise to murmur as to pray. A murmuring soul may get bread; a praying soul will get bread and grace too. This shows that all our mercies are not of merit, but of the Divine compassion,—we do not get them because we deserve, but because without them we should die. We should not have been surprised if an angel near had withdrawn his gleaming weapon and smote the rebels dead; or if the earth had opened to swallow them up. But God's ways are not as our ways, nor are His thoughts as our thoughts. God crowns the thankless with His mercy; of this we have abundant evidence every day. There is great encouragement here for the penitent; for if God responded to the cry of discontent, will He not much more to the cry of penitence? *And was not Christ an undeserved gift?* When He came to Bethlehem, did the world deserve Him? The world did not ask for Him. It was murmuring in its sin, and knew not where to look for relief. And when He came He was rejected and despised of men. And do *we* deserve Him? We have neglected Him; and even if we have yielded to Him it is after long entreaty, and in but a partial degree. We none of us deserved to be saved from sin and hell, and our salvation is of the infinite mercy of God.

II. That the temporal supplies of life necessitate the timely labour of man. Thus we see that God rained manna from the heavens, but the Israelites had to gather it, or they would perish. It is not the way of God to feed men independent of their own industry. God does His part in giving man what he could not otherwise obtain, and then he must collect and use the gifts thus bestowed. We see this in everyday life. God makes the great mountains, and man digs into them to obtain their treasures; God metes out the ocean, and man builds ships by which to navigate it; God gives intellect and sympathy, and men must solve the problem and compassionate woe. And thus in the conduct of the universe man is a co-worker with God. It is in this co-operation that he develops his best genius, and that he realises true dignity. If it had been the way of Heaven to give the world the manna, without any toil on its part, the world would have been lacking in its greatest men, in its richest biographies, and in all those qualities which ennoble wherever they are seen. We should not have had Stephenson. We should not have had Newton. We should not have had Howard; or perhaps we might have had them, but their names would have been without meaning, and their lives without greatness. There would have

been no manna on the fields of civilisation, philanthropy, and science for them to have gathered. It is well that the world has to gather its own manna, for in gathering manna it not only gathers food, but appetite to enjoy it, conscience to approve it, and industry to consecrate it. A man who gathers his own manna likewise gathers innumerable blessings with it. This is true physically, mentally, and spiritually. It would be the ruin of the universe if its manna were gathered for it. Industry would lack inspiration. Life would lack motive. *And so it is morally. We must gather the spiritual manna.* As we have the iron in the mountain, the pearls in the ocean, the gold in the mine, and the corn in the fields, so we have Christ in the ordinances, Christ in the promises, Christ in the Bible, Christ in the pulpit, and Christ in the biographies of the good; but Christ in the Bible is of more use to you than gold in the mine. He must be gathered by all the best energies of the soul. Then only will He become the nourishment of our moral nature. Ah, yes! This spiritual manna is all around us, but few gather it. The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few. Have you gathered any manna to-day? 1. *Men must gather diligently.* We can imagine how diligently the Israelites would watch for the first opportunity, and how eagerly would they embrace it, to collect their needed supplies. Some would be up and out with the first touch of morning light, and others would be seen leaving their tents just as the hot rays of the sun were melting the manna. In every community there are diligent and idle men. God hates idleness. In the world to-day we find men diligently gathering the manna of secular life. They are up at it long before the burning sun removes their opportunity. Would that they were as diligent in gathering the manna of the soul. We even find that the men who work hardest to feed the body, sometimes manifest the greatest indolence in reference to the cravings of the soul. They would not let a day pass without secular toil, but they let years pass without moral activity. Be diligent in seeking Christ and in reading the Scriptures. 2. *Men must gather early.* The Israelites were to go out early in the morning and gather the manna, before the sun came and melted it. They were to take time while time served. The early morning is the best time for gathering the manna of the body and also the manna of the soul. Would not the Israelites find the air more balmy, the scene more calming, and nature more sportive in the early morn? Men who work in the morning get nature's richest benediction. And no morning should pass away without gathering the spiritual manna. When the busy world is quiet, and when only a stray Israelite is seen, then is the time to commune with God, and to prepare the soul for the moral wear and tear of the day. And we would say to the young, Commence early to gather manna; if you work hard in early manhood, you will not want in old age. But, above all, gather Christ in the early morning of life, when the soul is fresh and fragrant with early dew and flower. The mercy of God falls early near the soul, it is there long before we go to seek it. 3. *Men must gather constantly.* The Israelites did not gather manna one day and then neglect it a day or two. They gathered every morning, else they would have experienced want, and finally, they would have perished. And if men wish to obtain temporal prosperity, it will not do to neglect business a day or two in the week. My brother, must not the spiritual manna be constantly gathered? Will it feed your soul to-day to know that you received Christ a week ago? Some people are very fitful in their moral gathering,—one day they are out early seeking manna, and then they neglect it for a week. Is it to be wondered that they have a weak spiritual life. The supply is constant. The manna lasted all through the wilderness journey. The Divine compassion fails not. His mercy is everlasting. Christ is an eternal Saviour, and the soul of man needs Him every hour. Is it not foolish and unwise to deprive our souls of the bread of heaven when it falls at our tent regularly every morning? 4. *Men must gather trustfully.* When the

Israelites gathered the manna, they had no misgiving as to its continuance day by day. When they closed the tent at night they had not a doubt but that it would be ready for them in the morning. They doubted not the providence of God. They were not anxious in reference to it. The manna came down from the heavens without the intervention of natural agencies, even at night, when Israel was asleep, and was found with the dew in the morning. How could they doubt such a Providence as this? We should be trustful of God in reference to our temporal resources. His providence is ever active for our good, even at night when all is dark and silent. The grass grows at night. The fruits grow at night. Night does not interrupt the munificent operations of God. If He then causes all things thus to minister, independent of our activity, to our support, we ought to be trustful of Him. We should remember that if all the natural sources of prosperity fail, He can rain bread from the skies, or send the raven with it. It is the design of Providence that men should trust it day by day. The faithfulness of God is great. The clothes of Israel did not wax old, their shoes did not wear out, the water of the rock followed them, and the manna failed them not. The same providence is over us now, and therefore we need not fear. *And we must be trustful from day to day in reference to the supplies of the soul.* If God gives daily bread to thy body, do you think He will fail thy soul? No. He will every morning keep thee well supplied with grace, thy robe of righteousness shall not wax old, thy shoes of service shall never wear out, and the influence of the Divine Spirit shall be your daily portion. Then trust in God. The manna ceased when they got to Canaan. The manna of the soul shall be sweeter and richer to our taste in heaven. Then the gathering will be no effort. The soul will know no fear about the morrow.

III. That the temporal supplies of life should be acquired in proportion to human need. "Gather of it, every man according to his eating; an omer for every man." *Appetite is the law of universal gathering.* This is true in the commercial realm of life; the gaining of wealth depends much upon the desire with which it is pursued. This is true mentally; a man will never gain more knowledge than he has an appetite for. And this is true spiritually; a man will never get more good out of the Bible and out of the ministry of the Word than he has appetite for. Men say "That sermon did not feed me; that service was barren to my soul," and they blame the preacher; it would often be far more to the point if they blamed their own lack of appetite. They will always take away from the sanctuary in proportion to the hunger they bring. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The design of this injunction was *to prevent greed and to awaken a sense of dependence on God.* The manna was not to be hoarded. Wealth is ruinous when it makes a man imagine that he is independent of God, and that he has got such an abundance of supplies that he can feed himself. Men cannot be independent in this world. It is not proper that they should. The wealthiest are as dependent upon God as are the humblest. Hoarded wealth is useless. Wealth is only truly useful as it supplies need, and as it leads to benevolence. Truly a man is worth what he uses and what he gives. What he hoards he wastes. Hoarded wealth is apt to breed *moral reptiles,* covetousness, ambition, pride, loss of moral sensibility, and loss of self-respect. If riches increase set not your heart upon them. Aim to be rich toward God. *You cannot hoard grace.* You must go out and gather it every day. Hoarded grace soon evaporates (ver. 17, 18). "Some gathered more and some less," &c. The richest man only gets his living, and does not the poor do the same? Daniel looks as well and happy upon the pulse and water as those who feed upon the King's allowance. God will make the little of a believing soul stretch to an omer. There was exact

sufficiency for all. And so there is in Christ. The vilest have enough. The best have none to spare.

IV. That in gathering the temporal supplies of life men must have respect to the commandments and sacred institutions of God. "And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning (ver. 23). Thus we see that God has great regard for His Sabbath, the day hallowed by Himself at the end of the week of creation. Man must not pursue his secular engagements on this day of rest. He has six days for himself, and God claims the seventh. The Israelites lost nothing by their Sabbath rest, the manna came in double quantity the day before. Men lose nothing by keeping the Sabbath. Its rest is sweet and invigorating. Its contemplation is helpful to the life of the soul. This dispensation is more spiritual than the Jewish, and therefore the day should be regarded with greater reverence of spirit. There is here a contrast between the manna of Israel and the manna of the soul; the former could not be gathered on the Sabbath, the latter may be collected in largest quantities on that day. The pure soul can get a rich feast of Christ on the Sabbath, and anticipates the richer feast in heaven. 1. *Have you gathered and eaten this manna?* Manna on the ground is no use to you. Manna in the tent is profitless. Manna in the soul alone will save you. Have you eaten? If not, what neglect! No excuse can be given. Do you turn away from this spiritual manna? There must be some disease. Send for the Great Physician. 2. *What return are you making to God for the gift of this manna?* Are you giving to Him a due proportion of your substance? Does His food make you strong for service? You have had the manna for many years; you must make the best return you can, else your confusion at the last will be terrible.

THE MANNA AS TYPICAL OF CHRIST.

We have every right to regard the manna which fell around the tents of Israel as typical of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the inspired testimony of the apostle (1 Cor. x. 3). Our Lord has expressly and minutely applied the nourishment afforded by the manna to the virtue of His atoning sacrifice (John vi. 32–51). We observe—

I. That as the manna met a great need in the case of Israel, so Christ met a great need in the experiences of the human soul. The Israelites had exhausted all the food which they had brought with them out of Egypt, and were in the wilderness without any means of sustenance. They had no bread, and knew not how to obtain any. They were helpless. They were murmuring. They might soon perish. Thus they were in great need of the manna. And did not Christ meet an equally strong need of the human soul? The world had exhausted all its means of moral sustenance. It had nothing to appease its moral hunger. It was perishing for lack of spiritual knowledge. Then Christ came and fed it with the bread of life. The soul cannot do without Christ in the wilderness of life; without Him it must perish. He is adapted to our moral need, and can alone give permanent satisfaction to the better desires of man. Christ is the only food of the soul. Creeds cannot nourish it. Sin cannot feed it.

II. That as the manna was not understood by Israel, so Christ was not understood by those to whom He came. The name of manna was not given by God Himself, but by the children of Israel. "And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it

was." It is most probable that the word signifies "portion" or gift, because it was evidently the gift of God; and as they did not know its nature, they could not chose any better term whereby to describe it. And was not Christ a great mystery to the men of His day? They did not understand His person. They could not interpret His miracles. They were amazed at His claim and at His language. There was a great diversity of opinion regarding Him. Some admitted His Divinity. Some said He had a devil. Some said He was mad. His disciples asked, "What manner of man is this?" (Matt. viii. 27). Christ asked, "Whom say the people that I am? and they said John the Baptist, but some say Elias, and others that one of the old prophets is risen again." The world by wisdom knew not God. If the world had known Christ, it would not have rejected and crucified Him. It has hardly yet obtained a complete knowledge of Him.

III. That as the manna made provision for all Israel, so Christ is provided as a Saviour for the entire world. The manna fell around all the tents of Israel in sufficient quantity to supply the need of every man, woman, and child. If any lacked food it was because they would not gather it. And so the benefits of Christ's death are available to all,—are within easy reach of all; and if any perish from soul-hunger, it will be through their own wilful and woeful neglect. Christ is not merely provided as a feast for the rich; the poor are welcome to His banquet, without money and without price. He is free to all seeking souls, but He must be appropriated in time, while the opportunity is given. All can receive Him by faith.

IV. That as the manna descended in the night, and was accompanied by the dew, so Christ comes to the soul in quietude, and is accompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit. The manna descended during the night, and was ready for the use of Israel in the early morning. Did not Christ descend unseen and unknown during the dark night of the Old Testament dispensation, and was He not found by men who waited for the bright morning? Simeon was one of the early watchers and gatherers of this welcome food. Christ comes into the soul when it is free from worldly excitement,—when it is quiet. The manna and the dew were found together. And do we not know that the gentle dew of the Holy Spirit accompanies the gift of Christ to the soul—there never can be the latter without the former.

V. That as the manna had to be gathered early every day, so Christ must early be sought by the penitent soul. The Israelites were up early seeking the manna. They had not to be self-indulgent. They had not to be slothful. And so there must be no self-indulgence in the life of the good. The food of the soul should be sought early every day.

VI. That as the manna was white and sweet, so Christ is pure in Himself, and welcome to the taste. The whiteness of the manna signifies the innocence of Christ; and the sweetness of the manna signifies how welcome He is to the taste of a refined soul. Christ is sweet in His life, in the promises, and in His word. He is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. We cannot have too much of Him.

VII. That as the manna was a test to Israel, so Christ is a test of universal character. The Israelites were tested by the gift of the manna as to whether they would obey God in His commandments and institutions. And so Christ is set for the rise and fall of many, and the way in which men receive or reject His will concerning them, will their present character and eternal destiny be determined. Christ is the great test of men. LESSONS:—1. *That*

every man has the opportunity of seeking Christ. 2. That Christ alone can nourish and sustain the human soul. 3. That Christ is sweet to the taste of penitent souls. 4. That we should seek to induce perishing mortals to gather this manna.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 4, 5. Jehovah turns His consolations unto the trials of His dearest servants.

God will not leave His ministers comfortless when striving with a rebellious people.

Jehovah calls His abused ministers to look from men to Himself.

God can make heaven give bread when earth denies it.

It is easy with God to make bread plenty in greatest scarcity.

Daily bread is a sweet portion which God allows unto His people.

God's mercies are His trials of men to see whether they will obey Him.

Verses 6–8. God's ministers instructed and comforted by Him, are engaged to instruct and comfort His people.

God's evening and morning providences may convince men that He is their Redeemer.

The glory of grace God sometimes shows to murmurers.

A murmuring against ministers is taken by God to be against Himself.

Humble souls are content to be nothing in redemption, that God may be all.

Verses 9, 10. God's ministers oppressed with murmurings cannot do better than call all the people to God.

God hears the murmurings of sinners against His ministers, and calls them to account.

God's ministers must summon souls to God, and the faithful do it at His command.

Souls shall be brought to see God's appearing in a sad way, who rise up against Him.

Verses 11, 12. God Himself owns what His servants have spoken for Him in His name.

It is no strange thing for God to speak twice to His oppressed servants to support them.

In greatest straits God can make evening and morning to bring seasonable supplies to His people.

Jehovah will make His people know Him, and that He keeps the covenant, though they break it.

Verses 13–15. God of His grace can give the sweetest nourishment to unworthy sinners at His pleasure.

God keeps His time in performing His promise to His people.

God's performance of promise is full and large unto His Israel.

Mercies promised are ordered to come seasonably, evening and morning.

God can make His dew bring and hide bread for His people.

Natural coverings removed, God can discover His hidden mercies unto the good.

The best of bread from God may seem a small and dispicable thing to man.

God's own Israel, in taking cognizance of His greatest mercies, may be at a loss what to think about them.

It is a blessing to have a choice interpreter of God's mercies to His Church.

Common bread has a spiritual use and meaning.

Verses 16–18. As God promised bread, so He commands labour to gather it.

Sufficiency God allows, and for that men must take pains.

God's omer or measure is enough for the portion of every soul.

All souls in families God will have cared for, even such as cannot labour for themselves.

Obedience must be given to God's command of labour.

All are not labouring alike for daily food, some more, some less.

Food convenient for every man's eating is a good portion from God.

Verses 19, 20. **Hoarded wealth.**

I. That we find many men in this life who are endeavouring to hoard their gains. We find that several of these Israelites, notwithstanding the clear command of Moses, endeavoured to keep the manna until the morning. The Word of God tells men that they are not to attempt an undue hoarding of wealth, it tells them not to be worldly-minded, and not to be covetous. But, notwithstanding these distinct requirements, there are multitudes who go counter to them, and who keep the produce of their industry until it becomes loathsome. Men have many excuses for hoarding: they plead a provident example, a needy future, a large family, and thus they palliate miserliness. Gathering should be limited to human requirement.

II. That an endeavour to hoard wealth manifests a sad distrust of the Providence of God. Why did these disobedient Israelites endeavour to keep the manna until the morrow? Were they animated by mere curiosity to see the result? Were they greedy, and anxious to be better off than their comrades? Were they over-anxious and fearful lest the manna should not fall on the morrow? Why do men hoard wealth in these days? Is it not often to increase their luxury, to strengthen their social position, and to feed their ambition? Miserliness abuses the good gifts of God. It is a sad distrust of Divine Providence. God will feed all who are willing to sit at His banquet, and to the end of their days. Hoarded wealth gives no enjoyment. It introduces bitter elements into life. It renders men no richer. It only becomes so much lumber to them. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

III. That hoarded wealth is very liable to become morally degenerate and corrupt. The manna that these Israelites left until the morning became corrupt, and bred worms. And so hoarded wealth will always degenerate in value, in useableness, and in power to give enjoyment. In the view of all right-minded souls it will be corrupt. It breeds all that is degrading to an immortal soul, capable of the riches of a pure moral character. Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth, &c.

God's law orders His allowance how to be used by His people, and not to be abused.

Foolish men refuse to hear and obey the just laws given to them.

Mercies abused by sinners are accursed by God, and aggravate their sin.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22-30.

THE SABBATH IN ITS RELATION TO SECULAR TOIL.

We see in this narrative how very slow men are to understand the meaning of the Divine Word and command, especially if it appears to contradict the usual method of things. When the elders saw the people gathering on the Friday enough manna for two days, they came and told Moses, imagining that the law was being broken, and they were not satisfied until he had assured them that the conduct they reported was right. Men are indeed slow to understand the laws of God concerning them, especially as regards their secular toil.

I. That man must not engage in secular toil on the Sabbath. The Israelites were commanded to gather twice as much manna on the Friday as they needed, in order that they might have sufficient for the day of rest. What was thus preserved did not become offensive. It had the blessing of God. Thus we see the Divine regard paid for the Sabbath in the wilderness. If Israel thus rested from gathering manna on the Sabbath, ought not men much more to rest from

the secular engagements of life? And if God has such respect for this day, ought not men to respect it likewise? Men must not even earn their daily bread on the Lord's-day,—they must provide it before. If food is not to be earned on this day, surely pleasure should be excluded from it, and all vain jesting. We should always regard the sanctity of the Sabbath.

II. That men engaged in secular toil on the Sabbath will as a rule find their labour vain and profitless. Some of the Israelites went out into the fields on the Sabbath, as they were wont to do morning by morning, but they found nothing. And men who go into their fields, and warehouses, and markets, and museums on the day of rest, generally go with like result; they bestow hard labour for no result. They do not realise the money they expected. They do not obtain the pleasure they desired. They do not get the education they intended. The man who goes out to work on the Lord's day will in the long run find nothing. He will lack the physical rest needful to diligent toil; men cannot work seven days running all the year through. He will lack the respect of pious customers. He will, above all, lack the blessing of God, without which all hope of prosperity is vain.

III. That men engaged in secular toil on the Sabbath show plainly that they have no regard for the commands of God. These Israelites had been Divinely commanded not to go out to gather manna on the Sabbath, as on that day none would fall; yet they went. "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws." Men who pursue their secular toil on the day of rest show to the world very clearly that they are devoid of reverence for the Supreme Being, and that they are lacking in good moral character. The way in which a man spends the Lord's-day is an index to his soul-life and to his character: only vile men will throw off all the restraint of God's law, and if they will do this in one thing they will in another. They are outcasts in society. They are selling their souls for gain.

IV. That men engaged in secular toil on the Sabbath have no delight in the culture of their moral nature. It is especially on the day of rest that men of secular toil have the leisure and opportunity for soul-culture, by inward meditation, by earnest devotion, by wise reading, and by the ministry of the sanctuary. And a man who pursues his work on the Sabbath, thereby testifies that he cares not for these important things. He does not wish to reflect on his inner life. He does not wish to remember God. He does not wish to refresh his soul after the activity of the week. He declares that he wishes to go ignorant and careless through time into the mystery of eternity. LESSONS:—1. *That men should work harder on Saturday if necessary in order to get the rest of Sunday.* 2. *That men who disobey the laws of God in human life make no gain thereby.* 3. *That the Sabbath must be regarded as a day of spiritual rest unto the Lord.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 22. When God orders the manna to be cared for, it is duty to gather bread for two days.

God expects an account of mercies received by His ministers.

Direction from God is to be expected for the right use of mercies received.

Verses 23-26. The holy Sabbath is a rest unto Jehovah, He hath said it, He terminates it.

Reserves of food for to-morrow when God commands shall prove no curse.

God's rest and man's repast are made very consistent by Jehovah.

Verses 27-30. God's fairest offers

and sweetest commands are accounted grievous by some.

God frustrates sinners who think to gain by breaking the Sabbath.

God's bountiful blessing on the Sabbath ought to shame those who degrade it.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 32–36.

AN INSTRUCTIVE MEMORIAL.

I. By whom the memorial was enjoined. "This is the thing which the Lord commanded." This memorial was not the outcome of superstitious feeling on the part of the Israelites, nor of their deep devotion of heart. They would not have thought of it of themselves. They were Divinely commanded to it. It does not readily occur to men to make memorials of the mercy of God. And yet there is eminent need of such memorials. Men are liable to forget the Divine goodness. They require something to continually remind them of it. The gifts we bestow upon others are long remembered; those we receive are soon forgotten. We have need to set up memorials in our lives, which shall call upon our souls to remember the benefits of the Lord. It is the will of heaven that its gifts should be held in constant remembrance.

II. In what the memorial consisted. "Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations." 1. *This memorial was reasonable.* Thus the Israelites were required to fill an omer with the manna, and keep it as a memorial of the wondrous providence which had so long supplied their temporal need. What could have been more reasonable than such a memorial, which was eminently adapted to recall the circumstances it was designed to commemorate. The good must lay up a sacred deposit of their everyday experiences and mercies before the Lord. The memorials of the soul must consist of its own inner experiences. 2. *This memorial was expressive.* It was expressive of the great need of Israel, of the abundant and appropriate mercy of God. An omer of manna was preserved which showed that the heavenly supply was not scanty. The memorials of the soul must set forth the infinitude of the Divine compassion, and the riches of Divine grace. 3. *This memorial was instructive.* It not merely reminded the Israelites of the goodness of God to them, but it would give an instructive and encouraging view of the Divine character and providence to the generations of the future. The memorials of the parents should be such as to instruct and aid the children in their religious life. 4. *This memorial was valuable.* The manna was kept in a golden pot—(Heb. ix. 2). It was not put into a common vessel. And the memorials of the soul should not find expression in valueless things, but in the richest treasures of man. God is worthy our best offerings.

III. Where the memorial was deposited. "And lay it up before the Lord." "So Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept." And so this memorial was laid up before the Lord, in the ark of the covenant. Thus we must keep the memorials of the soul in devout spirit, and with a constant trust in the mediatorial work of Christ. In celebrating the Divine providence, we must not be animated by a regard for a religious display, but by a desire to lay up a memorial of our best gratitude before the Lord. As Aaron laid up the pot of manna before the Testimony, so Christ alone can render our memorials acceptable to God.

IV. The design the memorial contemplated. "That ye may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness." "To be kept for your generations." The Israelites would enter Canaan, and then would return to the produce of the field; hence they needed something to remind them of their wilder-

ness condition. The mercy given in adversity must be remembered in prosperity. In heaven the soul will have memorials of the mercy which characterised its life on earth. This pot of manna was also designed to teach the generations to come the goodness and faithfulness of God. Every generation should seek to leave behind it new and encouraging revelations of the Divine character, which shall lead those who follow to see more clearly the merciful providence of God. Each generation leaves a moral deposit behind it, for good or evil. LESSONS:—1. *The soul must have a memorial of the Divine mercy.* 2. *The memorial of the soul must consist of the best things it possesses.* 3. *The memorial of the soul will have respect to the redemptive work of Christ.*

AN INSTRUCTIVE MEMORIAL.

Why was this "omer of manna" to be sacredly preserved from generation to generation? The only reason assigned is, "that your generations may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness." Whatever God does or commands to be done is for wise and worthy reasons. Let us reverently seek to ascertain what was the Divine reason in arranging for succeeding generations of the Israelites to see this manna, with which He had fed their fathers in the wilderness. We suggest that it was this, *Because the sight of it was calculated to promote their moral improvement by suggesting and impressing important truths.* Without mentioning certain suggestions of the manna which have been noticed in the exposition of the previous verses, that which was contained in the pot for preservation would be an impressive memorial of

I. The infinite resources of God. Here are three millions of persons in the desert without food. That which they brought out of Egypt with them they have consumed. And, though they have flocks and herds with them, they are not to be eaten for food but kept for sacrifices. Whence shall they obtain food? The prospect seems to them exceedingly dark, and they utter loud and bitter complaints against their leaders. In this extremity, the Lord appears for them and provides the manna. This provision was undoubtedly miraculous. The writer of the article on "Manna," in "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible," says, that "the natural products of the Arabian deserts and other Oriental regions which bear the name of manna, have not the qualities or uses ascribed to the manna of Scripture." And, after pointing out many points of contrast, he says, "The manna of Scripture we therefore regard as wholly miraculous, and not in any respect a product of nature." The resources of the Lord are infinite. No matter how dark and discouraging our circumstances and our prospects may be, if God be for us inexhaustible treasures are ours. He can spread our table in the barren wilderness, so that for forty years we shall lack no good thing. At His command the flinty rock shall pour forth copious streams, so that the dry and thirsty land shall become a land of refreshment and delight. If it were possible to exhaust the resources of the material universe, still the people of God are rich by reason of their interest in Him, whose resources are equal to all the needs of His vast universe,—whose resources are indeed infinite. We rejoice in "the unsearchable riches of Christ." "He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly," &c.

II. The great goodness of God. His goodness is strikingly exemplified in several things of which this manna would be a memorial. 1. *The supply of manna was undeserved.* These unbelieving, murmuring, rebellious Israelites merited no kindness from God. Had they received their deserts they would have been left to die of famine. "He has not dealt with us after our sins," &c. 2. *The supply was ample.* There was sufficient for every one and for all. If any one lacked provisions it was not because of any deficiency in the supply. So the blessings

of redemption and of providence are ample for all the needs of all men, everywhere, and in all ages. 3. *The supply was free.* All the Israelites might avail themselves of it. Every morning they would go out into the open wilderness and gather it. An illustration of the sufficiency and freeness of the provisions of Divine grace. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money," &c. 4. *The supply was pleasant.* The taste of the manna was like fresh oil, and like wafers made with honey, equally agreeable to all palates. The provisions of Christianity are not only wholesome but pleasant also. The prophet Isaiah represents them as "a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." Our Lord also compares them to a great feast. A feast of delightful experiences, exalted hopes, blessed fellowships, &c. Thus the manna would remind the generations of the great goodness of God to their ancestors.

III. The unvarying faithfulness of God. "The children of Israel did eat manna forty years until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan." During the forty years, the supply of manna never failed them. With undeviating regularity, God bestowed it upon them until they came to the borders of Canaan, where there was abundance of provisions. The Divine faithfulness is the more conspicuous when viewed in the light of the people's conduct. God was invariably faithful to them and to His promise, notwitstanding their—1. *Inconstancy.* 2. *Ingratitude.* 3. *Oft-repeated rebellion.* Notwithstanding the extreme provocation which He received from them, He continued to send them manna from heaven until they needed it no longer. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." The manna would remind the generations of this unfailing faithfulness.

IV. The abiding presence of God with them. When the Israelites attempted to keep the manna in their tents from one day to another, "it bred worms and stank." But in the manna which was kept by the command of God we have a perpetual miracle by which it was kept pure and sweet. And that perpetual miracle was a proof of the perpetual presence of God with them,—a proof that the faithful God was with them even as He was with their fathers.

And thus, the manna being such a memorial of the doings, character, and presence of God, it would be—

V. An encouragement to trust in God. "God's miracles and mercies are to be had in everlasting remembrance, for our encouragement to trust in Him at all times."

Conclusion. Ponder well two facts:—1. *The history of one generation may benefit all succeeding generations.* History furnishes patterns and beacons, encouragements and warnings. Let us heed them. 2. *The obligation of every generation to profit by the history of its predecessors.* Every fresh generation enters upon its career with greater advantages and responsibilities than those which have gone before. We ought to be wiser, braver, holier than our fathers. But are we? —*William Jones.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 32–36. Mercies of old to His Church God would have known to succeeding generations.

Men may see that the best provision of God's Church has been in its wilderness condition.

God confutes murmurers by His monuments, that He did not bring Israel out of Egypt to destroy them.

Wilderness mercies are contemporary with wilderness conditions.

God will carry His Israel through all wilderness trials unto their Canaan rest.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XVI.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Elim-Sinai! Ver. 1. The scene of the miracles of quails and manna was strikingly appropriate. Professor Palmer in his Desert of the Exodus gives a vivid description of the scene and sufferings. Familiar as we had grown with desert scenes, we were not prepared for such utter and oppressive desolation as this. As far as the eye could reach, there stretched a dull, flat, sandy waste—unrelieved by any green or living thing. The next morning he and his friends again set out, passing over a tract of sand equally dreary with that of the day before. It was, however, covered with a sombre carpet of hard, black flints; thus affording a firmer foothold for the pedestrian. But alike on the sand as on the rock, the sun shone with a fierce glare—scorching and blistering their hands and faces. Such no doubt was the experience of Israel. And such is the Christian's life-path. Believers journey along bare sandy wastes, or bleak rocky plains; with the burning sun of worldly persecution. No wonder they were weak, those Israel hosts. The Lord pitieth His children. He pitied Israel, when, as the Psalmist says, hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them.

Divine Ways! Ver. 1. We learn lessons ofttimes when the head is low; just as, when the sun is set, the stars come out in their blessed beauty, and darkness shows us worlds of light we never saw by day. In the glad summer time, when the leaves are on the trees, we go into the woodlands, and we sport among their branches. They arch over us, hiding from us the other world, and causing us to revel in the beauty and blessedness of this. But the blasts of winter come and scatter the leaves; then the light of heaven comes in between, to remind us that our sufficiency is of God. No doubt during the five or six weeks after the Red Sea Triumph, the host had gradually been losing sight of God—slowly but too surely forgetting their entire dependence upon heaven. So the supplies run short, and Israel is reminded that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Such are the ways of God in the Christian life. We begin to forget our dependence on the great Deliverer; so He arrests our sources of sustenance—stays the flowing channels of grace—stops the sunshine in the heavens—and strips our trees of their bright green and glossy foliage. Then we remember what helpless creatures we are, and are reminded that our sufficiency is of God.

"With shattered pride, and prostrate heart,
We seek the sad-forgotten God."—*Cook.*

Human Murmurs! Ver. 2. It has been suggested that murmuring must have been a malady characteristic of the Hebrew people, or else a disease peculiar to the desert. They were always murmuring. And such is man! The noxious weed—the root of bitterness, with its cleaving burrs and envenomed spines, has not become a fossil-flora. It is still only too prevalent. Of an Englishman, the foreigner says that it is his nature to grumble, and he himself claims it as his prerogative. Alas! it is man's propensity. As Dr. Todd tells of the farmer, he murmured when the rain fell because it would injure the wheat—and when the sun shone because it would damage the rye—and when the air was cold because it would nip the grass. He thought himself the one especial target at whose prosperity and peace Nature was bent on a perpetual flight of arrowy shafts. So Israel! And so man! He forgets not only that others feel the pointed barb, but also that there is a design in it all. Moreover, murmuring never travels alone. He is an invader followed by a motley host of plunderers. As Thomas Brooks puts it, murmuring is a sin that breeds and brings forth many sins at once; and so doth the River Nile bring forth many crocodiles, and the scorpion many serpents. On the edge of some plantations we read a notice:—"Mantraps and spring-guns!" Murmuring and peevish discontent is such a tangled thicket, closely set with guns and snares. So Israel found to his cost:—"Unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." Christians should be the last to murmur.

"As brooks, and torrents, rivers, all
Increase the gulf in which they fall,
Such thoughts, by gathering up the rills
Of lesser griefs, spread real ills;
And with their gloomy shades conceal
The landmarks hope would else reveal."
—*Dinnies.*

Backslidings! Ver. 3. Watching the golden eagle, as he basks in the noon's broad-light—balances with motionless wings in the high vault of heaven—or rushes forth like the thunderbolt to meet the clouds on the pathway of the blast, can you conceive that he would give up his free and joyous life to drag out a weary bondage in a narrow and stifling cage? Would not that kingly bird—that cloud-cleaving bird—prefer death to slavery. Foolish Israel! They longed to give up their freedom for the foul bondage of Egypt. How often God's spiritual Israel are thus tempted to go back to the serfdom of sin!—

"Shall I back to Egypt go,
To my flesh corruption sow?
No, with sin I cannot dwell;
Sin is worse than death and hell."
—*Wesley.*

Murmur-Mischiefs! Ver. 4–16. Murmuring is a mercy-embittering sin—a misery-sowing sin. As the sweetest things put into a sour vessel become sour, or put into a bitter vessel bitter; so murmuring puts gall and wormwood into every cup of mercy. Here was Israel in mercy out of Egypt—beyond the barrier to Egypt's hate; and yet in this mercy they saw only misery. Herodotus tells us of a people in Africa, who lived in the neighbourhood of Mount Atlas, that their daily custom was to curse the sun, because his excessive heat scorched them. Did the Atauratians forget that to the sun which they cursed, they were indebted for light—for food—for the fertility of their country—for countless mercies without which their continued existence had been impossible. Ah! we make our mercies our miseries. They wished for gloom as Israel wished for Egypt. But they forgot the brick-kilns, when they remembered the flesh-pots; and they overlooked the task-master's rods, when they recalled the onions and garlic. The little flower wished to be planted higher, and the cold wind blew and nipped it. Then it wished to be planted in the sun, and the sun burnt it. What murmur-mischiefs it experienced. No, no! we are best just as God places us.

"Whate'er my God ordains is right,
Here will I take my stand,
Though sorrow, need, or death make earth
For me a desert land."—*Winkworth.*

Manna-Nature! Ver. 15. Efforts have been made to do away with the supernatural aspect of this incident, by suggesting that this was nothing else than the exudation from the Tamarisk, to which the name "manna" has been given. No doubt the name was given to this gum, which exudes from the large eastern tamarisk-tree, in the belief that such was Israel's source of supply. But this was a supposition based on ignorance, and utterly without warrant from the narrative itself. It is true that the tamarisk-shrub thrives in arid sandy situations, and that it is even now abundant in the Sinaitic peninsula; but how could a host of such tamarisks daily supply such a vast assemblage with exudations sufficient? Then again, it has yet to be proved that this gum would be at all salutary or nutritive as an article of constant and substantial good; whereas Israel subsisted for forty years on manna. The monks of St. Catherine on Sinai may gather the Tamarisk gum, and sell it at a high price to Europeans as Israel's veritable sustenance; but they never can justify their assertion to sensible minds. The same holds good of the German idea of the honey-dew exudings from the camel's thorn, or Indian manna. By denial on the part of Rationalists of any supernatural manna, they only increase the difficulties, and render more numerous, if not greater, miracles necessary. It is far more credible that the supply was miraculous; and that Israel was so perplexed by this new atom-like thing, that, familiar as they were with the gums and honey-dews of the East, they exclaimed—"What is it?"

"A while ago we hungered, but Thy great love has given
A food so sweet and strange that it seems like bread from heaven.

Supplies! Ver. 4. An opulent person makes the tour of Europe, during which time his funds run short. But he comforts himself with reflecting that he has a sufficient stock in the bank, which he can draw out at any time by writing to his cashiers. The Israelites were in a foreign land, far from home, without supplies; whereupon they drew upon God by prayer, and faith, and humble waiting. God honoured their bill at sight, and issued to them from time to time such remittances as were sufficient to carry them in safety to the end of their journey. And so He does with the Christian passover-pilgrim. To him the promises are all yea and amen. No good thing is withheld from the patient, persevering believer. He accepts God's promises—draws upon them—and never finds them dishonoured at the Throne of Grace.

"I look to Thee in every need, and never look in vain;
I feel Thy strong and tender love, and all is well again."

Sabbath! Ver. 23. At the very time that Israel was so engrossed with the material, *i.e.*, with the body—God reminded them of the importance of the moral, *i.e.*, of the soul. As Kalisch remarks, the Sabbath here introduced is admirably calculated to disclose the internal end of the Sabbath. And what was that end? The perfect harmonising and reconciling of the material and moral—of the physical and spiritual—life of man. And most worthy of notice is the fact that the Sabbath was here fully recognised as an institution—not of recent date—but as it was, an ordinance co-eval with Creation itself; nay, as Mant says, the perpetual memory of the Maker's rest. So that the manna preaches with Wisdom's voice—cries loudly on us to hallow the Sabbath-day—proclaims distinctly the law of righteous condemnation for neglect or misuse—and points plainly to the fruits of obedience to the Divine behest. As Beecher says, the world without a Sabbath would be like a man without a smile—like a summer without a flower—like a homestead without a garden. It is the green oasis—the little grassy meadow in the wilderness. Wilberforce exclaimed: "Oh! what a blessing is Sunday, interposed between the waves of worldly business, like the Divine path of Israel through the parted Jordan."

Yet that day's joys are in proportion to our week's provision; and neglect of Jesus during the preceding days, will deprive us of enjoying His grace on the Sabbath. And so with preparations in time for the endless Sabbath of heaven. Therefore—

"Now in the morning sunlight, and now at life's decay,
We gather of the portion appointed for THAT DAY."

Quail and Manna Lessons! Ver. 13–15. Clearly we are taught: 1. Apprehension of our dependence on God. 2. Appreciation of the goodness of God. 3. Approbation of the Sabbatic rest in God. It is remarkable in the manna that, while what was left on the ground melted before the orient beams, and what was left in the house bred worms and stank, no such results are produced on the Tamarisk manna or Judean honey-dew. There is no such tendency to decomposition in them. What does this teach, if not the entire dependence of God's Church and people upon daily supplies of grace in Christ? It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. How expressive, then, the petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our sufficient Bread." Jesus is that sufficing Bread—sufficing in Himself—sufficing to us.

"Shall I then ever weary of this rich store of Thine,
And wish, with thankless murmurs, that other gifts were mine?"

Manna-Symbolism! Ver. 15. Law remarks that this miracle is a wreath of combined wonders. By it, Jehovah designed to teach mysterious truths—momentous lessons—as to soul-food. Goodness in bestowing food is taper-grace beside the shinings of redemption's gift. 1. Jesus is that Bread from heaven, which descended during this dark world's night upon the sands of time. 2. The dew was a fit mantle for this heaven-sent food; and so the means of grace are lovely caskets of the heavenly treasure. 3. But, even as the dews had neither taste nor vital juice, so the means of grace are nothing without Christ. 4. At early dawn must Israel seek; and it is they who seek Jesus early who find Him. 5. Sweet was their daily portion—nourishing and bringing pleasure to their lips; and His fruit is sweet unto the taste. He is all sweetness to the feasting soul; so that finding Him, we find an ever-satisfying portion, and possess an unfading paradise of joy in Him all our pilgrim way to the cold Jordanic wave. 6. Every one of the mighty host had enough and no more; and even so, the countless myriads of Messiah's followers, ransomed from sin-bondage, have sufficiency in Christ. They have enough, but none to spare, as the wise virgins informed their foolish companions. 7. The manna was free to all, and needed not the wealth of Crœsus to procure; so Jesus, the Living Bread, is the gift of God. God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son!

"Oh, Thou, whose loving-kindness this manna Feast hath spread,
Give me a higher relish for Him, the pilgrim's Bread."

Quail-Emblems! Ver. 13. This was the Hebrew *slav*, or common quail, so called from the sound it makes. It resembles a partridge, only smaller in size. It is migratory—crossing the Mediterranean in the autumn in immense flocks, and returning in spring. In crossing this sea, they alight on some of the islands, which on that account were called Ortigia. We are told that nothing is easier than to catch these birds when they have recently arrived, exhausted by their aerial pilgrimage. Dr. Bonar says that when he and his companions were traversing the desert of Sinai, they were sometimes attracted by flocks of pigeon-looking birds, which their Bedawin guides called quails. Dr. Donne quaintly remarks that particular mercies are the feathers of God's wings. They are that cloud of quails, which hovered over the host of Israel at eventide. And thus—

"Each mercy sent when sorrows lower,
Each blessing of the winged hour,
All we enjoy and all we love,
Bring with them lessons from above."
—*Bryant.*

Israel's Life-Food! Ver. 35. The history of Israel is a typical history. The slavery in Egypt represented the bondage in which we are naturally held; while the deliverance by Moses is symbolic of our redemption by Christ. The wanderings in the desert pre-figure the Christian pilgrimage on earth; while the Canaan at which the host arrived over Jordan is emblematic of the rest that remaineth beyond the chill waters of the River of Death. And so with reference to the life-food of Israel. They had it in the wilderness, but no further. The sacraments cease in the Heavenly Canaan. There is no temple therein—no place for sacraments—no need for channels of grace. Christ will be all in all there; for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple thereof. Not from ordinances shall we then draw our nutriment. The Redeemer will be all in all to our souls, and from Him alone and directly shall we draw the only material of everlasting happiness and ever-increasing goodness. It is under that apprehension of our Life-food here—

"That, feeding on His bounties, we shall our strength renew,
And with untiring spirit our desert-way pursue."

Trust! Ver. 9, 10. "When my heart is overwhelmed within me, I will look to the Rock that is higher than I" (Ps. lxi. 2). When I have slipped upon the ice-slopes of personal experience, and fallen into the crevasse of despondency, I will cast myself upon the waters of the river of Providence. Wandering one day over the Alps, a chamois-hunter made a mis-step, and fell more than a hundred feet to the very bottom of one of those horrid crevices in the ice. It was impossible for him to get up; the sides were too slippery, and there were no means of climbing. He cried out ever so loud, but no human ear could hear. There was nothing but death before him—cold, cruel, relentless death. What could he do? The water came pouring down in a flood, and this stream he followed until he entered a great cavern, high-arched, ice-ribbed. There the water gurgled, and boiled, and disappeared. He could see no exit; but there must be one somewhere, for that living stream found its way out. One thing remained for him. He looked up at the blue sky—commended himself to God's protection—and then, with a strong effort, threw himself bodily into that gush of water. A moment after he found himself thrown on the green grass of the valley of Chamouni, with the noonday sun shining above his head, and the blooming flowers of the mountain about him. What a type of Christian experience! When walking over the ice fields of our own experience, we make a mis-step which precipitates us into the deep chasm of doubt, despondency, or despair. There is no possible means of escape but one, and that is, to throw ourselves into the moving, foaming waters of the stream of Providence. Trust God. Thy will be done. Yet let it be—not with presumption, but with prayer. Commit thy way unto the Lord; and you will find that though the flood has nearly stifled you, it has at the same moment been bearing you on—underground it may be, through darkness and uproar it may be—safe into the green pastures of His truth and by the still waters of His faithfulness, surrounded by the flowers of grace, with the canopy of Divine protection over your heads. "For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and my feet from falling, that I may walk before Thee in the land of the living" (Ps. lvi. 13). Thus did Moses call on the people to trust God—to cast themselves by prayer and supplication into the deep waters of Divine faithfulness, in the full persuasion that He would supply all their need.

"In spite of many broken dreams,
This have I truly learned to say—
Prayers which I thought unanswered once
Are answered in God's own best way."
—*Carey.*

Divine Promises! Ver. 11, 12. The ropes which are used in lifting the heavy masses of iron ore out of the mine to the earth's surface, are all tested before being employed in this service. Each strand is tried separately by having a strain put upon it equal to that which the whole of them will have to sustain when combined. God's promises may be compared to a great cable—each strand has been tested—they cannot be broken! Moses laid hold of this rope, and God drew him and Israel out of the pit of Egypt, that in the furnaces of Arabia, He might mould and weld them into vessels of honour. Many a time Israel broke their covenant engagements, but God never. His promises were true, as the host found again and again during their wilderness-wanderings from Him.

"So in darkest dispensations,
Doth my faithful Lord appear,
With His richest consolations,
To re-animate and cheer." —*Pearce.*

Sabbath! Ver. 28. On the sides of an English coal mine, limestone is in constant process of formation, caused by the trickling of water through the rocks. This water contains a great many particles of lime, which are deposited in the mine, and, as the water passes off, these become hard, and form the limestone. This stone would always be white, like white marble, were it not that men are working in the mine, and as the black dust rises from the coal, it mixes with the soft lime, and in that way a black stone is formed. Now, in the night, when there is no coal-dust rising, the stone is white; then again, the next day, when the miners are at work, another black layer is formed, and so on alternately black and white through the week until Sabbath comes. Then if the miners keep holy the Sabbath, a much larger layer of white stone will be formed than before. There will be the white stone of Saturday night, and the whole day and night of the Sabbath, so that every seventh day the white layer will be about three times as thick as any of the others. But if the men work on the Sabbath they see it marked against them in the stone. Hence the miners call it "the Sunday stone." How they need to be very careful to observe this holy day, when they would see their violation of God's command thus written down in stone—an image of the indelible record in heaven!

"Heaven here; man on those hills of myrrh and flowers;
A gleam of glory after six day's showers."
—*Vaughan.*

Sabbath-Rest! Ver. 25. Like the pilgrim, the Christian sits down by this well in the desert—for what to him is the Sabbath but a fountain in a land of drought,—a palm-tree in the midst of the great wilderness; and as he drinks of the refreshing waters of this palm-shaded fountain, he is reminded of that rest which remaineth for the people of God When, as Cumming says, that last Sabbath comes—the Sabbath of all creation—the heart, wearied with tumultuous beatings, shall have rest; and the soul, fevered with its anxieties, shall have peace. The sun of that Sabbath

will never set nor hide his splendours in a cloud. Our earthly Sabbaths are but dim reflections of the heavenly Sabbath, cast upon the earth, dimmed by the transit of their rays from so great a height and so distant a world. They are but—

"The preludes of a feast that cannot cloy,
And the bright out-courts of immortal glory! —*Barton.*

Memorial Gratitude! Ver. 32. Bishop Hutton was once travelling between Wensleydale and Ingleton, when he suddenly dismounted, delivered his steed to the care of one of his attendants, retired to a particular spot at some distance from the highway, and knelt down in prayer for some time. On his return, he was asked his reason for this action? His reply was significant, "When I was a poor boy, I travelled over that cold and black mountain without shoes or stockings. In my extremity, I disturbed a cow on the identical spot where I have just prayed, to obtain a little warmth from the spot where the animal was lying." This good man felt grateful to God for all He had done for Him since that moment, and had knelt down by this memorial to praise God. Jehovah orders memorials of mercies to be set up—kept in view—held in remembrance, so that we may always be confident and contented.

"To remember, though gloomy the present may be,
That the Master is coming, and coming to me." —*Patterson.*

Memorial Mercies! Ver. 33. "The Lord's mercies are new every morning." What an assurance this is to carry with us in all our wayfaring through this world! The future is always dark to us; but then there are the memorial-mercies of the past to be recalled. A veil hides the future from our sight, but the past has lights here and there—the mercies of times of adversity shining afar to cheer us—what is under the shadows in front of us—what is behind the veil suspended before us—what is advancing out of the imperious mist towards us, none of us can know, but we may all see the memorials of the past. Like clear, flaming letters on a black velvet background they stand out. "The Lord's mercies are new every morning." It is as though the Holy Spirit of God went before us and set up these memorial-mercies to cheer us whenever we halt in weakness—to encourage us whenever we hesitate in fearfulness, and to incite us to gratitude whenever we are disposed to unthankfulness.

"Thy mercies, Lord, are like the sun
Whose beams undo what sable night hath done!
Or, like those streams, the current of whose course,
Restrained awhile, run with a swifter force."
—*Quarles.*

Memorials! Ver. 33. In deepest rocks, which have withstood all the assailing influences of time, geologists find the outlines of ferns of former ages, lined with the most delicate tracery, or distinct impressions of the feet of birds and animals which are now lost to earth. They remove these choice specimens from their rocky beds and place them among collections which the learned pour over with thoughtful and profitable interest. Of all the abundance of living grace, verdure, and activity, which covered the earth through remote ages, only here and there, and that very rarely, some specimens like these speak. Such records of Nature's workings are but seldom written in solid rock, but one line written there suggests forests of graceful waving fronds, with their bending shadows in clear waters, or a host of strange and now unknown animals which once animated the world. That line whispers of a great flood, in which this life was submerged—of sleepy eyes in which the moist bed where so much is written, changed to stern rock, holding securely a valuable historic record, which at last is given to those who grope for glowing facts among dull stones. Now, as the life, structure, and habits of myriads of plants and animals are suggestively unfolded through means of impressions in stone of comparatively few individual specimens; so history, culling comparatively few lives as representatives of the world's thought, leaves untold the births, deeds, and deaths of the great mass of the children of the earth; and when death claims them, they go back to her receptive bosom, leaving no lasting record here. And it is from the memorials set up in the Arabian wilds that we not only syllable out the goodness of God in supplying Israel's wants, and providing for their necessities, but also infer that many more mercies were their lot than the Bible leaves on record. It is by searching the plains of Holy Scripture that we come upon records of God's providence designed to encourage us to look hopefully to our own future.

"The present is enough for common souls,
Who, never looking forward, are indeed
Mere clay, wherein the footprints of their age
Are petrified for ever."—*Lowell.*

Sufficiency! Ver. 35. In the forests of Guiana grows the towering mora. Its topmost branch, when naked with age or dried by accident, is the favourite resort of the toncar. Many a time, says Waterton, has this singular bird felt the shot faintly strike him from the gun of the fowler below, and owed his life to the distance betwixt them. The wild fig-tree, as large as a common English apple-tree, often rears itself from one of the thick branches at the top of the mora, as when a man stands on the shoulders of another man. When its fruit is ripe, the birds resort to them for nourishment; and it was to an indigested seed passing through the body of a bird which

had perched on the mora, that the fig-tree first owed its elevated station there. Thus, unconsciously, did some bird contribute, if not to its own future sustenance, certainly to the after-support and nutriment of its fellow birds or progeny. But how did this seed germinate into a fig-tree? The sap of the mora supplied it with growing powers, and raised it into full bearing; and now in its turn, it is doomed to contribute a portion of its own sap and juices towards the growth of different species of vines, the seeds of which also the birds deposited on its branches. These soon vegetate and bear fruit in great quantities, so that the mora has much to do to supply nourishment for such a profuse and prolific mass of vegetation. What with calls from vines and fig-tree, the mora is unable to support her charge, languishes — dies; whereupon, the fig-tree, with its usurping progeny of vines, receiving no more succour from their late foster-parent, droop and perish in their turn. How often is it so with churches of earthly growth. They spread, minds nestle in the branches, and leave behind them seeds which germinate, affording nutriment to succeeding generations of minds, who in turn leave germs of vines; but all this growth at last bows down the mother church, when foster-parents and progeny fall. Not so with Jesus Christ —He is that giant mora whose resources never fail. On Him millions of figs and vines grow, without lack of moisture, for it hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and He is the Fountain of Life.

"The Bread,
Given from His hands, feeds thousands and to spare." —*Bickersteth.*

CHAPTER XVII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. After their journeys.**]—Literally, "their breakings up," alluding to nomad life, and bringing vividly before the mind the *pulling up* of the *tent-stakes* and general *break up* of the *camp*, incident to the passage of a people through the desert. The places of encampment would naturally become landmarks to be counted in, remembered, and recorded. Cf. especia ly Num. xxxiii.—**The commandment of the Lord.**] That is, through the guiding pillar of cloud and fire. Cf. C. N. on chap. xiii. 21, 22.

2. Tempt]—More exactly, "put to the proof;" for so the word נָסָה signifies. God did put Abraham to the proof—which was right: Israel did put God to the proof—which was wrong. Proof in abundance had already been given that Jehovah *was* among His people. The want of water was a sore trial, but might itself have assured them that a supply would soon come. The daily provision of food by a miracle, added to all the foregoing tokens of Jehovah's presence, should have controlled the spirit of the people, and confined their application to earnest believing petition.

6. Stand . . . upon the rock.]—This incident, especially when conceived according to the vividness of the original, is most pleasing and satisfying to the imagination of faith. "Behold Me! standing before thee there upon the rock." It is from Him who is standing upon the rock that the waters really flow. By this Divine action, of taking up such a position, the Source and Medium are in a manner identified. This is the first rock-smiting recorded; the second is narrated in Num. xx. It is no doubt to this first, more illustrious, instance that the Apostle alludes in 1 Cor. x. 4. The outflow now caused appears to have been kept up for some time; and the desert of Sinai being near wherein Israel remained for about a year, this rock "followed them" with its welcome stream, becoming thereby typical of spiritual blessing. "That rock was (*i.e.*, represented) the Christ." An experience in the desert such as this, even if continued only for a few months, would worthily serve as a type to be carried down the ages: it is, however, to be noticed, that we do not read of the Hebrews again suffering from *thirst* till years have elapsed, and then it is in a locality a long way from this smitten rock in Horeb.

16. The Lord hath sworn.]—A far-fetched if not an impossible rendering. The words are literally—

"For (or because) a hand upon (or against) the throne of Jah;
War for Jehovah with Amalek from generation, generation."

"If the hand refer to Amalek (Kalisch), the sentence runs thus—'because his (Amalek's) hand was against the throne of Yah (the Kingdom of God, which includes His people), &c.' The meaning is here simple and easy; the connection with what goes before is sufficiently plain; and the reason assigned for perpetual war until Amalek be extirpated, is intelligible and suit-

ible."—(Murphy). "This on the whole seems to be the most satisfactory explanation."—(Speaker's Commentary.) Some scholars (Gesenius, Fürst, Davies) think the rare word כֵּס, "throne," to be an error for נֵס, "banner;" and one of them (Fürst) proposes the following translation: "The memorial is upon the banner of God,—'Jehovah wages war with Amalek from generation to generation.'"

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

HOREB; OR, THE NEEDFUL THINGS OF LIFE PROVIDENTIALLY SUPPLIED.

The expression, "after their journeys," in ver. 1, would lead us to expect that there was a station or two between the wilderness of Sin and Rephidim. And on reference to Numbers xxxiii. 12–14, we find that there were Dophkah and Alush. Nothing of importance occurred at these places. The Israelites were not tempted. God was not displeased. The life of man is not always eventful. It has many halting-places destitute of moral interest. But these are soon exchanged for scenes of trial. Moral character is developed better at Rephidim than at Dophkah and Alush.

I. That men are sometimes brought into great straits through lack of the ordinary things of life. "And there was no water for the people to drink." Thus the Israelites lacked water. They had lacked bread only a few days previously. *It is not the lot of man to be long free from trial of some kind.* Trials come successively. This was the case with Job. Joseph escapes the pit and is put into the dungeon. David passes from the cave of Adullam to the wilds of Engedi. They are diversified according to the station in which our tent is fixed. Every sphere of life has something of perplexity connected with it, which tests our moral nature and brings the mercy of God near to us. We must learn both how to want and how to abound, to be sorrowful and yet always rejoicing. Thus by *the varied trials of life man is made to feel that earth cannot give him abiding satisfaction,* and he is led to anticipate the rest of heaven. Each sorrow in the wilderness would lead the true Israelite to long for the land of promise; and so all the vicissitudes of earth should create desires for the eternal satisfaction of heaven. The believer must not think of undisturbed repose while in the flesh. Life is a school in which sorrow is the first teacher, and in which we may learn the meaning of self. In the best gardens of earth there are graves; the garden of heaven is in eternal bloom. There the wilderness is unknown, and hunger and thirst are not experienced. The Lamb feeds them. They drink of the River of the Water of Life. But we see from this narrative, *that each occasion of want on the part of Israel was signalised by a rich manifestation of the mercy of God.* Their hunger was met by the manna. Their thirst was met by the streams of Horeb. The hour of man's need is often the hour of God's richest gift and blessing. Heaven gives kindly revelations of its love to sorrowful souls. Thus we see how thoroughly man depends upon God, even for the common necessities of life. The water we drink is the gift of His hand, and will cease to flow at His command. Man may experience want even in the paths in which he is Divinely led. Sorrow should lead to repentance and not to murmuring. *Have you never felt the need of spiritual water?* There is a thirst of soul compared with which physical thirst is unimportant, and which needs immediate attention. David thirsted for God. Earthly things cannot appease this thirst. The life of the soul cannot be sustained without the water of the Holy Spirit. It is absolutely essential. We are dependent upon heaven for it. No human creature can supply it. It flows clear as crystal from the throne of God and the Lamb. It is beyond price, and yet is free. It is refreshing to the weary soul. Here we drink of the stream; in the life to come we shall

drink at the fountain head. If we thirst after God we shall diligently seek Him in the means of grace and in private prayer.

II. That when men are brought into great straits through lack of the ordinary things of life, they often appeal to human agencies rather than to Divine. "Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink." Thus the Israelites blamed Moses for the straits into which they were brought through lack of water. How foolish, for did not he suffer from the same calamity? nor was it in his power to create fountains. How cruel, for was not he seeking their freedom? How fickle the approbation of men, it varies with the circumstances of life. People often go to the human in trouble when they ought to go to the Divine. It is the way of the world. God must be seen through all the agencies which He sends to conduct our life to its destined place. The seen things around us, which are influencing us, are only the means which heaven appoints to bring us to rest, and therefore our thoughts must not terminate in them, but must run on to that Being who has so wisely ordered them. Men are slow to see that all the circumstances of life are related to the providence of God, rather than to the immediate agencies which appear to have caused them. *And if you are seeking spiritual water to quench the thirst of your soul, do not go to the creature for it, but to the Creator.* The Israelites went to Moses and asked him to satisfy their thirst; but in vain. Not even the good things of this life, which are appointed by God for the true welfare of man, can satisfy this deeper longing of the soul. Science cannot. A good name cannot. Social enjoyment cannot. God alone can quench its thirst. Hence let no human soul seek to obtain from human agencies what alone can be obtained from the Divine. If you drink of the wells of earth you will thirst again; but if of the water of the Spirit you will thirst no more.

III. That when men are brought into straits through the lack of things they very much need, they often get them in the providence of God from the most unlikely sources." "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." Thus we see that God did not flash immediate judgment upon these rebellious people. He is long-suffering toward the race. We must learn to be patient with those who injure us. God has regard to human need, and evil in men will not turn Him away from His promise. None need despair of His mercy. When the people chide, the minister should pray. When his perplexity is great he most needs direction from heaven; God always reveals to praying souls the best method of action in the time of trouble. To prayerful spirits He makes known the rock which shall relieve their need. Thus *the thirst of Israel was quenched by water from a rock.* Who would expect clear, bright, water from a flinty rock? Certainly not the most sanguine in the camp of Israel. We know not the possibilities of the things around us. The providence of God can make rocks into rivers to supply the need of His people. We often get our blessings from whence we least expect them; we get pity from the hard-hearted, money from the miserly, and harvests from barren places. Nature yields her secret treasures at the voice of heaven. Every rock in the desert is embraced in the providence of God. *From whence shall come the water to satisfy the thirst of the soul?* From the rivers of worldly pleasures? From the streams of human philosophy? From the wells of wealth? Nay; we point to One who was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and say that from the Rock Christ Jesus comes the spiritual water, which alone can quench the thirst of the soul. Christ is set forth under the emblem of a rock. He is strong. He withstands all enemies. He is the true foundation for moral character. He is the abiding Refuge of the soul. **Thus, is**

not human salvation from an unlikely source? Who would have predicted that the Divine Son of God would have died to save men from sin? Yet so it is, and from the *smitten* Christ there flows a stream which is equal to the moral thirst of humanity. Christ was smitten. He bore the penalties of a broken law. Heaven spared Him not. He was smitten in body and in soul (Isa. liii. 10). The supply of water from the rock was *free*. The waters which flowed forth from the rock were free to all the camp of Israel. We should not have been surprised if rebellion had limited the supply to the more worthy few; but no, the gifts of God are bestowed on the just and on the unjust. And so the mercy which is in Christ Jesus is free to all, even to the worst of sinners (Rev. xxii. 17). The supply of water from the rock was *abundant*. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused the waters to run down like rivers (Ps. lxxviii. 16). There was sufficient water to meet the thirst of the entire camp. The mercy which is in Christ Jesus *is* superabundant; all may freely drink and yet there will be enough and to spare. Our Heavenly Father bestows not mercy with a sparing hand. He is rich in pity. The supply of water from the rock was *pure*. This water was not bitter. It was not poisonous. It was sweet. It was cooling. The mercy which is in Christ Jesus is sweet and clear as crystal. It cleanses those who drink it, and makes them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The supply of water from the rock was *continuous*. The water of the rock followed Israel. The mercy which is in Christ Jesus will never leave a trustful soul; but will follow it through all the wanderings of life. Our Heavenly Father is never absent from the good; goodness and mercy follow them all their days.

IV. That when men are brought into straits, the way in which they act therein will leave irreparable memorials of sin or victory. "And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" (ver. 7.) In the conduct of the Israelites there had been base unbelief and ingratitude. They had chided Moses. They had forgotten the sweetened waters of Marah. They thought not of the pillar of cloud. In the presence of these things, they asked, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" Some men will not see the clearest indications of the Divine Presence in the experiences of life. They are slow to recognise God in their time of need. Heaven is with us as truly in need as in plenty. When life is in pain, then the consolations of Divine mercy are richest. *Moral conduct always leaves memorials behind it.* In the olden times names were changed in token of great soul-events; Jacob was changed to Israel. Every righteous act of the soul leaves its memorial in increased vigour of manhood, in purity and beauty of character, and in the rich blessing of God. Every sinful act of soul leaves its memorial in an impoverished and ruined manhood. Thus the scenes of life which ought to be radiant with Divine mercy, are often darkened by the sin of man. Let us not leave behind in our life memorials of strife and unbelief, but of faith and good works. Such memorials are abiding; once erected, they cannot be removed; hence the need that they should be worthy. LESSONS:—1. *That man is frequently called upon in this life to endure great physical need.* 2. *That the physical needs of life often reveal our real and inner character.* 3. *That the physical needs of life are no indication that God has failed us.* 4. *That the physical needs of life give us a great insight into the wealth and method of Divine mercy.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 1, 2. The trials of the Church are continued and multiplied in the time of pilgrimage.

The Church must encamp where the Word of God determines.

Want and hardship may attend

God's people where He bids them pitch.

Every strait is an occasion of stirring up the wicked to sin.

Unreasonable transgressors are apt to revile the innocent ministers of God.

God's faithful ministers may justly turn away undeserved reproofs from themselves.

God's faithful ministers labour to show men their unreasonableness in their temptation of God.

Verses 3–7. Unbelieving murmurers expostulate about judgments as if they were causeless.

Earnest prayers to Jehovah are the best means for God's servants to use against the violent threats of men.

In the midst of threatenings God commands His servants to walk safely.

God may allow some murmurers to go and see His miracles wrought, but not all.

Murmurers fare the better and have mercies through believers who obey God.

God's ministers are and must be exact in doing God's commands before all men.

It is God's pleasure to make places monuments of men's sins by His naming them.

Temptation of God and contention with His servants usually go together.

It is high tempting of God to call in question His gracious presence with His people.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8-16.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.

It is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of heaven. The Israelites had experienced hunger. They had experienced thirst. Both had been supplied. Now they are to pass into a new experience of sorrow, they are called to do battle with numerous and fierce enemies. Thus the trials of the Christian life are numerous, varied, unexpected, and come in rapid succession. They test strength. They require wisdom. They are to be met in dependence on God. All pure souls are in a militant condition as long as they are in this world; they are met in their moral progress by terrible enemies, whom they must conquer or before whom they must fall.

I. That the good are required to do battle with inveterate enemies. "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim" (ver. 8). These people were descended from Esau, and seem to have been animated by something of the old enmity which once existed between Jacob and Esau. They were also envious of the mercies which were Divinely vouchsafed to Israel, and were anxious to spoil them. Some people can never live in peace and let the children of God pass by unmolested. These foes came secretly upon Israel (Deut. xxv. 18). And so every pure soul has its Amalek. It has to contend with the Amalek of an evil heart; with the Amalek of a wicked world; and with the Amalek of fallen angels. These enemies seek to impede its progress to heaven. They are cunning in device. They are vigilant in purpose. They are intense in hatred. They especially imperil those who loiter in the rear of the Christian life. Peter followed afar off, and was overtaken by the enemy. No pure soul is exempt from this conflict. Are we surprised that God did not avert this war from the Israelites? They were only just out of bondage; the newly-converted soul is speedily called to meet enemies. They were undrilled; the good learn their drill in the battle. They were unarmed; the weapons of the good are not carnal. Thus they were prepared for coming warfare with the Canaanites, whose territory they were to possess. The soul is led gradually into the moral battle

of life. We cannot get to heaven without being interrupted by many enemies —by Satan, by poverty, by sickness, by prosperity; all these will seek to stop or slay us.

II. That the good in this conflict must combine prayer with the utmost exertion to overcome their enemies. "And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in mine hand" (verses 9–11). Thus the Israelites were not with indifference to look upon the invading army. The good cannot afford to treat the progress of sin in the world with cool contempt. Joshua was to muster the best men for the conflict. The good require to be well led by the purest and most heroic spirits in their midst, in their strife with evil. Truth has lost many a battle through bad generalship. Truth needs a man like Luther to lead the attack. If we would overcome evil within us and without us, we must summon the best energies of our mental and moral nature, and put them under the command of Christ; then shall we be led to victory. Joshua fought. Moses went up the hill to pray. Prayer is often uphill work. And the conflict between Good and Evil necessitates the use of prayer and activity. Man must pray over his evil heart, and he must also fight against its sinful tendencies. During the battle some are better qualified to pray, others to wield the sword; both conduce to the victory. Hence varied talents are brought into helpful service. We must not go to this war in our own strength. Christ within the veil prays for every soul engaged in dire conflict with the world's evil; and in this is the hope of victory. We must trace all our moral victories up to the intercession of Christ; He prays for us that our faith fail not. Yet the conflict may be severe and long; even prayer and effort do not always win a speedy conquest. Sin is persistent in its opposition to the soul.

III. That the good in this conflict are often impeded by the weakness consequent upon the physical condition of life. "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun" (ver. 12). The physical man soon tires in religious devotion. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The best of men are not exempt from the infirmities which inhere in the body. When prayer is interrupted, the enemy of the soul gains an advantage. Moral declension begins here. We conquer evil as we pray. Nature at the strongest is weak. But the hands of Moses were supported by Aaron and Hur. Holy companionship is helpful in the hour of severe moral conflict. Two are better far than one. Christians should seek to hold up the hands of ministers. They must bear one another's burdens. The insignificant members of the Church may render service to the most important; Hur may strengthen Moses. The smallest services are potent for good in the great conflict between Good and Evil; even the holding up of enfeebled hands. All can do something toward this ultimate victory. The energy of one may aid the weakness of another. The hands of our heavenly Intercessor never grow weary with pleading; and the infirm Christian will soon be as the angels. It is consoling that God knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust.

IV. That the good in their conflict should keep faithful record of their victories. "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book" (verses 13, 14). Thus the Israelites were victorious. They were delivered from their enemies. They gained warlike experiences which would be useful to them. They would gain courage and hope in reference to the future. And one victory over self prepares the way for another, though we may have to wait long for

final conquest over selfishness. The power of Satan will one day be destroyed. The Church must conquer all foes. Christ is its Captain. He has triumphed by the cross. A record should be kept of all our soul-victories, to aid memory, to inspire hope, to awaken gratitude to Him to whom it is due. They are worthy of permanent name. They are interesting and instructive. And soon may the record of final victory be penned, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord.

V. That the good in this conflict should ascribe all the glory of victory to God. "And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi: for he said, Because the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (verses 15, 16). The Israelites had fought under the banner of God—to Him was due the glory of victory. They recognised the Divine help—not their own valour and fortune. They set up a memorial of it. We should set up grateful memorials of our victories over sin. LESSONS:—1. *That there are inveterate enemies to moral goodness.* 2. *That these enemies are doomed to ultimate defeat and destruction.* 3. *That the good must pray and fight to this end.* 4. *There will be a final celebration of victory.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 8. New plagues for new murmurings God can make quickly to follow sinners.

Greatest enemies of the Church God may make to arise from the fathers of it.

The weakness of the Church is an occasion unto wicked enemies to oppress it.

Amalek will for no cause seek to fight and destroy Israel.

Whatever enemies intend, God orders all their victories against Israel for good.

Verse 9. In case of oppression by hostility, God allows His Israel to make this defence.

God in His wisdom orders several parts to several instruments for safety.

The Church needs leaders in its war against evil.

Counsel for praying and fighting given by God, and taken from Him, is defensive to His Church.

Verse 10. Counsels for defence of God's Church are not only to be given and taken, but acted upon.

Good associates in praying are sweet helps to save the Church.

Gracious instruments are ready to climb hills to God for the help of the good.

Verses 11–13. The human hand:—1. Helpful to God, as an instrument. 2. Feeble in prayer, as an infirmity. 3. Strengthened in service, as indicative of friendship. 4. An encouragement in battle even to victory.

Doubtful may be the fight of Israel as to success against its enemies for a time.

Good helpers to strengthen hearts and hands in faintings are especially useful.

By such aids souls may be faithful to God unto time of victory.

Verse 14. Jehovah's victories over the enemies of the Church He giveth in charge to be recorded.

Writing and tradition are both God's ways of recording His works for future ages.

God's book is the best record of His mighty works done for His Church.

A memorial would God have kept by the records of God's works to men.

Verses 15, 16. Worship-memorials are the best monuments of God's glorious victories in the Church.

In all such worship-memorials, Jehovah must be known as the banner of the Church.

God's oath against the enemies of His Church is a strong reason for naming Him their banner.

God has sworn successive destruction to all of Amalek to the end.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XVII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Human Hearts! Ver. 1. Men may do much under the momentary influence of excitement. A coward has been known to become momentarily brave, as Sir Walter Scott evidently understood when he painted one of his characters in the "Fair Maid of Perth." But the nature is not changed; for when the exciting cause ceases, then the effects vanish —like the music which dies away when the breeze ceases to touch the harp chords—or like the corpse of Edgar Allan Poe's romance, which ceased to move when the electric battery was removed. So with Israel; great was their Red Sea triumph-song; but there was no change of heart. They had been like those sand toys which we buy for our children. You turn the box upside down, and then the little acrobat revolves and revolves till the sand is all run down, when he hangs motionless; or like that singular case in the now defunct Oxford Street Pantheon, which contained a bird drinking at a fountain. After every sip of the crystal fluid, it raised its head, swelled its gorgeous throat, trilled its glorious song, only so long as the machinery was wound up. When the chain and spring had run down, then the bullfinch stood stiff and still. The winding up had not changed it from a stuffed to a living bird. Israel, wrought up to enthusiasm on the spur of the moment, sang Jehovah's praises by the Red Sea wave; but the wilderness-way cools their fervour. Alas! they soon show that their hearts had yet to be changed.

"Oh! wonderful rebellion,
Thou Lord of hope and life!
Betwixt Thee and Thy servant
There have been war and strife."

Rephidim-Rest! Ver. 1. The course of none has been along so beaten a road that they remember not fondly some "resting-places" in their journeys—some turns of their path in which lovely prospects broke in upon them—some soft plats of green refreshment to their weary feet. Talfourd says, such are confiding love—generous friendship—disinterested humanity. The Rephidim-rest was by no means barren. It was doubtless surrounded by steep shelving mountains of gneiss, the fantastic cleavage and variety of which added greatly to the beauty of the scene. It has been said that the scenery is not unlike Glencoe without its heather. Through the plain may be seen scattered groups of trees—the tamarisk with its long, feathery boughs—the palm-tree with its long, bare trunk, and tuft of broad leaves at the top—and the thick, straggling, thorn bushes. But palms and tamarisks were dotted all around; and on every knoll and mountain slope were ruined houses, churches, and walls, at the time Captain Palmer visited the scene. Farther on were some hundreds of palms—what Southey calls "a palm grove islanded amid the waste."

"Mine eyes have seen Thy wonders
All through this desert land."

Rephidim-Rebellion! Ver. 2. How often —especially in Eastern lands and under Syrian skies—have we seen a morning fair and bright as ever dawned on mortal vision, and looked for a high noon golden and glowing, flashing its glories far and wide, only, when the hour arrived, to find it clouded and mournful, with wailing winds and muttering thunders! When the motley hosts of Moses clustered on the far shore of the Red Sea wave, what a bright dawn was their liberty—brighter far than the radiant beams of eastern dawnlight that lit up the wide waste where slept in their watery couches the mailed phalanxes of Pharaoh. Alas! how soon—ere noon—did that bright promise pale and fade—pale as pales the northern coruscations from the arctic zone—fade as fades the blush upon the cheek of consumption, beauteous when it is christened death. When Sir Samuel Baker was in Abyssinia, he saw the natives employing their cattle not only as beasts of burden, but for carrying supplies of water in skins slung at their sides. Probably the Israelites brought with them from Egypt supplies of water in this way. These would last until, having reached the Wilderness of Sin, they were called upon to turn away from the seashore, and get up among the mountains. Here the water supply becomes exhausted, and Israel once more sins. With fierce impatience, they turn to their leader, and heap upon him reproaches as bitter as they were unjust and ungrateful. The falling spoke of the revolving wheel returns and reascends. The ebbing tide of rebellion rolls in again. Thus troubles fall and rise again; temptations die and revive again. The Israelites murmur; and in their repinings we see the bias of human nature. Yet, on the base of rebellion there rises a lovely pillar, on which all ages may read the golden glories of the Lord—the Lord God merciful and gracious

"And yet I could not trust Thee,
Or wait upon Thine hand."

Rephidim-Rock! Ver. 6. About two miles below Paran, on the side towards Egypt from which the Israelites would have approached, there is a spot never noticed by former travellers, which is connected by Bedawin tradition with this miracle. Thus writes Captain Palmer of the Sinaitic Expedition:—Dr. Durbin, in his "Observations on the East," says that the rock made more impression upon him than any natural object claiming to attest a miracle ever did. No moisture is now seen about the surface, but the Arabs say that there is water beneath the soil. They accordingly give to the stone the name of "The Concealed Spring of the Writer," *i.e.*, Moses. In Psalm cxiv. 8, it says that Jehovah turned the flint into a fountain of water. The manna was simply sent from heaven; but the water, on the contrary, was brought out of the smitten rock—the most unlikely place that could be imagined. Some men went about collecting funds for an important charity. They arrived in course of time at a very rich man's door, who was known to be churlish in his manner and niggardly in his gifts; whereupon they said that there was no need to call on him, "He is not likely to give." However, they entered, laid their case before him, and were beyond measure astonished when he gave them the largest donation of all. Rephidim-Rock was a most unlikely place from which to receive supplies of water. And nothing more unlikely than that life and happiness should flow from One crucified as a malefactor.

"What if my lips have thirsted?
Thou from the rock couldst bring
The pure refreshing water
Of some unfailing spring."

Rock-Rifts! Ver. 6. The command is: "Smite the rock" Moses lifts his rod, and with it he strikes the great granite mass. It is rent, torn asunder; and from inside the water bubbles up—gushes out—overflows in all directions—pours down into the valley—and rolls onward a clear, bright, and sparkling river. Law remarks that the antitype is the smitten Jesus. (1.) It was from the stricken stone that the waters gushed out. The wounds of Jesus are the *avenue* of the Spirit. They give forth water—the sparkling emblem of the power of grace. (2.) Sweet was this blessing to the pilgrims of the desert; but sweeter far to the true sons of God are those spiritual supplies, of which they drink with greediness and gladness.

"And now that I have tasted
The soul-reviving stream,
Alas! how sad and shameful
My late repinings seem."

Seeing Purity! Ver. 1–7. We have become familiar with the symbol of the stagnant pool, all whose impurities have settled at the bottom, and left its waters clear. The sunbeam or even the traveller's staff soon discloses the "seeming purity to be real impurity." But we have recently read that a tourist in the Holy Land on one occasion procured two little phials, which he filled with water from the Jordan. The liquid in one of the vessels was filtered, so as to be clear like crystal. The other bottle had in it the sediment as well as the water; and when shaken, it rose and discoloured the liquid. So with Israel; when Jehovah shook them, it was apparent that deep down at the bottom of the sea of their religious life there was much impurity. Affliction soon tests the integrity of our motives—the disinterestedness of our friendship—the reality of our faith in God. And so with Israel. The manna miracle had only caused the doubts and despairs to settle at the bottom of their heart; so that when the hand of God shook it by lack of water, loud murmurs rose up. All the goodness of God was forgotten; and maddened with thirst and rage, they threatened the life of their leader.

"Yes, I have vainly chided
Thy providential ways;
And I have mourned and murmured
When thou hast looked for praise."

Prayer-Power! Ver. 4. There is scarcely a material force or element which has not been at one time or another influenced by prayer. We speak of a flinty rock; and lo! waters gush forth plentifully when prayer touches it with her magic wand. We speak of the ocean; and lo! a pathway is made for the ransomed of the Lord, when prayer stretches over it her magic wand and divides it asunder. Talk of Aladdin's lamp; behold the true secret of power in the uplifted hand and heart of Moses in the Mount. It will be one of the grand revelations of the future to see the proofs of the power of prayer—many and more marvellous than Jacob's Peniel wrestlings—than Elijah's Carmel agonisings—than Paul's strong cryings and tears. As has been said, prayer plucks out the briers and thorns in the pathway of life, and covers that pathway with flowers and fruits—stretches out its mighty hand to heaven, and scatters the dark portentous cloud threatening destruction—links its hands to Divinity, so that it becomes strong as God, and can hurl defiance at all foes:

"I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright."

Sanctified Suffering! Ver. 3–7. It has been beautifully said, "There are many fruits which never turn sweet until the frost has lain upon them. There are many nuts that never fall from the boughs of the forest trees till the frost has opened and ripened them. And there are many elements of life that never grow sweet and beautiful until sorrow comes." But these sorrows need the sanctifying influences of the Spirit to the end

that they may ripen and sweeten the elements of character upon which they act. Without divine grace we may grow sour and ungainly under heart sorrows.

"God guideth all His children home
By paths we know not here;
But once with Him, His ways will be
To every loved one clear."

Amalek-Associations! Ver. 8. The Amalekites—a nomad people dwelling in tents, and rich in flocks and herds—at this time occupied the peninsula. Some have supposed them to be descendants of Esau; but doubtless they had an earlier origin. Smith says that Arabian geographers state that they came from the shores of the Persian Gulf. At any rate, they were a numerous and powerful nation, occupying the region between Southern Palestine and Egypt. There is every reason to believe that Paran is just the spot which the Amalekites would have been sure to defend. It contains a beautiful oasis well worth fighting for; and the place is capable of being easily defended against large numbers by a comparatively small force. Whether Amalek regarded Israel as an intruder, or whether, for the sake of plunder, they seem first to have assaulted the rear of the column as it wound up through the narrow defiles, and cut off the infirm and stragglers, the motives which Amalek had in view seem to have been so base and reprehensible that they called forth from God a special and terrible announcement—nothing short of extermination. This incessant struggle against Amalek furnishes an admirable application for the Church. She must not let go the sacred banner displayed because of the truth, nor cease waging a perpetual moral crusade against sins and corruptions until she has effectually destroyed them, and can say, "They are no more." The course adopted by the Scottish monarchs for the resolute extirpation of the Border raiders may supply an analogy. In nature, one species of the ant tribe thus exterminates its foes. The missel thrush, knowing the cruel propensities of the jay as they grow up, watches the young of these birds, and deliberately destroys them wherever it can. It is an instinct—not of revenge—but of self-defence and preservation. So with Israel! Defence not defiance!

"Thronging hosts have gathered round me,
And the pilgrims God defied;
But His armour fitteth closely,
And His sword is at my side."

Mountain-Mediation! Ver. 9. Not the hands of Moses, but the rod was the banner. That rod was held forth as a banner over the battle-field—not in the midst of the fight, where sacrilegious hands could grasp—but high above, *i.e.*, 700 feet, on the top of the hill overlooking the scene. When Moses let down this banner, the hands and hearts of Israel sank—their hopes of victory faded. The Great Mediator faltered in His earth-struggle; but even as Aaron and Hur sustained the uplifted hands of Moses, so the attributes of Messiah's priesthood strengthened Him to uphold the banner of the truth. Henry of Navarre bade his soldiers look for his snow-white plume, that crested his princely helmet—in place of the celebrated oriflamme or standard of France—and press towards it for victory. As it fell, so sank their hopes; but as it rose again in sight, they fought and won. Our Mediator, high on the heights of heaven, sustained by His priestly powers, uprears over the great battle-plain of earth His glorious standard—the rod that smote—the truth of God. *Now* His hands never sink, but are upheld unweariedly until at eventide His mountain-mediation secures ultimate victory. It has, however, been suggested that Aaron and Hur represent those children of God who are shut out from active effort for God and His Church by sickness or infirmity. Such cannot fight like Joshua on the plain; but with Moses on the height they can pray. So that the lesson designed by the incident is not so much the power of prayer by *us* as the might of *His* mediation. "Christ the strength of His people,"—both on the mount and in the valley—both as Moses and as Joshua. The most honoured of earthly standards may lead to defeat, as when the consecrated standards of the Crusaders were grasped by the sacrilegious hosts of Saladin; but the "name of the Lord," the "truth of God," must lead to victory.

"Is not He who fights for Israel
Pledged to make my cause His own?
Keeps He not for me the palm branch,
And the overcomer's crown?

Pleading and Praising! Ver. 14. These are twins, which ought never to be sundered. It was a quaint notion of the learned Goodwin that prayer and praise were like the double action of the lungs, what we receive in answer to prayer being given back in praise to God. Moses had been wrestling on the hill while Israel was wrestling in the vale; now praise follows. What joyful songs of praise rose up as the last rays of the sun faded behind the hills. Standard-bearers, captain, soldiers, all rejoice together.

"Long, indeed, may last the conflict,
But the victory is secure;
And the new sweet song of triumph
Shall from age to age endure."

Banner-Beacons! Ver. 15. It was Jehovah who led Israel to Rephidim, that "place of mercy," which Israel turned into a place of murmuring. It became a place of battle; and on it Israel erected a banner. On the field of Waterloo there stands a huge mound, surmounted with the Belgic lion; and here and there may be seen monuments where heroes such as Picton and Ponsonby fell.

These are to mark the place of victory. The victorious Israelites erected not a monument, but a memorial-altar, thus acknowledging the source of victory. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory! After the fearful and bloody strife at Sedan, the warrior veteran monarch of Germany telegraphed to his anxious Empress that God had given them victory, and she must at once announce a solemn *Te Deum* throughout the land. If there be baseless pretension, it is when dust claims honour as the worker of Jehovah's works. The tool is not the agent, the pen is not the spring of thought, the spade of the labourer is not the source of growth and ripeness in the corn. It is the Lord who fights for His people. Under this banner they advance from victory to victory, until all their enemies are destroyed Led through countless conflicts, yet they never lose a field. They march to the throne of God in heaven, before which is spread a banquet, overshaded by a banner. When the Waterloo banquet was first held to celebrate Wellington's victory over Napoleon, the banqueting-hall was hung round with standards, and a canopy of English banners was suspended over the heads of the Iron Duke and his officers. He brought me into His banqueting-house, and His banner over me was Love. Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

"'Jehovah, my standard!' How bright is the blessing
Of them who go forth in the name of the Lord,
To combat with those who long since have been vanquished
By Him who has given this rallying-word."

Intercession-Influence! Ver. 10, 11. (1.) We have read of the missionary travelling in the desert, and resting for the night with his little company without any other covering than the canopy of heaven, rising the next morning and observing the footsteps of the beasts of prey within a few inches of his person, and yet no injury done. But have we thought what intercession-influence in England secured this safety? (2.) Look at the statesman wielding the destinies of the nation, presiding at the helm of national affairs. We think that his talent has brought all these popular measures about; but if we only knew the real truth, we should find that these wonderful acts are the result of intercession-influence. In the world that lies beyond, we shall see how often God has answered prayer even in national history; and how many of the measures which have delighted and blessed us have been the fruit of believing prayer in some humble cottage home.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Critical Notes.—1. Midian.]—If we may assume that these Midianites were descendants of Midian, son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. xxv. 2), our wonder will be lessened that among this Arabian people we should find the knowledge and worship of Jehovah had been preserved, as seen in this narrative. Thus this episode may be added to other incidental proofs of the continuance of pure religion among Gentile nations. **6. Am come.**] More exactly, "Am coming;" *i.e.*, "Am on my way; am at hand." This intelligence, sent forward by a messenger, would give Moses time to go forth to meet his father-in-law, as we find he did. We have here a beautiful picture of Eastern manners. The relatives meet, embrace each other, and, after due inquiries as to each other's welfare, turn at the head of their groups of attendants, and move on in conversation towards the camp of Israel and the tent of Moses. Nor may we take the absence of any remark on the meeting of Moses and Zipporah as implying anything unfavourable to their cordial relationship to each other. It is much in the manner of the Eastern delicacy of feeling to pass by the matrimonial connection without remark. It is pleasant to find Zipporah restored to her husband. They have been parted but for a few months at most: in the interval, "What hath God wrought!" **27. Moses let his father-in-law depart.**] The departure of Jethro may or may not have taken place prior to the law-giving from Sinai. It is quite possible, as Kalisch suggests, that this verse is here added for the sake of completeness, after the manner of chap. xvi. 35, leaving us free, notwithstanding, to believe that Jethro remained some time with Moses, as for many reasons he would be likely to do. It is to be borne in mind, however, that Midian was not far from the desert of Sinai, as Moses was hereabouts feeding the flock of Jethro when first commissioned from the burning bush. "It is most probable," says Murphy, "that, during the eleven months and twenty days of the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, there were frequent interviews between Moses and his relations by marriage, as they were in the immediate neighbourhood." This deserves all the more attention by reason of the record contained in Numb. x. 29-32.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **1-12.**

FAMILY GATHERINGS.

IT seems that Jethro, the priest of Midian, had heard of all that God had done for Moses, and became anxious again to see his son-in-law. It is well when men have their ears open to the tidings of God's providential mercies to the good. The senses should be avenues of the Divine to the soul. Jethro was a Gentile, and resided at a distance, but national peculiarities and distance from great events will not silence the voice of heaven to a faithful soul. Gentiles hear of God when Jews will not. The distant magi come to seek Him when they at Jerusalem are ignorant of Him. Now we see the little party setting out on their glad journey. There is the old father, the wife, and two sons of Moses going to meet the relative from whom they had been a long time separated. The journey is long, but they are sustained in it by the glad prospect of reunion. We have heard tidings of the world beyond the grave; thither are we travelling, and shall soon join those who have gone before us.

I. **That this family gathering was permitted after long absence and after the occurrence of great events.** Moses had parted from his father-in-law some forty years ago, in order that he might go to Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites. He had not seen his wife and sons since the day he had sent them back, when a great peril threatened his life. Moses had left all behind that he might with greater fidelity and zeal execute the great work intrusted to him. During these years of absence God had done great things for the Israelites. He had manifested His omnipotent power on their behalf in the dire plagues which had fallen on Egypt. He had shown His faithfulness and mercy in their deliverance from bondage, and in the supply of their needs in the wilderness. He had given manna from the skies. He had given water from the rock. He had given the cloud to guide them. Now the tent is pitched. It is a time of rest. Families are often separated on earth, sometimes by stern need, in order to win daily bread; sometimes by the call of the Gospel, in order thereby to promote the welfare of God's word and kingdom; and one separation awaits all families, even that occasioned by death. These separations are fraught with pain. But the time of meeting draws near; then what histories will there be to narrate, and what joys will compensate the sorrow past. Christ is gathering His family to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

II. **That this family gathering was characterised by courtesy, by a religious spirit, and by devout conversation.** 1. *There was true courtesy.* "And he said unto Moses, I, thy father-in-law, Jethro, am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her" (ver. 6). Thus Jethro sent a message to herald his advent to the tent of Moses. He might justly have approached Moses without this, but he had respect unto the official position and to the moral history of his son-in-law; hence the modesty which characterised his approach. A due respect for social position, for mental attainment, for moral character, and for providential circumstance, should exist even amongst members of the same family. The respect we pay to strangers is much more due to our nearest relatives. Discourtesy is never more out of place than in the midst of the tender relationship of life. This old priest of Midian would not be guilty of it. Reverence is due to authority. 2. *There was a deeply religious spirit.* Moses did not receive his father-in-law with proud and stately manner. He kissed him. The honours of office had not frozen up the tender feelings of his nature. He did not laud his own skill as a commander; he gave God the praise

of all his victories. He indulged in no idle talk. He indulged no spirit of levity. In the midst of this family there was sacred joy, pure *gratitude*, and devout *worship*. There was no word of murmuring uttered at the long separation or in review of severe trials; but all hearts in that tent were true to that God who had watched over and brought them together once more. Family gatherings should be pervaded by a religious spirit; then the tent will become a sanctuary. 3. *There was devout conversation.* Moses told his father-in-law of all that God had done for Israel, also of the "travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord had delivered them." The Great Leader did not forget the sorrowful experiences of his life; great trials make a deep impression on the soul. But he remembered his God-wrought deliverances. We should not talk more of trials than of the aid we have received in them. We should not indulge gloomy conversation, but a conversation which derives gladness from its mention of Divine help. What happy communings will there be amongst the redeemed as the members of the heavenly family come from the east and the west to their great home.

III. That this family gathering derived its highest joy from the moral experiences with which it was favoured. "And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, 'Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.'" Thus the supreme joy of this united family was not derived from its merely social intercourse, not from intellectual and pleasing conversation, not from the coming together of congenial souls, but from the moral experiences of each and from the devotion of all to the great God. This is the ideal of social intercourse. Not a cant reference to the mercy of God, but a sincere reference to God in the unfoldings of the heart to each other. Such intercourse can never fail to give joy, as the Infinite is the source of its rejoicing.

IV. That this family gathering was made the occasion of a sacramental offering to God. "And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God." Jethro was not content to express his joy and gratitude in mere words, but in specific and solemn action. He was a worshipper of the true God; he had come to learn that none other was worthy of praise. The family had communed with each other; it now communes with God. Earthly communion should naturally suggest Divine communion. Jethro was joined by Aaron and the elders of Israel. Here is sweet concord in worship. Prayer intensifies the family relationship; it also enlarges it. All the elders of the Church will one day worship God together. Sweet is the bread broken at the table of the Lord. Let us thus worship before God. LESSONS:—1. *That God can watch over the interests of a separated family.* 2. *That God unites families in a providential manner.* 3. *That united families should rejoice in God.* 4. *That the families of the good will meet in heaven, never more to part.* 5. *Let us pray for the completion of the Divine family in the Father's house.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 1-12. God moved strangers and heads of nations sometimes to listen after His providences to His Church.

The fame of God's stupendous works to His Church may affect strangers to come and see them.

Relations hearing of God's goodness to their loved ones are justly moved to visit them.

Friends to Israel's good cannot but be moved with the tidings of God's great works for them.

The fame of Israel's deliverance from Egypt may justify men to inquire after God.

Prudence may send away the dearest pledges from hindering God's work.

As children are great mercies, so it is good to make them the memorials of God's mercies to us.

The mercies of pilgrimage must not be forgotten by God's servants.

Wilderness condition do not deter the true relations of the Church from coming to them.

In the wilderness God may have His mount, His stony place for His Church.

It is sweet meeting of Church relations after the defeat of enemies.

It is not unbecoming the highest places or persons in the Church of Christ to give due respect to their relations.

Grace does not unteach men manners and civil respect unto men.

It is a natural duty for relations to inquire of each other's peace.

God's servants filled with a sense of mercies cannot but declare them to others.

The friends of Israel are the fittest to hear of God's wondrous works.

Great distress may befall God's Church in the way of its redemption.

The friends of the Church rejoice in all the good that is done for it.

As Jehovah is the cause of good to the Church, so He is the object of joy and gratitude.

The great works of God set Him above all other gods. Holy teaching is consistent with holy worship.

Verse 12 (last clause). **I. A common and necessary act. II. A common and necessary act done in a social spirit. III. A common and necessary act done in a pious manner.**

Leaving now this illustrious example of friendship, we may proceed to make a few general observations. One obvious one is, that this world is not a scene adapted or intended to afford the pleasure and benefit of friendship entire. Jethro was to lose his inestimable friend, after long, and what must have been the happiest intimacy, was to see him once again; again to lose him, to see him on earth, probably, no more. What a measure, we may almost say, of his vital existence, he was to lose! Providence has, in numerous instances, interposed wide spaces of land, or even sea, between persons who might be inestimable to one another in near and habitual association. The one mind, and the other, and the third, and many more are filled with exercises of thought, with emotions, with affections which would glow with social and sympathetic animation, if they could be one another's companions. But they have each their own assigned positions to occupy—their own moral track to cultivate, their own duties, labours, trials—and sometimes little happy in their actual associates; they have to fulfil their vocation amidst coldness, perversity, or imbecility, thinking, sometimes, how different the case would be if such-and-such were their companions and co-operators.

Inquisitiveness. "Asked each other." And the mutual inquiries respecting "welfare" are made in a spirit very different from unmeaning complacence. When a friend is far away, it will sometimes occur to wonder and to imagine how he may be situated—how employed. What at this time is the exercise of his mind? what part is he in of the process of an undertaking? what evil dispositions of his fellow-mortals is he conflicting with? what temptations is he beset by? When they meet the inquiry goes back over things, and it is gratifying to give the history to one who is so kindly interested in it at every step. And friendship will suggest many comments which would not occur to the thoughts of an indifferent person. It may be very advantageous for the instruction and improvement of the friends that they have moved a great deal apart, so as to have had a very different experience, different views of the world and of providence. Thus

they bring in a much larger store to the combined account, enlarge one another's knowledge, correct and mature one another's judgment.

The last thing is serious anticipation. Each meeting should admonish them that their life is shortened (sometimes much shortened) since they met before. Sometimes they are forcibly struck by the change in each other's appearance. After a considerable absence they can hardly meet without having to name some one who has shared their society, but meets them no more. When they part confessedly for a considerable absence, how possible is it they are looking at each other for the last time! Let it be considered what a melancholy thing any friendship would be that should be destined to expire with all its pleasures and advantages at death. That is worthy and happy friendship, and that alone where the parties are zealously preparing and have a good hope to meet in a nobler scene.—(*John Foster.*)

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13–27.

THE FOLLY OF SOLITARY RULERSHIP.

Jethro was not only a man of deep piety; he was likewise a man of sound judgment. He could not merely offer a sacrifice to God; he could also give advice to Moses. He combined the mental and moral qualities in a high degree. Intelligent men are generally the most devout. Hence we listen with keen interest to the old priest's advice to his son-in-law. It is not given in querulous spirit, but with kindly intent, and at the most opportune time. It would be well if rulers in Church and State would consent to follow the advice so wisely given. Solitary Rulership:—

I. That it is foolish because it causes an undue strain upon the solitary individual. "And Moses' father-in-law said unto him, 'The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.'" Moses was supreme judge in Israel. The whole weight and responsibility of the judicial function rested upon him. Judges are necessary in the present conditions of society; they are a great help and blessing; they should command respect; they should not tax themselves with undue responsibilities or work; they must be diligent; they must be equitable; they must be courageous; they must be reverent. But one man was not equal to such a wide administration as that assumed by Moses. His *physical* strength was not equal to it. Our best physical energy should be spent in the service of God and humanity; but in this respect we are to be careful to do ourselves no harm. Moses could not endure the fatigue of continuing so long in the seat of judgment, from morning until evening listening to and deciding the queries and disputes of that vast people. He was thus ignorantly and needlessly sacrificing his physical energy. His *mind* would be wearied. His *soul* would exhaust its vitalities. Wicked men sometimes kill themselves by excess of pleasure. Good men should not kill themselves by excess of work even in the service of God. Many great lives are lost to the Church through excessive toils. The Divine Judge can never grow weary in His administration of the universe.

II. That it is foolish because it interferes with the execution of the higher part of the judicial office. "Be thou for the people God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do." Thus Moses was not to vacate the judicial chair, but was to take

upon himself the higher duties pertaining to it. He was not to settle any little quarrel that might arise in the nation. He was to attend to the moral and spiritual aspects of justice rather than to the legal. How many great and good men are employed in meaner tasks than they ought to be, and are wasting their energies in plans which feebler minds could execute with equal skill, to the neglect of great spiritual works. How often are ministers engaged with the technical and local when they might be engaged in the spiritual and universal. Justice needs more than administrative power; it needs spiritual discernment and those qualities of moral character which are the outcome of moral meanness to God; hence it requires men to be for the people God-ward. Jesus Christ is now for the people God-ward, the one Mediator between God and man.

III. That it is foolish because it leaves unutilised a vast number of able men quite equal to the ordinary requirements of justice. "Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God—men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." There were men in the ranks of Israel who were competent to undertake the work by which Moses was overburdened. They were competent for it. They were truthful in life. They were self-sacrificing in spirit. They were judges in all but name. They wanted the authoritative call to bring them into judicial duty. They were simply waiting opportunity to become influential leaders. As it is, they are unutilised. There are crowds of men in the world, in society, and in the Church who are great in themselves, but do not become so in relation to society because they are not awakened by any call to great tasks. It is not well that a few men should monopolise official positions, thinking that they are alone equal to the work. Ministers should not do all the work of the Church; they should call out latent talent for it. Society has many unrecognised judges.

IV. That this folly is evident to wise old men who see solitary judgeships in operation. Jethro, the old Priest of Median, saw the meaning and issue of the work of Moses, as Moses did not. He saw that he was engaged in a task for which he could not long be equal. He spoke faithful words on the matter. He did not pander to any love of supreme power that there might be in Moses. He did not fear giving offence. He spoke wisely and kindly. Others can form a more correct estimate of our work than we can. We are too near it to take the perspective of it. We are too much interested in it to form unprejudiced judgments concerning it. Let us be open to the voice of wise old men who often speak to young men as in the fear of God. LESSONS:—1. *That positions of trust should not be monopolised by the few.* 2. *That the common crowds of men have unsuspected abilities.* 3. *That good men should not be prodigal of their physical and mental energy to the shortening of their lives.*

THE TEACHING OF THE PEOPLE.

"Hearken now unto My voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do." —EXOD. xviii. 19, 20.

Of some very great persons very little is said in Scripture. An instance of this, in the case of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. His general information, his wisdom, his aptitude for government, are all signally indicated in this chapter. The meeting is most interesting (ver. 5, 6)—their mutual salutation, conversation, &c. He sympathises with the onerous work of Moses—gives him counsel (ver. 13, &c., ver. 18). Then the text. Equally important is it now for Christian ministers and pastors.

I. The beautiful exhibition of the pastor's work. "Be thou for the people to God-ward," &c. That is, be God's mouth—God's servant—mediator—really, for so Moses was, revealing God's will—bring to God their wants and interests. See xx. 18. Then we have—

II. The pastors and churches. Encouragement—"God shall be with thee." Repeated by the Lord Jesus, "Lo, I am with you," &c. This presence of God is, 1. Essential—no substitute, &c.—essential to all, and for all. 2. Is *pledged.* Promise upon promise. 3. Has *never failed.* All God's servants can testify, &c. In regard to Moses. See Deut. xxx. 1. 4. *Belongs* to the *entire Church* of God. He is in it—its foundation—light—glory, &c.

III. The pastor's duty to the people (ver. 20). Ovserve—1. He is to *teach them.* Being taught of God—teach them what God reveals—teach them things about religion. Not science; but the fear and service of God. 2. *Teach* them *ordinances.* The services of God had fixed—instituted offerings, sacrifices, &c.; of course God's ordinances, and His only—all of them—not to abate, or add, or change. So now Christ, &c. Ordinances. 3. *Moral precepts.* "Laws." God-ward laws first, man-ward laws next, self-ward laws also. All the Divine precepts. Practical religion, as well as ceremonial and doctrinal—all conjointly. 4. The *exhibition* of *public religion.* "Called the way"—open. Observe the right way, old way, good way, way of life and salvation, way to Heaven. 5. *Religious work.* "The work that they must do." Now religious work. (1.) Is very diversified. Various kinds—public—home, &c. (2.) Religious work is obligatory—must be done—no evasion permitted—no neglect excused. (3.) Religious work must be done by all God's people. For their own sakes. It is their health, happiness, &c. For the sake of the Church. Every member of the body. Of the family. For the world's sake.—(*Dr. J. Burns.*)

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 13-27. The morning brings its own work from God unto His servants, not every day the same.

God's servants are careful as to worship Him, so to do justice to His people.

Good rulers sit close to deal justice to their people.

Providence sometimes puts hard work upon God's ministers from morning to evening.

It is just to be wearied in giving and receiving judgment when God calls.

Observant fathers may see inconveniences in acting judgment, which judges do not perceive.

Nature and affection may well move to question works of superiors in order to good.

The best rulers may overburden themselves.

The greatest and best rulers disdain not to give an account of their judgment to reasonable inquisitors.

God's laws are the best rule to order judgment between men.

God may use men of meaner calling and endowment to help in the government of His Church.

Good and righteous work may be too heavy for the strongest shoulders.

It is the mediator's work to teach the ways proper to the Church.

Supreme governors have need of subordinate agents to administer justice.

Men intrusted with government should be eminently qualified with wisdom, knowledge, and courage.

Matters of greatest moment have a just way of appeal from lesser to superior judges.

Prosperity to prince and people may be well expected by keeping God's commands.

Wise and sage counsellors after their work is done to others, betake themselves to their own charge.

Verse 17.

I. Others view our acts.

II. Others can often see faults where we cannot.

III. Others reproving us may lead to a better course of action.

Or,

I. Men should interest themselves in the acts of their relatives.

II. Men should be faithful in giving reproof and advice.

Or,

I. The wisest have some defects in their conduct.

II. The wisest may be benefited by the advice of others.

Verse 19 (last clause).

I. Moses was a Divine manifestation.

II. Moses was Israel's mediator.

III. Moses was a type of Christ.

Talent requires to be evoked. It is true indeed that genius asserts itself, and clears for itself space and prominence equal to its measure of supremacy; on the other hand, it is equally true that much sound ability may become dormant, simply because the leaders of society do not call it into responsible exercise. The counsel which Moses received from Jethro inspired Israel with new life. From the moment that it was acted upon, talent rose to the occasion, energy was accounted of some value, and men who had probably been sulking in the background came to be recognised and honoured as wise statesmen and cordial allies. There is more talent in society than some of us have suspected. It needs the sunshine of wise encouragement in order to develop it. There is a lesson in this suggestion for all who lead the lives of men. Specially, perhaps, there is a lesson to pastors of churches. It is a poor church in which there is not more talent than has yet been developed. When Saul saw any strong man and any valiant man, he took him to himself. This is the law of sure progress and massive consolidation in church life. Let us keep our eyes open for men of capacity and good-will, and the more we watch the more shall our vigilance be rewarded. We should try men by imposing responsibilities upon them. There is range enough in church organisation for the trial and strengthening of every gift. Better be a door-keeper in the house of God than a sluggard, and infinitely better sweep the church-floor than lounge upon the pew top, and find fault with the sweeping of other people. Every man in the church ought to be doing something. If the pattern be taken from the case described in the context, there need be no fear of rivalry or tumult. The arrangement indicated by Jethro was based upon the severest discipline. The position of Moses was supreme and undisputed; every great case was to be referred to his well tried judgment, and in all cases of contention his voice was to determine the counsels of the camp. There must be a ruling mind in the Church, and all impertinence and other self-exaggeration must be content to bow submissively to the master will. Very possibly there may be danger in sudden development of mental activity and social influence; but it must be remembered, on the other hand, that there is infinitely deadlier peril in allowing spiritual energy and emotion to fall into disuse. In the former case, we may have momentary impertinence, conceit, and coxcombry; but in the latter we shall have paralysis and distortion more revolting than death itself.—(*City Temple.*)

Now, my text suggests that no man can do everything. If a minister of the Gospel has on one shoulder the spiritual affairs of a church, and on the other shoulder the financial affairs of a church, his feet are on the margin of an open grave, clear to the bottom of which he can look without moving. Let all ministers of the Gospel, so far as possible, gather around them sympathetic men and women upon whom they can throw much of the care and responsibility and trouble. "Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee; for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone."

Standing before you this morning, preaching my sixth anniversary sermon as your pastor—a style of sermon in which the preacher is generally expected to be more than usual personal—I have to tell you that the burdens of life are getting to me less and less, and that as the years pass on I have fewer and still fewer anxieties. In beautiful Belleville, on the banks of the Passaic, where I began my Christian ministry, it seemed as if all the work came down on my young shoulders. Going to the West, the field was larger and the care less. Going to Philadelphia, the field was still larger and the care still less. And standing to-day, as I do, among hundreds of warm personal friends, whose hands and feet and hearts are all willing to help, I have less anxiety than I ever had. I have taken the advice of Jethro in the text, and have gathered around me a great many with whom I expect to divide all the care and the responsibility; and though sometimes, what with the conduct of this Church where we have a perpetual religious awakening, and the conduct of a religious weekly newspaper, and the conduct of the lay College, people have often addressed me in words similar to those of my text, saying, "Thou wilt surely wear away; this thing is too heavy for thee," I am glad to know that this morning I am in perfect health, and ready to recount to you what the Lord has been doing in all these days of our sojourn together, between 1869 and 1875.—*Dr. Talmage.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XVIII.

BY

REV. W. ADAMSON.

Jethro and Moses! Vers. 1–12. Here we have 1. Family gatherings, their (1) Causes, and (2) Customs. 2. Friendly greetings, their (1) Courtesy, and (2) Communion. These are capable of illustration from the Scripture histories of Job's family and the prodigal son. Christmas festivities suggest another source of illustration in their (*a*) Pleasant and (*b*) Profitable aspects. Illustrations may also be drawn from the life of Bishop Crowther, or of Uncle Tom, or of Jesus and His disciples on the Galilean shore and in the upper room, or of Joseph and his brethren;—when the pent-up thoughts

"Of many years flow'd from his eager lips,
As waters from a secret spring unseal'd."

Family Gatherings! Ver. 7. In the year 1690, the Vaudois fugitives from De Catinat and Fenguieres received tidings, as they lay encamped in Angrogna, the loveliest and most romantic of all the valleys of Piedmont, from the Duke of Savoy's ambassadors that peace was theirs unconditionally. Day after day the prisons, in which hundreds of the sufferers had for years scarcely seen the light of the sun, were emptied of their captives, who were restored to liberty. A detachment was deputed to proceed to the Swiss cantons, to bring back the female refugees who had been left behind. Never can that night be forgotten in the annals of Lucerna, when, under a bright setting sun, the returning wanderers were seen wending their way up the lovely valley. Wives restored to the embrace of their husbands, children to parents, brothers to sisters, friends to friends! Gratitude for present mercies softened and alleviated the bitter recollections of the past. Not unlike were the circumstances of Jethro's visit to Israel, with Zipporah and her children. Such questionings

"Of things that had befallen him since last
They met, and of his pathway thitherwards,
And of the freed host he had led behind:
Words with embraces interspersed."

Friend-Communion! Vers. 8–12. In March 1878 the Duke of Sutherland gave a complimentary banquet to Baker Pacha, on his return from the recent seat of war in the East, at Stafford House, St. James's. Amongst the noblemen and gentlemen who accepted the Duke's invitation were Musurus Pacha (the Turkish Ambassador), Field Marshal Lord Strathnairn, G.C.B.; Lord Houghton, Lord Eglinton, General Sir Alexander Horsford, G.C.B.; General Sir Charles Ellice, K.C.B., Major-General Sir Henry Green, K.C.S.I., C.B., General Foster, C.B., General S. Brownrigg, Major-General Hon. James Macdonald, Major-General Marshall, Colonel Wellesley, Sir Samuel Baker, Colonel J. Baker, Mr. W. H. Russell, and the Marquis of Stafford. After dinner, at the Duke's invitation, a number of guests assembled expressly to meet the guest of the evening, including the Duke of Teck, Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, the Persian Minister, Prince Ibraham, Midhat Pacha, the Marquis of Exeter, the Earl of Feversham, the Earl of Denbigh, the Earl of Orkney, Baron Hy. de Worms, and many

others. It is noteworthy that when Moses entertained Jethro, everything was ascribed to the goodness of God. It is interesting to consider how far friends in holding communion praise God for past mercies. Moses acknowledged the hand of God in all the events which had befallen Israel. May we not here contrast this joyful feast *before God*, with such meetings for pleasure and social intercourse which take place in all ranks of life, but in which too often the element of lasting satisfaction is wanting—we mean, recognition of the Divine Providence.

"'Not unto us!' How sweet to join the strain,
In self-deliverance blessful and complete;
And all our toils, successes, failures, pain,
To lose, O Christ Jehovah, at Thy feet."
—*Taylor.*

Christian Converse! Ver. 9. In a house in the city of Zurich which crowns the northern extremity of the "lake of blue waters" sat a family group. The house-room was long and low, occupying the entire centre of the house—one large window looked into the street, two others into the garden at the back. Through these the last crimson rays of the sun were streaming upon a singular group. Some of the members of this family had been absent in God's service for several years; and this was the family's earth-reunion. Sweet fellowship was theirs, but not without its tinge of shadow. They communed of the past—of the wonderful works of God in Germany and Switzerland, and the Low Countries, and of the gracious deliverances vouchsafed to themselves personally. Then came the song of praise to God for the mercies of the past; blended with prayer to Him for grace in the future to press onwards towards the mark. Such Christian converse was that of Jethro and Moses, in which hearts thrilled with holy joy, and spirits gushed over with grateful song.

"Children and kith and friends; all in a breath
Ask of his welfare, and with joyous tongues
Pour all their love into his thirsty ear."

Mutual Sympathy! Ver. 9. A gentleman travelling on one of the river steamers to Philadelphia mentions his sensations over the rescue of a fellow-passenger from a watery grave. It was a cold winter night, and every one was impatient to be ashore. Before the boat reached the wharfs a man slipped into the water. The icicles had frozen on the wharf and they had frozen on the steamer. The ropes were lowered, and all stood with anxiety lest the man should not be able to grasp the rope owing to the cold. When he grasped it and was pulled on to the deck, and we saw he was safe, although we had never seen him before, how we congratulated him. A life saved! With what fervency, then, must Jethro have congratulated Moses and his liberated host? The greater the peril, the fuller the tide of exultancy! The more hopeless the prospect of success and reunion, the deeper the fount of gladness!

"Their streaming tears together flow
For human guilt and mortal woe;
Their joyful songs together rise
Like mingling flames in sacrifice."
—*Barbauld.*

Life Lessons! Ver. 11. In Singapore, that wonderful emporium of the commerce of the East, established by the sagacious foresight of Sir Stamford Raffles, stood a house surrounded by an open verandah fenced with large tree ferns. At the time, a group of friends, the long-sundered members of an English family, sat together narrating their adventures. Separated by shipwreck from one another, sundered by the terrible typhoon of Indian seas, they had once again been united, after several of them had succeeded in escaping from the clutches of Malay pirates. All felt, as the hairbreadth escapes were related and the remarkable deliverances recounted, that truly the special Providence of God had guided and interposed. It was the first night of their reunion, and they sat holding fellowship one with the other. "Should we not return thanks to Him who has preserved us?" Then together they knelt in thankful acknowledgment of the Divine mercy. On rising, one of the family said that he had that night learned more about God—that He was indeed a *personal God caring for each*, while He cared for all. Jethro here acknowledges that the recital by Moses of Divine deliverance and direction had given him a new view of Jehovah, "Now I know that the Lord Jehovah is greater than all gods."

"O Thou Eternal One, whose presence bright
All space doth occupy, all motion guide;
Unchanged through time's all-devastating flight;
Thou only God! There is no God beside."
—*Derzhavin.*

Family Religion! Ver. 12. Religion not only hallows and brightens the joys of life; it is also the true basis and crown of them all. Hence the gladness of Jethro. His gladness was not because of any advantage he himself had gained, "but because of all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel." Here we see the sympathy which flows from a heart ruled by the love of God. In this spirit Jethro offered sacrifices to God in the sight of the vast multitude. Thus the host of Israel shared in the family-joys of Moses. Even so in Paradise,—all will share the feast of one another's gladness. Not that love can be

"Without the chosen specialties of love,
The nearest to the nearest most akin.
But none are strangers there,—none sojourners;
And as the cloudless ages glide away,
New fountains of delight to them—to all,
Will open in the fellowship of hearts."
—*Bickersteth.*

Moses Burdened! Vers. 13-26. We may glance at—1. Fatiguing government — its (1) Care, and (2) Constancy. 2. Faithful guests—the (1) Counsel, and (2) Compliance. It was no easy thing to govern Israel, as may be enforced by illustrations from "Robinson Crusoe," or from the Missionary at Metlahkatlah. The unselfishness of Moses to benefit Israel may be paralleled with that of Jesus, in often denying Himself food and sleep for the sake of His followers, &c. The "Mayflower" Pilgrim Fathers from England furnish an excellent parallel to Jethro's farewell in verse 27. The difficulties of government may be referred to by a poetic quotation—

"Each petty hand
Can steer a ship becalm'd; but he that will
Govern and carry her to her ends must know
His tides, his currents, how to shift his sails;
What she will bear in foul, and what in fair weather." —*Johnson.*

Faithful Friend! Ver. 17. In one of the lovely homes of the Susquehannah sat an anxious careworn mother, whilst grown-up daughters lounged or pored over books, &c. Day after day did she undertake all the responsibilities of a large American farmhouse-hold. Whilst she toiled, her children idled. They had the ability, but not the opportunity. The mother was too anxious to do everything herself, fearing its failure otherwise. An old friend absent for years in England had just returned. During his long absence, the little children have grown up to manhood and womanhood, only to increase the fatigues of their over-anxious mother. He has noted with pained heart this weary and exhausted look; and knowing where the shoe pinches, he has been counselling the mother to adopt another plan. He points to her overtaxed powers of body and mind,—explains how this may be avoided without injury to family interests, by allowing her daughters to do all but the most important household matters, and assures her that a trial of his method will satisfy her of its wisdom. She can still retain the general superintendence. Jethro observes the overstrain of mind and body which Moses allows from day to day, and like a faithful friend interposes.

"The true friend is not he who holds up flattery's mirror,
In which the face to thy conceit most pleasing hovers;
But he who kindly shows thee all thy faults,
And helps thee mend them 'ere an enemy discover." —*Oriental.*

Divine Consultation! Ver. 23. Jethro advises Moses to take his advice to the throne of grace, and ask God whether it was good or bad. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths." So felt Ehezer, Samuel, David. Balaam consulted God; but with no intention of compliance. Not so Moses. On receiving an affirmation from God, Moses at once carries the suggestion into practice. A parallel more or less exists in the case of the apostles and their Divine consultation as to the wisdom of selecting Stephen and the other deacons in the Pentecostal Church. Professor Caird sees here the *ideal* of the Presbyterian government, by which the pastors are relieved from many needless self-imposed cares and burdens in the appointment of elders and deacons. By the co-operation of Christian laymen in the practical work of the Church, the clergy are enabled to give more time and thought to the work of public instruction. In all plans suggested to ourselves, or suggested to us by others, let us consult God.

"Implore His aid, in His decisions rest
Secure; whate'er He gives, He gives the best." —*Samuel Johnson.*

Farewell Considerations! Ver. 27. During the stormy days, when Cavaliers and Roundheads swept England with the incessant tide of war, many a "Farewell" had to be uttered by English families. How solemn was the "adieu" which Paul paid to the elders at Miletus, where we are told that he knelt down and prayed with them all—that they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck, and that they kissed Him, sorrowing most of all at the thought of no more beholding his face on earth! (Acts xx.) And are we not reminded of that affecting scene between David and Jonathan, whose tender, conscious farewell David never afterwards forgot? (1 Sam. xxiii. 14.) Yet another "Farewell scene" suggests itself—the most sweet and solemn of all adieus, viz., that of the Lord Himself: "I go away." Then followed that interval of most solemn and delightful converse, in which the disciples, bowed down with sorrow at what they had heard, were assured that He would not leave them comfortless, and that He would come again to them (John xvii.). No such consolation could Jethro give. Probably he realised that, like Simeon, he would soon depart, having seen the "salvation of Jehovah." Still, Jethro and Moses were Christians, and had both respect unto the recompense of reward. Both knew that there was a land in which the everlasting epitaph "Farewell" had no place.

"Wherein may be nor pageantry, nor pride,
Nor altars, save the pure one of the heart,
Nor tombs, except for sorrow; and no tears!
The fadeless world of God, where human lips
Need say 'Farewell!' no more."—*Sladden.*

CHAPTER XIX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. The Wilderness of Sinai.**]—Sinai is the "proper name of the granite mountain in the Arabian peninsula, rendered famous by the Mosaic legislation. It consists of three large summits, of which the north-eastern is called Horeb, the south-western that of St. Catherine. 'The Wilderness of Sinai' is the wilderness about Sinai, and particularly the plain of Sebayeh, south of Gîbel Mûsa." (Fürst.)—**3. Thus shalt thou say.**]—There is something peculiarly beautiful in this message to Israel. (*a*) Its *poetical form* strikes the ear as well as the eye if printed, as it ought to be, in parallel lines. (*b*) *The graciousness of its tenor* goes straight to the heart: "Ye have seen what I did . . . now therefore." Benefits already bestowed are urged as a motive to consecration. (*c*) Its *position* at the commencement of the Divine announcement is an introductory proposal to Israel, eliciting Israel's first response—being, as we may term it, "the first time of asking," prior to the ratification of the covenant (ch. xxiv. 3, 7). (*d*) Its *lofty aim*, namely, that of securing a holy, obedient "people," and consecrating them as "a kingdom of priests" on behalf of all the earth, for which Jehovah thus shows His care. Note, especially, how much light is here thrown upon the meaning of the Hebrew *berith* in its loftiest application, as truly signifying COVENANT; and, further, the grace of Jehovah, in that, even here, where He appears in terror as Lawgiver, He makes way for His sovereignty by the most exquisite tenderness and love. **5. Peculiar treasure.** "Heb., *çeghullah*=property, possessim, *i.e.*, that which one *embraces, encloses.* (Fürst.) The *Sept.* has *periousios*= "abundant, opulent; peculiar, eminent." The language is that of one who has many valuables, but brings out one as his special delight. **For all the earth is mine.**]—The point of this clause is apt to be lost, until, with the proper emphasis laid on the pronoun "mine," the contrast is carried forward by the adversative conjunction "but," which in this case is required.

> "For MINE is all the earth;
> But YE shall become mine as a kingdom of priests," &c.

The specialty of pure Hebraism and the narrowness of Pharisaic Judaism are utterly opposed to each other. Jehovah's care for all nations is ever and anon gleaming out in the Hebrew Scriptures. Even here in Israel's betrothal it is not forgotten.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **1-6.**

GOD'S PROMISE TO THE JEWS.

I. The recital of His works. The works recited are these:—What He did to the Egyptians for the sake of Israel, His people; how He bore His Church on eagles' wings; how He bought His people to Himself. Every Christian can understand this: I defy any one else to do it. There is a spiritual import in all these expressions which none but the converted can understand. The child of God can enter into all this. God hath borne him on eagles' wings, delivering him from worse than Egyptian bondage. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

II. The proposals of His love. The two things that God Almighty, by His servant Moses, urges upon the people, are these. First, "If ye will obey My voice indeed:" do not mistake the matter, every word has its meaning:—"If ye will obey My voice indeed." They were to follow God at all risks, heedless of consequences: determined to obey Him, though all the world should frown, or hiss, or should persecute. Israel was also to keep the covenant of God. "If ye will keep My covenant." It may be said that it was a national covenant; and I admit that to a great extent it was a national covenant. All must admit that who examine the matter; but I must affirm that it was something more than this. Yes, it had respect to a Saviour, to an approach to God which now, through infinite mercy, is offered to you and to me. There are two grand characteristics of a Christian wherever you meet with him, that by God's

help he is willing to follow God's voice at all risks; and that he shall lay hold on the cross as the only means whereby sinful man can approach God.

III. The promises of His grace. Now this promise contained in the text is the most remarkable in the Bible, "Then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine." Oh, what a bold word to utter! If the word had come out of other lips, it had been the greatest blasphemy ever uttered; but coming from God, it is the language of truth and soberness. "All the earth is Mine." O Christian! do not be afraid! The very world in which you live, with all its treasure, with all upon its surface, with all beneath its surface, belongs to God. Now, though all the earth be His, He says, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people." The Israelites were never great as a commercial people; they were never great as a maritime people; they were never great in war, except, indeed, in the early stage of their history, when, in fact, God fought for the people, and they had little to do but to take possession of what God had given them. But they were a peculiar treasure to God; and still that people have mercies in store for them. The Bible teems with promises of the restoration of the Jews. The poorest saint is a treasure to the Lord. We do not know how to set a value upon moral excellence, upon spiritual greatness, but God does: "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." 1. *What actually became the state of the Jews? How far was this promise fulfilled?* The Jews were, to a certain degree, for a long time, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. While all other nations, the whole world around them, was in a state of pagan darkness, the lamp of life and truth shone forth in Israel. A succession of patriarchs, and then of prophets, and then of priests, was vouchsafed; and God's truth was perpetuated among the people, and they were, to a great degree, a kingdom of priests, and a holy people. 2. *What was it that caused it to come to pass that this promise was never completely fulfilled, that it never has yet been completely fulfilled to the Jews?* Because the people left off to hear God's voice, and left off to keep God's covenant. They went after dumb idols. They left the God of all their mercies. Hence the promise has never been fully realised. 3. *How far this promise, together with these proposals, may be considered as fairly bearing upon the state and upon the future prospects of the Christian Church.* With all our improvements in science, we are a degenerate people as to the service of God. We must be more regular in the worship of God, in private devotion, in family prayer. Let us make the most of our exalted privileges.—*Rev. T. Mortimer* in *The Pulpit.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 1–6. Months and days from Egyptian bondage are fit to be recorded.

Days are set by God for the progress and rest of the Church.

From Rephidim to Sinai, or from trials to rest, God removes His Church.

The camp of the Church and the Word of God are sweetly joined together.

In covenant making with God there is need of a mediator.

God's call alone can qualify or authorise a mediator between Him and sinners.

It is incumbent on the mediator to declare fully God's mind to His people.

A due recognition of God's gracious acts for souls against enemies is a good preparation to receive His law.

God's securing providence as well as selecting a people to Himself prepares them to hear His covenant.

God's covenanted people are His peculiar treasure in the world.

Royalty, near communion with God, and sanctity, are the privileges of God's peculiar ones.

The needs of duty and privilege

must be spoken and made known to the Church.

We would remark that as soon as God had erected the framework of this body politic, He gave His subjects laws—His own laws. He did not allow any man to lay down a rule for His own conduct or for His own worship. He did not allow these people to think they could be independent of Him, but He brought them to this wilderness where they had evidence in abundance that their God was the God of Providence and the God of power; and now He was about to teach them another lesson, that He was the God to whom they were amenable. "I said it was interesting to mark the *order* in which these events occurred. It is false doctrine, though almost universally received, that it is God's method to bring the sinner under subjection by moulding his heart into obedience by some repenting process as it were, and afterwards, when the man becomes *worthy*, then to bestow upon him His choicest gifts. There never was more unsound teaching, brethren. God takes the sinner just as he is; and according to the riches and sovereignty of His own grace, makes him a recipient of mercy; and after He has brought him into His fold—after He has taken him under the shelter of His own wing, He writes His law upon the fleshly tables of that sinner's heart."—*W. H. Krause, M.A.*

"You will observe, in the first place, that every man is thus taught his accountability to God. Do what you will, you cannot escape that accountability. It seemed as if God brought the people of Israel into the solitude of that wilderness that each man might, in the nakedness of his own soul, stand before God and hear His law. It has been said with much solemnity by a good man, that in the present time men hide themselves in the crowd, but in the day of judgment every man must stand *alone*, as if he saw or knew no one and nothing but himself and his own transgressions.

Verse 5. "For all the earth is Mine."

I. God's assertion of universal possession in the earth. 1. Nations. 2. Lands. 3. The animal and vegetable kingdoms.

II. God's assertion excludes every other being from universal possession. 1. It is not man's earth. 2. It is not the devil's. 3. It does not belong to any created intelligence.

III. God's assertion should awaken confidence in His saints and terror in sinners. 1. All forces are under His control. 2. Everything that is not of Him must fail. 3. His possession of the earth will be fully manifest in the end.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7-24.

The subject of this paragraph is God's revelation of Himself,—the call to receive it, the manner in which it was made.

I. When God reveals Himself man is summoned to attend. This is uniformly God's method. First the call, then the revelation. "Hear, O Israel," then, "the Lord thy God is one Lord." "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him," then the New Testament dispensation. This was "one of the sundry times and divers manners" in which "God spake to the fathers by the prophets." Moses was His minister here. "In these last days," He "hath spoken unto us by His Son." The aim of Moses is to call Israel's attention to God. So Christ, in answer to the prayer, "Show us the Father," says, "I am the way," &c. Moses was a type of the ministry of the Son of Man, and an example to Christian ministers in the manner in which he summoned men to God. He spoke—1. *Authoritatively.* "Moses came and called for the elders of the people." He spoke for God. He *knew* that he spoke for God. His message was no trivial

speculation of his own about which there might be two opinions. God's truth, his own conviction of it, and its great importance, invested him with authority. 2. *Clearly.* He "laid it before their faces." In order for a declaration to be clear, the speaker must see it clearly himself, or he will never make it plain to his hearers. He who has never seen Christ will never be able to proclaim Him to others. In order to see a thing clearly one must contemplate it for a sufficient length of time, till all its points and bearings are fully understood. Then, in order to convey it clearly to others, an intellect capable of more or less concentrated thought and power of distinct articulation are indispensable. All these qualifications Moses possessed in an eminent degree. 3. *Completely.* "All these words." This needed courage; a weak man would have suppressed or toned down what was likely to be unpalatable. Memory, unselfishness, fidelity, a habit of accurate statement, and a sense of the vast importance of his message. Peter, "All the words of this life." Paul, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." 4. *Successfully.* (1.) It was successful in producing the desired effect upon the people (ver. 8). This is the true test and seal of a faithful ministry. If men will deliver "all the words of the Lord" without adulteration in all their Divine power, they will do their appointed work. The result may not be seen, but that is God's matter (Eccles. xi. 1; Is. lv. 10, 11). (2.) It was successful in securing the people's confidence; "that the people may . . . believe Thee for ever." Another test and seal of a faithful ministry. Men will honour those who honour the truth. Men will trust those who are true to their own convictions. All workers for God should aim at these elements of success. "Seals for their ministry and souls for their hire" and the confidence of their fellow-men. 5. *Moses spoke for the people to God.* "Moses told the words of the people back to God." So does Christ combine our poor prayers with the mighty eloquence of His intercession.

II. When God reveals Himself man must be prepared for the revelation (verses 10–15). This is natural. Men prepare themselves for a visit from their fellow-man. Much more so should man be prepared for the revelation of God. It were an insult to receive any superior otherwise; much more so when that superior is God (Eccles. v. 1). In order to be prepared man must—1. *Attend to the herald who proclaims God's coming.* It was Moses in this instance. God announces Himself through many agencies. His Son, His Spirit, His Providence, His Word, the means of grace, the Christian ministry, &c., are ever telling man to "prepare to meet" his "God." Hence the importance of treating them with due respect. Learning and dignity sink into insignificance before the humblest of God's messengers (Heb. xii. 25). 2. *Man must be prepared by personal sanctification.* "Sanctify them." "And Moses . . . sanctified them." Sanctification in its *Biblical* sense means—(1.) Separation from sin; for only "the pure in heart shall see God." (2.) Separation to God, or else God cannot be seen. These two ideas must never be disassociated. There can be no real separation from sin which is not at the same time separation to God. Some men deny this, and call the outcome of their discipline virtue and morality. But these are only artificial flowers, fading and perishable, without life, having no root in the ground of true virtue, and no spring in the source of true morality. On the other hand, no amount of asceticism, praying, psalm singing, or ecstasy will impart sanctity to a life which harbours or practises any form of sin. "Wherefore come out from among them," &c. (2 Cor. vi. 17). 3. *Man must be prepared by a ready acquiescence in all that God commands.* Some of the commands here indicated may seem trivial; but they are not really so. They involve great principles, and that God commands them invests them with importance. One of the first was *personal cleanliness.* Discomfort, disease, death, are God's retribution on those who deem this trivial. Again, they were not to presume to over-

step a prescribed boundary. Those who would enjoy God's revelation of Himself must remain humbly and patiently in the sphere which God sees fit to appoint. 4. *Man must be prepared at the appointed time.* "Be ready against the third day." (1.) God has now appointed times in which He promises to reveal Himself to men. The Lord's day. All times of duty and religious privilege. Let no man be unprepared, or plead excuses, or make other engagements. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." (2.) God has now appointed times which He has not chosen to reveal. Death, judgment. We "know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh." Hence the wisdom of immediate and constant preparation. "Watch and pray." Ten virgins. "Blessed is the man who, when his Lord cometh," &c.

III. When God reveals Himself it is in a manner suited to the occasion. It was necessary that He should speak to men who for years had been surrounded by idolatrous associations, and who had become debased by years of servitude, in a most solemn, startling, and impressive form. God has other methods than those employed here. Abraham, Elijah. Bethlehem, Pentecost, Patmos, &c. So in each individual case. 1. *God here revealed Himself in a cloud, luminous, but still a cloud.* So He does now in many instances. Doubt, adversity, depression. But every cloud is luminous that has God in it. Christians, therefore, should not "fear to enter into the cloud." 2. *God revealed Himself within a Divine enclosure* (vers. 12, 13). So He does always. God ever says, "Hitherto shalt thou go and no further (Job xxxviii. 11). Hence the sinfulness of undue speculations about the Divine existence—of spiritualistic prying into the mysteries of the unseen world (Deut. xxix. 29). God has made all things plain that are necessary to life and godliness. Let us be satisfied with that. 3. *God revealed Himself with terrible manifestations of His power.* It was needful under the circumstances. It is often needful now. It is perilous for man to prescribe to God. He could be as tender in His dealings with His people then as He usually is now (Deut. i. 30 33; Ps. ciii.; Isa. liv.). And God never, under the Old Testament dispensation, revealed Himself more terribly than He has through loving lips in Matt. xxiv., xxv.; 2 Thess., Heb. xii. 28, 29, Jude and Revelation, and in some of the events of modern history. 4. *God revealed Himself after He had minutely ascertained that all preparations were complete* (vers. 21–25). This reveals to us God's careful attention to detail, and affords us many thoughts for edification and comfort. He studies the safety of His people. It is for their temporal and eternal safety that there is so much minute detail in the dispensation of—(1.) Creation (Is. xl. 12–31). (2.) Providence (Matt. vi. 25–30). (3.) Grace. Promise in the garden, types, prophecies, incarnation, crucifixion, Pentecost, means of grace, ministry, &c. Learn then: 1. *To listen when God speaks.* Faith has a faculty not only of sight but of hearing. 2. *When God calls obey that call, and be prepared for the public revelation which that call precedes.* "God now commandeth every man to repent" (2 Cor. vii. 1). 3. *Receive God's revelation of Himself in His own way.—J. W. Burn.*

A Commendable Engagement, Rashly Made, and Repeatedly Broken.—*Verse* 8.

The covenant between God and Israel was, in general, made at this time. Its particulars were entered into subsequently (Ex. xxx. 27, 28). A clear and correct idea of how the term covenant is here used is important. When applied to relations subsisting between God and man, the word is evidently used by way of accommodation; because man is in no respect in the position of an independent covenanting party in relation to God. He cannot say upon what terms he will render obedience, &c. Compliance with the Divine requirements is a most binding obligation, from which there is no possibility of escape for man.

"Generally, however, the form of a covenant is maintained by the benefits which God engages to bestow being made by Him dependent upon the fulfilment of certain conditions which He imposes on man." Two points are clear. 1. *The covenant does not originate in human obligation to render to God loyal obedience.* It recognises it, enforces it; but its origin is coeval with human existence, and springs out of man's relation to God as a dependent moral creature. 2. *The covenant is an act of grace and condescension on the part of God towards man.* In assuming the attitude of a contracting party with us He generally stoops to our weakness, &c. Our text is the response of Israel to the general terms of the covenant as stated by Moses. We have in the text—

I. A commendable engagement. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." This promise is commendable. 1. *Because of its righteousness.* To do what God commands is our sacred duty. Even if there were no heaven for the loyal and obedient, and no hell for the rebellious and incorrigible, still it would be our binding duty to seek truth, practise righteousness, reverence holiness, love moral beauty. 2. *Because of its advantageousness.* In keeping the commands of God there is great reward. The Lord promised to bestow the choicest blessings upon Israel if they would obey His voice indeed (vers. 5, 6). He engaged to grant unto them (1.) *The highest character:* "a holy nation." (2.) *The highest service:* "unto Me a kingdom of priests." (3.) *The highest privilege:* "a peculiar treasure unto Me," &c. How very much is included in the last-named assurance. The path of obedience to God is the path of safety and blessedness for man. "In the way of righteousness is life." "He that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Prov. iii. 13-27; 1 Tim. iv. 8; vi. 6). 3. *Because of its unanimity.* "And all the people answered together," &c. Such harmony in making this holy engagement is admirable. *In itself* it is commendable. Union in a holy enterprise is beautiful. *In its tendency* it is commendable. The natural tendency of this union would be to promote the fulfilment of this engagement.

II. A commendable engagement rashly made. The Israelites entered into this engagement — 1. *Without due consideration.* They had not weighed the character or measured the extent of the obligations which they undertook. Had they considered what was involved in being unto God "a holy nation"? Or estimated the comprehension of their promise, "*All* that the Lord hath spoken we will do"? Their haste in making so vast and solemn a promise reminds us of the scribe who said unto Jesus, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." In making religious vows, serious and thorough thought should be exercised. 2. *Without earnest purpose.* As the subsequent history shows with painful copiousness and conclusiveness, they entered into this engagement without any high and earnest resolution to keep it. Sacred promises should not be uttered without a sincere and firm purpose to fulfil them. 3. *Without hearty concurrence* with the will which they promised to obey. In their after history they manifested an almost utter absence of sympathy with the will of God. They had little or no love for either God or His will, although they so readily promised to obey it in all things. Make no religious resolutions except your heart be in them. 4. *Without any realisation of their need of Divine help* in order that they may keep it. The ring of self-confidence is in their words "How easily overween we our own abilities!" The most ready promisers are often the slowest performers. He who makes religious promises in his own strength is deplorably self-ignorant. Peter is a conspicuous example of this (Matt. xxvi. 33-35, 69-75). "Apart from Me ye can do nothing." "When I am weak, then am I strong." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

III. A commendable engagement repeatedly and terribly broken. They

seem to have forgotten the promise as readily as they made it. They violated their engagement.—1. *With great frequency.* Many instances in the following history (xxxii.; Num. xi., xiv., xvi., xx. 1–7; xxi. 4–6; *et al*). 2. *With great unanimity.* The great majority of the people united in practically repudiating the solemn obligations of the covenant. In the narrative of their rebellions we meet with some of these words frequently—"the people gathered themselves together;" . . . "all the people;" . . . "all the congregation;" *et al.* The breakers of the engagement were not the exception, but the rule. 3. *With great aggravations.* Their sin in violating this solemn promise was the more heinous because of (1.) God's great goodness to them. (2.) His invariable faithfulness in His portion of the covenant. (3.) The comparatively trivial circumstances and slight influences which proved sufficient to induce them to break their engagement. Notwithstanding the strongest obligations to fulfil their promise, they broke it upon the slightest provocation. CONCLUSION.—1. *Let us heed well our obligation to do all that the Lord commands.* 2. *Let us be careful in the utterance of religious vows.* 3. *Let us be humbled by the recollection of the many religious vows we have made but not kept, and seek forgiveness for our failures.* 4. *Let us endeavour to perform our vows, looking to God for strength to enable us to do so.—William Jones.*

THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE TO GOD'S CALL.—*Verses* 7–9.

Moses was God's minister. In a sense, he spoke for God to the people, and for the people to God. "I stood between the Lord and you" (Deut. v. 5).

I. The call (ver. 7). 1. *The elders represented the people.* In dealing with so great a multitude some such arrangement was necessary. So it is in many things—in the nation, the family, the Church. 2. *God's commands were faithfully communicated.* "Laid before their faces all," &c., nothing was added and nothing kept back. The will of God was made known so plainly that none could plead ignorance; so particularly that none could plead excuse. The truth was communicated to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

II. The response (ver. 8). "And all the people answered together," &c. 1. *Prompt.* There was no hesitancy. 2. *Hearty.* There was no reservation. 3. *Unanimous.* There was no dissentient voice (Acts ii. 1). How grand the spectacle. The mighty multitude as with one heart and voice proclaimed their submission to God. But, alas! the sequel showed, that mixed with their apparent sincerity and enthusiasm there was much of ignorance, presumption, and self-conceit. Like myriads since, they had not rightly counted the cost. They professed more than they felt; they promised more than they could perform; they needed further and deeper instruction, both as to God's law and their own hearts. How penetrating and wise are the words of Joshua at a similar juncture, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God" (Joshua xxiv. 19).

III. The report to God. "And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord" (*cf.* ver. 9). Such report was necessary to secure the favour of God and the faith of the people. It tended to—1. *Exoneration of conscience.* 2. *Relief of the heart.* 3. *Invigoration of hope.* 4. *Accrediting of character.* 5. *Success of ministry.* Nothing works more to give a man power with men than the belief that he has power with God.—*William Forsyth.*

THE PREPARATION FOR MEETING WITH GOD.—*Verses* 10–14.

Moses acted throughout according to Divine command.

I. The people were called to sanctify themselves. This work was to be

done thoroughly. Both inward and outward defilement were to be put away (Lev. xi. 44, 45; Heb. x. 22). There must be *separation from* what was not of God, that there might be *fellowship with* what was of God. To this end self-consecration was required (Ps. xxvi. 6; Is. i. 16–18; Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 9–20).

II. The people were charged to be ready at the appointed time (ver. 11). The fixing of times and seasons for worship belongs to God. Unquestioning obedience is ours. Thus we receive the blessing. But times of special manifestation and privilege require special preparation. The soul must be in readiness, the ear open to hear, the reason quick to apprehend; the conscience, the heart, and the will ready to bow in homage and submission. Come into God's presence careless or preoccupied, and you can expect no benefit; but come with humility, prayer, and hope, and you will not come in vain. Instructed and refreshed, your grateful song will be, "This is none other but the house of God; this is the gate of heaven!"

III. The people were commanded to observe the prescribed laws and ordinances as to approach to God. Bounds were fixed as to place, action, and behaviour (ver. 12–14). These restrictions were not arbitrary. They proceeded from the wisdom and love of God. They were necessary to check vain curiosity and unhallowed licence, and to preserve due order and reserve at a time of extraordinary excitement and peril. The lesson for all time is that found in the counsels of St. Paul, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. xiv. 10). "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 28, 29).—*William Forsyth.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 7–15. Orderly proceeding to acquaint the people with God's will by their chiefs is reasonable. . . . Proposition and exposition of God's words must be made to souls that they may know them all to be God's words, and no more but His. . . . Jehovah commands His ministers to speak to His people. Universal and free must be the confessions of the Church visible to the demands of God.

Mediators can return no other but what they receive from people unto God.

Upon people's readiness to obey, God is willing to make known His law.

People must hear God's speech by ministers, that they may believe it.

Sanctification of the people by the mediators is commanded by God before He deal with them. . . . Due preparation must be performed by souls against the time of meeting with God.

Verses 16–25. *God on Mount Sinai.* With what eager hearts would the people hail the dawn of the third—the appointed day. Doubtless they must have had many strange thoughts, and much talk one with another of what was to come to pass, but who could have conceived the reality? Fathers and mothers were there by thousands who had seen the wonders of the Lord in Egypt, and His works in the wilderness; but now something more sublime and terrible by far was to be revealed to their eyes. What excitement there must have been when they were commanded to leave their tents! What an awful pause of stillness and suspense as they stood marshalled in the plain before the Mount of God! And then—vers. 16–20. This manifestation was fitted to give an awful sense of—

I. The greatness of God. The most tremendous powers of nature were under His control. They were His servants, to do His pleasure (Ex. xx. 20; Ps. xcvi. 4; xcvii. 1–6; civ. 4).

II. The nearness of God. The

thunder was near, but nearer seemed the lightning. The lightning was near, but nearer still seemed the trumpet. The trumpet was near, but nearest of all was "The Voice." It was the Voice of Jehovah, and spoke to the hearts of the people, thrilling them through and through (Deut. iv. 7–12).

III. The mysteriousness of God. Though much was revealed, more was unrevealed. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne" (Ps. xcvii. 2; cf. Job xii. 7; Is. xlv. 5; Deut. xxix. 29; Rom. xi. 33–35).

IV. The holiness of God. Everything proclaimed the holiness of God (Ex. xv. 11; Is. vi. 1, 2; Rev. iv. 8; 1 Pet. i. 16).

V. The sovereignty and mercy of God (Deut. v. 24). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. How great our privileges under the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. xii. 18–29).—*William Forsyth.*

Verse 17. *The highest ministry.* The ultimate and supreme object of man is to be united to God. But we forget this. The things of this world for countless powers and agencies are constantly at work to hide God from us, and to make us feel and act as if there were no God. The essence of religion is to realise the presence of God. Therefore we should hail as our highest benefactor the man who does for us as Moses did for Israel. "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God."

I. In the operations of nature. Poets have sung of the sublimities and beauties of nature, and philosophers explain her secrets; but he does the noblest work who brings us face to face with nature's God.

II. The events of providence. Many writers have done well in history and fiction, and have depicted with wondrous skill the varieties of character and incident, and the strange vicissitudes of human life; but he does best who shows us that there is a providence in the affairs of men, and that the Lord our God ruleth over all in righteousness and love.

III. The ordinances of the Gospel. Preachers may be learned and eloquent, but it is only as they manifest God's law to the conscience and God's love to the heart that they do us real good. Prayer and praise are proper duties, but unless in them we rise to God they are meaningless and vain. We should remember the words of Christ, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." "Without Me ye can do nothing." Only through Christ can men be brought to God, united to God, and blessed in God.—*William Forsyth.*

Verse 21. *Vain curiosity.* There is a curiosity which is just, and which lies at the foundation of all science and research. But there is a curiosity which is vain and productive of much evil.

I. It pries into secrets.
II. Breaks through boundaries.
III. Sacrifices reverence and self-respect.
IV. Recklessly rushes into danger.
V. Multiplies confusions and perils.
Remember Eve, Uzziah.

According to this agreement, ratified by God, in which the mediatorship between God and the people was conferred upon Moses, the latter now approached the darkness in which God dwelt. Who does not stand amazed at the admirable confidence exemplified by Moses under such terrific circumstances—a confidence so filial and fearless! Who does not rejoice at the power which God can bestow upon the children of men, filially and confidentially to converse with Him, as a man with a friend. If such was the case under the Old Testament, where a spirit of fear predominated, and the true way of holiness was not yet thrown open, what cannot, what ought not, to take place

under the New Testament which bestows a filial spirit, by which we cry, "Abba, Father!" and are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace; whilst at that period the people were told not to come near, but to stand at a distance.—*P. Krummacher.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIX.

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Divine Motive! Vers. 1–5. Exotic flowers or foreign plants, if seeded on the mountain-side, or inserted in the meadow amongst the promiscuous herbage growing there, soon become choked and disappear. Those who wish to preserve the flaming glories of the Cape, or the rich fruits of the tropic, must provide a garden enclosed—must keep out the weeds and ruffian weather. And so God, anxious to preserve "His Holy Law," fenced in the Hebrew nationality. He secluded them, and walled them in, and made them, as it were, His own conservatory—a conservatory where Divine truth should survive uninjured until Messiah should come.

"We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

Divine-Presence! Ver. 3. Greenland says that hunters once went out and found a revolving mountain, and that, attempting to cross the chasm between it and the firm land, some of these men were crushed as the mountain revolved. But they finally noticed that the gnarled, wheeling mass, had a red side and a white side. They waited till the white side came opposite them; and then, ascending the mountain, found that a king lived on its summit—made themselves loyal to him, surrendered themselves to him affectionately and irreversibly, and afterwards found themselves happy in his presence. There was but one way of approach to the "Mount of Awe," and by that path Moses entered into Jehovah's presence without fear. Along that "new living way" Gentile sinners pass to God. It is the King's highway, for through Christ, who is our peace, both Jew and Gentile have access by one Spirit unto the Father. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by ME."

"Thou art the Way, the Truth, the Life;
Grant us that Way to know,
That Truth to keep, that Life to win,
Whose joys eternal flow." —*Donne.*

Mountain-Eagles! Ver. 4. Arabia is a region of mountains and magnificent bluffs; bare of verdure and destitute of streams of living water. Amid these granite cliffs the eagles make their nest; and high above their frowning peaks these noble birds wheel in majestic flight. So that this figure, "borne on eagles' wings," must have been full of deepest significance. M'Cheyne, when visiting a synagogue in Tarnopol—one of the finest towns of Austrian Poland—witnessed a procession of the law, in which he observed a standard embroidered with the Austrian eagle, and bearing these words, "I bear you on eagles' wings." During the eagle-like career of Alexander the Great, he had occasion to attack the Sogdians. These people dwelt amid huge mountain rocks and refused to surrender. When threatened by the Macedonian conqueror, they replied that they feared not his soldiers until they were "borne up on eagles' wings." The eagle soars the highest, and is the most majestic in its aerial courses. God, as it were, bears up His people on these mighty wings, so that they are above all obstacles and hindrances. As no bird can rise higher than the eagle, so none can get above God's children when He thus enables them to mount up with wings as eagles (Is. xl. 31).

"While on this vantage-ground the Christian stands,
His quickened eye a boundless view commands;
Discovers fair abodes not made with hands—
Abodes of peace." —*Elliott.*

Divine Republics! Ver. 5–9. When the freed negroes arrived on the West Coast of Africa, as the Republic of Liberia, they received certain laws and regulations. These were established amid the firing of cannon, the flaunting of flags, and the flashing of firearms. But when Jehovah constituted the legislation of Israel's Divine Republic, the eye was arrested by darkness that defied the gaze, and by lightning and tempest that played about the summit of Sinai, while the ear was thrilled by the trumpet-blast, and appalled by the thunder. The great mountain rocked to and fro, and burned like a furnace. Then, piercing through cloud and camp, was heard the trumpet-blast pealing out above the thunder, that "the laws of the Divine Republic were about to be promulgated." Glorious was this Divine legislation ceremony! The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them. From His right hand went a fiery law for them: Deut. xxxiii. 2.

"The terrors of that awful day, though past,
Have on the tide of time some glory cast."
—*Baillie.*

Oath of Allegiance! Vers. 7, 8. When a

kingdom is established, an oath of allegiance is required. Napoleon the Great, when he founded his empire on the ruins of the great "French Revolution," required this. And when Victoria was proclaimed the Empress of India at Delhi, it was accompanied by a similar requirement. God was now about to become the King or President of Israel, and required a voluntary self-surrender to His holy law. With a view to this, the hosts were marshalled, and by some suitable arrangement Moses communicated all the words of the Lord. They were good precepts and gracious promises, and the people took the preliminary oath of allegiance, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Such supreme self-surrender is still required. Matthew Henry wrote as follows: "Oct. 20, 1686.—I take God the Father to be my chiefest good and highest end. I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour. I take God the Holy Ghost to be my Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. I take the Word of God to be my rule in all my actions, and the people of God to be my people in all conditions. And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and for ever." This Divine oath of allegiance need not be written. "To whom shall we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

"Lord, Thou art mine, and I am Thine,
If mine I am; and Thine much more,
Than I or ought or can be mine.
If I without Thee could be mine,
I neither should be mine nor Thine."
—*Herbert.*

Divine-Division! Ver. 12. An eminent war-correspondent describes his first sensations during the Crimean war in beholding a shell fired from an English mortar. He watched it as it issued from the mortar, and admired the sublime rapidity with which it cuts through the air. While he followed the deadly missile, an explosion far off in the enemy's earthworks attested at once its gunner's purpose and unerring aim. The terrors of Sinai were a sublime spectacle, but their design was to shatter Israel's earthwork of self-confidence; to show men in all ages of the world that no citadel of self-righteous dependence was proof against the Divine law.

"Hence shall dividing hills and rents
Between my soul and Thee,
Be to my faith but arguments
To haste thy march to me."
—*Erskine.*

Divine Monitions! Ver. 16. There is a quaint fable of the archer who went to the mountains in search of game. All the beasts of the forest fled at his approach. The lion alone challenged him to combat. The bowman shot an arrow at the monarch of the wild, who fled in pain and panic. Met by a fox, who exhorted him to take courage and not give up at the first onset, the king of beasts replied, "You advise to no purpose, for if yon archer sends so fearful a messenger before him, who will be able to contend when the man himself draws near?" If the bolts and arrows of Sinai were so terrible to Israel, what must be the appalling terrors of His arm when He draws near at the last day! Sir F. Henneker says that "so great is the wildness of this region that if he had to represent the end of the world, he would model it from Mount Sinai."

"Then the trumpet's pealing clangour
Through the earth's four quarters spread,
Waxing loud and even louder,
Shall convoke the quick and dead."
—*Latin.*

Fire-Symbolism! Ver. 18. The lamp of fire was an emblem of the Divine presence in Gen. xv. 17. That presence was connected with covenant, and was indicated by the fire that passed between the pieces of the victims sacrificed. In the literature and customs of the East, the same thing is still asserted; and at the celebration of respectable marriages, it is a general practice to have a fire as a witness of the transaction. This fire is made of the wood of the mango-tree, and intimated that the vow was taken in the presence of the God of fire, whose vengeance was thereby invoked upon the breaker of the covenant. The Sinaitic covenant was entered into with all the sacred accessions of the most solemn invocation; and Jehovah's judicial presence at the last day will be linked with fire.

"Flame, and fire, and desolation
At the Judge's feet shall go;
Earth, and sea, and all abysses,
Shall his mighty sentence know."

Fiery-Clouds! Vers. 16–18. Brydone relates that in his tour through Malta, in 1757, a great black cloud was visible, which, as it settled, changed colour, till at last it became like a flame of fire mixed with black smoke. In 1772, in the island of Java, a bright cloud was observed covering a mountain in the Cheriton district. It was seen rising and falling like the waves of the sea, and emitting globes of fire, while loud reports as of cannon terrified the natives. Sir Charles Lyell says that Commander Murray observed, at Bagdad in 1857, a huge black cloud like a pall over the heavens. Afterwards, the black darkness was succeeded by a red lurid gloom.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

Divine Forces! Ver. 23. A traveller relates that—when passing through an Austrian town—his attention was directed to a forest on a slope near the road. He was told that death was the penalty of cutting down one of those trees. He was incredulous, until he was further informed that they were the protection of the city, breaking the force of the descending avalanche, which—without this

natural barrier—would sweep over the quiet home of thousands. When a Russian army was marching there, and began to cut away the defence for fuel, the inhabitants besought them to take their dwellings instead. Alas! men are not so anxious to preserve those moral fences which God sets up for the preservation of their souls from His righteous judgments.

Law Functions! Ver. 25. Wandering last year over the South Downs with my daughter, we came upon a model farm, under whose open outhouses were ranged the various implements of husbandry. It was no difficult task to explain to the young inquirer what the "drill" was. She could understand why it was necessary to plant the seed, and, under the blessing of God, ensure a golden harvest to a full garner. But the "plough," with its shining, terrible coulter, called for greater and more careful explanation. Why should it be required? To upheave the hard clods of earth—to uproot the tangled thistles and weeds. Are men not more readily disposed to believe in the "Gospel Drill" than in the "Legal Plough"? And yet both conserve the same purpose—both conduce to the same result. The Law ploughs conviction deep in the hard, weed-grown human heart; while the Gospel follows in due time, casting in seeds of saving grace. And the deeper the plough is put in beforehand, the better the crop afterwards.

"So the hearts of Christians owe
Each its deepest, sweetest strain
To the pressure firm of woe,
And the tension tight of pain."

CHAPTER XX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. All these words.**] Concerning which observe (1.) That they *form the basis of the covenant*, of which ch. xix. 3–6 offers the first proposal; chs. xxi.–xxiii., the detailed sketch; and ch. xxiv. 1–8, the formal ratification. (2.) That they are all *grounded upon the* existing *relationship* between Jehovah and Israel announced in ver. 1; so that THE LAW, *par excellence*, is itself founded upon redeeming grace. (3.) That thus they may all be *united by the principle* to which they owe their privileged position—faithfulness to Him who has redeemed Israel, shown directly towards God Himself in matters of worship ("four commands." 3–11); and indirectly towards man—for whom Jehovah cares—in matters of social intercourse ("six commands." 12–17). (4.) That, nevertheless, they reveal the immeasurable *inferiority of the old covenant* to which they give character, as compared with the new: the leading note of the former being "Thou shalt," that of the latter "I will" (cf. Jer. xxxi. 31–34; Heb. viii.). **3. Before Me.**] That is, "in presence of Me:" suggesting that the Divine presence in Israel would greatly aggravate the sin of idolatry—under the circumstances, the worship of idols would be an affront committed to Jehovah's face. The expression may admonish us that a due sense of the Divine presence is the great safeguard against idolatry. **7. Take in vain.**] Rather: "utter loud" (as for the purpose of solemn attestation) "for falsehood," *i.e.*, in the service of falsehood, to confirm falsehood. (1.) The word *nâsâ*, from the primary notion of "taking up," "lifting," "lifting up," comes to mean, when applied to the voice, the lifting up or elevating of the voice in public utterance (*cf.* Is. iii. 7; xxiv. 14; xlii. 2), and hence obtains the signification, in certain connections, of uttering aloud. (2.) The word *shav* means not only "vanity" but also "falsehood" (*cf.* Deut. v. 20; Ez. xii. 24; Hos. x. 4; Jonah ii. 9). The last cited passage is worthy of special notice: "lying vanities;" *hahley shav*="vanities of falsehood," where the qualifying notion of "falsehood" is expressly conveyed by the word *shav*. The more fundamental result thus obtained,—in harmony with the downright prohibition of *murder, adultery, theft*, &c., favours the view that nothing less than the awful crime of *perjury* is here forbidden; so that, as Kalisch says, "our verse contains what is more distinctly expressed in Lev. xix. 12, 'Ye shall not swear by My name falsely.'" **12. Upon the land.**] More exactly: "upon the ground" or "soil" (*'adhamah*, not *'eretz*); a term happily used of a people destined to become a nation of agriculturists. Patriotism clings fondly to the "soil" on which a people's fathers have trod. **19. We will hear.**] Kalisch happily remarks that "in the word *v'nishma'*AH, with the *he* paragogicum, lies the readiness and willingness: 'we will eagerly and gladly hear.'" **23. Ye shall not make with Me gods of silver, neither, &c.**] We prefer the Massoretic punctuation of this verse, which reveals a delicate appreciation of the meaning, although it entails on us an ellipsis which makes the text appear stiff, and tasks the reader a little to supply the unexpressed idea. "Ye shall not make . . . with Me: gods of silver and gods of gold ye shall not make for yourselves." "With Me:" *i.e.*, "to associate with Me." Supply "anything"—which in fact has not unfrequently to be understood. Then read: "Ye shall not make [anything] to associate with Me:" as much as to say "to put in My place," "to represent Me." Without the vowel points, *'itti*="with me," and *'othi*="ME" are indistinguishable: "Ye shall not make ME, *i.e.*, "anything to stand for Me," "be called by My name;" which brings us to the same thing again. The division of the verse made in the authorised version is unhappy. It leaves an utterly unintelligible antithesis between "with Me" and "unto you;" as

though the "gods of silver" were the more likely to be associated with God, and those of "gold" to be appropriated to man. Understood as above suggested, there is something majestic and impressive in the very vagueness of the earlier half of the verse. Not merely are the Israelites forbidden to make IMAGES of God: they are told not to make anything to be in any way put in the place of God, as even remotely representing HIM.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.—*Exod.* xx. 1-17.

These words stand out from all others in the Old Testament. Other things God spake to mankind through *men*,—these were spoken by Him through the nobler ministry of *angels* (Heb. ii. 2; Gal. iii. 19; Acts vii. 53). They were uttered, not by the Divine spirit in the stillness of a prophet's soul, but *audibly*, as voices coming from heaven (Deut. v. 22-26). They may be said to have been the only *direct* utterance made by God to men under the old covenant (Deut. v. 4). As if to mark the special sacredness that belonged to them, they were, moreover, Divinely *recorded* (Exod. xxxi. 18, xxxii. 15, 16). But what were the words that were uttered under circumstances so solemn, and recorded in a manner so special? When we compare the two versions of the Ten Commandments (Exod. xx. 1-17; Deut. v. 6-21), we find some important variations, such as the reason assigned for the sanctification of the seventh day. Probably *all* were originally given with the same brevity as the first, sixth, seventh, and eighth; and all else that we now find included in them is amplification, command, and explanations which Moses was Divinely authorised to make in order to render their meaning more plain. Concerning these great commandments, I observe—

I. That they are of universal obligation. They thus differ from many ceremonial injunctions afterwards given to the Jews. They are intrinsically and therefore eternally *right*. They have their foundation in the nature of God and of man, and therefore can never be abrogated while God and man continue what they are. This is true of the fourth. "The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark ii. 27) by his Creator, who best knows what his needs are; and while man continues what he is, he cannot neglect to consecrate to rest and worship without sinning against *himself*, as well as against God.

II. They are universal in their scope. They cover the whole range of duty, at least to the prohibition of every kind of wrong-doing. Consider what would be the state of society were they universally obeyed!

III. They reach to the heart, as well as the outward life. They are completed by One that teaches the heart alone. Christ teaches us that all the other commandments were intended to forbid, in like manner, not merely the actions named in them, but the cherishing in the heart of those evil thoughts which are the germs of crime (Matt. v. 21-28). Hence, if we would know if we have kept these great commandments, we must examine our heart as well as our outward life. In that solemn day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be known, it will be seen that some of the blackest criminals who ever trod this earth were men whose outward lives were blameless, and upon whom their fellow-men looked with a respect that almost amounted to veneration (Matt. xxiii. 27, 28).

IV. Nevertheless they are the most elementary that can be conceived of. If God undertook to give men any intimation at all as to their duty towards Him and each other, He could not have said less than He did from Mount Sinai. A man may keep all these commandments from his youth up, and yet lack the "one thing needful" (Mark x. 1-20). Nay, he may do so, and yet be far from being a good man. Now, with one exception—the command to honour father and mother—they are all negations. They tell us what we must *not* do. Even

the command to keep holy the Sabbath day is explained by a series of negations. To abstain from evil is better than to commit it. But abstinence from evil is by no means all that is demanded from moral agents. Otherwise, even an *atheist* who worked only six days in the week might be said to keep all the commandments of the first table, and a harmless *idiot* all the commands of the second. Remember, you may abstain from all forms of crime, and yet not be a good man. Were I to propose to erect a statue in honour of a man who had never been known to be guilty of any violation of the letter of the Ten Commandments, you would laugh at me. You would ask me what *good* he did—what benefactions he conferred on society—that he should be thus honoured. The barren fig-tree did no harm; it brought forth no poisonous fruit, as do some trees, that smite all who partake of them with madness and death: it simply brought forth no fruit—*it did no good;* and that was reason enough for condemning it (Luke viii. 7). If we would be loved of men and commended of God, we must not only eschew that which is evil: we must follow that which is good (Rom. v. 7). Before we can even thus secure the commendation of God, we must be restored to a right relation to Him. Through Jesus Christ, we must obtain the pardon of our first transgressions, and our acceptance with God or His children. *Then* our acts of faith and love will be sacrifices well pleasing in His sight; and even the imperfections of our services will be passed over in His fatherly pity (Ps. ciii. 13, 14).—*R. A. Bertram.*

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

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

The recollection, and admiration, and love, and worship, and obedience, and fellowship of God, form the substance of true religion. Salvation is God revealed in Christ.

I. Every man must have a god—originally. 1. Man must draw enjoyment from without—God alone is independent. 2. Man has capacities which are exercised on something external. 3. Man must now have many gods (Jer. ii. 28).

II. Jehovah claims to be the God of each individual. The grounds of this claim are stated in the Preface to the Ten Commandments. "I am the Lord thy God. 1. His intrinsic excellence. 2. His relation to men—to His people—to all. 3. God willingly submits to comparison (1 Kings xviii.).

III. Jehovah's claims to be the God of His creatures are generally overlooked and rejected. The forms of human idolatry are very numerous. 1. The creature is deified (Rom. i. 25). 2. God Himself is made after the fancies and tastes of depraved men. 3. God is contemplated out of Christ.

IV. Jehovah observes and marks the manner in which His Divine claims are disposed of by men.—1. He observes it as omniscient. 2. He observes it as jealous of His glory. 3. He observes it as forming a righteous judgment respecting the conduct of all His creatures. 4. He observes it that He may deal with men accordingly. 5. Prepare to meet thy God.—*Outlines by Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **4-6.**

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

The Being and Spirituality of God seem to be among the most simple ideas of which the human mind is susceptible; and yet they have been perverted or

entirely obliterated by the corruption of our nature. The Being of God is almost universally admitted. But the Spirituality of His essence has never entered into the conceptions of mankind under the dominion of sense. The deities of the heathen were all local—often in the form of deified heroes—it was therefore natural that they were made to assume a shape. Even the Israelites were guilty of this unholy worship.

I. Offer some general observations upon idolatry. 1. In the *origin of idolatry* we may find a lesson for our guidance with regard to the misuse of things in themselves lawful, and the perversion of ideas in themselves unobjectionable. The probable origin of idolatry was the perversion of simple and sublime sentiments. When mankind, in the infancy of their existence, opened their eyes upon creation, they beheld everything wonderful and splendid in the scene. What could be more calculated to awaken inspiring contemplations? The mind would then soon pass from admiration to reverence and worship. Thus homage was paid to the sun, moon, and stars, which was only due to the Creator. The reverence felt for men of genius gave them an ideal grandeur, and exalted them into the rank of deities. Thus the perversion of good ideas occasioned the growth of bad ones. 2. Nothing can be more painful than to record the *extensive prevalence of idolatry.* It would have been a melancholy fact had history stated its existence in only one town; how sad when all nations are under its influence. This proves the folly and depravity of man. The whole world has wandered from God. 3. *The effects of idolatry.* While, on the one hand, the depravity of the human heart has produced idolatrous worship, this has reacted upon man himself, to debase his character. The effects of idolatry are cruelty, the rendering sacred the worst vices, the contaminating the temples and homes of the land, and the corrupting of society. 4. The spirit of the command in the text must be considered as including all *mental idolatry.* There is a distinction to be made between idolatry and image worship. The former, which is the worship of false gods, is forbidden in the First Commandment; the latter, which is the worship more especially of images or representations of the true God, is interdicted in the Second. But as all outward figures or images of God are forbidden, so it must be considered that every substitute for God, as an object of adoration and love, is also forbidden, for God requires the supreme homage of the heart. We must not form an image in the mind of anything lovely which turns aside the mind from God. Covetousness is idolatry. What images of folly and abomination lurk in the secret recesses of the mind!

II. Notice the particular reasons here assigned for its interdiction. These reasons comprehend both the jealousy and mercy of Jehovah; both powerful considerations. 1. The *Divine jealousy* and its terrific manifestations. The term is frequently applied in the Old Testament to God, and is strikingly descriptive of His determination to maintain His high prerogatives. Jealousy is considered as one of the strongest passions of our nature. It is the feeling which an interference on the part of another with the object of tender affection inspires—a feeling of wounded love. We are not to suppose that God is susceptible of any painful emotion of the mind, in the strict sense of the word; but this passion is employed to illustrate the fact of that concern about His people which God is described as entertaining. The heathen gods had no jealousy; they were not capable of love. 2. Another reason for the interdiction of idol worship is taken from *the mercy of God;* and it is one, in its nature, most conciliative. The Jewish economy, as well as the Christian, was founded in mercy. Their formation into a distinct and chosen people was the outcome of mercy. Their system of worship was ordained by heaven in mercy. They had

providential mercies. What motives are there in the mercies of God to urge us to keep the commandments.—(*F. A. Cox, LL.D.*)

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 4–6. There are few feelings stronger than those of the parent for his children, and it argues an extraordinary moral derangement where the father is careless and indifferent to the wellbeing of his offspring. The Supreme Legislator has taken advantage (so to speak) of these sentiments, and arranged them on the side of righteousness. He attacks men through the avenue of the domestic charities, and calls upon them to prove themselves not unnatural parents, by striving to lead a life of holiness and piety. If they care not for themselves, will they not for their children? If they are indifferent to the ruin which sin must procure for their own portion, can they consent to the sending down to those they best love an hereafter of woe and of shame? Yet this is precisely what they have a right to expect if they go on in a career of transgression. "I, the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me."

We shall assume that the announced visitation of the iniquities of the fathers upon the children is unrestricted and general, so that it constitutes a feature in the fixed economy of the Almighty. We must state, however, that when we speak of the fathers and of the children, we are not to confine our ideas to that single relationship which these terms would ordinarily define. It is clear that the alleged principle is, the dealings of God must be supposed to take a wider range. The principle is, that one set of men shall be made to suffer for the sins of another set of men. We should do evident violence to the spirit, and, we may almost say, to the letter of the precept, were we to suppose that the transmission of iniquity was only then to take place when the parties were associated by the close ties of blood.—*H. Melvill, B.D.*

Of course the case of the father and the child is one of those cases in which the principle is applicable; but whatever the connexion which binds together two sets of men—whether it be that which subsists between rulers and subjects, or that general one between the present generation and the following, or that between the members of a church and their successors—the same principle is brought into play, so that the punishment of sin may descend on those who have had no part whatever in the commission of that sin.—*Ibid.*

Now we can add other instances which, if less general, are not less decisive. You remember that when David sinned by numbering the people, the monarch himself was not stricken for the offence. A pestilence was sent, so that there died from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men; and so evident was it, that the king cried out in the bitterness of his soul, "I have sinned, but these sheep, what have they done?" A still stronger instance is to be found in the history of the Gibeonites. Joshua had made a league with the Gibeonites, covenanting that they should not be destroyed with the rest of the inhabitants of Canaan. In contravention of this league, Saul sought to extirpate the Gibeonites, and in his zeal put many of them to death. This sin of Saul was not at once noticed by God; but in the days of David there was a famine, and God, on being enquired of, declared that it was a judgment on account of Saul's sin in slaying the Gibeonites. And what was the vengeance He then took for that sin? Seven of the sons of Saul were delivered to the Gibeonites, and hung up to the Lord in Gibeah of Saul; and then was God entreated for the

land. Who will say that in this instance God visited not on the children the iniquity of the father? In like manner David had fallen into the heinous sins of adultery and murder; on confessing his iniquity he was punished! Hear how the prophet Nathan speaks to the king—"Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." But our instances are not exhausted. We bid you next look at the Jews, strewed over the globe like the fragments of some mighty shipwreck. What have this people done that, through long centuries the weakest are strong enough to trample on them, the humblest lofty enough to despise them? Why should the countrymen of the Maccabees, those prodigies of valour, have been oppressed by every child, as though their arms were incapable of being strung by bravery? You can give no explanation of the history of the Jews since the destruction of Jerusalem, if you keep out of sight that they are under the ban of God's displeasure for the iniquity of their forefathers. It is, however, worthy of observation that the proceeding after all cannot be repugnant to our notions of justice, since its exact parallel occurs in human legislation. If the statute-book of the country enact the visiting on children the sin of the father, it will be hard to show that the visitation is counter to common sense and equity. In cases of treason, we all know that it is not the traitor alone who is punished. His estates are confiscated, his honours destroyed; so that, in place of transmitting rank and affluence to his son, he transmits him nothing but shame and beggary. We do not say that the thing must be just because enacted by human laws; we only say that there can be no felt and acknowledged contradiction between the proceeding and the principles of equity, since human laws involve the children in the doom of the parent. He, who would have worn a ducal coronet and succeeded to a noble patrimony had his father kept unsullied his loyalty, loses both title and revenue if his father revolt against his king, though all the while he himself had no share in the treason; and the consequences go on from generation to generation; so that the high-born family is for ever degraded, and penury and ignominy make up the heritage which passes down to a remote posterity, who, except for the rebellion of a single ancestor, would have rolled in wealth and ranked with princes. We are clear that the gist of the question lies in this: Do the children when visited for the iniquities of the fathers lose anything to which they have a right, or receive anything which they have not deserved? It is certain, on all the principles of a sound theology, that sin involved the forfeiture of every blessing and exposure to every misery; it is just as certain, therefore, that no blessing can be obtained, and no misery averted, by right; and we think it, consequently, an inference not to be disputed, that whatever are God's reasons for making a distinction between families, there cannot be injustice in visiting on children the iniquities of parents. The visitation cannot overpass what is due to the children themselves; and who then can pronounce the visitation unjust? Why, then, it is certain that the child is dealt with injuriously, if sentenced for the parents' iniquity to penury and affliction. Are penury and affliction never overruled for good? It is necessarily an evil to have been born poor in place of rich; to be of weak health instead of strong; to struggle with adversity, in place of being lapped in prosperity. No man who feels himself immortal, who is conscious that this confined theatre of existence is but the school in which he is trained for a wider and nobler still, will contend for the necessary injuriousness of want and calamity; and yet, unless this necessary injuriousness is suffered, it cannot be proved that the children who are visited for the father's iniquity are on the whole worse off than they would have been had

there been no visitation. Thus the argument against as much falls to the ground as that against his justice; for, proceeding on the principle that physical evil is never subservient to moral good, we overthrow our position by assuming what we know to be false. —*H. Melvill.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 7.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

I. What is meant by the name of God? 1. By the name of God is often understood God Himself; for to call on God's name and on Himself are one. 2. Properly hereby is understood His titles, as God, Jehovah, the Lord, Holy, Just, &c. 3. More largely it is taken for whatsoever He maketh use of for making Himself known.

II. What is meant by taking His name in vain? 1. False swearing, or blasphemy, charming, and what is wrong as to the matter. Nor (2) only profane abusing of the Lord's name when the matter is right, but by rashness, precipitancy, frequency in swearing. Nor (3) doth it mean unnecessary swearing when it may be forborne. But (4) in vain when it is not made use of to good purpose; that is, to God's honour—perjury, levity, scoffing.

III. Why the Lord is so peremptory in urging this command. 1. That He may set out His own greatness and work reverence of Him in the hearts of His people. 2. Because His name is dreadful and glorious. 3. Because this is the way to curb atheism and profanity, which the devil driveth on by these steps; first to think little of God, and then to profane His name. 4. God's name is precious, and given to His people for a great refuge (Prov. xviii. 10). God is a Friend in Covenant, yet so that relation may not in the least wear out His honour, and our due distance with Him (Deut. xxviii. 58). Because this honoureth God, and adorneth the possession of the gospel before others; whereas irreverence therein dishonoureth God. Look through your public duties, if there be not much taking of God's name in vain. Look through your private duties in families, reading, praying, singing, saying grace; how little regard is had to the name of God in these! Look through secret duties between God and you. Look through occasional duties, as when we say it is God's will. In the writing of books and letters. Accidental mention of God's name, in salutations. Consider narrations of Scripture history. Let us not take the name of God in vain in any of these things.—*See Denham.*

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

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

It is not the original institution of the Sabbath which is here referred to. The Jews are simply reminded of an institution which is actually in existence. This is clearly implied in the word "Remember." To remember a thing, it is necessary that we should have some previous knowledge of it. We are, therefore, carried back to the original institution of the Sabbath (Gen. ii. 2, 3).

Some say Moses was speaking anticipatively in this passage. They contend that the Sabbath was not instituted until the law was given on Sinai. It was peculiarly a Jewish institution; consequently it came to an end with the Jewish dispensation, and is, therefore, no longer binding. That this view is utterly false is evident from the following considerations:—

1. The language of the text—"Remember." This implies some familiarity with the Sabbath on the part of the persons addressed.

2. It is recorded in sacred history that the Sabbath was regarded as a Divine institution, and observed as a day of peculiar sacredness *before the law was given* (Ex. xvi. 22–28).

3. This is a precept of the MORAL LAW. Moral duties can never be temporary. Nor can the application of a moral law be restricted to any particular nation. Dispensations may change or pass away, but man remains a moral being in all ages and countries; and those laws which relate to his moral nature must ever abide in full force. If the Fourth Commandment is not binding upon us, neither are the rest.

I. The design of the Sabbath. Two ideas are invariably associated with this day—rest and sanctity. It is intended to serve two great purposes: 1. *A day of rest from physical toil.* On this day God "rested" (Gen. ii. 2; Ex. xxxi. 17). So man is to "rest." On this day there should be a general cessation from labour. Ordinary work must be laid aside, and only that which is necessary performed. This provision applies to the animals which serve man (Ex. xxiii. 12; Deut. v. 14). Is not this day of rest a wise and benevolent appointment? We greatly undervalue it. What would be our condition without a Sabbath? Every workshop, business mart, and commercial exchange open. Hand at it. Brain at it. Pen at it. One monotonous round of work, with no break in the weary march. Can we conceive of anything more dreary? How would this *no-Sabbath* tell upon the physical constitution? Let facts give the answer. How is the Sabbath observed as a day of rest? In some departments of activity it is difficult to distinguish it from other days—specially true of places of refreshment, public conveyances, &c. The following statistics throw a flood of light on the question:—100,000 men are employed on Sundays on our railways; another 100,000 on rivers, steamboats, and canals; 250,000 in public-houses and beer-shops; 24,000 in connection with cabs, omnibuses, and tramways *in London alone*, and 20,000 in the Post-office. 2. *A day of holy employment.* Mark the injunction: "Keep it holy." (See also Deut. v. 12; Isaiah lviii. 13, 14). It is to be a day of *rest*, but not a day of *idleness*. The time taken from secular employments must be devoted to holy pursuits.

II. What is the practical religious value of the Sabbath? 1. It is a *perpetual reminder* of spiritual things. It makes men think of God, keeps eternity before them, &c. 2. It is a *great conservative of good*, and a *powerful barrier against evil.* As things are now, the moral condition of the country is dreadful. What would it be if we had *no Sabbath?* Some advocate the opening of museums, picture-galleries, &c. To this I offer most resolute and unqualified opposition. I do so for three reasons:—(1.) The opening of such places is quite *unnecessary.* As an age of books. Books are plentiful and cheap. Working men get good wages, and can afford to buy them. They work short hours, and so have time to read them. They have frequent holidays, and may visit museums, &c., without encroaching on the Lord's day. (2.) It would *entail labour upon others.* It is unjust to compel one portion of the community to work on Sunday merely to gratify the whims and tastes of another portion. (3.) The purpose served by these institutions is not *a spiritual one*, and is, therefore, unsuited to the character of this holy day. They instruct and elevate the mind, but do not purify the moral nature.

III. The duty and privilege of keeping this day. As a duty, it is binding upon us in a threefold sense. 1. It is a duty we owe *to God.* He made the Sabbath. He commands us to keep it. 2. It is a duty we owe *to ourselves.* As a day of rest it is essential to the highest condition of physical health. As a day of holy meditation and worship, it is essential to our spiritual education and growth. 3. It is a duty we owe *to our fellow-men.* You cannot violate the

Sabbath without influencing your brother to do the same. Perhaps you directly compel him to labour for your pleasure. *A privilege.* It is a great privilege to be permitted to rest from exhausting toil. It is a still greater privilege to be able to devote an entire day to the interests of the soul. A Sabbath rightly spent is a foretaste of heaven; it exalts us into intimate communion with God, and elevates the whole tone of our life.—*George Brooks.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verses 8–11. As a social institution, the Sunday imposes upon us an obligation to keep it as free as possible from ordinary work; but as a religious institution it does not so much impose obligation as offer privilege. The great question we have to ask, in relation to any possible infraction of its religious sanctions is not, Shall I by doing this break a law? but, Shall I by this miss a blessing? Every thing will fall into its right place, and every question will receive its true answer, if we once seize the true idea of the day. It is a day to rejoice in; a day not of bondage, but of freedom; not of gloom, but of gladness; a day in which we declare that we are not merely merchants, mechanics, shopkeepers, and lawyers, but men—children of God and heirs of immortality; a day in which we assert our position as the rulers and lords of the material universe, and refuse to be in thraldom to it, and in which we claim to be the citizens of an invisible and Divine commonwealth. It perpetuates the memory not of our rescue from slavery in Egypt, but of a still nobler redemption. It bears witness to the resurrection of Christ; and to our resurrection with Him—it is "an Easter Day in every week." It reminds us, not of the completion of the Old Creation, but of the commencement of the New; in which at last the sins and sorrows which have marred and desolated the fair beauty of this world shall be known no more; but in which the glory of God shall be man's inheritance, because in the life of man the life of God shall be perfectly manifested; and in this weekly rest, which has not been imposed upon us by any external law, but demanded and won by an inward spiritual instinct, we anticipate the blessedness of the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell—the everlasting Sabbath of the regenerated and glorified sons of God.—*R. W. Dale.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 12.

The Fifth Commandment.

I. Who are we to honour? "Thy father and thy mother." They have given birth to their children. They have educated them. They have provided for their wants in days of infancy and weakness. They love them as no one else can. They watch them with intense interest, in the opening of their minds to truth, and in their progress in social and commercial life. They are over them in the Lord; and children must give honour not merely in the social and domestic life, but in the moral aspects of the relationship.

II. How are we to honour them? Not by mere verbal expressions of respect; but by true reverence, by constant affection, by untiring obedience, and by every effort calculated to enhance their welfare and delight. Speak well of your parents. Take care of them in old age. Never cause them pain by evil doing. Always commend them to God.

III. Why are we to honour them? "That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." It is well to observe that this is the only one of the commandments which has a distinct promise connected with it.

Hence the apostle says, "Children, obey your parents, which is the first commandment with promise" (Ephes. vi. 12). "Children, obey your parents, that it may be well with you." We may contrast this with another passage: "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother." Children must honour their parents. Because God has commanded it, because blessing will be attached to it, because the high relationship demands it, because self-respect prompts it, and because in the future they will need a like regard.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Verse 12. Some young people may say that their parents are not lovable, and that therefore they cannot love them; not wise, and that therefore they cannot respect them; that they are unreasonable, capricious, and selfish; that they have vices of temper and speech, and, perhaps, vices of a still grosser kind; and that therefore it is simply impossible to honour them. I think that there are not a few children in our days who are disposed to take this ground, and to maintain it as a principle. Our parents have a right to just that measure of respect and affection from us, which they can claim on the ground of their intelligence and worth, no more and no less. At first sight this looks reasonable enough. There is very much to be said for that view of matters. How can I love any one who has very little in her to love, simply because she happens to be my mother? How can I respect any one in whom there is nothing to respect, simply because he happens to be my father? The movements of the heart and the decisions of the judgment are and must be altogether independent of mere relationship, and are determined by the character and power of the people with whom we have to do. That looks very philosophical, no doubt. But, my philosophic young friend, how would it have fared with you if your father and mother had had the same ideas about your claims on them? You want your parents to stand on the same ground as other men and women, and to be loved and respected according to their personal merits, just as if they had no natural relationship to you; what would have happened if they had been equally philosophical and impartial, and if they had given you only as much affection and care as you seemed to deserve, or as you claimed on the ground of your helplessness; if, in short, they had justified themselves in ignoring any special obligation to love you and to care for you, beyond the obligation which would have rested on them to love and care for any child that happened to come into their hands?—*R. W. Dale.*

The notices of the childhood and youth of Jesus Christ in the Word of God are very few. But let us look now at His obedience to His earthly parents. He honoured them, first by being "subject to them;" He was obedient; He was "full of grace and truth;" He grew in wisdom daily. His understanding and His answers astonished all that heard them, even the most learned doctors of the day; and yet this Son went down to Nazareth with His parents, and was subject to them. What a lesson for all is this! He who was higher than the kings of the earth was subject to His parents; He honoured His father; He obeyed them. And nothing can excuse a child from this duty; it belongs to the relation, and what God has joined no man may put asunder. We find the greatest characters in the Word of God honouring their parents, Joseph, though governor of Egypt, bowed himself with his face to the earth before his father Jacob; and Solomon, the most magnificent of all earthly kings, honoured his mother with the same reverence, rising up to meet her and bowing himself unto her, and giving her the place of honour at

his right hand; and "behold a greater than Solomon is here," "who was subject unto His parents"—not merely courteous and reverential, as the examples I have mentioned may have been, but "subject" unto them, obedient to them. Nor should I conceive, dear friends, that age in the least interferes with this duty on the part of children, but that obedience is due from the child to the parent as long as the relationship exists. There may be a variety of reasons why the parent should have no occasion to exercise his authority; but should occasion arise, I conceive that the child, however advanced in years, is in no sense exempt from obedience; because we shall see, as we go on, that the parent is certainly not exempt from the exercise of authority.—*J. W. Reeve, M.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 13.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

One great source of mischief to society is disrespect to parents; against this God has guarded His people, by directing them to "honour their father and their mother." Another great source of evil in the world is to be found in the angry passions of men, which have hurried them on to thousands of violent and cruel actions against each other. God has given this command in His Word, "Thou shalt not kill." In order to see the true tendency of our corrupt nature in this matter, we must go to those lands in which the counteracting influence of Christianity is unknown. In heathen lands now interminable wars and private murders quite thin the population. Look at civilised nations; contemplate the wars in which they have been engaged. The passions which lead to war are here condemned.

I. Let us look at its meaning—"Thou shalt not kill." This command is not to be taken in an unlimited sense, as prohibiting *all* bloodshed, because there are certain limitations to it which the Word of God lays down, and it is one amongst many passages of Scripture which show that we must constantly seek for those limitations which God has set. God has Himself shown that there are some cases in which bloodshed is not only allowable, but right (Gen. ix. 5). Long after, when the old Mosaic law was established, the life of a murderer was by that law to be taken, and there was to be no atonement made. It is thus God's will that the murderer should be put to death. Nay, further, it is His will that other intolerable evils which would otherwise overrun society should be checked forcibly; and if, in the effort to prevent them, blood be taken, it is agreeable to His will (Ex. xxii. 2). Defensive wars may be placed upon this ground: if the thief, who broke into a dwelling, was to be resisted even to death, it must be agreeable to the Divine will that, when a multitude of men combine to overrun a peaceable community, they should be put to death. Human life may be taken when *necessary* to the repression of violent crimes, it may not be taken on the mere plea of expediency. But to take away human life on any other pretext whatever—to take it away from revenge or passion—to take it away unjustly, under colour of law or without law, by means of the magistrate or by personal violence—is absolutely contrary to the express will of God. It is contrary to His will that we should take away our own lives. Suicide leaves no space for repentance. It closes life by an act of rebellion against God. Even heathens could speak of the cowardice of suicide; because it never springs from any other cause than a man's incapability of bearing the sorrow which Divine Providence has imposed upon him, or which arises from his own fault. But we especially refer this command to others. Sometimes it has happened that men have taken away the life of a fellow-creature by means of un-

just and oppressive laws. That was no justification for their conduct in the sight of God; it must be murder, because they were the direct cause. If a man has made use of another as his instrument in attempting to murder, he is the murderer in God's sight. David, rather than Joab, was the murderer of Uriah. Cruelty leads to murder, as in the case of the oppressed slave. Excessive work leads to murder, and those who require it are guilty of murder. But the command of God bids us bind those angry passions which *tend* to murder. We are called to check all *strife* (Prov. xvii. 14). We must avoid *hatred*, as it leads to strife. In the Word of God, hatred is said to be murder. We must not permit the feeling of *revenge* (Matt. v. 39). *Envy* is also the source of murder; resist it. This occasioned the first murder; it nearly wrought the death of Joseph. Resist *pride*, as by pride cometh contention. Also the command not to kill, enjoins upon us the cherishing those opposite affections by which the temptation to kill shall be destroyed, and those passions controlled which are the first step to murder. Instead of indulging revenge, we are told, "Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink," &c. Instead of allowing ourselves to hate our fellows, the command is given that we should cherish brotherly kindness. Instead of being allowed to envy our fellow-creatures because of their superior merit, we are told to honour all men Instead of indulging pride, we are to be subject one to another. We are to love our enemies, &c.

II. How we may strengthen this principle of obedience which we are called to cherish. When God has said to us, "Thou shalt not kill," He has enjoined upon each of us to take the means, which are prescribed in the Word or presented by circumstances, by which we may secure obedience to that command. Prayer is necessary; thus grace comes to the soul. We have no reason to expect the aid of God, except we ask it. We must present to our minds those considerations which tend to strengthen the principle of obedience. Think of the authority of God in enacting this law; He calls us to repress all angry passions. Let us remember God's forbearance to us, and that He loved us while enemies. Take care to avoid the beginning of strife; if called to it in the way of duty guard the motives. Be careful in your friendships; make no friendship with an angry man. Let us guard all prejudices against others. Let us not fancy evil against any one. Let us form those habits which cherish all the purest and best affections. Let us enter upon this duty in dependence upon God's grace. There are many motives to it. It will bring us many personal comforts; it tends to give us the purest and most steadfast happiness on this side of eternity, and to prepare us for that celestial abode where no angry passion enters. It is calculated to benefit society and to adorn the doctrine of Christ.—*B. W. Noel, M.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 14.

The Seventh Commandment.

Among the various, the innumerable proofs, which God has given of His perfect goodness, the institution of marriage is one of the most beneficent; and it shows especially and abundantly His goodness to fallen man. Those who have not entered this endeared relation, feel in the midst of the world a solitude of the heart. In this relationship there is every circumstance calculated to promote human happiness. Other relationships are often interrupted and broken in upon by opposite interests; but, through the goodness of God, the interests of man and wife are one. Other relations are often separated by the circumstances of life; but a husband and his wife are united for ever. Yet man is

so perverse and foolish that he will cast aside this happiness. An adulterous man breaks many vows, and destroys the happiness of an entire family.

I. In this command, God has forbidden **unfaithfulness** towards a husband or towards a wife; having attached to it, both under the law and the Gospel, the most fearful penalties. Then the adulterer and the adulteress were to be put to death. Now we are told that adulterers shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But this commandment forbids any previous step in a course of infamy, —any kind of incentive to impurity is forbidden by the pure morality of the Gospel. Indecent conversation. Immodesty in dress. All evil thoughts.

II. **Rules favourable to moral chastity.** 1. *To mortify any evil propensity.* We are commanded by the Word of God to put to death any corrupt inclination. 2. *We must endeavour to strengthen the spirituality of our minds.* "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." 3. *Seek the society and the friendship of those who are themselves good and holy.* If a person loves the good he has a natural distaste for the society of the abandoned and the wicked. Just in proportion as virtuous affections obtain the dominion in our hearts, vicious passions are subdued. 4. *Fill up time with wholesome and right employments.* Even those that are not in themselves of a high and elevating character, but are the lowest kind of duty to which any man can be called, have this excellent effect; they are calculated to occupy the thoughts, to interest the mind, and to prevent the thoughts becoming vagrant after that which is in itself corrupt. 5. *Observe the rules of temperance in all things,* in eating, sleeping, and drinking. We owe a duty to society at large. We must secure our personal purity and lessen the amount of vice found in the world. Society ought to frown upon vice. No government ought to employ an avowed libertine. The public journals ought to brand him with infamy.—*W. B. Noel, M.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 15.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: VARIETIES IN THEFT.

Man is not to regard himself as an individual unit—as living for himself alone—but as forming part of the great aggregate of humanity. The promotion of his true welfare is the promotion of the welfare of the whole community of which he forms a part. He who wrongs the community wrongs himself; and also he who wrongs himself wrongs the community. A man by stealing thinks to enrich himself; but he is certainly impoverishing himself in the long run, as well as doing injury to his neighbour, so that the man who is a faithful keeper of the law obtains a reflex blessing. In seeking his neighbour's good a man is promoting his own highest welfare.

I. We must not rob ourselves. It might be supposed that selfishness would prevent us violating this precept, but selfishness overleaps itself, and is suicidal. The selfish are those who are self-spoliators. The selfish man robs himself of happiness at least; and in most cases hinders himself from becoming truly wealthy. Matthew Henry very pithily observes—"This command forbids us to rob ourselves of what we have by sinful spending, or of the use and comfort of it by sinful sparing." The prodigal robbed himself by sinful spending and was reduced to starvation. We must not rob ourselves either by wasting our money or our time, or by misusing our privileges, or by abusing Divine gifts, or by letting pride and prejudice prevent us receiving gospel blessings. There are duties which a man owes to himself. There is a sense in which a man must live to himself.

II. We must not rob our neighbours. Human laws very generally enforce this Divine law, "Thou shalt not steal," as a precept to be observed with regard to *material property*. Human governments have instinctively recognised the Divinity, and the necessity to social welfare, of a great part of the Mosaic Decalogue; and on what principle some are regarded as Divine and as perpetually binding, and others as not so, we fail to perceive! Material stealing is a crime universally abhorred. How comes it to pass that *intellectual* stealing is not more generally reprobated? Great changes would take place in the literary world if over every desk of the writer, and if over every pulpit of the preacher were written, and were duly observed the words, "Thou shalt not steal." We may repeat the question, Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Dost thou attempt to shine in borrowed plumage? Dost thou unblushingly appropriate the intellectual wealth of others? There is also *moral* theft. Every man who lowers the moral tone is stealing. Every man who undermines public virtue is stealing. There are many thieves who are regarded as honest men. There are thieves everywhere, but we shrink from calling things and men by their right names. A periphrastic mode of utterance may mean national decline, as well as the advance of civilisation.

III. We must not rob God. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation." We rob God more frequently than we rob men. There are those who are regarded as honest by their fellows who have robbed God. A man has no right to steal himself from God. The creature is the Creator's property, and the creature who does not use himself for the Creator's glory is guilty of stealing. And in thus robbing God we rob ourselves much more. We must be honest to ourselves, honest to our neighbours; and perfect honesty is only secured when we are honest to our God. Godward honesty will make manward dishonesty an impossibility. Then masters will not steal from servants, nor servants from masters. Then justice will be rightly administered. Then kings will rule in the fear of God. Then nations will not steal from nations. Oh, for the bright day when all shall seek to understand and to obey the comprehensive and far-reaching command, "Thou shalt not steal!"—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 16.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT: THE POWER OF THE TONGUE FOR EVIL.

Human codes take cognisance of theft and of murder, and seek to repress them by severe punishment; but they do not punish for theft and murder committed by the tongue. We acknowledge the power of the human hand, but too often forget the power for evil of the human tongue. In this the Divine code is for the most part superior to human codes. The tongue can steal and can murder. It may kill a neighbour's reputation. It may rob of that the loss of which makes him poor indeed and does not enrich the thief.

I. The violation of this command **destroys the witnesser's moral manhood.** This is a species of lying. All falsehood is base. It is the outcome of baseness, and increases the baseness. Every man who bears false witness does himself more moral damage than he does to the neighbour of whom the false testimony is given.

II. The violation of this command *does* **injustice to our neighbour.** It may do him no moral harm, but does him great social damage. It places him in a false position. The court may disbelieve and reject the false testimony, but the man has been injured by being subjected to an examination. It is extremely difficult for a man to clear away all the dirt which has been thrown by the false-witness

bearer. Many a man's reputation has been darkened all his life by the malicious tales of the bearer of false-witness.

III. The violation of this command **prevents the course of justice.** The administrators of law cannot move with certainty when witnesses are not reliable. Witnesses are not likely to tell a false tale, if appearances are not against the accused. It requires great sagacity to separate the true from the false, to get above mere appearances, and discover the correct state of the case.

IV. More generally notice that the **violation of this command degrades.** The tale-bearer revealeth secrets; and depraved human nature loves to hear evil secrets revealed. The slanderer may be welcomed, but is not respected. And ultimately his tales are received with suspicion. He is in danger of being cast out as an evil spirit. The man who to me slanders my neighbour, will in turn slander me to my neighbour; and if we are wise we shall not lend him our ears.

V. The violation of this command **robs the slanderer of his capital.** In modern society especially reputation is as much capital as the current coin of the realm. It is true that character remains when reputation is destroyed. This may be some consolation to the man sitting amid the ruins; but when reputation is gone a man's social position is gone. It may also be true that a man's well-known character will tend to preserve his reputation; but if sufficient dirt is thrown some of it is sure to stick. Slanderers are the bane of society. What suffering they inflict! They have embittered the lives of the purest and the holiest. We must pray God to hide us safe in His pavilion from the strife of unruly tongues.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

Bearing false witness covers the whole case of those sins which transgress more or less of *the whole truth;* and one who fails in a given case to tell the whole truth is more or less amenable to this law. Observe apart from deliberate lying—

I. That we may bear false witness by equivocation.

II. That we may bear false witness by the suppression of any essential element that goes to make up the whole truth; *e.g.*, in revealing an incident which affects our neighbour's character.

III. That we may bear false witness by putting a wrong connection on and giving a wrong emphasis to the words of another.

IV. That we may bear false witness without the utterance of a word. (1.) By neglecting to defend a slandered character, silence implying consent. (2.) By a shrug of the shoulders, a compression of the lips, a motion of the hand, is quite enough to ruin a reputation or a soul. To avoid this and its heavy condemnation; (i.) Seek to become like Him who is "the Truth;" (ii.) be open and candid in all your ways; and (iii.) give others credit for what you demand for yourself.—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 17.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT: INORDINATE DESIRE.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's." "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Here are two closely related commands. The negative and positive aspect of a perfectly righteous man's life. "Thou shalt not" may go far enough for children; but "Thou shalt" is a step higher. The perfect one must not only refrain from injuring a neighbour, but embrace him with the arms of love. The man who can say he has kept the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," has gained a high moral elevation, but he has not yet climbed the sublime moral heights of him who loves the neighbour even as if the neighbour were

himself. Love is compatible with desire, but it is not consistent with inordinate desire. Love thinketh no evil; and the covetous man is an envious man, is an evil-thinking man, is a man given to dismal brooding. Love doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own; but the covetous is most unseemly in his behaviour—the covetous not only seeks his own with great zeal, but seeks by fair means or by foul to get possession of that which is not his own. My very love for a friend may increase my admiration of his perfections, and thus lead me to desire them, but it will prevent me looking upon him with an envious gaze; it will keep me from being discontented. I shall rejoice in his perfections and possessions as if they were mine. Indeed my love makes them mine. They afford me as much pleasure as they do to him whom the world considers the true owner.

I. The violation of this command **arraigns the wisdom of Providence**. Some men may blame not Divine Providence, but their own improvidence, for the fact that they are not surrounded by all material blessings. We too often make Providence responsible for the evils under which we groan. But having done our best, and having been beaten in the race, we arraign the wisdom of Providence when we covet the winner's prize. The disposal of human events is of the Lord. We must believe that the hand of God gives riches, and beauties, and pleasures to some, and withholds from others. And we must not arraign the wisdom which guides the hand by coveting our neighbour's possessions.

II. The violation of this *command* **disturbs the balance of society**. It disturbs the harmony of all societies, both communistic and non-communistic. The early Church tried all things in common, but covetousness threw its withering blast over the fair ideal. Covetousness is the worm which destroys every booth which communism erects for a shadow. Covetousness leads the rich to oppress the poor; and causes the poor to combine for the destruction of the rich.

III. The violation of this command **produces criminal deeds**. The desire is inordinate, irrepressible. It consumes and destroys all right moral feelings in the man. No stone must be left unturned for the gratification of the forbidden lust. Every barrier must be thrown down that intervenes between the man and the coveted boon. Guile shall accomplish the purpose. But if guile fail, then force must be applied.

IV. The violation of this command **embitters existence**. A man may have sufficient worldly prudence left so as not to permit his covetousness to lead him into criminality. He may have sufficient self-control to stop just where the police meet him, or human law traces its lines. But his life is stripped of all pleasure. The cup he constantly drinks is very bitter, and his covetousness has prepared the ingredients. Envy is the rottenness of the bones. And where there is no envy there will be no covetousness.

V. This command can only be kept in **the spirit of the Gospel**. Love will enable us to fulfil the law, and this special law requires a special love. The Gospel teaches the true brotherhood of humanity. Covetousness is a thing of the darkness and cannot live in the clear light of brotherly love. Brotherhood is destroyed when covetousness takes possession of the soul. We need not only more brotherliness, but more motherliness. For a brother may covet a brother's goods, but a mother could never covet a child's goods. Oh, for this highest love! Oh, for the true spirit of Christ! Oh, for this power to look not with covetous eyes, but with complacent gaze upon the things of others!—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

That this law is of vast importance is seen—1. From its position in the code. It is the last. 2. From the fact that it is one of the secret sins of the heart. 3. From the fact that it is the root and mainspring of every other evil. God's

Word gives illustrations which can be multiplied in every experience of the breach of the other commandment through it (cf. James i. 14, 15); idolatry and kindred crimes (Col. iii. 5); Sabbath breaking (Num. xv. 32); dishonour to parents (Luke xv.); murder, David and Uriah; adultery, David and Bathsheba (Rom. i. 29); theft (Micah ii. 2); lying (2 Tim. iii. 2; 2 Peter ii. 3). Learn—

I. That covetousness is possible in many forms. 1. We may covet our neighbour's property, money, house, dress, &c. 2. We may covet our neighbour's abilities. 3. We may covet our neighbour's reputation. 4. We may covet our neighbour's friendships.

II. That covetousness is punished in many ways. 1. It is abhorred by God (Ps. x. 3). 2. It is condemned by God (Hab. ii. 9). 3. It involves exclusion from Church membership. 4. It disqualifies for heaven (1 Cor. vi. 10).

III. That covetousness may be avoided in all its forms. 1. By purification of the heart (Mark vii. 22). 2. By effectual fervent prayer (Psal. cxix. 36). 3. By godly contentment (1 Tim. vi. 6; Phil. iv. 11–14, 19). 4. By earnest coveting of the best gift.

IV. That God's blessing rests upon them that hate it in many ways (Prov. xxviii. 16).—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **18–21.**

THE SUPERFICIAL AND THE PROFOUND.

The law was given under circumstances of great solemnity. Nature assumed her sternest aspect; and spoke in tones of thunder. All was calculated to impart deep and striking emphasis to every enactment given forth by the world's great legislator. The whole scene was so appalling that the people were filled with terror. When we think of our own emotions as we listen to the thunder's deep base, or watch the lightning's vivid flash, we are not surprised that these people were alarmed. Let us, however, seek to get a correct view of Divine proceedings, and thus gain confidence.

I. Superficial views of Divine proceedings induce fear. Superficial views are always dangerous, though they may not always lead to fear. The superficial man is bold through his very shallowness. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Ignorant men are not troubled with doubts. They sometimes speak with repellant fluency and painful dogmatism upon subjects they have never thoroughly studied and much less mastered. Nevertheless, superficial views are dangerous, and lead to great mistakes. They did so in this case. The people said unto Moses, "Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Their fear led them to prefer the human and to reject the Divine. This is the history of fearing and deluded humanity. Human voices are followed through a mistaken sense of safety. Divine voices are rejected through baseless terror. The world follows the teaching of the priests, instead of listening to the still small voice of the Infinite. And the world is thus led fearfully astray; for earthly priests are not constituted after the Mosaic type. Our fears are the result of our sins; for conscience doth make cowards of us all. Earthly and self-seeking priests take advantage of our fears; but not so Moses, he was the world's sublime prophet.

II. Profound views of Divine proceedings encourage confidence. The voice of the earthly priest is fear; but the exhortation of the Heavenly Priest is, Fear not. The former carries on his trade by increasing the fears of the people;

but the latter, with Divine benevolence, seeks to encourage a legitimate confidence. Moses had profound views of Divine proceedings, therefore his exhortation. A correct understanding will remove terror; it often does so in things temporal. The lions produce terror, until we get a further revelation and find that they are chained. It must do so in things moral. God is to be feared in the assembly of His saints, but He is not to be regarded with terror. Fear not, is the exhortation of Moses; Fear not, is the exhortation of Jesus Christ, of whom Moses was an eminent type. If men were to fear not in the presence of the mount that might not be touched, how much more may we say, Fear not, to men who see the mount which is bright with the light of Divine love?

III. Profound views of Divine proceedings lead to a correct understanding of Divine purposes. "For God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." Shallow views lead to disastrous mistakes. The religion of mere sentiment will be a religion of terror. We must think upon the Divine ways, and then shall we turn our feet unto the Divine testimonies, and understand more correctly the deep things of God. Here is a seeming paradox, fear not and yet fear. Fear not with slavish terror; but fear as loving children. Fear not with that terror which makes you shrink from the Divine voice; but fear so as to shrink from that which the Divine voice forbids. The purpose of Divine proceedings is that His people may be proved. Nature herself tests man's powers. His power of labour and of endurance are tested. The phenomena of nature may become great moral tests. The thunder's peal and the lightning's flash may develop a true manhood. God comes to prove His people, not always by the thunder and the lightning and the smoking mountain, but by the common events of our daily life. Disappointments in business, defeats in ambitious projects, a new and seemingly unpromising opening in life, disorders in the family or in the nation, sickness, and bereavement, are the pathways along which God travels to prove His beloved. The ultimate purpose of all Divine methods is that His people sin not. The terrors of the Jewish economy were to keep people from transgression. The love and grace of the Gospel are intended to promote holiness. Jesus came to save people from their sins, to deliver them from moral bondage and corruption.

IV. The unenlightened and the fearing stand afar off. "And the people stood afar off." There is no reason to keep away from God. He invites and welcomes to Himself the children of men. We do not get to ourselves the true knowledge of the Divine Fatherhood, and therefore we keep at a distance. The prodigal felt himself unworthy to be called his father's son, until he understood the greatness of the father's love. Let us pray for more light. Let us consider that God is our Father in heaven, bending down with loving gaze and deep interest to us His children upon the earth. And why should we keep away from a Father's love? Why should we shut out the light of a Father's compassion? Why should we stand afar off, when we may be embraced by the arms of the Eternal?

V. But the heaven-taught are taken into the thick darkness where the true light appears. Moses drew near, or, more correctly, was made to draw near, unto the thick darkness where God was. The rabbis suppose that God called unto Moses, and encouraged him, and sent an angel to take him by the hand, and to lead him up. This may be a mere fancy, but it has its foundation in fact. God's encouraging call is heard in the hearts of the faithful. God's guiding angels lead by the hand God's faithful ones into the thick darkness where the true light appears. The pure in heart shall see God. At first the vision may seem only like thick darkness, but soon it will be one of celestial splendours. This is often the Divine method through the thick darkness into the Divine

celestial splendour. Through the thick darkness of earlier formations into the light and glory of the finished creation. Through the thick darkness of the law into the light of the Gospel. Through the darkness of repentance into the light of pardon. Through the darkness of this world, and through the deeper darkness of death, into the land of unclouded light and unsullied glory.

—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF.—*Verses* 18–20.

God's revelation of His law was accompanied by a revelation of Himself. What was this but a symbolic promise that He would be with them and enable them to keep His law. Cf. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 20; Luke xiv. 49. We have dealt with this subject under other aspects before, (see on chap. xix. 14–25). Here we have the mode, the reception, the comfort. Notice—

I. That the mode of this revelation was striking. Ver. 18. 1. Such a mode was *necessary* (1.) to reveal God's majesty to men familiar with the puerilities of heathen worship; (2.) to show that God was not to be trifled with and His laws broken with impunity; (3.) to meet the case of those—and the Israelites in general were such—who are open only to impression which can be made upon their fear.

2. Such a mode *served some of the most important functions of the old dispensation.* (1.) Gal. iii. 24, cf. John i. 17. It was preparatory to the mild and beneficent grace of Jesus Christ that by contrast with it the latter might be the more welcome. It was the storm before the calm, the night before the day. See also Heb. xii. 18. (2.) It was a symbol of the workings of the law in an awakened conscience before the blessing and liberty of the Gospel of Christ (Rom. vii. and viii).

3. Such a mode was *appropriate* as accompanying judicial proceedings. It was the same (1) at the flood; (2) at the destruction of the cities of the plain; (3) it will be so at the last day (2 Thess. i. 7–9; Rev. xx.) &c. &c.

II. That the reception of this revelation was what God intended it should be. 1. It was *intelligent.* "All the people saw it." (1.) Revelation is not an appeal to credulity, but to reasonable faith. Its evidences and credentials all appeal to the intelligence of man. (2.) The people saw what God intended them to see, not merely a spectacle which it would be difficult to forget, but the manifestation of Himself in it. So many painful providences tax our energies to see the meaning of them; but if our eyes are opened we shall see Him there (2 Kings vi. 14–17).

2. It was *reverent.* "They removed and stood afar off." (1.) This was reasonable; undue familiarity would have been shocking. (2.) This was exemplary. Many Christians in their references to the person, words, or works of God, may learn a profitable lesson from it. (3.) This should be usual (Exod. iii. 5, Eccl. vi.).

3. It was *prayerful.* Ver. 9. (1.) This shows the natural and reasonable yearning of man's heart for a mediator. (2.) This shows how desirable it is that the mediator should be man. (3.) This shows that the benefit of mediation is mercifully accepted by God.

III. That the comfort of that revelation disarmed it of all its terrors. 1. God had spoken. The God of their fathers. Their Redeemer. The God who had promised to bless them if they would keep His law.

2. God had spoken for their encouragement, "Fear not." The fire should not burn, the lightning should not strike them. These were but manifestations of the power which was on their side.

3. God had spoken but to prove their loyalty to Him. If they could stand the test, what could harm them? (Rom. viii. 39).

4. God had spoken for their moral elevation. (1.) "That His fear may be before your faces." (2.) "That ye sin not" (1 John ii. 1, 2), especial in earnest with verse 21. Learn—

I. Not to dread God's revelation. "Ye fearful souls, fresh courage take." II. To approach God through the one new and living way which is ever open. III. To keep all God's laws in the strength of the comfort which His presence brings—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS ON THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22-26.

GOD'S VOICE BUT NOT A FORM.

Moses went into the thick darkness, and held converse with God, and then came forth to declare the Divine regulations unto the people. And thus he was unto the people as a mediator. The ministration of the Gospel is more glorious than the ministration of the law. Moses was the law's mediator; but Christ Jesus is the mediator in the Gospel covenant. The one the servant; the other the Son in the Divine *house, which house is constituted by* believing people.

I. God's voice. How wonderful that God should speak with men! We know not what manner of a voice it was. We cannot tell how the people were made to understand that God talked from heaven. But this we are told that He did speak from heaven. The voice of God is indicative of the Divine personality. Some men's ears are too dull to hear the Divine voice, so they give themselves up to Pantheism in some cases, and in others to Polytheism. God's voice may truly be heard in the myriad voices of earth; but there is still a separate voice. He talks from heaven. The Infinite speaks, but reveals no form.

II. God's abhorrence of idolatry. The command is again repeated, and after a very short interval; and thus the people must have been impressed with the sinfulness of idolatry. We can suppose that the Infinite even might have come forth from the thick darkness and revealed Himself in some wonderful form; but the fact that God refrains makes impressive the lesson—Ye shall not make unto you gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. Our loftiest conceptions, embodied in the most costly and precious material forms, must fall short of Infinite perfectness.

III. God's love of simplicity. Altars of earth, and altars of unhewn stone. The simplest is often the purest and the divinest. If we are to have our altars, let them be of such a character that they shall be helps and not hindrances to a true comprehension of the spirituality of the Divine nature. Man's superb altars lead to degrading conceptions of the Infinite.

IV. God's respect to appearances. "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto Mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon." Let all things be done decently and in order, is the injunction of two economies. There is a reverence for places and for structures which is idolatrous superstition; and there is an irreverence which betokens a low state of the emotional nature, and which even God does not approve. There may be excessive and soul-destroying ritualism; and there may be excessive and God-dishonouring baldness

V. God's superiority to splendid structures. In all places where God's name is recorded there He will come, and there He will bless. It was by Divine appointment that the Temple was built; and yet, before the erection of that superb

structure, God teaches that wherever He is devoutly and sincerely worshipped there will His Divine blessing descend. And better than curiously wrought marble, or precious stones; better than telling and striking architectural designs; better than golden adornments, is the Divine blessing. God is not confined to any particular buildings. Wherever His people meet, there they behold His mercy seat.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

PUBLIC WORSHIP.—*Verses* 22-26.

The Book of the Covenant (cf. Chron. xxiv. 4, 7), extending from ver. 22 to chap. xxiii. 33, appropriately follows God's revelation of Himself, and appropriately opens with regulations for public worship. Upon which, by way of introduction, we remark—1. That the end for which God reveals Himself is, that we should worship Him. "Ye have seen" (verses 22–24, cf. Chron. xx. 1–4). 2. That God's revelation of Himself should be kept in perpetual memory by acts of public worship (vers. 24, 25). So the revelation of Jesus Christ (Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24). 3. That God having made a spiritual revelation of Himself, He should not be worshipped under any symbolic form. This text further teaches us—

I. That public worship involves cost. Ver. 24. Let the Christian who complains of the expense of his religion, the collections, the pew rents, &c., remember (1) what it cost the Jew to be religious; (2) what it cost God to make him a Christian (John iii. 16; Rom. viii. 32).

II. That public worship can dispense with elaborate ritual. The altars were to be of earth or of unhewn stone, the simplest and plainest possible.

III. That public worship carefully excludes all idea of merit on the part of the worshipper. Here all art and ability of man was to be carefully dispensed with, lest the worshipper should arrogate any virtue to himself. In after years, when the Israelites were indoctrinated into this spirit, this literal command was repealed.

IV. That public worship is not confined to set places. Altars of this description could be set up anywhere and everywhere. Public worship should be celebrated in every place that God appoints for the purpose. God now guides His Church by His providence. That providence points to our neglected populations. What an argument for Home and Foreign Missions! "In every place where I record My name."

V. That public worship does not depend on the material or intellectual qualification of the worshipper. If altars required wealth to erect them or art to adorn them, then only the wealthy or the intelligent could worship. What a plea for *common* worship! Not the minister alone, or the choir, but all should engage in the worship of God's house.

VI. That public worship must be conducted with proper decency. Ver. 26. 1. It is a sin to serve God with less attention and decorum than man. 2. It is a folly to encourage it in others. To invite men "to come in their working clothes" is an affront to the intelligent artizan.

VII. That public worship, when properly conducted, is uniformly attended with a blessing. 1. The Divine presence; 2. The Divine benediction (ver. 24). In conclusion, John iv. 20–24; Matt. xviii. 20.—*J. W. Burn.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XX.

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Law Divine! Ver. 1. A converted infidel exclaimed on reading Exodus xx., "Where did Moses get this law? The Egyptians and the adjacent nations were idolaters. So were the Greeks and Romans. The wisest Greeks and the best Romans never gave a code of morals like this. Where did Moses get this Law, which surpasses the wisdom and philosophy of the most enlightened age? He lived at a period comparatively barbarous; yet he has given a law in which the learning and sagacity of all subsequent time can detect no flaw. Where did he get it? He could not have soared up to it. It must have soared down to him. It must be from God." No Canova-eye can detect the tiniest flaw in this snow-white marble code.

"How holy is the precept,
How righteous the decree,
Revealing to His creatures
The Lord's own purity."

Moral Law! Ver. 1. A boat on a summer sea is a pleasant picture. But a boat full of people on the Indian Ganges or the mighty Amazon, when the day is dull and the sky dismal—when the wind roars and the thunder peals—when the waters swell and the stream flashes past—is a spectacle of horror. You hear the shrieks between the thunderpeals as they on surging waters, and you on solid strand, wonder how salvation is to come. Ah! if their frail barque could but be drawn into yonder narrow creek, all would be well. A rope is flung out to them, and fastened to the boat. Suddenly a frantic sailor seizes a hatchet, and by one frenzied blow severs the rope. One blow—no more! The boat sweeps headlong against the rock. A crash—and all is o'er. It needs not that the rope should be cut in ten places to sever the connection and injure salvation. If *one* commandment be broken; if frenzied passion cut God's Law at any *one* point—all is broken. Thus we see how

"One mischief entered brings another in;
The second pulls a third, the third draws more,
And they for all the rest set ope the door."
—*Smith.*

Divine Denial! Ver. 2. Kircher, the famous astronomer, anxious to convince an infidel friend of the Divine existence, procured a very handsome astronomical globe, and placed it in a corner of his room. When his friend called, he saw the globe, and admiring it, inquired to whom it belonged? "It was never made; it came here by 'chance.'" The sceptic declared it was but a sorry jest, since such was impossible. The wise philosopher at once happily retorted, "You will not believe that this tiny, frail globe came from 'chance,' and yet you expect me to believe that all those mighty worlds have no Maker!" He then proceeded to reason with his friend, so earnestly that he flung his infidel ideas to the wind, convinced of the existence of the Divine "I am."

"Infinite strength, and equal skill,
Shine through Thy works abroad;
Our souls with vast amazement fill,
And speak the builder God."
—*Watts.*

Idolatry! Vers. 2, 3. A man's idol is not necessarily an image of gold. It may be a child of clay—the fruit of his own loins—the wife of his bosom. It may be wealth, fame, position, success, business—anything which absorbs unduly the affections and attention. Against such idols God hurls His resistless missile here as resolutely as against "the heathen idols of wood and stone." When the English captured Rangoon, the saintly Havelock established a prayer-meeting in a famous heathen temple. The room was filled with idol-images, and in the lap of each of these "dumb gods" he placed a lamp to give light. He turned the idols into lampstands for the Divine glory. When there is no danger of our worshipping our old human-idols, let us turn them to good account. We may transform them into lampstands. We may make them serve as lights to enable us to worship Him, whose glory is that of the *One True God.*

"There are many heathen people,
Who yet God's name have known;
And many other idols
Than those of wood and stone."

Idol Inventions! Ver 4. The god Moloch was a fearful-looking monster, with a huge red mouth and grinning teeth, to show that he was fond of blood. The goddess Kalee, worshipped by many persons in India, is a fierce-looking female figure, with instruments of death in her hands, and a string of human skulls hanging round her neck as an ornament. Ganesa, another of the gods of the Hindus, is represented with the head of an elephant, and having four arms and hands. He always appears riding on the back of a great rat, having the figure of a serpent wreathed round his head. There are hundreds of uglier and more repulsive idols among the poor heathen in Africa and the South Seas; but it is not their hideousness that condemns them as objects of worship. Lovely idols are as loathsome in God's sight. How lovely are the sun, moon,

and stars, and how greatly the Psalmist appreciated their exceeding beauty! Yet men have made these beautiful creations of God loathsome. How? By making idols of them. The Brazen Serpent was no doubt a very bright and beautiful object; but it became repulsive when turned into an object of worship, and had to be destroyed. To admire a beautiful sculpture—whether stone, marble, brass, or silver—is not wrong; but to adore it, raises the Divine jealousy.

"Thou art a God who beareth
No rival near Thy throne;
Yet many a creature shareth
The love that is Thine own."

Profanity! Ver. 7. In ancient feudal times, when a man paid a small "peppercorn rent" to the landlord, it was in token of submission. It was no onerous burden. But when the "landholder" fell to fighting with some neighbouring chief or baron, or when he was summoned by the king to join the royal army into France, the "peppercorn submission" brought its corresponding penalty and danger. The payee was bound to follow in the baron's train, to make any sacrifices required by the landholder, and encounter any dangers, even death, in his service. Such are "profane expressions." They are tokens of submission to Satan, and the prince of darkness does not scruple to make the utterers testify their allegiance whenever it suits him. Oaths are light things. Blasphemies are rents too readily paid to the "prince of this world;" but they bring in their train heavy responsibilities from which there is no escape, except by sincere repentance.

"Take not His name, who made thy mouth, in vain;
It gets thee nothing, and hath no excuse."
—*Herbert.*

Profanity! Ver. 7. (1) When the name, titles, and attributes of God are lightly, falsely, and profanely employed, this link is broken. And it is to be feared that many ignorantly do this in prayer. We have read about a good man once, who made it a rule always to pause and look up before he uttered the name of God. That action was the index of his heart. He stood in awe of God. His holy name was to him holy. (2) A Southern planter had a favourite negro servant, who always made a low and solemn bow whenever his master uttered the Divine name. On being asked why he did this, he replied, that he never heard that great name mentioned but it filled his soul with awe and reverence. How many fear not frequently and foolishly in their prayers to take God's name in vain—*i.e.*, to make it common—to utter it carelessly and irreverently!

"Oh! may we never dare
To act that wicked part;
Nor offer up a prayer
That comes not from the heart;
Or speak that Name in careless phrase
That heaven adores, and earth obeys."

Profane-Penalty! Ver. 7. (1) In one of the loghouses so common in the southern counties of Vermont sat a man watching a fearful snowstorm. He was on his way across the Green Mountains, and was determined to reach home that day. When urged to tarry with his host, and not brave the perils of the increasing storm, he profanely declared that he would go *though God Almighty stood in the way.* But he never reached home. He was found dead near a large tree, partly supported by its trunk. His body was bent forward, and his ghastly intent features told the stubbornness with which he had profanely taken Jehovah's name in vain. For more than thirty years that tree stood by the solitary road, scored to the branches with names, letters, and hieroglyphics of death,—a silent rehearsal of the Sinaitic speech: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." (2) A profane coachman, pointing to one of the horses he was driving, said to a pious traveller, "That horse knows when I swear." To this remark his listener made the solemn retort, "Yes, and so does ONE ABOVE."

"Look to thyself, then, deal no more with oaths,
Lest He that hears against thee sends His woes."

Sabbath-Symbolism! Ver. 8. The Sabbath is coeval with Paradise. Both date their existence from the first week of time, and both bear the impress of an unfallen world. There is meet harmony between the two. Hence they stand together on the same page of the Bible, and are linked inseparably together in our recollections of man's primeval condition. As we cast our eyes backwards, they are seen shining like twin stars in the morning sky of the world, giving promise of a refulgent day. Venerable, beneficent, and holy, the Sabbath is the link between the Paradise which has passed away and the Paradise which is yet to come.

"Where that innumerable throng
Of saints and angels mingle song;—
Where, wrought with hands, no temples rise,
For God Himself their place supplies;
Nor priests are needed in the abode
Where the whole hosts are priests to God;—
Think what a Sabbath there shall be,—
The Sabbath of eternity!" —*Grinfield.*

Sabbath-Slaughter! Ver. 8. One morning, a happy cheerful Christian was on his way to the house of God. He was a singular man, prone to do things which others called "eccentric;" but his readiness of thought often proved of great service. As he walked joyfully along the way to the sanctuary, he encountered a man driving a heavily-loaded waggon through the town. No sooner had he

encountered the cart than he suddenly stopped, turned around, and, lifting up both hands in horror, he exclaimed, as he gazed under the waggon, "Oh! you have gone right over the child." The driver was frightened, brought up his horses with a jerk, and then looked down with pallid face under the wheels. He expected to find a little mangled body, but he observed nothing. Perplexed, he looked to the man who had so strangely arrested his attention, and anxiously exclaimed, "What have I gone over?" "The fourth of God's ten offspring, 'Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.'"

"Day fixed by God for intercourse with dust,
To raise our thoughts and purify our powers,
Periods appointed to renew our trust;
A gleam of glory after six days' showers!"
—*Barton.*

Sabbath-Steadfastness! Ver. 8. (1) Recently, the Queen's bandmaster required the members to attend rehearsal on Sunday, on account of some special performances before Her Majesty. Two Germans refused to desecrate the Lord's Day, and were dismissed by the master without the knowledge of the Queen. The Bishop of London heard of the incident and reported it to Her Majesty, who, on the day of performance, inquired for the absentees. The bandmaster acknowledged the dismissal, whereupon the Queen ordered their instant restoration, declaring that none in her service should suffer for "*remembering* the Lord's day to keep it holy." (2) In New York, an esteemed clerk was required by the manager of the bank to attend next day (Sunday), and help to make up the back work. As a Christian he could not comply. The president threatened him with dismissal, but to no purpose. He steadily refused to "*forget* the Sabbath day," and was dismissed. Some time after, when a new branch was opened, the president was asked to recommend a thoroughly trustworthy manager. He at once nominated the clerk whom he had dismissed, and the nomination was sanctioned. He felt the force of sterling Christian principle displayed in so praiseworthy a manner.

"Let us say to the world, should it tempt us to wander,
As Abraham said to his men on the plain,
There's the mountain of prayer, I am going up yonder,
And tarry you here till I seek you again."
—*Edmeston.*

Parental Honour! Ver. 12. When, after the delivery of the law on Mount Sinai, the commandments were graven on two tables of stone, this was placed first upon the second. It is the first commandment with promise. A little boy was once asked in school to explain the fifth commandment. Instead of trying to do so, he covered his face with his hands to hide his blushes, and said, "Yesterday I showed a strange gentleman over the mountain, and the sharp stones cut my feet. When the gentleman saw that they were bleeding, he gave me some money to buy shoes. I gave it to mother, for she had no shoes either, and I thought that I could very well go barefoot to honour my mother."

"Thou shalt honour thy mother, whose love unto thee
The greatest of God's earthly blessings shall be."

Filial Faithfulness! Ver. 12. George Washington, when quite young, was about to go to sea as a midshipman. Everything was in readiness. His trunk had been taken on board the boat, and he went to bid his mother farewell. Seeing her distress, he turned to the servant, saying: "Go and tell them to fetch my trunk back, for I will not go away to break my mother's heart." His mother, struck with his decision, and with mingled tears of joy and sorrow, assured him that God would bless him for thus honouring his mother. And the assurance was realised. The name of General Washington is a world-wide word of valiancy, integrity, and piety. We say that "now we see through a glass darkly." Suppose, when all is clear in the eternal world, we discover that had Washington gone to sea he would have met with an untimely—or unhonoured—death, whereas by honouring his mother his days were long in the land of his birth.

"How sweet, when we hear the commandment to say,
'Lord, if THOU wilt help me, I'll strive to obey;
I'll bend down the force of my own stubborn will,
And bid every passionate feeling be still.'"

Filial Folly! Ver. 12. In Deut. xxvii. 16 we read these solemn words: "Cursed be he that setteth light by father or mother." In Proverbs xxx. 17, God speaks in this awful way: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out." In Western Pennsylvania dwelt an Irishman, who had been wealthy at one time. He had an only son, whose wild and wicked ways reduced the father to poverty. With shattered health and fading sight—poor, blind, friendless, and forsaken—the old man found shelter in the Franklin almshouses. One day the wicked and ungrateful son was passing through the city, and was urged to visit his kind father, whom he had ruined. He refused to do so, and proceeded on his journey. A severe storm overtook him, and he caught a severe cold. It fastened on his eyes, from which all sight soon entirely fled. Poverty came; and on the very day that the dead corpse of the father was borne out, his living corpse was borne into the Franklin almshouse. He was put into the same room—died in the same bed—and was borne forth to the same grave.

"Thou shalt honour thy father, the guide of thy youth,
And yield him the homage of love and of truth."

Murder-Memories! Ver. 13. Amongst the numerous converts to God amongst the Red Indians of N.W. America was a great chief, noted for his many savage murders. When brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, his exclamation was, "Oh! why did you not come sooner; and then those whom I have killed would have heard those glad tidings." During a long and useful Christian old age, he frequently lamented the fact that he had by death prevented some of his fellow-creatures from hearing the Gospel's joyful sound. Even in the closing scene of life, his thoughts wandered to these murdered ones, whether he should meet them in the other world. He felt how awful a thing it was, *even in heathen ignorance*, to send a fellow-creature, whether friend or foe, unprepared into eternity. He had never read Shakespeare, but he still could enter into the feelings of Hamlet's ghost, who dwells so much on the fact that he was killed

"With all his sins broad blown,
Unhouselled, unanointed, unannealed."

Passion-Power! Ver. 14. One bright July morning, I was driving to town. As I came to the top of the hill just above the bridge, on the outskirts of the place, a little boy, from a cottage on the north side of the road, fired off a small cannon. He was so near the road, the cannon made so big a noise, and the whole thing came so unexpectedly, that my little bay pony took fright, and shied, with a spring, to the other side of the road. He not only overturned the carriage in doing so, but was with great difficulty reined in and prevented from running away. "You should not fire your cannon so near the road," said I to the boy, after I had got the pony somewhat quiet; "you frightened my horse badly, and nearly made him run away." "I didn't mean to do it," said he, "but it got agoing before I saw the horse, and then I couldn't stop it." I said no more, but drove on, thinking of the boy's answer, as I have often thought of it since, though all this happened years ago. "Couldn't stop it!" How often, when we start "lust," there is no stopping. Do not begin, and the difficulty will not arise It will not get "agoing."

"But if once we let them reign,
They sweep with desolating train,
Till they but leave a hated name,
A ruined soul, a blackened fame."
—*Cook.*

Theft-Tests! Ver. 15. Years ago, in Edinburgh, lived a "gang of body-snatchers." It was common for gipsies to steal children from their homes. The Arabs of East Africa are designated "men-stealers;" while some white traders under the *Southern Cross* are termed kidnappers. All these are regarded as heinous breakers of the Eighth Commandment. But this "eighth of God's moral offspring" may be slain and set at defiance by others. Very recently a man of eminence stole a rare volume from the Metropolitan Library, though he would have cut off his hands rather than steal the money it was worth. He steals, who robs God of the honour due unto His Name; and so does she who plunders her own soul of those precious moments given for solemn preparations for eternity. The self-plunderer thus seriously breaks God's law; how much more, then, the robber of God? To withhold part of the price of our obligations to God is the most aggravated form of theft.

"Higher yet this sin extends;
For it steals the spirit's love
From the very best of Friends—
Robbing e'en the God above."

Theft-Trouble! Ver. 15. Phœbe was tempted along with other girls to gather plums in a neighbouring orchard. On bringing home some of the fruit, her mother mildly reproved her, and said that she ought not to have gathered the plums without leave, because it was *sin*: God had commanded her not to steal. The child, not being sensible of the evil before, seemed greatly surprised, and bursting into tears cried, "I cannot touch these plums." The other children did not seem much concerned, but there was no pacifying Phœbe. She returned the plums to the owner; yet still she was full of grief. To every inquiry, her reply was, "Oh, it was sin" —sin against God. Phœbe never forgot to old age the solemn lesson, "It was sin."

"I must not nurse within my soul
One spark of sin's unhallowed fire;
Or yield my heart to the control
Of aught that speaks a wrong desire."

False-Witness! Ver. 16. This commandment requires us to keep our tongues from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering. In the garden of Eden, Satan bore false witness against God by telling Eve that she would not die if she ate of the forbidden fruit. Every one, therefore, who lies, slanders, or speaks evil of his neighbour, is becoming like Satan. It is said that there is one place in India where, when a person is found guilty of false witness, he is taken to a public place, and in the presence of a multitude of people his mouth is sewed up. It is to be feared that such a penalty inflicted impartially on such offenders in England would produce startling stillness of speech. Still greater would be the silence, were the mouths of all who gave ear

"With greediness, or wittingly their tongues
Made herald to his lies, around him sewed."
—*Pollock.*

Scandal-Seed! Ver. 16. The story is told of a woman who freely used her tongue to the scandal of others, and made confessions to the priest of what she had done. He gave her a

ripe thistle-top, and told her to go out in various directions and scatter the seeds one by one. Wondering at the penance, she obeyed, and returned and told her confessor. To her amazement, he bade her go back and gather the scattered seeds; and when she objected that it would be impossible, he replied that it would be still more difficult to gather up and destroy all the evil reports she had circulated about others. Any thoughtless, careless child, can scatter a handful of thistle-seeds before the wind in a moment, but the strongest and wisest man cannot gather them again. And the "thistle-seeds" need not be of the tongue. False witness is too often borne by

"The hint malevolent, the look oblique,
The obvious satire, or implied dislike,
The sneer equivocal, the harsh reply,
And all the cruel language of the eye."
—*More.*

Covetousness! Ver. 17. In the backwoods of Canada the forests have to be cleared for farms. The trees are cut down, but the roots remain. Efforts have been made to burn them, but this method is only partially successful. Some one has, however, invented a "root extractor," which has huge iron hooks and a crank connected with very powerful machinery. In this way the tough gnarled roots are torn up. The human heart is like the uncleared prairie. It has many twisted roots, and amongst the worst is that of "covetousness." Men, women, and children have these roots in their hearts. Hippocrates, in his letter to Cratena, an herbalist, gives this good counsel: "If it is possible, among other herbs, cut up that weed covetousness by the roots that there be none left; for know this of a certainty, that by so doing your patients will soon be cured in mind and body." Diodorus Siculus relates that the forest of the Pierian mountains being set on fire, and the heat penetrating to the soil, a pure stream of silver gushed forth from the bosom of the earth. The best dissolver of the spirit of covetousness is the fire of gospel love. When it burns up the growth of worldliness, silver lodes of self-denial and devotedness flow out from the human heart; for, says the Bible, out of the heart are the issues of life.

"Is there, then, naught above
That we may covet to possess?
Yes, there's the Saviour's boundless love,
With which He waits my soul to bless."

Law and Love! Ver. 18. The prodigal's father was no Eli, chiding with bated breath. Faithful and monitory were his counsels; urgent and expostulatory were his warnings. Did he love the wayward child less when thus he chided sternly than when he gently seated him at the festive board with its fatted calf? We trow not. The same deep, tender love was there in both; only it differed in expression. When I warn one dear to me from entering on some desperate plunge that must end in peril if not death, is my affection less than when I plunge in to save him? No. And so there is the same love in the law as in the gospel. In the law of Moses, love warns; in the gospel of Messiah, love wins. Both are the true mirror of Him who thus defines His own character, "God is love."

"The Law brought forth her precepts ten,
And then dissolved in grace." —*Erskine.*

Divine Discernment! Ver. 20. The law was in one sense God's "odometer." It reminded men that He could tell when they had gone beyond the boundaries of righteousness. The odometer is a machine something like a clock which can be fastened on to a carriage, and in some way is connected with the motion of the wheels. It is so arranged that it marks off the number of miles travelled over. Two young men hired such a conveyance, not knowing that it had an odometer fastened to it. Having gone ten miles more than the hire, they returned to the stable-yard, where the postmaster asked them how many miles they had been? "Twenty" was the reply. He touched the spring, the cover opened, and there on the face of the instrument the thirty miles were found recorded. The moral law is the odometer divinely fastened to the conscience, and when the journey of life is over, its face will tell how far the conscience has deviated from the way of holiness.

"Law of the Lord most perfect!
And traced in burning light!
How can a fallen rebel
Survive the dreadful sight?"

Divine Design! Ver. 20. The tidal river, below the banks of which a pretty rural village stood, suddenly overflowed with an unusual spring-tide, and sweeping away the low banks for hundreds of yards, poured its rushing waters over the whole district for miles round. Nancy's cottage was one of the first to be surrounded by the roaring torrents, and but for the land sloping behind, it must at once have been swept away as a frail leaf. As it was, the rushing waters made it tremble and almost totter, and to save herself from the fast-rising water within the cottage, she retreated up her little staircase. As step by step the waters rose, she retreated still higher, "wondering what the end would be." Her husband was away in the fields a mile or two distant, and no human help was at hand. "And how did you feel then, Nancy?" I inquired, as we talked together in the evening of that memorable day. "O miss, it was dreadful to hear the rushing of the water come so sudden. But I thought, 'Well, the Lord's here too;' and so I sat on the stairs and sang that verse—

"'This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our Love;
He will send down His heavenly powers
To carry us above.'"

Moral Restraints! Ver. 22–26. No doubt,

says Guthrie, the Law restrains us. But all chains are not fetters, nor are all walls the gloomy precincts of a prison. It is a blessed chain by which the ship, now buried in the trough, and now rising on the top of the sea, rides at anchor and outlives the storm. The condemned criminal in Newgate would give worlds to break his chain, but the sailor trembles lest his should snap. And when the grey morning breaks on the wild lee-shore, all strewn with wrecks and corpses, he blesses God for the good iron that stood the strain.

"Laws do not put the least restraint
Upon our freedom, but maintain it;
Or, if it does, 'tis for our good,
To give us freer latitude." —*Butler.*

CHAPTER XXI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. Judgments.**] Here begins the second part of "The Book of the Covenant" (ch. xxiv. 7), the entire contents of which seem to range themselves thus:—1. Safeguards of worship (ch. xx. 22–26); 2. Safeguards of justice and mercy (ch. xxi. 1–xxiii. 19); 3. Promises, blended with admonitions (ch. xxiii. 20–33). Next to the Ten Commandments stands this "Book," in importance, as the Divinely-laid foundation of Israel's nationality, and as the Magna Charta of the people. Here we see more in detail than in the Ten Commandments, but still in a summary and very comprehensive way, what sort of a nation Israel was laid under the most solemn obligation to become. **6. Unto the judges.**] Heb. *el hâ'elôhim*, literally "unto the gods;" but, according to usage, rather, "unto God," "unto the God," "unto the [living and true] God," or unto "God Himself." No doubt, however, "the judges" are intended. Compare especially (Deut. xix. 17): "Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before Jehovah, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days." In coming unto the priests and judges, they came "unto the judgment seat of God," as the LXX. here renders (*πρὸς τὸ κριτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ*). **7. Not as the men-servants.**] From Deut. xv. 17, 'Kalisch infers that in this place foreign female servants are intended, whereas in that place Hebrew domestics are meant, by which supposition the seeming contradiction is removed.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1–6.

SLAVERY AND SOVEREIGNTY.

The most influential factor in the process of human development has been the written revelation of God; and without that we cannot suppose humanity would have risen to glorious heights. These judgments are part of that revelation, and indicate the gradual methods by which the Almighty educates the nations. God's teachings touch humanity at its lowest point, and are adapted to the state of highest development. These judgments, then, must be considered in their relation to primitive conditions. They are the world's most ancient and most complete repositories of legal enactments. Their spirit is undying, and proclaims infinite wisdom. These judgments of God are the declarations of human rights. We must, in a teachable and impartial spirit, consider these judgments, as severally set forth to the Jews, in their ethical bearings.

I. These judgments dealt **with an existing institution.** The word most commonly employed in the Old Testament in this connection was one meaning slavery in our modern sense. We have, then, the fact that slavery was an admitted institution in the Mosaic economy. The circumstances under which a Hebrew might be reduced to servitude were—(1) poverty; (2) the commission of theft; and (3) the exercise of paternal authority. We cannot explain the divine methods, and do not know how it was that slavery was not at once abrogated by a divine decree. But we see that divine beneficence was revealed in the regulations.

II. This admitted institution does **not sanction modern slavery.** The Mosaic sanction of slavery was a strong support of that institution in the Southern States of America. But a candid inquirer will soon perceive that it had little kinship with that which it claimed for its support. There is in the

divine revelation a spirit ever working to the enfranchisement of the race. The letter is for the time then present, but the spirit is for all time; and it shall operate unceasingly and triumphantly till all forms of oppression are banished from the world. More closely consider the conditions of Mosaic slavery.

III. This system asserted the **slave's personal sovereignty.** Every step in the process will show the absurdity of instituting a comparison between Hebrew slavery and other forms of slavery, in order to make the former sanction human greed and cruelty. In modern systems, the man is a mere chattel, but in the Mosaic system the slave's manhood is declared. He is sovereign over himself, and is allowed the power of choice. The Southern slaveholder would not permit his slave to say, "I will not;" but the Hebrew slave is permitted to say, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free."

IV. This system declared the slave's right **to be a man of feeling.** The man was not to be separated from the wife he had chosen prior to his days of servitude. The slave is here regarded as one capable of loving, and of feeling distress at separation. Even where the wife was the gift of the master, and therefore she and her children the master's property, the servant was not to be forcibly separated; but, under other systems, slaves have been treated as if they did not possess the feelings common to humanity. This part of the Mosaic regulations would not harmonise with the painful scenes which took place at slave marts.

V. This system proclaimed the **slave's right to freedom, and that it is the highest condition.** The Hebrew slave worked on to the day of happy release. This term of service was no longer than a modern apprenticeship. The bells of the seventh year rang out the old order of slavery, and rang in the new glorious order of freedom. "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh year he shall go out free for nothing." "The fixing of the seventh year as the year of emancipation is connected with the sabbatical year, but does not coincide with it." The slave might choose to continue in servitude, but he did not choose the highest state. Such an one must have his ear bored before the judges, as setting forth his subject condition, and as sealing the voluntary compact. But no marks are placed on the person of the free man. "The boring of the ears was among the Orientals a sign of slavery."—*Knobel.*

VI. This system typically **sets forth that the service of love is the highest, and alone enduring.** He only was to serve "for ever" who chose continued servitude on account of love to his master, and love to his wife and his children. The service of love outstrips in dignity and surpasses in duration all other forms of service. Love's bonds are sweet. Its yoke is easy, and its service light. There is a loving service which shall be in the literal sense "for ever" —a service which is highest freedom, and from which the slave will never ask to be liberated. The service of Christ reaches beyond death, and is coeval with eternity.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

In considering generally the judgments of that part of the "Book of the Covenant" (xxiv. 3–7) contained in Exodus, chaps. xxi.–xxiii., three things must be borne in mind.

1. That God was legislating for *Jews*, and had to deal with such materials as existed and to make the best of them. Remember (1) The Jews were contaminated by their contact with and bondage under the Egyptians, and these were familiar with and contracted those habits which these judgments were intended to abolish or control. And (2) How needful a special and minute legislation was, their characteristics through many centuries of their history amply show (cf. Matt. xix. 8).

2. That this legislation was founded on great moral principles and was referable to them (Exodus xx. 1–17).

3. That this legislation as such (1) was not *final*. Many of the enactments, *e.g.*, those respecting slavery, contemplated a special state of things and made provision for their removal. And (2) it had respect to a legislation higher and final to which it was preparatory (Deut. xviii. 15; Gal. iii. 24; Heb. viii. 6, 7–13). (3) With *that* legislation therefore *this* must be compared.

Chapter xxi. exhibits (i.) God's care for the slave (1–11, 16, 26, 27); (ii.) God's indignation against the unfilial spirit (15, 17); (iii.) God's disapprobation of the use of brute force (18, 19); (iv.) God's regard for the safety of man and beast.

God's Care for the Slave.

1. Slavery was an established institution, and thus was only recognised and not established by the Mosaic law.

2. Humanly speaking, its entire abolition at this period was impossible or at least impracticable. (1.) Subsequent history shows how difficult it was to repress customs far less rooted in the Hebrew mind. (2.) In the wars in which the Israelites were engaged, it was the only alternative to extermination. (3.) In a condition of society where a labouring class was unknown, in many cases it was the only alternative to want (Lev. xxv. 25). (4.) Under circumstances where imprisonment was impossible, it was the only alternative for a criminal to a harsher fate (Exodus xxiii. 3).

3. עֶבֶד conveyed a very different meaning to δοῦλος, or *servus* or *serf* or *thrall* or *slave*. It implied a position of trust, and dealt rather with the duties of the servant than the right of the master.

4. Those who make a difficulty of Old Testament slavery should remember—(1.) That this is the first, and for centuries the only, attempt to legislate on behalf of the slave. (2.) That this attempt stands *first* among those judgments which regulated political and social life. And (3.) that if fairly carried out it meant the eventual and effectual extinction of slavery, and the establishment of the right of man as man.

5. That bondage could scarcely have been very intolerable from which its subjects should so seldom endeavour to escape (1 Sam. xxv. 10; 1 Kings ii. 39).

The other subjects connected with Old Testament slavery will be dealt with in their proper place in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The present passage deals with *Hebrew* slaves.

I. With regard to the **slave** himself we notice—(1.) That his term of service was limited. In the sabbatic year (not literally six years) he was to be free (ver. 2.) (2.) Then he was to be made free, legally and without cost, "for nothing." (3.) That the service might be of such a character, that, through love of his master or his family, it might be preferable to freedom (ver. 5). (4.) That so precious and divine was liberty, a special enactment was necessary to enable the slave to forego his right to it (ver. 5, 6). (5.) That fair play might be observed all round, this preference of slavery to freedom must be expressed in the most judicial, public, and solemn manner (ver. 6). (6.) That with regard to woman (with the exception noted in Deut. xv. 12, 13) she could only become a slave on the condition of marriage with her master or his son, in which case all the rights and privileges of wedlock under all circumstances must be respected, or else her unconditional freedom must be granted (vers. 7–11). (7.) That no man could be kidnapped and sold for a slave under penalty of death for the manstealer (ver. 16). (8.) That the life and limb of the slave must be respected under severe penalties. (*a*) If he died under chastisement, the master might be indicted for murder (ver. 20, cf. ver. 12). (*b*) If he was maimed in the slighest degree, he was entitled to freedom (vers. 26, 27).

All this minute legislation was for the *benefit of the slave*.

II. With regard to the **slaveholder**—(1.) He was entitled at most to six years of

service. (2.) Only by the free consent of the slave, and the authorities, could he retain his services for one moment longer. (3.) In the case of punishment inflicted on the slave, only unless the victim survived it two days, did the owner escape the charge of murder, and even then the loss of a valuable servant was no small penalty. A great deal has been made of this last case (vers. 20, 21). But (1) it argues a strong public sentiment on behalf of the slave, and implies that indignation might rise so high as to be difficult to repress. (2) The slave might not die wholly from this cause, and since it might be beyond the power of the master to prove his innocence, the law provides that he should have the benefit of the doubt. (3) The master *was* punished if guilty by the loss of valuable service, which was equivalent to money. (4) Why should "He is his money" be interpreted more literally than "Time is money"? In conclusion—

I. If God cared for the Hebrew slave He will care for the Christian servant.

II. If it was the duty of the Hebrew slave to serve his master with that diligence and affection which this legislation implies, how much more is it obligatory on the Christian servant?

III. If the Hebrew master were amenable to God's laws, and if those laws distinctly contemplated his relation to his dependent, how much more should he, who himself "serves the Lord Christ," obey His laws who said, "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren"?—*J. W. Burn.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1–6. Penalties as well as laws God would have made known to His people.

It concerns all Israel to know the judgments of God as well as His laws.

Notwithstanding all the general laws given to men, God has reserved some special judgments for His Church.

Amongst the judgments given to the Church, God has provided much concerning servants.

Servants in the Church must do faithful service for their time.

God in judgment delivers men to certainty of servitude when they choose it.

God's judgments, about corporal bondage and freedom, should remind us about our spiritual: to hate slavery and love freedom.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7–11.

The Rights of the Female Slave.

This passage is somewhat obscure, and in its interpretation we find comparatively little help from the Commentators. It treats of that state of concubinage which was assumed and provided for by the law of Moses. "The natural desire of offspring was, in the Jew, consecrated into a religious hope, which tended to redeem concubinage from the debasement into which the grosser motives for its adoption might have brought it."

I. The Israelitish daughter as **servant and concubine**. On account of poverty the Israelite sold his daughter, not merely as a slave, but with the hope that ultimately she would become the wife of her master, or of his son. In this respect she is not to be treated as a male slave. She is not to be sent out in the seventh year, but remain as one of the members of the family. Practically she has become a concubine, and if her rights are respected, it is far better for her to remain in the house of her master, than to go out free as did the manservant in the seventh year. "She shall not go out as the menservants do." The master must not follow mere caprice. Lust must be checked. She has rights which must be respected.

II. Her rights **when betrothed unto the master**. He has no power to deal

with her as he lists, even though she be evil in his eyes. "If she please not her master, then shall he let her be redeemed." The father may redeem her by paying back either the whole or part of the purchase money. The master has no power to sell her unto a strange nation. "The Greek, too, did not sell a Greek slave to go beyond the boundary of the land" (Knobel). Her lot would be more severe in a strange land than in her own country. To sell her into a strange land would be to deal unjustly by her. This would be to increase the injustice, if, after having dealt deceitfully with her, he were to sell her unto a strange nation.

III. Her rights when **betrothed unto the son.** "And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters." "As his son's concubine, she is to be regarded by him as a daughter." The servile merged in the connubial relation, and her children would be free.

IV. Her rights if **displaced by another.** "If he take him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish." If the master take another wife for the son, then the concubine's domestic rights must remain inviolate. She must have her proper food, her fitting raiment, and her recognised seat and resting-place in the house as a lawful concubine.

V. The concubine's remedy if her **rights are not regarded.** "And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money." She becomes a free woman, and the master can get no compensation. Learn that the weakest have rights which must be regarded—and that masters must conduct themselves so as to promote the welfare of the community and the consolidation of the nation.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 7–11. It is a great hardness of heart to sell children for the advantage of men to unnatural fathers.

God's special judgments take care for daughters, as the weaker sex, before men. God will not have any to make merchandise of the children of the Church.

Man's deceitfulness occasions God's faithfulness to provide for His oppressed children.

God's judgments determine all relations justly to be used, servants as servants, children as children.

God's justice appears in legal freedom, and His goodness to the Gospel-freedom under Christ our head.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12–14.

CASES OF HOMICIDE.

A rude state of society requires rough measures for the repression of crime and for the preservation of social order; and in considering the stern severity of the Mosaic code, we must try to project ourselves into that aboriginal state of society, and pronounce our judgments accordingly. Laws which were required in those early times ought not to be needful in these days. It is well that, through the spread of Gospel principles, justice is being more and more tempered by mercy. But mercy must not be allowed to supplant justice. And there is a danger lest in our pity for the man we restrain justice with regard to the criminal.

I. *Homicide in* **effect.**—The first case is that of the man who strikes his fellow; strikes in anger, but not with a murderous intention, and yet death is the result of the angry blow. Such a man shall be surely put to death. This is one of the most severe cases of punishment in those early periods. But it is a stern practical comment upon the New Testament words, "He that hateth his brother

is a murderer." Let us then learn to avoid angry feelings towards our brother men. Anger in the heart gives unconscious malicious power to the will. The blow directed by an angry man may be more severe than his better self would approve. The man, then, is responsible for the effects of his anger, even though these effects are more disastrous than he intended. The preservation of the physical life is important, but much more the preservation of the moral life in all its purity.

II. *Homicide by* mistake.—If a man kill his fellow, not in consequence of an angry blow, but by reason of a stroke given through mischance, then there is to be merciful provision for his safety. If a man kill his fellow through misadventure, then the city of refuge is to be opened for his reception. And cities of refuge were afterwards provided. Into those cities the avenger of blood could not enter. And in the final adjustment of human affairs, merciful consideration will be dealt out to those who have done vast mischief by mistake; upon sins of ignorance will fall the blessed light of Divine mercy. Embrace the glorious truth that through the sternest code the Divine love cannot help revealing its gracious tendencies.

III. *Homicide by* design.—The last mentioned, in verse fourteen, is a case of real murder. Here are all the marks of the murderer. There is the breaking through, in ebullient rage, the sacred restraints which protect one's neighbour as God's image. There is to be no hope for such a man. He is even to be torn away from God's altar. Death is to be his portion. It is a strange fact that through all times, with very few exceptions, the Mosaic law of death for death has so largely prevailed. A few monarchs have abolished capital punishment; but soon the stern decree has been re-enacted. It is sad to hang a man, but in saying this we seem to forget that it is a sadder thing to murder a man. The sufferer of capital punishment has not such severe measure dealt out to him as the victim who has suddenly been deprived of life. The repression of crime, and not revenge, is the purpose of wisely-constructed and justly-administered penal codes; and if the abolition of capital punishment tend to the diminution of murder, then we do not see that the Bible stands in the way of such a course. Learn the exceeding preciousness of life. How awful to kill the body! More awful still the conduct of those who go about to destroy moral life! It is dreadful to be a soul murderer. Life is God's most sacred gift. He bestows largely for its unfolding. He provides many safeguards for its preservation.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12–14. The life of man is dear to God to preserve it; man is God's image.

Pride, presumption, and treachery, make men truly murderers.

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

God's Indignation against the Unfilial Spirit.—*Verses* 15–17.

Nothing is more marked, in Old Testament and New Testament alike, than the imperative character of parental claims and filial duties. A special law incorporated in the *moral* code deals with this subject. These rights and duties arise from the peculiar relation in which parents stand between their children and God. God, through the parent, gives existence to the child, and makes through the same medium provision for its protection and nurture, and the supply of its moral, intellectual, and physical necessities. Parents must be regarded, therefore, as God's delegated authorities, and must be respected as such. Offences against them God treats as offences against Himself, and punishes them as such. Our text deals with (1) the unfilial spirit in two aspects; and (2) with

its uniform punishment. Some excellent remarks on this subject and the Rabbinical treatment of it will be found in an article by Dr. Ginsburg in "Cassell's Bible Educator," vol. i. pp. 153.

I. The unfilial spirit in two aspects.

1. He that *smiteth* his father or his mother (v. 15). (1.) A child may smite his parent *literally*, as in the case of those brutes we read of in the newspapers every week. (2.) A child may smite his parents' *authority* by rebellion in thought, word, or deed; *e.g.*, Absalom. (3.) A child may smite his parents' *wealth* by extravagance or carelessness; *e.g.*, ancient and modern spendthrifts. (4.) A child may smite his parents' *character* by an incautious revelation of domestic secrets. (5.) A child may smite his parents' *health* and, by misconduct, bring their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; *e.g.*, Joseph's brethren. (6.) A child may smite his parents' *heart*, and break it by disobedience and wilfulness; *e.g.*, sons of Eli.

In all these instances (2–6) a child may effectually smite his parents' without lifting a finger.

2. "He that curseth (*lit.* revileth) his father or his mother." (1.) A child may revile his parents by an assertion of *personal independence;* as in the case of the prodigal *demanding* his portion of goods and taking his journey into a far country. (2.) A child may revile his parents by speaking *of* them in a careless and irreverent way. What else is it when a youth refers to his father as "the governor," and to his mother as the "old lady"? (3.) A child may revile his parents by speaking *to* them in a familiar or impertinent way. (4.) A child may revile his parents by treating their counsels with contempt; and (5.) Alas! a child may revile his parents by cursing them to their face.

II. The uniform punishment of the unfilial spirit.—"Shall surely be put to death." The letter of this condemnation is now repealed, but its spirit lives on through the ages.

1. An unfilial child *dies to the respect of civilised* society. All the unwritten codes of humanity agree in condemning it as an unpardonable sin to treat one's parents with disrespect.

2. An unfilial child is *morally dead.* If the sign of the moral life is "love of the brethren," how dead must he be in whom filial respect and love is extinct! It would be easy to show (1) how all that deserves the name of intelligence, (2) veneration, (3) natural affection, and all the higher faculties of the soul, are utterly destroyed before a man can "smite" or "revile" his father or his mother.

3. An unfilial child, inasmuch as he breaks a moral law, and a law that partakes of the qualities of both tables and combines them, *dies in a more terrible sense.* "The soul that sinneth" (sin is the transgression of the law) "it shall die."

In conclusion—(1.) A word to parents. "Provoke not your children unto wrath." Don't do anything calculated to excite those distempers which may express themselves in "smiting" or "reviling"; but "train them up in the way they should go," "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (2.) A further word to children. "Obey and honour your parents in all things in the Lord." If there is anything you may deem objectionable, remember (*a*) your own inexperience, and (*b*) your indebtedness to those who have given you life and who have preserved and provided for it till now.

PARENT-SMITERS AND MEN-STEALERS.

We do not observe any deep metaphysical or psychological reasons for the order and number of these laws. There does not seem to be any great regard for logical order in the Hebrew spirit. We may simply discover the instructive and very suggestive circumstance that the three crimes mentioned in these verses

are placed in the same category, and have meted out to them the same awful penalty. Thus, it appears that the man who curses his father or his mother is no better than the man-stealer. And in this respect the social code of Christian England is scarcely equal to the moral code of the Mosaic economy. It is not indeed to be deplored that the penalty of death is less frequently inflicted in these times than in the days of the past; but it is to be lamented that reverence for parents is not now-a-days a virtue very strenuously insisted upon. We should not now think of placing the curser of parents, or even the smiter of parents, on the same level with the man-stealer. Those who make a trade of kid-napping are now reprobated; but cursers of fathers and of mothers are at least not regarded as criminals, if indeed they are not welcomed into good society. There is, however, a similarity of spirit in the two characters. There is a closer connection between the curser of parents and the man-stealer than we may at first imagine. Let us study them together, as placed before us in Holy Writ, and learn to avoid the evils.

I. The crime of cursing father or mother. The order now proposed for discussion as logical is to commence with cursing father or mother, then smiting father or mother, and then man-stealing. This crime of cursing father or mother is one of the letters of the Mosaic economy that has been in too large a measure dropped out of the moral alphabet of modern society. There is a needs be that it stand out in brighter colours. It is not by any means a desirable circumstance that, practically, we are behind the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Egyptians in this particular. We read out to our children the words, "Honour thy father and thy mother," but society does not on a large scale reprobate those who curse their fathers and their mothers. There are fathers and mothers who entail upon their children a heritage of woe; and we must feel pity for such children, and not be very much surprised if there is a tendency to curse their parents. It is difficult for us to be hard upon those children whose parents, either by their folly or by their wickedness, have entailed upon them a depraved physical or moral nature. Oh, let us be gentle in our speech towards those whose parents have been vile, reckless, and worthless! What a severe lot it is for those children whose homes are the abodes of wretchedness, or the hot-beds of crime! Still, crime in others is no excuse for our crimes. Cursing father or mother is to be condemned under all circumstances. (*a.*) It is to be condemned, *for it is a reflection upon the human authors of our being.* And thus it is in a sense a reflection upon God Himself. Instead of thanking God for our creation, we are practically cursing God that ever we were born. There is a great deal in life for which to be thankful; and most shun the process of giving up life. Why, then, should we curse those who have brought us into life? Why should we curse the dear mother whose gentle voice has hushed our sorrowful wailing into peaceful slumbers? Why should we curse the father whose strong hand has shielded from danger and ministered to our necessities? (*b.*) It is to be condemned, *for it is a disparagement of God's vicegerent.* If there is any being in this world placed by God in a position of authority, it is the father. He is the type of the eternal Father. He is God's true representative on earth. The house is his kingdom, and the children are his subjects, and he has an undoubted right to sway the sceptre of a divinely-constituted authority. How great, then, is the crime of that child who curses his father; who despises God's representative; who resists the lawful control of God's vicegerent! Is it much to be wondered at that the penalty for this crime in that early society was death? (*c.*) It is to be condemned, *for it is a subversion of the good order of society.* The family constitution is the primal form of government. All true governments are but its development. The true ideal of a nation is that of a family of which the king is the head and father. And our kingdom is established for this, among other reasons, that the throne is built upon the thrones set up in happy English homes. Rightly

conducted family life is essential to national life and national prosperity. Rebellion in the household is rebellion in the nation. Cursing the father leads to cursing the king. Anarchy in the home means anarchy in the state, and destruction to the community. We have regretted the fact that we seem behind some other nations in not branding the cursing of parents as a crime of deepest dye; but we have to rejoice in the salutary influence of so many Christian homes, which have been the safeguard of our nation; and we are extremely jealous lest the safeguard should be removed or its power diminished.

II. The crime of **smiting** father or mother. The man who curses his parents is the man who is prepared to smite them when the occasion arises. That father cannot safely trust himself to that grown-up son who has ventured to curse, and thus shown his contempt for the parental authority. Under certain circumstances it may be right for the father to smite his son. There may be too much leniency, as well as too much severity, in the family; some modern fathers appear to have lost faith in the wisdom of Solomon's proverbs. They spare the rod, and by bitter experience find that the child is spoiled. The father who never smites his son may thank God if that son never smites him. However, never use the rod in anger. Administer chastisement in the spirit of prayer, for the child's good, and for the maintenance of authority. But it is not right for the son to smite the father. The son had better suffer undeserved physical injury than venture to smite his father or his mother. The reasons adduced for the condemnation of those who curse their parents, are still more cogent when applied to those hardened children who smite their parents. What a wretch is he who smites the mother that has given of her life for the promotion of his life; who has poured out all the vast wealth of her nature in order to nurture up to glorious manhood. The penalty of death for this crime has no place in our civil code; but the man who smites his father or his mother will find that the stroke has a recoil sooner or later. Years may elapse between the act of smiting and the fact of being smitten. But the return stroke, though long delayed, at last shall come with fearful pains. Better suffer thy right hand to be amputated than use it to strike thy father or thy mother.

III. The crime of **man-stealing**. We have seen that slavery was allowed to continue; but man-stealing was made subject to the penalty of death. Even in those rude states of society God taught the great lesson that He had made of one blood men of different nations, as well as men of the same nation. It is a crime to steal a man's property. It is a crime to steal a man's character by villanous slander. But the crime of crimes is to steal a man's person. It is a striking fact that this Mosaic enactment has been exerting a powerful influence from age to age; and it has so worked that the kidnapper has never for long occupied a respectable position in society; and the time is fast hastening when the word may be eliminated from our language, and kindred words from all other languages. So great is this crime that the Apostle Paul numbers the men-stealers amongst those lawless and disobedient ones with special reference to whom the law is made. So great is this crime that there is in every rightly-constituted nature—yea, in every man not deeply sunk in sin and thoroughly hardened by iniquity—an instinctive horror of and shrinking from the man-stealer. Executioners appointed by human governments may not now put the man-stealer to death; but his doom is sealed. Fearful is the outlook. Unless he truly repent and forsake his way, his lamp too shall go out in fearful darkness. And the man who smites his father or his mother without any feeling of remorse, and without an earnest effort to restrain himself, is quite prepared to become the man-stealer when the opportunity presents itself; his depravity is sufficiently great to avail himself of the offered power of kidnapping his fellows.

Lessons.—(1.) These three crimes taken together are suggestive of the *genesis of crime*. There is the indulgence of evil thinking, then this grows into evil

speaking, and then comes evil acting. Inward cursing grows into outward cursing, and this culminates in crime of physical violence. The man who permits himself to curse his father inwardly, will not be long before he curses outwardly. In this respect cursing and smiting follow closely upon one another. And the man who smites his father or his mother is prepared to smite anybody else if there be provocation sufficient and no dread of consequences. The children who forsake their parents, when those parents are God-fearing, commence a downhill course from which return is difficult. (2.) Gives a *word of caution to parents.* So live, and work; and pray that your children may not curse you, but have good reason to bless your memories. And, parents, remember that in after years children may think they have reason to curse you for being too indulgent as well as for being too severe. (3.) Gives a *word of caution to children.* The wrongdoing of parents is no justification for the wrongdoing of children. Most likely a more severe penalty awaits the child who has been favoured with many privileges and has abused them, than the child whose privileges have been few, and who has accordingly gone astray. Do not dwell upon what your parents might have done for you if they had been different or had acted differently; but reflect upon the more pleasing part of their dealings with you. And try to make the best of unpropitious circumstances. He is the best general who knows how to retrieve mistakes. He is the world's hero who fights his way through and surmounts difficulties, and achieves moral victories.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11-19.

GOD'S DISAPPROBATION OF BRUTE FORCE.—*Verses* 22–25.

I. One of the great underlying principles and fundamental axioms of the Mosaic legislation was **the sanctity of human life.** Hence the number of hedges and guards by which it was surrounded.

1. Life is everywhere regarded as the *gift of God.* It is therefore taken for granted that He alone has a right to interfere with it or take it away.

2. Life is everywhere regarded as *given for the express purpose of promoting the Creator's glory, and fulfilling those duties which He has laid down.* To injure or destroy that life, therefore, is to make it fail of the end for which it was given.

3. Life, therefore, is to be *protected from*—(1) *attacks* which would inflict a temporary injury upon it, under the penalty of remuneration for loss of time and medical attendance (vers. 18, 19); or, according to the *lex talionis* (vers. 22–25), and which might become (2) *murder*, in which case the punishment was death.

4. Life, however, was *so precious* that even the manslayer, if his crime was accidental, might have an opportunity for clearing himself (ver. 13); thus in the wilderness, anticipating the cities of refuge (Numb. xxxv.; Deut. iv., xix.; Josh. xx.)

5. But life was *so sacred* that even the sanctuary was no protection to the deliberate murderer (ver. 14.) (See 1 Kings i. 50, ii. 28; Lev. iv. 7).

II. **This principle, properly applied, means the extinction of all strife, whether between individuals or nations.** There may be circumstances under which personal encounter or national war may be justifiable, as when rights are invaded or the helpless oppressed. But, in the great majority of cases, quarrels may be settled by arbitration or mutual concession. At any rate, this grand principle of the sanctity of human life, if acted on all round, would discourage all violence and inaugurate the era of universal peace and good will towards man.

GOD DISAPPROVES OF BRUTE FORCE.

I. Because it is **beneath the true dignity of man.** Such contests as described in the text are the outcome of the animal and lower part of our nature (Jas. iv.

1, 2), and reduce man to the level of the beast. But God has given man reason, discretion, self-control; and fighting degrades the man. This applies (1) to what, by a solemn irony, is described as the "noble (?) art of self-defence;" (2) to the vast majority of those wars undertaken to gratify an individual's or a nation's lust of glory, revenge, or spoil.

II. Because it is **unnatural**. Humanity is a brotherhood. "God has made of one blood all the nations of men." Therefore men should be prepared (1) to make concessions; (2) to forgive; (3) to live in peace and unity together.

III. Because it is **dangerous**—

1. To the *victor* in the struggle. (1.) He may disable his adversary, and have to pay a heavy indemnification (18, 19). (2.) He may have to pay with his life the murderer's forfeit (ver. 12). 2. To the vanquished. It may mean (*a*) serious injury, or (*b*) death.

IV. Because **no worthy object is gained.** Strength, time, skill, money, and, it may be, life are expended for what? Merely the ascendency of the strongest and the compulsory subjection of the weak.

V. Because it is eminently **unchristian.** "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

1. It is *contrary to the example of Christ*, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again (1 Pet. ii. 23), and who "did not strive."

2. It is *contrary to the precept of Christ.* "Love one another;" "Love your enemies;" "They that use the sword shall perish by the sword;" "My kingdom is not of this world else would My servants fight."

3. It is *contrary to the whole body of Christian teaching.* Paul (2 Tim. ii. 24; Heb. xii. 14); Peter (1 Epis. iii. 8–11); James (iii. 13–16), Jude (Ep. 9); and as for John every chapter in his epistles is against it. This principle applies (I.) To the *dogmatist.* (II.) To the *controversialist.* The instrument need not be fist or stones. God disapproves of the employment of—(i.) force of intellect; (ii.) fluency of speech; (iii.) power of lung when exerted against moral principles.—*J. W. Burn.*

Strivers and Smiters.—*Verses* 18–27.

There is in this passage no punishment appointed for the mere striver. He is simply held responsible for any evil consequences that may ensue from the strife. So that he who would be on the safe side, as regards either the being injured or being the cause of injury to another, must learn to "walk honestly, as in the day;—not in strife and envying." For mental strife stirreth up anger; and this leadeth to physical strife; and this to violent smiting; and this sometimes terminates in death. "He loveth transgression that loveth strife."

I. The striver who **injures** his **opponent.** The man smitten with a stone in a contention, and forced to take to his bed, is entitled to compensation. The smiter must pay for the loss sustained during enforced absence from work, and must also be responsible for all the injured man's medical requirements. Acts have consequences, and men are to be held responsible for such consequences. On this principle we still proceed in great measure; and especially is this true when the consequences are immediate. Move with caution. Let every deed be the result of prayerful deliberation. Who can tell what the deed of to-day may produce in the far off to-morrow?

II. The smiter who **injures** his **servant.** The man who smites his servant or his maid with a rod, and causes death, is to be surely punished. It is plain that capital punishment is not to be inflicted on this smiter; for it is left to the discretion of the judges to award the damages. If capital punishment were

intended, it is strange that it is not stated, as in the foregoing passages. Perhaps the term "rod" is here employed designedly; for where an iron was used malicious intention was supposed, and death was the punishment where death was caused. If, however, the injured servant continue a day or two, the striker shall not be punished; for the servant is the master's money. The master suffers the loss of his servant's services, and therefore receives sufficient punishment. If the servant or the maid lose either an eye or a tooth, through being struck by the master, then the servant or maid so suffering is entitled to liberty as a compensation. Such is the merciful provision for the slave's physical welfare. A tooth is but a small price to pay for liberty. Many slaves have risked their lives in order to purchase the precious boon of freedom. Even the physical part of man's nature is important. A slave's body is God's workmanship, and must be treated with respect.

III. The striver who injures a pregnant woman. Very often women meddle with the strifes of husbands or brothers. It is natural that women should seek to separate the contending parties. And if such women get injured in their efforts, we sometimes say it serves them right for interfering. But the Mosaic code did not so affirm; and we think rightly. Strivers should be held responsible for the results of their quarrels. It would greatly alter the condition of things if warlike strivers could be held responsible for the results of their contentions. As the result of the pregnant woman suffering permanent injury we have an enforcement of the law of retaliation. In rude states of society we may proceed on the principle of an eye for an eye, &c.; but we may aspire to and work up to a state of society, thoroughly permeated with Gospel principles, where all the members of the state will be members of Christ's mystical body—when this law shall vanish, and the higher laws of Christian love and forbearance shall be in full operation. It will then be an easy thing not to resist evil, for this will be reduced to a minimum. And, till those Elysian days appear, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 18–27. Passion and contention breed very bad events amongst neighbours.

Not only death, but the injury of man, God desires to prevent.

It is just with God that he who wounds must look to the healing of his neighbours.

Security and prosperity of creatures is the end of God's judgments against violent men. The lives and comforts of the poorest slaves are dear to God, and secured by Him.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 28–36.

GOD'S REGARD FOR THE SAFETY OF MAN AND BEAST.—*Verses* 28–36.

This is an extension of the principle maintained in the preceding section,—the sanctity of human life. So sacred is it, that it is not merely to be protected from injury or murder, but from accident. And not only human but animal life. Even that must not be sacrificed carelessly. Then—

I. God cares for the safety of man.

1. If an ox injured a man for the first time, the life of the ox only was forfeited (ver. 28). But 2. If the owner of the ox, acquainted with the proved

vicious character of his beast, neglected to put him under restraint, and the ox killed his victim as culpably negligent, (1) the owner was put to death; or (2) his life commuted for a fine.

II. God cares for the safety of the beast. Other scriptures demonstrate this (Matt. vi. 26; &c.).

1. In the case of a beast falling into an unprotected pit (or *well*), the penalty was adequate remuneration for the loss (vers. 33, 34). 2. In the event of an ox exhibiting vicious propensities for the first time, both the ox and its victim were to be sold and the proceeds equally divided; but after its proved viciousness, the owner for culpable carelessness was to bear the entire loss.

None but a superficial mind will deem this legislation trivial. It involves important principles recognised in all civilised codes. The application is, that God's regard, as expressed in the law, should be man's as expressed in action. The Jew, in the literal case before us, must put a wall round his pits or wells, or cover them in some way and "keep in" his intractable bulls: the Christian, in practical life, must adopt *every precaution* necessary for the safety of his neighbour or his neighbour's property. Hence there are matters about which a man may not simply consult his own interest. God and society demand that we consult the interest of others. Thus selfishness is checked, and provision made for harmony and peace and safety between man and man. The text suggests—

I. That provision for the safety of others should be made. We must not argue that others are able to take care of themselves, and if they walk into danger it is their own fault. No, the Christian law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." We may be able to walk amidst the dangers of our own field with impunity, because we are familiar with them, and are armed against them. Our neighbour may not be. Wherefore, "If eating flesh or drinking wine," &c. "Destroy not thy brother for whom Christ died."

II. That this provision should be made promptly. We must not argue that it will be time to adopt precautions when we see our neighbour coming. No, Christian life must be regulated by the principle that "prevention is better than cure." We are not at liberty to wait till the accident has occurred. Life is too short, and too valuable, for such experiments. We save life equally by prevention as by rescue. There may be no conspicuous heroism in taking precautions, but God counts it as very acceptable service. Davy did more for humanity by inventing his simple lamp than he would by daring attempts to rescue hundreds of victims from exploded mines. And so it is better by far to save a man from moral ruin than by indefatigable attempts to save him when ruined.

III. That this provision should be permanent. That accidents are exceptional does not alter the case. Most of the permanent arrangements of life are made to meet exceptional cases. A house is not built for weather, which with us is pretty uniformly mild; but so as to stand the severe stress of occasional torrents and winds. A shipbuilder does not contemplate the fair weather; but the exceptional storm. So our neighbour may be calling, or his ox straying, at any moment. The visit may be uncertain, but the uncertainty is permanent. So should be our means of meeting it. Be prepared, therefore, for accidents, and make sure in case of uncertainties. And depend upon this, he who is careful about his neighbour will be equal to any emergency that may occur respecting himself.

Application—(i.) Beware of injuring your neighbour's soul by any unguarded inconsistency. (ii.) Beware of injuring your neighbour's friendship by any unguarded passion. (iii.) Beware of injuring your neighbour's character by any unguarded word. (iv.) Beware of injuring your neighbour's peace by any unguarded look or action. (v.) In all matters concerning your neighbour, remem-

ber that "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."—*J. W. Burn.*

The Penalties of Carelessness.

In a nomadic state of society, great care is required in the management of cattle, if interests are not to clash, if the welfare of the community is to be promoted. Even when the children of Israel reached the Promised Land, there would be still need for caution, and great precision in the laying down of laws. The wise foresight of the legislator is seen in these particular laws with reference to dangerous cattle.

I. Life is superior to property.—The ox that had gored a man to death was to be killed, and put out of the way. His flesh was not to be eaten. The ox is stoned to death; and, legally, it would involve physical uncleanness to eat of the flesh. Is there Old Testament symbolism in this fact? Does the ox symbolise the murderer? Does the Almighty thus in a most significant manner set forth the awfulness of murder? This, however, may be safely inferred, that property should ever be subordinate to life. What a pity that this noble principle of the Mosaic code is not more fully carried out in modern days! We rightly slaughter cattle to prevent the spread of disease; but the farmer would object to have an ox slaughtered because it had unfortunately gored a man to death. There is still at work in modern society the influence of this mistaken principle,—the omnipotence of property. We need to learn the preciousness of human life.

II. The careless man is culpable.—If the animal had been known to gore; if this fact had been testified to the owner, and proper precautions had not been taken, then the owner was in some measure participant in the evil doings of the vicious creature. Carelessness is culpable. He that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. To prevent evil by wise precaution is our bounden duty, and is an indirect method of doing good. There are degrees of carelessness, and degrees of guilt. The man may so conduct himself as to declare that he rather rejoiced in the ox's murderous tendency; and, if so, the man must not only have his ox killed, but he himself is to be put to death. But there may be mitigating circumstances about the owner's conduct. The sufferers may take a lenient view of the transaction. Then the owner of the ox shall give a proper ransom for the life which has been forfeited, whether son or daughter. But if it be a manservant or a maidservant that is killed, then thirty shekels of silver shall be given to the master; which was probably the usual market price of a slave. All life is precious; but it seems to be indicated that some lives are more precious than others. Thirty shekels is a high price for some; but a hundred shekels would be a low price for others. After death has visited, then estimates nearer the truth of a man's worth will be formed.

III. Man is responsible for preventable evil.—If into the uncovered pit an ox or an ass fall, the owner of the pit shall make good the damage. He shall pay the price of the animal so killed; and receive the dead beast, of which he could only use the skin, and other such parts. The flesh was unclean. If we leave a pit uncovered we must take the consequences. Will the Almighty hold us responsible for the moral pits we have left uncovered? We have not placed precautionary signals in sufficient number along those highways where moral pits and quagmires abound.

IV. Community of interest.—In the Jewish polity men were not to be allowed to consider their own interests as paramount. They were to consider the welfare of others. The man, whose ox had killed the ox of another, was in a measure responsible for the loss occasioned. The goring ox was to be sold, and thus removed out of the sight of those to whom it had rendered itself obnoxious.

And the money got for the living ox was to be divided; and the dead ox also they shall divide. It is likely that the dead ox had gored. But if the ox had been known to gore aforetime, then the owner must pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own. The master must be watchful over the very cattle that he owns. He must have respect to the welfare of his neighbour. Let us feel that we have interests in common. The prosperity of one is the prosperity of all in a degree. In the long run there can be no individual interests separate from the interests of the whole community. Selfishness is self-defeating and suicidal. If there cannot be community of goods, there must always be community of interests—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXI.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Moral Law! Ver. 1. Travelling some Alpine pass, where the narrow road, cut out of the face of the rock, hangs over a frightful gorge, it is with friendly eyes you look on the wall that restrains your restive steed from backing into the gulf below. Such are the restraints God's law imposes—no other. It is a fence from evil—nothing else. Men hate the Divine restrictions as the madman raves against the padded walls which save him from deeds of horror. Thank God, our hearts are not left to themselves.

"For wholesome laws preserve us free,
By stinting of our liberty."—*Butler.*

Slavery-Bias! Ver. 2. Martin says that slavery, both Indian and Negro, that blighting upas which has been the curse of the West Indies, has accompanied the white colonist—whether Spaniard, Frenchman, or Briton—in his progress, tainting like a plague every incipient association, and blasting the efforts of man, however well disposed, by its demon-like influences over the natural virtues with which the Creator has endowed him; leaving all cold, and dark, and desolate within. But his limitation is unjust to the "pale-faces," for black and red and white skins have been alike addicted to enslaving their fellows. In Germany, England, and Russia a modified kind of slavery has existed. In the last-named country it was only a few years ago that the masses of serfs were emancipated. Although the serfs of Russia, the old villeins of England, and the like, could hardly be denominated slaves in the sense in which that word is understood to apply to the Roman slave, or to the modern African slave; yet there is no doubt that these servants of feudal chiefs worked for their masters, and were sold by them, very much as the modern serf.

"Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys;
And worse than all, and most to be deplored,
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes."—*Cowper.*

Slave-Trade! Ver. 2. It has been suggested that a great distinction lies between "slavery" and the "slave trade." The primitive domestic slavery which has for ages prevailed in Africa, bears no comparison with the cruel, oppressive bondage under which the poor negroes so long groaned in America. The Portuguese were the first to begin this infamous traffic at Cape Bajedor in 1442. But the first cargo of slaves was conveyed to Jamaica by some Genoese merchants in 1517, to whom the Emperor Charles V. granted a patent for the annual supply of 4000 negroes to his West Indian possessions. England first sullied her hands with "the blood of bondage" in 1562, when Charles II. sanctioned an expedition of three ships under Captain Hawkins.

"I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews, bought and sold, have ever earned."

Slave-Sufferings! Ver. 2. Little Benome was an African girl. Sent by her mother to one of Africa's sunny fountains for water, she saw a slave-hunting party approach. Rushing home, the villagers were alarmed and escaped to the woods. Their village was burnt, and next day themselves pursued. The fugitives were captured by the men-stealers, and Benome with her mother and many others were tied together and marched off to the coast. The way led through a desert and across a river. Here the cruel hunters seized a babe in arms, and flung it alive into the jungle to be devoured by wild beasts. The coast reached, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters, were sold separately, and shipped to America. Hundreds were imprisoned in the hold of the ship; and there, like bales of goods, kept till the voyage was over. Benome's ship was, however, captured by a British man-of-war, and Benome and the others were taken to the Island of Trinidad for emancipation. Here she learned to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

"O England, empire's home and head,
First in each art of peace and pow'r,
Mighty the billow-crest to tread,
Mighty to rule the battle hour,
But mightiest to relieve and save,—
Rejoice that thou hast freed the slave."
—*Carlisle.*

Slave-Emancipation! Vers. 2-4. One of the grandest results of Christian missions to the West Indies was the emancipation of the slaves in all the British Colonies in 1838. The enemies of freedom had predicted anarchy and rebellion. They loudly averred that the freedmen would at once rise against their former owners, and seek revenge. But it was not so. The utmost quiet prevailed. A Watch-night meeting was held in different places. Thousands of men, women, and children were found upon their bended knees before God to receive the blessing of freedom from heaven. When the clock struck twelve, which was the death-knell of slavery, they rose to their feet, and sung with united heart and voice, as they had never sung before—

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Him, all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host—
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Freewill-Serfdom! Ver. 6. As in nature's field, says Law, so in Israel's story, almost every object reflects Christ. A Hebrew servant is the subject of this verse, but one for whom freedom has no charms. Attachment binds him to his master's home, and a new ordinance is appointed to sanctify this willing offer of perpetual service. It may, perhaps, come as a new thought to some, that in this servant's choice and constant love, Jesus reveals Himself. In the 40th Psalm, where faith ascends in heaven-high flight, the Eternal Son, in close communion with the Eternal Father, is heard declaring, "Mine ears hast Thou opened," *i.e.*, digged by Thy hand. Thus we see the God-man stooping to the lowest grade—seeking a servant's voice—submitting to a servant's toil. Jehovah's fellow is Jehovah's workman in the labour-field of grace. We have, then, in this abject state a speaking portrait of the love of Jesus. "Behold My servant, whom I uphold" (Is. xlii. 1). "I am among you as he that serveth" (John xiii.).

"To conquer and to save, the Son of God
Came to His own in great humility,
Who wont to ride on cherub wings abroad,
And round Him wrap the mantle of the sky."—*Heber.*

Slave-Service! Ver. 7. Swinnock says that civil subjection to man came in by sinful defection from God. The word "servant" is thought to be derived from *à servando*, because those who were taken in battle and might have been slain were saved (2 Kings v. 2). As servitude came in with a curse (Gen. ix. 25), so sovereignty is promised as a blessing (Gen. xxvii. 9). It was usual for the debtor to become servant to the creditor amongst the Romans, by the law of the Twelve Tables. The French were wont also to sell themselves to noblemen for debt; and the Jews were not ignorant of this practice (2 Kings iv. 1). Titus Sempronius would sell his aged and weak servants as cattle. Cato Pollio commanded one of his servants to be thrown into his fishponds for breaking a glass which he valued highly, though he had an abundant stock of them. When Augustus Cæsar heard of it, he entered the place where the glasses were, and broke them all.

"Why didst thou this? Man! was he not thy brother?
Bone of thy bone, and flesh and blood of thine?
But ah, this truth, by Heaven and reason taught,
Was never fully credited on earth."—*Pollok.*

Homicide! Ver. 12. Pause and look for a moment on these drops of gore that stain the fresh greensward of earth. It rests silent, but how significant, upon the ground! It lies there a memorial of the curse which God had pronounced on man, "Thou shalt surely die." It lies a mirror, wherein sin may see its foul features most accurately represented, and whence the homicide may start back appalled at his own image. It is an awful thing to send any man into eternity, still more awful if he is unprepared. Anger is too often the fruitful cause of staining the human hand with the "red rain." All perfumes will not sweeten this hand!

"Will all the mighty ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red."—*Gilfillan.*

Parricide! Ver. 15. This was by the Roman law punished in a much severer manner than any other kind of homicide. After being scourged, the delinquents were sewn up in a leather sack with a live dog, a cock, a viper, and an ape, and then cast into the sea. Solon, in his laws, made none against parricide, conceiving it impossible that any one should be guilty of so unnatural a crime. And yet we are told that Tullia, the wife of Tarquin, drove over the corpse of Tullius, her own father; the wheels of her chariot, dashing through the pool of gore, besprinkling the garments of the parricide with a baptism of blood. By the order of Antipater, in his very presence—some say with his own hands—his mother Thessalonica was put to death because he thought she favoured his brother. When a Tahitian became tired of his aged parent, he would either place him in a separate hut to die of starvation, or thrust him through with a spear. Recently, in the south of France, a young man killed and buried his widowed mother in order to be owner of the little farm.

"Blood of the soul! Can all earth's fountains
Make thy dark stain disappear?"
—*Sigourney.*

Slave-Taking! Ver. 16. Men defended the modern slave-trade by Scripture allusions; but there was little or no analogy between the two. Ancient heathen nations made slaves either (1) by sentence of courts for breach of the laws of the land; or (2) by capture of soldiers in battle; and the Jews may have acted similarly. But there is no warrant for "slave-hunting;" and such pictures of the pursuit of African villagers as modern writers have lined in pathetic language, would have aroused emotions of horror in the Hebrew heart. In Africa, petty wars were got up. Slave-hunting parties were organised for the express purpose of surprising peaceful villages in the interior, capturing the inhabitants, and dragging them into perpetual slavery. These parties were generally headed by base Portuguese, who were assisted in their nefarious enterprise by such depraved negroes from the coast as would enlist for such service. England has, however, secured treaties with Egypt and Zanzibar and Malagasy, empowering her cruisers and soldiers to put down this iniquitous traffic with resolute hand.

"Proudly on Cressy's tented wold
The lion-flag of England flew;
As proudly gleamed its crimson fold
O'er the dun heights of Waterloo;
But other lyres shall greet the brave;
Sing now, that we have freed the SLAVE."

Selling Slaves! Ver. 16. The Koran justifies slavery on two grounds only: 1. A religious war; 2. Captives in such war. The Sultan of Turkey declares that man is the most noble of all the creatures God has formed in making him free, therefore selling people is contrary to the will of the sovereign Creator. The Pasha of Egypt has also denounced slavery in the strongest terms. The Shah of Persia raised some religious objection to the abolition of the slave-trade, but he was met by the opinion of six of his chief Mollahs that selling male and female slaves is an abomination. It is worthy of remark that Mahomet strove to ameliorate the condition of the slave, and gradually to extirpate slavery itself, which from old times had taken root in Arabia as well as in many other countries.

"Dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation prized above all price,
I would much rather be myself the slave,
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him."

Slave-Sellers! Ver. 16. The Banians of Zanzibar figure prominently in the literature connected with the East African slave-trade. These men are Hindus, *i.e.*, natives of India. They are to be found in large numbers in Kattywar; but their stronghold is Pylitana. There they have beautiful temples, to which bands of pilgrims periodically flock from other countries. They possess the most tender feelings for animals, and would run any risk to prevent cruelty to them. But though they have an elaborate system for the protection of even noxious creatures, they have no regard for human life. These are—along with the Bhatias—the slave-dealers in Zanzibar; and when they have acquired by this nefarious traffic a competency, they return to their native land. Thus

"There's naught so monstrous, but the mind of man,
In some condition, may be brought to approve."
—*Lillo.*

Homicide! Ver. 20. Dr. Leland writes concerning the Spartans, that nothing could exceed their cruelty to their serfs—their helots, as they called them. Not only did they treat them in their general conduct with great harshness and insolence, but it was part of their policy to massacre them on several occasions in cold blood, and without provocation. Several authors have mentioned their *kruptia*—so called from their lying in ambuscade in thickets and clefts of rocks, from which they issued out upon the serfs, and killed all they met. Sometimes they set upon them in the open day, and murdered the ablest and stoutest of them as they were in the fields at work. But English and American writers have been forced to admit the record of many such homicides in more modern times. Murdered "Uncle Toms" are no myth.

"Ah! for the tale the slave could speak,
Ah! for the shame of England's sway;
On Afric's sands the madden'd shriek,
'Neath southern suns the burning day:
Ye sounds of guilt—ye sights of gore—
Away! for slavery is no more."

Slave-Sorrows! Vers. 23-25. All honour Livingstone's righteous indignation against the cruelties which he was obliged to witness as he travelled amid the horror of the slave-traffic. On the Luongo, he describes an incident in words which show this feeling. Six men were singing as if they did not feel the weight and degradation of the slave-sticks. I asked the cause of their mirth, and was told that they rejoiced at the idea of coming back after death, and hunting and killing those who had sold them. Some of the words I had to inquire about; for instance, the meaning of the words "to hunt and kill by spirit power." Then the song started afresh: "Oh! you sent us off to the sea-coast, but the yoke is off when we die, and back we shall come to haunt and to kill you." Then all joined in the chorus, which was the name of each seller. The strain told not of fun, but of the bitterness and tears of such as were oppressed.

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit
Might never reach me more."—*Cowper.*

Eye for Eye! Ver. 25. Selden says that this does not mean that if I put out another

man's eye, therefore I must lose my own (for what is he better for that?), though this is commonly received. It means that I must give him what satisfaction an eye shall be judged to be worth. Accordingly, Cruickshank relates the case of a slave, who appealed to a traditionary law which entitled him to freedom for the loss of an eye, in his master's service, from the recoil of a branch of a tree. Compensation, then, and not retribution, is the essential element in this law. Substitution is here, and not revenge.

"You satisfy your anger and revenge;
Suppose this, it will not
Repair your loss."—*Massinger.*

Pitfalls! Vers. 33, 34. Evils are wrought by want of thought, as well as by want of heart. Bare want of thought is censured as sinful. There is a selfish and heedless disregard of the rights and personal safety of others. But there are moral as well as material pits. The gin-palace keeper should be compelled to write up, "An open pit here." Keepers of haunts of vice should be forced to have for their sign the opinion of the wise man in the Book of Proverbs—"The Way to the Pit."

"Our dangers and delights are near allies;
From the same stem the rose and prickle rise."—*Daniel.*

CHAPTER XXII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**2. No blood be shed for him.**] This is a free translation, which, however, fairly gives the purport of the original words. The Hebrew phrase reads literally: "There is not for him bloods" (*'eyn lo dâmim*), the last word—in the plural—plainly standing for "blood-guiltiness." "There is, in his case," or, "in reference to him," "no blood-guiltiness" resting on any one. No further blood is to be shed by way of avenging the death of one who had lost his life in the way described. We have here an instance of the underlying admission in the axiom, 'Blood for blood" as the rule which calls for the caution of the text, as an exception. **8, 9. Judges.**] See Critical Note on chap. xxi. 6. **18. Witch.**] Heb. *m'khashshephah:* from the root *kha-shaph*, "to speak softly, to murmur, to whisper, to listen, to act mysteriously, to mutter; hence to practise magic, *i.e.*, to mutter magical formulas. It belongs to those Hebrew words which received in usage the additional idea of something heathenish, idolatrous, and forbidden" (*Fürst*). The LXX. rather remarkably renders the verse: "Ye shall not acquire (*περιποιήσετε*) sorcerers." **31. And ye shall be holy men.**] This seemingly abrupt clause is to be taken in a relation of strict *sequence* with all that has gone before. As much as to say: "And so—namely, by your observance of all these instructions—ye shall be (or become) holy men." It is true that these words are introduced simply by the conjunction *vav;* the part, however, which this small word plays in Hebrew syntax is beginning to be more rightly appreciated. Its strong sequential force is, no doubt, more commonly noticed when it is construed with a verb, in which case it very frequently requires to be translated "and then," "and so," "so," "so that;" but it "can also denote the sequence of thought before any other word (and was in that case originally spoken with a tone peculiar to itself)" (*Ewald*, "Intro. Heb. Gram.," sec. 348). And so it may have this force with a noun as here. This very example is a strong proof of such a usage; since thereby alone does the fitness of these words to their place appear. The thought evolved by this legitimate recognition of their fitness is one of which the earnest teacher of God's people may make a most fruitful use. The end of redemption is holiness; the rule and guide of holiness is the revealed will of the Thrice Holy One.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1–6.

ACTUAL AND VIRTUAL CRIMINALITY.

The Mosaic law is a schoolmaster. Not a mere pedagogue to guide mankind to the place or person where education may be obtained, but a veritable schoolmaster to educate mankind—to lead men up out of a low into a high social condition, to develop humanity. We do not deny the fact that the Mosaic law, is a pedagogue, while we strive to bring into prominence the fact that it is itself also an educator. The educational power of the law is seen in this passage, as well as in others. Here men are taught to discriminate between crime and crime. While sin is one in its essence, yet there are degrees in criminality. Crime is variable, all sinners are not equally guilty.

I. **Men must suffer for crime.** The man who steals an ox or a sheep is not

merely to make good the stolen animal, but must be mulcted in a penalty. The stolen ox must be replaced by another. But four oxen, or three sheep, is the price of the crime. And if the thief have nothing, then he is to be sold for his theft. The judges must thus determine. And out of the money thus obtained the loser of the animal must receive compensation. It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. The evil-doer must ultimately be a sufferer. The man who suffers evil patiently must ultimately receive compensation. The great moral law of the universe cannot be thwarted. He who hopes to gain by wrong-doing will find that his hope is cut off by the sharp and sure stroke of the hand of retribution. Honest gains may be slow, but they are sure and blessed.

II. Men must suffer, unavenged, the extreme consequences of criminal conduct. If the thief is killed while in the act of pursuing his criminal course, then no one is to be held responsible for the slaughter. "There shall no blood be shed for him." If a man meets with evil while doing evil, then the human consciousness declares that it serves him right. And here truly the voice of all peoples is the voice of God. But danger might arise if men took the law into their own hands, so that they are not permitted to pursue the thief, and slay him in revenge. In the night, and in self-defence, the thief may be unwittingly slain, then he reaps as he has sown. But when the sun has risen, when the time of danger is over, extreme measures can only be regarded, as dictated by revenge. Even evil-doers have rights which must be respected. It is better to suffer evil than to give way to a revengeful spirit. "Avenge not yourselves."

III. Men must learn, by degrees of suffering, that there are degrees of criminality. The thief who kills or sells the stolen ox must restore fivefold; but if the theft be found in his hand alive, then he shall restore double. We may picture the thief arrested in his course by the voice of conscience. He does not proceed to extreme lengths. He seems to be on the verge of confession. The law has regard to moral states. A slight penalty is judged for a first offence. The man who has been repeatedly in prison receives a severe sentence. The great Lawgiver is wise and merciful. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

IV. Men must learn that property has rights. It seems likely that the case presented in verse five is that of the man who purposely causes his beast to feed in another man's field, or on the herbage growing between the vines; and of the best of his field and of the best of his vineyard shall he make restitution. Though, from our reading of the law, if this should happen as the result of carelessness, we should expect that restitution would have to be made. Communistic theories were not taught in the Old Testament. And the trial of communism was a short-lived and unsuccessful experiment in the early Church. The peculiar theory of some communistic advocates seems to be self-enrichment at the expense of others. The cattle of others must not be allowed to graze on my lands, while my cattle may trespass anywhere. When human selfishness is thoroughly destroyed, when men are as anxious for the welfare of their neighbours as for their own, then boundary lines may be obliterated, and courts of justice may be abolished.

V. Men must learn to consider the welfare of their neighbours. Love thy neighbour as thyself, is a law for all economies. The virtual incendiary must make restitution. The man may simply have been burning the weeds or stubble of his own ground, but he burned too near his neighbour's standing corn. He may be sorry for the destruction; but sorrow of itself will not fill the granary. Sorrow must work repentance, and repentance must show itself in ample restitution. Be careful how you handle fire. There are fires that cause such awful destruction that compensation is impossible. Who can make restitution for the

fires of lust, of sensuality, and of criminality, kindled in the souls of men? Evil-doers have much to answer for. What hand can stay their ever-burning fires?

—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

The Law of Robbery.—*Verses* 1–4.

God made provision not only for the acquisition of property, but for its security. Hence this law, which respects—1. Theft. 2. Housebreaking.

I. Theft, vers. 1–4. As the wealth of an Israelite consisted mainly in flocks and herds, the depredations of the thief were directed for the most part against them. 1. If the stolen animal were destroyed or sold (1) in the case of an ox, as the more valuable for food and service, and the owner losing its work as well as its literal value, the penalty was fivefold. (2) In the case of a sheep, the penalty was fourfold (2 Sam. xii. 6). But—2. If the animal were not sold or destroyed, the penalty was only double, as the thief would probably be a novice in his art.

II. Housebreaking, vers. 2, 3. The public sentiment (which ever recognises that a man's house is his castle) against this act, it may be presumed, was so high, that the protection of a robber from sanguinary vengeance was necessary. 1. If his depredations occurred at *midnight,* and he lost his life in the attempt, the right of self-protection on the part of the householder was recognised. 2. If, however, they occurred during the *day* when he might be identified or apprehended, and he was slain, even the life of a thief was precious, and taking that life was murder (chap. xxi. 12). 3. In the case of his success and detection, the *penalty* was double the value of the stolen property, or slavery. 4. In the case of *non-success,* he obtained the benefit of the doubt. (See also Lev. vi. 4, 5.)

Learn—

i. **That God's providence extends to property as well as persons.** Both are His gift. Neither must be interfered with except by the original donor.

ii. **That those who endeavour to thwart that providence play a losing game.** The law of retribution imposes not only the loss of the apparent gain but of more. An act of injustice prevents enjoyment, entails the loss of self-respect, the approbation of conscience, the censure of good men, and the anger of God.

iii. **That the recognition of that providence is not inconsistent with, but demands the use of, means.** It is an abuse and perversion of it to tamely submit to wrong when the legitimate prevention of wrong is within our reach.

iv. **That providence protects even the life of the wrong-doer, and no man must wantonly interfere with that protection.** It is a terrible thing to send a man into eternity red-handed in his guilt. Milder measures, as all history testifies, may produce reformation.

—*J. W. Burn.*

The Penalty of Carelessness.—*Verses* 5, 6.

As in chapter xxi. 28–26,—the principle is laid down that a man must "not only look on his own things, but also on the things of others."

1. If a man, negligent of doors or fences, "shall let his beast go loose, and it shall feed" (according to LXX. Vulg. Syr. followed by Luther) in another's field; or 2. If a man, according to the custom of Eastern countries before the autumnal rains, to prevent the ravages of vermin and to prepare the soil for the next crop, shall burn the dry grass and stubble in his field, and neglect to keep the fire within safe and proper bounds; then, 3. Restitution must be made.

Learn—

i. To be careful of your neighbour's

material, intellectual, and spiritual interest, and do not damage them by a careless word or action.

ii. In order that those interests may not be invaded, put a strong check on those loose and vagrant so-called interests of your own.

iii. In order to prevent any possibility of the transgression of those interests, see that those passions of avarice, envy, and revenge which cause so much mischief in the world, are quenched.

iv. If those interests are invaded, render a frank, manly, and ample restitution. 1. Confess your fault. 2. In the case of loss make it up. 3. In the case of injury to character, let the acknowledgment be co-extensive with the slander. 4. Let those who have been injured forgive as they hope to be forgiven. *J. W. Burn.*

Things Entrusted and Lost.

If the social compact is to rest on solid foundations, there must be a widespread feeling as to the sacredness of trusts. In societies one man is dependent upon another, and there will arise occasions when either goods or cattle must be entrusted to the keeping of others. Law must hold them responsible to whom goods have been entrusted. They must faithfully discharge the trust. They must render true accounts. Balance sheets must be submitted for inspection. The trustee occupies a responsible position. Every man, morally considered, is a trustee. Each man ought to consider himself as his brother's keeper. One day accounts will have to be rendered. How solemn is man's position as a moral trustee. Let there be a faithful discharge of duties, and there will be a wonderful display of Divine love and mercy.

I. The course to be pursued when the thief is found. If the goods have been stolen out of the trustee's house, and the thief is discovered, then the case is clear. The trustee is free from all blame, and the thief must pay double for that which he has stolen. The thief might have taken the goods of the trustee as well as the goods entrusted to his keeping, and therefore it is not needful to suppose him guilty. If the trustee has taken the same precaution with that which is another man's as with his own, then he has proved his faithfulness. Law requires no more.

II. The course to be pursued when the thief is unknown. If the goods are stolen, and the thief is not discovered, then there may be a case of embezzlement. The master of the house is responsible. His innocence must be proved. It must be shown that there has been no evil connivance. This is to be done by—1. An appeal to the judges. It will be their difficult task to decide whether the accused is guilty or innocent. Evidence must be taken. The truth must be elicited by careful cross-examination. And whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour. 2. An appeal to the Supreme Judge. The sacredness of a religious oath has been held by nations in rudest states. There is a religious instinct in men, which speaks of his Divine original. Low has that man fallen who can easily violate a religious oath. And yet how many in our day can trifle with this solemn engagement! If the owner accepts the oath, then the trustee is freed from blame. We certainly must take into consideration the character of him who swears. Happy the man whose character is above suspicion, whose simple "yea" is deemed conclusive.

III. The course to be pursued when cattle are stolen from the trustee. There is difficulty in comprehending the purport of verse 12 when taken in connection with the preceding verses. If they had not been present then we might fairly have supposed that the trustee is more responsible for the safety of cattle than for the safety of goods. Thus we may perceive that it is a more

difficult matter to steal cattle than to steal money. Therefore the trustee to whom cattle is entrusted, and from whom they have been stolen, must make restitution unto the owner. But if the cattle be torn in pieces, and he be able to bring it for a witness, then he shall not make good that which was torn. Perhaps the trustee was present at the attack, and endeavoured to drive away the wild animal, and the torn pieces rescued from the jaws of the destroyer are the witnesses of his heroism.

IV. The course to be pursued when injury is done to borrowed things. If the borrower has sole charge, then he is to be held responsible for the damages that may happen. But if the owner be with it, he shall not make it good; if it be an hired thing, it came for his hire. It seems as if the borrower is supposed to be in the hired service of the owner. The piece of the dead beast must be subtracted from the pay. We must be careful of borrowed property. All that we have has been lent unto us by the Lord, and He will call us to account for injuries done to that with which we have been entrusted.

V. The course to be pursued when a maid is enticed to her undoing. Some suppose this to be a case of trust like all the rest. The maid has entrusted herself—her honour and virtue—to the man, and he has betrayed the trust. He has violated her person, he has spoiled her virginity, and he must endow her to be his wife. He has no power of choice in the matter, but the father may for wise reasons utterly refuse to give the maid unto her betrayer, and he must pay money according to the dowry of virgins. The father ought to know what is for the good of his child. He is likely to have a knowledge of the world, and to know that his daughter's happiness would not be safe in the keeping of such a man. It is always wise to take the counsel of parents. Let daughters especially not forsake the guide of their youths. Seducers ought to be compelled to marry the seduced if the parents are willing, or, if not, to make restitution. This would lessen the amount of the prostitution which is one of our national sins.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

The Sanctity of Human Trusts.—*Verses* 7–13.

This paragraph recognises the sanctity of trust reposed on the principles —1. of neighbourliness; 2. of trade.

I. If a man entrusted *property*, ver. 7, "money or stuff," which it was impossible or inconvenient to keep himself, to his neighbour, the trustee was responsible for its safety. 1. If it was stolen and the thief discovered, of course the thief was punished. 2. But if the thief escaped, the holder, either as negligent or guilty, was fined double its value. From verse 9, however, it would appear that the judges had some discretion in the matter.

II. In the case of any beast, lent presumably for the purposes of trade, being hurt or lost. 1. If upon oath the borrower declared his innocence and proved his carefulness, that was deemed sufficient. 2. But if stolen, as careless, he had to make restitution. 3. Or if slain by wild beasts, and the carcase were produced, then, as his courage and vigilance were not at fault, he was released from responsibility.

III. But the responsibility must be submitted to judicial examination and decision, ver. 9. Thus guarding on the one hand recklessness, and on the other unreasonable exactions.

Application.—"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil," not only the law of Moses, but "the law of Christ."

i. On the one hand—(1.) Be neighbourly (Luke vi. 30, &c.). (2.) Take the same care of the matters in which you have obliged your neighbours, as you do of your own. If he has entrusted his goods to you, protect

them. If his secrets, do not divulge them. If his liberty or character, through previous service of yours, do not threaten them. If the guardianship of his defenceless children, do not neglect them. ii. On the other hand, if your neighbour has obliged *you*—(1.) Do not impose on his good nature. (2.) Don't suspect that, if your interests have been damaged because it was his interest to damage them, he has done so. (3.) In ordinary cases, unless you have good reason for the contrary, take his word. (4.) Don't make him suffer for circumstances over which he had no control. The whole subject is full of interest to masters and servants, employers and employed.—*J. W. Burn.*

Concerning Borrowing.—*Verses* 14, 15.

This is an extension of the preceding principles. Borrowing might be for the purpose of—1, obligation; or 2, trade.

I. If that which was borrowed received hurt in the absence of its owner, verse 14, the owner was to be indemnified.

II. But if, as might be the case when the loan were cattle, and the owner were present, the sum for which it was hired was understood to cover the risk of accident, and the owner bore the loss.

Learn—

i. On the one hand—(1.) to be obliging. If you can do a needy neighbour a good turn by lending advice or material assistance, do so. (2.) Don't make your needy but obliged neighbour answerable for any accident that may occur through your own misfortune or fault.

On the other hand—(1.) Be careful not to abuse that which is in kindness lent you; or (2.) (grave though minor inability of life) forget to return it, and thus render evil for good. Book-borrowers should note this. But (3.) rather both in principle (2 Kings vi. 5) and in action suffer the loss than inflict it.—*J. W. Burn.*

Social Evils.—*Verses* 16-19.

1. Are recognised in the Word of God, and recognised as abominable before God and man. But unfortunately they are not so recognised by Christian communities and governments. Hence their prevalence and their enormities.

2. Are dealt with delicately, but firmly, by the Word of God, Old and New Testament alike. But, from mock modesty and a strange stupidity or inhumanity, are not so dealt with, but are rather encouraged by Christian communities and governments. And the result, of course, is ruin and misery now, and to the third and fourth generation.

3. Should urge every man who takes the Bible as his *law*, and who loves his fellow-creature, to adopt every legitimate means, at all times, and everywhere, to bring back society and government to the spirit, at anyrate, of the legislation here enforced.

I. Contrast the **Mosaic precept** with the **Christian practice** with regard to the seducer.

1. *Then* the penalties fell on the real criminal. (1.) He must marry his victim; or (2.) in case the parents should interfere, pay a fine of 50 shekels of silver—the amount of her dowry.

2. *Now* the penalty falls upon the victim. (1.) It is true a feeble sentiment (anything but universal) is expressed, but nowhere legally as to the obligation of marriage. But when that obligation is not recognised, the poor creature loses all, loses reputation, position, opportunity for retrieving her character, inherits the scorn of her sex, and, driven mad with woe, sinks into a suicide's grave. (2.) While in the second case, the villain holds his head as high as ever, often escapes all penalty, and when that penalty is incurred it is the amount he spends upon his dog. Shame on our Christian

society, which adds burdens to that which by itself is too heavy to be borne. Shame on our inhuman and immoral legislation, which dares to put a premium on vice and to let the oppressors go free. (See also Deut. xxii. 23–29).

II. 1. The Mosaic precept concerning the beast was death without mercy.

2. The Christian practice is to put a cloak over his crime or to hurry him away.

Learn—

i. The awful sanctions of personal purity and chastity (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17, vi. 9–20).

ii. To expend your wrath on the right offender.

iii. Do not shun the society of the offender (Luke vii. 27; John iv. 18; but Gal. vi. 1; Mark ii. 17; *cf.* John xiii. 15).—*J. W. Burn.*

Divine Justice and Divine Compassion.

The strictness of the Divine justice is seen in these ancient enactments; but there is also revealed the tenderness of the Divine compassion. The law is severe on evil-doers, in order that well-doers may be encouraged and strengthened. God is just to punish the unjust and the oppressor; but He is compassionate to the weak and helpless. How tenderly He cares for the widow and the orphan. Their mournful cries touch His Divine heart. Here are combined the justice of the ruler and the tenderness of the father. We must be just, but justice must be tempered by mercy, and sweetened by compassion. Let the beautiful humaneness of our religion be always manifested.

I. Irreligion must be checked. The witch is especially mentioned because women are more addicted to these evil practices than men. She is instrumental in the promotion of radical irreligion. She invokes the aid of demoniacal powers. She nurtures all that is evil in man. She is an evil worker for the purpose of getting gain, or securing power, or carrying out her desire for revenge. "Thou shalt not suffer the witch to live." Perhaps if she repents and forsakes her evil ways, pardon may be granted. It is strange that this enactment is carried out in countries where the Bible is not read. Witchcraft is very generally abhorred. We must avoid all causes which tend to the spread of irreligion.

II. Unnatural abominations promote irreligion. The beastly is opposed to the spiritual. Religion exalts humanity, while irreligion degrades it. "Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death."

III. False sacrifices are the outcome of irreligion. We sometimes use the word religion in a loose sense. And in this way we speak of idolaters as religious. But religion is that which binds the heart of man to the service of his Maker. That man is not religious, in the scriptural sense, at least, who offers sacrifice unto a god made by art and man's device. There are those who insist on a religious spirit, and say that forms are no matter. But a right spirit will embody itself in a right creed, and express itself in right forms of religious worship. It is ridiculous to affirm that it is of no consequence to what god we offer sacrifices, in what form we worship, so long as the heart is right. "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed." Spiritual destruction at least will be the result of erroneous creeds and immoral practices. Erroneous creeds are very often the forced product of spiritual death or decline. The pure in heart shall see God, shall see His truth, and be led into right ways.

IV. Inhumanity is opposed to true religion. "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Knobel says, "The persons meant are the Canaanitish and non-Canaanitish strangers, who stayed as individuals among the Israelites; the Canaanites as a whole are,

according to this lawgiver also, to be extirpated." No penalties are laid down now for the non-observance of this command. An appeal is simply made to the former condition of being strangers. The remembrance of our own afflictions ought to make us sympathetic with the afflicted. But in the day of our prosperity we forget the days of adversity, and have not a due consideration for those in adverse circumstances. Vex not the stranger, for thy soul was once vexed in a strange land. Oppress not the foreigner, and he will come to love thee, and to admire that religion which has taught thee compassion.

V. Gentleness towards the weak is highest manhood and noblest religion "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." An exalted humanity abhors the conduct of him who oppresses the widow and the orphan. Their very helplessness should be their strength. If the oppressor makes them cry, their cries, though only the sighing of crushed hearts, will pierce the heavens. The oppressor will be finally crushed by means of the oppressed. It is the great law of nature and of revelation that as a man sows so shall he reap. Retribution will come sooner or later. The oppressor of widows and orphans shall be killed with the sword, and their wives shall be widows, and their children fatherless. Escape is only in seeming. The prosperity of the wicked cannot be for ever. Oppressors must be destroyed. Tyrants must feel the awful recoil of their tyranny. Let us hasten for forgiveness and for power to amend our ways to Him whose gentleness was such that He did not break the bruised reed.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

WITCHCRAFT.—*Verse* 18.

The term is here used to represent the whole class of wizards, necromancers, and diviners with which the world has been infested from a very early date, and is in one form or another infested still, who, when not gross impostors, appeal to a power not in subordination to Divine law, and are therefore guilty of, and punished for high treason against the government of God. The Bible regards it—

1. As a stern and diabolical reality (Lev. xx. 27; Deut. xviii. 9). 2. As unlawful trafficking with the unseen world (Lev. xix. 31; Isa. viii. 19, "For the living to the dead," *i.e.*, on behalf of the living to the dead.) 3. As sometimes trickery and imposture (Isa. viii. 19), "that peep and mutter" (probably ventriloquise. See art. Pythoness, Smith's Dic. Bible). 4. As filthy defilement (Lev. xix. 31). 5. As deserving death (Lev. xx. 6. *cf.* text). 6. As one of the crimes for which the Canaanites were destroyed. 7. As inconsistent with a trust in God (Isa. viii. 19). 8. As frustrated by God (Isa. xliv. 25). 9. As a power from which the godly have nothing to fear, for there is no solitary prayer in the whole Bible to be protected from its enchantments, and no thanksgiving for deliverance from them.

The belief in witchcraft has prevailed in all ages, and been sanctioned by some of the most eminent men. Amongst the heathen, Pythagoras, Plutarch, Pompey, Crassus, Cæsar, were all under its spell. The progress of modern civilsation has not destroyed this upas blight, for it counts its devotees by the thousand to-day. But whether it comes in the form of astrology with its star-gazing, palmistry with its hand-reading, or spiritualism with its media and trances and dark seances, it is the same foul abomination reprobated by the Word of God. In this country we only now meet with it in the latter form, and as such—

I. It is dangerous. 1. Because it destroys, all faith in the person and

providence of God, and hence imperils the hopes, aspirations, and safety of the soul. 2. Because it tends to debase man's moral standards, and to obliterate the fact of sin. 3. Because its direct aim is to subvert Christianity, and to abolish the Word of God. 4. Because it comes before the imagination and the affections with *plausible* appeals.

II. It shuns the light. 1. Its performances, like the old witchcraft, take place in the dark, and under circumstances the force of which requires the exertions of the strongest will. On the contrary, the grand facts of both Old and New Testaments were "not done in a corner," but in the light of day. 2. It is chary of the open exhibition of its credentials to the critic and the unbeliever; this privilege is reserved for those who first believe in the magician and in his powers. The miracles and other credentials of the Bible—court scrutiny—were mainly for the convictions of those who disbelieved. 3. And why does it shun the light? For the old reason (John iii. 19–21).

III. It is unlawful. 1. Because expressly forbidden in the Word of God. Christ and His apostles meet the spirits not in darkened cabinets but with open exorcism. 2. Because of its avowed mission to pry into and traffic with the unrevealed matters of the spirit-world. God has emphatically set His face against this (Deut. xxix. 29). 3. Because it is "another gospel" (Gal. i. 8).

IV. It is partly gross imposture. 1. Spiritual realities are solemn and imposing, and worthy in every way of the high source from which they emanate. When God communicated to the prophets and apostles we do not hear that it was on dancing tables, illegible inscriptions on slates, or through books made luminous by phosphoric oil. We do not hear of angels or spirits, whether in Old Testament or New, pulling men's hair, scattering sweetmeats, rapping on walls, hurling bed pillows, appearing in regimentals, or handling hot coals. 2. Spiritual realities in the Bible were never discovered to be small tricks. They were never found to be men and women ventriloquising, speaking through tubes, using electric batteries, or stuffed gloves; nor were the spirits, when suddenly embraced, found sufficiently substantial to be armed with fists and nails. 3. Spiritual realities in the Bible have never been explained by natural phenomena as have much of the legerdemain of modern magic.

V. It is uniformly useless. 1. For harm (Isa. viii. 19), when there is a firm trust in God. 2. For good (Luke xvi. 27–31), when there is no such trust.

Application.—i. It is at the Church's peril that she ignores what is condemned in the Word of God, and what threatens the well-being of the world. ii. Or fails to expose, check, and destroy what threatens to be the most gigantic superstition of modern times (1 John iv. 1).—*J. W. Burn.*

God's Exclusive Right to Man's Devotion.—*Verse* 20.

We remark—

I. That this claim is founded on right. It is not an arbitrary fiat, but a reasonable demand. By creation, providence, and grace, all belongs to God. God, therefore, asks us but to sacrifice His own.

II. That no other power has the right to make this claim. The whole Bible goes upon the fact that "an idol is nothing in the world." Sacrifice to them, therefore, can be but the outcome of superstition, and must end in disappointment.

III. That this claim involves self-denial. God demanded the best of the flocks and herds. He now demands our best faculties in their fullest vigour (Rom. xii. 1).

IV. That this claim is very widely disregarded. Man "robs" God (Mal. iii. 8), and still sacrifices to idols. We set up pride, vanity, ambition, selfishness, pleasure, friendship, and

desecrate the holiest qualities of our nature by offering them to other than the living God.

V. That the recognition of this claim can alone secure our highest well-being. 1. The literal punishment of death passed away with the theocracy, but the spirit of it lives on through the ages. As God is the only source of spiritual life, and the sacrifice of ourselves to Him through Christ the only means of securing that life, spiritual death is a penalty of neglect. But, 2, by rendering to God that which belongs to Him, body, spirit, soul, possessions, friendships, by contact with Him and separation to Him, they are enriched, elevated, sanctified, and glorified. Observe—

i. That God's claims can never be fulfilled without God's help. ii. That idolatry, the disregard and contempt of those claims (as Jewish history testifies), was uniformly the result of neglecting to procure that help. iii. That that help God is able, willing, and anxious to afford "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."—*J. W. Burn.*

International Rights.—*Verse* 21.

Strictly interpreted, this passage bears on duties to foreigners dwelling in the country, and supplies a motive for it; they themselves had been foreigners; and is another practical application of the "golden rule." But its principle may be enlarged, so as to compass the rights of *nations* to justice, humanity, and peace in their relations to one another.

I. **The rights of foreigners as individuals.** Here is a word, 3000 years old, of special force in many cases (thank God, not in all) to us Englishmen. We are surrounded by men from all nations under heaven. We should not oppress them — 1. By reminding them that they are not at home; but, on the contrary, endeavour by a generous hospitality to make them feel at home. 2. By noticing their peculiarities and criticising or exaggerating them; but, on the contrary, try to conform as far as possible to them, so as to make them less conspicuous. 3. By taking advantage of their imperfect acquaintance with our language and manners in trade, law, debate; but rather assist them with all the means at our disposal. 4. Because (1.) artificial boundaries should not separate between men of the same blood, the same wants, the same feelings. (2.) We may be (some of us have been) placed in the same position as regards homelessness, peculiarities, and imperfections.

II. **The right of foreigners as nations.** —1. If weak to protection, if strong to equal privileges of freedom, courtesy, and laws. 2. To be regarded irrespective of our mere interests, which are not "the measure of right and wrong all over the world." 3. Because we have had to claim, and still do claim, the same for ourselves.

Learn—i. Not to let our insular position generate an insular feeling. ii. To act upon principles of honour and humanity. iii. To follow peace with all men.

God's Care for the Widow and Fatherless.—*Verses* 22–24.

The widow and the orphan were God's special care, and their oppression was one of those crimes the punishment of which God reserved to Himself. This is one of those instances which reveal the large and comprehensive and spiritual character of the Mosaic law. God's people were not tied down, as is often supposed, to a fixed and literal obedience to a number of fixed and literal enactments. Much (as in the case before us) was left to their common sense and humanity.

1. No legal provision was made for the widow except (1.) The duty of her eldest son or nearest relative. (2.) Her right to a share in the triennial third tithe (Deut. xiv. 29, xxvi. 12).

(3.) Her right to gleanings (Deut. xxiv. 19) and religious feasts (Deut. xvi. 11–14). (4.) Her exemption from the necessity of giving her garments to pledge.

But 2. Her rights were everywhere recognised and (1) (Deut. xxvii. 19, Isa. 1. 17, Jer. vii. 6, xxii. 3, Zech. vii. 10,) threw her upon that charity which is above rubrics. (2.) (Ps. xciv. 6, Isa. x. 2, Ezek. xxii. 7, Matt. iii. 5, xxiii. 14) Any neglect of or cruelty to them was most severely condemned.

3. The New Testament declares "pure religion and undefiled" to be (James i. 27). Our text declares—

I. That widows and orphans have claims upon our **regard.**

1. They have claims upon our **sympathy.** Their stay, comfort, defence is gone. What state can be more sorrowful or helpless!

2. They have claims upon our **protection and help.** Our resources are only held in stewardship for God's purposes, and to what better purpose could they be applied, both as regards its intrinsic merits and the Divine will concerning it.

II. That widows and orphans have **special privileges.**

1. God has legislated for them. Not in the dry and hard manner in which penal and ceremonial codes are obliged to be enacted, but in a way which throws them on the broad and better principles of humanity and love.

2. God stands in a peculiar relation to them (Ps. lxviii. 5). In the absence of their natural guardians He takes them under His wing.

3. God is always ready to help them; to hear their cry (ver. 23, Jer. xlix. 11).

III. That any oppression of the widow and fatherless will be **rigorously punished,** ver. 24.

1. The oppressor is left to the righteous judgment of God, who will surely avenge His own (Luke xviii. 7.)

2. The oppressor is left to the terrible retribution of a hard and cruel heart, which inflicts as much punishment on the subject as on the object.

3. The oppressor is left to the certain contempt and execration of his fellowmen.

Husbands and fathers, learn—

i. To provide for the wants of those whom you *may* leave behind to mourn your loss. 1. Make diligent use of your time, and save all you can for them. 2. Your life is uncertain, insure it. 3. We don't know what a day or an hour may bring forth, have all your affairs in order, so as not to add perplexity to trouble already too heavy to be borne. It is "afflicting them," not to do so. (See i. Tim. v. 8.)

ii. Then, having made a proper use of means, leave them with calm faith in the power and goodness of their "Father in heaven."

iii. Help the widow and the orphan, as your wife may be left a widow and your children fatherless.—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25-31.

THE DIVINE NATURE HAS TWO ASPECTS.

The Almighty declares Himself gracious unto those who cry unto Him for succour; and in His provision He makes special regulations for the protection of those who might easily become the prey of the ungracious. "With the merciful man thou shalt thyself be merciful, and with the upright man thou shalt shew Thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt shew Thyself unsavoury. And the afflicted people Thou wilt save; but Thine eyes are upon the haughty, that Thou mayest bring them down." The haughty must not presume upon the Divine graciousness; but the afflicted people may reasonably hope in His salvation.

I. We must learn to deal tenderly with the poor. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." The cause of the poor is the cause of God. The Bible should be the poor man's Book

In no other ethical systems is their case fully considered, or are their claims urgently pressed. The subject of usury is difficult. We must find it hard to settle what is mere proper interest, and what is usury. Certainly the exigency of the poor must not be abused. In that early society, where money was not largely required, we may suppose that money was to be lent without interest. That it must be very small, at least, is evident from the fact that the poor man's raiment, given for a pledge, must be returned to him before the sun has gone down. The mantle marks the extreme of poverty in general. The indigent Oriental covers himself at night in his outer garment. Great cruelty is characteristic of him who keeps in pledge the poor man's protection from the cold of an Eastern night. How many are those who cry because of the advantage taken of their poverty! While God is gracious unto those who call for help, what will He be to the pitiless. Let men be gracious unto the poor that God may be gracious unto those who are indeed poor and needy, though rich in earthly possessions.

II. We must be respectful in our dealings with those in high estate. The word "gods" in verse 28 is taken by some to mean the Deity. Thus the Israelites are commanded not to revile the deity. A more general way of dishonouring God than that of directly cursing Jehovah. And this view is supposed to be supported by the next sentence, "nor curse the ruler of thy people," as God's vicegerents, as the one next to, and placed in a position of authority by God. Certainly, he who dishonours "the powers that be" dishonours Him by whom the powers are appointed. Even Paul's practical opposition to the powers is accompanied by wonderful Christian courtesy. We must not curse the rulers; and the rulers must not oppress—must not interfere with the authority of conscience. When rulers and consciences are opposed resistance must follow, but resistance may be courteous while it is firm. The highest style of gentleman is the Christian. Let us forbear cursing or reviling, lest we dishonour the Infinite Ruler.

III. We must be prompt in presenting our offerings. He gives twice who gives quickly. Delays are dangerous. Delay not to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors. The fruit of all is to be presented as an offering to Him who is the first great cause of all productiveness. In these New Testament times we reverse the order. The first we give ourselves; and the last, if we can easily spare it, we give to God; and yet surely He has a greater claim. If under the law God could command the first of all, how much more under the Gospel! The God of revelation is the God of nature, we must not do unnecessary violence to nature even for the promotion of religion. Seven days must the sheep be with the dam before it is offered. A truly religious spirit will not interfere with natural productiveness and social prosperity.

IV. The glorious purpose of all Divine legislation. "And ye shall be holy men unto Me." This is the great directing motive for all God's movements with reference to His people. Holy men must have regard to the beauty and welfare of the temple when the spirit of holiness is enshrined. Ye shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs. Defile not the temple of God. The body is the soul's temple. The purity of the temple promotes the purity of the worshipper.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

CONCERNING LOANS.—*Verses 25-27.*

While every one is liable to those fluctuations of fortune which entail temporary embarrassment or permanent poverty, the legitimacy and necessity of loans is apparent. The same remark applies to loans on secu-

rity for purposes of trade. Loans are only illegitimate when applied to immoral purposes, or when they encourage indolence. The law before us provides—

I. That in a case of real distress the rules of an ordinary commercial transaction were to be set aside, and the loan decided on the principles of humanity (Lev. xxv. 35-43, Deut. xxiii. 19).

II. That in a matter of business (presumably) when the loan is under some risk, but which is expected to yield the borrower some kind of profit; then, as in the case of mortgages and pawnbroking, a security is required. But this security, if a necessity of life, as, *e.g.*, the loose outer robe used for a coverlet as well as a garment, was to be restored when wanted.

III. That the graciousness of God should be the motive of man's conduct to his fellow in matters of obligation, and even business.

IV. That in this case, and in others which were to be decided on the principles of humanity, God took the consideration of the infraction of His law into His own hand.

Application.—i. Avoid borrowing or lending as far as possible. ii. When needful or in the way of business, let mercy and generosity enter into the transaction, as well as interest and justice. iii. God has been gracious to you, be gracious to your fellow (Matt. x. 8). iv. Remember that God "executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

—*J. W. Burn.*

The Divine Right of Magistrates to Respect.—*Verse* 28.

There has been some controversy about the interpretation of the first clause, Thou shalt not revile *Elohim*. 1. Some understand it *God*, conformably with Gen. i. 1 and general usage. (De Wette, Keil, Knobel, Speaker's Com., &c.) 2. Some (as A.V. LXX. Vulg. Luther, Cranmer, &c.) *Gods*. Philo and Josephus understand it as expressing liberality to gods of other nations. And 3. (The Targum, Syr, Saadia, Theod. Genevan, &c.) as the marg. *judges*. The second may be dismissed. The third is untenable, as in that case *Elohim* would have the article prefixed. The first is the ordinary translation, and as here employed, suggests that magistrates wield the delegated authority of God, rule by Divine right, and are therefore entitled to respect (Josh. iv. 14, Ps. xxi. 6, 7; Prov. xxiv. 21, 22; Eccles. viii. 2, 3).

I. That the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. xiii. 1-5; 1 Peter ii. 13-15).

II. That magistrates must be treated with respect, both their persons and their decisions (Josh. i. 16-18).

1. Because they administer that which when it is law at all, is based on the will and authority of God (Rom. xiii. 2).

2. Because they administer that which is the bulwark of national stability and personal safety (Rom. xiii. 3).

III. That magistrates must receive respect, irrespective of the effect of their decision (Prov. xvii. 26).

1. Because they are but the servants of the *law*.

2. Because if through human infirmities, justice should occasionally miscarry, it is better to suffer than to bring the law into disrepute (Prov. xxiv. 21, 22).

3. But if their decisions violate conscience, then Acts iv. 19, 20; v. 29.

IV. That magistrates must be secure against all hostile action (Prov. xvii. 26; Job xxxiv. 17, 18).

1. Fear will warp the judgment.

2. Fear will divert the course of justice.

V. That magistrates are not only entitled to respect, but to our sympathy and prayers (Ps. xxii. 1, 2; Ezra vi. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 2).

VI. That disrespect to magistrates is severely condemned (Jude 8).

Application. — Let magistrates, all who are in authority and all who

administer law whether civil or domestic, whether in law courts, homes or houses of business, remember—i. That they are responsible to God (2 Sam. xxiii. 3). Let them see (1) that they accurately know the law, and (2) that their administration is conscientious and courageous (Ps. lxxii. iv. 12–14). ii. That they are responsible to man. Upon their decisions depend the well-being of the citizen, and the stability of the realm. iii. That their title to sympathy and veneration is recognised by the people at large.—*J. W. Burn.*

CONSECRATION.—*Verses* 29–31.

These laws are most appropriately interrupted by the revelation of God's claims upon *us* and *ours*. This revelation teaches us—

I. That God's law should lead us to consider our relation to the Lawgiver.

1. We are not slaves under the rigorous and iron rule of an inflexible despot (John xv. 15; Rom. viii. 15).

2. But sons under the mild, free, and benignant rule of our Father in heaven (Num. xi. 12; Deut. xxii. 6; Rom. viii. 15, 16; James i 25, ii. 12).

3. And should therefore disseminate and obey those laws which are for our Father's glory and our brother's good.

II. That this relation to the Lawgiver should lead to the practical acknowledgment of His claims upon the service of all *we have*.

1. He has claims upon our property. We are only stewards (1 Cor. iv. 7). (1) Those claims upon part of it are literal and exclusive, and must be acknowledged by benevolence to the poor and the support of his ministers. (2) Those claims are upon the whole of it, and must be acknowledged by the use of all our property in getting the will of God "done on earth as it is done in heaven."

2. He has claims upon our children. (1) We must be cautious how we abrogate this literal claim upon *one* of them. If, under the old dispensation, one was to be specially dedicated to His service, there are stronger reasons for the same under the new. While education for the ministry, as a mere profession, cannot be too strongly reprobated, yet when God comes to call at your house for "labourers for His harvest," let Him find one at least of your children ready for that call. Let all parents, whether rich or poor, take heed to their privileges and duties in this direction.

(2) But as God has claims upon all of your children, see that they are dedicated to Him and "trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

III. That God's claims should be acknowledged *first*. "The first of thy ripe fruits," &c.

1. Let God's claims be acknowledged first in the order of *time*. The Jew embraced the first opportunity—as soon as the sheep could leave its dam, and the child its mother, God's claim was recognised. Surely the Christian should not be behind the Jew. In God's cause as well as man's, "he pays twice who pays *promptly*." Do not wait till the end of the quarter or the year before you pay your subscription. Let it be at the beginning.

2. Let God's claims be acknowledged first in point of *quality*. "First of ripe fruits." Other laws, based upon these claims, enact that the gifts shall be without blemish. God's sacrifices were of the best of beasts, God's house was the best in the land. How sad the contrast between this and Christian customs. Any scrap of money, or time, or prosperity, is good enough for God's use, and any barn good enough for His worship. And when a noble spirit is awakened, it is met with the old and usual, "To what purpose is this waste?" Not that God is particular, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof! He can value the widow's mite. But let them see to it, who live on the fat of the land and give a reluctant morsel to God's cause; who can give the whole twenty-four hours to their own interest, and not as many minutes to God's, and who sleep in

palaces but worship in hovels (Hagg. i. 2).

3. Let God's claims be recognised first in order of *interest*. If the rest of the flock died, this must be given to God. But now God's interests are considered last. After having consulted the claims of self, family, business, then if *anything is left* it may be given to God. On the other hand, if there must be retrenchment then God's interests are considered first—to be invaded and ignored, and the guinea dwindles down to half a sovereign, &c.

IV. That God's claims should be acknowledged *systematically*. "First," "on the eighth day." God here demanded a definite amount at a definite time. God's claims must not be considered more recklessly or haphazard than those of family and business. The Christian rule must not be repealed till God repeals it (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2).

V. That our relation to the Divine Lawgiver should lead to the practical acknowledgment of His claims upon *all we are*, ver. 31. God's claim is everywhere on ourselves. No proxies, as such, are permitted. There are many who acknowledge God's claims on what they have that but practically repudiate them which are *personal*. But (1 Cor. vi. 20).

1. God demands personal holiness. (1.) Separation from sin. (2.) Separation to Himself. (See on chap. xix. 10.) God's command is, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," "God's will" is "even your sanctification."

2. God demands a practical exhibition of that holiness in the dignity and nobility of our lives. The flesh that was torn by wild beasts was not forbidden as unclean, but because it was mean and paltry for those members of the "kingdom of priests" to eat their leavings. So the Christian, in his living and general conduct, must not condescend to practices which degrade his profession and dishonour his God.

Learn—

i. That all you have belongs to God. 1. How noble. 2. How safe are our possessions.

ii. That all we are belongs to God. 1. What dignity (Rev. i. 5, 6). 2. What promises (Matt. vi. 25–34; 2. Cor. vi. 16–18, vii. 1; Rom. viii. 28). 3 What safety (Luke xii. 32; John x. 28, 29; Rom. viii. 31–39). And what glory (Rom. viii. 18; 1 John iii. 2), belong to the sons of God.

iii. "What manner of persons ought we to be?"—*J. W. Burn.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Divine Enactments! Vers. 1–31. (1) There is a world of difference between a stained glass window and a kaleidoscope. Their relative values are very different, and so is their structure. The pieces of variegated glass are flung anyhow, for the prism to arrange; whereas, those employed in the window are all arranged to give a beautiful, effective, and abiding impression. These separate enactments are not strung together haphazard. On the contrary, they are chords divinely arranged to produce harmony in the world, and give forth strains of Divine adoration in their observance. (2) If one side of a tree grows, and the other does not, the tree acquires a crooked form. It may be fruitful, but it cannot be beautiful. God would have humanities and nationalities, theocracies and individualities, both rich in the beauties of holiness and the fruits of righteousness. The unequal growth of the Christian graces is undesirable; hence the numerous Divine precautions to make them alike fair, fragrant, and fruitful.

"Stern lawgiving! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds;
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong."
—*Wordsworth.*

Dishonesty! Ver. 1. (1) Matthew Henry says, "That which is won ill will never wear well, for there is a curse attends it, which will waste it." Many a fraudulent speculator on 'Change is none the richer for the gains

dishonestly obtained from widows and old maids. Honesty is, after all, the best policy; for very frequently, the same corrupt dispositions which incline men to the sinful ways of getting will incline them to the like sinful ways of spending. (2) In a recent Court of Queen's Bench trial of some men of note, for dishonest building estate transactions, the judge passed sentence of imprisonment, adding that during the interval pecuniary restitution would have to be made; otherwise at the expiry of the term, they would again be brought up on other counts of the indictment. Restitution and retribution were here combined. "The way of transgressors is hard."

"The sun of justice may withdraw his beams
Awhile from earthly ken; but soon these clouds,
Seeming eclipse, will brighten into day."
—*Bally.*

Full Restitution! Ver. 3. A youth having, in a moment of peculiar temptation, plundered his employer, was sentenced to several years' penal servitude. His conduct in prison was so exemplary that he was soon released on parole. Filled with a deep sense of his sin before God, and his ingratitude to his employer, he resolved to make the utmost amends. By dint of diligence, energy, and industry, he raised sufficient to refund the monies, including interest in full. He then presented himself before his old master in the spirit of a sincere penitent, expressed his sorrow for the dishonest action, and presented the full amount with interest. Conscience and a desire to live before God combined to achieve this happy result of full restitution. Conscience

"In leaves more durable than leaves of brass
Writes our whole history." —*Young.*

Trespass-Tribute! Ver. 5. Chandler in his "Asiatic Travels," observes, that the tame cattle are very fond of vine-leaves, and are permitted to eat them in the autumn. He observed about Smyrna that the leaves were decayed, or stripped by the camels and herds of goats, which were permitted to browse after the vintage. If those animals were so fond of vine leaves, it is no wonder that Moses, in anticipation of possessing the vineyards and oliveyards of Canaan, forbade by an express law any selfish, wilful intrusion of one man's cattle into the property of another. The trespass would prove a serious injury, if it took place before the time of the vintage; and if it occurred afterwards, it would still be plundering the food of the neighbour's own cattle. This law has its moral aspect, and applies to the "spiritual vineyards of humanity."

"Man spoils the tender beauty
That blossoms on the sod,
And blasts the loving heaven
Of the great, good world of God."
—*Household Words.*

Law and Love! Ver. 5. Two small farmers —the one a Christian the other a worldling— owned adjoining lands. Frequently the pious farmer found his neighbour's cow enjoying the rich grass of his meadow field, in spite of hedgerow and gateway. After driving back the animal, and closing the gate time after time, the humble Christian sent to the churlish, dishonest neighbour to say, that it grieved him more to witness his neighbour's dishonesty than to lose the fodder for his cattle; and therefore, if his neighbour could not give up breaking the hedge and opening the gate for his cow to trespass, he would cheerfully feed the animal for nothing along with his own stock. This tenderness of heart for his conscience touched the neighbour, and he at once confessed his constant practice of dishonesty, and offered to make restitution in any way.

"Conscience, what art thou? thou tremendous power!
Who dost inhabit us without our leave;
And art within ourselves another self,
A master-self, that loves to dominate,
And treat the mighty frankly as the slave?"

Honesty! Ver. 9. (1) **Entrusted!** A writer in the "Sunday at Home," alluding to the honesty of the Malays in the Dutch Indies, says that his business required frequent absences, during which he left his house in their care. Before setting out, he gave the key of his bureau to the mandoor, and told him to take care of the money it contained. He says he never found a single farthing amissing— that sometimes returning late, the servant would be found sleeping close to the bureau for its greater security—and that during all the time he passed in the island, he had no occasion to complain of the theft of any article. (2) **Lost!** Not far from St. Petersburgh lived a poor woman, whose only livelihood arose from the visits of a few shipmasters on their way to the capital. One of these left behind a sealed bag of money; which the woman put away in her cupboard till it should be claimed. Years rolled on; and though often in great want, the bag of gold still remained sacredly intact. Seven years afterwards, some shipmasters were again staying at her house, when one of them remarked that he would never forget the town they were then visiting, for he had years before lost a sealed bag of 700 roubles. The poor woman overhearing the remark, said, "Would you know it by the seal?" The shipmaster pointed to a seal hanging by his watch-chain; and the bag was at once produced and restored to its rightful owner.

"An honest man is still an unmoved rock,
Washed whiter, but not shaken with the shock." —*Davenport.*

Trust-Restitution! Ver. 9. (1) Recently a lady went to Paris on a visit, entrusting her house and furniture to a friend, on whose

honesty she relied. Unfortunately the confidence was misplaced; and during her absence, articles of considerable value were removed. On her return, the discovery was made, and the person guilty of so contemptible a breach of trust arraigned. The judge ordered him to restore all the objects of *vertu* which he had purloined, and to suffer a term of imprisonment for his breach of trust. (2) A poor widow entrusted the title-deeds of some property, left by her husband, to a solicitor, in whom she had confidence. Her trust was, however, grossly abused, as he retained the deeds on the plea of some false debt due by the husband. After long and persistent endeavours to obtain recovery of the documents, but in vain, the defrauded widow was advised to apply to the Lord Chancellor. On inquiry, the judge decided that the dishonest lawyer must either deliver up the title-deeds and make restitution for their retention, or be struck off the roll of solicitors.

"Justice has her laws,
That will not brook infringement; in all time,
All circumstances, all state, in every clime,
She holds aloft the same avenging sword."
—*Percival.*

Conscience-Restitution! Ver. 12. Gray mentions that as a gentleman in London entered his house, he found a well-dressed female sitting on the stairs. She asked pardon for the liberty she had taken, saying that she had taken refuge for a few minutes in his house from a mad dog. On hearing her story, he gave her some refreshment before she left. In the evening, his wife missed her gold watch—it having been purloined by the forenoon visitor. Fifteen years afterwards, the watch was returned, with a note from the thief. It stated that the Gospel had recently changed her heart, and that in consequence she desired to return the watch to its rightful owner.

"Conscience! It is a dangerous thing.
It made me once
Restore a purse of gold."—*Shakespeare.*

Seduction-Solatium! Vers. 16, 17. Marriage or money are the only earthly compensations which can be made. Unhappily, Wilson's "Tales of the Borders" abound with instances, in which this law—still in force—was utterly disregarded altogether in its compensatory aspects. So far are men from any disposition of heart towards the act of restitution, that English law has to be framed and put in force to compel them to make solatium, either by matrimonial contract or pecuniary indemnity. One of the most painful of the annals of British Law Courts is that which concerns the disclosure of man's heartlessness in regard to the maiden whom he has seduced. Law, however, can only enforce compensation; and it remains for grace to suppress the inclination. St. Benedict relates that when he felt this desir upon him, he rushed from his cave, and flung himself into a thicket of briars and nettles, in which he rolled himself until the blood flowed. This expedient could only be a temporary relief; and the only efficient and permanent method of preventative is "Prayer for divine grace."

"Terrestrial objects, disenchanted there,
Lose all their power to dazzle or ensnare;
One only object then seems worth our care—
To win the race." —*Elliott.*

Witchcraft and Wizardry! Ver. 18. (1) The Church of Rome subjected persons suspected of witchcraft to the most cruel torments; but itself is the most notorious offender in this respect. Its pretended miracles from the blood of St. Januarius to the trance of La Pucelle are a concentration of superstitious wizardry. In tens of thousands of cases the victims—often innocent—were burned alive; while others were drowned by the test applied. Rome herself, the apocalyptic wizard clothed in scarlet, is to know the retributive penalty of this law: "She shall not be suffered to live." (2) Sad as are the evidences of superstitious wizardry in modern spiritualism of America and England, there is this sure solace, that all witchcraft is doomed sooner or later. It is Carlyle who says, that the burning of a little straw may hide the stars of the sky; but the stars are there, and will reappear. Truth is Eternal.

"Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again—
The eternal years of God are hers;
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies among her worshippers."
—*Bryant.*

Witchcraft! Ver. 18. The river Dart is a bright clear stream, which takes its rise amid the wild beauty of our English Alps—the Dartmoor range. Long years ago, a crowd was gathered. Here were the middle-aged and young farmers and labourers, with mingled fear of all witches, and hatred to witchcraft a part of their very creed. Here also were women with rancorous tongues; little children, with babes in their mothers' arm, gathered as for a holiday. The squire's daughter has been condemned to the test of witchcraft; if she sinks, she is guilty; if she rises and escapes, she is innocent. Arrayed in white garments, she is led towards the river through the crowd, whose cruel jests and coarse words are the first gauntlet her pure mind must run. The tender arms were grasped, and the graceful form hurled into the stream, swollen with the unusually heavy rains. Suddenly a cry was raised; the cruel crowd gave way; and a man rushed breathlessly to the river's brink. It was the maiden's lover, to whom she was shortly to be united; and having heard of the dreadful ordeal designed, he had hastened to rescue her from the "witch's test." Too late! Without a word, he plunged in after her. A gleam of a white robe—a sudden uplifting of a man's strong arm—were all that the super-

stitious onlookers ever saw more of the maiden or her lover.

"But endless is the list of human ills,
And sighs might sooner fail than cause to sigh." —*Young.*

Idol-Sacrifices! Ver. 20. Idolaters and their sacrifices, says Dr. Chapin! You cannot find any more gross—any more cruel—on the broad earth, than within a mile's area of the pulpit. Dark minds, from which God is obscured! Deluded souls, whose fetish is the dice box, or the bottle! Apathetic spirits, steeped in sensual abomination—unmoved by a moral ripple—soaking in the swamp of animal vitality! These are your modern Daphne and Delphian idolaters. False gods, more hideous, more awful than Moloch or Baal—worshipped with shrieks—worshipped with curses; with the hearthstone for the blood-stained altar, the drunken husband for the immolating priest, and women and children for the sacrificial victims! These are your modern idol-holocausts. This verse may not be applicable to Christianised England in its literality; but the moral vein lies hidden beneath the literal surface. In its moral aspect it is England's obligation of a truth.

"Turn thee from these, or dare not to inquire
Of Him whose name is jealous, lest in wrath
He hears and answers thine unblest desire;
Far better we should cross His lightning's path,
Than be according to our idols heard,
And God should take us at our own vain word." —*Keble.*

Idolater's Doom! Ver. 20. A philosopher, states the Hebrew Talmud, once remarked to Gamaliel: "Instead of uttering threats against the worshippers of idols, why does not God rather turn His wrath against the idols themselves?" The wise Rabbi replied by a story. A prince had an insolent and rebellious son, who, among other insults to his father, had the audacity to bestow his father's name upon his dog. His father was full of wrath; but against whom? To this inquiry, the philosopher made reply, "The son, doubtless; but if God were to send all these idols into destruction, there would no longer be any danger of idolatry in the world." The pious Hebrew at once retorted: "The barbarians deify the rivers and waters, the stars and suns. Would you then have God, on account of the folly of some of His creatures, plunge creation in ruin? If any one steals seed, and afterwards sows it in the ground, does it remain fruitless on account of its having been stolen?" Hence the doom of death upon the Jewish idolater.

"If I have sought to live
But in one light, and made a mortal eye
The lonely star of my idolatry,
Thou that art LOVE, oh *pity and forgive.*"
—*Hemans.*

Strangers' Rights! Ver. 21. A certain shepherd had a flock which he led daily to pasture, and which he brought home each evening to the fold. It came to pass on a time that a stag voluntarily joined, and became the inseparable companion of the flock. When they went to the pasture it went thither; when they returned to the fold, it returned with them. The shepherd greatly loved the stag, and often charged his servants that nothing should be wanting to its welfare. But the servants, astonished at the injunction, inquired of their master his reason. "This poor animal, accustomed to the wilderness, has left its natural freedom of roaming, and joined itself fearlessly to us! Should not we, therefore, be kind to it, and not vex or oppress it?" God loves the stranger in giving him food and raiment; and He enjoins similar consideration on the part of the Jews. He requires still more of Christians in this respect. There is a promise: "Be careful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

"And He will leave the ninety-nine that range
In pleasant pastures where the grass grows sweet,
And seek us till He sets our wandering feet
Where tempting herbage springs and cooling waters meet." —*Mason.*

Strangers! Ver. 21. Upon the higher Alps, the snow is sometimes piled so high, and so evenly balanced, that a crack of a whip or the shout of a voice may give sufficient vibrations to the air as to bring down the whole mass upon the travellers below. So in our moral world, there are souls just hovering over the abyss of ruin. A word, or even a look, from us, may cause them to plunge down into depths from which there is no return. On the other hand, a helping hand stretched out to them in the moment of peril may lead them into the safe, sure way of peace. To vex the stranger, or afflict the alien, may lead to the overthrow of all the life of hope in him; whereas kindness may induce him to give heed to those truths of Scripture, which have led in your case to the practise of the Christian virtues. Many a stranger has been alienated from the gospel by the cruelties and oppressions of its professors. Better those—

"Who lead the blind old giant by the hand
From out the pathless desert where he gropes,
And set him onward in his darksome way."
—*Lowell.*

Widow Woes! Ver. 22. The Jewish law required a man's brother to marry his widow. In numerous countries, notably India, widows are devoted to great privations from the time their husbands die. At the Isthmus of Darien, when a widow dies, such of her children as cannot from tender age provide for their own subsistence, are buried in the same grave with her. It was one of the most heinous of Phari-

saic offences, which drew down the stern malediction of Jesus upon them, that they vexed and afflicted the widows in Israel. One of the most touching of His parables is based upon the wrong-doing of a poor widow's adversary, and the indifference of the judge towards her importunate plea. It is remarkable that the Lord in verse 22 alludes to the "crying of the widow" as ever to be heeded by Him. He may bear long with them. There may be a long, and from our view-point inexplicable delay; but let not the oppressed widow despair. He will avenge her—His widowed and oppressed Church. When the cry rises, broken and stifled, but eager, as uttered by one enduring dread wrong, God in heaven hears it well pleased.

"You take my house, when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house; you take my life,
When you do take the means whereby I live." —*Shakespeare.*

Orphan Oppression! Verse 24. Other offences are punished by the medium of human justice; but God is His own avenger of this heinous wrong. Years ago, a rural parish clerk was left in charge of an orphan relative of his wife. He appropriated the monies, and abused the boy. Forced by persistent cruelties to flee away from home, he reached Australia, where God raised up friends He prospered in life, and became a landowner. His dishonest and tyrant guardian, none the richer for his fraudulent gains, yielded to evil counsellors—took part in a local crime, and was tried and transported to the Australian convict settlement. Here, he made his escape with a fellow convict, and both took refuge in a cave. They quarrelled over the fire, as to which should have possession of certain stolen articles, and in the dispute their gunpowder flask fell into the flames. It instantly exploded in the face of the convicted tyrant, depriving him of eyesight; while his comrade, seizing the things in dispute, left his blind companion in the cave. As he was shrieking piteously for help, some horsemen passed by; and overhearing his agonising screams, they alighted from their horses and entered the cavern. The leader was the "defrauded orphan," who, having nobly struggled to position and honour, now knelt by his oppressor, whose system was so shattered by the shock, that he died a few minutes afterwards.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all."
—*Longfellow.*

Orphan Obligations! Vers. 22–24. Orphans should be grateful to their benefactors. God Himself will reward them. A poor widow took an orphan, left by a next door neighbour, into her own family. For years she struggled on with the humble proceeds of mangling in the court, until illness came. The orphan youth obtained a place in the city, which enabled him to find necessaries for the widow and her children, most of whom were younger than himself. His leisure hours were spent in ministering to the wants of his benefactress, and instructing her children. As he grew up, his honesty and shrewdness won him a post of confidence and competence in his firm; enabling him to advance the temporal welfare of his adopted brothers and sisters. All of them were placed in good situations. In course of time the orphan became the junior, then the head partner of his firm. He purchased a rural estate; and in one of the prettiest of the cottages he placed the poor widow; poor no longer, but enriched with a handsome annuity for life. Here she lived happy and honoured; dying at last in the arms of him whom she had received as a penniless child, and whom she had rescued from the fate of a youthful London Arab.

"Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."
—*Tennyson.*

Security Pledges! Vers. 26, 27. In all parts of Southern Africa the skin cloak is the covering of males and females by day and night. The Hottentot cloak is composed of sheepskins, retaining the wool on the inside of it; and in this he sleeps comfortably under a bush or tree. In the East, extreme heat of the day is often succeeded by extreme cold of the night. The Israelite encamping in the wilderness would probably be often content with such a cloak or mantle. No doubt in the Holy Land there would be many poor, who could afford no other raiment than this by night and day. The Red Indian has his blanket, in which he wraps himself when wandering in his vast native forests. The thoughtful and gracious care of God, therefore, shines out sweetly in this humane and considerate enactment. Man should follow the Divine example.

"Have love! Not love alone for one,
But man, as man, thy brothers call;
And scatter, like the circling sun,
Thy charities on all." —*Schiller.*

Gratitude-Gifts! Vers. 29, 30. St. Paul stamps the sin of ingratitude to God as peculiarly heinous, when he says of the heathen (Rom. i.) that they were not thankful. Seneca —between whom and St. Paul some suppose that there was personal intercourse—says: "We are thankful to a friend for a few acres of land only, or for a little money; and yet for the possession of the whole earth, which God has given us, we care not to testify any grateful returns." The English proverb declares a humiliating axiom: "The river passed, and God is forgotten." The Italian

form of it sounds a still sadder depth of ingratitude: "The peril passed, the saint mocked." Mandrabulus the Samian, having vowed to the goddess Juno a golden ram if she disclosed to him a certain mine, the Greek story runs that under her auspices and direction he was the discoverer. Once in possession, however, his votive-offering of a golden ram dwindled down into a silver one; that again for a brass one; and at last nothing at all. God here lays down the law of Divine gratitude, in which are also involved the Divine rights of human self-consecration: "All that I have is Thine;" "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine;" "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." But

"Man, the worldly, ingrate man can ever
Enjoy God's gifts, but never mind the Giver;
And like the swine, though pampered with enough,
His eyes are never higher than the trough."
—*Quarles.*

Cheerful Consecration! Ver. 30. As fruits artificially raised or forced in the hothouse have not the exquisite flavour of those fruits which are grown naturally, and in their due season; so that obedience, which is enforced by the requirements of the law, wants the genuine flavour and sweetness of that obedience which springs from a heart warmed with the love of God in Christ. God loves a cheerful giver, for this among other reasons: The votive-fruits of such self-dedication are exceeding sweet to His taste. "How much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!" (Cant. ii. 10).

"Come, bring thy gift. If blessings were as slow
As men's returns, what would become of fools?"
—*Herbert.*

Legislation-Links! Ver. 31. The study of the Mosaic laws will repay the students. "They will repay the historian," says Hamilton; "for they will introduce him to a civilisation compared with which the Greek culture and Roman commonwealth are barbarisms. They will repay the jurist, for in the dividends and compensations—the doctrine of trespass and damage and *malice prepense* laid down by the Hebrew lawgiver, he will find the origin or earnest of much in our own British statute-book. And they will repay every student of morals and of mankind; for thoughts, says Wines, colonise as well as races; ideas, like families, have a genealogy and a propagation. The cradle of all codes is the law of Mosaic enactments."

"These are the lessons God would write—
These laws as with a burning pen,
In traces of eternal light,
Upon the hearts of men." —*Schiller.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. Thou shalt not raise]** = *tissa*, from the inf. *naça*, in its simple sense, "to carry," and in its ethical, "to bear about in the heart." Hence *tissa* is a pregnant word, and signifies: "Thou shalt neither raise nor carry abroad, nor harbour in your heart, evil report." **2. Thou shalt not follow]**. Our idiomatic expression, "to be after," *i.e.*, to preserve a course of persistent getting at a person or thing answers well to the literal meaning of the words, *lo tihyeh*, "be not;" *achrey*, "after;" *rabbim*, "multitude;" *le rāoth*, "for evil." In other words, do not get at the multitude with evil designs, and so become an evil *unto the multitude.* Hence the appositeness of the other clause of the sentence becomes evident, if rightly rendered: "Neither shalt thou speak in a cause to incline (to the multitude) to wrest judgment." The exhortation means, "not to give way, or bend (*lintoth*), on account of the pressure of the multitude, and thus suffer the multitude to become an occasion for evil *unto thee.*" **3. Thou shalt not adorn]** (*tehdar*), *i.e.*, gloss over the cause of a man (*though he be*) *dal* = *destitute.* 6. The poor referred to in this verse is "thy poor ones" (*ebyoncha*), in the sense of simply being in, or suffering from, want, but not being absolutely destitute. **19. Thou shalt not seethe, &c.]**—This command, taken in connection with the preceding one, justifies the explanation of ancient commentators that it was given to banish a pagan rite, in the offering up as an harvest thanks-offering of a kid seethed in its mother's milk. With the milk of this oblation the fields, gardens, and orchards were sprinkled, in the belief that favour of the deities for a good harvest in the coming year would be thus secured. This commandment may, however, also imply a prohibition against cruelty and outrage of nature. Rabbinism took occasion to adduce from this commandment injunctions of an extensive culinary kind, according to which every Jew was strictly prohibited, not only from using milk, butter, or cheese with meat, but he is obliged to keep separate sets of kitchen utensils for each of those two classes of food.

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

RULES FOR JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS.

We see a connection running through the whole of these verses. They may all be said to have a bearing upon judicial proceedings. Rightly received they tend to promote the integrity of the witness, the uprightness of the judge, and the correctness of the judicial conclusion. All must regard themselves under law. Subjects are under law. Lawgivers and law administrators are likewise under law. There can be no escape from law. The highest condition is that of being ruled by the great law of love.

I. Perjury is to be avoided. "Thou shalt not raise or receive a false report; put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness." If the receiver is as bad as the thief, then the receiver of a false report is as bad as the raiser. If we pass out of the court of justice and say that men are not to raise false reports, which is undoubtedly true, and that the receivers are just as guilty as the raisers of false reports; then we get a very painful view of even Christian (so called) society. Such is the corruption of human nature that we delight in listening to a false report, though we may doubt its accuracy. Laws against perjury are severe, and justly so, for the perjurer is one of the vilest of men.

II. The influence of the multitude is to be repudiated. Too often the multitude is omnipotent. "The voice of the people is the voice of God," is a proverb which is injurious, which is in great measure false, but which shows how men follow the leading of the crowd. The voice of the sovereign people is too often appealed to as the divinest law. The conclusion of the thinking multitude will very likely be correct; but the movements of the unreflecting multitude are just as likely to be under the direction of folly; and the greater part of large gatherings are unreflecting. The crowd will cut a man's head off to-day, and canonize him to-morrow. There is no reason why the multitude passes so quickly from crying "Hosannah" to crying "Crucify." The leaders of the people exercise a responsible function. Too often the leaders are only led. The men are benefactors who work to create a healthy public opinion. Judges, above all men, should be free from the influence of the multitude.

III. False sentiment must find no place. "Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause." Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. Tenderness for poverty is misplaced when it leads to the perversion of justice. The emotional must not be stifled, but kept in its right position. The emotional must be subordinate to the intellectual and deliberative faculties. In all our judgments let us preserve the true position of our God-given faculties.

IV. Prejudice must be laid upon one side. Regard the directions in verses 4 and 5 not merely as enjoining upon men the duty of doing good to those who hate them, but as showing that the judge must not let prejudice influence while seeking to come to a conclusion. Thus we see a purpose in the placing of them in this part of the general legal directions. It is certain that judges ought to be even-handed, as free on the one hand from the sentiment of pity as from the feeling of hatred on the other.

V. The bribe must be at once rejected. How true universally are those words—the gift blindeth the wise. Gold can throw a yellow film over the most keen-sighted of men, that they see not clearly. All things are tinged with the colour of the metal prostituted to a base purpose.

VI. And yet the judge must not be a hard oppressor. He must give the

poor stranger a fair chance. He must make due allowance for his timorousness; for ye know the heart of a stranger. How suggestive from the homiletical point of view! 1. Sorrowful dispensations increase knowledge. 2. Sorrowful dispensations develop refinement. 3. Sorrowful dispensations enlarge sympathy. 4. Sorrowful dispensations promote beneficence.

V. Judges themselves must be judged. "I will not justify the wicked." Therefore be careful. The innocent and righteous slay not. Fearful will be the doom of unjust judges. Slaughtered innocents will confront them, and fill their souls with unutterable anguish. God is judge, and a great day of trial will come to universal man.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

SLANDER.—*Verse* 1 (*first clause*).

The word rendered "thou shalt not raise" is from נָשָׂא to take away; hence both text "raise," and margin "receive," are correct. In this law slander is characterised, prohibited, and punished.

I. Slander is **characterised**—

1. Slander consists in **originating** a false report. (1.) It may be from envy. (2.) It may be from carelessness; judging appearances merely. (3.) It may be from hasty conclusions, through not taking into consideration the whole of the circumstances of a given case, or not waiting for its full explanation.

2. Slander consists in **listening** to false reports. (1.) Because it countenances and encourages the slanderer. (2.) Because you allow it to be reported to one at least who ought not to have heard it. (3.) Because repeated encouragement of slander may make you a slanderer.

3. Slander consists in **circulating** a false report (Lev. xix. 16.) (1.) It may be circulated confidentially; "I wouldn't let any one know it for the world! It may not be true, you know." (2.) It may be circulated as an ordinary topic of information in gossip. (3.) It may be circulated by a pretended desire to benefit the individual concerned: "Don't you think I ought to mention it to him?" (4.) It may be circulated by implication; shoulders, eyes, lips, hands, may be all eloquent with slanderous insinuations. (5.) It may be circulated negatively: "I don't believe it; now, do you?"

II. Slander is **prohibited**.

1. Affecting antecedents. (1.) A man's character does not consist in what he has been, but in what he is. (2.) What a man has been ought not to be a lever to lift him into it again. (3.) Even if a man has been very bad in the past, he may be very good in the present.

2. Affecting character. A man's character is his all; if you take that away, you leave him "poor indeed!"

3. Affecting his family or social relations.

4. Affecting his goods.

III. Slander is **punished**. This is one of those commandments which are addressed to the conscience, common sense, and good feeling, and is not followed by judicial punishment. But does the slanderer escape? Nay, verily!

1. He is excluded from religious fellowship (Ps. xv. 3).

2. He is the object of Divine vengeance (Ps. x. 5).

3. He is exposed to the contempt of mankind (Prov. x. 18).

4. He is excluded from the kingdom of heaven (Rev. xxii. 15). See some excellent remarks by Wesley (Sermon xxii. on Matt. v. 5–7).

In conclusion—1. Exod. xx. 16; 2. Matt. xviii. 15; and 3. Gal. vi. 1.

—*J. W. Burn.*

THE DUTIES OF WITNESSES (*last clause of verse* 1–3).

I. Not to co-operate in an unrighteous cause, ver. 1. This "commandment is exceeding broad," and conveys a lesson—

1. To judicial witnesses. (1.) Personal friendships. (2.) The guilt of the accused on some other point. (3.) A *show* of justice must not influence us.

2. To all partisans, controversialists, politicians.

3. To trades unionists, &c.

II. Not to co-operate in any unrighteous cause because it is popular, ver. 2.

1. Because majorities are no test of truth. Multitudes may be roused by passion, prejudice, or self-interest.

2. Because men should be weighed as well as counted.

3. Because righteousness, from the constitution of human nature, is often unpopular, and in the minority.

III. Not to co-operate in an unrighteous cause because it is apparently benevolent, ver. 3; (Lev. xix. 15).

1. Because we may be putting a premium on vice which is the source of all misery. (1.) By endeavouring to conceal the crime. (2.) By extolling other virtues, so as to minimise the enormity of guilt. But to what purpose is it if we extol a man's honesty, if he is lazy, or a drunkard; or his sobriety, if a thief?

2. Because justice is above mere sentiment, and for the wellbeing of the whole community, and not for the exclusive benefit of a class.

3. Because of its influence on the object himself. Let a man feel that you do this or that for him simply because he is poor, and he will see no advantage in helping himself.

Learn then—

i. To entertain none but righteous considerations. ii. To pursue them at all cost.—*J. W. Burn.*

ON DUTIES TO ENEMIES.—*Verses* 4, 5.

Notice—

I. That duties to enemies are enjoined (Prov. xxiv. 17; 1 Thess. v. 15).

1. It is our duty to protect the interests of our enemy. (1.) If they are damaged, we should endeavour to retrieve them. (2.) If they are in danger of damage, we should endeavour to prevent them (James v. 19, 20).

2. It is our duty to help the difficulties of our enemy. (1.) His mind may be in difficulties. (2.) His soul may be in difficulties. (3.) His material interests may be in difficulties.

II. That duties to enemies are difficult: "and *wouldest* forbear to help him."

1. Such duties are against the grain of human nature.

2. Such duties are apparently against self-interest.

3. Such duties require self-denials and sacrifices.

III. That duties to enemies are rewarded (Prov. xxv. 21, 22; Matt. v. 44, 45; Rom. xii. 20).

IV. That neglect of duties to enemies is punished (Job xxxi. 29; Prov. xxiv. 18). In conclusion—

i. Our text applies to all enmity, whether polemical, political, or national. ii. Its precepts should be obeyed, because we may be in the wrong and our enemy in the right. iii. Because God has Himself set us the sublime example. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of His Son."

—*J. W. Burn.*

THE DUTIES OF JUDGES.—*Verses* 6–9.

Our text enjoins—

I. That judges should be impartial.

1. In particular towards the poor, ver. 6. (1.) Because the poor are

most open to the oppression of the powerful. (2.) Because the poor are often at a disadvantage for the want of technical knowledge, or means to procure legal assistance. (3.) Because the poor are easily overawed.

2. In general towards the right, ver. 7, *first clause.* Not to aid or abet a wrong cause.

II. That judges should be **cautious**, particularly with regard to matters relating to capital punishment. "The innocent and righteous slay thou not."

1. The case must be clearly proved.

2. The accused to have the benefit of the doubt.

3. Because justice would be done. If the criminal escaped an earthly doom, God would "not justify the wicked" (Prov. xi. 21).

III. That judges should be **incorrupt**, ver. 8, either in the shape of direct bribe or indirect present.

1. Because the bribe may blind him to the true merit of the case; and

2. Because the bribe may weigh down and pervert his judgment on the wrong side.

IV. That judges should be **considerate**, ver. 9; particularly in regard to foreigners. Because—

1. They had been foreigners themselves, and had suffered for the want of consideration.

2. They therefore knew something of the sufferings of foreigners. (1.) Foreigners may be ignorant of the law and unwittingly break it. (2.) When broken, they may know nothing of legal technicalities, or be unable to pay legal expenses.

Application.—"I will not justify the wicked" applies to the judge as well as to the accused. Judges will have to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.—*J. W. Burn.*

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

Sabbatic Years and Days.

It has been said that a life according to nature is the highest good. Now, most certainly, a life conducted on the principles laid down by Him who is the God of nature and of grace is the highest good,—being productive of the largest amount of happiness. The wisdom and benevolence of the Almighty are manifested in the appointment of the Sabbath; and those consult their highest good—not only their future, but their present welfare—who observe that appointment, and devote a seventh of their time to rest, and to the cultivation more especially of the spiritual life.

I. The beneficence of the Sabbatic year. 1. *It is beneficent to the land.* Every seventh year the land must rest and lie still. Even in high farming it is found needful to give the land a rest by a change of crops. The earth is wonderfully productive, and has a marvellous power of renewing its youth from year to year, and from age to age. But this power of productiveness must not be stretched too far. The land, too, must have its Sabbath. A shortsighted policy works the land until it becomes comparatively barren; and thus selfishness, in the long run, is not as profitable as a spirit directed by Divine regulations. 2. *It is beneficent to the owner of the land.* He learns by this arrangement to husband his resources, and to be provident. One reason of the poverty of uncultured tribes is, that they are not provident. They do not look into the future, and store up seed for the coming harvest. This Sabbatic year will teach the owner to be provident. It will teach him to have a wise management of affairs. He will be taught to take a large view of God's dealings. He will see that the world is not conducted on the haphazard principle. There is method in the Divine government. Thus the farmer's reflective faculties are developed. He is not to be a mere working machine; but a king in nature moving in subjection to the Divine King, learning lessons of dependence upon

God, and admiring the bounty of that God who in six years gives ample supplies for the seventh. 3. *It is beneficent to the poor and to the beasts,* "that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave, the beasts of the field shall eat." The poor have a divine right to the charities of the rich. There is no law against the plenty obtained by six years' hard labour; but here is a wise limit to the spirit of acquisition. The poor must not envy the rich their six years' plenty; and the rich must not deny to the poor the power to glean in the seventh year. God cares even for oxen; and the rich must care for those who are God's care. If God cares for oxen, how much more for those made in His image. That community must be safe and prosperous where there is this mutual consideration. Communistic violence will not be known in that land where the rich do not oppress the poor. There is plenty for all in God's vast universe. Let there be no waste, but a wise economy. Surely six years' produce is enough for the reasonable and benevolent owner of property! Let the poor have the gleanings of the seventh year.

II. The beneficence of the Sabbatic day. The blessed Saviour said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." And in the Old Testament we find that the appointment of the Sabbath was a beneficent arrangement for man's welfare. But some so read our Saviour's words that the Sabbath is divested of any binding power. The Sabbath was made for man, and therefore if man does not want to keep a Sabbath he has no need to do so. Put the statement in another form. It is self-evident that food was made for man, and not man for food. No one would ever think that the statement meant that man need not take food. It was made to meet man's physical necessities, and he cannot do without it. Now, just in the same way as food was made for man, so the Sabbath was made for man's physical, intellectual, and moral nature. The Sabbath was not made for man as a toy is made for the child, to minister for an hour or two to its amusement, and then to be destroyed. The Sabbath was made for man as the sun was made for man, to give us light, heat, beauty, and productiveness. The Sabbath was made for man as the revolving seasons, as the sweet interchange of day and night were made for man, that this world may be to him a glorious dwelling-place. The Sabbath was made for man, as the Bible was made for man, that he may attain the true conceptions of manhood, that the true royalty of his nature may not be blotted out of existence, that he may rise above mere notions of animality, that he may stand in this world conscious of the dignity of his origin and the greatness of his sublime destiny. The Sabbath was made for man as the Saviour Himself was made a man for men, that the powers of evil may not gain a complete mastery, and that they may sit in heavenly places, clothed in garments of spiritual fashion, and radiant with Divine beauty. The Sabbath was made for man as heaven is made for redeemed man. A refuge from the storms of life. A home of peace after the six days of care and toil. A goal to which we look with glad hearts, and towards which we work with hopeful spirits amid the intense struggles and fervid contests and fierce strifes of existence. There are those who seem to regard the Sabbath as an infringement on their rights, and as a robbery of the time they might otherwise profitably employ in trade or commerce. And they strive to frustrate the purposes of Divine benevolence by putting seven days' labour into the six, and then taking the seventh day for the purpose of recruiting an over-wrought physical or mental nature. But it will not do. By and by the man will be compelled to pay the penalty of his folly. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest. To put seven days' labour into six is like stretching the bow until it snaps and is destroyed. Man needs periods of rest and release from care, from toil, and from business, and this need is met by the appointment of the Sabbath. This

is one of the most beneficent of Divine institutions; and it is the one that is the most universally observed. The greater part of civilized humanity, as if by instinctive feeling, seem to appreciate its beneficence. Its infringement is only the result of a narrow selfishness that would soon bring the social fabric to awful ruin. The Sabbath is not for work, is not for pleasure that may be harder toil than our accustomed work, is not for doing little odds and ends for which we have not time in the week, but for rest—rest of body and rest of mind—rest in divine service, rest in peaceful worship, and rest in holy employments. The Sabbath day fosters the spirit of benevolence. The letter of the Old Testament is not binding, but the spirit is. We must do all that lies in our power so that the ox and the ass may rest, and the son of the handmaid and the stranger may be refreshed. In this world of selfishness it will foster a benevolent spirit, and produce restful feelings to strive to minister to the welfare of the lower animals, and the refreshment even of the stranger. The Sabbath throws open the arms of love, and would enfold a wearied universe and impart abiding rest.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

THE SABBATIC YEAR.—*Verses* 9–11.

For the whole subject, see Dr. Milligan's article on "Sacred Seasons" in Cassells' "Bible Educator." This law was intended—1. To show the fertility of the land of promise. Every seventh year, without skill or toil, the land would produce of itself sufficient for the poor and the beasts of the field. 2. To encourage habits of thrift and forethought, so that they might provide for the year of rest. 3. To test (1.) their faith in the providence, and (2.) their obedience to the laws of God. The subject suggests—

I. That periods may arrive by the order or permission of God when work must be laid aside. Commercial depression, sickness, old age.

II. That the prospect of such periods should lead us to provide for them. We are not like "fowls of the air," or "grass of the field," which have to be literally fed and clothed by the providence of God, and are utterly unable to forecast and provide for contingencies.

III. That the prospect of such periods should teach us resignation to the will of God and faith in His goodness (Matt. vi. 25–34).

Application.—i. There remaineth "a rest" for the people of God; ii. Prepare for that rest by faith and obedience.

—*J. W. Burn.*

LABOUR AND REST.—*Verse* 12.

This verse teaches us—

I. That rest is needful, "May be refreshed."

1. Rest is needful that the exhausted faculties may repose after past work.

2. Rest is needful that those faculties may be invigorated for future service.

3. Rest is needful that work may not become irksome; for if so (1.) It will be done slovenly; and (2.) Done imperfectly.

4. Rest is needful that work may be free and joyous.

II. That rest is mercifully provided.

1. This rest is provided by God, lest man should not overlook its necessity.

2. This rest is provided by God lest the servant, the foreigner, or the beast should be defrauded of their right to it.

III. That rest should be diligently earned. "Six days shalt thou *do* thy *work*." 1. Not lounge over it; 2. Not neglect it; but 3. *Do* it earnestly, conscientiously, and well.

Application.—i. A lesson to employers. *God* has provided this rest, beware how you steal what God has given to man.

ii. A lesson to working men. This rest is yours by right. Then (1.) claim it; (2.) don't abuse it; (3.) don't curtail that of others; (4.) work during your own time, rest during God's. iii. A lesson to the world at large. Sabbath-breaking is the direct cause of (1.) Intellectual evils; overtaxed brains, &c.; (2.) moral evils; neglect of the rights of God and man; (3.) physical evils. Science has demonstrated the need of one day's rest in seven.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 13.

THE NEED OF CIRCUMSPECTION.

The man who makes a wise use of his eyes is in so far circumspect. Words that primarily set forth bodily actions are secondarily applied to the description of mental states and actions. Circumspection is descriptive of a mental condition, and denotes intensity and watchfulness of spirit. The man who takes heed to himself and his ways is circumspect. "In all things that I have said unto you be circumspect." There never was greater need for circumspection. This exhortation is for all time.

I. **Circumspection is difficult.** It is difficult, from the fact that we are blind, and are unconscious of our sad state. The blind man moves with caution because he feels his defect. Carelessness, which may be taken as the opposite of circumspection, is characteristic of a childish state. It is difficult for the child to command its attention. There is a deal of childishness in full-grown men. It is difficult for the photographer to get a happy expression fixed upon the prepared glass. The sitter cannot bear the necessary fixity of gaze, and the countenance assumes an unnatural aspect. This is typical. It is difficult to keep the mind fixed upon the great problems of life, and the ears ever open to the reception, and the understanding ever on the stretch to the true perception of the voice of God. Circumspection is not a mere listless gaze. It is a looking round about, but it is a looking with an earnest purpose in order to see what dangers are to be avoided, what voice is to be obeyed, and what course is to be pursued. All mental efforts in the initial stages are difficult, and circumspection is a mental effort. It must sometimes be a prolonged mental strain.

II. **Circumspection is wise.** It is not by ease, but by difficulties, that the world's great heroes have been created. The smooth pathway is the most attractive, but it is not the one selected by wisdom. "See that ye walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise redeeming the time." The man is unwise who does not constantly employ his powers of mental vision. Circumspection we consider wise in the merchant, the soldier, the sailor, and the statesman. Circumspection is wise on the part of moral beings, or those who have great duties to discharge. There is a right spirit in which feast days and days of rest must be kept, and it is wise to be circumspect.

III **Circumspection is wise, for it is helpful.** Helpful to the individual. The exercise of circumspection increases our power of being circumspect. It will become a habit. All difficulty will vanish. And then all his nature will be enlarged. He will march through this world thoroughly alive to its great movements, and its solemn realities. He will not be easily surprised by any foe. He cannot be taken unawares, for He is always on the watch-tower. Every power and faculty of His nature will be brought into play. Helpful to the community. The careless horse in the team hinders all the rest. A great many overlookers would have to be discharged if all workers were circumspect. What a blessed revolution would circumspection produce in civil and ecclesiastical communities! What holy rejoicings on feast days if all feasters were

circumspect! What undisturbed and delightful repose on rest days if all were truly circumspect!

IV. **This circumspection is required**—1. By reason of the condition *of our nature.* We are materialised. The spiritual essence has been eliminated. Idolatry is alluring and compatible. This was the danger of the Jews. This is still our danger. One of our great literary men lately said he was only interested in what he could "see and touch." Is not this the idolater's temper? 2. By reason of the condition *of our surroundings.* The Jews were the only theocratic nation. They were surrounded by idolaters. It was needful for them to be circumspect. There is a revivification of materialistic philosophy. Matter is deified. Idols are being projected from the ingenious minds of scientists. We may not be in danger of bowing down to misshapen idols of the hand; but we are in danger of worshipping misshapen idols of the mind. We must be circumspect. 3. Increased circumspection is required with reference to those evils to which we are specially liable. The Jews were not even to mention the name of heathen gods; for this was their special danger. We know how easy a thing it was for them to lapse into idolatry; therefore the need of increased circumspection. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset." Where danger threatens let the forces gather. Let us consider the circumstances of our times, the peculiar dangers to which we are liable; let us be increasingly circumspect. 4. Increased circumspection is required in those things that may seem of little importance. It is a strict charge not to let the name of other gods be heard out of the mouth. The Jew might be disposed to resist this as unreasonable. Words are little things, but in them are great powers. The utterance of our thoughts increases their vitality and their potency. The more we speak about the evil thing, the less is our repugnance to it. Let abhorrence of idolatry be so great that we shall not deign to mention the name of other gods. O God, keep the door of my lips, as well as guide the motions of my heart!—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

CIRCUMSPECTION.—*Verse* 13.

I. In general. "In all things." Moses is drawing to the close of these precepts, and looking back upon them, he says—"Be circumspect." The original (שָׁמַר) suggests—

1. That we should be fully awake to the importance of the Divine commands. (1.) Give them intelligent and reverent examination. (2.) Store them up in the memory. (3.) Study them in their beneficent operation.

2. That we should be on our guard against temptations to break the Divine commands. Temptations are (1.) sudden; (2.) insidious; (3.) deceiving.

3. That we should be careful "to remember His commandments to do them." (1.) There is a danger lest an exaggerated estimate of human weakness should lead to despair on the one hand, and recklessness on the other. (2.) God would not command the impossible. (3.) There is "grace to help in time of need."

II. In particular, "make no mention," &c. Because—

1. That would be uncircumspect in the first and greatest commandment.

2. That would be to forfeit the help promised to the circumspect.

3. That would be to yield to a tendency to be uncircumspect in everything.

Christians—i. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." ii. Live so as "to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things."

—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14–19.

PILGRIMAGE FEASTS.

The three feasts referred to in this passage are—The Feast of the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles or ingathering; and may be regarded as the pilgrimage feasts. We do not consider them to be of patriarchal origin. They evidently refer not to a pastoral but to an agricultural state of society. The offerings are such as an agricultural people might be expected to present. They are indicative of the fact that the people were not mere keepers of sheep, but tillers of the land. Our religious feasts must be appropriate to our conditions. Our religious offerings must be characteristic of our state, and proportioned to our means. God requires from us only that which we are able to give. Let each give according to that which he has received from the great Giver.

I. Religious feasts are memorials. The feasts of this world very often are made only for empty laughter, and too frequently the laughter is turned into mourning. Many of those who give feasts give them in order to minister to the desire of display, or for the purpose of gaining some advantage. For this reason our blessed Lord tells the givers of feasts to call in the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. But the feasts appointed to be observed by God are memorials. These three feasts are—1. *Memorials of God's past dealings.* The word Passover indicates the nature of the feast of unleavened bread. It is a memorial, not of the fact that the children of Israel *passed through* the Red Sea; but of the fact that the destroying angel *passed over* the abodes of the Israelites. It is a memorial of a wonderful Divine deliverance. Of all the feasts of the Jewish economy, this is the one great feast which has been brought into prominence by the observance of the feast of the Lord's Supper. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." This great memorial feast of the Jews was typical and prophetical. It pointed onwards through the intervening centuries to the greater feast of the Lord's Supper. The one feast celebrated the deliverance of the natural Israel, while the other celebrates the deliverance of the spiritual Israel. The one feast has become absorbed and lost in a greater feast; but the other feast will be perpetually celebrated. We shall pass away from drinking the symbolical wine of earth to the glorious privilege of drinking the new wine in our Father's kingdom. The one feast was local, but the other was intended to be universal. It is a significant fact that the feast of the Lord's Supper has been so widely observed. Churches that have departed from the faith and lapsed into idolatry have stuck to this Christian ordinance. And we may consider it prophetical of the destined universality of Christ's kingdom. 2. *Memorials of our dependence upon God's care.* While the feast of unleavened bread brings into prominence the lesson that God is a deliverer to His people, the feasts of harvest and of ingathering bring into prominence the lesson that God is a provider and a sustainer. They make impressive, and teach by appropriate symbolism, the utterance of the great singer of the Israelitish Church—"He maketh peace in thy borders, He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat." They have a manifest tendency to raise the heart in adoring gratitude to "God, who gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and fills our hearts with food and gladness." Let us never forget that it is God who makes the earth fruitful. While some keep their feasts in honour of "natural causes," the "uniformity of Nature's laws," and a "fortuitous concourse of atoms," let us keep our feasts to celebrate the goodness of Him who is the first cause of all so-called natural causes, the Giver and Enforcer of Nature's laws, and the Glorious Designer who causes the atoms to consort together, so as to produce the useful and the

beautiful. 3. *Memorials of our present condition.* Not only and merely in the sense of being dependent creatures, but that while in this world we are but pilgrims. The feast of ingathering was the feast of tabernacles. During this festival, the Jews were to dwell in tents or booths. It was a reminder of their wilderness life. Even in our feasts let there be the chastening thought that here we have no continuing city. Our feasts are but temporary as were the booths in which the Israelites dwelt. The only perpetual feast is that which shall be celebrated in heaven. This earth is not our rest.

II. Religious feasts are not to interfere with the duties of life. The wisdom of Divine arrangements is seen in the appointment of these feasts. The Passover was observed in the month Abib—the month of the ears of corn; the Feast of Pentecost, after the corn had all been safely gathered; and the Feast of Tabernacles, after the vines and fruit-trees had been stripped, so that no feast interfered with those times when work was most pressing. Diligence in business is, or may be, religious worship. God may be honoured by the work of this life. Those are divine who do lowliest acts in a divine spirit. The Jew was religious, not only when he brought the first-fruits of his labours as an offering to God, but when he ploughed, and sowed, and reaped, that he might have first-fruits to place upon God's altar.

III. Stated religious feasts are helpful to a religious spirit. "Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto Me in the year." "Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God." There are some who object to set times, and say that set times develop mere empty formalism, and that we ought always to be in a religious spirit. The Divine Legislator did not follow this method. And while the gospel sets us free from the trammels of the law, it nevertheless shows the propriety of stated religious observances. And we are "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together." The more loyal a man is, the more he will rejoice in stated seasons for the expression of his loyalty. The more spiritual a man is, the more thankful will he be for opportunities of public worship, to break up the course of his earthly life, and to develop his spiritual nature.

IV. Religious feasts must promote the social and benevolent instincts of our nature. All are to appear together before the Lord God. The separateness brought about by daily pursuits is to be broken up. There is to be a commingling of feeling and sentiment. This is an Old Testament provision which is greatly needed in these times. Cold isolation pervades the business, the social, and the religious worlds. We do not appear *together* before the Lord God. None are to appear empty before the Lord. The grasping spirit of selfishness must not be allowed to move on without being disturbed. The best way to uproot selfishness and to develop benevolence is to give unto God's cause.

V. The offerings at religious feasts must be—1. **Pure.** No leavened bread is to be eaten. Nothing that savours of corruption. We must seek for purity of motive in our religious feasts. They must be free from heathen luxury, or heathen magical arts. "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." Arabs boil the flesh of kids in sour milk. A delicacy for the feast. Or to scatter the milk on the field for the production of a good harvest. 2. Of the **best.** The best of the first-fruits. The best in the Old Testament, and surely the best in the New Testament. Such offerings are productive of prosperity. The very effort to secure a surplus will promote care and develop provident habits. Nothing that is given to God can be lost.—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

GOD'S PROVISION FOR HIS PEOPLE'S ENJOYMENT.—*Verses* 14–16.

We remark—

I. That seasons for rejoicing were commanded. Let those who think that the old dispensation was gloomy remember that there was Divine injunction for joy and feasting three times a year.

II. That these seasons for rejoicing were conveniently appointed. Not in winter, but—1. In spring, Passover. 2. Summer, first-fruits. 3. Autumn, ingathering.

III. That these seasons for rejoicing had a religious basis. 1. The feasts were "unto God." 2. Were in remembrance of Divine services which made rejoicing possible.

IV. That these seasons for rejoicing were connected with religious acts, vers. 17–19. 1. Personal dedication. 2. Sacrifices.

V. That seasons of rejoicing must not engender slovenliness and uncleanness, ver. 18.

VI. That seasons of rejoicing must not be desecrated by unnatural or superstitious ceremonies, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk;" an outrage on nature and connected with witchcraft. In conclusion—

If Judaism was a religion of joy, much more so is Christianity. The latter—i. was inaugurated as "glad tidings of great joy." ii. Its leading fact and doctrines are grounds of joy (1 John i. 1–4). iii. Its great central and fundamental principle is an occasion of joy (Rom. v. 11). iv. The "fruits of the Spirit are joy." v. It provides an eternity of joy. vi. But remember the *joy of the Lord* is your strength, and it is only "in the Lord" that we can rejoice evermore (Phil. iv. 4).

—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20–25.

DIVINE GUIDANCE.

I. There is a divine way. There is a divine way for individuals. Joseph, Abraham, Daniel, and David were led in the right way. The saints of the Old and New Testaments were guided in the divine way. And all those who seek divine guidance may hope to be led in the right divine way. There is a divine way for nations, and those nations that seek to walk in the way of national uprightness, and recognition of God's supremacy, will attain a true national greatness and perpetuity. And there was such a way for the Israelites. 1. *This way was through the wilderness.* Such are the conditions of our present existence. Every way to greatness, to glory, and to divinely-prepared places is through the wilderness. This is the law of nature as well as of grace. 2. *This way was beset with enemies.* There are always seen and unseen forces and powers opposing the onward and upward course of those who are striving after nobility and the accomplishment of divine purposes. The march of the Israelites was opposed, and the nearer they came to the realisation of their hopes the more numerous did their foes appear. The greatest struggle takes place just before the final victory. The valley of decision is the valley of stern conflict. The fact that the powers of evil concentrate their skill and their strength may be taken as a sign that we are in the right way. 3. *This divine way was one of many privations.* Travellers must not expect the pleasures and comforts of home. The march of the Israelites was not a summer's holiday. We must expect privations, and maintain a quiet faith and a spirit of patient and heroic endurance. 4. *This divine way, then, was contrary to mere human liking.* Notice the frequent complainings of the children of Israel. And oh, God's way is not our way! Ours may be pleasant at first but bitter at last, but God's way is the reverse; and

yet not exactly, for sweets are graciously mingled with the bitters. There is hunger, but there is manna. There is thirst, but there is clear water from the smitten rock. There is perplexity, but there is an angel to guide and protect.

II. This way leads to divinely-prepared places. All is well that ends well, and this way is well, for it brings to a prepared place. Many are willing to endure if they are certain of securing rich results. Hopes are blasted in mere human pursuits; but if we faithfully fulfil divine conditions we shall come to divinely-prepared places. The Almighty has prepared all lands. His wisdom planned, and His power built up, the goodly frame of this terrestrial universe. He has made the green earth, and stretched above the blue sky in striking contrast. His Divine hand has shaped every form of loveliness. But the Almighty seemed to come forth in the greatness of His love, in the depth of His wisdom, and in the energy of His power, in order to make Palestine the most fruitful and beautiful of lands, the joy of all climes, the song of all countries, the goodly heritage of the host of nations. How eminently fitting that this lovely land should be selected to be the dwelling-place of His chosen people, and the magnificent stage on which should be enacted the most glorious transactions of all time. Palestine was a specially prepared place, and to it the wilderness way was the course for the Israelites. Heaven is a specially prepared place. "I go to prepare a place for you." A place in the best of all places. A home in the best of homes. A dwelling-place where all the abodes are mansions. A seat where all the seats are thrones. A city where all the citizens are kings. What matters it though the way be long and sometimes dreary, so long as the place is so attractive; and we cannot fail to reach it if we obey divine directions.

III. The travellers on this way are favoured with a Divine Guide. We cannot tell whether this angel was a created angel, or the second person in the Trinity —the angel that was with the Church in the wilderness. But we learn his greatness. The divine name was in him. The divine name is indicative of the divine character We presume the name was in him as a reflection of the divine glory, as a granted prerogative, as a token of delegated authority, as investing with glorious attributes, and imparting unusual dignity and majesty. This name was in him as a power to inspire religious awe, and to restrain irreverent trifling. "Provoke him not; for My name is in him." This angel was competent. Unerring wisdom never appoints the incompetent to important offices. And this angel was appointed by infinite wisdom. He knows all the way, understands all its dangers and difficulties, and is competent both to guide and to protect. Jesus Christ, the angel of the new covenant, is a perfect guide, fully competent to direct and protect. He has trodden every inch of the way. He has personally inspected the course. He gives ample directions to those who are to go before us to keep us in the way, and to bring us to the divinely-prepared place.

IV. Divine promises are contingent on the faithful pursuits of divine methods. God promises seed-time and harvest, but we only expect harvest as the result of prepared soil and planted seed. Many of those to whom the promises were given did not enter the promised land because they did not carry out the conditions. "Ye shall serve the Lord your God, and He shall bless thy bread and thy water"—is a law and a promise rightly read for all economies. We must obey the voice of the angel; and then God will be an enemy to our enemies, and afflict those who afflict us. Retribution must fall sooner or later upon the heads of all persecutors.

The divine methods may be thus summarised—Caution, obedience, self-restraint, and the entire destruction of all that has the remotest tendency to damage the moral nature. Caution—"Beware of him." Watch with intense interest as you would watch a guide in some difficult pass. "Obey his voice."

Listen attentively to the utterance. Interpret as to the spirit. Eagerly catch the solemn whisper of the infinite. Self-restraint. "Provoke him not." Do not trifle with your guide. He is very merciful, but there is a period when even mercy seems to expire. "He will not pardon your transgressions." The doom of triflers is sealed. The despisers have only a gloomy prospect. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." "Provoke him not." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry."

Thou shalt not only refrain from bowing down to the gods of the heathen; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. The material and the moral are strangely interblended. The very presence of the suggestive material image will surely damage the moral nature. The spiritual requires to be carefully guarded. We cannot be too watchful.

Amid the din of human voices let us have an ear open to the Divine voice. Let us believe in angelic ministry. Amid many seductive ways that present themselves, let us cleave to the one divine way; and through divine grace, and through faith in the Redeemer, we shall come to the prepared place.

—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT.—*Verses* 20–23.

The people had prayed for a mediator. (See on chap. xx. 19.) God now appoints a greater than Moses to act in that capacity. The present section reveals the nature and office of the mysterious person, the proper attitude towards, and the reward of obedience to Him.

I. His nature was divine.

1. Equal with God. (1.) Bearing the divine name; "My name is in Him." The incommunicable covenant name of Jehovah. (2.) Performing divine actions; "Mine angel shall go," &c., "I will cut them off." So New Testament, "I and My Father are one."

2. Distinct from the personality of the speaker, "I send," so New Testament, "The Father which sent Me."

For an able *resumé* of this argument for the Divinity of Christ, see Liddon's "Bampton Lectures," pp. 52–56. (See also Gen. xxxii.; Hosea xii. 3, 4; Josh. v. 14; Judges ii. xii.; Malachi iii. i., &c.)

II. His office was to conduct the covenant people to the fulfilment of God's covenant engagement.

1. Providence. "To keep thee in the way." So Christ "upholds all things by the word of His power." "In Him all things consist." Generally and particularly He preserves those who trust in Him (John x. 28).

2. Redemption. "To bring thee into the place which I have prepared." Israel's redemption is only half accomplished as yet. So Christ's eternal redemption is not complete till the last enemy is destroyed (John xiv. 2, 3).

III. The proper attitude towards Him.

1. Fear. Carefulness not to displease Him. Christ is the Saviour of those only who believe in Him. To others He is a "savour of death unto death."

2. Obedience. "Obey His voice." So says the Father in the New Testament (Matt. xvii. 5); and Himself (Matt. xxviii. 20). This implies—(1.) Trust in His person. (2.) Subjection to His authority. (3.) The prosecution of His commands.

IV. The reward of obedience to Him, vers. 22, 23. (1.) Identification and sympathy with us in our cause. "I will be an enemy," &c. (2.) Victory over our foes (1. Cor. xv. 57), world, flesh, devil, death, &c. (3.) Inheritance in the promised land.

Learn—
i. (2 Tim. i. 9), That God's grace has been manifested in Jesus Christ from the beginning of the world. ii. That God's grace has been, through Jesus Christ, with His people up to the present moment. iii. And will be till the end of the world.—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 27–33.

THE POWER OF MORAL FORCES.

In our estimation of the powers of the world we do not always give sufficient prominence to the power of moral forces. Much has been accomplished by material force, but this must be under the direction of intellectual force. And this is shorn of its greatest strength if it be not allied with moral force. The greatest movements of the world have been moral movements. The battles that have done most to shape the destinies of mankind have been those where moral forces have been largely at work. The power which must be exalted above all others is moral and spiritual power. Consider then the grandeur of moral forces.

I. The strength of moral forces. God's fear is a moral power, is a religious power; and this is to exercise an intimidating influence upon the enemies of Israel. God's people are to win their onward way to the promised land, not by force of arms, not by skill and heroism and strategy on the battle field; but by the all-subduing force of a Divine fear scattering the opposing hosts. We have heard what an unreasonable panic can do in paralysing an army and causing it to flee. But here is a true cause for panic—even God's fear. The people of God must seek to be strong by the possession and exercise of moral force.

II. The power of littles backed by moral force. We need not inquire whether the word hornets is used in a literal or a metaphorical sense; for the lesson is equally true that moral force can accomplish great results by means of small instrumentalities. It only requires to send forth the hornets, and they will drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite. If the moral force be there, the feeblest instrumentalities will be sufficiently adequate to the achievement of stupendous and glorious results. Look not to the size and strength of the material forces, but to the vigour and power of the moral force. The world's true victors are the moral victors. If only locusts constitute their army, yet the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite will flee before their conquering march.

III. Moral forces move to the production of distant results. In all our contests we are impatient of results. But those that work in the moral sphere have need of much patience The enemies are not to be driven out in one year. Regard must be had to the future. Unseen Divine preparations are going on while we are fretting with impatience. If the victory were gained too soon, the land might become desolate, and the beasts of the field might multiply to the destruction of the victors. He who rules in the moral sphere knows best how to guide moral forces.

IV. The movements of moral forces are not hurried. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. The best disciplined armies move with precision. There is no hot haste in Divine movements. By little and little is a very general law of Divine procedure both in the kingdoms of nature and of grace. That which is to be lasting, must be by little and little; and therefore moral movements must be according to this law, for they are to produce permanent results.

V. Moral forces will continue to move until the purpose is finally accom-

plished. The fear will operate, and the hornets must sting, and all forces must be brought into play, until the time has come to set the bounds from the Red Sea on the south even unto the sea of the Philistines, or Mediterranean Sea, on the west; and from the Arabian desert on the east to the river Euphrates on the north. Divine purpose cannot fail. There may be seeming delay, but never defeat. Through the centuries the purpose is ever ripening. Nothing is so certain in the universe as that these moral forces must ultimately prevail.

VI. Moral forces are ever on the side of right doers. There must be no compromises with evil if the moral forces of the universe are to be enlisted on our side and in our cause. Thou shalt make no covenant with false gods. Moral strength departs so soon as we enter into unholy alliance with the wicked. Evil companionship leads to evil conduct. To serve false gods is to set for ourselves a destructive snare. The wicked are weak, and impart weakness. The righteous are bold as a lion. They themselves are irresistible moral forces.

—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

WORLDLINESS.—*Verses* 24, 25; 32, 33.

Nothing is more emphatic in the Old and New Testaments than God's condemnation of worldliness. Theologians have frequently mystified and misrepresented it, but in these clauses, as elsewhere, it is exhibited in an intensely real and personal form. The Israelites were to be placed in the midst of a people who knew not God, and who followed customs that God abhorred. But they were to have no communion with the one, ver. 52, and to keep themselves unspotted from the other. Notice—

I. That worldliness is described. It is—

1. Not asceticism. That was utterly foreign to the whole genius of the Jewish system. No race ever had more facilities for intercourse with other nations, or more extensively used them. The Jews have been, all through their history, a commercial nation (1 Cor. v. 10).

2. But intimacy and friendship with irreligious men—(1.) not, however, that which is necessary to the performance of kindly offices (see vers. 4, 5), but (2.) partaking of their spirit; "making a covenant with them," implying affinity, sympathy of soul, and fellowship.

3. And conformity to irreligious customs, "doing after their works," "making a covenant with their gods." Irreligious customs may be broadly characterised as—(1.) Those which God cannot sanction. (2.) Those which can do no real and lasting good.

II. That worldliness is dangerous.

1. It brings a snare. (1.) Fellowship with ungodly men may through fear of ridicule or singularity draw us into ungodly practices. (2.) Conformity with worldly customs may beget a liking for them which may draw us utterly into the vortex.

2. It leads to sin. "Lest they make thee sin against Me" (1 John v. 19). (1.) It extinguishes the love of God (1 John ii. 15). (2.) It leads to enmity towards God. "No man can serve two masters," &c. (James iv. 4).

3. It ensures God's condemnation (Deut. vii. 4; 1. Cor. xi. 12).

III. That the duty of unworldliness is enjoined.

1. Nonconformity. "Thou shalt not," vers. 24–32, abstinence from worldly fellowship and customs, &c., but not abstinence merely, but—

2. Active antagonism. He who is not for God in this matter is against Him. "Thou shalt utterly overthrow them and break down their images."

3. Positive unworldliness. "Ye shall serve the Lord your God" (John v. 19).

IV. That those who observe the duty of unworldliness are blessed. "And He shall bless," &c.

1. Often literally. Worldliness brings excess, exhaustion, and disease. Godliness promotes temperance and health.

2. Always spiritually. Even eating and drinking, if to the glory of God, are ministers of blessing, and in addition to that there is moral satisfaction, approbation of conscience, and a sense of the benediction of heaven. In conclusion—i. Christ has overcome the world and destroyed the fear of it (John xvi. 33). ii. God will keep us from its evil in our necessary contact with it (1 John xvii. 15). iii. Faith will be equal to any emergency (1 John v. 4; Rom. xii. 1, 2). iv. Nonconformity to the world is one of the tests of the new birth (1 John v. 4).

—*J. W. Burn.*

PROSPECTS AND PROGRESS.—*Verses* 26–31.

Learn—

I. That there is a bright and extensive prospect before God's people, vers. 26–31.

1. If the Christian's prospect is at any time dark, it is because a gloom has settled upon his hope. The promised land in all its fertility and beauty is a fact both in this life and in that which is to come.

2. If the Christian's prospect is at all contracted, it is because of the narrowness of his faith. The promise is as broad as God can make it, and if the believer is at any time disappointed, it is not because God is straitened, but because he is straitened in himself.

3. Let the Christian be fully alive to his privileges, and feel that this broad and beautiful land is for him. Let nothing blanch his courage or divert his step. But let him "strive to enter in."

II. That this prospect is to become his inheritance by Divine power and human exertion. These are always linked together (Phil. ii. 12. See some excellent remarks in Hooker's Sermons, i. vol. iii.).

1. God's energy was exerted—(1.) in giving them the land, (2.) in driving out its inhabitants. So God in Christ has effectually weakened the power of our adversaries, bruised the serpent's head, destroyed his works, and overcome the world, (3.) in being present with them in all their undertakings, vers. 20–23. So God says to us, "Certainly I will be with thee." "If God be for us, who can be against us."

2. But that energy was conditional—upon their exertions. (1.) Upon their use of means. So we must make use of means. The whole armour of God, steady resistance, courage, activity, zeal. (2.) Upon the cultivation of their own strength, "Until thou be increased:" so we, by the use of means, must grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Add to your faith," &c.

III. That this prospect was not to be inherited all at once, but by degrees, vers. 29, 30.

1. Because this is God's usual method of working in the formation of the world, in the course of providence, in the construction of nations, in physical growth. The law of progress is written everywhere. (1.) Let not the sceptic sneer at the individual Christian because he is not perfect, nor at the Church because it is not universal, because God never wantonly interferes with the course of nature or of grace. (2.) Let not the Christian be discouraged at his imperfections if he is "going *on to* perfection," and "pressing *toward* the mark." Let not the Church be discouraged at the limited range of her operations if she is, as far as she can, "preaching the gospel to every creature."

2. Because a sudden occupation of the land might be dangerous to themselves. They could not cover the whole space, and the uncultivated

tracts would be a covert for wild beasts. Let the inhabitants remain, "till thou be increased and inherit the land." (1.) A word to the Church—perhaps it is wise that in her past and present condition she has not "covered the whole earth." God wants the work done properly and perfectly. Is it not fitting then that her own growth in grace, power, and purity, in all moral perfections should be promoted first? It were hardly desirable, since the work *will* be accomplished properly and perfectly, that the Church, as it has presented itself in any century of its past development (witness its superstitious fears, corruption, &c.) should be universal. Better to let other systems keep their place a little longer, than that the Church, weak by internal discord and lack of faith, should be unequal to fill their place, and perhaps be beaten by worse foes—her own arrogance and pride.

3. A word to the believer. It is wise that some enemies should remain a little longer perhaps. They test your faith and patience, while other departments of spiritual life and grace are preparing for a contest which shall eventuate in their *perfect* overthrow.

In conclusion, see 1 Cor. **xv. 57, 58.**

—*J. W. Burn.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Mosaic Morals! Ver. 1–19. A modern jurist, Hennequin, says: "Good right had Moses to challenge the Israelites, what nation hath statutes like yours? a worship so exalted—laws so equitable—a code so complex?" A Frenchman and an infidel, he observes that, compared with all the legislations of antiquity, none so thoroughly embodies the principles of everlasting righteousness. Lycurgus wrote, not for a people, but for an army: It was a barrack which he erected, not a commonwealth. Solon, on the other hand, could not resist the surrounding effeminate influences of Athens. It is in Moses alone that we find a regard for the right, austere and incorruptible; a morality distinct from policy, and rising above regard for times and peoples.

"But what could *Moses'* law have done
Had it not been divinely sent?
The power was from the Lord alone,
And Moses but the instrument."
—*Newton.*

Slander-Scandal! Ver. 1–9. It must be universally acknowledged that mankind at large are insatiable reporters of gossip—that gossip heats by friction—and that what to-day is only an unusual circumstance, is to-morrow a foul crime. If an apprentice runs away from his master, the latter is straightway reported to have killed and concealed him. If a girl is found drowned without any circumstance whatever to warrant such a notion, it is immediately insinuated that she has been murdered. If a husband or wife dies suddenly, the slander is at once broached that the survivor accomplished the death for sinister purposes. If a child is burnt to death, forthwith the calamity floats abroad that the parents behaved cruelly to the child, and at last burnt the body to destroy all traces of their wanton and unnatural brutality. The morbid appetite for horrors and the ordinary appetite for gossip, when combined together, constitute a calumnious power of terrible evil. Hence the Mosaic Law here seeks to dry up the fount of corruption by legal barriers.

"For Slander lives upon succession;
For ever licensed when once it gets possession."
—*Shakespeare.*

Slander-Sting! Ver. 1. It is fruitful in variety of expedients to satiate as well as disguise itself. But, says Sterne, if these smooth weapons cut so sore, what shall we say of open and unblushing scandal, subjected to no caution, tied down to no restraints? If the one, *like an arrow shot in the dark*, does nevertheless so much secret mischief, this, *like the pestilence* which rages at noon-day, sweeps all before it, levelling without distinction the good and bad. The whispered tale

"That, like the falling hill, no foundation knows;—
Fair-faced deceit, whose wily, conscious eye
Ne'er looks direct—the tongue that licks the dust,
But, when it safely dares, as *prompt to sting.*"
—*Thomson.*

Multitudes. Ver. 2. It is here assumed that the multitude do evil; and it is here implied that we are in danger of copying their example. Hence the urgent need to guard

against the seductive influence of the multitude. This is best accomplished by seeking the grace of God. Colton remarks that the mob is a monster with the hands of Briareus, but the head of Polyphemus, strong to execute, but blind to perceive. If Dryden is correct, how valuable the command not to follow a multitude: "it is the scum that rises upmost when the nation boils." Nothing is more easily swayed than the multitude, and that sway is always most easy in the direction of evil.

"And since the rabble now is ours,
Keep the tools hot, preach dangers in their ears,
Till they run headlong into evil discords,
And do our business with their own destruction." —*Otway.*

Judges! Vers. 4–7. Aristides being judge between two private persons, one of them declared that his adversary had greatly injured Aristides. Interrupting him at once, the judge said: "Relate rather what wrong he hath done thee; for it is thy cause, not mine, that I now sit judge of." Corrupt judgment is a familiar evil in Egypt, Syria, and other Eastern lands. Of these, we may say with Massinger, "petitions not sweetened with gold are but unsavoury and oft refused; or, if received, are pocketed, not read."

"Who painted Justice blind, did not declare
What magistrates should be, but what they are;
Not so much 'cause they rich and poor should weigh
In their just scales alike, but because they,
Now blind with bribes, are grown so weak of sight,
They'll sooner feel a cause than see it right." —*Heath.*

Falsehood - Folly! Ver. 7. There is nothing of so ill consequence, says Lloyd, to the public as falsehood, or—speech being the current coin of converse—the putting *false money* upon the world; or so dark a blot as dissembling, which, as Montaigne remarks, is only to be brave towards God, and a coward towards man; for a lie faceth God, and shrinketh from man. Therefore a lie should be trampled on and extinguished wherever found. Carlyle says, "I am for fumigating the atmosphere when I suspect that falsehood, *like pestilence*, breathes around me." Let those who bear false witness remember Reade when he says, "that every false report, great or small, is the *brink of a precipice* —the depth of which nothing but Omniscience can fathom."

"Lying's a certain mark of cowardice;
And when the tongue forgets its honesty,
The heart and hand may drop their functions too,
And nothing worthy be resolved or done."
—*Southerne.*

Judicial Venality! Ver. 8. (1.) Sir Thomas More succeeded Cardinal Wolsey as Lord Chancellor of England. Many abuses had multiplied during Wolsey's chancellorship, more especially in the way of gratuities. Sir Thomas, however, neither in his own person nor in that of any under him, would allow of anything in the shape of a bribe. At this his son-in-law rather complained, saying, "The fingers of my Lord Chancellor Cardinal's veriest doorkeepers were tipped with gold; but I, since I married your daughter, have got no pickings." And yet, no matter how immaculately impartial a judge may be, how far wrong may be his judgment! Not so God; His judgment is unerring and unimpeachable. Venal judges cannot bribe the Divine Judgment. (2) There is a machine in the Bank of England which receives sovereigns as a mill receives grain. This is for the purpose of determining wholesale whether they are of full weight. As they pass through, the machinery—by unerring laws—throws all that are light to the one side. This proceeding affords the most vivid similitude of the judicial functions at the Last Day! Venal judgments will be weighed in the balances and found wanting. The Lord Cardinal's fingers, as well as those of his veriest doorkeeper, may have been weighted heavily with gold, but this will not avail to pass them from before the Divine Judge as of standard weight.

"Of mortal justice, if thou scorn the rod,
Believe and tremble, thou art judged of God." —*Swenam.*

Sacred Seasons! Ver. 10. The deeper basins of the African Sahara are frequently of great extent, and sometimes contain valuable deposits of salt. Wherever perennial springs rise from the earth, or wherever it has been possible to collect water in artificial wells, green oases break the monotony of the desert. They might be compared with the charming islands that stud the vast solitudes of the Southern Seas. A wonderful luxuriance of vegetation characterises these oases of the wilderness. And what is life but a wilderness? What are the sacred seasons but these emerald, living oases? Here the pilgrims halt for refreshment and repose. Here they rest beneath the shadow of the lofty palm-trees, dip their vessels in the waters of the calm, clear fount, feed upon the luscious clusters of grape and pomegranate, orange and apricot. Then with recruited strength they go forth again upon their pilgrimage towards the Land of Rest; singing as they press onward over the sands of time, How sweet

"To hold with heaven communion meet—
Meet for a spirit bound to heaven;
And, in this wilderness beneath,
Pure zephyrs from above to breathe."
—*Bowing.*

Sabbath Beneficence! Ver. 12. Stations on the line of your journey, remarks Pulsford,

are not your journey's end; but each one brings you nearer. A haven is not *Home;* but it is a place of quiet and rest where the rough waves are stayed. A garden is a piece of common land, yet it has ceased to be common. It is now an effort to regain paradise. Such are the Lord's days. The true Lord's Day is the rest that remaineth for the people of God—is the upper Eden of eternity. But its earthly type is the ever-recurring weekly world-Sabbath. By cultivating our earthly Sabbaths, we are making an effort to regain the lost Paradise That benefit God designed, and that blessing God will confer.

"Sabbaths, like waymarks, cheer the pilgrim's path,
His progress mark, and keep his rest in view."

"In life's bleak winter they are pleasant days,
Short foretastes of the long, long spring to come." —*Wilcox.*

Circumspection! Ver. 13. (1) Circumspection is nothing else but the soul running up and down, to and fro, busy everywhere. It is the heart busied and employed with diligent observation of what comes from within us, and of what comes from without us and into us. Ah! souls, says Brookes, you are no longer safe and secure than when you are upon your watch. While Antipater kept the watch, Alexander was safe. A watchful soul is a soul upon the wing, a soul out of gunshot, a soul upon a rock, a soul in a castle, a soul above the cloud, a soul held fast in the Everlasting Arms. (2) Be circumspect, writes Dyke, over thine heart. It is like a wild horse; if a man once let go the bridle as he is walking on his journey, when it is gone, it is not so easily secured again; and much time may be spent in trying to recover the runaway. Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. (3) Be circumspect, counsels Reynolds, for thou hast many foes. When enemies are around, generals and subalterns and sentinels are all on the alert. The Christian's foes are more relentless and numerous. They have no desire that thou shouldst reach the object of thy pursuit. And though they cannot shut thee out from the Land of Promise, the stronghold of eternity, yet may they do much to hinder thy march thitherward.

"Oh watch and pray! for thou hast foes to fight,
Foes which alone thou canst not overcome;
Watching and prayer will keep thine armour bright;
Soon will thy toils be o'er—thy victory won."
—*Mant.*

Festival Functions! Ver. 14–17. The Israelites were to be peculiar people. They existed not for themselves, but they had a function to fulfil towards all mankind. In order to fulfil this function, it was needful that they should be for a time a people separate and self-contained, singular in their usages, and sequestered in their dwellings. In order to fix them down to one spot, they had their local worship. It was a law that all the men amongst them should rendezvous at the central shrine three times a year. Thus foreign settlements and distant journeys were made impossible more or less. The Hebrew home must be within a short and easy radius round the Temple; and if he went abroad, he carried this tether, and was pulled back again by the Passover or some other feast.

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee;
Still to Mount Sion turns with ceaseless strain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain."
—*Goldsmith.*

Humanity and Heathenism! Ver. 19. Various explanations have been given of this precept. It may have been intended, like Leviticus xxii. 28, to enforce humane feelings towards animals. But probably the forbidden dish was connected with idolatry. Thomson says that the Arabs are fond of it, highly seasoned with onions and spices. The Arabs call it "Lehn immû." The Jews will not eat it, because they say that it is an unnatural and barbarous dish. It is also a gross and unwholesome dish, calculated to kindle up animal and ferocious passions. It is associated with immoderate feasting, and was connected with idolatrous sacrifices. As the Abyssinians are fond of slicing the shoulders and hips of living animals, and as other civilised and semi-civilised heathen are addicted to boiling and roasting animals alive, there may have been a similar practice extant among them in the time of Moses of shearing the kid, and seething it *alive*. M'Cheyne, when in Poland, offered a Jewish boy some bread-and-butter. Though he looked eagerly at it, he laid it aside for some hours, remarking that he had just eaten flesh, and if he had immediately tasted butter, it would have been a violation of Exodus xxiii. 19.

"Verily, they are all thine; freely mayest thou serve thee of them all;
They are thine by gift for thy needs, to be used in all gratitude and kindness."
—*Tupper.*

Covenant Angel! Ver. 20. When the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, how were they guided on their way to Canaan through the trackless desert? "The Lord went before them." In chapter xiv. this glorious One is called "The Angel of God" — Isaiah speaks of him as the "Angel of His Presence." This verse shows that the only-begotten Son is referred to for four reasons. (1) "My name is in Him;" whereas we are told that Jehovah is the Lord, and that His glory He will not give to another. (2) "Obey His voice;" which counsel answers to that on the Mount of Transfiguration, "Hear ye Him." (3) "Provoke Him not;" an expression gathering deep and awful meaning when we read the warning of

the Apostle, "Let us not tempt *Christ*, as some of them also tempted." (4) "He will not pardon your transgressions;" a monition singularly harmonised by the inquiry, "Who can forgive sin but God only?" Christ was the Angel who was with the Church in the wilderness. This was that Christ of God, who, in all the Church's wanderings and dangers, has evermore been her Leader and Defender.

"Anywhere with Jesus, says the Christian heart;
Let Him take me where He will, so we do not part."

Obedience and Observance! Ver. 21. (1) Nothing, says Robertson, 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 was his own son. He accepted a challenge from the leader of the other host, slew and spoiled him. He then, in 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. (2) Whereas love is the fulfilling of the Law. The other graces shine like the precious stones of nature, with their own peculiar lustre and varied hues; but the diamond is white. In white all the other colours are united; and in love all the other graces and virtues are centred. Love is the only source of true obedience to the commands of God. If Israel only learned to love God with all their heart, they would necessarily love His Law, which is the transcript of His Divine Mind.

"Nay, man's chief wisdom's love—the love of God.
The new religion—final, perfect, pure—
Was that of Christ and love. His great command—
His all-sufficing precept—was it not love?"
—*Bailey.*

Pilgrim Path! Ver. 23. Goethe, the world's favourite, confessed, when he was 80 years old, that he could not remember being in a really happy state of mind even for a few weeks together; and that, when he wished to feel comfortable, he had to veil his self-consciousness. The following is the closing sentence of his autobiography: "Child! child! no more. The coursers of time, lashed, as it were, by invisible spirits, hurry on the light car of our destiny; and all that we can do is, in cool self-possession, to hold the reins with a firm hand, and to guide the wheels, now to the left, now to the right, a stone here, a precipice there. Whither it is hurrying, who can tell? And who indeed can remember the point from which it started?" What a contrast to Israel's position! "Mine Angel shall go before thee." Happy Christian Israelite, he knows he traverses his pilgrim path under Divine guidance, and that there is no uncertainty as to the "whither."

"Though in the paths of death I tread,
With gloomy horrors overspread,
My steadfast heart shall fear no ill,
For Thou, O Lord, art with me still."
—*Addison.*

Worldliness. Ver. 24, 25. Pope gives us an affecting account of the death of Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. After having been master of £50,000 per annum, he was reduced to the deepest distress by his vice and extravagance, and breathed his last moments in the mean apartment of an inn. Such is often the end of worldliness. It is said that the Duke of Alva starved his prisoners, after he had given them quarter, saying, "Though I promised your lives, I promised not to find you food." In the same manner does the world deceive its votaries. The Persians, writes Buck, when they obtained a victory, selected the noblest slave, and made him a king for three days. They clothed him with royal robes, and ministered to him all the pleasures he could choose; but at the end of all he was to die as a sacrifice to mirth and folly. So worldliness is shortlived; and when its feast is ended, the guests are only like those who have partaken of poisoned food, or who "have fed on ashes."

"Ay, beauteous is the world, and many a joy
Floats through its wide dominion. But, alas!
When we would seize the winged good, it flies,
And step by step, along the path of life,
Allures our yearning spirits to the grave."
—*Goethe.*

Hornet-Harms! Ver. 28. The hornet is abundant in the Holy Land. The species are larger than ours. Instances are on record in profane history where these have multiplied to such a degree as to become a pest to the inhabitants. Probably the insect meant is the Abyssinian fly. Its bite produces fatal boils; and at the very buzzing of a swarm the cattle run almost mad with terror. The Septuagint translates the word "wasps." But Dr. Tristram thinks that the word "hornets" here is metaphorical, and is used of a panic, *i.e.*, of sharp stings of fear, by which flying rumours stung them so that they fled. It is wisely counselled to avoid the pugnacious, poisonous, quarrelsome character of the hornet: such are proverbially called "waspish;" a number of them are rightly designated a hornet's nest. However, it seems best to regard these hornets as material agencies—types of the moral agencies to which they have given place in subsequent ages of the world.

"Owls, ravens, crickets, seem the watch of death;
Nature's worst vermin scare her godlike sons."
—*Lee.*

Grace-Growth! Ver. 30. "The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Many a struggle the spiritual Israel have in overcoming inherent leanings to sin; but, by little and little, they shall drive them out. And as a man, looking at a dial, cannot see the shadow move, yet after a while perceives that it has moved; so it is with Christian progress. The surrounding nations could see the result of Israel's gradual conquest of the Canaanite nationalities, until the land became entirely their own possession. The work of grace, says Salter, if begun, is gradually and continually going on; and it will not be completed till the image of God can be seen perfectly reflected in us. The conquest of self is steadily and expansively progressing; and by and by the triumph will be wholly achieved. Yet, as Bishop Reynolds says, we must not expect a fulness until the time of the restitution of all things—wherein the light, which is here but sown for the righteous, shall grow up into a full harvest of Canaan conquest. There may be slowness in the struggle onwards to absolute possession, but there is also sureness: "Thou shalt inherit the land."

"No mortal eye the manner sees,
The imperceptible degrees,
By which our Lord conducts His plan,
And brings us to a perfect man."
—*Wesley.*

Prospect! Vers. 20–30. God allures Israel from the present, where all was dark and uncomely, into the future, where all was bright and fair. He, as it were, takes the Hebrew host by the hand, and leads them, *as a father his child*, out from the gloomy wilderness region, which they were pacing somewhat sadly, into the fertile fields and fruitful glades of Canaan; so that joy, or at least the faint reflection of it, stole into their hearts, and lifted up their heavy eyes. And how cheering the Christian's prospect of the heavenly Canaan—that rest which remaineth for the people of God. It transfuses the life of heaven through our frame; either, on the one hand, making our languid pulse to beat more swiftly; or, on the other, our feverish pulse to throb more calmly and evenly. It acts as a *regulator* of the soul in its wild and inconstant movements—neither allowing the spiritual Hebrew to sink too low, nor to soar too high. It fills with energy to face the toils, and with ready courage to brave the dangers, of the night.

"From strength to strength advancing, only he,
His soul well knit and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."
—*Arnold.*

World-Snares! Vers. 32, 33. (1.) As you love your souls, beware of the world. It has slain its thousands and tens of thousands. What ruined Lot's wife, but the world? What ruined Achan, but the world? What ruined Haman, but the world? What ruined Demas, but the world? What ruined Judas, but the world? The gods of this world are indeed a snare. (2.) The pleasures of the world are not like the waters of the Nile, which leave, when they are gone, the germs of beauty and fertility to bud and blossom, and cheer the heart of man. On the contrary, they are like those streams polluted by the washings of poisonous minerals, depositing the seeds of disease and death to all who drink them. (3.) The Reubenites, having taken a liking to the country which was first conquered because it was prolific in pasture, renounced the promise of interest in the Holy Land; which "love of the world" proved a snare to them, and subsequently their destruction. So the gods of this world, the pleasures of sin, lure men to delight in the present, and forego all hope of heaven. (4.) A man residing on the coast of England, and seeing his neighbours grow rich with foreign trade, converted his goods into gold, went to Spain, and bought a cargo of figs. On his way home a great storm compelled him to throw the cargo overboard. When again tempted by the sea, he said: "No; your fair looks shall never deceive me again; they once proved a snare to me: get thee hence, for I'll have none of them."

"Is this a friend indeed, that I should sell
My soul to her, give her my life and youth,
Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell?"
—*Rossetti.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

Critical Notes.—1. "And he said unto Moses."] These words should be read in connection with chapter xx. 18. The order of events seems to be this—After Moses had received the ten commandments, he drew near again "where God was," and then he received the book of the covenant (xx. 19 to xxiii. 33); and before leaving the presence of God he was asked to appear again, accompanied by Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, together with seventy of the elders of Israel (xxiv. i., &c.) 6. And half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.] This preliminary to the act of communication of the book of the covenant to the people signifies that God pledged Himself to fulfil His part of the covenant independently of the acceptance of it by the people. 7. And he took the book, &c.], *i.e.*, after God had declared Himself bound to the fulfilment of

the covenant. **8. And sprinkled it on the people,]** *i.e.*, after the book of the covenant had been read out "*in the audience,*" bê-osney = into the ears. Thus they were not asked to declare their willingness to do and obey the words until they had heard them distinctly read. Amid all the awful grandeur of the scene God dealt with them as intelligent agents. The objection that Moses could not have made himself heard by so vast a multitude, 600,000, besides children, is met by the fact that the covenant was made not with individuals but with the whole Jewish nation, so that there could be no ground found for dissent on the part of individuals from the engagements of those who heard the words of the covenant and promised obedience to them. The same argument is applicable to the sprinkling of the blood "on the people," which, in all probability, was only sprinkled on some few individuals who were considered as *representatives* of the whole nation. **10. And they *saw* the God of Israel.]** The words—"they saw" = Vâyiruh—in this verse is qualified in its ordinary meaning by the word "saw" in the following verse (11). There the word Vâyechsuh = they saw—means literally "*they visioned,*" that is, they had a vision of God clear enough to be assured of His actual presence.

Paved = libnath in this construction (stat. constr.)—does not mean brick-lebenah, and hence pavement, but should be rendered white or transparent-splendour. The translation of "a paved work of a sapphire stone" = kimâseh libnath hassappir, like a work of transparent sapphire.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1-8.

THE RATIFICATION OF THE DIVINE COVENANT.

There are divine regulations in nature, but these are not sufficient for man's guidance. Nature teaches only in symbol, and these symbols cannot always be clearly read and interpreted. Nature's teachings are not adequate as a rule of life for man as a moral agent. The scientific man and the philosopher would not be satisfied without a book revelation. And the moralist, who should be the true philosopher, will ask for a direct revelation on morals. And this requirement is met. The true guide for man in the realm of morals is the revelation of God as found in the Bible; taken in its completeness, read and interpreted under the guidance of a discriminating wisdom. The old covenant will tend to illustrate the new; and the new *will declare what part of the old is perpetually binding.*

I. God makes a covenant with His people. Though the terms of the old covenant were strict and severe, yet they were evidently designed for the good of the people to whom they were delivered. We cannot possibly imagine any advantage that might accrue to the Divine Being from this ancient covenant. But from time to time we have seen that great advantage would result to the people, in so far as they followed the divine rules for life and conduct. Here, again, the divine mercy may be marked in that God makes a covenant with His people. He does not at once destroy, but labours for their social and national prosperity.

II. God reveals the terms of His covenant by specially endowed messengers. Moses was specially endowed as a messenger of God. He displayed the possession of those qualities fitting him in an eminent degree to be a legislator. He ruled with a wise spirit. He stands forth as one of the master spirits of humanity. He was further fitted for his office by special divine communications, and by special disclosures of the divine glory. He alone stands in the divine presence. The people must stand afar off. The elders must worship at a distance. And even the gifted Aaron—the progenitor of a noble priesthood—must not come nigh. In solitude, Moses must approach the mysterious realm. This Moses was the one to tell the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments. Those lips, touched with the divine hand and made reflective of the divine glory, must read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people. The old covenant was given by Moses who reflected the divine glory, but the new is given by Him who was the incarnation and visible manifestation of the divine glory.

III. God gives definiteness and permanence to the covenant. "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord." Yea, God Himself is represented as writing, and we find reference made to the commandments which God had written. Oral instruction is not sufficient. The voice of tradition is vague. As time advances that voice becomes feeble and wavering. The moral code must be clear and definite. This writing of the covenant may be taken as symbolical of its permanence. To this day the broad spirit—the true essential—of the covenant is working in all legal codes and religious systems.

IV. God gives solemn emphasis to the covenant by sacred ceremonials. We may suppose that Moses acted under divine direction. The hands of Moses built the altar, but the mind of God directed the human movements. The altar raised as indicative of the divine presence, and the twelve pillars representative of the dwelling place of the twelve tribes. Moses sends the young men, the life and vigour of the people, to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings, the divine and human sides of the great solemnity. Part of the blood was sprinkled on the altar, an act of solemn dedication of their humanity in its completeness to God, and then the other part was sprinkled upon the people, which may be regarded as the divine response and acceptance. The first Testament was dedicated with blood. Thus the covenant was rendered emphatic by solemn observances. The blood sprinkled on the altar and on the people would be calculated to inspire deep reverence.

V. God requires a voluntary assent to the terms of His covenant. There was something of the nature of an appeal to the people. In fact, the whole circumstances, in connection with the promulgation of the covenant, constituted an eloquent appeal. The reading of the book of the covenant by such a reader, and on an occasion so deeply impressive and affecting, was plainly calculated to draw forth the universal utterance: "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." The whole people joined in the declaration. There was a pleasing unanimity in the promise, but there was unpleasant difference as to the performance. The man who at first refuses and then performs is nobler than the man who too readily acquiesces, and then fails to fulfil his vows.

VI. Man's highest wisdom is to promise and perform obedience to all the terms of God's covenant. Well would it have been for these people if they had kept to their brave resolve—"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." There are poetical states in peoples, and then they are apt to be free with their promises. But the prosaic condition soon arrives, and then the promises are broken. God's covenant ever commends itself to man's higher nature, or to man's nature in its loftier and holier moods. The temptations of life, and the weakness of the flesh, render us unwilling to practice, and then unbelieving as to the virtue of the divine covenant. Obedience is the pathway of light, the pathway of true divine knowledge, and the pathway to the realisation of divine benedictions. Let us obey, and then shall we know the blessedness of all divine covenants.

There is a slight disarrangement in this chapter, as Ewald and speakers commonly shew. Verse 3 logically follows verse 33 of previous chapter, and verses 1 and 2 should be inserted between verses 8 and 9.

—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

THE COVENANT.—*Verses* 3–8.

This was one of the most impressive acts of a most impressive dispensation. It was also one of the most important, inasmuch as (1) God used this opportunity to "avouch Himself to be the God" of Israel, and Israel "avouched

themselves to be His people." And (2) it is the great fact upon which the New Testament lays stress as typifying the great covenant work of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. xi. 25; Heb. viii.–ix. For some valuable remarks in this latter application, see Dales' "Jewish Temple and Christian Church," p. 163).

I. The covenant was divinely revealed. "And Moses came and told the people." 1. It was revealed faithfully. "All the words of the Lord and all the judgments." (1.) It consisted of "words" for their direction and encouragement. (2.) It consisted of judgment for their warning: so the covenant of Jesus Christ consisted of "beatitudes" and "woes." 2. It was revealed intelligently. Moses had no interest in suppressing anything. He was a good man, and would not suppress anything. (1.) It was not an appeal to their superstition and credulity. It consisted of laws upon the wisdom and beneficence of which 2000 years of legislation have not improved. (2.) It was revealed in language which they could all understand. (3.) It was revealed under circumstances which attested its divine origin. (4.) It was an appeal to their reason, piety, and interest.

II. The covenant was accepted by man. 1. Unanimously. "All the people . . . with one voice." 2. Heartily. "We *will* do." 3. Specifically. "All the words which the Lord hath said." There had been a general acceptance before (xix. 8). 4. Speedily. "Moses rose up early in the morning."

III. The covenant was permanently embodied. "And Moses *wrote* all the words of the Lord." 1. A *written* revelation is necessary. Memory is not to be trusted. Traditions from a long past are apt to be vague or to diminish or be added to. Books *fix* facts. 2. A *written* revelation is advantageous. (1.) A perpetual direction for obedience and warning against disobedience. (2.) A standing witness of the divine wisdom and goodness. 3. A *written* revelation is important. An everlasting record for man's benefit of what has proceeded from the mind of God.

IV. The arrangements for the covenant were carefully and impressively prepared. 1. (1) An altar was built to represent God, and (2) pillars to represent His people. 2. Young men were selected for special service as symbolising the strength and earnestness that should be exerted in keeping our covenant engagement. 3. Sacrifices were offered. (1.) Burnt-offerings, to signify the dedication of the people to Jehovah. (2.) Peace-offerings, as typifying Jehovah's reconciliation with His people.

V. The covenant was ratified with blood. 1. Half the blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled on the altar to signify Israel's dedication to God. 2. One more opportunity was given to the people to withdraw from their engagement. The law was read and the people renewed their vows. 3. Then the other half of the blood was sprinkled on the people, signifying the purification of the people and the certainty of the divine favours, and the whole ceremony closed with the memorable words, ver. 8.

In conclusion—1. Christ is the mediator of a better covenant. 2. That His blood is sprinkled on the altar of God (Heb. ix. 12), and in the heart of His people (Heb. ix. 13–15). 3. That He has instituted a "perpetual memorial of His previous death until His coming again" (1 Cor. ix. 25).

—*J. W. Burn.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1–8. Again, I see the seventy left at some little distance; I see Moses alone go up into the mount; and I see the affairs of the people committed to Aaron and Hur. It appears to me this is a beautiful presentment of what is going on in the present dispensation, when the affairs of the Lord's kingdom are administered through subordinate instrumentality. The 4th of Ephesians tells us that, when the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of God, "He

gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." But, meantime, higher transactions are going on in the mount—transactions of which you and I know nothing except through the precious lattices of the promises. By and by the time will come when we shall see our glorious Head; see Him in His glory, see Him as he is.—*Krause.*

We may search from end to end of the legal ritual, and not find those two precious words, "*draw nigh.*" Ah! no; such words could never be heard from the top of Sinai, nor from amid the shadows of the law. They could only be uttered at heaven's side of the empty tomb of Jesus, where the blood of the cross has opened a perfectly cloudless prospect to the vision of faith. The words, "afar off," are as characteristic of the law, as "draw nigh" are of the Gospel. Under the law, the work was never done which could entitle a sinner to draw nigh. Man had not fulfilled his promised obedience; and the "blood of calves and goats" could not atone for the failure, or give his guilty conscience peace. Hence, therefore, he had to stand "afar off." Man's vows were broken and his sin unpurged; how, then, could he draw nigh? The blood of ten thousand bullocks could not wipe away one stain from the conscience, or give the peaceful sense of nearness to a reconciled God.—*C. H. M.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9–11.

A Glorious Vision.

There was an indication of unity in the Old Testament Church, Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up together. Prophet, priests, and representatives of the people were united together on the great occasion. And there must be this practical unity on the part of the modern Church if there is to be any great work accomplished, if there is to be any glorious divine vision obtained. The primitive Church was united by the spirit of love. *We need the welding power of this gracious spirit.*

I. Glorious ascension. This united body went up to the mount of divine manifestation. The Church must not stay in the plain. There are mountains to climb. "Upward" should be the Church's motto. It may be difficult work to climb, but difficulties brace up the energies. Mountain climbing is always wholesome. The more we climb the less will be our difficulty. On the summit of divine mountains are gracious manifestations to reward the praying climbers.

II. Blessed vision. "And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." "No man hath seen God at any time." It may be that they saw no objective image, but only the place where the God of Israel stood. Certainly it was a vision that gave them very exalted views of the divine nature. The very place of the divine feet was glorious. "A paved work of sapphire stone, as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." The clear blue stretched itself out as a divine pavement. This is suggestive of calm repose. We may rest sweetly on the divine fidelity. If the footstool be thus glorious, how glorious must be the throne! If the fringes of the divine vesture are thus splendid, how much more splendid the nature that is thus enshrined! Blessed visions are most surely the portion of those who climb the divine mountains. The pure in heart shall see God. Waiting spirits shall not wait in vain. Praying souls shall receive special disclosures of divine love.

III. Gracious preservation. "Upon the nobles of Israel He laid not His hand." Sinners may well fear lest the hand of justice crush; but saints may

believingly clasp the hand of divine mercy. Faith may venture where fear cannot approach. The nobles who trust the hand of God will find that it is a saving and not a destroying hand. God's hand will never be laid upon the spiritual nobility. The earthly ignoble may become spiritually noble. The nobles of the spiritual Israel are under God's protecting, preserving care.

IV. Wondrous festivity. "Also they saw God, and did eat and drink." These two short sentences must be connected. They saw God, and yet they did eat and drink. Fear says that the sight of God is death, but faith finds that the divine vision is feeding and sustaining. Blessed are they that did thus eat and drink after, and close upon, such a vision. Here is a wondrous festivity indeed. It is prophetic. The saints shall eat and drink in the Divine Presence. Their food will be heavenly manna. Their drink the new wine of the upper Paradise. Their banqueting chamber the courts of heaven. The banner over them will be love. The attendant music will be struck from golden harps. The song will be that of Moses and the Lamb. May we stand amid prophets, priests, elders, and the great company of the redeemed!

—*W. Burrows, B.A.*

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

MAN'S APPROACH TO GOD.—*Verses* 1, 2; 9-11.

From these words we learn—

I. That man's approach to God is commanded, ver. 1. This is both reasonable and necessary. Servant to master; scholar to teacher; child to parent; sinner to Saviour.

II. That man's approach to God must be through a mediator; "worship thou afar off, and Moses alone shall come near unto the Lord." So Jesus has entered into the Holy place for us. He is the "one mediator," &c., "the new and living way" (John xiv. 6). We must remember that this was in answer to their own prayer (xx. 19).

III. That man's approach to God must be reverent. "Worship ye afar off."

IV. That man's approach to God is rewarded by a manifestation of the divine glory, ver. 10. Not a literal or physical vision of "the king" . . . invisible (Duet. iv. 2; 1 Tim. vi. 16); but spiritual (Isa. vi.; Acts ix. 3, 4, and refs.; 1 Cor. xii. 2).

V. That man's approach to God is not to be dreaded, but welcomed and enjoyed. "They find His presence no more a source of disturbance and dread, but radiant in all the bright loveliness of supernal glory: a beautiful sign that the higher religion and state of conformity to law, now established, shall work onward to eternal blessedness." —*Ewald.*

Application.—Heb. iv. 14-16.

—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12-18.

DIVINE PREPARATIONS.

Through all the ages the Divine hand is at work. In the kingdoms of nature and of grace we notice vast preparatory processes. And the Almighty has to do with individuals as well as communities. He brings forth His chosen instruments when the fit time has come. But He does not bring forth until they are fitted for their work. Moses must dwell forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai. As nature has its barren winter and fruitful harvest, so God's heroes have the winter of seclusion, and *the autumn of golden productiveness.*

I. Each one has his proper position to occupy. Moses must go up into the Mount, be hidden in the cloud, and hold communion with the Infinite. Joshua

must attend as the minister. Aaron and Hur must act in the place of Moses, and be the administrators of justice; and the elders must tarry. They may serve who only stand and wait; and this is sometimes the most arduous service. Tarry is very often an unwelcome word. Tarry when the cloud conceals a sublime mystery, and when Moses is about to penetrate that mystery. The man who can tarry in a right spirit has a well-disciplined nature. However, let each seek his proper position.

II. Each man has his own divine vision. There was one vision to Moses, and another to the children of Israel. Moses entered the cloud; but the children of Israel stood outside the cloud. And this is still true. The Almighty is differently revealed to different natures. And differently revealed to the same natures at different periods. There is the revelation of the cloud, and there is the revelation of the devouring fire. To-day we may experience Divine chidings, and to-morrow we may be on the Mount of Beatitude.

III. But there are specialities of work. Moses was the lawgiver. He was to teach unto the people the law and the commandments, which God delivered unto him on the Mount. Moses stands out in solitary grandeur as the great lawgiver of the Old Testament. His name stands high in the historic scroll. Grandest and noblest of men! His words and works speak and influence through all time.

IV. Therefore there must be speciality in the preparation. This we see in the whole of the chapter; and it has already been a subject of remark. Whatever may have been the nature of the vision vouchsafed to Moses, it must have been of a special nature. He entered the cloud and conversed with God. He breasted the devouring fire, and was not consumed. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and yet did not perish of hunger. The Bible does not satisfy an idle curiosity. No history writes the tale of that forty days and forty nights' retirement. The deep things of spiritual retirement cannot be written. But their sublime influence will be felt. Moses was brighter, nobler, and truer for the mountain retirement. In all true life there must be seasons of disappearance and of reappearance. The man of action must be also the man of prayer. The man of mighty words must be the man of prolonged meditation. A man may have high swelling words, which are only sound and nothing more, who has never been guilty of half an hours' deep meditation. Moses was not an empty rhetorician. Aaron was the fluent speaker, and yet the words of Moses are more powerful and vital than the words of Aaron. Learn to be much in thought, much in prayer, much in mountain solitude; but much also with the people. Be not the empty-headed demagogue; and be not the useless, selfish recluse. Let waiting and working go hand in hand. Above all things, obey the Divine voice. Wait even six days for the Divine utterance; and it may be that on the seventh, God will call to thee out of the midst of the cloud.

—*W. Burrows*, ***B.A.***

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.—*Verses* 12–18.

All great lives have been characterised by close and frequent communion with God. Enoch, Abraham, Moses, David, our Lord, &c., &c. All Scripture and Christian history testify to the importance and benefit of communion with God. Our text teaches us—

I. That communion with God **is necessary.**

1. Moses went up after the solemnities of the covenant. Religious teachers, beware how your duties interfere with your devotions. You can only give what you get, and you can

only get what you give by communion with God.

2. Moses went up after the performance of his official duties as judge and general of the people. Men of business, beware how your engagements interfere with your prayers. Parents, &c., you can only perform the duties of life well by the "faith and fear" which you can alone get from God.

II. That **special places** are appointed for communion with God. "Come up unto the mount."

1. God's house is appointed as the place where God records His name and vouchsafes His blessing (Heb. x. 25; Matt. xviii. 20).

2. The privacy of our own chamber (Matt. vi. 6).

True, where there is a praying heart there is a sanctuary; but warehouses, counting-houses, &c., are hardly places where the soul can pour itself out to God.

III. That **preparation** should be made for communion with God, ver. 14. "Shut to the door" (Matt. vi. 6).

1. Arrangements should be made so that this communion may not be interrupted. Let not servant, nor family, nor callers take you away from this important business; let all those matters be settled before you commence.

2. Make such preparations that all worldly and anxious thought may be left outside, and give yourselves entirely up to the business in hand. How often are we half through the service before we begin to reap any benefit. It was not without significance that the Jews had a day of preparation (Mark xv. 42).

IV. That communion with God should be most frequently **alone.** The elders were to tarry behind. This is necessary.

1. Because the presence of others may distract the mind or embarrass the thoughts.

2. Because the presence of others may call our attention away from those intensely personal matters which concern our own souls alone.

3. Because there are sins and wants to confess, about which we should not like our dearest friends to know.

V. That in communion with God the **presence of others** is **sometimes helpful** and even necessary. "And Moses rose up and his servant Joshua."

1. There are occasions on which we should take a friend, our wives, our children, separately with us to the throne of grace. There are matters which concern us in common, want, interest, &c. Two Christian workers, *e.g.*, two partners in business, husband and wife about the family, &c.

2. The same applies to family worship and prayer meetings.

VI. That communion with God is the **condition upon which man may witness the Divine glory.** "And the glory of the Lord abode on Mount Sinai" (vers. 16, 17; Isa. vi.)

VII. That communion with God may be **protracted**, and man must not **weary** of it (Acts i.; Luke xviii. 1–6; Acts xii. 5; 1 Thess. v. 17). Man's duty is "to wait upon the Lord."

1. Sometimes God delays to test His people's faith.

2. Sometimes in order that the course of His providence may not be abruptly interfered with.

VIII. That among the **purposes of** communion with God are **recognition of the divine authority and preparation for future work.** Moses waited for further divine instructions (chaps. xxv.–xxxi.) In conclusion—

(i.) Ps. lxii. 5; (iii.) Isa. lx. 31.

—*J. W. Burn.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIV.

BY

REV. W. ADAMSON.

Elders! **Ver. 1.** Pierotti says that, among the Jews, the elders exercised great authority, and were held in high respect. At a later period the word became a regular title, irrespective of age or experience, being conferred generally on those who, by their wealth or

wisdom, could head a tribe or lead in public affairs: 1. From Deut. xxi. 2 it would appear that in certain expiatory rites they represented the city or the whole nation. In Deut. xxii. 15 they formed a court for trying crimes; while in Numb. xi. 16 they were selected by Moses to aid in supporting his authority. Joshua, in chap. vii. 6, relates how, after Israel's defeat, he and the elders fell down before the ark. 2. In the New Testament we have the seventy disciples; and in the apocalyptic scenery of heaven are twenty-four lesser thrones around about the throne of God—occupied by four and twenty elders. These, sitting in the symbols of priesthood and royalty, of endurance and victory, clothed in white raiment, and having on their heads crowns of gold, are supposed to be the representatives of the twelve tribes under the Mosaic and Christian dispensations:—

"For the Lord their God hath clothed them with
A new and glorious dress.
With the garments of salvation, with the robes
Of righteousness."

Covenant! Ver. 3. Away on the lofty mountain-summit is a spring which breaks into two parts, one flowing down one side, the other adown the other. A man, climbing up the wild and rocky side, traces the river up to its source. There he sees the other flowing. He follows down the grassy soft slope, until he traces its descent into the ocean. Even so with Christ's salvation on the Mount of Love. This is not a new covenant, but the renewal and fuller development of the everlasting covenant with Abraham, Abel, Adam, &c. Its living stream flowed on one side to David and Israel, Abraham and Abel; on the other side to the apostles and martyrs, &c., and so on to the eternal ocean.

"Jehovah's covenant shall endure,
All ordered, everlasting, sure!
O child of God, rejoice to trace
Thy portion in its glorious grace."

Law's Province! Ver. 3. In Gal. iii. 17, the apostle says that law, in its Mosaic development, was added because of transgression. He does not say that there was no law before Adam sinned, much less does he assert that there was none before Moses received it here. There is law in heaven, *i.e.*, the moral law of love, and that law Adam had. In the free state of Liberia certain judicial enactments were absent. After the African Republic had existed a few years, some of its subjects committed offences. To prevent their repetition Government passed certain laws. The moral law was there before, and the Liberian freedmen were as morally bound to obey it *before as after* its judicial enforcement. God renewed the covenant more stringently, because of previous breaches of its provisions. The purpose of the law was to (1) Point out clearly the rule of human duty to tread the path of righteousness; to (2) Press home man's natural inability to keep the law in his own strength; and to (3) Prepare the way, like John the Baptist, for Christ to enter the sinner's heart, as the end of the law for righteousness.

"By His life, for that fulfilling God's command exceeding broad,
By His glorious resurrection, seal and signet of thy God."

Morning-Prayer! Ver. 4. Milton speaks of the breath of morning being sweet, "Her rising sweet with charm of earliest birds." Vaughan quaintly says that mornings are mysteries. Mysteries of good are they when well used, but mysteries of evil when, as too oft, much abused. Mornings are well used when prayer ushers them in. Beecher says, "Let the day have a blessed baptism by giving your first waking thoughts into the bosom of God." The first hours of the morning is the rudder of the day. Carlyle says we have a proverb among us that "the morning is a friend to the muses," *i.e.*, a good time for study. Is it not more true that it is a great friend to the graces—that it is a good praying time? Therefore

"Serve God before the world; let Him not go
Until thou hast a bless ng; then resign
The whole unto Him, and remember who
Prevailed by wrestling ere the sun did shine." —*Vaughan.*

Gospel and Blood! Ver. 6. Foss says that he once heard a very earnest and evangelical minister say that he had been accosted by a man who had heard him preach with this remark: "I do not like your creed; it is too bloody,—it savours of the shambles. It is all blood, *blood*, BLOOD." To this the faithful ambassador replied, "Well, it is so, for it recognises as its foundation a very sanguinary scene—the death of Christ, with bleeding hands, and feet, and side. And without shedding of blood is no remission of sins."

"Jesus, our Great High Priest,
Has shed His blood and died;
Our guilty conscience needs
No sacrifice beside.
His precious blood
Did once atone,
And now it pleads
Before the throne." —*Watts.*

Covenant-Obedience! Ver. 7. Obedience is our universal duty and destiny, says Carlyle, and whoso will not bend must break. Upon which Watson adds that to obey God unwillingly, as Balaam did, is to resemble the devils who came out of the man possessed, at Christ's command, but with reluctancy and against their will. If a willing mind be wanting, there wants that flower which should perfume our obedience and make it a sweet-smelling savour to God. The hireling prophet's obedience was deficient in this respect,

that it lacked the frequent odours of voluntary or free-will offering. Israel's apparently full self-surrender to covenant-obedience — however earnest for the nonce—afterwards turned out signally deficient in this voluntary grace. Their vehement covenant-protestations of obedience here are a vivid example of the Divine testimony, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" None but God, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins.

"Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone—
Thou must save, and Thou alone."
—*Toplady.*

Covenant-Blood! Ver. 9. Doddridge, in his "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," suggested a solemn covenant being entered into with God. Samuel Pearce acted upon it by writing it with blood drawn from his own body. But he soon afterwards fell into sin, and thus broke his covenant. Driven into more close examination of the question, he was led to see that it was not his own blood, but that of Jesus. Carrying the blood-stained covenant to the top of his father's house, he tore it into pieces, and scattered them to the winds, resolved thenceforth to depend upon the peace-making and peace-keeping blood of Jesus.

"Thy blood, not mine, O Christ,
Thy blood so freely spilt,
Can blanch my blackest stains,
And purge away my guilt."—*Bonar.*

Sapphire-Pavement! Ver. 10. "Paved stone" should be "whiteness, clearness." "Splendour of sapphire," says Wordsworth. Kalisch calls it "pellucid sapphire." It is one of the brightest and most valuable of jewels. "Born of darkness," says Macmillan, "it yet holds in its core of focussed rays the blue of heaven." There is one variety, of a singularly soft pure azure, which has the power of retaining its lovely memory of heaven even by candlelight, when an ordinary sapphire looks black. It formed the throne of glory which appeared to Ezekiel in visions; and here it forms the pavement, like the body of heaven in its clearness, under the feet of the God of Israel, as seen by the elders of Israel. God's throne is "Love," its foundations are "Love," and the treadings of His feet are "Love." Such an interpretation is in strict accordance with the symbolism of nearly all nations, among whom sapphire-blue has always been associated with ideas of "Love."

"In heaven's starred pavement at the midnight,
In roseate hues that come at morning dawn,
In the bright bow athwart the falling showers,
In woods and waters, hills and velvet lawn,
One truth is written, all conspire to prove,
What grace of old revealed, that "GOD IS LOVE." —*Davies.*

Sapphire-Symbolism! Ver. 10. During the Belfast revival of 1859, one of the converts who had previously been crying out under the crushing burden of an evil heart of unbelief said, "If they would but look up at the *blue* sky, would not that be enough, Jesus? I used to think it *was only the blue sky*; I did not know that THOU reignedst up there." How came she to connect the blue sky with the Lord's loving tender mercies? Was it not because she was Spirit-taught? And is not the blue sky a most beautiful emblem of the pavement of love, on which the King's throne rests?

"I know He reigneth now
In yonder heaven of love;
And He will quickly come again,
To carry me above."

Two Tables! Ver. 12. 1. Like that remarkable architecture still found amid Porter's "Giant Cities of Bashan," where a door will be hewn out of the solid rock, and door, rock, and hinge are all a single stone, the two tables make but one law. The fifth commandment is the axis or hinge on which they open and close—the connecting point where you pass from the one to the other. 2. According to the Talmud, these two tables were formed of sapphires; and it is certainly remarkable that the Hebrew word *sappir* is derived from the same root as the words that signify a book, writing, or engraving. God's law, like His throne, is based on "Love." Christ is Incarnate Love—blood-besprinkled blue—sapphire soaked in sardine.

"Alone, O Love ineffable!
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from Thee is hell,
To walk with Thee is heaven."
—*Whittier.*

Covenant-Mediation! Ver. 12. A mediator's hands receive the tables, thus establishing signs that grace is in the Law of Sinai. God states His claims that we may see our need of help to pay them, while our sense of ruin is designed to make us prize the gospel. Is it not grace to urge us onward towards the Cross—towards Him who is the Mediator of the New Covenant? To bring us to Christ, the law displays God's holiness, sin's heinousness, hell gaping at our feet. It shows that God's whole nature abhors evil, and is pledged to execute just wrath. Peter was not alarmed to sink him fathoms deep in Galilee's blue waters, but to persuade him to lean on Christ—"Save me, I perish." So the law convicts the sinner that he may seek the Mediator's help;

for there is such help in Christ, and Christ alone.

"For Christ is given to be
The covenant of God to thee;
In Him—God's golden scroll of light—
The darkest truths are clear and bright."
—*Havergal.*

Forty-Days' Food! Ver. 18. Clarke and Paxton Hood allude to a conversation between Rabbi Meir and another on this subject. "Is it possible that any man can fast forty days and forty nights?" To this Rabbi Meir replied, "When thou takest up thy abode in a particular city, thou must live according to its customs. Moses ascended to heaven, where they neither eat nor drink; therefore he became assimilated to them. We are accustomed to eat and drink, and when angels descend to us, they eat and drink also." As Grozart says, truly it was a heavenly not an earthly life in the case equally of Moses, Elias, and our Lord.

"Lo! He feeds on living bread,
Drinks the fountain from above,
Leans on Jesus' breast his head,
Feasts for ever on His love."—*Wesley.*

CHAPTER XXV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—2. An offering.] Trumah, from the root *rom*, "that which is taken off," from what has been put by as private property reserved for special enjoyment. Hence the injunction, "*of every man whose heart impelleth* him," as there might be some who would not willingly part with what they associated in their hearts as pleasurable enjoyments, for the offering was to consist of choice things. Trumah = offering, also admits of the meaning *raised, i.e.*, to higher purpose, from the very things set apart for earthly pleasures offering should be made for the building of the sanctuary. Gifts coming only from persons whose *heart impelleth* them had to be the material of which the sanctuary was to be constructed, and in such love-built sanctuary, Jehovah was willing to dwell. 9. Pattern] = tabnith, model or prototype, conveys the idea that a higher purport than the construction of a temporary tabernacle was the design of that pattern, evidently foreshadowing Him who came and *tabernacled* among us, and in the tabernacle of our flesh lovingly offered by the blessed Virgin. "Be it unto me according to Thy word" (Luke i. 38).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1–10.

THE LAWS OF SACRIFICE AND SERVICE.*

We are taught here—

I. That whatsoever is done for God must be done willingly. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering," ver. 2. The sanctuary was to be built through *offerings*, not by a *tax*. "Of every man that giveth it *willingly with his heart*," ver. 2. There was to be no constraint or coercion. The Hebrew is literally rendered: "On the part of every one whom his heart drove." —*Keil.* How *noble* is service and sacrifice when it is the spontaneous fruit of the spirit! How *joyful* is such giving and work! The man has not to spur himself, to argue with himself, to just move himself to action and charity by constraint, but his heart drives him, and his work and giving are full of joyfulness. How *efficacious* such service! A piece of brass touched by a loving soul has more power in it than shekels of gold given by cold hearts and cold hands.

II. That whatsoever is done for God must be our best, vers. 3–7. All things of beauty, preciousness, sweetness, and brightness. We must ever give God our best. Let us be sure that we give Him the best of ourselves—our life in the beauty, sweetness, and preciousness of youth, and not the scraps of a wasted life; let us give Him the best of our powers in seeking to understand His word and worship at His feet; let us not always give Him the smallest coin in our purse; let us not give Him the worthless scraps of our time, or wealth, or

* Most of the sketches on Chapters XXV.-XXXIII. are specially contributed to this Commentary by Rev. W. L. Walkinson.

ability, or influence; but consecrate to Him the rarest, fairest, brightest gifts of life and fortune.

III. That whatsoever is done for God must be done according to Divine method, ver. 9. And this command is constantly repeated. Let us beware of "will-worship." God has great reasons for all His commandments, and we must not lightly depart from them. We must carry out God's work on the lines laid down in God's Word.

IV. That whatsoever is thus done for God secures a great reward. "And let them make Me a sanctuary: that I may dwell among them," ver. 8. The people gave of their treasures to erect the tabernacle, and then a Glory shone there full of truth and grace. Whatsoever is done simply and spiritually for God, brings us nearer to God, brings God nearer to us. Let *all* bring their services and sacrifices to God. The princes gave the jewels (chap. xxxv. 27), but the poor could give the brass; the rich gave the gold and scarlet, but the common people could give a ram's or badger's skin. And if all give their best, *God shall bless all alike* (2 Cor. viii. 11, 12).

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1–10. How befitting the wealthy members of Christ's Church among us is disinterested liberality; The tabernacle was mainly formed of the spoils of Egypt: should not our worldly gains be hallowed, in greater or less proportion, to the glory and honour of God? The people of Israel brought *much more than enough* for the service of the works which the Lord commanded to be made. Indeed, Moses gave commandment and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were *restrained* from bringing (Exod. xxxvi. 5, 6). Only think of a proclamation in Christian England to *restrain* the liberality of British Churches in the cause and service of their Lord and Saviour! What a rebuke to our too general parsimony is here!

—*W. Mudge.*

Surely, divine philanthropy needs not the excitement and the gaze of notoriety to give it impulse. When the stony rock of the human heart is smitten, and a fountain of living water therein opened, its overflowings will be felt, and the Christian, like Abraham, will become a blessing in the place of his sojourn. Israel's offering to the tabernacle was a *willing* offering: and it is the *will* spiritualised, subdued, and sweetly captivated to the yoke of Christ, that constitutes the seat and source of all true charity. The walls of Jerusalem rose rapidly under Nehemiah and his faithful coadjutors, for the defence and security of the holy city against Sanballat and his arrogant compeers; and the reason assigned for the successful prosecution of their labour is, The people *had* a *mind* to the work (chap. iv. 6). With like-mindedness, like results would follow: whereas, without a primary consecration of *ourselves* to God, our most laborious efforts may prove abortive. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so* let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity: for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7). It is *principle* which the great Father and Giver of all Good chiefly regards in the conduct of His creatures (1 Sam. xvi. 7). Hence it is, that mites may be inestimable and millions may be contemptible. Look well, then, unto the state of your hearts before God, and let no attention, however sedulous and constant, to the outward custom and duties of religion, make you forgetful of your inward frame. And at the same time, remember, the higher your station in society, the more commanding your influence and wealth may be, still greater responsibilities rest upon you—*Ibid.*

(1.) *The tabernacle then was a type or emblem of Jesus Christ.* "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt,—or as the original expresses it, *tabernacled*—among us." Such a manner of representing the sojourn of the spirit within its tenement of clay, is frequent among the sacred writers. St. Paul calls the body "our earthly house of this tabernacle." St. Peter declares "that he must soon put it off," or exchange mortality for life. Even thus, the Saviour spake of His own flesh, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." His body was the vail; and in His incarnation, when He descended from heaven, and became "Emmanuel, God with us," He shrouded essential Deity in the likeness of our flesh. And as the Most High dwelt visibly within the sanctuary, even on the ark, so did He reside in the human nature and tabernacle of His dear Son: for "*in Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*" "*We beheld His glory, the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" Dark, indeed, had been the tabernacle in the wilderness, unless the Shekinah had shed its radiance through it, and the glory of the Lord had filled it. Dark and dreary had been the humanity of Christ, to the eye of those who looked for salvation through Him, unless, in the humiliation of that external character which exhibited "no beauty that we should desire Him," they could also behold the ineffable splendour shed forth by the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.*"

(2.) This consideration leads me to add, that *the tabernacle was a symbol of every real Christian.* God dwelt within the sanctuary in the wilderness. He dwells within every renewed and believing heart. *I will set My sanctuary among them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them. Ye are the temples of the living God. In Christ Jesus ye also are builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit.* In the soul of every true follower of the Saviour does the Father dwell, the object of his worship, the author of his blessings, the principles of his spiritual and everlasting life. And, as the ark held the commandments and kept them from pollution, so must he in whom the Father dwells, and in whom Christ is formed the hope of glory, lay up the law in his heart, and preserve it from pollution.

The tabernacle also typified the **Church.** It was an emblem of the heavenly temple. "I heard," said the beloved John, when the consummated felicities of the Redeemer's Church burst upon him in the visions of Patmos—"I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Did He take up His dwelling in their hearts, as over the ark, in the ancient sanctuary? Did His love, His presence, and His Spirit fill their minds, as the Shekinah filled the holy of holies? Oh, then, what will be the splendour of His appearance, when the cloud shall be withdrawn, and His faithful worshippers shall see Him as He is? Glorious things are related of the tabernacle, and glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou temple of the everlasting hills.—*Buddicom.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10–17.

THE LAW OF GOD.

The ark of the covenant, containing the two tables of the testimony, was itself a symbol of its contents. It symbolised—

I. The **graciousness** of the law. The chest was covered with gold (ver. 11). Law is generally used as the antithesis of grace; but, really, the law in its inmost

essence is love. Men speak sometimes of the "beautiful" laws of nature—the laws of the moral universe are beautiful also. The law is "good"—generous, just, unchallengeable—the expression of essential purity and kindness.

Moral law has become terrible in our eyes, because we have broken it and felt its penalty; but as we are forgiven and restored to purity and understanding, the moral law ever becomes more gracious and precious in our sight. The law was borne in a chest of gold, not of iron, for the law is not a harsh rule of life, propounded by despotism, but the rule of action delivered by Eternal Wisdom and Love to secure the protection and happiness of the whole universe. There is only what is tender and generous on the first table! God asks not from us blood, sweat, and tears, but love. And only the spirit of a noble justice and a generous love breathes in the second table.

II. The **immortality** of the law. The ark was made of acacia wood—an incorruptible wood. The moral law abides for ever. When Christ came it was not to destroy, but to fulfil this law. His sacred humanity was the golden ark in which the moral law was republished with living power. All those systems which seek to abolish or relax the moral law, whether they are found within the Christian Church or without it, are intensely anti-Christian. This law is the law of the eternal universe. The fashion of the world passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not a jot or tittle of the law shall perish.

III. The **supremacy** of the law. "And shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about" (ver. 11). This law is sovereign. All must bow to it. The angel that keeps it not is cast from heaven. The kingdom that will not bow to it is broken. The life that will not obey it is damned. Blessed are all those who keep it, but woe to all who despise it. Let us remember this in our *outward* life of business, pleasure, politics, society; let us remember it in our *inner* life of imagination, thought, and passion.

IV. The **holiness** of the law. This is set forth by the fact that the staves of the ark were "not to be taken from it" (ver. 15). So that there was no need for the ark to be touched. The law of God is glorious in holiness, and is not to be touched by us. How mixed are the graceful fables of Greece, the mythologies of India, the moral systems of China, the visions of Mahomet! But this law is altogether pure and sublime. Nothing must be added to it—nothing must go into the ark besides it; nothing must be taken from it. It stands alone, the sublime manifestation of the mind and character and purpose of God.

1. Let the priests **sustain** the law. It was the duty of the priests to carry the ark, and it is the duty of the priests still to sustain, to hold up, to magnify the law. 2. Let the *people follow* the law. The ark directed the steps of Israel. Where the law does not lead us, let us not go: where it directs the way we shall be right and safe and happy.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 10–17. 1. With reference to the *ark*, we believe that, in its materials, construction, and use, it might point to our Lord Jesus Christ as the true ark of the everlasting covenant; uniting in Himself the divine and human natures, and exhibiting in His life a most perfect conformity to all requirements of God's just and holy law. "Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared Me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sins Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me [namely, in Ps. xl. 6–8], I delight to do Thy will, O God: yea, Thy law is within my

heart" (Heb. x. 5–7). Jesus Christ, then, is the grand depository of the Father's will. The costliest and most exquisite productions of human art, although shittim-wood and gold alone may enter into their composition, afford but imperfect resemblances of the person and work of our glorious Immanuel. An understanding that is infinite; a power that is almighty; a love that is inestimable, and a mercy that is boundless and endless as eternity, combined to prepare a *body* for the Son of God (Luke i. 35). No worm might corrode His flesh; no stain might soil His spirit. All was incorruptible and pure in the world's Redeemer.

—*W. Mudge.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17–23.

THE MERCY-SEAT.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the true mercy-seat; the piece of temple furniture in the text is the shadow of which Christ is the substance.

I. In Christ the mercifulness of the Divine nature is fully declared. The Old Testament is ever celebrating the mercy of God. Some contend that the God of the Old Testament is an inexorable and cruel deity, but the inmost idea of the whole dispensation is that of the Divine mercifulness (Exod. xx. 6). This glorious idea runs through the whole of their worship; the whole ceremonial culminates on the golden mercy-seat. And this idea also runs through the whole of their literature. But in Christ we have the clear, full declaration of the mercifulness of God. Thus Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers" (Luke i. 68–72). The mercifulness of God is hinted in nature; it is more clearly made known in Mosaism; it is finally and fully declared in Jesus. Mercy for the *worst* (Luke xix. 10); mercy for *all;* mercy through all *generations.* The Cross of Christ is the true rainbow in the black cloud which hangs over the destinies of the world.

II. In Christ the mercifulness of the Divine nature is manifestly reconciled with the claims of truth and righteousness (vers. 18–20). The cherubims over the mercy-seat symbolise the fact, that the extension of mercy to mankind is justified in the eyes of the heavenly universe. When man fell, the cherubims were the witnesses of his guilt and of his exclusion from paradise (Gen. iii. 24), and now they are the consenting witnesses to his forgiveness and restoration. Some speak as if it were a very easy thing for God to show mercy to a world of sinners, but Revelation throughout reminds us that it was not such an easy thing as sentiment suggests. The claims of truth and righteousness were to be sustained. These conflicting claims are reconciled in Christ. God shows mercy in the Cross without sacrificing truth (ver. 21). The law is the basis. Although God pardons sinners, the truth is honoured. God shows mercy in the Cross without sacrificing righteousness. The golden mercy-seat, sprinkled with blood, tells how the holiness of God was vindicated by the death of Christ (Rom. iii. 19–27). The universe of glory looks down with wondering, consenting eyes upon the resumption of the world in Jesus Christ (1 Peter i. 12).

III. In Christ alone will the Divine mercifulness be extended to guilty men (ver. 22). There would God meet with Israel, and there alone. God will only save and bless men through Christ crucified. There is no other name given by which men can be saved. 1. We all need mercy. Where is the man who can stand before God on the grounds of justice? 2. We may all find mercy. There is no exception. The mercy of Christ is infinite, universal, everlasting. 3. Let us so seek this mercy that we may find it. Come to the mercy-seat with penitence, renouncing all sin; come with a bold faith.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 17–23. Then, again, we have to remark as to the meaning of the word "mercy-seat;" it literally signifies "covering." The mercy-seat was a complete covering; it came between the law and God. The law condemned the people who had broken that law; when God commanded the mercy-seat to be placed over it, it was as if He had said, Cover it, I will not look upon it; it would be impossible to look upon it without reading, as it were, in blazing letters, the condemnation of My beloved people. This is just what God has condescended to say in another place, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember *no more*," or, as we have it again in the 103d Psalm, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."

—*W. H. Krause, M.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 23-30.

THE TABLE OF SHEW BREAD.

This table, with its burden and furniture, must be regarded in a two-fold sense. It teaches—

I. That all life springs from God. These loaves on the golden table certainly signify the fact that out of the love of God comes the sustenance of man. 1. God is the supporter of our *natural* life. The golden table reminds us of the golden harvest which God gives for the preservation of the world. As the loaves were continually renewed, so from year to year does God give us rain and fruitful seasons, filling the heart of man with food and gladness. But, 2. God is the giver of *spiritual* nourishment to the world of souls. Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. This is the heavenly bread which is given in Jesus Christ. (1.) The shew bread was made of the finest of the flour, and in Christ we have the pure spiritual truth for which the soul longs (Isa. lv. 2). (2.) The number of the loaves, twelve, indicate the fulness of the provision that there is in Christ for the soul. It satisfies the intellect, the affections, the conscience. He "satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Ps. cvii. 9). (3.) The continued renewal of the bread signifies the everlasting power and grace of Christ. It always satisfies—it satisfies for ever (John vi. 35; John vi. 51). In Christ we have not a hollow shape of old history, not a phantom shape of the imagination, but food for the heart and life—a living, loving, personal, strengthening Saviour. "Whoso eats His flesh and drinks His blood hath eternal life."

II. That all life must be consecrated to God. These loaves were to lie before the face of Jehovah as a meat-offering presented by the children of Israel (Lev. xxiv. 8). The frankincense sprinkled upon the bread, or consumed over it, indicated that it was offered up to God, and thus all life must be consecrated to God. It comes from Him, and it must be yielded up to Him. Fully given to Him—constantly given up. To Him must ever go up the offering of our love, the incense of our worship, the sacrifices of our obedience. The table of pure gold on which the loaves stood may well suggest the pure heart, without which all our gifts and services are rejected. The cans, cups, dishes, &c, of the table, all of pure gold, remind us that we must keep our members as instruments of righteousness unto God, and that all our gifts and possessions, all the associations and details of life, must be holy and undefiled.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 23-30. 1. Fine flour was to form the ingredient of the bread, and even this was to pass through a fiery ordeal in its preparation: thus the very purest bread must furnish the table of the holy place. See we not here the impressive import of the words, My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven? The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world (John vi. 32, 33). Inconceivably fine and free from all impurity is this bread. Still, it pleased the Lord to bruise Him (Isa. liii. 10). The Son of God passes through most appalling trial in order to the demonstration of His glorious perfection (Heb. ii. 10); and, blessedly to observe, every succeeding humiliation and sorrow, though deepening in agony and increasing in intensity at every step, endured by Jesus Christ, does but leave Him more triumphant in righteousness and glorious in holiness.—*W. Mudge.*

We observe another direction which God gave with regard to the table of shew bread. God said to Moses, "Thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be *on* the bread"—not mixed up with it, but "*on* the bread, for a memorial." The "pure frankincense" was to be placed on the "pure table." The sweetness of that provision which God has made for His people is here set before us. We want this idea to be fastened on our minds, dear brethren, that Jehovah is as much delighted with that which is the food and nourishment of His people, as they themselves can be, when they find their wants satisfied to the very utmost. There is such communion, such oneness between God and His Church, that the very thing His people want is the very thing in which He Himself takes delight. So that when the believing soul feeds upon Jesus, the bread of life, this, like sweet incense, comes up with acceptance before the Lord.

Observe the two ideas suggested by this continual placing of bread before the Lord. First, it was the very food which God provided for His people; it was abundantly good food for them, and it was always the same. Just as it is said of the manna, "The children of Israel did eat manna *forty years*"—all the time of their wilderness history. A spiritual appetite will always like the same food, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is a second idea suggested by the continual placing of this bread before the Lord. You mark there was provision made for *all* the tribes. Not one of the Lord's people shall want the spiritual food that is best for them. God is bound, by everlasting covenant engagements, to nourish and to feed all His people. Not one of them shall ever complain that good food has not been provided for him. According to the greatness of our wants, the Lord will abundantly satisfy our necessities. This is a truth which the Lord's people are very slow to receive. We look at others, and we say, Oh, if I had the faith, the love, the diligence of such or such an individual in the family of God, all would be well. Depend upon it, brethren, the Lord knows how to satisfy all His people with the food that is best for them.—*W. Krause.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 31-40.

THE CANDLESTICK.

Christ is the "light of the world," and His Church is the lamp-holder, the light-bearer. What does the candlestick teach in respect to the Christian Church?

I. The necessity of purity, if the Church is to diffuse the knowledge of Christ. 1. "The candlestick must be of *pure gold*," ver. 31. Again, ver. 36,

an impure *Church* cannot keep the light, and diffuse the light (Rev. ii. 5). Here the Ephesian Church is warned that if they do not repent and amend, the light that is in them shall become darkness. An impure *ministry* cannot shed this light long. And, *personally*, if we are to be evangelists we must be pure. 2. The Church must be *really* pure. "Of *beaten* work shall the candlestick be made," ver. 31. It was to be *solid*, not hollow. The goodness of the Church, the minister, &c., must not be formal and ceremonial, but real and heart-felt. 3. And the lowest workers and instruments for Christ must be holy. Tongs and snuff dishes must be of pure gold. We are taught—

II. The grand mission of the Church of Christ. It is a *candlestick*—its great mission is to diffuse light. We see sometimes all pains taken with the candlestick—in its ornamentation, &c.,—and it is forgotten that the end of a candlestick is to give light. A church is grand architecturally, but what of that if it is not a light-giving centre? A ministry is eloquent, but what of that if it does not shed the clearer light which leads us to the Lamb? ver. 37. We are reminded—

III. That the Church must declare the whole counsel of God as made known in Jesus Christ. The candlestick was seven-branched, ver. 32. There is completeness and fulness of light in Christ, and the Church must seek to set forth fully the manifold light of the Gospel. On matters of belief and matters of duty, our relations to God and man, body and soul, this world and the next. Let nothing deter us from making known the whole counsel of God.

We are reminded—

IV. Of the beautiful fruits which will spring forth under the shining of Christian truth, vers. 33–35. Flowers and pomegranates. Beautiful flowers and sweet fruits are the creations of the light. Thus, if the Church is faithful, the wilderness around her shall bloom. We are reminded—

V. Of the constant vigilance which the Church must exercise to keep the truth undimmed. In verse 38 we read of tongs and snuff-dishes. Let us watch, and carefully remove whatever would dim the shining of the light of Christ. Discipline in the Church; discipline in ourselves.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 31–40. The candlestick of pure gold comes next in order, for God's priests need *light* as well as *food;* and they have both the one and the other in Christ. In this candlestick there is no mention of anything but pure gold. "All of it shall be one *beaten* work of pure gold." "The seven lamps" which "gave light over against the candlestick," express the perfection of the light and energy of the Spirit, founded upon and connected with the perfect efficacy of the work of Christ. The work of the Holy Ghost can never be separated from the work of Christ.

—*C. H. M.*

Moreover, it is not a partial statement even of Divine truth that will suffice for the edification of the Church or of the nation. Not one or more of the seven lamps of the seven-branched candlestick must burn apart from others: all must burn together, and send their commingled blaze in combined and united radiancy around her holy place. A mutilated Bible, or a book of garbled extracts in the place of the Bible, ought to be the wonder and the grief of Christendom.—*W. Mudge.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXV.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Typology! Vers. 1–40. If you hold up your hand between the candle and the wall, what do you see? That shadow of your hand is not, however, of the same size and colour. It is only an outline. Holding up some beautiful object which we have never seen before, its shadow would give but a feeble impression of itself. So Heb. x. 1 says, that the Law had a *shadow* of good things to come. Those good things have come; and

"Man has gazed on heavenly secrets,
Sunned himself in heavenly glow;
Seen the glory, heard the music,—
We are wiser than we know."
—*Mackay.*

Cheerful-Giving! Ver. 1. 1. A missionary association having been formed at Huahine, in the South Seas, the native Christians were reminded that they must give "willingly with their hearts" One, however, brought a pig to the treasurer, Huatia, and throwing the animal down at his feet, said in angry tone, "Here is an offering for your society." Huatia calmly explained to the giver that such offerings were for GOD, not for any Society, and that "GOD loveth a cheerful giver." He then, to the chagrin of the native, added, "Take it back again, for God does not accept angry gifts." 2. In Tahiti, on a similar occasion, a person brought a quantity of cocoanut oil to King Pomare, exclaiming in a very bad spirit, "Here are five bamboos of oil; take them for your Missionary Society." The churlish giver was greatly surprised when Pomare pushed aside his offering with the rebuke, "I cannot mix your angry bamboos with GOD'S oil, so take them away." As Beecher says, There are some who give as a perennial fountain does, freely and without force, while there are others who resemble a well which requires much pumping.

"See the rivers flowing
Downward to the sea,
Pouring all their treasures
Bountiful and free." —*Procter.*

Church-Contributions! Vers. 2–8. A missionary rode one day into a ruined village seeking subscriptions to build a church in the neighbourhood. He called upon a Negro Christian, whom he found living with his wife and family and beneath the fallen roof of his hut, which the earthquake had recently shaken and shattered. On ascertaining the missionary's object the negro went back to the hut, and from amongst the confusion of overturned furniture brought ten dollars. Struck by this liberal gift, the servant of God remonstrated with the donor, but he promptly replied, "Sir, we must build up God's house before our own, and get into it, and then our prayers will bring down such a blessing as will soon set all right again."

"Give, give, be always giving!
Who gives not is not living.
The more you give,
The more you live." —*Anon.*

Free-Will Offerings! Ver. 3. 1. An Alpine missionary relates an interesting circumstance of the Christians at Vanvert, in regard to the scheme for erecting a sanctuary there. "Some," he says, "gave money in francs, some devoted portions of their wearing apparel, some, and these not a few, sacrificed their earrings and necklaces, some could give nothing but a cheese, or a sheep, they were so poor." 2. This has its parallel in Southern Africa, where, on one occasion, to build a church, the natives contributed oxen, cows, sheep, goats; also horns, skins, ostrich feathers, eggs, &c. Of them, St. Paul might say, "Their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality; for to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive their gift" (1 Cor. viii. 3). Then

"Give! as the morning that flows out of heaven;
Give! as the waves when their channel is riven;
Give! as the free air and sunshine are given;
Lavishly, utterly, joyfully give."

Israels'-Gifts! Vers. 4–7. 1. Bush remarks that the hair of the Eastern goats, particularly that of the Angola species, is of the most delicate and silky softness, and wrought into the kind of cloth known by the name of camlets. 2. Thomson relates that the vast flocks which annually come from Armenia and Northern Syria are nearly all males, and that the leather, therefore, is literally rams' skins dyed red. 3. Macmillan says that the spices here were to perfume the oil. It was composed of two parts of myrrh, two parts of cassia, one part cinnamon, and one part sweet calamus, with a sufficient quantity of the purest olive oil to give it the proper consistency. 4. Spices were also used in making the incense; and, according to rabbinical tradition, a priest or Levite, one of the fifteen prefects of the temple, was retained, whose special duty it was to prepare this precious compound. So precious and holy was this "sweet incense" considered, that it was forbidden to make a

similar perfume for private use on pain of death.

"Man is the world's high priest; he doth present
The sacrifice for all; while they below
Unto the service mutter an assent,
Such as springs use at fall, and winds that blow." —*Herbert.*

Ark-Speech! Vers. 10–17. God gives pre-eminence to the ark; as the heart and core of all religion. 1. It tells us in language clear and emphatic that Christ should fill up the foreground of each thought and word of ours, that no reserve, no unworthy veil should obscure the brightness of His smile, and that no man should hide Him in the rear. 2. It also tells us that underneath the seeming barrenness of the Mosaic tabernacle details lie hidden many precious truths—hidden for man to search for—hidden, that when sought and found, man may taste the sweetness of discovery and possession. We, therefore, should not forget that

"The roots of fairest bloom lie sometime hidden
The deepest underneath the soil; that stones
Of purest crystal are from gloomiest mines." —*Bickersteth.*

Shittim-Wood! Ver. 10. Dr. Shaw says that the acacia, being by far the largest and most common tree of these deserts, there is good reason to conjecture that the shittim-wood, of which the several utensils of the tabernacle were made, was that of the acacia. The tree abounds with flowers of a globular shape, and of an excellent smell; which is another proof of its being the Scripture *shitta* tree. The name is derived from the Hebrew verb *shata*, because the sharpness of its spines made animals decline or turn aside. This plant is so hard and solid as to become almost incorruptible. In the prophecies of Isaiah, it is joined with the myrtle and other sweet smelling plants.

"The cedar waved its arms of peaceful shade,
The vine embraced the elm, and myrtles flower'd
Among the fragrant orange groves."

Ark-Symbolism! Ver. 10. St. John tells us that with enraptured eye, he beheld the Temple of God opened in heaven, and saw therein the ark of God's testament (xi. 19). The veil had been rent at Christ's death; therefore its snowy surface, with richly inwrought cherubic figures of scarlet and gold, no longer concealed the holiest of all from view. The covenant-ark is visible. John gazes on this familiar symbol so often and so long associated with the fortunes and the history of the Hebrew people, the palladium of their liberties, the rallying-point in every hour of disaster. It had now, however, a deeper significance as the type of the great Propitiatory—the true ark of testimony. In the glories of His Divine Person, says Macduff, and in the fulness of His mediatorial work, Jesus is set in the heavenly temple, the pledge and guarantee of eternal safety and peace to the Church purchased with His blood. I thank thee

"For countless mercies from Thy hand, my God,
Which never cease;
For each sprinkling of that cleansing blood
Which speaketh peace."
—*E. C. C. B.*

Ark of Testimony! Ver. 11. It is God's will that His Son should be set forth without a cloud, in full-orbed splendour. Hence, He first shows that which shows Him most clearly. 1. It was for the ark that the Holy Tent was reared—that the holiest place was set apart. As the richest jewel in the sacred casket, as the topstone of the hallowed pile, is the Covenant-Ark given precedence. 2. It exhibits Christ in its substance of wood and gold—as the ark of redemption—as very man, and spotless man, conjoined with perfect Deity. 3. It testifies to the kingship of Christ in the crown that surrounds its summit; for He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. xix. 16). 4. It speaks of Christ abiding as the inmate of the faithful heart, but passing on if not heeded; for the staves might not be taken out.

"Jesus, Master! I am Thine;
Keep me faithful, keep me near;
Let Thy presence in me shine,
All my homeward way to cheer.
Jesus! at Thy feet I fall—
Oh, be Thou my ALL IN ALL."

Mercy-Seat! Vers. 17–23. 1. A lid is placed above the Ark for the purpose of hiding the Law from every eye. The requirements of the Law are very long and wide, their breadth embracing the whole of each man's life. But Christ covers the vast dimensions of the requiring and condemning code; for an exact covering conceals all claims. 2. A lid of solid gold is made, because mercy has no birthplace but in heaven. And what is mercy but Christ in His finished work? He is, says Law, the mirror of God's loving heart—the pinnacle of tender grace. He is the mountain towering above mountains, in which every grain is God's goodness.

"While reason, like a Levite, waits
Where priest and people meet,
Faith, by a 'new and living way,'
Hath gained the Mercy-Seat."

Mercy-Model! Ver. 17. Our Lord said, "Be ye merciful, as your Father also in heaven is merciful." 1. Sterne says somewhat strongly that while we may *imitate* the Deity in all His attributes, mercy is the only one in which we can pretend to *equal* Him. We cannot, indeed, give like God; but surely we may forgive like Him. 2. Richter says, When thou showest mercy, the man who has pierced thy heart stands to thee in the rela-

tion of the sea-worm that perforates the shell of the oyster, which straightway closes the wound with a shining, precious pearl.

"The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."—*Shakespeare.*

Cherubims! Ver. 18. The form of the cherubim used in the tabernacle is uncertain. From the other descriptions of these symbolic figures in Scripture, we perceive that while the same type was adhered to, the details of the form varied. 1. Fairbairn considers them to have symbolised the fulness of life, *i.e.*, life most nearly and essentially connected with God-life, as it is or shall be held by those who dwell in His immediate presence—pre-eminently, therefore, spiritual and holy life. 2. Brown is of opinion that these cherubim represent the redeemed themselves, preoccupied in the holy and delightful exercise of meditation upon the mysteries of grace—the same beings as were inwrought upon the Cherubic Veil. 3. Law says that, being of the same material as the Mercy-Seat, and indeed of one piece, they teach that the heirs of life have no dependence but on Christ; that they are one with Him, partakers of the Divine nature; and that their expanded wings indicate the devoted and ever-ready zeal of believers to serve God. 4. A reference to these has been found in Cant. vi. 12: "The chariots of My willing people." During the Gospel and Millennial, and even in the Eternal, ages, Christ will be borne abroad—

"Himself the Bridegroom on the right of power,
Where in the heaven of heavens He sate embosom'd,
All in His Glorious Majesty, and deign'd
Ascend the chariot of Omnipotence,
Borne onward by cherubic shapes."

Mercy-Mirror! Ver. 21. Trapp quaintly says that in the heaven-bow there are many wonders. Amongst these are its beautiful shape and various colours. It also has two contrary significations; fair weather and foul. It is a monument of God's justice in drowning, and of God's mercy in delivering the world. The Jews have an odd conceit, that the name JEHOVAH is written on it. Whenever, therefore, they behold its lovely arch they hide their eyes, confess their sins, and adore the Divine Mercy. But the rainbow is not visible after nightfall. Mercy is like it; we must never look for it when night has gathered. It shines not in the other world. If we refuse mercy here, says Le Bas, we shall not find it spanning the dark vault of death and hell. Mercy's bow is only visible NOW, Justice—

"Doth bend itself into a hollow shroud,
On which, when MERCY doth but cast her face,
A thousand colours do the Bow enchase."
—*Fletcher.*

Throne of Grace! Ver. 22. Ballow says that between the humble and contrite heart and the Majesty of heaven there are no barriers. The only password is Prayer. 1. It is, however, a blood-besprinkled mercy-seat before which the soul prostrates itself in supplication. There God is present to hear, answer, and bless. There He will open all His heart, and deal, as friend with friend, in all the freeness of familiar love. 2. The Mosaic throne of grace has disappeared. But Christ ever lives. In Him the Throne of Grace cannot be moved. Essential blessings have eternal life; and he who passes often to it through the parted veil, will return laden with blessings—rich in grace—refreshed with heavenly converse and meet for a heavenly home.

"How dreary and how lonely
This changeful life would be,
Without the sweet communion,
The secret rest with Thee!"

Table of Shewbread! Ver. 23. 1. A carved representation of this is visible on the famous Arch of Titus. In height it was to be co-equal with the ark, whilst the measure of its length and breadth were to be less. The substance also was identical; the inner frame being incorruptible acacia wood, the outer case shining in the chaste splendour of pure gold. 2. The rings mentioned in verse 22 were not found in the table which was afterwards made for the Temple, nor indeed in any of the sacred furniture where they had previously been, except in the Ark of the Covenant. These rings were for the insertion of the staves to carry it from place to place during the wilderness wanderings. 3. Many see in this table a type of the Divine-human nature of Christ. He is the one full table which is ever full. And as the thought and plan of the shewbread table were wholly from above, and of no human pattern or design, so Christ is the offspring of full grace, and comes forth from God.

"I would rejoice for all that Thou hast given in Christ to Me,—
For grace, and peace, and gladdening hope of heaven,
Not bought, but FREE."

Shewbread! Ver. 30. 1. Literally it means "bread of faces," or "bread of presence," from being always set before the face and presence of God. This bread was composed of twelve unleavened loaves, which were sprinkled over with frankincense, and, it is stated in the Alexandria version, with salt likewise. Jahn says that they were placed in two piles, one above another, and were changed every Sunday by the priests. 2. Law says that faith knows this emblem well, having often sat at the feet of Jesus with rapture, and heard Him say, "I am the Bread of Life." The numbered bread is a clear picture of the numbered Church, whose members sit together with Christ in heavenly places, on whom rests the constant fragrance of His infinite merits.

The ministers of Christ every Sunday place Christ before their flocks,—ever the same, yet ever new. 3. Gray sees in this presence-bread the tribute of Christian hearts; the outflow of our gratitude. As flowers carry dewdrops, trembling on the edges of the petals, and ready to fall at the first waft of wind, or brush of bird, so the heart should carry its beaded words of thanksgiving, and at the first breath of heavenly flavour let down the shower, perfumed with the heart's gratitude.

"Angels, help us to adore Him,
To behold Him face to face;
Sun and moon bow down before Him,
Dwellers all in time and space,
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise with us the GOD OF GRACE."
—*Lyte.*

Candlestick! Ver. 31. 1. Macduff says that this unquestionably denotes the Church of Christ, just as do the golden candlesticks in Rev. i. There, we are taken back to the sacred furniture—to the one candlestick with its branches or lamps. We are also reminded of the similar beautiful and suggestive vision of the prophet Zechariah, when he saw the candlestick all of gold, with its seven lamps, fed from the upper reservoir of holy olive oil, in chap. iv. 2. The priest attending to its lamps symbolises Jesus, the great High Priest. In Rev. i. He is represented as moving in their midst, their common bond of union. It is no longer one planet, but a system, of which He is the glorious sun and centre. The light of the world is Christ. No candlestick, no Church shines of itself; from Him its light emanates.

"Come nearer, Sun of Righteousness! that we,
Whose swift short hours of day so swiftly run,
So overflowed with love and light, may be
So lost in glory of the nearing Sun,
That not our light, but Thine, the world may see,
New praise to Thee through our poor lives be won."—*Havergal.*

Candlestick-Branches! Ver. 32. (1.) Elliot says that the seven branches were removable from the central chandelier; perhaps to typify how, under the Gospel Dispensation, the Church would lose the form of visible unity that it had possessed under the Jewish, and be scattered in its different branches over the world. (2.) Law, on the other hand, says that Christ is the seven-lamped candlestick, and that the holy place wherein it shone, symbolises that heavenly home in which Christ is the full light. "The Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23). The branches shine as clustered trees of fruit and flowers, to indicate the exquisite loveliness and surpassing fruitfulness of Christ. (3.) Trench says that the Jewish tabernacle lamp was symbolic of the Church of God in its relation to the kingdom and economy of Israel. That ancient Church for ages stood alone in the earth as the Divine "lightgiver." But no sooner did the Jewish Dispensation cease, than the tabernacle lamp-branches were separated into lamps, to signify the essential unity, though external diversity of the Church.

"And so the Church of Jesus Christ,
The blessed Banyan of our God,
Fast rooted upon Zion's mount,
Has sent its sheltering arms abroad;
And every branch that from it springs,
In sacred beauty spreading wide
As low it bends to bless the earth,
Still plants another by its side."
—*Anon.*

Candlestick-Beam! Ver. 37. (1.) The sevenfold branches support sevenfold lamps. Each summit is a coronet of fire. Little would be the profit of the costly frame unless light sparkled from it. But its special purpose is to burn—to lighten the darkness that otherwise would shroud the holy place of the Church. And the mystic number, as well as the constant blaze, speak to the Church that her "light should ever shine a perfect light." (2.) The ancient insignia of the Waldensian Church was a candlestick, with a light shedding its rays across the surrounding darkness, and encircled with seven stars and the motto, "*Lux lucet in tenebris.* As the light of Christ shines in the darkness of the Church, so the Church thus enlightened shines in the darkness of the world. "Ye are the light of the world." (3.) Every believer shines in a world lying in darkness; therefore he should guard and tend his light, not only to lead himself, but all whom he can influence from the outer darkness of the world to the marvellous light of heaven. "If the light in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" It is a total eclipse within and without—a blackness of darkness for ever.

"He that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon."—*Milton.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. Of cunning work**] = Mââsey CHOSHEB represents workmanship of a more skilful and costly kind, such as was used in the inworking of the figures of the cherubim upon the inner covering of the roof of the tabernacle, the vail before the Holy of Holies, and upon the ephod and the breast-plate of the High priest. Another peculiarity of this covering

of this cunning work was, that its texture exhibited figures on *both* sides, while the *needle-work* = mââsey *rokem*—was without figures of the cherubim, and exhibited the pattern only on one side. The workmanship of the former, *maasey chosheb* = *cunning work*, being employed for decorations of the interior of the tabernacle only, may be taken as symbolising the presence of God in the tabernacle.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1–15.

THE CURTAINS OF THE TABERNACLE.

In its highest meaning the Tabernacle is the symbol of Christ, in whom God is revealed to His people. What practical truths, then, do these curtains suggest?

I. That the glory of God is hidden to all who stand outside Jesus Christ. These elaborate curtains were to veil the sacred furniture and services of the sanctuary from the vulgar or profane eye. Only such as entered the Tabernacle saw the glory; those who remained outside knew it not. God is only known in Christ. The people of Israel were face to face with nature; as they gazed on the pillar of fire and cloud, they were face to face with Providence; but it was only as they penetrated the Tabernacle that they felt themselves in the peculiar presence of God. The lights of the candlestick, the table of shewbread, the ark speaking of reconciling truth, the mercy-seat and the glory which lighted it, declaring the love and friendship of God,—all these were hidden from the careless and unbelieving outside the Tabernacle. The truth for us is, that the knowledge of God, the righteousness of God, the love of God, the beauty of God, are hidden from all who stand outside Christ. The bright stars are clouds which God has spread on His throne; the heavens He has spread out as a curtain; the course of history is full of mysteries, that is to say, God hides Himself in darkness; the nature of man is a darkened glass, through which filter perplexing gleams of the great Creator. "The world by wisdom knew not God." In the ancient world man felt that God had hidden Himself in nature and the world's government, and in the modern world all who reject Christ find the curtains between man and God, heaven and earth, denser than the ancients found them to be. There were many curtains; the curtains were closely linked to each other; they were fastened to the pillars by nails; there was curtain behind curtain. There was no possibility of any of the interior glories being witnessed by any outside the tent. Man cannot surprise God and penetrate His secrets.

II. That in Christ the glory of God is most brightly revealed. The innermost curtains were very beautiful. "Of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet," and the cherubim worked in with golden thread. These curtains were hooked with golden hooks. Then came the second curtains, of goats' hair, hooked with brass. Then the outermost curtains, of rams' skins and badgers' skins. 1. There is such a thing as regarding Christ from the outside; and then, as the Jews, we see no beauty in Him. 2. There is such a thing as knowing Christ as a great Teacher, a great Example; "the goats' hair curtains hooked with brass." 3. But it is only when we believe in Christ as the Son of God, and rest in Him as such, that we behold the fulness of His glory. "The colours are the symbols of the different names of God; *blue* signifies the special revelation of God, being the colour of heaven and ether; *red* denotes the highest dignity, majesty, and royal power; *crimson* is that which fire and blood have in common, and symbolises, therefore, life in its full extent."—*Kalisch.* In Christ, the love, the life, the beauty, the majesty of God are most brightly expressed. The Tabernacle was a very different place seen from the outside, with its badgers' skins, and seen within, where the richly-coloured curtains shone with their

golden broideries; and it is only when we are "in" Christ that we behold the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Let us penetrate to the heart of the Gospel; let us go beyond the curtains of goats' hair, and of rams' skins, and badgers' skins—the letter and circumstance of Christianity—to gaze with open face on the glory of the spiritual and redeeming Jesus.

III. That in Christ is everlasting security and blessedness. These are sheltering curtains—*safety* within the tent of the King. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His Tabernacle shall He hide me." And everlasting *blessedness:* "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying," &c. (Rev. xxi. 3, 4). Here we are secure beyond all the tempests of life or death.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

The curtains on which we have been dwelling were covered with other "curtains of goats' hair," vers. 7–14. Their beauty was hidden from those without by that which bespoke roughness and severity. This latter did not meet the view of those within. To all who were privileged to enter the hallowed enclosure nothing was visible save "the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and fine twined linen," the varied yet combined exhibition of the virtues and excellencies of that divine Tabernacle in which God dwelt within the vail—that is, of Christ, through whose flesh, the antitype of all these, the beams of the divine nature shone so delicately, that the sinner could behold without being overwhelmed by their dazzling brightness.

As the Lord Jesus passed along this earth, how few really knew Him! How few had eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve to penetrate and appreciate the deep mystery of His character! How few saw "the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and fine twined linen!" It was only when faith brought man into His presence that He ever allowed the brightness of what He was to shine forth—ever allowed the glory to break through the cloud. To nature's eye there would seem to have been a reserve and a severity about Him which were aptly prefigured by the "covering of goats' hair." All this was the result of His profound separation and estrangement, not from sinners personally, but from the thoughts and maxims of men.

—*C. H. M.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15–30.

THE BOARDS AND BARS OF THE TABERNACLE.

Christ is the true Tabernacle, the ground of the world's reconciliation, and refuge, and hope. What living truths are suggested to us by this passage concerning the Saviour and His great salvation?

I. That invincible strength underlies the apparent weakness of the Gospel. When we regard the vails and curtains of the Tabernacle, we might think it a frail structure to be swept away by the winds; but under these draperies are solid boards fixed in solid sockets, and strong bars, giving to the whole framework of the building the greatest consistency and compactness. In the days of His flesh how weak Christ appeared, and yet what power dwelt in His word and spirit! "He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God." How contemptible the Gospel in the eyes of worldly wisdom, and

yet how powerful and invincible! How feeble the Church of Christ often appears, and yet the mightiest storms of persecution have failed to sweep it away! We learn—

II That the Gospel, despite all its natural and human aspects, has a Divine character and basis. "The tenons were not fixed directly in the ground;" for the *habitation* of God should have no connection with earth; but they are fitted into sockets; and these are inserted in the ground, so that one socket always corresponded with one tenon."—*Kalisch.* Christ is not of the earth: before He ascended into heaven, He first descended. The whole scheme of salvation is a Divine and supernatural work. This Tabernacle "descended out of heaven from God." Our faith rests in the power of God. The sockets of silver supporting the Tabernacle, and disconnecting it from the earth, symbolises the great truth that the Church of Jesus rests, not on human wisdom, or strength, or love, but, whilst it touches earth, it belongs altogether to heaven. The solid silver, and not the shifting sand, reminds us that faith in Christ rests on a Divine and firm foundation, and not on the yielding opinions of men, and the changing fashions of the world.

III. That out of the strength of Christ spring the highest glory and joy. "And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold," ver. 29. The salvation of Christ is not a bare salvation, but it brings with it also beauty of character, joy of heart, and a hope full of glory. Let the world know their mistake in attempting to realize beauty and blessedness without the strength of God—the strength of righteousness. It cannot be. Beauty of life and joy of heart can never be real and lasting if not based on the immortal love and strength of God. "Strength and beauty are in the sanctuary." And let the Church seek to realize its full privilege in Christ. In character, we are often satisfied with the bare boards of mere honesty and uprightness; in experience, we are content with the boards and bars, a mere sense of safety: in hope, we rest content with the bare expectation of pulling through in the judgment. The gilded boards of the Tabernacle are eloquent illustrations of the New Testament doctrine, that in Christ we must rise to beauty, to brightness, to bliss.

IV. That Christ is an everlasting dwelling-place to His people. The Tabernacle was built of boards of acacia-wood. The wood of the acacia is so durable, that it is said even not to rot in water. The strength of Christ is everlasting. "We are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible; by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

Let us hide in Christ, forsaking all refuges of lies.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 31–37.

THE TABERNACLE VAILS.

What does this vail between the Tabernacle and the court, and this vail which divides the Holy Place from the Holiest Place, signify? and what relation have they to Christianity?

1. They signify that the highest vision and fellowship of God are as yet denied to man. Whilst the Tabernacle was standing, these vails signified the distance of God from man,—His inaccessibility. God withdrew Himself behind impenetrable vails. This is the teaching of the Apostle: "Into the second Tabernacle went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which He offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while

as the first Tabernacle was not standing: which was a figure for the time then present" (Heb. ix. 7–9). God's presence is fenced about from sinful man. Because of our sin Paradise is closed to us: because of our sin God has hid His face from us. There are *two* vails, and Jewish authorities say that the vail between the Holy and the Holy of Holies was four fingers thick, to prevent any person penetrating with his eyes into the Holiest. Does not this powerfully remind us how the holy God has hidden Himself from unholy man?

II. Whilst these vails remove God from the approach of man, they give the promise of a fuller revelation. Look at the hanging for the door of the tent: "Blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework," ver. 36. Here, at the threshold of the Tabernacle, the bright colours of the vail are full of promise. The God of mercy, and love, and life shines through the obscuration. The cloud that God has spread on His throne has a rainbow in it: the curtains by which God hides Himself from man are burnished with colours of hope. And then, as you draw near to the Holiest, the vail is still more glorious. In addition to the rich colours of the vail of the door, the vail of the Holy of Holies has cherubim made upon it, and other associations of brightness and beauty. The vail that God has drawn about Himself is not of forbidding, hopeless blackness; but it promises whilst it prevents, it allures whilst it forbids. Is there not something of this in nature? Whilst the creation is a dense curtain to hide God, does not the beauty of the curtain declare the grace of Him who is behind it, and give us the promise of some day knowing Him better? The Jewish dispensation is full of the same idea—the golden thread, the rainbow colours, give the promise of a fuller vision, a richer fellowship when the fulness of time shall come.

III. That these vails are taken away in Christ. "And the vail of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mark xv. 38). The rent was complete. See Heb. ix. 11, 12. In Christ we stand "within the vail." In Him we realize the presence and joy of God. In Him we realize highest fellowship with God. "There I will meet with thee, and commune with thee." In Him we realize the everlasting vision and felicity of God. Sin wove the vail between us and the heaven above us, but in Christ's atonement and priesthood that vail is taken away. If there are any vails now, they are upon our heart.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Blue.—If the gold was a type of the glory, majesty, and eternity of the Son of God, blue will fitly represent the grace and love He manifested as declaring the character of God. "God is love." So inseparably and exclusively is this blessed attribute descriptive of Him, that He affirms it to be His very nature. It is not of earth. As the blue vault of heaven, with its vast dimensions, defies our puny measurements, so the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ passeth knowledge. The thunders of God's wrath and holy indignation against sin may for a time seem to obscure His love. But "His anger endureth but a moment." Judgment is "His strange work," for "He delighteth in mercy."—*H. S. Soltau.*

The Scarlet.—As blue is peculiarly the colour of the heavens, so scarlet is the gorgeous colour belonging to earth. The flowers, the produce of the soil, display its brilliant tints. We do not look above to find it: but it meets our eye when we contemplate the flowers of the field. The Word of God also employs this colour as an emblem of royalty. The beast, and the woman in the Revelation, are both represented as scarlet. Not that the scarlet of itself denotes evil; but because the kingdoms of the world were held under their regal sway. And, when the Lord Jesus was, in mockery,

hailed as king, the soldiers of imperial Rome clothed Him with a scarlet robe. (Matt. xxvii. 28).—*Ibid.*

Purple.—If we were to place the blue and the scarlet side by side, without the intervention of some other colour, the eye would be offended with the violent contrast; for, though each is beautiful in itself, and suitable to its own sphere, yet there is such a distinction—we might almost say opposition—in their hues, as to render them inharmonious if seen in immediate contact. The purple interposed, remedies this unpleasing effect: the eye passes with ease from the blue to the scarlet, and *vice versa*, by the aid of this blended colour, the purple. The blue gradually shades off into its opposite, the scarlet, and the gorgeousness of the latter is softened by imperceptible degrees into the blue. The purple is a new colour, formed by mingling the two: it owes its peculiar beauty alike to both: and were the due proportion of either absent, its especial character would be lost.

The order of the colours, blue, purple, scarlet, repeated at least twenty-four times in Exodus, is never varied. The scarlet and the blue are never placed in juxta-position throughout the fabrics of the Tabernacle. Does not this intimate a truth of an important character? Would the Spirit of God have so constantly adhered to this arrangement had there not been some significant reason for it? Are we not hereby taught a very precious fact respecting the Lord Jesus? He is God and Man: and we can trace in the Gospels all the fulness of the Godhead, as well as the dignity and sympathy of the perfect Man. But, besides this, in His thoughts, feelings, words, ways, and actions, there is an invariable blending of the two. Many mistakes and errors would have been avoided in the Church of God, if those, who have undertaken to write or speak on this subject, had been subject to the definite words of Scripture, instead of adopting abstract reasonings upon the divinity and humanity of the Son of God. The Christ of God is the object of our faith; not a nature, or natures, but Himself.—*Ibid.*

The linen composing the mystic vail was required to be fine; pure and faultless as the material could be produced: indicating that although Messiah should be found in fashion as a man, He should be clearly exempt from the merest stain of defilement through contact with humanity. What a dignified and courageous appeal was that of Christ to His enemies and accusers! "Which of you," said He, "convinceth Me of sin?" (John viii. 46); and how altogether extenuating was the testimony of the Judge at whose bar envy and maliciousness had arraigned the Son of Man as a malefactor and a criminal—"I find in Him," said Pilate, "no fault at all" (John xviii. 38). Even Satan found nothing in Him wherewith to work the commission of the smallest inconsistency in the character of Jesus.—*Mudge.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVI.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Tabernacle-Thoughts! Vers. 1–30. 1. Rosenmuller says that the portable temple of the Israelites had in its whole arrangement a resemblance with the temples of antiquity. Lachemacher states that in many of the Grecian temples the back part was not to be entered by anybody; and here the statue of the deity was placed. Spencer shows that in the Egyptian temples the inner or sacred part was shrouded in darkness, and divided from the front or outer portion by a curtain embroidered with gold. 2. Law sees in the Tabernacle a type of Christ—a sketch of that fair frame of Christ, which God the Holy Spirit wrought and planted in this earth. He is the true Tabernacle of Heb. viii. 2, the greater and more perfect Tabernacle of Heb. ix. 11. It points to a mystic fabric which human hands produce not—which human skill erects not—which human imperfection taints

not. Christ is discerned, the end and excellence of the predictive house. 3. Macmillan suggests that it is an emblem of man indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Man's body is a tabernacle sojourning in the wilderness of the world. In his constitution God has wrought out in higher form the great truths which were symbolised in the Jewish tabernacle. But what constituted its glory? The Shekinah—the token and symbol of God's Presence. Without this, its golden furniture and priceless jewels were meaningless, as our world without the shining of the sun. So what constitutes the glory of man is Christ dwelling in the heart.

"As some rare perfume in a vase of clay
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own,
So when Thou dwellest in a mortal soul,
All heaven's own sweetness seems around it thrown." —*Stowe.*

Divine Æstheticism! Vers. 1–37. (1.) Henry Martyn wrote, "Since I have known God in a saving manner, painting, poetry, and music have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose is a taste for them; or Religion has refined my mind and made it susceptible of impressions from the sublime and beautiful. Oh, how Religion secures the heightened enjoyment of those pleasures which keep so many from God by their becoming a source of pride!" (2.) Winslow says that to the new creature in Christ Jesus even the world of nature seems as a newborn creation, now that he has passed from death unto life. The sun shines brighter—the air breathes softer—the flowers smell sweeter—the landscape is clad with deeper verdure and richer loveliness. In a word, the whole creation appears in newborn beauty and sublimity. (3.) Even so Christ is not seen to be full of loveliness outside. Once in Him, the soul perceives His exquisite beauty; "My Beloved is fair and ruddy, the chiefest amongst ten thousand; yea, He is altogether lovely." Once, he could perceive no beauty in Him that He should desire Him; now he exclaims, "Thou art all my salvation, and all my desire!"

"All over glorious is my Lord,
Must be beloved, and yet ador'd;
His worth if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole earth would love Him too." —*Erskine.*

Fair Colours! Ver. 6. They shall make the ephod of gold, blue, and purple. "Thou shalt make the breastplate of gold, blue, and purple." Taches of gold were inserted into loops of blue, connecting together the curtains of the tabernacle. Laces of blue, passing through rings of gold, fastened the ephod to the breastplate; and a lace of blue bound the golden plate to the mitre of the high priest. The golden vessels of the sanctuary—with the exception of the ark—were all covered with a cloth of blue. A veil of blue separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies. Every Israelite wore a fringe of blue ribbon to his garments to remind him of the commandments of the Lord. These the Pharisees afterwards enlarged in order that men might praise their scrupulous adherence to the letter of the law. Jesus Himself carried this blue hem to His raiment; and from it, on one memorable occasion, the touch of faith drew out healing virtue.

"There's nothing blue, above, below,
From flowers that bloom to stars that glow,
But in its hue my faith can see
Some feature of Thy SYMPATHY."—*Moore.*

Tabernacle-Unity! Ver. 6. 1. It was necessary that the tabernacle should consist of many parts, on account of its (1) Movable and (2) Mystical character. Yet though of many parts, particular emphasis is laid on its essential unity: "It shall be *one* tabernacle." It does not mean that only one tabernacle was to be erected to His name. The oneness spoken of here is not singleness—*not uniqueness*—but UNITY. 2. If, as some say, the tabernacle is a type of the Church of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, we see the importance of this typical unity. Jews and Gentiles—Barbarians and Scythians—Britons and Red Indians—Germans and Japanese, are all different nationalities, and the Christian converts form themselves into different churches; but all are parts of one whole, and are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Ephes. ii. 22).

"Like a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet a union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;
So, with two seeing bodies, but ONE HEART." —*Shakespeare.*

Curtain-Weaving! Vers. 7–14. According to the Greek idea, the ancient art of weaving curtains was gathered from the web of the spider. The mythologies of the ancients relate how the goddess Minerva changed Arachne into a spider, because she surpassed the goddess in weaving; and hence we have a spider-species called "Arachnida." So far as can be traced, weaving first assumed the form of matting—*i.e.*, simple interlacings of shreds of bark, lacustrine plants, vegetable stalks, &c. By and by, skill employed fibres, such as flax, hemp, and silk. These were in turn supplemented by the introduction of wool and hair, if we credit Homer. These wools were dyed all colours, as here described by Moses. Homer, to whom we have already referred, narrates how Alcandria, the Queen of Egypt, presented Helen, the consort of Menelaus, with such gifts on their return from the siege of Troy:—

"And that rich vase, with living sculpture wrought,
Which, *heap'd with wool*, the beauteous Phyle brought;
The silken fleece, *empurpled for the loom*,
Rivall'd the hyacinth in vernal bloom."
—Homer's *Odyssey.*

Curtain-Coupling! Vers. 3–11. (1.) The tabernacle had two divisions, called respectively the holy place and the Holy of Holies, the one being separated from the other by a very thick veil. But the utmost care is taken to couple the curtains and tenons and taches. Under one covering, overshadowed by the same cloud, and filled by the same glory, were these *two* compartments, until the veil that separated them was rent (Matt. xxvii. 51). (2.) This curtain-coupling signifies the essential oneness of the Hebrew and Christian Churches. The Great High Priest Himself declared that the saints of the Old Testament dispensation desired to penetrate the veil which concealed from them the mysteries within. Yet were they one, coupled together by the mystic bonds of faith and hope and love; and when the veil was rent, the new compartments of Hebrew and Christian became one in Christ Jesus. (3.) In Hebrews ix. St. Paul says further that the outer room typified not only the Hebrew but the Visible Church, the "world-sanctuary," and that the inner room was a peculiar type of heaven, whither the Forerunner hath for us entered; and if so, the twice-repeated caution to couple the curtains, taches, &c., plainly indicates the essential unity of the Church Militant and Church Triumphant. Over both is the covering of God's omnipresence. Over both is the banner of His love waving. Between them and us hangs the veil, but each Christian has his turn to pass within. And as at His first advent the veil was rent, so in His second advent will the other veil be riven.

"One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."
—*Wesley.*

Woods and Forests! Vers. 15–30. (1.) Whence did Israel obtain the wood, as trees are now small and scarce? The wilderness was not always without forests. No doubt the *sepal*, the tree which now sparsely occurs, grew in extensive woods. These were being cut down at the time of the Exodus, in order to serve as fuel in the ancient smelting works, many of which were found by Holland among the Sinaitic mountains. These vast mines could not be worked when the supplies of fuel in the shape of the acacia forests ceased; but recently Captain Burton has resumed their workings, by way of experiment, in behalf of the Khedive of Egypt. He has brought specimens of the metallic ores, as enumerated in this chapter. (2.) This denudation of the Arabian Peninsula would seriously alter the state of the country, as all who know the service of trees in the economy of nature can realise. Greece and Italy have changed for the worse since their forests were cut down, and no doubt at the time of the Exodus, when timber covered the sides of the hills, streams washed the dry ravines, rains attracted by the foliage carpeted the soil, affording no inconsiderable sustenance for cattle.

"There, interspersed in meads and opening glades,
These trees arise and shun each other's shades;
There in full light the verdant plains extend,
And, wrapt in cloud, the granite hills ascend;
E'en the wild heath displays its purple dyes,
And 'midst the desert grassy meads arise."
—*Pope.*

Tabernacle-Base! Ver. 15. The tabernacle in the wilderness had no foundation. It was pitched in the bare and sterile desert. Its floor was the shifting yellow sand. No marble pavement or cedar hoarding separated the golden furniture and the costly curtains from the naked ground. Barefooted priests in splendid vestments paced over the earth in the discharge of their sacred functions. But it is not so with the spiritual temple. There is no combination in it of beauty and barrenness — preciousness and worthlessness — imperishableness and changeableness—glory and vanity. It is all fair, all glorious. It is built upon solid and enduring bases—the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.

"Ah! why on sands like these thy temple rear?
How shall its base the storms and billows shun!
Build on the Eternal Rock of sapphire clear."

Art-Studies! Ver. 19–25. Lytton says that art is the effort of man to express the ideas which nature suggests to him of a power above nature. Hillard says that many persons feel art, some understand it, but few both feel and understand it. Emerson says that the study of art is of high value to the growth of the intellect; in other words, that the refining influence is the study of art. Cousin says that art neither belongs to religion nor ethics; but that, like these, it brings us nearer to the Infinite. Hazlitt says that art must anchor in nature, or it is the sport of every breath of folly. Victor says that the basis of true beauty is moral, which, however, is veiled in nature; and that it is the province of art to bring out this moral beauty, and to give it more transparent forms.

"Happy who walks with Him, whom what he finds
Of flavour, or of scent in fruit or flower,
Or what he views of beautiful and grand
In nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a PRESENT GOD."
—*Cowper.*

Tabernacle-Materials! Ver. 19–25. (1.) Some suggest that the golden ornaments and vessels, the silver sockets and brazen utensils, and the jewels on the high priest's breastplate,

represented the mineral kingdom. *Law* remarks that the gold typifies the transcendent blaze of Deity in Christ, the silver the ransome-price paid for the redemption of souls, and the brass the enduring strength of the God-man. (2.) It is further noticed that the boards of shittimwood or acacia, the table of shewbread, the linen wrappings, and the ornamentation of the furniture, represent the vegetable kingdom. *Law* says that the wood symbolised the spotless purity of Christ's manhood, the white linen the holy life, and the furniture the various adornments of redemption's scheme. (3.) The coverings of badgers' and goats' skins, and the crimson colours of its curtains, procured from the juice of a shellfish or an insect, thus represent the animal kingdom. *Law* suggests that the coverings indicate the meek and lowly guise in which Christ lived on earth; and the crimson colours the stream of precious blood that flowed when the sword of divine justice pierced the side of Christ.

"Thou usest all Thy works,
The meanest things that be;
Each has a service of its own,
For all things wait on Thee."
—*Bonar.*

Beauty's Ministry! Ver. 30. (1.) Mrs. Stowe says that the human heart yearns for the beautiful. The beautiful things which God makes are free to all ranks in life. A love of the beautiful is implanted in every one; but it rusts out and dies, either because they are too hard pressed with the cares of life, or because they are too much engrossed with the pleasures of sin, to cultivate it. He who implanted the yearning has given ample opportunity for its lawful gratification. (2.) The old parchments, with their beautiful thoughts, were marred by minds of a subsequent generation covering them over with puerile representations; but science has enabled man to destroy or erase this obliteration, and so to restore the original writings. The cares of life and the pleasures of sin obscure the taste for the Beautiful; but Divine Grace removes this defect, and disposes the renewed mind to appreciate the Ministry of Beauty. (3.) A gifted writer says that Beauty was the angel of deliverance that led him out of darkness into light. "My nature was a seething caldron of ungoverned passions; but I loved nature. The beauty of twilight—the sweet influence of a summer night—the purity and freshness of early morning—would soften my most wayward mood." Alas! all this "light" was not the light of life. Beauty cannot lead the soul into that light. As the priest within the holy place could not see its Ministry of Beauty without the aid of the oil, type of the Holy Spirit, and as the high priest could not when within the Holiest perceive its glories without the Shekinah—light; so the soul cannot enjoy the beauties of religion without the spirit and presence of Christ. Spirit of Beauty,

"What is thy worship but a vain pretence,
If they who tend thine altars, gathering thence
No strength, no purity, may still remain
Selfish and dark, and from life's sordid storm
Find in their ministrations no defence?"
—*Trench.*

Vail! Ver. 31. The veil of the holiest was Broidered—Beautified and Borne up. (1.) *Blue!* Brown thinks the blue was emblematic of God's mercy, while Tanner regards it as representing heaven, and therefore typically imparting that revelation of heavenly things which Christ alone can give us. (2.) *Purple!* Some say that this symbolised the Divine Righteousness of Jehovah Jesus; others suggest it as portraying royalty, *i.e.*, the setting forth of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. (3.) *Scarlet!* It has been viewed as emblematic of the Justice of God in the precious bloodshedding of His dear Son; while, on the other hand, it is described as typifying life, and the blood which is the life. (4.) *Fine Linen!* This some take to symbolise, as in the Apocalypse, the righteousness of the saints, *i.e.*, sanctifying righteousness, or holiness of heart and life; while others consider it as indicative of the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Himself. (5.) *Cherubim!* Brown thinks that these represent the redeemed themselves, inwrought upon the veil, and as rent along with the veil at the Crucifixion; thus signifying both the dying of the redeemed with Christ in His death, and their union with Him by the Spirit of Faith.

"Where'er we turn, Thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are Thine."
—*Moore.*

Cherubic-Symbols! Ver. 31. (1.) Were the figures of the cherubim above the mercy-seat in the most holy place compound animal forms, symbolic of creation? And were those embroidered in cunning work of various colours on the veil between the holy and most holy designed to indicate that the material creation is the veil between the seen and the unseen; *i.e.*, like shadows on a window blind? (2.) Macmillan says that just as on the outer side of the separating veil of the tabernacle there were flat cherubic figures woven on another material, answerable to those which stood out in full outline and relief above the mercy-seat; so the common objects and material every-day uses of the natural world around us are the screen on which we may perceive the figures of what is unseen and spiritual. (3.) As the manna spoke of the True Bread from heaven—as the water gushing from the rock reminded of the Water of Life, even the Holy Spirit of Grace—as the pillar of light testified of Christ, the Light of Life in this dark world-wilderness of sin; so the cherubim were emblems of spiritual intelligences, either of the angels of God around the Throne exploring the mystery of redemp-

tion, or of the redeemed themselves fathoming the deep things of God,—

"In calm humility musing always
Upon those mysteries of grace, which seem'd
Vaster in length and breadth, and depth and height,
The measureless dimensions of God's love,
As still the bridal of the Church drew near."
—*Bickersteth.*

Colour-Symbolism! Ver. 36–38. (1.) As the gold was emblematic of the glory and majesty of God so the blue combined with it in the sacred appointments of the tabernacle might be aptly employed to represent God's love and grace. The gold setting, as it were, with the blue gems, are to the eye an emblem of St. John's sentence: "GOD IS LOVE." (2.) As the priest, whenever he moved within the tent of Aaron, was surrounded by gold and sapphire; so, wherever the Christian (who is a priest unto God) wanders, he finds himself still encircled by the gold and blue of Divine Love. The boundless sky of Divine Love bends over him—wreathes him round, as the horizon embraces the landscape.

"And the mild glories of Thy grace
Our softer passions move;
Pity Divine in Jesu's face
We see, adore, and love."
—*Watts.*

Veil-Embroidery! Ver. 36. (1.) Morier relates that in passing Lahar he found several encampments of Eelauts, at one of which he stopped to examine the tent of a chief, over the door of which was suspended a curtain curiously worked by the women with coarse needlework of various colours. In the Shah of Persia's tents magnificent hangings of needlework are suspended, as well as on the doors of the great mosques in Turkey. (2.) The Chinese are perhaps the most laborious and elaborate embroiderers of modern times. The figures are either in coloured silk alone, or in silk combined with gold and silver thread; the figures of men, horses, and dragons, &c., being outlined with gold cord, and filled up, coloured, and shaded with silk. The Persians, Turks, and Hindoos also excel in embroidery. They use, besides silk and gold and silver thread, beads, spangles, pearls, and precious stones. (3.) Allusion is made to this embroidery in Cant. i. 5, under the name of the curtains of Solomon. These were either the beautiful embroidered hangings of Solomon's palace mentioned in Eccl. ii. 4; or else, the broidered veil or hangings of the temple. Some think, however, that the word Solomon is not a name here, but the title "Prince of Peace," and that the curtains are the veils which adorned the tabernacle of the Prince of Peace when He journeyed through the desert with His people (Ps. xlv.; Ezek. xvi. 14; Matt. xxii. 11).

"O that I knew how all these lights combine,
And the configurations of their glory;
Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
But all the constellations of the story!"
—*Herbert.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—1. An altar of shittim wood.] It was known also by two other names: 1st, as "the brass altar," so called since it was overlaid with brass; 2d, the "outer altar," because of its position without the tabernacle in the court, to which all the members of the house of Israel had free access. To this altar great importance and high honour was attached, as being the meeting-place between God and the worshipper. **2. Its horns.]** Karnoth = symbolical of power, protection, and help, as well as of glory and salvation, and designed to emphatically signify the whole purpose of the sacrificers.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1–8.

THE ALTAR OF BURNT-OFFERING.

I. The situation of this altar reminds us of the spirit in which guilty man should draw nigh to God. This altar of burnt-offering was placed in the court of the Tabernacle intimating the circumspection with which man should draw nigh unto God. Before he must venture into the Tabernacle he must recognise the holiness of God, and his own sinfulness, and purify himself from guilt and sin. Lamb, or ram, or goat, or bullock, must be sacrificed and consumed. In our day some presume to worship God, to serve God, without any deep recognition of sin, or any deep sorrow on its account. Let us come before God with a living sorrow for sin, and a burning desire for purity. Before we bring thank-

offerings or sacrifices of praise, or dare to mix in the fellowship of saints, let us bring the sin-offering and the burnt-offering. Let us penitently trust in Christ the Lamb of God. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James iv. 8).

II. The material of this altar reminds us of the fact that sin debases everything, and that as we leave sin behind the glory of life increases. The altar was overlaid with brass, and all the vessels were of brass. The precious metals so freely used elsewhere are wanting here. This altar recognising sin, recognises also the debasing dishonouring power of sin: yes, sin makes whatever it touches common and unclean. It debases our nature, our relationships, our work, our pleasures. As we pass, through the grace of Jesus, into the enjoyment of God's fellowship and presence, everything grows more precious and beautiful. At the door of the Tabernacle is silver and embroidery, and within the shrine the drapery is more costly still, and all the vessels pure gold. As Christ frees us from sin, all becomes fairer and rarer. "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron" (Isa. lx. 17). With perfect purity we find ourselves in the city which is "pure gold like unto transparent glass."

III. The uses of this altar reminds us of the thoroughness with which we ought to dedicate ourselves to God. The burnt-offering symbolised the fact that its offerer thus yielded his life unto God. Thus must we die unto the world and to sin, that we may live unto God.

IV. The ornaments of this altar remind us of the perfect security of those who have repented and believed. There was a horn at each corner of the altar. "The horns are a symbol of power, of protection and help; and at the same time of glory and salvation."—*Kalisch.* Let us fly to take hold of the horns of the altar.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

We observe, 1st. The incorruptibility of our Saviour's human nature being seen in the shittim-wood, the omnipotence of the divine nature is apparent in the brass of the altar. Its characteristic is endurance. The fire of a justice infinitely pure in itself, and altogether uncompromising in its requirements, must not consume it.

For, 2dly. The altar of burnt-offering being four-square, and having projections or pinnacles at every corner, it is implied thereby that the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ shall one day be efficacious and applicable to the whole world.

3dly. Did the altar of burnt-offering, under the seven-fold sprinkling of the oil of dedication, become the Holiness of holinesses to Jehovah? the most sacred of all the furniture that graced the Tabernacle or stood before the seat of mercy?—See from this particular the pertinency of our Saviour's question to the blinded and ignorant teachers of His day. "Whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?" (Matt. xxiii. 19). They had perverted the original intention.

Hence, 4thly. The sacrifices of the altar, whether daily, weekly, monthly, or annually offered, pointed the nation of Israel to one greater sacrifice, in which all the mystic ordinances of the Tabernacle should finally be concentrated and embodied.

The altar was a very conspicuous object in the court. It stood in the centre, and on entering, was right before the worshipper, who could not fail to be impressed with its square and massive form, its bright and blood-stained exterior, its blazing and smoking fire, and its white-robed and min-

istering priests. If the type of the crucifixion was so very conspicuous in the court, how much more so should the crucified Christ Himself be in the New Testament Church. As the pious Hebrew on entering the gate leading to the sacred precincts could not miss seeing the brazen altar, so believers when visiting the house of God, should ever behold Jesus as its greatest attraction. The minister who does not make the Cross the grand theme of his preaching, need not expect to lead sinners to the Saviour. As the altar was the most prominent of the holy vessels in the Tabernacle court, and as the Cross is the principal object held up by faithful servants of God in the Christian sanctuary, and around which the thoughts and affections of His people cluster, so Christ will be the chief attraction of the New Jerusalem; and if we are among the number of His saints, its gates will open to admit us when we die, and as we enter, we will behold right before us, and in the very midst, heaven's greatest and grandest sight, for the first scene that will burst upon our wondering and admiring gaze will be "the Lamb that once was slain;" and the first wave of celestial melody that will greet our ears and transport our hearts, will be that of praises to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

—*W. Brown.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9-20.

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE.

This scene, into which all the members of the house of Israel might enter, reminds us—

I. Of the common need. It was the court of the *congregation.* Every member of the house of Israel needed to come here—that is, every member needed forgiveness and purification. No matter that they were an *elected* and *peculiar* people. Whilst nationally they were elected to play a great part in the government of God, their moral weaknesses remained, and they needed forgiveness and cleansing. No election ignores moral considerations. No matter what their *age.* The youth, the patriarch. No matter what their *rank.* Princes, elders, common people, all needed alike to present themselves here. No matter what their *office.* The Priest, the people—the sacred and secular orders. The men of all Israel came here to be reminded of their imperfection, sin and stain. We are all guilty before God. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; there is no difference. "If any man say that he hath no sin," &c.

II. Of the common privilege. It was the court of the *congregation.* All *needed* to come, all were *privileged* to come. The hanging at the entrance was full of promise. If the radiant vail encouraged the high priest to enter the holiest, if the similar vail gave assurance to the priest to pass into the holy place, the similar vail, at the entrance to the court of the congregation, spoke hope into the breast of all Israel, ver. 16. The embroidered, richly dyed hangings on the very threshold of the sacred tent, inspired all guilty and sorrowful souls, who turned their faces thitherward, with most consolatory expectations. *Whatever* might be the sin, the altar in that enclosure might be approached. *Whatever* might be the uncleannesses of the people, there it might be atoned for and purged. (Notice the sins and stains to be removed as given in Leviticus.) So forgiveness and purity in Christ is a common privilege. "The common salvation." There are *special* gifts and appointments in the natural sphere; *special* gifts and callings in the Church; but grace, pardon, purity are in Christ for the whole world. "There is no difference."

III. Of the common hope. The Tabernacle of the congregation was far inferior to the holy place and the most holy—in the one brass and silver, in the other

fine gold—but the places were connected together, and the priest passing into the interior of the holy habitation represented the whole nation. So now in Christ have we forgiveness and righteousness; our high priest represents us in the heavenly place; and soon shall we pass from the more imperfect services of earth to the highest vision, and glory, and joy of the celestial world.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20–22.

The Oil for the Lamps.

Consider the provision for the lamps as a service. The children of Israel were to bring oil for these lamps for ever, and the priests were to trim the lamps and keep them brightly burning. Notice:—

I. The service of the people. Is not the duty of the people in relation to this service most suggestive? a pattern of service to all after-times? 1. They were to bring their *first*. "The olive berry is first green, and assumes, later, a purple and black colour. The best kind of oil is obtained from the unripe green olives." We are not to give God the gleanings of our power, or time, or influence, or life, but the first-fruits. 2. They were to bring their *best*. It was the purest and costliest oil. We are not to give to the cause of God anything that is inferior. We are to hold our best for God, and for His service. 3. They were to give *freely* their first and best. "*Beaten* oil. That is such oil as could easily be expressed from the olives after they had been bruised in a mortar; the *mother-drop*, as it is called, which drops out of itself, as soon as the olives are a little broken, and which is much purer than that which is obtained after the olives are put under the press."—*Clarke*. Does not this signify that our service for God should flow freely from a loving heart? "God loveth a cheerful giver."

II. The service of the priests. The priests were to feed the lamps. "Aaron and his sons shall arrange it from evening to morning before the Lord," &c., ver. 21. A daily constant service. And thus it must be in this dispensation, if the Church is to be a brightly burning lamp. Every morning the priests cleansed the lamps and replenished the oil: and the Christian ministry must keep the Church pure, and preserve all its ordinances in vigour and brightness. As the lighthouse-keeper preserves all his lamps in cleanliness, and each evening sends for the guiding light, constant as the stars; so must the ministers of Christ's Church see to it that no impurities dim the glory of the Church or impair its efficiency.

III. The glorious result when ministers and people are faithful in their service. The Church then stands forth with a guiding, warning, cheering light. If the people are unfaithful, it cannot be so. They are to bring the oil, and if that oil be wanting in quantity, or inferior in quality, the light is defective; and so if the members of the Christian Church do not bring the pure oil of a loving, generous, spiritual service, the lustre of the Church is dimmed. And if the ministers be slothful, or selfish, or unspiritual, the lamps are tarnished and the flame flickers. When ministers and people are faithful, the Church is the light of the world, the day-star of a grander world.

The Lamps of the Tabernacle.

Consider these lighted lamps as a symbol. The golden candlestick, lighted as in the text, may justly be regarded as a symbol of Christ—the light of the world. Observe—

I. The purity of the light. "The oil prescribed for the holy service is of a white colour; it gives a better light and little smoke. The holy oil was pure, and unmixed with oil of any other quality." Was not this significant of the light which God has given us in Jesus Christ? In our philosophies we have truth mixed with error, as much smoke as light; in the various religions of the heathen world we have the true and the false strangely blended, and giving forth a most uncertain ray; in Christ we have the true unclouded illumination. "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all." "For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxvi. 9). In that pure light it is our privilege to walk.

II. The perfection of the light. On each of the seven arms of the candelabrum rested a burning lamp. Seven, the note of perfection. On all the great questions touching our salvation from sin, our moral discipline and development, our duty to God and man, our preparation for the life beyond, we have sufficient light in the Lord Jesus. We have no need to resort to the *philosophies of man.* The speculations of the natural reason. No need to resort to *ecclesiastical traditions.* Opinions of the Fathers, &c., as in Catholicism; as if the New Testament did not contain all that was necessary for salvation, character, and destiny. All spiritual light is in Christ, as all natural light is in the sun. The light in Christ brings conviction to the understanding, assurance to the heart. Don't add to the lamps; don't take any away. The doctrines of Christ are all necessary; they are all that are necessary.

III. The perpetuity of the light. That light on the candlestick was to burn on for ever. The light we have in Christ is not an artificial light to guide us through some passing perplexity, it is the essential and everlasting truth. It is not a light *to be superseded in this world.* Some tell us that Christ is destined to be eclipsed by greater teachers, that His Gospel is destined to be eclipsed by systems of moral and spiritual truth far more full and reliable than His own. The greater teacher, the grander gospel, has not yet appeared, and gives no sign of appearing. We need expect no grander light. The seven-branched golden candlestick of the Jewish Temple is buried, if we believe tradition, in the bed of the Tiber; but the Light of the world shall shine through all time, the master light of all our seeing.

> "Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be:
> They are but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

It is not a light to be *superseded in the world to come.* "The Lord God and the lamb are an everlasting light." In Christ we have the light of eternal truth, love, righteousness, felicity. "All flesh is grass," &c.

"O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." (Isa. ii. 5).

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

You will observe, 1. The requirement of *oil* to cause the lamp of the sanctuary to burn. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." (Ecc. xi. 7.) In the absence of that glorious luminary, artificial light becomes a great convenience. The Tabernacle possessed no windows; whence the necessity for an ever-burning lamp. A lamp, however, although costly in material and exquisite in form, can emit no radiance of itself; oil, therefore, must be furnished for its use. In like manner, the Church of Christ must be illuminated by extraneous aid. It is not in mere human in-

tellect, how rich soever in resources and attainments of a worldly kind it may be, to discover the way of life: it must consequently be taught of God and replenished with wisdom of a heavenly kind. It is the inspiration of the Almighty which alone giveth true and saving light unto mankind; and the oil that must burn in the lamp of our understanding is, the Holy Ghost.

—*Mudge.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Mosaic-Ritual! Ver. 1–21. (1.) Beautiful and rich as were the materials employed, there was a remarkable simplicity about the tabernacle and its adjuncts. And why? Glance at the books designed for the instruction of children. They may be rich in design and ornate in execution, but how mono-syllabic they are! What pictures of simplicity they contain! When the child develops in body and mind, the thoughts and words are also proportionately developed. We do not dream of instructing the babe-mind in the mysteries of algebra, or the intricacies of science. (2.) God speaks, by the mouth of a later prophet, as of Israel as His child at this time. As a child, Israel's host could but receive milk of truth—the elementary truths of Divine wisdom. Pictures interleave the Divine manual of saving instruction—pictures such as the tabernacle, the altar of burnt-offering, the outer court with its brazen laver, and encircling curtains, and solitary gateway. (3.) And as Israel grew, so the instruction was raised. The theocratic nation was schooled in the deep things of God, while its saints and seers were permitted to drink deeply at the Fount of Divine Wisdom, searching diligently into the mystery of redemption, until the Teacher Himself became Incarnate. Thus the Law was alike the pedagogue leading to, and the schoolmaster instructing as to, Christ—the End of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

"And when the last trumpet shall sound through the skies,
When the dead from the dust of the earth shall arise,
With bright millions I'll rise far above yonder sky,
To wear Christ's Righteousness for ever on high."

Altars! Ver. 1. (1.) Appealing to the senses of a people whose spiritual discernment was undeveloped, Jehovah, on the very night in which they began their march from Egypt, went before them in the *Shekinah*, or pillar of fire by night and of a cloud by day, the advance or halt of which was the signal for their march or rest. SACRIFICE was contemplated as the very object of their journey; and we read of its being offered by Jethro and Aaron before Sinai. **But of its place we have no** other notice than the command given in the first series of precepts, to make an altar of earth, or unhewn stone. Subsequently came this ordinance of the Altar of Burnt-offering. (2.) It was known as the brazen altar, and was so arranged in front of the single gateway, that every worshipper as he approached the hallowed tabernacle would be reminded of his need of sacrifice. All heaven-taught souls recognise in this arrangement a type of man's need of the propitiatory of Jesus Christ. Its twofold substance of wood and brass signifies the complex character of Christ—His human nature overlaid with Divine strength.

"The outward form is not the whole,
But every part is moulded
To image forth an inward soul
That dimly is unfolded."

Exodus-Christology! Ver. 2. (1.) It has been said that Christ is everywhere in the Bible, *as oxygen is everywhere in the atmosphere*, its all and in all of vitality. So of its individual parts, and none the less of these apparently dry details and reiterations of Exodus. These make Him, as do all other portions of Scripture, their grand central Sun; while all the ritual observances and Levitical requirements are so many pointers calling attention to His glory—so many satellites revolving round Him in harmonious moral rhythm—so many beams or shafts of light culminating in Him. He gives the meaning to this Exodus ceremonialism, the direction to all this Exodus worship, the warmth to all this Exodus ordinance. (2.) There is, therefore, no typical overstrain when we represent the four-square altar as indicating the perfect stability of Christ's atonement, or the horns as symbolising His all-subduing might, to which despairing sinners may fearlessly cling. It is the horn of Jesus which prevails, says Law. Nay, more, the horns of salvation are the realities of refuge; so that, adhering to Christ, holding fast by Jehovah's strength, there is no need to fear.

"Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak
Who trusted in his own."

—*Cowper.*

Atonement! Ver. 3. The main design of the altar was to receive burnt-offerings. At early morn, throughout the day, and at earth's eventide, the flames were bright of sacrifice. Each fire-made offering, says Law, typified Christ's death. The recurrence of this idea of Messianic atonement everywhere in the Pentateuch shows its paramount importance to man. If frequent types set forth this truth, it is that man's thoughts may cluster round it more constantly. If this sweet passion-flower blooms and floats its heavenly fragrance over every part of the Mosaic meadows and mountains, it is that human hearts may exult in its everlasting beauty. On the accursed tree we have the sacrifice of Christ, not only fulfilling all the analogies of nature, but concentrating all the typal beams of the Law in one glorious, ruddy orb of atonement.

"Whoever yearns to see aright,
Because his heart is tender,
Shall catch this Truth of Heavenly Light
In every typal splendour."

Divine Order! Ver. 5. (1.) These commands may seem puerile, but they are not so. Ruskin rightly says that "Whatever may be the means, or whatever the more immediate end of any kind of art, all of it that is good agrees in this, that it is the expression of one soul talking to another." And it is precious according to the greatness of the soul that utters it. (2.) If such be true where man is concerned, how much more when God is the speaker! How precious should be the art-words of God in this chapter! How beautiful the designs and arrangements! What lessons must be hidden underneath; lessons, too, which have undying issues in their bosom! These Exodus chapters are—

"The modifying medium through which
Grace-glories are exhibited to man—
The grand repository where God hides
His mighty thoughts, to be dug out like diamonds."

Order-Importance! Ver. 8. Guthrie says that the most important results may depend on the right place and position of things. No wonder, then, that God lays so much and impressive stress upon the Mosaic conformity to the Sinaitic model. God teaches us this in every-day life and experience. (1.) If things are out of place in Nature, what serious issues are at stake! Who does not know that the fruitfulness and beauty, yea, the very life of a tree depends not only on its having both root and branches, but on these members being placed in their natural order? (2.) In art the same law holds good. The builder must not only erect the stately fabric, but he must so construct it with the proper base to rest on, lest the agitation of some earthquake or the aggression of some stormy wind should overturn it. (3.) So with the tabernacle arrangements; order of arrangement was of the most vital importance, seeing all, in whole and in each individual part, was designed to typify things under the Gospel Economy. Thus was it in the Mosaic Dispensation as in Nature. Each moss—

"Each shell, each crawling insect, holds a rank
Important in the plan of Him who framed
This scale of beings; holds a rank which, lost,
Would break the chain, and leave behind a gap
Which Nature's self would rue."
—*Thomson.*

Divine-Design! Ver. 9–19. (1.) If on shaking a quantity of printer's type in a basket, it should appear that some of the pieces stuck together, when they fell, in such order as to compose the narrative of these Mosaic ordinances, could we resist the conclusion that these particular types were loaded with the design of composing that story? We read the design in the complicated and intelligible adaptation of the final result. So, when we find these various and varied ordinances, altars, lamps, courts, and curtains thus arranged by Moses, we cannot but believe that He who gave them to him loaded them with the designed method and arrangement in which we find them. (2.) There are few subjects that confuse the mind more thoroughly than the numerous and diverse mineral substances which form the great mass of the earth's crust; and it was not till Abbé Haüy dropped his beautiful specimen of calcareous spar, and noted that all the shivered fragments of the original prism had the same rhomboidal form, that men dreamt of any regularity among inorganic objects. God formed His manual of religious instruction after this analogy of nature. Its unity does not stand out upon the surface, neither does its unity of design. We have to make due, devout, and diligent search to find the Divine design in these Exodus unveilings.

"Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine,
And jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depths,
For every searcher there."—*Hodder.*

Court-Order! Ver. 12–15. (1.) Johnson says, Order is a lovely nymph—the child of Beauty and Wisdom. Her attendants are Comfort, Neatness, and Activity. Her abode is the Valley of Happiness. She is always to be found when sought for; and she never appears so lovely as when contrasted with her opponent, Disorder. (2.) Southey says, as the beams to a house, as the bones to the microcosm of man, so is order to all things. Not only is order beautiful; its existence is a necessity. Addison says wrongly that its non-existence is excusable in men of great learning, who are often too full to be exact, and who may therefore throw down their pearls in heaps instead of stringing them.

(3.) Shaftesbury says, In nature is no confusion, but all is managed for the best with perfect frugality and just reserve. Bigg says that nature is still, as ever, the thin veil which half conceals and half reveals the design of God in grace. The order which we perceive in nature, from the setting and sweeping of star-worlds in space to the forming and flitting of fire-flies amid the palm fronds, is designed to instruct us in the order of Revelation.

"So work the honey-bees,
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom."
—*Shakespeare.*

Linen! Ver. 16. (1.) Weaving was extensively carried on in ancient Egypt. On the tombs are found various representations of the mode of carrying on this art. Pharaoh arrayed Joseph in vestures of fine linen. There can be no doubt that during the captivity in Egypt the Israelitish women were thus employed. It was as bond-slaves in the houses of the princes of Egypt that they acquired the arts which were afterwards used in the service of the Lord. Thus the disciplines of life are often enlisted by God to enable His chosen ones to render to Him agreeable service. (2.) *The fine twined linen* probably alludes to the great pains taken in the bleaching of linen in ancient Egypt. Osburn says that, after being marked, the piece of wet linen was probably wrapped in strong sacking made for the purpose, one end of which was fastened to a post, and a staff was inserted in a loop in the other. It was then wrung by the united strength of two men, so as to force out as much of the water as possible, and thus prevent any impurity that might be in the water or in the cloth from drying in. It may, therefore, be called fine twined, or twisted, or wrung linen. (3.) Such was the righteousness of God, wrought out by the Lord Jesus on the plains of earth; that fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints. Through the ordeal of trial the Lord Jesus wrought it; and through much tribulation the saints enter the kingdom to wear it.

"Lo! his clothing is the sun,
The bright Sun of Righteousness;
He hath put salvation on,
Jesus is his beauteous dress."
—*Wesley.*

Court-Entrance! Ver. 16. There was admittance by one only gate. All worshippers must pass the door. In a town in the north of Scotland some boys were in the habit of meeting together for prayer. A little girl was passing, and heard them sing. She stopped to listen, and thinking that it was just an ordinary prayer-meeting, she felt anxious to get in. Putting up her hand, she pulled the latch, but it would not open. It was fastened inside. She became very uneasy, and the thought arose in her mind: "What if this were the door of heaven, and me outside?" She went home, but could not sleep. Day after day, she became more troubled at the thought of being shut out of heaven. She went from one prayer-meeting to another, still finding no rest. At length, one day reading the tenth chapter of John, she came to the words, "I am the Door." She paused! Here was the very door she was seeking; it was wide open. She entered.

"'I am the door,' those words begin;
I press towards that Voice,
And, ere I know it, am within,
And all within rejoice."

Thoroughness! Ver. 17. In all these minute arrangements God teaches the art and duty of thoroughness. A friend called on Michael Angelo, who was finishing a statue. Some time afterwards he called again; the sculptor was still at his work. His friend, looking at the figure, exclaimed, "You have been idle since I saw you last!" "By no means," replied the sculptor, "I have retouched this part, and polished that; I have softened this feature, and brought out this muscle; I have given more expression to this lip, and more energy to this limb." To this his friend replied that all these were "trifles." "It may be so," replied Angelo, "but recollect that trifles make perfection, and that perfection is no trifle." But Angelo's perfect works, when viewed through the microscope, disclosed rough outlines. Not so God's. His works are thoroughly perfect—even to the "filleting" and "sockets." And so are His words.

"How longed the holy men and prophets old
God's Truth to see! How blessed, whom
He hath willed
To see His Truth in His own book enrolled."
—*Mant.*

Little Things! Ver. 19. It is but the littleness of man that sees no greatness in a trifle. And indeed there is nothing little in truth which can be connected with eternity and God. Little pins held together that tabernacle, which was the glory of God. As Dryden says, God never made His work for man to mend. (1.) This is true of nature, which Goethe calls the living visible garment of God, and which Carlyle terms the time vesture of God that reveals Him to the wise, and hides Him from the foolish. A microscopic examination of the smallest flower or animalcule shows that He has cared for the little things—that every part is perfect of its kind—and that with Him nothing is too insignificant to be done thoroughly. (2.) This is true of the Mosaic law, which has been rightly called the gospel in bud. How careful God was that the little things of the tabernacle should all be wrought out after His plan. Even the pins were to be made perfectly, and after the fashion shown to Moses in the Mount.

"Naught that is right think little; well aware
What reason bids, God bids; by His command
How aggrandised the smallest thing we do!"
—*Young.*

Olive-Oil! Ver. 20. (1.) Dr. Burden observes that by the expression "oil-olive" this oil is distinguished from other kinds. The addition "beaten" indicates that it is that oil obtained from olives pounded in a mortar, and not pressed from olives in the oil-mill. The oil obtained from pounded olives is, according to Columela's observations, much purer and better tasted, does not emit much smoke, and has no offensive smell. From passages in the books of Joel and Micah, it would seem that the olives were usually crushed in the mill by men's feet, just as in the vintage operation. 2. In the museum of Naples is a graceful olive in bronze, on whose spreading branches the various members of some old Pompeian household used to hang up their little lamps when they came from their different employments, and mustered in the family apartment around the symbolic family tree. Figure of each member of the Church of Christ, each of whom should contribute the small lamp of a Christian life, fed with the pure oil-olive of Divine Grace, to be suspended on the fair olive-tree of the Church (Ps. lii. 8).

"God's saints are shining lights; who stays
Here long, must pass
O'er dark hills, swift streams, and steep ways
As smooth as glass.
But these all night,
Like candles, shed
Their beams, and light
Us into bed." —*Vaughan.*

Olive-Symbolism! Ver 20. The word "tree," as pointed out by Grindon, actually means "intellect" in both English and Hebrew. It is even "intellect" in its widest sense amongst the Hebrews. The personifications of Scripture are not like those of merely human poetry, which are addressed simply to the object. On the contrary, they always involve a direct reference to the mental, the moral, or the spiritual. "The trees of the forest clap their hands." Here the figure is borrowed from the waving of the branches; but the figure is itself figurative. The idea is that of the joys of the redeemed being expressed to God. When, therefore, particular kinds of trees are mentioned in Scripture, it is in reference to specific mental gifts, moral virtues, or spiritual graces. It is the "tree department" of the language of flowers in its highest and noblest use. The olive has from time immemorial been identified with peace, forgiveness, charity, reconciliation, and similar high attitudes of virtue. In the sphere of Revelation and Grace, its oil thus symbolises "the Graces of the Holy Spirit."

"For Nature dwells within our reach;
Yet though we stand so near her,
We still interpret half her speech
With ears too dull to hear her."
—*Anon.*

Olive-Oil Objects! Ver. 20–22. Thomas calls attention to, 1. The *Plant*, whence the oil came, as an emblem of Jesus, the Plant of renown, full of grace and truth; to, 2. The *Properties* of the oil, as expressive of the purity of the Spirit of Christ; 3. The *Process* of its manufacture, as predicting the sufferings of Jesus ere the Holy Spirit's full descent at Pentecost; 4. The *Persons* receiving and dispensing, as types of the true Israel of God, who receive of Christ's fulness, and grace for grace; and, 5. The *Purposes* to which the oil was put, as symbolic of the Divine Light ever shining in the holy place of the Church, and of the temple of the Christian heart.

"The Rites of God are fair for nought,
Unless our eyes, in seeing,
See hidden in the type the thought
That animates its being." —*Anon.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—5. And they (the workmen) shall take] = **Vehem yikchuh.** These words imply that the workmen received all the costly materials for the priestly robes directly from the people. Thus those filled with the "spirit of wisdom" (ver. 3) were eminently trustworthy as men of God, and as such possessed the unlimited confidence of the people. **15. The breast-plate]** = Choshen was of the same "cunning work," mââsey chosheb, as the ephod, and of like costly materials; being smaller than the ephod, and intended only to cover a span square "on the heart." It was also doubled in order to bear the weight of the twelve inserted precious stones arranged in four equal rows, and on each of which was engraven one of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There can be little doubt that the precious stones were types of the character and destiny of the individual tribes respectively, the interpretation, however, of which has been kept from human scrutiny. We find the same precious stones enumerated in the Apocalypse on "the foundation of the walls" of the celestial city (Rev. xxi. 19). This correspondence is deserving of attention, and shows how the Old and New Testaments unite in their teaching respecting the glorious and encouraging fact of God holding His people in high honour, and of the manner in which He will beautify them.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6-15.

THE EPHOD: THE INTERCESSORSHIP OF THE HIGH PRIEST.

The Lord Jesus is the Great High Priest, and this portion of the raiment of the Levitical high priest is full of suggestion concerning the Divine Mediator. It suggests—

I. The immediateness of His advocacy. "The ephod was made of the work of the skilful weaver, and is thus, at once, discernible as appertaining to the Holy of Holies, the vail of which was of the same distinguished workmanship. The high priest alone was allowed to enter into the immediate presence of the Ark of the Testimony; to the representative of the theocratical community alone could the privilege be granted of communing with the invisible King."—*Kalisch.* So *Christ* has "entered into the presence of God for us." Our great representative is in the Eternal presence. The vast distance between God and sinful man, exists no more between God and the Perfect Man who represents humanity. The moral perfection, the essential dignity of Christ, qualifies Him to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on High. Christ brings *us* into the immediate presence. In the Aaronic high priest all Israel was brought into the presence of the Holy One, and Christ brings us into the heavenly place. In *prayer* it is so: we need no human priest; He brings us to God. In the whole Christian *life* it is so. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." In *death* it is so. We see God's face through Christ for ever.

II. The comprehensiveness of His advocacy. "And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth," vers. 9, 10. The whole of the tribes were thus brought before God. And Christ the great High Priest represents the whole race—not Israel only, but all nations, tribes and people, and tongues. What a consolation to think, that for ignorant ages and generations He is pleading: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." What a consolation to know that we who have transgressed against clearer light have an interest in His intercession! "If *any man* sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*" (1 John ii. 1, 2). None of us need hesitate to come before God with our sins and our sorrows. "*My* name is written on His hands."

III. The power of His advocacy. "And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial," ver. 12. Is there not the idea here of the priestly power carrying Israel and Israel's cause? This representation is full of the idea of the strength and sovereignty of the priest. "Besides the materials used for the vail of the Holy of Holies, gold threads were applied in the ephod, which, like the golden plate on the mitre, point to the sovereignty of the high priest, who was the spiritual king of the nation; for gold is generally the emblem of regal power. The garments of the high priest in general are called the "golden garments;" and, indeed, no part of them was without this metal."—*Kalisch.* Christ is a King as well as a Priest. His Priesthood is full of power and efficacy. Full of power as it is related to God; full of power as it stands related to the Church and the world. "He shall build the Temple of the Lord . . . and He shall be a Priest upon His throne" (Zech. vi. 13). The whole of His Divine strength and majesty are engaged in the task of reconciling the world to God.

THE BREASTPLATE.—*Verses* 15-30.

That the ephod and the breastplate were intended to form one whole, is evident by the chains and ribbon which connected them, but the breastplate has its peculiar teachings. It has a two-fold relation—to God and to Israel. Let us consider the suggestions of this prominent portion of the high priestly vestments.

I. As towards God the breastplate conveys the idea of representation.

1. The *righteousness* of this representation. The breastplate was to be the work of the skilful weaver; and it was to be made "of gold, of blue, of purple, of scarlet, and of fine twined linen," ver. 15. Is not the idea here, that the intercession of the priest rested on purity and righteousness? The breastplate that met the eye of God, and on which the names of the children of Israel were written, was of white, and gold and beauty. The intercession of Christ is based in wisdom and righteousness. The holiness of God, the holiness of the law, the holiness of Heaven, are fully recognised and guaranteed.

2. The *individuality* of this representation. "And the stones shall be according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve," ver. 21. Each tribe particularised. And must we not conclude that the individual jewels for the different tribes had a specific meaning? Our great High Priest knows our particular nature, infirmities, temptations, sins, sorrows. He brings us before God in our individual character and need.

3. The *design* of this representation. Did not these sparkling jewels on the priest's breast symbolise the fact that the end of his intercession was, the restoration of Israel to purity and glory? Thus Christ recognises the intrinsic preciousness of human nature, and ever pleads and acts, so that we may be cleansed from every defilement, and shine as a bride's jewels.

4. The *sympathy* of this representation. "And Aaron shall bear the names upon his heart," ver. 29. Christ bears us on His heart: His Priesthood is full of tenderness and sympathy.

II. As toward man the breastplate conveys the idea of illumination, ver. 30. "The Urim and Thummim are to be regarded as a certain medium, given by the Lord to His people, through which, whenever the congregation required divine illumination to guide its actions, that illumination was guaranteed, and by means of which the rights of Israel, when called in question or endangered, were to be restored, and that this medium was bound up with the official dress of the high priest, though its precise character can no longer be determined.—*Delitzsch. Kalisch* considers the Urim and Thummim to be identical with the precious stones, which is very probable. This oracle represents the Divine and saving light which Christ gives to His Church. The divine doctrines of the New Testament are the oracular gems to guide us into all truth. The Jewish legend declares, that during the flood the ark was lighted by the lustre of jewels; the Ark, the Church, is lighted by the clear shining of the doctrines of Christ. In Christ we have *saving* light; not for curiosity or earthly interest, but for the salvation of our highest nature. *Sufficient* light: the twelve gems indicate a fulness of illumination. *Infallible* light: it never leads astray. These precious stones indicate, then, precious truths (Isa. liv. 11-13). Let us be like unto "the merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. xiii. 45, 46).

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

But the children of Israel were represented in an entirely *different* order, and after a different manner, on the *breastplate* of the high priest. Each

there had his own peculiar precious stone, and his own peculiar place. Judah was the head of the first row; and Dan took the lead in the last. The gorgeous colour of the ruby shone out from one; the soft refreshing green of the emerald was visible in another; the brilliant light of the diamond flashed out from a third; and the heavenly azure of the sapphire was displayed in a fourth. Thus, each had his own peculiar glory and beauty: each differed from, without rivalling the other; and each filled his appointed place in the order of God. There was unity, combined with diversity. God is able to create variety, without that variety involving inferiority. And so it is with the individuals that compose the Church of God. Each reflects Christ: and yet Christ is seen in each, with a peculiar beauty and glory, into which another does not intrude.

—*Soltau.*

THE PRIEST'S ROBE.—*Verses* 31-35.

A robe is the badge of office, and the robe here described marks out the high priest as one whose function it was to preserve and declare divine truth. And Christ, the great High Priest, is also the Apostle of our confession. Consider what this robe suggests concerning the truth as it is in Jesus.

I. The colour of the robe suggests, that our great High Priest is the source and guardian of truth. The robe was to be entirely of blue. "That this is significant cannot be doubted, if we consider, that (Numbers xv. 38) the Israelites are commanded to wear on the borders of their garments fringes with a thread of blue, 'that they might see it and remember all the precepts of the Lord;' we may, therefore, safely infer that the robe, with its only blue colour, represented the high priest as perfectly and entirely under the command of God, as the instrument and guardian of His laws."—*Kalisch.* Christ is the grand source of spiritual and divine truth. He declares the laws of God to mankind. It is the *highest* truth: blue, the colour of the lofty firmament. It is the *purest* truth: the deep blue sky is an image of purity—free from all stains and defilements. It is the infinite, *eternal*, truth: the blue unchanging sky is the image of eternity.

II. The integrity of the robe suggests the integrity of the law and truth of Christ. The robe was of one piece, it was entirely woven without the use of the needle; and the robe was of one colour, all of blue. The Gospel of Jesus is no patchwork, as some would assume, partly true and partly false, partly human and partly divine, partly obligatory and partly obsolete, partly beautiful and partly unseemly. The Gospel of Jesus is not a thing made from scraps and shreds gathered from various sources, Jewish and Pagan,—it is of one spirit, one beauty, one authority throughout. Let us not attempt to tear it asunder. "There was to be a binding of woven work round about the hole for the neck, like the opening of an armour, that it be not rent," ver. 32. Let us make no schism in it. The Gospel of Jesus is the unfolding of God's heart and God's mind, and let us be careful and preserve the whole counsel of God.

III. The ornaments of the robe suggest the sweetness and virtue of the truth as it is in Jesus, vers. 33, 34, 35. "We find allusions to the Word and Testimony of God in the pendant of pomegranates and bells attached to the fringe of the high priest's robe. The simile in Proverbs xxv. 11, where the word is compared to an apple, suggests the idea that the pomegranates, with their pleasant odour, their sweet and refreshing juice, and the richness of their delicious kernel, were symbols of the Word and Testimony of God, as a sweet and pleasant spiritual food that enlivens the soul and refreshes the heart."—*Delitzsch.* The music of the golden bells we may also regard as the delightful harmony of

Gospel truth—sweet alike to God and man. The truth as it is in Jesus is full of richness and beauty—it speaks of pardon, reconciliation, and immortality.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

THE DIADEM OF THE PRIEST.—*Verses* 36–38.

The words on the priest's mitre, **Holiness to the Lord**, signify that he who wore it was entirely devoted to God, and that it was his mission to elevate the people to the same sanctity. Thus is Christ pure, and thus does He seek to sanctify all who seek His aid. Consider the sanctity of the priest—

I. As personal. The inscription on the priestly diadem signified:—1. That the priest was *altogether* separated to God. The inscription was on his *brow*, declaring the giving up to God of his whole personality. 2. The priest was *always* separated to God. "It shall be always upon his forehead." Thus the Israelites saw in their high priest the ideal of a true humanity—life altogether and always given up to God. In Christ we see the glorious actuality—an absolutely pure humanity. See Heb. vii. 25–27. All other men, even the greatest, the wisest, the best, have been marked by imperfection and sin, but in Christ we have a great High Priest of absolute sinlessness, and in Him we may safely and fully trust.

II. As official. It was the duty of the high priest to raise others to his own sanctity, ver. 38. He had to bear away the iniquity of the sacred things. The high priest was an atoning mediator of the whole nation, and in his intercession the sin of the people was blotted out. Thus Christ is a High Priest to take upon Himself and to bear away the condemnation of all sinful but penitent men. Christ declares in His teaching the holiness of God; in His own life He gives us the grandest illustration of that holiness; and in His ever-living advocacy, He seeks to elevate all His people to share His glory.

Lessons:—1. Man at his best is a sinful creature. "The iniquity of the holy things." Our best works, feelings, hours, are tainted, and mixed and imperfect. What of our ordinary works, feelings, hours? What of our worst? 2. That God will only accept us and our gifts when we and they are pure. The priest had to purify the givers and the gifts; for so long as these were infected by iniquity they were unacceptable to God. Here we see the need of a mediator. How presumptuous are those who venture to go into the presence of God on merely natural grounds, and offer Him their spotted selves, and spotted lives, gifts, prayers, services! All sacrifices, prayers, oblations, services, are an abomination to God if they are not perfectly sincere and pure; and how can these clean things come out of our erring, passionate, perverse nature? 3. That in Christ we have full redemption and sanctification. He can make us pure and our offerings. He can purge the iniquity of our holy things and our unholy. We need seek no other priest; we need add to Him no other priest; His royal power and eloquent advocacy save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him.

THE KINGDOM OF PRIESTS.—*Verses* 39–43.

Aaron was the high priest, but all his sons were priests also, and in the text we have given more particularly the garments of the common priests. Let us notice these as suggestive of the character of the kingdom of priests created by Christ Jesus.

I. The holiness of the garments. Not only are Aaron's garments called "holy," ver. 2; but the garments for his sons are called "holy" also, ver. 4.

He who wore these garments was separated to God, doing God's service. The sons of Christ are thus holy unto God. These garments indicate the *completeness* of their sanctification. The garments of the priest in several parts indicate that he is entirely clothed in holiness. Does not the coat of fine linen or the tunic, ver. 39, indicate the sanctification of the heart which beats beneath it? Does not the girdle, ver. 39, which is a symbol of readiness and service, indicate the sanctification of the active life? Does not the bonnet or turban, ver. 4, indicate the hallowing of the intellect? Do not the linen drawers, ver. 42, indicate the sanctification of the flesh? The whole nature and life for God. Those garments indicate the *thoroughness* of their sanctification. The tunic above the drawers, the girdle around the tunic. Our purity must be deep and thorough. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts." Are we thus sanctified to God?

II. The beauty of the garments. The workmen were to "take the gold, and the blue, and the red, and the crimson, and the fine linen," ver. 5. The tunic was of fine linen, the girdle was the work of the embroiderer, and the turban was for glory and beauty. *Holiness is beauty.* Is not this the grand idea of the priest's gorgeous apparel? Purity causes the whole man to shine, and touches his whole life into beauty. Many aim to make themselves beautiful, but it is a mistake to aim at beauty; we must aim at purity, and purity transfigures all. What beauty about a true heart! A noble mind! A chaste body! A sincere and transparent life! *Holiness is the highest beauty.* Gold, blue, crimson, red, fine linen—here you have the richest material, the finest fabric, the highest colours. Holiness of heart and life reveal the highest beauty. Physical, intellectual beauty are alike inferior to the beauty of holiness. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. lxi. 10). Notice—

III. The indispensability of these garments, ver. 43. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Without this holiness our worship will not be acceptable; our services for society not be efficacious; our spirit shall not stand acquitted in the judgment. It is the wedding-garment of the Gospel.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVIII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Scripture-Secrets! Ver. 1–43. "The Bible can never be exhausted. The most learned commentators and eloquent preachers have but crossed the threshold of the magnificent temple. As in Nature, so in Revelation: the materials of every steam-engine, telegraph, microscope, and other mechanical and scientific contrivances, have been lying for countless ages under the dust of the earth undisturbed until a comparatively recent date. . . . And what yet may be fashioned out of the materials of nature no sagacity can prognosticate. Our present conquests form the starting-points of more dazzling victories. So, in reference to Revelation: generations yet unborn will group around its pages, and gather from them more sublime and radiant truths than those which have flashed on our intellect and cheered our heart—from the harps of the Hebrew bards they will hear a more elevating melody than ever charmed our spirits, and in the living words of the Divine Man perceive a depth, a grandeur, and a significance of which no conception can be formed. The ancient prophets have yet more to relate. Isaiah will reveal glories surpassing imagination, and Ezekiel unfold splendours which would overpower our visual organs. Intellectual perception will be quickened so as to penetrate the clouds which intercept man's vision of the truth. No NEW Revelation, however, will be granted; but from the present Bible will stream 'a light above the brightness of the sun.' Never need we fear an exhaustion of the truth. It is sempiternal as God, and perennial as the springs of immortality."

"The Book of God! a well of streams divine!
But who would wish the riches of that mine
To make his own, his thirst to satisfy
From that pure well, must ear, eye, soul apply." —*Mant.*

Priest-Prefigurings! Ver. 1. (1.) The Mosaic Ritual was figurative throughout of the Gospel Dispensation yet to come. It typified, more or less directly, in all its parts, the person and the work of the Great High Priest of our profession. (2.) This was especially true of the Jewish High Priest, who in his, 1, Person, 2, Priestly robes, and, 3, Priesthood functions, stood to all the other officials and offerings of the tabernacle as the Holy of Holies stood to all other portions of the material fabric. (3.) In his duties and official dress Aaron and his successors *pictured* to the eye of faith the Redeemer Christ. He was to the Jewish devout worshipper a picture of One whom they might one day see, just as a portrait of the Queen or archbishop to an Indian subject or New Zealand Christian.

"See Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Within the veil appear,
In robes of mystic meaning dressed,
Presenting Israel's prayer."—*Newton.*

Holy Garments! Ver. 2. Griffin notes that these were three in number, and symbolised the excellencies, merits, and grace of the Lord Jesus. (1.) *Snow-white!* a vestment of fine linen, emblematic of Christ's purity. Some think that it also indicated penitence as well as purity, at least apparently so, when worn alone on the Day of Atonement. (2.) *Sapphire!* an ephod of a light azure hue, reaching only to the knees, and adorned with bells and fruits—especially was it incumbent to wear this in the Holy Place. (3.) *Scarlet!* This was a robe of magnificence, embroidered with gold and purple, and blue and scarlet, and fine twined linen. It was the garment of (*a*) Gladness and (*b*) Greatness. It prefigured the excellency and unequalled beauty of the Lord our Righteousness in the sight of Jehovah. Farr remarks that "If ever eyes beheld an object in which splendour shone, it was Aaron thus arrayed." God planned each part for glory and for beauty. Every brilliant colour sparkled, richest jewels cast back their dazzling rays, and the varied hues of the rainbow blended with the sun's meridian light.

"Lord of all that's fair to see,
Come, reveal Thyself to me;
Let me, 'mid Thy radiant light,
See Thine unveiled glories bright."
—*Silesius.*

Art-Inspiration! Ver. 3. In the Pacific Ocean there are lovely islands built entirely by coral zoophytes out of the profound depths of the ocean. Raised above the waves, floating germs of vegetation light on them, and speedily cover them with a fair clothing of verdure. Man comes and takes up his abode on these Edens, and makes their resources subservient to the purposes of human life. By and by the missionary appears, and by the preaching of the Gospel changes the moral wilderness into a garden of the Lord. The last great result is thus but the completion of a process begun by a tiny creature in the depths of ocean. Even so here are we told that Jehovah influenced certain to make Aaron's robes. Then followed the ministry of the Gospel, proclaiming those truths symbolised by the Spirit-inspired garments for the moral regeneration of humanity. The final issue is the accomplishment of a work begun in symbolic-raiment.

"Man hath his daily work of body or mind,
Appointed, which declares his dignity,
And the regard of Heaven on all his ways."
—*Milton.*

Art-Aim! Ver. 3. Most men look upon their work merely as the means by which they may earn money to buy the necessaries or luxuries of life. A day's labour is given solely for the purpose of getting a day's pay. Men value their work exclusively at its money-worth. Did these men so work? or was it to glorify God? When, asks a writer, shall men learn the great truth that the money which their labours earn is not the true reward of it? No workman can be paid by mere money. The money that is paid is only the means of living. The reward of the work lies in the moral good that it does to us and to others around. We need the inspiration of God's Spirit to rescue our work from the degradation into which it so easily slides, and make it what God meant it to be—conducive to His glory and human good. The motto which these labourers of God placed on the High Priest's mitre was only the reflection of the motive in their own hearts which prompted the labour. So should we work as labourers or lawyers, fishermen or farmers, engravers or engineers, ministers or miners—for GOD.

"Their bright example I pursue;
To THEE in all things rise;
And all I think, or speak, or do,
Is one great sacrifice."—*Wesley.*

Girdle-Glory! Ver. 4. St. John tells us that on the day commemorative of his Lord's resurrection he was startled with a great voice as of a trumpet. He turned round, awestruck and astonished. It was no phantasy, no ideal voice, but the Living Presence of one clothed with a garment down to the foot. Macduff points out that the long flowing robe—partly sacerdotal, partly regal—suggests the first of many resemblances to the visions of Daniel, when on the banks of the Hiddekel he saw the man clothed in the long linen robe. In both cases they pointed to the Royal Priest—the Priest upon His throne, the God-man Intercessor—and He was girt with a golden girdle.

This was the symbol alike of His Truth, His Unchangeableness, and His Love. Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and Faithfulness the girdle of His reins.

"Majesty combined with meekness,
Righteousness and peace unite
To insure Thy blessed conquests,
Take possession of the right;
Reign triumphant,
Decked in robes of perfect white."

Golden Girdles! Ver. 8. (1.) After the Vision of the Sea of Glass mingled with fire in Rev. xv.—a vision which has most remarkable resemblances to the Morning Scene, when Israel's redeemed host stood on the borders of the Red Sea shore, in Exod. xiv.—the apocalyptic seer beholds the Holy of Holies opened, wherein, enshrined between the cherubim above the mercy-seat and ark of the covenant, was the Shekinah Pillar-Presence of God. Seven angels come forth. Like priests of the Most High, they were all clad in linen pure and white, and they had also golden girdles like that of their Lord. (2.) The period just before 1792 was remarkable. The mighty spiritual movement of the Reformation (as depicted in the Vision of the Glassy Sea) appeared to have spent its force. The great lights which had irradiated the seventeenth century had sunk beneath the horizon. The eighteenth century rose, and passed on comparatively starless. Meteor lights of infidelity gleamed luridly. Over Christendom hung damp, chill November fogs. Everything living was dying, and every ray of light was fading. The Church herself was locked in slumbers deep, when

"The seven last angels seen by John in Patmos,
From heaven's sanctuary came forth
Arrayed in priestly robes of white, girdled with gold,
And bearing in their hands the Mystic Vials
Of the wrath of God."—*Bickersteth.*

Shoulder-Sardonyx! Ver. 12. (1.) The shoulders were the strongest part of the body. 1. *Strictly!* Aaron, as the representative of the Israelites, was to bear up the host before God mightily. 2. *Symbolically!* The True Aaron, as the forerunner of His redeemed Church, bears up with His mighty strength all who are His people. (2.) If the *onyx* is really the sardonyx, it is a dark stone, variegated with bluish white, black, and red, lying in circles, as if inlaid by art. It appears in Rev. xxi. 20 as the fifth row of stones on which the apocalyptic city was seen to rest. (3.) Thus, in mineral meaning, its use here for the shoulders, with the names of the twelve tribes, would indicate the heavenly and earthly natures of God's people—the admixture of the pure and impure; *i.e.*, of the new man and old man, as in Rom. vii. Though weak and unworthy, the offspring of clay, yet, borne up by Christ, believers soar above all peril, and sit as more than conquerors on eminence of almightiness.

"O Holy Saviour, Friend unseen,
Since on Thy arm Thou bidst me lean,
Help me through life's varying scene,
By faith to rest on THEE."—*Elliott.*

Stones and Symbols! Ver. 17–22. The breastplate here means literally the "ornament." Jewels formed its prominent characteristics. Students may observe:—I. SYMBOL-STONES! The ancients attached special virtues to these gems. But notice here:—1. *Their Shining*, as indicating their (1) purity, and (2) preciousness. 2. *Their Setting*, as directed in the pectoral, and over the heart. 3. *Their Stability*, as implied in the four-square and solid forms. 4. *Their Service*, as bearing the names of the twelve tribes. II. STONE-SYMBOLS! A prophecy of the infinite grace of the Great Mediator, bearing on His very heart all His own. So notice here:—1. *Their Shining*, as speaking of the (1) purity, and (2) preciousness of the saints. 2. *Their Setting*, as signifying that Christ lets out His precious blood to make room for them in His heart. 3. *Their Stability*, as suggesting the strength of His Church, and that He gathers together in one all His people far and near. 4. *Their Service*, as symbolising His fervent love for all who hope in Him. "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up My jewels." And then,

"A perfect satisfaction,
A fulness of delight,
A sense of gliding onward
Through regions ever bright."
—*Adams.*

Gem-Formation! Ver. 17. (1.) In nature there is hardly a stone that is not capable of crystallising into something purer and brighter than its normal state. Coal, by a slightly different arrangement of its particles, is capable of becoming the radiant diamond. The slag cast out from the furnace as useless waste, forms into globular masses of radiating crystals. The very mud on the road, trampled under foot as the type of all impurity, can be changed by chemical art into metals and gems of surpassing beauty. (2.) God can make jewels out of the most worthless moral rubbish. Let the cases of John Newton, of the woman that was a sinner, of the thief upon the cross, of Augustine, of John Bunyan, of Colonel Gardiner, and of thousands more, bear witness to the almighty power of the Alchemy of Divine Grace. It only requires a supreme surrender of ourselves into the hands of the Holy Spirit to ensure the Scripture assurance, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels."

"Creator! let Thy Spirit shine
The darkness of my soul within,
And lead me by Thy Grace Divine
From the forbidden paths of sin."
—*Burleigh.*

Breastplate-Symbolism! Ver. 18–20. (1.) Each jewel in the four rows of precious stones shone by its own coloured light, and yet contributed to the brilliancy of the whole. So in the Christian character all the graces should blend in such a way that the effect of the whole may be to the eye what melody is to the ear. (2.) There is, says Macmillan, harmony in colours as well as in sounds; and when the proper hues are associated together, the complementary ones harmonising and contrasting with one another, the effect is exceedingly pleasing. Every one who has observed nature at all must have been struck by this distinguishing feature. (3.) Such a symmetry of graces is rarely observed in the Christian character; for only too often graces that charm us by their beauty lie close by the side of defects that repel. The sapphire of love may be placed side by side with the sickly green of envy and jealousy; and the purple of humility with the red and angry glare of passion. As Jesus says, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee."

"My God! how fearful is the fight
Within my heart two spirits wage;
One seeks alone Thy heavenly light,
And every thought with thee t'engage;
The other scorns Thy sovereign will,
And dares revolt against it still"
—*Racine.*

Precious Stones! Ver. 21. The New Jerusalem above will be a glorious city, because there shall be gathered together, in varied but harmonious splendour, the brightness of the diamond, the ruddy glare of the topaz, the deep green of the emerald, the shining gold of the jasper, the milk-white filmyness of the onyx, the heavenly blue of the sapphire, the lovely violet of the amethyst, the burning changes of the opal, and the soft beauty of the pearl!

"The city had no temple, for itself
From wall to wall, from base to pinnacle,
Was one harmonious veilless sanctuary,
One Holiest of all. —*Bickersteth.*

Urim and Thummim! Ver. 30. (1.) Gesenius and others imagine that these were small oracular images, like the teraphim, by which revelation and truth were personified, and which were placed in the inner cavity of the breastplate. (2.) Spencer and others fancy that the ornament was derived from the Egyptians, whose chief priest, being also supreme civil judge, wore such suspended from a golden chain round his neck. But this jewel was wholly *judicial.* (3.) Kitto says that the Urim and Thummim were not so much judicial as sacerdotal and oracular; and that there is really no resemblance to the Egyptian practice, except in the substance, a jewel. (4.) In verse 29 Aaron is directed to wear the names upon his heart before the Lord; and here he is directed to wear the Urim and Thummim upon the same place, and before the same Being. They are thus identical; at least such is a reasonable presumption. (5.) Some think that they were the two tables of the law inscribed in some way on the breastplate, while others consider them to have been the precious stones. It is impossible to say with certainty.

"Urim and Thummim near his heart
In rich enchasings worn,
The sacred light of truth impart,
To teach and to adorn."

Light and Perfection! Ver. 30. (1.) *Urim* means light; *Thummim* means perfection. By means of these the Lord revealed His will and gave responses to His consulting people. In what way they were consulted is quite uncertain. (2.) Josephus says that probably the stones gave out an oracular answer by preternatural illumination. But it seems to be more natural to suppose that the answer was given simply by the word of the Lord. (3.) Law says that the gospel significance of these is clear; that they tell us Christ is our light and our perfection, and that He is made unto us the light of wisdom and the perfection of righteousness. (4.) Dr. Smith points out the idea of justification, which is often expressed in actual Oriental life by the nature of the robe worn. He directs attention to Isa. lxi. 10 as a good illustration of this.

"In Him a holiness complete,
Light and perfection shine;
And wisdom, grace, and glory meet,
A Saviour all Divine."

Revelation! Ver. 30. In the fabulous records of Pagan antiquity we read of a mirror endowed with properties so rare that, by looking into it, its possessor could discover any object which he wished to see, however remote, and discover with equal ease persons and things above, below, behind, and before him. Such a mirror, but infinitely more valuable, do we possess in the breastplate of the Bible. Here, on its very forefront, are the Urim and Thummim of the Eternal Divine Mind. Yet, as Revelation is a communication from an Infinite Mind to a finite capacity, it may be expected to mingle shadow with its splendour; for what finite comprehension can grasp Infinity?

"Therefore the sacred page
With deep attention scan! If on thy soul,
As thou dost read, a ray of purer light
Break in, oh check it not, give it full scope."
—*Hayes.*

Pomegranates! Ver. 33. (1.) The tree, or rather shrub, which bears this beautiful and delicious fruit, has its habitat in Asia and North Africa. Its leaves are dark green, in shape of those of the myrtle. The flower is a rich, brilliant red, and the fruit like an orange in shape, somewhat darker red in colour. The flavour is almost identical with that of a man

darin orange. The pomegranate was exhibited by the Israelite spies at Eshcol. When cut open, it reveals juicy red seeds, arranged symmetrically in rows parallel to the core. Hence in Cant. iv. 3, the Church of Christ, at the time of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, is likened to an open pomegranate. (2.) Is it more than a mere coincidence that in Cant. iv. 12, vi. 11, and vii. 12, allusions are made to this fruit? The first of these allegorical prophecies refers to the closing scenes in the life of Christ during the Last Supper; the second is inseparably connected with the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; while the third links itself with the subsequent Evangelisation of the Samaritans and other Gentiles. It was then that our Lord passed within the veil after "*His Exodus*" accomplished at Jerusalem, and when arrayed in the gorgeous high-priestly apparel He presented His fragrant and fruitful intercessions before the Throne of Mercy and Grace above.

"And He gathers the prayers as He stands,
And they change into fruits in His hands,
Pomegranates of purple and red;
And beneath the great arch of the portal,
Through the streets of the City Immortal,
Is wafted the fragrance they shed."
—*Longfellow.*

Golden-Bells! Ver. 34. The sound of these bells was very pleasant to the worshippers in the court of the tabernacle—telling, as they did, of the Advocate within the veil who was acting for them, and prevailing according to the will of God. We have a better High Priest, One who can never die, and who, having entered into heaven itself, now appears in the presence of God for us. May we not well believe, suggests Wood, that the golden bells on His robe are those melodious declarations of love—those alluring promises which give life and gladness to the soul, and which have all their value and significance only as they are connected with Him who is the Substitute and Surety of sinners? Trapp, however, says that they shadow out the prophetical office of Christ here and His perpetual intercession in heaven.

"Hark to the bells among the fruits, low, surging deep,
Falling in tender minors, now once more
Blending in heavenly harmonies, as creep
The rippling wavelets on the shelving shore."
—*Shipton.*

Conscience-Chimes! Ver. 34. Years ago, one lovely Sabbath morning, eight young law students were strolling along the bank of one of the tributaries of the Potomac River. They were going to a secluded spot in a grove to murder the precious hours of that holy day by playing whist and drinking wine. Each of them was the son of a praying mother. As they were sauntering along, and amusing each other with idle jests, the court-house bells—used for calling the people to their house of worship—commenced to ring. Suddenly one of them stopped, told how the bells recalled his mother's farewell assurance that every Sunday morning, when the church bells rang, she would pray for him, and expressed his determination to go back to church. "Silently," says the ringleader, "we all followed. Each of us managed to throw our cards and flasks into the stream, and not one of us now lives without a new heart"—each a monument to a mother's prayers.

"How soft the cadence of those village bells
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet!" —*Cowper.*

Pomegranate-Prefigurations! Ver. 34. If the joyful sounds of grace to sinners were prefigured by the golden bells on the robe of the ephod, it has been suggested that we shall not be far wrong in supposing that these fruits were types of the results which always follow a right hearing of the sweet melody. As every golden bell was followed by its pomegranate, so every Gospel message is, when welcomed, succeeded by its appropriate fruit. The pomegranate is not only (1) beautiful to the eye, but (2) richly luscious to the taste. It is also (3) full of seed, to extend the blessings already possessed by itself. So, says a Glasgow merchant, is it with the fruits of grace. Not one of them but is lovely to the sight of God and man. In themselves refreshing and delightful, they carry spiritual seeds for the propagation of the same rich joy which they enwrap. Blessed in themselves, they give forth blessing to others. These are the fruits of the Spirit detailed by St. Paul. It is hinted by Trapp that these pomegranates shadow out the duty of ministers, which is to live sermons—to be fruitful as well as painful teachers.

"Oh! then sustain me, Holiest! I am vowed
To solemn service high;
And shall the spirit, for Thy tasks endowed,
Sink on the threshold of the sanctuary?"

Aaronic-Bells! Ver. 35. (1.) This verse shows their use and intent. The sound of the numerous bells that covered Aaron's robe, gave notice to the assembled people that the most awful ceremony of their religion had commenced. When arrayed in this garb, he bore into the sanctuary the vessel of incense. This was the signal to prostrate themselves before God, and to commence those fervent ejaculations which were to ascend with the column of incense to the Throne of Heaven. The music of the bells was here, then, a signal to wrestle with Jehovah to bless the intercession of Aaron. (2.) Talmage suggests that the Gospel has many bells: (1) *Golden Bells*, signifying the preciousness of the glad tidings of salvation; (2) *Inviting Bells*, summoning the servants of God to worship Him in His holy temple; (3) *Warning Bells*, saying that

delay in serving God is attended with danger; (4) *Cheering Bells*, setting forth the possibility of pardon to all anxious sinners; and (5) *Triumphant Bells*, singing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (3.) Wood says that the sound of the bells outside attested Aaron's being alive and active, and accepted in the intercessory work to which he was appointed. When the worshippers learned from the ringing of the bells that their advocate within the veil was prospering in his appeal on their behalf, they were emboldened to blend their supplications with those of Aaron.

"Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices, something understood."
—*Herbert.*

Mitre-Medallion! Ver. 36. (1.) Dr. Kitto says that the mitre was a turban of fine linen, furnished in front with a plate of pure gold, on which were inscribed the words, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," and which was attached to the turban by a blue lace. The word translated, "plate," signifies a flower, and is rendered *petalon*, *i.e.*, a petal, by the Septuagint. This seems to show that the plate was wrought with flowered work, or was itself in the form of a flower or petal. (2.) In the prophecies of Zechariah (xiv. 20) it is foretold that in the coming millennial days there is to be inscribed upon the bells of the horses, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Until the recent introduction of tram-cars there was little of such a custom in England, though in some continental cities almost every horse employed for draught purposes bears a bell round its neck. Russian and Canadian sleighs are always furnished with these bells. (3.) Contrast the one inscription on the Messiah's frontlet with this inscription everywhere visible in the latter days. It tells us that so efficacious will the intercessions of our Great High Priest in heaven for 2000 years prove, that every kind of traffic shall be carried on in a manner becoming the Gospel, and that, whatsoever men do, each and all of their works shall be done with a single eye to God's glory, *i.e.*, shall be "HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

"And all the holy race of Abraham
Be clothed in priestly robes, spotless as snow." —*Bickersteth.*

Mitre-Moral! Ver. 38. During Alexander the Great's career of conquest, he was opposed by the Jews, who remained faithful in their allegiance to Darius the Persian. Having wreaked his vengeance on Tyre by giving it to the flames, and crucifying 2000 of its citizens along the seashore, he marched against Jerusalem. Rollin gives an interesting account of the event. Jaddus, the high priest, interceded with God to aid His people, and was answered in a dream that he must cause flowers to be strewn about the city, set open the city gates, and go forth with the priests in festal procession, wearing his pontifical robes. He accordingly arrayed himself, and leading the procession, marched forth to meet the "fiery scourge of God." Alexander, struck by the sight of the high priest, on whose mitre and forehead a gold plate was fixed bearing the name of God, bowed low before the august name of JEHOVAH. All were surprised, and one of the conqueror's favourite generals asked for an explanation. The conqueror having given it, entered Jerusalem, and offered up sacrifices to the God of the Hebrews. Thus the proud head of earth's mightiest warrior bent before the mitre-motto, "Holiness to Jehovah." And before Jesus, the great High Priest, on the forefront of whose earth and heaven life is inscribed this title, shall all the mighty ones of the world be at last constrained to bow.

"Exalted high at God's right hand,
And Lord of all below;
Through Him is pardoning love dispensed,
And boundless blessings flow."
—*Barbauld.*

Holy Wholly! Vers. 40–43. In the raiment of Aaron, as in all the tabernacle appurtenances, every part was holy throughout. Not a carven pomegranate—not a bell, silver or golden, but was holy wholly. The table and its lamps, with flowers of silver light, tent and stones, fluttering curtains and ascending incense, altar and sacrifice, breastplate and ephod, mitre and gem-clasped girdle, wreathen chains and jewelled hangings, were holy. This signified not only (1) the entire holiness of God, with whom we have to do, but also (2) the absolute necessity for thorough sanctification of heart and life in ourselves. This is the will of God; and to accomplish this He sets His jewels in the fires that they may be purified, and like Himself in holiness.

"No spot or wrinkle on their holy brow,
No film upon their robes of dazzling white,
Most beautiful, most glorious; every saint
HOLY in individual HOLINESS."

CHAPTER XXIX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**8. Thou shalt pour it**] = *veyatsakta* from the verb *yatsak*, to profusely anoint, is the word employed in regard to the anointing of Aaron; but *Mashach* = to simply anoint is the word used in the case of his sons. Thus the difference in the terms employed indicate that God regarded the High priest with more honour than the other priests.

And, as oil is the acknowledged symbol of health, strength, and beauty or purity, we have here an indication of the qualifications and graces which should distinguish the priesthood generally and the High Priest in particular. 9. And thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons] is a free rendering of the words of the text: *U'miletha yad Ahron veyad banav*, literally, "Thou shalt fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons," with a reference, no doubt, to (verses 22–24). The things there enumerated are the various parts of the ram of consecration, besides several other accompaniments which Moses was commanded to place on the hands of Aaron and his sons, and by which evidently the propitiatory character of the priest's office was indicated, as they were burnt before the Lord as *an acceptable offering* (ver. 25). And, as in the act of consecration of the priests, they placed the gifts given to them by Moses upon the altar of the Lord, these may be regarded as characteristic of their office, and typified humility and devotedness.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1-38.

THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AS TYPICAL OF THE PRIESTLY CALLING OF CHRIST.

We have shadowed forth here in the public appointment of Aaron some great truths concerning the Great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens.

I. The authority of His calling. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. v. 4). Aaron does not invest himself with the pontifical attire, and himself assume the priestly functions, but he receives these from the hands of Moses as the representative of God. "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee" (Heb. v. 5). Christ is ever careful to keep before us the Divine authority of His character, teachings, and priesthood. Thus with His *character* (John xiv. 6–9). Thus with His *works* (John xiv. 10, 11). Thus with His *doctrines* (John vii. 16–18). Thus with His *atonement* (Rom. iii. 25). There is Divine authority in the whole work of Jesus Christ; we see "God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

II. The glory of His character. In the first ceremony of the washing we have an anticipation of the purity of Christ's nature, and in the robing and crowning of Aaron we behold, as in a glass, the moral loveliness and glory of the world's everlasting Priest. Christ's life was destitute of all the empty pomps of royalty. They that wear soft raiment are in king's houses: but how irresistible the moral glory of His spirit and work! "What could I do more in royal robes, father, than in this plain garment?" said Edward I. to a bishop who remonstrated with him on his attire as unkingly. The Jews saw Messiah destitute of all material, social, and political glory, and thus when they saw Him, there was no beauty that they should desire Him; but if they had regarded the moral grandeur of His spirit and work and doctrine, they would have felt that He needed no angel's face, or transfigured robe, or golden crown. He was without sin, His holiness was intense and perpetual, and He is the most glorious Being in earth or heaven.

III. The fulness of His grace, ver. 7. Oil was a type of reconciliation and peace, and the fact that it was *poured* on the head of the priest indicates the fulness of the grace imparted to the priest, and through him to Israel. This attains its highest meaning in Jesus Christ (Heb. i. 9.) Christ is *full* of truth and grace. In His reconciling character He can fill the *individual* soul with peace; and He can harmonise all the conflicting elements of the world, and fill the *earth* with peace. "He giveth more grace."

IV. The efficacy of His atonement, vers. 11–38. All that is said here of the purification of the priests, by blood and fire, is most significant of the fact that,

through the atonement and spirit of Christ, humanity is fitted for intercourse with God. It was only when the animals had borne away the sin of the priests, and when their members and raiment had been purified by the sprinkled blood, that they are fitted to enter into the presence of God; and it is only as Christ atones for us by His death and purifies us by His Spirit, that we are worthy to see the face of God (Heb. ix. 18–28).

HOLINESS AND SERVICE.—*Verses* 1–38.

All these ceremonies attending the consecration of the priests are intended to teach the great lesson, that all who minister before God, that all who minister to God, must be holy. These ceremonies are not so many empty forms, intended merely to impress the people, but full of moral meaning.

I. The necessity of holiness in the service of God. Before the priests can minister before God there must be the washing, anointing, robing—all significant of purification from sin and of the attainment of the beauty of holiness. The services of a priest not thus consecrated would have been rejected. All must be thus washed and beautified who would serve God in all generations. Without holiness of heart—for this is what the ceremonial holiness typifies—our *virtues* are unacceptable. Our righteousness is filthy rags. The patchwork garment of human fabrication will never do in place of that wedding robe of spiritual righteousness which God gives. Our *work* is unacceptable. No matter what our work may be, if it is not pure, it is rejected. It may be high work in the world, solemn work in the Church, but if it lack love and holiness it is vain. Our *worship* is (Isa. i. 10–16). Our *gifts* are (Isa. i. 10–16; 1 Cor. xiii. 1–4). Our *services for others* are. Holiness must be possessed by the priest before he can pray and offer for the people. Our virtues may be many, our work useful, our prayers eloquent, our gifts munificent, our services to our times liberal and salutary; but if in our heart there is selfishness, sensuality, sin, God will reject us. "Be ye holy that bear the vessels of the Lord." We must be washed in the laver of regeneration, beautified by God's righteousness, anointed by God's grace, and then shall God be well pleased in us, and our ministrations for others shall be blessed. And this holiness must be *complete* and *thorough*. We feel this if we regard the blood-sprinkling upon the person and garments of the priests, vers. 19–21. "A part of the blood of the ram of consecration was sprinkled upon the ears of Aaron and his sons, to remind them always to listen to the commands of God; upon their hands, to enjoin the duty of activity and zeal in the service of God; and upon their feet, to symbolise their walking in the ways of the law."—*Kalisch*. The hallowing of the whole personality and life. And we feel how necessary holiness is in the servants of God, and how thorough that holiness must be, when we read verse 35, that the ceremonies of consecration are to be repeated during seven days.

II. The source of this holiness. The whole ceremony attending the consecration of the priests teaches that the highest holiness is only realised in Christ. The sprinkling of the blood on the priest and on all his attire typifies this. Christ crucified alone creates in us a horror of sin; Christ alone bears our sin away; Christ's grace alone cleanses us from the crimson stain (Heb. ix. 11–15; 1 John i. 7). If we are to become a holy priesthood unto God, offering here the living sacrifices of an acceptable service, and at death entering into the Eternal presence, the dying love of Christ must kindle our love, and the righteousness which Christ died to maintain must adorn our nature and life. The theology of the Jewish Temple is full of purity by atonement; so is the

theology of the primitive Christian Church; so is the theology of Heaven (Rev. vii. 9–17).

THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN THE CHURCH.—*Verses* 38–46.

We are instructed here concerning—

I. The condition of the Divine Presence. God promises to dwell with Israel, and the stipulations which accompany this promise are full of instruction. God is not to dwell with Israel on the ground of their *election*. God had elected Israel to be the guardian of His Truth, and to accomplish certain great ends in the drama of history, but the presence of God with Israel is neither here nor anywhere else made to rest on the ground of this election. The continued presence of God with Israel is not guaranteed by the *magnificence* of the Tabernacle. God did not dwell in the Tabernacle because of its gold and scarlet, because of its rich draperies and gorgeous furniture. God will never dwell among us because of the richness or grandeur of a worldly sanctuary. The presence of God is not secured to Israel on the ground of their *ecclesiastical polity*. "See that thou make it according to the pattern I showed thee in the mount." So Moses did: the whole Tabernacle and its furniture was according to the celestial pattern shown to the great lawgiver. But not on this ground was God to dwell with Israel. We may have our churches constructed on what we consider to be *the* scriptural pattern, on what may be a scriptural pattern, and yet God may deny us His presence. The grand condition is *moral* and *spiritual*. *Everything* must be holy. The *priests* must be holy, as we have already seen; and here again the demand is reiterated. "*Whosoever* toucheth the altar must be holy," ver. 37. No unclean individual was allowed to approach the altar; it does not mean, whatever has once touched the altar must be considered holy. And the *altar*, too, was to be most holy, ver. 37. God dwelt with Israel on the ground of their moral purity, and for their lack of righteousness He deserted them. God's presence is given still to such as seek Him with pure and penitent hearts. The sacrifices here mentioned symbolised the constant consecration of Israel's life unto God, and only on this ground will God meet with and bless mankind. Purity is the sign of the true Church. *Entirely*, *daily*, *permanently*, must we yield ourselves to God, and then God's face shall shine upon us as an unsetting sun.

II. The blessedness of the Divine Presence. 1. It is an *enlightening* Presence. "Where I will meet you, to speak there to thee," ver. 42. How truly blessed to have this communion with God! to have a certain spot where we are sure of special revelations of God's heart and will! Not to have our imagination wandering through infinity, baffled by the vastness, but to be able to enter into our closet, and talk with God. God comes to the door of the Tabernacle to enlighten and bless the people—He will not hide Himself in the Holiest. If we come to God with pure and penitent hearts He will not hide Himself from us, but we shall see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2. It is a *glorifying* Presence. "That it be hallowed by My glory," vers. 43, 44. The glory of gold and crimson was nothing, without the glory of the Divine Presence. Where God dwells He creates that fulness of purity and gladness which we call glory. 3. It is a *redeeming* Presence. "Which brought them out of the land of Egypt," ver. 46. And which, therefore, would deliver them from all other evils. God's presence is a wall of fire. 4. It is an *abiding* Presence. "That I may dwell among them," vers. 45, 46. Not only "meet" them, but "dwell" among them. "Pleasures for evermore" (Rev. vii. 15–17).

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIX.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Speech-Symbolism! Vers. 1–44. (1.) An eminent author says that language is the amber in which a thousand precious and subtile thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved. It has arrested ten thousand lightning flashes of genius, which, unless thus arrested and fixed, might have been as bright, but would have also been as quickly passing and perishing *as the lightning.* (2.) Trench adds to this, that words convey the mental treasures of one period to the generations that follow; and, laden with their precious flight, *they sail safely across the gulfs of time* in which empires have suffered shipwreck, and the languages of common life have sunk into oblivion. (3.) What, then, shall be said of speech which is not man's but God's? What, then, shall be said of words in which the thoughts of God are embalmed? Sent safely across the yawning, surging gulfs of time, do they not invite our most searching investigation for our learning and comfort in matters of infinite importance and everlasting endurance?

"Then be not like the hog that hath
A pearl at his desire,
And takes more pleasure in the trough
And wallowing in the mire."
—*Barker*, 1594.

Priesthood-Consecration! Ver. 1. Edwards well says that man's redemption was a purpose before it was a fact. Hence the Son of God anticipated man's fall, and immediately on its occurrence, putting aside the gorgeous veil of His dwelling-place, descended to earth to promise deliverance. As Wallis remarks, from that time His atonement was prefigured by slaughtered victims, exhibited in prophetic types. The Redeemer's sacrifice, therefore, has a retrospective as well as prospective value. He planted His cross between the two dispensations, throwing a radiance over the past and a splendour over the future. Thus He made its glory to glance on the two extremities of time, and set it forth as the centre of associated interest to the good both of heaven and earth.

"The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love,
The sinner's refuge here below,
The angel's theme in heaven above."
—*Kelley.*

Ablutions and Oblations! Vers. 3, 4. (1.) The tabernacle, as Atwater remarks, is to be considered as the residence of the Divine King of Israel. The remembrance of this will aid in understanding some parts of the Jewish ritual that might otherwise be comparatively unintelligible. This explains the great importance attached to personal cleanliness and freedom from corporeal blemishes on the part of all the attendants of the sanctuary. Some of the sacrifices, such as the burnt-offerings, were forms of consecration to the service of the sovereign — what in modern phraseology would be called homage. (2.) Such purification we have in the case of Joseph entering Pharaoh's presence, of Esther appearing before Ahasuerus, and of Daniel being presented to Nebuchadnezzar. The homage of offerings, when persons acknowledged themselves subjects to a king, is as common to-day in eastern countries as it has ever been from the most remote of historical periods. Hence the ideas were familiar to the Israelites who had just left Egypt. (3.) But these priestly ablutions and oblations were deeply symbolical; not only as implying man's moral unfitness to serve Jehovah-King, but also as involving the prayer for Divine Grace, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." The offerings are indicated in the Pauline entreaty: "We beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

"Oh! cleanse my sordid soul within
By Thy Christ's blood—the bath of sin."
—*Wotton.*

Aaronic Washing! Ver. 4. (1.) Does this typify the Baptism of the Lord Jesus? Baptism was usually connected with confession of sin, both amongst the heathen and Hebrews. The washing was in itself a symbol of the desire to wash away the defilement of the soul. But Jesus knew no sin, though Aaron did. Nevertheless He offered Himself to God. His Baptism, symbolised by the Aaronic purification, was the purifying of Himself as the Priest and Victim. (2.) In the upper room when He offered up His intercessory prayer, that God would accept Him in sacrifice for the sins of His people, He says, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." What Jesus spoke of the sanctifying of Himself, to be a holy priest and holy sacrifice, is amplified, says Geso in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the effect that Jesus was both the offerer and offering. (3.) The Baptismal rite was linked with the descent of the Holy Spirit. It was through the Eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God. Thus both priest and animal were washed to shadow forth the Baptism not only in Jordan waters but with the Holy

Spirit. Having knelt in prayer on the bank to which He had returned from the shallow ford,—

"Lo! on a sudden the blue heavens were rent,
The Spirit descending in corporeal shape,
Dove-like, alighted on His sacred head,
A Dove of plumage *whiter than the light.*"
—*Bickersteth.*

Aaronic Associations! Vers. 5, 6. (1.) The Aaronic priesthood, as established and perpetuated for long ages in Israel, was in all its aspects and relations eminently symbolic and typical. The selection and consecration of the high priest, the manifold duties and functions of the high office, were all penetrated with spiritual significance. *Not more saturated is our atmosphere with ozone, our ocean with salts, our flowers with sweet odours;* than are the Aaronic associations with spiritual significations. (2.) As a natural and inevitable result, names, titles, figures, and symbolic phrases derived therefrom, have been sown broadcast, over the entire area of our religious literature. As Thompson observes, the most precious and significant names and official titles bestowed upon our blessed Lord come to us without modification from this source. This we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

"Where high the heavenly temple stands,
The house of God not made with hands,
A great High Priest our nature wears—
The Saviour of mankind appears."
—*Logan.*

Priest-Anointing! Ver. 8. (1.) Jenkyn says that the Agonistes in the Grecian Games anointed themselves with ointments in order to attain quickness, agility, and nimbleness of action; and this gave a grace and beauty to their various movements. Before they could attain this the ointment must have pervaded their frame and not glistened in superficial application. (2.) In like manner, before the Church can acquire a grace in doing good, and in acting after the Spirit, the unction from the Holy One must penetrate all the muscles of its frame and all the members of its body. Thus the Spirit of Holiness gives to the Church an aptness and a grace in all its movements and efforts for the conversion of the world.

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the Anointing Spirit art,
Thou dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart.
—1662.

Priesthood! Vers. 8, 9. (1.) The priests were types of Christ in reference to the freedom of access to God, which was allowed to them. They alone were permitted to enter the Tabernacle. Only to the High Priest was it lawful to go into the Holy of Holies, just as Christ our Mediator enters into the immediate presence of God. (2.) The whole body of the people were required to keep themselves ceremonially pure. But in the case of the priesthood this was enjoined with special urgency, on the ground that Christ was literally without sin.

"Holy Saviour, wash us hourly,
Sanctify us day by day;
Sorely we have need of cleansing,
Purge each stain of sin away."
—*Murray.*

Sin-Offering! Vers. 10–14. There were three gateways which the Aaronic priesthood had to penetrate before they could minister in the presence of God. One was that of the Sin-offering, the gateway of confession of sin. Another was that of the Burnt-offering (vers. 15–18), the gateway of profession of faith in Christ. The third was that of the Peace-offering (vers. 19–21), the gateway of consecration, *i.e.*, of self-dedication to God. These were the stepping-stones to acceptable ministry in the priesthood. When these steps had been ascended—when these gateways had been passed, the Meat-offering had then to be eaten, to signify (1) a state of fellowship with God, and (2) a resolution to bring forth fruit to God. Not less essential are these gateways to the Christian ministry, and to that universal ministry of Christians who are designated as kings and priests unto God.

"Through death the world is raised above
Its alien curse and kindred dust;
We on the Cross read, "God is just,"
But in the offering, "God is Love."
—*Punshon.*

Midriff-Mystery! Ver. 13. (1.) One of nature's most painful and deadly maladies is cancer. If within reach of the surgeon's knife and skill, an operation is performed for its excision. Often the physician fails to extract all the fibres; and to eradicate the roots left behind, he applies lunar caustic. But how many uncertainties surround this operation. The cancer may be beyond reach of his knife. It may be within reach, and yet the operation produce fatal results. The operation may only be partially successful and require burning. The application of caustic may not be successful in eliminating the residue. (2.) The Divine Physician extracts the cancer in the human nature. Yet is He pleased to allow, for wise and loving purposes, part of it more or less to remain; and by successive operations of "burning affliction and sorrow" to eradicate it entirely. There are no possibilities of failure in His hands. He can reach every sin-cancer. Its excision is certain to be successful. The application of "moral caustic" never fails to achieve the desired results. The Christian is made whole—meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

"Pain's furnace-heat within me quivers,
God's breath upon the fire doth blow,
And all my heart in anguish shivers
And trembles at the fiery glow;
And yet I whisper, "As God will!"
And in His hottest fire hold still."
—*Sturm.*

Burnt-Offering! Vers. 15–18. (1.) In nature, both with animals and plants, there are special characteristics for each species or form; and yet, the special characteristic of one species or form may be found more or less prominent in another species or form. The sea-anemone has its own peculiar feature of existence; nevertheless, that feature appears in other and more common existence. The Indian banyan has likewise its particular characteristic, which, however, presents itself in less prominence in another African tree. (2.) In the Levitical sacrifices, substitution was the special idea implied in the sin-offering. Substitution was most fully shadowed forth in this sacrifice. Nevertheless, though dedication rose prominently to view in the burnt-offering, yet the substitution element existed largely in it. This element presents itself more clearly in the daily sacrifice of vers. 38–42.

"The blood which, as a priest, He bears
For sinners is His own;
The incense of His prayers and tears
Perfumes the Holy Throne."
—*Newton.*

Sweet Savour! Ver. 18. (1.) The curtains of God's pavilion are here thrown back, and each attribute appears rejoicing in redemption. The animal is offered, and there is fragrance throughout heaven. This image is a bright jewel in the Bible treasury. It first flashed its beauty on Noah's sacrifice after the Flood. It appears again and again through the Patriarchal offerings and those of the Levitical priesthood; and all these are but satellites borrowing their beauties from the shining sun in Ephes. v. 2: "Christ gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God, for a sweet-smelling savour. (2.) Just as one orb contains all lights, so this brief expression contains the whole purpose of redemption. The children of Israel were taught in twilight-rites the fulness of the work of Christ: "It is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord." This is the magnifying medium, through which we see that the dying of Jesus is the garden of God's sweetest perfumes. His one sacrifice is eternal and unbounded fragrance. (3.) If Christ's sacrifice is richest odour to God, so ought it to be to man. The joy of God should be our joy. The refreshment of God's heart should be the refreshment of every man's heart. The perfume which gratifies the spirit of God should perfume the spirit of each child of Adam. Man's every faculty should expand and revel in the Calvary oblation. His crucifixion should be the soul's paradise of every spice and flower. His name should be as ointment poured forth. His sacrifice should smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. He Himself should be as a bundle of myrrh, a cluster of camphire.

"As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is a dying Christ to me;
And while He makes my soul His guest,
My bosom, Lord, shall be thy rest."

Ram-Rump! Ver. 22. Eastern sheep have much larger tails than those of our own land. The broadtailed sheep of Aleppo, Russell says, are known to have tails five pounds in weight. To prevent these being torn by thorns and thistles, the shepherds fasten thin boards underneath them. Some of these boards have wheels to facilitate the movements of the animal. The Abbé Mariti, in his "Travels through Cyprus," states that the flesh of these tails is juicy and tender. It is not, however, eaten separately, but mixed with the lean of other portions. The fat is often used as butter. This explains the Levitical consumption by fire.

Priesthood-Purposes! Ver. 29. Almost everything connected with the Levitical priesthood was symbolic. There was a spiritual purpose in each separate act and fact. It is sufficient merely to mention such suggestive things as the mercy-seat covering the ark, in which was deposited the stone-engraved law, and on which the high priest sprinkled seven times the atoning blood. Then there were the cherubims, beneath whose outspread wings ascended the cloud of incense—the prayers of the saints perfumed by the infinite merits of the Great Mediator. How many delightful thoughts gather about it, *as bees clustering around some odorous flower or luscious honeycomb!* In how many humble prayers, in how many glad songs of praise, is it the central idea, *as a sun serves for a centre of attraction to countless satellite-orbs of light and beauty!* Thus the priesthood had its purpose. Acting out their sacred functions, they were continually revealing and visibly interpreting the deep mystery of available mediation between God and man.

"I need Thee, precious Jesus!
For I am full of sin;
My soul is dark and guilty,
My heart is dead within."
—*Whitfield.*

Atonement! Ver. 33. (1.) All bloody sacrifices embodied in themselves the idea of expiation. This idea may have existed in the mind of the patriarchs only in a vague and indefinite shape, as marking the earliest stage in the development of the plan of redemption. It may have resembled the pencilled outline which the artist makes upon the canvass pre-

vious to his filling in with rainbow hues. (2.) The patriarchs and priests of the Mosaic dispensation understood that in themselves sacrifices had no atoning power. They could atone for sin only as they were symbolic—anticipatory of the real atonement afterwards effected by Christ. The idea which lies at the basis of atonement is that of covering. The sin atoned for is regarded as if no longer in existence. (3.) This paved the way for reconciliation—that idea which occurs ten times in the Greek New Testament. In nine of these ten, the Greek is translated "reconciliation;" and in the tenth (Rom. v. 11) "atonement," *i.e.*, at-one-ment. The death of Christ makes a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for sin; and thus opens up a way for man's reconcilement to God.

"No more need altar smoke, nor victim bleed;
'Tis finished! the great mystery of love,
Ye sin-condemned, by this blood 'tis decreed
Ye stand absolved: Behold the curse removed!"
—*Palmer.*

Substitution-Shadows! Ver. 36. (1.) The Messianic Substitutionary Sacrifice is the grandest and most distinctive thing in the Bible, for the sake of which, indeed, the Bible has been produced. Many regard it as a discord in nature's harmonious anthem; clashing with the phenomena of the universe around us. But, as an earnest writer says, this is altogether a superficial view. Nature and human nature present certain aspects of atonement. And the substitution taught by the Aaronic offerings and rites is patent to the student in the laws of nature and human nature. (2.) We see, writes an eloquent divine, the law of vicarious action at work in the plant yielding up its life in order that the animal may be nourished. We observe it in the sacrifice of the animal that the nobler life of man may be sustained. The doctrine of substitution pervades the whole science of chemistry, in which we find numerous examples of one element of congeners replacing another. (3.) Thus nature, human nature, and the Mosaic sacrifices are in harmony in teaching each and all the great mystery of substitution. All three are like different aisles in the great cathedral, or different avenues in the vast forest, leading up to the Holy Place—to the central object of Calvary: "He hath made Him who knew no sin, to be *sin for us*, that we might be the righteousness of God in Him."

"He seized our dreadful right, the load sustained;
And heaved the mountain from a guilty world."
—*Young.*

Morning and Evening Watches! Ver. 39. (1.) This continual burnt-offering, combining in itself to a considerable extent what belonged to the other sacrifices, might be regarded as embodying the general idea of sacrifice, and as in a sense representing the whole sacrificial institute. (2.) On the same account Fairbairn says that it was a species of offering to be presented morning and evening in behalf of the whole covenant people; and which, especially during the night, was to be so slowly consumed that it might last till dawn. (3.) This continual burnt-offering, or perpetual sacrifice, symbolised the abiding sacrifice which the Lord Jesus presents before the heavenly Throne night and day, from morn till eve, and from eve to dawn of day. Faith's eye perceived this. (4.) In a secondary sense, it signified also the morning and evening watches of Christian prayer. In Deut. xxxiii. 10, it says, "They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifices upon Thy altar." The incense is an emblem of daily prayer, morning and evening—of prayer without ceasing; and the accompanying burnt-offering indicated that in every "incense-supplication" was to be the Propitiation of Christ. The Sacrifice of Calvary should ever be mentioned in, should ever be associated with, the Christian's morning and evening watches.

"Here I would for ever stay,
Weep and gaze my soul away;
Thou art heaven on earth to me,
Lovely, mournful Calvary."
—*Montgomery.*

Acceptable Service! Ver. 41. (1.) Fragrance has a far-reaching power, a mysterious association with the deep and hidden things of the heart. Because of these virtues, many of the Bible images appeal to our sense of smell. No sense is more closely connected with the sphere of the soul. It is regarded as an important means of communication with heaven, *and a direct avenue for the soul's approach to the Father.* The acceptance, says Macmillan, of man's offerings by God is usually represented in the anthropomorphisms of the Bible as finding its expression in the sense of smell. (2.) The Apostle Paul, employing the same typical language, speaks of himself and the other Apostles as unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. The Psalms and the Prophetic writings are full of the most beautiful and expressive metaphors, applied to the most solemn persons and things, of "sweet savours." The Song of Solomon is like an Oriental garden stocked with delicious, odorous flowers. But the "sweet savour" that is most acceptable is "the offering by fire," *i.e.*, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus amid the fires of wrath.

"The fragrance of which perfect sacrifice
Breathes infinite beatitude, and spans
The clouds of judgment with Eternal Light."

Burnt-Offering! Ver. 42. What is in a name? Words are but empty air; names are but the exterior and useless *shell.* The thing signified is the *kernel.* But this is a

very inadequate statement. Language is far more than the mere *vesture*, or even the *vehicle* of thought. It is both *parent and nurse* of the thought. There is much in a name; most of all in those divinely given. Such are the words "consecration," "atonement," "burnt-offering," "wave-offering," &c., occurring in this chapter. They are our *teachers and guides*, without which we can make no valuable acquisition in the Pentateuch fields of spiritual knowledge. They are *self-luminous lamps*, hung around the infinite mystery of the invisible God, and penetrating the thick darkness in which He dwells, so far as man's feeble sight can pierce. Upon the glass of this lamp ("burnt-offering") may be read letters, burnt in by the fiery process of inspiration, telling us that within the building over whose porch it hangs is a spiritual glory in the shape of the Atoning Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

"Nor can the type and symbol take away
The guilt, and for a broken law requite.
The cross unfolds the mystery, *Jesus died;*
The sinner lives; the Law is satisfied.
—*Conder.*

Mediation-Meaning! Ver. 44. (1.) Eastern nations, beyond all others, have recourse to mediation. It has been noticed that they seem incapable of transacting business without the intervention of a mediator. The buying of an ass, the renting of a house, the hiring of a servant, or the settling of a trifling dispute, cannot be achieved without mediation at the present day in the East. Yet it is not, as has been remarked, a modern fashion. It appears even in the early history of Abraham at Machpelah, and Joseph in the Egyptian dungeon. (2.) Such being the custom in transacting temporal matters, it became the most natural thing in the world to resort to mediation in the affairs of the soul. Educated to *mediation* in things secular, the Israelites were the more prepared to accept *mediation* in things spiritual. The consciousness of sin would only intensify this feeling and desire to have a Mediator or Intercessor. (3.) The priests in the Tabernacle stood in this relation officially and by Divine appointment. But even they could only mediate typically. *Their mediation had a meaning in the future.* Their sacrificial offerings were of no avail, except as they pointed to the one true Mediator, whose blood cleanseth from all sin.

"See Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Within the veil appear,
In robes of mystic meaning drest,
Presenting Israel's prayer."
—*Newton.*

Divine-Indwelling! Ver. 45. It is a remarkable coincidence that as here we have the sacrificial lambs connected with the Divine Presence in the Hebrew Church, so there is a similar conjunction of the two in Rev. xxi. Whether we regard that chapter as a prophetic vision of the Millennial or Eternal Eras of the Church of Christ matters not. It is the Lamb of God who figures in it with His Bride; and afterwards comes a great voice proclaiming that the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them. "Jehovah-Shammah," *i.e.*, The Lord is there; because "Jehovah-Tsidkenu," *i.e.*, The Lord our Righteousness is there. As the Lord dwelt between the cherubims as long as the typical lambs were present in the Tabernacle services, so will He tabernacle where the Lamb of God is in heaven. Twice over in one verse is it here said that such shall be the bliss. Oh, amazing honours! The Tabernacle of God with men! We can picture the angelic myriads hovering on silvery pinions over the glowing scene, and exclaiming—"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"

"There, wrought with hands no temples rise,
For God Himself their place supplies;
Nor *priests* are needed in the abode
Where the whole hosts are priests to God."
—*Grinfield.*

Presence-Purpose! Ver. 46. (1.) Compare this chapter with Rev. vii., which has been sweetly designated as the "Palace Beautiful." If verses 13 to 17 may be called by one "the mirror set in the Christian Apocalypse, in which the Christian sees reflected his future character and condition;" surely these verses from 36 to 46 may be equally well described as "a mirror placed in the Mosaic Apocalypse, in which the Israelite was to behold reflected his future hope in Christ." If in Exodus xxix. we have the ceremonial washing, so in Rev. vii. we are told that the myriad-throngs of white-robed beings have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. If in Exodus xxix. we learn that this was by way of free approach to the throne of God within the Holy of Holies, so it is expressly declared that these blood-cleansed souls are in consequence before the throne. If in the significant speech of symbolic act and fact, Aaron and the priests and people sang, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," so it is the same song whose silent echoes down the ages are caught up in audible acclaim by the redeemed hosts. If in Exodus xxix. Israel, through obedience to the Divine command, hoped for the Divine Presence with them in a land where neither hunger nor thirst should be their lot, so in Rev. vii. we are told that these redeemed ones, having been washed in the blood of the Lamb, are in their holy land enjoying the presence of God, and knowing nothing of the pangs of hunger or the tortures of thirst.

"Now before the Throne of God,
Seal'd with His Eternal Name,
Clad in raiment pure and white,
Victor palms in every hand,
Through their great Redeemer's might,
More than conquerors they stand."

CHAPTER XXX.

CRITICAL NOTES. —1. Altar of incense] = Miktar Ketoreth, literally, the incenser of incense, or, to incense incense, because, strictly speaking, this was not an altar, as no sacrifices were offered upon it. It was also called *the golden* altar (xxxix. 38 ; Num. iv. 11) to distinguish it from the altar of burnt-offering which was of less costly materials. There was a special importance attached to this altar from various circumstances. The sweet incense, the symbol of prayer, was burnt upon it every day, morning and evening (vers. 7, 8). The blood of the sin-offering, too, was sprinkled upon it every year on the great day of atonement (Lev. xvi. 18–20), and at such other times as occasion required (Lev. iv. 17, 18). The position of this altar was, no doubt, calculated to enhance its typical import. It stood between the altar of burnt-offering in the Court and the mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies, separated from the latter by the great partition veil. Thus the priest as he ministered with his face turned in the direction of the mercy-seat, though assured of its reality, was still only permitted to see it with the eyes of his mind). Hence the High priest's ministrations in this rite taught Israel to offer the incense of prayer towards the throne above, which, though invisible to the bodily eye at the time, is nevertheless real and present to the eye of faith.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1–10.

WORSHIP.

The altar of incense is instructive as to worship in all generations.

I. The material of the altar is suggestive of the elements of a praying heart. It was to be made of acacia wood, ver. 1 ; significant of the fact that prevailing prayer must rise from a *sound* heart. Acacia wood was incorruptible. In prayer the heart must be sincere—no lightness, no hollowness, no hypocrisy. Effectual prayer must rise from a *pure* heart. This is signified by the altar being overlaid with pure gold, ver. 3. It was called the golden altar. True prayer springs from a sin-renouncing heart. How often do we seem to think that any altar will do for heaven! Any rotten wood, any unconsecrated stones, any brazen altar. We ask amiss. We ask with an insincere, sin-regarding, unbelieving heart. "Let us draw near with a *true* heart."

II. The position of the altar is suggestive of the grand function of prayer. "And thou shalt place it before the vail," &c., ver. 6. It stood before the curtain which separated the sanctuary from the Holy of Holies. By prayer we gain access into the immediate presence of the merciful God. "Before the mercy-seat which is over the testimony." By prayer we gain an interest in all the great promises of God to mankind. "By the ark of the testimony." By prayer, whatever is in the covenant becomes ours. We cannot expect *mercy* without a life of prayer : "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may find mercy." We cannot expect the blessings of *providence* and *grace* without prayer. We must enter *heaven* by prayer. Prayer brings us into the presence of God; into fellowship with God ; and makes us partakers of all the treasures of God.

III. The pure incense is suggestive of the sweetness of prayer, ver. 7. Prayer is sweet to *us.* To pour out our soul to God, to pray, to praise, is the highest joy of our spiritual life. Prayer is sweet to *God.* The gratitude and trust of the heart are to God as the fragrant perfume of golden censers (Rev. viii. 3, 4).

IV. The offering of the incense in connection with the lighting of the lamps suggests the illuminations of prayer, vers. 7, 8. We get light through prayer. The Word of God is a great lamp for our illumination, but we only realise its luminous teachings when we ponder them in the spirit of prayer (James i. 5–7)

V. The horns at the corners of the altar remind us of the power of prayer, vers. 2–10. How great the power of prayer in the day of trouble, in the day of temptation! Day by day we need the strength which prayer alone can supply. Horns are the symbols of power, and from the altar of God comes the strength to make us conquerors. Prayer is not only sweet, but animating—not only full of poetry, but full of power.

"Let us pray." And if we pray with a pure heart, offering no strange incense, ver. 9, and resting all our intercessions upon the atoning merit of Christ, ver. 10, God shall shew us His glory, enrich us with His gifts, and fill us with His eternal joy.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11–16.

EQUALITY BEFORE GOD.

We are reminded here—

I. That all men are equally recognised by the eye of God. Moses was to take "the sum of the children of Israel after their number." This taking of the census of Israel reminds us of God's all-comprehending and individualising knowledge of man. He knows *all*. Every living soul is written in His book. He knows *each*. Each tribe, each family, each person. There is not a living being outside God's knowledge, there is not one who can drop out of that knowledge. With all the apparent confusion of the world, and the cheapness of life, God knows "the sum;" and He knows each race, each dwelling, each person which go to the making up of that "sum."

II. That all men are equally guilty before the law of God. They were to give a *ransom* for their souls. What is the ground idea of this ransom but guilt? Israel was sinful before God, and it was necessary that they should bring "atonement-money" in their hands as expressive of their sin and penitence. It was to make an "atonement for their souls." We are guilty before God, and it is necessary that *we* have somewhat to offer. "In our hands no price we bring." Christ has paid all, and rendered it possible for Eternal love to show grace unto all who seek for it (John i. 29; Matt. xxvi. 28; Rom. v. 11; Rev. i. 5). In Christ's death we have the grand recognition that we are sold under sin, but that God has provided for our emancipation and life. *All* were to give their ransom. No exemptions. All are guilty. Every mouth is stopped. And that all were *equally* guilty before God is expressed in all having to bring the same atonement-money. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel." This fixed amount indicates two great truths: the equal preciousness of all souls in the sight of God; and the equal guiltiness of all souls in the sight of God. "There is no difference" (Rom. iii. 22).

III. That all men are equally redeemable through the mercy of God. The atonement-money was to be accepted from every hand. The half shekel in the hand of every member of Israel spoke of universal reconciliation as clearly as it did of universal sin. So all men are recoverable in Christ (John iii. 16). The Apostle in declaring "there is no difference," intends to show there is no difference in regard to men's restoration, as there is no difference in regard to their sinfulness and condemnation (Rom. iii. 9–31). 1. We see here *the need of atonement*. We cannot go to God as innocent creatures. A merely natural religion will not do for us fallen and guilty men. 2. We see *the preciousness of the atonement of Christ*. It *saves* those who trust in it from wrath and death. "Then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when

thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them." And so Christ's merit saves us from the last plagues of God's wrath against sin and sinners. And it saves *all* who trust in it. The worst, the poorest. (Heb. vii. 25.)

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17–21.

THE TRUE WASHING.

This priestly washing in the Temple symbolised certain great truths to which we shall do well if we take heed.

I. The true washing is **Divine.** Aaron and his sons were to wash themselves in this brazen laver in the Tabernacle. They were not to wash themselves in their own homes, the washing was to be in the sanctuary of God. Self-purification will not do. We cannot cleanse ourselves from the defilements of sin. Sin is not skin deep, as many seem to suppose, and to be washed away by the touch of our palm; the stains of evil are deep and dark in our nature, and only the Divine Cleanser can purge them away. "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord God" (Jer. ii. 22). "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" (John xiii. 8). The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to purify a sinful world, and there is no real and abiding efficacy in any other method (Ps. li. 2–7).

II. The true washing is **spiritual.** It is true that Aaron washed only his hands and feet, but we should forget the whole genius of the Mosaic dispensation if we were to overlook the spiritual significance of this rite. The true purification is not *material.* Many social reformers think to purify society by instituting certain political and physical improvements. They think—

> "That washing seven times in the 'People's Baths'
> Is sovereign for a people's leprosy,
> Still leaving out the essential prophet's word
> That comes in power."

The true purification is not *ceremonial.* Baptismal regeneration is more mistaken than a merely superficial political regeneration is. The water in the Church's font possesses no magic efficacy to wash away sin. The true purification is that of the soul. "O Jerusalem, wash thine *heart* from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved" (Jer. iv. 14). This is the true purification. The cleansing of *the heart through the truth and grace of Christ* (John xv. 3, xvii. 17; Eph. v. 26; 1 Peter i. 22). Let us not rest in a mere social purity (Titus iii. 5). Let us not rest in a mere ecclesiastical purity (John iii. 5; 1 Peter iii. 21). Let Christ cleanse our spirit and life.

> "Wash me, and make me thus Thine own,
> Wash me, and mine Thou art;
> Wash me, but not my feet alone,
> My hands, my head, my heart."

III. This true washing is **essential.** "That they die not." This interior and divine purity is indispensable. Without it we cannot enter into fellowship and communion with God; without it we cannot enter heaven (Rev. vii. 13–15). In the blood of the Lamb we must make our raiment white, and by constant washing there, keep it white. Naaman had to wash in Jordan "seven times," and so must we come again and again to the great fountain of purification in Jesus Christ.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22–24.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE CHURCH.

That the ointment signifies the influence of the Spirit of God we can hardly doubt. The anointing of kings and prophets signified that they received the gift of holiness in a special degree; and when Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Ps. xlv. 8, 9), it signified that on Him rested the power and grace of the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary degree. What does this ointment teach respecting God's Spirit?

I. The salutariness of His influence. Ointment is gracious in its action, and signifies the *softening* influence of the Spirit. As ointment softens, so does the Spirit of God cause the proud will to relent, and the hard heart to soften. The *healing* influence of the Spirit. Wounds are mollified with ointment—its action is medicinal and purifying. So God's Spirit cleanses and heals the diseased and wounded soul. The *rejoicing* influence of the Spirit. It is "the oil of gladness." "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Ps. xxiii. 5). Here the Psalmist associates anointing with fulness of joy. Yes, the Spirit of God gives tenderness and purity to the soul, and out of this contrite and cleansed heart springs up streams of peace and joy.

II. The sweetness of His influence. The sweetness of this ointment renders it a striking symbol of the rich and fragrant influence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God gives an incomparable charm to the character! We see this in Christ. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad" (Ps. xlv. 8). The spirit, the language, the life of Jesus, breathed a divine perfume. And so it is with all in whom the spirit of Jesus richly dwells. There is something far beyond a merely cold and formal prosperity, there is a rich diffusive goodness. When the power and grace of Christ fill the heart, our character is fragrant, and wherever we go, "'tis as if an angel shook his wings." In Jesus, and in that Holy Spirit which is His gift, we rise to the beauty, the music, the fragrance of life. Let us seek to realise this richness and sweetness of character and disposition. Not a cold intellectual religion; not a hard austere morality; not a stern rugged character; but a lovely life and a soul full of grace and sweetness. Such sweetness is full of personal *joy*. It is also most *preservative*. Some say that the sweetness of the rose kills certain vermin, and sweetness of character is a defence. And it powerfully *recommends* the faith of Christ.

III. The sacredness of His influence. 1. *Nothing is sacred except as it is hallowed by the Spirit of God.* Everything was to be anointed with the ointment, vers. 26–31. Our temples are only sacred so far as they are hallowed by the Spirit of God; our religious instrumentalities are only sacred so far as the Spirit of God blesses them; our ministers are only sacred so far as the Spirit of God dwells in them and works through them. The grandest things in the sanctuary needed to be anointed, and the strongest, brightest, purest things in the Church are but dark and feeble and profane except as they are filled and used by the Holy Spirit. And this is equally true of the highest and grandest things of the world and life. 2. *Everything is sacred that is hallowed by the Spirit of God.* The commonest things, when anointed, were sacred as the highest—the brazen laver as the golden ark. Let us seek for God's Spirit to hallow all within the Church, to hallow all within the world, so that there shall be nothing common or unclean.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 34–38.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

Notice here—

I. The elements of true worship. 1. There must be nothing in prayer but what is *sweet.* "Sweet spices." No *anger.* Some nations leave their swords outside their temples; we must cherish no angry or warlike sentiments in worship. "Lifting up holy hands, without *wrath.*" No *pride.* No, "I thank God I am not as other men." No *selfishness.* "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts" (James iv. 3). No *unbelief.* "Without doubting." Some prayers have in them so much of doubt and passion, of pride and hypocrisy, that they go up to the sky more like the vapour of a noxious drug, than the pure incense in which God delights. In worship there are various elements of thought and feeling, as there were various spices in the priestly censer, but we must take care that there is nothing bitter or bad. All peace, love, faith, charity, admiration, hope, joy—whatsoever is otherwise enters not into true worship. 2. Nothing in prayer but what is *pure.* "Pure frankincense." If we do not renounce iniquity in our *life,* God will not hear us. (Isa. i. 12–15). If we do not renounce iniquity in our *heart,* God will not hear us. Worship is not a substitute for righteousness, but the expression of a soul delighting in righteousness, longing for righteousness. The prayers of a bad man, although offered in a white or golden surplice, although expressed in seraphic language, although borne upward on the voices of singers and organs, are an abomination to the Lord—it is the smoke of the pit, not the sweet incense of God's holy temple.

Pure and sweet worship is delightful to us; it is the highest condition of the soul. Such worship is sweet and grateful to God.

II. The expression of true worship. "And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony." Is it not suggested here, that in worship there should not be vague and general feeling and language, but that our service should be specialised and particular? Our *penitence* should be thus special. Our sins should be discriminated as far as possible, so that with each fault should go the appropriate confession and sorrow. Our *supplications* thus distinguishing. Our *intercessions* thus. Praying for special individuals, pleading for special gifts. Our *praises* thus. "Forget not all His benefits." It is a good thing to recall the mercies of God, one by one, as far as that is possible. We are not to worship in the lump, as if God were too grand to recognise the detail of life; we are not to worship in the lump, as if the "least mercies" were not worth recognition.

III. The efficacy of true worship. "Where I will meet with thee." God met them as they came near Him with this incense. We hear worship depreciated sometimes, and are told that *life* is worship, *work* is worship; let us not be led away by such plausible sayings from a personal, constant, express fellowship with God. It is only as we come to God with the pure and loving worship of the heart that we realise His presence. Life may be worship, and work may be worship; but life and work are never worship, until the heart gives its highest love and trust to God.

IV. The exclusive object of true worship. "As for the perfume," &c., vers. 37–38. No worship of *man:* No worship of *humanity:* No *saint*-worship: No *angel*-worship. "Worship God."

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXX.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Sacrificial Speech! Vers. 1–38. (1.) No student of the Bible needs to be reminded that by the complicated and long protracted series of events which preceded, accompanied, and followed the Exodus from Egypt, the essential doctrine of Gospel truth and grace are distinctly made known. By a stupendous array of symbolic acts and facts they are most emphatically confirmed and illustrated. (2.) Thomson remarks that what is more pertinent, if possible, is that the record of them is so guided as to suggest and evolve the very best words, figures, and phrases by which these fundamental doctrines can be set forth. This is equally true of the words and ideas in this chapter of Exodus, as of the paschal lamb in Egypt, or the smiting of the rock in Horeb. (3.) The symbolic acts and facts, it has been wisely asserted, in connection with the typical institutions, rites, and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy, were designed to permeate, and did permeate, the entire religious consciousness of the Hebrews. They thus gave birth to spiritual ideas and emotions wholly peculiar, and to corresponding formulas by which to give expression to them.

"I saw a Moslem work upon his shroud alone,
With earnest care, even as the silkworms weave their own,
When with that sacred Script it was filled from side to side,
He wrapt it round his body, and in calmness died." —*Oriental.*

Incense-Altar! Vers. 1–10. (1.) In the gorgeous ceremonial worship of the Hebrews, none of the senses were excluded from taking part in the service. Macmillan observes that the eye was appealed to by the rich vestments of Exodus xxviii.; and the splendid furniture of Exodus xxvi. and xxvii. The ear was exercised by the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of praise and prayer. The nostril was gratified by the clouds of fragrant smoke that rose from the golden altar of incense and filled all the place. (2.) This altar of incense occupied one of the most conspicuous and honoured positions in the Tabernacle. It stood between the table of shew-bread and the golden candlestick in the Holy Place. It was made of shittim or cedar wood, overlaid with plates of pure gold. The expiating altar was behind the priest, who stood at this altar. His steps had brought him to the borders of the holiest place. He has passed the spot where dying victims bleed; so that its position divinely arranged seems to be a link joining Sacrifice to Acceptance.

"I read God's Holy Word, and find
Great truths which far transcend my mind;
And little do I know beside
Of thoughts so high, so deep, so wide;
This is my best theology,
I know the Saviour died for me." —*Bethune.*

Incense-Altar Prefigurings! Vers. 2–8. It is worth while observing—(1.) *Pattern!* Gold and wood; four-square. (2.) *Place!* Within the Holy Place; midway between the Altar of Sacrifice and the Throne of Grace. (3.) *Purpose!* Incense to be offered daily thereon; by the priest; morning and evening; along with the sacrifices. (4.) *Purport!* Significant of prayer; the duty and privilege of prayer; presented through an intercessor. (5.) *Precept!* Daily prayer is our privilege; and should be our duty; it is also holy; unworthy prayers incur danger. (*a.*) Doubtless the Jews felt, when they saw the soft white clouds of fragrant smoke rising slowly from the altar of incense, as if the voice of the priest were silently but eloquently pleading in that expressive emblem on their behalf. (*b.*) We should remember that from the altar of our souls God expects that daily prayer is to ascend, kindled by the altar fire of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, perfumed with the merits of His sinless mediation within the veil. (*c.*) But it was *perfumed* incense, telling the Jew that praise must ever be associated with prayer. This is a needful reminder to the Christian, who is so apt to offer *unperfumed* prayer, *i.e.*, prayer *minus* the fragrance of thankfulness and adoration. Canst thou close

"Thine eyes with comfort, and in peace repose,
Before thou lift thy voice, and to the skies
Send up devotion's thankful sacrifice,
Sweet as the fumes which from the censer rose?" —*Mant.*

Incense-Intent! Ver. 7. (1.) *Priestly!* Looking upon the Tabernacle as the palace of God, the theocratic King of Israel, and the Ark of the Covenant His throne, we may regard this incense as merely corresponding to the perfume so lavishly employed about the person and appointments of an Oriental monarch. The Persian sculptures exhibit the burning of incense as one of the marks of honour offered to royalty. In the Canticles of Solomon, there seems to be express allusion to these perfumes burned in the presence of the king, when the bride enters his palace; signifying the Prince of Peace and the Church, which He hath purchased with His blood.

(2.) *Priestly!* No doubt incense derived its chief importance in connection with the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic ritual, from the fact of its being the great symbol of prayer. It seems to have been regarded in the light of a sacred offering. The Spirit has selected incense as the type of prayer in Psalm cxii. 2. Fragrance is the breath of flowers—the sweetest expression of their inmost being; and prayer is the breath of life—the expression of the soul's best, holiest, and heavenliest aspirations. (3.) *Prophetically!* When the morning lamps were trimmed, and when the evening lights were lit, this perfume ascended as a great prediction. The nostril of smell and the eye of sight may have seen in the fragrant cloud only the symbol of their own daily orisons to God; but the nostril and eye of faith realised the perfumed incense of Messianic Intercession. They perceived in the unceasing harmonic offering up of incense—a beautiful and expressive type of the all-prevailing prayers of their Messiah.

"He, Who for men their Surety stood,
And pour'd on earth His precious blood,
Pursues in heaven His mighty plan,
The Saviour and the Friend of man."

Prayer! Ver. 8. Ryle says that cold prayers are like incense without the fire. Secker remarks that when prayer mounts upon the wing of fervour to God, then answers come down like lightning from God. It is Spurgeon who writes, When thou art wrestling, ask the Holy Spirit to nerve thine arm. Prayer may be the incense, and the fire may come from the altar of burnt-offering; but it is the Holy Spirit who sends the fire from heaven. Trapp says that a good Christian is ever praying or praising. He drives a constant trade between earth and heaven. The incense-altar is ever smoking with the sweet perfumes of thankfulness and supplication, though there may be times when the odours are sweeter and stronger. Of the delight which the Lord has in the fragrant entreaties of His servants, ample illustrations are afforded in the Canticles of Solomon.

"My God, is any hour so sweet,
From blush of morn to evening star,
As that which calls me to Thy feet—
The hour of prayer?"—*Elliot.*

Praise! Ver. 8. (1.) Power well remarks that daily praise should ascend from each of us to God, as the perfume-incense of the daily sacrifice ascended in olden times. There must not be fewer incense-offerings under the New than under the Old Testament. We are priests to offer up unto God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Heb. xiii. 15). (2.) Pilkington says that, if Christ dwell—mark *dwell*, not sojourn—praise will go up like incense continually. It used to be the custom in some monasteries in the Roman Church to have a constant change of choir. Thus, both night and day an endless odour of adoration went up to God. (3.) It is said that when the sun rises and sets, the pious herdsmen of the Alps sound their horns with the words: "Praise ye the Lord!" The echo is caught up by herdsmen on the other slopes and summits. These have the mountains for their brazen altars, the thankful spirit for their incense, and the love of God for their enkindling fire.

"'Not unto us;' O Lord of lords, supreme,
Whate'er we work, Thou workest;
Thine the praise;
Oh, wash us, cleanse us, light us with Thy beam,
And work in us, through us, to endless days."—*Taylor.*

Strange-Incense! Ver. 9. (1.) The allusion is to the incense employed in Egyptian and other heathen worship. The burning of incense prevailed in most of the ancient religions. It was of a particularly sensuous spirit; and hence the pertinent caution against its use. But the extreme force of the caution shows that some other design was in the mind of God. (2.) Strange incense censures the use of wrong words in prayer. The utmost refinement and reverence, purity and piety, should be cultivated in our approaches to the Throne of Grace. Worldly expressions in supplication are like strange incense—"an abomination to the Lord." (3.) Strange incense condemns a wrong spirit in prayer. Ideas of an unworthy kind; as well as words. Too great care cannot be exercised in this respect. The mind of Christ should be our mind in prayer. He is our model, in the Lord's Prayer, in the Supper Intercession, and in the Gethsemane Supplication. (4.) Disregard of right spirit and speech brings judgment. The mother, who, when her only child was given up by the doctor, besought God to spare her child, as she would not say, "Nevertheless, Thy will be done," received a sore visitation for this "strange incense" on the altar of her soul, by living to see her son ascend the scaffold in maturer years.

"To Thee I, therefore, Lord, submit
My every fond request,
And own, adoring at Thy feet,
Thy will is always best."—*Wesley.*

Soul-Ransom! Vers. 11–16. (1.) The payment, says Trower, was an acknowledgment to God that all souls are His (Ezek. xviii. 4); that all lives are due to Him for sins committd against Him; and that all owe Him thanks for the mercy by which we have been enrolled in the census of His people, and for the privileges we thus enjoy. (2.) We should regard ourselves as God's coin, stamped with Christ's image. And as the coin of the realm, stamped with the image of our earthly sovereign, reminds us of the claims of our rulers for what is their due; so we should remember

that, as bearing Christ's stamp, we are in the highest sense due to Him. Having been bought with His blood, we should ever offer ourselves to Him who is the Lord of heaven and earth.

"He gave me back the bond—
The seal was torn away;
And as He gave, He smiled, and said,
'Think thou of ME alway.'

"That bond I still will keep,
Although it cancelled be;
It tells me what I owe to Him
Who paid the debt for me."

Soul-Redemption! Ver. 16. (1.) A gentleman visiting a slave market was deeply moved by the agony of a slave girl. He inquired her price, paid the ransom to the slave trader, and placed the bill of sale in her own hands, telling her that she was now free, and could go where she pleased. At first she could not realise the change; but when the whole truth flashed upon her, she sprang forward, and kneeling before him cried: "Let me be thy servant, for thou hast redeemed me." (2.) The Lord Jesus has purchased our freedom from sin-serfdom and Satan-savagedom with a great price: "Ye are not bought with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus;" therefore, "we should glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are His." It is for every one to pay the half shekel of *voluntary* surrender to His service, whose are our souls, since He paid the ransom—

"Thy ransomed servant, I
Restore to Thee Thine own;
And from this moment live or die
To *serve* my God alone."—*Wesley.*

Laver-Lessons! Vers. 18–21. (1.) *Water!* Ver. 18. In emblem of the Holy Spirit. Law says that it is a figure of the precious blood of Christ here. No doubt the laver itself is a vivid type of Christ; but the water seems rather to symbolise the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, the Holy Spirit in Him. (2.) *Washing!* Ver. 19. The cleansing power of Divine Grace prepares the way for the Christian priesthood of all who are "kings and priests unto God." See Ezek. xxxvi. 25; John iii.; Tit. iii. 15; also in Rev. xx., the pure river of the Water of Life. Jordan and Naaman; Jesus at Bethabara; Ethiopian Eunuch near Gaza. (3.) *Worship!* Ver. 20. A strict command was issued that no priest should touch the brazen altar, or pass the tabernacle door, until his hands and feet had been washed. The Rabbis and Pharisees were most punctilious in their temple arrangements on this point. (4.) *Witness!* Ver. 21. Believers are to minister a lifelong service to the Lord; and to engage in this worship acceptably, they must be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Their hands and feet, *i.e.*, their working and walking with God, must be cleansed from earth's impurities. God has provided the cleansing medium: "Wash you, make you clean."

"Let all who hold this faith and hope
In holy deeds abound;
Thus faith approves itself sincere;
By active virtue crowned."

Anointing-Oil Ingredients! Vers. 23–25. (1.) It was composed of two parts of myrrh—the gum of a thorny tree growing in Arabia; two parts of cassia—the bark of an Indian tree, having a strong resemblance to cinnamon, but more pungent, and of a coarser texture; one part of cinnamon—the inner bark of a tree of the laurel kind growing in Ceylon; one part of sweet calamus—a fragrant beard grass growing in Arabia, and whose root and stem and leaves, when bruised, are very fragrant; with a sufficient quantity of the purest olive oil to give it the consistency. (2.) An immense quantity, we are told, was annually manufactured and consumed. Of this, says an eminent author, we have a very significant indication in the fact that it was never made in smaller quantities than 750 ounces of solids compounded with five quarts of oil. It was so profusely employed that, as we find in Psalm cxxxiii., when applied to Aaron's beard, it flowed down over his head and breasts, to the very skirts of his garments.

"In Him a holiness complete
Light and perfection twine;
And wisdom, grace, and glory meet—
O Saviour! Thou art mine."—*Newton.*

Cinnamon! Ver. 23. (1.) The cinnamon tree is not a native of Palestine, but there is no doubt that the substance here referred to is the spice of the cinnamon laurel in Ceylon. It is a low growing tree, with a smooth ash-coloured bark and wide-spreading boughs. It is rendered very picturesque, both by its form and the variety of tint given to its bright green leaves by their white under-surface. The young shoots, too, have a scarlet crimson hue, and their bark is often speckled with deep green and orange-coloured spots. The fruit is about the size of a damson, and, when ripe, is of a black colour. (2.) Neither the leaves nor flowers give forth any odour; and it is not till the season for gathering arrives that a walk through the cinnamon gardens yields delight in respect of fragrance. Kingston notes that, when the Cinghelese are engaged in their annual employment of peeling the twigs, the beauty of the gardens and the fragrance of the spice is exquisite. (3.) The Arabians had commercial intercourse with Ceylon and India at an early period, as they were the first navigators of the Indian Seas. Cinnamon is mentioned in Prov. vii. 17; Cant. iv. 14; Rev. xviii. 13. In the second of these passages it is referable figuratively to the baptism of our Lord; and in the third, it is

mentioned as among the articles of commerce in Babylon.

"From various herbs, and from discordant flowers,
A fragrant harmony of spice compounds."
—*Smart.*

Divine Rites! Ver. 17-21. (1.) The whole science of chemistry makes us familiar with a system of order. The chemistry that deals with the inorganic world may be called the science of substitutions. There is nothing *accidental* in these substitutions. They are the result of laws which have been through all time in active operation, and to which they are bound by a mathematical precision. (2.) As in chemistry, the phenomena of *substitution* bring out in full relief the unchanging order of nature, showing that it is not a system of chance or confusion, but of the most harmonious arrangements; so is it with the rites enjoined by God. The various arrangements of the Tabernacle—whether of its Holy of Holies, of its holy place, or of its court and altar adjuncts—were all parts of our orderly system of substitution, pointing to the Great Substitution which magnifies the moral law and makes it honourable.

"The types and figures were a glass
In which they saw a Saviour's face."
—*Cowper.*

Holy Water! Ver. 18. Holy water indeed, says Spurgeon! If there be such a thing, it trickles from the eye of penitence, bedews the cheek of gratitude, falls upon the page of Holy Scripture when the Word is applied with power. (1.) Those waters that filled the hunger-channels on the cheeks of the prodigal son, as his father fell on his neck and kissed him, were holy. Those waters that flowed from deep liquid wells upon the sacred, dust-soiled feet of Jesus at the feast, were holy. Those waters that gushed from the fount within the Prophet's patriot heart over his people's woes and wickedness were holy. Those waters that welled out during the silent night watches upon the Psalmist's pillow, as he pondered God's goodness and his own badness were holy. (2.) Holy in God's sight, though they cannot make holy. There is but One Fount whence the "Water of Life" flows to purify the soul, and sanctify his daily ministry in the Christian life. That purifying comes not of ceremonial cleansing, but of the Holy Spirit. His grace is the "Holy Water,"—the living water—the water whose living properties are capable of cleansing the works and walks of the Christian priests unto God; so that they are able to minister daily before God. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" Who shall rise up to officiate in "His Holy Place"? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart. Even he who has accepted the cleansing virtues of the Spirit of Christ and of God.

"Only be sure
Thy hands be pure
That hold these censers, and the eyes,
Those of turtles, chaste and true,
Wakeful and wise."—*Crashan.*

Hin-Measure! Ver. 24. The instructions given about the holy ointment, and the mode of its preparation, remind us of the Egyptian skill in ointments and perfumes. In the description of this ointment occurs the mention of the "hin" as a measure. It is supposed to be borrowed from the Egyptian language, and is only found in the Pentateuch, and in Ezekiel's description of the temple. It was said to be equal to about six quarts.

"Thy Word is like a glorious choir,
And loud its anthems ring;
Though many tongues and parts unite,
It is *one* song they sing."

Anointing-Oil Symbolism! Vers. 26-30. (1.) All parts of the Mosaic worship were symbolic; and all those parts were symbolic of Christ. They all silently spoke of One beyond and behind, above and around them. Moreover, the most explicit directions were given for their anointing. The altars and the sacred furniture, as well as the priests and the high priest, were to be most carefully anointed. But the unction seems to have been most special in the case of the high priest. As, then, the various portions of the Tabernacle and its appurtenances were emblematic of Christ, this anointing must also have been figurative of something done to Christ. (2.) One of the sweetest names of the Lord Jesus is "Christ"—the Anointed One. "With my holy oil, have I anointed Him." The unction of the Holy One, our great High Priest received in (*a*) *Intention*, long before the head of Aaron had received the material unction; (*b*) *Intimation*, when the wise men of the East laid their gifts at His feet; (*c*) *Interpretation*, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven upon Him, as He knelt in prayer on Jordan's strand. He received not the Spirit by measure; for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

"Nor prayer is made by man alone;
The Holy Spirit pleads,
And Jesus, on the eternal throne,
For sinners intercedes."—*Montgomery.*

Incense-Ingredients! Vers. 34–38. (1.) *Composition!* Vers. 34, 35. The ingredients are described with great precision; and were principally obtained in traffic from the Phœnicians. A few of them were products of native plants; but most of them came from Arabia, India, and spice islands of the Indian Archipelago. Great skill was required in the mixing of these ingredients. The art was a recognised profession among the Jews; and the *rokechim*, translated "apothecary" in our version, was simply a maker of perfumes.

(2.) *Consecration!* Vers. 36, 37. This mixture was to be pounded in very small particles, and deposited as a very holy thing in the Tabernacle, before the ark of the testimony. It has been said that this was to ensure a store of it being always in readiness. But this excludes the Divine idea of "holy consecration." Hence, according to the Rabbins, one of the fifteen prefects was retained in Solomon's temple for the special purpose of preparing it; and a part of the temple was reserved for his use as a laboratory, to indicate the purity of incense. (3.) *Conservation!* Ver. 38. So precious and holy was this incense considered, that it was forbidden to make a similar perfume for private use on pain of death.

"Nor will He to those lips attend
Whose prayers are not sincere."
—*Burton.*

Incense and Unction! Vers. 1–38. The Canticle of Solomon lies in the *casket* of Revelation—an exquisite gem—engraved with emblematic characters. It is a retrospective poem upon Christ in the Pentateuch; and it is a prospective poem upon Christ in the New Testament. (1.) Cant. iii. 6: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness" is Jesus Christ coming up from the wilderness of Judea—from the wilderness, whence the sweetest odours are gathered; for not amid rich and cultured fields, but amongst the rocks and sands of the desert, are the incense and unction herbs obtained. (2.) He comes up "like pillars of smoke," which cannot derive its significance from the Shekinah pillar-cloud, but from those fragrant clouds of incense wafted upwards on the eastern air—in type of the prayers of Jesus on His Baptism. As perfumes of fragrant oil anoint our High Priest; so pillars of perfumed vapours ascend from His heart. (3.) He comes up "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense," anointed with the Holy Spirit; for on Jesus our great High Priest the Spirit is shed immeasurably. In this "Vessel of Honour" the Spirit is poured, abiding in Himself in all fulness, and as an exhaustless fountain ever overflowing for His people.

"The Spirit, through the Saviour shed,
His sacred fire imparts,
Refines our dross, and love divine
Enkindles in our hearts."

CHAPTER XXXI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**14. Ye shall keep the Sabbath** = Ushemartem eth hashshabbath]. The verb *shamar* = to keep, implies the idea of guarding, watching over with tenderness and fidelity. (Comp. Ps. xxi. 4, 5, "He that *keepeth* Israel"—and, "The LORD is thy *keeper*"). Thus Israel, by keeping the Sabbath aright, was intended to cultivate those ennobling qualities of the human heart and mind which should distinguish them as a people in covenant with God, both their keeper and liberator, to bless them with *rest* from the works of their bondage, and with peace on account of His jealous love and care.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1-11.

GRACE AND GENIUS.

After having given directions for the construction of the sanctuary, and all things required for the worship, Jehovah pointed out the builders whom He had called to carry out the work, and had filled with His Spirit for that purpose. This paragraph is instructive as to the connection between gifts of nature and the influences of grace, between the natural and the supernatural in man's intellectual life. Observe—

I. Natural gifts are often discovered by grace. Bezaleel and Aholiab were naturally gifted men—men of artistic faculty. Their natural ability is presupposed. Thus Ex. xxviii. 3, "Thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom." But it is very improbable that these men had as yet revealed anything like great artistic taste or power. Egypt did not know their talent; very probably they did not suspect it themselves. As *Trapp* well observes: "Moses might well doubt where he should find fit workmen among those brickmakers from Egypt." And yet in these

brickmakers were artists, architects, painters, embroiderers, and musicians. The grace of God evoked the latent power. It often does so still. Many a man having got a new heart seems also to have got a new head, and reveals mental power and superior aptitudes which had not been suspected before.

II. National gifts are directed by grace. "See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri." We speak of men being "called" to the ministry; are they not "called" to all spheres? Nature qualifies men for certain spheres, for certain mental or manual work which they will best accomplish. But is it not true that many miss their calling? Let all men seek the grace of God, and none shall miss their providential way. "I have called by name." God knows each of us; He knows the kind of our talent and the measure of it; and if we are obedient to God, He who puts everything in its place in nature will find the "right groove" for every man in society.

III. Natural gifts are heightened by grace. Bezaleel "was filled with the Spirit of God," and thus all his natural gifts were supernaturally exalted. Grace acts on the lines of nature. The king in the parable divided to each of his servants his goods "*according to their several ability.*" But the influence of God's Spirit gives to our natural powers a glow and ripeness and force which they could not otherwise have. Did not Milton attain a sublimed strain through living in the presence of Heaven? Did not Angelico find that devotion gave magic to his pencil? Have not holy men in all spheres realised a perfection and power of genius, which they never could have reached had it not been for the inspirations of religion? Let all seek for the Spirit of God to purify and hallow their heart, and they shall find that their intellect has new force, their eye new light, their hand new cunning.

IV. Natural gifts are sanctified by grace. The genius of Bezaleel was directed to a sacred and worthy end. How often have we seen genius directed to paltry ends of mere luxury and amusement, or to immoral ends! God's grace sanctifies talent to noble uses and ends.

All the work of the world is for God, and every workman needs to be filled with God's Spirit, so that all may be well and wisely done.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12-18.

THE SABBATH AND THE SANCTUARY.

The command to keep the Sabbath was included already in the decalogue, and there is therefore some special meaning in the repetition of the command in this place. Coming as it does at the conclusion of the instructions respecting the Tabernacle, it is evident that the intention was to teach the connection which existed between these great institutions. We observe—

I. Both exist to the same divine end. What is the end of the sanctuary? That man may come near to God—that he may worship God. All understand this. The sanctuary does not exist to any merely intellectual or physical end, but it is the place where our spiritual nature is to be instructed and purified and blessed by communion with the Holy Spirit (Ps. xxvii. 4). What is the end of the Sabbath? Precisely that of the sanctuary. Many entertain the idea that the grand end of the Sabbath is physical rest—that this is one of its purposes is quite true, but it by no means exhausts the meaning of the day; neither is the grand end of it intellectual—visiting picture galleries and science lectures, &c; its grand object is spiritual. The Sabbath is primarily intended to free man from bodily toil and secular care, that he may give his earnest attention

to his spiritual nature. The sanctuary and the Sabbath have one purpose, and that is religious and holy.

II. Both are alike essential for the accomplishment of that end. They cannot be divorced. 1. If the public worship of God is neglected the Sabbath will soon be secularised. The Sabbath has a divine basis, and when God ceases to be recognised and worshipped, this day will no longer retain its spell. 2. If the Sabbath is secularised, religious worship will soon cease. If we spend some hours of the sacred day frivolously, how seriously it impairs our worship in the temple! When society give up the Sabbath to physical and intellectual pleasures, it will give up its God and His worship soon after. Some who are fully persuaded of the importance of the sanctuary and its services, have very loose views on the keeping of the Sabbath. It is greatly to be deplored. The Sabbath is the main pillar in the temple of God, and if it comes down the whole fabric of divinity comes down with it.

III. Both are alike of absolute and perpetual obligation. We know that the worship of God is of strict and perpetual obligation, and thus is the Sabbath. Read the text. And Christ did not revoke or modify the obligation of keeping this day to high and holy ends.

Lessons:—1. We see the wickedness of those who would secularise the Sabbath. It would shock us if some profane man made a stable of a church; it ought not to shock us less to see God's holy day profaned to worldly ends. Anti-Sabbatarianism is essentially atheistic. 2. We see the mistake of those who seem to think that having worshipped they may spend the remainder of the Sabbath in worldliness and pleasure. 3. We see the error of those who think that doing religious work justifies certain forms of Sabbath desecration. The Israelites had a great work to do in building the Tabernacle, but they were not to build it on the Sabbath; and we must all take care that the work of the Sabbath which we call unavoidable is really so. 4. We see the error of those who think they have kept the Sabbath when they rest from their work, but who absent themselves from the house of God.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXI.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Mosaic-Mines! Vers. 1–18. (1.) The face of Nature, says Macmillan, is everywhere written over with Divine characters, which he who runs may read. But beside the more obvious lessons which lie, as it were, in the surface of the earth, and which suggest themselves to us often when least disposed for inquiry or reflection, there are more recondite lessons which she teaches to those who make her structure arrangements their special study, and who penetrate to her secret arcana. And those, who read her great volume, passing on leaf after leaf, to the quiet and sober chapters of the interior, will find in these internal details revelations of the deepest interest. (2.) It is even so with the Bible. In the New Testament, we have a rich robe of vegetation adorning the surface, the beauties of tree and flower, forest, hill and river, and the ever-changing splendours of the sky. In the psalms and prophets we walk amid the beauty of gardens and ornamented parterres, where everything thrills with their beauty and fragrance. But in the pentateuch, we descend, as it were, into the crust of the earth. We lose sight of all these upper-air glories; but we find new objects to compensate us—truths written with the finger of God—lessons on the deep things of God—diamonds which sparkle when brought up within the sphere of the Sun of Righteousness, who has risen with healing in His wings.

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear."
—*Gray.*

Bezaleel and Aholiab! Vers. 1–11. 1. We have here (1.) Nomination by God of the architects and artisans; (2.) Inspiration by the Holy Spirit of their genius; (3.) Consecration of their artistic gifts to the service of God; and (4.) Construction of the tabernacle with a view to Sabbath-worship. 2. In these several points

we have prefigurations of the Lord Jesus Christ—the true Builder and Maker of that spiritual edifice, which is to be the object of enduring and adoring observation on the part of angels and archangels—He, too, was called of God, and was filled with the spirit of wisdom and knowledge. He, too, devoted His gifts to the worship of Jehovah, and upreared a superstructure for Sabbath adoration. 3. When Christ, says Matthew Henry, sent His ambassadors to uprear the Gospel tabernacle, He poured out His Spirit upon them. He enabled them to speak with tongues the wonderful works of God. He qualified them not to work upon metal, but upon men; so much more excellent were the gifts, as the tabernacle to be pitched was a greater and more perfect tabernacle (Heb. ix. 11).

"And if to partake of such honour,
A bruised reed dareth to trust,
O Comforter! raise, in Thy goodness,
Thy servant who speaks from the dust."

Art-Inspiration! Ver. 2. (1.) Jacox relates of Fra Giovanni de Fiecoli that he never commenced any work—whether an elaborate fresco, or an illumination for a book—without praying. He always carried out the first impression, believing it to be an inspiration. He never retouched or altered anything left as finished. (2.) Ruskin, in his "Modern Painters," writes of Turner as "inspired." He apologises for the use of the word as irreverent possibly; but there is no such irreverence, if the word is used by him in the sense and within the scope of Exodus xxxi. There is such a thing as Art-Inspiration. (3.) South says, that the greatest poets and thinkers will confess that their highest and most admired conceptions and disclosures were such as darted into their minds like sudden flashes of lightning, they knew not how or when. This is prominent in the case of Watt and his steam-engine; as in the case of those two astronomers at Berlin and London, who at the same moment, independent of and unknown to each other, suggested one of the most remarkable of astronomical phenomena. Thus

"Step by step, and throne by throne, we rise
Continually towards the Infinite;
And ever nearer—never near to God.
—*Bailey.*

Inspiration-Impetus! Ver. 3. The same Spirit, who inspired the eloquence of Isaiah, and the melodies of the chief musician Asaph, also imparted to Samson that wonderful bodily strength which he displayed in Herculean feats against the Philistines; and to Bezaleel and Aholiab the fine æsthetic taste and mechanical skill, by which they were enabled to construct the tabernacle after the pattern shown on the mount. As Macmillan says, Gideon and Jephthah carried on their military campaigns—Elijah and Elisha wrought their singular miracles—Hiram of Tyre forged and engraved the precious metals employed in the service of Solomon's temple, under the influence of the Holy Spirit;—in short, it would appear from Scripture that the influence of the Spirit is co-extensive with the sphere of human affairs; and that nothing with which man has to do is outside of and beyond the proper field of his operations. Yet

"The Lamp of Genius, *though by His grace lit,*
If not protected, trimm'd, and fed with care,
Soon dies, or runs to waste with fitful glare." —*Wilcox.*

Sanctified Genius! Ver. 3. One of the most remarkable examples in modern times of natural gifts lying long dormant is that of Joseph Cook. The world dreamt not that within her circle lived a giant thinker, whose thoughts would prove Whitworth hammers to break the huge brazen idol-gates of Dagon-Atheism. Possessed of this gift, for long years, he devoted himself to the study of all the rationalistic theories and arguments, as well as to the arts of rhetoric and science of language. When the time came, like Bezaleel and Aholiab—under the inspirations of the Spirit—he appeared before the towering strongholds of Infidelity. His lectures are not only specimens of magnificent critical power; but they are marked by such cultured eloquence that men listen entranced. His natural genius, under the sanctifying cultivation of Divine grace, is furnishing the Church with vessels of gold and tapestries of purple and fine twined linen of rare workmanship and surprising execution.

"Thus beams forth his soul—grace-illumined,
As shineth at morning anew
The pastures in gold and in jewels
When wet with the heavenly dew."

School of Art! Vers. 4, 5. Some of the materials of which the tabernacle was formed were very costly, and not easily procured by Israel during their wilderness wanderings. These were brought with them out of Egypt. The time of their residence in Goshen, and employment in Egyptian works, was amply sufficient to render them thoroughly acquainted with all the methods of Egyptian art and manufacture. The precious stones, which were set in the gold of the ephod and breastplate, were engraved by means of the skill acquired by them in Egypt. Bezaleel, to whom God had given ability in the preparation of stones for setting, &c., may have perfected his talent by observation and practice in Egyptian manufactories. Many ornaments of purest gold yet remain, which demonstrate the skill of the Egyptians in the working of that metal.

"All thoughts that mould the age begin
Deep down within the primitive soul,
And from the many slowly upward win
To one who grasps the whole."—*Lowell.*

Genius-Grace! Ver. 4. All human skill, all artistic talent, all mechanical invention, are from God. (1.) How sadly are these inspirations prevented! A Byron destroys that heavenly genius by libidinous poetry. A Shelley perverts that unearthly grace by atheistic poems. A painter perverts that God-given skill by voluptuous pictures. A mechanician perverts that more than human science by missiles of destruction. (2.) How sorely are these inspirations distorted! One of the most eloquent of scientists is Tyndall; yet he writes to blot out the Christian Heaven in the "infinite azure of the past." One of the most talented of Nature's students is Darwin; yet he disowns any God beyond the tiny film vapour of evolution. One of the most renowned of naturalists is Wallace; yet he disputes the God of the Christian Revelation. What blessings these Divine Inspirations would have proved to mankind and the men themselves, were they but employed—as God conferred them—to HIS GLORY!

"Behold, they're God's! Say not 'Tis zephyr mild
Which rustles the dead leaf;'
They are thy Saviour's, yea, thy God's, my child,
Let not thine ear be deaf;
If I come now in breezes soft and warm,
I may return again upon the storm;
'Tis no light fancy—firm be thy belief
They are thy God's!'"

Work-Design! Ver. 5. The people of Southern Italy convert the soft plastic lava that has devastated their homes and fields into beautiful ornaments worn on the bosom. So should the farmer, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains, and converts the waste places of the earth into fertile meadows and smiling cornfields, endeavour to make the earth a tabernacle for God's glory and for man's worship and welfare. So should the labourer, who drains and trenches the soil; the engineer, who constructs bridges and roads; the architect, who builds dwellings and temples; the artisan, who changes the metallic ore and the timber of the earth into useful and ornamental articles; the manufacturer, who adapts to human uses the raw materials which the earth furnishes; the artist, who idealises the scenes and objects of nature and human life; and the poet, who moulds the sins and sufferings of the race into forms of beauty in his melodious verse. Then, indeed, will come the "Golden Age," when the wide world shall be one tabernacle.

"The rest foreshadowed for the Church of God,
The golden eve of Everlasting Day."
—*Bickersteth.*

Egyptian Fabrics! Vers. 7–10. (1.) *Leather!* Of the preparation of leather by the Egyptians here can be no loss. The representations on the monuments, and the few actual specimens which remain, enable us to understand it. Some of the specimens consist of straps across the bodies of mummies, and are beautifully embossed. Leather was employed for sandals, shoes, seats of chairs, sofas, and chariot ornaments. In the Louvre at Paris was an Egyptian harp, the wood of which was covered with a kind of green morocco, cut in the form of a blossom of the lotus. (2.) *Leather Manufacture.*—On the monuments may be seen a man dipping the skins to soak in water before removing the hair. In other pictures Egyptian curriers are engaged in cutting leather with a knife, in shape resembling the semi-circular blade in use among modern curriers. In tanning, the Egyptians used the pods of the *Acacia Nilotica*, the juice of the unripe fruit of which is still imported from Egypt to Europe for medicinal purposes.

"Kindred objects, kindred thoughts inspire,
As summer clouds flash forth electric fire."
—*Rogers.*

Sabbath-Storm! Vers. 12–15. Owing to the length of the winter and the shortness of the summer on the Swiss mountains of Jura, it is of great importance for the peasantry to preserve their hay; otherwise the cattle would starve. One Lord's Day, when the hay was just in the finest condition for taking up, the sons of an old man who feared God and honoured His Sabbaths, proposed to go and cut it. He admonished them for the wickedness of such desecration; but they persisted and went. Just as they had cut it down, a sudden and terrible storm broke over their heads, the rain poured down from the thunder-clouds in torrents, and the hay was soon completely destroyed. Returning home drenched and dispirited, the sainted patriarch replied: "My sons, learn from this to respect the commandments of God."

"I do regret God's day among the hills,
Spent in wild wand'rings in His world so fair;
Warmed by the sunshine which His mercy fills,
Swept by His mighty wings when storms were there;
When I passed by the church's sacred door,
And left His people all within once more."

Sabbath-Significance! Ver. 16. In addition to other important ends, the Sabbath was intended to be an ever-recurring symbol of heaven, and a prophecy of the rest that remaineth for the people of God. It is thus explained at large by inspired writers, and by those who accept the Bible as from God this statement will not be questioned. It is not essential to our purpose to determine whether or not this institution be still binding upon the Christian Church. But it is clear as a sunbeam that, as positive institution, prophetic

type, or soothing symbol, the Sabbath has graven its name on the very heart of Christianity. Its sweet voice is heard in her hymns and psalms of praise. To unnumbered millions of her children it is the only practical foretaste of that blessed rest which it foreshadows, and which the servants of God anticipate with longing hearts.

"Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of eternal rest."

Testimony-Tables! Ver. 18. The learned author of "Earth's Lessons" says, it was on tables of stone that God's finger traced the unerring and unchanging moral law. The same handwriting may be recognised in the masses of rock from which these very tables were constructed. We can trace the universality of Divine law throughout all the successive creations of the earth—throughout all the time worlds, as throughout all the space worlds, in geology as in astronomy. That divinely universal law is unity of force amidst diversity of phenomena—unity of plan amidst diversity of expression. And thus, amid all the *varying operations of His hands and dispensations of His Providence*, we find Him to be without variableness or shadow of turning.

"Oh! Thou Almighty, throned above the stars,
In light eternal, which no darkness mars,
From where Thy bright pavilion is unfurled
Thou lookest on the sorrows of the world;
Thine is the kingdom, Thine is power and might,
Directing day, and ruling in the night."

Divine Finger! Ver. 18. (1.) Before Moses first went up to the Mount it was the voice of God which he heard repeating the decalogue; now he sees the finger of God writing the same. By finger some understand the "power" of God, as in Exod. viii. 19; others conceive the "Spirit" of God, as in Luke xi. 29. No doubt both are right; and the Holy Spirit by the power of God wrote the tablets. (2.) Both as spoken by God's own voice, and as written on the rock by God's own finger, these commandments stand forth alone. Their supreme importance is sufficiently betokened by their prominence in the forefront of all the Mosaic ordinances and Levitical ceremonies, and by their promulgation so directly and entirely Divine. God's finger gave to man those ten jewels of purity—

"As an eagle from the waters
Rising plumes his feathers bright,
Shaking diamonds as he soareth
Upwards in the sunny light."

Decalogue - Restoration! Ver. 18. (1.) This magnificent memorial was designed by God to stand up amid the ages in full clear outline, like the Egyptian pyramids, free from external growth of any kind. But during the subsequent centuries the grand pillars disappeared. True, it stood, but a jungle of weeds and creepers had sprung up around it. Instead of insisting on the simplicity of the decalogue, the Pharisees and Syrian scholiasts planted creepers round it, so that these growing up soon hid the Memorial-Thoughts of God amongst scarves and hems, washing of pots, and tithes of mint and cummin. (2.) It was reserved for the Lord Jesus to destroy this desolating overgrowth. With the Sword of the Spirit in His Sermon on the Mount He cleared away this noisome tangle, until the Memorial-Truths of God again flashed forth to view, and beholders were astonished at their majesty. Nay, He did more. As the restoration of ancient fabrics brings out again the old lines of carving and sculpture; so did the Restorer of the decalogue fill out the law, and bring its sayings into stronger relief: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"When Moses stood upon the hill,
The land with storms was trembling still;
As Jesus speaks from the hillside,
All is with sunshine glorified:
The Saviour preaches on the Mount."

—*Gerok.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. Zeh Mosheh häish** = this Moses *the man*]. The Israelites, thinking that "the man" who brought them out of the land of Egypt had acted the part of a truant, and that they ought to fill up his place by substituting, not another "man," but a deity, as a more reliable guide. Extravagant and foolish as the idea was, it is not evident that they contemplated wittingly to defy God's commandment (chap. xx. 4), by demanding of Aaron to make them gods. That such was Aaron's view of the case is quite clear from the words in which he defends his conduct (ver. 23). When, however, they beheld the image, then all the evils with which the worship of it in Egypt, the land of their birth, was associated in their minds, seized upon their imaginations with such power that they lost all self-control, and "they said, These are thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt" (ver. 4). They were maddened with delight, and "when Aaron saw it" (ver. 5), *i.e.*, the effect the image of the golden calf had produced upon the people, he perceived that it was too late to

reason with them; and, having weakly yielded to their first sinful demand, he had now no choice, probably, to prevent a mutiny or to save his life, if he manifested any signs of disapproval of their conduct, so he built them an altar "before it," viz., the golden calf; and perhaps also, in his endeavour to stave off the evil of an idolatrous celebration, he proclaimed "a feast to the Lord" (= Jehovah) for the following day, and that too with the hope, by the mention of the name of Jehovah, of the people calling to mind His commandment against all image worship, and so affording them time to reflect upon it over night, and of Moses returning in the meanwhile.

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

IDOLATRY.

In consequence of the absence of Moses in the mount, the children of Israel are betrayed into an act of gross idolatry. Let us observe—

I. The crime of which they were guilty. That crime was not altogether forsaking God. It is quite evident that these Jews intended to recognise Jehovah in these emblems or this emblem. They wanted a visible representation of Jehovah, and Aaron made the calf as such. Their crime was in making any such visible representation; it was a culpable breach of the second commandment of the covenant words (chap. xx. 4). But is there not ever in us this tendency to obscure our vision of God by resting in natural things? The passion for gods in the text is a passion still active in our fallen nature. Is not much of the *nature-worship* of our age a similar sin? Men talk of honouring God in His works, but really they allow the works of God to hide the personal, spiritual, holy God of Revelation. Is not the *worldliness* of the age a similar sin? Do we not often think so much of human love, of material wealth, of social honour, of sensational pleasure, that we but feebly realise our spiritual nature, and our dependence upon a spiritual duty for the satisfaction of life? Is not much of the *ritualism* of the Church in our age a similar sin? We multiply forms and ceremonies, and attach to them a supreme importance. It is all the visible Church until you can hardly see the spiritual Jesus. God is a Spirit, and is to be loved, worshipped, served as such; but there is in us a sad tendency to sink into the worldly, the carnal, the material, and to forget the true and the living God.

II. The inexcusableness of this crime. It was regarded, as this chapter fully shows, as a great and unpardonable crime, and very dreadful was the punishment which followed it. Here we learn—1. That the *expensiveness* of such idolatry does not excuse it. They gave their golden earrings—they sacrificed wealth and pride. Will-worship, creature-worship, is often costly, but this does not condone it (1 Cor. xiii. 3). 2. That the *superior nature* of the object which comes between us and God does not excuse it. The god was gold. Thine may be no vulgar God,—nature, humanity—but however noble in itself may be the object which eclipses the vision of God, the sin is none the less. 3. That the *beauty* of the object does not lessen the fault. "The calf was fashioned with a graving tool"—artistically correct. A Church which comes between me and the spiritual Jesus, may be perfect in its architecture, pictures, robes, music, &c., but it is none the less a curse for that. 4. That *religious ceremonies* going with the idolatry does not justify it, vers. 5, 6.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7–15.

INTERCESSION.

Consider—

I. The sin and peril of Israel. Their sin was the more grievous because it came after such wonderful manifestations of God's power and love. "Thy people,

which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves," ver. 7. Here was the sting. After they had seen all the wonders that God had showed them. 2. Their sin was the darker because it was committed so early. "They have turned aside quickly out of the way," ver. 8. So little patience and faith had they. 3. Their sin was in itself a capital offence. "They have made a molten calf," &c., ver. 8. We reckon a lack of belief in God as a mere speculative error; we reckon a godless life as far more innocent than a life of passion; but to lose sight of God—to cease to love Him—is regarded in the Word of God as the cardinal, all-comprehending sin. And this sin on the part of Israel provoked the anger of God. "God's wrath waxed hot against them," ver. 11. In these modern days a certain school chose to represent God as looking down coldly and calmly on sin, and dealing with it in quite an unimpassioned manner, but Revelation does not thus reveal God. He hates sin; He waxes hot against sinners; He is grieved at His heart. Is not this whole picture of the apostasy of Israel suggestive of our own age and nation? God has not dealt with any nation as He has with us, and yet the spirit and philosophy of our day is strangely godless. The golden calf is in the market-place and in the schools.

II. The intercession by which the impending calamity was averted. Moses entirely forgets himself in the welfare of the people, ver. 10. His own glory and the glory of his house are ignored. 1. He pleads with God for Israel on the ground of God's past mercies, ver. 11. Thou hast been good and gracious—be gracious still. 2. He pleads with God on the grounds of sympathy with the divine glory, ver. 12. He was jealous for God's character in the eyes of the world. 3. He pleads with God on the ground of the divine promise, ver. 13.

Thus let us plead with God when we behold the unrighteousness of the age. Men often plead with God for man's sake—for the sake of human sufferings, &c.—let us plead for God's sake. Let us plead for man out of sympathy with God. And if we thus plead, God will hear and bless, ver. 14.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15–20.

THE TRUTH GIVEN AND LOST.

We contemplate—

I. The truth given, chap. xxxi. 18. 1. The highest truth was *given* to man. That truth could not be divined by the genius of men. It was a revelation from God. 2. The *fulness* of the truth is intimated. "Two tables, and they were written on both their sides." The whole truth needed to teach us our duty to God and man. Ten commandments seem few, but in them we have the great laws of the moral universe, and one such law properly understood explains a wide range of life, as the knowledge of one of the great laws of nature explains much phenomena. 3. The *authority* of the truth, ver. 16. "Written with the finger of God." This gift of the tables of testimony was God's grandest gift to Israel. The source of light and purity and gladness (Ps. xix. 7–9; Rom. iii. 1, 2). The truth is God's grandest gift to the world. And when Christ declared unto us more fully the grand truths of the spiritual universe, He imparted to us the choicest blessings of heaven. What the sunshine is to the natural world—that is the law of Moses, and the exposition of that law in Christ, to the moral world.

II. The truth lost, ver. 19. Moses brake the tables of the law, because of the sin of the people. His was a righteous anger, and his action forcibly pictures the fact that in unbelief and sin we lose the truth. 1. Sin sometimes leads God

to take away from a people the revelation of Himself. There is a famine of the word of God. 2. Sin always blinds men to the knowledge of the highest truth. Let us open the windows of our soul to the light of God's truth, and let us carefully preserve that truth. We see nations who have lost the truth; we see Churches; we see individuals. That the truth may not be lost to us, let us live in purity, let us obey all its directions. If we lose the tables of the law we lose the foundation stones of empire, of Churches, of character.

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

SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY.

"And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it to me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

Aaron has acted a very sorry part at a great crisis, and his conduct, and the apology he made for it, are worthy of being attentively considered by us, as we are very apt to fall into similar errors. Being charged with the great sin of which he was guilty, Aaron sought to shift the responsibility, and rest the blame elsewhere.

I. He blamed society. "And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest *the people that they are set on mischief*," ver. 22. "So *they* gave it me," ver. 24.

Thus is it with men now. Yielding to the pressure of society, we do not live out our highest convictions. We defer to public *opinion*. Great is the tyranny of public opinion, and many dare not brave it. Aaron dare not in the text, and thousands still are overawed by it. We like to be talked *about*, but not *against*. We stay short of being what we ought to be, of doing what we ought to do, for fear of the adverse criticism of our neighbours, work-fellows, countrymen. We defer to public *custom*. The Jewish rabble wanted images, such as were in Egypt, and Aaron had not courage to resist the demand. So we often bow to the questionable customs of society. Our convictions are otherwise, but we have not the bravery to be singular—we cast a grain of incense on the world's altar when we ought to hurl a stone at its gods. We defer to public *violence*. "They gathered themselves together unto," ver. 1—rather "against"—Aaron in a tumultuous manner, to compel him to do what they wished. And Aaron was coerced by them. So we often fear the anger, menace, violence of those around us, and act a consciously unworthy part. Aaron in the text blaming "the people" is a picture of thousands of us to-day! We do not wish to act thus and thus, but we are the victims of our social surroundings. It is not *I*, but the *people*. *We, none of us*, are guilty, it is the crowd behind which pushes us.

II. He blamed nature. "I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." As it it were not *his* fault, but *nature's*. He says nothing about the mould that he made; nothing about the graving tool that he used, ver. 4; but nature has done it—it has done itself. So do we reason still.

1. We blame nature for our *sins*. We cannot hold ourselves responsible for various sins; we look upon them as springing from nature, and as not being amenable to control. We ignore the fact that we failed to interpose our will; that we fed the fires of passion; that in making preparation for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, we constructed the mould.

2. We blame nature for our *miseries*. Aaron seems to represent himself as an ill-used man—one to whom nature has been unkind. His miseries were self-created, but he fumbles about to represent them as an unfortunate outcome of nature. So do we act still. The other night we heard a man the worse for

liquor, abusing a telegraph pole against which he had bruised his face. The spectators smiled; but they might have seen in the complaining sot a striking picture of poor foolish human nature in general. We foolishly, wilfully dash ourselves against the great laws of the creation, and then, bruised and weeping, rail against that creation, all of whose laws are pure and sublime. We transgress the physical laws on which health depends, and there comes out the sickly calf; we transgress the moral laws on which happiness depends, and there comes out the wretched calf; we transgress the intellectual laws on which knowledge depends, and there comes out the stupid calf; we transgress the social and political laws on which national prosperity depends, and there comes out the bloody calves of civil strife and revolution; we transgress the economical laws on which wealth depends, and there comes out the lean and ill-favoured calf of poverty. We blame nature for a score of ugly things by which we are plagued when they are simply the consequences of our own folly.

A word—

1. As to the *childishness* of this method of shifting responsibility. *They* did it; *it* did it. How childish! The little children say, "*It* did it—*it* fell—*it* broke," and their seniors smile at the transparent sophistry. But do not the seniors also the same? Blaming society, their body, nature? "The calf came out!" *He* was the calf, and we all feel that he was, and we are also when we shirk responsibility, and speak of *it* and *them*. We are *men*, gifted with the power of self-determination, and it is supremely ignoble and childish to attempt to rest the onus of our conduct on the laws of nature or the exactions of society.

2. The *foolishness* of it. Sin not only makes cowards of us all, but fools also. *They* did it; *it* did it. What shuffling and foolish excuses! How irrational! "Aaron's reply to the reproachful question of Moses is designedly obscure and confused, because he was himself conscious of the great crime which his fatal want of moral courage had abetted."—*Kalisch* (*in loco*). The reason is confused before we sin, and sinning confuses it all the more, and we awkwardly seek to veil our sin and shame by the most unmanly and illogical vindications.

3. The *uselessness* of it. Aaron is severely blamed and censured. Moses gives no reply to the childish apology, but directly charges the crime home upon Aaron. "*Thou* hast brought so great sin upon them," ver. 21. "*Aaron* had made them naked," ver. 25. See also Deut. ix. 20. So will it be with us all in the great day of judgment and retribution; our personal responsibility will be insisted upon, and the flimsy reasonings by which we sought to evade that responsibility will be scattered to the winds.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25-30.

RETRIBUTION.

We observe—

I. The sin by which the retribution was provoked. This sin was one which could not be lightly passed over; it was a violation of the fundamental law which God had given unto Israel (Ex. xx. 3-5). In these days direct sins against God are lightly thought of, but Israel was taught a very different theology. God saw that in the making of an image His real nature would first be eclipsed, and soon His existence would be forgotten: the image first degraded the idea of God, and then displaced God in the eye and heart of the people. And whatever lowered God in the estimation of the people, whatever let God down to the level of the people, whatever stole away the reverence and love of the people from God—this was a cardinal evil. They who teach us to see God in nature, until nature takes the place of God; they who teach us to see God in humanity, until humanity takes the place of God; they who teach us to see

God in the blessings of life, until the blessings of life take the place of God; they who teach us to see God in the Church, until the Church takes the place of God;—all these Aarons are causing Israel to sin the sin which is unto death. Let us beware of losing sight of the Divine spirituality, of the Divine existence. Idolatry is the root of all sin—renunciation of the spiritual holy God is the mother of all crimes and sorrows. Ceasing to revere the Eternal One, what greatness can be admired? ceasing to adore the All Beautiful, what excellence can be venerated? ceasing to believe in the Holy One, what purity can be sacred? ceasing to commune with the Happy One, what woes are not possible? Idolatry and atheism are direct violations of the most fundamental law of existence, and directly provoke God's anger. We observe—

II. The retribution by which the sin was punished, vers. 27, 28. 1. This retribution was *swift.* The scene of feasting and song, verse 18, was soon turned into a scene of death and dirge. God can bring swift destruction on splendid empires, on proud sinners. Let us remember, in the day of our pride and vanity, how easily and swiftly God can visit us. "The laughter of fools is as the crackling of thorns under a pot." "The triumphing of the wicked is short." 2. This retribution was *terrible.* There was great mercy exercised by God in this event, and yet how terrible this judgment, even softened by grace! It is a fearful thing to sin against God. Idolatry, atheism, libertinism—bring with them awful punishments in this life; and if in this life, what of the next? 3. This retribution was *just.* We see what dreadful penalties are inflicted on men for transgressing the great laws of nature, and we feel that if this is right, it is just in God also to punish those who violate the highest law of all. What frightful diseases, wars, famines, deaths, come out of sin, and the event recorded in the text is in consistency with the same law!

III. The penitence by which the retribution was escaped, ver. 26. "Who is on the Lord's side?" The Levites, no doubt, had participated in the general sin, but at the call of Moses they repent, and become the instruments to execute God's judgment, although they had to slay their own son or brother. Let us put ourselves on the Lord's side, whatever it may cost us. "O Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us: but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name" (Isa. xxvi. 13).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 30–35.

Religious Patriotism.

It has often been brought as a charge against Christianity that it is adverse to patriotism. It is true that the spirit of Christianity is cosmopolitan, but yet the love of humanity does not exclude the sentiment of nationality, and the Word of God presents us with instances of the most sublime patriotism. The true Christian is a true patriot; the patriotism inspired by religion is of the noblest type. The text is a case in point.

I. Religious patriotism recognises national sin, ver 30. "Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin." There is a patriotism whose motto is: Our country—right or wrong. Such patriotism is spurious and quite misleading. There is a patriotism which is ever dwelling in a vain-glorious temper on the wealth and victories and power of a nation, and which cannot tolerate the rebuking of the national vices. This is a kind of patriotism which leads to evil issues. Religious patriotism discerns and rebukes the sins of the times, and is therefore the true patriotism. True love is not blind, neither is true patriotism. It is sensitive to those errors and vices by which national greatness

is eventually destroyed. He may *seem* the greatest patriot who is always vaunting the power and prowess, the wealth and magnificence, of his country; but he is *really* the truest friend to his country who protests against the iniquitous laws which are on its statute book, the errors which are taught in its schools and temples, the vices which disgrace its streets.

II. Religious patriotism is prepared to make the greatest sacrifices for the national welfare. We see this in Moses in the text, vers. 31, 32. See also verses 11–14. Moses set the nation above his personal interests, above his family glory. His temptation to become the founder of a great nation reminds us of Christ's vision of the kingdoms. He loves his nation; he will not merely die for it, he is ready to suffer unknown sorrows on its behalf. See also Apostle Paul, Romans ix. 3. Thus the Christian Church is ever making great sacrifices on behalf of the nation. A religion that does not issue in practical patriotism, is not the religion of Christ. The nation is of God as well as the family, and the true Christian in the spirit of self-sacrificing love, gives time, money, influence, and often life itself, that the nation may be educated and free and pure.

III. Religious patriotism is most precious to the state, vers. 33–35. We find that God was moved by the prayer of Moses to spare Israel. It is often thought that the grandest power in the state is the power which *fights;* but really the grandest power is the power which *prays.* The patriotism which seeks to spread the knowledge of God; which seeks to secure the keeping of God's laws; which vindicates the sanctity of God's day; which pleads with God on behalf of the nation, as it sins and suffers—this patriotism is of essential preciousness. The patriotism which seeks to bring God and the nation closer together, is far more precious than the tongue of the eloquent, the sword of the valiant, or the wisdom of the ancient.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Idol-Idiosyncrasy. Vers. 1–35. (1.) Material idolatry has passed away among civilised nations in its literal import. As Macmillan says, the old worship of stocks and stones is now impossible among a professedly Christian people. But although the outward mode has passed away, the essence of the temptation remains the same. Human society is changed, but human nature is unchanged. The impulse which led Israel to seek the golden calf is as strong as ever, and images are set up and worshipped now as fantastic as any pagan fetish or joss. For what is idolatry? Is it not in its essence the lowering of the idea of God and of God's nature, and the exaltation of a dead image above a man's own living spirit? *Is not an idol whatever is loved more than God, whatever is depended upon for happiness and help independent of God?* (2.) Sooner or later, as Moses pounded the calf and gave the Israelites the dust to drink in punishment of their idolatry, will all such moral idolaters have to drink the dust of their idols. Our sin will become our punishment, our idols our scourges. God is a jealous God, and every soul that turns aside from His love to the lying vanities of the world must drink the bitter water of jealousy, filled with the dust of the bruised and mutilated idols of spiritual idolatry: "This shall ye have at My hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

"Thou art the man within whose heart's deep cell
All evil sleeping lies;
Lust, in a dark hour waking, breaks the spell,
And straightway there arise
Monsters of evil thoughts and base desire."
—*Gerok.*

Israel's Insurrection! Vers. 1–6. SCENE I. —*The Camp of Insurrection.* 1. *Infidelity* of the people (ver. 1) may be illustrated by the glacier and crevasse, and of Aaron by the story of Arnold Winkelreid. 2. *Idolatry* of the people (ver. 4). Breaking the law may be illustrated by the familiar figure of a chain-link which holds a person up, being broken, or by Samuel and Saul's disobedience as to sacri-

fices; and making the calf by the homely idea of the Great Eastern having a wooden engineer to pilot her over the ocean waves. Mosaic Intercession! Vers. 7–14. SCENE II.—*The Mount of Indignation.* 1. *Indignation* of Jehovah (ver. 7) at Israel's folly may be illustrated by the story of a father going to New Zealand, leaving his children with certain commands till his return: or by the natural figure of a lamp hung up by a chain being broken in its fall. 2. *Intercession* of Moses (ver. 14) for Israel's forgiveness, with his pleas of God's (1) perfections, (2) partiality towards, (3) purpose in, and (4) promises to Israel, may find simple illustrations, if any are needed, in a mother's intercession with the father for her offending boy's pardon; or by the Queen's intercession at Calais with her husband, King Edward, on behalf of its citizens. Levitical Intervention! Vers. 15–29. SCENE III.—*The Valley of Intervention.* 1. *Indignity* (ver. 15) resented by breaking of stone tablets, and by causing Israel to drink of powdered wood and gold. Allusions might be appropriately made here to Dagon, Achan, Saul, or the story of the Chinese boy and the gods. 2. *Integrity* (ver. 25) of the Levites contrasts with the fear, folly, and falsehood of Aaron. Apt references might be found in the histories of Melancthon and Luther, and in the noble tale of the boy stopping the leak in the Dutch dyke.

"Rain and sunshine doth combine,
One side dark, the other bright;
Thus, by nature's grand design,
In one rainbow both unite."
—*Maguire.*

Self-will! Ver. 1. (1.) It was but a little boy crying, as he limped towards his father on the rough common. Yet what a lesson it taught! His father had promised to take him to a lovely scene across the stony waste if he would promise to be led by the hand, and not be rebellious or impatient. And he had promised, as boys will promise, and failed, as boys will fail. Hardly had he set out than he began to murmur at the length of the walk. When the father seriously reminded him of the promise to obey and exercise patience, he was silent and submissive. But presently he let go of the strong, wise hand, turned aside from the path, struck his foot against a rugged rock, and straightway cried out with pain. The scar remained till death. (2.) Israel was God's wayward, self-willed child. They thought that they could do without the Father's hand, though they had promised to be guided by Him, who was able and ready to conduct them to the green fields of Eden. And so they wander aside, stumble against the rough flints, experience the misery of self-sufficiency and disobedience, and learn that the way of transgressors is hard. On Israel's national life the scar was visible, even to the hour when Titus shivered its massive structure.

"Therefore, O man, remember that thy heart
Will shed its pleasures as thine eye its tears;
And both leave loathesome furrows."
—*Bailey.*

Sinful Self-Sacrifice! Vers. 2, 3. Whale says, People often spend more in superstition than Christians for the truth. To gratify self they do not mind making many sacrifices. To have his golden calf of ambition or popular adulation the man of the world will freely scatter largesses on all sides with bounteous hand. With what lavish magnificence did the ancient heathen adorn their temples of superstition! With what profuse prodigality will some modern men of science, or some wealthy student of atheism, spend his riches to gratify his selfish—it may be sinful—motives! Who amongst us is willing to do as much for Jesus as these Israelites did to have self gratified in the golden calf? At the present time, in our own country, a man of great wealth spends his whole fortune in the issue of infidel tracts and pamphlets, which are disseminated broadcast over the world. Atheism is his idol-deity. He worships the golden calf of blank atheism. He devotes his immense riches to its exaltation. There are few Christians willing to make such supreme sacrifices for their God.

"I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
I gave My life for thee;
What hast thou given for Me?"
—*Havergal.*

Sin's Deceit! Vers. 3–6. There is a beautiful picture of a female with a sweet but melancholy expression of countenance. She kneels on the top of the rock, and is singing to a harp, which she strikes with her graceful fingers. Below is a boat with two men in it—the one old and the other young. The boat is rapidly nearing the rocks, but both the men are utterly unconscious of their danger. The old man has ceased to hold the helm—the young man has dropped the oars. Both are fondly stretching out their hands towards the deceiving spirit — wholly entranced with her song. A few moments more, and their boat will be a wreck. Israel was thus captivated. Lured on by the weird melody of a craving for visible worship, they were now on the wide river borne onwards toward the jagged rocks of destruction.

"The fruit of sin, goodly and fair to view,
Deceives us in its beauty. Pluck'd, it turns
To ashes on our lips."—*Webster.*

Bull-Worship! Ver. 4. (1.) From the earliest times the Egyptians adopted certain

animals as representatives of their deities. The symbolism of these selections has been entirely lost, inasmuch as the deities were lost sight of in the creatures by whom they were symbolised. It was so with Apis-adoration: an animal most sacred in the later age of Egypt. It is supposed that the Israelites borrowed their idolatrous idea of the calf from this form of bull-worship, which they had observed in Egypt. (2.) Sir Gardner Wilkinson, however, says that they borrowed their notion of the "golden calf"—not from Apis-adoration, but from the worship of Mnevis. This was the sacred ox of Heliopolis. At his worship were offerings, dancing, and rejoicings. And it is supposed that the Israelites adopted these; or rather, resumed them as religious revelries in which they had joined during their sojourn in Egypt. Satan

"Moved Israel and their timid priest to carve
Their idol-god, and interweave with songs
Their naked dances round the golden calf:
Vision of horror and of grief."
—*Bickersteth.*

Aaronic Action! Vers. 4, 5. (1.) Among the high Alps, the traveller is told in certain places to proceed as quietly as possible. On the steep slopes overhead, the snow hangs so evenly balanced that the sound of the voice, the crack of a whip, the report of a gun, or the detachment of a snow-ball may destroy the equilibrium and bring down an immense avalanche that will overwhelm everything within reach in ruin. (2.) The Israelites were in such a position. Their moral character was unstable—their principles unfixed. They were so evenly balanced between good and evil that a word from Aaron in the wrong direction threw them down into the abyss of idolatry. Had Aaron stood firm—stiff and silent as the rocks around, the tumultuous heaving would have ceased. (3.) Are there not souls around us hanging so nicely poised on the giddy slopes of temptation, ready, *on the least encouragement or yielding on our part as Aaron did*, to come down in terrible avalanches of moral ruin, crushing themselves and others in their fall? To stand firm, says Richter, may save a world.

"Be great in act! So shall inferior eyes,
That borrow their behaviour from the great,
Grow great by your example, and put on
The dauntless spirit of resolution."
—*Shakespeare.*

Visible Gods! Ver. 5. (1.) Adam Clarke says there is one pretence that Roman Catholics have for the idolatry of their image-worship. Their high priest, the Pope, collects the ornaments from the people, and makes an image—a crucifix—a Madonna. The people worship it; but the Pope says that it is only to keep God in remembrance. But of the whole, God says, "They have corrupted themselves." He will have nothing to do with visible media through which He is to be worshipped. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must do so in Spirit and in truth. (2.) Therefore, as Hallam says, any image substituted for the living and loving God, who is invisible, is a portentous shadow projected from the slavish darkness of an ignorant heart. It is as much idolatry to worship God under a visible symbol, as it is to worship the image of a false divinity. Both forms of idolatry deceive the soul, harden the heart, and drag their votaries into complete alienation from God.

"The heart surrendered to the ruling power
Of some ungoverned passion, every hour
Finds by degrees the truth that once bore sway,
And all their deep impressions wear away,
So coin grows smooth, in traffic current passed,
Till Cæsar's image is effaced at last."
—*Cowper.*

Revelry Rites! Ver. 6. The worship of Apis assumed a bacchanalian character, attended by the wildest and most extravagant revels. Herodotus says, that on the feast day of the gods all the Egyptians arrayed themselves as soon as the bull left his gilded asylum, and gave way to feasting and revelry. Hilarious processions formed an important feature of the Egyptian ritual; as might be expected in a country where the cloudless sky and the elastic air predispose men to mirth and indolence. Drumann remarks, that they were like orgies—that even women appeared in them—that they were followed by indecent songs and dances—and that they were accompanied by clamorous music and drunken feasts. There were also mimès and mummeries, like the Roman Saturnalia, in which the actors painted their faces, and ridiculed or struck the bystanders.

"Men are but children of a larger growth;
Our appetites are apt to change as theirs,
And full as craving too, and full as vain;
And yet the soul shut up in her dark room,
Viewing so clear abroad, at home sees nothing;
But like a mole in earth, busy and blind,
Works all her folly up, and casts it outward,
To the world's open view."—*Dryden.*

Divine Omniscience! Vers. 7, 8. Israel lost sight of the fact that though Moses could not see, God could. Creeping down stairs at night towards the orchard, the little boy forgot that while his father's eyes were locked in slumbers deep, yet there was One whose eye neither slumbers nor sleeps. But when he stood beneath the favourite apple-tree—when he stretched forth his hand to the branch—when he lifted up his eye to the tempting, coveted, rosy-cheeked fruit; lo! a star twinkled its ray upon him, and seemed to say, "God sees." And the little fellow shrank

back — retreated from the garden — betook himself upstairs, repeating to himself the Scripture words "Thou God seest." Ah! had Israel only remembered this, the sin had not been committed, and the dire mischief had not been wrought.

"Though all the doors are sure, and all our servants
As sure bound with their sleeps, yet there is ONE
That wakes above, whose eye no sleep can blind;
He sees through doors, and darkness, and our thoughts."—*Chapman.*

Self-Corruption! Ver. 7. "Thy people have corrupted themselves, *i.e.*, as the original and English words imply, they have broken themselves up together. (1.) *Material disintegration!* The clay and soil of our fields are caused by the oxidation or burning of pure metals. They are, in fact, the ashes of metals. The dirt that cleaves to our footsteps, as the emblem of all impurity, is produced by the disintegration of the brightest metals, or the most sparkling jewels. (2.) *Mental disintegration!* Jehovah tells Moses that Israel had corrupted itself. A few days before they were as His jewels; now they had voluntarily entered upon a process of disintegration. Passion had broken loose from the law of cohesion to God; and they were fast becoming as mud—the foul product of the pure crystal under self-corruptive influences. (3.) *Moral disintegration!* All sinful thoughts, and words, and deeds, have such corrupting effects. By this, man breaks the order and law of his existence, and his whole nature disintegrates in the atmosphere of sin. The whole being becomes vitiated, disordered, and corrupt. What was once more or less solid and valuable has become dust and ashes.

"The basis sinks, the ample piles decay,
The stately fabric shakes and falls away."
—*Crabbe.*

Idol Illustrations! Ver. 8. It was a curious feature of the ancient Egyptian worship that each large city had its own triad or assemblage of three gods, whom it more particularly adored. The triad of Memphis were Ptah, Buhastis, Apis. The ruins of the temple at Memphis sacred to calf-worship were discovered in 1850. Close at hand stood the *Apeum*, or sanctuary of the sacred bull, where he was carefully tended, as well as the cow from which he had sprung. As each bull died his mummy was stored away in one of the corridors extending underground for a considerable distance, and known as the "Mummy-pits of Apis." No fewer than 1200 of these tombstone-tablets have been traced, and the most important of them were removed to the Louvre at Paris.

"Ideal images in sculptured forms,
Thoughts hewn in columns, or in caverned hill,
In honour of their deities and their dead."
—*Montgomery.*

Sin-Steps! Ver. 8. (1.) *Facilis decensus Averni.* The *first* step in the primæval world was to worship God under natural symbols. The *second* step was to worship the creature along with or beside Jehovah. The *third* step was to worship the objects of nature more than the Being who made them. The *fourth* step was to worship these works of nature to the exclusion of God. Lower was the surging sea of all ungodliness, whose end is DEATH. (2.) Goulburn well says that idolatry—*i.e.*, the surrounding the creature with the attributes of the Creator—is the original, fundamental sin of man, the point of departure from which man started on the downward course, until he reached the lowest depths of wickedness.

"Polluted most, yet wallowing in the mire;
Most mad, yet drinking frenzy's giddy cup;
Depth ever deepening, darkness darkening still."
—*Pollok.*

Wrath and Mercy! Vers. 10–14. (1.) If we look with the naked eye, says Macmillan, at the star Rigel, which forms the right foot of the constellation of Orion, we observe a star of first beauty and brightness. But the telescope shows us that it is a *double* star. This is a binary arrangement which prevails to a great extent throughout the heavens. These binary stars revolve round each other, or round a common centre. They thus exhibit the extraordinary spectacle, not of planet revolving round sun, *but of sun moving round sun.* Their lights blend before they reach us, so that they present to the naked eye the appearance of one star. (2.) Kurtz says that wrath and mercy were both united in the eternal counsel of salvation, which was the combined product of the two; for in that counsel wrath was appeased by mercy, and mercy sanctified by wrath. Wrath and mercy were made one in the counsel of salvation, but they were not extinguished. Their lights blended together in this incident on Horeb—Jehovah saying, "Let Me alone;" Moses, prompted by the Spirit, saying, "Spare Thy people, O Lord."

"Had not the milder hand of Mercy broke
The furious violence of that fatal stroke
Offended Justice struck, we had been quite
Lost in the shadows of eternal night."
—*Quarles.*

Mosaic Meditation! Ver. 12. We find the law of intervention in every department of human life—each and all of its phases serving to indicate more or less clearly the spiritual law. As Ragg remarks, is not that man a mediator who, in the hour of danger, interposes with his strong arm for the protection

of the weak? Is not that woman a mediator who, with noiseless step, paces the sick room where the once stalwart man is laid prostrate, anticipating his every want and desire as she stands between him and the fell disease with which he is grappling? Is not that mother a mediator who, with simple and eloquent words, and tears more eloquent, pleads with the father for the child whose wrongdoing has incurred parental censure and rebuke? Is not that nobleman a mediator who, with earnest words, undertakes to induce his sovereign to pardon the rebel-peer, and restore him to his confiscated title and possessions? Is not the Jewish maiden a mediator who, with consciousness of the great risk she runs, ventures into the royal presence to implore the revocation of the imperial decree dooming a whole exiled race to death?

"Praying for His children
In that blessed place,
Calling them to glory,
Sending them His grace;
His bright home preparing,
Faithful ones, for you;
Jesus ever liveth,
Ever prayeth too."—*Havergal.*

Apis-Adoration! Ver. 20. The Egyptian Apis was attended by a retinue of priests, and sacrifices of red oxen were offered to him. All his changes of appetite, his movements, and choice of places were watched as oracular. He was not allowed to live longer than twenty-five years. If he died a natural death before that age, his body was embalmed as a mummy, and interred in the subterranean tombs. Otherwise, he was secretly put to death, and buried by the priests in a sacred well. A new animal was then sought for. It was necessary that he should be marked with a white square on his forehead, an eagle on his back, and a knot like a cantharus under his tongue. When found, he was conveyed with great pomp to Nicopolis, where he remained for forty days, attended by naked women. He was then removed to Memphis.

"The general world, unconscious pietists
Of falsest creeds and errors, God allowed
To live on, unreproved, till came the time
When all the mysteries of heaven and earth
Were put in evolution."

Calf-Carved! Ver. 20. (1.) Most of the large idols of antiquity had a wooden centre; the metal being, by way of preparation, cast into a flat sheet which the goldsmith hammered and spread out. No doubt, this calf was made of wood, and then overlaid with gold. This explains the destruction by Moses. Being burnt, the wood was converted into charcoal, while the gold would be crushed to pieces. (2.) In a French Bible appears the ridiculous gloss that the ashes of the calf which Moses caused to be burnt and mixed with the water that was drunk by the Israelites stuck to the beards of such as had fallen down before it, by which they appeared with gilt beards, as a peculiar mark to distinguish those who had worshipped the graven image.

"Man's a poor deluded bubble,
Wand'ring in a mist of lies;
Seeing false, or seeing double;
Who would trust to such weak eyes?"
—*Dodsley.*

Idol-Impotency! Ver. 20. (1.) After the defeat of the Persian army in the Libyan desert, Cambyses returned to Memphis. On his arrival, he found its inhabitants rejoicing at the discovery of a calf marked with the mystic characters which declared it to be a divine bull. Ignorant of this fact, and supposing the public joy to be over his defeat, Cambyses summoned the magistrates. They endeavoured to pacify him by explaining about the bull; but he ordered them to be executed as liars. The bull and priests were then brought into his presence, when, drawing his dagger, he stabbed the calf. (2.) Was Moses by this act desirous of showing the utter impotency of their newly adopted god? He certainly took the most effectual way to do so. When the English officer struck the Brahmin bull amid its crowd of worshippers, these deluded devotees looked for his immediate destruction. But when no harm came to him, when he seized a rough branch, and drove it with many lusty, sacrilegious blows about the market-place, the people then ridiculed their priests and animal god. The merciless grinding and pounding of the Apis or Mnevis calf may have been a design to convince Israel of their folly.

"What, Dagon up again! I thought we had hurled him
Down on the threshold, never more to rise.
Bring wedge and axe; and neighbours, lend your hands,
And rive the idol into winter faggots."
—*Athelstane.*

Dust-Drink! Ver. 20. (1.) She was his idol, his only daughter! A fairy, sylphlike form was hers; and fondly his eye watched her flitting hither and thither. In his love, the proud peer and father forgot the suffering world around—its sorrows and its woes. In his idol-worship, he lost sight of God, who had given him that living soul. He placed the human form, overlaid with the gold of sweetness and fairy charms, upon the throne in his being, which rightly was Jehovah's only. One day the pony shied, and the idol fell—fell on a rude stone by the pathway. She lived, but became a decrepit form, with distorted face. He had to drink of the bitter water with the dust of his idol, as from day to day he saw her nerveless form, and marked her twitching, pinched features. (2.) The observed of all observers! What queenly grace was hers! What exquisitely chiselled features! Women envied her surpassing love-

lness; while men thirsted for her smiles. And she knew it all. Her beauty became her idol—wood overlaid with gold. She learned to adore her own charms. She worshipped her image reflected in the boudoir mirror. God was forgotten in her idolatry of self-beauty. An evening came, when the flashing jewels lay untouched — when the princely saloon felt not the witchery of her presence. It was small-pox; and she rose from her bed with disfigured features. The powdered dust of marred and charred loveliness was mingled with the bitter water, as she gazed in the now hateful mirror. Therefore—

"Seek not the world!
'Tis a vain show at best;
Bow not before its idol-shrine; in God
Find thou thy DAY and REST."—*Bonar.*

Responsibility! Vers. 21-24. Aaron sought to shift the responsibility of this apostacy from his own shoulders to those of others. 1. He blamed the people (ver. 22) for (1) desiring, and (2) demanding. 2. He blamed the furnace (ver. 24) for (1) protecting, and (2) producing. Kalisch says that Aaron's reply to the reproachful question of Moses is designedly obscure and confused, because he was himself conscious of the great crime which his fatal want of moral courage had abetted. A crazy house is propped up by one support; but conscious of its insecurity, the owner places a second to keep up the structure. Aaron was sensible of the flimsiness of his defence, and he must need prop it up with two supports, which, after all, disclosed its insecurity.

"Sin and shame are ever tied together
With Gordian knots, of such a strong thread spun,
They cannot without violence be undone."

Personal Responsibility! Ver. 23. That puckered mouth had once known smiles! Those withered, parchment-like cheeks had once worn the rose bloom! Those hungry eyes had once been like those of doves, washed with milk and fitly set! Those lean, clutching hands had once tenderly embraced a fair and loved form! And that heart, dry and worthless as a decayed nut-kernel, had once been soft and gushing with love and sympathy! Now he was a miser, smiling only as he saw the yellow dross and clutched the golden coins. To bleed a stone were easier than to find pity and unselfish sympathy for the woes and wants of others. He was a miser; yet he had his moments when conscience, like a second Moses to Aaron, would ask, "What is this that thou hast done?" Adam-like, Aaron-like, Saul-like, aye, man-like, he would reply to himself, "She made me what I am." He had loved, and his love had proved faithless—had, on the very morning of their intended marriage, been wedded to another. She had made him love gold, become selfish and avaricious, live a hard and unsympathetic life. "She made me!" "No, Aaron, death before dishonour." Fearing the anger, menace, and violence of the Israelites, he acted a consciously unworthy part, and all the more because he was their leader *pro tempore*. We are what we make ourselves, not what others make us—the victims of our fears or follies, our lusts or lingerings after evil.

"Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."
—*Beaumont.*

Retribution! Vers. 2-8. (1.) Yes, they were rebels taken red-handed in revolt against their king. Not only had they taken up arms against their liege lord, and entered into negotiations with his relentless foe, but they had endeavoured to induce many of their fellow-countrymen to join them in their rebellious and lawless course. To spare them from punishment would be to leave them opportunity of bringing wider ruin upon all and sundry. For the sake of the people, and especially the weak, it was necessary that retribution should overtake these red-handed communistic leaders. (2.) Daniel Defoe, in his far-famed "Life of Robinson Crusoe," and John Bunyan, in his widely-known allegory of the Holy War, have shown how this apparently severe treatment was in reality true charity and compassion. And is it not from the same cause that the lost angels and men are to be "for ever" shut up in darkness, and precluded from entering amongst the redeemed? It is often the greatest mercy to exercise strictest justice. Severity to one may save the many from temptation, nay, from ultimate destruction. Pity!

"I share it most of all when I share justice,
For then I pity those I do not know,
Which a dismiss'd offence would after gall;
And do him right that, answering one foul wrong,
Lives not to act another."—*Shakespeare.*

Mosaic Intercession! Ver. 30. (1.) There is a sublime grandeur in the form of Moses, as we behold him holding forth his rod over the billowy sea, or raising that rod towards heaven. The stormy tempest and the beetling waters obeyed the *Leader*, who was invested with power by that God who made the sea and stretched out the firmament on high. (2.) There is more than human majesty in the appearance of Moses when we behold the great *Lawgiver* descending from Sinai, bearing aloft those holy commandments which not a nation alone, but a world should observe, his countenance radiant with such glory as never before had beamed from human face. (3.) But though he was mighty as the Leader, illustrious as the Legislator, it is with more of interest and admiration that we view him as the Intercessor for Israel. Power, it has been well said, excites wonder, holiness, awe. But it is love which attracts the soul.

"'Mid visions of eternal light
That glow on Eden's plain,
Where never comes the shade of night
In spirit realms to reign;
Where robe and crown of angels glow,
There's ONE in tears alone—
One interceding for our woe—
'Tis JESUS by the Throne."

Book of Life! Ver. 23. (1.) The book here spoken of is the Book of Life. It was even then the custom of every city to keep a list of the burgesses. The Israelites were familiar with the custom of keeping a register of families; as appears in Genesis v. 1. Hence Moses uses a familiar figure in speaking of God's book. It has been supposed that a similar reference occurs in Psalm xxix. and lxix.; and in Daniel xii. 1. (2.) It seems that in China they have two books—one the Book of Life, and the other the Book of Death. These are presented to the Emperor by his ministers, who is at liberty to blot out from either book any names he pleases. Those whose names he blots out from the Book of Life are doomed to die; and those whom he erases from the Book of Death are allowed to live.

"And then and there the likeness as of books
Before the awful presence of the Judge
Was seen—the massive chronicles of time,
The Law—the Gospel and the Book of Life."
—*Bickersteth.*

Intercession! Vers. 31–34. In one of the lovely Swiss villages, bordered on its most romantic lake, dwelt an aged Christian and his granddaughter—a maiden of simple beauty and lofty imagination. Two Englishmen visited the locality; when the attention of one was attracted to this German girl. After some weeks' residence, the English stranger discovered that he was loved by the village maiden. He, therefore, induced her to leave her grandfather's roof, under the promise of a marriage. For a month they continued travelling from one place to another, partly for concealment and partly to view the beautiful scenery. At length, the yearning to see the aged grandfather became intense; but he had sternly refused. In this painful crisis, the English friend undertook to intercede. His intercession proved effectual; and on the regular marriage of the two runaways, she was restored to her old home. Here husband and wife lived happily, until the summons came for the veteran Christian to leave this passing world.

"We dare not think what earth would be,
O Intercession! but for thee;
A howling chaos, wild and dark—
One flood of horrors, while no ark,
Upborne above the gloom-piled wave,
From one great death-abyss might save."

Intercessory Prayer! Ver. 34. (1.) It has been well said, Prayer is not an endeavour to wrest from God what He is reluctant to bestow. It is the approach of the heart to Him to claim what He has promised, and what He delights to give. It was God Himself who directed Moses to stand in the beach. And it is the Father who has given the Son to be our Intercessor. All true prayer is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and *therefore* cannot fail to be presented and accepted. (2.) If such is true of the intercessory prayer of Moses, how much more so is it of Christ? He pleads for our forgiveness at the throne of God. When the word went forth against the fruitless fig-tree: "Cut it down," the voice was heard of the prevailing advocate, "Let it alone this year also." How often may such prayers have been offered on our behalf!—Luke vi. 12.

"Ended is the day's work now,
Jesus seeks the mountain's brow;
He, from early dawn, His sheep
Hath, as Shepherd, toiled to keep.
Doth He close in sleep His days?
Nay, *He watches still, and prays.*"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**18. Thy glory**] = Kebodecha, from kabod=glory, *i.e.*, the mysterious essential qualities of the Deity in all their magnificence and stupendousness. Moses felt forced to make this request on account of the pressure of circumstances. He was fully alive to the heinousness of the sin which the Israelites had committed in the worship of the golden calf (xxxii. 30); he had witnessed God's indignation upon it (xxxii. 10), and yet, upon *his* intercession on their behalf, the Lord repented (*i.e.*, recalled) the evil which He thought to do to His people (xxxii. 14). This blending of justice and mercy; this stern reproving, and again yielding with all tenderness and love and forbearance, on the part of God, was so contrary to all that he feared, and therefore so bewildering to him, that he was induced to ask, "Show me now Thy way that I may know Thee" (ver. 13), *i.e.*, "reveal unto me *now*, at this juncture of contrarieties, Thy secret, that I may know once for all the principles on which Thou dost act thus." To this God answers him with a promise (ver. 14). To which, again, Moses replies with great naiveté (ver. 15), as if he said, "Of course, Thy presence must go with us; only that

is not exactly what my request means," and, as if for the sake of greater perspicuity, he amends his request and resumes, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory," *i.e.*, "Give me that which will unlock to my understanding Thy mysterious self, for then shall I feel at rest and never again be confounded, however contradictory Thy wonderful dealing with us may appear in future." And again God replies (vers. 19–22), and of which verse 23 is an axiomatic conclusion, viz., that man in his present state can only know or see the glory of God experimentally, and in the manifestations of His providence, as indicated in verses 19–22, and that only retrospectively, by seeing His "back-parts = Achoray, *i.e.*, His *past*, or His works; but His "face" = Panav, *i.e.*, *future*, in all its mysteriousness no man can see while in a mortal state.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1–12.

THE HIDDEN COUNTENANCE.

We observe—

I. The fact of the hiding of God's face. God has not here wholly deserted Israel—far from it. In consequence of the intercession of Moses, and of that retribution which had been inflicted upon Israel, God promised not to forsake His people; but we are instructed here, verses 2 and 3, that God's presence shall not be so fully and brightly granted to Israel as it has been. "I will send an angel before thee," ver. 2. That is, God will stand by His elect people, but He will be more hidden by agents and instruments. Is not this sometimes still the case with God's people? They feel that God has not forsaken them, but He is not near to them, so sensibly near and precious to them as He once was. They feel as the children of Israel did here—that an angel takes the place of God—a star takes the place of the sun. They feel as Job did (Job xxix. 3.) As David did (Ps. xlii. 5). There is not the rich, full abiding sense of the Divine presence and love.

II. The reason of the hiding of God's presence. This hiding is not arbitrary. The sin of Israel was the explanation of this eclipse of the Divine Face. When God withdraws His fuller presence from the souls of His people it is (1) partly in *judgment*. "I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people," ver. 3. Because of our forgetfulness, or unbelief, or perversity, God takes from us the joys of His salvation. Our sins separate between us and God, and when they do not create an impassable gulf, they create a distance between us and God which fills the soul with the gloom of the night and the chill of the winter. But it is (2) also in *mercy* that God hides Himself. "Lest I consume thee in the way." With fuller revelations of God's presence come loftier responsibilities, and God lessens the gifts that He may lessen our perils. It is as much in mercy as in anger that God denies us fuller revelations of truth, fuller measures of joy, higher privileges and gifts.

III. The sorrow of the hiding of God's presence, vers. 4–6. The people put off their ornaments as the sign of their great loss and sorrow. Putting away their ornaments signified (1) that in losing God they had lost their *glory*. Their God was their glory, and if He refused to shine upon them, their glory departed. Putting away their ornaments signified (2) that in losing God they had lost their *treasure*. God was their portion, and in Him they had all riches. (3) Putting away their ornaments signified that they had lost their *joy*. No more joy without Him. Thus is it still with God's people. In diminishing measures of God's love and grace they find reason for profoundest sorrow. It is no use wearing jewels if we are losing Him—for without Him we have no glory, no treasure, no joy.

"Should I from Thee, my God, remove,
Life could no lasting bliss afford;
My joy, the sense of pardoning love,
My guard, the presence of my Lord."

IV. The method by which we are to seek the restoration of the light of God's presence, vers. 7–12. Drawing nigh to God in penitent sorrow—in ardent supplication. Then God is moved to forgiveness; He causes His face to shine upon us, and we are saved.

THE MANIFESTED PRESENCE.—*Verses* 12–17.

The manifested presence is—

I. The saint's privilege, vers. 12, 13. Moses pleads that it is his privilege to have a clear knowledge of God's will and way. God has condescended to honour Moses: "I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight," ver. 12. Therefore Moses pleads that God will give to him a clear knowledge of His mind and purpose, ver. 13. It was not only the privilege of Moses thus to know God, but all God's people are to be sharers in the same privilege. God has called us His friends, and sons, and people, therefore it is not for us to walk in uncertainty and darkness and sorrow. We ought to seek—1. For a clear manifestation of God's character. 2. For a comfortable assurance of God's favour. 3. For a full acquaintance with God's will concerning us. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," and none of God's people ought to be content to live in a state of perplexity and misery.

II. The saint's rest. "And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest," ver. 14. The clear bright consciousness of God's favour and presence will give rest unto the soul. There is rest from *doubts.* We feel we are God's, and all fear is cast out. Rest from *fear of enemies.* "If God is with us, who can be against us?" Rest from anxieties *about the way.* He finds the path for us. Rest from misgivings *about the future.* In the knowledge of God's truth, love, power, promise, the soul realises a peace which passeth understanding.

The manifested presence is,—

III. The saint's joy and glory, ver. 15. If God does not go with them, they do not wish to proceed to Canaan. True, Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey; but it had no charms in the eyes of Moses if God was to be hidden. The manifested love of God is the Canaan of His people, and without this, lands flowing with milk and honey are desolate and undesirable. And, in ver. 16, we are taught that God is the glory of His people. The consciousness of God's love renders the people of God singularly rich, and great, and happy.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXIII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Bible-Truths! Vers. 1–23. Beautiful Book of Life! Everlasting Word! though heaven and earth should pass away thou art all-abiding. Thou art the book of love and of peace; thy pages are brightened with the intelligence that "God is love," and thou makest by thy soft influence families and nations peace-makers. Thou art the book of truth; from thy pages have shone forth the clearest and most certain words that ever fell on human ear. Thou art the book of freedom; priests and kings have clasped and chained thee, dreading the dreadful power of light. Thou art the book of eternity and of time; thou hast the promise of a life that now is, and of one that is to come. What a lovely world would that be where the page was not only widely and openly spread, but where all men and women walked steadily in the light of it! What would such a world be but a Paradise regained?

"Speak! for Thy servant heareth; bid Thy word
Draw me to Thee, encourage, or reprove;
Incline my heart to do Thy will, O Lord;
And on its tablets trace Thy words of love."

Divine-Restraint! Ver. 3. (1.) In Madagascar, some natives asked a missionary to take the leadership of their deputation to the governor of the province, on the question of their being allowed to migrate to another and more fertile part of this great island. On the way, some of the members of the party fell into committing excesses by drinking, and under its influences plundering some of the properties. As soon as the complaint was made to the missionary, he refused to go any farther, and intimated his intention of returning the following morning at daybreak, leaving them to shift for themselves. "I cannot go up with you, for your irregularities dishonour my character as a messenger of truth and righteousness." (2.) Was it not something of this kind here! "I will not go up in the midst of thee." But why not? Surely God had forgiven them in chap. xxxii.? But it was forgiveness conditional upon Israel's penitence. If a child, who has done wrong, and who has heard of its father's readiness to pardon, does not arise and go to him, saying, "Father, I have sinned," can he obtain the father's forgiveness? Ought he to expect it? No. Just so Israel. God could not, consistently with His attributes, go up with Israel so long as there was no repentance. This impenitence was a Divine restraint upon Him.

"May repentance be the ember
Which upon my lips shall lie,
And, from head to foot, my nature,
With its burning, purify."

Palestine-Promised! Ver. 3. Bannister says that all that can delight the eye, and feed the imagination, is lavished over the surface. The lovers of scenery can find there every form and variety of landscape. Its snowy heights and mountains, its valleys and its waters, are as beautiful as when David sang their praises, and far more interesting by the accumulation of reminiscences. The land, unbroken by the toils of the husbandman, awaits but the hour appointed, when it will sustain and fructify its millions of products, and flow, as of old, with milk and honey, reasserting its rightful title, "the garden of the Lord"—"the glory of all lands!"

"O blessed land! the whole world envies thee,
Thy fields, by His pure footsteps hallowed.
O happy people, whom, as Shepherd, He
With gentle crook unto green pastures led." —*Gerok.*

Sin-Scars! Vers. 1–3. Have you ever attempted a carpenter's work as an amateur? There is a right and a wrong way of planing a board. Even the skilled carpenter will by accident plane one shaving the wrong way of the grain. Of course, the surface is left rough. What is to be done? Turn the board and plane in the reverse direction. It will take more than one driving to get the surface smooth again; and it is necessary to go over it again and again. So with Israel. One stroke—a wrong one—cut deeply and roughly, and long weary years were needed to efface the error. Efface! That could never be. The cut made by the urchin's hand remains in the giant oak centuries after that boy became hoary and went to the other world. The scar formed from some slight wound received by a child in some act or deed of disobedience when but three years of age, remains on the finger or leg when threescore years and ten have been reached. The mark of Israel's cross-grainedness at Sinai remained afterwards on the national life.

"*The wind is hushed, and the storm is gone,*
Yet the waves of the ocean are rolling on,
And, reckless of all they have done before,
Madly they rush on the trembling shore,
And whiten the beach with foaming spray,
Like wreaths of snow on a winter's day."

Hiding - Discipline! Ver. 4. A father walking with his child in the city, and fearful of losing him, owing to the restless spirit of the child, whose curiosity led him to gaze on every new object which presented itself, withdraws himself behind some pillar, or hides himself at the corner of a street. He has thus hidden away, not that he may lose the child, but in order to prevent it from being lost, by making it keep closer to him in future. So did God hide Himself from Israel when that people rambled from Him in their worship at Sinai. It was done to make the Israelites seek Him the more earnestly, walk more circumspectly, and keep closer to Him for the time to come.

"Therefore, although 'tis hard to flesh and blood,
Believe, my children, this is for your good."

Divine - Tuition! Ver. 5. (1.) Sailing down the might-sweeping Amazon were an English mother and her children. One of them of very tender years was yet of wayward and self-willed spirit. On one occasion, having landed from the boat at a creek on the shore to catch turtles and game, the little one, contrary to solemn injunctions, wandered off into the wood, and caused extreme anxiety and delay. The search all night for the wanderer led to an elder brother catching the swamp fever, from which he never recovered. It was necessary that the self-willed child should be punished. Yet the mother-heart yearned to relax the severity of the chastisement. Could this be done without an expression of penitence? No; but none was evidenced. Tenderly the mother took the boy's hand, reasoned with him, pointed out that the moral attributes of a parent required contrition for an offence, and urged upon him true repentance. (2.) Great as is a mother's love, the Divine is greater. Solemn as are the moral attributes of a parent, God's are

more so. He cannot be inconsistent with His own perfections, yet He longs to reduce the severity of His sentence. How can it be done? He on Sinai—ay, in Egypt—condescended to be Israel's Teacher and Parent; therefore He here instructs Israel in the law of repentance. Like that mother, He, as it were, sits down to teach Israel the necessity of true heartfelt contrition, with confession of sin. Awful as ver. 5 seems, it is the awfulness of the Divine Heart thirsting to extend mercy, if only the scandalous offenders will bend their stiff necks in penitence: "Therefore now, put off thy ornaments from thee."

"It is good for you, though it seems not now;
Although your eyes are now bedimmed with tears,
Yet on your darkness purer light shall glow,
Till, through the cloud, the Crown of Faith appears."

Self-Mortification! Vers. 6, 4. (1.) A nobleman employed at a continental court on an important State mission heard of the unfaithfulness of his wife during his absence. Duty to his country at a perilous crisis required its careful and complete discharge. On his return home and arrival at the town nearest his castle, he sent forward a friend to disclose the revelation which had been made to him. Stricken with remorse at her sire's knowledge of her guilt, she implored mercy, and besought the friend to intercede for her forgiveness. The husband promised that she should be provided for, but declared his inflexible resolution not to restore her as before. Overwhelmed with a sense of shame, and of the utter hopelessness of life under such circumstances, she stripped herself of her princely attire of silks and jewels, and assumed the meanest garb of sackcloth and humiliation. (2.) God tells us that Israel had been to Him as a wife: "Thy Maker is thy husband." The calf-worship was indeed idol-fornication on the part of the nation's soul. He had discovered Israel's unfaithfulness while Moses was in the mount. He sends Moses to announce an entire separation of Himself from the nation. The intercession of Moses secure milder terms; but God says, "I will not go up in the midst of thee." This terrible declaration led to deep humiliation on the part of the people. They stripped themselves of their ornaments, in token that separation from God meant the drying-up of all heart joy and gladness. This explains ver. 4, which chronologically comes in after ver. 6.

"No good thing in me resides,
All my soul an aching void,
Till Thy Spirit there abides,
And I am filled with God."
—*Wesley.*

Congregation - Tent! Ver. 7. (1.) Some suppose this to have been the official tent-residence of Moses, as the leader of Israel. Porter says that the tents of eastern leaders are often very lovely, spacious, and encompassed with walls of waxed cloth. He describes one pasha's tent near Cairo, inside of which was a pavilion lined with flowered tapestry. Around this costly tent were pitched two hundred other tents in such a manner as to look towards the pasha's tent. (2.) Others, however, are of opinion that this was really a temporary sacred tabernacle, provisional to the construction of the one according to Divine direction by Bezaleel, Aholiab, and their workmen. This seems to be the most correct view; and its removal without the camp was clearly symbolic instruction to Israel of their increased need of a mediator in their approaches to God.

"Times have been when tempests beat,
And I suffered great defeat;
When loved comrades fell away,
Till it seemed that none would stay;
But amid the storm's wild rush
There has come a solemn hush
Over life's oft-troubled sea,
For a Friend has said to me,
'I will never leave thee.'"
—*Farningham.*

Scripture Sublimities! Ver. 9. What a mistake it is, says the author of the Schönberg Gotta Family, to look upon the Bible as a mere collection of many books! It is so essentially One Book—the first page linked to the last—not by similarity of opinion, but by identity of authorship. If Exodus xiv. is evidently by the same author as Revelations xiv.; so clearly is this chapter with other portions of the apocalypse. Exodus and the apocalypse are portions—verses, if you like—of one great, wonderful poem, by one whose ideas are all eternal realities. The simplicity of the old classics is strained and artificial beside its stories and pictures. The vivid visions of Dante are faint and dusky as the air of his Inferno itself beside the Scripture sublimities of Exodus xxxiii. and Revelations iv. or xi. And there is this infinite difference between it and all human compositions: that its heroes were those who were alive, and are dead, and yet are alive for evermore. Its visions are not guesses, but glimpses of realities which shall soon familiarly surround us. Its thoughts are messages, to each soul among us, from "the Lord our God talking with us."

"Then I felt my fainting soul
Filling with a new delight,
On my darkened vision stole
Dawn of day that hath no night;
Thirsting, trembling for the vail
To be wholly rent for me,
That from sin's entangling toils
Evermore I might be free."

Divine Communion! Ver. 11. (1.) Some say the Lord Jesus is in visible guise; while others say, invisible. The blind communicate

without seeing a form, and the deaf without hearing a voice. We may speak to a person behind a wall or a screen, if only assured that he is within call. By letters we address friends hundreds of miles distant. The telegraph hourly gives instances of men in close contact, though physically far apart. Writers have addressed multitudes separated from them by continents of space and centuries of time. Here, however, was some sense of nearness to God. (2.) It may be, therefore, that the Divine Son appeared in visible form, as He had formerly done to Abraham and to Jacob—deigning thus to shroud His glory before the time when, born of a woman, He should wear the veil of human flesh. But what the Lord revealed of Himself only raised a more intense desire in the heart of Moses for higher knowledge—more exalted communion. It is ever so. Each glimpse of Emmanuel's beauty makes us long for fuller revelations. Each draught of divine fellowship fills us with deeper thirstings.

"As pants the hart for cooling streams
When heated in the chase,
So longs my soul, O God, for Thee,
And Thy refreshing grace."

Prayer-Pleadings! Vers. 12–16. (1.) Hamilton not inaptly remarks that the insulated cloud, which from its lonely bosom launches a bolt big enough to rend the mountain, or make the welkin ring again, if touched at every point by its trailing neighbours—if stranded on the tree tops or the mountain side—soon loses all its lightning, drawn off in inconspicuous sparklet—a thin pale ghost of vapour. (2.) From isolated spirits, soaring hearts like those of Elijah and *Moses*, great bolts of prayer went up, or, like the fire from heaven, in some flashing word the long-gathered thought came down. And such was this mighty supplication, which Moses dared to flash out from his Horeb-heart up into the Divine and Infinite. (3.) Nowadays, instead of the whole soul going up to God in some heaven-rending ejaculation, it is all that our spent and diluted pity can do, when the sacred fire is drawn off in driblets, to appreciate the sublime upsoarings of souls such as Luther and Knox, John or Paul, Daniel or David, Elijah or Moses. Yet, let us not forget that a thousand smaller *organs* may equal the might and melody of that in the giant minster.

"Prayer, like the Saviour, ever pleads
For faithless friend—for keenest foe;
Prayer, like the Spirit, intercedes
For every grade of human woe.
And yet like Him, so vast its power,
That it can calm the fiercest blast,
And, over misery's darkest hour,
A sunlet radiance sweetly cast."
—*Mark.*

Name-Knowledge! Vers. 12–17. Kitto says that this denotes personal favour towards those whose names are thus known. To be known by name to a great personage or king in the East is still considered a high distinction. Knox, in the History of his Adventures in Ceylon, mentions that, when he desired the Cingalese to bring him rice for his daily food, they told him that, as "the king knew his name," the nobles of the Court would see that he was daily supplied with all necessary provisions and dainties. Before Theodore, the Emperor of Abyssinia, became a victim to the vice of strong drink, the missionary found a frequent passport through the wilds and villages of that region in the same way: "The king knows your name." In Isaiah xliii. 1, the Lord exhorts to confidence and trust, because "I have called thee by thy name." His knowing the name of Moses was indicative of honour. Even so, God knew Jesus by name: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus;" and, "He has given Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus (as the Mediator and Intercessor) every knee should bow."

"Thy precious name, Lord Jesus Christ! is
better far to me
Than all the wealth that can be found in
earth, or air, or sea.
Thou art the Paradise, set forth by God's
own hand of love;
Thy presence is itself the heaven where I
shall dwell above."—*Canitz.*

Divine Guidance! Ver. 14. Two boys were conversing about Elijah's ascent on the chariot of fire, when one inquired of the other whether he would not have been afraid to ride in such a chariot. "No," replied the other, "not if God drove the horses." If God holds the reins there can be no danger. As the child on board the ship, amid the howling blast, exclaimed, "My father is at the helm," Moses felt that with the Divine Guidance all would go well, and Israel reach the haven where they would be. He realised that God's presence was the only guarantee for safety, success, and happiness.

"I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy
victory?
I triumph still if THOU abide with me."

Presence-Power! Ver. 15. It was church-time. The bells had ceased tolling, and still the messenger of God came not to conduct the services. The congregation were wondering and impatient, for they were blessed with a faithful pastor, whose ministry they esteemed. Anxious about the delay, the elder sent the verger across to the parsonage to remind the preacher that he was expected in the house of God. On entering the open door, what was the worthy man's astonishment to hear his pastor apparently in earnest and urgent conversation with some one, whose replies he

could not hear. Returning hastily to the place of prayer, he acquainted the pious elder with the fact. A ray of light flashed in upon the elder's mind, and he asked the verger what words he had heard. The reply was, "I cannot go without Thee; I must have Thy presence." "That will do," said the elder; "He'll come with our pastor, and we'll have a blessed day with God." The minister was, like Luther and Knox, agonising with God in prayer, imploring Him in the words of Moses, "Let Thy presence go with us."

"Does He promise that His presence
Shall go with us to the end?
Will our dear Lord ne'er forsake us?
Will He all our steps attend?"

Mosaic-Self-forgetfulness! Ver. 16. (1.) In England's historical annals stands a king of high renown, against whom a nobleman had secretly conspired with a rival prince. A neighbouring baron, on intimate terms with the offender, and yet held in high esteem by the sovereign because of his probity and valiancy, undertook to intercede. Hastening to court, he sought the royal presence-chamber, and pressed his suit for mercy. The king told him that his intention was to confiscate the estates and titles of the offending nobleman and confer them upon himself, as a most faithful and devoted subject, to whose wisdom and valour king and country alike owed much. He assures him of his sovereign's favour and grace. What was the astonishment of the courtiers around to see the favoured baron cast himself again at the feet of his monarch benefactor, and plead the royal favour towards himself as a reason for pardoning the conspiring peer. (2.) Israel's Sovereign assures Moses of His favour, and offers to confer on him Israel's inheritance and title as "God's People." Whereupon Moses makes the assurance of God's favour to himself a plea for offending Israel: "If I have found grace in Thy sight, go up with us." He identifies himself with Israel because he derives no separate advantage or privilege. "I and Thy people." Surely, if the earthly monarch grasping England's sceptre wondered at the spirit of the mediator, acceded to his request, and honoured him in many ways, we can understand the Divine King, swaying the sceptre of righteousness, according Moses his petition, and rewarding him with a vision of His glory.

"Father of Jesus, love's reward,
What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before Thy Throne to lie,
And ever *gaze on Thee.*"—*Faber.*

Mosaic-Yearnings! Ver. 18. (1.) *Not Nature's glory.* Moses had seen glorious landscapes—the Nile brimming over with bounty—sunrise from behind the Pyramids—the majestic mountains of this great wilderness. The 90th Psalm, and all the poems in the Pentateuch, show that Moses was alive to the glory of God in Nature. He realised the Divine Glory in the twinkling stars and shining sands, in the wild thunderstorm and in the soft sweet breath of eve. But this was not the glory for a vision of which he thirsted. (2.) *Not Jehovah's glory.* Moses had beheld His glory at the Burning Bush in Midian—on that night, so much to be remembered, when His royal ensign fired the firmament, and under Heaven's immediate guidance the glorious march began; and in that mount, whose mountain-top was encircled with the Divine glory like devouring fire, whilst the voice of the Eternal filled the surrounding solitudes with words which echo still far and wide o'er earth and sky and sea. (3.) *But Grace's glory.* Moses would gaze on the *heart* of Jehovah, rich in forgiveness, and radiating forth its ceaseless loving-kindness. Like those mysterious boxes of Eastern Asia and Japan, the Divine attributes had opened up their glories one by one; and now Moses glimpses a glory still interior—the glory of His Grace. God has just shown mercy to scandalous insulters of His supremacy; and grasping at this inlet mild and merciful, Moses prays, "Show me Thy glory." As the astronomer

"Who on the starry heavens the livelong night
Has gazed unwearied, in the dewy morn
Returning homeward, plucks a simple flower,
Primrose, or cowslip, or anemone,
And in its tender beauty peering finds
More sweet delight than in those mighty orbs
With all their pendant satellites."
—*Bickersteth.*

Mediator-Mirror! Ver. 19. (1.) Moses interposes between God and the breakers of His holy laws. He even offers himself a sacrifice (chap. xxxii.) in the place of recreant Israel. His mediation avails, so that God mitigates the penalty on the repentance of the evil-doers. He declares His favour for the man who has so generously offered himself as a substitute. The Divine assurance of favour and grace emboldens the mediator to become the intercessor. In chap. xxxiii. we have these eloquent utterances of self-forgetful devotions; as well as the Divine revelation that He will vouchsafe to manifest Himself to the intercessor. (2.) Messiah interposed between God and the offenders of His righteous will. He offered Himself a sacrifice unto God for a sweet-smelling savour—doing what Moses could not do. The Lord accepted His mediation—laid on Him the iniquity of us all—and announced pardon to those sinners who repented. He spoke from the excellent glory this word, "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On the Cross of Calvary, the Intercessor's prayer rose high and clear: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." St. Mark in his last chapter,

and St. Luke in Acts i. relates that God then "received Him up into glory," as Paul expresses it in one of his epistles; see also Rev. i.

"And lo! the Everlasting Father rose
Diffusing beams of joy ineffable,
Which centred on His Son, His only Son."

Face-Fire! Ver. 20. (1.) Heathen mythology has an extraordinary caricature of this Divine declaration in the tradition-fable of Jupiter and Semele. She is reported to have entreated Jupiter to show her his glory. At first he was very reluctant, knowing that it would be fatal to her; but he at last yielded to her solicitations. The story runs that she paid dearly for her importunate temerity, as she was consumed by his presence on the revelation of his majesty. (2.) Oh! Profane parody of the Divine Ideal! Jupiter cannot do aught to ward off the peril. Whereas, Jehovah accedes to the request, only by preventing danger to the suppliant Moses. Bagster thinks that "the face of God" here signifies that light inaccessible before which angels may stand; and concerning which the apostle says, "Now we see through a glass, darkly; then face to face"—with no dim, darkling veil between.

"Light of the world! be Thou a sword of wrath
Flashing its threat'ning gleam across the path
Which leads to sin and shame—and guide us on,
Until we bathe in bliss before Thy throne!"

Divine-Face! Ver. 20. The Incas of Peru have a curious tradition of one of their princes. He had been driven from the palace and court; and had to tend the sacred llamas amongst the lonely plains of Chita. Here a glorious being, with robes brighter than the light, appeared to him, and ordered him to return to his city, to deliver his people from oppression: "For to thee it is given to deliver thy people." He did as he was told—secured the deliverance of his people—and was appointed their ruler and prince. After this was accomplished, he built a beautiful temple. Here he stood in the court before all the people, wearing a beautiful tunic of blue wrought with gold threads, and a long mantle glittering with shining jewels. He dared to raise his eyes to the awful burning face of the great father, and to say, "Let me behold thy brightness." Is there in this ancient legend no relic of the histories of Moses, Aaron, and Solomon—blending together in the far distance of time?

"But who can wander to Thy bright abode,
And look on Thee, the Everlasting God,
If angels, veiled, before Thy presence sing,
And sinless seraphs droop the golden wing?"

God-Emblems! Ver. 22. Bowes says that one of the most ancient hieroglyphic representations of God was the figure of an eye upon a sceptre, to denote that God sees and rules all things. The Egyptian hieroglyphic was a winged globe with a serpent coming out of it: the globe to signify God's eternity, the wings His active power, and the serpent His wisdom. The Thracian emblem was a sun with three beams; one shining upon a sea of ice and melting it, another upon a rock and dissolving it, and the third upon a dead man and putting life into him. But we know nothing of the imagery which God decided to employ in order that Moses might behold this beatific vision.

"How wonderful, how beautiful,
The sight of Thee must be;
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power,
And awful purity!

"Yet I may love Thee, too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art;
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart."

Rock-Clift! Ver. 22. (1.) There is a remarkable passage in Cant. ii. 14, which is uttered by Christ (1) to His Church, and so (2) to the Christian: "Thou art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs." Some suppose that the second clause refers to the gardens in the east, where the terraces one above another were cut out of the rock. But the natural significance is the cavernous precipices of the rocks resembling stairs. What are these words designed to indicate? 1. Some say "the rock of nature," in which Christ finds the Church and Christian before He calls them by His grace. 2. Others assert that Christ is the hiding-place. Thrice blessed are they who are hidden in Him, that they may see the goodness of the Lord! (2.) The subsequent expression is equally remarkable: "Let me see Thy face, let me hear Thy voice." It was Moses who besought God for this. But here we have God asking for this at the hands of Moses. To Him the voice of Moses' prayer had been sweet: "The prayer of the upright is His delight." He loves to hear the breathings of the Spirit of His Son in our hearts. See Cant. iv. 13; Mal. iii. 16. Moreover, it is only while we are thus in Christ Jesus that our countenance beams with the reflection of His glory. Thus when Moses was forty days in the mount His face shone. "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty."

"Oh, droop not! Though a cloud may be
Between the glorious Son and thee,
No shade His face can dim;
Beneath His smile away shall roll
The sin-mist of thy wounded soul:
Only abide in Him." —*Shipton.*

Deity-Dazzling! Ver. 23. (1.) When a heathen king objected to the missionary's tes-

timony concerning the One living and true God, that he could not see Him, and, therefore, could not believe in Him, he took the king into the courtyard, and asked him to look intently upon the sun, which was burning in high noon. When the monarch replied that the attempt would blind him, the missionary retorted, "If thou canst not look upon one of His servants without being dazzled by his brightness, how canst thou endure looking upon Himself?" (2.) But this incapability not only arises from the inherent glory of God, but from man's imperfection. True, when Daniel by the river Hiddekel, and John in Patmos, beheld even the veiled glory of the Lord, their comeliness was turned into corruption; but still sin has much to do with this fact, that no man shall see God and live. Angels, who never sinned, may look upon Him and be undismayed; but sinful man cannot. Yet we have the Messianic beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"O Holy, wondrous vision! to think, when this life's past,
The beauty of Mount Tabor shall end in heaven at last!
To think that all the glory of uncreated light
Shall be the promised guerdon of them that win the fight!" —*Cosmas.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. Hew thee two tables of stone].** A task which could not have failed to make Moses feel abashed, and to impress him with a sense of humility as he reflected on his breaking the first tables which God Himself had prepared for him. The former he had but to receive, these he must carry up the mount; and, besides, this time without being accompanied by Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy of the elders of Israel (xxiv. 9). That all this difference connected with his obtaining the second tables was calculated to make a designed impression upon him, is evident from the emphatic manner in which God referred him to the first tables, viz., "which thou hast broken" (ver. 1).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **1-4.**

THE RENEWAL OF THE TWO TABLES.

At the earnest intercession of the mediator God had consented to give another substantial revelation of His will. It was, however, to be connected with a substantial memorial of the people's disobedience and God's patience and goodness. On the former occasion, the materials, as well as the revelation, were prepared by God. The material must now be prepared by man. The circumstances under which the law was renewed were the same as those under which it was first given, see chap. xix. 12, &c. The subject teaches us—

I. That the moral law is perpetually binding. Having been broken it must be renewed.

1. The revelation of the law, in the first instance, was but a repetition in detail of what had already been conveyed directly in the heart of, or by special injunctions to, man. (1.) Generally (Exod. xv. 26; Gen. xxvi. 5; Gen. xvii. 3). (2.) Particularly, obedience (Adam and Eve); murder (Cain, and Gen. ix. 5); dishonour to parents (Gen. ix. 22). The spiritual worship of the true God (Gen. xii. 7; xiv. 18); adultery and lying (Gen. xii. 14–19; xx. 2–16); adultery (Gen. xxxix. 9); lying (Gen. xxvii. 35); idolatry (Gen. xxxv. 2); the Sabbath (Exod. xvi. 25, 26).

2. The moral law was not abrogated by Christ (Matt. v. 17–19). We are redeemed from its curse, not from its obligation.

3. The moral law is still binding (Rom. vi. 15; 1 Cor. ix. 21).

II. That the renewal of the moral law when broken entails duties unknown before. "Hew *thee* two tables of stone;" "and *he hewed* two tables of stone." This fact is very typical and suggestive.

1. In the first inscription of the moral law upon man's *heart*, the preparation and

the writing were exclusively the work of God. When our first parents awoke to consciousness, the "fleshy tables" were found covered with the "oracles of God."

2. When those tables were defaced and those oracles transgressed, the work of preparation fell largely upon man. Ever afterwards man had to prepare himself by acts of penitence and faith,—not excluding divine help, of course,—but nevertheless those acts are acts of man. "God commandeth man everywhere to repent." "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (cf. Heb. viii. 10).

3. But this renewal of the divine law is accomplished in such a way as to deprive man of all ground of glorying, and so as to ascribe all the glory to God. The tables were of plain stone, all their embellishments were by the Divine hand.

III. That when the moral law is broken God, graciously offers to renew it upon man's compliance with the revealed condition, ver. 1. So when man by repentance and faith "puts off the old man and puts on the new," he is renewed in the image of Him that created him, on which the moral law is inscribed (Col. iii. 9–16).

IV. That these conditions should be complied with—

1. *Speedily.* "Early in the morning."

2. *Personally.* This great work is a transaction between God and the individual particularly concerned. We may therefore argue that priestly intervention is (1) unnecessary. The Being who could inscribe the precept on stone, can inscribe the principle on the fleshy tablets of the heart. (2) Imposture. None but God could do the one, none but God can do the other. Vain, then, is the dependence on Baptism, Absolution, &c. If God has not written on the soul, no priest can ever trace the Divine handwriting there.

3. *Patiently.* Moses waited again forty days and forty nights. (1.) Do not hurry the work over. What is being done is being done for eternity. Distrust spasm and mere excitement, no man ever became great in Christianity or anything by paroxysm. (2.) Don't despond if the work is not progressing as rapidly as you might wish. If God is writing on your heart, let that be your comfort, and let God use His own time. Paul had to say, Phil. iii. 12–14. Learn—1. The value of the moral law. 2. The importance of having that law not only on stone or paper but in the heart. 3. The necessity of a public and practical exhibition and interpretation of that law in the life.—*J. W. Burn.*

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

The Proclamation of the Divine Name.

This was the second proclamation. The first, Exod. iii. 4, was delivered to Moses for his instruction and comfort on his special mission. This was delivered for the Jewish nation and the world. Let it be remembered that this God had revealed His law, and was about to take the people into covenant relationship with Him. It was necessary, therefore, that the people should know something definite about the Being to whom they were thus intimately related and whom they professed to serve. This was the first *full* revelation, the last is "like unto it." "God is love," and they are "enough" for faith and hope and work Notice—

I. The proclamation of the Divine name.

1. The Divine name was proclaimed *absolutely.* What God is in and of Himself is thus defined: "The Lord, the Lord God." The self-existent, self-sufficient, all-powerful One. Connected with the subjoined revelation of His good

ness, this teaches—(1.) That as His goodness is based upon His power man must not presume. (2.) That as His power supports His goodness man need not despond.

2. The Divine name was proclaimed *relatively*. This relative proclamation may be viewed as revealing God's goodness and God's justice. (1.) The Divine goodness. *Merciful*, first because man's misery makes him first an object of pity (Judges x. 16; Isa. lxiii. 19). *Gracious*, because unless God's goodness was free, spontaneous, and unconstrained, man could never enjoy it, as he has not the wherewith to purchase or deserve or draw it forth (2 Cor. viii. 9). *Longsuffering*, not good by spasm or effort, but patient and unwearied. "Slow to anger," "Bears long," even when the wrongs of His saints call for His vengeance (Luke xviii. 7). Stretches "out His hand all the day long," and "waits to be gracious." How forcibly does the history of Israel, and indeed of every individual life, bear witness to this! *Abundant;* to God's goodness there is no limit. It is a fountain that ever flows and is never exhausted (Eph. iii. 16, 21; Phil. iv. 19). *Certain.* "Truth." It is based upon the Divine immutability; "He cannot deny Himself." *Universal;* "keeping mercy for thousands;" universal as regards space, universal as regards time. *Active;* "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." (2.) The Divine justice is *Inflexible.* "That will by no means clear the guilty." This inspires us with the confidence that right is the order of the universe. The guilty may be spared so that they may repent, but they will not be cleared. They may prosper for the time, but a heavy retribution awaits them. Once more the Divine justice operates through natural laws, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers," &c. How? By the physical law of heredity. What a motive for parents! Beware how you break God's laws; you not only entail punishment on yourself, but your poisoned blood will flow in the veins of your degenerate offspring!

II. The method of its proclamation.

1. The Divine name was proclaimed *personally*. "And *the Lord* passed by before him and proclaimed." (1.) God is not the discovery of the unaided intellect. It was no deduction of philosophy, no imposition of priestcraft, but the revelation of the Lord (Job xi. 7; 1 Cor. i. 21). (2.) Not an inference from the phenomena of nature. If it is contended that it was, how is it that only Jews and Christians have arrived at this knowledge of the Divine name? Others have had the page of nature spread before them, and yet have been either atheists or idolaters. Much of what is boastfully called natural theology, and the revelation of God in the universe, are but facts *read into* nature from the Bible and by Bible men. True, God is revealed there (Rom. i. 20); but the key is wanted to decipher the hieroglyphics, and that key is the "Scriptures which are given by inspiration of God."

2. The Divine name was proclaimed *condescendingly*. Although *a* revelation of the Divine Being was necessary, yet one so full and gracious was surely the result of the beneficent condescension of God. Another revelation has been vouchsafed since, based upon the same condescension (Phil. ii. 5–8).

This proclamation is of value—

i. Apologetically. This is the authorised revelation of the character of God. Unbelievers fight shy of it, and take certain doings or commands wrested from their context, and without examination as to the reason why. All such doings, &c., must be referred to and compared with "the glories" that here "compose God's name." This is the God we worship, not the fiction of a disordered fancy or a diseased mind, but "the Lord, the Lord God," &c.

ii. To the afflicted. Can this God be unkind or unjust? Then trust that what He is now doing is for your good.

iii. To the sinner. (1) God is good, therefore repent and come to Him; but (2) just, and therefore cannot connive at sin.—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8, 9.

GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE.

The revelation of the Divine name was almost too much for Moses, it was so unmerited. He was lost in wonder and adoration at the Divine condescension, ver. 8. Recovering himself, however, and emboldened by this gracious proclamation, he, in the true spirit of believing and triumphant prayer, supplicated God's actual presence among His people. This is not the only instance in which past favours have been the basis for future expectations (Gen. xviii. 23–33; Ps. cxvi. 12). The text teaches us—

I. That God's presence with His people is secured by mediation. His presence with Israel was secured by the intercession of Moses; His presence with His Church is secured by the intercession of Jesus Christ. The whole of John xvii. is based upon this.

II. That God's presence is importuned because of the obstinacy of His people. "A still-necked people." One would have thought that would have been an argument for vengeance. But no, Old and New Testaments alike base upon man's failings a reason why God should visit him (John iii. 16; Matt. ix. 13; Rom. v. 8). The reason is obvious, God alone is equal to the task of subduing sinners and bringing them into obedience to Himself.

III. That God's presence is supplicated to fulfil God's promises.

1. God had promised to pardon. God's presence was requisite for this, because the Divine pardon is not merely an erasure of sin from God's book, but an erasure of sin from man's heart. Forgiveness is not merely a fact in the moral universe of which man may or may not be conscious; but a fact in man's spiritual nature which he enjoys, and of which he has irrefragable proofs. God Himself must come near and transform the sinner into the saint.

2. God had promised that Israel should be His inheritance. This could only be effected by God's going amongst them and *taking* them. What boundless comfort does the double argument give! "God, in the person of His Son, has come amongst us, therefore we are His inheritance. Man is His inheritance, therefore He is with us always even unto the end of the world."

In conclusion—i. God having blessed us is a reason for our expectation of future blessings. Compare the past, present, and future tenses of Psalm xxiii. ii. God having blessed us in the past should be the basis of our expectation that He will manifest Himself to us. iii. This Divine presence should be the incentive to, and power of, personal purity and consecration.—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10–26.

THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT.

The engagements which man had made with God being broken, the covenant had to be commenced *de novo*. All the ground must be again covered. The subject naturally divides itself into promises, prohibitions, injunctions. For the other circumstances, see Exodus xxiii., xxiv.

I. Promises. "Before all the people I will do marvels," &c.

1. God's marvels are indefinite, to leave a margin for Him "to do exceeding abundantly more than we can ask or think." No man would wish for God to tie Himself exclusively down to certain undertakings and nothing more. In that case, God having literally executed His promise, there would be no more

room for faith and hope. So all the great Christian privileges are indefinite—faith, conversion, sanctification, heaven. However—

2. God executes *definite* marvels. God gives us a little that we may have a sample of what He can give, and that little is real, tangible, and experimental, ver. 11. God promises us definite destruction of our enemies, and a definite inheritance in the Promised Land.

3. All God's definite promises include the indefinite, and *vice versa.*

4. God's promises to His people are for general instruction. "All the people among which thou art shall see," &c.

II. Prohibitions.

1. Covenants with the people of the land, ver. 12. All alliances—matrimonial or religious—were sternly forbidden, from whatever motive, "lest it be for a snare," vers. 15, 16; (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15).

2. Idolatry, vers. 13, 14. They were neither to serve nor to spare other gods. This prohibition is binding to-day. All those idols which intervene between us and the service of the true God must be overthrown. *Now* they excite the righteous jealousy of God!

3. The manufacture of symbols of God, ver. 17, lest they should fall again into their recent sin. Christians should cut themselves off from all that would be likely to drag them back into their "former conversation."

III. Injunctions.

1. The religious feasts. Unless religion be based upon joy, and unless God's service is joyous and free, they are unpracticable. This first injunction is based upon this fact. God is not a hard master, and desires His people to delight in His service.

2. The religious rest of the Sabbath-day. Sabbath observance is one of the root principles of religion. Where that is neglected or desecrated, religion is extinct. This, by the way, is one of the Sabbath arguments which cannot be refuted.

3. The religious consecration of the first-fruits as recognising God's right to all. This is also part of the Christian covenant. We must recognise God's right to our time, our property, and ourselves. In conclusion—our text

i. Has a special reference to backsliders. God offers to renew His covenant with them on the specified terms (Hosea xiv. 1-3). ii. To all (Isa. i. 18-20).

—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 27, 28-32.

Divine Revelation.

Divine revelation is the communication by God to man of certain facts, doctrines, duties, for instruction, comfort, or practice, which would not otherwise have been discovered. Our text may be used as covering the whole revelation of God's character and will as contained in the Bible. We remark—

I. That Divine revelation is the result of Divine inspiration. "And He was there with the Lord." It is no human conjecture, however true. It is no inference, however correct, from existing facts; but information directly derived from the presence of Divine wisdom and Divine power.

II. That Divine revelation is made through a human medium. In some cases God has sent angels to communicate His truth; but even those communications have only reached the people through the appointed medium. We earn therefore—

1. That the inspired man is *only* the medium, and must not be treated as the revealer.

2. The way to account for variations of style and apparent discrepancies. The thought is God's, the words are man's.

III. That Divine revelation is infallible on the one hand, intelligible on the other.

I. *Infallible.* (1) As regards authority. "All that *the Lord* had spoken to him." A most conspicuous fact in God's Word is, that inspired men disclaim all originality and speak "in the name of the Lord." (2) As regards completeness. "*All* that the Lord had spoken." Inspired men claim to "declare all the counsel of God." The Book claims to be a revelation of "all things pertaining to life and godliness."

2. *Intelligible.* Being through man, God's thoughts are presented in a form adapted to the conditions of the human intellect, in words man can understand.

IV. That Divine revelation is binding upon man. "He gave them commandment."

1. God does not speak for nothing. It cannot be supposed that having spoken He would leave it to man, whether he obeyed or disobeyed. Nor can it be supposed that man is at liberty to pick and choose as to what he shall accept and what reject. The whole counsel of God, because it is His counsel, is binding upon man.

2. It is binding because only by obeying God's laws, and following the lines indicated by God's wisdom and goodness, that man's well-being can be secured mentally, morally, and spiritually. Learn then—

i. To value this revelation. ii. To treat it reverently, not to cavil at its apparent discrepancies, &c. iii. To make it the one rule of our faith and practice.—*J. W. Burn.*

***MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH—Verses* 29-35.**

THE GLORY OF MAN.

The glory of man is harmony with his Maker, likeness to his Maker, consecration to the service of his Maker, and the attestation of his Maker's approval in his character and life. In this sense Moses was glorified. In this, and also in other and sublimer senses, was the "Son of Man glorified" (John xvii.) Moses' glory was external as well as moral, but he belonged to an external dispensation. It is the privilege of every Christian to have this glory, not in the mere lustre of the face, but in the moral and influential sphere of the heart and life (John xvii. 22, 23; Col. i. 27). Notice—

I. That this glory was the result of communion with God. For forty days and forty nights Moses had dwelt in the secret place of the Most High and under the shadow of the Almighty." He who would know what glory is must go where that glory is to be obtained. Man usually seeks glory elsewhere; on gory battle-fields, in the arena of political strife, on the broad plains of literature, science, and art. Indeed, in these spheres Moses had "whereof to glory." He occupied a high rank among warriors and statesmen and literati; but if we could question him about these matters he would count all these things loss, and tell us that his glory consisted in the manifestation of his Maker's favour when on the holy mount. If man would now be glorified, he must "approach with boldness the throne of grace," and then he will hear Christ say with reference to him and his fellow-worshippers, "The glory thou gavest Me I have given them."

II. That this glory was open to the inspection of others. "And when Aaron

and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone." And so now. Not in the same *literal* way of course, but in a way no less real. One of the great features of Christianity is its publicity. None of its great events were done in a corner. Even the transcendent miracle of the transfiguration was before witnesses. So with Christian life all through the ages. It derives its glory "in secret," but it exhibits its glory "openly." The Christian is "a city set on a hill," a "light shining in a dark place." This glory will exhibit itself in the appearance, speech, action of those in whose heart Christ is formed "the hope of glory." And that glory, unlike Moses', as we shall see, "shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day."

III. That this glory had a due effect on its beholders. What could it mean? It might signify the coming glory which should consume them for their sins. Was it a mute declaration that God had rejected the intercession of the mediator and was coming in flaming fire to have vengeance upon them? They were afraid. They waited. No fire fell. They were assured. Whereupon they "talked with Moses."

1. The glory of a holy Christian life will have its effect upon the wicked. It will arouse conscience. Its awful contrast with the smouldering embers of an ungodly life may perhaps arouse the breath of prayer to fan them into a divine flame.

2. The glory of a holy Christian life will have its effect upon the good. It will encourage the feeble by an exhibition of the grand possibilities of piety. It will stimulate the strong to exhibit their glory more and more.

IV. That while this glory was manifest to all beholders, its subject was unaware of its existence. "Moses wist not that his face shone." Self-consciousness is fatal to a glory that is more than tinsel or varnish, at all times and everywhere. It is the one thing against which the Christian should especially guard himself. There are certain facts of which it is necessary that he should be conscious. He should be conscious that he is born of God, that he loves Christ, that he is growing in grace, and that he has a hope of heaven. Of all else of the virtues and graces that flow therefrom, of past achievements, of present attainments, he should be forgetful.

1. Moses had no time to think about it. While it was transfiguring him he was in communion with God. When he ceased communion he was about God's work.

2. Moses had no inclination to think about it. His ambition and desires were in quite a contrary direction. His one desire was to serve God and guide the people to the Promised Land.

3. He had no warrant to think about it. It was not a consequence of his own services, or virtue, or work. It was the manifestation of the grace of God.

V. That this glory being derived was not self-sustaining. "And *when* (not as A. V. *till*, in conformity with the fact that Aaron, &c., beheld the glory and —with ver. 35, and LXX. Vulg. Targums and most versions) Moses had done speaking . . . he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord . . . he took the vail off." See 2 Cor. iii 13–16. (See *Alford, in loco*). "Moses placed a vail on his face in order that the sons of Israel might not look on the termination of the transitory." He had to visit the Lord to renew that glory. It was like the sacred fire which the vestal virgins were to feed continually.

The Christian can only keep up the lustre of his holiness by continually deriving fresh supplies from its fontal source. His life can only be kept fresh, beautiful, and glorious by always being near the Lord of his life.

Application—1. Have you this glory? All other glories are but tinsel in

comparison with it. All other glories fade both in themselves and in the recollection of the beholders. This is true glory, eternal glory. 2. This glory is obtainable through Him who is the "brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person, and by fellowship with Him we shall walk in its light here, and afterwards "appear with Him in glory."—*J. W. Burn.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXIV.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Law-Lights! Vers. 1–35. Pressense says, that whatever opinions men may hold as to the integrity of that primitive witness, all must own that it contains pages in which one beholds, as it were, the reflection of the lustre which caused Moses's face to shine when he held converse with God. It has ever been the pious mind which has through the eyes beheld the chain of revelation and the long series of Divine manifestations gradually unwind themselves. Just as they that watch for the morning gaze out from the height of the tower, longing with inexpressible desire for the approach of dawn; so does religious consciousness cast glances of fire upon the horizon as she looks out for the Divine Sunrise. The whole of the Old Testament pants and throbs with this Divine yearning, and it also shows us the finger of God writing in the heart of man the great preparation for the Gospel. The angels ever

"Draw strength from gazing on its glance,
Though none its meaning fathom may;
The Word's unwithered countenance
Is bright as at Mount Sinai's day."
—*Goëthe.*

Sun-Splendours! Vers. 1–7. Countless and ceaseless as are the benefits which are imparted to us by the bright orb of day, the human eye cannot look upon his undimmed noonday face, without being blinded. We cannot look upon him in his full brightness; but when he is passing away, we can, as it were, enjoy and wonder at the beauty he has, or the splendour he leaves behind. A gorgeous canopy of clouds—glowing in every tint of gold, scarlet, and purple over the evening sky, alone remains to bear witness to the passing sun's magnificence. As we enjoy the vanishing glory of the sun, so did Moses exult in the vision of the Divine glory. He could not look upon the face of God; but when the Lord had passed by then he could behold and delight in the shaded vision of Jehovah's back parts. And what sweet beauties did his eyes descry—emblems of those invisible beauties which the soul in communion with God beholds—

"The vivid brilliant streaks
Of crimson disappear, but o'er the hills
A flush of orange hovers, softening up
Into harmonious union with the blue
That comes a-sweeping down."
—*Carrington.*

Written-Revelation! Ver. 1. (1.) The stream which flows through many soils takes a bitter taste from one, and a dusky tint from another. Even so the true faith could not be kept alive by tradition. Man's memory was too treacherous to be entrusted with a matter so distasteful to his fallen spirit as the true character of God. Hence the need of a written revelation. (2.) And even where there was a traditional theology, in its transmission from race to race it was found that the oral revelation grew dark and offensive. In this stagnant swamp, weltering with reptiles and fuming with pestilence, who can recognise the stream which bounded from the Alpine crag, pure as the melted snow and salubrious as Heaven's own precipitate. Hence the need of a written revelation.

"The which, in waves which clear as crystal seem,
Spreads like a swelling sea o'er earth's dry ground,
Mirror'd therein heaven's halls of azure gleam,
And gold and pearls amid its sands are found.
Hast thou not of this heaven-bright river heard?
There dip thy cup; it is *Truth's Holy Word.*"
—*Gerok.*

Morning-Communion! Ver. 2. Fuller quaintly says, "Spill not the morning—the quintessence of the day—in recreation; for sleep is itself a recreation. Add not, therefore, sauce to sauces." Beecher says, "Let the day have a blessed baptism by giving your first waking thoughts into the bosom of God. The first hour of the morning is the rudder of the day." Boerhaave says, "Nothing more effectually restrains the passions, and gives spirit and vigour through the business of the

day, than early meditation and prayer." Swain says, "It is the early blackbird that catches the worms; and it is the early riser who sees the sun rise. Morning prayer brings bounties to the soul; and the Christian, who betakes himself betimes, beholds the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings!" Green says, "When the morning breaketh forth in crimson, the beauteous flowers of the field spread wide their odorous cups to drink the blooming influence of the rising genial sun. We should get us early to the hill of supplication, and catch the bright effulgence of the Saviour's face."

"That as the light, serene and fair,
Illumines all the tracts of sin,
His sacred Spirit so may rest
With quick'ning beams upon thy breast,
And kindly cleanse it all within
From darker blemishes of sin,
And shine with grace until we view
The realm it gilds with glory too."
—*Parnell.*

Beatific-Vision! Ver. 2. Another morning came, so different from that other august occasion when a quaking multitude surrounded a thundering mount. This time there was neither blackness nor tempest, nor sound as of a trumpet; but, with his two stone tablets, the Lawgiver ascended in the clear, cool dayspring. He ascended and sought the appointed place, and as there in the cleft of the rock he waited, a cloud drew nigh—a cloud like that which floated above the Tabernacle. And as the Lord passed by, and spake, Moses bowed his head and worshipped. During the protracted interview of the forty following days, perfect love cast out fear; and from the pavilion of this friendly presence and its rapt communion, Moses came down with that shining face, which only reappeared on the Mount of Transfiguration.

"Never the ken of mortal eye
Can pierce so deep, and far, and high,
As the eagle vision of hearts that dwell
In the lofty sunlit citadel
Of Faith that overcomes the world."

Divine Character! Ver. 6. (1.) Simonides the philosopher, being requested to describe God, asked a week to think of it. After that, he besought a month; then a year. Even then, being still unable, he declined the task, declaring that the more he thought of God, the less was he able to describe Him. (2.) Pagan artists depicted Jupiter with thunder in his right hand, and an eagle at his feet. Their highest conceptions were to clothe him with clouds, while the poets robed him in terrors. Woes and wonders were their sublimest ideal of God. (3.) Revelation alone emblazons God in the full circle of His perfections. The name of the God of the Jews, who is also the God of the Christians, is "The Lord God, merciful and gracious."

"Most glorious art Thou! when from Thy pavilion
Thou lookest forth at morning; flying wide
Those curtain-clouds of purple and vermilion,
Dispensing life and light on every side."
—*Barton.*

Divine Glory! Ver. 6. Amongst astronomers, remarks Hamilton, it is a favourite speculation that the sun himself is something else than a mere ball of fire, and that inside of his burning atmosphere there may be a mighty globe with cool meadows, seas of glass, rivers of crystal, and every conceivable provision for a vast and rejoicing population—the possible home of even the just made perfect. True or no, the speculation illustrates our thought. God's glory is His goodness. The holiness of God is as a consuming fire to the guilty conscience; but within this light inaccessible—within this refulgent atmosphere of truth and sanctity, is a glory more intimate and essential still, the inmost perfection and divinest beauty of the Godhead. Coming from within that light inaccessible, the only-begotten Son from the bosom of the Father declared what was there—viz., *love.* And so on this occasion to the meek and wistful Moses preaching the Gospel, Jehovah expanded that one word of love into the name: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."

"The sun has lost his rage; his downward orb
Shoots nothing more but animating warmth
And vital lustre; that, with various ray,
Lights up the clouds, those beauteous robes of heaven." —*Thomson.*

God-Goodness! Ver. 6. (1.) The child's primer on geography is a very different thing from that which the child has in mature school-days. Very simple are the words and expressions; but how detailed. The word *continent* requires sentence after sentence of explanation to the child-mind; but when the child has become the youthful student, three words suffice to explain the same. Even so, in Exodus xxxiv. 6, we have the lengthened explanation of the Divine glory; while in 1 John iv. there is the same and substance—the essence of all—in the three words, "God is Love." (2.) The savage who has never seen a rose, can only understand its nature when it is presented to him in full bloom; whereas he who knows what a rose is, realises its beauty and perfection when it is wrapped up in the bud. The petals, so to speak, of God's goodness were set before Moses in full bloom in this verse; but in the New Testament it was sufficient to give the bud, "God is love."

"I'll sing it in the sinner's ear,
I'll tell it to the worldling,
And ask no other theme;
'Twill flow to soothe the mourner's wail;
Children will hold the oft-told tale
Dearer than fiction's dream."

Grace-Revelations! Vers. 6, 7. (1.) These verses, as Stock says, show that the revelation of God was not merely to the outward sight, but chiefly to the heart and mind of Moses. All the previous dealings of God with Israel had been successive revelations of His attributes, embraced in the name JEHOVAH. But Moses had never had a full and wonderful view of the "Mercy and Truth" therein; therefore he here obtains a glimpse into the Divine treasury, with its boundless, inexhaustible stores of mercy—mercy ready to meet and satisfy the demands of justice. (2.) Filled with joyful boldness, he turns the very fact of Israel's stiff-neckedness into a plea for the presence and favour of God. As Law says, this heart is mercy. As the sun abounds in sparkling rays, the sea in drops, the sky in glittering orbs; so God is one vast treasure-house of mercy. This is the brightest jewel of His crown—overtopping the heavens, outliving all times, outshining all perfections. It is the riches of His riches.

"God's boundless mercy is to sinful man
Like to the ever wealthy ocean;
Which, though it sends forth thousand streams, 'tis ne'er
Known, or else seen, to be the emptier."
—*Herrick.*

Boundless Mercy! Ver. 7. (1.) Hearken, says Law, to the melody of this sweet note. The thought may sometimes rise, that mercy visits but a favoured few, that the rare gift enriches but rare souls. Nay, mercy's arms are very wide; mercy's heart is very large; mercy's mansions are very many. It has brought saving joy to countless multitudes. It has saving joy for countless yet. The doors stand open. Thousands have found mercy; but there are stores for thousands yet. (2.) The atmosphere is sometimes terrible with thunder, and riven with lightning—impregnated with pestilence, and charged with destruction. But it is generally and chiefly a means of health, filled with beautiful sounds, fragrant with sweetest odours, the pathway of sunbeams, the source of sparkling dew, the parent of harvests and fountain of earthly life. Ay, God is indeed full of mercy's flowers and fruits.

"O God, how beautiful the thought,
How merciful the bless'd decree,
That grace can e'er be found when sought,
And naught shut out the soul from Thee!"
—*Cook.*

Grace-Memories! Ver. 8. Moses could never forget those moments spent in the clefts of the rock, while he beheld the grace of God's glory, after the insufferable glories of the law on Sinai. What Christian, who has felt the terrors of the law producing deep conviction in his conscience, and who has found peace, ever forgets that blissful moment when, hiding in the cleft side of Jesus, he beheld the glory of God's grace, and heard His voice, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." As the rebellious subject, who has stood before his offended monarch, marked the dread frown gathered on his royal brow, and listened to the solemn proclamation of the laws of the state, is filled with deep, unutterable joy as he sees the radiant smile of love glowing on that face, and as he hears the forgiving declaration, "Thy offence is blotted out by a merciful sovereign," the pardoned and restored subject can never lose sight of that scene—of the radiant smile. The proclamation would be written on the tablets of his memory in ineffaceable characters.

"For the King Himself in His tender grace,
Hath shown me the brightness of His face;
And who shall pine for a glow-worm light,
When the sun goes forth in his giant might?"
—*Havergal.*

Christ and Exodus! Vers. 18–26. Take that prism to-morrow and let the sun shine through it, and you will see marvels. The white pure light is divided into many colours. Even so, bring Christ and let His mediatorial glory pour its concentrated flood upon this prism in Exodus xxxiv. Lo! glorious truths of Gospel grace shine with varied, vivid lustre. What glorious rays of saving, sanctifying beauty! We behold the glory of Christ in marvellous combination then in this Mosaic prism. Each ray may be contemplated in itself, but all blend in the glory of God our Saviour.

"Flooded with splendour bright and broad,
The glorious light of the Love of God."

Vision-Media! Vers. 18-22. (1.) We do not say to a person of diseased sight, Come out and look at the noonday sun. But we provide the coloured glass as the medium through which he may behold the brightness of the sun. (2.) Israel could not gaze upon the glory of God, except through the media of rites and ceremonies, &c. The supernal splendour of a direct vision of God would only have dazzled their sight, and not illuminated their soul. (3.) Under the Gospel, Christians have their media through which to behold the Divine glory. Christ the Son of Man, His words of tenderness and truth, His works of solace and sympathies; these are the coloured media through which we "gaze upon God"

"O Love! O Life! our faith and sight
Thy presence maketh one;
As through transfigured clouds of white
We trace the noonday sun.

"So, to our mortal eyes subdued,
Flesh-veiled, but not concealed,
We know in Thee the Fatherhood
And heart of God revealed."
—*Whittier.*

Divine-Tribute! Ver. 20. (1.) Arrowsmith says, The sun shines by his own nature, the

air only by participation of light from the sun. So whatever good the creatures have, is by derivation from Jehovah, the fountain of being. Take away the light of the sun, the air ceaseth to shine, and so it is here. (2.) Williams says, A right view of benefits received, of the source from whence they flow, and of our own demerit, has a direct tendency to excite gratitude; and while the mind is influenced by sovereign grace this will be the pleasing effect. (3.) The great ocean is in a constant state of evaporation. But there are men who do not believe in evaporation, *i.e.*, in giving back to God of what they received from Him. They get and keep all they can; forgetting the duty of gratitude, overlooking the law of Divine tribute.

"I yield Thee back Thy gifts again,
Thy gifts which most I prize;
Desirous only to retain
The notice of Thine eyes."
—*Guyon.*

Spiritual-Sustenance! Ver. 28. (1.) In the beautiful transparent amber of the Eocene epoch are often found threads of mould, fragments of moss and lichens, blossoms and leaves of flower-bearing plants, as well as wings of bees and butterflies. Nature has preserved these things of the past—things, too, which, apparently small and insignificant, open up to the mind's eye a wide vista into the mysterious past. So in the precious amber of the Bible are preserved incidents and statements, remnants of thought and blossomings of truth. To the careless readers these may appear trivial; but they are infinitely suggestive to those who examine them. (2.) One of the most interesting and suggestive is that of Moses existing for forty days without nature's bountiful stores. He was fed by the melodies of heaven, the music of the spheres, as the beautiful Jewish legend says, until God's purposes were accomplished, and then he returned to the common mode of sustaining life. It teaches that bread has no essential or necessary relations to the bodily organisation of man, that human life can be sustained independently of material means, and that, as God Himself is the nourisher, He can, when He pleases, dispense with the mere outward instrumentality, and feed by His own direct and unveiled sustaining power—

"O Lord, Thou hast with angel food my fainting spirit fed;
If 'tis Thy will I linger here, bless Thou the path I tread;
And though my soul doth pant to pass within the pearly gate,
Yet teach me for Thy summons, Lord, in patience still to wait."
—*Shipton.*

Written Word! Ver. 28. (1.) In proportion as a nation becomes civilised, the desire for a code of written law increases along with the knowledge of its desirableness. Our forefathers wandered as savages amid the wilds, relying upon oral traditions, which became more and more degenerate. And so in these Gentile religions, all alive with hideous and abominable idolatries, who could believe that this is what man has made of that oral revelation vouchsafed to Noah, so clear and pellucid in its Ararat outflow? (2.) When civilisation disclosed their degenerate conditions to our ancestors, they felt the need of a written code of laws and enactments; and these are embodied in our statutes called the Law of the Land. The condition of the world at large, and of Israel in Egypt, evidenced the moral necessity for a written law. Even amidst the awful glories of Sinai, Israel learned from its own tendency to degenerate how urgently essential it was to have the written Word.

"Thy Word, O God, is living yet
Amid earth's restless strife,
New harmony creating still,
And ever higher life.
And as that Word moves surely on,
The light, ray after ray,
Streams farther out athwart the dark,
And night grows into day."
—*Longfellow.*

Fellowship-Fruits! Vers. 29–35. (1.) For forty days successively, the great Jewish legislator was concealed on the summit of Mount Sinai, within the thick darkness by which the glory of Jehovah was veiled from the less-favoured eyes of the multitude. In this prophetic seclusion, separated from the world, his mind took deeply and strongly the impress of heaven. By communion with God his soul was *saturated* with the light of His holiness. His countenance by a spiritual affinity caught the celestial radiance and reflected it with dazzling brightness. On his descent from the mount, this splendour from the Divine Presence continued to shine on his face, that Aaron beheld it while he talked with him, and all the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh. (2.) Brown says his face was radiant, and dispersing beams like many horns or cones about his head; which is also consonant unto the original signification. Our Saviour and the Virgin Mary are commonly painted with scintillations or radiant halos about their head, which by the French are designated the glory. In some of the ancient Bibles, Moses is described with horns. The same description we find on a silver medal, *i.e.*, upon one side Moses horned, and on the reverse side the commandment against sculptured images. The believer's walk and conversation should be thus encircled with "horns of glory," rays of the beauties of holiness.

"Ne'er let the glory from my soul remove,
Till perfect with Thy ransomed flock above,
I cease to sin, but never cease to love."

Sunset-Reflection! Ver. 29. (1.) Looking up into the bright blue sky on a clear summer day, we see far off great masses of white fleecy clouds, piled up against the sky like the snow mountains in Switzerland. We see them sailing quietly and gracefully across the dark blue heavens, bright with the dazzling effulgence of the monarch of the day. (2.) And at sunset we may see the mighty clouds, kissed by the warm effulgence of the sovereign sun ere he sets behind the western hills, hang around in all their congregated hues of beauty, like the pillars of some grand tabernacle. Even the sky, illuminated to its centre, has caught the radiance, and glows intensely, changing its sapphire majesty to gold. (3.) Where do the clouds and sky borrow their splendour? From the sun's face. And so Moses, from communion with God, caught the reflection of His glorious face. And just as the sun shines on the clouds in the sky and makes them beautiful; and just as God shone on the face of Moses and made it bright; so, by intercourse with Jesus—by beholding His face—we are changed into the same image; our souls are made to reflect the brightness of His face.

"Sunlight seeking hidden shadow, touch'd
The green leaves all a-tremble with gold light." —*Massey.*

Soul-Excellence! Ver. 29. An eminent writer says—True Christian excellence shines naturally *like the sun*, not for the sake of effect, but because it cannot help shining. It was so with the face of Moses. But whenever a Christian grace becomes, so to speak, self-conscious, it loses its charm. It is like an *Alpine flower* brought from the lonely mountain peak, where it blushed unseen, and planted in the public garden, where it loses its beauty and fragrance, becoming a mere weed. You cannot handle *a butterfly's wing* without rubbing off its delicate mealy dust, or a *ripe grape* without destroying the rich purple bloom upon it. And so you cannot handle admiringly your own Christian virtue without impairing its tender loveliness.

"Beware of too sublime a sense
Of your own worth and consequence."

"If thou would'st keep thy garments white and holy,
Walk humbly with thy God."
—*Cowper.*

Soul-Shekinah! Vers. 30-35. (1.) In our atmosphere we have noticed the lower strata of clouds have a dark colour, for to them belong the smoke, and the steam, and the fogs, and the malaria, and the earthly exhalations. Above them are those which have left behind much of the earthly exhalations, but which are still not of perfect brightness and hue. But far above them, through the dry air of summer, may be seen other clouds beautiful in array, the white of their drapery pure, having left behind the impurities of earth, and having drawn nearer to the sunlight. (2.) Here we have a picture of Israel, of Aaron and the elders, and of Moses. The Israelites were like the earth-clouds, with sombre faces dulled. Aaron and the elders were nearer God and so were brighter. But Moses was like the far-up cloud of silver purity, his countenance caught the bright perfections of God in the clear blue scene of communion. He knew it not, was as unconscious as the snow white vapour-vail; yet his face shone. (3.) There are souls whose lives, spent amid the fogs and malaria and defiling exhalations of worldliness, are dark and ugly. Then there are others whose lives are higher up in the region of morality, and so are less dense and repulsive, but still not clear and bright. And there are those who, living far above amid the sapphire-sheen of God's infinite love, have lives all beautiful—comely with the comeliness which the Sun of Righteousness sheds upon them.

"To whose white robes the gleam of bliss is given;
And by the breath of mercy made to roll
Right onward to the golden gates of heaven,
Where to the eye of faith, they peaceful lie,
And tell to man his glorious destiny."
—*Wilson.*

Moral-Transfiguration! Ver. 30. (1.) Like the great Jewish lawgiver, the soul that is familiar with God in meditation and prayer cannot fail to contract resemblance to Him—cannot fail to catch a portion of His purity and greatness. When our Saviour prayed and held intercourse with His Father on the mount, His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. In like manner every believer on the mount of prayer, during his heart's intercourse with God, is spiritually transfigured. (2.) It has been beautifully remarked that every face, according as it is more or less turned towards our Sun, must reflect a portion of His brightness. When Arthur returned from church there was a serene happiness expressed in his manner, that strikingly contrasted with the peevish restlessness and fretfulness of those whose thoughts had not risen above earth. Lina thought that she had never seen her brother's eyes so bright, or his manner more full of the sweet light of courtesy to all around.

"As though an angel in his upward flight
Had left his mantle floating in mid-air."
—*Baillie.*

Legal Fears! Ver. 30. Contrast the fears of the Israelites at Horeb, as they saw the shining face of Moses, with the joys of the disciples on Hermon as they beheld the countenance of the Mediator shine as the sun. Then the disciples of Moses were reluctant to draw near; but now the disciples of the Mediator exult in their nearness, "It is good

for us to be here." As Krummacher says, "Every glance, every play of look, every word, every majestic act, was radiant with grace and only grace." Streams of peace flowed into the apostles hearts. Sweet and sabbatic rest was breathed around them. Every ray of His countenance that fell upon them was the transporting smile of a God. Here they would gladly have made tabernacles and remained—for ever remained in this beatific irradiation of the Only-Begotten, full of grace.

"Here let us holy tabernacles build,
That we may ever stay
In silent trance, with heavenly visions filled,
Joy that shall ne'er decay."

Self-Consciousness! Ver. 31. (1.) *Character!*—A beautiful woman who knows that she is beautiful, and prides herself upon its possession, and parades her charms before the world for its admiration and applause, gives evidence of her self-consciousness by a thousand vain and artful ways, studied in order to attract attention. Alas! This is but too common with Christian souls. They know too well that their lives reflect the glory of God. They embrace every opportunity of exhibiting the radiance. They are proud of their spotless character and blameless conduct. (2.) *Consequence!*—The transparent film of collodion on the photographer's plate becomes instantly blackened and unfit for his purpose when placed in the light. And so there are graces so delicate and sensitive in the Christian soul that they are rendered opaque and useless for their object when regarded in the light of self-consciousness. It perverts the motives—lowers the aims—corrupts the affections. And Satan, as has been well remarked, takes full advantage of such self-complacency to tempt us to a grievous fall. There is on earth

"A host of prides, some better and some worse,
But of all prides, since Lucifer's attaint,
The proudest swells a self-sufficient saint."
—*Hood.*

Vail-Symbolism! Ver. 33. (1.) *Type!*—In 2 Cor. iii. 7–18, Paul says that it typified the blindness of the Jewish mind. The hardness of their hearts brought a vail over their spiritual sight, so that they could not look beyond the letter. They saw the tables of stone, and beheld the letters written upon them; but they could not behold the Divine glory in the face of Moses. (2.) *Token!*—On the one hand it was a token that under the law man cannot see the face of God and live; and on the other that under the Gospel the natural man cannot behold the glory of God as it is in the face of His Son Jesus Christ—the only Mediator between God and man. (3.) *Testimony!*—It spoke eloquently of the Divine glory in the law—of the spiritual lessons of the moral beauty and effulgence vailed in the Pentateuch from ordinary gaze. Aaron and the rulers might draw nigh and behold; but the giddy world-throng could not perceive.

"This is the mount where Christ's disciples see
The glory of Incarnate Deity;
'Tis here they find it good indeed to be,
And view His face."
—*Elliott.*

Renewed Reflection! Ver. 35. (1.) It has been supposed by some that the vail was put on by Moses after he had delivered the message from God, in order to hide the passing away of the brightness, which he retained on first coming forth from the Divine Presence. There is, however, no just reason for this supposition. Such a proceeding appears very unworthy of Moses, and entirely opposed to his character. He assumed the vail each time he came out from holding communion with God, because each time his face again reflected the glory of the Lord's face. The vail was thus put on, in order that the people might not shrink from his presence. (2.) When our earth turns away its face from holding communion with the sun, then the reflected brightness passes away from its features, and night reigns. No sooner does it again turn towards this dark world's light, than again her countenance is illumined with the reflection of the sun's glory. But again the face is withdrawn by the earth's diurnal motion, and the glory fades. Even so, whenever Moses was with God, he came forth—his face resplendent with the bright effulgence; only to lose it, and again to have it restored.

"Welcome, dawn that never dies,
Day that needs no stars nor sun,
Where no tear-mists ever rise,
Hiding Thee, Eternal One."

Modesty's Vail! Ver 35. Macmillan says a true Christian does not parade his excellencies before the eyes of his fellow-creatures. He covers them with the softening vail of modesty, as Moses covered his shining face with a vail in his intercourse with Israel. The Christian, as the poet rhymes, does good by stealth, and blushes to find it fame. He prefers the shade of retirement to the theatre of display. In short, he does not attest himself in anything that he says or does, but retires behind the vail of modesty, and shows that he is animated by the same mind which was in Christ Jesus—that he has learned of Him who is meek and lowly in heart.

"Scarcely revealing,
Scarcely concealing,
Being's sweet mystery
Smiles from the sod:
While on each leaf
Is written this brief
But beautiful history,
'We are of God.'"
—*Butler.*

Spiritual Assimilation! Ver. 35. Just as those who live at a royal court acquire courtly manners, and those who associate with refined and educated people acquire refinement insensibly; so those who live by faith in the presence of God, and as it were in the court of heaven, inevitably acquire something of a heavenly tone and spiritual elevation. As Macmillan says, "Communion with light imparts light; fellowship with greatness creates greatness; contact with the spiritual produces spirituality." The apostle represents the transforming influence of the contemplative study of the Divine character when he says in allusion to the transfiguration of Moses, "We all, with unvailed face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

"From glory unto glory! O marvels of the word!
With open face beholding the glory of the Lord,
We, even we (O wondrous grace!) are changed into the same,
The image of our Saviour, to glorify His name." —*Havergal.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. And Moses assembled** = vayyakheyl]. This assembling suggests the idea of reuniting and strengthening the bonds of union among "all the congregation," which, through the sad consequences of the sin of the golden calf, were no doubt very much loosened. And Moses does this by first impressing upon the people that most elevating observance of God's laws, viz., the keeping holy of the Sabbath day, and then by affording them a common interest in a common work. He only now tells them of what he had been told by God (xxv.-xxxi.) concerning the holy service. He invites them to bring free-will gifts for the construction of the tabernacle, its vessels, and the holy garments (vers. 4–20). This wrought so effectually on their better nature that Moses found it necessary to restrain the spontaneous outflow of their hearty generosity (xxxvi. 5).

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

The covenant having been renewed, Moses now relates to the people what God had revealed concerning the time and place of divine worship.

THE TIME FOR DIVINE WORSHIP.

1. Moses was never weary of impressing on the people the importance and divine obligation of the Sabbath day. For this there were several obvious reasons. (1.) The Sabbath was part of the moral law. (2.) It was necessitated by the conditions of the body and mind needing rest. (3.) It was a recognition of God's right to *time*. (4.) An opportunity apart from the distractions and duties of life for drawing near unto God. All these reasons are in special force under the Christian dispensation. Why then should Christian preachers tire of teaching it, or Christian people tire of hearing it? It requires no very wide research to find that selfishness, worldliness, and sin are at the bottom of Sabbath desecration.

2. As this chapter deals mainly with the building of the sanctuary, this command may be regarded as applying to that. They were not to break the law even for so good a purpose. So Christians should not do evil on that day for the supposed benefit that may accrue. The question is not, Would it amuse and instruct to open museums on the Sabbath day; but, Is it right to do so? No! says God's Word. Notice—

I. That the Sabbath was to be a rest after six days' work. Hence, honest, diligent toil is of equal obligation. Do not let us lay all the emphasis on "Remember the Sabbath day," and none on "Six days shalt thou labour." Again, it would be easy to show that if a man has played away his working week he is unfitted for the sacred enjoyment of the day of rest.

II. That the Sabbath was to be a day of sacred rest. "An holy day, a Sabbath of rest *to the Lord.*" Not of unsanctified idleness, but a cessation of exhausting labour, so that the mind might be wholly given to the refreshing duties which devolve upon that day. A man may no more waste the Lord's time than his own. Keeping the Sabbath day holy does not mean simply the putting up of shutters, and the putting by of business; it means also attention to those sacred employments which devolve upon us as the servants of God.

III. That the Sabbath implied the cessation of unnecessary labour. "Ye shall kindle no fire," &c. In eastern climates this would be quite unnecessary. And, indeed, as the materials of life in those climates are so simple and so easily procurable, very little manual work could be said to be necessary. The obvious exceptions, of course, were works of mercy to man and beast. With us it is different; fires, *e.g.*, are necessary. But the prohibition against needless work is binding still. We have ample time to do our necessary works and to enjoy the luxuries of life. Let us not, nor oblige our servants to, rob God of the right to His own day.

In conclusion—Remember that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

i. For man's use. Not for his abuse. If a man wants recreation let him take it out of his own time. ii. For God's worship. As the institution, or the confirmation at any rate of the Sabbath contemplated the tabernacle, so the Sabbath is inseparably, all through the ages, connected with the worship of God.

—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4–19.

THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

The instructions for the building and furniture of the Tabernacle were detailed in chap. xxv., &c. In this recapitulation, notice—

I. That the provision of the house of the Lord was obligatory. The command for worship, the time of worship, and the building for worship emanated from the same divine authority. Has, then, the obligation for the latter ceased? No! Christians should be cautious how they speak of the abolition of the Mosaic dispensation. Much of the terrible pest known as antinomianism is based on erroneous notions on this subject. True, as a dispensation it is abolished, inasmuch as we live under the dispensation of Christ. But many of the leading principles, provisions, and commands of the latter are based upon those of the former, and what has not, either by divine ordination or the necessities of the case been abrogated, is binding still. The law of our text—provision for public worship—has never been abolished, was sanctioned by Christ, practised by the Apostles, and has been recognised by the Church universal ever since. The command of our text is based—

1. Upon necessity. (1.) The worship was a common worship, and therefore necessitated a place where people could meet together. (2.) The worship was of perpetual obligation and frequent practice. Some provision must, therefore, be made against contingencies of weather, &c. 2. Upon utility. Private houses could not always be in a state of readiness, and must from their very nature lack those appliances without which order and decency would be impossible.

II. That the Lord's house should be the result of the people's free and generous will, ver. 5. The principle held as good then as now, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," &c. The people were not taxed for it. No Church rate was levied. No hand was laid on national property. To wrest contributions from

unwilling and grudging hands for God's service, is to overthrow the principles on which such service is founded, and to offer what God cannot accept. Here, as afterwards, such as had "a mind to work" were invited to work; such as were inclined to give were encouraged to give. No compulsion was used. God wanted a house. Moses told the people so. The voluntary principle was called into play, and was on this its first appearance successful, as it has been ever since, as it will be as long as the work is left to the faith and love of those to whom the appeal is made (Ps. cx. 3).

III. That the Lord's house was to be built and furnished intelligently, ver. 10. The Jews built their Tabernacle with distinct reference to the purposes for which it was to be used. The "wise hearted," therefore, and not merely the wealthy and the tasteful, were in special request. The necessity for "wise heartedness," in building and furnishing God's house, has not vanished with the "shadowy dispensation." Let Christian architects and Church officers bear this in mind. If *our* tabernacles are specially for the teaching of God's word, they should be so constructed that the preacher should be seen and heard by all.

IV. That the Lord's house was to be complete.

1. The building was to be complete. "His tent, covering, taches, boards, bars, pillars, sockets," &c., &c., were all to be finished and in their place. No man thinks of moving into a house until the house is complete. Is, then, that which is not good enough for man, good enough for man's Maker? Christian men! let not the infidel and the worldling say as they pass by our slovenly and unfinished buildings, "These men began to build a tower for their God and were not able to finish." We can finish our temples of mammon, our temples of gaiety, our temples of learning: let us not leave unfinished the sanctuary of our God.

2. The accessories were to be complete. The inventory here is perfect, down to the very pins and sockets. It may be said that this belonged to the "ceremonial law." Well, is the abolition of that law in its technical details a reason why "beggarly elements" should be introduced into the Christian Churches, and ministers hampered, congregations inconvenienced, and the work of God generally retarded for the want of needful arrangement. Let trustees of Churches see to it that everything in the pulpit, choir, pews, and vestry, that is requisite for the decent, edifying, comforting worship of God, is provided. And let vergers, chapel-keepers, pew-openers, see that everything is in its place before the minister and congregation arrive.

3. The funds were to be complete. When the Tabernacle was "opened" it was out of debt. Christians did not learn from Jews the habit of spending money for God which their children would have to provide. It is a scandal to men, who would under no circumstances allow men to call themselves *their* creditors, to make them God's creditors. If a congregation is poor, let them be satisfied with a modest building till they are rich enough to provide a more magnificent structure.

V. That the Lord's house should be beautiful (1 Chron. xvi. 29). It was only a tent, but it was the best tent in the whole camp. It was reared for the best purpose, the people therefore constructed it of the best materials they had, and on the best plans. True, it may be said that God is everywhere and may be worshipped anywhere. But everywhere is the temple God has erected for Himself, and has He not lavished magnificence and beauty on that temple? Look at its roof, its floor, its aisles! Let nature, then, be the model upon which churches should be constructed for the higher worship of the great Creator. And if the Jews thought it worth their while to make God's house as splendid as their means would allow, let not Christians fall below their standard. There may be exceptions. The people may be poor. Churches may have to adapt

themselves to circumstances. But let them be of the very best that can be afforded; and let those beware whose objection against the beauty of the Lord's house is merely the selfish one, *cost.*

Remember—(i.) That God's house is for His worship, not for lectures or theatrical displays. (ii.) That God's house is for the preaching of His Word; (iii.) and therefore, that God's house demands our best efforts for its completion, and our reverent behaviour at its services.

—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20-29.

HINTS FOR BUILDING COMMITTEES.

The wishes of God were made known in the previous section, and the people forthwith resolved themselves into a committee of ways and means for carrying those wishes out. The action of the committee was—

I. Immediate, vers. 20, 21. They did not hold a meeting to take into consideration the recommendations, and adopt the report. Nor did they elect a chairman, secretary, and working committee, to advise when, where, and how measures were to be carried out, but went away at once and commenced the work, before their ardour evaporated in idleness and their determination in talk. Had they met but once and debated the question, the probabilities are, like their Christian successors, the work might never have been done.

II. Spontaneous and earnest, ver. 21. They had but one public meeting, and that a very short one, and that without resolutions or amendment or exciting appeals. The cause itself was all the eloquence they wanted. God had graciously forgiven them, and had condescended to dwell amongst them, and wanted a house for that purpose. That was enough for them. Their gratitude to, and love of God, did all the rest. Should Christian people want other incentives than these? and should their contributions to building funds, &c., be less prompt, less free, less generous? Must *Christian* contributions, for God's cause, be prompted by dinners, soirees, harangues, bazaars, when *Jewish* contributions were given because the people's heart was stirred up, and their spirit made willing by the grandeur of the cause? (2 Cor. viii. 9-12).

III. According to individual ability. From gold and silver, down to brass and badgers' skins. Nothing was too good or rich, nothing too poor. "They did what they could." The poor did not draw back because of their poverty. The rich did not plead the many demands upon their wealth. God required then, as now, "according to what a man had, not according to what he had not." God looks at quality as well as quantity, and has scales of His own in which to weigh the widows' mites. The wisdom of this encouragement to poor as well as rich is obvious. Let the poor man feel that, because it has been raised partly by his exertions, the building belongs as much to him as to the rich man, and that he does not occupy its benches on sufferance or through charity.

IV. Self-denying. Many of these gifts for the sanctuary were the ornaments, luxuries, and comforts, and even the necessities of life. They felt that the work was worth the sacrifice. And what work? Let the Christian remember that the Tabernacle was mainly for domestic worship, not for teaching the will of God to the foreigner and idolater outside. When we consider, then, the work of Christian Churches, how that they are not merely or mainly for the comfort and edification of believers, but for the preaching of the Gospel for the lost and the depraved, how much more should we be willing to dispense

with the superfluities of life, that the Word of God "may have free course and be glorified!"

V. Laborious. Their gifts did not supersede their individual exertion, ver. 29. And those who could present no material gift gave their time and skill.

1. Let those who can work as well as give, do both. This applies particularly to women who, indeed, are specifically mentioned. The Church has wisely followed this example, and utilised this source of profit in Working-meetings, &c. Let them never go out of date. Not merely for the pecuniary profit, although that is by no means to be overlooked, but for the good feeling and sympathy that are established, and because of the interest in the Lord's work that it develops.

2. Let those who can't give, work. Many a little country chapel has been built by the exertions of its congregation in their overtime. Work is money, and work done for God is perhaps more prolific in blessing, and more acceptable to God. This applies to the children. Let them have a share in the work; and let them be able in after years to look back with satisfaction and gratitude that they were early in life instructed and encouraged to work for God.

VI. In conclusion—our text implies that some were unwilling, and did not embark on this glorious enterprise.

1. Some were selfish. They loved their property more than they loved their God.

2. Some may have argued, "Amongst such a vast congregation, one contribution will not be missed," as many Christians do to-day.

3. Some may have argued, "We are poor, and our mite will be really nothing in aid of the undertaking."

4. But all who failed to do what they could in this matter, necessarily failed to receive that special blessing which God has for, the "cheerful giver."

—*J. W. Burn.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 30–35.

GENIUS.

No more instructive chapter on human genius has ever been written than this. It tells us what genius is. It traces it to its origin. It describes its duties and responsibilities. It warns us of the dangers to which it is exposed. Bezaleel and Aholiab are representative men. They belong to a class which comprises the poets, philosophers, sculptors, artists, and skilled artizans of every age. The narrative suggests—

I. What genius is.

1. Wisdom der. from חָכַם. To fasten the attention upon, to judge, to decide; LXX. *σόφια*, Vulg. *sapienta*, and is employed in various instances to denote the highest exercise of the mind, and the prime qualification of the workman in any manner of work.

2. Understanding from תָּבַן. To see into or discriminate; *i.e.*, the perceptive faculty; LXX. *σύνεσις*, Vulg. *intelligentia.*

3. Knowledge from יָדַע. To experience. Practical acquaintance with fact; LXX. *ἐπιστήμη*, Vulg. *scientia.*

4. All manner of workmanship, dexterity of hand. There is nothing equal to the Old Bible definitions. No modern dictionary could give a more accurate definition of genius than this.

II. That genius is the gift of God. "The Lord . . . hath filled him with the

Spirit of God,"—the spirit of Elohim. The same spirit who inspired **Balaam** (Num. xxiv. 2), Azariah (2 Chron. xv. 1), Zechariah (2 Chron. xxiv. 20).

1. We must, of course, carefully distinguish between the inspiration of Moses, *e.g.*, and that of Bezaleel. The one was inspired to reveal moral truth, binding on the hearts and consciences of men, the other to perform work of a very different character. Hence the former was, for the time being, infallible; the latter might neglect to employ his gifts, or divert them into an improper channel.

2. But never let us forget that genius is one of God's mightiest gifts (Jas. i. 17). The intellect in all its phases and faculties, is inbreathed by God, and is the highest tribute to His glory, and the strongest argument for His existence. "The heavens declare the glory of God," but their proclamation is silence compared with the speculations of the philosopher, the imagination of the poet, and the discourse of the orator, with music, and sculpture, and song.

III. That genius only reaches its highest level when devoted to the service of God. "The Lord hath called by name," &c.

1. Because it belongs to God and is in affinity with God. No degradation is more complete and disastrous than genius working apart from, or in antagonism to, God—Byron, Shelley, &c. The most splendid geniuses have been those who have walked humbly with their God—Moses, Isaiah, Paul, Augustine, Bacon, Newton, Faraday, &c.

2. Because the service of God is the noblest ministry in which it can engage. That is the delight of the unfallen intelligencies. It is a crime, therefore, to exclude the intellect from this province. God does not ask for our ignorance, He condemns it. The mind of man was created in order that it might be employed for God, and God has provided spheres for its exercise in His written word and in the worship of His holy name. And what loftier service can man render either to His God and to his fellow, than to unfold the truths that have been revealed for man's guidance in this world, and his hopes for that which is to come?

3. Because in serving God its own highest interests are promoted. In God's presence it is elevated and transfigured. When has poetry been so sweet, eloquence so rich, logic so subtle, eloquence so moving, philosophy so pure, learning so varied and so exact, and art so sublime, as when consecrated to God?

IV. That genius should not be above practical work. "To work in gold and silver," &c. Carlyle has defined genius as "an infinite capacity for taking pains." So says our text. An unproductive genius is inconceivable. Men of great intellectual powers have given way to idleness and have perverted their powers. But here they have failed. Then—

1. Genius must not be made an excuse for idleness. Because one man can do in three days what would take another man six, he must not lounge away the remaining time.

2. Genius must not be an occasion for imposition upon others. Aholiab had to perform the work allotted to him as much as the most illiterate Israelite. Yet this is a great danger. It is held by some, almost axiomatically, that "geniuses need not work. Let that be done by the hewers of wood and drawers of water while we do the thinking."

V. That true genius is unselfish, ver. 34. They were not to be miserly of their intellectual powers, but to impart their skill and knowledge, as much as possible, to others. It is not only theologians or lawyers who are to be charged with keeping the "key of knowledge." Genius is a trust, and the man who devotes it to selfish uses, and neglects to improve others by it, commits a sin against God. In conclusion, Learn—

i. To cultivate gratitude to God for the existence of genius in the world, and for what genius He has given you. ii. To recognise your responsibility to God for what the genius of others has placed within your reach, and what your own genius enables you to do. Cultivate it in yourself, encourage it in others. iii. To feel the duty and privilege of laying all the stores of genius on the altar for the service of God.—*J. W. Burn.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXV.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Moral Law! Vers. 1–35. (1.) The *ceremonial* law was like a scaffo ding around a building which is being slowly and gradually raised. When the building is completed, the scaffolding is taken away. But the *moral* law is like the rafters, deep sunk in the building itself. These cannot be taken away without the ruin of the whole structure of revelation. (2.) The *ceremonial* law is like the bright petals of a blossom, which drop off to make room for the fruit. But the *moral* law is like the stem, which upholds both blossom and fruit. For God is holy—God is good; and therefore the law of holiness and goodness must, like God, endure for ever.

"Thy God is good, His mercy nigh,
His love sustains thy tottering feet;
Trust Him, for His grace is sure,
Ever doth His Truth endure."
—*Zehn.*

Sabbath! Ver. 2. The Sabbath was originally instituted as a day of rest; and was to be employed in the service of God. Of this latter circumstance the Jews had so far lost sight, that they substituted their own superstitious rites in the place of divine ordinances, and thus exchanged a spiritual for a merely ceremonial observance of the day. Concerning some of the superstitions which prevailed amongst the people, Basnage tells us that in the places where they had liberty, in the time of Maimonides, they sounded the trumpet six times to give notice that the Sabbath was beginning. At the first sound the countryman left his plough; at the second, they shut up their shops; at the third, they covered their pits. They lighted candles, and drew the bread out of the oven; but this last article deserves to be insisted on because of the different cases of conscience about which the masters are divided. When the sound of the sixth trumpet surprised those that had not as yet drawn out their bread from the oven, there the pious must leave it, &c.

"A Sabbath glory for the good
No night shall take away;
When shall Thy servant, Lord, attain
To that eternal day?" —*Gerok.*

Sabbath-Sanctuary! Ver. 2. The temple, says Hamilton, was a sacred place. In the Middle Ages it was usual to claim for churches the right of sanctuary; so that whosoever took refuge within the hallowed precincts was safe from the avenger. But it is not to a holy place, but to a holy day, that God has given this protecting privilege. Every seventh day was to be a sacred asylum for man and beast. Humboldt despised all religions and hated Christianity; yet he was forced to own that the "seventh day rest from labour" was an unspeakable blessing. But what Humboldt would not acknowledge, viz., its Divine authority, an eloquent Israelite has. Disraeli, in his "Tancred," remarks that the life and property of Britain are protected by the law of Sinai. The hard-working people of England, he says, are secured a day of rest in every week by the Sinaitic Decalogue; for

"Sunday is the golden clasp
That binds together
The volume of the week."
—*Longfellow.*

Sabbath-Service! Ver. 3. It is no easy matter to be everybody's friend. Yet we do not fear to say that the friend we are introducing to our readers deserves that gracious name—we mean the Lord's day. Our friend is most faithful and punctual; every seven days he comes round. However laborious our vocation, however painful our life, we are sure to see that friend reappear at the end of the week, inviting each of us to break for a few hours the monotony of our work, to give a new current to our thoughts, to put on our Sunday garments, and to enjoy necessary repose.

"Why do we heap huge mounds of years
Before us and behind,
And scour the Sabbath days that pass
Like angels on the wing?
Each turning round a small sweet face
As beautiful as near;
Because it is so small a face,
We will not see it clear."

Nature's Tabernacle! Ver. 4. Rightly considered, all nature is the tabernacle of God,

constructed for His worship. The tabernacle of the wilderness has been called by an eminent writer a miniature model of the whole earth, just as he calls the people of Israel a miniature pattern of all nations. Every man has a part assigned to him in the erection and adorning of this wonderful tabernacle, whose floor is the green fields, whose walls are the rocks and mountains, and whose roof is the ever-changing sky. Every man who does a day's work is a fellow-worker with God, in carrying out His great design in creation—in improving the face of nature—changing the wilderness into a garden, developing the latent resources and capabilities of the earth, converting its crude materials into shapes of beauty and forms of usefulness, in making the world fairer and richer, and better fitted to be the home of redeemed man, and the shrine of the Most High God. Therefore "Excelsior."

"In happy homes he saw the light
Of household fires gleam warm and bright;
Above the spectral glaciers shone,
And from his lips escaped a moan—
'Excelsior!'"
—*Longfellow.*

Love's Service! Vers. 5–19. (1.) He was busy preparing the home. All his thoughts day after day were on its beauty and decoration. And as the work advanced towards completion; as the rooms became richly yet chastely adorned in floor, and ceiling, and wall; as the garden parterres assumed an orderly and blooming appearance, he spent hours in wandering from room to room, and terrace to terrace, thinking—of what?—of whom? Of her whom he loved—on whom he had lavished his fondest affections, and for whose residence in that house he had been so busily occupied in preparation. He regretted none of these costly offerings at "Love's Shrine." (2.) God had condescended to be Israel's God. He had promised to come and dwell with them. And they were building Him a house wherein to reside. Some there might be who grudged the costly beauties of the tabernacle, but most of the pious in Israel, who loved God with all their heart, would delight in making sacrifices for Him whom they loved. And as the home grew more and more ready for His Divine indwelling, how that love would fill their spirits with bright prospects of sweet fellowship and loving communion with Him when the house of God was ready. So the fabric of our soul's holiness is being daily upreared and adorned for the Apocalyptic consummation.

"The mansion of creation's Architect;
The palace of the Everlasting King;
Its gates of pearl, its edifice of gold;
Its very streets of pure crystalline gold."
—*Bickersteth.*

Midianite-Mines! Ver. 5. The Old Testament allusions to gold, silver, and other valuable metals, derive new interest from Captain Burton's researches in Midian during the last six months. He has returned from his first expedition with twenty-five tons of specimens—including torquoise, alabaster, and sulphur. He also brought for the Egyptian Khedive, Midianite coins, inscriptions, fragments of glass and pottery; as well as a variety of relics from the thirty-two ruined cities which still exist in the land. He found evidences of ancient mining operations everywhere, traces of gold to an important amount, quartz threaded with veins of silver. Everywhere were evidences of great operations anciently conducted by practised miners—probably slaves—under skilled engineers. The stones

"Of purest crystal are from gloomiest mines,
The tenderest pearls are won from roughest seas."

Religion-Sphere! Vers. 6–11. The Levitical economy teaches that the whole life is one, that true religion is the proper use of man's whole being, and that it is not a thing merely of the Sunday and the sanctuary. By our Lord's life on earth He imparted to the whole earth a heavenly character—made every spot of common ground an altar, every common mean a sacrament, every action of daily life a worship. Religion has its place in everything; even in our daily labours which we pursue. The inspiration of Aholiab in his trade shows the true design and meaning of work. Macmillan remarks, that natural, as well as spiritual talents, are the good gifts of God, that the right use of the powers of the artist, the musician, the poet, the artisan, the mechanic, the day labourer, is due to the inspiration of the Spirit.

"'O dreary life!' we cry, 'O dreary life!'
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live, while we are keeping strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
Against which we may struggle!"

Stone-Stability! Ver. 9. (1.) Gems are steadfast and enduring. They are not composed of perishable materials—not even of rocks that wither and crumble away; but of that which endures. Jewels, as a class, are the most lasting of all earthly objects, the most beautiful, as well as the most imperishable, form in which matter appears. Gold will wear away, silver will tarnish, and wood will decay. The granite stone itself will disintegrate. But jewels will continue unchanged for thousands of years. They are, therefore, expressive types of stability and permanence. (2.) Gospel truths have this virtue. They are no vague hopes, or shadowy dreams; but solid substantial realities, more enduring than the everlasting hills themselves. They are truths which will last when the heavens shall

be rolled up like a scroll and vanish away. They will come out of the last dread conflagration, when the earth and all therein shall be burnt up, all the purer, clearer, and more enduring for the fiery ordeal. Were Gospel truths destitute of this stability, they might retain their literary brilliancy, but they would lose their saving and consoling potency. It enabled Paul to say, "I know in whom I have believed."

"The earth shall pass away,
The stars shall fall,
The heavens roll together
Like a parchment scroll;
But TRUTH shall live for ever,
And through endless ages give
Her blessings to the sainted,
And fail them *never, never.*"

Tabernacle - Furniture! Vers. 10 - 14. Amongst the existing memorials of ancient Rome is the triumphal Arch of Titus, reared to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem by that famous general. It represents in its bas-reliefs the golden candlestick, the table of shewbread, and other sacred articles which formed part of the spoils of the temple. These trophies were borne conspicuously in the triumphal procession with which Titus and his army were honoured on their return to Rome. The sculptures on the arch represent the procession, the figure of the candlestick being the most prominent of the sacred symbols.

"Their glory faded, and their race dispersed,
The last of nations now, though once the first,
They warn and teach the proudest, would they learn,
'Keep Wisdom, or meet vengeance in your turn.'" —*Cowper.*

Divine Delectation! Vers. 10, &c. In the Canticles of Solomon we are told that He feedeth among the lilies. (1.) *Material!* The Creator, it has been well observed by Macmillan, receives enjoyment from the beauties of creation. We are told authoritatively that He takes pleasure in the works of His hands; that for His pleasure they are and were created. Those countless objects of wonderful loveliness, in situations where no eye but His own can behold them, are sources of Divine delectation. Such are the wild flowers in pathless deserts, and on inaccessible mountain peaks. (2.) *Moral!* As the artist delights in exercising his talent in depicting the landscape—as the architect finds pleasure in exerting his skill in uprearing the gorgeous minster; so God not only delights in the scenes and objects of nature, in the formation of which He has exercised His divine wisdom and power, but also in the "beauties of holiness," designed and upreared by His grace. In this respect God desired and delighted to see the Wilderness Tabernacle beautiful and glorious—as the emblem of the Church and Christian "comely with the comeliness" which He has put on them.

"To-day I saw a dragon-fly
Come from the wells where he did lie,
An inner impulse rent the vail
Of his old husk; from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.
He dried his wings; like gauze they grew;
Through crofts and pastures wet with dew,
A living flash of life he flew." —*Vernon.*

Gift-Generosity! Ver. 21. (1.) Dr. Fowler remarks that the servants of God should be as hearty as the servants of Satan have been. They gave their ornaments for the golden calf; now they give them to God. Let grace succeed sin, as Paul passed from a self-sacrificing persecutor to a self-denying and laborious preacher. God invites but does not compel. Every one is to do what he can. Christ's kingdom rests on the affections. Its motive is love, its object is the perfection of love. (2.) Spurgeon relates of a woman who was known to be very poor, that she offered at a missionary meeting to subscribe one penny a week to the mission field. When remonstrated with, that surely she could not afford such a sum in her great poverty, she replied, "I spin so many hanks of yarn a week for my living, and I'll spin one hank more, which will be a penny a week for the Society."

"To pass, when life her light withdraws,
Not void of *righteous* self-applause,
Nor in a merely *selfish* cause."

Church Gifts! Vers. 21, 22. Bickersteth says the urgent needs of the Church Missionary Society were set before his flock on November 25th; and, although his congregation was by no means a wealthy one, £100 was collected. A printed note was circulated during the week following, in which he asked for a great effort to be made to raise the sum of £300 in this emergency of Foreign Missions. On Sunday £300 were cast into the Lord's treasury, including a cheque for £100—a roll of bank notes to the amount of £75, the proceeds of the sale of a silver bowl, and a little boy's silver cup. There were also two small gold rings put in the plates, and two more silver mugs were since sent for sale. So that he had £400, or more than he asked for, to send to the Society for missions to the heathen.

"But what or who are we, alas!
That we in giving are so free!
Thine own before our offering was,
And all we have we have from Thee."
—*Wither.*

Almsgiving, &c.! Ver. 21, 22. Two women were one day discussing what constituted the true beauty of the hand. Differing in opinion, they selected a gentleman as umpire.

It was a delicate matter. He thought of Paris and the three goddesses. Glancing from one to the other of the hands presented for examination, he replied at last, "Ask the poor, and they will tell you that there is a more beautiful hand than these." Astonished at this reply, they inquired, "What hand?" To which he responded that the poor considered that the most beautiful hand in the world which was devoted to deeds of loving service and almsgiving. There is one hand more beautiful still—the hand that with a humble, grateful heart, brings gifts for the worship and service of God.

"At least not rotting like a weed,
But, having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of further good indeed."

Necklaces and Jewels! Ver. 22. Hengstenberg tells us that in Egypt costly and elegant ornaments abounded in proportion as the clothing was simple and scarce. Girdles, necklaces, armlets, rings and earrings of various kinds, suspended from the neck, are found represented in the paintings, and in fact still exist among the mummies—the excellence of the Egyptians in some of the nicer and more elaborate and useful branches of art. They imitated, with a skill not certainly surpassed by moderns, the amethyst, the emerald, and other precious stones; and they formed necklaces of all the hues of the rainbow. From these, it is plain—as a matter of history—that the Israelites received instructions in the art of making, as well as engraving, precious stones.

"The jasper, streaked with many a tender dye,
The sapphire, of celestial blue serene,
The agate, once Chalcedon's peerless boast,
The melibean hyacinth, and last
The lucid violet of amethyst."
—*Bickersteth.*

Permanent Offerings! Ver. 22. Dr. Judson tells of a Karen woman who offered herself for baptism. After the usual examination, he inquired whether she could give up her ornaments for Christ. It was an unexpected blow. He explained the spirit of the Gospel, and appealed to her own consciousness of vanity. He then read to her the apostle's prohibition in 1 Tim. ii. 9. She looked again and again at her handsome necklace; and then, with an air of modest decision, she took it off, saying, "I love Christ more than this."

"No love but Thine, but Thine can me relieve;
No light but Thine, but Thine will I receive;
No light, no love but THINE."
—*Bonar.*

Fine Linen! Ver. 25. In the tombs of Beni Hassan, there are pictures of the method of preparing and twisting the thread for the manufacture of the fine linen or *byssus* of which the priest's garments were composed. The yarn was beaten with clubs, and the thread boiled in water, so as to soften it. Arsinoe, Pelusium, and Alexandria were celebrated for their weaving, which was principally done by men, and not by women. In agreement with this last fact, the preparation of the cloth for the sanctuary, and of the robes of the priests, was entrusted throughout to the care of men. The women did the spinning, and they bought of the people which they had spun.

"To toil in tasks, however mean,
For all we know of right and true,
In this alone our worth is seen;
'Tis this we were ordained to do."
—*Sterling.*

Spindle and Spinning! Ver. 25. In ancient times, and even in periods not long ago in our own country, the distaff and spindle formed as commonly the occupation in the higher ranks of society, as do the more elegant accomplishments of the present day. Even in the Augustan age of Rome, the Emperor usually wore no other garments than what were made at home by his wife, sister, or daughter. Irby and Mangles in their "Travels" say, that in Arabia, while the girls guard the flocks they have a bundle of wool at their backs for spinning. The spindle was probably the most ancient form of spinning apparatus. In India and other parts of the East, the art of spinning, so says the author of "Rays from the East," is still of the most primitive kind. The Hindoo mother, placing her infant on the ground, will sit by the hour turning the simply-formed machine with her hand; at her wheel

"Spinning amain, as if to overtake
The never-halting time; or, in her turn,
Teaching some novice in the Eastern home
Her skill in this, or other household work."

Tribute-Offerings! Ver. 29. (1.) *Gratitude!* A slave in the Southern plantations was aided by a Canadian to escape from the horrible oppression of a slave-driver. He was enabled to procure employment in Canada, and, being a skilled mechanician by natural talent, he was able to command a liberal income. Every half-year a mysterious gift reached the home of the Canadian liberator—"Gratitude's tribute for my freedom." Freed from the bondage of Egyptian taskmasters, Israel had ample occasion to testify their gratitude to the Divine deliverer. (2.) *Gladness!* Frequently, an announcement may be seen in the daily papers that the Queen has been graciously pleased to accept some subject's gift, a book, or something else. The donor is glad to have his gift accepted by so great a personage as his sovereign. It becomes a *red-letter* day on which the donation was acknowledged. What gladness the Israelite donors ought to have felt in their hearts

that the "King"—the "Divine King" in their midst, and heaven's dread Sovereign—consented to receive their voluntary offerings!

"Pitying Lord, wilt Thou despise
This my sacrifice?
Tell me, Saviour, do I bring
Anything?"
—*Kimball.*

Sacred Self-denial! Ver. 29. (1.) In a happy rural parsonage were two children. The parish was a poor one, often visited with distress and disease. The elder girl delighted in deeds of loving service amongst the aged and needy the younger found pleasure in self-gratification. On one occasion came an urgent demand upon the charity of the charitable, and the love of the loving. The elder was desirous of helping in time of need, and gave up her trinkets and presents, with the consent of her mother, to be appropriated to supplying the necessity. But the younger hugged her presents, and grudged to give her necklaces and ornaments. On the following Sunday, as they walked to the house of God, they presented a singular contrast, the one plainly attired, with no ornament of any kind, the other arrayed in all her prettiness of jewel and adornment — which was the happier? Churchgoers, who saw outwardly, may have thought the one in all her bravery; but her mother and her God knew otherwise. (2.) So Moses and Jehovah saw that the hearts of those Israelites, who had cheerfully given up their armlets and amulets of gold and silver, their jewels and necklaces of precious stones, were happier far than those who still retained them. They may have derided their plainly-robed fellows for their over-devotion to God; but they could not have the inward sense of joy and satisfaction which springs from unselfish self-sacrifice for God. And when the givers and non-givers stood before the completed tabernacle, on whom would the Divine benediction rest. Thus will it be when the Church of Christ is perfect in the last day.

"Their earthly ministry approved, He'll enroll
Their names among the citizens of heaven,
And freemen of His sinless universe."

Art-Inspiration! Vers. 30–35. Few minds are sunlike, sources of light to themselves and to others. Most are moons, which shine with a derivative and reflected light. Bezaleel and Aholiab drew their skill from Divine inspiration. Indeed, it has been said by Cicero that all great men are in some degree inspired. They are divinely qualified for their respective missions. Was not Gutenberg inspired to invent printing, with the view to a world-wide diffusion of the Word of Life? The history of nations and of the Church affords numerous illustrations of this species of inspiration in the raising up of special men to certain works when such needed to be done.

"Oh, I see the crescent-promise
Of the Spirit hath not set;
Ancient founts of inspiration
Well through all my labours yet!"

Grace-Genius! Ver. 32. (1.) Hume says that the richest genius, like the most fertile soil, when *uncultivated*, shoots up into the rankest weeds; and instead of vines and olives for the pleasure and profit of man, produces to its slothful owner a plentiful crop of poisons. (2.) But is Hume right? Is it not *unsanctified* genius which thus shoots up lank and long, rank and strong? Genius, under the influence of Divine grace, will never become the deadly Byronic euphorbia. However splendid talents may compel our admiration, they have no right to claim the general esteem of mankind, when their possessor exercises them without due regard of what is due to the welfare of the human race, and conducive to the glory of God.

"Yet man, dim-sighted man, and rash as blind,
Deaf to the dictates of his better mind,
In frantic competition dares the skies,
And claims precedence of the ONLY-WISE."
—*Guyon.*

Work-Results! Ver. 35. (1.) The labours of Bezaleel and Aholiab, from a worldly point of view, were evanescent. The tabernacle, which they constructed with such rare skill, passed away. All its precious materials and workmanship disappeared like a beautiful dream of the morning, and not a trace of them now remains on the face of the earth. Yet, notwithstanding this, the work of Bezaleel and Aholiab was abiding in its spiritual results. Israel reaped the benefit of it through all their generations. We ourselves are better for it to-day. Our Christianity, our civilisation itself, is based upon the fleeting fabric which the Jewish artists created in the wilderness. (2.) Our work may appear far less important and far more transient than theirs. Many of the tasks in which we engage serve very brief, and apparently trifling purposes indeed. But let us overcome this temptation by the thought that, while the outward aspects of our daily labours may pass away in the changes of time, the inward spiritual substance will remain. Their results will live and act for good or evil when that night has come upon us in which no man can work.

"In this glorious calling
Work till day is o'er;
Work, till evening falling,
You can work no more.
Then your labour bringing
To the King of kings,
Borne with joy and singing
Home on angels' wings."
—*Bonar.*

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**1. According to all that the Lord had commanded].** "Bezaleel and Aholiab and every wise-hearted man" (ver. 2) were not permitted to indulge in using their artistic skill in working things of an arbitrary kind, but were restricted to work only such things as they were commanded. The nature of these instructions which restricted the sphere in which they might employ their skill, but yet within an assigned sphere, allowed them the amplest scope for the exercise of their skill, served both æsthetical and moral ends. Probably the severe lesson which the Israelites learned in consequence of the making of the golden calf fitted them for the right appreciation of the restrictive commandment in regard to the works of the tabernacle, as may be seen from the entire absence of any spirit of self-assertion; they brought their gifts cheerfully and liberally, and ceased to do so as they were commanded. Showing how thoroughly cured they were, for a long time at any rate, of ritualistic fancies and innovations.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.

I. The skill of the workmen. "Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab and every wise-hearted man." It is obvious that though Bezaleel was, as has been said, the master of the works, and Aholiab his principal assistant, there was associated with them, but acting under them, a large company of skilled workmen, master craftsmen, as they might be called, who directed the labours of other artizans beneath them. The expression "every wise-hearted man" applies, in all probability, to all but the last. Notice—(1.) *How far their skill extended.* They knew, it is stated, "how to work all manner of work;" by which it is not necessary to understand that every one of them was a sort of "Jack-of-all-trades," but only that among them were individuals qualified to perform every variety of work that was needed for the Tabernacle—spinners, weavers, silversmiths, goldsmiths, workers in wood and brass, &c., &c. And so within the Church of God to-day is every kind of talent that is needful for the erection of the better Tabernacle of which that simple structure was but a type—persons qualified to do the noblest services, as well as persons exactly fitted for the meanest, skilled expounders of the Word, and gifted champions of the faith, as well as humble preachers of the Gospel, and earnest teachers of the young. Yet it would seem as if Bezaleel and Aholiab were specially endowed. Aholiab, we learn, was "an engraver and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer," and Bezaleel was qualified "to think out inventions;" while it would seem as if they both possessed such a knowledge of all the different arts as to enable them to teach the artizans in any department whatsoever. And so in the Church, while the rule is to find the gifts distributed among many,—the Holy Ghost dividing to every man severally as he will,—occasionally there are discovered those who possess a whole cornucopia of endowments, a sort of spiritual Admirable Crichtons. (2.) *Whence their skill proceeded.* Distinctly stated in the narrative to have been supernatural in its origin: "Every wise-hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding." In a sense this is true of all men, whatsoever be the amount of wisdom and understanding they possess. The mind with all its faculties is God's gift; and the best talents are dependent on the divine blessing for success in acquiring knowledge (cf. Ps. cxxvii.). But obviously the historian refers to a communication of wisdom which was special and extraordinary. Yet not of such a character as to preclude, but rather to presuppose, the possession of superior natural endowments, and diligent application of the same. As already hinted, the All-Wise Artificer works no superfluous miracles, and certainly never dispenses with His ordinary rules in conducting men to wisdom, unless in cases where these customary methods are altogether inapplicable, as, *e.g.*, in revealing His will to prophets. "Poeta nascitur, non fit," is a

maxim which holds true in large measure of all gifted men. Bezaleel, Aholiab, and their co-workers, were doubtless naturally gifted men. But in this case their abilities were supernaturally assisted by divine influence. Hence God spoke of them as gifts which He had given for the work of the Tabernacle. It should teach us to recognise not only that all our mental endowments are the gift of God, but that special proficiency in any particular profession, trade, art, is equally due to Him, while it also reminds us that whatever talent we may possess, as Christians for helping on His Church, has been originally bestowed by Him, and by Him has been rendered successful, and that if at any time God is pleased to raise up within the Church any eminent sons of wisdom,—men who know what Israel ought to do, and competent to direct their fellows,—we should cheerfully recognise such as His gift. (3.) *To what their skill was directed:* "The service of the sanctuary." The great talents of these artificers were not applied to any selfish purposes. As if vividly recognising whence their "gifts" had proceeded, they joyfully returned them in willing consecration to their Heavenly Donor—in this supplying a lesson for us all, both as men and as Christians. Nothing more lamentable can be witnessed than the consecration of great powers of mind or body to the ignoble object of self-aggrandisement, the making of money, the acquiring of fame, the sipping of pleasure. Even in the commonest of callings a loftier purpose is attainable. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do," whether ye sweep a crossing or cobble a boot, or build a ship, or command an army, or rule a senate, "do all to the glory of God." It is beautiful to see life pervaded by this sublime idea. More especially is it beautiful to see Christians upon whom God has conferred special qualifications for the service of the sanctuary, whether of mind or of body, devoting them to His service. Besides being beautiful it is right. He surely has the first claim upon those talents which He Himself has bestowed.

II. The liberality of the people. 1. The liberality of the people was *for a sacred object:* "for the work of the service of the sanctuary;" *i.e.*, for the erection of the Tabernacle, or the building of the Church. In other words, it was designed for the maintenance of religious ordinances in their midst. With this they were charged by Divine commandment (xxxv. 4). So have Christians been charged with the duty of maintaining and extending the New Testament Church by means of their liberality (1 Cor. ix. 14; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; 2 Cor. vii. 7, &c). Hence, whatever be the opinions of God's people about the legality or expediency of State endowments, this much is clear, that they are not exempted from the obligation of contributing as God hath prospered them for the support and diffusion of the Gospel. This commandment, which was given to the people through Moses, was not *that Israel as a State should endow the Church*, but *that Israel as a Church should support herself.* 2. The liberality of the people was *voluntary in its character:* the "offerings" were "free." Though by a Divine commandment they were charged with the duty of building the Tabernacle, the people were not compelled to give for that object by means of pains and penalties. "Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring an offering unto the Lord" (xxxv. 5). Cf. vers. 21, 22. "And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom His Spirit made willing." Nothing can more clearly indicate that this was not a State-tax, or a compulsory Church-rate, but a veritable free-will offering, a voluntary contribution. Of this character were all the offerings of the Hebrew Church: not only those which were *free-will* in the sense of being prompted by the offerer, but those which were *prescribed* by divine statute. See Lev. i. 3, xix. 5, xxii. 19–29. The sword of the magistrate was not employed to enforce payment of any offerings in the Hebrew Church. By divine appointment the Hebrew Church was a voluntary Church; and so is the Church of the New Testament (2 Cor viii. 12, ix. 7). This being the case, are not State endow-

ments both unnecessary and wrong? 3. The liberality of the people was *abundant in its measure.* One of the chief objections urged against Voluntaryism is its insufficiency. Were the Church to be left solely to the free-will offerings of God's people, the Gospel ministry would starve, and Church Extension would be at an end. It was not so with the Hebrew Church. "The people" brought "much more than enough for the service of the work," and required to be restrained. And if, in the New Testament Church, the same superabundant liberality has not been manifested, it is not because it has not been required—Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, will consume all the free-will offerings that Christ's people can bring; nor because it has not been commanded (2 Cor. ix. 6). May it not be because the New Testament Church has too often sought to lean on State support? All experience proves that State support and voluntary offerings are antagonistic, and tend to mutually destroy one another. State support represses Christian liberality. Christian liberality, when allowed free scope, will not long be satisfied to lean upon the crutch of State support. 4. The liberality of the people was *widely diffused in its extent.* Possibly it was universal, although that is not exactly affirmed. The probability is, there were those who offered nothing, whose hearts did not make them willing. At the same time, the impression is that the people generally contributed. So in the Christian Church liberality should be generally diffused, should in fact be universal. Were it always of the character of that displayed by these Hebrews, as general, as liberal, as cheerful, it would never be objected to as insufficient.

III. The disinterested conduct of Moses.

The workmen having reported that the people had brought more than enough for the service of the work, Moses caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp that no more offerings were to be received. So the people were restrained from bringing, ver. 6. Had Moses or the workmen ever been inclined to enrich themselves, they had ample opportunity. "But they were men of integrity, that scorned to do so mean a thing as to sponge upon the people, and enrich themselves with what was offered unto the Lord. Those are the greatest cheats that cheat the public. If to murder many is worse than to murder one, by the same rule to defraud communities, and to rob the Church or State, is a much greater crime than to pick the pocket of a single person. But these workmen were not only ready to account for all they received, but were not willing to receive more than they had occasion for, lest they should come either into the temptation or under the suspicion of taking it to themselves. These were men that knew when they had enough."—*Henry.* "Had Moses been intent upon gain, and had he not been perfectly disinterested, he would have encouraged them to continue their contributions, as thereby he might have multiplied unto himself gold, silver, and precious stones. But he was doing the Lord's work, under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, and therefore he sought no secular gain."—*A. Clarke.* In this Moses served as a pattern to all public men, to ministers of State, to magistrates and rulers, but especially to Christian ministers, not to use their offices for self-enrichment. The minister who can say like Paul, "I seek not yours, but you," wields a mighty power for good over the members of his flock in comparison with him who seeks into the priest's office, like Micah's Levite, for a piece of bread, and preaches the Gospel "for filthy lucre's sake."

The Preparation of the Dwelling.

"And every wise-hearted man among them that wrought the work of the Tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue and purple and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work made he them," &c., vers. 8–38.

"The dwelling (הַמִּשְׁכָּן) was an oblong of thirty yards in length, and ten yards in breadth and height, built on the southern, northern, and western sides of upright planks of acacia-wood, overlaid with gold. Over the whole, there were placed four coverings. The inner one, consisting of costly woven materials (byssus woven in different colours, with figures of cherubim upon it), was so arranged as to form the drapery of the interior of the dwelling, whilst the other three were placed outside. In front of the building, towards the east, there were five gilded pillars of acacia-wood; and on these a curtain was suspended, which closed the entrance to the dwelling, and bore the name of מָסָךְ." "The interior of the dwelling was divided into two parts by a second curtain, sustained by four pillars, and made of the same costly fabric and texture as the innermost covering. Of these two parts, the further (or westerly) was called the **Most Holy** קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים, and was a perfect cube of ten cubits in length and breadth and height; so that the other part, or the **Holy**, הַקֹּדֶשׁ, was of the same height and breadth, but twice as long. This inner curtain was called Parocheth פָּרֹכֶת." Kurtz—"Sacrificial Worship."

In the present section these various parts are again described:—A. **The coverings**: (1.) *The inner covering*, consisting of ten curtains, of blue and purple and scarlet, ornamented with cherubim, and joined together, curtain to curtain, by means of fifty loops and fifty golden taches, vers. 8–13. (2.) *The second covering*, of eleven curtains of goats' hair, "for the tent over the Tabernacle, vers. 14–18. (3.) *The third covering*, of rams' skins dyed red, ver. 19. (4.) *The fourth covering*, of badgers' skins, ver. 19. B. **The framework**, vers. 20–34. C. **The veils**: (1.) *The inner vail*, vers. 35, 36. (2.) *The outer vail*, vers. 37, 38. See chap. xxvi. 1, in which all these articles are described.

That the Tabernacle was symbolic of the better things of the Christian dispensation, as well as of the spiritual condition of the covenanted nation, we have the authority of the writer of the Hebrews for asserting. For the explanation of its symbolic import, see chap. xl. 17–33. To suppose that every pin, and bolt, and pillar, and curtain, had a special spiritual significance, is only the imbecility of exegesis. "The Irvingites, *e.g.*, believe that their ecclesiastical council "was shown at the time of its formation, by the word of prophecy, to have been shadowed in the construction of the Mosaic Tabernacle. The forty-eight boards of that structure, it was said, typified the six elders from each of the seven churches in London, together with six of the apostles; the five bars, which upheld all the boards, represented a ministry committed to other five of the apostles, whose duty it is to instruct the council in the principles upon which counsel is to be given: the two tenons, with their sockets of silver for each board, had reference to the deaconal ministry, through which the eldership is rooted in the love of the people. Two elders, appointed to act as scribes of the council, have their shadow in the two corner boards of the Tabernacle. The heads of the fourfold ministry—apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor—correspond to the four pillars between the Most Holy and the Holy Place: five evangelists to the five pillars at the entrance: the seven angels of the Churches to the lights of the candlestick; and sixty evangelists are the antitypes of the sixty pillars of the court, four of whom form the outer door of entrance. This council is declared to be the model according to which God's purpose is to be effected in every land."—Eadie's "Ecclesiastical Cyclopædia," art. "Irvingites."

Scarcely less fanciful is the explanation which Josephus, following Philo, gives: "When Moses distinguished the Tabernacle into three parts, and allowed two of them to the priests, as a place accessible and common, he denoted the land and the sea, these being of general access to all; but he set apart the third division for God, because heaven is inaccessible to men. And when he ordered twelve loaves to be set on the table, he denoted the year as distinguished into so

many months. By branching out the candlestick into seventy parts, he secretly intimated the Decani, or seventy divisions of the planets; and as to the seven lamps upon the candlesticks, they referred to the course of the planets, of which that is the number. The vails, too, which were composed of four things, they declared the four elements; for the fine linen was proper to signify the earth, because the flax grows out of the earth; the purple signified the sea, because that colour is dyed by the blood of a sea shell-fish; the blue is fit to signify the air, and the scarlet will naturally be an indication of fire. Now, the vestment of the high priest, being made of linen, signified the earth; the blue denoted the sky, being like lightning in its pomegranates, and in the noise of the bells resembling thunder." For continuation, see "Josephus," Ant. iii. 7, 9.

Though not symbolic in the senses described, the structure of the Tabernacle may be suggestive of true and profitable thoughts; as, *e.g.*—**I. The character and condition of the Church of God on earth**: 1. *Its mean and insignificant appearance,* like a tent. 2. *The excellence and variety of its materials,* "gold and silver and precious stones, &c. (1 Cor. iii. 12; 1 Pet. ii. 4). 3. *The unity and compactness of its parts,* suggested by the joined curtains and fastened framework, "in whom all the building fitly framed together," &c. (Eph. ii. 21). 4. *The protection and security of the whole,* pictured in the threefold covering (Isa. xxxii. 2; Zech. xii. 8), &c. **II. The fidelity and diligence of Christian Ministers,** who, like Bezaleel and his fellow-craftsman, should be—(1.) *Obedient to the Divine orders,* "the wise-hearted men," who wrought the raw material, were honoured to be fellow-workers with God, but not fellow-designers. They were not invited to plan the Tabernacle either in whole or in part, but only to construct what God had previously designed and commanded: which is precisely what the Christian minister, as a wise master builder, has to do, not originate a church according to his own conceptions, but fashion all things, the doctrines and ordinances of the Church, according to the pattern supplied to him by Christ. (2.) *Diligent and minute in their execution,* doing everything with good will as to the Lord and not to men, counting no trouble too great if so be they can fulfil their ministry in connection with Christ's temple, and being equally solicitous about all their duties to have them well done, not bestowing more care upon the larger offices and less upon the smaller, but transacting everything with due attention to the approbation of the Master.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXVI.

BY

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Symbolism! Vers. 1–38. Atwater notices that symbolic language was in common use at the time of Moses. True, the art of alphabetic writing was used to some extent at this period; but it is equally certain that symbolic writing must have been more common. May it not, therefore, have been the more effective medium of communication of moral and religious truth? Egypt furnishes an emphatic affirmative. Much use was made by them, not only of symbolic writing, but of what may properly be styled symbolic institutions. The construction of their temples—the rites performed in them—the garments worn by the priests, were all designed to represent, in a visible form, the doctrines of their religion. It is, consequently, a natural supposition that Israel would require a form of language by which they might be most readily and effectively taught the Divine mysteries. Possibly they understood symbolic language quite as well as the Greek understood writing, &c.

> "The ancient Hebrew clad with mysteries;
> The learned Greek rich in fit epithets,
> Blessed in the lovely marriage of pure words." —*Brewer.*

Human Help! Ver. 1, &c. (1.) *Human agency!* As God sent down the manna from heaven, so could He have planted the tabernacle upon the sands of the desert in all its unique completeness of design and ornament. But He wisely employed human agency in its design and construction. The glorious temple

of His Church could be executed and established by Himself without any of the instrumentality of man. Yet God wisely enlists human agency. (2.) *Human activity!* As God brought forth water from the flinty rock; so could He have furnished Moses with the materials for the construction of the tabernacle. But He graciously counselled the offering of the necessary articles by man. He called forth the activity of the human hand and heart. The wonderful structure that attracts angelic observation, as it rises daily more complete, is associated with human activity. The gifts and graces of the human mind and heart are employed by God to achieve its adornment. (3.) *Human adoration!* As God was alone adored when the structure was perfect, so to Him alone will adoration be ascribed through the eternal ages. We are told that the topstone shall be brought forth with shouts of "Grace, grace unto it." No man could claim praise for the tabernacle glories, still less can he do so in connection with the "beauties of the Church-Temple." "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us; but unto Thy name be the praise."

"Thy works all praise Thee; all Thy angels praise;
Thy saints adore, and on Thy altars burn
The fragrant incense of perpetual love."
—*Pollok.*

Genius-Inspiration! Ver. 2. It is recorded of Smith, the great Assyrian explorer, that he felt endowed with a certain natural predestination to be an Orientalist, *especially in the connection of Oriental discovery with the Bible.* In what various ways does that wonderful old book stimulate the human mind! Thus, inspired from childhood, Smith was always directing his attention towards it. As he grew up, this interest increased in intensity and attraction. He made a series of discoveries in deciphering the tablets deposited in the British Museum. In 1872, he accomplished his most brilliant feat—the finding and translating the tablets containing the Assyrian account of the deluge. His labours and researches, thus directed from childhood, have resulted in our being able to corroborate from profane memorials and ruins the early statements of Genesis and Exodus. He has not merely achieved the *resurrection* of primitive history, but out of those resurrected materials he has constructed a *tabernacle of testimony* to the verity of the Christian Faith. For the Christian Faith,

"Unlike the timorous creeds of Pagan priest,
Is frank, stands forth to view, inviting all
To prove, examine, search, investigate."

Fame-Immortality! Ver. 2, &c. In his recent explorations near Troy, the great German explorer has found many curiously wrought, richly enchased jewels of gold and silver, &c. In the temple ruins of Pompeii, as well as of Corinth and Antioch, beautiful specimens of architecture, sculpture, and art decoration have been discovered. But nothing is known of the makers. Their works remain, more or less tarnished or disfigured, but their names are a blank. Magnificent temple ruins, surrounded by most exquisitely carved and sculptured elephant statues, may be seen by the traveller in Cinghalese woods and wilds; but who worshipped within those idol-fanes, or who exerted art and genius in their design and erection? Echo answers, "Who?" Humble as was the "tent-house" of God, its designers and builders are known to fame. The names of Bezaleel and Aholiab are *phonoscopes*—telling the sons of men down the ages that it is service for God which immortalises; that the fame of loving, holy service for Jehovah is handed down in the imperishable *amber* of the Divine purpose, and that as the drops of Juno's milk abide in the Milky Way above, so throughout eternity they who serve God shall shine as the stars of heaven.

"Oh, who shall lightly say that fame
Is nothing but an empty name!
When memory of the mighty dead
To earthworm Christian's wistful eye
The brightest rays of cheering shed,
That point to IMMORTALITY."
—*Baillie.*

Tabernacle-Costs, &c.! Vers. 5, 6. Its cost was defrayed chiefly by the voluntary contributions of the people, and probably amounted to £250,000. This was, says Kitto, from a poor people, and yet the liberality of the people was such that their gifts were more than sufficient for the purpose. The value of the precious metals alone, which were used in the construction, must have been immense. Dilworth, in his description of the tabernacle, notes that the worth was upwards of £200,000 of our money. Cobbin says we may hope that the time is coming when there shall be more than enough for the evangelisation of the world unto Christ. At present, Home and Foreign Missionary Societies in England and America are continually crying, "Give more, give more, or we must give up various mission stations and missionaries." At home and abroad, churches stand unfinished, their spireless forms a loud-voiced reproach to Christendom, that with all her light and liberty, with all her blessings and benedictions, she comes very far short of realising the Mosaic record, "The people were restrained from bringing." For men still

"Lavish their wealth on bloodshed, but begrudge
A tithe for Gospel progress, and the means
Of Christian industry, and the behoof
Of fellow creature's growth in grace."

Nature-Teachings! Vers. 8–13. (1.) *Nature*, that great missionary of the Most High, preaches to us for ever in all tones of love,

and writes truth in all colours, on manuscripts illuminated with stars and flowers. And yet the nineteenth century, with all its excessive nature-worship, fails to hear those tones, or learn those truths. Landscapes form favourite subjects in our galleries of art; yet how few of the artists, or their admirers, have listened to their preaching. The pages of our poets radiate with exuberant imagery from nature, like the rainbow hues that flicker on the neck of a dove; yet neither the poets, nor their students, read the lessons. (2.) *The Tab rnacle*, as richly and beautifully adorned,—and after nature's model,—has also its tones and truths. Yet how few hear, or hearing understand. What an elegant writer has put into nature's lips may well be conceived to come from the tabernacle and its surroundings, "Oh, it is the saddest of all things that even one human soul should dimly perceive the beauty that is ever around us, a perpetual benediction." It is the beauty of "*Christ and Christianity vailed.*"

"Mysterious these—because too large for eye
Of man, too long for human arm to mete."

Beautiful and Good! Vers. 14–38. (1.) When God made a house for man to dwell in, He blended *the beautiful and good*, illuminating it with the lamps of heaven, threading it with silver streams, embroidering it with rainbow tinted flowers, perfuming it with incense from ten thousand painted chalices, and appointing a band of feathered choristers in every grove. (2.) When God gave man commission to build a house for Him to dwell in, He modelled the plan upon His own principle of combining *the beautiful and good.* True, it was but of limited extent, but it had the concentration of loveliness and excellence. The choicest productions, as well as the loveliest hues and most graceful forms in nature, were enlisted to achieve the construction of God's beautiful house. (3.) When God makes a building of God—a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—for Himself and redeemed humanity to dwell in, it will likewise combine *the beautiful and good.* It, too, will have its everlasting light, its ever-living stream, its never-fading flowers, its ever-fragrant incense, and its ever-abiding priesthood. Hence it is called the heavenly sanctuary, to point it out as a place of holy worship (Rev. vii. 15–17).

"His people were a royalty of priests,
And offered in His temple ceaseless prayer,
And incense of uninterrupted praise."

Method-Order! Vers. 16–18, &c. (1.) Gray remarks, that by the distribution of gold, silver, brass, &c., and by the clearly defined numberings and loopings, we are reminded of the fitness of things and the Divine order—right things in right places. We see this Divine method and order in nature, acknowledged and admired by the most bigoted of materialistic thinkers. Linnæus said that the more he explored the tabernacle of nature, and the deeper he penetrated behind its vail, the more he saw of order—the more, too, he admired the wisdom of the Creator. (2.) The same method and order apparent and appointed in nature and the tabernacle are expected by God in the Christian Church, and in the tabernacle of a Christian's life-purpose. There are individual communities of Christians, and there are individual Christians, who place gold and silver and brass, taches and curtains and skins, numberings and looping in discreditable confusion. They talk of the "Divine Profusion" as though it was "Divine Confusion." God would have method-order in grace, as in nature—under the Gospel, as under the law. For

"Order is Heaven's first law—a glorious law,
Seen in those pure and beauteous isles of light;
Nor less on earth discerned,
'Mid rocks snow-clad, or wastes of herbless sand
Throughout all climes, beneath all varying skies,
Fixing in place the smallest flower that blooms." —*Milton.*

Badgers! Ver. 19. Kirby says, that Ruppel, an African traveller, held that the animal here was in reality the *dugong.* These now nearly extinct dugongs of the Indian Seas form the connecting link between the real whale and the walrus. When they raise themselves with the front part of their body out of the water, a lively fancy might easily be led to imagine that a human shape was surging from the deep. Hence they have been named sea-sirens and mermaids, and have given rise to many extravagant fictions. Like the whale, the dugong has no hind feet, but a powerful horizontal tail. The anterior extremities are, however, less finlike and more flexibly jointed, so that they can lean on them while cropping the seaweeds on the shallow shores. It is the only animal yet known that grazes at the bottom of the sea, usually in shallow inlets. It feeds upon the seaweeds much in the same manner as a cow does upon the herbage.

"Part single or with mate
Graze the seaweed their pasture, and through groves
Of coral stray, or sporting with quick glance,
Then to the sun their wav'd coats dropt with gold."

Labour-Benefits! Ver. 20. (1.) Carlyle says that work is of a religious nature—work is of a brave nature, which it is the aim of all religion to be. All work of man is as the swimmer's. A waste ocean threatens to devour him; if he front it not bravely, it will keep its word. By incessant wise defiance of it, lusty rebuke and buffet of it, behold how

it legally supports him—bears him as its conqueror along. Goethe says that it is so with all things man undertakes in this world. And it is so with labour. (2.) When Satan came to Adam and Eve in Paradise, it was to contradict this—to lure them into the belief that labour dishonoured and debased; and that true honour and happiness consisted in reclining at ease amid the bowers of Eden, and enjoying all things by a mere wish. They gave up dressing and tending the garden, only to learn that Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do—only to learn, too late, that work in itself is the essential condition of man's growth and happiness. (3.) God might have given Israel the boards all ready sawn and planed and carved; but He did not. Why? for He never acts without a purpose—without a design worthy of Himself. When resting under Sinai, Israel fell into golden-calf revelry; therefore, they are now kept busily occupied. As has been fitly said, labour-toil is meant to be for a being who cannot stand alone in his helplessness, the *trellis* along which he is to be trained and disciplined to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

"Labour is rest—from the sorrows that greet us;
Rest from all petty vexations that meet us;
Rest from sin promptings that ever entreat us;
Rest from world-sirens that lure us to ill."
—*Osgood.*

Work-Design! Ver. 23. (1.) It was an act of policy with some of the Roman consuls to keep the people constantly at war, that they might be diverted from hatching mischief and seditions at home. The dangerous humours in the body politic were supposed to find their outlets in the strife with foreign nations in which the people were engaged. Whatever the wisdom of this form of doing evil to others that good may continue with one's self, it shows that even the heathen mind understands that idleness and mischief are closely related. (2.) Conscious of this disposedness to evil on the part of man after his fall, God enjoined upon His progeny the pre-occupation of labour. So Israel were kept employed in the wilderness. Daily work, then, is not an aimless and capricious thing. It has a wise plan—a noble purpose; if only to deter us from the commission of crime. That is labour in its "toil-aspect." But labour or work in itself is no "deliverance from sin and strife," for work existed before the fall. There was work in Eden, and there shall be work in heaven; for the paradise of saints,

"Like Eden with its toiless husbandry,
Has many plants to tend, and flowers to twine,
And fruit-trees in the garden of the soul,
That ask the culture of celestial skill."
—*Bickersteth.*

Mutual Usefulness! Vers. 25–30. (1.) The carpenter and goldsmith are not ordinarily ranked as of the same standing and position; yet is not the carpenter as necessary as the goldsmith, if not more so? Were all carpenters goldsmiths, where would be our houses, our stately bridges, our exquisite art carvings? Both have their place in the economy of the tabernacle-structure. Both are mutually useful, the one giving prominence to the useful, the other giving prominence to the beautiful. The carpenter prepared the pillars, but he required the co-operation of the silversmith, so that sockets might be made for his pillars. On the other hand, the goldsmith might beat out his gold, burnish and cunningly enchase it, but he could not say to the carpenter, "I have no need of thee." (2.) In the New Testament St. Paul illustrates this "mutual usefulness ideal" in the Christian Church, by the analogy of the members of the human body. And so the curtains cannot say to the bars, nor the pillars to the sockets, nor the carpenters to the goldsmiths, "We have no need of you." Vessels of wood and brass, and silver and gold, are alike essential and useful in the Christian Church. The efforts of none, however humble, should be despised. Common material, if honouring God, should be as much thought of and esteemed as rare gems and precious metals; they are so by God, who is no respecter of persons. Then let us act

"For each new dawn, like a prolific tree,
Blossoms with blessings and with duties, which
So interwoven grow, that he who shirks
The latter, fails the first to win."

Union-Strength! Vers. 31–34. (1.) The coupling bars, says Gray, by which the boards of the tabernacle were held together, may well remind us of some of the advantages of union. By it, weak things become strong, plain things beautiful, useless things of the highest service, and detached things a compact whole. As De Sénancœur says, union does everything when it is perfect. It satisfies desires, simplifies needs, foresees the wishes of the imagination. It is *an aisle always open*, and becomes a constant fortune. (2.) Union among the barons of England established the Magna Charta liberties. Union amongst the tribes and nations of England and Scotland made them a compact nationality, and mistress of the world's many seas. Union amongst the Vaudois of the valleys, secured them strength to resist the utmost satanic combinations of Rome. Union amongst the Canadians is enabling them to build up the mightiest kingdom of the future. (3.) When has the Church achieved her greatest triumphs over ancient and modern idolatry, except when she was united? Why is Christendom so far behind in the missionary conquest of the world? Because the churches are not united. Because bars and boards, loops and links, pillars and sockets, curtains and taches, are

not bound together in the unity of the Spirit, and the bond of peace. When the different portions and branches of the Church of Christ are thus united in the latter days, then the universe will read in the result, "Union is Strength."

"The Christ again has preached through thee
The Gospel of humanity!
Then lift once more thy towers on high,
And fret with spires the western sky,
To tell that God is still with us,
And Love is still miraculous."
—*Whittier.*

Mosaic-Mystery! Vers. 35–38. (1.) There is a celebrated picture of Raphael, in which the Virgin and her child are represented as surrounded by a halo, which appears at a distance to be nothing else than vapour. This, when seen near at hand, is found to be made up of innumerable cherub faces—borne close to the tabernacle vail, and what at the distance appears to be vapour, resolves itself into cherubic forms, behind which is the Omnipresent. *So with the doctrines of the New Testament.* (2.) The beast of the field sees the *sunset*, but he does not understand it. He gazes upon its glory and beauty, but finds that sunset a sealed book. The brute mind gazes upon the setting sun of Mosaism, but discovers nothing that can be understood. But let the brute mind become a new creature in Christ Jesus, and things are different. Mosaism has then its beauty, its sublimity, its moral law. The spiritually enlightened man reads truth in its sunset. (3.) The poet has branded the atheist as an owl coming forth to the sunlight, shutting its eyes, and hooting, "I see it not." Our shutting our eyes does not extinguish the Shekinah behind the cherubic vail. The Omnipresent is there, for all our blinking and blinding. In that innermost Holiest Christianity finds a personal Omnipresence, lifting up the light of His countenance upon His devout and devoted worshippers.

"No more the rising sun shall gild the morn,
Nor evening Cynthia fill her silver horn;
But lost, dissolved in His superior rays,
One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze,
The Light Himself shall shine
Revealed, and God's eternal smile be thine."
—*Pope.*

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Critical Notes.—1. And Bezaleel made the ark]. All things in their order. First, the vessels of the Holy of Holies, and then those of the Holy. First, the due regard for God's commandments, and then for worshipping Him in a becoming manner. First, the mercy-seat, then the altar of incense.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1-29.

The Preparation of the Furniture.

"And Bezaleel made the Ark of shittim-wood: two cubits and a-half was the length of it, and a cubit and a-half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a-half the height of it," &c., xxxvii. ver. 1-29.

A.—The Holy of Holies.

I. The Ark, vers. 1–5. *Cf.* xxv. 10–15, in which the instructions which are here carried out were originally given. The Ark, being intended to contain the Divine testimony, and to support the Mercy-Seat, the proper residence of God, required to be constructed so as to leave upon the minds of the people the idea of ineffable purity or holiness. Accordingly it was made as directed, of the finest wood, and of the purest gold. To enhance the idea of holiness connected with the Ark, it was not to be touched or immediately handled, but only by means of two staves constructed of the same kind of wood and overlaid with gold—which staves were not to be removed from its side, but to remain in the four golden rings which supported them, two on each side, in order to be always convenient for lifting, and that no temptation might be given for laying hands upon the sacred symbol.

II. The Mercy-Seat, ver. 6. *Cf.* xxv. 17. The term "capporeth," by which the Mercy-Seat is designated, signifies "covering." The circumstance that this covering was not to be made of wood and gold, but of pure gold alone, seems to indicate that it was designed to serve another purpose than simply to be a lid for the Ark. That God was to commune with His people from off this capporeth appears to point in the direction of a spiritual rather than a material covering; and the Peil form of the verb כִּפֶּר from which the word is derived, according to Gesenius and others, always means to cover sin. Then the fact that on the great day of atonement the blood of the holiest sin-offering was sprinkled upon it, shows that it was designed to be a ἱλαστηριον or propitiatorium. Whence we conclude that the Mercy-Seat was a covering not for the Ark, nor for the tables of testimony, but for the sins of the people. That is to say, it was the place where they were covered up by the blood of expiation from the eye of God. *Cf.* Kurtz—"Sacrificial Worship."

III. The cherubim, vers. 7–9. *Cf.* xxv. 18–22. These mystical figures were to be constructed out of the one sheet of gold of which the Mercy-Seat was made. What these figures were has given rise to much discussion. They are first mentioned in Gen. iii. 24 as guarding the Tree of Life. Probably it was representations of these same figures which Solomon introduced into the Temple, and which Ezekiel has described in his visions, though it is doubtful if the terms "cherub" and "cherubim" did not apply to a variety of figures. The composite beings which Ezekiel saw (i. 5) had a human figure with four faces; the cherubims of the Ark had only one face each. As to the interpretation of the symbol, it is probable "that no single explanation can be accepted as adequate, but that the best of the various explanations contain elements of truth." Kitto, art. "Cherubim." For a statement of opinions on this subject see articles in Bible Dictionaries, "Fairbairn's Typology," &c. "The prevailing opinion now is," says Dr. Jamieson in the Portable Commentary, "that those splendid figures were symbolical not of angelic, but of earthly and human beings—the members of the Church of God interested in the dispensation of grace, the redeemed in every age, and that these hieroglyphic forms symbolised the qualities of the true people of God—courage, practice, intelligence, and activity." More correctly, however, we think, that, combining with the human figure, as they did, the highest attributes of animal life, they were designed: (1) to be symbols of the most perfect creature life, and thus to indicate that only with the perfect could Jehovah dwell; and (2) to be ideal representations of humanity, and of the nearness to God which fallen man will enjoy when he is perfect.

Thus the three things suggested by the furniture of the Holy of Holies were, the holiness of God, the possibility of pardon, the hope of perfection.

B.—The Holy Place.

"And he made the table of shittim-wood: two cubits was the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof," xxxvii. ver. 10–29.

I. The table of shew-bread, vers. 10–16, was made of acacia-wood, covered with a plate of gold. Its dimensions were two cubits long, one broad, and one and a-half high, the cubit being 18 inches. It was ornamented with a golden wreath or border round the table leaf. "The frame of the table immediately below the leaf was encircled with a piece of wood of about four inches in breadth, around the edge of which was a vine or border similar to that around the leaf. A little lower down, but at equal distance from the top of the table, there were four rings of gold fastened to the legs, through which staves covered with gold were

inserted for the purpose of carrying it." Vessels of pure gold stood upon the table, large deep plates in which the shew-bread was not only brought to the table but placed upon it, sacrificial spoons to make the libations with, and goblets, some larger and some smaller, into which the wine was poured and placed upon the table.

II. The candlestick, vers. 17–24. "The structure of the candelabrum consisted of a base; of a shaft rising out of it; of six arms, which came out by threes from two opposite sides of the shaft; of seven lamps, which were supported on the summits of the central shaft, and the six arms, and of the different kinds of ornaments belonging to the shaft and arms. These ornaments are called by names which mean cups (bowls), globes (knops), and blossoms (flowers). The cups (bowls) are described as almond-shaped, it being uncertain whether the resemblance was to the fruit or the flowers. Three such cups were allotted to every arm; but four to the shaft, two and twenty in all. The name of the second ornament occurs only in two places in the Old Testament in which it appears to mean the capital of a column; in the Septuagint and the Vulgate it is rendered σφαιρωτῆρες and spherneæ, whence it may be understood as meaning bodies of a spherical shape. The third ornament means blossom, bud, flower. All these different articles, along with the necessary appendages of snuffers and snuff-dishes, were made of pure gold, wrought with the hammer (beaten work) instead of being cast by fusion. The quantity of gold expended in its construction was one talent, about 94 lbs.—*See* Kitto's "Cyclopædia," art. 'Candlestick.'

III. The altar of incense (ver. 25) was a square box, two cubits high, one cubit long, and one broad, made of acacia-wood, and having four horns (קרן) or wooden projections, one at each corner. Its top and sides were overlaid with gold; and round the flat surface was a crown or border of gold, underneath which were the rings for the gold-covered staves. In connection with this, Bezaleel, or his artificers acting under his directions, made the holy oil or ointment for anointing all the vessels of the Holy Place and the officiating priests; and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the apothecary, for burning on the altar. The composition of both of these articles is described in Exod. xxx. 25–34.

If the Holy of Holies was the peculiar dwelling-place of God, the Holy Place was the temple of the priesthood, hence symbolic of the Christian Church. For the symbolism of the Tabernacle, as a whole, see chap. xl. Meantime the present section is suggestive of four ideas which should ever be associated with the Christian Church, with its edifices, and its worship—

1. *Fidelity.* All the above-mentioned articles of furniture were made exactly according to the specifications. In not a single point, however minute, was there the slightest deviation from the original pattern. Possibly Bezaleel, or some of his clever artisans and cunning workmen, had their own thought of the different designs. Just as likely as not they believed they could have originated better articles had their fashioning been left entirely to them. Perhaps, too, the reason of some of the instructions, as, *e.g.*, why the gold of the candlestick should be beaten and not cast, did not quite appear to them. Still in this matter there was no room for either their inventive genius or their critical faculties. Their business was simply to carry out the orders of the Great Architect and Chief Designer to whom the Tabernacle, with all its furniture, belonged. So within the Christian Church in the elaboration of her creeds, in the regulation of her worship, in the administration of her government, there is place for neither original discovery nor rationalising criticism. Doubtless, many think they could have sketched a better plan of a New Testament Church than Christ has done, instituted a superior ritual, enunciated truer and more valuable doctrines, and appointed a more beneficent administration; only, in that case,

the Church would not have been Christ's, but theirs; and since it is His and not theirs, their business is not to go beyond, nor below, nor against what is written, but to ask, What saith the Scripture? "To the Law and to the Testimony." Calvin's principle, *with a little modification*, was unquestionably right, viz., that nothing is to be introduced into the creed, worship, or government of the Christian Church that is not either expressly commanded in Scripture or deducible therefrom by necessary inference.

2. *Liberality.* As the articles in the Holy of Holies were made of the most costly materials, the finest wood, and the purest gold, so were those in the Holy Place, which may remind us that in all matters connected with the Christian Church the utmost liberality should be displayed. In fact, no part of the Church's service should be anything but the absolute best, *i.e.*, in the circumstances. The spiritual food which she dispenses should be the richest possible, the intellectual and religious light which she diffuses the clearest and the sweetest possible, the sacrifice of prayer and praise which she presents the purest and the noblest possible. All her undertakings and schemes should be supported with the most bountiful munificence. Nothing mean, shabby, illiberal, ungenerous, should have a place within the house of God. This principle too however, has a qualification which must be noted.

3. *Beauty.* The table, the candlestick, and the altar were all ornamented; and though some minds imagine that all taste and beauty should be eschewed in connection with Divine worship, this, obviously, was not God's opinion; and, indeed, why should it, when God has made His world so fair, ornamented and decorated every part of it? But sin is always vulgar and unæsthetic; and as the only unbeautiful sights to be witnessed on earth are to be found in connection with the works of man, so in God's service even some are never happy unless everything is as little beautiful and tasteful as possible. Magnificent churches are an offence, elevating music is pronounced to be out of place, decorous and seemly behaviour is an affectation. Contrary to this, however, though again with limitations which must be specified, it should be the aim of devout souls to follow in the footsteps of the Lord, and make everything connected with His house beautiful in its place.

4. *Sanctity.* The methods adopted to impress the Hebrew mind with this conception of the holiness of God, and of all connected with His house and worship, were many. One of these was the injunction that all the articles of the dwelling should be overlaid with gold, and should not be immediately handled, but borne by means of gold-covered staves. Another was the sprinkling of everything within the Holy Place with holy oil. An idea this which should never be absent from the mind and heart of the Christian. The Christian Church and all its exercises are hallowed by the perpetual Presence of Him who is the Holy One. Hence the lowliest reverence should be exhibited before Him, the purest feelings should be cherished in His service, and a sense of personal consecration should be sought before engaging in His worship. This also has a caveat which must be mentioned.

(1.) The first qualification, "Fidelity," must be balanced with "Freedom"—not, however, the "freedom" of choosing differently from God, but that highest of all freedom which is synonymous with "cheerful obedience," or the free election of God's ways, and thoughts, and purposes. and plans, because they are best. (2.) The second, "Liberality," must be modified by the Divine command, "Go ye into all the world." While Christ's people are to generously and handsomely support His cause at home, their liberality to home operations must not infringe upon their ability to extend His cause abroad. The best should be done at home that is consistent with the greatest possible munificence to Christ's cause abroad. (3.) The third, "Beauty," requires to be supplemented with "Spirituality." While Christian churches may be beautiful, and Christian wor-

ship tasteful, &c., it should never be forgotten that "God is a Spirit," &c. (4.) The fourth, "Sanctity," must be guarded against degenerating into "Superstition." The holiness suggested to the Hebrew mind was not the holiness of the table, &c., but of the God to whom the table belonged. And so must Christians be careful not to transfer to these things what in reality is an attribute of God.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXVII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Labour! Ver. 1, &c. (1.) *Idleness enervates!* It has been said that scruples are weeds which luxuriate in the soil of monasticism. That soil is full of the elements which minister to their growth; and the chief of these is *idleness*. The same element is productive of serious results in all departments of human life. Whether civilised or savage, the idle man deteriorates; and at last *actively* develops into a mischievous animal, either towards himself or towards his fellow-creatures. (2.) *Industry elevates!* It is, as MacCulloch says, the talisman that has raised him from the condition of the savage. It has changed the desert and the forest into cultivated fields—has covered the earth with cities, and the ocean with ships—and has given plenty, comfort, and luxury, instead of want, misery, and barbarism. What, then, shall be said of its mental and moral results, if those of the material are so great? No greater contrast could be found amongst ancient nations, perhaps, than Rome in its infancy of hardihood and Rome in its impotency of luxury and idleness. Persia furnishes a parallel contrast.

"What heart can think, or tongue express,
The harm that groweth of idleness?"
—*Heywood.*

"But sober industry, illustrious power!
Bids the bleak hill with vernal verdure bloom." —*Bruce.*

Holy of Holies! Ver. 1. (1.) Its cubical form—the decade in its dimensions—its colours of holiness, heavenliness, kingliness, and life—its undecaying wood, and glorious gold—all unite in predicting that, when the kingdom of God reaches its final development, the outward state and surroundings of the redeemed will correspond in excellence with their high class as the household of God. This seems to harmonise with the Apocalyptic seer's vision. (2.) In Rev. xxi. the Evangelist is represented as standing like another Noah at the heights of Ararat, gazing on a renovated world. After passing through the crucible of its own latent fires, it has come forth—phœnix-like—from their ashes in new resurrection life. Vast as are its dimensions—a gigantic cube, lying foursquare, with gates in every quarter wide open—it must be noticed as having streets of pure gold—*i.e.*, within it there entereth nothing that defileth. All are pure in heart there who see God.

"O heaven! when storm and cloud
Debar the mortal vision of the eye
From wandering o'er thy threshold, more and more
I love thee, thinking on the perfect calm
Which bounds the deadly fever of these days—
The higher, *kolier*, spiritual heaven."
—*Bailey.*

Ark-Symbolism! Vers. 4, 5. Dr. Kitto mentions the fact of Captain Cook having seen in the Island of Huahine a curious analogy to the ark. Hawksworth describes it as a kind of ark or chest, the lid of which was nicely sewed on, and thatched very neatly with palm-nut leaves. It was fixed upon two poles, in order to remove it from place to place in the manner of a sedan chair. In one end of it was a square hole, in the middle of which was a ring touching the sides, and leaving the angles open, so as to form a round hole within, and a square one without. Sir Joseph Banks, who saw this curious coffer, considered its general resemblance to the Mosaic ark as remarkable. Still more remarkable is it, that the natives called it "The house of God."

"Therefore, this little room doth seem
To me a holy place,
And in the world around I deem
A *Bethel* I can trace."
—*Gerok.*

Ark-Disclosure! Ver. 5. Stone says that the ark of the covenant is observed by St. John (Rev. xi.) more plainly than ever revealed; because now, as the series of visions draw towards the great consummation, the purposes of God in Redemption become more manifestly developed to His worshipping children and prophesying servants. Clearer views are obtained in a spiritual and prophetic sense towards the close of the Gospel dispensation. These come from the course of events, or otherwise by the light of the Spirit of God,

from the increased and devout study of unfulfilled prophecy, and the general agreement on the subject of the glory of Christ; when

"The seventh trumpet's wondrous sound
Shall through the rending tombs resound,
And wake the sleepers underground!"

Mercy-Seat! Ver. 6, &c. This was the throne of Jehovah, where He dwelt between the cherubs, which stood one on either end of the cover of the ark. Above this mercy-seat, and between the cherubs, was the place where the God of the Hebrews localised Himself in the midst of the people whom He had chosen that they should be holy. His throne was thus established on the testimony, or covenant, as a foundation. There can be little doubt that the Psalmist refers to this when he says, "Justice and judgment are the foundation of Thy throne." And again, "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne." Over the testimony, as the basis of the covenant, was the place where Jehovah dwelt among His people as their God and King.

"O beauteous God! uncircumscribed treasure
Of an eternal pleasure!
Thy throne is seated far
Above the highest star,
Yet Thou dost make a glorious place,
Within the brightness of thy face,
For every spirit to inherit
Who builds his hopes upon Thy merit."
—*Taylor.*

Cherubic-Form, &c.! Ver. 7. (1.) *Form!* Meyer says that these had no fixed form; Bâhr says that the cherubim on the tapestry work could not have been conceived like those on the ark, because the latter were statues, the former paintings. This, however, is hard to see. Indeed, it would seem, as Ladd says, that the Mosaic cherubim was a fixed form. Gesenius in his Thesaurus says that they were in great part human forms. This seems to be inferred from verse 6. (2.) *Face!* They had only one. Their faces (verse 9) looked towards one another—towards the mercy-seat were the faces of the cherubim. Spencer says that the face of the cherubim was that of an ox; for which there is no evidence. Indeed, as Winer remarks, the complete delineation of the Mosaic cherubim must be for ever renounced. (3.) *Figuration!* Herder thinks that they symbolised *guardianship;* while Bâhr regards them as figuring beings of abounding life. Ladd says that their watchful posture—with wings overshading—seem to indicate the guardian; and Gesenius views their figuration—with their faces towards the mercy-seat, wherein were the two Tables—that of simple custodians or protectors. (4.) *Foundation!* Some think that the imagination of the constructor had much to do with the source whence these forms came: and that Moses drew on his familiarity with such figures in Egyptian temples. Hengstenberg distinctly says this was the sphinx of Egypt—a familiar object to Moses. But the question arises:—"Was not the foundation in the Divine Ideal?" Was not Moses instructed as to the form, face, and figuration? Was Bezaleel under the Divine-Mosaic direction?"

"So if His Word once teach us, shoot a ray
Through all the mind's dark chambers, and reveal
Truths undiscern'd but by that holy light,
Then all is plain." —*Cowper.*

Cherubims! Vers. 7, 8. The cherub has been represented as a symbol of redeemed and perfected humanity, and the Holy of Holies of the kingdom of God in its perfected condition. If so, we are summoned to glance backward at the Edenic paradise, where God and man walked together; and forward to the ethereal paradise, where the spirits of just men made perfect commune with God. The garden of Eden was no sooner vacated by man than it was placed under the care of cherubs, to be kept by them till the original heir should be restored to his inheritance. A tableau of cherubs around the throne of Jehovah is, therefore, says Atwater, a prediction and a promise to men of restoration to such fellowship with God as Adam enjoyed before the earth ceased to be a paradise.

"When, face to face, our ravish'd ear shall hear
God's voice—that glorious One in Three,
And Three in One—and hearing Him, shall bless Him,
And blessing, love Him—and in love possess Him." —*Quarles.*

Cherubic-Attitude! Ver. 9. It has been suggested that the attitude of the cherubs harmonises with the symbolic idea of the *capporeth*, or mercy-seat. It is so called because it was the place from which the covering of sin was authoritatively announced. And with this idea their attitude well accords. They stood with their faces towards it, as if what it signified was specially attractive, wonderful, and agreeable. The posture of these symbols of redeemed humanity expresses the gratitude for expiation, which the vision of the Apocalypse represents them as uttering in song.

"To think how poorly eloquence of words
Translates the poetry of hearts like ours."
—*Lyter.*

Cherubim-Significance! Vers. 7–9. Edwards maintains that they represented the ministry of angels, or the principalities and powers in heavenly places. It was, doubtless, the Divine design that the holy angels should be brought into close friendship with the

human family for *mutual advantage*. It is certain that, from the hour of creation, they have always taken the deepest interest in the affairs of earth. Earth is the planet of their choicest excursions—the realm of their noblest employments—the sphere of their sublimest pleasures. The Church on earth is to them the garden of the Lord, enriched with the bloom, and fragrant with the odour of the fairest flowers in creation's empire. Redemption is to them the most stupendous fact in the moral universe. Like the fixed gaze of the cherubim within the vail, all their burning ardour is absorbed in its mysteries, and will be absorbed even through eternity itself. A living poet represents these angels at the "Bridal of the Lamb" as

"Retiring till their robes, and wings, and crowns
Appeared as hangings woven of richest dye;
Star-spangled, like the temple curtains, twined
With purple, crimson, blue, and gleaning forms,
Cherubic, curiously traced in gold."
—*Bickersteth.*

Candlestick! Ver. 17, &c. 1. *Gold!* More common material would have served the purpose of lighting; but gold was an emblem of (1) the Light-giving Word, whose truths are more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold; and (2) the Light-giving worker, who holds forth the Word of Life; for the entrance of the Word giveth light. 2. *Graven!* A more simple form might have sufficed; but the rich ornamentation was symbolic of (1) the beauty of the Bible, being richly adorned with flowers of poetry, &c.; and (2) the beauty of ministers, whose life and testimony should be adorned with the true beauty of zeal, faith, and love. 3. *Gifted!* M'Ewen, however, says that the candlestick was a figure of the Church, whose use is to receive the light, and then diffuse it abroad. The Church receives the truth, and then holds it forth by purity of doctrine and sanctity of life. Stone says that it symbolises a true Church, having the sevenfold gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.

"And these prepare man for the sight
Of Majesty above;
The sons of ignorance and might
Can stand in the *Eternal Light*
Of Th' Eternal Love." —*Binney.*

Candlestick - Symbolism! Vers. 18–23. (1.) The figure of this Light-giver is represented on the famous arch of Titus at Rome. The Light-giver with seven branches stood in the inner sanctuary—not the Holy of Holies. Its rays thus threw light upon the incense altar and table of shew-bread. Its jets of light bore witness for centuries, says Plumptre, that God was Light, and that that Light revealed itself in manifold variety, growing out of a central unity. (2.) The form of this Light-giver appears in Zech. iv. 2; where the symbol is completed by a vision of two olive-trees feeding from their branches, through two golden pipes, the bowl through which the lamps were kept burning. The prophet learnt that the trees were the two anointed ones—*i.e.*, Joshua and Zerrubabel, types of priestly and civil authority. This typical symbolism may, however, be capable of large expansion. (3.) The Patmos seer beholds seven distinct lamps—showing that the lamp was the emblem not merely of uncreated light, but of the Church—as the channel through which that light was to be diffused through the world. This is in harmony with the lampshaft or pedestal in Matt. v. 15. These passages bring out the perfect unity of the Bible. Infinite diversity there may be; but immaculate unity there is.

"Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
Here earth and water seem to strive again;
Not chaos-like together crushed and bruised,
But, as the world, harmoniously confused,
Where order in variety we see,
And where, though all things differ, all agree." —*Pope.*

Incense-Altar-Symbolism! Ver. 25. (1.) *Construction!* Wood overlaid with gold tell us that they speak of Christ, as fellow to man in humanity's low estate, and as equal to God in Godhead's greatness. Its fourfold shape—like the altar of burnt-offering—speaks of the stability of Christ; its crown of the kingly dignity of Christ; its horns of the mightiness of His salvation; and its staves of the ever-ready spirit of Christ to be borne to the uttermost parts of the earth. (2.) *Constitution!* On this altar a censer full of incense poured forth its fragrant clouds every morning and evening. Without smoking censer, the high priest was forbidden, on pain of death, to enter into the awful shrine of Jehovah. This is a graphic image of Jesus, from the altar of whose soul—once on earth, and now in heaven—continually rises the fragrance of increasing prayer and intercession for His people. "He ever lives," says St. Paul, "to make intercession for us." (3.) *Consideration!* The prayers of the saints are here; and from it we learn of the preparation of the heart for prayer. The golden altar was of given form, and size, and material. The praying heart should be equally balanced and lying towards all quarters of truth in affection, sympathy, faith, and earnestness. It should be pure in thought and desire, says Gray, and be framed by the direction of the Spirit. It should accompany the believer everywhere.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword in the gates of death—
He enters heaven *with prayer.*

Praise-Incense! Vers. 25–28. "The formalist," Bridges remarks, "considering 'seven times a day' to be an infringement of the sacred canon, 'Be not righteous overmuch,' pays his customary duty twice a day. He says his prayers and he says his praises too, and his conscience slumbers again. And it is sad to think that there should be times of slumber with the Christian, when he little differs from him. Oh! let us be alarmed at every symptom of such a state, and 'find no rest to our spirit' until we have regained something of the frame of hearty and overflowing praise. If there be a heavenly nature, there must be a heavenly heart. Tongue and heart should be set on fire by love. But the Christian sometimes feels that he must not praise. He has not sensible tokens of love to call him forth, and therefore his harp is suffered to 'hang upon the willows,' and he cares not to take it down, even to 'sing one of the Lord's songs in this strange land.' But how little does he remember that this service of praise is the most successful means of resistance to the despondency of unbelief. Many have found with Bunyan, 'When I believe and sing, my doubtings cease.'"

"Two fountains from one source,
Or which from two such neighbouring sources run,
That aye for him who shall unseal the one,
The other flows perforce.
And both are sweet and calm,
Fair flowers upon the banks of either blow;
Both fertilise the soul, and where they flow
Shed round them holy balm."
—*Trench.*

Incense-Chariot! Ver. 27. Gray mentions an incense-chariot found in a tomb at Cervetri, in Etruria, unquestionably belonging to a very remote date. It was used in the ritual services of the ancients for burning incense. The perfume was placed in the concave part, and the fact that the whole was mounted upon four wheels proves that it was intended to be moved about. The borders are adorned by a row of flower-shaped ornaments, the principal forms of which are fully appreciated from a side-view. The elegance and highly refined taste displayed in the form and figure of this chariot leads to the conclusion that it belonged to some royal personage. Thus even amongst heathen peoples incense had its symbolic speech; *fragrant flowers blooming sweetly amid a thousand noxious* weeds.

"And nature's God, to whom alone
The secret of the heart is known,
The hidden language traced thereon."
—*Whittier.*

Heavenly Incense-Altar! Vers. 25–29. The Apocalypse is composed of three parallel visions. In one of these (chap. viii.) we have a vision of the angel at the golden altar. The apostle hears a voice, "Come up hither." The dull, commonplace scenery of his rocky home, writes Macduff, once more fades from view; and in a revived heavenly ecstacy he waits his Saviour's summons. As previous to the breaking of the seals, there was a sublime opening vision of Christ as the Mediator of His Church; so now, at the sounding of the seven trumpets, it is the same Divine Being—only symbolised as an Angel-Priest in the performance of a great intercessory work. The Lord Jesus stands by the golden altar of incense in the Heavenly Temple—offering, in the golden censer filled with much incense, the prayers of all the saints—*i.e.*, the multitude of the redeemed on earth. Perfuming them with the incense of His adorable merits, the grateful cloud ascends. Poor and utterly unworthy as these prayers may be, they are perfumed by the fragrant merits of the Covenant-Intercessor. The glowing coals in His censer are feeble emblems of the burning love which glows in His heart. Without this all is vain!

"In vain shall waves of incense drift
The vaulted nave around;
In vain the minster turret lift
Its brazen weights of sound."

Mountain of Spices! Ver. 29. (1.) When the high priest passed within the vail, it was with feverish anxiety that the crowds outside looked for the circling eddies of the odorous incense to arise. When they saw the eddying cloud floating upwards into the clear sunny sky, they knew that the Aaronic intercession had prevailed. Anxiety gave place to expectancy. They longed to see him come forth with the glory yet lingering on his brow—arrayed in splendid robes—the breastplate glittering with the consecrated symbol of the tribes, that, with uplifted hands, he might dispense his benediction. (2.) The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that all this was a splendid mirror of Christ's sacerdotal grandeur, and which continueth ever. Hence, in Canticles viii. 14, we have the redeemed Hebrew and Gentile Churches expressing the intense fervency of desire that He, who is the great High Priest and King, would come forth from the Heavenly Temple, where He lives to make continual intercession. The mountain of spices is the holy, heavenly hill where the Kingly Priest offers up incense with the prayers of the saints. These are represented (as in Rev. xxii.) as calling with their hearts upon Jesus to come forth to bless them. So eager is the Church to receive this everlasting benediction that she would have Jesus be like a young hart, whose feet are beautiful in their swiftness.

"The minutes seem to move too slow,
O Jesus, quickly come."
—*Watts.*

Tabernacle-Significance! Ver. 29. It is an inquiry of considerable importance how

far the Israelites comprehended the significance of the Tabernacle. The general answer to be given to this inquiry is, that they were as competent to understand its symbolic significance as men of the present day are to apprehend the meaning of the Bible. The devout Hebrew had the aid of the Holy Spirit in his pious desire to understand the ordinances of the law, as the devout Christian has in his earnest wish to comprehend the ordinances of the Gospel. And just as the Christian's knowledge of the Bible indirectly and largely depends upon his mental character—on the degree of attention and study which he gives to the subject—and on the spirituality of mind which he possesses; so doubtless was it with the believing Israelite. A Caleb and a Joshua would see far more in the tabernacle appurtenances than a Nadab or Abihu; even as an Ellicot and a Luther perceive more in the Scripture expressions than a Voltaire or a Comte. All the Egyptians were able to read their hieroglyphic language; though, doubtless, their apprehension and knowledge of its significations were very unequal and varied. To see alike?

"Impossible! unless minds were alike
In all, which differ now like human faces."
—*Rowe.*

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**Of the looking-glasses of the women**]. The contribution of the looking-glasses for making the laver must have been a greater act of sacrifice to those female donors than at first sight appears. Looking-glasses were articles of difficult manufacture, and rare, and highly prized even above golden ornaments. The motive, therefore, must have been a very powerful one that prompted them to the self-denial. Probably it was from a sense of sorrow over the sin for having contributed even their earrings to the golden calf, or perhaps too, to give expression to their disapproval of another Egpytian practice, which was that of women visiting the heathen temples with mirrors in their left hands.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1-20.

C.—The Court.

"And he made the altar of burnt-offering of shittim-wood: five cubits was the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof: it was four square; and three cubits the height thereof," xxxviii. ver. 1.

I. The altar of burnt-offering, vers. 1–7. This was a hollow square, three cubits high, and five in length and breadth, made of shittim-wood, and overlaid with pearls of brass, having horns, like the altar of incense, at its four corners, each one covered with brass (copper). According to Jewish writers, the hollow square was filled with earth or stones. A sort of terrace, or projecting board, halfway up the altar, compassed it about, and was supported by a brass grating. The various vessels used in connection with the altar were all made of brass. These vessels were—(1) The pans, to cleanse it of the ashes that arose from burning the flesh of the sacrifice upon the altar; (2) The shovels for cleaning the altar; (3) The basins for receiving the blood, and sprinkling it upon the altar; (4) The flesh hooks, or large forks, to turn the piece of flesh or to take them from the altar; and (5) The fire pans, or coal scoops. As with all the other articles, the altar of burnt-offerings was carried by staves, which passed through rings at the corners: only the rings were of brass, and the staves were covered with brass.

II. The laver, ver. 8, was a round caldron-shaped basin, made of brass. The brass, it is stated here, was taken from "the mirrors of the women assembling, who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation; *i.e.*, of the women who served, assembling by troops (served by turns). "Though not washerwomen, these were women who dedicated their lives to the service of Jehovah, and spent them in religious exercises in fasting and in prayer, like

Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, mentioned in Luke ii. 37."—*Delitzch.* Their mirrors, which had been hitherto used for purposes of personal adornment, they cheerfully renounced for the service of the sanctuary. The brass laver was constructed from them. The use of this laver was for the washing of the priest's hands and feet when they touched the holy things, or trod the holy ground. "As no mention is made of a vessel whereat to wash the parts of the victims offered in sacrifice, it is presumed that the laver served this purpose also."—Kitto's "Cyclopædia," art. 'Laver.'

III. The outside hangings, vers. 9–20, consisted of spun byssus, or "fine twined linen," and were supported on pillars with brass sockets and silvered capitals, with hooks and fastenings for the pillars of silver. On the southern and northern sides were twenty pillars; on the western side ten; and on the eastern side six pillars, three on each side of the gate. The length of the northern and southern sides was one hundred cubits; of the western and eastern sides fifty cubits. The hangings on each side of the gate were fifteen cubits: thus leaving twenty for the gate, which consisted of four pillars in sockets of brass with hooks, fillets, and capitals of silver, supporting a curtain or hanging of blue and purple and scarlet. It is noted that all the pins used in the construction of the Tabernacle and the court were of brass.

In perusing this account of the construction of the court and its different articles of furniture, we are reminded of several things which are prominently present in the Christian Church:—

1. *Variation in construction.* Not merely were the articles in the court different from those in the Holy Place, but in part the materials employed in their construction. Instead of the pure gold of the table and the candlestick and the incense altar, there are now the brass and silver of the altar of burnt-offering, the laver, and the court pillars; from which it may be gathered that there are degrees of importance in things connected with the Christian Church, as Paul reminds us in 1 Cor. xii. 4; yet, of course, parts which are less important are not the less parts of the one great body.

2. *Self-abnegation among its inmates*—a lesson frequently enforced on the attention, it is here again suggested by the generous conduct of the pious women in parting with their mirrors: a lesson on the consecration of property to God. Not a little remarkable that it was in connection with the making of the laver that these pious women parted with their mirrors. These mirrors were employed for purposes of personal adornment; and the laver was a symbol of the bath of regeneration which purifies and adorns the inner man, and which, wherever it is enjoyed, enables one to dispense with that adornment which is merely outward (cf. 1 Pet. iii. 3–6). Noticeable, too, that this very special act of self-renunciation was in connection with one of the less important parts of the Tabernacle furniture; which, however, only made it all the greater. Perhaps, too, this was the reason why it has received special mention.

3. *Seclusion from the world.* The dwelling and its furniture were shut off from the gaze of men by the court hangings; and so is the Church of Christ separated from the world, like "a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (cf. John xv. 19; 2 Cor. vi. 17). Three points emerge here that cannot be sufficiently insisted on, viz., (1) *That the Church and the world are not the same societies, but essentially different,* the first being founded on the covenant, and created by the hand, of grace; the second remaining on the platform of creation, and in the sphere of nature. (2) *That the Church ought to keep herself distinct from the world.* God having separated her from the world, she should not obliterate the lines of demarcation which He has fixed; and (3) *That the true nature of the Church cannot be apprehended by the world,* as the internal aspect of

the court and Tabernacle were not visible to those who were without (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 9–14).

SUMMATION OF THE METAL USED.

"This is the sum of the Tabernacle, even of the Tabernacle of the testimony, as it was counted, according to the commandment of Moses"—xxxviii. 21–31.

I. The quantity of metal used. Of gold there were 29 talents, 730 shekels; of silver, 100 talents, 1775 shekels; of brass, 70 talents, 2400 shekels. Difficult now to ascertain with accuracy the exact sum represented by these figures. "The original meaning of the term 'talent' is a circuit; hence it came to be put for a round cake, and for the weight called a talent (perhaps from its having been taken as 'a round number' or sum total). It is impossible to decide whether the Hebrews had one talent only, or several of different weights, as various other nations had." Art. 'Weights,' in 'Fairbairn's Cyclopædia.' The same writer is inclined to think that, in the passage now under consideration, the talent of gold, silver, and brass was a talent of the same weight. From ver. 26, it may be gathered that 1 talent = 3000 shekels. The exact sum employed may be thus represented, reckoning the talent at 93 lbs. 12 oz. avoirdupois weight, and the price of gold and silver at £1, 10s. and 2s. 1d. per shekel, and taking the brass at 1s. per pound.

	Talents.	Shekels.	Weight.		Value.		
Gold . . .	29	730	2741 lbs. 3 oz.	=	£131,595	0	0
Silver . . .	100	1775	9430 lbs. 2½ oz.	=	31,434	18	1
Brass . . .	70	2400	6637 lbs. 8 oz.	=	331	17	0
					£163,361	15	1

Of course, this calculation makes no claim to accuracy. Dr. A. Clarke makes the sum total to be: Gold, £198,347, 12s. 6d.; silver, £45,266, 5s. 0d.; brass, £513, 17s. 0d. = £244,127, 14s. 6d. Dr. Jamieson calculates the gold as = £150,000 sterling, and the silver as = £35,207. Each of these assign a higher value to the shekel. The largeness of either of these sums has been advanced as an argument against the historic credibility of the narrative; but two things are overlooked by those who advocate it:—

(1) *That gold and silver were in those days remarkably abundant among Eastern nations.* (On this point see Keil *in loco*); and (2) *That the Israelites are represented as having left Egypt, not as paupers, but as enriched through spoiling the Egyptians.* The offering of such a large sum in the circumstances in which they were then placed speaks volumes for the zeal of the offerers. It is doubtful if the liberality of the British nation for religious purposes is on the same scale of magnificence. 603,550 men, having been numbered for taxation, would give upwards of three millions of a population, about equal to the population of Scotland, which may be reckoned, without challenge, the most liberal portion of the empire. In the year 1876, the three great Presbyterian bodies of that country contributed for religious purposes—United Presbyterian, £378,268, 10s. 4d; Free Church of Scotland, £565,195, 10s. 4d.; Established Church, £384,106, 15s. 2d. Total, £1,327,570, 15s. 10d.; which is nearly ten times more, but still not larger in proportion to the wealth of the countries, and the greater work committed to the Church's care in Gospel times.

II. Reasons for the employment of so much precious metal. Dr. A. Clarke suggests three, which are well worth consideration:—

1. "To impress the people's minds with the glory and dignity of the Divine

Majesty, and the importance of His service." 2. "To take out of their hands the occasion of covetousness; for as they brought much spoil out of Egypt, and could have little, if any, use for gold and silver in the wilderness, where it does not appear they had much intercourse with any other people, and were miraculously supported, so that they did not need their riches, it was right to employ them in the worship of God, which otherwise might have engendered that love of money which is the root of all evil." 3. "To prevent pride and vain glory, by leading them to give up to the Divine service even the ornaments of their persons, which would have had too direct a tendency to divert their minds from better things."

III. Reasons for its summation. These are not stated in the narrative, and can therefore only be conjectured. It does not appear that Moses was commanded by God to sum up the people's contributions, but that he did so of his own accord. While, therefore, we have not here a Divine command to be obeyed, we have at least an excellent example to be copied. The summation of the metal used was—(1.) *A justification to Moses*, vindicating, as it were, his integrity by showing that none of it had been embezzled for private uses—an example that might be copied with advantage by all who have charge of monies, and especially of church or charitable society monies. All matters of finance in connection with the Church of Christ should be conducted with scrupulous exactness. Religion will thrive none the less for noting its receipts and disbursements with business regularity and minuteness. Were this rule always followed, many scandals would be avoided. (2.) *An encouragement to the people*, giving them some idea of the vastness of the work in which they had been engaged, and of the wide-spread interest it had evoked—from which the practical hint might be taken by those who are entrusted with the management of church affairs, that it is not always a disadvantage to publish printed lists of contributions for church building, missionary societies, and other schemes. People as a rule like to know what they are doing when they part with their money, and like to see where their money goes when it leaves them. To this rule Christians are no exception: nor is there cause why they should be exceptions.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Old Testament Truth! Vers. 1–38. Joseph Cook says that the Scriptures are a *map* of the universe, and not of Palestine merely. We are not abreast of our privileges when we live in Judea. If we are full of the spirit of the Scriptures, the *wings* of philosophy will tire us only by their tardiness and narrow range of flight. He means that the Old Testament was not designed to teach Jews only, but likewise Christians. There are many truths to be learned from that ancient schoolmaster—the Hebrew Theocracy. All the lesson-books he employed may not be of use to the world now, for Christianity has suspended these themes by her heavenly classics. But we need not discard—not even disregard—the old teacher. He can still tell us something about Divine wisdom and love. We may

"Still see, and hear, and breathe the evidence
Of God's deep wisdom in that teacher's school." —*Willis.*

Sacrifices! Vers. 1–7. The Vazimba were the supposed aborigines of the central parts of the Island of Madagascar. They neither made images, nor associated charms with their religious rites. A plain stone, or a mound of stones—often in the midst of a grove—was their temple and altar. Their worship—the most esteemed in the country—combined homage and invocation, and was accompanied with sacrifices of oxen, sheep, and poultry, *the blood and fat of which were offered on the altar, and the rest eaten by the worshippers.* These were the only sacrifices offered in

Anhova. Were these rites derived from a knowledge of the Mosaic sacrifices, or do they owe their existence in Madagascar to some more primitive and patriarchal model, such as that of Abraham or Noah, when

"Altar of thanksgiving he
Built on Ararat"? —*Gerok.*

Burnt-Offerings! Ver. 1. (1.) One of the saddest features of the modern ministry is the disposition to eliminate the idea of "substitution," or "atonement," from the Mosaic sacrifice; and so from that nobler Messianic sacrifice on which man rests for admission into God's presence here before the incense-altar, and into His immediate presence hereafter before the throne on high. We give a Scotch Professor's extraordinary theory, followed by the holy utterances of an English Dean:—"In the Passover, and in the subsequent sacrifices of the law of Moses, the idea predominates of salvation through sacrifice, not only the first idea of Abel, of life being owed to God, but the further idea, which would soon grow out of the first one, of life fulfilling its true end, attaining to its true position in the sight of God, doing its proper duty by Him, through sacrifice—sacrifice of which the offering of the lamb or other victim was but the type, sacrifice of self—of a life throughout its whole being and history devoted to God. This was the meaning of all sacrifice for sin." (2.) In every age, not least in this, Satan erects his many counterfeits, and calls them Christ. He decks them with false show. He slopes a flowery path to the bewitching snare. He smooths with skilful hands the slippery descent. *He plants the altar of man's fancied worth.* He prompts the dream that rubbish dug from nature's quarry, and shaped by sin-soiled hands, and worked by sin-soiled tools, may form a sufficient base. He bids men offer Christ on this, and then lie down content. Man's merit forms the broad foundation. His tears of self-wrought penitence, his long array of self-denials, his train of ostentatious self-sacrifice, construct the fabric. Such altars stand on ruin's ground. Think what the end must be of a creed thus emasculating the substitution of Christ, and substituting self instead! How miserable those

"Who strive to pull Christ Jesus from His Throne,
And in the place of heaven's Eternal King,
Set up that pigmy "SELF." —*Glynn.*

Altar-Sacrifices! Ver. 1. It is an interesting fact that in the Island of Madagascar the idea of blood having an efficacy to make atonement for sin is a marked feature in the sacrifices occasionally offered by the people; and also that the inner fat of the victim was regarded, as in the Jewish ritual, as the most appropriate portion to be offered, together with the blood. In crossing many of the smaller streams, certain rocks in the midst of the current are often seen smeared with fat as a propitiatory offering to the guardian-genius or deity of the river. The upright stones fixed at the head of graves are anointed with blood and fat, as an offering to the spirits of the ancestors of the family.

"Thus the idolaters with fear approach
Their reverend shrines, and there for mercy sue,
And, trembling too, they wash the hallow'd earth,
And groan to be forgiven." —*Lee.*

Altar-Horns! Ver. 2. (1.) Flandin mentions two fire-altars, upon which the sacred fire of the Persians was kept perpetually burning, as being still in existence at Nacht-i-Roustan. Upon a rock, which elevates itself to a moderate altitude from the plain, stand two altars sculptured out of the solid mass, and so exactly alike as to present the aspect of twins. *The four corners are adorned with small pilasters cornered out in relief from the same block.* These are in reality "horns." Heathen altars were not only placed in groves, but on the summits of hills, as being nearer the gods to whom they were dedicated. (2.) In Psalm cxviii. 28 we have the sacrifice spoken of as bound with cords to the horn altars. This Psalm breathes a spirit of jubilant trust in the Lord. Its trumpet tones made it one of Luther's hymns. Of it he says, "I would not give it in exchange for the honour, wealth, and power of all the world, Pope, Turk, or Emperor." In the midsummer of 1530, when Melancthon was deputed to present the Confession of the Protestant Churches of Germany to the Diet at Augsburg, Luther was advised to abstain from any public appearance. In this "*Desert,*" as he calls it, he was able "to bind the sacrifice of thanksgiving with cords, yea, even unto the 'horns of the altar.'"

"For truth shall flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."
—*Addison.*

Horn-Hints! Ver. 2. (1.) *Strength!* Law regards these as speaking of all-subduing might. The horned tribes move as the terror of the forest. When they assail their foes, whether man or beast, they prevail. Christ is thus armed for conquest. This thought is precious. Self is a broken arm, a pointless dart, a crumbling staff; and yet the soul has strong assaults to repel, strong corruptions to tread down, strong temptations to baffle, and heavy trials to bear. But Christ is strength. "I can do all things through Christ." He is the horn of our salvation. (2.) *Shelter!* Thomson says that the expression "horn of salvation" was probably derived from ancient altars, the raised corners of which were so-called. Temples, and especially the altars within them, were regarded as sanctuaries, and the greatest criminal, if he could but reach the

temple, and lay hold of the altar, was for the time safe. These corners of the altar were indeed horns of salvation on this account, as many striking examples in Biblical History show. (3.) *Salvation!* To the devout Hebrew Jehovah was the only reliable sanctuary, and these material objects were but significant symbols of Him. Christ is the horn of our salvation. Let nothing part you from your hold on Him. As Satan cannot seize Christ, and drag Him from His Throne; so he cannot pluck you from Christ if you hold fast by Him.

"What comfort to the saints to know
That He controls their every foe."
—*Hopkins.*

Altar-Fire-Coals! Ver. 4. (1.) In Ezekiel x. we have the vision of the man clothed in linen with the inkhorn at his side. He seals the faithful few who, when terrific judgments were about to burst on Jerusalem, had a mark set on their foreheads. He is commanded to go in between the wheels under the cherub, and fill his hand with *coals of fire* from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. (2.) In Rev. viii. there is the beautiful vision of the Angel-Intercessor standing by the golden altar of incense. Immediately subsequent to the reception of the prayers of the saints, the same Angel-Priest took the censer, and filled it *with fire of the altar*, and cast it on the earth; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. In both books then we have the symbols of judgment. (3.) The hot ashes, says Macduff, thrown by the very hand that had just been revealed as strong to save, indicate that to the wicked His arm is strong to smite. These glowing coals, if they mingle not with the prayer-offering of the saints, will be cast forth amidst despisers and scorners. The fire which does not purify will, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, consume and destroy.

"The Angel in his golden censer took
Fire blazing from that altar-hearth, and cast
Earthward the flaming coals, which as they fell
Kindled the tempest, charged electric air."
—*Bickersteth.*

Propitiation! Vers. 4–7. The wild people of the Khond district in India believed that the only way to make their crops grow was to capture a human victim — offer him up in sacrifice—and then sow bits of his body over the field with the seed-corn. This superstition cost hundreds of lives a year, and so immovably rooted was it, that when the practice was interdicted the Khonds rebelled. It became necessary to watch the Khonds, and to rescue all prisoners retained for slaughter. The result was that in ten years more than 1300 lives were rescued; and the practice was stamped out. But was the evil heart of unbelief extracted by this measure? No. Only the Gospel brought to bear upon the Khonds could eradicate the root of bitterness. Then they could understand the One Great Sacrifice that roots and fruits might abound over the field of humanity.

"Thou art the One! Yea, Lord, I now confess
Great is my sin to Thee;
Oh! in Thy pitying love and gentleness
Have mercy upon me!"

Divine-Purposes! Vers. 8–20. (1.) During the age of ferns, the conditions of the earth were unsuitable for flowers. Flowers can only breathe oxygen—their bright colours being due to rapid oxidation; whereas the atmosphere of the early geological epochs was densely charged with carbonic acid gas. (2.) So during the earlier epochs of humanity, the moral atmosphere was unsuitable for the flowers of New Testament truth. Only the fern-truths of blood of bulls and goats, of material fabrics, and of ritual observances were adopted to that early human atmosphere. (3.) Dark and gloomy, however, as was the sight of the eye of ferns, there were not wanting faint rays of an approaching floral dawn. In those ferns were hints and predictions, typical speech, and silent prophecy of flower vegetation destined to appear above the horizon of human life. (4.) So those crimson tints on the fern-rites of blood and incense and brazen lustrations were in reality prefigurations of nobler truth-life yet to appear. Like the Baptist, they heralded greater yet to be manifested. Like Wickliffe, they announced a brighter yet to arise. They prefigured the blood of Christ, the fragrant intercession of the Mediator, and the purifying graces of the Spirit.

"And down the long and branching porticoes,
On every flower-sculptured capital,
Glitters the brilliance of the Gospel's beams."
—*Milman.*

Brazen-Laver! Ver. 8. (1.) Eternal love devised the plan—eternal wisdom drew the model—eternal grace came down to build it. Observe the choice material. It is the strongest metal—brass—to shadow forth the strength of Christ. He came to do the mightiest of mighty works; therefore He brought omnipotence in His hands. But by whom can it be filled? Jesus Himself pours in the stream. He brings the rich supply; then with a voice loud as the sound of many waters, sweet as the melody of heaven, He cries, "Wash and be clean." The waters symbolised the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit. Hence we have St. Paul speaking of the "laver of regeneration," which is the renewing "grace of the Holy Ghost, which God hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ." Then

"Bathe thy wounds—His stream of mercy
Ever runneth o'er;
But when thou art healed and pardoned,
Go and sin no more."

Mirror-Symbolism! Ver. 8. (1.) Law says faith seeks, nor seeks in vain, to gain instruction here. Women give aid to form this Gospel-type. Here seems to be a bud of truth. The virgin-mother holds the full-blown flower. The gift of gifts comes in through female means. (2.) New feelings bear new fruits. These mirrors were recently prized as implements of vanity—as handmaids of self-love. But now the eyes are opened to far nobler views. Self has no charms when one glimpse of things divine is caught. (3.) The offering was not scorned. That which was framed to cast back poor nature's image, is accepted to form semblances of grace. We see to what use our worldly vanities may rise when placed on the altar of Christian self-sacrifice.

"These things are our examples, given
Till He, Whom type and lay foretold
In mystic signs and songs of old,
Shall lead us o'er life's dreary wold,
Safe to our happy home in heaven."
—*Holy Seasons.*

Looking-glasses! Ver. 8.—Various metals were used in their composition. The Arabs at the present day use polished steel. Mirrors were never hung upon walls, as with us, but fixed to a handle, sometimes curiously, sometimes hideously carved; and were carried in the hand, or fastened to a girdle round the waist. The mirrors given by the devout Israelitish women were evidently of brass. The metallic composition of ancient mirrors illustrates Job xxxvii. 18, "A molten looking-glass." In such mirrors as these the objects reflected would be but dimly and defectively seen. See 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

"And yet, as angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul when man doth sleep,
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,
And into glory peep." —*Vaughan.*

Revelation-Growth! Vers. 9–20. (1.) How instructive it is to notice the elevation of the part that bears our human food during the geological epochs, from flat lichens creeping over rocks, and roots of ferns to the summits of annual plants and the boughs of trees—from roots to fruits—from the first and lowest stage of growth to the last and highest development of the plant—from the humblest and least organised to the noblest and most perfectly organised plants. (2.) More instructive still is it to observe the gradual development of the mystery of God in the Holy Scriptures, from the "seed" in the garden of Eden to the "stem" of Abraham, and from the "plant" of Moses to the "flower" of Isaiah, until the fruit-growth is attained in the New Testament. Thus even nature's progressive developing growth was, like the ritual of the tabernacle, a type of "better things to come." (3.) The wilderness tent, with its sandy foundation, its perishable curtains and draperies, gave place to the more stable foundations of Zion-rock, with its lordly temple-pile of less decaying materials; while these in turn were succeeded by that to whose advent they silently testified in type, viz., the Rock of Ages, with the uprising structure of living stones—the house eternal in the heavens.

"And then were new discoveries soon made
Of God's unbounded wisdom, power, and love,
Which gave the understanding larger room
To swell its hymn of ever-growing praise."
—*Pollok.*

Tabernacle-Typism! Vers. 21–31. (1.) It is interesting to notice in the earliest natural productions of our earth the same laws and processes which we observe in the latest and most highly-developed flowers and trees. The earlier forms of plant-life are but the types of those of later creation. The later complex forms of vegetation are but developments of rudimentary parts existing in the more simple. (2.) God's dealings with mankind, as revealed in Scripture, are precisely analogous. The earlier events and persons were types of those of later date; and spoke of coming greater ones. Christianity itself is but the development of the types and shadows and beggarly elements of the Jewish dispensation which preceded it. (3.) Even the Mosaic enumeration of the costliness and self-sacrifice connected with the tabernacle were an emblem of the great treasures required, and the great self-sacrifice demanded for the construction of that more glorious fabric—built, not on the shifting sands of time, but on the "Cleft Rock," which endureth unto eternal life, for Him hath God the Father sealed.

"So teach us on Thy shrine to lay
Our hearts, and let them day by day
Intenser blaze, and higher."—*Keble.*

Tabernacle-Cost-Hints! Vers. 24–31. (1.) Gray says that the cost of the tabernacle reminds us that, however great, it may be defrayed by the *many*—that, however small, it will help to make up the *great whole*—and that nothing is impossible to diligent minds, industrious hands, and earnest hearts. (2.) It is the many blades of grass, bristling like spears in the sunlight, or sparkling at the dawntide with jewels of dew, that unitedly make the verdant carpet of nature which we admire so much. A drop of water is but a little, yet if it were not for the drops where would the vastness be? What wonderful results spring from those tiny coral builders in the Southern Seas, or from the industrious bee of our own land. (3.) The various missionary societies have the larger portion of their enormous incomes made up of these many, many littles. There is a story told of a magnificent church being erected by the

united efforts of a whole community—each of whom brought a stone, or a beam of wood, or a pane of glass.

"Despise not then the pence,
They help to make the pound;
And each may help to spread abroad
The Gospel's joyful sound."

Mosaic-Typology! Vers. 1–31. (1.) Turn upon the sky your unarranged telescope at random, and you see nothing. Direct it properly, but fail to arrange its lenses, and everything visible through the tube is blurred. But arrange the lenses, and bring the telescope exactly upon the star, or upon the rising sun, and the instant there is perfect accord between the line of the axis of the tube and the line of the ray from the star, or the orb of day, the image of the star or sun starts up in the chamber of the instrument. (2.) Is it not so with the Word-firmament? The soul must direct the telescope of the human mind straight at some truth-orb, or type-star; and the human mind must be rightly adjusted to the focus of faith to enable us to see that orb of truth which the hand of the Invisible has placed in the Old Testament sky. The mind is the glass—the faith of Christ is the focus—the soul is under the guidance of the Spirit, the directing and adjusting power.

"Then shall this scheme, which now to human sight
Seems so unworthy Wisdom Infinite,
A system of consummate skill appear,
And, every cloud dispersed, be beautiful and clear." —*Jenyns.*

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**9. Doubled** = kafal]. This word is repeated again at the close of the verse to show that the length of the breastplate was one span after it was doubled, so that its actual length was two spans, and because this was not expressed with sufficient distinctness in chapter xxxiii. 16.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses **1–31.**

PREPARATION OF THE PRIEST'S CLOTHES.

"And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as the Lord commanded Moses"—xxxix. 1.

I. The holy place: so called because it enshrined the Holy of Holies, which was the immediate dwelling-place of God. *It is God's presence alone that makes a holy place.* In this sense the entire world is a holy place: "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Hence when He revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, He said, "The ground whereon thou standest is holy ground." Hence the Christian Church is a holy place: "Where two or three are met together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." Hence heaven is by pre-eminence "the Holy Place." It is called the Habitation of His Holiness. "His presence fills each heart with joy," &c

II. The holy service. *Holy places are for holy services.* In this case the peculiar service, which consisted of three parts, the lighting of the golden candlestick, the burning of incense on the altar, and the laying out, removing, and renewing of the show-bread, all of which had a symbolic character to be afterwards described, was holy, as being a service done unto the Lord. And this is the essential idea in holy service, whether rendered in the temple of Nature, or the temple of the Church, or the temple of Heaven, it is service rendered to the High and Holy One whose presence fills them all. Clearly this was Paul's idea when he said: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

III. The holy minister. This was Aaron, the high priest, and his sons, who ministered in the priest's office. *Holy services can only be performed by holy per*

sons. It is so in heaven, and so it must be on earth. This was symbolised by the consecration of Aaron and his sons with the holy oil at their first appointment, and every time they went to minister before the Lord. Of course, it is not the outward consecration that makes holy, but the inward, of which the outward is but a symbol. With the inward consecration of the nature by the Holy Ghost the person is holy, even though no anointing oil should ever have been poured upon his head; while with the outward one remains unholy still, unless the Spirit of God shall have also given him "another heart." In short, only a new-born child of God can either find a holy place or perform a holy service.

IV. The holy clothes. *Holy persons require to be arrayed in holy garments.* So God commanded with reference to Aaron and his sons. The different items of the priest's dress had a special symbolic significance, for which see below; in the meantime, it may be noted that they served the purpose of certifying to the nation their consecration to the priestly office. And so does God command that they who shall minister, or do holy service to Him in the holy place of the Church of Christ, shall array themselves in the beautiful apparel of holiness (cf. Matt. xxii. 11, 12; Rom. xiii. 13, 14; Eph. iv. 24).

1. *The Ephod.*

"And he made the Ephod of gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen"—xxxix. 2–7.

Cf. xxviii. 6–14. The ephod, Septuagint ἐπωμίς, Vulgate superhumerale, which was par excellence the official dress of the priest, was a short cloak covering the shoulders and breast. It was made of the same materials as the inner drapery and curtain of the tabernacle, "blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen," interwoven with gold threads, or wires, which were cut from thin plates of gold. Pliny says the ancient Egyptians understood the art of weaving fabrics with gold; and Egyptian monuments show coloured costumes which were probably woven with gold thread. Ver. 4 seems to indicate that it was made in two parts, joined together at the shoulders by what are called "shoulder-pieces." It was tied round the waist by an embroidered ("curious") girdle woven of the same material. Upon each shoulderpiece was an onyx stone set in gold, graven as a signet is graven with the names of six of the sons of Israel, "according to their births," which is explained by Josephus to mean that the names of the six elder sons were engraven on the precious stone upon the right shoulder, and the names of the six younger sons on the precious stone upon the left. The two stones were designed to be memorial stones for the children of Israel. All this was in accordance with Divine command, which shows that it was meant to have some special significance. What then was that significance? Well—

I. The ephod, *being made of the same material as the drapery of the tabernacle,* **indicated that the high priest was designed for the special service of the sanctuary.** It was an article of dress which was only worn when engaged in the sacrificial worship of the tabernacle. So the Lord Jesus Christ is represented (Rev. i. 13) as wearing a girdle, and probably an ephod, to mark Him out as the High Priest of the better sanctuary.

II. The ephod, *as resting on the shoulders of the priest,* **indicated that on him exclusively lay the burden of the sanctuary service.** So of Christ it is said, "The government shall be upon His shoulder." He is the one only High Priest

in the Christian Church, to whom has been assigned the work of offering sacrifice and making intercession for the sins of the people.—Heb. v. 10.

III. The ephod, *as bearing on its shoulders the names of the children of Israel,* **indicated the nature of the high priestly service,** which was to represent the nation before God. So Christ is the great Representative of His people before the throne; the special work in which He is now engaged being that of "appearing in the presence of God for us."—Heb. ix. 24.

IV. The ephod, *as being made of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and linen interwoven with gold,* **indicated the beauty and the glory of the high priestly service.** "Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty," said Jehovah. What was true of all the different parts of the official dress was specially true of the ephod. It was designed to leave upon the mind an impression of the honourable and glorious character of the high priestly office. And surely there is no office that, in respect of "glory and beauty," can compare with that of Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our profession. "Καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐχ ἑαυτὸν ἐδόξασε γενηθῆναι ἀρχιερέα" (Heb. v. 5), which clearly implies, however, that there was a "glory" in being a "High Priest;" and so we read in Heb. ii. 9: "βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν . . . δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον, ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσηται θανάτου." Even the service of the Christian ministry, though not that of a priesthood, acquires a "beauty and a glory" from being subservient to that of Christ's. Whence thinks Dr. A. Clarke their official garments should be "for beauty, for glory" also, in some degree expressive of the dignity and grandeur of their calling. Certainly the service of the Christian life, which is that of a priesthood, though not exactly of the same character as Christ's, is beautiful and glorious; and the garments of the Christian—if not his literal clothes, at least the clothing of his spirit, his walk and conversation—should be for beauty and for glory.—Eccles. ix. 7, 8; Rom. xiii. 14.

2. *The Breastplate.*

"And he made the breastplate of cunning work, like the work of the ephod, of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. It was four square" —xxxix. 8–21. See also xxviii. 15–30.

I. Its formation. The breastplate was fashioned of the same material as the ephod. It was about ten inches square, and made double with a front and lining, so as to answer for a pouch or bag. It was adorned with twelve precious stones, arranged in three rows of four each. The order of the stones as given in the authorised version is different from that of the old versions, which is stated by Keil as follows (reading from right to left):—

Emerald: *Zebulon* (of a brilliant green).	Topaz: *Judah* (golden tinged).	Sardius: *Issachar.* (*i.e.*, our cornelian, or blood-red colour).
Diamond: *Asher* (transparent or reddish yellow).	Sapphire: *Simeon* (sky-blue).	Carbuncle: *Reuben* (the ruby—fine coloured).
Amethyst: *Benjamin* (violet-blue).	Agate: *Manasseh* (transparent—of divers colours).	Ligure: *Ephraim* (transparent—orange).
Jasper: *Gad* (dark red).	Beryl: *Naphtali* (sea-green).	Chrysolith: *Dan* (golden coloured).

On each of these stones was engraved a name of one of the sons of Israel as above. The two upper corners were fastened to the ephod by blue ribands

passing through gold rings, two on each side, one attached to the ephod and another to the breastplate. In the bag or pouch between the front and back were put the Urim and Thummim, which are mentioned in chap. xxviii. 30, as if they were already known. Now, however, they are unknown. No description is given of them. Nor can their meaning be traced with any certainty from their etymology. The words mean "lights and perfections." Whether they denote some material objects which were deposited in the pocket of the breastplate, or whether they were only intended to signify that Divine manifestations were to be given through the breastplate, has been much disputed. "Perhaps the Urim and Thummim are only a spiritual description of the sacred gems in the High Priest's breastplate."—*Eadie.* "The Urim and Thummim did not represent the illumination and right of Israel, but were merely a promise of these, a pledge that the Lord would maintain the rights of His people, and give them through the high priest the illumination requisite for their protection."—*Keil.*

II. Its designation. "The breastplate of judgment," and the "memorial," —xxviii. 29. Doubtless the two names were derived from its use. It was probably styled by the first to indicate that the high priest should wear it when either asking counsel or judgment from the Lord, or administering justice and judgment in the name of the Lord. These were two given functions of the Hebrew high priest; and in discharging them he was typically foreshadowing the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both the fountain of Divine wisdom and the administrator of Divine justice in the Christian Church. The second name was equally suggestive of its use. It was designed as a remembrancer of the people when the high priest ministered before the Lord. It reminded the high priest of his representative character, in which again he foreshadowed Christ who is His people's representative before God and within the veil.

III. Its situation. This is indicated in the name. It lay upon the breast. "The heart, according to the Biblical view, is the centre of the spiritual life, not merely of the willing, desiring, thinking life, but of the emotional life, as the seat of the feelings and affections. Hence to bear upon the heart does not merely mean to bear it in mind, but denotes that personal intertwining with the life of another, by virtue of which the high priest was, as Philo expresses it, τοῦ σύμπαντος Ἔθνους συγγενὴς Καὶ ἀγχιστεὺς Κοινός, and so stood in the deepest sympathy with those for whom he interceded."—*Keil* and *Delitsch.* In short, its lying on the breast indicated—

1. *Nearness.* So the names of Christ's people are on His breast, and their persons are always near. Isaiah represents Israel as graven on the palms of Jehovah's hands: here they are pictured as graven on Christ's heart.

2. *Remembrance.* Having the names of Israel upon his heart, the Jewish high priest could not forget them; and neither can Christ ever forget those for whom He has already shed His blood, and now presents it within the veil.

3. *Affection.* So the people of Christ are near His heart in the sense of being always the object of His tender love (Jer. xxxi. 3), "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (John xiii. 1); "Having loved His own . . ."

4. *Representation.* The names of the sons of Israel were on the high priest's breast that he might represent them within the veil: so are Christ's people always on His breast in the sense that He is interceding for them (Heb. vii. 25; ix. 24).

5. *Communication.* Being on the high priest's breast, the people shared his fortunes. When He was accepted, so were they. When blessing was bestowed on him, it was that through him it might come down to them. And so it is with Christ. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him for us, that out of His fulness we might receive.

3. *The Robe.*

"And he made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue . . ." —xxxix. 22–26.

The robe (מְעִיל), from מעל, to cover, was an upper garment of dark blue purple, closely fitting to the person, and reaching to the knees, made of one piece, with an opening for the head to pass through, and, according to Josephus and the Rabbins, with armholes, but with no sleeves. The opening for the head was bound with a hem, so that it should not rend; and the skirt was bordered with a fringe, ornamented with artificial pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and little golden bells between them round about, a bell and a pomegranate occurring alternately all round. The robe was not intended as a covering for the ephod, as then the breastplate must have been concealed. Lange thinks it was a very short garment, covering only the shoulders of the ephod. This, however, is obviously a mistake. The articles of the priest's dress are clearly mentioned in the reverse order to that in which they were put on. Beginning with the outside, there is first the ephod with its breastplate, then the robe, after that the long frock or coat, then the head-dress, and finally the breeches. The robe was a covering for the coat.

Great diversity of opinion exists as to the symbolic import of this particular article of dress. The following may be considered along with other suggestions on the subject:—

I. The robe of blue being an article of dress which specially belonged to the high priest, and requiring to be worn over and above the linen coats which were common to the entire priestly order, pointed **to the need of special qualification** for the high priestly office. *Authority* to exercise the office and *fitness* to discharge the duties of the office, seem to be the two ideas involved in the clothing of a priest with an official dress; and that these two qualifications belonged to Aaron was signified by his official robe, in addition to the linen coat, which he wore in common with the ordinary priests. The first of these ideas may have been pointed to in the "dark blue colour of the robe," which "indicated," says Keil, "the heavenly origin and character of the office with which it was associated." Being heavenly in its origin and character, no man could take it upon himself except he was "called of God as Aaron was" (Heb. v. 4). "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee," glorified Him by investing Him with high priestly authority (Heb. v. 5). The second was possibly indicated by its forms, which, being woven in one piece, "set forth the idea of spiritual wholeness or integrity."—*Keil.* A qualification which was never possessed in completeness except by Him who wore "the seamless robe," and who is now the great High Priest of our profession, possessed of all the qualities which are necessary to the efficient discharge of His priestly office. For a statement of those qualities, see Heb. iv. 15; v. 2.

II. The pomegranate fringe, among other things, and chiefly, was intended to remind the wearer of the **necessity of attending to the Divine regulations** in discharging his high priestly office. According to Num. xv. 38, 39, every Israelite was directed to make a fringe in the border of his garment of dark blue, in order that every time he looked upon it, he might "remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." It was thus a symbolic injunction to order his daily walk in accordance with Divine precept; and doubtless the fringe upon the robe of Aaron signified that he, too, in discharging the duties of his high priestly office, was not to follow courses of his own, but confine himself exactly and minutely to the regulations and prescriptions which God had

given. So Christ came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that had sent Him (John vi. 38). The duties of Christ's high priestly office were not left for Him to invent when He entered on the office—they were all defined for Him in the "Volume of the Book" (Ps. xl. 7). Accordingly in all He did He kept His eye upon His Father's writing in the Scripture. (See Matt. xxvi. 54; Mark xiv. 21; Luke xxiv. 46; John xix. 24; 1 Cor. xv. 3.) If the artificial pomegranates were intended to symbolise anything, perhaps it was the "fragrance" and "fruitfulness" of such high priestly service when performed in accordance with the will of God.

III. The golden bells, ever tinkling as the high priest went about his duties within the veil, intimated that he had found favour in the sight of God, and was yet alive, although looking on the glorious Presence of Jehovah, and so virtually proclaimed **the efficacious intercession** of his high priestly office. **The common notions,** as, *e.g.*, that the ringing of the bells was to take the place of knocking at the door of Jehovah's palace (*Abraham ben David*); that it was meant to call the people without to accompany the high priest with their thoughts (*son of Sirach*, in Eccles. xlv. 9); that it was designed as a reverential greeting and a musical ascription of praise (*Knobel*); that it symbolised the sounding forth of the word of God (*Keil*); that the alternation of pomegranates and bells was designed to indicate the connection of nature and grace (*Lange*) may all have some elements of truth in them, although for the most part they are fanciful. **The true interpretation** of the tinkling bells, we feel persuaded, is to be found in Heb. vii. 25, which speaks of the *Everliving* **High Priest,** who even now, within the veil, is making intercession for us. The testimony of the angels (Acts i. 11), the phenomena of Pentecost (Acts ii.), the continuous existence of the Church, the witness of the Spirit through the Word, are the evidences to the Christian Church that Christ lives; the evidence to the Hebrew congregation that its high priest within the veil was living was the tinkling of the bells upon his garment. This is hinted at in Ex. xxviii. 35. The robe with its pomegranates and bells was to be upon Aaron when he went to minister before the Lord, "that he die not;" or, "and he shall not die." Entering without his official "robe" he was sure to die: entering with it he would live; and that would be announced to the people by the sounding bells. If the bells ceased to sound it would be an intimation that the high priest was dead.

Thus, **special qualification, Divine regulation,** and **efficacious intercession,** were the three ideas suggested by *the robe, the fringe,* and *the bells.*

4. *The Mitre.*

"And they made coats of fine linen, of woven work, for Aaron, and for his sons. And a mitre of fine linen, and goodly bonnets of fine linen. . . ." —xxxix. 27–31.

The linen coats, bonnets, and breeches, which are here referred to, were articles of dress which Aaron wore in common with the priestly order in general. They do not call for any special note. The head-dress of the high priest, in addition to the "goodly bonnet," or linen turban, consisted of a mitre, or superior turban, made of fine linen, and bearing upon its front a gold plate, tied to the mitre by a blue riband, on which was inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord." According to chap. xxviii. 38, this plate was to be upon Aaron's forehead, that he might bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead that they may be accepted before the Lord."

I. Personal consecration was the first thing symbolised by the golden mitre. "Through the golden plate, with its inscription, 'Holiness to the Lord,' which

was fastened upon his head-dress of brilliant white, the earthly reflection of holiness, he was crowned as the sanctified of the Lord."—*Keil.* **II. Representative propitiation** was the second thing intended by the golden mitre. Wearing the "crown of holiness," Aaron was the representative of the entire congregation. In this capacity his business was to bear the iniquity of the holy offerings of the children of Israel. The stains of sin which clung to all the expiatory offerings of the people required to be further cleansed away; and in and through him acting as their representative that expiation was effected. **III. Congregational acceptance** was a third idea included in the golden mitre. When Aaron appeared before God wearing the holy crown, the people were accepted. Thus, again, we have a threefold symbol: of the *Personal qualification* of the Lord Jesus Christ for the high priestly office—**Holiness**; of the *character of His official work*—**Expiation**; and of the *blessed result* which He secures for His people—**Acceptance with God.**

The Delivery of the Work to Moses.

"Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished; and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they. And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses," &c.—xxxix. 32–43.

I. The presentation of the work: "They brought the tabernacle unto Moses." It seems that after all the different articles were finished, they were solemnly brought and presented to Moses, the chief builder of the house. So, whatever work or service is done in connection with the Christian Church should be solemnly presented to Christ, who is the Chief Builder of the Christian temple.—**II. The inspection of the work:** "Moses did look upon all the work;" and so does Christ inspect every offering that is brought to Him, whether of work or of gifts, to see if it be according to the commandment of the Lord. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. iii. 13, that a day is coming in which every man's work will be tried of what sort it is—tried by fire—tried with the most terrible exactness. Yet even now a process of inspection is going on in which everything a person does—and especially does for Christ—is subjected to minute investigation. **III. The approbation of the work:** "Behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded." So in Christian service nothing can be accepted that is not minutely in accordance with the Divine specification. This will be the standard at the last day as it is now. "As the Lord had commanded," is the one qualification which must attach to all our labours and gifts to make them good. **IV. The remuneration of the work:** "And Moses blessed them." So is all faithful service done to Christ rewarded even here with spiritual blessing. So will it be in the end (1 Cor. iii. 14). Lessons:—(1.) The *dignity* of Christian work as presented to Christ; (2.) the duty of *fidelity* in Christian work, considering it must be inspected by Christ; (3.) the *grand aim* in Christian work, to be accepted by Christ. *Cf.* 2 Cor. v. 9; (4.) the *high stimulus* in Christian work, the certainty of being rewarded by Christ.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXIX.

BY

REV. WILLIAM ADAMSON.

Scripture-Symbolism! Vers. 1–43. 1. When God uses natural objects in His Word, notes Brown, as illustrations of spiritual truth, He did not take them, as we should have taken them, simply because He saw them to be apt illustrations of the subject, but that He had an eye to their use for this purpose when He made them. He did not

in fact, use them because they were apt illustrations of the truths inculcated, but He made them in order that, among other purposes, they might be such. The sun was not employed by God to emblematise the Lord Jesus, because He recognised in it a fit emblem, but God made the sun with the very object of being such, amongst other objects. 2. So with all the tabernacle and its adjuncts, God enjoined their manufacture and construction, not because they were, but because He would have them to be striking symbols —silent, symbolic sermons. The poet speaks of sermons in stones and in the running brooks. In the tabernacle accessories are such sermons—designedly arranged for Israel's instruction in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. As such, we should recognise them. They are expressly appointed by God to be earthly shadows of heavenly realities.

"The key that opens to all mysteries,
The Word in character, God in the voice.
Each page of Thine hath true life in't,
And God's bright mind express'd in print."
—*Vaughan.*

Holiness-Hints! Ver. 1, &c. Who can ever forget the vision of the apocalyptic seer, known as that of the "white-robed and palm-bearing multitude"? (Rev. vii.) The Patmos exile had just been witnessing scenes of judgment and terror. How grateful and soothing, then, to him, must have been this lull in the storm—this bright though momentary glimpse through the midst of the tempestuous clouds. The words must have fallen on his ear with serenest music. But what signify the array of "white robes"? 1. Such was the scene in the fourth century, in the age of Constantine, and the general conversion of the empire from Paganism to Christianity. Not, however, in the *visible* Church, though it had the seal of baptism, enrolled its members in church registers, and enrobed them in white, with crowns and palms. No, the allusion is to the *invisible* Church of that era. It had in the spirit impressing the image of Jesus a more enduring seal—in the Lamb's Book of Life a more enduring registration—and in the divine holiness of heart and life a more lustrous purity. 2. Such will be the scene in the latter days, before the millennial dawn. The passage, it has been said, is like a *mirror set in eternity*, in which the believer sees reflected his future character and condition. We all, beholding as in a glass our heavenly glory, are encouraged to look forward to the time when we shall have "white robes," *i.e.*, when the holy services of the heavenly temple shall be performed by us as holy servants of God (Rev. vii. 15).

"Palm-bearing, white-robed multitudes who sing
Salvation, honour, praise, and glory to their Lord the King."

Gold-Wire, &c. Ver. 3. (1.) Some of the mummy cloths which are preserved are of beautiful texture, and bespeak a high degree of excellence for those who manufactured them. The finest kind resemble muslin, and are very thin and transparent. Some of them are fringed like silk shawls; others have strong salvages, with stripes of blue, the dye of which has been determined to be indigo. One specimen is covered with hieroglyphics, drawn with exceeding fineness. Gold and silver wire was used at a very early date in Egypt in weaving and embroidery. (2.) If gold is symbolic of the divine excellence, does it not teach us that in all the hangings of the Sacred Scriptures, *i.e.*, in all the word-veils and curtains, the elements of divine excellence is discernible? May it not also teach us that all our works for God, all our efforts of service for Him, should have the element of divine excellence interwoven with them? Not, however, that this is to be done as rendering our works *works of merit*, but because their beauty is thus enhanced, and as an acknowledgment that they are for His glory.

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee:
Take myself, and I will be
Ever *only* ALL for Thee."

Breastplate-Stones! Vers. 10–14. The minute account in Exodus and Revelation of the jewels that adorned the sacerdotal apparel and the walls of the heavenly city, indicate, says Macmillan, the symbolic reverence attached to their use by the Jews. And this belief in their mystic qualities passed from India and Persia to Greece and Rome. After playing a considerable part in the Gnostic systems of Alexandria, this belief was finally transferred to the Christian Church, as we find Bishop Marbœuf of Rennes, in the eleventh century, versifying their talismanic influences in his curious "Lapidarium." This is an illustration of the sure darkening of Scripture truth during the dark ages. No such influences are ascribed to these precious stones in the Word of God; though, doubtless, they symbolise moral and spiritual perfections in the Christians. "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up My JEWELS." Then

"Christ alone beareth me
Where Thou dost shine;
Joint-heir He maketh me
Of the Divine;
In Christ my soul shall be
Nearest, my God, to Thee,
Nearest to Thee."

Little Things! Ver. 20. One of the most astonishing results of the scientific expedition lately undertaken to dredge the bottom of the Atlantic was the discovery of organisms—delicate as hoarfrost—living at a depth of four or five thousand feet. All that enormous mass

of water rested above them, and yet they were as safe and uninjured as the tender blossom that unfolds in the summer air. Still more wonderful, remarks Macmillan, is the discovery which the geologist is constantly making of microscopic shells and other forms of life, of most delicate organisation, in rocks that have been subjected to the most tremendous pressure. An infant's touch could crush them to atoms, and yet they have shared uninjured in movements which have displaced continents, upheaved huge mountain chains, and shaken the earth to its very centre. All these, like the pins and taches of the tabernacle, have their place and functions in nature. And so all parts of Scripture have each their place and function in the mystery of God. The verses in this chapter, little and unimportant as they seem, are essential to the Bible unity. As such, God has preserved them amid the upheavings of the Jewish nation and the Gentile world. They are part of our heritage to-day. They are

"Marked with the seal of high divinity,
Their every thought bedewed with drops of love
Divine, and with the eternal heraldry
And signature of God Almighty stampt."
—*Pollok.*

Testimony-Tabernacle! Ver. 21. As the Word of God is the light to direct us, and to detect errors, so it is also the standard and beam to try the weights of truth and falsehood. Therefore our Lord, knowing, says Bishop Jewell, that there should be such confusion of things in the latter days, commandeth that Christians, who live in the profession of Christian faith, and are desirous to settle themselves upon a sure ground of faith, should go to no other thing but to the Scriptures. Otherwise, if they had regard to other things, they should be offended and perish, and not understand which is the true Church. The master of a ship, when he is on the main sea, casts his eye always upon the lode-star, and so directs and guides his ways. Even so must we, who are passengers and strangers in this world, ever settle our eyes to behold the Word of God; so shall no tempest overblow us; so shall we be guided without danger; so shall we arrive safely in the haven of our rest. This is the rule of our faith. . . . Therefore, Christ saith, "Search the Scriptures; they are they that testify of Me."

"O child of sorrow, be it thine to know
That Scripture only is the cure of woe;
That field of promise—how it flings abroad
Its perfume o'er the Christian's thorny road.
The soul, reposing in assured belief,
Feels herself happy amidst all her grief;
Forgets her labour as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song."

Scripture-Secrets! Vers. 22–30. 1. Many years ago Rassam, the famous explorer and orientalist, searched the ruins in Assyria to no purpose for ancient remains. Within the last two years, he has again gone forth to examine the very same ruins, under the firm conviction that treasures are there, though he had failed to discover them. This time he has been eminently successful; and very soon the literary world will have rare gems of history set before them for study and instruction. 2. Long years ago, we searched these Mosaic mounds, but failed to discover truth-treasures hidden within. But subsequent and more recent investigation has proved successful. We have found Messianic-treasures—tablets of Gospel truth among the tabernacle-articles of Moses. They were there before, but we failed to discover them. Now we rejoice in them. 3. Is it not so with all the Scriptures? Bunyan, in his "Grace Abounding," says that while he was shut up in Bedford Jail he never had in all his life so great an inlet into the Word of God. "Those Scriptures that I saw nothing in before are made in this place and state to shine upon one." And this experience has been the experience of others also, especially when suffering for the truth's sake.

"There is a Lamp, whose steady light
Guides the poor traveller in the night:
'Tis God's own Word! Its beaming ray
Can turn a midnight into day."—*Betts.*

Bells! Ver. 25. Who invented bells we know not. Probably they were devised, at a very early period of the world's history, by the musical genius of Jubal, who is called in Gen. iv. the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. But this and Zechariah are the only two books in which we have direct reference to bells. Maurice mentions that one indispensable ceremony in the Indian Poojah is the ringing of a small bell by the officiating Brahminic priest. The women of the idol, or dancing girls of the pagoda, have little golden bells fastened to their feet—the soft harmonious tinkling of which vibrates in unison with the exquisite melody of their voices. Calmet calls attention to the fact that the ancient kings of Persia, who in fact united in their own persons the regal and sacerdotal office, were accustomed to have the fringes of their robes adorned with pomegranates and golden bells. The Arabian princesses wore rings, to which tiny golden bells were suspended. But no bells ever sounded so sweet and melodious as those on the Great High Priest's robes. The ministers of Christ, when preaching the glad tidings of salvation, are those bells; and it is Jesus who enables them to send forth sweet strains.

"Ye monarchs from the eastern land,
Ye heathen from far island strand,
Come up, come up, ye people all,
His voice the whole wide world doth call;
The Saviour preaches from the mount."

Mitre-Material! Ver 28. (1.) In Chron

xxxix. 6, this ornament is called "*nezer*," from a verb signifying to separate; and hence denoting a crown as a mark of separation or distinction. The same word is applied to the diadem of kings. Indeed, such turbans of fine linen, with an encircling or front ornament of gold or precious stones, seem to have been the usual diadems of ancient kings. Justin says that Alexander the Great took his diadem from his head to bind up the wounds of Lysimachus. This shows clearly that it was of linen. Probably, it had some distinguishing ornament like that of the high priest here. 2. Jahn says curiously enough that, in the time of Josephus, the shape of the mitre had become somewhat altered. It was circular, was covered with a piece of fine linen, and sat so closely on the upper part of the head that it would not fall off when the body was bent down: apparently it did not cover the whole of the head. It may be that there is mystical reference to the crown of gold worn by each of those who exulted before God in the acknowledgment that He had made them prince-priests unto Himself. Each cast his mitre-coronet down before Him, who sat upon the throne, singing—

"I bless Thee, gracious Father, for Thy pleasant gift to me,
And earnestly I ask Thee, that it may always be
In perfect consecration laid at Thy glorious feet,
Touched with Thine altar-fire, and made an offering pure and sweet."

—*Havergal.*

Labour-Lessons! Ver. 32, &c. 1. *Duty and desire!* (xxxix. 43.) (1.) That it is the *duty* and should be the *desire* of the workmen to submit their work to the builder or surveyor. This applies to Scripture readers, teachers, and pastors. (2.) That it is the *duty* and should be the *desire* of the builder or surveyor to scrutinise the work on its completion. This applies to chief pastors, the Church, and the Christ of God. 2. *Destiny and delight!* (xxxix. 43.) (1.) That it is the *destiny* and should be the *delight* of the surveyor to record his approval of work well done. This is true of chief pastors, the Church, and the Christ. (2.) That it is the *destiny* and should be the *delight* of the workmen to receive the approval of the surveyor of the work when complete. This is true of Scripture readers, teachers, and pastors. 3. *Dignity and design!* (xl. 34.) (1.) That it is the *dignity* and should be the *design* of the proprietor to recognise the completion of his house. This may refer to the Church, the Christ, or God. (2.) That it is the *dignity* and should be the *design* of the builder and workmen to rejoice in the proprietor's recognition of their handiwork. See our Lord's parables, Paul's epistles, and John's apocalypse for admirable illustrations of the above.

"Glory waits the faithful workmen
Who perform their Master's will;
Then, O Christians, will ye weary
Of this work of building still?"

—*Allis.*

Church-Building! Ver. 32. 1. "Peep of Day" furnishes a very different account of the erection of the first church in Tahiti. In the year 1800, the missionaries determined to build a place of prayer. Hitherto they had only met together in a room in their own house, just as Israel probably had held their services at the tent of Moses or Aaron. King Pomare seemed pleased with the plan, and promised to set his people to work. The brethren, however, found this assistance of little use. Pomare's servants set about the work eagerly, *but soon grew weary of it*, as they did of all their undertakings, unless encouraged by continual feastings. *They also did the work so ill*, that they gave the missionaries more trouble than they did them service. In March, the first wooden pillars were reared to form the walls; and, as the workmen proceeded, they jeered at Christ, and scoffingly marked each pillar with His name. But the missionaries earnestly hoped that those pillars would hereafter be witnesses to the conversion of the heathen.

"To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying,
Were precious in His sight."

—*Montgomery.*

Well-doing! Ver. 32. It is recorded of these Israelites that they did not weary in the work appointed. All that the Lord commanded Moses, that they did accordingly. Alas! how many, whether in the uprearing of the tabernacle of a holy life, or in the erection of a house to His name, become weary. How readily does it creep over the most vigilant man! Of how many has it to be said, "This man began to build and was not able to finish"! Not able, because not willing,—not able, because inconstant,—not able, because weary in well-doing. How, under the dread spell of inconstancy, exclaims Punshon, have fair plants been withered, generous youth launched into premature age, and the edifice of Christian graces stayed in its erection! Unlike Israel, they have not continued steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Forgetting that they have the Divine assurance that their work shall not be in vain in the Lord, when He says "Well done," they have become like the stream

"Which, smiling, left the mountain's brow,
As if its waters none could sever;
Yet, when it reach'd the plain below,
In the sand-desert sank for ever."

Ark of Testimony! Ver. 35. The apocalyptic seer tells us in Rev. xi. 19, that he

saw the temple of God opened in heaven. The impenetrable veil, which screens from mortal sight the mysteries of that true "Holy of Holies," was for a moment drawn aside. And what was the disclosure made to the eye of the apostle? "*The ark of His testimony!*" What a glorious and comforting vision wherewith to terminate all the previous terrific trumpet soundings—those symbols of wrath and judgment, more awful and awe-inspiring than the Sinaitic peals and flashes! He gazes on the familiar emblem, so often and so long associated with the fortunes and the history of the Hebrew people—the palladium of their liberties—the rallying-point in every hour of disaster—the true COVENANT ARK. In it he recognises a figure of the Great Propitiatory—the true mercy-seat; in the glories of whose Divine person, and the fulness of whose mediatorial work, is the pledge and guarantee of eternal safety and peace.

"O Master, at Thy feet
I bow in rapture sweet!
Before me, as in darkening glass,
Some glorious outlines pass,
Of love, and truth, and holiness, and power;
I own them THINE, O Christ, and bless Thee
for this hour." —*Havergal.*

Candlestick! Ver. 37. The Church, it has been said, is a golden light-bearer, and therefore at once precious and luminous. Zion is God's peculiar heritage; its members are His jewels, acquired by an immeasurable ransom, and therefore properly symbolised by an article made of solid gold. One of the chief functions of the Church has ever been to give light. All the true light enjoyed by the ancient world streamed out from the candlestick which God set up in His chosen people, and still more largely was this the case in the new economy. It was intended to be diffusive and propagandist; but only by the force of *light*—the manifestation of the truth.

"Where'er I go, where'er I stand,
In valley dark, or mountainland,
At noon, or 'neath the midnight drear,
That Golden Light still shines most clear."
—*Gerot.*

Golden-Altar! Ver. 38. Solemn and imposing, says Macduff, must have been the scene on the Great Day of Atonement, when the Jewish high priest, divested of his wonted gorgeous robes, and habited in a pure white vestment, stood before the great brazen altar. After the preliminary sin-offerings, &c., burning coals were taken by him from the altar and deposited in a golden censer. Carrying with him a handful of sweet incense, he proceeded within the curtain into the Holiest of all. As he stood in this august presence-chamber of Jehovah, he took a portion of it beaten small, and cast it among the burning embers. The cloud enveloped the mercy-seat, the fumes filling the most holy place with grateful odours. Hence Rev. viii. 3, "Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer," &c. This is Jesus, the great antitypical High Priest, standing in the heavenly temple. Therefore we need not fear: He will undertake.

"Give to the winds thy fears;
Hope and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs, and counts thy tears,
God shall lift up thy head."

Incense-Materials! Ver. 38. 1. *Stacte!* Some say the distilled myrrh or gum; but Rosenmuller points out that it has been described as a species of storax gum, transparent like a tear, and resembling myrrh. This tree is found in Syria. 2. *Onycha!* Kalisch says that it is found in the waters of Arabia, that it is the crustaceous covering of the shells of certain fish, that it is frequently used in the present day for incense, and that, though by no means fragrant, yet it enhances the fragrance of other ingredients. 3. *Galbanum!* Pliny says that it was employed as an ingredient in perfumes, and that it was so used to make the odours more lasting. It has always been used in medicine; but, though so long known, the plant itself is still a matter of dispute. 4. *Frankincense!* This well-known odoriferous resin is obtained from a large tree which grows in the mountainous parts of India. It is extremely fragrant, and exudes naturally from the bark. An inferior kind was found in Arabia. There can be little doubt that these have each their spiritual significance. But since it is now difficult to distinguish their origin, &c., we are without a clue, except so far as the New Testament tells us, what are the genuine ingredients of true and acceptable prayer.

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."
—*Montgomery.*

Atonement-Day Incense. Ver. 38. Macmillan observes that on the golden altar a censer full of incense poured forth its fragrant clouds every morning and evening. Yearly, as the day of atonement came round, when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, he filled a censer with live coals from the sacred fire on the altar of burnt-offerings, and bore it into the sanctuary, where he threw upon the burning coals the "sweet incense." Without this smoking censer, he was forbidden, on pain of death, to enter into the awful shrine of Jehovah. Notwithstanding the washing of his flesh, and the linen garments with which he was clothed, he dare not enter the Holiest of all with the blood of atonement unless he could personally shelter himself under a cloud of incense.

"I need Thee, precious Jesus!
For I am full of sin;
My soul is dark and guilty,
My heart is dead within."
—*Whitfield.*

Tabernacle-Life! Ver. 42. 1. When King Pomare began to build the first Christian chapel in Tahiti some sixty years ago, he had not observed that a stream of water ran in a slanting direction through it. The builders might have tried to turn the course of this stream, which flowed from the mountains into the sea, but they decided to allow it to pass through the sanctuary. We think those who sat near it must have been reminded, by the sight of this living stream, of the living water that Jesus gives to those who ask Him, and of that crystal river that makes glad the city of God. 2. Israel did not, probably, when they at first began to construct the tabernacle, perceive that from the hills of eternal truth a river flowed onwards and downwards through it to the eternal sea. Afterwards, they did see that there was such a symbolic stream making glad the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. Many persons connected with the uprearing of the superstructure of temple-grace see not the Gospel-stream,—the river of life,—flowing through the fabric of the visible church-tabernacle in this desert of sin.

"This beautiful stream is the river of life,
It flows for all nations free;
A balm for each wound
In its waters is found;
O sinner, it flows for THEE!"

Duty Done! Ver. 42. 1. On one occasion, at a crowded dinner-table, Webster was asked what his greatest thought was. Looking about on the company, he inquired whether all were his friends. On receiving an affirmative assurance, he said, "The greatest thought that ever entered my mind was that of my personal responsibility 'to a personal God.'" He expanded that idea in conversation for ten minutes and then left the room. 2. The same man on another occasion said, "There is no evil that we cannot either face or flee from, but the consciousness of duty disregarded. A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent like the Deity." Whereever we go, whatever we are busied about, duty performed, or duty violated, is still with us for our happiness or misery. We cannot escape the power, nor fly from the presence of duty. 3. What must, then, have been the emotions of Moses and Israel when their duty was done? Conscious of their work's completion, how heartfelt was their sense of happiness. If we neglect our duty, we cannot escape from the consciousness of pain in its violation; and, on the other hand, if we do as the Lord commands us, there is the consolation awaiting our completed work, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

"When, when shall that great day appear,
In which all His that voice shall hear,
Each knee bow down in reverence deep,
All flesh before Him silence keep?
'Servant of God, well done! well done.'"

Finished Beauty! Ver. 43. 1. If any one had looked in upon Raphael, while in his studio working out the first rough draught of his immortal "Transfiguration," he might have seen nothing that was attractive. As Cuyler says, vague outlines or coarse blotches of paint were all that the canvass could yet show of the world's master-piece of art. The artist himself could say to the visitor, "Wait until the picture is done; it will be beautiful in its time." 2. So with the tabernacle. Hobab and the Egyptian camp-followers may have commented on the confined labours of the tabernacle-toilers. But, as the time to see Raphael's picture was when it was hung in its matchless loveliness above the dead master's coffin at Rome; so the time to see the "beauty of the tent of God" was when—upreared under the shadow of Sinai—it stood in all its exquisitely simple grace. 3. And so with the temple of God. His workers are men busily employed in its erection. The world remarks on the apparent roughness and confusion on all sides; yet how beautiful will that workmanship be in its time? Then the scaffoldings and seatings will all be swept away, Messiah will look upon the work and exclaim, "It is finished," while all His coworkers will see on every column and frieze and architrave, "the beauty of our God" (Rev. xxi. 23).

"Oh none can tell Thy bulwarks,
How gloriously they rise;
Oh none can tell Thy capitals
Of beautiful device!
Pure mansion of pure people,
Whom God's own love and light
Promote, increase, make holy,
Identify, UNITE." —*Bernard.*

Scripture-Scenery! Ver. 43. 1. John Bunyan in his immortal allegory says, "By this time the Pilgrims had a desire to go forward, and the shepherds a desire they should; so they walked together towards the end of the mountains. Then said the shepherds one to another, 'Let us here show the pilgrims the gates to the celestial city, *if they have skill to look through our perspective glass.*' The pilgrims then lovingly accepted the motion; so they had them to the top of a high hill called CLEAR, and gave them the glass to look." But their hands shook so, that they could not look steadily through the glass; yet they saw some of the glory of the place. 2. The ministers of God earnestly desire that their flock should, through the glass of faith, behold the Messianic glory around and within the gates to the Pentateuch and its tabernacle. The writer has himself brought his readers

towards the end of the Exodus mountains, up to the lofty summit called CLEAR; and all that he can do is to bid them take the perspective glass and behold Christ's glory in these chapters. Alas! how many are there who take the glass, and gaze through upon the gates, predetermined not to witness Messiah's loveliness there.

"Oh may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light."

CHAPTER XL.

CRITICAL NOTES.—**34. The glory of the Lord.**] This was a sensuous manifestation by which the presence of Jehovah in the tabernacle was made known to the people of Israel, but this manifestation was not of the character of the glory of Jehovah as Moses desired to have it shown to him. (See Crit. Note on xxxiii. 18.) **35. Not able**=*lo-yachol*], *i.e.*, he attempted to enter but could not effect an entrance, at the time, into the tabernacle: this fact goes to show that it was the purpose of Jehovah to impress upon the Israelites that He was Lord over His own house. In the worship of the tabernacle they were to regard Him who was the Lord over it, and not Moses the servant in it.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.

THE ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE.

A. *The Order for Erection.*

"And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle. . . ."—xl. 1–16.

The manufacture of the different parts of the Tabernacle having been completed, and everything necessary for the tabernacle service having been provided, instructions were at length issued for the erection of the building. Observe:—

I. The completeness of those instructions. 1. *The time was specified* for the performance of the work. "On the first day of the first month (of the second year) shalt thou set up the Tabernacle of the tent of meeting." "To everything there is a season," says the Royal Preacher, "and a time to every purpose under heaven: a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted; . . . a time to break down and a time to build up." Whether there was anything specially significant in the selection of the first day of the first month of the second year, cannot be determined. If, as is probable, the date of their arrival at Sinai was the first day of the third month of the first year, counting from the day of the Exodus, a period of nine months must have elapsed since their entering into covenant with God, during six of which they had been actively engaged in the preparation of the dwelling-place of God. But whatever was the reason for the selection of this date, it was the right date, as we know that God's time is always the best time, and in particular that the time of the setting up of the Tabernacle of Christ's body, was "The Fulness of the Times." Everything in the lower kingdom of Nature has its appropriate season, and so has everything in the higher kingdom of Grace. Also, for every separate movement in the history of the Church of God, and for every onward step in the religious life of the individual Christian, there is a "right" time, which it is the part of wisdom to wait for, and to discern when it comes. On the circumstance that the time selected was the first day of the year, M. Henry has the following remarks:—"It is good to begin the year with some good work. Let Him that is the first have the first; and let the things of His kingdom be first sought. . . . When a new year begins, we should think of serving God more and

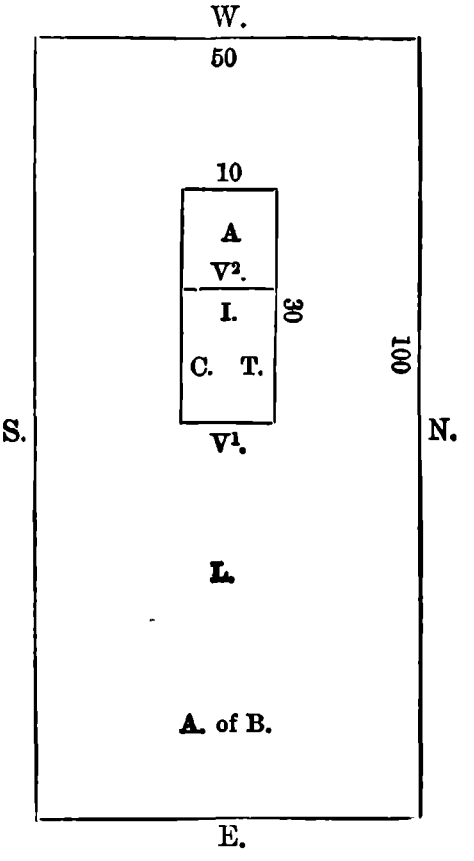
better than we did before." 2. *The order was appointed* in which the work should be done. First the Holy of Holies was to be constructed and its furniture arranged. Then the Holy Place and its furniture. After that the outer court and its furniture. Next the whole building, with its vessels, was to be consecrated by anointing with the holy oil. And, finally, Aaron and his sons were to be brought to the door of the Tabernacle, and there washed, sanctified with oil, and clothed. As there is a proper time for God's work, so likewise is there a proper order, and that order mostly is from the more important to the less important. 3. *Nothing was omitted* that was needful for the successful execution of the work. There is not here the same minuteness that there was in ordering the manufacture of the different articles and items of which the tabernacle was composed, because that was now unnecessary; but there is as much minuteness as is sufficient. Every separate article is mentioned, its situation described, and what is to be done with it stated. So in the instructions which God has given in the Bible for the erecting of the Tabernacle of His Church, and for the building up of the religious character of the individual saint, nothing is omitted that is needful for the efficient discharge of both of these tasks. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine . . ." (2 Tim. iii. 16). God hath set in the Church "some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ," &c. (Eph. iv. 11–13). II. **The fulfilment of those instructions**: "Thus did Moses: according to all that Jehovah commanded him, so did he." 1. *The exact time was kept:* "it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the Tabernacle was reared up." As Moses would not take a step towards the erection of the Tabernacle till he was enjoined by God, so neither when he was enjoined would he deviate a single iota from his instructions. In the matter of time he felt it was not open to him either to anticipate or delay the hour which God had fixed. And so should we feel. "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in His own power," said Christ to His disciples before ascending: see Acts i. 7. His meaning was, that not only all the great eras of Church history, but likewise all the little moments of Christian experience, were to be prearranged by the Father; and that the duty of both Church and individual saint was to wait till God in His providence should show that the hour for movement had struck, and then to move. 2. *The appointed order was observed:* see next section. As God's time, so God's order, is ever the best. And as God allows no room for the Church's or the individual's originality in the matter of determining the times and seasons, so neither does He afford scope for the talent of either the one or the other in improving the arrangement which He fixes for the greater movements of Church history or the lesser movements of individual experience. The proper business of both Church and saint is to carry out what He originates, remembering that "God is a God of order and not of confusion," and believing that what Supreme Wisdom has arranged is little likely to be improved by the suggestions of ignorance. 3. *Nothing was omitted from the programme*, unless it be what is stated in vers. 9–15, about the anointing of the holy places and things, and of Aaron and his sons. Lev. viii. 1–13 contains a minute account of what took place at the consecration of Aaron and his sons. It is not absolutely certain, however, that the transaction recorded in Lev. viii. did not actually take place on the day of the erection of the Tabernacle, although not recorded till after a statement has been given of the sacrificial laws. If it was delayed, it must have been because of the impossibility of carrying it out on that day with befitting solemnity; which reminds us that God's instructions are not always to be interpreted with literal exactness, but sometimes with an enlightened spiritual freedom. Literal exactness was the sin of the Pharisees of a later day. Let us learn to imitate Moses, "who was faithful to God in all

His house;" or, better still, "Him who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was" (Heb. iii. 2).

B. *The Erection of the Building.*

"And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the Tabernacle was reared up."—xl. 17–33.

I. A brief survey of the finished structure. When finished, the Tabernacle had the appearance of a wooden box or chest, 30 cubits long, 10 cubits broad, and 10 cubits high, protected by four rich coverings, of which the innermost was of fine linen or cotton, the second of goats' hair or cashmere, the third of rams' skins dyed red or morocco, and the outermost, or weather covering of badgers', or rather of seals' skins, and standing in the middle of an open court, 100 cubits long and 50 cubits broad, which was enclosed by curtains. The exact position of the wooden box or Tabernacle proper is not stated, although the suggestion of Kurtz is as probable as any that it stood at equal distances from the N.W. and S. sides, thus leaving an open space of 50 cubits square in front between the dwelling and the eastern curtain of the court. The disposition of the four curtains has likewise been omitted to be stated with such precision as to prevent discussion. For opinions as to their adjustment, Kitto's "Cyclopædia," art. 'Tabernacle,' and Lange on Exod. xxvi. 1–30, may be consulted. The dwelling was divided into two parts, the Holy of Holies, and the Holy Place. Each part, along with the surrounding court, had its appropriate furniture. Entering the court from the east, the first object that met the gaze was the Altar of Burnt-offering, standing near the door: behind that and before the dwelling, probably a little to the side, was the Laver. Passing in through the Vail to the Holy Place, on the right hand towards the north, stood the table of shew-bread, with its two rows of loaves; and on the left hand, towards the south, the candlestick, with its rich mellow light; while in front of the second or inner Vail (V_2) was the Altar of Incense (I), with its fragrant smoke rising up before the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies, concealed behind the second Vail, was set the Ark, containing the two tables of stone, with its golden mercy-seat and overshadowing cherubim. Into the outer court alone were the people allowed to come with their offerings: into the Holy Place only the priests of the nation were admitted; while the Holy of Holies could be entered by the high priest alone, and that only once a year on the great day of Atonement: all which was significant, as will appear.



II. The meaning of the names applied to the Tabernacle. (1.) *The Sanctuary* (Ex. xxv. 8). The word מִקְדָּשׁ (Mikdash), denotes something consecrated to God, and was applied to the Tabernacle to signify that the entire structure was set apart and dedicated to the worship of Jehovah, and was accordingly to be

regarded as a holy place. (2.) *The Dwelling place* (מִשְׁכָּן) (Ex. xxv. 9, xl. 21). So called to indicate that God's presence was to dwell within that Holy Place, and, dwelling there, was to dwell amongst them as a people. (3.) *The Tent of Meeting* (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד) (xl. 22). The import of this name is given in Ex. xxv. 22, "And there will I meet with thee and commune with thee . . ." (Cf. xxix. 42–46). Of course, it was included in this idea that the Tabernacle was the meeting-place for the congregation of Israel in all their united acts of worship (see Lev. viii. 3). When Aaron and his sons were consecrated, "the assembly was gathered together" by Divine command "unto the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation." 4. *The Tent of Witness* (אֹהֶל הָעֵדוּת) (Num. xvii. 7, 8). Used in connection with the blossoming of Aaron's rod, when it and all the other rods were laid up in the Tabernacle before the Lord, by which God showed that He had chosen the house of Levi, with Aaron as its head, to be His priests to minister before Him, just as He had previously testified by the terrible judgment on Korah and his children that He had not chosen them. It was the tent where God bore witness to Himself, to the gracious character of His covenant, and the qualifications that were required of those who would serve Him. It is not difficult to perceive that every one of these names and titles applies with even greater force to the True Tabernacle of the Human Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, and likewise indirectly to the Christian Church.

III. The interpretation of its symbolical significance. Without entering too minutely into this department, the following statements, it is hoped, will give at once a concise and comprehensive exhibition of the teaching of the Tabernacle as a whole. Generally viewed, it was meant to embody in a materialistic form the spiritual transaction which had taken place between God and Israel at Sinai—to be, as it were, an illuminated text-book from which Israel might be able to read and understand the sublime spiritual ideas which were contained in the covenant of Sinai. Then, as that covenant was itself designed to be a pictorial exhibition of the grand scheme of grace, which now lies unfolded in the Gospel—was, in fact, intended to be a preaching of the Gospel to them in the only way perhaps in which they could understand it—the Tabernacle, with its Holy Places and sacred vessels, was a material and visible presentation of the Gospel. Observe, the main facts which took place at Sinai were these:— (1.) God, in the sovereignty of His grace, elected Israel to be His people, and solemnly covenanted with them to be their God, bestowing upon them the right to come near to Him and serve Him, or, in other words, salvation, and promising, in token of His favour and reconciliation towards them, to dwell amongst them. (2.) When God proposed to come down and talk with them on Sinai, they felt themselves unable, through a consciousness of sin, to avail themselves of the priestly privilege conferred upon them, and so entreated Moses to act as mediator. In due course, the duties of mediation were transferred to Aaron and his sons. (3.) A system of sacrifice was appointed, through which the sinful nation could still realise their priestly character, if not immediately in their own proper persons, at least mediately in the persons of the priests. Hence the main ideas that required to be presented before the minds of the people were these:—

1. The fact *that God was graciously pleased to dwell among them*, and take them into covenant with Himself. This was done by the setting up amongst them of a Tabernacle in which His symbolic presence might continually reside.

2. The fact *that they through sin were unfit to appear in God's presence* and enjoy His favour. This was done by concealing God's presence within the second veil,

and shutting off the entire congregation from any access to the dwelling except through the medium of the priesthood.

3. The fact *that before any approach to God could be made, the guilt of sin must be expiated, and the pollution of sin removed.* This was done by the presence of the altar of burnt offering and the laver in the outer court.

4. The fact *that when sin has been expiated and cleansed, a sinful being passes into a state of acceptance with God,* in which He enjoys certain privileges of enlightenment and sustenance (both spiritual), and is enabled to perform certain duties. This was taught by the entrance of the priest as the representative of the pardoned and renewed worshipper into the Holy Place, where he walked in the light of the golden candlestick, and partook of the shew-bread, and offered up incense upon the altar.

5. The fact *that a distance still intervened between the enjoyment of the Divine favour and serving in the immediate presence of God.* This was signified by excluding even the common priesthood from the Holy of Holies.

6. The fact *that God's continued presence in the midst of them depended on the great atoning sacrifice of the everliving high priest.* This was pointed at by the entrance once a year into the Holy of Holies of the high priest with his official robes and the blood of sprinkling wherewith to sprinkle the Mercy-Seat. Now these are the fundamental ideas of the Gospel scheme; so that practically the Hebrew worshipper had a Gospel sermon preached to him every time that he approached the Tabernacle. (1.) *Being shut out from the Tabernacle,* he was practically told that he was a sinner, and that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and that evil shall not dwell with Him. (2.) *Seeing the Tabernacle before him,* he was visibly reminded that, sinful though he was, God was yet "waiting to be gracious." (3.) *Approaching the Tabernacle, and finding that he could not advance a step without the service of a priest,* he was as good as informed that no man can come to God without a mediator, a truth of which Christ reminds us when He says, "No man can come unto the Father but by Me." (4.) *Beholding the altar of burnt-offering* immediately he crossed the threshold of the court, the altar said to him, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." (5.) *Advancing towards the laver,* he was directed to the truths that, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (6.) *Entering the holy place,* in the person of his representative, he learnt that they whose sins are forgiven, and whose hearts are renewed, enjoy a twofold privilege, viz., of spiritual enlightenment and spiritual provision, and have one all-embracing duty to perform, that of transforming their whole lives into "a savour of a sweet smell unto God." (7.) *Gazing on the solemn ceremony of the great day of atonement,* when the high priest passed into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the warm blood of the slain victim on the Mercy-Seat, he was taught that the salvation of God's people depended on the services of One who, with His own blood, should enter into God's immediate presence, there to make intercession for them. Thus *the main elements of gospel truth* were exhibited before them, and were doubtless in some feeble measure apprehended at least by the spiritually-minded among the community. With the advantage possessed by us of studying the symbolism of the Tabernacle in the light of the gospel, many things are clear to us which were comparatively dark to them. We can see, for instance, that the outer court was **a type of the Israelitish theocracy,** in which the worshipper was not able personally to enter upon the functions of his priesthood, but could only perform them by deputy, that the holy place was **a type of the Christian Church,** in which every worshipper is a priest unto God, offering up the incense of prayer and praise, enjoying spiritual illumination, and nourishing his soul upon the Bread of Life; and that the Holy of Holies was a **a type of heaven,** in which all God's people will ultimately attain to the immediate vision of God.—See Kurtz's "Sacrificial Worship."

C. *The Consecration of the Building.*

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle." . . . xl. 34–38.

"To consecrate the sanctuary, which had been finished and erected as His dwelling, and to give to the people a visible proof that He had chosen it for His dwelling, Jehovah filled the dwelling in both its parts with the cloud which shadowed forth His presence, so that Moses was unable to enter it. This cloud afterwards drew back into the Most Holy Place, to dwell there, above the outspread wings of the Cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant; so that Moses and (at a later period) the priests were able to enter the Holy Place, and perform the required service there, without seeing the sign of the gracious presence of God, which was hidden by the curtain of the Most Holy Place. So long as the Israelites were on their journey to Canaan, the presence of Jehovah was manifested outwardly and visibly by the cloud, which settled upon the Ark when they came to a halt, and rose up from it when they were to travel onward." —Keil. A distinction appears to be drawn between the *glory* of the Lord which filled the Tabernacle, and the *cloud* which rested on the tent of the congregation. Turning, however, to Leviticus xvi. 2, we find that above the Mercy-Seat, within the Holy of Holies, the glory of the Lord was revealed in a cloud; and looking to ver. 38 in this section, we see that in the pillar of cloud there was a fire or glory which flashed forth by night above the tent of Israel. The probability is, therefore, that we have here *a double sided emblem* of the Divine presence, with *a twofold manifestation*, one within the Tabernacle, in which the bright side predominated, and the other without the Tabernacle, in which the dark or obscure side predominated.

I. **The double-sided symbol of Jehovah's presence.** "No man hath seen God at any time." His glorious presence, therefore, has always been manifested mediately—latterly through Jesus Christ; under the Old Testament economy through material symbols. Here there are two terms used—עָנָן a cloud, and כָּבוֹד glory, translated by the LXX. δόξα, which two things were almost invariably united in manifestations of the Divine presence. To Abraham the Divine presence appeared as "a smoking furnace and a burning lamp" (Gen. xv. 17). Here were the fire and cloud. At the Red Sea the pillar which stood between Israel and the hosts of Pharaoh was double-sided, light towards Israel, dark towards their foes (Ex. xiii. 21; xiv. 19, 20). On Sinai, when God came down to talk with Israel, there were again the gloom of cloud and the light of fire shining through it (Ex. xix. 16–18). Similarly when Isaiah beholds Jehovah's presence there are the glory and cloud (Is. vi. 4 compared with John xii. 41). Ezekiel's vision had the like characteristics, "a great cloud and a fire infolding itself" (i. 4). Putting these and other Scripture notices together, we can gather that the material symbol of God's presence was a cloud infolding a fire which, when the fire predominated, and as it were etherealised the cloud, shone forth as a brilliant light called **the glory of the Lord**, but which, when the cloud predominated, deepened down into a dark, dull, burning red fire, which symbolised **the devouring wrath of God**. There was thus taught the three well-known New Testament ideas, that God is invisible to mortal eye, that God is light, and that God is a consuming fire; that is to say, while this all-glorious essence is to us enveloped in a cloud of darkness, in Himself He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all—which light, however, may be either the light of love or the fire of wrath. So in Christ—the latest manifestation of the Divine presence—there was **the cloud of His material body** concealing **the glory of His Godhead** within; which at times shone out in *a brilliant light of love* and truth upon His believing

people—"I am the light of the world;" but at other times, as upon the Pharisees, gleamed forth *in terrible denunciations of wrath*—"I am come to send fire upon the earth."

II. The twofold manifestation of the Divine presence.

1. *Within the dwelling as a glory.* The dwelling having been designed as a symbol of heaven, where the glory of God shines forth undimmed and unobscured, the cloud was, so to speak, etherealised, licked up, and the pure light shone forth between the Cherubim, which were emblems of Perfected Humanity. It is probable, although this is only a conjecture, that the glory paled its lustre when the high priest entered, so that to him it always seemed encircled with a thin white cloud, for the reason that, though he was symbolically holy, he was not in reality so. But to all intents and purposes it was a cloudless light which burned between the Cherubim, which seemed to symbolise the two truths with which we are so familiar; (1) that "God is light," all spirituality, purity, intelligence, in His essence; and (2) that heaven is a region in which the pardoned soul shall walk in the clear light of God's love and truth (Rev. xxi. 23, 24).

2. *Without the dwelling as a cloud.* Outside the dwelling was not God's immediate presence. Hence outside His glory was vailed. So it was when Christ came to earth. So it is in the Church and the world. Still the two things were there—the cloud and the glory; and the vailed presence of the all-glorious Jehovah is still with His Church, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," and with them for the same purposes, (1) *to guide*, which the pillar did to Israel, the cloud shutting in the fire by day, and the fire piercing through the cloud by night; (2) *to protect*, which again the pillar did to Israel. Doubtless during night the light which shone upon the tents of Israel was soft and mellow, while that which gleamed forth through the darkness upon all the outlying world was fierce and dark. All which Christ is to His Church: **a guide**, going before her and ever saying "Follow Me" (Luke ix. 59): **a protector**, saying, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. iii. 10). As Israel followed the cloud, so ought the Church, both collectively and individually, to follow Christ: *not advancing* in any line of action till Christ, by His Word and Providence, clearly and emphatically points the way; but the moment such indication is given, *advancing* promptly, courageously, continuously, till Christ again indicates that the time has come to rest. So, following her Divine Guide, the Church of Christ, like Israel, will enjoy the help of her Divine Protector: and this protection will be like that vouchsafed to Israel: (1) efficacious—"upon the tabernacle" sat the cloud and fire, conveying the idea of complete security: (2) seasonable—"by day the cloud: by night the fire," suggesting the idea that the succour will be always suited to the Church's need:" (3) visible—"in the sight of all the house of Israel." When Christ interposes to protect the Church, the Church shall be conscious of it, and the world shall see it: (4) perpetual—"throughout all their journeys." So Christ says to His people, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XL.

BY

REV. WM. ADAMSON.

Bible-Firmament. Vers. 1–33. 1. The grandeur and majestic beauty of the starry heavens appeal to the senses of a blind man in vain. But if his eyes are opened, the full glory of that dazzling sight would burst upon his astonished gaze, when his face was turned towards the sky. Brown well says, If that man presently looks through a telescope, his quickened sight would pierce still further into the depths of space, and myriads of bright stars, till then unsuspected and unknown, would become visible to him. And returning night after

night to the contemplation of this entrancing sight, the astronomer, penetrating still further into its heavenly depths, and pondering deeply over the pleasing discoveries, begins in a measure to apprehend the order and arrangement of its parts. 2. Even so with the Bible firmament. The natural man is blind—he cannot see the revolving worlds of truth-light. But when the Holy Spirit opens his eyes to behold the wondrous star-beauties in the love of God, then he is filled with awe and rapture. With the glass of faith, he daily surveys this firmament of truth. Its glories become visible to him. Its general beauties are discernible by him. Each survey adds to his store of knowledge, as well as his source of happiness. He begins to see exquisite arrangement, order, and system. Portions of a gigantic plan begin to unfold themselves before his entranced and admiring gaze. He catches glimpses of beauteous and harmonious systems, all exquisitely balanced, and all revolving in wondrous unity and sublimity of purpose—drawing forth the exultant symphony—

"When all Thy wonders, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

Tabernacle *versus* Churches! Ver. 1. There was but one place of worship for the Jew; there are many for the Christian. Farrar says, it is one of the great blessings of our country that there is not a town or village which is left without its house of God. In most places, these places of worship are the chief centres of reverence and interest, and have stood unchanged amid a thousand changes for immemorial years. Generations have gone to rest under the shadow of their elms; and their spire, whose silent finger points to heaven, has been the last sight that the village boy has seen. A thousand memories make them dear to us. It is there that we have learned to regard ourselves as children of our Heavenly Father. It is there that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, has fallen like the dew of Hermon. It is there that we have heard "the still small voice," whose calmness is louder than the thunders of Sinai.

"And 'tis for this they stand,
The old gray churches of our native land!
To keep our spirits lowly,
To set within our hearts sweet thoughts and holy!" —*Landon.*

Church-Consecration! Ver. 2. The first memorial church at Ambatonakanga! Patience and hope had to be exercised. The workmen were dull, but, dull as they were, to save a little trouble, they would scamp the work, and put in rubbish-material with an ingenuity that only constant inspection could detect. Moses had no such difficulties to contend with. But, at the end of three years, it was "finished." The day of opening (22d January 1867) was made an occasion of great rejoicing by the Christian part of the community, and numbers even of the heathen inhabitants pressed into the building at the dedicatory services. Doubtless many of the Egyptian and Amalekite camp followers stood around Israel's host on the first day of the first month. Dr. Ellis remarks it is difficult to describe the varied emotions of those who joined in the services of that glad day. It was impossible not to feel—"what hath God wrought." It was impossible not to exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

"Oh then, with hymns of praise
These hallow'd courts shall ring;
Our voices we will raise
The Three in One to sing."
—*Chandler.*

Tabernacle-Unity! Vers. 3-33. The saintly Leighton says, Be not sudden. Take God's work together, and do not judge of it by parcels. There are the ark and the table, the altar and the laver, the lamp and the curtains, &c.; and each of them is wisdom and righteousness. But we shall best discern the beauty of it when we look on it in the frame, when it shall be fully finished, and our eyes are enlightened to take a clearer view of it than we can have here. What endless wondering will it then command! All the parts of the "tabernacle of God," of the mystery of redemption, will then present one harmonious whole. And as, when looking on a far-stretching landscape of surpassing unity of loveliness, the spectator exclaims, "It wants but the glory of the sun to lighten it," so, when surveying the outspread, upreared structure of grace, your soul will be ready to exclaim, "It wants but the glory of the Sun of Righteousness." And even as you cry, lo! the Sun will arise and shine, and a voice will sound, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

"O'er the gloomy hills of darkness,
Look my soul, be still and gaze;
All the promises do travail
With a glorious day of grace.
Blessed jubilee!
Let thy glorious morning dawn!"
—*Williams.*

Olive-Tree! Ver. 9. When the Jews entered the Holy Land, they would find abundant supplies of oil in the extensive and fertile oliveyards, which had been well tilled by the aboriginal inhabitants. Bernard says that almost every village in Palestine has its olive-grove at this day. There are health and vigour in the fresh look of a flourishing olive-tree, but especially when a grove of them is seen together, and the sun shining on their

glossy leaves. The foliage is of a deep and peculiar green; and, under a passing breeze, the uppermost leaves twine round and show a fine silvery hue. M'Cheyne asks, "Where could we find a better emblem of the Church in a flourishing condition than just such a grove of olives, with the peaceful notes of the turtle poured forth in the midst, and the sun's living light over all, like the Sun of Righteousness shining over His peaceful Church?" As the sun

"Doth spread his radiance through the fields of air,
And kindle in revolving stars his blaze,
He pours upon His Church the brightness of His rays." —*Upham.*

Exodus-Emblems! Vers. 16–23. Judaism was, so to speak, a pictorial Bible. How often in families, on Sunday afternoons, has the pious father or mother opened the volume before the children. They have not been able to understand clearly the reading, but when the picture has been set clear before their eyes, what an insight is thus furnished to the little students! And the written law and visible types formed such a pictorial Bible. They had the written word in the parchment rolls which the scribes and scholars could read; and they had another blazing on Aaron's breastplate, curling up in the smoke of the altar and hovering over the mercy-seat. This was a Bible which the runner could read, and which the unlettered peasant and untutored infant could spell. If he read about Jehovah's majesty, or sin-excluding sanctity, that God was greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, "Who shall abide in Thy tabernacle?" most likely only a faint impression would be made. But when he saw the picture, *i.e.*, when he went up to the house of God, descried afar off the mystic curtain, and remembered that within that was the Shekinah, his spirit would be subdued to reverence. This explains the anxiety of Moses to paint the pictures exactly as God commanded him.

"What hast thou here? A book; but what a book!
Another such, nor hath been, nor shall be;
Of universal love th' epitome:
The oracles the Everlasting spoke."

Ark-Testimony! Ver. 20. Atwater says the fact that the ark was designed for the safe keeping of the two tablets on which the decalogue was written, is one of many indications that these tablets were regarded as very precious. If one observes that the ten words were inscribed on stone for the sake of permanence, that this durable record was preserved in a chest specially constructed for the purpose—that this depository of the inscription was the sole furniture of that department in the tabernacle, which is not merely the holiest of all, but accessible only through the outer chamber and the court—that the tabernacle itself was the centre of the encampment, he must conclude that, *as its kernel is the most valuable part of the nut, or as the soul is the most precious part of man*, so the words inscribed on the tablets of testimony were more important than the successive shells and caskets by which they were protected and preserved.

"O Father! hath it such undying force
When unrevealed, and left without attest
Of miracle from Thee, and unconquered
By man; and shall not Thine own WORD go forth,
In all its fulness, through these times unblest? —*Cranch.*

Christ and the Law! Vers. 20, 21. There was, says Sibree, a certain officer, a rich man, in a distant part of the country of Madagascar, who, when dying, ordered his friends to observe the following ceremonies after his death. His coffin was to be filled with money, to be surrounded with soldiers and by his family, and to hold his body with outstretched open hand. All this was done, and while some wondered, others said, "See, the man wishes to show us that all his money cannot purchase life, that all his soldiers cannot protect him from death, and that all his weeping relatives cannot prolong his existence. See, he stretches out his hand, and *asks for something more now.*" Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God, and so shall the *dead Jewish* nation. There it lies, like the army of bones in Ezekiel's Valley of Vision. All its wealth of privileges have not satisfied; all its sentinel host of laws and ceremonies have not preserved it from national decay; and all its weeping descendants around the "stones of the Place of Wailing" have no life-giving virtue. Israel, as a nation, rests to-day in its coffin with empty open hand; but soon another hand shall grasp it, as it did the hand of the maid, or of the widow's son: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. I am the Resurrection and the Life."

"The veil of darkness rend in twain,
Which hides their Shiloh's glorious light;
The sever'd olive branch again
To its own parent stock unite."—*Joyce.*

Lamp-Light! Ver. 25. It has been said that the Church, *like the moon*, shines only with a borrowed light. She has no resources of her own. All depends upon the central Sun of Righteousness, not only for illumination, but for every other kind or degree of influence. 1. God uses human instruments, and rarely, if ever, works independently of them, but when they effect their aim, the power comes from above. A *sailing vessel*, perfectly appointed and manned, cannot move in a calm. The apostles were held fast in Jerusalem until the Spirit lit their lamp. 2. Whether in the conversion of the individual, or in mighty movements among races and nations, the

effect is due to a supernatural cause. In the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, that brilliant lamp, Luther, had no light in himself; he was non-light-giving, until the Mediator lit the flame of grace in his soul. 3. The lamp of the Spirit lightens this Gospel dispensation,—this outer court, or vestibule of heaven, where are the table of shewbread and incense altar. But there was no light in the "HOLIEST," until the pillar-cloud slowly swept in majesty Divine from the summit of Sinai; for "the Lord God and the Lamb are the LIGHT thereof."

"From what pure well
Of milky light, whose soft, o'erflowing urn,
Are all these lamps so filled? these friendly lamps,
For ever streaming o'er life's troubled deep,
To point our path, and light us to our home."
—*Barbauld.*

Altar and Incense. Ver. 27. This was the daily offering of the incense by the ministering priest, morning and evening. Standing by the great brazen altar, and placing, by means of a silver shovel, some live coals in his censer, carrying at the same time a handful of frankincense, he advanced to the golden altar in front of the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The whole of the congregation during these solemn moments preserved a profound silence. They remained outside engaged in devout prayer (Luke i. 10); while the priest, at an appointed signal, after laying the censer on the golden altar, cast the incense on the fire, and the fragrant cloud ascended. Here we have a figure of the continual intercession, day by day, of the Lord Jesus in heaven.

"With boldness, therefore, at the throne,
Let us make all our sorrows known;
And ask the aids of heavenly power
To help us in the evil hour." —*Bruce.*

Incense-Fire! Ver. 27. 1. Law says that the Spirit has selected incense as a type of prayer in Ps. cxli. 2, and we have here a graphic image of the prayer of prayers,—the intercession of the King-priest Jesus. Mark whence the kindly fire was brought. It came not from a human hearth. The outer altar gave the supply. It was the very fire from heaven. It was the very fire which consumed each offering. 2. Thus the victim-altar feeds the incense-altar. The prayer of Christ receives its life, its power, its vigour from His blood-stained cross. The argument which prevails is drawn from justice satisfied—payment made, wrath appeased, law fulfilled, curse endured, covenant discharged. Christ's intercession rests upon His DEATH.

"See, He lifts His hands above;
See, He shows the prints of love;
Hark! His gracious lips bestow
Blessings on His Church below;
Still for us *His death He pleads;*—
Prevalent He intercedes." —*Wesley.*

House of Prayer! Ver. 29. 1. It is true that the sincere worshipper may anywhere worship the Father in spirit and in truth,—may everywhere and in every place lift up holy hands, without wrath or doubting,—in the home or by the roadside, in the secret chamber as in the crowded street. Yet, undoubtedly, the associations of worship do tend to hallow and solemnise our souls. Doubtless this was one of the many objects which Jehovah had in view when He originated the *one* tabernacle and its services. These, Farrar well says, tend to exclude dreams of self-interest and images of sin. They inspire, by imperceptible influence, the vast conceptions of death, judgment, and eternity. 2. And so with the *many* Christian houses of prayer. It is a happy and beautiful thing in such structures for worship, as are the splendid legacy to ages of faithfulness from an age of faith, in the many-coloured light that streams from painted windows, and under the cool, fretted aisles, among silent and scattered worshippers, to kneel down—the happy to thank God and make melody in their hearts, the unhappy to implore Him, "Make haste, O Lord, to deliver me."

"How beautiful they stand,
Those ancient altars of our native land!
Amid the pasture-fields and dark green woods,
Amid the mountain's cloudy solitudes."
—*Landon.*

Israel-Initiation! Vers. 34–38. Kalisch has admirably remarked that, at the beginning of Exodus, we found the descendants of Jacob a multitude of ill-treated and idolatrous slaves. At its end, we leave them a free nation, the guardians of eternal truth, the witnesses of overwhelming miracles. Released from the vain and busy worldliness of Egypt, they encamp in the silent desert,—in isolated and solemn solitude,—holding converse only with their thoughts and with their God. Before them stood the visible habitation of Him whom they acknowledged and adored as their rescuer from Egyptian thraldom. The mysterious structure disclosed to them many profound ideas of their new religion. They respected the priests as their representatives and mediators. Between God and His people communion was opened; life had its aim, and virtue its guide.

"'Is this the way, my Father?' 'Tis, my child;
Thou must pass through this mazy, dreary wild,
If thou would'st reach the Canaan undefiled,—
The happy land above.'"

Divine-Dwelling! Vers. 34, 35. The tabernacle was a peripatetic shrine, a cathedral that could be carried about, a temple of canvass and tapestry which accompanied Israel in their wanderings. It sufficed, says Hamilton, as a visible centre of worship, till

such time as the waving tapestry solidified into carvings of cedar, and the badger skins were replaced by tall arcades of marble, and the tent had grown to a temple. And that New Year's day, when Aaron and his sons came forth in the gorgeous garments which they now for the first time put on, and when over the dedicated shrine the cloud descended, and such a glory filled the tabernacle that Moses and the attendant ministers were forced to withdraw, devotion must have felt somewhat like what, on a similar occasion, Solomon expressed, "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon earth?"

"But will, indeed, Jehovah deign
Here to abide, no transient guest?
Here will the world's Redeemer reign?
And here the Holy Spirit rest?"
—*Montgomery.*

Tabernacle-Truth! Ver. 34. Thomson says that the tabernacle was intended mainly to furnish the *machinery* for the regular ongoing and visible outworking of the Mosaic institutions, and was, therefore, the natural centre of the Old Testament economy. It may have been designedly so arranged as to admit of more than one interpretation; but the main end and aim was to localise the Divine Presence. Such is man's nature, that what is far off and out of sight produces but a feeble impression. It was, therefore, necessary to give a local habitation to this awful presence. Going up to the tabernacle, the pious Hebrews came consciously before the heart-searching God, who could not be deceived. This felt presence gave tone, solemnity, and intensity to the verbal formulas of public worship. Indeed, the whole *costume* of the devotional and poetic portions of the Bible has been coloured by this vivid consciousness of God's presence. In the least,

"As well as in the greatest of His words,
Is ever manifest a present God,
As in the systems of revolving suns,
Through time revolving in unbounded space." —*Wilcox.*

Mosaic-Revelation! Ver. 34. When Noah, the world's second father, received the truth from God, it was all in *heaven's own currency, full weight and without a flaw.* But as soon as it began to circulate, it began to deteriorate. Consigned to no written record, when entrusted to the memory of man, with all his prejudices and bad propensities, they were *like shillings dropped into the tide.* When next you see them, you can hardly recognise them, crusted over with such uncouth or monstrous additions, and changed into a substance so remote from the bright original. To obviate this difficulty to some extent, a written revelation in the tables of stone, as well as a symbolic revelation in the tabernacle of witness, were furnished to Israel. And to complete the revelation—to let Israel understand that it was more than earthly in its origin, object, and ostensible culmination—a cloud covered the tent of the congregation. Yet not a cloud of nature's forming, but the cloud of God.

"Whence but from HEAVEN could men, unskilled in arts,
In several ages born, in several parts,
Weave such agreeing truths?" —*Dryden.*

Glory Glimpses! Vers. 34, 35. 1. The natural eye is too weak to contemplate unvaried, dazzling whiteness for any lengthened period without suffering. And in the snowy regions of Tartary and Thibet, travellers have to provide themselves with hair spectacles, to protect their eyes from the dazzling whiteness of the snow. Huc, a Roman missionary, in his "Travels," says that in traversing the plateau of Wa-ho, throughout the day the sky was pure and serene, with not the faintest film of vapours flecking its brilliant azure-blue. But this excess of fine weather was a source of suffering. The glare of the sun was so intensely dazzling that his hair spectacles were of little use in averting inflammation. 2. So brilliant was the effulgent glory of God, that Moses, who beheld the cloud-glories of God on Sinai, could not endure the ineffable brightness of the Shekinah, and had to withdraw. Yet is there a time coming when the saints shall see the face of God and live; when the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and God shall dwell with them, and when from His glory the redeemed shall draw a ceaseless fount of light and gladness, for "light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart."

"The Sun shall then be face to face behold
In all His robes, with all His glory on,
Seated sublime on His eternal throne."
—*Prior.*

Tabernacle-Teaching! Vers. 33–35. We are all more or less familiar with "Object-Lessons." Any one entering a school must have observed, and probably may have heard, teachers giving instruction to the children from objects before them. The tabernacle was designed to give such an object-lesson. It was the *planetarium*, which astronomers use in their class-rooms to explain to students heavenly things. In Heb. ix. 23, St. Paul, speaking by the Spirit, says that it was a pattern of things in the heavens. Its respective parts were symbols — "object-lessons to Jewish childhood"—of the deep things of God, — those heavenly mysteries eternal in the heavens.

"Friendly their Teacher stood, the bright
Angel of Light there among them,
And to His children explained He the holy,
the highest in type-words,—
Striking, yet simple and clear, for sublimity
always is simple." —*Longfellow.*

Cloud-Pillar! Vers. 36–38. 1. *Supernatural!* Because it was always (1) *upright;* see Heb. ix. 12; and (2) *unique.* Ordinary clouds are seen in all kinds of form, and change every moment. It was always distinctly recognisable from every other cloud. 2. *Sacramental!* This significance is brought out in 1 Cor. x. 1. (1.) *Reviving:* Paul's language justifies the impression that it was surcharged with a grateful moisture, which it shed upon the people. (2.) *Refreshing:* as a baptism of refreshment amid the desert sun glare. 3. *Symbolical!* The typical signification of the cloud appears in Is. iv. 5—the presence of God with His Church. (1.) *Guidance:* most (*a*) certain, and most (*b*) constant. (2.) *Governance:* (*a*) shrouding from foes, and (*b*) sheltering from fierce heat. He who knows the voice of Christ will not follow any other voice; and he who depends on the Divine protection need fear no evil.

"Jesus, still lead on,
'Till our rest be won;
And, although the way be cheerless,
We will follow, calm and fearless.
Guide us by Thy hand
To our fatherland."—*Zinzendorf.*

Jew-Journeyings! Ver. 36. The cloud gave them a light, by which night-journeys became as safe and easy as those in the daytime could be. 1. Doubtless the night was often chosen by God as the season of His people's travel, as it is still chosen by the caravans which have to cross the Arabian deserts. After the sun has set, a cool breeze is wont to blow,—the air becomes less stifling, and the sandy soil less hot, so that wayfarers are able to accomplish twice the distance by night that they would travel with great difficulty during the day. 2. In such night-journeys modern caravans are commonly preceded by a large fire signal borne aloft upon a pole,—an iron basketful of blazing pitch and resinous woods and rags steeped in oil. By keeping his eye fixed upon that beacon-light, a pilgrim can save himself from being lost even in the darkness. But how much better was the light by night for Israel! And how true an emblem of the light of truth, which the spirit of Jesus sheds upon our way!

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom;
I do not ask to see
The distant way; one step's enough for me."

Cloud-Covering! Ver. 37. 1. A company of Covenanters had been pursued by their persecutors until their strength was exhausted. Their leader stopped in his flight, and called upon them to join in prayer. As he lifted up his voice in supplication that "Jehovah would wrap His cloak around them," a mist rose up about the hill, and shrouded them from the pursuers, who failed to discover their refuge. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." 2. When the brave Arnaud and his little band of Vaudois peasants were in despair of escaping unseen from the ruined entrenchments of Balsille to the ridge of Guigenevert, a cloud of mist came rolling down the valley, so that, enveloped in its sable curtain, they were able to descend undiscovered by the foe, who, at dawn of day, when the fogs rolled off, were astonished to see their *prey* perched like the eagle beyond their reach. 3. When pursued by Pharaoh, the cloud-covering hid them from their enemies, and also prevented them from perceiving the terrors which menaced them. Who shall say how often the host of Israel was thus shielded from wild, marauding hordes, during the up and down wanderings in silence for forty years? Such an ample protection, too, has the believer in the presence of God, not only from the enemy who thirsts to regain him as his prey, but also from all enemies whatsoever.

"Thou whisperest some loving word,
I catch the much-loved tone;
I feel Thee *near*, my gracious Lord!
I know Thou keepest watch and ward,
So all my fears are gone."

Cloud-Canopy! Ver. 38. As Rooke remarks, it was really a pillar of fire, *i.e.*, a lofty column of fiery light surrounded by a fleecy cloud, which in the daytime prevented the cloud being seen, just as any artificial light of our own can easily be hidden when the sun is shining, *if we cover it round with a screen of muslin or of gauze-like paper.* So in the daytime Israel saw the symbol of Jehovah's presence in the semblance of a white cloud, and nothing more. But at night, when darkness had succeeded to the glare of sunlight, the fiery core of the pillar shone out through the mist-like veil, and shed a moony radiance over all the wilderness,—a clear, yet soft and mellowed light, which did not, like the moon, wax and wane, but continued always the same. Image of Him in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, softened and subdued by the veil of His stainless humanity.

"A thin, pure veil of filmy mist and vapour,
Scarcely less subtle than the luminous hair
Dishevell'd, streaming from a comet's brow,
Through which the faintest star shines undim'd."

Finis! Vers. 33–38. "Behold, I make all things new!" How that voice rolled melodiously over the sunset crimson waves of the Ægean Sea. And as the Patmos seer looked, he saw not the clouds piled up and around the western sun as confused cumuli; but the holy city, the heavenly temple, the Divine tabernacle. The city and house of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, was bathed in a flood of everlasting brightness. All the costliest materials

gold and crystal, and every stone of priceless value, from the jasper to the amethyst, were employed to symbolise a glory which cannot otherwise be translated into human language. As the Evangelist gazes, his ears catch other strains, "It is finished." He knows the voice, though it rolls sublimely far and wide. It is the voice of Him who on the cross cried, "It is finished;" who in the banquet hall said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." "Behold" (Rev. xxi.) "the tabernacle of God is with men." Twice over in one verse it is said, "He will dwell with them." The last stone has been placed,—the last jewel has been clustered in the magnificent structure of ransomed humanity, by the Divine Mediator and Builder, and on that imperishable pile rests the glory of the Divine presence.

"His foundation is in the holy mountains!
The Lord loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.
Glowing things are spoken of thee, thou
House of God!
When the Lord shall build up Zion
He shall appear in His glory!"
—*Ps.* lxxxvii. 1; cii. 16.