THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

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

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

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DEUTERONOMY.

Exposition

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Homiletics

By REV. C. CLEMANCE, B.A., D.D.

Homilies by Various Authors.

REV. J. ORR, M.A., B.D. REV. R. M. EDGAR, M.A.

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THE

BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. Title and General Character.

This book, which ranks as the closing book of the Pentateuch, the Fifth of the Fifths of the Law (חֻמָּשׁ תּוֹרָת), as the Jews designate it, is in the Hebrew canon named from its two initial words, *'Elleh Had-debhârîm* (אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים), or simply *Debhârîm*, according to an ancient usage with the Jews (Origen on Ps. i. ap. Huetii 'Origeniana,' tom. i. p. 47; Jerome, 'Prol. Gal.'). The name Deuteronomy it received from the Greek translators, whom the Vulgate follows (Δευτερονόμιον, *Deuteronomium*). Probably this was the name in use among the Hellenistic Jews, for this may be regarded as a fair rendering of the phrase, *Mishneh Hat-torah* (מִשְׁנֶה הַתּוֹרָה), "Iteration of the Law," by which some of the rabbins designate this book—a phrase taken from ch. xvi. 18, though there having a different sense (see note on the passage). The name "Deuteronomy" is thus somewhat misleading, as it is apt to suggest that there is in this book either a second code of laws or a recapitulation of laws already delivered, whereas it is rather a summary, in a hortatory manner, of what it most concerned the people to keep in mind, both of the Lord's doings on their behalf, and of what it was his will they should specially observe and do when settled in the promised land. Many parts of the Law, as already promulgated, are not so much as alluded to; very few new laws are enunciated; and in general it is the civil and social rather than the ceremonial institute, the personal and ethical rather than the political and official aspect of the Law, that is dwelt upon. This character of the book some of the rabbins have signalized by the title *Sepher Tôkdhôth*, "Book of Admonitions or Reproofs," with special reference to ch. xxviii. The unsuitableness of such a title to the book as "Deuteronomy," was long ago pointed out by Theodoret, who asserts ('Quæst. I. in Deut.') that it is not a *second* Law that Moses here gives, but that he only recalls to memory what had been already given.

The book is thus neither properly historical nor properly legislative, though in a measure it is both. It is historical, inasmuch as it records certain things said and done at a particular time in the history of Israel; and it is legislative, inasmuch as it enunciates certain statutes, ordinances, and rules which the people were bound to observe. But properly it is a hortatory book—a book of orations or discourses (דְּבָרִים), in which the subjectivity of the author is throughout prominent. In this respect it is markedly different from the earlier books of the Pentateuch, in which the objective element prevails. "In Deutoronomy it is the parænetic element that is especially predominant; in place of the objective rigorous injunction, there is here the most impressive exhortation; in place of the letter, legally imperative and averse from development, which finds the ground of its highest necessity in itself, there prevails here reflection on the Law, and on this line the latter is brought nearer to the feelings. The book has thus a prophetic colouring, the germ of which we have already seen in the close of Leviticus, but which has here a wider compass and authoritative significance. The book is a foretype of the prophetic discourse; and from this peculiarity may be explained how, for instance, a later prophetism (Jeremiah and Ezekiel) connects itself with this type" (Hävernick, 'Einleit,' i. 522; cf. 'Introd. to the Pentateuch,' translated by Thomson, p. 338).

§ 2. Contents of the Book.

The book consists chiefly of three lengthened addresses, delivered by Moses to the people on the eastern side of the Jordan, after they had obtained possession by conquest of the region stretching northwards from the borders of Moab towards those of Aram. After a brief notice of the circumstances of time and place when the addresses were uttered (ch. i. 1—5), the first address begins. Moses first of all recalls to the recollection of the people certain important particulars in their past history, with the view apparently of preparing them for the admonitions and injunctions he is about to lay upon them (ch. i. 6—iii. 29). This recapitulation is followed by a series of earnest exhortations to obedience to the Divine ordinances, and warnings against idolatry and the forsaking of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and the only true God (ch. iv. 1—40). To this address is appended a short historical notice of the appointment of three cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan (vers. 41—43).

The second address, which is also introduced by a brief notice of the circumstances under which it was delivered (ch. iv. 44—49), extends over twenty-one chapters (ch. v.—xxvi.). In it Moses goes over the leading ethical precepts of the Law which he, as the servant of God, had already declared to the people. He begins by reminding them how God had made a covenant with them in Horeb, and then, having repeated the "ten words" of the covenant—the ten commandments which Jehovah spake to the

assembled multitude—and having uttered a general exhortation to obedience (ch. v. 1—33), he proceeds to admonish the people to love Jehovah the one God, to be obedient to his Law, to teach it diligently to their children, and to avoid all intercourse with the idolatrous nations of Canaan, on the possession of which they were about to enter. This admonition is enforced by threatening of judgments on idolaters; victory over the Canaanites is promised; the gradual but utter extinction of these idolatrous peoples is foretold; and a command is given to destroy all objects of idolatrous worship to be found in the land (ch. vi. 1—vii. 26). A cursory review of God's dealings with Israel in guiding them through the wilderness is then taken, as furnishing ground for enforcing obedience to the Law; the danger of self-confidence and forgetfulness of God is pointed out; cautions are given against self-righteousness and spiritual pride; and, to enforce these, the people are reminded of their sins and rebelliousness in the wilderness, of Moses' intercession for them, and of God's grace and goodness, especially as shown in his restoring the two tables after they had been broken, and writing on them anew the law of the ten commandments (ch. viii. 1—x. 5).

At this point a short notice of the journeyings of the Israelites in the region of Mount Hor is introduced, with notices of the death of Aaron, of the continuance of the priesthood in his family, and of the separation of the tribe of Levi to the service of the sanctuary (ch. x. 6—11). The address is then resumed, and the people are exhorted to fear, obey, and love the Lord; and this is enforced by reference to God's claims upon them, the blessings that would ensue if they yielded to these claims, and, on the other hand, the curse that disobedience would bring upon them. In connection with this the command is given that, when they should be come into the promised land, the blessing should be put upon Mount Gerizim and the curse upon Mount Ebal, the situation of which is indicated (ch. x. 12—xi. 32).

After this Moses enters on a more minute detail of the laws which the people were to observe when settled in Canaan. Directions are given as to the destruction of all monuments of idolatry, and they are enjoined to preserve the worship of Jehovah and to present the appointed offerings to him in the place which he should choose, where also the sacrificial meal was to be eaten (ch. xii. 1—28). All intercourse with idolaters and all curious inquiries concerning their rites are to be avoided; all who would seduce to idolatry are to be put to death, even though they pretended to be prophets and to speak under Divine sanction; even the nearest relations who act this part are not to be spared; and all idolatrous cities are to be destroyed (ch. xii. 29—xiii. 18). The people are cautioned against joining in or imitating the mourning customs of the heathen, and against eating the flesh of unclean animals or of animals that had died of themselves; they are directed as to the laying aside of tithes for sacrificial meals and for the poor; they are enjoined to observe the seventh year of release for poor debtors and of emancipation for the bondman; they are commanded

to dedicate to the Lord the first-born of sheep and oxen; and they are instructed to observe the three great feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (ch. xiv. 1—xvi. 17). From these religious regulations Moses passes on to others more of a civil and social character, giving directions as to the appointment of judges and magistrates, the trial of idolaters and criminals of various classes, the choice and duties of a king, and the rights of priests and Levites; the promise of a Great Prophet like unto Moses, whom they are to hear and obey, is given; and the proper test by which any one pretending to be a prophet is to be tried, is prescribed (ch. xvi. 18—xviii. 22). Following these come some regulations as to the appointment of cities of refuge for the manslayer, the maintenance of landmarks and boundaries, the number of witnesses required to establish a charge against any one, the punishment of false witnesses, the conduct of war, exemption from service in war, the treatment of enemies, the besieging of towns, the expiation of murder where the murderer is unknown, the treatment of women taken in war, the just exercise of paternal authority, and the burial of malefactors who had been executed (ch. xix. 1—xxi. 23). The address is concluded by a series of miscellaneous injunctions relating to rights of property, the relation of the sexes, regard for animal and human life, the avoidance of what would confound distinctions made by God in the natural world, the preservation of the sanctity of the marriage bond, and the observation of integrity and purity in all the relations of life, domestic and social. After appointing the eucharistic services on the presentation of the firstfruits and tenths of the products of the field, the address is wound up with a solemn admonition to attend to and observe what the Lord had commanded (ch. xxii. 1—xxvi. 19).

In his *third* address, after directing that the Law should be inscribed on two stone pillars to be set up on Mount Ebal, when the people should have obtained possession of Canaan, Moses proceeds to charge them to proclaim in the most solemn manner, after offering burnt offerings and sacrifices, the blessing and the curse by which the Law was sanctioned, the former on Mount Gerizim, the latter on Mount Ebal (ch. xxvii. 1—26). He then more fully sets forth the blessings that should come upon the people if they hearkened to the voice of the Lord, and the curses that would befall them if they neglected his word or refused to obey it (ch. xxviii. 1—68). Moses then recapitulates what the Lord had done for Israel, and, after again referring to the blessings and curses of the Law, adjures the people to accept the covenant which God was graciously pleased to make with them, to adhere to it constantly, and so, having blessing and curse, life and death, set before them, to choose the former for themselves and their posterity (ch. xxix. 1—xxx. 20).

These three addresses of Moses to the people are followed by an account of the closing scenes and acts of his life. A few words of encouragement addressed to the people introduce the appointment of Joshua to be his successor as the leader of Israel; the Law written out by Moses is handed over to the custody of the priests, with a command that it shall be read

every seventh year to the people at the Feast of Tabernacles; Joshua is summoned with Moses into the presence of Jehovah, and receives from him his commission and authority; and Moses is commanded to write a song, and teach it to the people (ch. xxxi. 1—22). The active life of Moses was now drawing to its close. He puts the last hand on the writing of the Law; composes the song which God had commanded him to write; utters a few words of encouragement to Joshua; delivers the book of the Law to the priests that bore the ark of the covenant, with the injunction to them to put it in the side of the ark; and summons the elders of the tribes and their officers to hear from his lips, ere he left them, his solemn charge, and listen to the words of the song he had composed (vers. 23—29). Then follows the song itself; after which comes a short exhortation to the people by Moses, followed by the Divine intimation of the approaching decease of their great leader and lawgiver (ch. xxxii. 1—52). Next is inserted the blessing which Moses pronounced upon Israel in its separate tribes (ch. xxxiii. 1—29); and to this is appended an account of the death and burial of Moses, with his eulogium (ch. xxxiv. 1—12). With this the book terminates.

§ 3. Design of the Book.

From the survey of the contents of this book, it is apparent that it is not intended as a supplement to the other books of the Pentateuch, but rather is to be viewed as a closing appeal, on the part of the great leader of Israel, to those whom he had conducted and formed into a nation, directed towards inducing them to keep inviolate the covenant of the Lord, that it might be well with them and their children. With this in view, Moses selects those facts in the past history of the people the remembrance of which was most fitted to preserve them in their dependence upon and allegiance to Jehovah, and those parts of the legislation already enacted as bore most closely on the covenant relation of Jehovah to his people. It is in accordance with this design that laws of a general kind, or such as relate to official functionaries and acts, should be only briefly referred to or altogether passed over; and also that instructions as to the proper ordering of matters which could be attended to only after the settlement of the nation in Canaan, should form an important element among the farewell counsels of him who had brought them to the confines of that land, but was not himself to enter it with them.

§ 4. Author and Date of the Book.

This book presents in the general such a uniformity of representation and character, such sameness of style and method, that there can be no hesitation in accepting it as, in the main, the work of one author. Was that author Moses? That he was is the commonly received belief, handed down from a remote antiquity, and which was not seriously questioned till

comparatively recent times. Many objections, however, have been advanced against it of late; and this renders it necessary that the evidence, both in support of the traditionary belief and against it, should be carefully collected and weighed.

I. In favour of the Mosaic authorship of the book there is—

1. The weight of traditional authority. In the Christian and in the Jewish Church, so far back as we can trace, this book has been reputed the work of Moses. As to this there can be no legitimate question; the fact is indubitable. The stream of testimony may be traced from the Christian Fathers of the second century after Christ, with hardly a break, up to the time of David (cf. 1 Kings ii. 3; viii. 53; 2 Kings xiv. 5, 6; xviii. 6, 12, with ch. xxix. 9; ix. 26; xxiv. 16; x. 20). Moses is thus, so to speak, in possession, with a title which has been admitted for more than three thousand years. On those, therefore, who would dislodge him lies the burden of proving that this title is false; and this can be done only by showing from internal evidence that the book *cannot* be the writing of Moses. It will be incumbent on them also to show how this title could have been acquired, if purely fictitious—how this universal belief could have arisen, if without foundation in fact.

2. The testimony of our Lord and his apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, gives special weight to this tradition. Our Lord quotes from this book as part of the sacred writings, using the formula, "It is written," by which is indicated that the passages quoted are from the sacred canon (comp. Matt. iv. 4; ix. 7, 10, with ch. viii. 8; vi. 16; vi. 13), and recognizing it as the "Law" given by God to Israel (Matt. xxii. 24 compared with ch. vi. 5; x. 12). He expressly refers to and cites this book as the work of Moses (comp. Matt. xix. 7, 8; Mark x. 3, 4; John v. 46, 47; possibly also John vii. 19); and he implicitly attests this by assenting to the assertion of it by others (comp. Mark xii. 19; Luke xx. 28). St. Peter, in his address to the people who were collected together after the healing of the lame man at the gate of the temple, cites a passage from this book as the saying of Moses (Acts iii. 22); St. Stephen does the same in his apology to the Sanhedrim (Acts vii. 37); St. Paul quotes from this book as from Moses, in the same way as he quotes from the Book of Isaiah as from Isaiah (Rom. x. 19, 20), and at other times prefaces his citation with the words, "It is written" (Rom. xii. 19; Gal. iii. 10); and the apostles generally freely refer to the Law, *i.e.* the Thorah, or Pentateuch, including, of course, the fifth book, as of Moses. Now, the testimony of our Lord and his apostles cannot be regarded as a mere link in the chain of tradition on this point. It *is* that, but it is more than that; it is an authoritative declaration, from which it is maintained there is no appeal. Jesus, "the faithful and true Witness," and himself "the Truth," could utter only what is true; and knowing that his words, even the most minute and least weighty, were to endure for ever (Matt. xxiv. 35), and to guide the judgments and opinions of men to the latest generations, he

would be careful to order his speech so as in every case to express only what was in accordance with truth and fact. But it may be asked, "Might not our Lord have cited a passage from one of the Pentateuchal books as a saying of Moses, merely because these books were commonly called by the name of Moses, without meaning to affirm that they were actually written by him; just as one who had adopted the Wolfian theory of the composition of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' might nevertheless continue to cite from these as the works of Homer, though he doubted if Homer ever existed, and felt sure that no one man composed these poems as they are now extant?" But to this it may be replied that the cases are not parallel. When one quotes from the 'Iliad,' or the 'Odyssey,' or from any classic writing, it is for the sake of the sentiment or expression that the quotation is made, and it matters not how the source of the quotation is designated, provided the designation be such as shall direct the reader or hearer to where the passage quoted is to be found. In our Lord's citations from the book of the Law, however, the important thing is not the mere words of the passage or the mere sentiment of it, but the *authority* of the utterance, and as that was derived entirely from its being part of the Law given by Moses in whom the Jews trusted (John i. 17; v. 45; vii. 19), it was essential to the validity of his argument that it should be from Moses and none other that his citation was made. When, therefore, our Lord adduced a passage as a saying of Moses, he must have meant that the saying adduced was actually uttered by Moses—in other words, that it was found in a book which not only carried on it the name of Moses as a popular and convenient designation, but of which Moses was really the author.

3. The antiquity of the book favours the ascription of it to Moses as its author. That the book is of early date is shown partly by the allusions to it in books that come after it in the canon, partly by certain peculiarities of language by which it is marked, and partly by certain statements and references contained in it.

(1) In the Book of Jeremiah there are so many expressions, phrases, utterances, coincident with such in Deuteronomy, that there can be no doubt that the author of the one book must have had the other before his mind whilst composing his own. The only question that can be raised is whether Jeremiah cited from Deuteronomy or the author of Deuteronomy cited from Jeremiah, if indeed the same person were not the writer of both books. This point will come to be considered subsequently; at present it is sufficient to note that these coincidences afford certain evidence of the existence of the Book of Deuteronomy in the time of Jeremiah.

That it was known to Isaiah and used by him may be inferred from a comparison of the following passages:—Isa. i. 2 with ch. xxxii. 1; Isa. i. 10 with ch. xxxii. 32; Isa. i. 17 with ch. xxviii. 27; Isa. xxvii. 11 with ch. xxxii. 28; Isa. xli. 8 with ch. vii. 6 and xiv. 2; Isa. xli. 10 with ch. xxxi. 6; Isa. xlii. 2 with ch. xxxii. 15; Isa. xlvi. 8 with ch. xxxii. 7; Isa. l. 1 with ch. xxiv. 1; Isa. lviii. 14 with ch. xxxii. 13; Isa. lix. 10 and lxv. 21 with ch. xxviii. 29; Isa. lxii. 8, etc., with ch. xxviii. 31.

In Amos and Hosea there are allusions to passages in this book which prove that it was known in their day. Of these the following may be noted :—

Amos iv. 6—10 and v. 11 compared with ch. xxviii. 15, etc. In Deuteronomy certain judgments are announced as to come on Israel if apostate and impenitent; in Amos certain judgments are declared as having come on Israel because of their apostacy and impenitency; and the two are so closely identical that the prophet must be regarded as describing the fulfilment of a threatening predicted by the lawgiver. Famine, drought, blasting, and mildew, the ravages of the locust, pestilence, the diseases of Egypt, and the calamities of war are described by the prophet as what had come on Israel; and these are what are threatened in Deuteronomy in the same or equivalent words. Compare especially Amos iv. 6 with ch. xxviii. 17, 38—40; Amos iv. 7 with ch. xxviii. 23, 24; Amos iv. 9 with ch. xxviii. 22, 38, 42; Amos iv. 10 with ch. xxviii. 21, 27, 26; Amos v. 11 with ch. xxviii. 30, 39.

In Amos vi. 12 the prophet charges the people with having "turned judgment into gall (*rosh*), and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock (*la'anah*)." Compare ch. xxix. 18 [17], where the people are warned against apostacy, "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood (*rosh we la'anah*)."

Amos viii. 14, "They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth" (cf. 2 Kings xii. 28, 29). Ch. ix. 21, "And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made," etc.; ch. vi. 13, "Thou shalt fear Jehovah thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his Name."

Amos ix. 14, 15, "And I will turn (*weshabhti*) the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God." Ch. xxx. 3, "Then Jehovah thy God shall turn (*weshabh*) thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither Jehovah thy God hath scattered thee;" ver. 5, "And Jehovah thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed;" ver. 9, "And Jehovah thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, for good," etc. "This passage forms the basis of all the passages in the Old Testament in which the very peculiar formula שָׁב שְׁבוּת occurs" (Hengstenberg).

Turning now to Hosea, the following correspondences with Deuteronomy may be noted :—

Hos. iv. 14, "They sacrifice with the *kedéshoth*" (women consecrated to prostitution in the service of a heathen deity). Ch. xxiii. 17, 18, "There shall be no *kedéshah* [consecrated harlot] of the daughters of Israel, . . .

thou shalt not bring the hire of a *kedêshah* . . . into the house of the Lord." Only in these passages and in Gen. xxxviii. 21, 22, is this word found.

Hos. v. 10, "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bounds (*massîgei gebûl*)." Ch. xix. 14, "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark (*lo tassîg gebûl*);" ch. xxvii. 17, "Cursed be he that remdveth his neighbour's landmark (*massîg gebûl*)." Hos. v. 14, "I will take away, and none shall rescue (*eyn matzîl*)." Ch. xxxii. 39, "And there is none that rescueth out of my hand (*eyn m'yâdi matzîl*)." (Cf. also Hos. ii. 10 [Heb. 12].)

Hos. vi. 1, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, [cf. Hos. v. 14] and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." Ch. xxxii. 39, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal."

Hos. viii. 13, "They shall return (*yashubhu*) to Egypt." Ch. xxviii. 68, "The Lord shall bring thee (*heshîbhka*) into Egypt again."

Hos. xii. 13, "By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved." Ch. xviii. 18, "A Prophet . . . like unto thee." Only here is Moses described as a prophet.

Hos. xiii. 6, "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore have they forgotten me." Ch. viii. 14, "Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God," etc.

Hos. xiii. 9, "This (*shihethka*) hath corrupted [destroyed] thee, O Israel, that thou art against me [who am] in thy help." Ch. xxxii. 5, "A perverse nation hath become corrupt towards him (*shiheth lo*);" ch. xxxiii. 26, "Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help."

The coincidences thus noted are not, it must be confessed, all of equal weight and evidential value; but, on the other hand, none of them can be certainly declared to be accidental, and some are of such a character as almost to force the conclusion that the prophets Hosea and Amos had in their hands the Book of Deuteronomy, and freely cited from it. Assuming this, something more is proved than that this book was extant in the days of these prophets. As these were prophets, not of Judah, but of Israel, their references to Deuteronomy may indicate the reception of that book in Israel as a sacred book; and as it is not probable that any book would be so received in the kingdom of Samaria which had not been carried by the ten tribes with them when they broke off from Judah, it would follow that this book was known and reverenced at the time of the separation. But if it was thus accredited in the beginning of the reign of Rehoboam, the probability is that it was so in the reigns of his predecessors, Solomon and David; for it is incredible that it could have attained to universal acceptance at the moment of his accession to the throne, if it had not been by long usage already established. It may indeed be said that the better part of Israel was never wholly alienated from Judah religiously, but continued to regard the temple at Jerusalem as the national sanctuary. But that this would have led to the acceptance by the nation generally of a

book pretending to be from God, which was unknown to their fathers, and which had come into existence in Judah after the separation of the tribes, cannot be believed; national enmity and sectarian jealousy, to say nothing of pious zeal for God, would have effectually prevented that, the more especially in respect of a book by which their whole religious position and system was condemned.

The conclusion above announced is corroborated by the references to Deuteronomy in the narrative of the Books of Kings.

Reference has been already made to passages in these books in which the Book of Deuteronomy is expressly referred to as the Law of Moses, and as written by Moses. What has now to be considered are allusions to things contained in that book, and apparent quotations from it.

1 Kings viii. 51, "For they are thy people . . . which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron." Ch. iv. 20, "And the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth from the furnace of iron, out of Egypt."

1 Kings xvii. 1. Here Elijah announces to Ahab that the judgment threatened in ch. xi. 16, 17, against idolatry in Israel, should now be inflicted, because of his having set up an altar to Baal, and placed beside it an Asherah for idol-worship.

1 Kings xviii. 40. In the order given by Elijah as to the treatment of the priests of Baal, the prophet follows the Divine injunction as given in ch. xiii. 15, 16, and xvii. 5; without which it is inconceivable that he should have ventured to enjoin on the king such extreme measures.

1 Kings xxi. 10. The appointment of *two* witnesses in order to convict Naboth of blasphemy points to the observance in Israel of the law recorded in ch. xvii. 6, 7; xix. 15.

1 Kings xxii. 11. "The symbolical act of the false prophet Zedekiah, here described, is an embodying of the figure in ch. xxxiii. 17. This illustrious promise, specially applicable to the posterity of Joseph, was the basis on which the pseudo-prophets built; only they overlooked the one thing, that the promise was conditional and the condition was not realized. . . . The reference to the Pentateuch here is the more important since Zedekiah was one of the prophets of the calves, and since the symbolical act could have been undertaken only on the presumption that its meaning, resting on the Pentateuch, was intelligible to those present, and especially to the kings" (Hengstenberg, i. 132).

2 Kings ii. 9. Elisha, as the firstborn of Elijah in a spiritual sense—his γνήσιον τέκνον, according to their common office as prophets—asks of Elijah that the portion legally due to the firstborn son might be his, that a double portion (פִּי שְׁנַיִם) of his father's possessions, his spirit, might be given to him. This points back to ch. xxi. 17, where the law relating to the right of the firstborn is enunciated. It is noticeable that in both passages the same peculiar phrase, פִּי שְׁנַיִם, a mouthful of two, occurs, and in this sense only in these two passages.

2 Kings vi. 28—30. The extreme horror of the king on hearing the woman's story, and his penetential observance in consequence, are best accounted for by a reference to ch. xxviii. 53, 57, 58. The king recognized in what the woman told him a fulfilment of the threatening denounced in this passage; and so, while the lesser calamities that had befallen his people in consequence of the siege of the city by the Syrians had failed to move him, this most terrible tale filled him with horror and drove him to penitence.

2 Kings xiv. 6. Here is an express quotation of a law which is found only in ch. xxiv. 16.

2 Kings xviii. 6, "For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him," etc. Ch. x. 20, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave," etc.

Besides these references to Deuteronomy, there are many in the two Books of Kings to other parts of the Pentateuch, going to prove that that book in its entireness was known and accepted in the kingdom of Israel from the time of its first establishment. "Indeed," as has been remarked, "the entire action and operation of the prophets in the kingdom of Israel is an inexplicable riddle if we do not assume the public recognition of the Pentateuch in this kingdom as its basis. With all the annoyances which the prophets occasioned to the kings, and the priests who were in close alliance with them, there never came to be a systematic and thoroughgoing persecution of them so as to extirpate them. This suggests, unless we set aside all probability and all historical analogies, the possession by them of an external right whereby hatred against them was restrained, and the following out of extreme measures prevented. But on what could such an outward right be well based if not on the public acknowledgment of the Pentateuch, on which they grounded their censures, with which they connected their threatenings, and whose prophet-law they maintained against their opponents?" (Hengstenberg, i. 140).

Ascending to the earlier books, the following correspondences between them and Deuteronomy may be noted:—

2 Sam. vii. 6, "During all [the time] that I walked with all the children of Israel," etc. Ch. xxiii. 14, "For Jehovah thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp" (cf. Lev. xxvi. 12, "And I will walk amongst you"). Only in these three passages does this peculiar phraseology occur. 2 Sam. vii. 23, "And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself . . . thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?" Ch. vii. 8, "The Lord hath redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (cf. also ch. ix. 26; xiii. 5; xv. 15; xxi. 8; xxiv. 18). This expression may be said to be specially Deuteronomic.

1 Sam. ii. 2, "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God." Ch. iv. 35, "Know that the

Lord he is God; there is none else beside him;" ch. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 31, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect . . . the Rock of his salvation . . . the Rock that begat thee . . . For their rock is not as our Rock," etc. 1 Sam. ii. 6, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." Ch. xxxii. 39, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal," etc. 1 Sam. ii. 29, "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded?" Ch. xxxii. 15, "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." The verb בָּעַט, to kick, occurs only in these two places.

1 Sam. viii. 1, "And it came to pass that Samuel when he was old made his sons judges over Israel." Ch. xvi. 18, "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates." In making his sons judges, Samuel was carrying into effect the law enunciated in Deuteronomy. As Samuel thus obeyed the Law, so his sons transgressed it, for they took bribes (*shohad*, 1 Sam. viii. 3), contrary to the injunction, "Thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift [bribe, *shohad*]," etc. (ch. xvi. 19). 1 Sam. viii. 5, "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Ch. xvii. 14, "And shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me."

1 Sam. x. 1, "The Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance." Ch. xxxii. 9, "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." 1 Sam. x. 25, "Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom," etc. The manner (the law, the legitimate order, *mishpat*) of the kingdom was what had been prescribed; and it is only in Deuteronomy that this prescription is given (cf. ch. xvii. 14, etc.).

1 Sam. xv. 2, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt." Ch. xxv. 17, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt."

1 Sam. xxviii. 3, "Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land." Ch. xviii. 10, 11, "There shall not be found in thee . . . a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard."

Judg. i. 20, "And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said." Ch. i. 36, "Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon."

Judg. ii. 2, "I said . . . And ye shall make no league (*lo tikrethu berith*) with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars." etc. Ch. vii. 2, "Thou shalt . . . utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them (*lo tikroth lahem berith*);" ch. xii. 3, "And ye shall overthrow [throw down] their altars." Judg. ii. 3, "And their gods shall be a snare unto you." Ch. vii. 16, "Neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee." Judg. ii. 15, "The hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them." Ch. xxviii. 15, etc. Judg. ii. 18, "For it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and

vexed them." Ch. xxxii. 36, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone."

Judg. iv. 14, "And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?" Ch. ix. 3, "Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee."

Judg. v. 4, 5, "Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel." Ch. xxxiii. 2, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran," etc. Judg. v. 8, "They chose new gods (*elohim hadâshim*)." Ch. xxxii. 17, "They sacrificed . . . to gods whom they knew not, to new (*hadâshim*) gods that came newly up," etc.

Judg. xi. 15, "Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon," etc. Ch. ii. 9, 19, "And the Lord said, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession . . . When thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession."

Judg. xiv. 3. The parents of Samson expostulate with him as to his intention to take a wife "of the uncircumcised Philistines." But there was no reason why he should not do this, if it so pleased him, except that it was expressly prohibited by the law of God as recorded in ch. vii. 3. It would thus appear that that law was known and recognized as binding on the people of God in the days of the judges.

Ruth iv. 2—12, "And he took ten men of the elders of the city," etc. The entire narrative in this context points to the law of the levirate in ch. xxv. 5—10. "The real relation of the *goel* [kinsman] in Ruth to the *yabam* [husband's brother] in the law is unquestionable. 'Each was bound to raise offspring to the dead from the wife of the dead. The reason in both cases was the same, that the name of the dead might not perish from Israel, nor from his family. In fine, in both cases, if the party refused to marry the wife of the deceased, this was attested by the taking off of the shoe' (Perizonius, 'Dissert.,' vii. p. 79). No less undeniable and still more decisive is the *verbal* reference to the law, which is equivalent to an actual citation of it. Compare only ch. xxv. 6, 'And the firstborn which she beareth יָקוּם עַל־שֵׁם אָחִיו הַמֵּת,' with Ruth iv. 5, 'Of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance (לְהָקִים שֵׁם־הַמֵּת עַל־נַחֲלָתוֹ).' The name of the dead could only be raised up, according to the law, by a son being ascribed to him. This kind service Boaz was prepared to render to him; the *goel* must either do what Boaz proffered, or he must transfer to him, as the next *goel*, the right of redemption. Still more complete is the reference to ch. xxv. 6 in Ruth iv. 10, 'I take to me Ruth as my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his

inheritance, and that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place.' According to ch. xxv. 9, the transaction between the brother-in-law and the sister-in-law must take place in the presence of the elders; in Ruth iv. 2 it is said, 'He took ten men of the elders of the city.' In ch. xxv. 9 it is said, 'So shall it be done unto that man *who buildeth not up his brother's house;*' with which compare Ruth iv. 11, 'The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel;' *i.e.* since thou, according to the prescription, hast builded up the house of thy brother, may the Lord make, etc. That Deuteronomy is older than the Book of Ruth is seen from this, that the author of the latter describes the symbolical act of pulling off the shoe as a usage that had descended to his time from former times, whilst in Deuteronomy it appears as then in common use, and of itself clear" (Hengstenberg, ii. 104). It may be added that it is by reference to the usage prescribed in Deuteronomy that the words of Naomi to her widowed daughters-in-law (Ruth i. 11) are to be understood.

It does not seem necessary to carry this investigation further; the instances adduced are sufficient to show that when the Books of Samuel, Judges, and Ruth were written, the Book of Deuteronomy was extant and commonly known; for the alternative hypothesis, that the author of Deuteronomy, writing at a time subsequent to the appearance of these books, carefully picked out of them a number of small particulars and adapted the statements of his own book to these, so as to give the appearance of an undesigned coincidence between his book and the others, is too violent to be entertained. It thus appears that all through the history of Israel, from the times immediately succeeding those of Moses and Joshua, this Book of Deuteronomy was known and in common use in Israel.

(2) The antiquity of this book is vouched for by the archaisms with which it abounds. "The use of הוּא in both genders, which occurs one hundred and ninety-five times in the Pentateuch, is found thirty-six times in Deuteronomy; while of the eleven places in which הִיא is written not one is in this book. In Deuteronomy, as in the other books, a maiden is called נַעַר; only in one passage (ch. xxii. 19) is נַעֲרָה used. The demonstrative pronoun הָאֵל, which is not found out of the Pentateuch except in 1 Chron. xx. 8 (cf. Ezra v. 15; Aramaic), is not only to be read in Gen. xix. 8, 25; xxvi. 3, 4; Lev. xviii. 27; but runs through Deuteronomy (cf. ch. iv. 42; vii. 22; xix. 11). So also the *He locale*, so rare in the later usage of the language, the old rare writing תְּמִצָאן (Jahn in Bengel's 'Archiv.,' ii. 582) and the future ending ין־ are common. The last of these, according to the investigation of König (Heft. ii. of his 'Alt-test. Studien'), is more frequent in the Pentateuch than in any other Old Testament book, and is found in Deuteronomy fifty-eight times, as also twice in the Pret. viii. 3, 16 יְדָעוּן, of which the Old Testament has only one other instance—Isa. xxvi. 16. Among these archaisms common to Deuteronomy with the other Pentateuchal books may be reckoned also the shortening of the Hiph. לְעַשֹּׂר (ch. xxvi. 12), and often the use of קָרָא equi-

valent to קָרָה, to meet; the construction of the passive with the אֵת of the object (*e.g.* ch. xx. 8); the changes of the common כֶּבֶשׂ into כָּשָׂב, lamb (ch. xiv. 4); the use of זָכוּר equivalent to זָכָר, a word lost to the post-Pentateuchal language (Dietrich, 'Abhandlungen,' s. 89), ch. xvi. 16; xx. 13; and many old words, such as אָבִיב and יָקוּם, and among these such as are found only in Joshua, as אַשְׁדּוֹת, or in Ezekiel, whose language is framed on that of the Pentateuch, like מִין. Also in hapaxlegomena, which in an old language abound, Deuteronomy is not poor. Examples of these are חֻרְמֵשׁ (for the later מַגָּל); the old Canaanitish עַשְׁתְּרוֹת הַצֹּאן, increase of the flock; יְשֻׁרוּן (as a name of Israel, borrowed by Isaiah, xliv. 2); הַסְכִּית, to be silent; הֶעֱנִיק, to lay upon the neck; הִתְעַמֵּר to take possession of, to lay hands on. To the antique and genuinely Mosaic peculiarities of the Deuteronomist belongs also his love of pictures: a root of hemlock and wormwood sprouts (ch. xxix. 18), head and tail (ch. xxviii. 13, 44), the saturated with the thirsty (ch. xxix. 19); and comparisons: as a man beareth his son (ch. i. 31), as bees do (ch. i. 44), as a man chasteneth his son (ch. viii. 5), as the eagle fluttereth (ch. xxviii. 49), as the blind gropeth (ch. xxviii. 29). Of such comparisons I know only three in the other books: 'As the ox licks up the grass of the field' (Numb. xxii. 4, in the Balaam section); 'As a flock that hath no shepherd' (Numb. xxvii. 17); 'As the guardian bears the suckling' (Numb. xi. 12); both in the mouth of Moses" (Delitzsch, 'Die Genesis,' Einleit, s. 27 f.). To these may be added certain words and phrases found in the earlier books, but which would seem to have become obsolete or to have been regarded as archaic in the times subsequent to that of Samuel:—As for instance, שְׁעָרִים, gates, for habitations generally; nineteen times in Deuteronomy; elsewhere once, in Exod. xx. 10, in a document acknowledgedly Mosaic; and occasionally but rarely in poetical pieces (Ps. lxxxvii. 2 [but see Hengstenberg *in loc.*]; Isa. iii. 26; lx. 18 (?); Jer. xiv. 2). שֹׁטְרִים, officers; seven times in Deuteronomy; elsewhere Exod. v. 6, 10, 14, 15, 19; Numb. xi. 16; Josh. i. 10; iii. 2; viii. 33; xxiii. 2; xxiv. 1; Chron. six times. רֵיקָם, empty, in the sense of without an offering; ch. xvi. 16; Exod. xxiii. 15; xxxiv. 20; 1 Sam. vi. 3; not elsewhere. עָנָה אִשָּׁה, to humble a woman; ch. xxi. 14; xxii. 24, 29; Gen. xxxiv. 2; Judg. xx. 5; 2 Sam. xiii. 12, 14; Lam. v. 11; Ezek. xxii. 10, 11. סוּר יָמִין וְשְׂמֹאל, to turn to the right hand or to the left, of departures from God's Law; ch. v. 32; xvii. 28; xxviii. 14; Josh. i. 7; xxiii. 6. הֶאֱרִיךְ יָמִים, to prolong days, to live long; eleven times in Deuteronomy; elsewhere only Exod. xx. 12; Josh. xxiv. 31; Judg. ii. 7; 1 Kings iii. 14; Eccles. viii. 13; Isa. liii. 10. תְּמוּנָה, likeness, similitude; ch. iv. 12, 15, 16, 23, 25; v. 8; Exod. xx. 4; Numb. xii. 8; Job iv. 16 (image, form, shape); Ps. xvii. 15. כֹּהֵן; this term is in Deuteronomy, as in the other Pentateuchal books, used only of persons exercising sacerdotal functions; in later times it came to be used also of civil officers and counsellors of the sovereign (cf. 2 Sam. viii. 18; xx. 26; 1 Kings iv. 2, 5; 1 Chron. xxvii. 5). אִשֶּׁה, fire

offering; ch. xviii. 1; often in the Pentateuch; once in Josh. xiii. 14; and once in 1 Sam. ii. 28. כִּלְאַיִם, two things heterogeneous; ch. xxii. 9; elsewhere only in Lev. xix. 19. גּוֹזָל, a young bird; ch. xxxii. 11; Gen xv. 9; not found elsewhere. זָכָר, a male; ch. xvi. 19; xx. 13; elsewhere only Exod. xxiii. 17; xxxiv. 23. נְקֵבָה, female; ch. iv. 16; often in the Pentateuch; once in Jer. xxxi. 22. אָבִיב, the month Abib; ch. xvi. 1; Exod. ix. 31; xiii. 4; xxiii. 15; xxxiv. 18; Lev. ii. 14; nowhere else. שֶׂה, young of a beast; ch. vii. 13, 28; iv. 18, 51; elsewhere only Exod. xiii. 12. יְקוּם, substance, living thing; ch. xi. 6; Gen. vii. 4, 23; nowhere else. סְנֶה, bush; ch. xxxiii. 16; elsewhere only in Exod. iii. 2, 3, 4.

(3) The antiquity of the book is further guaranteed by certain statements and references contained in it.

Ch. vii. 1, etc. Intercourse with the nations of Canaan is here strenuously forbidden to the Israelites. This was fitting before they took possession of that land; at a later period such a prohibition would have been superfluous, if not ridiculous.

Ch. xxv. 9. Reference is here made to the taking off of the shoe as a symbol of the transference of an inheritance, in a way which shows, as already observed, that the usage was then common. In the time of the judges this was regarded as a usage of "the former time" (Ruth iv. 7). The time of Deuteronomy, therefore, must have preceded that of the judges.

Ch. xxv. 17, etc. The Israelites are commanded to remember what Amalek did to them by the way, as they came out of Egypt, etc. Such an injunction it would have been absurd to publish in writing at a much later period in the history of Israel, long after the Amalekites had ceased to exist as a nation. So also of the Canaanites (ch. xx. 16—18).

Ch. xvii. 14, etc. It is here assumed that at some future time the people of Israel would propose to set a king over them, like all the nations about them, and directions are given as to the choice of a king in this case, and as to the conduct of the king when he should be chosen. The fair presumption from this is that the book in which these are recorded must have been written before the time of Samuel; for it is not credible that any writer would have introduced into his narrative any such statements posterior to the election of Saul to be King of Israel. Especially is it to be noted that one of the directions given is that the king is "not to multiply horses, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way." Such a cautionary injunction was fitting at a time when there was some danger of the people being seduced into returning to Egypt; at a later period, long after they had been settled in the promised land, it would be simply preposterous. It has indeed been said, on the other hand, that, had this book been then extant, Samuel must have known this passage, and in that case would not have rebuked the people as he did for their sin in desiring a king. There would be

some force in this did the passage in Deuteronomy contain an enactment that a king should be chosen or express approval of such an act. But this is not the case; rather is the contrary implied, for it is plain, from the manner in which the subject is introduced, that the anticipated act was not regarded by the speaker with approval, but was rather viewed by him as a wilful departure from an order instituted by God, prompted by a desire on the part of the people to be like to the nations around them; in fact, a species of apostacy from Jehovah, second only to a renunciation of him for other gods. When Samuel, therefore, rebuked the people, even whilst conceding their request, he spoke in the very spirit of this passage, and not improbably with this very passage in his mind.

It has also been urged that, as the appointment of a king was incompatible with the Theocracy, it is highly improbable that any such thing would have been contemplated and legislated for by Moses. It is to be observed, however, that the king whom it was supposed the people were to be allowed to set up was not to be an autocrat or one whose rule was to be independent; he was to be one whom God should choose, and who was to be under law to God, and so was really to be the vicegerent of Jehovah, the Great King. By the appointment of such a king, therefore, the Theocracy remained intact. The administration of government by means of a king whom God should choose no more superseded the supreme kingship of Jehovah, than the administration of law by judges interfered with his supremacy as Lawgiver and Judge.

It is further asked—Had this passage been in existence and known, how could Solomon have dared to contravene it as he did by multiplying wives and sending to Egypt for horses? But Solomon, we know, dared to do many things which were contrary to law, both Divine and human. His having many wives and concubines was as much against the law of the Decalogue as against the law in ch. xvii. 14—17.

Ch. xxvii. 11—26. Directions are here given concerning blessing and cursing on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. These, however, are of a very general character, details evidently being left to the discretion of the parties by whom the injunction was to be carried into effect. An author writing after the event would, it is presumed, have been more precise, and would have so framed his statement as to present to his readers a distinct and easily apprehensible representation of the whole transaction.

Ch. xix. 1—10. Here it is enacted that, on the establishment of the people in Canaan, the land is to be divided, and certain cities to be set apart as places of refuge for the manslayer. This is a law which could be obeyed only at the time of the entrance of the people on the possession of the land, and which, therefore, it would be absurd to prescribe in a book written long after that took place.

In several parts of the book allusion is made to the condition of the Israelites as then in the wilderness, and to their experiences there as then recent (cf. ch. i.—iii.; iv. 3, 4, 44—49; vii. 1; viii. 1; ix. 1;

xi. 8, etc., 30, 31; xiii. 12; xviii. 9; xix. 1; xxvii. 2). Unless, then, the book be put aside as a pure fiction, it must be accepted as of an age not later than the time of the arrival of the Israelites on the eastern side of the Jordan.

From these considerations the high antiquity of this book may be fairly inferred. This not only falls in with the supposition that it is in the main the writing of Moses, but lends support to that supposition; for Moses is the only person of whom we know anything who at that early period can be supposed to have composed such a book, and as the book professes to be his, the presumption is very strong that he and no other is the author of it.

4. The aspect and attitude of the writer, both retrospective and prospective, are those of one in the position of Moses at the time immediately before the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan. The book presents itself as Mosaic, and with this the entire costume and colouring of the book is in keeping. "There is nowhere even a single expression which is not suited to the position of Moses at that time; the standpoint throughout the whole book is the same; the situation is ever that of one on the borders of the promised land. To that which in later times was the centre of the popular life—to Jerusalem and its temple, to the kingdom of David—there is not a single reference such as would transgress historical limits. The occupation of the land is only in the general assumed as about to take place; nothing is said as to the special relations of Israel in the land when conquered. The principal foes are the Canaanites, who, from the beginning of the period of the judges, retire into the background, and, after Judg. v., nowhere play any notable part. (For exact acquaintance with the early relations of the peoples in the Mosaic times, see ch. ii.; in respect of the geography of the scene of the last wandering, ch. i. 1, etc.) Specially noticeable are the very vivid reminiscences of Egypt; the motives to kindness towards servants thence taken (ch. v. 15; xv. 15; xvi. 12; xxiv. 18); the references to diseases peculiar to Egypt in the threatening of punishments (ch. xxviii. 27, 35); the references to deliverance from thence in the promises (ch. vii. 15; xxviii. 60); the exaltation of Canaan by comparison with Egypt (ch. xi. 10); a highly graphic representation of the old Egyptian agriculture, to which the monuments bear witness." Besides these references to Egyptian usages, etc., may be mentioned the command to bear the words of the Law as an amulet on the hand and breast (ch. vi. 8, etc.; xi. 18; cf. Exod. xiii. 16), and to inscribe them on the door-posts of the house (ch. xi. 20); the command to write the Law on stones plastered with mortar (ch. xxvii. 18); the mode of punishment by the stick, the Egyptian bastinado (ch. xxv. 2, 3); the method of irrigation (ch. xi. 10); the function of the scribe in the military arrangements of the Egyptians (ch. xx. 5). There are also frequent retrospective glances in the book to the residence of the Israelites in Egypt as of recent occurrence (ch. vi. 21, etc.; vii. 8, 18; xi. 3). Such a statement also as the following is intelligible only on the supposition that it is the utterance of one addressing those who were contemporaneous with the

event referred to:—"Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day" (ch. iv. 3, 4). The inference is irresistible: either these words were uttered at the time indicated by "this day" or the statement is a fiction. These allusions are so numerous and precise that it may with justice be said, "If Deuteronomy is not the work of Moses, there is here the most exquisite of literary frauds, and that in an age which had not as yet acquired the art of transporting itself into foreign individualities and situations" (Hengstenberg).

5. The passage just quoted suggests a weighty consideration in favour of the Mosaic authorship of this book. If the book is not by him, if it is the production of a later age, it must be regarded as a forgery. For beyond all question, the book not only contains discourses alleged to have been uttered by Moses, but also claims to have been written by him (cf. ch. i. 1; xxix. 1; xxxi. 1, 9—11, 24). Are we, then, to pronounce this book a forgery? If so, the book cannot be regarded as one of the ἱερὰ γράμματα, the sacred writings—as really belonging to the γραφὴ Θεόπνευστος, as being a book given by Divine inspiration. For the religious consciousness recoils from the thought that God would either originate or sanction a deliberate untruth. We may admire the genius of the man who could produce so consummately skilful a fiction; but we can never believe that it was by Divine direction and with help from above that he composed it, or that it was sent forth with the authorization of him "all whose words are true." Nor is it easy to conceive how what must have been known to be a fraud could have found acceptance and been reckoned among the sacred writings of the Jews. It has, indeed, been pleaded that there was no fraud in the case; that, as all knew that the book was not written by Moses, none were deceived by the ascription of it to him, any more than those who heard Herodotus read his history at the Olympic games were deceived by the ascription to his heroes of the speeches which he had himself composed. But on this supposition, how are we to account for the author of the book ascribing it to Moses at all? Herodotus made speeches for his characters and inserted them in his history, merely to give completeness to his story and as a display of literary skill. But no such motive could have induced the author of Deuteronomy, supposing him to be some prophet or scribe of a later age, to have ascribed his work as a whole to Moses. He could do this only in the hope of thereby investing it with greater authority, and procuring for it a more ready acceptance and deferential regard. But for this it was essential that the book should be *believed* to be by Moses; the moment it was known not to be by him, the author's design would be wholly frustrated. The author must, therefore, have *intended* it to be accepted as really the work of Moses; and if it was not so accepted, it must have been repudiated as a too manifest forgery to be endured. Its acceptance by the Jews and its place in the canon is thus utterly unaccountable on the

supposition that it is the production of a writer of an age later than that of Moses.

II. These considerations give strong support to the traditional belief that this book is what it professes to be—the work of Moses. It is possible, however, that other considerations, drawn from the book itself, may outweigh these, so as to make it uncertain whether Moses wrote this book or not, if they do not render it highly probable that it must be ascribed to some later writer. Such considerations, it is maintained, are to be found, and they have been strenuously urged by many critics of note as fatal to the claims of the book to be regarded as the genuine work of Moses. To these attention must now be directed.

1. It is alleged that not only is this book in style, phraseology, and manner of thought different from the other Pentateuchal books, but that its contents present so many discrepancies to the other books that it cannot be regarded as the product of the same author.

This consideration, it is obvious, is of force as against the genuineness of Deuteronomy only on the assumption that the other books of the Pentateuch are the writing of Moses. If this be denied or questioned, the objection becomes invalid. For in that case any alleged discrepancies would prove nothing more than that this book is not from the same hand as the other books; they would leave the claims of this book, which professes to be the work of Moses, unaffected.

It may also occur to the inquirer that, even on the assumption just referred to, the force of an argument of this sort is not great. For whilst it is quite conceivable that the style and phraseology and manner of thought of an author may differ at one period of his life from what they were at another, or may acquire a different character as they are used on different subjects or with a different purpose, and that in the course of forty years such changes may take place in the condition, circumstances, and relations of a community that an author writing near the end of that period may have much to narrate concerning them that is not in accordance with what he has narrated in books written long before; it is to be noted that such discrepancies are the very things a forger would be most careful to avoid. His aim would be to imitate the style and manner of thought of his author as closely as possible, and as he would have before him what that author had written, he would be careful to conform all his own statements to what he found set forth by him. If discrepancies, then, are found to exist between Deuteronomy and the other Mosaic writings, this would rather be in favour of the genuineness of the former than otherwise.

As respects style and method and manner of thought, such variations as may be detected in this book from the earlier books are sufficiently accounted for by the fact that, whilst the latter are purely narrative or didactic, this is hortatory and admonitory. The style and manner of a legislative code, or even of simple narration, must needs be departed from in a popular address, unless the speaker means to exhaust the patience of his audience and thereby frustrate his own effort.

"A good example of the fundamental difference in legal style between the Levitical Law and the Deuteronomic code is found in Numb. xxxv. compared with ch. xix." (Robertson Smith, p. 433). That differences of expression and phraseology are to be found in these two passages is manifest at a glance; but that they are "fundamental," or such as would disprove identity of authorship in the two writings, may be denied. For these differences are only such as may be found in the writings of any author who has occasion to repeat in substance what he had put forth more at large in an earlier writing. In Numbers the cities are called throughout "cities of refuge," in Deuteronomy they are described as cities to which the homicide may flee (for refuge, of course); in Numbers the man for whom a place of refuge was to be provided is described as one who had slain another "at unawares" (*bishgaga*, through error or mistake), in Deuteronomy he is described as one who killeth his neighbour "ignorantly" (*bibhli da'ath*, without knowledge, unintentionally), but also as one who had done it "unawares" (ch. iv. 42); in Numbers it is "any person" who is supposed to be killed, in Deuteronomy it is "his neighbour" whom the homicide is said to slay; in Numbers the murderer is described as one who "thrust him [his victim] of hatred" (*b'sin'ah*), in Deuteronomy it is said "if any man hate" (*sonay*)—in the one place the noun is used, in the other the cognate verb. Such differences surely cannot be regarded as "fundamental." Of more weight, apparently, is the difference in the description of what constitutes murder as distinguished from simple homicide, given in the two books respectively; the one book giving a detailed description, while the other furnishes only one exemplary illustration from actual experience of what is intended. But this is only such a difference as might be expected between a legal document and a popular address in reference to the same subject. Another difference alleged is that "the judges in the one are 'the congregation,' in the other 'the elders of the city.'" But there is a mistake here. In Deuteronomy nothing is said about "judges;" the function assigned to the elders is executive, not judicial; they are to apprehend the criminal and bring him to suffer the penalty to which he had been adjudged. "In addition," it is said, "there is a substantial difference in the laws themselves, inasmuch as Deuteronomy says nothing about remaining in the city of refuge till the death of the high priest." Had Deuteronomy said that the refugee was to remain till his own death in the city of refuge, or till the death of some other person than the high priest, there would have been a substantial difference between the two laws; as it is, Deuteronomy only omits what it was not needful for the speaker to state. When it is remembered that these differences are alleged as "fundamental," it will be seen of how little moment are the other differences in style and phraseology which may be adduced between Deuteronomy and the other Pentateuchal books.

Of the material discrepancies alleged, the following are the most important:—

Ch. i. 22, etc. Here the sending of the spies is said to have been at the suggestion of the people, whereas in Numb. xiii. 1, 3 it is by command from God that the spies are said to be sent. There is, however, no real discrepancy here; the passage in Deuteronomy simply contains an addition to the narrative in Numbers. The proposal originated with the people, but it was not until authorized by God that Moses carried it into effect. For the rest, the two narratives are in full accordance.

Ch. i. 37; iii. 26; iv. 21. In these passages Moses appears as casting the blame of his exclusion from the promised land on the people, whereas in Numb. xx. 12 it is in consequence of his own defective faith, and in Numb. xxvii. 14 as a punishment for his rebelliousness, that this is said to have come upon him. But that there is no discrepancy here is rendered certain by the fact that in ch. xxxii. 51 the same cause is assigned for his exclusion as in Numbers. The two statements are easily reconciled. The immediate reason of the exclusion was Moses' own sin; the ultimate reason was the rebelliousness of the people, which gave occasion to that sin (cf. note on ch. i. 37).

In Deuteronomy it is prescribed that sacrifices shall be offered only in *one* place, whereas the other books say nothing of this, and in one passage express mention is made of many places of worship (Exod. xx. 24). But (1) it is not true that no mention is made of this in the other books, for in Lev. xvii. 8, 9 the law regarding the offering of sacrifice only in the one place, viz. at the door of the tent of meeting, is announced even under more stringent conditions than in Deuteronomy; and (2) the declaration in Exod. xx. 24 was uttered shortly after the giving of the Law on Sinai, when the people had the prospect of moving from place to place, and of the sanctuary moving with them, and was intended to assure them that wherever that sanctuary was pitched there worship might be acceptably offered.

When Numb. xviii. 20—32 is compared with ch. xiv. 22—29, it is alleged that "it cannot escape any one who makes the comparison without prejudice, that the two laws differ from each other in respect both of content and character." In Numbers it is prescribed that the Levites shall not have any fixed possession among the sons of Israel, but shall receive, for the service in the sanctuary binding on them, all the tithes which properly belong to Jehovah, and from these they shall again pay a tenth part to Aaron the priest. In Deuteronomy, on the contrary, the Israelites are enjoined to bring before the sanctuary the tithe of all the produce of their fields and their cattle, either in kind or in money, and there, in honour of Jehovah, to eat it with their families in joy and festivity; only along with this it is enjoined that they are not to forsake the Levite who has no possession of his own, but each third year they must retain all the tithes of their income and bestow them as a beneficence on the Levite, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan in their gates. These two laws, it is alleged, differ so both in content and in character that it cannot be supposed that

Moses could have enacted both; and as the enactment in Numbers is undoubtedly the original, that in Deuteronomy must belong to a later ago (Bleek). That these two laws differ from each other is indisputable, and the difference is such that, supposing them to relate to the same object, there is no possibility of harmonizing them; the one must exclude the other. But it is conceivable that Moses, after enacting the general law of tithes as a provision for the Levites, should, in the prospect of the people settling in a rich and fertile land where the produce of their possessions would be great, prescribe the giving of an additional tithe, to be devoted to sacred festivity and for the benefit of the poor and needy, in which benefit the Levite was to share. That such an additional tithe was actually made and rendered by the Israelites in Palestine, appears certain from the testimony of the Talmudists and Josephus; by the former of whom the מַעֲשֵׂר שֵׁנִי, or second tithe, is distinguished from the מַעֲשֵׂר רִאשׁוֹן, the first tithe—that for the Levites; and the latter of whom expressly says that, besides the two tithes which were to be levied yearly, one for the Levites and another for feasting, there was to be every third year a third tithe for distribution to the poor and needy ('Antiq.,' iv. 8, 22). In the Book of Tobit the second tithe (δεκάτη δεύτερα) is mentioned (i. 7), and the LXX. refer to the δεύτερον ἐπιδέκατον (ch. xxvi. 11). There seems no doubt, then, as to the existence of a second tithe among the Jews. What is called the "third tithe" (Josephus, l. c.; Tobit i. 8), was only "this second tithe converted into the poor tithe, to be given to and consumed by the poor at home" (Ginsburg, 'Kitto's Cyclopædia,' iii. 1012). This being the case, we are justified in regarding the law in Deuteronomy as not exclusive of that in Numbers, but rather as supplementary to it, as an additional prescription for the benefit of the Levites, who as a tribe were without possessions in the land, as well as the poor and destitute. As both laws were apparently in operation at a late period, the one obviously does not abrogate or exclude the other, and therefore there is no reason why both should not have been appointed by Moses.

Ch. xii. 17, 18. Here the people are enjoined to eat the firstlings of their herds before the Lord, in the place which he shall choose. But in Numb. xviii. 15—18 the flesh of the firstlings is said to belong to the priest: "The flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine." How, then, it is asked, could the people eat the firstlings if they were to be given to the priest? There is here, it must be allowed, an apparent contradiction. It is, however, only apparent. The qualifying clause, "as the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine," indicates that it was not the whole animal that was to be given to the priest; the distribution was to be according to the norm established in the case of the *shelamim*, or peace offerings (Lev. vii. 28, etc.), that is, after the fat had been burnt on the altar, the wave breast and the right shoulder were to be the portions of the priest. The rest of the animal, therefore, remained with the offerer, and might be eaten by him. There is thus between the two laws no real contradiction (see note in Exposition). "It is not said in Numbers

that all the flesh of the firstlings belongs to the priests, nor in Deuteronomy that the people are to eat all of it" (Curtiss).

According to Exod. xxix. 27, 28, and Lev. vii. 28—34, the breast and the right shoulder of all thank offerings belonged to the priest; according to ch. xviii. 3, he was to receive the fore leg, the two cheeks, and the maw. This latter ordinance is said to be an alteration of the earlier law, which cannot be supposed to have proceeded from Moses. But what is prescribed in Deuteronomy as the priest's due is not said there to be *all* that he shall receive; it appears rather as an addition to what the earlier law assigned to him. This is "evident from the context, since the heave leg and the wave breast belonged to the firings of Jehovah mentioned in ver. 1, which the priests had received as an inheritance from the Lord; that is to say, to the *tenuphoth* of the children of Israel, which the priests might eat with their sons and daughters, though only with such members of their house as were Levitically clean (Numb. xviii. 11); and also from the words of the present command, viz. that the portions mentioned were to be a right of the priests on *the part of the people*, on the part of those who slaughtered slain offerings, *i.e.* to be paid to the priest as a right that was due to him on the part of the people" (Keil). Whether it was from animals offered in sacrifice alone that this portion was to be given to the priests, or whether the right of the priests extended also to animals slain for domestic use, has been made a matter of question. But this is immaterial as regards the relation of the law in Deuteronomy to the law in Exodus and Leviticus; for in either case the portions assigned to the priests were a gift from the people, distinct from and in addition to what the priest claimed as part of his inheritance from the Lord.

"In the other books the Levites appear always as servants of the sanctuary, in sharp distinction from the priests the sons of Aaron. In Deuteronomy the Levites appear as sustaining priestly functions, and the priests are called 'sons of Levi' or 'the priests the Levites,' as elsewhere only in the later books" (Bleek). That the priests should be described as "the sons of Aaron" is only what might be expected, inasmuch as the priesthood was restricted to the Aaronic family; and that they should be called "sons of Levi" and "Levites" is equally natural, seeing all the priests were descended from Levi, and belonged to that tribe. The only thing to be accounted for is that in the earlier books they should be described as "sons of Aaron" and never be called "Levites" or described as "sons of Levi," and that in Deuteronomy they should never be described as "sons of Aaron" but always as "Levites" or "sons of Levi." Is this a mere difference of phraseology, or does it imply such a difference in the actual constitution of the priestly order as to necessitate the conclusion that the Book of Deuteronomy belongs to a later age than that of Moses? In regard to this it may be observed: (1) The mere fact that an author uses expressions, names, or titles which are found elsewhere only in books of later date, affords no proof that his book itself is of later date than that traditionally assigned to it, because the

expressions, names, or titles may have originated with him or come into use in his time. (2) The mere fact that certain phrases or names used by an author are not found in books confessedly written by him but older than the date assigned to this particular book, affords no proof that his book was written at a much later date, because the new words, names, or phrases may have come into use during his lifetime, but after his earlier writings were issued. (3) As a considerable time elapsed between the writing of Exodus and Leviticus and the writing of Deuteronomy, phraseology which was fitting at the earlier period may have become less fitting at the later, and consequently Moses may have felt it necessary to depart in his latest writing from phraseology which he used freely in his earlier writings. (4) The appointment of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood preceded the consecration of the tribe of Levi to the service of the sanctuary, and was an appointment wholly independent of that tribe. The priesthood was at first that of a family, not that of a tribe; it was purely Aaronic, not in any proper sense Levitical. At first, then, it was only as "sons of Aaron" that the priests could be designated; but after the consecration of the tribe to which that family belonged, such designations as "sons of Levi," "the priests the Levites," became fitting designations of the priests. The phrase "sons of Aaron" was thus the earlier, the phrase "sons of Levi" the later, formula of designation. It is not improbable that gradually the earlier designation fell into desuetude, and the later came to be that alone in use; and in this case Moses, writing near the end of his life, would naturally use the designation which by that time had come to be the proper designation of the priests.

As respects the discharge of priestly functions by the Levites, it may be observed: (1) In the general that, as the tribe of Levi included the priestly order, what was done by the priests may be popularly described as done by Levites; just as one might say that a certain act was the act of the Church, though properly it was the act of only certain officials in the Church. On this principle we may account for its being stated that the tribe of Levi was separated by Jehovah to bless in his Name (ch. x. 8), though this was the special function of the priests; just as in ch. x. 8 and xxxi. 25 it is said that it was the duty of the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant, whereas this belonged specially to the Kohathites, a family in that tribe. (2) As in a graduated hierarchy the higher office includes the lower, so the duties properly belonging to the lower functionary may, on occasions of special solemnity, be undertaken by the higher. Thus we may account for the priests on special occasions bearing the ark, which ordinarily it was the part of the Kohathites to do (cf. ch. xxxi. 9). (3) When those who are set apart as ministers to a superior functionary are called actually to assist him in his service, they may without offence partake of the privileges which belong properly to the superior. On this ground we may account for the statement in ch. xviii. 1, 8, that the Levite who might of his own choice attend upon the service of the sanctuary

should have the privilege of partaking with the priest of the sacrifices offered there, though this, according to the Law, was the privilege of the priest only (cf. Lev. vi. 18, 29; vii. 6). As the Law allotted these to the priest, but did not prohibit the giving of a portion of them to the attendant Levite, the prescription that the Levite was to have a share with the priest is not a repeal of the older enactment, but only an addition to it.

"According to Numb. xxxv. 1—8, the Levites were to have cities assigned to them as their own, in all forty-eight, with fields attached for their cattle, and these were by lot given to them by Joshua (Josh. xxi.). Of any such relations, of special cities of the Levites, nothing is found in Deuteronomy; here the same appear, at least for the most part, as homeless, living scattered among the rest of the Israelites in the different towns; this is presumed, and legal prescriptions refer to it (cf. ch. xii. 12, 18, etc.; xiv. 27—29; xvi. 11, 14; xviii. 6; xxvi. 12)" (Bleek). In these passages the Levite is represented as living within the gates of the people, and this is assumed to mean that he was there as a stranger who, having no home of his own, had to be dependent on the hospitality of others for a residence. But this does not seem to be the meaning of the phrase. The Levites had, in accordance with the law in Numbers, fields and towns assigned to them; but they were not the sole occupants of these; they were only a portion, in most cases only a minor portion, of the inhabitants. The town thus properly was not Levitical; it was a town of Israel, in which the Levites had residences, with fields appertaining. Hence the description, "the Levite within thy gates;" not that the Levite was homeless, but that his home was within the precincts of one of the cities of Israel (Keil, 'Comment. on Joshua,' p. 211; Kitto, 'Cyclopædia,' ii. 826). Even if the town had been occupied wholly by the Levites, they might still have been said to dwell within the gates of the people, inasmuch as the towns allotted to them were not in a region of their own as a tribe, but were taken from the portions of the other tribes throughout the country. It is further assumed in this objection that Deuteronomy makes the only source of maintenance for the Levites to be the share in the sacrificial feasts of the tithes which it assigns to them; whereas the right of the Levites to partake of the tithes received from the nation is distinctly recognized in Deuteronomy, as in the earlier law (cf. ch. x. 9; xiv. 22; xviii. 2; xxvi. 12).

2. It is alleged that there are statements in the book which could not have been made by Moses, but betray the hand of a writer of a much later age.

Ch. i. 1. The expression, "beyond the Jordan (בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן)," here and in ver. 5, is, it is alleged, plainly the writing of one whose position was on the west of that river, and therefore must have been written after the death of Moses. It must strike one, however, that it is very improbable that any one writing in the person of Moses, and wishing to be taken for Moses, would make a mistake of this sort, and on the very threshold of his work betray himself so foolishly. There is, however, no mistake in the case

The phrase, "beyond the Jordan," was the established and current designation of the country to the east of the Jordan where Moses then was; nor is there any reason to believe that this came into vogue only after the Israelites had occupied Canaan. Moses, therefore, dating his book from the place where it was written, indicates that place by its proper name, the name by which alone it was known. So also in referring to localities within Palestine, he describes them by the names given to them by the inhabitants of the country, and by which they were properly known. Thus as the common name for "westward" was in Hebrew "seaward," and the name for "southward" was "towards the Negeb" (the usual appellation of the arid district to the south of Palestine), Moses uses these terms even when writing where the sea was not to the west or the Negeb to the south of the place where he was. This, indeed, has been urged as an argument against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. But without reason; for when designations are once given to localities, they become proper names, and are used without respect to their original or etymological signification. It is simply absurd to ask, "Would Moses, writing at Sinai, have spoken of the Negeb as to the south of him when it was really to the north?" Moses says nothing of the sort. Writing in Hebrew, and for Hebrews, he uses the expression, "towards the Negeb," because that is the Hebrew for "southward." Suppose a person, writing in Edinburgh, to say of a certain event that it took place in Norfolk, or of a locality that it is in Sutherland; what would be thought of a critic who should argue that neither statement could have been written in Edinburgh, because in relation to that city Norfolk (North-folk) lies to the south, and Sutherland (Southern-land) lies to the north? Or, suppose Cæsar, when on the north of the Alps, to have dated one of his Commentaries from Transalpine Gaul, would any one have held this to prove that that book was spurious, and must have been written by some one south of the Alps?

Ch. ii. 12. The remark, "As Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the Lord gave unto them," presupposes a time when the Israelites were already in possession of Canaan, and had expelled the peoples formerly dwelling there—a time, therefore, posterior to that of Moses. Here it is assumed that the land referred to is Canaan, and on this assumption it appears certain that the passage could not have been written by Moses. But is it Canaan that is here referred to? In ch. iii. similar phraseology is used of the district east of the Jordan, already captured by the Israelites, and assigned to the two and a half tribes; in ver. 18 it is described as the land which the Lord their God had given them "to possess," and in ver. 20 as their "possession" which had been assigned to them by Moses. As these tribes were part of Israel, the land of their possession might well be called "the land of the possession of Israel;" and it is to this, doubtless, and not to Canaan, that Moses here refers. This is rendered certain by the fact that it is for the purpose of encouraging the people to go on to the conquest of Canaan, that the reference to what had already been achieved by them is

made. A later writer would never have committed the gross absurdity of representing Moses as encouraging the people to undertake the conquest of Canaan, by telling them that they had already conquered that land and were in possession of it.

Ch. xix. 14 and xx, 5, 6. Here, it is alleged, certain relations which imply a later period are assumed as present. But this overlooks the ideal standpoint of the Deuteronomic legislation, which is that of faith in the Divine promise that Israel should certainly possess and dwell in the land of Canaan. Hence the speaker throughout speaks as if the people were already settled there, and legislates accordingly. In the passages cited he simply assumes that certain relations, which were sure to exist after the people were settled in the land, already existed.

Ch. xxiii. 12, 13. This is adduced as in itself a very convincing proof of the unhistorical character of the whole narrative, because it involves the absurdity of enacting what was obviously impracticable (Colenso). But this assumes that the enactment has reference to the conduct of the people whilst encamped in the wilderness, whereas the precept has reference to a camp such as soldiers might form should they at any time march out against their enemies. It is to the preservation of the purity of a military camp in the time of war that the injunction has respect, and not to anything connected with the domestic encampment of the people, either in the wilderness or elsewhere. It would have been absurd had Moses given such an instruction as this to the whole camp of the Israelites during their wanderings, especially had he reserved it till the very close of their wanderings, just when instructions of this sort became unnecessary.

In ch. xxxii. and xxxiii. are passages which have been alleged as against the genuineness of the book. As these apply specially to that part of the book, and do not directly affect the book as a whole, the consideration of them may be deferred till the question of the integrity of the book comes under notice. (See § 6.)

3. As against the antiquity of the book, it is alleged that certain things forbidden or denounced in the book were done by individuals in times subsequent to those of Moses; and this, it is alleged, would not have been had the book been in existence at the time in which these persons lived. Thus in ch. xvi. 22 it is enjoined, "Neither shalt thou set up a *maççeba*; which the Lord thy God hateth." A *maççeba* was a pillar, usually of rough, unhewn stone, and when set up beside an altar was there for idolatrous purposes; and this is what is forbidden here. Notwithstanding this, *maççebas* it is alleged, continued to be set up for worship even by men of eminent piety among the Israelites; in proof of which the following passages are referred to:—Josh. xxiv. 26; 1 Sam. vi. 14; vii. 12; 2 Sam. xx. 8; 1 Kings i. 9; vii. 21; Hos. iii. 4. "This detail is one of the clearest proofs," it is said, "that Deuteronomy was unknown till long after the days of Moses. How could Joshua, if he had known such a law, have erected a *maççeba*, or sacred pillar of unhewn stone, under the sacred tree

by the sanctuary at Shechem?"[1] But what proof is there that it *was* a *maççeba* which Joshua erected? The record simply says it was "a great stone," and the same is the expression used in the majority of the other passages, in some without the epithet "great;" in none but the last does the term *maççeba* occur. By what right, then, is it assumed that these stones were of the kind forbidden in Deuteronomy? All *maççebas*, it may be supposed, were stones, but all monumental stones were not *maççebas*. The word used in 1 Kings vii. 21 is "pillar" (*'âmûd*), and this certainly was not a *maççeba;* what Solomon set up by Divine direction "in the porch of the temple" were pillars, monumental as well as ornamental, but not in any way connected with worship except as they stood at the entrance to the place of worship.[2] As for the Hosea passage, it has no bearing on the point at issue; in declaring that Israel should be without worship of any kind, sacred or idolatrous, it only declares implicitly what the history attests explicitly, that idolatrous usages had been in Israel, not that these were ever regarded as lawful, or were practised by those who professed to be worshippers of Jehovah.

But "this law," it is added, "was unknown to Isaiah, who attacks idolatry, but recognizes *maççeba* and altar as the marks of the sanctuary of Jehovah," and in proof of this Isa. xix. 19 is adduced, "In that day there shall be an altar to Jehovah within the land of Egypt, and a pillar (*maççeba*) at the border thereof to Jehovah." But this passage asserts something very different from what it is adduced to prove; it asserts that the pillar was erected, not at the sanctuary of Jehovah, but at the border of the land of Egypt. It is not, therefore, a *maççeba* of the kind condemned in Deuteronomy that is here referred to, but a stone set up as a landmark or terminal index. The reference, consequently, is irrelevant to the present discussion.

4. Much weight is attached to the fact that, not only during the unsettled times of the judges, when "there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes," but on to a later period, even to the time of David, the law of a central sanctuary at which alone sacrifice was to be offered was disregarded, and even pious men, like Samuel and David, scrupled not to offer sacrifice at any place where they might chance to be at the time; conduct which, it is maintained, argues on their part a total ignorance of any such law as that in ch. xii. 6, 11, and by consequence the non-existence of that law, or of the book in which it is recorded, in their day, seeing, had the book existed, they could not have been ignorant of what it prescribes. This has been put forth as conclusive against the pretensions of the book to be of a date as

[1] 'The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,' p. 354.

[2] The significance of the pillars appears from their names. "They were the monumental witnesses that the God of the covenant had now taken for ever his abode in this sanctuary in the midst of his people, and would manifest thence his might and majesty for their help" (Riehm, 'Handwörterb. des Bibl. Altertums,' s. 653).

early as the time of Moses. On examination, however, it will be found not to be by any means so conclusive as has been pretended.

(1) It is to be observed that the mere fact of the non-observance of a law, even by good men, does not necessarily involve the assumption that the law was not then known or did not then exist. This is only a *conjecture*, which the critic puts forth as accounting for the fact, and which can be accepted only as it appears probable. But on what does the alleged probability of this conjecture rest? Only on the counter-improbability of good men acting as Samuel and others did had the law been then in existence. That is to say, it is probable they did not know the law because it is not probable that, had they known it, they would have neglected it. To one accustomed to weigh historical evidence, this cannot but appear anything but conclusive. Good men often do very unexpected things; and unless we know all the circumstances, it is impossible to determine beforehand what they will do or will not do in any particular case. Even when all the circumstances are known, the chances of any given course being followed are not such that a prudent man will risk much on the anticipation.

(2) So far as the circumstances are known to us, they suggest another and different reason for the conduct of the pious men of Samuel's time in the matter referred to than that adduced by the objector; they make it highly probable that the law of the central sanctuary was neglected, not because it was unknown, but because the means of observing it were wanting. The central sanctuary was where God chose to put his Name, and where was his habitation (ch. xii. 5, 21), and this was where the ark of the covenant was. There it was that God had engaged to meet his people, and there it was that his Name was put (Exod. xxv. 22; 2 Sam. vi. 2). Now, during the whole of Samuel's time and part of that of David, the ark was in abeyance, nor was there any sanctuary in which it was placed. After the destruction of the sanctuary at Shiloh, the ark was for a season a captive in the land of the Philistines, and when at length it was restored, it was only to find temporary accommodation in private houses and unconsecrated courts, until it was brought up by David to Jerusalem. During all this time, therefore, there was no central sanctuary to which the worshipper could bring his offering, and consequently no one place more legitimately appropriate for this act of worship than another. The alternative before the men of that time was thus, either to omit the offering of sacrifice altogether or to offer it at such places as were most convenient and suitable for such a service. They chose the latter; and in so doing they obeyed the earlier and more general law (Exod. xx. 24), while they neglected the later and more special one—not because they were ignorant of the latter, but because they had not the means of obeying it (comp. 1 Kings iii. 2).

(3) It is to be noted that the law in Deuteronomy appointing the one place for sacrificial worship is not absolute and unconditioned. It is expressly qualified by the condition of the Lord's giving them rest from all their enemies round about (ch. xii. 10). Until this was done, then, the law

was in abeyance; so that, if circumstances required, other methods than that which it prescribed of observing the primary and absolutely imperative ordinance of sacrifice might be followed. We find, accordingly, that it was only as it was considered that the Lord had given them rest from their enemies that it was deemed fitting to fix upon a certain place to which the people might repair as to the dwelling-place of Jehovah, to present their worship and offerings. Thus, after the occupation of the land by the Israelites, it was not until the land was subdued before them, and the Lord had given them rest round about, that the congregation of the children of Israel assembled at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there (Josh. xviii. 1; xxi. 44; xxii. 4). The rest, however, which was then given to them was not destined to be permanent. Times of unsettlement ensued, and at length the sanctuary at Shiloh was everted and the ark of the covenant carried away by hostile invaders; nor was it till the time of David that it could be said definitively that the Lord had given rest to his people from all their enemies, as he had promised. Then at length the occasion had arrived when a house might be built for the Lord to dwell in; and David, recognizing this, determined, seeing "the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies," to build a house unto the Name of the Lord; and though he was not permitted to carry this into effect, because of the wars in which he had been engaged in the earlier part of his reign, his purpose was approved of by God (2 Sam. vii. 1; 1 Kings viii. 18). The fact that in the usages of the nation there was this connecting of a time of rest from all enemies with the setting up of a fixed place for the sanctuary, is surely a strong indication that the law of Deuteronomy was all along known and respected by them; and, at the same time, we may see from this how it was that, pending the arrival of the promised rest, good men were found offering worship and sacrifices elsewhere than at a central sanctuary.

(4) That the law of Deuteronomy respecting the offering of sacrifice only at the place which the Lord should appoint was known and reverenced from the earliest times, is placed beyond doubt, not only by the constant references, in the early historical books, to the "house of the Lord" as the place where worship and sacrifice were to be offered, but especially by what is recorded in Josh. xxii. The indignation of the people against their brethren who had erected an altar on the border of Jordan before they crossed it to return to their own possession on the eastern side of that river; the earnestness with which the latter hastened to assure the people that they had erected the altar, not to establish an independent worship, but rather that it might stand as a permanent witness that they still adhered to and claimed to have part in Jehovah as their God; and the solemnity with which they disclaimed any intention to rebel against the Lord by building an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices besides the altar of the Lord that was before the tabernacle;—all incontestably show that this law was known and recognized as imperative at the time of the

settling of the people in the promised land. It was this law which they who had built the altar so earnestly disclaimed having broken; it was zeal for this law which stirred the other tribes to such wrath against their brethren when they supposed it had been violated by them.

5. Great stress has also been laid on the fact that non-priestly men, like Samuel, David, and Solomon, offered sacrifices, contrary to the express law which enacts that this shall be done only by the priest. This law appears only in the middle books of the Pentateuch (Lev. i. 9, etc.; v. 8, etc.); but it is assumed in Deuteronomy as existing, and the objection may therefore be considered here. In regard to it, it might be observed that, though the law constitutes the priest as the proper presenter of the sacrifice, it does not enact that no other but a priest shall at any time or under any circumstances present sacrifice. It was according to order that the priest should present the sacrifice; but order is not so imperatively binding that it may never under any circumstances be departed from. If laymen, then, on special occasions, assumed to themselves this priestly function, this does not prove that the law was unknown to them and did not exist in their day; it only shows that on such occasions the law might be suspended and neglected without offence. Especially was this allowable when, by a special manifestation, God came to his servants, and so virtually consecrated the place where he appeared and authorized his servants, though not priests, to offer sacrifice and worship him; as in the case of the people at Bochim (Judg. ii. 1—5), of Gideon (Judg. vi. 20—22, 25), and Manoah (Judg. xiii. 16—23). In other cases it may be asked—Did these non-priestly men really themselves make sacrifices? It is said, "They sacrificed to the Lord," or "They offered sacrifices;" but does this mean that with their own hands they slew the victims and offered the blood upon the altar? Are not such statements to be understood according to the old juridical brocard, "Qui facit per alium facit per se"—as simply intimating that the persons named presented sacrifice in the legal way by means of the priest? In the case of Solomon this *must* be the interpretation put upon the phrase; for as that monarch, at the dedication of the temple, "offered unto the Lord two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep" (1 Kings viii. 63), it would be monstrous to suppose that he killed all these animals himself and presented them with his own hand on the altar. Besides, be it observed that there was an offering and an offering; the man who brought the sacrificial victims offered, and the priest who presented to the Lord offered. This is evident from the very terms of the law in question (cf. Lev. i. 3, etc.; ii. 1; vi. 1, 4; ch. xii. 14 xviii.; 3, 4, etc.). We interpret fairly, then, when we understand the assertion that Samuel, David, and others offered sacrifice, as meaning nothing more than that they brought the victims which were offered in sacrifice according to the law.

From this survey it appears that there is nothing in the contents of this book or in the conduct of notable individuals in relation to its enactments that effectually militates against the conclusion, so strongly vouched for by

the general character of the book as well as by particular statements in it, as to its being the writing of Moses.

§ 5. Relation to Jeremiah.

It must strike every one who compares Deuteronomy with the writings ascribed to the prophet Jeremiah that the author of the one book must have been very familiar with the other. The resemblances between the two are numerous and marked. Words are used in both which are found nowhere else; passages in the one are identical with, or closely similar to, passages in the other; sentiments prominent in the one are prominent also in the other; and, in general tone and form of thought, the two remarkably resemble each other.

To account for these points of resemblance, it seems sufficient to suppose that the prophet, from much familiarity with the Book of Deuteronomy, had so transported into his own mind its phraseology and sentiments that these naturally flowed from his pen when he himself began to write. That Jeremiah would be well acquainted with Deuteronomy can be readily believed. As a priest, the study of the Law in all its parts must have been his occupation from his youth upward; and called as he was to act as a reprover and admonisher of the people in dark and disastrous times, Deuteronomy would be the part of the Pentateuch to which he would most frequently turn, both that he might feed his own mind with thoughts appropriate to his position, and that he might have suggested to him what it would be fitting to address to the people. In his time also the Book of the Law was discovered and drawn from its obscurity into prominent notice, and a fresh impulse given to the study of it both among the rulers and teachers of the nation and through the community at large. That book was probably the entire Pentateuch, possibly the original copy placed in charge of the priests by Moses, and which had been allowed for many years to fall out of sight; but the part which seems to have excited most interest and been most attended to was undoubtedly Deuteronomy (cf. 2 Kings xxii. 13, 16, 17 and xxii. 2—25 with ch. xxviii. and xxix.; xii. 2, 3; and xvi., xviii.). This book, therefore, must have been constantly before the mind of Jeremiah during his ministry in Judæa, and if so, it is no wonder that its words and phrases and sentiments should be found so frequently recurring in his writings.

To some it has appeared that more than this is to be inferred from the resemblances which the writings of Jeremiah bear to Deuteronomy; and they have advanced the opinion that this book itself is from the pen of the prophet of Anathoth. For this opinion, however, the support is of the slightest. A number of words common to both writings, a similarity of phraseology, an occasional identity of sentiment and mode of thought, can never be held to furnish adequate proof of an identity of authorship, for it is always open to the inquirer to account for these coincidences by a

presumed acquaintance on the part of the later writer with the writings of the earlier. It would be otherwise were there a large number of words, phrases, and sentiments *peculiar* to both writings, *i.e.* found in both of them but nowhere else. This, however, is not the case with the writings of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy. On the contrary, a large number of words peculiar to the one are not found in the other, and in respect of sentiment also considerable diversity prevails. The discord between the two is thus greater than the agreement; so that if the question of authorship is to be determined by such considerations—and by these alone is it proposed to determine it—the only conclusion to which we can come is that the Book of Deuteronomy and the writings of Jeremiah are not from the same author nor are even of contemporary authorship.[1]

Before passing from this part of the subject, it is necessary to advert to the reproach which is cast upon the prophet by the supposition that he was the author of the Book of Deuteronomy. Whether he wrote this book of his own accord, or, as has been suggested, conspired with his relative Hilkiah to produce it and give it forth as the Book of the Law found in the temple, the prophet must be regarded as having deliberately lent himself to falsehood, to practise an imposition in the name of God upon the people. Can this be believed of one like Jeremiah, or indeed of any one who was a true prophet of Jehovah? It has indeed been said that, in that early age, "when notions of literary property were yet in their infancy, an action of this kind was not regarded as unlawful. Men used to perpetrate such fictions as these without any qualms of conscience."[2] This may be true of the later times of ancient literature, when the making of books had become a source of livelihood, and was practised by many who, not having power enough to write what would command attention of itself, used to send forth their productions under the veil of some great and venerable name; but of the early age of literature it is not true, nor was the practice at any time regarded as laudable,[3] and least of all is it true in respect of the sacred literature of the Hebrews. There is not the shadow of evidence that such practices were known among the Hebrews of the time of Jeremiah or any earlier time, and one can hardly conceive the possibility of such a thing being tolerated among them. Be this, however, as it may, the fact remains that if Jeremiah wrote this book and issued it as a writing of

[1] For the details bearing on this question, see König, 'Alt-test. Studien,' 2 Heft.; 'The Mosaic Origin of the Pentateuch, considered by a Layman of the Church of England,' pp. 179—189; 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. ii. p. 795.

[2] Kuenen, 'Religion of Israel,' ii. 18, 19.

[3] Galen, a very competent witness, says that it was not till the age of the Ptolemies, when kings were rivalling each other in the collecting of libraries, that the roguery (ῥαδιουργία) of forging writings and titles began; and this was done by those who hoped thereby to obtain money by presenting to the kings books pretending to be written by illustrious men (Galen, 'Comment. ii. in Hip. de Nat. Hom.'). It is plain from this that even when this practice was most common it was not regarded as lawful; but, on the contrary, was even among heathens denounced as a "roguery."

Moses, he was guilty of a forgery and a falsehood; and thus not only is a shadow cast over his character as a man, but his reputation as a prophet is damaged. For if he could publish as from Moses what was not from Moses but from himself, what security is there that what he utters as a message from the Lord is not merely some invention of his own? To those who look upon the ancient Hebrew prophets as mere *litterateurs*, who exercised their craft as they best could, according to the measure of their own powers, this may seem a very small matter; but those who believe that the prophet of old was one chosen by God to be the medium of communication between God and man, one who was moved by the Holy Ghost to speak what he uttered, and who was bound under the most solemn sanctions to speak God's word faithfully to the people, will not so regard it. To them it will appear nothing less than an impeaching of the claims of one of the greatest of the prophets to be an ambassador from God and interpreter of his mind to men, and by consequence a detracting from the authorship of his writings as Divine, and not of his only, but by implication of all the prophetic Scriptures.

§ 6. Integrity of the Book.

Whilst accepting the book as, on the whole, the writing of Moses, it may yet be fairly inquired whether every part of it as we now have it proceeded from his pen, or whether there may not be portions of it which are additions to the original writing, or interpolations introduced by some later writer. That there are such has been confidently affirmed.

The parts which have been thus stigmatized are chiefly these: the title and introduction (ch. i. 1—5; the ethnological notices (ch. ii. 10—12, 20—23); the account of the cities of refuge on the east of Jordan (ch. iv. 41—43); Moses' song (ch. xxxii. 1—43); the blessing of the tribes (ch. xxxiii. 1—29); the account of Moses' last journey, death, and burial (ch. xxxiv. 1—12).

Regarding the first of these, it may suffice to say that, though it is quite possible that the title and introduction may have been prefixed to the original work by a later hand, there is nothing to show that this is really the case; and whilst, on the one hand, there is no reason why this may not have been written by the author of the work himself, it is, on the other, probable that it was placed there by him, since without it his work commences so abruptly that it is inconceivable that any skilled writer should have allowed it to go forth in such condition.

The passages containing the ethnographical notices have, it must be confessed, very much the appearance of being interpolations, and may possibly be glosses that have been introduced by some editor of the work into the text. At the same time, it is not incredible that Moses may have inserted, parenthetically, the notices which these passages contain. The mention of the Moabites, to whom God had given a possession by expelling from the land its former occupants, not unnaturally leads to a description

of the nations so expelled; and this it was of use for Moses to give, because it showed the Israelites that the right of the children of Lot to the undisturbed occupancy of their territory rested on the same grounds as rested the right of the Israelites to the lands they had taken from the Amorites, and as would rest their right to the occupancy of the land the Lord was about to give them in Canaan; and further, because it showed that, if the children of Lot could cast out nations so mighty and powerful as the Emim, and the children of Esau could dispossess the Horim, there was no reason to dread that Israel would be baffled in grappling with the Anakim, who then possessed Canaan and were of the same race as the Emim. There was thus a practical end to be gained by the insertion of such notices, if done by Moses; whereas if done by a later editor they would possess only a slight antiquarian interest, hardly sufficient to induce any one to take the trouble of writing them, certainly not sufficient to induce any judicious editor to incorporate them with the text. The presumption, therefore, is in favour of their having been inserted by Moses himself. A modern writer would have thrown them into a note; but as this method had not come into use in ancient times, it was only by way of parenthesis that Moses could introduce them. Whichever hypothesis be adopted, whether these passages be regarded as written by Moses or whether they be pronounced to be the insertions of a later writer, as they are manifestly excrescences, their excision would not in any way affect the integrity of the book.

The passage, ch. iv. 41—43, has been supposed to be an interpolation on the ground that it has no relevance either to what goes before or to what follows. But were this the case, why should the passage have been inserted at all? It could not drop into this place by accident; and he must be a bungling editor indeed who should gratuitously insert in the body of another man's work a passage which has no relation to the context in the midst of which it is thrust. If, however, Moses himself inserted this passage, we may see at once why he did so. He had just finished his first address, and was about to enter upon his second. An interval between the two thus ensued, and during this Moses, in obedience to the Divine injunction (Numb. xxxv. 6, 14), set apart cities of refuge in the district to the east of Jordan, recently conquered by the Israelites. Not improbably (as has been suggested) he chose this time for doing this, "not only to give the land on that side its full consecration and thoroughly confirm the possession of the two Amoritish kingdoms on the other side of the Jordan, but also to give the people, in this punctual observance of the duty devolving upon it, an example for their imitation in the conscientious observance of the commandments of the Lord, which he was now about to lay before the nation" (Keil). The passage is, therefore, not only in its proper place as part of the historical narrative, but it has a close, intimate relevancy to the main theme of Moses' admonitions in his addresses to the people.

The song or ode contained in ch. xxxii., though expressly declared to have been composed by Moses, uttered by him in the hearing of the people, and

written by him to be preserved in Israel as a witness against them should they apostatize from Jehovah, has been adjudged by many critics to be the production of some unknown writer of a much later age. This judgment is grounded partly on the language and style of the ode, partly on certain statements in it which it is alleged contain allusions to events and circumstances in the later history of Israel.

1. It is alleged that the style and tone of this composition are so different from the style and tone of the preceding part of this book, that it cannot be regarded as proceeding from the same author. This, however, is really saying nothing more than that this is a poem, whereas the preceding part of the book is in prose. For in a poem the style of language and tone of thought are necessarily different from what characterizes prose compositions; to the poet belong "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," and he is no poet whose thoughts and words are not of this sort. When, therefore, an author passes from simple narrative or expository and hortatory discourse, to give utterance to feeling and sentiment in song, he of necessity adopts a style and mode of thought more or less differing from those of his other compositions, else his utterance ceases to be poetry. Now, this ode is poetry of a very high order; and to this its peculiarity of expression and sentiment is due, not to its being the production of another than the author of the other parts of this book.

It is further to be observed that, whilst this ode differs in diction and cast of sentiment from the preceding parts of this book, as poetry differs from prose, there is nothing in it alien from or contradictory of the sentiments and utterances of Moses in his addresses to the people, reported in the preceding parts of this book. On the contrary, there are not a few coincidences both in thought and expression which may well be regarded as *pro tanto* proofs of an identity of authorship in this and the other parts of this book (see Keil, 'Biblical Commentary,' vol. iii. p. 466).

Worthy of notice also are the coincidences between this ode and Ps. xc., a composition admittedly of great antiquity, and which is with much probability attributed to Moses as its author (see Ewald, 'Die Dichter des Alt. Bundes,' Bd. i. Th. ii. s. 31; Hengstenberg, 'Die Psalmen,' Bd. iii. s. 529; Bleek, 'Einleit in. d. A. T.,' s. 615, English translation, ii. p. 234). Both in mode of expression and in cast of sentiment the two odes resemble each other (comp. ch. xxxii. 7, 18, 4, 36, with Ps. xc. 1, 15, 13, 16), and thus favour the supposition that both have proceeded from one author.

2. It is urged that this song is so constructed that the Divine guidance of Israel (ver. 12, etc.) and their ingratitude (ver. 15, etc.) are referred to as things already past. But this ignores the *prophetic* character of the song, and mistakes the style of prophetic utterance. Moses was a prophet; and the prophets, or seers, not only looked to the future, but beheld it as present; and the energy of their perception of it stamped itself on their words so that they very frequently represent as actually before them or as already done what in reality was yet future. So familiar is this usage that gram-

marians have recognized "the prophetic perfect" as an idiom of the Hebrew. Nor is it in prophecy alone that this presentation of the future as actual is to be found; the poet also claims liberty to do the same, and exercises it freely. Even if Moses, then, be regarded as only an uninspired poet, the use of the preterite in the passages referred to may be accounted for without supposing that the song is the production of a later writer.

3. The occurrence of Aramaic words and forms in the song has been alleged as an evidence of its late composition. That a few such are to be found may be admitted, though there are fewer than has sometimes been insinuated; but be their number what it may, their presence proves nothing as to the lateness of composition, or it proves too much; for as the presence of Aramaisms in a book is a sign of either very early or very late composition (cf. König, 'Alt-test. Studien,' ii. 8), if the early date of this song be denied, these Aramaisms would go to show that it must have been written in the latest age of ancient Hebrew literature. This, however, no one will accept; the latest date supposed for it by any of those who refuse to regard it as Mosaic is the age immediately succeeding the revolt of Jeroboam. These Aramaisms, then, so far as they have any weight, point to an early age for the composition of this song; and so fall in with the supposition that it was written by Moses.

4. The song, it is alleged, contains allusions to a state of things which did not arise till the time of the kings after the revolt of Jeroboam; it dwells upon the falling away of Israel from allegiance to Jehovah, upon the evils of this, and upon the hope of a restoration to forfeited privileges when the Lord should remember his covenant with Israel and be "merciful to his land and to his people;" and such it is supposed could be the theme of a poet only after he had witnessed a state of religious degeneracy and political disorder such as emerged in Israel after the revolt of the ten tribes. It is to be observed, however, that the language of the song is in this respect quite general; there is no part of the description which indicates a reference to the condition of the people at any special time during the decline of the Israelitish kingdom; nor is the apostacy of the people, with its melancholy results, more pointedly alluded to here than it is in other parts of Deuteronomy, as for instance in ch. xxviii. The truth is, that the possibility of this and the dread of it pressed continually on the mind of Moses at this time, and breaks forth throughout his farewell addresses; and if here his language becomes more animated and his delineation more vivid, it is only because there is here the impassioned utterance of the poet, whilst in his addresses he restrains himself within limits befitting hortatory address.

But even supposing it could be shown that in this ode there are references to things which actually occurred in the history of the nation at a later period, it would not follow that the song could not have been written by Moses. For we must not ignore the prophetic character of the song. Moses was a prophet—a prophet of the highest order, the very type and paradigm of a prophet (ch. xviii. 18), and he here speaks as one on whom

the prophetic afflatus had fallen, and whose mental eye had been opened so that he saw in vision scenes and events yet future as if they were actually present. The standpoint, therefore, of the poet is not his own time, but a time into which he is transported; and the people to whom he speaks are not his own contemporaries, but those whom he sees in vision—Israel in the after-time. This is characteristic of all prophetic utterances; the prophet speaks of what is yet future as if the whole were before his eyes at the time. The assertion, therefore, "that the entire ode moves within the epoch of the kings who lived many centuries after the time of Moses, rests upon a total misapprehension of the nature of prophecy, and a mistaken attempt to turn figurative language into prosaic history" (Keil).

It may, indeed, be affirmed that such a thing as a presentation to the inner sense of the prophet of things yet future is an impossibility; but this is a mere dogmatic assumption, which not only cannot be proved, but which is made in the face of facts that are incontestable. Now, if it was possible for Moses under the hand of the Lord to see the future, to have a vision of the nation falling away from the Lord and suffering under calamities which their apostacy had brought upon them, what more natural, what more fitting than that, ere he finally retired from the post he had so long occupied as their leader, teacher, and ruler, he should sound in their ears a loud note of warning such as this ode contains, and should leave the ode with them as a perpetual protest against their unfaithfulness, and an enduring witness for God amongst them?

The genuineness of ch. xxxiii., containing the blessing of the tribes, has been called in question on very much the same grounds as those on which the song of Moses, in the preceding chapter, has been assailed. It is needless to repeat what has been already advanced in reply to the arguments founded on peculiarity of style, diction, and general literary character in this composition as compared with the prosaic parts of this book. But this chapter has more the appearance of a mere appendix to the book than the song has; it is not said to have been written by Moses, as the song is said to have been written by him; and it appears with a heading which must be ascribed to the pen of another than Moses, for, by describing Moses as "the man of God," the author of this heading clearly distinguishes himself from Moses, and applies to him a phrase by which, apparently, it was customary at a later period to designate him (comp. Josh. xiv. 6; Ps. xc. 1). This makes it necessary that we should see whether in the contents of this poem there is, as alleged by many modern critics, anything incompatible with the supposition that it was composed and uttered by Moses.

1. The allusions to the localities of some of the tribes in Canaan indicate, it is said, an acquaintance with a state of things which did not exist till after the division of the land by Joshua, and a knowledge of the country such as Moses could not have possessed. Thus it is said of Zebulun, "They shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand" (ver. 19); of Naphtali, that they should "possess the west and the south"

(ver. 23); and of Asher, that he should "dip his foot in oil," and that his "shoes should be iron and brass" (vers. 24, 25). It must be allowed, however, that these descriptions are far from precise, and indicate nothing beyond a very general acquaintance with the form of the country as a whole, and the character of the district assigned to each of these tribes. Now, not to mention that Moses might have visited Canaan while a shepherd in the desert, it cannot be supposed that he would be so long on the confines of Canaan, and where he would come into intercourse with many who had explored that country from end to end, without making himself acquainted with it so far at least as the general topography of it was concerned, along with the natural peculiarities of its different districts. And as the division of the land and the location of the different tribes had been already arranged (Numb. xxxiv.), it required no great intelligence on the part of Moses to foretell to Zebulun that he should draw wealth from the sea on the borders of which he was to be located, or to assign to Naphtali that he should possess a district fanned by the sea-breeze and turned to the genial south, or to announce to Asher that his should be rich and fertile soil and that his dwelling should be strong and secure (see the notes on these passages in the Exposition). Even, then, if we look on Moses as simply a man of superior intelligence, and take no account of him as a prophet, there seems no reason in what these verses contain for our concluding that they could not have been uttered by him.

2. It is alleged that in ver. 5 there is reference to a monarchical form of government as existing when this poem was composed. But this rests on an entire misconception of what this verse states. The king there spoken of is not one of the kings of Judah or Israel, neither is he Moses himself, but Jehovah, the true King of Israel from the first (see note).

3. Ver. 7 is alleged to contain a reference to the division caused by the secession of the ten tribes, and an aspiration for a reunion of the whole under the sceptre of Judah. This, however, rests on what is a misinterpretation of the verse. There is nothing here about the divisions of Israel, or about the sorrow of Judah over these and Judah's desire that they might be healed. The verse simply expresses a wish that Judah may ever have a safe and jubilant return from conflict, that he may always have strength to defend himself, and may obtain help from Jehovah against all his enemies whoever they might be. Such a wish might be uttered at any time; it is, in fact, correlative to what Jacob predicted long before concerning Judah's leadership of his brethren and successes in war (Gen. xlix. 8, 9), and no more refers to the peculiar state of things in Israel at any subsequent period of its history than does the utterance of the patriarch. It is, besides, absurd to take the words, "bring him unto his people," as equivalent to "bring his people back to him."

4. "The contents of most of the utterances, and especially the conclusion of the whole ode (vers. 26—29), make it indubitable that it was composed at a time when the people of Israel, including the ten tribes, were on the whole

in a happy condition." "The original composition of this ode appears, as is most probable, to have been made in the period between the death of Solomon and the beginning of the Assyrian Exile, most probably in 800 B.C., when both kingdoms were governed by strong and powerful kings, Israel by Jeroboam II. and Judah by Uzziah." So Bleek ('Einleit,' s. 305), following here the leadership of Graf against his own earlier opinion that this ode is older than the blessing of Jacob. Ewald's view is that it was written about the time of Josiah; whilst Hoffmann and Maurer bring it down to the date of the Exile. It may suffice here to cite, in opposition to the view of these critics, the words of Knobel, who, no less than they, maintains the late origin of this poem: "There is no trace here of allusion to national misfortunes which befell the Hebrews in the Syrian, Assyrian, and Chaldean periods. The political no less than the religious condition of the people was satisfactory; at least, the author does not even remotely refer to any religious indecencies such as are so strongly denounced in ch. xxxiii.; rather does he commend Zebulun and Issachar for bringing 'sacrifices of righteousness' (ver. 19). All this forbids the placing of this ode in the time of the Exile (Hoffmann; Gesenius, 'De Pentat. Samar.,' p. 7), or in the time of Josiah (Ewald, 'Gesch. Isr.,' i. 171), or in that of the second Jeroboam (Graf), or indefinitely in the period of the two kingdoms (Von Lengerke, 'Kenaan,' i. s. cxix. f.); it belongs to a much earlier time, though it did not, as the older critics thought, originate in that of Moses; . . . it declares itself to be of the time when David was a fugitive from Saul" ('Erklärung,' s. 339). This opinion of Knobel is just as arbitrary as any of those which he condemns; for none of them does the text give any real authority. Knobel's "own arguments," as has been justly observed, "ought in consistency to have carried him further, and led him to place it much earlier. For it is impossible to explain how the disasters, apostacies, and confusion of the latter part of Saul's reign, and still more those of the times of the judges, could have happened at a date not long before that, in which the song was penned" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. ii. p. 926). It may be added that the differences of these critics as to the probable date of this poem sufficiently show the insecurity of the data on which their conclusions rest; for unless the historical events and actual facts supposed to be alluded to in a poem are so described as not to be mistakable, it cannot be known that there are any such allusions in the piece at all.

There seems no substantial reason, then, for doubting or questioning the genuineness of this sacred poem. Whether Moses wrote it or not, he must be accredited with the authorship of it; and if he was the author of it, he probably also committed it to writing—else how could it have been preserved?

That the concluding chapter of the book is not from the pen of Moses, but is the production of a later age, is so evident from the contents of the chapter, that no one now thinks of disputing it. Philo, indeed ('De Vita Mosis,' iii. § 29), and Josephus ('Antiq.,' iv. 8, 48) do not hesitate to ascribe

it to Moses, who they think was enabled to narrate his own death and burial by Divine inspiration; and in this they have been followed by not a few of a former age. In the Talmud, Joshua is said to be the author of this chapter, which he appended to the writing of Moses after his death ('Baba Bathra,' fol. 14, 2); and this also has been extensively accepted. The whole chapter, however, cannot have been written by Joshua, for the statement in ver. 6, "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day," and the declaration in ver. 10, that "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses," evidently proceed from a much later age than that of Joshua. The whole chapter may have been written and appended to the original writing of Moses by Ezra, who was "a ready scribe in the Law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given" (Ezra vii. 6), and of whom Jewish tradition attests that "the Thorah was forgotten by the Israelites until Ezra went up from Babylon and re-established it" ('Succa,' 20 a).

As a whole, then, with one acknowledged and one or two possible but slight exceptions, this book may be pronounced the genuine production of the great leader and legislator of Israel.

§ 7. Analysis of the Book.

Title and Introduction. Ch. i. 1—5.

I. First or Introductory Address. Ch. i. 6—iv. 40.
- The new beginning and review of the journeyings of Israel from Kadesh to the river Arnon, the frontier of the Amorites. Ch. ii. 1—23.
- First war of conquest. Ch. ii. 24—iii. 17.
- Conclusion of historical recapitulation. Ch. iii. 18—20.
- Joshua appointed Moses' successor. Ch. iii. 21—29.
- Admonitions and exhortations. Ch. iv. 1—40.
- Appointment of three cities of refuge beyond Jordan. Ch. iv. 41—43.

II. Second Address of Moses. Ch. iv. 44—xxvi. 19.
- Introduction. Ch. iv. 44—49.
- The Decalogue the basis of the covenant, the essence of the whole Law, and the condition of life and felicity. Ch. v. 1—33.
- First and great commandment. Ch. vi. 1—25.
- Entire separation from idolatry. Ch. vii. 1—26.
- Exhortations to obedience enforced by a review of God's dealings with Israel in the wilderness. Ch. viii. 1—20.
- Dissuasives from self-righteousness. Ch. ix. 1—29.
- Renewed exhortations to obedience. Ch. x. 1—xi. 33.
- Announcement of particular statutes and rights. Ch. xii. 1—xxvi. 19.

III. Third Address of Moses. Ch. xxvii. 1—xxviii. 68.
- The Law to be inscribed on stones, an altar to be built, and the blessing and curse to be uttered on Gerizim and on Ebal when Canaan was occupied by the Israelites. Ch. xxvii. 1—13.
- Curses and blessings pronounced, judgments threatened in case of disobedience. Ch. xxvii. 14—xxviii. 68.

IV. Renewal of the Covenant in the Plains of Moab, and Exhortation to keep it. Ch. xxix. 1—xxx. 20.

V. Exhortation to the People and to Joshua; Delivery of the Law to the Priests; Moses commanded to Compose a Song; Charge to Joshua. Ch. xxxi. 1—30.

VI. Song of Moses. Ch. xxxii. 1—43.
Moses' last words. Ch. xxxii. 44—52.

VII. Benediction of Moses. Ch. xxxiii. 1—29.

VIII. Death, Burial, and Encomium of Moses. Ch. xxxiv. 1—21.

§ 8. Literature.

Historico-Critical. Carpzov, 'Introductio ad Libros Canonicos, V. T. Omnes' (Lips., 1741); Eichhorn, 'Einleitung in das A. T.' (5 Bde., Göttingen, 1820—24); Jahn, 'Einleit. in die Göttlicher Bücher des Alt. Bundes' (Wiesn, 1803); Augusti 'Grundriss, Einer Hist.-Krit. Einleit. ins A. T.' (Leipzig, 1827); De Wette, 'Lehrbuch der Hist.-Krit. Einleit. in die Kanon. und Apokryph. Bücher des A. B.' (Leipzig, 1840); Hävernick, 'Handbuch der Hist.-Krit. Einleit. in das A. T.' (Erlangen, 1836); 'Introduction to the Pentateuch' (translated by Thomson, Edinburgh, 1850); Hengstenberg, 'Die Authentic des Pentateuches' (Berlin, 1836—39); 'Genuineness of the Pentateuch' (translated by Ryland, Edinburgh, 1847); Keil, 'Lehrbuch der Hist.-Krit. Einleit. in die Kanon. Schriften des A. T.' (Erlangen, 1853, translated by Douglas, 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1869); Bleek, 'Einleit. in d. A. T.' (Berlin, 1860; translated by Venables, 2 vols., London, 1875); Riehm, 'Die Gesetzgebung Mosis im Lande Moab' (1854); Davidson, 'Introduction to the Old Testament' (3 vols., London, 1862); Colenso, 'The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua critically examined' (1862); 'The Mosaic Origin of the Pentateuch considered' (by a Layman, London, 1864); Kuenen, 'Religion of Israel' (2 vols.); Vaihinger, Art. "Pentateuch" (in Herzog's 'Encyclopædia,' Bde. xi.); Curtiss, 'The Levitical Priests: A Contribution to the Criticism of the Pentateuch' (Edinburgh, 1877); Wellhausen, 'Geschichte Israels' (Bde. i., Berlin, 1878); Robertson Smith, 'The Old Testament in the Jewish Church' (Edinburgh, (1881); 'Deuteronomy the People's Book.'

Expository. Besides the general commentaries, in all of which expositions of Deuteronomy are to be found, the following more special treatises may be enumerated:—Calvin, 'Commentarii in Quatuor Reliq. Mosis Libros in Formam Harmoniæ Digest.' ap. Opp. Omnia (tom. i. edit. Amsterdam, 1771); Gerhard, 'Comm. super Deuteronom.' (Jena, 1657); Ainsworth, 'Annotations on the Five Books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Song of Solomon' (fol., London, 1639, 2 vols. 8vo, Glasgow, 1843); Rosenmüller, 'Scholia in Pentateuchum in Compendium Redacta' (Lips., 1828); Baumgarten, 'Theologischer Commentar. zum Pentateuch' (Kiel, 1843, 1844); Schultz, 'Das Deuteronomium' (Berlin, 1859); Knobel, 'Die Bücher Numeri, Deuteronom. und Josua erklärt' (Leipzig, 1861); Vitringa, 'Commentarius in Carmen Mosis cum Prolegomenis' (Harlingen, 1734); Dathe, 'Dissertatio in Canticum Mosis in Opuscc. ad Crisin. et Interpretationem Vet. Test. Spectantia' (p. 197, Lips., 1796); Ewald, 'Das Grosse Lied' (in 'Jahrb. d. Bibl. Wissenschaft'), 1857; Kamphausen, 'Das Lied Mosis' (Leipzig, 1862); Hoffmann, 'Comment. in Mosis Benedictionem' (in Keil's 'Analekten' iv. 2, Jena, 1823); Graf, 'Der Segen Mosis' (Leipzig, 1857).

THE

BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.

TITLE AND INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I. 1—5.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Vers. 1—5.—In these verses we have the inscription and general introduction to the book, announcing the contents of the book, the author of it, the parties whom he addressed, and the time and place of his addresses.

Ver. 1.—**These be the words.** Some would render here "Such are the words," and understand the expression as referring to the preceding books. But it seems more natural to refer it to what follows—to the addresses in this book. The pronoun *these* (אֵלֶּה) may be used with a prospective reference, as well as with a retrospective (cf. *e.g.* Gen. ii. 4; vi. 9). The author does not by this connect this book with the preceding, but rather distinguishes it. The subscription to Numbers (xxxvi. 13) indicates that what precedes is occupied chiefly with what God spake to Moses; the inscription here intimates that what follows is what Moses spake to the people. This is the characteristic of Deuteronomy. **Unto all Israel.** It cannot be supposed that Moses spoke to the whole multitude of the people so as to be heard by them. Hence the Jewish interpreters say that he spoke to the elders of the people, who carried his words to the people at large. This is just; for what was thus mediately communicated to the people might be fairly described as spoken to them; and we find from other passages in the Pentateuch that the phrase, "the elders of Israel," in the mind of the writer, was equivalent to "the congregation of Israel" (comp. *e.g.* Exod. xii. 3 with ver. 21; Lev. ix. 1 with ver. 5). But through whatever medium conveyed, it was to the people that these words were addressed; this is emphatically a book for the people. **On this side Jordan.** This should be *On the other side* or *beyond Jordan*, and so also in ver. 5, as in ch. iii. 20, 25. The word here used (עֵבֶר) means properly something beyond, over, or across, and indicates that which, to the speaker, lies on the *other* side of some line or limit. When coupled with "the Jordan," it usually indicates the region to the *east* of that river; only in one or two instances, where the speaker takes his standpoint on the east of the river, does it designate the regions to the west of Jordan (ch. iii. 25; xi. 30). The phrase "beyond Jordan" seems to have been the established designation of the region east of the Jordan (cf. Ezra iv. 10, and Canon Rawlinson's note there). It is this, unquestionably, which is here so designated, as what follows expressly shows. **The wilderness.** This term is used of any extensive district not occupied by inhabitants or subjected to culture; hence of vast prairies or pasture-lands, as well as of places properly desert and desolate. It here denotes the grassy plains or downs on the east and south-east of the Jordan, in the land of Moab (ver. 5). **In the plain;** in the 'Arâbah. This is properly the whole of that remarkable depression which stretches from the source

of the Jordan on to Akâbah, or the Ailanitic Gulf; but here it is only that part of it which extends from the south end of the Dead Sea to Ailah (ch. ii. 8). This part still bears the name of the 'Arâbah, the northern part being known as the Ghôr (Smith's 'Dictionary,' vol. i. p. 87; Kitto's 'Cyclopædia,' vol. i. p. 178). **Over against the Red sea.** The name by which the Red Sea is elsewhere designated is *Yam-suph* (יַם־סוּף); here only the latter word occurs, and this has led some to doubt if the Red Sea be here intended. Patrick, Rosenmüller, and others suggest that *Suph* denotes some place in that region, probably Suphah (Numb. xxi. 14, margin, Authorized Version), so called because lying at its extremity, as the verb *suph*, from which it comes, means, to come to an end; but it is not certain that Suphah designates a place in Numb. xxi. 14. The Hebrew word סוּפָה means a tempest or whirlwind; and this meaning may be assumed here, as it is by Gesenius, Keil, and others: "Waheb [he conquered] in a storm." Knobel suggests that probably the pass now called Es Sufâh, on the north side of the Wady Murreh—the Maaleh-acrabbim (Scorpion-ascent) of Josh. xv. 3—is meant; others have suggested Zephath (Judg. i. 17; comp. Numb. xiv. 45), and others Zuph (1 Sam. ix. 5). It is probable, however, that *Suph* is here merely a breviloquence for *Yam-suph*, the Red Sea; and so all the ancient versions take it. The identification of the *Yam-suph* of the Old Testament with the ἐρυθρὰ θάλασσα of the Greeks, the *mare erythræum*, or *rubrum*, of the Latins, is due to the LXX., which other versions have followed. The identification is undoubtedly correct (cf. Numb. xxxiii. 10 and 1 Kings ix. 26). *Yam-suph*, indeed, means simply sea of weeds, and might be the name of any sea in which algæ are found; but these passages clearly prove that by this the Hebrews designated the Red Sea. At what part of this sea the Israelites crossed, and the hosts of Pharaoh were submerged, is and must remain uncertain, because we know not what was the condition of the Isthmus of Suez at the time of the Exodus. It is probable it was not at any part of what is now known as the Red Sea or Gulf of Suez. Brugsch Bey places it at that—

> "Serbonian bog
> Betwixt Damiata and mount Casius old,
> Where armies whole have sunk."
> (Milton, 'Paradise Lost,' Bk. ii. 592.)

But this has not been accepted by scholars generally (see *Edinburgh Review*, No. 307; Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 247; *Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund*, July and October, 1880). It seems probable that originally only a marshy district lay between the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean; and somewhere in this probably the passage of the Israelites and the drowning of the Egyptians occurred. **Between Paran, and Tophel,** etc. This serves more fully and particularly to indicate the locality here intended; but the details present considerable difficulty. Taken in connection with the words "over against the Red sea," the names here given can only be regarded as intended more precisely to indicate the region in which the Israelites had been during the forty years of their wandering. *Pâran:* this is the name of the wilderness bordering on Idumea, where the Israelites encamped (Numb. x. 12; xii. 16); the place of their encampment being Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin (Numb. xiii. 21, 26), which was the eastern part of the wilderness of Pâran, *hod.* Wady Murreh. The wilderness of Pâran corresponds in general outline with the desert of Et-Tîh. This is a vast plateau of irregular surface stretching from the Et-Tîh range northwards to the boundaries of the Holy Land, and from the Gulf of Akâbah and the Wady el 'Arâbah on the east to the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean on the west. It is described as "a chalky formation, the chalk being covered with coarse gravel, mixed with black flints and drifting sand;" not, however, wholly sterile: in many parts vegetation abounds, considerable portions are under cultivation, and there are evidences that at one time water was abundant there (Smith, ii. 707; Kitto, iii. 1077; Drew, 'Scripture Lands,' p. 80). It is not, however, to the wilderness of Pâran that the reference is in the text, but to some definite locality or spot in the region in which the Israelites then were, or which they had recently passed through. It has been suggested that the place now called Feirân, and where there are the ruins of a town, once of some importance in the early history of Christianity, is the Pâran of this passage, as it apparently is the Pâran of I Kings xi. 18. But this locality at the base of Jebel Serbail is much too far west to be the Pâran here referred to. More probable is the suggestion that it is the Faran mentioned by Eusebius and Jerome ('Onomast.,' *s.v.* Φαράν), a city to the east (north-east) of Ailah or Elath, about three days' journey (Reland, 'Palest.,' p. 556; Winer, 'Realwörterbuch,' *s.v.* Pharan). *Tophel:* this name occurs only here; it is supposed to be the place now called Tufailah or Tafyleh, a large village of six hundred inhabitants, between Bozrah and Kerak, on the eastern slope of the mountains of Edom (Burckhardt, 'Syria,' p. 402; Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' ii. 570). As this is a place where the Syrian caravans are supplied with

provisions, it has been conjectured that the Israelites, when at Oboth (Numb. xxi. 10, 11), may have resorted to it for a supply, and that it was here that they purchased meat and drink from the children of Esau (ch. ii. 29). **And Laban.** *Laban* is generally identified with Libnah, the second place of encampment of the Israelites on their return from Kâdesh (Numb. xxxiii. 20, 21). Knobel, however, thinks it is the place called by Ptolemy Ἀβαρα, lying between Petra and Ailah; this name, from the Arabic حار (he was white), having the same meaning as the Hebrew לָבָן. **Hazeroth** is supposed to be the place mentioned in Numb. xi. 35; xii. 16, from which the Israelites entered the wilderness of Pâran; but as the other places here mentioned are on the east side of the 'Arâbah, it is not probable that this Hazeroth is the same as that of Numbers, which must have been not far from Sinai, in a northerly or north-westerly direction from that mountain, probably at or near to the fountain now called El Hudherah (Wilson, 'Lands of the Bible,' i. 235; Kitto, 'Cyclopædia,' ii. 243). There were probably several places bearing the name of *Hazeroth*, i.e. villages. **Dizahab.** This is generally identified with Dhahab, a place on a tongue of land in the Gulf of Akâbah. But it is extremely improbable that the Israelites ever were at this place, the approach to which is exceedingly difficult; and the mere resemblance of the names Dizâhâb and Dhahab is not sufficient to prove the identity of the places. There were probably more places than one which were named from *zahab* (gold) in the region traversed by the Israelites. There is a Dhahab on the east of the Jordan near the Zerka or Jabbok, a double mound, which is said to derive its name from the yellowish colour of the sandstone rock of which it consists, and which is metalliferous. In the Arabic of the Polyglot, Dizahab appears as *Dhi-dhahab*, which signifies "*auro præditum* vel *ab auro dictum;* nam דו vel די, apud Arabes in compositione nominum propr. idem est ac Heb. בעל" (J. H. Michaelis). There is a various reading here, *Di-waheb*, and this has been supposed to connect this place with the Waheb of Numb. xxi. 14. But, as above noted, it is by no means certain that Waheb is there the name of a place; it may, as Bishop Patrick suggests, be that of a man, some hero or chief, who was conquered in Sufah or in a storm. Waheb is a name among the Arabs. The maternal grandfather of Mohammed had this name (Abul-Pharaj, 'Hist. Dynast.,' p. 161, edit. Pococke, Oxon., 1663); and the sect of the Wahabees take their name from Abdul Wahab, a fanatic who appeared about the beginning of last century. The words "between Paran and Tophel" have been taken to indicate the termini of the wanderings; at the commencement of these the people were at Pâran, and towards the close of them they were at Tophel. "Looking from the steppes of Moab over the ground that the Israelites had traversed, Sûph, where they first entered the desert of Arabia, would lie between Pârân where the congregation arrived at the borders of Canaan toward the west, and Tophel where they first ended their desert wanderings thirty-seven years later on the east" (Keil). But this assumes that Pâran here is the wilderness of Pâran.

Ver. 2.—**Horeb.** The name generally given to Sinai in Deuteronomy (see introduction, § 4). Sinai, however, occurs in ch. xxxiii. 2 of this book. **By the way of mount Seir,** *i.e.* by the way that leads to Mount Seir; just as in ch. ii. 1, "the way of the Red sea" is the way that leads to that sea (see also Numb. xiv. 25). *Mount* is here, as often elsewhere, for *mountain range.* The mountain range here referred to seems to have been, not that on the east of the 'Arâbah, but what is in vers. 6 and 19 called "the mountain of the Amorites," "the Seir by Hormah" of ver. 44, *i.e.* the southern part of what was afterwards called the mountains of Judah. According to ver. 19, the Israelites, when they left Horeb, passed through the wilderness along the way that led to the mountains of the Amorites, and came to Kâdesh-barnea. Kâdesh must, therefore, be looked for, not on the eastern side of the 'Arâbah, but somewhere in the wilderness of Zin. It has been identified with the place now known as 'Ain Kûdes, near the northern extremity of Jebel Halal, and to the east of that hill; but this is far from being certain. Moses reminds the Israelites that the distance between Horeb and Kâdesh is eleven days—*i.e.* about one hundred and sixty-five miles, the day's journey being reckoned at fifteen miles—not to give them a piece of information, but rather to suggest to them how, in consequence of rebellion, a journey which might have been so easily accomplished, had been protracted through many wearisome years.

Vers. 3, 4.—Here is intimated the *time* when the following addresses were delivered to the people. It was on the first day of the eleventh month in the fortieth year; therefore near the end of their wanderings, and towards the close of the lawgiver's own career. He could thus speak to them **according unto all that the Lord had given him in commandment unto them,** *i.e.* in accordance with the legislative contents of the preceding books (comp. ch. iv. 5 23;

v. 28—33; vi. 1). It was also after the destruction of Sîhon and 'Og (Numb. xxi. 21—35). This also is significant. By the destruction of these kings, who sought to bar the access of the Israelites to the promised land, God had given proof that he would indeed fulfil his promise to his people, and had at once laid them under obligations to obedience, and given them encouragement to go forward on the course to which he had called them. The "he" here is Moses, who, at the command of God, had led the Israelites against Sîhon and 'Og. **Edrei**, *hod.* Draa (Numb. xxi. 33) was the second capital of 'Og; he "reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei" (Josh. xiii. 12). Here, however, it denotes the place where he was slain in battle, and the words "in Edrei" are to be referred to the verb "smote" and not to "dwelt" (cf. ch. iii. 1: Numb. xxi. 33).

Ver. 5.—The locality is again described as **beyond Jordan** (see on ver. 1), and **in the land of Moab**. This designates the region elsewhere called *Arboth Moab*—the Plains of Moab (Numb. xxii. 1; ch. xxxiv. 1, etc.), the region on the east of the Jordan, opposite to Jericho, now known as the region of Kerak (Burckhardt, 'Syria,' p. 377, etc.; Robinson, 'Bib. Res.," ii. 569). **Began**; rather *set himself to*. The Hebrew word signifies to undertake, to betake one's self to, and so to begin. It is variously rendered in the Authorized Version (comp. Gen. xviii. 27, "taken it upon me;" Exod. ii. 21, "was content," had made up his mind; 1 Sam. xii. 22, "it pleased;" xvii. 39, "assayed," etc.). **To declare**, *i.e.* make clear, explain, expound (Hab. ii. 2, "make plain"). The Hebrew word here used (בָּאַר) signifies primarily to cut or dig, then to cut into, to grave, and then to cut or dig out so as to make evident, to declare, to make plain. What Moses set himself to do, then, was not to publish a new law, but to make plain to the people the Law already promulgated, to set forth clearly and pointedly what they were required by the Law to be and to do. This explains more fully the "spake" (דִּבֶּר) of ver. 3. This exposition of the Law was designed specially for the sake of those who, at the time the Law was first promulgated, either were not born or were incapable of understanding it (Grotius). The expression used by Moses plainly indicates that this book was not intended to furnish a second code of laws different from the former, but simply to explain and enforce what had before been enjoined.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

CHAPTER I. 6—CHAPTER IV. 40.

Ver. 6.—With this verse begins Moses' first address to the people, which extends to the end of ch. iv. It is of an introductory character, and is occupied chiefly with a retrospective survey of the events that had occurred during the forty years of their wanderings. By this Moses reminded the people how God had fulfilled his promises to them, and at the same time, how they had by their rebellion drawn down on them his displeasure, which had caused their wanderings to be so much more protracted than they would otherwise have been.

Vers. 6—8.—The Lord's command to depart from Horeb, and his promise to the people.

Ver. 6.—**The Lord our God**—*Jehovah our God*. The use of this epithet implies the covenant union of Israel with Jehovah, and presupposes the existence of that covenant which was entered into at Sinai. **In Horeb.** This was the starting-point, so to speak, of Israel's being as the special people of God—his *segullah* (סְגֻלָּה, Exod. xix. 5), his special treasure. There he made himself known to them as Jehovah, the Eternal and Unchangeable, and entered into covenant with them; and there they received that Law, on the keeping of which depended their retention of the privileges to which they had been elected. At Horeb the Israelites had remained for about a year (comp. Exod. xix. 1 and Numb. x. 11, 12), and as the purpose for which they had been brought thither was answered, they were enjoined to move, not indeed by express command, but by the rising of the cloud from over the tabernacle, which was the signal of their march (Numb. ix. 15, etc.; x. 11—13), preceded by the instructions they had received preparatory to their removal (Numb. i.–iv. 7). **Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.** The Israelites remained at Sinai from the third month of the first year to the twentieth day of the second year after they came

out of Egypt (cf. Exod. xix. 1 and Numb. x. 11).

Ver. 7.—**Go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all that dwell thereon**; literally, *its dwellers* or *inhabitants* (שְׁכֵנָיו). The mountain range of the Amorites, afterwards called the hill country of Judah and Ephraim, was the object which would first strike the view of one advancing from the south; and so, it stands here for the whole land of Canaan, with which it is in this context identified. Those "that dwell thereon" are the inhabitants of the whole of Canaan. The Amorites (Hebrew *Emori*, so called from Amor, or Emor) oftener than once appear as standing for the Canaanites generally (cf. Gen. xv. 16; Deut. i. 20, 21, etc.). That all the inhabitants of Canaan are intended here is evident from the specification of the different districts of the land of Canaan which immediately follows. **In the plain**: the *'Arâbah* (see ver. 1). **In the hills**: the hill country of Judah (Numb. xiii. 17). **In the vale**: the *shephêlah*, or lowland, the country lying between the mountain range of Judah and the Mediterranean Sea, and stretching northwards from the parallel of Gaza to that of Carmel. **In the south**: the *negeb*, or southland (literally, *dryness*), the district which formed the transition from the desert to the cultivated land, extending from the south of the Dead Sea westwards to Gaza, a vast steppe or prairie, for the most part pasture-land. **The seashore**: the narrow strip of land on the coast of the Mediterranean from Joppa to Tyre (in the New Testament, "the coast of Tyre and Sidon," Luke vi. 17). **The land of the Canaanites**: the whole country of which these were the separate parts. **And unto Lebanon**: the *White Mountain*, so called, probably, from the snow which rests on its summit. **The great river, the river Euphrates.** The Phrath, or Euphrates, which has its sources in the mountains of Armenia, and in its course divides Armenia from Cappadocia, formed the eastern limit of the territory promised by God to Abraham. The epithet "great" seems to have been commonly applied to it. Callimachus calls it Ἀσσυριοῦ ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος ('In Apoll.,' 107), and Lucan has—

"Quaque caput rapido tollit cum Tigride maguus
Euphrates."

('Phars.,' iii. 256.)

As by much the most considerable river of western Asia, the Euphrates was known as "the river" *par excellence* (cf. Exod. xxiii. 31; Isa. viii. 7; Jer. ii. 18; Ps. lxxii. 8). The mention of Lebanon and the Euphrates is not, as Keil suggests, "to be attributed to the rhetorical fulness of the style;" but is due to the fact that these were included in what God promised to Abraham and his seed (Gen. xv. 18; Exod. xxiii. 31; Deut. xi. 24).

Ver. 8.—**Behold, I have set the land before you**: literally, *have given the land before you*, i.e. have made it over to you, that you may go and take possession of it. The Lord had placed this land in the power of the Israelites, had given it up to them to possess and use it, according as he had sworn to their fathers, the patriarchs, to give it to them and their seed (comp. Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 15; xv. 18, etc.; xxii. 16). At Horeb, therefore, they received the charter of their inheritance, and might have gone on at once to take possession of the land. The delay that had occurred had arisen solely from their own waywardness and perversity, not from anything on the part of God.

Vers. 9—18.—Moses reminds them that he had done all that was required on his part to conduct the people to the enjoyment of what God had freely given to them. The people had so increased in number that Moses found himself unable to attend to all the matters that concerned them, or to adjudicate in all the differences that arose among them. God had brought to pass that which he had promised to Abraham (Gen. xv. 5), that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude; in this Moses rejoiced, nay, he would even that their numbers were, with the Divine blessing, increased a thousandfold beyond what they were. But he found the burden, the weight of care and trouble, especially in connection with their strifes and suits thereby brought on him, too much for him; and, therefore, whilst they were still at Horeb, he had, following the advice of Jethro, his father-in-law, counselled them to select competent men from among themselves, who should relieve him by attending to those duties which he found it too burdensome for him to have to attend to (cf. Exod. xviii. 13, etc.). This appointment of captains was quite distinct from that of the elders whom God directed Moses to select that they might assist him in bearing the burden of the people (Numb. xi. 10, etc.). The occasion of the appointment was the same in both cases, viz. the complaint of Moses that the task was too onerous for him, but the time, the place, and the manner of the two transactions were different.

Ver. 9.—**I spake unto you at that time.** The somewhat indefinite phrase, "at that time" (comp. Gen. xxxviii. 1), does not refer

to the time *after* the people departed from Horeb, but to the time generally when they were in that region (see Exod. xviii. 5, 13). "The imperfect (וָאֹמַר, I spake), with *vav rel.* expresses the order of thought and not of time" (Keil). It is not mentioned in Exodus that Moses spake to the people, as here stated, but what Jethro said to him to this effect is recorded; and as Moses proceeded to put in execution what his father-in-law advised, it is probable that in doing so he told the people what he proposed to do, with his reasons for so doing, and obtained their assent, as here mentioned.

Ver. 10.—**Notwithstanding** the cruel oppression to which they were subjected in Egypt, the Israelites had so increased in numbers that they went out of the house of their bondage a mighty host. **Ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude** (cf. Gen. xv. 5; xxii. 17). God had promised to Abraham that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude; and Moses here reminds the people that this promise had been fulfilled. This is hardly to be regarded as the utterance of hyperbole. When God gave the promise to Abraham it was to the stars *as seen by the patriarch*, not as actually existing in the immensity of space, that reference was made; and as the number of stars which can be taken in with the naked eye does not exceed 3000, and as Israel at this time numbered more than 600,000, counting only the adult males (Numb. ii. 32),—it might be literally said of them that they had been multiplied as the stars of heaven. The comparison, however, imported nothing more than that their numbers were very great.

Ver. 11.—It was not the vast increase of the people in numbers that distressed Moses, rather was this to him a matter of rejoicing, and his desire was that their increase might become still greater, even a thousandfold. But he felt his own inability, as leader, ruler, and judge, alone to cope with so vast a multitude.

Ver. 12.—Moses appeals to the good sense of the people themselves: **How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?** *Cumbrance:* this is a just rendering of the Hebrew word טֹרַח, from טָרַח, which, though it occurs only in the Hiphil in Hebrew, in the sense of to cast down (Job xvii. 11), probably was in use also in the Kal, in the sense of to lay upon, to encumber, which is the meaning of the cognate Arabic طرح followed by على. *Burden* (מַשָּׂא, from נָשָׂא, to lift up, to carry, to bear), something lifted up and carried, a load or burden. *Strife:* (רִיב) here, not mere contention, but litigation, suit-at-law. Some understand all these three, of troubles and burdens laid upon Moses, by his being called upon to compose differences, and adjust competing claims among the people. But other burdens besides these came upon him as the leader of the nation; and it seems best, therefore, to understand the first two of troubles and burdens generally.

Ver. 13.—**Take you**; literally, *give to you* or *for you*, i.e. *yourselves*. The selection was to be made by the people themselves. Jethro, in giving Moses the advice on which he thus acted, described the men who were to be selected as "such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness" (Exod. xviii. 21). Moses here describes them rather by qualities, indicating ability and fitness for such a post as that to which they were to be called; they were to be **wise** (which, indeed, may be regarded as comprehending all good moral qualities); **understanding** men, men of discernment and sagacity, as well as intelligence; **and known among their tribes**, men of good repute in the community ("quorum conversatio sit probata," Vulgate; comp. Acts vi. 3; 1 Tim. iii. 7). **And I will make them rulers over you**; literally, *will set them for your heads*, i.e. will appoint them to act as superintendents, managers, and judges over you.

Vers. 14, 15.—The people approved of the proposal, and acted upon it; and Moses accordingly appointed the persons selected to be chiefs **over thousands, and over hundreds, and over fifties, and over tens** (Exod. xviii. 21); he appointed men also to be **officers**, that is, persons who should preserve order in the tribes, keeping the registers, acting as scribes, to prescribe and to take account of work, and perhaps also attending to fiscal arrangements (שֹׁטְרִים, *shoterim*, a word of general application; cf. Exod. v. 6, 10, 14; Josh. iii. 2; 2 Chron. xxvi. 11, etc. LXX. γραμματεῖς and γραμματο-εισαγωγεῖς). In Exodus, Moses is said to have chosen these functionaries (xviii. 25); but what many do under the direction of one may be said to be done by him.

Vers. 16, 17.—In installing the judges, Moses solemnly charged them to deal impartially, fairly, and equitably with those who might come before them.

Ver. 16.—**Hear between your brethren**, *i.e.* hear impartially both parties, **and judge righteously between man and man**, whether both parties are Israelites, or one of the parties a **stranger**.

Ver. 17.—**Ye shall not respect persons**; literally, *look at* or *regard faces*, i.e. ye shall not deal partially, favouring the one party rather than the other (comp. Exod. xxiii. 2, 3; Lev. xix. 15); the small as well **as the great were to be heard**, and neither

for favour nor from fear were they to pervert justice. **The judgment is God's**; *i.e.* appointed by God and administered in his name, the judge acting for God and by his authority, and being answerable to him (comp. 2 Chron. xix. 6). Hence the phrases, "to inquire of God," "to bring before God" (Exod. xviii. 15, 19; xxi. 6; xxii. 8, etc.)—phrases still in use among the Arabs for a summoning to judicial trial. In the case of a matter coming before the judges which they found it beyond their power to decide, they were to bring it before Moses as a superior authority (see Exod. xviii. 26). "Some think there were certain causes reserved to the cognizance of Moses; but the contrary appears by these words, that all manner of causes were brought before the judges; and they, not the people, brought such causes before Moses as they found too hard for them to determine. So that they, not the person whose cause it was, judged of the difficulty of the cause. See Selden, lib. i. 'De Synedriis, cap. xvi." (Bishop Patrick).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The Word of God full of hidden treasure.* We cannot get very far in these preliminary verses ere we are struck with a phrase which is a most suggestive one, and should not be lightly passed over, viz. "On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses *to declare* this law," literally, to dig it, *i.e.* to go deeply into it, and to turn up again its contents, so that, to all the advantage of a generation of culture, the people might see that there was more meaning, and also more glory in the Law of God than they were able to discern in the first years of their national existence. Observe—

I. THERE IS A MINE OF WEALTH IN THE LAW OF GOD. This is the case, even if we thereby intend the Mosaic Law alone. Its theology, its ethics, its directory of religious faith and worship, its civil and political code for the Hebrew commonwealth, are all so pure and elevated, that no account can be given of how any man at that age of the world could have propounded such a system, save that he was taught of God (cf. 2 Pet. i. 21). (See Homiletics, ch. v. 7—22.) If, moreover, we would see how the devout Hebrews estimated the Law, let us turn to Ps. xix.; ciii. 7, *et seq.* Our Saviour honoured the Law, and maintained it in all its integrity (cf. Matt. v. 17, 18). He removed the glosses by which it had in his time become disfigured, but he never depreciated it. We are by no means to confound "the Law" with the abstract idea of "law." See how sharply the Apostle Paul distinguishes between these two in Rom. iii., especially in ver. 21, "But now there has been manifested a righteousness of God *apart from law,* being witnessed by THE Law and the prophets." The Law given by Moses is based on the gospel (cf. Gal. iii.; see also Homiletics, ch. v. 6). If, however, to all that Moses gave, we add all "the grace and the truth" which came in by Jesus Christ, how unsearchably vast is the wealth stored up for us in the "Word of everlasting Truth!"

II. THE EFFORT OF DIGGING INTO THIS MINE WILL BE WELL REPAID. How much difference there is between a man who knows only *what men say about* the Book, and one who knows the Book for himself! The one may be easily beguiled into the belief that it is so out of date that it is scarcely worth while to study it at all. The other will find it so far ahead of the actual attainments of the wisest and best of men, that he will pity those who dismiss it with but a glance from afar. The continuous, careful, thorough student of the Law of Moses, will be ever discovering a richness in it which will at once astonish and enrapture him. Its harmony with, its historical preparation for, the gospel, will be continually disclosing to him new proofs of its Divine original, that will be worth more *to him* than any merely "external evidence." And when the whole Word of God is made the constant study of one whose heart is open to the truth and loyal to God, such a one will find fuller and richer meaning in *single words,* such as *göel,* "grace," "righteousness," etc., when these words are put to their highest use in Divine revelation, than in whole tomes of merely human lore!

III. THE WORD SHOULD BE DUG INTO, THAT WE MAY APPROPRIATE ITS CONTENTS, BY ENLIGHTENED REASON AND LOWLY FAITH. These treasures are for the use of all, not merely to gratify them with the consciousness of ever making new discoveries, but to make them richer in the accumulating stores of holy thought. And if we, in the

right spirit, explore these sacred pages, we shall ourselves become richer in knowledge, in gladness, in hope. If we cultivate a willingness to do God's will, and seek to know the truth for the purpose of doing the right, we shall find that much that is "hidden from the wise and prudent" is, by means of the Book, "revealed unto babes."

IV. THE MORE WE THUS DIG INTO THE BOOK OF THE LAW, THE MORE EXHAUSTLESS IT WILL SEEM. No one is there, who lovingly and prayerfully studies it, who will not come to say, with a feeling that becomes intenser year by year, "There remaineth very much land to be possessed." "High as the heaven is above the earth, so are" God's "ways higher than" our "ways, and" God's "thoughts than" our "thoughts"!

V. THE ACCUMULATING STORES OF HOLY THOUGHT SHOULD BE TRANSMUTED BY US INTO THE WEALTH OF HOLY LIFE. It is not for nought that our God has so enriched this world with thoughts from heaven. It is not merely that the intellect may be furnished or the taste for research gratified. Oh no; it is for our life. Heaven has poured forth its wealth upon earth, that earth may send up its love and loyalty to heaven. Precious are the riches of truth. The riches of holiness are more precious still. God gives us the first that we may yield him the second. God would win Israel's love by unveiling his own. So now, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How great will be our guilt, how severe our condemnation, if we let such priceless disclosures remain unnoticed and unused! It were better for us not to have known the way of righteousness than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us. May we, through the Spirit, so use the truth of God as to find our joy and salvation in the God of the truth!

Vers. 1—8, together with Exod. xxiii. 20—33.—*The Hebrew right to Canaan.* Moses is reviewing the career of Israel, and is endeavouring to set before the people the patience and faithfulness of God, as well as their own waywardness. In the part of his review which is before us just now, he points to the time when their sojourn in Horeb was about to close. Laws and ordinances had been given. The nation was formed. Preparations for departure would have to be made. To this they are incited by a renewal of the Divine gift to them of the land of Canaan. The bare and brief recital in the verses referred to above may be advantageously compared with Exod. xxiii. 20—33. A subject is here brought before us of great importance, viz. *The right of the Hebrews to Canaan, and the purpose of the Divine Being in granting it to them.* We have here—

I. THE HEBREW RIGHT TO CANAAN DIVINELY CONFIRMED. A double use has been made of the command to dispossess the Canaanites: 1. By sceptics, to impugn the morality of the Old Testament. 2. By professing Christian men, to justify wars of aggression now. Now we might meet both these by one short and ready reply, viz. "If God *commanded* the Hebrews to exterminate the Canaanites, no defence is required; if God *did not* command them, no defence avails." But there is a more appropriate way of meeting the two cases. As to the first, we would say, "Before you pronounce it immoral, look at the entire bearings of the case, that you may see if the Israelites had an adequate warrant for the course they took." As to the second, "Before you regard this as a pattern, look at the entire bearings of the case, that you may see if there is any ground for adducing the wars of the Hebrews as a justification or palliation of aggressive war now." If men go to the Book to learn what the Israelites did, they must in all fairness go to the Book to see the grounds on which they did it. And the same teaching that will answer the one question, Were they justified? will also answer the other, Should we be justified in imitating them? Thirteen points present themselves for distinct and cumulative consideration. We can but name them. (1) God spake to Moses. (2) In speaking to Moses, God but confirmed the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (3) God defines the bounds of the land to be possessed. (4) God makes the claim, "All the earth is mine;" consequently he has a right to give the land to whomsoever he will. (5) In choosing Israel, God would have a people for himself who should be his witnesses. (6) God foresaw the time for carrying out this plan (Gen. xv.). (7) The preparation of the land was of God (Exod. xxiii. 20). (8) The ground on which the Canaanites were dispossessed was their

enormous wickedness (ch. ix. 4, 5). (9) Israel was consequently only the means in the Divine hand of carrying out an explicit Divine purpose. (10) To spare the Canaanites would have been to infect Israel with their abominations. (11) *God* would deliver the nations into Israel's hand. (12) On a land and among a people recognized as God's, the Most High would reassert in the world the well-nigh forgotten truth, "The Lord our God is holy." (13) Even *Israel's* continuance in the land would depend on their maintenance of the principles which had been entrusted to their keeping, and on their loyalty to the God who had chosen them for his own (ch. xxviii. 49). When we put all these principles together, the two questions suggested at the outset receive a direct and sufficient reply.

II. ACCESS TO CANAAN DIVINELY SECURED. "I will send an angel before thee" (Exod. xxiii. 14; xxxii. 34; Isa. lxiii. 9; Mal. iii. 1; Acts vii. 38, 53; John i. 51). It is only as we study the more advanced revelations of the New Testament as to the place of angels in the Divine administration, and the lordship of Jesus Christ over them, that all these texts of Scripture are seen to fit in together. Note the specific statements in Exod. xxiii. as to God clearing Israel's way.

III. DUTY IN REFERENCE TO CANAAN DIVINELY REGULATED. Negatively: they were neither to bow down to false gods nor to mix with the heathen. Positively: they were to serve and fear God and to practise the right.

IV. PROMISES CONCERNING PROSPERITY IN CANAAN DIVINELY GIVEN (Exod. xxiii. 25). Blessing on food, health, long life (cf. Matt. vi. 33; Ps. xci. 16). A separate homily might well be devoted to the temporal benefits naturally resulting from obedience to God.

The application of all this to us in these days is manifest. 1. What Israel was once in the world God expects his Church to be now (cf. Exod. xix. 5, 6 with 1 Pet. ii. 9). 2. In Jesus Christ we have a new covenant, a better ministry, greater promises (Heb. viii. 6). 3. We have a commission for the world. We have to co-operate with God in bringing about new heavens and a new earth, by working in accordance with his plan of redeeming and educating our race. We have no commission to destroy. The Lord hath given us a power for edification but none for destruction. Our commission runs, "Go, baptize and teach." We have not to supersede the occupation of territory held by a barbarous nation, through its enforced occupation by a civilized one, but to go and teach all nations that each nation may supersede its own barbarism by a civilization that is equally its own. 4. This commission is to be fulfilled by the Word of Truth, by the power of God. By spiritual weapons only can our victories be won. In the might of a love that has conquered us, and in that might alone, we are to go forth to make the conquest of the world.

> "These weapons of the holy war,
> Of what almighty force they are,
> To make our stubborn passions bow,
> And lay the proudest rebel low!"

Vers. 6—18.—*Rules to be observed in choosing rulers.* This paragraph may with advantage be compared with Exod. xviii., in which there is a fuller account of the circumstances under which the choice of judges and magistrates was proposed and made; this important step towards the order and consolidation of the national life was taken at the suggestion of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. Referring to the exposition of that chapter for the historic detail, we note here simply: 1. That the choice of rulers, etc., is put into the people's hands; they are to select, Moses is to ratify the selection. 2. They are to choose men of righteousness, who will fear God and do justice. 3. When the judges are chosen, Moses seeks solemnly to impress on them the high and holy responsibilities of their office. 4. The supreme reason for this care in judging rightly is found in the fact that the cause is God's, *i.e.* that they are rulers under God and for him—representing Divine laws in the earthly sphere. The state is sacredly to be governed by the laws of righteousness, and by such laws alone. Hence a subject is opened up to us which is of no small moment, viz. *Principles and facts to be borne in mind in choosing rulers of the people.* Observe—

I. THAT THE CHOOSING OF MEN TO TAKE PART IN MAKING OR ADMINISTERING A NATION'S LAWS IS A SOLEMN AND MOMENTOUS CONCERN. It matters comparatively little,

so far as our present topic is concerned, what may be the peculiar form of government adopted, or what may be the mode of choosing men for office in the State. For 1. The position such men occupy is an exalted one. It is self-evident that when they have to take part in governing or carrying out the laws of the land, it is of the utmost moment that they should be men who are capable of perceiving what measures will tend to the people's good. A country may be perishing from the want of good laws, if its rulers are not competent, wise, and just. 2. The influence such men wield in private circles is largely increased from the fact of their public position. 3. Their representative character is another element of great moment. Great men and good will elevate common questions to their own level; while worthless men will fail to appreciate the importance of the greatest questions of the day. 4. The great matters which may—nay, must—come before the rulers of a nation, are such as may involve that nation's honour or discredit among the nations of the world; yea, more, they are such as will do much, according as they are decided, to bring upon a people the blessing or the wrath of Almighty God! Hence—

II. THE POSSESSION OF A POWER TO PUT MEN IN SUCH AN OFFICE OR OFFICES, IS A TRUST FOR THE USE OF WHICH THOSE WHO POSSESS THAT POWER ARE RESPONSIBLE TO THEIR COUNTRY AND THEIR GOD! The decisions of earthly judges ought to be the earthly expression of heavenly law. Hence to let whim, or caprice, or passion, or partizanship carry us away, when such concerns are at issue, and to forget the everlasting laws of righteousness, is to tamper with the public interest, and to betray a solemn trust. Therefore—

III. IN THE DISCHARGE OF THIS TRUST, STRICT REGARD MUST BE PAID TO PERSONAL CHARACTER. (See Exod. xviii. 21.) Even a pagan felt this. It was the priest of Midian who said, "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness"—a fourfold qualification, so comprehensive that, where it is possessed, a man may be safely entrusted with any office. Such men will undertake their work as those who are responsible to God; they will ever be on the look out to perceive what the interests of their country may require at their hands; they will seek to qualify themselves to take part in the public questions which will come before them; without seeking their own honour, they will aim at judging as is wisest and best; and their supreme aim will be that the government they help to administer should be ever in harmony with righteousness and truth. If all its public men answer all these requirements, a country cannot go far wrong; but if a nation's leaders are themselves lacking in virtue, how can there be any security for that righteousness and truth which exalt a nation, when a country is at the mercy of men who know not the one neither regard the other?

IV. A CONSIDERATION WHICH GIVES INFINITE WEIGHT TO THE ABOVE PRINCIPLES IS THAT THE JUDGMENT OF EARTHLY RULERS IS INTENDED, IN ITS WAY, TO BE A COPY OF THE DIVINE. "The judgment is God's," says Moses. It is God's judgment, expressed through his own appointed officers (see Rom. xiii.). Secular judgments should have sacred principles underlying them. And we cannot divorce the secular from the sacred without great mischief accruing. But, finally: the judgment is God's in another sense. HE is the Supreme Judge; and whether men use *their* judgment well or ill, God will exercise his own. The principles of the Divine government of nations are developed by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, and others. No nation can escape from the sway of the Mighty One; if God's laws are set at nought, his judgments will follow, that, while they are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof may learn righteousness.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Divine covenant and human conduct—the two hemispheres of a complete life.* I. AN ELECT MAN, THE BEST OF THE AGE, BECOMES A MEDIUM OF REVELATION BETWEEN GOD AND MEN. As in nature, so in human life, there are numberless grades of office and of function. At Sinai, we have God, angels, Moses, priests. The transparent candour and fidelity of Moses, as a subaltern in God's great host, is a light to all future ages. As the uncreated light left an abiding impress on the face of Moses, so

the known will of God shone out lustrously in Moses' life. *All* that Moses heard, he communicated by word, and temper, and influence, and deed.

II. MATERIAL PENURY A CONDITION FOR HEAVENLY ENRICHMENT. The scene for the revelation of God, is the wilderness. Stript of earthly luxuries, the mind opens its portals to heavenly visitation. This is not a necessity arising out of the nature of things, but it is a necessity for man in his present state. The son of Zacharias, though a priest, turned his back upon the temple, and chose the wilderness as the theatre most suitable for his ponderous undertaking. *This* the spirit of prophecy had foreseen. It was in the desert, Jesus fed the thousands by a creative word. In the desert, Paul was equipped for shaking the foundations of paganism. In Patmos, John passed through the portals of the spirit-world.

III. HUMAN POWER IS FORMAL—GOD'S POWER REAL. To the eye of mortal sense, the Hebrews, drilled and officered, fought victoriously with Amalek and Moab; nevertheless, a clearer vision sees that it was God that slew Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan. Let us be sure that what *we* do, *God* does by us! Be we the agents; God the principal! In righteous warfare, "He teacheth our fingers to fight." In us hourly let God be immanent. "God wills it," therefore let us will it also. "He worketh in us."

IV. MEDITATION AND ACTION INTEGRAL PARTS OF HEALTHFUL LIFE. "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount." The body may be wrecked by surfeit, as well as by hunger. Knowledge is not entirely *ours*, until it is reduced to practice. Heavenly wisdom is essentially practical. All light is designed for service. The doctrines of religion are raw materials, which are to be put into the warp and woof of our daily life. Is "the Lamb the light of the heavenly place"? The saints "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Meditation qualifies for action; action demands new meditation. These are the two wings, without *both* of which the eagle cannot rise. "Come ye into the desert;" "Go and preach;"—these are the twin behests of Christ.

V. GOD'S ABSOLUTE PURPOSES LEAVE FULL SCOPE FOR MAN'S OBEDIENCE. How the two things are co-related, we cannot ascertain. The point of junction is among the incomprehensible—beneath the surface of things. There is now and again seeming discord; but as we listen on there is a profounder harmony. The Lord sware unto the patriarchs to give them the land of Canaan. Yet the spies brought back an ill report; and the people debated and murmured, vacillated and countermarched, as if they had been the umpires of their destiny.

VI. GOD'S PROVISION IS ALWAYS MORE AMPLE THAN MAN'S DESIRE. God's plan for Israel's territory extended from Mount Lebanon to the Euphrates; but Israel never rose to the full height of God's design. "Ask what I shall give thee" is still the message from heaven to every man. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "We have not because we ask not." There is abundance of sea-room in God's plan for the largest human endeavour; and every day the voice of the Great Proprietor reminds us, "There is yet very much land to be possessed." "All things are yours."—D.

Vers. 9—18.—*The blessing of good government.* I. A WISE MAN DISAVOWS ABSOLUTE MONARCHY. Legislation, the most difficult department of government, had been furnished for Israel by the Supreme Mind of the universe; yet Moses found the task of administration too much for a single arm. The aim of every ruler ought to be, not personal power, but universal service—the greatest good of the greatest number. No wise man will expose himself to the tremendous temptation of personal aggrandisement. Beside, it is a boon to others to exercise the faculties of discrimination and judgment.

II. POPULAR CHOICE OF RULERS TO BE DETERMINED BY A SINGLE LAW, VIZ. PERSONAL MERIT. To lift the voice for an unqualified ruler is a crime against the State—an injury, and not a benefit, to the person elect. To allow personal qualification to dominate the choice, is to make God the umpire. This is, in civic affairs, "to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven."

III. THERE IS ROOM, BOTH IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE STATE, FOR VARIOUS OFFICES. If a man cannot rule five thousand, he may be able to rule fifty. Service in a subordinate station may qualify for higher dignity. Gradation of rank best conserves the interests of the nation. "Order is Heaven's first law."

IV. ALL HUMAN AUTHORITY IS IN THE STEAD OF GOD. "The judgment is God's."

Magistrates act in God's stead. Parents likewise. Every man is bound to act as God would act. He represents God always and everywhere. All talent is a trust. We are the stewards of God's estate.

V. HUMANITY IS FAR SUPERIOR TO NATIONALITY, CLASS, OR SECT. Every man, however poor or ignorant, is to be accounted a brother. In the commonwealth of Israel there are no strangers. Nationality is but a pasteboard separation. "God hath made of one blood all nations." The great divider is sin. A heaven-kindled eye penetrates through every crust of barbarism and vice, and sees a *man* beneath. Here is a kingly nature, though now enslaved.

VI. GROWTH OF NUMBERS IS A TOKEN OF DIVINE APPROBATION. In the ratio of material abundance and contentment, is increase of population. It was one of the presages of Messiah's kingdom, "they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." In heathen lands population is sparse. War and pestilence decimate the ranks. In proportion as sound Christianity prevails, the subjects of the state augment. Every additional man ought to be an increment of strength and usefulness.

VII. PRAYER HAS A RECOGNIZED PLACE IN GOD'S GOVERNMENT. Promise always waits on prayer, as harvest waits on the husbandman's toil. However abundant are the promises, yet for the fulfilment God will be inquired of to do it for us. When prayer has its root in God's specific promise, it must bear fruit in proportion as faith enlarges her boughs. This is wise building, for we found our expectations upon eternal rock.

VIII. GOOD MEN GREATLY DESIRE THEIR COUNTRY'S GOOD. Patriotism is a goodly virtue, though not the noblest. To fence ourselves round with selfish interests is despicable. We envy not that man's narrow soul who has no sympathy nor energy for his nation's weal. The best Christian will take some interest in everything—in municipal matters, international treaties, literature, science, commerce, art. In the broadest sense, he is a citizen of the *world*. He lives to bless others. This is Christ-like.—D.

Vers. 1—4.—*The Deuteronomic discourses.* I. THE SPEAKER. "Moses." Though an hundred and twenty years old, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (ch. xxxiv. 7)—a statement borne out by the sustained eloquence of these addresses. He speaks with the authority of a prophet, the affection of a patriot, and the earnestness of a dying man.

II. THE HEARERS. "All Israel." A new generation had sprung up from that which had received the Law at Sinai. 1. All are concerned in hearing God's message. "It is your life" (ch. xxxii. 47). 2. New-comers need new teaching.

III. THE SITUATION. "In the wilderness"—still there at the end of forty years. The places named (ver. 1), suggestive of past wanderings and rebellions. Form a background to the discourses that follow, and point home their lessons. We learn: 1. The value of association as an aid in teaching. 2. Our past cannot be got rid of, but it may be utilized. 3. God's Word is to be pondered in the light of bygone experiences. 4. The comparison of our actual situation with what it might have been (ver. 2) is often a salutary exercise (cf. Luke xv. 17).

IV. THE SUBJECT. "All that the Lord had given him in commandment." We find that this does not refer to a new commandment, but to the old commandment which they had from the beginning (cf. 1 John ii. 8). 1. Men crave for novelty, but the function of the preacher is to remind them of the truths which do not change, and to give "line upon line, precept upon precept," until loyal and hearty obedience is rendered to the same. 2. Exhortation is most effective when it takes as its basis the sure Word of God. 3. God's Word is to be spoken in its entirety.

V. THE TIME. "In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month"—when the attack on the Canaanites was about to be renewed, and after signal tokens of Divine favour had already been granted (ver. 4). 1. God's mercies call for renewed dedication (Ps. cxvi. 12—14). 2. The recollections of wasted years should prove an incentive to obedience in the future (Rom. xiii. 11, 12; Eph. v. 15, 16; 1 Pet. iv. 3). 3. We need God's commandment in our memories and hearts when entering on work in which formidable opposition is to be encountered, and which will put our fidelity to a severe test.

VI. THE MOTIVE. 1. *The natural solicitude of old age.* It is characteristic of old age to fall back upon and reiterate previous counsels. Compare Peter in his second

Epistle (i. 16); the traditional stories of the old age of John; Paul in the pastoral Epistles, "urging and repeating and dilating upon truths which have been the food of his life" (Alford). 2. *The lawgiver's knowledge of the rebelliousness of the people's disposition* (ch. ix. 24). 3. *The Divine command* (ver. 3). This had respect to the altered circumstances of the new generation, and to the prospect of their entering the land promised to their fathers, continuance in which was conditional on obedience.—J. O.

Ver. 2.—*The might-have-beens of life.* In its present setting this brief geographical note was, doubtless, meant to suggest the lesson of the evil results of disobedience. "Eleven days' journey," yet the fortieth year still saw them in the wilderness. We learn: 1. Sin turns short ways into long ones. 2. Sin entails on the transgressor needless trouble and sorrow. 3. Sin fills life with fruitless regrets. 4. Sin delays fulfilment of God's promises.

The path of obedience is in the end the shortest, easiest, safest, and happiest.—J. O.

Vers. 6—9.—*A summons to advance.* Moses begins by reminding the Israelites how God had formerly summoned them to march upon Canaan. The summons came to them at Horeb, after a sojourn of eleven months. The verses may be applied to illustrate—

I. THE CHURCH'S DANGER—to abide at the mount, to settle down into a state of apathy or simple receptivity. This is met by the call to action—"Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: turn you, and take your journey" (vers. 6, 7). Notice: 1. *Israel's stay at the mount was good while it lasted.* There the nation enjoyed a season of rest, ratified its covenant with God, received the Law, constructed a sanctuary, and was otherwise equipped and organized. There must be times of getting, of learning, of consulting for one's own edification, else it will go hard with us in the work and battle of life. But 2. *There was a danger that Israel's stay at the mount might last too long.* So is it with the Church, when she concentrates her attention too exclusively on her own spiritual improvement, and forgets her mission to the world. We have to remember that we get and learn only that we may apply and act. There is the peril of religion becoming a species of enjoyment. We luxuriate in retired communion, in restful fellowship with God, in converse with fellow-believers, in Church ordinances; and we think how sweet it would be if this could always last. But we are wrong. It would not be good for us always to be in this state of simple receiving. Religion, divorced from active employment, must soon lose its robustness, and degenerate into a sickly religiosity. There are many, many Christians who have been long enough, and far too long, in the mount, and it would be well for themselves if they could hear this voice summoning them to go forward.

II. THE CHURCH'S DESTINY—to possess the land. The type was the land of Canaan; the antitype, so far as it lies in time, is the world, which it is the Church's calling to conquer for Christ, and for her own possession. St. Paul gives this interpretation in Rom. iv. 13. Taking the passage in this light, and reading the wider truth into it, we get the idea of a land which is: 1. *Known to God* (ver. 7). Known thoroughly, in all its parts, peoples, districts, conformation, accessibilities, and inaccessibilities. In advancing to take possession of the world for Christ, we have the encouragement of thinking that he knows precisely to what kind of work he is sending us, and yet promises success. India, China, Africa, etc.,—he knows them all, yet he says, "Go in and possess." 2. *Gifted by God* (ver. 8). It is long since the oracle declared that God had given Christ the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession (Ps. ii. 8). The Church, as one with Christ, shares in his kingdom, and shall yet inherit the whole earth. 3. *The conquest of which is commanded by God.* Not, indeed, by carnal weapons, as the Israelites were commanded to conquer Canaan, nor yet by the destruction of those against whom we war; but by the nobler weapons of the truth, and by seeking men's salvation. This is a benigner method of conquest, and it will prove successful if we advance with faith and courage. Those who persist in hardening themselves must indeed be destroyed; but not by us. The Lord puts no weapon of a kind to injure any into our hands; but bids us leave vengeance with himself. Our means are the preaching of the gospel, prayer, holy living, organized and beneficent activity to reach the lost sheep of our great communities, and multiplied missionary agencies in foreign lands.

III. THE CHURCH'S DUTY—to obey her Lord, and go forward at once to this great work. 1. He gives no alternative. 2. The command is express. 3. The world sorely needs our work. 4. Every motive of gratitude and compassion should urge us to it. —J. O.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Israel's increase.* These verses embody the expression of a very natural state of feeling in contemplating the marvel of the Church's growth.

I. THE CHURCH'S INCREASE AN OBJECT OF DESIRE. "The Lord God of your fathers make you," etc. (ver. 11). Such increase is: 1. A token of Divine favour (Acts xi. 24). 2. A manifestation of Divine power (1 Cor. i. 18—30; Eph. i. 19; 1 Thess. i. 5). 3. A source of blessing to the world (Ps. lxvii.). 4. A fulfilment of the Divine counsels (Eph. i. 10). 5. Means the ascendancy of true religion.

II. THE CHURCH'S INCREASE AN OBJECT OF WONDER. (Ver. 10.) The rapid spread, the extraordinary victories, the prolonged empire, and the undecaying vitality of the Christian religion are the most wonderful things in history, and a proof of its Divine origin. As Israel increased by the Divine blessing at an unprecedented rate, and in spite of all Pharaoh's attempts to check the increase, so has the Church flourished and spread, proving herself in her unarmed strength more than a match for the deadliest powers which can be arrayed against her. The present century has witnessed a remarkable revival of this propagative energy of Christianity (comp. Numb. xxiii. 23).

III. THE CHURCH'S INCREASE A MATTER OF PROMISE. (Ver. 11.) The promise to Abraham of a countless seed embraced in its widest import the spiritual, not less than the natural, Israel—his seed in Christ (Rom. iv. 16; Gal. iii. 7—10, 14, 16, 26, 29). (Cf. the promises in Isa. liii. 10—12; liv. 1—3; lx. 1—12, with Dan. ii. 35, 44; Matt. viii. 11; Rev. vii. 9).—J. O.

Vers. 9—16.—*Division of labour.* (Cf. Exod. xviii. 13—27.) An instance of a good idea (1) suggested, (2) readily adopted, (3) generally approved of. Reminds us that division of labour is as important in Church work as in the arts.

I. THE NEGLECT OF DIVISION OF LABOUR LEADS TO SERIOUS EVILS. 1. The work is not overtaken. "Not able" (ver. 9). 2. Those who have to do it are greatly overtaxed. "Cumbrance," "burden" (ver. 12). 3. Energy is wasted on subordinate tasks which might be applied to better purpose.

II. THE ADOPTION OF DIVISION OF LABOUR SECURES OBVIOUS ADVANTAGES. 1. Relieves the responsible heads. 2. Expedites business and promotes order. 3. Secures that the work is better done. 4. Utilizes varieties of talent. But parties must be as willing to co-operate as they were here.

III. RIGHTLY TO SECURE THE ADVANTAGES OF DIVISION OF LABOUR THERE MUST BE EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION. When Moses took in hand the appointment of assistants, he did it thoroughly (ver. 15). The work which each is to do must not be left to haphazard, or to "understandings," or to the tastes and inclinations of individuals, but should be definitely marked out. There must be organization and distribution of tasks on a general plan, which, while it affords room for all grades of talent, allots work with a view to the aptitudes which each is known to possess. It is characteristic of Moses' scheme: 1. That it took advantage of existing institutions. 2. That it rested on a broad, popular basis; elective (ver. 13).—J. O.

Vers. 16, 17.—*Judging.* The rules here laid down, while primarily applicable in the administration of law, are, in their spirit and for the most part in their letter, equally fitted to guide our private judgments. A proneness to judge is condemned by Christ (Matt. vii. 1); but his rebuke of the censorious spirit is not to be read as forbidding the framing of such judgments upon the character, actions, and pretensions of others as the circumstances of our position may render necessary. We are called every day of our lives to form, and frequently to express, judgments upon men, measures, causes, theories, disputes, proposals; judgments as to true and false, right and wrong, wise and unwise, expedient and inexpedient. Matters are appealed to us as individuals, or as a part of the general community, on which judgment is expressly asked. We must judge that we may know how to act. All this involves the possibility of judging rashly; of judging with bias and prejudice; of judging so as to do

wrong to individuals; of judging so as to injure truth and retard progress and improvement. The text teaches us, on the contrary—

I. THAT CAUSES, BEFORE BEING JUDGED, ARE TO BE FAIRLY HEARD. How many judgments are passed daily in utter ignorance of the real facts of the case, and without any attempt to ascertain them, perhaps without the means of ascertaining them! Such judgments are *ipso facto* unjust. It is only by the rarest chance they can be right, and their rightness being accidental does not justify them. Let judgments be reserved for cases in which we have an opportunity of full investigation. Hear both sides, and hear them (1) fully, (2) candidly, and (3) patiently.

II. THAT CAUSES, AFTER BEING HEARD, ARE TO HAVE JUDGMENT PASSED UPON THEM WITH STRICT IMPARTIALITY. "Judge not according to the appearance," said Jesus, "but judge righteous judgment"—an instance illustrating that wider view of judging which we are here taking (John vii. 24). Equal measure is to be meted out to all. We are to judge impartially as between brother and brother, fellow-citizen and foreigner, rich and poor, applying the same principles and standards to each case, and keeping in view the essential merits as the one thing to be regarded. This is the plain rule of justice, though we all feel how difficult it is to act up to it.

III. THAT JUDGMENT UPON CAUSES IS TO BE GIVEN FEARLESSLY. "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." (Cf. the Regent Morton's eulogy on Knox—"There lies he who never feared the face of man.") Even when just judgment is being pronounced internally, the fear of man, or the desire of man's favour, or the dread of temporal consequences, often leads to a time-serving tampering with conviction, to a saying and doing of the thing we do not at heart approve of. This is the worst kind of cowardice.

IV. THAT JUDGMENT UPON CAUSES IS TO BE GIVEN UNDER A DUE SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD. "The judgment is God's." Judges are his vicegerents, deriving their authority from him, expressing the judgment of his righteousness, anticipating his own final judgment, and themselves responsible to him for the manner in which they exercise their functions. Every biassed, untrue, and insincere judgment is a misrepresentation of that truth and rectitude which have their ground in God's own being.

V. THAT IN CAUSES ON WHICH WE ARE INCOMPETENT TO PRONOUNCE, JUDGMENT IS NOT TO BE ATTEMPTED. (Ver. 17.)—J. O.

Vers. 1—18.—*The impartiality of God to be reflected in the judges of his people.* In the following Homilies we adhere to the traditional view of the Mosaic authorship of the book, believing that no sufficient evidence has yet been adduced by the critics for departing from that view. Moses enters upon his addresses in the land of Moab by recapitulating the salient points of the Exodus. The first notable reference is to the appointment of the judges. The qualifications and directions here recorded are fitted to throw precious light upon the Divine character. Here let us notice—

I. There was to be NO RESPECT OF PERSONS IN JUDGMENT. And here we may quote a definition which will materially aid us in this subject: "By the word *person* the Scripture signifies not a man, but those things in a man which, being conspicuous to the eyes, usually conciliate favour, honour, and dignity, or attract hatred, contempt, and disgrace. Such are riches, wealth, power, nobility, magistracy, country, elegance of form, on the one hand; and on the other, poverty, necessity, ignoble birth, slovenliness, contempt, and the like." These Jewish judges, therefore, were directed to allow none of these personal accidents to influence their judgments in the cases committed to them, but to decide as matters of pure equity.

II. There was to be NO FEAR OF MAN in their judgments. The consequences to themselves were not to be regarded. They were to be fearless officers, representing the Most High.

III. We see here that WITH GOD THERE CAN BE NO RESPECT OF PERSONS AND NO FEAR OF MAN. The strict impartiality of God has been questioned, if representations of his procedure drawn from the Divine Word are accepted. Now, the whole plan of salvation by *grace* appears favouritism and partiality. What is the meaning of "grace"? Undoubtedly *free, unmerited favour.* If, then, salvation is by grace (Eph. ii. 8), must not God be liable to the charge of partiality? Such, at least, is the reasoning of some in the interests of certain systems.

But when the matter is looked into more closely, we find that salvation by free grace

is the most conclusive evidence of God's *impartiality*. It is really saying to all men, "Unless you give up the notion of recommending yourselves to me; unless you surrender the idea of some special claim in your being or your life upon me; unless, in a word, you lay aside the fancy that you must be partially and exceptionally treated, which is the whole meaning of self-righteousness, I cannot save you." This is impartiality *par excellence*; and this is exactly God's position in offering salvation to men.

All who refuse salvation are really refusing to be treated impartially, and are clamouring for exceptional consideration on the ground of some fancied merit. The rejected at the last will be found to be those who wanted favouritism, but put away free grace. The line of thought opened up here may be profitably carried on.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 19—28.—Here Moses passes from the judges to the people at large; from charging officials to judge righteously, to reminding the people that they also had received from him commandments which they had to obey. The "things" referred to are either the injunctions specified in Exod. xxi., etc., or simply the instructions mentioned in the preceding verses. God had called the Israelites out of Egypt that they should go up at once to Canaan, and he had by Moses done all that was needed for this. But they had been rebellious, and had opposed God's commands, the consequence of which was that they had been made to experience various trials, especially to wander nearly forty years in the wilderness, so that of those who came out of Egypt only two were privileged to see the promised land. The words of Moses in this section supplement and complete the narrative in Numb. xiii.; but the words are those, not of a compiler, but of one who had been himself a witness of all he narrates.

Vers. 19—26.—**That great and terrible wilderness**: the desert forming the western side of the Stony Arabia. It bears now the name of *Et-Tih*, i.e. The Wandering, a name "doubtless derived from the wanderings of the Israelites, the tradition of which has been handed down through a period of three thousand years. . . . It is a pastoral country; unfitted as a whole for cultivation, because of its scanty soil and scarcity of water" (Dr. Porter, in Kitto's 'Biblical Cyclopædia,' vol. iii. p. 1075). In the northern part especially the country is rugged and bare, with vast tracts of sand, over which the scorching simoom often sweeps (see on ver. 1). This wilderness they had seen, had known, and had experience of, and their experience had been such that the district through which they had been doomed to wander appeared to them dreadful. Passing by the way of the Amorites, as they had been commanded (ver. 7), they came to Kâdesh-barnea (see Numb. xii. 16). Their discontent broke out oftener than once, before they reached this place (see Numb. xi., xii.); but Moses, in this recapitulation, passes over these earlier instances of their rebelliousness, and hastens to remind them of the rebellion at Kâdesh (Numb. xiii., xiv.), because it was this which led to the nation being doomed to wander in the wilderness until the generation that came out of Egypt had died. It was through faith in God that Canaan was to be gained and occupied by Israel; but this faith they lacked, and so they came short of what God had summoned them to attain (Ps. lxxviii. 22; cvi. 24; Heb. iii. 18, 19; comp. 2 Chron. xx. 20; Isa. vii. 9). Hence, when they had come to the very borders of the promised land, and the hills of Canaan were before their eyes, and Moses said to them, in the name of God, **Go up, possess** ("asyndeton emphaticum," Michaelis), they hung back, and proposed that men should be sent out to survey the land and bring a report concerning it. This was approved of by Moses; but when the spies returned and gave their report, the people were discouraged, and refused to go up. They were thus **rebellious against the commandment** (literally, *the mouth*, the express will) of Jehovah their God; and not only so, but with signal ingratitude and impiety they murmured against him, and attributed their deliverance out of Egypt to God's hatred of them, that he might destroy them (see Numb. xiii. 1—33, to which the narrative here corresponds).

Ver. 27.—**Ye murmured in your tents**; an allusion to what is recorded in Numb. xiv. 1, etc. Moses addresses the people then with him as if they had been the parties who so rebelled and murmured at Kâdesh, though all that generation, except himself, Joshua, and Caleb, had perished. This he does, not merely because of the solidarity of the nation, but also that he might suggest to them the possibility that the

same evil spirit might still lurk among them, and consequently the need of being on their guard against allowing it to get scope.

Ver. 28.—**Our brethren have discouraged our heart**; literally, *have melted* or *made to flow down our heart* (הֵמַסּוּ, Hiph. of מָסַס, to flow down or melt), *have made us faint-hearted*. **The cities are great and walled up to heaven**; literally, *are great and fortified in the heavens*. To their excited imagination, the walls and towers of the cities seemed as if they reached the very sky; so when men cease to have faith in God, difficulties appear insurmountable, and the power of the adversary is exaggerated until courage is paralyzed and despair banishes hope. **Sons of the Anakims**; elsewhere (Numb. xiii. 22; Josh. xv. 14; Judg. i. 20) *children or sons of the 'Anak*. 'Anak may originally have been the proper name of an individual, but it appears in the Bible rather as the designation of the tribe. It is the word for *neck*, and this race, which were strong and powerful men, or their progenitor, may have been remarkable for thickness of neck; this, at least, is more probable than that it was from length of neck (Gesenius) that they got the name, for a long neck is usually associated with weakness rather than strength. Some have supposed the Anakim to have been originally Cushites; but the origin of the tribe is involved in obscurity.

Vers. 29—40.—Moses endeavoured to rouse the drooping courage of the people, and persuade them to go up by reminding them that God, who was with them, would go before them, and fight for them as he had often done before; but without success, so that God was angry with them, and forbade their entrance into Canaan. This is not mentioned in Numbers, probably because Moses' appeal was unsuccessful. The whole of that generation was bound to fall in the wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua; only their children should enter the promised land.

Vers. 29, 30.—Moses exhorts the people not to be afraid, as if they had to encounter these terrible enemies solely in their own strength; for Jehovah their God was with them and would go before them, as he had gone before them hitherto, to protect them and strike down their enemies.

Ver. 31.—Not only at the Red Sea did God appear for the defence of his people and the discomfiture of their enemies, but also in the wilderness, which they had seen (as in ver. 19), where (אֲשֶׁר, elliptically for אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ) Jehovah their God bore them as a man beareth his son, sustaining, tending, supporting, and carrying them over difficulties (comp. Numb. xi. 12, where a similar figure occurs; see also Isa. xlvi. 3, 4; lxiii. 9, etc.; Ps. xxiii.).

Vers. 32, 33.—**Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God**; literally, *With this thing* [or *With this word*] *ye were not believing in Jehovah your God*. The Hebrew דָּבָר, like the Greek ῥῆμα, signifies either thing or word. If the former rendering be adopted here, the meaning will be, Notwithstanding this fact of which you have had experience, viz. how God has interposed for your protection and deliverance, ye were still unbelieving in him. If the latter rendering be adopted, the meaning will be, Notwithstanding what I then said to you, ye remained unbelieving, etc. This latter seems the more probable meaning. In the Hebrew text there is a strong stop (*'athnach*) after *this word*, as if a pause of astonishment followed this utterance—Notwithstanding this word, strange to say! ye were not believing, etc. The participle ("believing") is intended to indicate the *continuing* of this unbelief. So also in ver. 34, the participle form is used—"who was going in the way before you," to indicate that not once and again, but continually, the Lord went before them; and this made the sin of their unbelief all the more marked and aggravated. (For the fact here referred to, see Exod. xiii. 21, etc.; Numb. ix. 15, etc.; x. 33—36.)

Ver. 34.—**And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and he was wroth, and sware**, etc. (comp. Numb. xiv. 21—24).

Vers. 35, 36.—They were all, the whole generation of them, evil, and therefore not a man of them should see the good land which God had promised to their fathers, with the exception of Caleb, who had wholly followed the Lord—had remained steadfast and faithful whilst the others fell away. Joshua also was exempted from this doom; but before mentioning him, Moses refers to himself as having also come under the Divine displeasure.

Ver. 37.—**The Lord was angry with me also for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither**. This must be regarded as parenthetical, for what he here refers to in regard to himself occurred, not at the time of the rebellion at Kâdesh, but at the time of the second arrival of the people at that place, many years later. This parenthetical reference to himself was probably thrown in by Moses for the purpose of preparing for what he was about to say respecting Joshua, in whom the people were to find a leader after he himself was gone. It may be noted also that Moses distinguishes between the anger of the Lord against him,

and the wrath which broke forth upon the people—a distinction which is aptly preserved in the Authorized Version by the words "was wroth" (קָצַף) and "was angry" (אָנַף). **For your sakes**; rather, *because of you, on account of you.* The Hebrew word (דְּבַר) comes from a root meaning to roll, and signifies primarily a turn in events, a circumstance, an occasion or reason. Moses reminds the Israelites that the misconduct of the people was what led to God's being angry also with him (see Numb. xx. 7, etc.; comp. Ps. cvi. 32, 33).

Ver. 38.—Though the rebellious generation were to perish, and Moses was not to be permitted to enter Canaan, God would not depart from his promise, but would by another leader bring the people to the inheritance which he had sworn to their fathers to give them. (For the account of Joshua's appointment and installation, see Numb. xxvii. 15—23.) **Which standeth before thee**; *i.e.* to be thy minister or servant (Exod. xxiv. 13; xxxiii. 11; Numb. xi. 28; comp. for the meaning of the phrase ch. x. 8; xviii. 7; Dan. i. 5). **Encourage him**; literally, *strengthen him* (comp. ch. iii. 21, 22; xxxi. 7, 8). **Inherit it**; the "it" refers back to ver. 35, "that good land." In vers. 8 and 21, the land is spoken of as to be possessed by the Israelites; here it is spoken of as to be inherited by them. The former has reference to their having to wrest the land by force from the Canaanites (יָרַשׁ, to occupy by force, to dispossess; cf. ch. ii. 12, 21, 22, where the verb is, in the Authorized Version, rendered by "destroy"); the latter has reference to their receiving the land as a heritage (נָחַל) from God, who, when he divided to the nations their inheritance, assigned Canaan to the children of Israel (ch. xxxii. 8). "Joshua the executor of the inheritance" (Schroeder).

Ver. 39.—Only among the young of that generation should the inheritance be divided, as they had no part in the rebellion of their seniors. **Your little ones**; *i.e.* children beginning to walk (טַף, from טָפַף, to trip, to take short and quick steps). **And your children**—boys and girls—**which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil**; rather, *of whom* [ye said] *they know not to-day good and evil.* The Hebrews were wont to express totality or universality by specifying contradictory opposites, as, *e.g.* great and small (2 Chron. xxxiv. 30), master and scholar (Mal. ii. 20), free and bond (Rev. xiii. 16; xix. 18), shut up and left (ch. xxxii. 36, where see note; 1 Kings xiv. 10), etc. Accordingly, when *good* and *evil* are set over against each other, the notion of entireness or universality is expressed. Thus, when Laban and Bethuel said to Abraham's servant, "We cannot speak unto thee bad or good" (Gen. xxiv. 50), the meaning is, We can say nothing at all. Absalom spake to Amnon "neither good nor bad" (2 Sam. xiii. 22); that is, he did not say anything to him. The woman of Tekoa said to David, "As an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad" (2 Sam. xiv. 17); *i.e.* there is nothing the king does not know—his knowledge is universal. Hence to know good and evil came to mean to be intelligent, and not to know good and evil to be unintelligent, as is a babe. The children here referred to knew nothing, and consequently could not be held as morally responsible; comp. Isa. vii. 15; Homer, 'Odyssey,' xviii. 228—

"οἶδα ἕκαστα
ἐσθλά τε καὶ τὰ χέρεια· πάρος δ' ἔτι νήπιος ἦα."

Ver. 40.—The command to go to the mount of the Amorites (ver. 7) is recalled, and they are ordered to turn into the wilderness and go by the way leading to the Red Sea (comp. Numb. xiv. 25).

Vers. 41—46.—The people, appalled at the prospect of another sojourn in the wilderness, yet still rebellious and disobedient to God's command, though professing penitence, determined, in spite of direct prohibition on the part of God by Moses, to go up and force their way into Canaan; but were punished for their presumption by being utterly defeated and put to flight by the Amorites (comp. Numb. xiv. 40—45).

Ver. 41.—**We have sinned**; in Numbers it is simply said that "the people mourned greatly" (bemoaned themselves, יִתְאַבְּלוּ); but this is not incompatible with the statement here that they confessed their sins; the one would naturally accompany the other. Their confession, however, was in word only; their conduct showed that it was not sincere. In Numbers (xiv. 44) it is said, "They presumed to go up;" here it is said (ver. 41), **Ye were ready to go up**, rather, *Ye acted heedlessly with levity*, or *frivolously, to go up.* The verb here (וַתָּזִידוּ) occurs only in this place, and is of doubtful signification. The Rabbins compare it with the זנה, lo we! Here we be! of the people in Numb. xiv. 40. It is the Hiph. of הזן, which is supposed to be the same as the Arabic هَيَّنَ, to be light, easy; and from this the meaning, "ye went up heedlessly," is deduced. None of the ancient versions, however, give this meaning. The LXX. has *συναθροισθέντες ἀνεβαίνετε εἰς τὸ ὄρος*; the Vulgate, *instructi armis pergeretis in montem*; Onk., ושרתון למסק (and ye began to

ascend); Syriac, ܘܣܩ ܠܟܘܢ ܘܣܠܩܘ (and go incited yourselves to go up).

Ver. 42.—Moses, by the command of God, warned the people that, if they presumed to go up, they should go without his protection, and so would certainly fall before their enemies.

Ver. 43.—In vain were they thus warned. Moses spoke to them as God commanded, but they would not be persuaded. **Went presumptuously**; rather, *acted insolently and went up*; margin, Authorized Version, "Ye were presumptuous, and went up." The verb here (זִיד, from זוּד, to boil) signifies tropically, to act proudly, haughtily, insolently (comp. Neh. xi. 29, Authorized Version, "dealt proudly").

Ver. 44.—**The Amorites**, for the Canaanites generally; in Numbers, the Amalekites are specially mentioned as joining with the Amorites in chastising the Israelites. These tribes came down from the higher mountain range to the lower height which the Israelites had gained, and drove them with great slaughter as far as Hormah, in Seir, chasing them as bees do, which pursue with keen ferocity those who disturb them. Hormah (Ban-place), the earlier name of which was Zephath (Judg. i. 17), was a royal city of the Canaanites, taken by the Israelites towards the close of their wanderings, and placed by them under a ban (Numb. xxi. 1, etc.), which ban was fully executed only in the time of the Judges. It is here and elsewhere called Hormah by anticipation. The old name Zephath seems to have survived that given to it by the Israelites in the name Sebaita or Sepata, the Arabic form of Zephath, the name of a heap of ruins on the western slope of the rocky mountain-plateau Rakhmah, about two hours and a half south-west of Khalasa (Ritter, 'Geography of Palestine,' i. 431; Palmer, 'Desert of Et-Tîh,' p. 289, etc.). This is a more probable identification than that of Robinson ('Res.,' ii. 18), who finds Hormah in the rocky defile of Es-Sufâh, an unlikely place for a city of the importance of Zephath to be in.

Ver. 45.—**Ye returned**; *i.e.* either to Kâdesh, where Moses had remained, or from their rebellious and defiant attitude to one of apparent submission and contrition, or the whole phrase, "Ye returned and wept," may mean merely that they wept again, as in Numb. xi. 4, where the same words are used. **And wept.** They mourned their misfortune, and complained on account of it (comp. for the meaning of the phrase, Numb. xi. 4, 18, 20). **Before Jehovah**; *i.e.* before the tabernacle or sanctuary (comp. Judg. xx. 23, 26). Their mourning was not that of true repentance, and, therefore, the Lord would not listen to them or give heed to their wail (comp. Prov. i. 24, etc.).

Ver. 46.—It was unnecessary that Moses should tell the people the precise length of time they abode in Kâdesh after this, because that was well known to them; he, therefore, contents himself with saying that they remained there as long as they did remain (comp. for a similar expression, ch. ix. 25). How long they actually remained there cannot be determined, for the expression, **many days**, is wholly indefinite.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 19—33.—*Sending the spies.* This paragraph contains a brief review of events which are recorded in Numb. xiii., xiv. Israel had left the wilderness of Sinai; the cloud now rested in the wilderness of Paran. At this point they were not very many days' journey from the land of promise. But it would seem that they did not like to go in and take possession of the land without more information than they as yet possessed as to its accessibility and its fitness for their permanent home. So they proposed that spies should be sent ahead. We gather that, at the desire of the people, Moses asked advice of the Lord, and in consequence he was bidden to accede to their request. Twelve men were sent. Ten brought an evil report of the land; two only were full of heart and hope, strong in faith, giving glory to God. *Numbers* carried more weight than *worth*. The report of ten bore down that of two. The people would not believe the Lord. They said in their unbelief, "Let us make a captain, and return into Egypt," and even (Neh. ix. 17) "appointed a captain to return to their bondage." And a sad and sorrowful glance does Moses cast over the sin of that time. Let us glance at it too. We will endeavour to gather a true estimate of the course which Israel took, taking care, as we go on, to see how far the incidents recorded here convey instruction to many whose feelings are analogous to theirs. In estimating this case, let us look—

I. AT THE COURSE ISRAEL TOOK IN SENDING THE SPIES. 1. *It was unnecessary.* For they had been redeemed by a strong hand and by a stretched-out arm from the bondage

and degradation of Egypt; their deliverance had been effected for them by the free love, spontaneous care, and watchful providence of God. Surely it should not have been hard to argue on this wise: "He who has shown us such wondrous mercy will not be wanting to us to the end." It was surely needless to send out any scouts to Canaan, to survey the land before them. A wiser and better care than theirs had done this for them, and there was no more need for them to send to spy out the land than to have sent pioneers to clear their way through the deep! But, in thus chiding Israel, are we not really rebuking ourselves? We have to bethink us of a rescue, before which that of Israel fades into nothingness. And how has our rescue in Christ been effected? By *our* power or skill? Nay, but by a wisdom, power, and love, which in blessed union did combine in the cross of Christ to save us. Is not, then, the inference more than warranted, "He that spared not," etc. But if so, why need we strain our eyes to pierce the gloom that hangs over our future course? We need not faithlessly forecast. 2. *It was undesirable*, and that on several grounds. (1) It was manifestly hindering their march. (2) They were confronted by the prospect of an accumulation of difficulties which would come only one at a time. (3) Israel therefore darkened the present by prying into the future. So it is now. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Our daily course, with its mingled comforts and cares, may be so peaceful if we will calmly leave the future to him who knows and plans all; but if we, with our short foresight and our little strength, will foolishly set before us in one perplexing combination all the difficulties which will come only one by one; if we think and speak as if our God would leave us alone when they come,—we shall dishonour him, and shade the present by anticipating the future.

II. LET US LOOK AT THE CONCLUSION TO WHICH ISRAEL CAME ON THE REPORT OF THE SPIES. They resolved to go back and to return to Egypt, and appointed a captain to lead them. It was one-sided, forgetful, ungrateful, and ruinous. 1. *It was one-sided.* True, the sons of Anak were in the way. But who was above them all? See Caleb's putting of the case, in Numb. xiv. 6—9. 2. *It was forgetful.* For was not the fact of all these enemies being in the land explicitly named in one of the earliest promises (Exod. iii. 17); and had not God promised to drive them out? 3. *It was ungrateful.* After all the love which had been shown them, how could they so requite it? 4. *It was ruinous* (see Numb. iv. 33—38; ch. i. 32—39). But are there not some now who start fairly in the Christian race, or seem to do so, and yet who, when some difficulty meets or threatens them, turn back and go away (cf. Matt. xiii. 20, 21)? Nor can we safely neglect the warning consequent on this incident given in Heb. iii. 4. To quit the leadership of Christ because of present or impending difficulties will be much more grievously sinful than it was for Israel to propose to quit the leadership of Moses. The four points named above will apply also here. It will be: 1. *One-sided.* For supposing, as we try to peer into the future, possible or even certain difficulties do present themselves, ought we not to remember that with the demand on the strength there will be given strength to meet the demand? Why look at one without looking at the other? 2. *It will be forgetful.* For what are the words of Holy Writ? What are we bidden to expect? Have we ever been told that we are to have a smooth path through life? Have we never read that "through much tribulation we *must* enter the kingdom"? Have we not read that we must expect to be "partakers" of Christ's sufferings? 3. *It will be ungrateful.* Did not our Saviour tread a thorny path for us; and have we no return to make in treading a thorny path for him? Do we thus intend to repay the sorrow and blood of Calvary? 4. *It will be ruinous* if we turn back. Difficulties we seek to shun will be multiplied a hundred-fold. The ease we would fain secure will not be ours. While, instead of having to conquer the sons of Anak, we shall have to encounter the condemnation of our Saviour and Lord. Let us press onward still to the rest which remaineth. On! for *honour* demands it. On! for *gratitude* requires it. On! for love, infinite love, expects it. On! only a step at a time, and if the giant Anakim appear, the Lord will fight for us. On! and if we come to Jericho's walls, faith's trumpet blast shall bring them to the ground. On! and you will have many a cluster of grapes sent to you by the Lord of the land, to show you its richness, and that you may taste of its fruits ere you enter there! Trust your God, ye people, follow the Lord fully, and not all the powers of earth or hell shall keep you from the promised rest!

Vers. 32—35.—*The grievous consequences of unbelief.* Moses rehearses in the hearing of Israel the strange story of "their manners in the wilderness," and reminds them how their unbelief had provoked the Lord to anger, and had deprived vast numbers of them of the rest they had hoped to enjoy. We ought to be at no loss how to apply this to present day uses. The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, renews the warning voice. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, both by argument and exhortation, repeatedly says, Take heed lest a like evil befall you (Heb. iii. 7—19; iv. 1—11). Whence observe—

I. HERE IS A REMARKABLE FACT TO BE NOTED: viz. Divine arrangements apparently failing of their end through the misconduct of man. 1. God had made provision for securing the entrance of Israel into their land. Early had the promise been made. Long and patiently did the patriarchs await its fulfilment (Heb. xi. 13). God had watched over his people's wanderings. He beheld them in Egypt. When the time for liberating them was come, Moses was at hand. Israel had but to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, again and again. The Law was given from Sinai. Manna descended from heaven. Water gushed from the rock. The pillar of fire and of cloud was their guard, light, or shade. They knew what God intended to do for them. The promise was clear; the conditions were plain; the warnings were solemn; the threatenings were terrible. No excuse of ignorance could be pleaded by the people. Yet: 2. All were insufficient to prevent their defection of heart from God. They were perpetually doubting God. "Ten times"[1] (Numb. xiv. 22). Unbelief led to the breaking forth of lust. They forfeited the promise; and of the many thousands who started for Egypt only two survived to enter Canaan. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

II. THERE IS GREAT DANGER LEST THE PARALLEL BETWEEN OURSELVES AND ISRAEL, ALREADY SEEN IN GREATER MERCY, SHOULD BE SEEN AGAIN IN A GREATER RUIN. There is already a parallel in mercy. 1. There is a complete arrangement for meeting all our wants on the way to a nobler rest. 2. In treading the way, we have a far better Leader than Moses. 3. We have far clearer light than Israel had. 4. We have fuller and richer promises. 5. We have a far higher rest in view. 6. Throughout the way there will be demands on our faith. 7. There is a danger *from within*, lest we should distrust God. Are we not conscious of such a danger? Our hearts are sinful, and predisposed to doubt. We *have* doubted God very much, and thus wronged him in times gone by. Such unbelief may take or may have taken the form of presumption or of despair. For an illustration of the former, see next Homily. The latter kind of unbelief may be almost indefinitely varied. Men may doubt (1) the power of God to bring them to the rest; or (2) the willingness of God to do it; or (3) the readiness of God to bring *them* to the rest, without questioning his care for others; or they may even go so far as to doubt (4) whether the promises of the rest be Divine; (5) whether there is any such rest as the one promised; and even (6) whether there is any God of promise. Whichever of these forms a despairing unbelief may assume, the evil of it is sufficiently manifest. It is the greatest dishonour which we can cast on God, to allow the thought to gain the mastery, that we are flung down hither without any sure destiny of blessedness being disclosed, or without any certainty of reaching it being made known. Besides, doubt prevents work; it paralyzes. Doubting God gives the rein to every lust. 8. And unless we "take heed," if we suffer doubt to get the mastery, as Israel lost their rest, we shall lose ours. What present rest can we have while unbelief has the upper hand? Doubt is essentially unrest. How can we enjoy any future rest? What sympathy with God can we have? Besides, God declares, "They *shall not enter* into my rest." In that heavenly rest none can or will share who do not implicitly believe the promise and loyally obey the precept. 9. And how much more serious it will be to trifle with Christ, than to slight Moses (Heb. x. 28—31)!

But there is a very bright side to this subject. While unbelief will shut us out of heaven, *nothing else will!* Nothing can shut us out of heaven but doubting God! Poverty cannot. Persecution cannot. Reproach cannot. Obscurity cannot. No one

[1] Ten times: Exod. v. 20, 21; xiv. 11, 12; xv. 22—27; xvi. 2, 3, 20, 27; xvii. 1—7; xxxii.; Numb. xi. 1—3, 4—35; xiv.

shall ever sink who trusts his God. See that young and weak believer who has turned his back on the world, and set his face heavenward. A thousand difficulties bristle up in all directions. But he meets them all, saying, "God called me, God will help me, God will lead me, God will guard me."

"A feeble saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way!"

Yea, even so! "Them that honour me," saith God, "I will honour." But, must we not look to him who awakened our faith, to sustain it? 'Tis even so. Ever have we to say, "Give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt." "Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief." And is there not enough revealed of God and of his wondrous love in Christ to put every doubt to flight, when all that God is to us is laid home to our hearts by the Holy Ghost? Here, indeed, is a quickening, inspiring, sustaining force, of which Israel knew little or nothing. "Greater is he that is for us than all they which be against us." "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Let us doubt ourselves as much as we will, but our God and Saviour—never. He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Vers. 41—46.—*Forced back!* In the preceding paragraph we had an illustration of unbelief in doubting the promise of God, and of the effect of that unbelief in excluding from the promised rest. Here we have an illustration of a like unbelief working in precisely the opposite direction; as Israel feared to go up notwithstanding the promise of God, so now we find them resolving to go up in spite of the prohibition of God, "acting," as an expositor remarks, "in contempt of the threatening, as they had before acted in contempt of the promise, as if governed by a spirit of contradiction." The points in the history which should be noted are these. 1. As the men of that generation (two only excepted) were debarred from entering Canaan, they have to wander in the desert for forty years. 2. They rebel against this Divine arrangement, though we, who at this distance of time "see the end of the Lord," can perceive how much mercy there was in it. 3. There was a short way to Canaan, through a hill country, which to human judgment would seem preferable to a "march far wandering round." 4. In this route enemies would surely assail—Amorites, Amalekites, etc. 5. Israel made light of these difficulties. 6. God forbade their going up. Moses forbade them. The ark was not moved from its place in the camp. 7. The people were resolved to go up, defiantly, *insolently* (Gesenius, *sub verb.*). 8. They paid dearly for their presumption. They were forced back. 9. They grieved and wept over their disappointment. 10. Such weeping God does not regard. "Tears of discontent must be wept over again." As they had before found out the folly of distrusting God's strength, so now they had to bewail the uselessness of presuming on their own! We cannot be wrong in continuing to follow the apostolic teaching in regarding the Canaan of Israel's hope *as a type of the higher "rest"* which "remaineth for the people *of God*" (cf. Heb. iv. 1).

I. THE LAW OF OLD IS IN FORCE STILL, THAT THE UNBELIEVING SHALL NOT ENTER INTO REST. This is the teaching, under varied forms, of no small part of the Old Testament and of the New. We may inquire, if we will, into the philosophy of this; and in doing so, we shall find but little difficulty in seeing the essential impossibility of one who doubts God finding rest anywhere. Doubt *is* unrest. But whether or no one can discern the deep reason of it, there stands the word, with its awful bar, "He that believeth not is condemned already."

II. IT IS A DREARY OUTLOOK FOR THE UNBELIEVER. To wander on, and to be moving towards some destiny or other, but yet to have no prospect of rest at the end of the journey, is it not dreary? We do not deny that men may, as they say, resign themselves to the inevitable. And we even admit that men may so far control themselves, as, with stoical unfeelingness, to take "a leap in the dark." But not all this can blind us to the misery of those who move on under the ban, "The unbeliever shall not see rest."

III. THE SAME UNBELIEF WHICH DOUBTS THE PROMISE ALSO DESPISES THE THREATEN-

ING. Both promise and threatening come from one and the same God; hence whoever doubts *him* will be as likely to question one as the other. And it is very, very easy for unbelief to urge plausible arguments or questionings concerning the threatenings; *e.g.* "Has *God* said *that?*" "God will not be so severe;" "God cannot mean *me;*" "Who can tell whether the judgment day will ever come?" etc.

IV. THIS UNBELIEF MAY MAKE A DESPERATE EFFORT TO PROVE THE THREATENING NULL AND VOID. "WE WILL go up!" How much does this remind us of what our Saviour says in his Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. vii. 22)! As if unbelief would carry its daring up to the very judgment seat (see also Matt. xxv. 10—12; Luke xiii. 24—26).

V. AN ATTEMPT TO ENTER THE REST IN A WAY CONTRARY TO GOD'S WORD, WILL BE FORCED HELPLESSLY BACK. Israel was disastrously repulsed, and found it "hard to kick against the pricks." "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" "Hath any hardened himself against God, and prospered?" (see continuation of New Testament passages referred to above). Man can do many wonderful things, but there are five things he never can do: He cannot *evade* the sentence of God; he cannot *postpone* it; he cannot *nullify* it; he cannot *modify* it; he cannot *impeach* it. "We are sure that the (*δικαίωμα*) sentence of God is according to truth."

VI. THE WEEPING OF DISAPPOINTMENT WILL BE UNAVAILING. "Ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you." It will be of no use whatever trying to enter Canaan if the sentence has finally gone forth against us, "Ye shall not see my rest;" nor will it avail to try to enter by any other than God's own appointed way; nor will the murmuring, or wailing, or gnashing of teeth at all alter the matter. There may be as much unbelief in tears as in trifling. By no other means than implicit faith in and unswerving loyalty to God in Christ, can we find rest for our souls either here or hereafter. Oh that sinful men would "hear the voice of Jesus say," "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"! Apart from Christ, our souls must wander in dry places, seeking rest and finding none.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 19—46.—*Irrecoverableness of wasted opportunity.* I. THE CULMINATION OF OPPORTUNITY OFTEN FINDS A MAN UNPREPARED TO OCCUPY IT. The point of time referred to here was *the supreme moment* in Israel's history. They had relinquished Egypt, endured privation, performed a toilsome journey, for one object, viz. to possess Canaan; yet, when they touched the threshold of the inheritance, they failed to rise to the conception of their privilege. They hesitated, dawdled, feared—and failed. Men play with opportunity as a toy, and when their eyes open to see its value, lo! it has vanished. Possibly, there is a supreme moment in every man's history; yet often he is too indolent to improve it. Every morning is not a May-day. Many reach the margin of a glorious destiny, and then turn back to the desert. The path of duty is very plain; but self-indulgence makes us blind as a mole.

II. THE DISHONESTY OF PRUDENTIAL PLEAS. These Hebrew men thought themselves very sagacious to suggest the experiment of the spies; and God endured their whim. Yet there was no reason for this precaution. With God as a Pioneer and Protector, they might have known that it was safer to follow the fiery pillar than to remain at ease in their tents. The command was plain—"Go up and possess." Therefore all delay, and all reconnoitring, was sin. If we were to deal honestly with inclination, if every whisper of conscience were obeyed, we should often see through the thin guise of our own pretences; we should strip the veneer of insincerity from our deeds. In some dark cavern of our hearts we may find, by honest search, some wish that we are ashamed to avow. There is often a conspiracy in the man against himself. We hunt for excuses to cover disobedience.

III. UNBELIEF DEVELOPS, THROUGH MANY STAGES, INTO RANK REBELLION. The report of the spies confirmed the word of God. *This* always accords with external fact, and with human experience. God had *not* said that the Canaanites were few or weak. What mattered it how tall and brawny they were, if so be God were on their side, and

fought for them? Old Unbelief is a fool, and ought to be decorated with cap and bells. Unbelief is poison, and saps the basis of our strength, enervates our courage, and melts our iron into flux. Unbelief develops into falsehood, and perverts the truth of God into lying. Unbelief maligns and traduces God—charges him with the basest crime. It calls evil good; purest love it styles blackest hate. It is the essence of blasphemy. It is the crime of crimes—the seed of misery—the germ of hell.

IV. THE RETRIBUTIONS OF GOD ARE SEVERE AND EQUITABLE. Much that human judgment deems to be retribution is not penalty. Bodily suffering is usually corrective, not destructive. The retributions of God are co-related to the sin. Men pamper the passion for drink: inappeasable thirst shall be their doom. Men say to God, "Depart from me!" God responds, "Depart from me!" The Hebrews would not march into possession of Canaan: therefore they shall dwell and die in the desert. Retribution is related to sin as fruit to blossom—as wages to work. There comes a point where return is impossible. God swears that it shall be so. The oath is an oath of righteousness. Nevertheless, out of the crowds of the nameless ungodly, individual liegemen shall be honoured, even Caleb and Joshua. These are elect spirits—choice natures. In the day of overwhelming calamity, God does not overlook the solitary righteous. "He hideth him in the hollow of his hand." The proofs of inviolable equity are written in gigantic capitals on the heavens and on the earth.

V. THE FORECASTS OF FEAR ARE OFTEN THE REVERSE OF REALITY. Cowardly and disobedient Hebrews pretended a far-reaching concern for their children. "If we are slain in this invasion of Canaan, what will become of our little ones?"—thus argued these malcontents. "Can we endure to think that they shall become a prey to these human wolves?" They were frightened at a mirage—terrified at the shadow of their own folly. *Facts* were the very reverse of their fears. These "little ones" God would take into training—drill them by the hardy discipline of the wilderness, and qualify them for warfare and for conquest.

VI. REPENTANCE HAS MANY COUNTERFEITS. There is often confession of our folly, and yet no repentance; promise of amendment, yet no repentance. There may be poignant regret for the past, bitter shame, sharp remorse, deep compunction, severe self-judgment, yet no repentance. For repentance is soul-submission unto God. It brings our feeling, desire, will, into harmony with God's feeling and will. Repentance has not thoroughly penetrated the soul until we love what God loves, and hate what God hates. True repentance works for righteousness. Deceit may so worm itself in the heart as to intertwine itself round every fibre of our being. We may ultimately become so blind as not to discern between truth and falsehood. The repentance of these Jews was a carnal sorrow that produced fruits of death.

VII. PRESUMPTION IS AS CRIMINAL AS PUSILLANIMITY. We dishonour God as much by going beyond the line of duty, as by falling short of it. Each alike is an act of disobedience. We cannot atone for cowardice yesterday by an excess of rashness to-day. The essence of obedience is promptitude. It is *not* the same whether we observe the command to-day, or to-morrow. Between the two there may be a gulf deep as hell itself. The prohibitions of God are as sacred as his positive commands. What is a duty to-day may be a sin to-morrow, because the precept may be withdrawn. Some commands are eternally permanent; some have only temporary prevalence.

VIII. REPENTANCE OFTEN COMES TOO LATE. During life-time, repentance has moral productiveness. We may not attain the precise object, which by repentance we hoped to gain; nevertheless, real repentance brings relief and gladness to the soul! Esau was afterwards a better man for his repentance, though he could not recover his birthright. To these Hebrews, repentance came too late for them ever to possess the earthly Canaan: let us hope it availed to gain them the heavenly. It is possible for repentance, long-delayed, to be unavailing. "Because," says God, "I have called, and ye refused . . . I also will laugh at your calamity. . . . Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer." "He sware in his wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." When all gracious remedies are exhausted, "it is impossible to renew men unto repentance." It is a perilous thing to tamper with conscience, or to trifle with God.—D.

Ver. 19.—"*That great and terrible wilderness.*" **An emblem of the rough and afflictive way by which God leads his people to the higher rest.**

I. THE FACT OF THIS WILDERNESS DISCIPLINE. We need not exaggerate. We admit all that can be said of the world as a fair and delightful residence, in which we have much to make us happy. But it cannot be denied that the picture has a darker side. The man who has drunk deepest of the world's pleasures is he who can tell best how unsatisfying it is as a portion for the spirit. There are more sad and weary hearts in this same world than a glance at the surface of society would lead us to suspect. There are numbers to whom life is one hard, dreary, terrible, hopeless struggle with adverse conditions. The joy of a life is often blighted by a solitary stroke; and in how many cases does some secret grief embitter what seems from the outside a prosperous existence! The believer is no more exempt than others from these ordinary griefs of life—from poverty, trial, pain, bereavement. But he has thoughts and feelings of his own, which add to the pain of his situation. He is a Christian, and contact with the world's evil tries and grieves him as it will not do a worldly man. His hope is beyond, and this makes earth, with its imperfect conditions, its broken ideals, its unsatisfied yearnings, seem drearier to him. Like his Master, his ear is quicker to catch the strain of human woe—"the still sad music of humanity"—than the strain of noisier mirth. All this compels him to look at life prevailingly under an aspect of privation, discipline, and trial, and it is in no unreal sense that he speaks of it as the "wilderness." When troubles crowd on him, it is literally, as to others, "waste and howling," a "great and terrible" desert.

II. THE ENDS OF THIS WILDERNESS DISCIPLINE. These are numerous. 1. In part *the discipline is inevitable*—bound up with the conditions of existence in a world "made subject to vanity." But: 2. *The discipline is useful.* (1) It tries and proves the heart (ch. viii. 2). (2) It inures to hardship. (3) It develops the nobler qualities of character—faith, patience, resignation, etc. (Rom. v. 3). (4) It makes the rest sweeter when it comes (Rev. vii. 14; xiv. 13).—J. O.

Ver. 21.—*Courage.* "Fear not, neither be discouraged" (cf. Josh. i. 7, 9).

I. GOD'S WORK NEEDS COURAGE. 1. The enemies are *many.* 2. The enemies are *strong.* 3. Humanly speaking, *we are feeble in comparison with them.* Distinguishing between real and nominal Christianity, it might be plausibly held that there is to-day greater talent, intellectual power, wealth, rank, and social influence enlisted on the side of unbelief than on the side of faith. But the true citadel of unbelief is the evil heart; and what powers of our own are sufficient to storm that?

II. IN GOD'S WORK THERE IS EVERY REASON FOR COURAGE. 1. God is with us. Our cause is his cause. 2. He has promised victory, and he is able to keep his promise. 3. The past should encourage us. The Church can never come through greater conflicts than those in which she has already proved herself victorious.—J. O.

Vers. 22—32.—*The mission of the spies.* We see from two instances in this chapter how God's plans leave wide room for the independent action of the human mind. Moses got the suggestion of appointing judges from Jethro; the idea of sending spies to reconnoitre the Holy Land originated with the people. The source from which it came made the motive of it doubtful, but as in itself a measure of prudence, Moses was well pleased with it, and, with God's permission, adopted it. We have here—

I. A POLICY OF CAUTION. Caution is in itself a virtue. It is never wise to rush into undertakings without well-planned measures. The more knowledge we have to guide us in entering upon difficult duty the better. The sending out of these spies was fitted to procure for the Israelites valuable information as to the nature of the land, the best mode of attack, the state of feeling among the inhabitants, etc. The Church would do well to improve upon the hint thus given, and have men out on the field, to keep a sharp watch on the fortifications and movements of the enemy, and bring back intelligence which may encourage, guide, or otherwise help those whose time and thought are devoted to the actual warfare.

II. AN UNEXPECTED RESULT OF THAT POLICY. The spies, with two exceptions, brought back a most disheartening and ill-advised report. We see here the danger of a policy of caution, when that springs from over-fearfulness or an original indisposition to advance. When caution is divorced from courage, and gets the upper hand, its natural tendency is to neutralize enthusiasm, to concentrate attention on difficulties, to

play into the hands of those who don't want to do anything, and to furnish them with excuses and arguments for delay. It was so here. The real secret of the desire of the people to have spies sent out was their lurking disbelief and fear. The spies themselves shared in this fear. With the exception of Caleb and Joshua, they seem to have had an eye for little else than difficulties. They admitted the goodliness of the land, and brought with them a splendid sample of its fruit (ver. 25). But in every other respect their report was calculated to dispirit. It is a sad thing for the Church when those who ought to animate and encourage her begin themselves to show the craven spirit. Yet over-cautious people are apt, often unwittingly, to do the very work of these spies, by magnifying difficulties, looking only to discouragements, and standing in the way of plans and efforts which would do great good.

III. A REBELLION OF THE PEOPLE. That rebellion was the result of downright unbelief (ver. 32), and illustrates its work (cf. Heb. iii. 19). We see in it how unbelief: 1. *Looks only to the seen.* They thought only of the size of the people and the strength of the cities (ver. 28). The help of their invisible King was to them as if it were not. They had not the slightest hold upon the reality of it. 2. *Sees only the discouragements of duty.* There was a bright side as well as a dark one to the report brought to them, but nothing would make them look at the bright one. The same two sides—a bright and hopeful side, and a side of difficulty—exist in every situation, and it is a test of character which we are most given to dwell upon. 3. *Misreads the providence of God.* What greater perversion of God's kind dealings could human nature be guilty of than that in ver. 27? 4. *Is blind to the lessons of the past.* They had just been delivered from Egypt, had seen mighty miracles, had been brought across the Red Sea, had been strengthened to conquer the Amalekites, etc.; but all is already forgotten. 5. *Issues in flat refusal to do God's will.* That is the upshot of unbelief, wherever it exists.

The report of the spies, confirmed by the grapes of Eschol, suggests that there is very much in the world which makes it worth conquering for Christ (genius, art, beautiful natural characteristics, etc.).—J. O.

Vers. 31—33.—*Love in the wilderness.* A beautiful passage, laden with God's compassions. We have in it—

I. TENDER LOVE. The love is likened to that of the best of fathers to a son (cf. Ps. ciii. 13). The New Testament goes further. It not only *likens* God to a father, but tells us he *is* one. He is "our Father in heaven," "the God and Father of Jesus Christ our Lord." This full revelation of Fatherhood only a Son could have given; and as given in the gospel it is the believer's daily comfort (Matt. vi. 25—34).

II. CONSTANT CARE. This arises out of the relation and the love. It is a care: 1. *Unceasing.* "All the way." 2. *Provident.* "Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in." 3. *Comprehensive;* embracing every want of our lives. God "bare" Israel, *i.e.* took the entire charge of the nation upon himself; the whole responsibility of seeing them fed, led, clothed, kept, and brought safely to their final destination. So does he provide for his children in Christ. 4. *Tenderly sympathetic.* "As a man doth bear his son." And God has to bear with, as well as bear us.

III. SPECIAL GUIDANCE. This is included in the care, but is more prominent as a peculiar manifestation of it (ver. 33). Guidance is never wanting to those who need it. It is from day to day—just sufficient to show us present duty. It is given in the Bible, in the indications of providence, and in that inward illumination which enables us to discern the Lord's will in both. It was furnished to the Israelites through the pillar of cloud and fire—the symbol: 1. Of fiery guardianship with grateful shade. 2. Of guiding light with attendant mystery. 3. Of light shining to us in the midst of dark providences. 4. Of the adaptation of God's guidance to our needs—by day the cloud, by night the fire.—J. O.

Vers. 34—40.—*The excluded and the admitted.* I. THE EXCLUDED. 1. *That whole unbelieving generation,* with two exceptions (ver. 35). Note: (1) Their unbelief and disobedience did not frustrate God's purpose of the occupation of the land. Canaan was occupied after all. So heaven will be peopled, the world conquered,

and God's work done, though we in our folly and sin rebel and stand aloof (Matt. iii. 9). "It remaineth that some must enter in" (Heb. iv. 6). (2) Their unbelief and disobedience effectually excluded themselves. God sware it in his wrath, and the sentence admitted of no reversal. A foreshadowing of the final exclusion from heaven of those who persistently disobey (Matt. vii. 21—24; Luke xiii. 24—29; Heb. iv. 11; Rev. xxii. 11—16). 2. *The holy Moses* (ver. 37; cf. on ch. iii. 26; iv. 21; xxxiv. 4). The exclusion of Moses will be more fully considered afterwards, but we learn from it here that God's apparent severity is often greatest to his own people (Amos iii. 2), and that the share which others have had in leading us into sin does not abate our own responsibility in the commission of it. This greater apparent severity (1) repels the charge of favouritism; (2) gives a peculiarly impressive demonstration of the evil of sin; (3) reminds us that sin in God's people is more dishonouring to him than it is in others; (4) warns the wicked. For if judgment begin at the righteous, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. iv. 17, 18).

II. THE ADMITTED. These were to be: 1. *The faithful two*—Caleb and Joshua (vers. 36, 38). The former is signalized as having "wholly followed the Lord," and Joshua was a man of like faith and staunchness in a time of general defection. Such persons God will singularly preserve and honour. Their place in heaven will be a high one. "We must, in a course of obedience to God's will and of service to his honour, follow him *universally*, without dividing; *uprightly*, without dissembling; *cheerfully*, without disputing; and *constantly*, without declining; and this is following the Lord fully" (Matthew Henry, on Numb. xiv. 24). 2. *The younger generation* (ver. 39). Instead of the fathers, God would take the children. What a rebuke!—(1) of their *groundless fears*. "Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey." (2) Of their *unmanly cowardice*. Their little children, types of all that was humanly feeble, would do the work they were afraid to attempt. (3) Of their *inconsiderate selfishness*. They were not ashamed to hand down to these children their own abandoned life-tasks, with all the work and peril, if also with all the reward and honour, attending their accomplishment. Was not this to make themselves objects of contempt to their own offspring? "Let no man take thy crown," least of all thine own child.—J. O.

Vers. 40—46.—*Tardy repentance.* In the conduct of these Israelites we have a typical exhibition of human nature. In its folly, its fickleness, its unreasonableness, and its obstinacy. Forbidden to enter Canaan, they change their mood, and nothing will serve them but to "go up" and do the thing they had formerly said they would not do. They are vociferous in their professions of repentance, and will not be reasoned out of their self-willed purpose, but persist in following it up to their own after discomfiture. We have here to notice—

I. HOW UNCHANGED CHARACTER MAY COEXIST WITH A CHANGED FORM OF MANIFESTATION. Underneath these loud professions of repentance, "We have sinned" (ver. 41), it is not difficult to detect: 1. The old *unbelief*. They disbelieve God's threatening, as before they refused to believe his promise. 2. The old *self-will*. It is not what God wills, but what they will themselves, that is to be done. They do not ask, "Will God permit us to do this?" but they take the law into their own hands, and ignore God's wishes altogether. 3. The old *contumacy*. Their wills are wholly unsubmissive. In revolt yesterday against their duty, and to-day against their punishment. They will not hear warning (ver. 43), but pursue their own way. All this stamps their repentance as not only tardy, but insincere. Analogous to much of the repentance caused by fear of punishment, fear of exposure, fear of death; and points to the defects in superficial repentance generally.

II. HOW INSINCERE REPENTANCE NATURALLY PASSES OVER INTO PRESUMPTUOUS SIN. It does this inasmuch as there was never in it the element of real submission. The undertaking of the Israelites was typical of many more. It was: 1. Presumptuously *conceived*. 2. Presumptuously *prepared for*. 3. Presumptuously *persevered in*. It is, therefore, the type of all undertakings set on foot and carried out (1) in defiance of God's will; (2) without God's assistance; (3) in face of God's expressed displeasure. It is a case, in short, of flying in the face of God; of defying him, and entering into

direct contest with him; as every one does whose schemes are in opposition even to natural and economical, and still more if they are in opposition to moral and spiritual, laws; or in any way contrary to what we know to be God's will. Presumption may show itself in refusal to be saved, except in ways or on terms of our own dictation.

III. How GODLESS ENDEAVOUR RECOILS IN DISASTER ON THOSE WHO PERSIST IN IT. (Ver 44.) So must it be with all schemes that have God's frown upon them.

Note—1. Repentance may come too late (ver. 45; Matt. xxv. 11; Luke xiii. 25). 2. Disobedience may cloak itself in the guise of obedience (ver. 41). 3. The test of obedience is willingness to do what God requires *at the time he requires it*, and not at some time of our own.—J. O.

Vers. 19—33.—*The unbelief in sending and in hearkening to the spies.* Moses reminds his audience of the conduct of their fathers at Kadesh-barnea, when exhorted to go up and possess the land. Duty was clear. They had been brought up out of Egypt for the very purpose of entering into and possessing the land of Canaan. But instead of courageously following the path of duty, they resolved to send over spies. The result was an evil report and an evil resolution on the people's part not to attempt invasion. The bitter end was death in the wilderness and exclusion from the land of promise.

I. GOD OFFERED CANAAN TO HIS PEOPLE AS A SUITABLE INHERITANCE. It was the promise of this land which led to the exodus. The sojourn at Horeb was to organize the nation and give it laws. All was ready for an entrance into the land. Its suitability was guaranteed in the Divine promise; and if the people had been willing to walk by *faith*, then the invasion would have been immediate and successful. (On the suitability of the land, cf. Moorhouse's 'Hulsean Lectures,' the last sermon in the volume, on 'The Land and the People.' In Kinglake's 'Invasion of the Crimea,' we have a similar instance in the allies not taking Sebastopol by assault immediately after Alma.)

II. THE SUGGESTION ABOUT SPIES WAS REALLY A RESOLVE TO WALK BY SIGHT AND NOT BY FAITH. Moses at first approved of it, although it never came from him. He thought that anything the spies *saw* would only confirm them in the resolution to invade the land. But in principle it was unbelief in God. It was virtually resolving not to follow his advice unless it *seemed* the best. It was putting clear duty to the trial of prudence. It was a resolve to walk by appearances and not by faith.

And this is the universal tendency of the human heart. Prudence often conflicts with faith and hinders wholesome action. Prudence has no voice in the matter after God has spoken. He may lead us through over-prudence, in absence of express commandment; but when the command is clear, prudence should hide its head and allow *faith* to obey.

III. IT WAS STILL WORSE TO HEARKEN TO THE SPIES WHOSE COUNSEL CONFLICTED WITH THE COMMAND OF GOD. Having embarked on prudential considerations, they must needs follow them out to their unbelieving end. The spies returned, and could not but acknowledge that the land was good. From Eshcol they carried on a staff a bunch of grapes sufficient of itself to vindicate the Divine choice of the land. "But the inhabitants," said ten of the spies, "are gigantic, and the cities walled up to heaven; and there is no use in thinking of successfully invading it." In vain did Caleb and Joshua counsel courage instead of cowardice, faith instead of fear. The people resolved to take counsel of their fears and unbelief. They *would not* enter the land of promise.

So is it often in the lives of men. God offers salvation and a good land to all who will believe upon him. But men fear the giants and their castles. They imagine that the difficulties of the life of faith are beyond their powers, and so shirk them.

But when God points out a path of difficulty, it is not that we may encounter its perils in our own strength, but in his. Faith will carry us through, while sense and sight are sure to fail us.—R. M. E.

Vers. 34—46.—*The heirs of promise.* We have in this passage the result of unbelief. The dread of the people was lest their little ones should become a prey to their gigantic foes in Canaan. The Lord now declares that these little ones shall be

the possessors of the land, while they themselves shall be denied an entrance, since they refused it when offered to them. The only exceptions are to be Joshua and Caleb, who made the good report and gave the good counsel. Even Moses is included in the doom of exclusion. The subsequent attempt and the subsequent tears had no effect in reversing the deserved sentence. We learn from this passage such practical lessons as these:—

I. GOD'S GRACIOUS OFFERS ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH. The promised land lay open to the Israelites, who had been mercifully guided to its gates. The all-important "Now," the time for decisive action had come, and it remained with them to determine whether they would go in and receive the blessing, or remain without. They preferred to delay, to trifle with the offer, and so the time went past.

So sinners are offered pardon and acceptance as an immediate boon (2 Cor. vi. 2), but when the offer is despised and trifled with, it may be withdrawn (Prov. i. 24—33).

II. PRESUMPTION IS A POOR SUBSTITUTE FOR FAITH. When the people saw the mistake they had made, they would go up and fight in a spirit of presumptuous chagrin. They now fought *without commissions*. The result was disastrous defeat, and a hurling of them back from the gates of Palestine to the great and terrible wilderness. God was not with them in their presumption, since they would not follow him in humble faith.

So may it be with sinners. Despised mercy may be succeeded by deserved defeat. The wild and proud efforts of presumption are in striking contrast to the quiet courage of faith. Toil and tears may be insufficient to retrieve disaster when once courted by unbelief.

III. JOSHUA AND CALEB'S GOOD FORTUNE SHOWED WHAT WAS POSSIBLE TO WHOLE-HEARTED FAITH. These two spies, in wholly following the Lord and in counselling courage, showed an humble faith. They stood alone faithful in face of an unbelieving majority, and God gave them a corresponding assurance that they should enter into the land. They were greatly honoured in being allowed to do so.

And they are surely encouragements to believing souls throughout all time.

IV. THE ASSURANCE OF THE CHILDREN THAT THEY SHOULD BE HEIRS OF THE LAND VINDICATED GOD'S PROCEDURE AND FAITHFULNESS. The little ones, for whom they feared, are selected as the heirs of promise. But they are to get the land after discipline and sorrow in the wilderness. God's ways are not ours. Yet wisdom regulates them all.

And the Divine grace was magnified in this arrangement. The Israelites, as they died in the wilderness, would be *cheered* by the thought that, though they were justly excluded from the land because of their unbelief, their children would receive the inheritance in the exercise of faith. The judgment on the fathers would be sanctified, like the sickness of Hymenæus and Alexander (1 Tim. i. 20), and their spirits, let us hope, saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. v. 5).—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Vers. 1—23.—THE NEW BEGINNING AND REVIEW OF THE JOURNEYINGS OF ISRAEL FROM KADESH TO THE RIVER ARNON, THE FRONTIER OF THE AMORITES. At this point the language of address is exchanged for that of narrative. The change of subject from "*ye* abode" to "*we* turned," became necessary when Moses passed from exhorting and warning the people to narrating what happened after they resumed their journeyings; and gives no support to the notion of some recent German critics, that Moses left Kâdesh with only a portion of the people, while the rest remained there, so that no entire departure of Israel from Kâdesh ever took place—a notion which the whole tenor of the subsequent narrative contradicts. In obedience to the Divine command (ch. i. 40), the people, after tarrying for a while at Kâdesh, took their departure and marched in the direction of the Yam-suph (Numb. xiv. 25).

Ver. 1.—**And we compassed mount Seir many days.** These "many days" are the thirty-eight years during which the people wandered in the wilderness before they camped the second time at Kâdesh; their going round Mount Seir, which was in Edom (Gen. xxxvi. 8, 9, 20), is descriptive of their

nomadic wanderings in various directions, west, south, and south-east of that mountain (Numb. xxi. 4). "Crossing the long, lofty mountain chain to the eastward of Ezion-geber (Numb. xxi. 4, 5), the Israelites issued into the great and elevated plains which are still traversed by the Syrian pilgrims on their way to Mecca; and appear to have followed *northward* nearly the same route which is now taken by the Syrian Hadgi along the western skirts of this great desert near the mountains of Edom" (Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' i. 253, 559). Mount Seir is now *Jebâl* and *esh-Sherah*. This mountain range is a continuation of that which surrounds the eastern side of the Dead Sea. The details of this protracted wandering are passed over by Moses as not required by his purpose here.

Vers. 2, 3.—When Israel, after their long and disheartening wandering, were at the south-eastern end of the 'Arâbah, God gave them the word to turn their march northward towards Canaan. The route they pursued was along the eastern boundary of Edom (comp. Numb. xxi. 10, etc.).

Ver. 4.—It would appear that the Edomites made preparations to resist the passage of the Israelites through their territory (Numb xx. 18—20). As the Israelites, however, kept on the outskirts of their country, and did not attempt to penetrate into the interior, the Edomites did not attack them or seek to hinder their progress. The Israelites, on the other hand, were strictly forbidden to invade that country in a hostile manner; they were to watch over themselves, so as not to be tempted to make war on the Edomites, who were their brethren; as God would not give them any part, not so much as a foot-breadth, of that land, for he had given Esau (*i.e.* the race descended from Esau, the Edomites—LXX, τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἡσαῦ) Mount Seir for a possession. **They shall be afraid of you** (see Exod. xv. 15).

Ver. 5.—**Meddle not with them**; literally, *Excite not yourself against them*, i.e. so as to strive in battle with them; comp. the use of the verb in Jer. l. 24, "hast striven" (Authorized Version); Dan. xi. 25 (where מִלְחָמָה, war, is added), "shall be stirred up to battle" (Authorized Version). Accordingly, they were enjoined to buy from them for money food and water as they required. Two different words in the Hebrew are rendered here by "buy" in the Authorized Version; the former, שָׁבַר, a denominative from שֶׁבֶר, grain, properly means to deal in grain, whether as buyer or seller, and so to buy food; the latter, בָּרָה, means primarily to dig (a well, *e.g.* Gen. xxvi. 25), and, as used here, probably conveys the idea that the Israelites were to pay for permission to dig wells in the country of the Edomites to supply themselves with water as they passed along; this, however, does not necessarily follow from the use of this word, for it has also the meaning to buy (comp. Hos. iii. 2, and the corresponding Arabic verb, *kará*, which in certain conjugations has the meaning to borrow or hire).

Ver. 7.—They were enabled to buy what they required—**For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand**; their flocks and herds had increased during their wanderings (Numb. xxxii. 1); and they may have gained wealth by cultivating the soil at places where they had made a lengthened sojourn, or by traffic with the tribes of the desert with whom they came in contact. Jehovah their God had **known**—had noted, observed, had regard to, had cared for (comp. Gen. xxxix. 6; Ps. i. 6; Prov. xxvii. 23)—**their walking**—their peregrinations—**through this great wilderness**; he had been their Leader, had chosen for them places to rest in, had provided food for them, and had been their Protector and Guardian all through the forty years of their pilgrimage, so that they had wanted for nothing (ch. i. 33; viii. 2, 3, 15, 16; comp. Ps. xxiii. 1—6). "He sufficiently supplied what was needful for thee when thou walkedst through this great wilderness; for these forty years the Word of Jah thy God hath sustained thee; nor hath anything been wanting to thee" (Chaldee Paraphrase). **Forty years** (Numb. xiv. 33). "From the fifteenth day of the first month in which their fathers came out of Egypt (Numb. xxxiii. 3), to the tenth day of the same month in which they went over Jordan into Canaan (Josh. iv. 19), there were but *five* days wanting of complete forty years" (Patrick).

Ver. 8.—**And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Ezion-gaber, we**, etc. Rather, *And we passed by from* (away from) *our brethren the sons of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, from* (off from, *i.e.* alongside, but at some distance from) *the way of the 'Arâbah, from* (off from) *Elath and from Ezion-geber.* And so, in obedience to the Divine command, the Israelites passed from the territory of the Edomites without entering it, and went by their border on the east side of the 'Arâbah, and from beside Elath and Ezion-geber, both ports at the northern extremity of the Elanitic Gulf of the Red Sea (Numb. xxxiii. 35). Thus they came to where they were then encamped, in the steppes of Moab. "Probably they followed the still used caravan route to Damascus, between the east side of the cultivated land, and the west side of Arabia Deserta" (Schroeder).

Elath or *Eloth* (אֵילַת, אֵילוֹת, palmgrove)—the Αἰλὰθ of Josephus, 'Antiq.,' ix. 12; the Ἔλανα of Ptolemy (v. 17)—was a city of Idumea, situated on the eastern gulf of the Red Sea. Its ruins are still traceable near the modern fortress of Akâbah, on the north-west (Burckhardt, p. 509; Robinson, i. 241). Ezion-gaber (עֶצְיוֹן גָּבֶר, backbone of a man, so called probably from the rugged and jagged rocks in its vicinity), a seaport near to Elath (cf. 1 Kings ix. 26; 2 Chron. xx. 36).

Ver. 9.—The Moabites, being the descendants of Lot, and so allied by race to the Israelites, the latter were commanded to pass through their country without offering them any injury or assault. **Ar**, a border-town of Moab (Numb. xxi. 15), here put for the country itself. It is the Areopolis of the Greeks, and was, as Jerome tells us, destroyed in a single night by an earthquake. A hill, with ruins a short distance south-west from Ara'ir, is supposed to be its site.

Vers. 10—12.—The mention of the Moabites gives occasion to the author to introduce some notices of the ancient inhabitants of Edom and Moab. In Moab dwelt, in the earlier times, the Emim, a giant race, potent and numerous, like the 'Anâkim. They were also, like the 'Anâkim reckoned among the Rephâim, but were by the Moabites called Emim. The word **Emim** means frightful, and was given to these men probably because of their huge stature and fierce aspect. **Anakims** (see ch. i. 28). *Rephâim* seems to have been a generic name of these gigantic Canaanitish tribes (see Gen. xiv. 5; xv. 20). **The Horim** appear from the name (from חוֹר, a cave) to have been a Troglodyte race, inhabiting the caves which abound in the Edomite range, and with whom, perhaps, originated the conception which was at a later period carried out in the marvellous rock city of Petra. Of their own origin nothing is known. **As Israel did** [or *has done*] **unto the land of his possession.** This cannot be regarded as uttered proleptically; it must either be the insertion of a later age, or it must refer to the conquest which had actually been made before this by the Israelites of the land to the east of the Jordan, and which is, in ch. iii. 20, described as the possession which the Lord had given to the two tribes and a half to whom it had been assigned. The latter is the preferable supposition.

Vers. 13—15.—Ver. 13 connects with ver. 9, the intermediate verses being a parenthesis, introduced for the purpose of reminding the Israelites that the Edomites and Moabites had received their territory by gift from God, the earlier inhabitants having been cast out by him that they might take their lands (see vers. 21—23). There is no need, therefore, for the insertion "I said," in ver. 13; the words are those of Jehovah, not of Moses.

Ver. 13.—**The brook Zered**; either the stream of the Wady el Ahsy (Robinson, ii. 157; Ritter, iii. 78), or that of the Wady Kerab (Keil, Kurz, etc.); see Numb. xxi. 11, and Smith's 'Dictionary,' iii. 1842. This brook formed the boundary line between Edom and Moab, and was the limit of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. They crossed it thirty-eight years after the doom had been pronounced upon them at Kâdesh, and during that period the entire generation of those who had rebelled had died out.

Ver. 14.—**Men of war**; those of age sufficient to go forth to war, viz. twenty years old and upwards (Numb. i. 3; xiv. 29). These, as the responsible transgressors, all perished; the whole generation passed away, and was consumed (תֹּם; cf. ch. v. 15; Ps. lxxiii. 19), as God had sworn (Numb. xiv. 28, 29).

Ver. 15.—**For indeed**; rather, *And also*; not by natural causes alone, but by the hand of God, *i.e.* by special penal judgments also, were they troubled and destroyed (cf. Numb. xvi. 31, etc.; xvii. 12, 13; xxi. 6; xxv. 1—9).

Vers. 16—19.—The generation that sinned having quite died out, the people were now to cross the border of Moab and advance to the conquest of the promised land. To the east of Moab was the country of the Ammonites; these, also, the Israelites were to leave unassailed, for the Lord had given to them their land for a possession (cf. ver. 9).

Ver. 18.—**Coast of Moab**; the boundary of Moab, which was the river Arnon, *hod.* Mujeb (Numb. xxi. 13—15; xxii. 36).

Ver. 19.—**Over against the children of Ammon.** As the Israelites were passing eastward of Moab; when they crossed the Arnon, the Ammonites, whose dwelling was in the wilderness east of the Jordan, would be almost in front of them. The Israelites came over against them after they conquered Sihon (cf. Numb. xxi. 24).

Vers. 20—23.—Another parenthetical insertion, containing some ethnographical notices, intended, probably, to confirm the assertion that to the children of Ammon God had given their land for a possession. There is no sufficient reason for supposing that this paragraph is an interpolation, or gloss, inserted by some later writer. It lay

as much in the way of Moses to introduce such ethnographical notices as in that of any writer of a later age.

Ver. 20.—Before the Ammonites, the land was occupied by a gigantic race, called by them, **Zamzummim** (probably *noisy ones*, from זָמַם to hum, mutter; or, as the verb also signifies, to muse or meditate, perhaps *moody ones*; whether the same as the Zuzim of Gen. xiv. 5—LXX., ἔθνη ἰσχυρά, as if from זוּז, to overflow, to abound—is uncertain). The colossal stone monuments, resembling what in Europe are known by the Celtic names of *dolmen*, *menhir*, and *cromlech*, still to be found in the land of Moab, are supposed to be the work of these aboriginal inhabitants of the country, the gigantic Emim and Zamzummim. This giant tribe the Lord had destroyed before the Ammonites, just as he had destroyed the Horim before the children of Esau in Seir.

Ver. 23.—So also the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor (Gen. x. 14), probably the island of Crete (Ritter, iii. 262), drove out the Avim, a Canaanitish race, who dwelt in villages (*Hazêrim*, הַחֲצֵרִים) as far as Gaza (Azzah), and took possession of their land; though it would appear some of them still remained among the Philistines (who were Caphtorites, Amos ix. 7; Jer. xlvii. 4), and were among the tribes not subdued by the Israelites under Joshua (Josh. xiii. 3). These Caphtorim were, like the Israelites, immigrants, who drove out the original occupants of the country; and on this account, probably, are referred to by Moses here. "This is so often repeated, to possess the minds of the Israelites with a sense of God's providence, which rules everywhere; displacing one people, and settling another in their stead, and fixing their bounds, also, which they shall not pass without leave" (Patrick).

Vers. 24—37.—CONQUEST OF THE KINGDOM OF SIHON. Sihon and his people were Amorites, who had settled on the east of the Jordan in Gilead. But though not included in the original promise to Abraham, God had assigned this territory to the Israelites; and, therefore, he commanded the people under Moses to cross the Arnon, and take the first step towards possessing the promised land, by assailing Sihon, King of Heshbon, assuring them that from that day he would "put the dread and fear of them upon all nations under the whole heaven," that is, all nations, wherever placed, to whom the fame of the Israelites should come (comp. Exod. xxiii. 27; ch. xi. 16), so that on hearing thereof, they should tremble and writhe as in pain (יָחִיל, comp. Isa. xiii. 8). Moses, however, in the first instance, sent a message of peace to Sihon, proposing to pass through his territory on the same terms as he had made with the Moabites and Edomites, travelling by the highway, and paying for such provisions as his followers required. But this Sihon refused, and came out against Israel, with all his people, to battle. The issue was that he was utterly discomfited; all his towns were captured, he and all his people utterly destroyed, and the cattle and spoil of the whole country taken for booty. Israel thus became possessed of that entire territory, though it did not lie within the bounds of the land promised by God to Abraham, which was the reason, probably, why Moses made overtures of peace to Sihon, and would have passed through his country amicably, had he been permitted; but comp. ch. xx. 10.

Ver. 26.—**The wilderness of Kedemoth** (comp. Numb. xxi. 13); so named from the town of Kedêmoth, an old Amorite town, on the right bank of the Upper Arnon; at a later period, a Levitical city in the tribe of Reuben (Josh. xiii. 18; xxi. 37; 1 Chron. vi. 79). The name (from קֶדֶם, the east), signifying eastern parts, indicates that it was situated on the eastern boundary of the Amorite region, so that the desert named from it must have bordered on the great Arabian desert; it may have been on what is now the Derb el Haj, or Pilgrims' Road, probably, at Kal'at Balûa.

Ver. 27.—**Along by the high way**; literally, *by the way, by the way*, i.e. always, continuously by the way, the public road, called in Numb. xx. 17 and xxi. 22, "the king's way," probably because made and kept up by the king.

Ver. 29.—**As the . . . did unto me.** This refers expressly to the fact that the Edomites and Moabites did not *hinder* the Israelites from passing through their country, though they were far from friendly, and dealt in an unbrotherly way with them, for which the Moabites were afterwards placed under a ban (Deut. xxiii. 3).

Ver. 30.—**Heshbon**, the chief city of the Amorite king, Sihon. Some ruins on a hill east of the upper end of the Dead Sea, and bearing the name Chesbân, mark the site of this once large and important city. Sihon rejected Moses' overtures of peace, because **God had hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate**; literally, *had sharpened his heart*, had made his determination keen. It is not to be supposed that any influence was *directly* exerted on him, to make him

obdurate and persistent in his hostility to the people of God; the expression "he would not" indicates that it was of his own will that Sihon acted; but it was the will and purpose of God that Sihon should be destroyed, and his country taken by the Israelites, and so he was placed in circumstances by which, "given over to a reprobate mind," he was confirmed and strengthened in his determination to pursue a course which led to his destruction; like Pharaoh, by the circumstances in which God placed him, he found scope for the display and for the confirmation of a stubborn, pertinacious pride of spirit, which led ultimately to his ruin. Nothing so hardens the heart as resistance to God's overtures of peace. **As appeareth this day**; *i.e.* as present experience shows; in Sihon's refusing to let them pass, there was already an actual beginning of the fulfilment of God's purpose to deliver him into the hand of the Israelites.

Vers. 31—37.—God had determined to give Sihon and his land to the Israelites, and so certainly should this be done, that Moses is exhorted already to begin to seize, in order to possess the land. Sihon initiated hostilities by coming out with all his host to fight against Moses and the Israelites. The battle took place at Jahaz (or Jahazah, or Jahza), a town between Medeba and Dibon (Euseb.; cf. Numb. xxxiii. 45), afterwards belonging to the tribe of Reuben (Josh. xiii. 18), and assigned to the Levites of the line of Merari (Josh. xxi. 36; 1 Chron. vi. 78). The war was one of extermination, in which all the people of Sihon were destroyed, from one end of his dominion to the other; all his cities were devoted irredeemably (comp. Lev. xxvii. 29), and only the cattle and the material property were preserved as booty by the conquerors (Numb. xxi. 23—26).

Ver. 32 (cf. Numb. xxi. 23).—**Jahaz** (יַהַץ, downtrodden), elsewhere Jahazah (יַהְצָה), a city of Moab, afterwards assigned to the tribe of Reuben, and allotted to the priests (Josh. xiii. 18; xxi. 36; 1 Chron. vi. 63; Isa. xv. 4; Jer. xlviii. 34).

Vers. 33, 34 (cf. Numb. xxii. 24, 25; xxxii. 34, 35, etc.).—**And utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, . . . we left none to remain.** As the Amorites came out of Canaan, they belonged to the race which God had doomed to destruction. The Israelites, therefore, had a commission to extirpate them. *Utterly destroyed*; literally, *devoted* or *placed under a ban*, which of course implied utter destruction. *The men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city*; literally, *every city of men and women and little children.* The phrase "city of men" can hardly mean, as Rosenmüller affirms, "men of a city;" the hypallage here would be too violent. It rather means "a peopled city," "a city inhabited by men." The word rendered "men" (מְתִים) does not designate males as opposed to females, but is a designation of human beings in general (cf. Job xi. 3; xxiv. 12 [Heb. xx. 48]; xxxi. 31; Ps. xxvi. 4, "vain persons," Authorized Version, literally, *men of emptiness* or *of falsehood*, etc.). The passage might be rendered, *every inhabited city, even the women and the little children.*

Ver. 36.—**Aroer**, one of the Amorite cities, on the right bank of the river Arnon (cf. Josh. xii. 2; xiii. 16). On the Moabite Stone, King Mesha says, "I built Aroer;" but this can only mean that, after some temporary condition of decay or ruin, he rebuilt it. On the borders of the northern side of the Wady Mojeb, there are heaps of ruins bearing the name of Ara'ir, which probably mark the site of this ancient town. There was another Aroer, belonging at a later period to the tribe of Gad, and opposite to Rabba, the chief city of the Ammonites (Josh. xiii. 25; 2 Sam. xxiv. 5); and still another in the south of Judah (1 Sam. xxx. 28), probably in what is now known as the Wady A'râràh. **The city that is by the river**: properly, *in the river* or *wady*; i.e. Ar, the capital of Moab, which was in the valley of the Arnon, and which is mentioned here as marking the exclusive limit of the country that was captured. The word rendered "river" (נַחַל) is used of the valley or ravine (Arabic, *wâdy*) through which a stream flows, as well as of the stream itself (cf. Gen. xxvi. 19; Numb. xxiv. 6, etc.). Ar is elsewhere called Ar of Moab (Isa. xv. 1). **Even unto Gilead**, *i.e.* Mount Gilead, which rises to the north of the Jabbok (*hod.* Zerka).

Ver. 37.—In obedience to the Divine injunction, the Israelites left untouched the country of the Ammonites, situated on the eastern side of the Upper Jabbok. **Cities in the mountains**; the towns in the Ammonitish highlands. In Josh. xiii. 25, half of the land of the Ammonites is said to be assigned to the tribe of Gad; but that refers to the part of the land between the Arnon and the Jabbok, which had been taken from the Ammonites by the Amorites, and was in the possession of the latter at the time of the Israelitish invasion (Judg. xi. 13, etc.). **Whatsoever the Lord our God forbad us**; literally, *all that Jehovah our God commanded us*, sc. *not to come into.*

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—23 (specially ver. 7).—*God's knowledge of our pilgrimage.* (For the historical and geographical details connected with this section, see the Exposition.) Moses here reviews the career of Israel during the wanderings, with reference to their treatment of the nations through whose territory they required to pass on their way. They, though the favoured people of Jehovah, were not allowed to transgress the common laws of righteousness, by levying any demands on the nations through whose country they passed, nor to "distress" in any way those peoples whom the Lord had not delivered into their hands. They were to labour for their own sustenance, and to purchase, at a fair rate, meat or drink. And so far as this precept was concerned, they seem to have been (notwithstanding their waywardness in other respects) loyal to the Lord their God. These directions against transgressing the rules of right in national intercourse, were a most important part of the education of a people, where God was forming a commonwealth with this (then) unique feature, that *its corner-stone was righteousness.* (For an admirable survey of the fundamental principles of the Hebrew polity, home and foreign, see Wines's 'Commentaries on the Laws of Moses.') And as Moses is now reviewing the stages in their experience when they passed through an alien's land, he reminds them how faithful God had been to them; that they had had no need to depart from the Divine injunctions, for their good and gracious God had taken all their need into account. "*He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness.*" This clause contains a world of meaning in itself, and opens up a most fruitful theme for the Christian's meditation and for pulpit exposition, viz. *God's knowledge of our pilgrimage in life.* Three inquiries invite our notice—

I. WHAT IS IT THAT GOD IS HERE SAID TO KNOW? "Thy walking." We understand Moses as here referring to the walking, viewed objectively, not subjectively. The sentence would be true in both respects; but, nevertheless, the reference does not seem to be to the manner of Israel's walking, but to the pilgrimage itself. What was true of them is also true of us. He knoweth *our* walking, etc. 1. The *meaning* of our pilgrimage is known to him—as being that of moral and responsible beings, made in the image of God, and as having for its purpose the education of character for eternity. 2. He knows the *difficulties* of the pilgrimage—the obstructions with which we are continually meeting, thwarting, perhaps, our fondest plans and wishes. 3. He knows the *trials* of the way. Not only the trials which are "common to man" in general, but also those indefinable, *felt* peculiarities, which are ours and ours only, which we cannot unfold to a single soul on earth. 4. He knows the *enemies* which beset us: their strength, number, malice, and craft. 5. He knows the appointed *goal* at the end of the pilgrimage, and all the glorious possibilities which may be unfolded in the realization of our destiny. 6. He knows the *wants* of each and of all, temporal and spiritual; that we are helpless to the attainment of life's end, without constant supplies from him.

II. WHAT IS HERE MEANT BY GOD'S KNOWING ALL? 1. Obviously, his perfect, full, entire *acquaintance*, not only with the pilgrimage in general, not only with such particulars of it as those we have just named, but also with *every detail* of each particular. He seeth the whole of everything. 2. But it is not a *bare* seeing; the knowledge is attended with *a fatherly interest* in all that concerns the welfare of his children. He "taketh pleasure in them that fear him." "He careth for" us. The training of his children for a home by means of a pilgrimage thither, is one of the most kind and loving designs of the heart of infinite love! 3. The knowing includes the *actually taking into account* all the need of our pilgrimage, in his words, works, and ways. (1) In the *promises* he makes, all things are taken into account. These promises are not merely applicable in part, or at times, but wholly and always. (2) His *precepts* too are framed according to the same perfect knowledge. (3) His *providential mercies*, general and special, meet the wants of to-day and prepare for those of to-morrow. He works for our future, that we may live by the day. (4) In his *great redemptive provision* for our spiritual training, there is the same forethoughtfulness. (5) In his *distinctively personal and individual care* over each one, the whole of our pilgrimage is taken into account. No one is con-

fused with any one else. The Great Father's family is not so large as to tax him. He can care as lovingly for each as if each one were all!

III. WHAT IS THE PRACTICAL VALUE TO US OF SUCH KNOWLEDGE? The value of it is *infinite*. On three main points, however, the preacher may dwell, and revel in the luxury they afford. 1. If life's pilgrimage is just beginning, this Divine knowledge, so applied, may yield us *guidance* in treading the way. For if God has so mercifully taken all things into account in promise and precept, then we never need to depart a hair's breadth from the right path, for the sake of securing any apparent advantage whatever. This is specially suggested by the way in which Moses uses the words. 2. If we are just in the mid part of the pilgrimage, we may find *immeasurable comfort* under the difficulties of the way. All our responsibilities are accurately estimated, all wants perfectly considered, all supplies certainly ensured. What more could we desire? 3. If we make use of the Divine knowledge in the ways we have specified, we shall find that it will also give us a *song of thankfulness* when near the end of the way. At the point of time referred to in the text, Israel was near the verge of Canaan. And the words are retrospective. They are a testimony to Divine faithfulness and care; "These forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." So may the believer say and sing as he closes stage after stage of life; so *will* he sing when he closes the last stage of all:—"Not one thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath spoken." The more life unfolds to him of his own weakness, the louder and sweeter will be his song over Divine care; yea, he will go singing to the heavenly rest!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—23.—*International relationships.* The wilderness state is the most salutary for men. Prematurely to enter into the land of rest would prove an endless calamity. Theoretically, it is possible to gain heaven too soon. Even "the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering." That heaven may be to us a perfect paradise, there must be complete harmony between the soul and its environment.

I. GOD BRINGS NATIONS INTO CONTACT FOR RECIPROCAL MINISTRATION. So long as the conviction prevails that distinct nations are natural foes, it is best for them to remain apart. Mountains and seas and languages are God's bulwarks of peace. Yet this is but a temporary arrangement. Nationality has its use, but is liable to great abuse. God has given a monopoly of blessing to no one nation, that all may feel mutual interdependence. The products of nature are the property of all; yet personal interests are to be respected. The life-long enjoyment of Divine bounty should make us grateful, modest, and benevolent.

II. COMMERCE WITH OTHERS AN OCCASION FOR SELF-CONTROL. We are often ignorant of the selfishness and arrogance of our own hearts, until our material interests come into seeming conflict with the interests of others. In the presence of a stalwart foe, our courage or our cowardice is made manifest. We know not whether good seed or bad lies in our fields, until the summer sun makes them spring. On the wheel of the lapidary the qualities of the jewel are revealed. Such occasions for knowing ourselves—testing ourselves—disciplining and controlling ourselves, must be highly prized. The ruler of his own nature, especially under sore provocation, is a genuine victor.

III. OUR SUPERIOR STRENGTH AFFORDS NO WARRANT FOR VIOLENT INVASIONS. *Might* has a terrible proneness to warp our sense of *right*. Unless might is penetrated through and through with a spirit of righteousness, it is a body without a soul; it soon becomes a despicable corpse. Mere strength gives to no man, and to no body of men, warrantable authority to rule. It is base and self-degrading for strength to trample on weakness. Real strength displays its latent reserves when it stoops to protect—when it endures rather than contends. Violence is essential weakness, the scarecrow of power.

IV. OUR NATURAL RELATIONSHIPS HAVE A CLAIM UPON OUR REGARDS. What God hath constructed, man may not wantonly destroy. We are to "honour all men," but to "*love* the brotherhood." We may send our portions of sympathy to the uttermost circumference of the human circle, but we are to reserve a double portion for kindred.

Spiritual ties are superior to all the bonds of nature, but they need not be separate and distinct. The *natural* may, yea *ought*, to be the foundation on which the *spiritual* relationship is built. *He* who affirmed that "all who did the will of his Father were his mother, sisters, brothers," said also as he commended his human mother to his disciple's care, "Behold thy mother!"

V. A SENSE OF GOD'S PRESENCE FOSTERS SELF-ABNEGATION. Because we have so many proofs that God is about us, safeguarding our interests, we shall not be so anxious to extort our fancied rights. "He is at my right hand: I shall not be moved." "Let your moderation be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand." We have an all-wise, all-mighty, and omnipresent Defender; therefore we will not fear. We will not avenge seeming injuries: the Lord doth fight for us. "Vengeance is his."

VI. THE DISPLACEMENT OF SUCCESSIVE HUMAN RACES IS AN ORDINANCE OF GOD. Throughout the entire plan of God's providence the same law is manifest. In the formation of the earth's crust we see that one order of life passed away—another order appeared. This phrase of God's procedure science has labelled "the survival of the fittest." Is man the final link in this magnificent series? All oracles are dumb. Yet this law of successive development is apparent everywhere. History and ethnology record the facts; the Bible ascribes them to the personal God. Whatever were the motives or the passions which prompted Esau to evict the Horims, or Moab to displace the Emims, or the Caphtorims to dislodge the Avims, *this much* is plain—that the hand of the Lord wrought behind the human machinery. *Bad* as some of these races seem to have been, they were, without doubt, an improvement on the preceding. "First that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual." The world's amelioration may be waiting for our removal.

VII. THE DEATH OF UNITS PROMOTES THE WELFARE OF THE NATION. The patience of Jehovah is conspicuous in that he did not destroy the murmurers and recusants in Israel with a stroke. He used them still as the natural protectors of the younger members, and when *these* reached maturity of courageous faith, the older portion fell away, like useless husk and chaff. As in the human body, so long as cellular tissue dies and is replaced by fresh development, there is health; so in the race, the removal of effete elements secures the advancement of the whole. Yet it is not *inevitable* that the separate units of mankind should absolutely perish. The same law of development may prevail in each separate person. The inferior parts of our being may minister to the growth of the higher. The outward man, like the husk, may perish, while, withal, the inner man may be renewed daily, and be fitted for a higher plane of existence. Death is the gate of life.

VIII. GOD EXTENDS A WATCHFUL SUPERINTENDENCE OVER ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH. The children of Ammon rose in arms against the Zamzummims, and defeated them, yet (though they knew it not) it was Jehovah who destroyed their foes. God has a thousand various methods for ruling a nation's career and destiny. Because Britain has come into a larger heritage of blessing than other empires, or because many of the British people consciously recognize the sceptre of Jehovah, we may not conclude that the Zulus or Papuans are not equally overruled by him. "His kingdom ruleth over all." Respecting Cyrus, King of the Medes, God said, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." There is an unseen and an unrecognized sceptre directing all the movements of the world, controlling and restraining even wickedness itself! The errors of the heathen are, after all, partial truths, and God is leading their minds onward from obscurer to clearer light. Sometimes, we must admit, there is a temporary submergence—the advancing light is for a time eclipsed by a wave of darkness. Nevertheless, through long periods of human history, we can for the most part discover progress. *Eternity* is God's abode, and we discern but fragments of his work.—D.

Vers. 24—37.—*Warrantable warfare.* Sihon, King of Heshbon, opposed with physical force the fulfilment of Israel's destiny; and, having provoked war, provokes it to his own destruction.

I. THE NECESSITY FOR WAR. The question whether war is ever just and legitimate must be answered in the affirmative. Still, this does not justify all war. The majority of wars are indefensible. War is a barbarous instrument; and, as intelligence advances, can be replaced by better methods of conquest. But it sometimes becomes the last and

desperate alternative. If war has been tolerated in heaven, it may be *tolerated* on earth. Even a war of extermination may be, under some *conceivable* circumstances, a necessity. In this case we may look: 1. *At the human side of the war.* (1) *There was an arrogant rejection of equitable demands.* No man, and no State, holds an absolute and irresponsible right to the surface of the globe. "The earth is the Lord's." We may acquire, by inheritance, or purchase, or culture, personal interests in the land, which others are bound to respect. Yet personal interests are to be subservient to a nation's good. The lesser must yield to the greater. Israel justly demanded a right of way to his own possessions. The terms proposed by the Hebrews were fair and equitable, and the onus of war fell on him who rejected them. (2) *Israel could point to his pacific and honourable conduct in passing through the territories of Ammon and Esau.* A reputation for trustworthiness in observing a treaty had been already established. (3) *The rejection of Israel's proposal involved a deprivation of Israel's natural rights.* The patriarch Jacob had acquired by purchase and by culture much land in Canaan; and now, released from prolonged captivity, the people claim their ancestral estates. If we leave out of view the commands of Jehovah, there was ample reason, founded in common justice, why the Hebrews should demand a passage into Canaan. 2. *Let us contemplate the matter on the Divine side.* This invasion was a plain intimation of Jehovah's will. (1) *It is not man's place to sit in judgment on his God.* We are largely ignorant of all the factors in this case. There are vaster considerations than we can reach—problems which we cannot solve. Our moral judgments are often warped by weak and morbid sentiments. Righteousness, in its very nature, is superior to pleasure. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (2) *We are assured that the guilt of the Amorites was great.* What forms this guilt assumed we are not fully told, but certain it is that most flagrant corruptions flourished among them. He who uses elemental forces and angelic agents to execute his judicial verdicts, is equally at liberty to employ men as the officers of his vengeance. (3) *Very probably this was a signal act of retributive justice.* Possibly they had acquired the territory by violence and bloodshed, and had now to yield it again to the arbiter of war. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (4) *Certainly this calamity was in the line of the world's progress.* Mankind has been benefited by the overthrow of corrupt empires. This was the rough pathway along which Israel fulfilled its beneficent destiny.

II. THE PRECISE OCCASION FOR THIS WAR. This is attributed to the stolid perverseness of one man—Sihon, King of Heshbon. Is it to be tolerated that the march of a nation's destiny is to be baffled by the ignorance, or lust, or stupidity of *one* man? 1. *This obstinacy of the royal will must be attributed to natural causes.* God never compels a man to be bad. Human nature was the same in Sihon's day as in ours. Insolent arrogance is a growth. Sihon had for many years repressed nobler instincts, stifled generous feeling, pampered selfishness and pride; hence blind obstinacy became in him despotic. Corrupt principles spring from tiny seeds. 2. There are stages in a man's career when his *choice* becomes his *fate.* By the operation of God's unseen laws and mysterious forces, habits become as fixed as granite. The hardening process becomes irreversible, and truly it is said that *God* does it. We can choose whether or not to prepare our artillery, manufacture our explosives, or light the fusee, but at that point human control ends; the cannon-ball wings its way by laws imposed by God, and it is now entirely at his disposal. So in the moral sphere, there is a point at which human choice ends, and in his judicial capacity God steps in and fixes irreversibly the matter. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." We slowly and imperceptibly harden our sentient natures; then God fixes them with his judicial act, and we are held in the iron manacles of doom.

III. THE SECRET OF SUCCESS IN WAR. 1. *God's promise of success does not exclude human exertion.* His promise always presupposes man's wise activity. His pledge of help is intended to stimulate, not supplant, brave endeavour. We can only move successfully in the line of God's promise. 2. *God's initial processes should be closely followed by our activity.* "I have begun," said God (ver. 31), therefore "begin to possess." We should follow *hard* upon God's path, then his right hand will uphold us. If tardiness enchain our feet, we may soon lose the trace of his footprints. 3. *One brave deed is the forerunner of many successes.* The report of Israel's martial prowess flew as on the wings of the wind, and the widespread fear it induced made further con-

quests easy. The fruits of good or evil deeds may reproduce themselves through all time. The first step in a new course is pregnant with importance. 4. *Strict obedience is the highway to large success.* When the command of God is plain, there is no place for hesitation. Bravery grows and flourishes in an atmosphere of loyalty. During the last thirty-eight years of wilderness life, the faith and love of the young Hebrews had immeasurably grown, and their prompt obedience was the early firstfruit. They were wedded in faithful love to God. Speaking of this period at a later date, God says by his prophet, "I remember thee, . . . the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness." In keeping all the "commandments" of God, they found a large reward.—D.

Vers. 4—10, 17—20.—*Edom, Moab, Ammon.* The Israelites are strictly enjoined not to molest these three peoples, or to attempt to rob them of any portion of their territory. The ground of this injunction is that God had given them the territory they possessed, and had *not* given it to the Israelites. Additional reasons why Israel was not to molest them lay in the facts that they were kinsmen (ver. 4) and that Israel was amply provided for already (ver. 7). God's people have little need to covet the possessions of the worldly. Apart from questions of their rights, kinsmen are entitled to be treated with special kindness and forbearance. We learn from this passage—

I. THAT THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS MINUTELY CONCERNED IN THE SETTLEMENT OF NATIONS. (Vers. 5, 9, 19.) It is not by accident that they are where they are. God marks out for them the bounds of their habitation. This is a fundamental idea in Scripture (Gen. x.; Deut. xxxii. 8; Acts xvii. 26). In the verses before us the territories of Edom, of Moab, and of Ammon are spoken of as being a gift to them from God, as directly as Canaan was a gift to the Israelites. It does not alter this fact, though it renders the comprehension of it more difficult, that men's own violent and aggressive dispositions are often the means by which these secret purposes of God are fulfilled (vers. 12, 22, 23). The barbarian incursions which overthrew the Roman empire were prompted by mere love of conquest, with the hope of enrichment by slaughter and pillage; but we may trace the providence of God working through them for the formation of modern Europe. Our own acquisition of India was not without blame; but we may see in our present possession of it a gift of God which, with our other territories in different parts of the globe, we are bound to use for his glory. This is the highest view we can take of the possession of territory, and one which, so far from justifying unlawful aggression, leads us to refrain from it. It is to be remarked, however, that the possessions which God gives to nations are not irrevocable—not for ever. Instances of dispossession occur in these verses, and Edom, Moab, and Ammon themselves have long since been dispossessed. "Be not highminded, but fear" (Rom. xi. 20).

II. THAT THE RIGHTS OF NATIONS ARE TO BE SACREDLY RESPECTED. These verses teach lessons which might be pondered with advantage by the most advanced modern nations. They teach: 1. *Scrupulous respect for international rights.* It can never be our duty wantonly to invade the territories of those at peace with us, or, from motives of ambition, to seek pretexts of war with them. They are as entitled to the peaceable possession of what they have, as we are to the peaceable possession of the lands belonging to us. The right of the stronger is not to rule our policy. 2. *Scrupulous justice in international transactions.* The Israelites might have used force, but they were to deal justly, and honestly to pay for everything they received (vers. 6, 29). 3. *Scrupulous self-restraint under circumstances of provocation.* The Edomites had refused the Israelites a passage through their mountains, and had entailed on them a long, painful, and circuitous journey; Moab had employed Balaam to curse them, and had, with Midian, done them yet worse evil (Numb. xxv. 1); but not even these provocations were to tempt them to retaliation. How many modern nations would have made a *casus belli* of far less? Forgiveness of injuries should have a place in our international as in our private dealings, and it is strange if we have to be sent back to the Jews of Canaan-conquering notoriety to learn it. It is to be added—

III. THESE INSTRUCTIONS WERE A VALUABLE DISCIPLINE TO THE JEWS THEMSELVES. 1. *It taught them to recognize the Divine gift as the ground of their own tenure of Canaan.* If the Divine providence so guarded these neighbouring peoples, and would

not allow one foot of their land to be taken from them against his will, how much more might the Jews, if obedient to the covenant, depend on being preserved in theirs! If God gave, who could take away? 2. *It taught them to distinguish their commission to destroy the Canaanites from one of rude conquest.* It teaches *us* also to take a just estimate of those acts of the Israelites in destroying the Canaanitish nations on which so much indignation has been expended. Their conduct here shows how far they were from being actuated by the motives often ascribed to them. This high sense of honour, this scrupulous justice, this exemplary self-restraint prove that it was in no bloodthirsty, slaughter-loving spirit they were proceeding to their work; and show how at every step they were guided by God's will, fell in with the lines of his providence, and wrought out his wishes and purposes. They help us to conceive of the destruction of the Canaanites, not as a barbarous massacre, but as the execution of a long-delayed, deliberately pronounced, and most justly deserved sentence of Heaven.—J. O.

Vers. 10—13, 20—24.—*The Emims, Horims, Zamzummins, etc.* If these verses are part of the context of the original speech, and not a later insertion, they must be viewed as scraps of history introduced to encourage the Israelites in their work of conquest, and to dispel their apprehensions by showing what had been done by others. They suggest—

I. THAT THE PRESENT MAY LEARN FROM THE PAST. History, sacred and secular, is a powerful influence in forming the characters of the living race. The brave deeds, the conquests, the self-sacrificing endurances of those who have lived before us, are of use to rouse from apathy, and to inspire with courage and enthusiasm. The early conquests of the gospel help us to believe in its power to overcome existing oppositions.

II. THAT THE CHURCH MAY LEARN FROM THE WORLD. The holy nation is here incited by pointing to what other peoples have done in pursuit of their secular ambitions. If the Moabites could drive out the Emims, "a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims" (ver. 10), and if the Edomites and Ammonites could do the like in their respective districts, why should Israel fear the enemies to be encountered in his? We may learn much from men of the world—from the boldness of their plans, their ingenuity in surmounting difficulties, their admirable perseverance, their self-denial in working out their ends, etc. Were the Church half as diligent, wise, and determined in the prosecution of her work, as they are in making the schemes which they adopt succeed, it would be the inauguration of a day of splendid spiritual successes.

III. THAT THE DESPONDING MAY LEARN FROM THE SUCCESSFUL. It is something to feel that we are not the first who have had to face giants. What has been done once can be done again, and it is a great matter to be able to point to cases in which the very difficulties we are contending with have been successfully surmounted.—J. O.

Vers. 14, 15.—*Dying out.* These thirty-eight years form a melancholy parenthesis in the history of Israel. A death-silence reigns in the narrative in regard to them. The ninetieth Psalm is apparently a memorial of them—the dirge of Moses over the fallen. One or two incidents, and a few laws in Numbers may belong to this period; otherwise we have only these brief epitaph verses. As here described, they form a fitting image of godless existence generally—

I. IN ITS WANT OF HISTORY. History is meant to preserve that which is of permanent worth. The unessential, the evanescent, are not held deserving of its record. But from the spiritual standpoint there is no life of permanent worth but that which is lived in God and for his glory. Relatively to this world, the godless man may have a history; but relatively to eternity, he has lived to no end which ensures his being held in remembrance. He will be forgotten, and his life be a blank in the records which alone will interest a heavenly society.

II. IN ITS ESSENTIAL UNPROFITABLENESS. 1. It is without proper *purpose*. That thirty-eight years was one of purposeless existence. It had no right end. Men might engage in various pursuits, but their existence as a whole had lost its value. They were there but to draw out their profitless days till death came to end the scene. The godless man is in the same position—his existence as a whole has no proper end, and

he is made to feel this the more keenly the longer he lives. 2. It is without proper *joy*. There could be no true joy in men's hearts during that wretched time of waiting for the grave. Is there any in the life of the worldling, or of any ungodly man? Ask Byron, Goethe, Rousseau, or whoever else has given confessions on the subject, and we will need no other witness. 3. It is without *hope*. For what is there to give it?

III. IN ITS BEING SPENT UNDER GOD'S WRATH. The feeling that it is so darkens life, troubles conscience, makes death terrible, and awakens fearful and well-founded presentiments of future evil.—J. O.

Vers. 24, 25.—*The effects of Israel's conquests.* Would induce widespread dread and anguish. Apply to the Church.

I. GREAT VICTORIES OF THE CHURCH WOULD SPEEDILY GET NOISED ABROAD. The world has too much lurking fear of the truth of Christianity not to be sensitive to such reports. They would soon spread. They would find their way into circles little thought of.

II. GREAT VICTORIES OF THE CHURCH WOULD BE THE SUREST TOKEN THAT GOD WAS WITH HER. Were there a return of Pentecostal days, and conversions by thousands at a time; or were there such revivals as the Church has sometimes seen at special times and places;—were these becoming general, and multitudes were filled with the power of God's Spirit as the result—it would have a marvellous effect in producing widespread conviction that the religion of Christ was true, and that God's might was being exerted through it. It would be the best "evidence" of Christianity. Why should not the Church work, pray, and hope for such glorious successes? They are possible; they are promised; they will yet come.

III. GREAT VICTORIES OF THE CHURCH WOULD INSPIRE WIDESPREAD FEAR. Anything does that which brings the Divine sensibly near to human beings (Luke v. 8). But sinners in particular fear any near manifestation of God. They know, like the devils who besought Christ to let them alone, what that means for them. One result of the conquests of the early Church was that "fear" fell on those who witnessed them (Acts ii. 43). The Church is never so safe as when she is bold, aggressive, and successful.—J. O.

Vers. 26—37.—*The conquest of Sihon.* Sihon, though an Amorite, was not to be unconditionally destroyed. He had, like Pharaoh, an opportunity given him of averting ruin by acceding to a most courteous and reasonable request; but, like Pharaoh in this respect also, he hardened his heart, and took the course which made his destruction inevitable. We are led to consider—

I. SIHON'S OPPORTUNITY. (Vers. 26—30.) It was not given him in the hope that he would avail himself of it; for it was foreseen that he would refuse it and be hardened by it. But the sinner's hardness of heart is not a reason why the opportunity of securing his salvation should be withheld from him, or why every gracious means should not be employed to overcome his hardness. It is, indeed, necessary that this should be done, in order that the responsibility of his ruin may rest entirely on himself. It lay in the counsel of God that this king's territory should be given to the Israelites, but only on condition of his refusal of the request made to him. It was otherwise with the gift of Canaan, which was absolute, and permitted of no overtures of peace being made to the inhabitants. Their day of grace was past: to Sihon there still remained this last momentous and decisive opportunity. The last opportunity will come some day to all who harden themselves in sin (cf. Matt. xxiv. 37, 38; Luke xix. 42). This message of Moses to Sihon was: 1. *Peaceable* (ver. 26). Peaceful means should be exhausted in a cause before resorting to force. They should be exhausted even with those who are not likely to be influenced by them. This is due to the cause, due to ourselves, and due to the person approached. Men must at least have the opportunity given them of acting reasonably and generously. 2. *Courteous* (vers. 27, 28). No message could have been couched in more modest or conciliatory terms. A courteous tone is to be adopted towards men, even when we foresee that they will not reciprocate it. 3. *Perfectly sincere.* This was proved by the justness of Moses' dealings with Edom and Moab, to which he makes reference (ver. 29). 4. *Justified by necessity.* Only thus could they reach the land which God had given them (ver. 29).

II. SIHON'S OBSTINACY. "The Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate" (ver. 30); not, indeed, by any evil influence exerted on his soul, but by giving him up to his naturally obdurate disposition, and by placing him in circumstances which he knew would have a hardening effect, though in themselves of a character fitted rather to soften. 1. The hardening of the heart, so far as it is a result of evil courses, is *a work of God operating in the laws of our mental and moral nature.* Sin naturally operates to blind the mind, sear the conscience, destroy the generous affections, etc. But these effects are as truly a judicial operation of God in the soul, of a punitive nature, as was the Flood, the destruction of the cities of the plain, or any other outward expression of his wrath. 2. The hardening of the heart, so far as it is the result of acts of providence, is *a work of God operating in the moral government of the world.* Both mercies and judgments have a hardening effect on those who refuse to be taught by them. This result, foreseen by God, may be also *willed*, as a just punishment for voluntary transgression (Isa. vi. 9, 10); while, as a foreseen fact, a sinner's hardness of heart may be taken up as a link in the further development of God's purposes. 3. The hardening of the heart, as flowing from influences which ought rather to have melted and subdued it, *is a result for which the sinner himself is justly held responsible.* God wills not the death of any. The mingled goodness and severity of his dealings with men are meant to lead them to repentance. But the very things which are designed to produce a softening and converting effect on souls, are those which frequently harden and sear them—the discipline of sorrow, the preaching of the gospel, warnings and expostulations, etc. Hardness induced by such causes is the most invincible of all, and brands the obdurate transgressor as ripe for God's judgments (Prov. xxix. 1).

III. SIHON'S DESTRUCTION. (Vers. 32—37.) 1. It was *self-sought.* "Then Sihon came out," etc. (ver. 32). The sinner's destruction is of his own seeking. 2. It was *achieved by Divine aid.* "The Lord our God delivered him before us" (ver. 33). So are all spiritual victories. It is the Church's comfort in her conflicts to know that she has this power to depend on. 3. It was *total.* "Utterly destroyed" (ver. 34). A type of the utter destruction awaiting all who resist and oppose the Divine will; said of the Church, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish" (Isa. lx. 12); of Christ, "Every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts iii. 23; cf. 2 Thess. i. 9, 10).—J. O.

Vers. 1—23.—*God's faithfulness in dealing with nations outside the covenant.* We have here strict injunctions given to the pilgrims not to disturb the children of Edom, nor the Moabites, nor the children of Ammon, because they were occupying the district assigned them. These tribes, though related to Israel, were not in the covenant. Still God had guaranteed to them certain temporal blessings, and he shows himself faithful in his dealings with them.

I. GOD IS A RIGHTEOUS GOVERNOR AMONG THE NATIONS. It is in equity that he rules. His judgment is always according to truth. Having written the law of conscience upon every human heart, he can justly judge men thereby. They are laws unto themselves, and so will be held accountable for their relation to their law, or, as we might call it, inward light (cf. Rom. ii. 14, 15).

II. TEMPORAL ADVANTAGES ARE GIFTS OF GOD. The laws which regulate nature are, we believe, the ordinances of God. Hence the benefits irreligious nations receive through the laws of nature are really the gifts of his bounteous hand. Though the nations may not so regard them, the people of God can form no other notion of them.

As gifts, they are *undeserved.* Hence it is part of God's scheme of mercy so generously to treat the race of men. We must look to Christ's atonement for an explanation on the ground of justice of this merciful treatment of mankind. The death of Jesus purchased temporal as well as spiritual blessings, and its vast application should be recognized and known. In this sense he did "die for every man."

III. THE CONSTANCY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE IS TO BE TRACED TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. No other hypothesis can be offered so consistent with the facts. The promises treasured up in nature are promises of God, and the laws which secure their fulfilment are the ministers of his faithfulness.

IV. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN THE CASES REFERRED TO WAS NOT RECOGNIZED BY

THE TRIBES PROFITING BY IT. In seizing the places allotted to them by God, the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites fought each for his hand and in no religious spirit. They overcame and exterminated races of giants who formerly possessed the land. All the while, God's plan and faithfulness were receiving illustration and fulfilment. The exercise of human freedom did not militate against, but secured the Divine pleasure.

V. GOD'S BOUNTY TO NATIONS OUTSIDE THE COVENANT IS INTENDED TO ENCOURAGE HIS OWN PEOPLE. The Israelites would be the better prepared to meet and master the giants in Canaan after seeing the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites snugly dwelling in the inheritances of gigantic predecessors. If these tribes, without any sense of dependence upon the Almighty, overcame the giants opposing them, what will not be possible to *faith*?

And the whole government of the world is really intended to foster confidence in God's covenant faithfulness and to forbid all despair.—R. M. E.

Vers. 14—18.—*The wasting of the warriors.* There was evidently a considerable knowledge of "the art of war" in the Israelitish host on leaving Egypt. Moses was versed in it, as in so much more, and the mixed multitude which accompanied the exodus would also contain men skilled in arms. And experience of opposition on the part of Amalek, etc., would elicit a martial spirit throughout the host.

Moreover, the presence of seasoned men, or "veterans," gives confidence to young troops in actual conflict. The world would say, "By all means retain the veterans for the purpose of invasion." Yet, strange to say, God kept the host wandering till the warriors were all weeded out, and buried in the wilderness. The invasion is to be made by the rising generation, which had never seen the military art or reviews in Egypt. From this we learn—

I. THAT GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS, NOR HIS THOUGHTS OUR THOUGHTS. In fact, his plans are often constructed so as to baffle worldly wisdom. We see this in this invasion of Canaan; we see it in his way of salvation by Jesus Christ; we see it in his providential dealings.

II. THE ART OF WAR IS NOT SO IMPORTANT AS THE ART OF FAITH. The experience of the veterans was as nothing in comparison with the courageous faith in God. This made heroes of the children who would, they thought, be a prey. All wisdom of man becomes vain when unsustained by confidence in God.

III. SOLDIERS' GRAVES HAVE OFTENTIMES BEEN THE MELANCHOLY CONDITION OF SUCCESS. It was really after sacrifice, the sacrifice of the whole fighting army of Israel, that success came. There grew out of their graves warning and inspiration. And it has been over the graves of soldiers that almost every progress of the world has been made. Multitudes had to be buried on the battle-fields before the promised land of peace could be entered. The buried warriors constituted the holocaust which was presented before the blessing came.

IV. THE DESTRUCTION OF FALSE TRUSTS IS OFTEN THE PREPARATION FOR TRUE ONES. The temptation to trust in the veterans and their military ideas is taken away by the death of the warriors. So is it that God removes from us every false refuge. Thus we learn to trust in the living God, and to fight his battles in his own way. Providence is oftentimes just the removal of the warriors who were so wise in their own eyes and so able to take the best course, that the people may follow the Lord only.

Happy for each soul it is to be deprived of every false support, and to be led to trust Christ alone! Into real rest the soul enters by faith—the promised land lies open to the trustful soul, while its gates are closed against the self-confident ones.—R. M. E.

Vers. 24—37.—*The destruction of Sihon, King of the Amorites.* Moses here recalls the first stage in the conquest. By Divine direction, the pilgrims are to advance upon the land of the Amorites, and they are promised an important victory over them. And here we have to notice—

I. THE REASONABLE PROPOSAL MADE TO SIHON THE KING. (Vers. 26—29.) This was for permission to pass through his land to Canaan, undertaking to disturb nothing and to pay for all supplies. Nothing could be more reasonable. The onus was thus thrown on Sihon of determining whether he would befriend God's people or oppose them.

And this reminds us of the most reasonable offers God, in his gospel, makes to men. He acts the friendly part, and if men take it in good faith, all is well.

II. THE REFUSAL OF THE HARD-HEARTED KING. (Ver. 30.) Sihon quite needlessly resolves to oppose their passage to Canaan. He likely had heard of or remembered the former unsuccessful attempt thirty-eight years before at Kadesh, and so he imagines that a little opposition will deter them and turn them from their purpose. The hardening of heart, here attributed to God, means simply that the providences, instead of softening Sihon's nature, had through his own self-will an entirely opposite effect. The heart gets hardened through the corruption of the will.

It is similarly with those who reject the offer of salvation.

III. BATTLE IS THUS FORCED UPON THE PILGRIMS. (Vers. 31, 32.) This battle of Jahaz was a decisive one. The pilgrims were so numerous that Sihon had to bring out *all* his host. Into it the Israelites entered with the assurance of victory, and this largely secured it.

It is so in the spiritual warfare. The enemies of God's people are met by a host confident in success, because promised by God. This of itself is half the battle.

IV. THE PENALTY OF OPPOSITION TO GOD'S PLANS IS EXTERMINATION. (Vers. 33, 34.) If men will oppose God, they must take the consequences. God must be supreme. He can allow no victorious opposition. His enemies must lick the dust. It is a mortal combat into which they must enter who fight against him.

The propriety of the extermination rests in the Divine command. God has the right to dispose as he sees fit of his creatures. If they oppose his will, which is always right, they may justly be taken away with a stroke, and that without remedy.

V. THE LIMITATIONS SET BEFORE THE CONQUERORS. (Vers. 35—37.) They took the cattle and a certain portion of the land, but they did not overrun the whole country. The land of the children of Ammon was exempt from the invasion. It was forbidden ground.

So is it always. God sets limits to success. It is well he does. Ambition must abide by his decree, and not overstep due bounds. When his will is thus respected, and self-repression and self-discipline rigidly enforced, all is well. The dangers of success are thus avoided, and real elevation of spirit is experienced.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1—11.—CONQUEST OF OG, KING OF BASHAN. The Amorites had wrested from Moab a portion of the territory taken by the Moabites and the Edomites from the giant aborigines; and Og, who was of the same giant race, ruled over the northern half of the region of Gilead and over all Bashan. This district also God purposed Israel to possess; and therefore, before crossing the Jordan, a diversion was made northwards by the Israelites, for the purpose of attacking this powerful chief. Og encountered them with all his host, but was signally defeated, and he and all his people were exterminated. Not fewer than three score fortified cities, besides villages, were captured by the Israelites, the whole country was subjugated, and all the cattle and material property taken as booty (cf. Numb. xxi. 33—35).

Ver. 1.—(Cf. Numb. xxi. 33.) **We turned**—*i.e.* took a new route—**and went up** (וַנַּעַל, and we ascended). As Bashan was an upland region, they are very properly said to have gone up. **Edrei**, *hod.* Draa, with Roman and Arabian ruins, nearly three miles in circumference, but without inhabitants; not the same as the Edrei of ver. 10.

Ver. 2.—(Cf. Numb. xxi. 31, etc.)

Ver. 4.—**Threescore cities**; probably the same as the Bashan-havoth-jair, afterwards mentioned (ver. 14). **The region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.** The region of Argob comprised the kingdom of Og, and Bashan was another name for the same country; extending from the Jabbok to Hermon, and embracing both the northern part of Gilead, and what was afterwards in a stricter sense Bashan, viz. the land north of the Wady Zerka (*hod.* Jebel Ajlûn) to Hermon. The name *Argob* is supposed by some to be given to the district from a town of that name, fifteen Roman miles eastward from Gerasa, a city of Arabia (Eusebius); but more probably it is derived from the character of the district, either as *deep-soiled* (from רֶגֶב, a clod), or as *rugged* and *uneven* (רִגּוֹב, from רָגַב akin to רָגַם, to

heap up), just as the neighbouring district to the east and north-east received the name *Trachonitis* (from τραχών, rough, rugged); in the Targum, indeed, *Trachona* (טרכונא) is the name given here for Argob. This district is now known as the province of *El-Lejah* (The Retreat). It is described as oval in form, about twenty-two miles long by fourteen wide; a plateau elevated about thirty feet above the surrounding plain. Its features are most remarkable. It is composed of a thick stratum of black basalt, which seems to have been emitted in a liquid state from pores in the earth, and to have flowed out on all sides till the whole surface was covered. It is rent and shattered as if by internal convulsion. The cup-like cavities from which the liquid mass was projected are still seen, and also the wavy surface such as a thick liquid generally assumes which cools as it is flowing. There are deep fissures and yawning gulfs with rugged, broken edges; and there are jagged mounds that seem not to have been sufficiently heated to flow, but which were forced up by some mighty agency, and then rent and shattered to their centres. The rock is filled with air-bubbles, and is almost as hard as iron. (Dr. Porter, in Kitto, 'Biblical Cyclopædia,' iii. 1032; see also the same author's 'Five Years in Damascus,' ii. 240, etc.; and 'The Giant Cities of Bashan'; Burckhardt, 'Travels in Syria,' p. 110, etc.; Wetstein, 'Reisebericht üb. Hauran,' p. 82, etc.; a paper by Mr. Cyrill Graham in the *Cambridge Essays* for 1858; and Smith's 'Dictionary,' art. 'Trachonitis.') The entire trans-Jordanic region was thus captured by the Israelites.

Ver. 5.—**All these cities** were **fenced with high walls, gates, and bars**; literally, *double gates and a bar*. These cities, with their marvellous erections, are believed to be still existing in the Hauran. Over that district are strewn a multitude of towns of various sizes, all constructed after the same remarkable fashion. "The streets are perfect, the walls perfect, and, what seems more astonishing, the stone doors are still hanging on their hinges, so little impression has been made during these many centuries on the hard and durable stone of which they are built" (Graham, *Cambridge Essays*, p. 160). These doors are "formed of slabs of stone, opening on pivots which are projecting parts of the stone itself, and working in sockets in the lintel and threshold." Some of these gates are large enough to admit of a camel passing through them, and the doors are of proportionate dimensions, some of the stones of which they are formed being eighteen inches in thickness. The roofs also are formed of huge stone slabs resting on the massive walls. All betoken the workmanship of a race endowed with powers far exceeding those of ordinary men; and give credibility to the supposition that we have in them the dwellings of the giant race that occupied that district before it was invaded by the Israelites. "We could not help," says Mr. Graham, "being impressed with the belief that had we never known anything of the early portion of Scripture history before visiting this country, we should have been forced to the conclusion that its original inhabitants, the people who had constructed those cities, were not only a powerful and mighty nation, but individuals of greater strength than ourselves."

Ver. 6.—(See ch. ii. 34.)

Ver. 8.—**Hermon** (חֶרְמוֹן), probably from חָרַם, to be high, "the lofty peak," conspicuous on all sides. By some the name is supposed to be connected with חֵרֶם, a devoted thing, because this mountain marked the limit of the country devoted or placed under a ban; and it is certainly remarkable that, at the extreme north-east and the extreme south-west of the land conquered by the Israelites, names derived from *Herem*, viz. *Hermon* and *Hormah* (ch. i. 44), should be found; as if to indicate that all between was devoted. Hermon is the southernmost spur of the Antilibanus range. It is "the second mountain in Syria, ranking next to the highest peak of Lebanon behind the cedars. The elevation of Hermon may be estimated at about 10,000 feet. The whole body of the mountain is limestone, similar to that which composes the main ridge of Lebanon, the central peak rises up an obtuse truncated cone, from 2000 to 3000 feet above the ridges that radiate from it, thus giving it a more commanding aspect than any other mountain in Syria. This cone is entirely naked, destitute alike of trees and vegetation. The snow never disappears from its summit" (Porter, 'Handbook, Syria and Palestine,' p. 431). At the present day it is known as *Jebel esh-Sheikh* (The Chief Mountain), also *Jebel eth-Thelj* (The Snow Mountain). Anciently also it had various names. By the Hebrews it was known also as *Siôn* (שִׂיאֹן, the high, ch. iv. 48); by the Sidonians it was called *Siriôn* (שִׂרְיֹן=שִׁרְיֹן, a cuirass or coat of mail), probably from its shining appearance, especially when covered with snow; and by the Amorites it was called *Senir*, a word probably of the same meaning. These names continued in use to a late period (cf. Ps. xcix. 6; Ezek. xxvii. 4; Cant. iv. 8; 1 Chron. v. 23).

Ver. 10.—The different portions of the conquered territory are here mentioned. 1. **The plain** (הַמִּישׁוֹר, the level country); the table-land south of Mount Gilead, as far as the Arnon. 2. The whole of **Gilead**; the

hilly country north of the Jabbok, between Heshbon and Bashan, between the northern and southern table-land. 3. **All Bashan**, as far eastward as Salchah, the modern Szalkhat or Szarkhad, about seven hours to the east of Busra, and northwards to Edrei, *hod.* Edra, Ezra or Edhra', an extensive ruin to the west of Busra, still partially inhabited.

Ver. 11.—Bashan was of old possessed by a giant race, the Rephaim (Gen. xiv. 5); but of these Og, King of Bashan, was, at the time of the Israelitish invasion, the sole remnant. His vast size is indicated by the size of his bedstead, which was preserved in Rabbath-Ammon, perhaps as a trophy of some victory obtained by the Ammonites over their gigantic foe. This measured nine cubits in length, and four in breadth, "after the cubit of a man," *i.e.* according to the cubit in common use. Taking the cubit as equal to eighteen inches, the measure of the bedstead would be thirteen feet and a half by six feet. That Og even approximated to this height is incredible; if he reached nine or ten feet his height would exceed that of any one on record. It is probable, however, that he may have had his bed made vastly larger than himself, partly from ostentation, partly that he might leave a memorial that should impress upon posterity a sense of his gigantic size and resistless might; just as Alexander the Great is said (Diod. Sic., xvii. 95) to have, on his march to India, caused couches to be made for his soldiers in their tents, each five cubits long, in order to impress the natives with an overwhelming sense of the greatness of his host. It has been suggested that it is not a bed that is here referred to, but a sarcophagus of basalt or ironstone in which, it is supposed, the corpse of Og was placed, and which was afterwards carried to Rabbath, and there deposited (J. D. Michaelis, Winer, Knobel, etc.). This implies that the passage is a later insertion, and not part of the original narrative as given by Moses. But with what view could such an insertion be introduced? Not to establish the credibility of the story of the victory of the Israelites over Og, for the existence of a sarcophagus in which a corpse had been placed would only attest the fact that such a one once lived and died, but would prove nothing as to how or when or where he came by his death. Not to show the vast size of the man, for a sarcophagus affords no measure whatever of the size of the person whose remains are placed in it, being an honorary monument, the size of which is proportioned to the real or supposed dignity of the person for whose honour it is made. A bed, on the contrary, which a man had used, or at least had caused to be made for himself, would afford some evidence of his size; and there is an obvious reason for Moses referring to this here, inasmuch as thereby he recalled to the Israelites the remembrance, on the one hand, of what occasioned the fear with which they anticipated the approach of this terrible foe, and, on the other, of the grace of God to them in that he had delivered Og and all his people into their hand. It is idle to inquire how Moses could know of the existence of this bed at Rabbath; for we may be well assured that from all the peoples through whose territories he had passed reports of the strength and prowess and doings of this giant warrior would be poured into his ear.

Vers. 12—17.—*Distribution of the conquered land.* The countries thus conquered by the Israelites were assigned by Moses to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. The southern portion, from Aroer, in the valley of the Arnon, to the Jabbok, with its towns (see Josh. xii. 15—20, 24—28), was assigned to the Reubenites and the Gadites; and the northern portion, from the Jabbok, comprehending, with Gilead, the whole of Bashan, or Argob, to the half tribe of Manasseh.

Ver. 13.—The last part of this verse is differently construed and rendered by different translators. By some the clause **all the region of Argob** is connected with what precedes, while others regard this clause as in apposition with what follows. Targum: "All the region of Trachona, and all that province was called the land of giants;" LXX.: "And all the region of Argob, all that Bashan: the land of the Rephaim it was reckoned;" Vulgate: "The whole region of Argob, and all Bashan is called the land of giants." Modern interpreters for the most part adopt the order of the Targum. The clause may be rendered thus: *The whole region of Argob as respects all Bashan* [i.e. in so far as it formed part of the kingdom of Bashan under Og] *was reputed the land of the Rephaim.*

Ver. 14.—**Jair, a descendant** of Manasseh

by the mother's side (his father was of the tribe of Judah, 1 Chron. ii. 22), obtained the Argob region **unto**—*i.e.* inclusive of (see Josh. xiii. 13)—**the territory of the Geshuri and Maachathi.** These were small Syrian tribes located to the east of Hermon. As *Geshur* signifies a bridge, it has been conjectured that the Geshurites were located near some well-known bridge across the Jordan, of which, perhaps, they were the keepers, and from this took their name. Maachah is called Aram- (Syria-) Maachah in 1 Chron. xix. 6. According to the 'Onomasticon,' it was "a city of the Amorites, by the Jordan, near Mount Hermon" (*s.v.* Μαχαθί). It had in later times a king, who allied himself with the Ammonites against David (1 Chron. xix. 7). These tribes were subdued, but not destroyed, by the Israelites; and at a later period seem to have regained their independence, and to have formed one kingdom (comp. 2 Sam. iii. 3; x. 6; xiii. 37; xv. 8; 1 Chron. iii. 2). **And called them after his own name, Bashan-havoth-jair.** The word *havoth* (properly *chavvoth*, חַוֹּת) is the plural of a word meaning life, and *Chavvoth-Jair* probably signifies Jair's livings, not Jair's villages, for these were apparently fortified cities (vers. 4, 5; Josh. xiii. 30; 1 Kings iv. 13). These were recaptured by the Geshurites, aided by the Arameans (1 Chron. ii. 23, "And Geshur and Aram took Chavvoth-Jair from them," etc.); at what time is unknown. From Numb. xxxii. 42, it appears that Nobah, also a family descended from Machir, took certain towns, viz. "Kenath and her daughters" in this district; these, with the twenty-three Havvoth-Jair, made up the sixty towns which "belonged to the sons of Machir the father of Gilead" (1 Chron. ii. 23). Nobah was probably in some way subordinate to Jair, and so in this rhetorical discourse, where it is not the purpose of the author to enter on minute details, the whole of these cities are included under the name Havvoth-Jair. **Unto this day.** "This does not necessarily imply a long time; and Moses himself may have used this expression, though only shortly after the event, in order to give prominence to the capture of the fortified cities of the giant king Og, by the Manassites for the encouragement of the Israelites" (Herzheimer).

Ver. 15.—(Cf. Numb. xxxii. 40; 1 Chron. ii. 22.)

Vers. 16, 17.—The possession of the tribes of Reuben and Gad is here more exactly defined. Its southern boundary was the middle of the valley (the wady) of the Arnon; **half the valley, and the border,** *i.e.* the middle of the ravine (or wady) and its edge; a more precise definition of **the river Arnon;** the brook which flowed through the middle of the ravine was to be their boundary line to the south. On the northeast the Upper Jabbok (*Nahr Ammân*) was to be their boundary; this separated them from Ammonitis, the region of the children of Ammon (Numb. xxi. 24). On the west the 'Arâbah (*Ghôr*), and the Jordan and its border (its east bank), from Chinnereth (Kinnereth), a fenced city by the sea of Galilee, thence called "the sea of Chinnereth" (Numb. xxxiv. 11; Josh. xii. 3; xix. 35), to the sea of the 'Arâbah, **the salt sea, under Ashdoth-pisgah**—the slopes (literally, *the outpourings*, the place where the mountain torrents flow out, hence the base of the hill) of Pisgah (Numb. xxi. 15; xxvii. 12)—**eastward;** *i.e.* simply the east side of the 'Arâbah and the Jordan.

CONCLUSION OF HISTORICAL RECAPITULATION. Vers. 18—29.

Vers. 18—20.—Moses reminds the two and a half tribes of the conditions on which they had received the possessions they had desired beyond Jordan (see Numb. xxxii. 20—32). **All that are meet for the war;** literally, *all the sons of might* (בְּנֵי חַיִל), *i.e.* not all who were men of war or of age to go to war, but men specially powerful and fitted for warlike enterprise. **Until the Lord hath given rest unto your brethren** (comp. Exod. xxxiii. 14).

Vers. 21, 22.—*Joshua appointed as Moses' successor in the leadership.*

Ver. 21.—**At that time,** *i.e.* after the conquest of the land on the east of the Jordan (see Numb. xxvii. 12, etc.). **Thine eyes have seen,** etc. Joshua was directed to what he had himself witnessed, what his own eyes had seen, in the destruction of Sihon and Og and their hosts, that he might be encouraged to go forward in the course to which he had been called; and the people are reminded of this, that they may keep in mind what God had done for Israel, and may without fear follow Joshua as their leader to the conquest of Canaan (comp. ch. xxxi. 23).

Ver. 22.—The "he" here is emphatic; as God himself would fight for them, why should they be afraid?

Vers. 23—29.—*Prayer of Moses.* Moses knew that he was not to enter the promised land with the people; but, reluctant to relinquish the enterprise which he had so far conducted until he should see it successfully finished, he besought the Lord that at least he might be permitted to cross the Jordan, and see the goodly land. This prayer was presented probably just before Moses asked God to set a man over the congregation to be their leader to the pro-

mised land (Numb. xxvii. 15—17); for the command to give a charge to Joshua, in that office, follows immediately, as part of God's answer to Moses' request (ver. 28), and the expression "at that time" (ver. 23) points back to the charge of Moses to Joshua, as contemporaneous with the offering of his prayer. In this prayer Moses appeals to what he had already experienced of God's favour to him, in that he had begun to show him his greatness and his mighty power. The reference is to the victories already achieved over the Amorites; these were tokens of the Divine power graciously manifested to Israel, and Moses appeals to them as strengthening his plea for further favours (comp. the pleading, Exod. xxxiii. 12, etc.).

Ver. 24.—**O Lord God**. *O Lord Jehovah.* **For what God**, etc. (comp. Exod. xv. 11; Ps. lxxxvi. 8; lxxxix. 6; cxiii. 5, etc.). "The contrast drawn between Jehovah and other gods does not involve the reality of heathen deities, but simply presupposes a belief in the existence of other gods, without deciding as to the truth of that belief" (Keil).

Ver. 25.—**That goodly mountain**; not any mountain specially, but the whole mountain elevation of Canaan, culminating in the distant Lebanon, as it appeared to the eye of Moses from the lower level of the 'Arâbah. This was "goodly," especially in contrast with the arid and sunburnt desert through which the Israelites had passed; the hills gave promise of streams that should cool the air and refresh and fertilize the land (see ch. viii. 7, etc.). Moses longed to go over if but to see this land, and to plant his foot on it; but his request was not granted.

Ver. 26.—**The Lord was wroth**, etc. (cf. ch. i. 37; Numb. xx. 12; xxvii. 13, 14). **Let it suffice thee**; literally, *Enough for thee!* i.e. either Thou hast said enough; say no more, or Be content; let what I have done, and the grace I have given, be enough for thee (comp. the use of this formula in Gen. xlv. 28; Numb. xvi. 3; ch. i. 6; ii. 3). Keil and others refer to 2 Cor. xii. 8, as "substantially equivalent," but the expression there seems to have quite a different meaning and reference from that used here.

Ver. 27.—Comp. Numb. xxvii. 12, of which this is a rhetorical amplification. There the mountains of Abarim are mentioned; here Pisgah, the northern portion of that range, is specified. **The top of Pisgah**; *i.e.* Mount Nebo (ch. xxxiv. 1). **Westward**; literally, *seaward*, i.e. towards the Mediterranean; **northward** (צָפוֹן, hidden or dark place, where darkness gathers, as opposed to the bright and sunny south); **southward**, towards the right-hand quarter (תֵּימָנָה, from יָמִין, the right hand; cf. Exod. xxvi. 18, "to the south towards the right hand"); **eastward**, towards the dawn or sunrising; cf. ch. iv. 47 (מִזְרָח, from זָרַח to shine forth).

Ver. 28.—(Comp. ch. i. 38; iii. 21; xxxi. 7; Numb. xxvii. 23.)

Ver. 29.—**In the valley over against Beth-peor**; *i.e.* in the plains of Moab (Arboth Moab, Numb. xxii. 1; cf. ch. iv. 46; xxxiv. 6). Beth-pe'or, *i.e.* the house or temple of Pe'or, the Moabitish Baal. There was a hill Pe'or, in the Abarim range, near to which this town was; it was opposite to Jericho, six Roman miles north of Libias (Eusebius); it was given to the tribe of Reuben (Josh. xiii. 20). In passing from the historical recapitulation, Moses indicates precisely the locality in which they were when this address was delivered.

HOMILETICS.

Ch. ii. 24—iii. 11.—*The last of the giants.* Though Israel was not allowed to plunder or in any way to behave uncourteously to peoples who permitted them to pass through their territory without obstruction, yet, if they were obstinately opposed, they were to maintain their ground, and to force a passage through. There are recorded here two conflicts of this kind, which were memorable in after-days, and which gave a colouring to the sanctuary songs (cf. Ps. cxxxvi.). Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, the King of Bashan, fought against the people of God, were utterly vanquished, and their land was taken possession of by those whose course they obstructed. We may find in this apparently unpromising theme a topic for pulpit teaching, which may furnish instruction in the ways of God, of which we cannot afford to lose sight. Either of the two cases before us will equally avail for this purpose. We propose to study the overthrow of *Og, and the passing away of the last of the giants.* Observe—

I. THERE IS SOMETHING OF MYSTERY ABOUT THIS PASSAGE, WHICH WE PROPOSE TO CLEAR UP. There are three points respecting Og which, *at first sight*, have an aspect

of romance about them: 1. The account of the king and his bedstead. 2. The race of giants. 3. The sixty great cities and unwalled towns—a great many, and that within a space less than that covered by some of our English counties. We can quite imagine a superficial reader, specially if he be one who has a keen appreciation of the liberty of doubting, and who restlessly chafes against the Old Book, saying, "There, it is absurd upon the face of it, just like the legends of other peoples—a piece of mythology." That is the rough-and-ready way in which Moses is dealt with now by many who ought to know better. We are prepared to contest these sceptics at every point, and, what is more, to affirm that a careful study of the latest researches will confirm Moses' statements, and not overthrow them (see the Exposition on this passage; also Dr. Kitto's 'Daily Bible Readings,' *in loc.*; specially Rev. J. L. Porter's 'Giant Cities of Bashan'). When we sufficiently avail ourselves of the light which modern travel and research have thrown upon the Bible, we find that what seemed romantic and almost legendary before, appears to be exact, literal, sober truth. This is an age of scepticism as regards the old *Word*, and of resurrections as regards the old *world*; the latter at every step are putting the former to shame. Every word of God is pure, and, however some may load it with reproach, it shall be more than vindicated, and shall abide when the last of the sceptics, like the last of the giants, shall have passed away!

II. THERE IS HERE VERY MUCH INSTRUCTION SUGGESTED IN THE WAYS OF GOD, TO WHICH IT BEHOVES US TO TAKE HEED: as we are presented with this topic for meditation—*The passing away of nations and the incoming of others.* 1. *What a retrospect does the history of the rise, progress, and abandonment of these giant cities, and the dwindling away of a stalwart race, call up before our imagination!* Sixty strong cities. More than forty unwalled towns, of which the remains *may even now be seen!* What a hum of busy life must there have been at one time! and what a degree of civilization at that remote period! "When Israel was a child," a world of strong, skilled life had reached its prime; of some arts a knowledge was then possessed which, somehow or other, we have lost and cannot regain. We can gather, to some extent, what they were, from silent, monumental speech; but while the cities remain, the nation which reared and owned them has quite passed away! Strange spectacle! Huge mystery! That pillars and monuments and records (even on papyrus) should survive the wreck of ages, while the *men* who originated all have mouldered long in dust! 2. *How humiliating to see the powerlessness of a nation to guard itself, even when it erects buildings which for ages will survive itself!* Those stout walls of Bashan have defied the tempests of three thousand years! But of the men whose wit devised and whose hands wrought them not a trace is left. Is it so? Can a nation fashion that which shall resist the wear and tear of millenniums, and yet do nothing to arrest its own decay? How insignificant does this make a nation seem (cf. Isa. xl. 17)! 3. *How unimportant is it to the world at large whether one nation or another is uppermost!* Bashan's people are gone, and not for thousands of years has there been a lament that that race has ceased to be! We *ought* to learn this lesson: A nation that seems great at one moment, may disappear from the scene of busy life, and, after a temporary shock, a short inconvenience, perhaps, the world would soon adjust itself to the change, and would go on as before! 4. *Nevertheless, no nation passes away without some advance in the unrolling of the great map of God's providence.* God may make much of that of which men make nothing. It was not for nought that Og and his people were dispossessed. Great strength was combined with ghastly wickedness. This is the reason why they were swept away. The wheels of providence are "full of eyes." Unless a nation is accomplishing God's purposes, it will not be spared to fulfil its own! God will rid the world of plague-spots. 5. *By sweeping away Og and his people, the way was cleared for planting in their territory a people who should have a nobler faith, even a faith in the One living and true God, and who should also set up a higher standard for national life and personal character.* The corner-stone of Israel's polity was righteousness. Hence we should be prepared to sing right joyously the old Hebrew song in Ps. cxxxvi., and to see in the dispossession of Og a proof of the Divine mercy to the world! Hence: 6. *We who know God's Name can look with calm serenity on national catastrophes.* Nations have been, and may yet be, swept off; but in all the transitions of power from one people to another, we see the onward march of One who is but putting down that which is ill, that he may ultimately reset the world in goodness,

truth, and love. We can join anticipatively in the song in Rev. xv. Note, in conclusion: (1) Whether a nation is likely to continue in being or no depends on the degree to which it is fulfilling *God's* designs, and not at all on the measure with which it is carrying out its own. (2) Whether it is best for the world that a nation should continue in being depends on the virtue, purity, and piety of the people who compose it. (3) If virtue be a-wanting, no number of cities and towns, nor any strength and hardness in the race, will ever shield a nation from absolute extinction. God can raise up better peoples. He is able "of these stones" to raise up children to Abraham. (4) God deals with *nations* in *this life*; with *individuals*, in the next also. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Vers. 23—27.—(See Homiletics, ch. xxxii. 41—52, and ch. xxxiv.)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—20.—*Self-propagating conquest.* There is solid truth in the French proverb: "It is the first step that costs." An untried course makes large demands on a man's thought, self-watchfulness, and energy; but when habit is acquired, the machinery of the soul works with smooth facility. Enterprises which are most arduous at the first, become by repetition as simple as a natural instinct.

I. CONQUEST INDUCES NEW ENERGY. The joy of conquest is a spur to fresh endeavour. The appetite for adventure and exertion is whetted, and is not easily controlled. Herein lies the secret cause of Alexander's tears, that there were no further worlds to be conquered. The selfsame law of inertia, which hinders senseless matter from originating motion, operates to keep it in incessant motion when it has once begun.

II. CONQUEST GENERATES LARGER AND MORE COURAGEOUS FAITH. The man who (conscious of Divine assistance) has gained a triumph, listens with docility to every fresh whisper from the lips of Jehovah. So David, after many conquests over the Philistines, asks again with child-like simplicity, "Shall I go up against them? Wilt thou deliver them into my hands?" The successful efforts of robust faith will lead a man to keep very close to God. They do not puff up with pride; they humble us by a sense of the Divine goodness. In the spiritual world as in the material, there operates the law of action and reaction. Faith promotes success, and success invigorates faith.

III. ONE TRIUMPH MAKES ALL TRIUMPH POSSIBLE. An atom is a type of the world. An organic cell is a type of the animal. A leaf is a type of the tree. So *one* triumph is the pattern and pledge of all triumph. We become, in holy warfare, "more than conquerors;" for we have qualified ourselves for further warfare and for easier conquests. Og, King of Bashan, may have been a more formidable foe than Sihon, King of Heshbon; the walls and gates of Bashan may have been tenfold more impregnable than those of Heshbon; nevertheless, the Divine succour which had been afforded to the Hebrews was competent for every exigency, and if only faith could rise to the height of its resources, no opposition could withstand it. What though Og be a stalwart giant—the last of his race—the God that made him can destroy him! The God who is at our back can give us victory over every foe. Conscious of the power and skill of our heavenly Ally, we can say, "God is with me, therefore I must prevail."

IV. THE TRIUMPH OF THE WHOLE CHURCH DEPENDS ON THE BRAVE EXERTION OF DIVIDUALS. In every community we shall find a variety of temperaments—some sluggish and some sanguine. The faith of a few will reproduce itself in others. The glowing zeal of one will be contagious. Among the enormous host of the Hebrews two names are singled out for honour—Jair and Machir. In all warfare, much depends on the heroic examples of a few leaders. The tone of feeling and courage percolates through all the ranks of the army, and braces every man to fulfil his part. Every member of the Church helps or hinders the Church's conquests. The son of Jesse infused a spirit of bravery into *all* the tribes of Israel, and knit them into organic unity.

V. REAL CONQUEST BRINGS ABIDING RESULTS. This triumph of the Israelites put them into permanent possession of lands and cities and palaces. Better still, it

developed the qualities of faith and courage—brought into play generous and self-abnegating sentiments. Such principles as these made secure to them the possessions they had won. As a few seeds will bring a large harvest, so a complete mastery over any real foe bears rich and remote advantages. We do well to *discover* our foes, fasten attention on them, and give no quarter until they are destroyed. So ingrained was idolatry in these Amorites, that the moral pollution could only be removed by the destruction of the people.

VI. THE EFFECT UPON OURSELVES OF CONQUEST SHOULD BE TO DEVELOP OUR BROTHERLY SYMPATHY. Those who have fought at our side, and been mutually helpful, deserve a place in memory and affection. If by their co-operation we have gained a conquest, gratitude impels us to continue the alliance until they obtain their possessions also. It is noble to sacrifice ease and material advantage for the purpose of serving our brethren. Self-conquest will prompt us to empty self, if only we can enrich others. This is to follow the highest example—to be as God. The glory and excellence of spiritual possessions is *this*—they are not diminished by communication. We give, and still have.

VII. CONQUEST SHOULD DEEPEN OUR SENSE OF OBLIGATION TO THE SUPREME GOD. There is a strong tendency in all success to foster pride and self-esteem. Crowds of successful men bow down to their own net, and burn incense to their drag. They recognize the visible instrument, rather than the invisible Cause. Moses had to withstand the current of popular feeling, when, in the flush of triumph, he reminds them emphatically, "The Lord your God hath given you this land." Poverty often drives us to God: fulness ofttimes keeps us from him. Yet every factor in the achievement of victory was of God, and to him was all praise due. "His right hand, and his holy arm, gain for us the victory."—D.

Vers. 21—29.—*Prospect of death.* In the full career of triumph, Moses has inward presentiment, and external announcement, that his end was near. Nature has a greater repugnance to death when we are enveloped in the bright sunshine of prosperity. The contrast is more marked. Decay and disease are natural forerunners of dissolution; but in Moses these were wanting. With him, the gravamen of the trial was that his life-work was incomplete. The closer we approach to the final stroke of an undertaking, the deeper becomes our anxiety for a successful issue. "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

I. WE HAVE HERE SAGACIOUS PROVISION TO CONSUMMATE HIS WORK. In the judgment of a good man, the perpetuation of his work by others is vastly more important than the continuance of his own life. Individuals pass away, but the progress of the race continues. Up to this point in Israel's pilgrimage, Moses had been unequalled as a leader; no one among the tribes could have filled his place. But now, a military general, rather than a legislator, is needed, and Joshua has been gradually moulded by a Divine hand for this work. We may safely trust human interests with God. 1. *The experience of age conveys its lessons to youth.* Joshua was scarcely a young man, as *we* reckon years; yet, compared with Moses, he was juvenile and inexperienced in governing men. Age is a relative quality. The lesson was directly to the point—straight at the bull's-eye of the target. "Fear not." *Courage*, just then, was the "one thing needful." 2. *The command was founded on the most solid reasons*, viz. the irresistible might of Jehovah, and the unchangeableness of his purposes. What he *had* done, he could yet do. What he *had* done was a revelation of what he designed to do. *Observation* of God's deeds and methods fosters valorous faith. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

II. PRAYER THAT LIFE MAY YET BE PROLONGED. It savours of submissive meekness to the Divine will that Moses first provided for the nation's welfare, in view of the contingency of death, and then prays that the stroke may be delayed. The latter is secondary. 1. *The prayer was earnest.* "I besought the Lord." There is indication that it was oft repeated and long continued. 2. *The prayer was inspired by noble motive.* An unusual display of God's greatness had been made in the defeat of the two kings, and Moses longed to see further unfoldings of God's might. Still, his prayer was, "I pray thee show me thy glory!" God had only *begun* to act; Moses yearned

to see the final consummation. 3. *Yet this prayer was refused.* Unerring wisdom perceived that it was best to refuse—*best*, perhaps, for Moses himself—and best for Israel. It is better for a man to present an unsuccessful prayer, than not to pray at all. *Some* blessing is the fruit. 4. *The denial was a vicarious chastisement.* We have, in God's kingdom, vicarious blessing and vicarious suffering. For Joseph's sake, the house of Potiphar was blessed. For David's sake, Solomon finished his reign in peace. For Paul's sake, the crew of the doomed vessel escaped. On the other side, God was wroth with Moses for the Hebrews' sake. Present chastisement better far than final banishment. 5. *Divine tenderness is displayed even in refusal.* The refusal was not wholly from anger; there was a large admixture of kindness. Anger for the sin; kindness for the man. It is as if God had said, "It pains me sore to impose this chastisement; nevertheless, it must be done, and you will add to my pain by seeking an escape." God beseeches him to urge no further. Up to this point, prayer was fitting; *beyond* this, prayer would have been fresh guilt. 6. *Yet compensation for the loss is granted.* Prayer is never wholly unsuccessful. A gracious concession is made. Moses had asked to *see* the land; he shall *see* it, although his foot shall not tread it. The eye and the heart of the man of God shall be gladdened. Without doubt, Moses' natural eyesight had been preserved for this selfsame occasion, and special power of vision also was vouchsafed in that eventful hour, when Moses stood on Pisgah's peak. He shall *see* it without the toil of travel, without the peril of the conflict. 7. *A crowning kindness is shown in confirming the succession to Joshua.* Though the workman is to be removed, the work shall advance. It was a sweet solace to the mind of Moses that Joshua should have been accepted in his stead. His cherished purpose shall be accomplished, although by other hands. The spirit of Moses would survive in Joshua. "Being dead," Moses would still speak and act. The body may dissolve, but the moral courage and heroic valour are transmitted to another.

Rest is the reward of toil, and the cradle of new exertion. "So we abode in the valley." The valley of Beth-peor was the preparation for Pisgah's peak. Humiliation before exaltation.—D.

Vers. 1—12.—*The conquest of Og.* Og, King of Bashan, was a yet more formidable adversary than Sihon. We read with wonder of that extraordinary territory over which he ruled, the region of Argob, with its sixty cities built of black stone, hard as iron, and perched amidst the masses of basaltic rock, which are the characteristic feature of the district, and which formed an apparently impregnable barrier against assault. The suddenness, completeness, and decisiveness of the conquest of this region, naturally so strong, so thickly peopled, so powerfully defended, and ruled by a king of the race of giants, is in any view of it, an astonishing fact, and would naturally raise the courage of the Israelites to the highest pitch of confidence, while striking dismay into surrounding nations (ch. ii. 25). We consider—

I. Og's CONFIDENT ATTACK. Like Sihon, he came out against the Israelites, "he and all his people" (ver. 1), and doubtless with great hopes of success. Had he been less confident, he would probably have remained within his fortifications. Though Joshua speaks (xxiv. 12) of him being driven forth by the hornet, the spirit of the attack reminds us of Goliath's boastful advance against the armies of Saul (1 Sam. xvii. 4—12). His assault symbolizes the giant-power of the world in its hostile relations to the Church: pagan—papal—infidel; science—learning—philosophy; powerful in itself, strongly entrenched, boastful in spirit. Voltaire boasted that it took twelve men to set up Christianity, but he would show that one man was sufficient to overthrow it. Christianity lasts still, but Voltaire——?

II. His COMPLETE ROUT (vers. 3—8). Moses dwells on the details of this astonishing victory with lively gratitude and wonder. The victory was, as in Sihon's case, complete, only here more remarkable from the strength of the cities and towns. And again all the people were devoted to destruction (ver. 6). Somewhat analogous to this rout have been many of the victories of Christianity. We think of the downfall of ancient paganism, so strongly entrenched, but now swept so entirely from the earth; of the collapse of eighteenth-century deism; of the mighty men of their own days, boastful of their power to destroy the Church's faith, who are now, like Og, only remembered by their coffins. The tomes of Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, and a

host of others lie unread on dusty shelves, while the Bible is multiplying its circulation every year. New, and it may be even mightier, foes are springing up in our modern agnostic and positivist and pantheistic schools, but to the serious student of history there can be no real doubt as to the issue of the conflict.

III. THE OCCUPATION OF HIS LAND (vers. 9—12). The land and the cities thus conquered were taken possession of by the conquerors, and as speedily as possible occupied. The enemy was dispossessed and spoiled. So did the Church in the early centuries first conquer, and then possess the ground previously held by paganism. "We are of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only" (Tertullian). The same thing takes place as often as the treasures of unbelieving science, learning, and philosophy, in their varied forms and applications (inventions, arts, etc.), fall into the hands of the Church, and are made to subserve her ends. The unbelieving criticism of the Bible, *e.g.*, has furnished a vast amount of material available for the purposes of faith. So the discoveries of science, which were dreaded as hostile, prove at last to be confirmatory and helpful, and are appropriated by belief. Every victory of Christianity in the outward world, or in the regions of thought, enlarges its possessions and extends its influence.—J. O.

Ver. 6.—*The destruction of the populations.* The difficulty is often urged of the numerous cases of the destruction of entire populations recorded in Scripture, and said to be commanded by God. It is a difficulty which all have felt, and which deserves remark. It is not questioned that, as a matter of *policy*, it was wise to root out these populations from the lands in which they dwelt; but the justice and humanity of the measure are thought to be more doubtful. The believer, on the other hand, cannot take a condemnatory view of these transactions (so far as covered by express command); but must treat them as he would treat similar difficulties in the ordinary providence of God, as matters which *appear* to conflict with the Divine goodness and justice, while doubtless admitting of a perfect reconciliation with both. But it may be suggested—

I. THAT THE FINER METHODS OF MODERN WARFARE CANNOT REASONABLY BE LOOKED FOR IN RUDER AGES. War in any case is an evil of terrible magnitude. The sufferings it inflicts, even when conducted most humanely, are incalculable. It is not the men in arms alone who suffer, but the populations whose villages are burned, whose fields are devastated, whose aged and sickly are driven out to perish, whose wives and mothers mourn their dead thousands. Modern warfare has, however, its alleviations, the result of centuries of civilization and of the growth of Christian feeling. These did not, and could not, exist at the time of the conquest. It is not in analogy with God's method of operation to suppose that he should have miraculously anticipated the work of long ages of development, and grafted on these wars the military science of the nineteenth century—a science equally unsuited to the intelligence of the invader and to the tactics of the enemy. It would be as reasonable to allege that God should have anticipated the discoveries and methods of modern surgery, or armed the Israelites with nineteenth-century weapons. What may reasonably be expected is that, adopting as a basis the methods of warfare then customary, the evils of these should as far as possible be mitigated, and any improvements be introduced which the rudeness of the times admitted of. How far this was accomplished will appear to any one who studies the accounts of ancient warfare, with their shocking barbarities, mutilations, tortures; scarcely a trace of which is to be found in the wars of the Israelites, and none in the Law.

II. THAT THE EXTERMINATION OF WHOLE POPULATIONS WAS NOT THE RULE OF JEWISH WARFARE, BUT WAS INVARIABLY A PUNISHMENT INFLICTED FOR SIN. The proof of the former of these propositions will be found in ch. xx. 10—16; and examination of the special cases will show the correctness of the latter. The destruction of the Canaanitish nations, in particular, is put expressly on the ground of their horrible and nameless iniquities (Lev. xviii. 24, 25). It was the execution of a long-delayed and richly deserved judicial sentence. The Midianites and Amalekites incurred this doom through sins against Israel (Numb. xxxii. 16; Exod. xvii. 16); as also to some extent did Sihon and Og. But while we cannot speak absolutely as to the moral state of the nations

under these kings, it may be inferred that the cup of their iniquity had, in the Divine estimation, become full like the others. Do we condemn the sentence as too severe? Or must we not leave the judgment on a point like that to the Judge of all the earth? The essential difficulty is not greater than in the judgments of the Deluge or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in which God claimed a like right to dispose of human life, and to vindicate his justice by the destruction of it. We ought rather to read in the severity of these punishments the awful lesson of sin's evil and enormity, and of the abhorrence in which it is held by the holy Lawgiver. The emphasizing of guilt and its deserts was a necessary preliminary to the introduction of the gospel.

III. THAT GOD IS AS SEVERE IN HIS DEALINGS WITH SIN IN HIS OWN PEOPLE AS IN HIS ENEMIES. This is a point which is surely of great moment. If severe in punishing these wicked nations, God is not less sparing of Israel when it follows in their ways, and does what is wrong. We think here of the destruction of thousands of their number for the sin of the golden calf (Exod. xxxii. 28), and for the sin of Baal-peor (Numb. xxiii. 5); of the plagues, fiery serpents, etc., which chastised them for disobedience; of their defeat at Ai (Josh. vii. 4), and of the threatenings recorded against them in this book (ch. xxviii.). We think of Moses himself excluded from the land of promise. Nor is sin made less of in the New Testament than in the Old. In the cross of Jesus, where the Holy One is made a curse for sinners, a far more affecting demonstration is given of the judicial sternness of God, than in the destruction of the nations of his foes. There is with God no respect of persons; and if one can believe in his love to Israel notwithstanding these inflictions, he may believe in his love and justice notwithstanding the punishments inflicted on the sinful nations around. As regards the Canaanitish nations, their rooting out, so just otherwise, was plainly necessary for the preservation of Israel's purity (ch. vii. 1—6).—J. O.

Vers. 12—20.—*Distribution of territory.* I. CONQUERED TERRITORY IS NOT TO BE LEFT UNOCCUPIED. This is a sound principle. Has a vice been conquered?—replace it by a contrary virtue. Has a soul been converted?—set it to Christian work. Has a new district or a portion of heathenism been won for Christ?—plant it with Christian agencies, industries, and institutions. Replace bad books by good ones; sinful amusements by such as are healthful; pernicious customs by pure forms of social life. Unoccupied territory will soon fall back into the hands of the enemy.

II. CONQUERED TERRITORY IS TO BE WISELY DISTRIBUTED. The distribution of the conquered districts suggests to us how, in the occupation of the fields of service which God gives her, the Church should study order, peace, and the attainment of the higher ends of possession, by wise arrangements. There should be no clashing or confusion of spheres in the kingdom of Christ. We have illustrations of the violation of this rule in the occupation of limited districts by a great number of rival Churches, often working in antagonism to each other; in the appointment of individuals to posts for which they are unsuited; in the confusion arising from workers not knowing their own departments of service, or not keeping to it when known. Whereas here: 1. Each had his portion *carefully defined.* 2. Respect was had to *the talents and callings* of those who were to occupy. "A place for cattle," "much cattle" (Numb. xxxii. 1; cf. ver. 19). 3. Individuals *had their own conquests secured to them* (ver. 14). A man's spiritual conquests are always secured to himself—his conquests *over* himself; and they are his greatest possessions. True also of conquests for Christ in conversions (1 Thess. ii. 19). Should be a principle recognized in the work of the Church.

III. CONQUERED TERRITORY IS HELD ON CONDITION OF ASSISTANCE TO OTHERS. (Vers. 18—21.) 1. Each branch of the Church is to assist the others. 2. It holds its privileges on this condition. 3. The rest of all is needful to the perfect rest of any (Heb. xi. 40).—J. O.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Encouragement.* We notice: 1. Past mercies are a pledge of future ones. "Thine eyes have seen," etc. 2. The past victories of the Church mirror her future conquests. "So shall the Lord do," etc. 3. The conditions of success in spiritual conflict are (1) fearlessness, (2) dependence on Divine aid. "Fear not," etc.—J. O.

Vers. 23—29.—*God's refusal of man's wishes.* We have in this singularly pathetic passage of the private history of Moses—

I. AN AFFECTING ENTREATY. "I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land," etc. (vers. 24, 25). In this speaks: 1. The *man*. How hard to flesh and blood to be cut off just then! To see the goodly land (ver. 27), but not to enter it. Yet not an uncommon experience. Few things are more painful than to be removed when just on the verge of some great success; when the hopes of a lifetime seem just about to be realized; when some great cause with which we are identified is on the eve of final victory. 2. The *patriot*. There never beat in human breast a more patriotic heart than that of Moses, and it was supremely hard to step aside and commit the leadership into other hands, when all his wishes for his nation were so nearly fulfilled. It was Israel's triumph, not his own, he wished to celebrate. 3. The *saint*. For Moses' deepest longing in the matter after all was to see God glorified—to witness his greatness and his mighty hand (ver. 24). No man had ever seen as much of God's greatness and glory as he had, but what he had seen only whetted his desire to see more. It is always thus with saintly natures. The thirst for the manifestation of God increases with the gratification of it (Ps. lxiii. 1—6; cf. Exod. xxxiii. 18—20). "Father, glorify thy name" (John xii. 28).

II. A DECISIVE REFUSAL. 1. The *cause* of it. "Wroth with me for your sakes" (ver. 26). How painful to feel that misconduct of ours has involved any (1) in sin, (2) in penalty, (3) in disappointment! 2. The *severity* of it. It seems a great punishment for a not very great offence. Yet how often do we find that one false step, "one pause in self-control," entails on the individual irretrievable loss! God could not allow the sin of one who stood in so close and personal relation to him to pass without putting on it the stamp of his severe displeasure. 3. The *irreversibility* of it. He who had succeeded so often in saving Israel by his powerful intercession, fails in his intercession for himself. "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter" (ver. 26). Moses, the mediator and representative of the Law, must, when he sins, undergo its severity. In a case so typical, a reversal of the sentence would have shaken faith in all God's threatenings. He interceded for others, but there was no second Moses to intercede for him. Those who live nearest to God, and are most honoured by him, must expect to be treated with exceptional strictness for their faults; as a father is more particular about the morals of his own son than about those of servants and aliens.

III. A PARTIAL COMPENSATION. It was given him: 1. *To see the goodly land* (ver. 27). Even this he must have felt to be a great boon, and how his eyes, supernaturally strengthened, must have drunk in the precious vision! How many toilers have to leave the world in this frame of mind—getting glimpses of a future they do not live to inherit! 2. *To know that his successor was ready* (ver. 28). There are few sights more suggestive of magnanimity than Moses meekly surrendering his own dearest wishes, and helping to prepare Joshua for the work which he coveted so much to do himself. It may be felt by us that there was kindness as well as severity in the arrangement which gave Israel a new leader. "The conquest of Canaan—a most colossal work—demanded fresh, youthful powers" (Oosterzee). The work of Moses was indeed done on earth, and he had to pass away to make room for instruments better fitted to do the work of the new age.

CONCLUSION. In this refusal see (1) God's severity, (2) God's kindness. For in addition to the point just mentioned, we can see how, from his temporal loss, Moses reaped a great spiritual gain—the perfecting of his will in its choice of God as its exclusive portion, and in entire acquiescence in Divine arrangements. This great renunciation was the last sacrifice asked of him, and he rose to the heroic height of making it.—J. O.

Vers. 1—17.—*The destruction of Og, King of Bashan.* We have here an account of another conquest, for which the victory over Sihon, King of the Amorites, prepared the people. Bashan was "called the land of the giants" (ver. 13), and Og, the king, was manifestly the greatest of the giants—hence the particulars about his bedstead, as being nine cubits long and four broad (ver. 11). In a rude age and country, *force* was the recognized ruler, and the biggest man in consequence was chosen chief. It was living and reigning by *sense* and *sight*—the world's regular way. Here, then, let us observe that—

I. THE VICTORY OVER SIHON, KING OF THE AMORITES, WAS A NEEDFUL PREPARATION FOR THE MORE SERIOUS ENTERPRISE OF THE CONQUEST OF BASHAN. The Lord leads his people, even in *war*, "from strength to strength." They try their swords upon the Amorites successfully before attempting to subdue the giants. They get a taste of successful war before they are asked to undertake the greater and more serious task of exterminating the giants of Bashan.

And so it is in fighting the good fight of faith. One little victory over an easily besetting sin gives nerve for a greater task. The muscles of the soul grow strong through exercise, and greater victories are gained. Faithfulness in the little conducts to faithfulness in that which is much (Luke xvi. 10).

II. THE GIANTS BY THEIR UNWALLED TOWNS PROVED THEIR INTENSE FEELING OF SECURITY. They had their strongholds, no doubt, as "the giant cities of Bashan" still attest. But they had "unwalled towns a great many" (ver. 5). It is evident from this that their sense of personal security was intense. They confided in their size and powers. They imagined no one would have the temerity to attack them. It was the contrast to "assurance of faith"—what we might call "the assurance of sense."

And this characterizes the enemies of God's people more or less always. Self-confidence is the source of their power and of their misfortune in the end. It is an easy victory eventually which the Lord's people, who have learned to have "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3), obtain over their self-confident foes.

III. THE VICTORY OVER THE GIANTS WAS COMPLETE, AMOUNTING TO AN EXTERMINATION. "And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon, King of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city" (ver. 6). This was absolutely necessary, as well as by the giants deserved. Had such foes been spared in the rear of the invasion, the Israelites would have had no sense of security. It was impossible to "mask these fortresses," as great armies can sometimes afford to do in modern warfare. It was better to exterminate these foes. They did so as the servants of God. His command was their warrant, and made their act defensible on moral as well as strategic grounds.

And the victory God gives his people over their sins and foes is at last complete.

IV. THE ALLOTMENT OF BASHAN AND THE LANDS ON THIS SIDE JORDAN GAVE THE INVADERS OF CANAAN AN IMPORTANT BASE OF OPERATIONS. No longer would they be, like Sherman in his advance through Savannah, marching on without a base. God gave them in Bashan the leverage they needed. Here they quartered the non-combatants till the land over Jordan was won.

And so is it in the spiritual life. Out of one conquest future conquests are organized. We go forward in God's guidance along a safe path to perfect victory.—R. M. E.

Vers. 18—20.—*The pioneers of the invasion of Palestine.* Here the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites are directed to "intern" their wives, little ones, and cattle in the cities of Bashan, which were now literally free from the race of the giants, and then to go armed across the Jordan before their fellows, the van of the invading host. These pioneers become thus the least encumbered of the invaders. Their non-combatants are safe in the cities of Bashan, their cattle are in good pastures, they may go with easy minds and light hearts to the war. Their purpose in the invasion is not selfish, but perfectly disinterested. They go to fight for their brethren, and to carve out homes for them beyond the river.

We have here a Divine law, as it seems to us, of very practical application. To sketch this let us notice—

I. GOD GIVES REST AND INHERITANCE TO INDIVIDUALS THAT THEY MAY INTEREST THEMSELVES IN SECURING SIMILAR BLESSINGS FOR OTHERS. Beginning with the lowest inheritance, we would observe that, when God gives individuals *riches*, it is not that they may be *excused* from public work, but *enabled* for it. A servant of God who finds himself wealthy is not superannuated, but supported for public ends. He is bound to do all he can with and by his means.

But this law has a still happier spiritual side. When God blesses us with assurance of salvation, it is that his way may be known on earth, and his saving health among all nations (Ps. lxvii. 1, 2). He makes us peaceful and happy in Christ that we may, with unburdened spirits, seek the salvation of those around us.

II. ASSURANCE OF SALVATION SHOULD THEREFORE BE SOUGHT BY EACH OF US ON PUBLIC GROUNDS. It is not a personal matter only, but a public interest as well. The world will be less benefited by us if we are constantly in doubt about personal salvation. We are in such a case marching without a base. It is a risky kind of warfare.

Let us seek from God, on *public* grounds, the priceless blessing of assurance, and then we shall be able to lose sight of self in seeking the common weal.

III. DISINTERESTEDNESS IS THE SECRET OF SUCCESSFUL WARFARE. The Reubenites and their fellows in the van must have commanded the respect not only of those behind them, but of the Canaanites with whom they had to contend. It was the first time, since Abraham's rescue of Lot, that warriors had appeared from purely disinterested motives in the field of battle.

And in matters spiritual it is the same. The ministry of Christ is, speaking generally, an ill-paid profession. There is the less chance, then, of men entering this service for a piece of bread. Disinterestedness is more likely to be the rule. With other Christians it is the same. When people are compelled to recognize disinterestedness, the chief part of the battle is won.

IV. THE THOUGHT OF HAVING HELPED OTHERS TO REST IN THE LORD ENHANCES OUR OWN REST IN HIM. The Reubenites, etc., must have come back to their homes in Bashan with great satisfaction. They felt that they had done a good, unselfish work in the campaign. They were not fighting for their own hand, but for the welfare of others. So in the spiritual warfare, when we become instruments in God's hand in leading others to rest in him, we find our rest deepened and made more glorious. May it be the joy of many !—R. M. E.

Vers. 21—29.—*Moses' longing to enter the promised land refused.* The two conquests over Sihon and over Og had filled Moses with a sense of God's matchless power. With a warrior's instinct—for he had had a warrior's training, it is believed, in Egypt, in his youth—he saw in this first portion of the fight the assurance of a glorious invasion. He longed to be at its head, and to see the land which God had promised actually won. Will he not get complete the work he has been instrumental in beginning? He pleaded with God for it, but all he gets is a Pisgah-view; he is denied an entrance into the land.

I. IT WAS NATURAL FOR MOSES TO LONG FOR THE COMPLETION OF HIS WORK. The Exodus was his special work. All else in his life was preparatory to this. But the Exodus was to be finished in the invasion of Canaan and the settlement of the people there. Moses is now so interested in the work which he has had on hand for forty years that he is loth to leave it.

So with God's servants often. They form plans, plans manifestly Divine, and they long to complete them. But God does not respond always to these very natural desires. Public work is attempted—literary work—but the sowing and the reaping are often separated. One soweth, another reapeth.

II. IT IS A GREAT PRIVILEGE TO BE ALLOWED TO ENCOURAGE THOSE COMING AFTER US. Moses is directed to encourage Joshua. This is something done towards successful invasion. An encouraged Joshua may do better than an ever-present Moses. And the privilege of encouragement is greatly prized. Joshua receives all from Moses that son could receive from father, that a leader could receive from his superior and guide (vers. 21, 22).

And our successors should be encouraged by us all we can, as one of life's last and best privileges.

III. A PISGAH-VIEW IS FITTING COMPENSATION, BACKED UP AS IT WAS BY SPECIAL CARE. Moses saw the land at last, and died with God, reserved by the All-wise for an entrance into Canaan at the transfiguration of Christ. The view from Pisgah was grand, but the view on Hermon was grander. His entrance of the land with Elijah in glory was grander than an entrance at the head of the hosts of Israel.

And these views from Pisgah may still be ours if we seek the appointed mountain-top of God. He calls us to mountain-tops of prayer and meditation, and shows us wondrous glimpses of his glory and his promises. To be with him there is compensation for much disappointment.

IV. A FAITHFUL SON MAY EXPERIENCE A FATHER'S DESERVED WRATH. Moses

admits that God was wroth with him, and states the reason. It is well to recognize that deserved wrath and chastisement may coexist with profound and tender love. Moses was well beloved, even though excluded from the land of promise. God gave him paradise instead of Canaan.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1—40.—ADMONITIONS AND EXHORTATIONS. Moses, having presented to the people certain facts in their recent history which had in them a specially animating and encouraging tendency, proceeds to direct his discourse to the inculcation of duties and exhortations to obedience to the Divine enactments. This portion also of his address is of an introductory character as well as what precedes.

Vers. 1—8.—*Exhortation to the observance of the Law generally.* The Law was to be kept as a complete whole; nothing was to be taken from it or added to it; it comprised the commandments of Jehovah, and therefore they were not only to do it as what Moses, their leader and lawgiver, had enjoined, but to keep it as a sacred deposit, not to be altered or tampered with, and to observe it as what God their Sovereign had enacted for them. The dignity and worth of the Law are here asserted, and also its completeness as given by Moses. Any addition to it, no less than any subtraction from it, would mar its integrity and affect its perfection. Altered circumstances in process of time might, indeed, lead to the desuetude of some parts of the Mosaic enactments, and new institutions or laws might be required to meet a new condition of things, or even in that new condition to fence and sustain the primitive code; but that code was to remain intact in the Statute-Book, and no alterations were to be made upon it that should affect its substance or nullify any of its principles. New laws and institutions appointed by God would, of course, have the same authority as those originally ordained by Moses; and such, it can hardly be doubted, were in point of fact under the Hebrew monarchy introduced by the prophets speaking in the name of God. The Law, nevertheless, was kept substantially entire. Even under the new dispensation, the Law has not been abolished. Christ, as he himself declared, came not to destroy the Law and the prophets, but to fulfil them (Matt. v. 17). The sin of the Pharisees, for which they were censured by our Lord, lay in this, that they taught for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. xv. 9), and had "made the commandments of God of none effect by their traditions" (Matt. xv. 6).

Vers. 1, 2.—**Now therefore**; rather *And now.* With this Moses passes from referring to what God had done for Israel to admonish Israel as to what they had to do as the subjects of God and the recipients of his favour. They were to give heed to all the statutes and judgments which Moses, as the servant of God, had taught them, in order that they might do them. **Statutes** (חֻקִּים), the things prescribed or enacted by law, whether moral, ritual, or civil; **judgments** (מִשְׁפָּטִים), *rights*, whether public or private, all that each could claim as his due, and all he was bound to render to God or to his fellow-men as their due. These two comprehend the whole Law as binding on Israel. On the doing of these by the people depended *life;* these had been made known to them, not merely for their information, but specifically that they might do them, and thereby have life; not long life in the promised land alone, though this also is included (ver. 40; ch. v. 33; vi. 2, etc.), but that higher life, that life which man lives "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (ch. viii. 3; cf. Lev. xviii. 5; Ezek. xx. 11; Matt. iv. 4), that spiritual life which is in God's favour (Ps. xxx. 5). Enjoying this life as the fruit of obedience, they should also possess as their inheritance the land promised to their fathers.

Vers. 3, 4.—The people had had personal experience of the danger, on the one hand, of transgressing, and the benefit, on the other, of keeping God's Law; they had seen how those who sinned in worshipping Baal-peor were destroyed (Numb. xxv. 3, 9), whilst those who remained faithful to the Lord were kept alive. This experience the people had had only lately before, so that a reference to it would be all the more impressive. **Baal-peor**, the idol whose *cultus*

was observed at Peor. Baal (*Bal, Be'el, Bel*, Lord) was the common name of the supreme deity among the northern of the Semitic-speaking people, the Canaanites, the Phœnicians, the Aramæans, and the Assyrians. There were thus many Baals. **Followed**: *walked after*; a common Biblical expression for religious adherence and service (cf. Jer. viii. 2; ix. 14; and with a different formula, Numb. xxxii. 12; Deut. i. 36; Josh. xiv. 8; Judg. ii. 12, etc.). **Ye that did cleave unto Jehovah your God.** "To cleave unto one" is expressive of the closest, most intimate attachment and communion (cf. Gen. ii. 24; Isa. xiv. 1). The phrase is frequently used of devotion to the service and worship of the true God (cf. Deut. x. 20; Josh. xxii. 5; xxiii. 8; Acts ii. 23, etc.); here it expresses the contrast between the conduct of those who remained faithful to Jehovah and those who forsook him to worship Baal. **Are alive every one of you this day.** "Thus they that keep themselves pure in general defections, are saved from the common destruction (Ezek. ix. 4—6; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Rev. xx. 4)" (Ainsworth).

Vers. 5, 6.—The institutes of Moses were the commandments of Jehovah, and therefore obedience to them was imperative. By this was conditioned the enjoyment by Israel of the promised land; and this would be their **wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations**; to themselves it would be life, and to the nations it would convey an impression of their being the depositories of true wisdom and knowledge, so that they should be constrained to say, **Surely a wise and understanding people is this great nation.** "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that is wise winneth souls" (Prov. xi. 30). God's statutes make wise the simple (Ps. xix. 8; cxix. 98, 99); and they who are thus made wise attract the attention of others by the fame of their wisdom. Thus the Queen of Sheba heard in her distant country of the wisdom of Solomon, and came to him to commune with him of all that was in her heart (1 Kings x. 1, etc.); and many throughout the ages who were seeking after truth among the heathen, were drawn to Israel by seeing how with them was the true knowledge of God. Israel was thus exalted because God was nigh to them, ready to hear their cry and to give them what they needed; which none of the gods of the nations were or could be to their votaries; and because, in the Law which God had given them, they had such instruction and direction as no heathen nation possessed.

Vers. 7, 8.—Translate, *For what great nation is there that hath gods that draw near to it, as Jehovah our God whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that hath righteous statutes and ordinances like this whole Law which I am giving before you this day?* (comp. ch. xxxiii. 20; Ps. xxxiv. 17—20; cxlv. 18; 1 Sam. xiv. 36; 1 Kings xviii. 26—29, 37; Jas. iv. 8). "True right has its roots in God; and with the obscuration of the knowledge of God, law and right, with their divinely established foundations, are also shaken and obscured (cf. Rom. i. 26—32)" (Keil).

Vers. 9—14.—The possession of the oracles of God by Israel was a benefit to them only as these were kept in mind and reverently obeyed. Therefore they were to take heed and diligently beware of forgetting the circumstances under which the Law had been received at Horeb. God had then commanded the people to be gathered together, so that they stood before the Lord, were in his manifested presence, and were made to hear his voice speaking to them from amidst the fire and the clouds that covered the mount. They had thus actual evidence and guarantee that the Law they had received was Divine; and this they were to keep in mind as long as they lived, and to communicate to their children in all coming time, that so they might fear the Lord; for on this rested that covenant which God had made with Israel, and which they were to keep as the condition of their continuing to enjoy privilege and life.

Ver. 9.—**Keep thy soul diligently**; *i.e.* Be very careful to preserve thy life (cf. Job ii. 6; Prov. xiii. 3; xvi. 17; xix. 16; in all which passages the same formula is used as here). The Hebrew (נֶפֶשׁ) means primarily breath, then vital principle, natural life (*anima*), then soul life, the soul or mind (*animus*). The forgetting of the wonders they had seen would lead to their forgetting God, and so to their departing from him, and this would mar and ultimately destroy their life (cf. Josh. xxiii. 11—16). **The things which thine eyes have seen** (see Exod. xix. 10, etc.).

Ver. 10.—**Specially the day.** The word "specially," introduced by the translators into the Authorized Version, is a needless interpolation. With this verse begins a new sentence, which is continued in ver. 11 on to the end of ver. 13. Render, *On the day* [i.e. at the time, the יוֹם is an adverbial accusative] *when ye stood before Jehovah your God in Horeb, . . . when ye came near and stood, . . . then Jehovah spake to you*, etc.

Ver. 11.—**The mountain burned with fire unto the midst** [unto the heart] **of heaven**; *i.e.* up to the very skies; a rhetorical de-

scription of the mighty pillar of fire that blazed on Sinai, and betokened the presence of him whose symbol is fire. **With darkness, clouds** [cloud], **and thick darkness**; underneath the fire was a cloud of deep darkness, out of which it blazed, the "thick cloud" of Exod. xix. 9, 16, and the "smoke" out of which the lightnings flashed, and over which the glory of the Lord, like devouring fire, rested on the top of the mountain (Exod. xix. 18; xx. 18; xxiv. 16, 17).

Ver. 12.—On this occasion the people **heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude**; there was no form or shape apparent to the eye. No man can see God's face (Exod. xxxiii. 20, 23); "no man hath seen God at any time" (John i. 18); and though the nobles or elders of Israel who went up with Moses into the mount are said to have seen God, it is evident that what they saw was only some luminous manifestation of his glory, and not a form or shape of which a similitude could be made (Exod. xxiv. 9—17). Even Moses, with whom God said that he would speak mouth to mouth, and who should behold the similitude of God (Numb. xii. 8), was told that he could not see his face, his essential personality, but only his back, the reflection of his glory (Exod. xxxiii. 18—23).

Ver. 13.—**His covenant**; God's gracious engagement with Israel for their good, and by which they were bound to observe all his commandments. God declared this at Sinai when he uttered the ten commandments (words, דְּבָרִים), "the words of the covenant, the ten words" (Exod. xxxiv. 28), which he afterwards gave to Moses on two tables of stone, written with the finger of God (Exod. xxiv. 12; xxxi. 18). Besides these, there were other statutes and ordinances which Moses was commanded to teach the people, and which, with them, comprised the Law given at Sinai (see Exod. xxi. and following chapters).

Vers. 15—20.—As the people had seen no form or figure when God spake to them, so they were to beware for their very lives (cf. ver. 9) of acting corruptly by making any kind of image, whether of man or of beast, for the purpose of worshipping God as represented by it; they were also to beware of being so attracted by the splendour of the heavenly bodies as to be forcibly seduced to worship them and offer them religious service. They were not in this respect to imitate the heathen; for God, who had delivered them out of the furnace of Egyptian bondage, had taken them for himself to be his special possession; and therefore they were to take heed not to forget the covenant of Jehovah their God, nor to offend him by making any image or representation of him as the object of worship. Among the heathen, and especially in Egypt, images were the very pillar and support of religion; but in Israel, as God had revealed himself to them without form, it was as a spirit he was to be worshipped, and not under any outward representation.

Ver. 16.—**Graven image** (פֶּסֶל), carved work or sculpture, whether of wood, or metal, or stone—**the similitude of any figure**—the form of any idol (סֶמֶל, form, statue, idol)—**the likeness**—figure (תַּבְנִית, a building, a model, a form, or figure)—**of male or female**—in apposition to *graven image*, and illustrative of it.

Vers. 17, 18.—**The likeness**—the figure—**of any beast**, etc. A warning against the animal-worship of Egypt.

Ver. 19.—**Lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven**, etc. The worship of the heavenly bodies, especially star worship, prevailed among the Canaanites and many of the Semitic tribes, but was not confined to them; the Egyptians also reverenced the sun as Ra, the moon as Isis, and the stars as the symbols of deities. The Israelites were thus, both from past associations and from what they might encounter in Canaan, exposed to the danger of being seduced into idolatry. **Shouldest be driven**: *shouldest be urged on, drawn*, or *constrained* (cf. ch. xiii. 13). **Which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.** God had allotted (חָלַק) to all mankind the heavenly bodies for their advantage (Gen. i. 14—18; Ps. civ. 19; Jer. xxxi. 35); it was, therefore, not competent for any one nation to seek to appropriate them as specially theirs, and it was absurd for any to offer religious service to objects intended for the service of man. Targum: *Which the Lord thy God prepared for all peoples under heaven*; Vulgate: *Quæ creavit Dominus Deus tuus in ministerium cunctis gentibus.* This seems better than the interpretation that God had "allotted them for worship, *i.e.* had permitted them [the nations] to choose them as the objects of their worship" (Keil, etc.); for: 1. There is no distinction here between the Hebrews and the other nations of the earth; "all nations" includes them as well as the heathen. 2. Though God permitted the heathen to worship the heavenly bodies, he never allotted these to men in order that they might worship them. "It noteth God's bounty in giving all people the use of those creatures, and the base mind of man to worship such things as are given for servants unto men" (Ainsworth).

Ver. 20.—**Iron furnace**—furnace for smelting iron: "figure of burning torment in Egypt" (Herxheimer). This reference to the smelting of iron shows that, though the implements of the ancient Egyptians were mostly of copper, iron must also have been in extensive use among them. Other references to the use of iron are to be found in the Pentateuch; see Gen. iv. 22; Lev. xxvi. 19; Numb. xxxv. 16; ch. iii. 11; viii. 9; xix. 5; xxvii. 5 (Goguet, 'Origine des Lois,' i. 172; Wilkinson, 'Ancient Egypt,' i. 169; ii. 155). **To be unto him a people**, etc. (cf. Exod. xix. 4—6; ch. vii. 6).

Vers. 21—24.—Moses, after again referring to his being not permitted to enter Canaan, takes occasion anew to warn the people against forgetting the covenant of Jehovah and making any image of God, seeing he is a jealous God, and a consuming fire.

Ver. 21.—**The Lord was angry with me . . . and sware**, etc. Neither in Numb. xx. 12, nor in Numb. xxvii. 12—14, is there any mention of God's having *sworn* that Moses should not enter Canaan with the people; but it is absurd to suppose, as some have done, that the writer here has confounded this with what is recorded in Numb. xiv. 21, 28,—that is inconceivable; and it certainly does not follow, because no mention is made in Numbers of God's having sworn, that he did not swear on this occasion; if he confirmed with an oath his decree that the generation that rebelled at Kâdesh should not enter Canaan, the probability surely is that he would do the same when he announced to Moses the decree that he should not conduct Israel into the promised land. "It is perfectly obvious, from ch. iii. 23, *sqq.*, that all the details are not given in the historical account of the event referred to" (Keil).

Ver. 23.—**A graven image, or the likeness of any thing**, etc.—literally, *a graven* (sculptured) *image of a form of all that Jehovah thy God hath commanded thee; s.c.* not to make (cf. ch. 16—18 and ii. 37).

Ver. 24.—**A consuming fire.** When God spoke to Israel at Sinai, his glory appeared "like devouring (consuming) fire on the top of the mount" (Exod. xxiv. 17); and in allusion to this Moses here calls God "a consuming fire." He is so to all his enemies, and to all who disobey him; by severe inflictions he will punish, and, if they persist in their hostility and rebellion, will ultimately destroy them (comp. ch. ix. 3; Isa. x. 16—18; Amos v. 6; Zeph. i. 18; Heb. xii. 29). **A jealous God**; LXX., Θεὸς ζηλωτής. God has a burning zeal for his own glory; he guards it with jealous care; and he will not spare those who do him dishonour, especially those who are guilty of idolatry, whereby they "change the truth of God into a lie" (Rom. i. 25; cf. Exod. xx. 5; ch. vi. 14, 15; xxxii. 16, etc.; Ps. lxxviii. 58, etc.; Nah. i. 2). He is jealous also over his people, because he loves them, and will not endure any rival in their affection and devotion.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Life and prosperity dependent on obedience to God.* In this paragraph Moses indicates, by the word "therefore," the purpose he has had in the review in which he had been indulging. It was not for the mere rehearsal's sake that the varied incidents in Israel's career were thus recalled to memory, but to stimulate the people anew to obedience, by reminding them how strong was the reason for it, and how great would be the blessedness of it. It was then, as it is now, "godliness is profitable for all things;" and though that would be a low standard of virtue attained by a man who served God merely for what he could get by it, yet, on the other hand, *if no good came of it*, the reason for it would certainly be seriously affected in the influence it had on a man. There is a mean and selfish form of utilitarianism. But if, when a man contends for utility as the foundation of virtue, he means by utility "a tendency to promote the highest good, on the largest scale, for the longest period," there is nothing selfish or mean about the theory *then*, whether we accept it as sound philosophy or no. And it is certain that our Lord Jesus Christ meant considerations of profit to weigh with men (see Matt. xvi. 25, 26). Observe—

I. GOD'S STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS ARE THE BEST MORAL AND SPIRITUAL FURNITURE WITH WHICH A PEOPLE CAN BE ENRICHED. The word "statutes" includes "the moral commandments and statutory covenant laws." "Judgments" are precepts enjoining what is due from men to man or to God. Sometimes we get the word "commandments," including both the former; at other times we have the word "testimonies," in which duty is looked at as that concerning which God bears testimony to man

Now, men will rise or fall according as the moral nature is cultured or neglected. And it is because the Divine precepts constitute a directory for our highest selves, that they are so invaluable to us. Doubtless, to some extent, the Law of God is still graven in the hearts and consciences of men; and if men were perfect, the Law written on the heart would be clear enough. But as men neglect God's Law, they come to fail in discerning it. The characters written inwardly are more and more faint, and, lest it should cease from among men, our God has had his will graciously recorded in a Book, our constant standard of appeal, our unvarying directory of right!

II. THESE STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS ARE TO BE PRESERVED INTACT. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." The manifestation of the tendency of men to do one or the other, yea both, is one of the saddest chapters in human history (see Homily on ch. xii. 32). (Cf. Jer. xxvi. 2; Prov. xxx. 6; Rev. xxii. 18, 19; Matt. v. 19; xv. 1—13.) Scepticism violates God's Law by subtracting from it; superstition, by adding to it. Our appeal must ever be "to the Law and to the testimony," and the appeal will only be valid, nay, will only be possible, as both are preserved intact and kept free from the tampering of men.

III. THEY ARE TO BE PRESERVED IN THEIR ENTIRETY, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY BE OBEYED IN THEIR ENTIRETY. Hearken, for to do them (see John xiii. 17; Jas. i. 22). A mere reverence for the letter, without obedience to the spirit, is displeasing to God. Jesus Christ complained of this among the Jews (John v. 38—40). A written law, honoured as to its preservation, but yet neglected in life, is a silent witness against us (John v. 45). Men may rest in *having* the oracles of God, and may cherish even up to the last, vain hopes of acceptance on the ground of privilege, but they will be unde-ceived (Matt. vii. 21—27). Obedience to the Law of God includes the two great duties of trust in a great salvation and loyalty to moral precepts. No man was allowed to trifle with the sacrificial code any more than with the ethical: both formed parts of the Law; both were to be observed with equal exactitude.

IV. OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW WOULD BE FOR ISRAEL'S WEAL, AND WAS THE CONDITION OF THEIR CONTINUANCE IN THE LAND. Ver. 1, "That ye may live," etc. The word "life" is very far from being a mere synonym for "existence." It is equivalent to "*healthful existence*," a state of being in which all his powers and functions are in harmonious exercise, and directed to their proper objects and ends. Nor can any one doubt that obedience to the laws of God has a tendency to promote true comfort and success in this life, while it is certainly the truest, yea, the only, preparation for the next. Besides, the blessing of God is promised to the obedient. If a man's life *accords with* the laws of God, he will find out how conducive obedience is to good. But if he "strives with his Maker," his life-course will bristle up with prickles everywhere.

V. AS WE LOOK ROUND, WE MAY SEE SAD EXAMPLES OF THE REVERSE, FROM WHICH WE MAY TAKE WARNING. (See the sad history of Baal-peor, referred to in ver. 3.) Surely we should take warning from that, and from too many similar instances. The prevalence of lust will be destructive of life's beauty, peace, power, and hope.

VI. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PEACE AND JOY, ATTENDANT UPON A LIFE OF LOYALTY TO GOD, IS A STRONG ARGUMENT FOR CONTINUANCE THEREIN. Ver. 4, "Ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day." What would the victims of lust and greed and passion give if they could but have the calm peacefulness of one who follows the Lord fully! But that cannot be. The test of a life for God is God's own seal to its worth in his eye (cf. Ps. xci.); while (*cæt. par.*) long life is ensured by the healthy state of body which a righteous life induces. And the hope—the good hope *through grace*—which gilds the outlook, oh, the unutterable joy of that!

IN CONCLUSION. 1. It is just as imperative, in a Christian point of view, for us to combine obedience to the sacrificial and ethical law of the gospel, as it was for the Hebrews to obey both parts of their Law. No outside virtues performed in a legal, self-righteous spirit will save us. Nor will any trust in the sacrifice of Christ, apart from holiness, be accepted. Both faith in Christ and holy living, form inseparable parts of a true obedience to God. 2. The rich fulness of peace which those enjoy who trust, love, and obey, is far greater under the gospel than it could have been under the Law of Moses, because, in Christ, the revelation of Divine love is so much clearer, and the "blessed hope" is so much brighter. Christ gives us a rest in himself, and the life he

quickens and sustains in believers is a restful life (see Rom. v. 1—11; Phil. iv. 4—7). "Though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is life indeed!

Vers. 5—9.—*National greatness dependent on obedience to God.* In these verses we have a continuation of the address of Moses to the people. He had previously reminded them of incidents which had occurred. He here points out to them the advantageous position they are privileged to occupy, and shows them how to maintain and perpetuate it. He reminds them of the following points:—1. That theirs was the very special privilege of having God nigh unto them as the Lord their God (see also vers. 32—34). 2. That they would occupy a prominent place among the nations round about (cf. Exod. ix. 16; xv. 14; Numb. xiv. 13—21; ch. xxviii. 10). 3. That the corner-stone of their national life and honour was the worship of God and the practice of righteousness. Their "statutes and judgments" were characterized by this special mark—they were *righteous* above those of any other nation[1] (ver. 8). 4. That the carrying out into action of these precepts was their only wise course (ver. 6). 5. That such wisdom would be their true greatness, and such greatness would win them regard and honour from surrounding peoples (ver. 6). [This was actually the case to a very large extent. Our space will not allow us even to touch on the matter here; but careful research will show the student how Israel's greatness has manifested itself in the influence exerted by them in modifying the religion, philosophy, literature, politics, institutions, and moral judgments of the world. First, among the Egyptians, Canaanites, and Phœnicians; and then among the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. See Wines, Gale, Stillingfleet, and others.] 6. That it behoves them to "keep and do" these precepts, to retain them in their heart, to hand them down to their children, and to take constant care of themselves. In turning all this to pulpit use for modern times, observe—

I. THERE ARE CERTAIN PRINCIPLES, THE APPLICATION OF WHICH WILL SECURE THE TRUE GREATNESS OF A PEOPLE. It is becoming to a true patriot to think of his country as being renowned among the nations of the earth. Jehovah evidently meant the people to be moved by such an ambition. It is far more healthful to direct natural desires into a right channel than to try to suppress them. Let a man cherish the most fervent wish to see his country unsurpassed among the people. God promises this as the result of his blessing. Thou shalt be "the head, and not the tail." But observe: *No conspicuousness is so much to be desired as that arising from wisdom and understanding.* The prominence which arises from moral influence is that alone which is worth striving after. Any influence by which we help to lift up other nations in virtue and power, is worth infinitely more than that which comes of martial valour, or diplomatic tactics, or such supremacy over a people as shall simply make them stand amazed at the length of our purse, or the precision and deadly fire of our arms. To be known as the wisest people, so that others seek in friendly emulation to learn from us—this is an eminence any patriot well may desire for the land he loves. But observe: *This will depend on the amount of moral culture in a people,* i.e. on the degree of clearness with which a people see what is right, on the measure of force they put forth in the pursuit of it, and on the firmness with which they insist on the right being paramount to any considerations of power, expediency, or gain. "The throne shall be established in righteousness." "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." Not only in the individual, the family, and the social life must righteousness be the chief corner-stone of a common weal, but in those acts in which a man has to play the part of a citizen, and in which a nation has to do with other nations. Righteousness may not be eliminated from politics, nor may it play a subordinate part. Universal, eternal, unchangeable, are the laws of righteousness, and by whomsoever they are violated—by individuals, families, Churches, or nations—such violation will surely be followed by remorse and shame. *The truest form of moral culture is loyalty to the Divine Being and his commands.* No nation ever has or ever can thrive without the recognition of a Great Supreme. It is only the fool, the "*nabal*," the withered one, who

[1] Should the difficulty here suggest itself, whether the command to exterminate the Canaanites was right, see the suggestions in Homily on ch. i. 1—8, by way of reply.

says there is no God. And no nation which ignores the duty of loyalty to God will ever be great. But then in the Book, as the world's grandest moral text-book, there are statutes, precepts, testimonies, judgments, for the regulation of life, both individually and collectively. The appeal of ver. 8 is still valid, "What nation is there . . . that hath statutes and judgments *so righteous* as all this Law, which I set before you this day?' We know how the Law may be summed up: "All the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law." *And this principle of love to all, carried out in loyalty to God, will ensure that greatness which is most worth having.* The Egyptians were at one time renowned for learning, the Phœnicians for their commerce; the men of Bashan for their giant strength; Greece for its philosophy; Rome for her "imperium et libertas." Their sway has gone. But the Hebrew race, by whom first and alone this law of love was proclaimed as the one guiding principle of a nation's life, is living in its literature the grandest of all lives, and swaying, with the sceptre of its *one Perfect Man*, men of different nations, tribes, and tongues in every quarter of the globe. Yes, this one law of love has given to the Hebrew race a greatness it will never lose. The brightest streaks of light on the globe now are to be discerned only where the law of love is known and obeyed; that law given by Moses, brought in by Jesus Christ. And in proportion as nations follow and act out this law, will they attain to the only greatness on which heaven smiles. "The world passeth away and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." This righteousness is in itself an armour of light—a nation's best defence. For on "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth" will God's blessing rest, and, next to the Divine blessing, the good will of the nations is our surest and happiest guard.

II. HERE IS AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE AS INDIVIDUALS TO TAKE HEED TO THESE PRINCIPLES. The appeal is fourfold in this paragraph. 1. "*Keep therefore and do them.*" There is as much obedience to God in the nation as is rendered to him by individual souls, *and no more.* Hence it is the part of the true patriot who desires his nation's greatness to see that he is living the life which will help to make the nation great. 2. This is not to be superficial work, but the Law is to be *in the heart.* Not an accidental, surface life, but an intelligent and designed direction of the inner and outer life according to God's ways and Word. 3. This law of righteousness, truth, and love *is to be handed down* from sire to son, and so on to generation after generation. The parent is to be the true depositor, conservator, teacher, and transmitter of God's Law. He is to live after he has gone in the truth he has taught, and, when he is dead, his speech is to be moulding the young hearts of a nation. 4. Each one is to put a careful guard around himself, lest any of the baneful influences around him should destroy or weaken his loyalty to God and the right. "Take care of thyself;"—such is the meaning of the phrase in ver. 9 (cf. Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"). It is easy to gather from the Book of Deuteronomy against what influences the ancient Hebrews would have to guard. These influences, hostile to unswerving loyalty, vary with each land and race and age. A careful observation and knowledge of the times will show us against what foes we have at all points to be armed. Let us take the whole armour of God. Let us save ourselves from this untoward generation. Let us play the man and the citizen, with hearts loyal to our Saviour, jealous for the right and the true, fearing God, but having no fear beside!

Vers. 11—20.—*Israel's peculiar relation to God.* This paragraph sets forth in earnest appeal the peculiar and distinctive relation to God in which Israel was placed. (For the precise details of the point in their history here referred to, see Exod. xix.; and for the application of several of the expressions used both here and there to believers in Christ under the Christian dispensation, see 1 Pet. ii. 9.) Here is a noble theme for the preacher—*Israel's special relation to God, typical of and fulfilled in the present relation of Christian people to him.*

I. LET US STUDY THE PECULIAR RELATION OF ISRAEL TO GOD. "The Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, . . . to be unto him *a people of inheritance*," *i.e.* a purchased or acquired people. So in Exod. xix. 5, 6. The Lord had called Abraham, had made promises to him and to his seed. These promises ran down

through Isaac and Jacob and the twelve patriarchs. Now *their* descendants had become numerous enough to form a nation; as such they had been duly constituted, with this peculiar feature—they were to be God's nation. They had been freed by him, they were consecrated to him, and were being trained by and for him. Hence, as Kalisch remarks, every subject is as it were a priest, and every civil action assumes the sanctity of a religious function: idolatry was an offence against his sovereignty, and therefore punishable with death; so blasphemy, false prophecy, sabbath-breaking, were visited with the like punishment. Disrespect to elders, disobedience to parents (they being the representatives of God), were visited with sore penalties. Hence, too, the whole land belonged to God. The people were but tenants, and in the year of jubilee land reverted to its former owner or his heirs. The Israelites were the subjects and servants of God alone. Slavery, therefore, though not peremptorily put down, was so regulated that the slave went out free in the seventh year; and if he did not desire the freedom, he was branded with an ignominious mark because he refused the immediate sovereignty of God.[1] Now, this expression, "God's nation," is the key wherewith to interpret many of the enactments which seem to us unintelligible, and many of the punishments which seem unusually severe. This truth, that Israel is the Lord's people, runs through the Old Testament Scriptures, as will be seen if we note the varied names by which they are distinguished. 1. God's son, his firstborn (Exod. iv. 22, 23; Jer. iii. 4, 9; Hos. xi. 1). 2. Firstfruits (Jer. ii. 3). 3. *The* people of God (Ps. lxxxi. 8—11; 2 Sam. vii. 23, 24). 4. God's inheritance (ch. xxxii. 9). 5. *The* people (ch. xxxiii. 29). 6. The chosen ones (Ps. xxxiii. 12; ch. vii. 6). 7. His flock (Jer. xiii. 17; Ps. c. 3). 8. The holy people (ch. vii. 6; Jer. vii. 44). 9. The righteous people (Numb. xxiii. 10; Exod. xix. 6). 10. The house or the family of God (Isa. i. 2). 11. A kingdom (Ps. lxxxix. 18). Thus all Israelites were subjects of the same eternal, perfect King, all equal in dignity, rights, and duties. There was among them no institution resembling caste. All were equal in Heaven's eye; all enjoyed scope for the development of their spiritual nature. The poorest herdsman might become a prophet, if filled with the Spirit of God. And the intended differential feature of the whole nation was given to it by the revealed character of its King, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." It is no wonder that a people, selected thus for such a close relationship to God, should be called in the text, "a people of inheritance." Not, indeed, in Israel alone, was there a theocratic form of government. The kings of Egypt, the monarchs of Persia and Thibet, pretended to rule as the representatives of the gods. Minos among the Cretans, Lycurgus the Lacedæmonian, Numa of Rome, and Mohammed, all pretended to have in some sort Divine authority; but these were only the mimicry of the true, and were all lacking in *the supreme point* to and for which Jehovah was educating Israel, even for "righteousness and true holiness." It is easy enough to win converts by a certain mimicry of the Divine. The early history of many a nation is laden with mythology, but the early history of Israel stands out in clear and startling distinction from that of other peoples, in the clearness with which they witness for the one living and true God, the accordance of their early records with known life and manners, and the clear and striking demand in their precepts for love and goodness, holiness and truth. This was at the time, and ever will be in the history of that age, the one bright spot amid the surrounding gloom. The people were "a peculiar treasure to God above all people."

II. WHAT ISRAEL WAS DESIGNED TO BE AMONG THE NATIONS, CHRISTIAN PEOPLE ARE TO BE WHEREVER THEY ARE: a holy people unto the Lord their God. The Apostle Peter intimates this in the verse to which we referred at the outset (see also Titus ii. 14; Eph. ii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16). There are many more passages in which believers are spoken of not only individually but collectively, as making up a family, a household, a city, a commonwealth (Eph. ii. 12, 19; Phil. iii. 20, Greek). And there are four features which mark this new commonwealth, which correspond to those which marked that of the Hebrews. 1. *The members of this Christian commonwealth are redeemed* (cf. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19). From the curse of the Law, from the bondage of sin, believers have been redeemed by an offering of unspeakable value, even the precious blood of Christ. 2. *Thus redeemed, they come to have such a knowledge of God as their God as the world has not and cannot have* (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 5—7). They are

[1] See Kalisch, *in loc.*, to whom we are indebted for much light on this theme.

redeemed out of a state of servitude into a state of sonship (cf. John viii. 34—36). 3. *They are redeemed to a life of close fellowship with God* (cf. ch. iv. 7; 1 John i. 1—3). They are at home in God. 4. *They are redeemed to this close fellowship with God, that thereby they may become pure;* and that in this life of purity they may "show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." Not one of these four stages must be lost sight of; redeemed *out of* sin and servitude, *into* sonship, *to* fellowship, *for* holiness. Not one of these features must be left out; nor can the order in which we have put them be reversed or even transposed. The only mark by which the world can know God's people is—*their holiness* (Heb. xii. 14). It is not for nought that Scripture speaks of a great redemption. And no preacher preaches the gospel fully, who does not insist on its side of ethics as well as on its side of grace. And no professing Christian is worthy of the name he bears, who loses sight of holiness as the end to be attained, any more than he would be if he were to lose sight of the grace of God as that by which alone he can attain the end. How many of the controversies in the Church of God have arisen from an unequal perception of the varied truths of God's holy gospel! Out of an inadequate view of the evil of sin and of its affront to God's honour and government, many have felt but feebly the need of the Great Atoning Sacrifice, whereby the injured honour of the Law was vindicated and a redemption for man made possible! And then, on the other hand, through dwelling all but exclusively on the evil *from* which man is rescued, others have failed to insist sufficiently on *the holiness* for the sake of enabling him to attain which his rescue was effected at such a cost. Perhaps few preachers present in perfection an *exactly balanced* gospel. It is a doctrine according to godliness. Some decry doctrine because they see around them such a lack of godliness. But if we would have the godliness which is to illustrate the doctrine, we shall never secure the end by weakening the exhibition of the doctrine which, rightly used, will certainly lead to it. And not only do preachers need to take heed to both doctrine and practice, but private professors also. If we want the world to understand the value of the Christian religion as an object of revelation, we must show its power in a holy, personal life. If we want others to believe its doctrines to be superior to any other doctrines, we must show that the life it secures is superior to any other life. Thus must we be, like Israel, a peculiar people; showing to others that we have not been redeemed in vain. Be it ours to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Thus shall we show we are his people indeed.

Vers. 21—24.—*God a consuming fire.* "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." This is no obsolete sentence. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes it, and urges the truth it expresses as a reason for serving God "with reverence and godly fear: for," he adds, even "*our* God is a consuming fire." Perhaps the first impression which these words would convey to the earnest and thoughtful mind would be that of terror. Perhaps, too, some may even almost shudder at such a representation of God, and may at once declare that it belongs to a past age, and to a decaying order of ideas. But others who are more cautious would be likely to say, "We must be quite sure that we understand the phrase before we say that." Doubtless we say with pleasure, "God is light," "God is love," but who can delight in saying, "God is fire"? Is it possible that any one can go even further, and delight in saying, "*Our* God—the God who is in covenant relation to us—is a consuming fire"? Does not the phrase act as a repellent force, and inspire one with dread? No doubt it may have that effect in many cases, specially if men have carelessly fastened on one aspect of things, or where they have been misled by a popular misquotation, "God *out of Christ* is a consuming fire." For whatever the phrase means, it is just as true that God in Christ is a consuming fire, as that God out of Christ is so. The phrase is one which should be thoughtfully and devoutly studied in the general light of Scripture teaching, in order that in God's light we may see light. It may be, if thus we try to feel our way to its meaning, that it opens up views of God with which we would not willingly part.

I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE PHRASE IN THE TEXT? It must have often struck an attentive reader of the Bible how frequently the figure of "fire" is found therein, both in connection with man's offerings to God, and with God's manifestations of himself

to man (cf. Gen. iii. 24; viii. 20; xv. 17; Exod. iii.; xix.; Isa. iv.; xxxi. 9). Now, whatever may be the attribute of God here set forth under the figure of fire, it, like all God's attributes, must be twofold in its action *in a sinful world*. The action of fire is according to the object on which it acts. 1. *There is a terrific action of fire.* It tries what is bad (1 Cor. iii. 13). It consumes (Lev. x. 2). It appals (Numb. xi. 1—3; Isa. xxxiii. 14). It destroys (2 Kings i. 12; Luke iii. 17; John xv. 6; Ps. xcviii. 3; Heb. vi. 8). 2. *There is a kindly action of flame.* It enkindles (Lev. ix. 24). It tries (1 Pet. i. 7; Isa. xlviii. 10). It purifies (Ps. xii. 6). It guards (Zech. ii. 5; 2 Kings vi. 17; ch. ix. 3). It escorts (2 Kings ii. 11). It guides (Exod. xl. 38). It enlightens (Ps. lxxviii. 14). It is as a pavilion of glory (Exod. iii. 2; Isa. xxxiii. 14—17). Now, widely different as is the action or the meaning of flaming fire from heaven in all these cases, the difference is not in the flame, but in the material on which it acts. The same fire that melts the wax will bake the clay. So the very same attribute of God in which the righteous may glory will be a terror to his enemies. 3. *Fire, when spoken of in reference to God,* is an emblem of: (1) *Purity.* In Exod. iii. 2—5, God would signify that in his redeeming love he, the holy God, would dwell with men, and that men might dwell in the midst of his blazing holiness, and yet be perfectly at home. (2) *Power* (ch. ix. 3; vii. 8). Power exerting itself on behalf of those who love him. (3) *Jealousy* (ch. iv. 23, 24). (4) *Anger* (ch. vi. 15). Thus there are these four conceptions to be attached to the use of the phrase "a consuming fire," viz. a pavilion of purity in which Israel might dwell unharmed; a jealousy which could brook no rival; an anger which would go forth against sin; a power which would guard its own as with tongues, yea, with walls of flame. 4. *But we may take another step, and reduce this fourfold conception to a twofold one.* There is anger against sin *because* of spotless purity. There is jealousy which will brook no rival, and a power that will guard its own *because* of intensest love. Thus the consuming fire is purity, in which righteousness may dwell, and in which sin is consumed; and love, which is mighty in its active care, and jealous of any rival in the human heart. 5. *We may simplify yet again, and reduce the twofold conception to a unity,* and say that God is a consuming fire, inasmuch as he is perfect love—pure love, active love, jealous love; so that our text is but another way of saying, "God is light," "God is love." Let us now—

II. LOOK AT THESE THREE FORMS OF THE EXPRESSION "PERFECT LOVE," AND SEE WHAT THEY INVOLVE. 1. *Pure love.* God is a flaming fire of infinite purity, and yet a burning flame of tenderest love. He receives the sinner on a basis of righteousness. He makes men who are in covenant relation to him perfectly pure. They are to be tried and purified and made white, till they are without fault before the throne of God. Would we have it otherwise? God's love without its purity would be worthless to us! 2. *Active love.* God castles his saints in a wall of fire (Isa. iv. 6), while he also destroys their foes as with a tongue of fire. 3. *Jealous love.* There is a hateful jealousy. There is a rightful one. The first it would be unworthy of a man to possess; the second, a man would be unworthy of himself if he did not. A father would be worth little if he were not jealous for the purity of his child; so would a husband if not jealous for the honour of his wife; or an Englishman, if not jealous for the honour of his queen! Even so, it would be unworthy of God if he were not jealous, in the scriptural sense. Note: (1) God's love is jealous for the first place in our hearts. (2) God is jealous for his own purity, holiness, and truth. (3) He is jealous for the honour of his Son. He will not let one be lost who receives him, nor will he let one be saved who trifles with him. To go against Christ is to rush into the consuming flame!

III. WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL USES TO BE MADE OF THIS SUBLIME ATTRIBUTE OF GOD? (See the use made of it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. xii., the last three or four verses.) 1. Is God thus a consuming fire? Then let us never attempt to draw nigh unto him without a recognition both of his purity and of our sinfulness. No service is accepted before God which does not take account of sin, and in connection with which there is not "reverence and godly fear." 2. Do not let us think of any mode of recognition of sin which ignores God's own way, viz. that of an atoning sacrifice. God will jealously guard the honour of his dear Son. "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape,

if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." 3. If thus we are penitently making use of the atoning sacrifice of Christ as our only means of approach to and ground of hope in God, then let us glory in this holy, jealous love, which guards us as with a wall of fire, and is our everlasting guarantee that we shall not be put to shame. 4. Let us remember that it depends on ourselves whether the "consuming fire" is a flame at which we tremble, or a pavilion in which we can hide. God cannot deny himself. He will not deal with the sinner on any principle which ignores the great atonement which his Son has effected, or which admits of his accepting the service of a divided heart. It is for us to say whether the great redeeming work of Jesus shall be the means by which we are raised to fellowship in infinite holiness, or whether it shall be to us the savour of death unto death. It must be one or the other. If we receive it, it will bring us to eternal rest in God; if we reject it, it will deepen our condemnation more terribly than if no Saviour had been provided! *Our* God is a consuming fire. If, in Jesus, we draw near to him, that burning, blazing holiness shall be the secret place of his tabernacle in which we are safely hidden. If we neglect this great salvation, as men unpardoned and unsaved, we shall remain, and at the flame of Jehovah's purity we shall tremble for ever! Sinner, say, oh say, shall this fire of God's perfect love surround you ever as a wall of protection, or shall it terrify and consume you as devouring flame?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The sacredness of the Divine Law.* Law, being the utterance of righteousness, is unalterable as righteousness itself, *permanent* amid all the mutations of human affairs. Its requirements are statutes, stable as the everlasting hills.

I. LAW IS THE VERITABLE VOICE OF GOD; the manifestation of his thought; the mirror of his mind. "The Lord *spake* unto you." "Out of the midst of the fire"—the flame of holiness and zeal—issues every command. If man's moral nature has an open ear, it may often detect the imperial voice of Heaven. 'Tis not to *sight* God reveals himself, but to the ear. His messengers are emphatically "a voice." "Faith comes by hearing."

II. LAW, IN ITS SPHERE, IS PERFECT. Over every work of his hands God pronounces the verdict "Very good;" and Law, being the instrument with which he works, is "holy, just, and good." For *unrighteous* man there may be something more precious than Law; but when restored to God, Law is his delight. In the domain of belief we cannot augment or diminish God's Law without self-injury. Perfection cannot be improved upon. In the sphere of practice, to halt short of the line of duty, or to go beyond the line, is alike an offence. Self-mutilation, or blemish, is the effect.

III. THE VERACITY OF LAW ATTESTED BY ACTUAL EXPERIENCE. Every honest-minded man may discover whether or not the written Word embodies a Divine Law. If a genuine Law, its authority is ratified by an honest conscience; as sanctions, whether of commendation or curse, are witnessed by every clear-sighted eye. Every truthful man is a witness that God's laws (whether written in external nature, in man's constitution, or in Scripture) bring life to the obedient, death to the transgressor. Not a Law is revealed in the Scriptures, but it tends to righteousness, happiness, life!

IV. DIVINE LAW ASSERTS ITS AUTHORITY OVER THE WHOLE MAN. 1. Over the intellect, for it demands attention, investigation, comparison, and discrimination. 2. Authority over the affections, for it demands reverence, esteem, choice, and love. 3. Authority over the moral faculty; for it demands assent, response, and loyalty. 4. Over the active powers, for it requires watchfulness, self-restraint, uninterrupted deference, and uncompromising service.

V. LAW IS THE PATHWAY TO TRUE EMINENCE. Every successful application of science to practical life is simply a treading of the pathway of law. So long as man finds the footprints of God's Law, he moves onward. There is no real progress in any department of human life, except along the line of God's Law. To find *that*, and to follow it, is success. This is equally true in the spiritual province. This is the quintessence of wisdom—the stepping-stone to eminence! What men—what nation—have ever reached to permanent greatness, save they who have trodden the path of Divine Law?

VI. LOYALTY TO GOD'S LAW BRINGS US NEAR TO GOD. As when we follow up the footprints of a man rapidly enough, we at length come up with the man himself; so, as we pursue the pathway of Law, we come soon without the hallowed precincts of God's presence. We see the working of the heavenly machinery, the movements of God's thought and purpose. We move with it, and ever come nearer to the central light and love. It is a *narrow* path, and few they are who find it.

VII. A SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE IS SELF-PROPAGATING. Like plants in the garden, every righteous man bears seed after his own kind. Without formal teaching, the beauty of his life will be a living lesson—the fragrance of his deeds will be contagious. They who love God's Law will be zealous to teach God's Law, and to commend it to others. A fine trait in Abraham's character comes into view when God said, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him." Every man bequeaths to posterity a large legacy of blessing or of bane.

VIII. THE LAW OF GOD IS DESTINED TO HAVE PERMANENCE IN HUMAN LIFE. There was high significance in the fact that the Decalogue was written, not in rays of light upon the sapphire firmament, nor in legible characters upon parchment, but *on stone*. The stone of Sinai is said to belong to one of the oldest formations—the granite period. The forms and modes of law may undergo change to meet the growing necessities of men; but the inner sense—the kernel—of every law still abides. "Heaven and earth may pass away," all material stricture may undergo radical change—but the words of God can undergo no change. What is *true* once is *true always!* What was *right* a myriad of ages since, retains all its authority to-day, and will be obligatory world without end. The sum and substance of moral law is writ by the finger of God, and graven on the solid rock!—D.

Vers. 1—28.—*The curse of idolatry.* Idolatry is the general bias of fallen humanity, the perversion of an innate principle, the misgrowth of the religious instinct. Men everywhere "feel after God, if haply they may find him." Absolute atheism cannot long endure anywhere. If men reject a personal Deity, they invent an inferior God, and practically worship that. The wildest atheist which the world has seen, must admit that there is some power or force in the world superior to himself. There is no resting-place for reason, short of a spiritual God.

I. IDOLATRY WAS THE PREVALENT DANGER OF THE PATRIARCHAL AGE. During the childhood of men, they are under the domination of the bodily senses. They demand a god whom they can see and handle and hear. The kindred of Abraham were addicted to idolatry. The wife of Jacob furtively abstracted the teraphim of her father, and held them in a measure of reverence. Even Moses yearned for a visible Deity. "I beseech thee, show me thy glory!" The absence of Moses from the camp for forty days sufficed for the people to relapse into idolatry. Throughout their history, every decline in religious feeling showed itself in a fresh lapse towards idolatry.

II. IDOLATRY GROSSLY CORRUPTS ITS VOTARIES. The object which is at first selected to be a *symbol* of the Deity, soon detains on itself the homage of the worshipper, and becomes his Deity. Matter is at the antipodes from spirit. The laws and forces working in material nature may help us to understand the Divine Being, but matter itself *never*. Apart from a written revelation, we best rise to the knowledge of God through the contemplation of our own minds and consciences. The object of our worship moulds us after itself. The worshipper of beasts becomes bestial. "They that make them become like unto them." This is God's law.

III. MATERIAL IMAGES DEGRADE THE GODHEAD. For God is a Spirit, and cannot be represented by material images. For matter can convey no impressions of omnipresence, or of eternity, or of moral qualities, or of emotions, affections, or joys! Representation by material images strips our God of all that is noblest in his nature, of all that is distinctive in the Godhead. It cloaks his perfections and eclipses his glory.

IV. IDOLATRY ANNULLED THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND ISRAEL. That gracious compact required upon the part of the Israelites the honest recognition and worship of the One Jehovah. Unfaithfulness on this vital point invalidated the entire covenant; God had pledged himself specially to be their God, on condition that they were his loyal people. All the resources of God's kingdom were pledged to Israel in that covenant. It was an act of mercy that God should bind himself in any form to

his creatures, and this superabundant grace ought to have held their homage by closest and tenderest ties. *His* part of the covenant, God had conspicuously observed in the release of his people from the "iron furnace." Was not every sign and wonder wrought in Egypt a fresh seal upon the heavenly bond? This covenant, between a gracious God and undeserving men, idolatry destroyed.

V. OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS DESIGNED AS A REGULATIVE FORCE. There are limitations to our knowledge of God imposed by our constitution, and further limitations imposed by our sin. *These latter* can be removed at once by the redemptive power of Christ; and the first named shall gradually be relaxed in the resurrection state. *Fire* does not represent God, except so far as it *consumes*, and this illustration is meant to check our presumption; 'tis not for the satisfaction of a curious intellect, but to restrain a wayward life. Knowledge of God, which is honestly reduced to practice, becomes larger and clearer knowledge. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."

VI. INIQUITY BECOMES ITS OWN PUNISHMENT. Throughout the Scriptures this doctrine is taught, that sin ripens and culminates in punishment. The penalty threatened upon the idolatry of the Jews was *this*, that they should be driven into a heathen land, and be compelled to serve the senseless blocks of wood and stone. The punishment of avarice is *this*, that the sensibilities become as hard as gold. The penalty of drunkenness is *this*, that the morbid appetite grows into an uncontrollable passion! The voice of doom says, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

VII. PRESENT PUNISHMENTS ARE THE TYPE OF FUTURE PUNISHMENTS. The penalty to be imposed on the Jews for disloyalty, was banishment from Canaan—defeat, scattering, death. So the final penalties revealed for reprobate men are exclusion from the heavenly Canaan; banishment to the darkness they have preferred; utter destruction. Each man "goes to his own place."

VIII. SUFFERING FOR OTHERS, A PATHWAY TO HUMAN HEARTS. In connection with these fatherly counsels, Moses again reminds the people of his privation on account of their sins. The blame of his exclusion from Canaan he attributes to them. He who aforetime had prayed that, for the sake of Israel, his own name might be blotted out of God's book, now submits to this chastisement for the people's good. But Moses would not throw away the advantage which this fact might bring. In his desire for the people's good, he converts it into a persuasive argument, by which to confirm their loyalty to God. As if, should every other appeal fail, this appeal to their sensibility might succeed. It is as if he had said, "Remember what I am called to endure for *you!* Let your requital be unswerving obedience to my God." Here he serves as a feeble type of Jesus.—D.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Acceptable obedience.* I. ITS BASIS—the Divine command. "Statutes and judgments." Action originating in self-will, however correct in moral form, is not obedience. It is God's command which is the rule and starting-point. Recognition of his authority is essential. Kant distinguishes religion from morality thus—"Religion is the doing of all duties as if they were Divine commandments." The objective rule is found in the inspired Scriptures.

II. ITS CHARACTER. It must be: 1. *Entire*, not partial. Having respect to all that God reveals. 2. *Honest*, neither altering, mutilating, adding to, nor subtracting from (cf. Matt. v. 19; xv. 6, 9). 3. *Persevering.*

III. ITS REWARD. "Life," possession of blessings. This reward not legal, but of grace through Christ, as on the legal basis no one can attain to it (Rom. iii. 20). But though, as sinful, we cannot have life *through* obedience, we still have it *in* obedience. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21; Rom. ii. 7).—J. O.

Vers. 6—10.—*A nation's glory.* I. A NATION POSSESSING GOD'S WORD IS SUPREMELY FAVOURED. (Ver. 8.) Even to *have* such a Law as Israel possessed exalted her to a position of unique greatness. The knowledge of the true God—light on the great principles of conduct—equitable statutes—institutions adapted to promote material, moral, and spiritual well-being. Our own nation is exceptionally favoured in the

plentiful enjoyment of religious privileges—Bibles, churches, sabbath schools, evangelistic agencies, Christian literature, etc., bringing the highest knowledge within the reach of the humblest; while the laws, institutions, etc., under which we live, as the fruit of a Christian civilization, are not surpassed by any on the earth. God has indeed, favoured us to an unexampled degree in every religious respect.

II. A NATION ENLIGHTENED BY GOD'S WORD IS SUPREMELY WISE. To have is much, but to be truly "a wise and understanding people," we must "keep and do" (ver. 6). It is not in knowing, but in adopting, the wise course that we show ourselves truly wise. Wisdom is the course that conduces to the formation of a brave, noble, resolute, happy, and contented people; and the nation that loves God's Word, fears God himself, and applies the teaching he has given it in the various spheres of domestic, social, commercial, and political existence, is indubitably in possession of that wisdom. It is to be regretted that the nations most peculiarly privileged do not always set that store upon their privileges which they should do, or make a good use of them. The amount of irreligion, infidelity, and general indifference to the Word of God in our own land is a startling omen for the future. Britain's greatness will soon wane if she abandons her respect for the Bible, the sabbath, and the guiding principles of revelation.

III. A NATION ORDERING ITSELF BY GOD'S WORD IS SUPREMELY EMINENT. (Ver. 7.) Its prosperity: 1. Rests on a solid foundation. 2. Is built up under conditions that ensure its permanence. 3. Is secured by a special blessing of God. And this is a matter admitting of ample historical verification. Compare: 1. Pagan nations with Christian. 2. Unbelieving nations with believing (France: Britain). 3. Roman Catholic nations with Protestant (see Laveleye on 'Protestantism and Catholicism in their bearing upon the Liberty and Prosperity of Nations'). 4. Sabbath-desecrating nations with sabbath-keeping. It will be found that the Bible-loving, Bible-obeying, sabbath-keeping nations exhibit: (1) an intellectual superiority; (2) an ethical superiority; (3) a superiority in political institutions; (4) a superiority in material respects (trade, commerce, wealth, etc.).

IV. A NATION OBEYING GOD'S WORD WILL HAVE THE SOURCE OF ITS GREATNESS ACKNOWLEDGED BY OTHERS. (Ver. 6.) They will not only own to its eminence, but they will discern its true cause, and acknowledge that it springs from its religious faithfulness. Numerous testimonies of this kind exist to the source of the national greatness of our own country.

Lessons—1. Value our religious privileges. 2. Seek the furtherance of religion in the community. 3. Be diligent in the training of our children (ver. 9). 4. Extend our blessings to others.—J. O.

Ver. 9.—*The religious education of children.* 1. God's way of handing down the fruits of present privilege. 2. God's way of maintaining his witness in the world. 3. God's way of extending his Church. The natural law of the increase of population leads, where parents are faithful, to a constant increase in the number of the godly.—J. O.

Vers. 10—14.—*The revelation at Horeb.* A revelation—

I. OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD'S NATURE. "Ye saw no similitude" (ver. 12). A wonderful truth to be impressed on the minds of a people fresh from contact with the debasing idolatries of Egypt. A truth: 1. Difficult to grasp. 2. Elevating in its influence. 3. The apprehension of which is necessary for spiritual worship (John iv. 24).

II. OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD'S CHARACTER. The lightnings that played about the mountain, the fire burning in the midst of it (ver. 11), the fiery law that was given,—all bespoke the awful and terrible holiness of him whose voice was uttering words of dreadful import to transgressors.

III. OF THE VERITIES OF GOD'S LAW. Then were spoken the ten commandments (vers. 10, 12)—the sum and substance of moral duty—the rule of life to believers—the Law which condemns and slays transgressors. Christ is "the end of the Law of righteousness to every one that believeth," and only in him can we escape from its condemning power (Rom. viii. 1; x. 4).

IV. OF THE TERRORS OF GOD'S MAJESTY. God surrounded himself with these signs

of his greatness, power, wrath, and holiness: 1. That we may reverence and fear him. 2. That we may be kept from presumption in our approaches to him. 3. That we may feel the awfulness of his Word. Recalling this scene, the Israelites should have been preserved from ever trifling with it. God's Word should be handled and read with a deep feeling of reverence. 4. These terrors suggested that the Law, in itself considered, is not a saving, but a destroying power. The whole manifestation was overcast with threatening.—J. O.

Vers. 15—20.—*Warning against heathenish idolatry.* I. THE ORIGIN OF HEATHEN IDOLATRY. The result of a "corruption" (ver. 16). Not a stage in the advance upwards from fetichism, etc.; but, as inquiries are tending more and more to show, the consequence: 1. Of a depravation of the idea of God. 2. Of a corruption of the worship of God. 3. Arising in turn from the substitution of the creature for God in the affections (cf. Rom. i. 20—26).

II. THE FORMS OF HEATHEN IDOLATRY. 1. Hero-worship (ver. 16). 2. Animal-worship (vers. 17, 18). 3. Nature-worship (ver. 19). Greek idolatry furnishes conspicuous instances of the first; Egypt was notorious for the second, so Hinduism; while Parseeism, and the early Vedic worship illustrates the third (cf. Job xxxi. 21).

III. THE FRUITS OF HEATHEN IDOLATRY. 1. A degraded intellect. 2. Degraded affections. 3. Degraded morals (Rom. i.). Therefore Israel must not "corrupt" themselves.—J. O.

Ver. 20.—*The iron furnace.* God had passed his people through a hot furnace in the terrible sufferings they endured in Egypt, but with the gracious purpose of ultimately delivering them, and giving them an inheritance in Canaan. We learn—

I. THAT GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SOMETIMES SUBJECTED TO SUFFERINGS OF INCREDIBLE SEVERITY. The expression an 'iron furnace," *i.e.* a furnace for smelting iron, conveys no weaker an idea. We know that in fact it sometimes is so. Bodily anguish—mental anguish—stroke after stroke of heaviest trial. An instance in the history of Job. Shakes faith to its foundations—seems to argue that God has utterly forsaken them.

II. THAT THESE SUFFERINGS ARE APPOINTED, AND SERVE DISCIPLINARY ENDS. The use of the figure of a furnace implies a purpose in the sufferings. Iron is put into the furnace deliberately, and with a design. Trials, difficult enough to bear in the faith that God sends them, would ofttimes be absolutely intolerable without that faith. The furnace acts on the tough, hard, impure iron to separate it from dross, and make it soft and workable. The severe sufferings through which God passes believers: 1. Purify character. 2. Make the nature plastic to God's will, and subdue it to meekness. 3. Fit the man thus sanctified for new and higher uses.

III. GOD HAS AN INHERITANCE IN STORE FOR THOSE WHO ENDURE THE FURNACE SUCCESSFULLY. 1. Their sufferings fit them *to be* God's inheritance. "To be unto him a people of inheritance." He has to melt, mould, and spiritually prepare for his own indwelling those whom he chooses. 2. Their sufferings fit them for the inheritance which God gives them (1 Pet. i. 3—10). By creating a pure, chastened, heavenly disposition. By strengthening faith, brightening hope, and increasing love. By subduing pride, rebellion, and impatience; and making the will absolutely pliant in the hands of the Divine.—J. O.

Vers. 1—14.—*Obedience the secret of success.* Moses here reminds Israel of the privilege it possesses as a nation in having the oracles of God committed unto it (Rom. iii. 2). He urges obedience upon them as the one purpose for which they are to be introduced into the promised land. National prosperity depends upon this. And here we have to notice—

I. DISOBEDIENCE HAS ALREADY PROVED FATAL. He recalls the terrible experience in connection with Baal-peor—how the people in large numbers became lewd idolaters with the Israelites (Numb. xxv.), and how fierce anger from the Lord visited the people. In Canaan they shall be exposed to similar temptations, but the chastisement at Baal-peor must not be lost upon them. Past judgments are to secure more complete obedience.

II. GOD'S NEARNESS TO THEM SHOULD PROVE A HALLOWING PRIVILEGE. How gracious is God to dwell among them, always near at hand to be inquired of, a most serviceable King! He dwelt in their midst as a Pilgrim with his people. Upon his accessibility and wisdom they could always calculate. This distinguished Israel from the other nations.

Such a privilege should of itself hallow them, and make them to abide under his shadow. Equally near is God still to all of us who seek him.

III. HIS LAW IS WISER THAN ALL MAN'S DEVELOPED LEGISLATION. The surrounding nations had their laws and customs, but the superiority of the Mosaic code was admitted by all acquainted with it. It was an immense moral advance for Israel, as great an advance as in that rude age they could take in.

Similarly, the morality of the gospel is ahead of all jurisprudence. Indeed, enlightened legislation and reform tend towards the scriptural ideal. God is wiser than man, and the Bible better than all acts of parliament.

IV. THE LAW WAS GIVEN AS A RULE OF LIFE FOR A COVENANT PEOPLE. They were redeemed from bondage, and then received the Law at Sinai to guide their redeemed lives. Obedience should be a matter of gratitude for deliverance, and would prove the secret of success.

It is so still. "Christ redeems us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us." But as grateful and saved people, we feel that we are "under the Law to Christ" (1 Cor. ix. 21).

And this grateful obedience proves the secret of comfort and success. It is the meat of life to do the will of him who hath sent us, and to finish his work (John iv. 34). Palestine becomes "paradise regained" to the grateful and obedient souls. We find a promised land where God's precepts are gratefully observed by redeemed souls. It is the attitude within, rather than the circumstances without, which constitutes life a blessed country and an antepast of heaven.—R. M. E.

Vers. 15—24.—*The Divine jealousy of graven images.* The great temptation of Israel was to idolatry. Images were worshipped by all those nations among whom they came, and they were in constant danger of conforming to the sinful practice. Hence this warning and statement about the Divine jealousy. Let us observe—

I. THAT JEALOUSY PRESUPPOSES LOVE. Love must be strong as death, else jealousy will not be cruel as the grave; nor will its coals prove coals of fire, having a most vehement flame (Song of Solomon viii. 6). The God who proves so jealous is he whose essence is *love.* If God did not love men so much, he would not be so jealous when they turn away from him. He knows that, as a wife cannot be happy separated from her loving husband, no more can the human spirit be, away from him.

Israel then and we now have to deal with a God of love.

II. GOD IS JEALOUS WHEN MEN GIVE HIM VISIBILITY. Idolatry is trying to help worship through the aid of the senses. The image is not regarded as the god, but his likeness. Man embodies his ideas of God in outward forms.

But imagination is not *creative;* it combines in new relations what has already been given to it. Hence idolatry has never done more than place the creatures, whether beast, or bird, or fish, or reptile, or the heavenly bodies, in new relations to the invisible Divinity.

God resents this visibility as degradation. He knows that man becomes degraded by such associations. Hence his deserved wrath against idolatry.

III. IF GOD BE NOT OUR KINDLING FLAME, HE WILL IN JEALOUSY BE OUR CONSUMING FIRE. It is at the torch of the Divine that the human soul becomes enkindled. The flaming fires of Pentecost sublimate the soul and fit it for primeval powers. It is this warning, elevating influence that is love's natural action.

But when rebellious man turns the grace of God into lasciviousness; when love is ignored instead of returned, and the soul seeks in the things of sense what God only can give,—then love begins to burn as jealousy with a vehement, consuming flame.

IV. IT BECOMES US CONSEQUENTLY TO WORSHIP GOD IN THE SPIRIT. We must keep upon the serene heights of faith, and not fall into the degradation of superstition. We are made for better things than weakly to associate in our minds the invisible and eternal God with the creatures of sense. Let us give faith proper scope, and the worship of God will prove both possible and delightful.

But the worship of God through images makes stocks and stones of men. "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Ps. cxv. 8). May our worship raise us and not degrade us! Superstition degrades, but worship of the invisible God in the Spirit elevates and ennobles our souls.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 25—31.—Moses enforces the warning against idolatry, by predicting the evil that should come upon the nation through the apostacy of those who should in after times turn from Jehovah to strange gods. When they should have begotten children and children's children, and had been long in the land, *i.e.* when in after years a generation should arise that had not known the things they had seen, or had forgotten them (ver. 9), and the nation should then become wanton and corrupt, and fall into idolatry (cf. ch. vi. 10, etc.; viii. 7, etc.; xxxi. 20, 21; xxxii. 15, etc.; Hos. xiii. 6); then should they utterly perish from off the land of which they were now about to take possession.

Ver. 25.—**Have remained long in the land**; literally, *have become old*, an ancient nation, etc. **To provoke him to anger**; *i.e.* so as that he should be displeased and grieved, and roused to punish.

Ver. 26.—**I call heaven and earth to witness.** Moses speaks in the name of the Lord of all, and so calls to witness the whole created universe to attest his words; the heavens and earth are witnesses for God, and when evil comes on those who transgress his Law, they declare his righteousness (Ps. l. 4, 6), in that what has befallen the sinner is only what was announced beforehand as the penalty of transgression. **Soon**; hastily (מַהֵר), without delay (cf. ch. vii. 4, 22 ["at once," Authorized Vers.]; ix. 3 ["quickly"], 12, 16). **Prolong days**; usually equal to have a long life (cf. ch. v. 16; vi. 2; xi. 9; xvii. 20, etc.); here it means "continue long to occupy." Only as they continued faithful to Jehovah could they continue as a people to possess the land; severed from him, they lost their title to occupy Canaan, and ceased to be his special people; as a nation they would be destroyed by being scattered among other nations. From Lev. xxvi. 33, etc., and ch. xxviii. 64, it is evident that the author had in view "all the dispersions which would come upon the rebellious nation in future times, even down to the dispersion under the Romans, which continues still; so that Moses contemplated the punishment in its fullest extent" (Keil).

Ver. 27.—**Few in number**; literally, *men of number*, i.e. that may be counted; few as compared with the heathen among whom they should be dispersed (Gen. xxxiv. 30). **Shall lead you.** The verb here (נָהַג, Piel of נָהַג) is frequently used in the sense of conducting gently and kindly (Isa. xlix. 10; lxiii. 14; Ps. xlviii. 14; lxxviii. 52); but it also means to drive, to carry off, to convey forcibly (Exod. xiv. 25; Gen. xxxi. 26; Exod. x. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 26); the connection shows that it is in the latter sense it is to be taken here. Dispersed among the heathen, they, who had dishonoured God by making an image to represent him, should be compelled to do service to mere dead idols, the work of men's hands, which not only could not hear or see, as God can, but also could not perform even such animal functions as eating and smelling (Ps. cxv. 4—7; Jer. x. 3—9). These idols are called "gods" by Moses, because they were so counted by those who worshipped them; elsewhere he stigmatizes them as "abominations," things to be loathed and abhorred (שִׁקּוּצִים, ch. xxvii. 15; xxix. 17). As had been their sin, so should be their punishment; as they had dishonoured God, so should they be themselves dishonoured; as they had worshipped by an image him who is spirit and without form, they should be made to sink down to an utterly materialized worship, that of mere idols, the work of men's hands; as they had apostatized from the one holy and true God, they should be degraded to become the servants of abominations, objects of loathing and abhorrence (Jer. xvi. 13; Acts vii. 42). God, however, would not utterly cast them off: if, in their misery and degradation, they should repent and turn again to him and seek him sincerely and earnestly, they should find him; for he is a merciful God, and mindful of the covenant which he sware unto their fathers (cf. Lev. xxvi. 39, etc.).

Ver. 29.—**With all thy heart and with all thy soul.** As true religion consists in loving the Lord with all the heart and soul, the whole inner nature (ch. vi. 5; x. 12), so true repentance consists in a turning from sin and all ungodliness to God, in a coming from a state of enmity to him, or of indifference to his claims, to honour, reverence, and serve him intelligently and sincerely, thinking of him aright, adoring his perfections, delighting in him as the alone

good, giving to him that honour which is his due, and doing his will from the heart (cf. 2 Chron. xv. 15). When men have apostatized from God, it is often by means of "tribulation" that they are brought to a right state of mind towards him, and to a true repentance "not to be repented of;" and to effect this is the design of all the chastisements which God sends on his own people (Heb. xii. 5—11; cf. Jer. xxiv. 7; xxix. 10—13; l. 4, etc.; Ezek. vi. 11, etc.).

Ver. 30.—**In the latter days**; *in the afterward of days* (בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים; "end," ch. xi. 12)—a phrase used sometimes to designate the times of the Messiah (Isa. ii. 2; Hos. iii. 5; comp. Acts ii. 17; 1 Pet. i. 20; Heb. i. 1; 1 John ii. 18); but here, as generally, it simply indicates futurity, the time to come (cf. Gen. xlix. 1; Numb. xxiv. 14; ch. xxxi. 29, etc.). This, however, may include the far distant future, and so points to the time when Israel shall finally return to the Lord and be saved, through the acknowledgment of him whom they despised and rejected when he came as the Messiah promised to the fathers. As St. Paul grounds the assurance of the final redemption of Israel, as a whole, on their calling of God (Rom. xi. 26—29), so Moses here sees in God's covenant the ground of the ever-watchful care and grace of God to Israel, and the security of their final restoration as a nation.

Ver. 31.—**Will not forsake thee**; literally, *will not let thee loose*, will not lose hold of thee, will not cast thee off (cf. Rom. xi. 1, etc.). "Israel will return and find God, because he loses not hold of it" (Herxheimer). "The sinner will incline to seek God only when he apprehends him as gracious and ready to hear" (Calvin).

Vers. 32—40.—Still more to enforce his warning against apostacy, and urge to obedience and faithful adherence to the service of Jehovah, Moses appeals to what they had already experienced of God's grace in the choosing of them to be his people, in his speaking to them to instruct them, and in the miracles which he had wrought for their deliverance and guidance; grace such as had never been showed before to any nation, or heard of since the creation of the world, and by which those who had experienced it were laid under the deepest obligations of gratitude and duty, to love and serve him by whom it had been showed. With this appeal he closes his first address.

Ver. 32.—**For**. This connects the statement that follows with that which precedes as its cause; it is *because* Jehovah is a merciful God, that the unparalleled grace showed to Israel had been displayed. **The days that are past**, etc., *i.e.* inquire from the earliest time of man's abode on the earth. **From the one side of heaven unto the other**; search the records of all times and places, whether any so great a thing has ever happened or been heard of.

Ver. 33.—(Cf. ver. 12; v. 22—26; Gen. xvi. 13.)

Ver. 34.—**Hath God assayed**, etc.; hath he ever made the attempt to come on the earth and take a nation from the midst of a nation, as he took the Hebrew people from among the Egyptians? **By temptations** (מַסּוֹת, plu. of מַסָּה, a testing, a trial)—*i.e.* by the plagues inflicted on Pharaoh and his people, whereby they were tested and tried—**by signs and by wonders**. "The *wonder* (מוֹפֵת) differs from the *sign* (אוֹת) in this, that the former denotes the properly marvellous, the extraordinary, the uncommon, consequently the subjective apprehension of the miraculous event; the latter the significant element in the miracle, the reference to the higher, Divine design, the purpose of God in it, consequently to the objective side of the miracle (comp. ch. xiii. 2)" (Hävernick, 'Comment. üb. Ezech.,' p. 161). **By war** (cf. Exod. xiv. 14; xv. 3—10); **by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm** (Exod. vi. 6; xiv. 8; ch. v. 15); **and by great terrors** (Exod. xii. 30—36), the effect on the Egyptians of the Divine inflictions (cf. Ps. cv. 27—38; cvi. 21, 22).

Ver. 35.—All this Israel was made to see, in order that they might know that Jehovah is alone God, and beside him is no other. **God** (הָאֱלֹהִים, **the** God), the one living and true God.

Ver. 36.—(Cf. Exod. xx. 18—22.) To indicate still further the pre-eminence of Israel, Moses emphasizes the supernatural character of the revelation God had given to them, and the awful manner of its delivery; God spake to them with audible voice, out of heaven, amidst fire, and they heard his words out of the fire. **To instruct thee**. The verb here used (יַסֵּר) means primarily to bind and thence to correct, to chasten, which meaning some interpreters would give here. But the word means also to correct by instruction, to instruct or persuade (cf. Isa. viii. 11; xxviii. 26; Ps. xvi. 7); and the connection, both with what precedes and with what follows, requires this meaning here.

Vers. 37.—**And because he loved thy fathers** (cf. Gen. xv. 5—7; Exod. xiii. 15—17, etc.). Inasmuch as God had loved their fathers, the patriarchs, and had chosen them their descendants to be his people, and had delivered them out of Egypt, that he might establish them in the promised land, having driven out thence nations

mightier than they, therefore were they to consider in their heart and acknowledge that Jehovah alone is God, and that in the wide universe there is no other. The apodosis in this sentence begins at ver. 39, and not, as in the Authorized Version, at "he chose," in ver. 37, nor at "brought thee," as some suggest. **Because he loved thy fathers, and chose his** [*i.e.* Abraham's] **seed after him, and brought thee,** etc.,—for all this *thou shalt keep his statutes,* etc. **In his sight**; literally, *in his face,* i.e. in his presence, by himself present with them; with special reference to Exod. xxxiii. 14, where the same word is used as here. Onkelos has here "by his Word," and the rabbins explain it of "the angel of his presence, as it is said, Isa. lxiii. 9" (Bechai, fol. 194 b).

Ver. 38.—**As it is this day**; as this day has shown, or as it has come to pass this day, in the overthrow, namely, of Sihon and Og.

Ver. 39.—**Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart,** etc.; literally, *bring back into thy heart.* "Because we cannot lay hold of spiritual things in thought instantly in a moment, God commands *to make them to revert,* i.e. again and again to recall them to the mind" (Bechai, fol. 194 b).

Ver. 40.—**Upon the earth,**—rather *upon the land* (הָאֲדָמָה)—**which the Lord thy God giveth thee for ever.** The comma after "thee" in the Authorized Version should be deleted. "The sum of this whole exhortation is (1) to acknowledge and lay to heart that God is the alone God of the universe, in heaven and on earth; hence (2) to be obedient to his laws; and so (3) to have, as a recompense, a happy continuance in the beloved land" (Herxheimer). The conclusion of the exhortation reverts to its beginning (comp. ch. v. 40; ver. 1).

Vers. 41—43.—APPOINTMENT OF THREE CITIES OF REFUGE BEYOND JORDAN. A short historical notice is here inserted, probably because it was during the interval between the first and second addresses of Moses that he carried into effect the Divine command to appoint cities of refuge for the manslayer (Numb. xxxv. 9, etc.; cf. Exod. xxi. 13). This notice, therefore, is here in its proper place in the order of the narrative. That Moses should, just at this stage, have made this appointment was fitting and proper, seeing he had been urging on the people obedience to the Divine statutes and commandments, and had represented their conquest of the territory of Sihon and Og as an earnest of their ultimate possession of the whole land of the Amorites. By appointing these cities, Moses gave an example of obedience to God's injunction, and, at the same time, not only asserted on the part of Israel a right of proprietorship in this trans-Jordanic territory, but assumed as certain that, on the other side of Jordan also, the same right of proprietorship should be possessed and exercised by Israel in the fulfilling of the whole law concerning cities of refuge (cf. ch. xix. 1, etc.). That this section belongs properly to Numb. xxxv., xxxvi., and has been interpolated here by some later hand, is a pure assumption, for which there is no ground.

Ver. 41.—**On this side Jordan**; beyond Jordan, more expressly defined as **toward the sun rising,** viz. on the east of that river.

Ver. 42.—**Unawares**; literally, *in lack* or *want of knowing* (בִּבְלִי־דַעַת), *i.e.* unconsciously, unintentionally; in Numb. xxxv. 31, 15, another word (בִּשְׁגָגָה, by mistake) is used, rendered in the Authorized Version by "unwittingly;" in Josh. xx. 3, both words are used. **In times past**; literally, *yesterday, three days since,* i.e. formerly, heretofore (cf. Gen. xxxi. 2; Exod. v. 8).

Ver. 43.—Names of the cities set apart. **Bezer**; LXX. *Βοσόρ*; one of the cities of the plain or table-land of the Amorites, on the east of Jordan (ch. iii. 10; Josh. xx. 8), afterwards a Levitical city in the tribe of Reuben (Josh. xxi. 36). It is probably the Bosor of 1 Macc. v. 36; it has not been identified with any existing locality, but the ruined heaps of Burazin to the east of Hesbân, or those of Berza in the same district, may mark its site. **Ramoth in Gilead**; probably the same as Ramoth-mizpeh (Josh. xiii. 26); it lay to the north-west of Philadelphia (Rabba or Rabbath-Ammon, *hod.* Ammân), on the Jabbok ('Onom.,' *s.v.* "Rammoth" and "Remmoth"); a Levitical city in the tribe of Gad (Josh. xxi. 38), *hod.* Es Salt, six hours from Ammân (Von Raumer, Porter). **Golan in Bashan.** Eusebius identifies this with Gaulon, a very large village in Batanæa, from which the surrounding region had its name, viz. Gaulonitis, *hod.* Jolan ('Onom.,' *s.v.* "Gaulon"); it was a Levitical city in the tribe of Manasseh (Josh. xxi. 27; 1 Chron. vi. 71); it has not been identified.

PART II.

SECOND ADDRESS OF MOSES.

CHAPTER IV. 44—CHAPTER XXVI. 19.

THIS address is introduced by a general notice of what is to form the subject of it, viz. the Law, with a more especial description of that in its different parts, as consisting of ordinances, statutes, and rights; together with a reference to the place and time when this address was delivered.

Ver. 44.—**This is the Law**—the Tôrah—**which Moses set before the children of Israel.** "He meaneth that which hereafter followeth; so this belongeth to the next chapter, where the repetition of the laws begins" (Ainsworth); cf. ch. ver. 1; vi. 1; Lev. vi. 9; vii. 1, etc.

Ver. 45.—**Testimonies**; ordinances attested and confirmed by God; the word used here (עֵדוֹת, plu. of עֵדָה) occurs only in Deuteronomy (here and ch. vi. 17, 20) and in the Psalms. **Statutes and judgments** (cf. ch. iv. 1). **After they came forth out of Egypt**; "i.e. not immediately after their exit, but, as ver. 46 shows, when they were already beyond Jordan" (Herxheimer); literally, *in their coming out*; i.e. during the process of their passing from Egypt to Canaan; more exactly defined by what follows.

Ver. 46.—**In the valley** (cf. ch. iii. 29). **In the land of Sihon**; on ground already captured and possessed by Israel (cf. ch. ii. 32—36; iii. 1—17; ver. 48; cf. ch. iii. 9, 12—17).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 25—28.—*Penalties of disobedience and apostacy.* (See Homiletics, ch. xxviii.)

Vers. 29—31.—*Punishment not rejection.* (See Homiletics, ch. xxx. 1—5.)

Vers. 32—36.—*Israel's peculiar greatness.* (See Homiletics, ch. iv. 11—20; v. 6; xxxiii. 29.)

Vers. 37, 38.—*The dispossession of the Canaanites.* (See Homiletics, ch. i. 1—8.)

Vers. 39, 40.—*Loyalty to God the basis of national prosperity and of family happiness.* (See Homiletics, ch. iv. 1—4 and 5—9.)

Vers. 41—43.—*The cities of refuge.* (See Homiletics, ch. xix.)

Vers. 44, 45.—*The Law: its value.* (See Homiletics, ch. v. 22—33.)

Vers. 44—49.—*The territory of Sihon and Og occupied by others.* (See Homiletics, ch. ii. 24—iii. 1—11.)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 23—32.—*National backsliding.* The history of the Jews is an unanswerable argument in favour of the truth of prophecy and the reality of Divine revelation. The singularity of that history is such as can only be fully accounted for on the idea of a supernatural Providence interesting itself in their fortunes; but the strangest fact is in that, their own sacred books, this wonderful history is predicted with minute precision. The Book of Deuteronomy furnishes a series of these predictions, the extraordinary character of which is not removed by any date to which the book may be assigned. We may read this passage first as a prophecy, then as a warning.

I. A PROPHECY. It does not, as several later passages do, put the backsliding of the Jews hypothetically, but states the fact plainly that they will backslide—takes it for granted (ver. 25). There is a prediction: 1. Of national *apostacy*. The whole history of Israel, beginning with the time of the judges (Judg. ii. 19), is a commentary on this statement. 2. Of national *rejection* (vers. 26—29). How remarkably has this testimony been fulfilled in the rooting out of both Judah and Israel from their own land; in their scattering throughout the nations, in every region and country under heaven; in their preservation amidst all vicissitudes as a distinct people; in the conformity to alien worships, customs, and beliefs, to which they have so often been compelled; in the miseries and indignities which they have endured! Surely we are entitled to ask from the unbeliever that he should give us, when rejecting revelation, some satisfactory explanation of these coincidences. 3. Of *national repentance* (vers. 29—32; cf. ch. XXX.). Though yet unfulfilled, there can be little doubt in the minds of any who study past fulfilments, that this prophecy of the repentance of Israel will in God's good time receive its accomplishment also (Zech. xii. 10; Rom. xi. 26).

II. A WARNING. We learn the truths: 1. That backsliding is possible from a state of high attainment. 2. That backsliding is commonly of gradual development (ver. 25). 3. That backsliding may assume very aggravated forms. 4. That backsliding exposes to severe punishment from God. But, finally, and for our encouragement: 5. That backsliding, if repented of, will be graciously forgiven.—J. O.

Vers. 32—41.—*The wonderfulness of Israel's history.* I. THE WONDERFULNESS OF REVELATION AT ALL. (Ver. 33.) It may be argued with great propriety that man needs a revelation; that if there is a God, it is probable he will give one; that the absence of all special revelation would be a greater wonder than the fact of a revelation being given. Yet, when the mind dwells on it, the sense of wonder grows at the thought of the Eternal thus stooping to hold converse with finite, sinful, dying men on earth. Whatever enhances our conceptions of God's greatness, intensifies in the same measure our wonder at the condescension, grace, and love implied in special revelation (Ps. viii.).

II. THE WONDERFULNESS OF GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY. (Vers. 34—39.) God revealed himself *to* Israel; but, inasmuch as the calling, deliverance, and whole history of the nation was full of the supernatural, he was revealed also *in* Israel—in its history. The miraculous element in the history of Israel is urged as a reason for rejecting it. But remark: 1. *It claims to stand out as something absolutely unique in time.* This is no case of the vulgar supernatural, begotten of a childish, miracle-loving age. Moses is as conscious of the marvel, of the exceptional character of the occurrences he narrates, as any of his critics; probably more so. He rises to the grandeur of the subject he speaks of, and puts it on the express ground that nothing like it was ever known, or rumoured, in history. 2. *An adequate reason existed for these wonders.* The interposition of God, as narrated in these verses, the whole revelation, with its terrors, its signs and wonders, its fire, its lawgiving,—is abundantly worthy of the Being who is said to have revealed himself, and of the ends for which that discovery of himself was made. On the other hand, it rises high above what man would naturally have imagined God to do, had he set himself to invent a story of the kind. 3. *The wonders are well attested.* Moses appealed to a generation, the older part of which had witnessed them. Critics dispute the Mosaic authorship of the address; but apart from this, it is to be said that the whole after-history of the nation rests on their reality. There is, however, an inherent sublimity, fitness, vividness, sense of reality in the narratives, and in this appeal to eye-witnesses, which speaks of itself for the truthfulness of the history. When narratives of the same kind, presenting the same marvellous characteristics, can be produced from other literatures, and laid alongside of these, we will be able to believe in their legendary or invented character. 4. *These wonders established a unique claim on Israel for obedience and fidelity* (vers. 39, 40).

III. THE WONDERFULNESS OF GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN ISRAEL IS SURPASSED BY HIS REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN CHRIST. These wonders in Israel were but the earlier acts in a great drama, of which the later belong to the dispensation of the gospel. While Moses appeals to the *limited* character of the former revelation as enhancing its wonder (ver. 34), it is the greater marvel of the revelation in Christ, that it is *universal* in its scope, and brings in a redemption which all can share. We think here of the

incarnation, the miracles of Christ, the resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit, the miraculous spread of the gospel, subsequent reformations and revivals, conversions, the supernatural power exhibited in the renewal and sanctification of souls, the successes of missions, etc. (cf. Heb. ii. 1—5). The appeals of Moses, and his exhortations to wonder and obey, come down to ourselves, accordingly, with enormously enhanced force. —J. O.

Ver. 37.—*Beloved for the fathers' sake.* We learn, taking this verse with the context—

I. THAT THE PIETY OF ANCESTORS IS REMEMBERED BY GOD IN HIS DEALINGS WITH THEIR DESCENDANTS. He remembers: 1. Their piety. 2. The love he bore them. 3. His promises. 4. Their prayers.

II. THAT THE PIETY OF ANCESTORS IS A FREQUENT GROUND OF LONG-SUFFERING AND FORBEARANCE. It was so with Israel (ch. ix. 5); Solomon (1 Kings xii. 12), etc.

III. YET THAT THE PIETY OF ANCESTORS WILL NOT OF ITSELF SECURE SALVATION. The Jews were not to be exempted from chastisement for personal transgressions. If "they abide still in unbelief" (Rom. xi. 23), they cannot be saved. There cannot be salvation without personal faith and obedience.—J. O.

Vers. 29—40.—*The mercy of God.* The knowledge of his own deceitful heart, and his observation of others' waywardness, convinced Moses that, in spite of all warning and appeal, the people might yet wander into evil ways. But Moses had also such a comprehensive vision of God's mercy, that he foresaw that there would be room for repentance even in the land of exile, and that Divine mercy would be available in every extremity of distress. Since God had designed to show mercy unto Israel, Moses felt assured that he would not allow his gracious designs to be frustrated.

I. AFFLICTION OFTEN REVEALS TO OUR MINDS OUR NEED OF MERCY. Amid the joyous excitements induced by earthly prosperity, men forget the deeper needs of the soul. They spend life as if they had no soul, as if this earth were their all. But the deep gashes, which suffering makes, become mouths through which the imprisoned soul makes herself heard. When events defeat our selfish plans, or when health is interrupted, we are made to feel that there is a higher Power than ourselves, who reigns upon the throne, and often, in sheer despair of other help, we appeal to him for mercy; like Manasseh, who had long hardened his heart against God, yet, when he was in sore affliction, sought Jehovah's face. When brought to the lowest ebb, the prodigal son bent his steps homeward. Affliction often serves as the shepherd's crook.

II. EARNEST APPEAL FOR GOD'S MERCY IS NEVER UNSUCCESSFUL ON EARTH. From the furthest limit of apostacy the cry for help is heard. There is no spot on earth from which lines of connection with heaven will not be found. Our God is not wont to hide himself in secret places, where the eye of faith cannot find him. If only the bow be well bent by the arm of spiritual earnestness, and the arrow be feathered with faith, and aimed by heavenly wisdom, it must penetrate the skies. Without gracious influences from above, men will not pray; but whensoever they do pray, they shall be heard. The prayer of the rich man in his torments was unheard, because it was a godless and a selfish prayer, and because we have no ground for expecting mercy when life has closed; in his case there was no appeal for mercy.

III. GOD'S MERCY IS THE MOST ATTRACTIVE REVELATION OF HIMSELF FOR SINNERS. So far as we know, this revelation of his merciful character was reserved for guilty men. In the construction of this material universe, we see chiefly a forth-putting of amazing *power*. In the creation of sentient beings, capable of deriving pleasure from the processes of natural law, we see in active exercise the qualities of wisdom and benevolence. In the Divine treatment of apostate angels, we discover brilliant coruscations from the flames of justice. In the provision of pardon and hope for human transgressors, we see in God's nature the fascinating quality of mercy. This mercy manifests itself in a thousand ways, and is a prolific parent of blessing. It restrains from flagrant sin. It envelops the sinner in a network of heavenly influence. It holds back the hand of justice from summary destruction of the culprit. Though men forsake God, he does not forthwith forsake them. Retaliation finds no place in the Eternal Mind. It is negative and positive good.

IV. THIS MERCY IS SECURED TO MEN BY COVENANT. A covenant is a compact or treaty made between two persons, and which is intended for the advantage of all parties interested. But it is a pure act of condescension, when God undertakes to bind himself in solemn engagements with his feeble and fallen creatures. This gracious procedure is taken in order to encourage our trust, and to pierce unbelief through and through with a two-edged sword. *Now* that God has made a covenant with men, and repeated it age after age, his truth and faithfulness and integrity are pledged for our salvation. He made a covenant with Christ, by which he secured to him an ample recompense of redeemed men, and our Lord pleads in prayer for the fulfilment of his Father's covenant. So gracious is the covenant that God makes with us—the new covenant—that he writes it on the tablet of our minds, yea, deeply engraves it upon the soft affections of our hearts.

V. THIS MERCY IS MADE CONSPICUOUS BY THE MIGHTY DEEDS OF GOD. Moses reminds the Hebrews of the splendid tokens of God's goodness they had seen; for every one of these was a pledge of unchanging love. God's signal emancipation of the people from the iron bondage of Egypt; his care over them throughout the desert pilgrimage; his unprecedented revelation of himself on Horeb, in fire and cloud and voice;—*all these things* were tantamount to fresh covenants—earnests of yet larger blessing. In deeds, more eloquent than words, he assured them that all his resources were available for them. And we, in New Testament times, can make this argument stronger still. Calvary serves as a platform, on which we may erect a magnificent structure of expectation. If God had meant to desert us, would he have shown to us such kindnesses as these?

VI. GOD DISTRIBUTES HIS MERCY IN VARIOUS MEASURES. He did for the Hebrews what he did not do for other nations of that period. In the way of providence, and in the way of revelation, he deals differently with separate nations, and with individuals. We cannot understand all the rules and methods by which he is pleased to work, but we can leave it to himself to justify his ways. Because mercy snatched the crucified thief from the jaws of perdition at the last moment of life, it is criminal presumption for any other man to expect mercy in his last hour.

VII. MERCY FLOWS TO MEN THROUGH A VICARIOUS CHANNEL. God assured *that* generation of the Jews, that *they* were blessed for *their fathers'* sake. Not on the ground of personal merit, nor on the ground of personal claim, did God show them his distinguishing favour, but because he had loved Abraham their father, and for *his* sake loved his seed. Learn here how greatly God loves a good man! Abraham was not destitute of fault; yet so conspicuous was his practical faith, that God could not do enough for him during an earthly life-time. The benediction of God overflowed (like the oil on Aaron's head), and descended to the skirts of his posterity. So, and much more, the love which God bears his only Son flows to us for his Son's sake. The same rich quality of love God cherishes for his Son, he cherishes for us. The gift of salvation can flow to us in no other way than through this channel of vicarious merit. "God, in Christ, reconciles the world unto himself."

VIII. GOD'S MERCY A POTENT INDUCEMENT FOR LOYAL OBEDIENCE. When all other methods have failed to elicit a man's loyalty, the unexpected display of mercy has often succeeded. Justice, and honour, and all sense of obligation in man have been appealed to over and over again, and always in vain. No appeal moves his callous nature, except the plaintive voice of love. We may tell him of the measureless power of Jehovah, of his inflexible justice, of his inviolable truth, of his fixed determination to root out sin from his kingdom; he hears it all unmoved. But tell him of Jehovah's overflowing mercy, of his tender love for the chief of sinners, of the costly provision of salvation; and by the gracious application of this by the Divine Spirit, man's nature relents, becomes docile, and enshrines the Law of God in its inmost centre. "Man!" says the silvery voice of mercy, "thy sins are forgiven thee." And the swift response is, "Lord, *what* wilt thou have me to do?"—D.

Vers. 41—43.—*The cities of refuge.* Regard for human life is more important than regard for private property. With legislative prescience, Moses secured three cities on the east of Jordan as sanctuaries for fugitives, before the land was allocated to their several families. Still further security for the unwary manslayer was obtained by the decree that these cities should be occupied by families of the Levites.

I. GOD'S HIGH REGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE. This Divine thoughtfulness for men is impressive. Not a life was to be wantonly wasted. Human life, it is plain, was counted inferior in value to the interests of public justice; but it was to be sacredly protected against private revenge. This humane provision was all the more required at that time when Israel had been commanded to slay such vast numbers of Canaanites. Inevitably, human sensibility would be blunted, and a grave peril arose that human life would be cheaply rated. The entire land, purchased at such great cost, was a *temple*—a sacred enclosure—which God had chosen for his abode, and the shedding of innocent blood would degrade and desecrate the hallowed soil. Human life, sustained by God with exquisite pains—capable of eminent usefulness—is appraised by God as of great value.

II. THE JUDICIOUS ADJUSTMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PITY. Both these are sentiments implanted in the breast by a Divine hand; both serve the interests of humanity; and both have a fitting sphere in which to move. For the nation's good, the conscience of every man should be kept in healthful activity. It needs illumination, discipline, vigour. The moral sense is as liable to injury, disease, and decay, as any other faculty of mind. It may be deficient in wisdom; it may be overburdened with sensitiveness; it may magnify molehills into mountains; it may act with precipitate haste. Side by side with unrelenting hostility for sin, should dwell honest pity for the sinner. This provision of "sanctuaries" in Israel was in no wise an interference with the proper procedure of justice. By the decision of competent magistrates the fugitive might yet be handed over to the executioner. It gave full opportunity for investigation. It safeguarded a suspected man, if he were innocent of the greater crime. It taught men to draw a deep line between unintentional injury and premeditated murder. It shielded from needless death many a useful life.

III. PROMPT AND SEVERE EXERTION WAS THE CONDITION OF ESCAPE. When a man was killed, his next of kin was expected to avenge his blood. This rough ministry of justice was needful in those early days. It strengthened family ties. It fostered a spirit of brotherhood. It was a shield for the weak and defenceless. If one man had slain another, the presumption was that it had been maliciously done, and prompt vengeance was preparing for him. He had placed himself (inadvertently, it may be) in a serious plight. He was exposed to a sudden reprisal. Before an hour his own life might be forfeited. If his conscience told him that he was innocent, there was a possibility of escape. But he must promptly flee. He must bid a hasty adieu, or none at all, to wife and children, and run at highest speed for the refuge city, for vengeance is swift-footed as an antelope. Every muscle must be strained to the utmost; his eye must be on every bush and rock, lest the foe should be lurking in ambush; his last resource of strength must be expended upon his flight; he must go direct as an arrow for the provided sanctuary. So for every guilty son of Adam there is a refuge provided on the hill called "Calvary;" and because Death rides apace upon our heels, we are charged to flee—to flee for very life—to this capacious Refuge. *So run*, that ye may be safe!—D.

Vers. 25—31.—*Judgment leading to mercy.* After stating the fact of God's jealousy in the matter of graven images, Moses goes on as a prophet to declare that, if they corrupt themselves in this way in Canaan, the result will be their destruction and dispersion. But in dispersion, if they turn with all their hearts to God (ver. 29), they shall find him and be restored. God is merciful as well as jealous (ver. 31). The following thoughts are hereby suggested:—

I. JUDGMENT IS WITH A VIEW TO AMENDMENT. Of course, the *incorrigible* stage may eventually be reached. But until this spirit is manifested, judgment is remedial. The dealings of God with Israel, as we know from the history, were in hope of national amendment. Defeat at the hand of their enemies, exile in Babylon, and all the severe dispensations were to bring them to their senses and lead them to return to God. Judgment, in fact, is first the servant of mercy.

II. TRIBULATION SHOULD AT ONCE LEAD US TO HEART-SEARCHING. It is not an infallible sign of special sin, as the case of Job proves. But the probabilities are in favour of supposing that some special sin has called for special sorrow. Let self-examination, then, be the rule in the midst of all our tribulations. God is calling us in trumpet-tones to return to his embrace.

III. MERCY FINDS IN TROUBLE A SPLENDID SPHERE. The riches of God's grace and mercy can be displayed only in the permitted extremities of human experience. Tribulation, exile, the bitterness which no earthly intermeddling can relieve, are so many worlds into which mercy enters to assert its power and to reign.

The permission of evil has here the only explanation which the present life allows. We shall learn more afterwards, but meanwhile this is all we can learn here.

IV. THE MERCIFUL ONE COUNSELS SOULS TO RETURN AT ONCE TO COVENANT RELATIONS. A loving God is jealous of the defections of his people—hence the judgment and the tribulation. But in mercy he counsels return, and promises to receive them into covenant relationship again. Here alone can we have peace and satisfaction of a permanent character.

Outside the covenant there can be no real comfort or joy. In covenant relations with God, there is a charmed circle, and peace passing all understanding. As Israel returned after the exile, may we return from our backslidings to the consolations of the covenant again!—R. M. E.

Vers. 32—40.—*The deliverance of the Lord's people unparalleled.* Moses would have the Israelites to regard God's deliverance of them from Egypt as a matter for the most grateful admiration. There had been nothing like it since the beginning of the world. There was direct and immediate communion with God; there was deliverance of the people from Egypt by unexampled judgments; and all was to show his character as a sovereign and loving God. The effect of such a discipline should be *filial* obedience. It suggests the following lessons:—

I. THE LORD'S PEOPLE SHOULD GRATEFULLY STUDY THEIR DELIVERANCE. The marvellous Exodus from Egypt and communion at Sinai were deserving of the most faithful study. No people had ever been so favoured before.

But our personal deliverance from the bondage of sin, our march through the wilderness of life, our fellowship with God from the mountain-top of ordinances, the entire experience of a spiritual soul, combine to eclipse even the discipline of Israel. Each one is prepared, who understands his state, to say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul" (Ps. lxvi. 16).

II. UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE FROM GOD ARGUES AN UNPARALLELED GOD. For it is a revelation of his powers and character he makes in these matters, and we are expected to reason from our experience up to himself. "Unto thee it was showed," said Moses, "that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him." He moves in an unparalleled fashion, that we may recognize in him the unparalleled One.

The use of personal experience is, therefore, to reach the Divine side of it, and see what reflection of Deity it presents.

III. IT WAS GOD'S LOVE WHICH HE ILLUSTRATED IN BRINGING ISRAEL FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN. The casting out of the Canaanites, the extermination of the idolaters, was judgment justly exercised upon them; but it was love towards Israel. Hence one of the psalmists makes these conquests a proof that "his mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. cxxxvi. 17—22).

And God's dealings with his people always are to illustrate his love. They find how all things work together for good unto them (Rom. viii. 28).

IV. IT IS FILIAL OBEDIENCE HIS PEOPLE SHOULD RENDER. The similarity between ver. 40 and the fifth commandment of the Decalogue is certainly remarkable. The idea of God's fatherhood is as certainly in the mind of Moses and of the filial obedience of Israel. Long life is attached to their filial obedience to God, as it is attached in that commandment to the filial obedience we render to man.

And indeed this "fatherhood of God," with its correlative "sonship of man," constitutes the crowning relation into which God and man come. How glorious it is! Earth becomes the school of God's children; the promise of the life that now is cheers them on, and heaven contracts the kindly light of home.

We should never rest contented till our study of God's dealings leads us into assurances and hopes like these. The Israelites were to be obedient, and in consequence successful children; and the same blessed conditions become ours by faith!—R. M. E.

Vers. 41—43.—*The cities of refuge beyond the Jordan.* After the discourse contained in the preceding portion of this book, Moses seems to have taken a breathing time, during which he designated Bezer in the wilderness, Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan in Bashan, as cities of refuge. To these the manslayers were directed to flee, when they had been guilty, not of murder, but of manslaughter. In this way a distinction was introduced in the Mosaic code between manslaughter and murder, which did not obtain in the code of revenge among the other nations.

And here let us observe—

I. RETALIATION CONSTITUTED THE RUDE JUSTICE OF THIS EARLY AGE. Vengeance seems dreadful to many because we live under an organized system of public justice. But if we were translated to some uncivilized country, where each one is forced to fight for his own hand, we should regard it less painfully. We should recognize it, in fact, as a necessary assertion of justice.

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord," seems dreadful only to those who have not appreciated the need of a perfect public justice. The Divine vengeance will be public and perfect, from which there will and can be no appeal.

II. RETALIATION, SUCH AS THE MOSAIC CODE PRESCRIBED, DEMANDED COURAGE AND SELF-DENIAL. The kinsman was directed to pursue the manslayer, and to seek the payment of life for life. It was not one of those feats which would be lightly undertaken. In fact, it was one of those dangerous duties, which a person would shirk if he could. The command reinforced the courage and sustained the self-denial of the people (cf. Mozley's 'Ruling Ideas in Early Ages,' pp. 180—221).

And in the Divine vengeance—with reverence would we say it—there is needed courage and self-denial. The infliction of it is *forced* upon him.

III. THE CITIES OF REFUGE AFFORDED PROTECTION TO THE MANSLAYER WHO DID NOT DELIBERATELY TAKE AWAY LIFE. Here the manslayer lived in lonely exile till the death of the high priest. This milder sentence, however, was preferable to a violent death. The opportunity was afforded of examining himself and of being penitent for his sins.

The sojourn in the city of refuge corresponds to the spiritual experience of those who have betaken themselves to Jesus under a sense of their sin and bloodguiltiness, to find under his wings freedom from condemnation (Rom. viii. 1), and the necessity of great watchfulness and circumspection. If the manslayer had left the city of refuge, he would still have been liable to the avenger.

IV. BUT WHEN THE HIGH PRIEST DIED THE MANSLAYER REGAINED LIBERTY AS WELL AS LIFE. "Life in Christ" is indicated by the sojourn in the city of refuge. But liberty through the death of Christ is indicated by the release at the death of the high priest.

It takes many relations to bring out the truth as it is in Jesus. He is our *Goel*, or Avenger, as we have seen where he says, "Vengeance is mine." He is our City of Refuge; he is our High Priest, whose death secures the return of the exile. May Jesus be all in all to us!—R. M. E.

Vers. 44—49.—*The circumstances under which the Law was reiterated.* These verses are manifestly introductory to the discourse of the succeeding chapters. Moses is about to declare the "testimonies" (הָעֵדֹת), what comes forth from God to indicate his will; and the "statutes" (הַחֻקִּים), the defined duties of moral obligation; and the "judgments" (הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים), or mutual rights of men. The conditions of his speech are here detailed.

I. THE ISRAELITES HAD RECEIVED AN EARNEST OF THE PROMISED INHERITANCE. They had got, as we have seen, the land of the Amorites. The kingdoms of Og and of Sihon were already in the hands of the two and a half tribes. Moses had a vantage-ground, therefore, from which to plead the claims of God.

And so, when we get an earnest of the promised inheritance in the gift of the Spirit, we are more likely to yield ourselves to the Divine demands (Eph. i. 14). We have an inheritance on this side the Jordan of death, more important than the pastures of Bashan, and God, having given us this, may well make demands upon us.

II. THE EXPERIENCE THROUGH WHICH THEY HAD PASSED WAS ALSO MOST IMPORTANT. For the temporal inheritance in Moab and Bashan was a minor part of their gifts from

God. Their fellowship at Sinai, their wanderings through the wilderness, the chequered experience of judgment and of mercy, all combined to make the Israelites in Moab a favoured people. No other nation had had such an experience and history.

III. THE REITERATION OF THE LAW WAS IN THE MIDST OF HAPPIER CONDITIONS. At Sinai their fathers and themselves had witnessed awe-inspiring wonders. The mount was the centre of quaking and fear. Even Moses had to yield to the panorama of terror, and to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake." But now in Moab all around them is bright and hopeful. Mercy encompassed them, and so they were more likely to enter into the spirit of the Law, which Moses makes out to be *love* (ch. vi. 1—5).

IV. WE LEARN FROM THIS THAT GOD FIRST GIVES BLESSINGS AND THEN ASKS OBEDIENCE. It is here that we see plainly the essence of the gospel. The glad tidings consist of the offer of a full and free salvation to the sinner, on the ground that he is a sinner and cannot save himself. The salvation is saddled with *no* condition. This is the trouble—it is too good news to be true, in the sinner's sight. He can hardly credit such free gift—he would rather pay something for it. But God is firm, and will make no half bargains.

But when the sinner has been redeemed from Egypt and brought to God, he is expected in gratitude to obey God's Law. It is his rule of life, and he renders obedience to it willingly.

People "put the cart before the horse," and fancy God will take something in part payment, and could not think of refusing them! Nothing is so important just now as clear views about the plan of salvation.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

THE DECALOGUE THE BASIS OF THE COVENANT, THE ESSENCE OF THE WHOLE LAW, AND THE CONDITION OF LIFE AND FELICITY.

Vers. 1—33.

Vers. 1—5.—Moses reminds them of the making of the covenant at Horeb, and of the revelation of the fundamental law of the covenant there. As he was about to recapitulate the laws which God their King had enacted, it was fitting that he should refer at the outset to that covenant relation between Jehovah and Israel on which all the injunctions of the Law rested.

Ver. 1.—**And Moses called all Israel** [called to all Israel], **and said.** "The calling refers not to the publicity of the address, but to the clear voice which, breaking forth from the inmost heart of Moses, aimed at penetrating, as far as possible, to all (Gen. xlix. 1; John vii. 37)" (Schroeder). (Cf. also Prov. viii. 4.)

Vers. 2, 3.—**Not with our fathers,** the patriarchs (cf. ch. iv. 37.) The covenant to which Moses refers is not that made with Abraham, but that made at Sinai, with Israel as a people; and though the individuals who were then present had all perished with the exception of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, the nation survived, and as it was with the nation as an organic whole that the covenant had been made, it might be with propriety said that it was made with those whom Moses addressed at this time, inasmuch as they constituted the nation.

Vers. 4, 5.—**The Lord talked with you face to face.** God spoke to them immediately, in their presence and to their face, from the mount, as one person might to another. There is a slight difference in form between the phrase here and that in Exod. xxxiii. 11 and ch. xxxiv. 10, where it is used in reference to Moses, but it is so slight (בְּפָנִים instead of אֶל־פָּנִים) that no difference of meaning can be elicited. God spake directly to the people, as he did to Moses, only Moses was admitted to closer communion with him than the people were. This difference is sufficiently indicated in ver. 5, where the mediatory function of Moses, in the promulgation of the Law and the making of the covenant, is described as necessitated by the fear of the people, and their not going up into the mount (cf. Exod. xix. 19, etc.). This is referred to more fully afterwards (ver. 23, etc.). **I stood between the Lord and you;** *i.e.* acted as mediator; LXX., εἱστήκειν ἀνὰ μέσον (cf. Gal. iii. 19).

Ver. 6.—**I am Jehovah thy God.** "The Law, the establishing rule for men, can proceed only from him who alone and over all stands fast; *i.e.* from God, specially as Jehovah. The eternal, unchangeable One, since he demands the obedience of faith (is not merely the moral imperative), must not only reveal himself, but in revealing himself

must claim Israel as loyal and faithful; *thy God*" (Schroeder).

Vers. 7—21.—*Repetition of the ten commandments.* On these, as the basis of the covenant, the whole legislation rests, and therefore a rehearsal of them is a fitting introduction to a repetition and enforcement of the laws of the theocracy. Some differences appear between the statement of the "ten words," as given here and as given in Exod. xx. It is chiefly in the fourth commandment that these are to be found. It begins here with "remember" for "keep;" reference is made to the command of God as sanctioning the sabbath (ver. 12), which is omitted in Exodus; a fuller description of the animals to be exempted from work on that day is given (ver. 14); the words, "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou," are added (ver. 14); and in place of a reference to the resting of God after the Creation as the ground of the sabbath institute, as in Exodus, there is here a reference to the deliverance of the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt as a reason why the Lord commanded them to keep the sabbath day (ver. 15). In the fifth commandment there are two additions here—the one of the words, "as Jehovah thy God hath commanded thee," and the other of the words, "that it may go well with thee" (ver. 16). In the tenth commandment, the first two clauses are transposed, "desire" appears in place of "covet" in relation to "wife," and "field" is added to the specification of objects (ver. 21). These differences are of little moment. The only one demanding notice is that in the fourth commandment, where different reasons are assigned for the ordinance of the sabbath. The two reasons assigned, however, are perfectly compatible; the one is fundamental and universally applicable, the other is subsidiary and special in its application; the one is a reason why the sabbath was originally instituted and is for all men, the other is a reason why it was specially and formally instituted in Israel and was especially memorable to that people. In a popular address to them it seems fitting that the latter rather than the former should be the one adduced. As a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, the sabbath was all important to them, for by it they were constantly reminded that "they were thereby freed from the dominion of the world to be a peculiar possession of Jehovah, and so amid the toil and trouble of the world had part in the holy rest of their God" (Baumgarten). It was also fitting in a recapitulatory address that special emphasis should be laid on the fact that what the Law enunciated was what "the Lord had commanded." The addition of "field" in the tenth commandment is probably due to the fact that now, the occupation and division of the land having begun, the people were about to have, what they had not before—each his own property in land. In the tenth commandment, also, there is a difference in the two accounts worthy of notice. In Deuteronomy, "field" is added to the enumeration of objects not to be coveted, and the "wife" is put first and apart, while in Exodus the "house" precedes the "wife" and the latter ranks with the rest. In Deuteronomy also this separation of the wife is emphasized by a change of the verb: "*Neither shalt thou* desire (תַּחְמֹד) *thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou* covet (תִּתְאַוֶּה) *thy neighbour's house*," etc.

Vers. 7—16.—FIRST TABLE OF THE LAW. *præcepta pietatis.*

Ver. 7.—In this, the first commandment, the great principle and basis of all true religion is asserted—monotheism, as opposed to polytheism or pantheism. There is but one God, and that God is Jehovah, the self-existent and eternal, who yet has personal relations with men.

Vers. 8—10.—Here the spirituality of God is asserted, and, in the prohibition of the use of images in the worship of the Deity, all idolatry is denounced, and all deification of the powers of nature in any sense is prohibited. By the Jews, this commandment was not always regarded, for they were not unfrequently seduced into following the idolatrous usages of the nations around them. It does not appear, however, that, though they set up images of the idol-gods whom they were thus led to worship, they ever attempted to represent by image or picture the great God whom their fathers worshipped—Jehovah—by whom this command was given; and at a later period, when they had long renounced all idolatry, they became noted as the one nation that adored the Deity as a spirit, without any sensible representation of him: "Judæi mente sola unumque Numen intelligunt . . . igitur nulla simulacra urbibus suis, nedum templis

sinunt" (Tacit., 'Hist.,' v. 5). It appears that, by many of them at least, the commandment was regarded as prohibiting absolutely the graphic and plastic arts (Philo, 'Quis Rer. Div. Hær. sit.,' p. 496, edit. Mangey; 'De Ebriet.,' p. 374; 'De Gigant.,' p. 270). This may account for the low state of these arts among the Jews, and for the fact that they alone of the civilized nations of antiquity have left no monuments of art for the instruction or admiration of posterity. **Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them;** LXX., Οὐ προσκυνήσεις αὐτοῖς, οὐδὲ μὴ λατρεύσης αὐτοῖς. Every kind of worship of images is forbidden, alike that of *proskunesis* and that of *latria*. **And shewing mercy unto thousands;** *i.e.* to the thousandth generation (cf. ch. vii. 9).

Ver. 11.—**Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;** literally, *Thou shalt not take* [or *lift*] *up the Name of Jehovah thy God to vanity.* This commandment forbids not only all false swearing by the Name of God, but all profanation of that Name by an irreverent or light use of it (Lev. xix. 12).

Vers. 12—14.—**Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.** This phraseology implies that the sabbath institute was already well known to the people of Israel; so that this commandment was intended, not to enact a new observance, but to enforce the continuance of an observance which had come down to them from earlier times. The sabbath was to be kept by being *sanctified.* This means that it was to be consecrated to God to be used as he had appointed. The sanctification of any object "always goes back to an act of the Divine will, to Divine election and institution. In other words, it is always a state in which the creature [or institute] is bound to God by the appointment of God himself, which is expressed by קָדַשׁ, קֹדֶשׁ, הַקָּדֵשׁ, קֹדֶשׁ" (Oehler, 'Theology of the Old Testament,' vol. i. p. 155). The sanctification of the sabbath, accordingly, was the consecration of that day to the Lord, to be observed as he had enjoined, that is, as a day of rest from all servile work and ordinary occupations. Among the Jews, those who were careful to keep this law "rested the sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke xxiii. 56). Not, however, in mere indolence and idle vacancy, unworthy of a man. Not thus could the day be sanctified to the Lord. Man had to "release his soul and body from all their burdens, with all the professions and pursuits of ordinary life, only in order to gather himself together again in God with greater purity and fewer disturbing elements, and renew in him the might of his own better powers" (Ewald, 'Antiquities of Israel,' p. 102). In the sabbath institute, therefore, lies the basis of spiritual worship and pious service in Israel.

Ver. 16.—The germ of society is the family, and the family is sustained only as the authority and rule of the heads of the house are upheld and respected. The command, then, to honour parents may be justly regarded as asserting the foundation of all social ordinances and arrangements. Where parents are not honoured, a flaw lies at the basis, and the stability of the entire social fabric is endangered.

Vers. 17—21.—SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW: *præcepta probitatis.*

In the enactments of the second table there is a progression from the outward to the inward. First, sins of *deed* are prohibited, such as murder, adultery, and theft; then sins of *word*, such as injury of a neighbour's good name by false testimony; and finally, sins of *the heart*, which do not come into open manifestation, such as covetousness and evil desire. The "commandment" is thus seen to be "exceeding broad" (Ps. cxix. 96). So that only the man "who hath clean hands and a pure heart, and who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," shall "ascend into the hill of the Lord, or stand in his holy place" (Ps. xxiv. 3, 4).

Vers. 22—27.—Here is an expanded citation of Exod. xx. 15—18, addressed by Moses to prepare the way for the solemn admonition to observe and do all that the Lord had commanded them, with which he passes on to the enunciation of the various statutes and ordinances he had been enjoined by God to lay upon them.

Ver. 22.—**And he added no more.** "Only these ten words did God speak immediately to you; all the rest he spoke afterwards by me" (Herxheimer); cf. Numb. xi. 25, where the same formula occurs, "and they added not," *i.e.* they prophesied only when the Spirit of God came on them, but this was not continuous. **And he wrote them in two tables of stone.** This anticipates what is recorded in its proper historical connection in ch. ix. 10, 11.

Vers. 23—27.—In a purely historical narrative such as that in Exodus, a condensed statement of what took place on this occasion was sufficient; but in an address to the people, it was fitting that Moses should give it in fuller detail, especially in view of what follows.

Vers. 28, 29.—The words of God in reply to those of the people are not given in Exodus; here they are fittingly inserted God approved of their words because they

expressed a proper reverence and a due sense on their part of the unworthiness of sinful men to come into the presence of the great and holy God; but knowing their fickleness, and proneness to forget and depart from him, he added, **Oh that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always!** God looks upon the heart, and will accept no service or worship that is not rendered from the heart. Only they who do his will from the heart (Eph. vi. 6) really fear and keep his commandments. The tongue may sometimes promise what the heart does not guarantee; and so when the occasion that provoked the utterance has passed, the whole may be forgotten, and the promise never be fulfilled.

Vers. 30, 31.—The people were commanded to return to their tents, and Moses was appointed to act as mediator between God and them, receiving from him his commandments and communicating them to the people.

Vers. 32, 33.—Moses winds up this part of his discourse by exhorting them to observe and do all God's commandments, not in any way departing from that course of action to which he had called them, that they might live, and it should be well with them in the land they were about to possess.

Ver. 32.—**To the right hand or to the left.** "This signifieth an exact care to walk in God's Law, as in the highway, from which men may not turn aside, as in Deut. ii. 27" (Ainsworth); cf. ch. xvii. 11, 20; xxviii. 14; Josh. i. 7; Prov. iv. 27; Isa. xxx. 21. "To receive what God enjoins is only half obedience; it belongs thereto also that nothing be required beyond this. We must not desire to be more righteous than as we are taught by the Law" (Calvin).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 6.—*The Divine Law based on a divinely revealed relationship.* "I am the Lord *thy* God," etc. This little word *thy*, in this connection, gives us the basis on which the Law was set. Of the event called "the giving of the Law," we feel the thrill even now. That Law has in it four features, corresponding to one or other of the aspects in which the people to whom it was first given may be regarded. They were (1) members of the great human family, moral, responsible beings, amenable to the government of God. They were (2) a Church in the wilderness, with their own institutions, which embodied the worship appropriate to the religion enjoined upon them. They were (3) a people rescued from bondage, about to have a commonwealth of their own, for which sundry civil and political regulations had to be provided. They were (4) a nation which for years was to be in a wandering state, yet destined in the long run to find a home in Palestine. Adapted to them in this last-named aspect, they had sanitary laws; for them in the third aspect there were civil and political laws; for them in the second aspect there were religious institutions; and for them in the first aspect there was the great moral law. The set of rules having reference to health would be binding only so far as the laws of climate and modes of life necessitated their continued observance. The civil law would be but temporary so far as it received its complexion from the idolatrous surroundings of the people. The ceremonial law would pass away *in form*, but the underlying principles of it are permanent. The moral law is unchanging as man's nature, and enduring as his relation to God. It is given in the ten commandments, of which the *first* enjoins supreme love to the Divine Being: the second, recognition of the spirituality of the Divine nature: the third, reverence for the Divine Name: the fourth, care for Divine worship: the fifth inculcates religion in the home: the sixth, the religion of the temper: the seventh, the religion of the body: the eighth, the religion of the hand: the ninth, the religion of the tongue: the tenth, the religion of the heart. But antecedently to the Law in any of its aspects, there is a question of deep interest and importance, viz. From whom came it? The reasons for obedience to it come very largely out of the answer to be given to that question. Now, the words in ch. v. 6, which precede the Law itself, are not merely a preface *to* it, they are at once the basis of it and the reason for obedience to it. And these words should be opened up clearly in every case where the Decalogue is about to be expounded. *The* Law is not set on *law*, but on *grace!* For observe—

I. HERE IS A SPECIAL VIEW OF GOD PRESENTED TO THE PEOPLE TO DRAW FORTH THEIR ATTENTION AND WIN THEIR ALLEGIANCE. "*Thy* God." The Hebrews were never expected to believe in, obey, or love an absolutely unrelated Being. THERE IS

NO SUCH BEING! God is related to all the creatures he has made. Hence our knowledge of him is not unreal, because it is relative; but real, because in knowing God's relations to us, we, so far, know him as he is. God was Israel's Redeemer. He had redeemed them that they might be his. He would have the entire life of his redeemed ones spent in covenant relationship with him. Hence he sets his own Law on the basis of those relations. And so it is now. We are not expected to love a Being whose relations to us are doubtful or obscure, or whose mind and will towards us are unknown. We love *because* he first loved us.

II. THE VARIED ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH ARE SET UPON A LIKE BASIS, AND HAVE IN IT THEIR REASON AND POWER. The following suggestions may be developed largely with great advantage. 1. The conception of law is materially changed when we know that it comes from One who loves us infinitely, and cares for us with a tender care. This gives sweetness to the command. We are "under law to Christ." 2. "The Lord *thy* God;" that gives the worship of God its charm. 3. This is the truth which is objectively disclosed by the Incarnation. 4. It is the truth which the Holy Ghost graves on the hearts of the saints (Rom. viii. 15). 5. This truth shows us that real religion is love responding to love (1 John iv. 19). 6. It gives a manifest ground for trust. We *know* whom we have believed. 7. It gives a charm to every precept. 8. It gives meaning to every trial (ch. viii. 5). 9. It is in the light of this truth that prayer becomes possible, and is seen to be reasonable. 10. This gives a solemn aspect to our responsibility (Ps. lxxxi. 10; Amos iv. 12; Heb. iv. 13). 11. The fuller understanding of the words, "My God," will be the result of ripeness in grace (Zech. xiii. 9; Isa. xli. 10—20). 12. This is pre-eminently the truth which gives its certainty and its glow to the hope of future glory (Mark xii. 26; Heb. xi. 16; Rev. xxi. 3, 7).

III. SEEING THE WIDE BEARING AND VAST IMPORTANCE OF THE TRUTH IN THE TEXT, WHAT SHOULD BE WITH US ITS PRACTICAL OUTCOME? 1. Seeing the fearful havoc agnosticism would make, if it should ever come to govern human thinking,[1] let us show men: (1) That a God *out of relation* to us does *not* exist. (2) That the one God *is* related to us as Creator, etc. (3) That his varied relations are explicitly revealed, specially through the Son and through the Holy Ghost. (4) That these relations are to be apprehended by our moral and spiritual nature, and not by the intellect alone. It should never make us stagger that, after getting to the very outer rim of natural knowledge, men should look out on an awful blank, and call it "the great unknown." It shows us only that they cannot find God *in that way*—not that there is no way of finding God, still less that God cannot find us or make his communications intelligible to us. Do not let us suffer men to think that God cannot be found because no one can find him out to perfection! He is *our* God. 2. Since God is *our* God, let us cultivate fellowship with him. It is for this purpose he hath revealed himself, that we may come to him (1 John i. 1—3; Heb. x. 19—22). 3. Let us seek to realize the blessedness of a known and happy relationship to God, enjoyed through Christ, by the Spirit, in a life of penitence, faith, devotion, and love (Isa. lxi. 10; 1 Chron. xii. 18; Ps. lxviii. 28; xlvi. 1; xviii. 29; cxlvi. 5). 4. Let faith in the love of *our* God fill up our duties with glorious meaning, and make the discharge of them a delight (ch. vi. 5; xxviii. 58; Lev. xxv. 38; xi. 45; Isa. xli. 10; Jer. iii. 13; Micah vi. 8; Rom. xii. 1). 5. Let the fact that God is *our* God create, confirm, and perpetuate our assurance of immortal blessedness. See the wonderful words in Matt. xxii. 31, 32; Heb. xi. 16. As if God would be ashamed to be called *our* God, if he did not mean to do something worthy of the name! Wondrous grace! How perfect the reconciliation effected by Christ, to bring together the holy God and sinful men in blest accord and union for ever!

Ver. 7.—*The first commandment. God the sole object of worship.* "Thou shalt have none other gods before me." So runs the first of the ten commandments. (For the specific direction of each, see enumeration in Homily on ver. 6; for the completeness of the whole, see Homily on vers. 22—33.) It has been well observed, in reference to the delivery of the ten commandments, that "this is the only authentic case in the history of the

[1] See this vividly illustrated in a poem by Mr. Buchanan, entitled, 'Justinian,' *Contemporary Review*, January, 1880.

world of a newly formed nation receiving at once, and from one legislator, a complete code of laws for the direction of their whole future life." They are, in outline, the Old Testament revelation of God's will. If any one would wish a clear statement of Old Testament morality, he should be referred to these sayings, or to our Saviour's brief epitome of them. We should do very wrongly if we expounded the Decalogue *merely* as the Hebrews might have done at the time it first was given. Comparison of corresponding or parallel passages in the New Testament will help us in the exposition and enforcement of these ten words. A reference to Matt. v. 17—20; xv. 1—9; xix. 16—19; xxii. 36—40; Luke x. 25—28; xvi. 31; John v. 46, 47, will help to show what regard our Lord paid to the Mosaic Law. Bearing this in mind, we will endeavour now to sketch in outline an exposition of the first commandment, using the clearer teaching of the gospel to give us any additional light and force in so doing. Thus saith the Lord, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me."

I. THIS COMMAND AT ONCE SETS ASIDE THE CLAIMS OF ANY OTHER SUPPOSED GODS. (Cf. ch. iv. 19; Exod. xxiii. 24, 25.) "None other gods before me," *i.e.* "over against me. I will suffer no rival deity; you must worship no other god," etc. Does, then, the command permit Israel to suppose that there *is* any other god whom they could possibly worship? Not by any means. It recognizes the fact of the existence of idolatry round about them. According to the heathen conception, there were gods many and lords many. Israel was not to regard one of all the gods adored by the heathen. This is the very gracious way in which our Father in heaven would help his children in those young days to higher thoughts about himself. Is it not always the case with young children now? They have to be told what they may or may not do, and as they get older they will discover the *reason*. *Indoctrinate into dogma by means of precept.* This was the way God taught Israel "when he was a child," by putting *this* precept in the front. Had Moses discoursed to the people on the philosophic excellence of monotheism, and so on, he would have been virtually speaking in an unknown tongue. They would not have caught a glimpse of his meaning; but they could understand *this*. And the faithful obedience to this precept would be for them the very surest way of learning the doctrine which lay beneath it. By serving *only* one God, they would best come to learn that there was no god but *the One*. But further. This commandment is much more than a mere prohibition of what we usually call idolatry. It is a declaration of the Divine intolerance of any rival in the heart. Though we acknowledge that there is but one God, yet that is practically the idol of our hearts which engrosses our dearest affections, and with a view to which we shape our lives. God wants the innermost sanctuary of our hearts to be sacredly reserved for him.

II. THE PEOPLE WERE TO DRAW OFF THEIR REGARD FROM OTHER GODS, THAT ALL THE POWERS OF THEIR SOULS MIGHT BE CONCENTRATED ON GOD. (See ch. vi. 5.) In our text, the form is negative; the intent is positive. They are to know *none but* God, that they may concentrate all their strength *on* God. In fact, the command is equivalent to this: "Let all your personal, family, social, national life be regulated completely by the commandments of your God. And let this be done from love." Is it asked, "Is this practicable? Can a man put forth all his strength for God when his energy is absorbed in trade?" We answer, "Yes; by regulating his business rightly, as God wills." "Can a mother put forth all her strength on loving God, when the care of her family is taxing and even straining all her powers?" We answer, "Yes; by training her children for God." And so on in each one of life's tasks.

III. THIS IS SET ON GROUNDS OF TENDER APPEAL. (See the preceding Homily.) God does not say, "When you love me supremely I will redeem you from Egypt;" but "I *have* redeemed you, therefore yield me your all." The religions of man go out to an unrevealed Being, if perchance he may be propitiated. Scriptural religion is the response of the heart of man to the revealed love of the Infinite One. Hence the gospel claim is, in substance, like the Mosaic, although its form is new, and the view we get of Divine love is larger (see Rom. xii. 1). In both, duty is the same: the whole heart of man is demanded for God. But note the advance in light, tenderness, and strength in (1) the mercies of God; (2) the "beseeching" tone; (3) the "consecration of a living sacrifice" asked; (4) the reason given, "Your reasonable service." Here is the difference in the method of the gospel.

IV. THIS PRECEPT IS HERE SET IN THE FOREFRONT OF ISRAEL'S NATIONAL LAWS.

It was the law for each one's life. It was the rule for all. In their legislation, the supreme feature was to be the national recognition of God. And even now, yea, ever, so far as the legislation of any people is based on righteousness, so far as that legislation recognizes the rights of the Great Supreme, so far as a people are loyal to God, to that extent will there be the surest guarantee for individual, family, social, and national prosperity. If ever a nation *as such* should "break his bands asunder," and inaugurate an age of reason *versus* faith, instead of a reasonable faith, the reign of terror would not be far off. And it is owing to the supreme importance of thus launching into the world a nation with God for its Lord, and righteousness for its law, that the open transgression of this first commandment was so severely punished, as being a crime against the State as well as a sin against God (ch. xiii. 7—12, 13—18; xvii. 2—7). (The frequent phrase "cut off" does not refer to punishment in another life, but to a man's being "cut off" from the congregation.) And even now fidelity to God is the supreme condition of a nation's well-being; and that man is playing foully with the highest interests of a people, who is seeking to undermine its allegiance to heaven.

V. IS THIS THE LAW? THEN LET US MAKE THREE USES OF IT. 1. As a *touchstone*. It reveals guilt. The *need* of any such command is a very humiliating fact. "The law is not made for a righteous man." "By law is the knowledge of sin." This precept (1) discloses the world's sin. (2) It shows the deep root that sin had in the natures even of the freed people, that they should need such legislation to grave this precept on their hearts. (3) It shows *our* sin, that we should need the written Law. If we were what we ought to be, we should do God's will spontaneously without needing a written law at all! 2. As a *judge*. This being the Law, we see how it is that as by law we stand convicted, so by it we stand condemned, "subject to the sentence of God," for failures innumerable; and our guilt is the greater, since he who asks our heart reveals his own love that he may call forth ours. This Law is a perpetual, silent accuser (see John v. 45). 3. *As a child-guide to Christ* (see Gal. iii. 24, Greek). God only is greater than law. And he alone can restore those who, having broken law, must needs, in the ordinary course of things, be regarded and dealt with as law-breakers. For restoration, three things are required: (1) Forgiveness; (2) justification; (3) re-creation. Bare Law does not provide for either of these, but God in his Law has witnessed concerning this great restorative scheme. So says Paul in Rom. iii. 21, "But now there has been manifested a righteousness of God apart from law, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets," etc. So in Rom. i. 16, 17, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, . . . for therein there is revealed a righteousness of God by faith, with a view to [the production of] faith." By believing in Christ, forgiveness is sure to the penitent, and grace re-creates the man, writing the Law on the heart, so that we obey and love God, not because God says we must, but because we are remade so that we can do nothing else. And what we need is to have our whole nature so reset by Divine grace, that we shall instinctively see God's will and do it, without needing any precept at all. As by the regenerative efficacy of the Holy Ghost we attain to this, shall we understand what it is to do the will of God on earth, "even as it is done in heaven."

Vers. 8—10.—*The second commandment. The spirituality of Divine worship.* It is sometimes said that there is a reason attached to this second commandment. It is scarcely accurate to affirm that. There is a double *sanction* attached to it to enforce it, but there is no mention made here of a *reason*, strictly so called. We will, however, incorporate in this Homily the true reason which underlies this precept. But we shall have to go to the New Testament for the clearest statement of that. Let us then, in connection with the above, ask the reader to turn to John iv. 24, in which he will find a deep reason for the second commandment. We will first of all, as briefly as we can consistently with clearness, open up the contents of this command, and will then endeavour to unfold the double sanction by which it is guarded.

I. ITS CONTENTS. The *first* commandment claims for Jehovah alone the love and worship of the people. The *second* warns off from any mode of worship which would bear a resemblance to or which would be a compromise with idolatry. While Israel was in Egypt, there had been a general worship on the part of the Egyptians, of bird, beast, and reptile, not for their own sake, but as representing some attribute of the invisible God.

The forms of Egyptian worship, the names of Pasht, Osiris, etc., must be done away with. *No representation* of the object of worship was to be allowed. However much men might have pleaded that sense was an aid to faith, the stern "Thou shalt not" peremptorily barred the way. We know the reason *why*, as they in their childhood did not. God is spirit. Being spirit, it is only by spirit that he can be approached. No *merely* bodily act can possibly be worship. Further, neither God nor any one of his attributes can be represented by any physical form. Whatever idea of Jehovah may be gained or retained through impressions derived from beholding a sensible object with the bodily eye, will be an idea representing *it*, not *him*. It will be a thought of God formed by the image and limited by it—not the true thought given by revelation. Obviously, however, this command did not forbid decorative designs in the tabernacle or the temple (cf. Exod. xxv. 18, 20, 34; xxvi. 32; Numb. xxi. 8, 9; 1 Kings vii. 25; x. 20). But never were any creature-forms allowed, either as objects of worship or as aids to it. Nor can we read through Hebrew history without seeing how much need there was of such a command. Ere long, the people were dancing round the golden calf! And in the days of Jeroboam two calves were set up—one in Bethel, another in Dan. But surely the history of Christendom is even a sadder one than that of the Hebrews. Ere four centuries of the Christian era had passed away, how did the Christian Church lapse into repeated breaches of this law! "An enormous train of different superstitions was gradually substituted in the place of true religion and genuine piety. . . . Images were not as yet very common. But it is certain that the worship of the martyrs was modelled by degrees according to the religious services that were paid to the gods before the coming of Christ."[1] It is true, indeed, that in 726 A.D. Leo III. issued an ordinance forbidding the use of images in churches, as heathenish and heretical, and a Council of Constantinople, in 754 A.D., sanctioned that condemnation. Another Council, which met at Nice in 789 A.D., declared the previous Council heretical, and ordained the worship of pictures in churches. The decisions of this Council were rejected at a Council in Frankfort, in 794 A.D. Also at another in Constantinople, in 815 A.D., all worshipping of pictures and images was forbidden. In 869 A.D. the iconoclasts were condemned. Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth century, affirmed a threefold use of images, and declared that like homage is due to the image of Christ as to Christ himself! And we know but too well what the later history of Rome has been, how pagan rites have become more and more mingled with Christian service. The Saviour is approached through the crucifix, and fed upon through the bread; and, as if blind to the warnings of history, ritualism openly proclaims that the best exposition of doctrine is that which meets the eye rather than the ear. Perhaps it is not to be wondered at, that in Roman Catholic catechisms the second commandment *is left out;* and not even Luther was sufficient of a reformer to restore the missing law in his catechism—an easy way, indeed, of blinding the people to the evil of a mistaken ritual, to *leave out* the authoritative command, obedience to which would render such evil impossible!

II. THE DOUBLE SANCTION ATTACHED TO THIS LAW. The first is drawn from the Divine nature, the second from the Divine administration. 1. *From the Divine nature.* "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." "They that worship him *must* worship him in spirit and in truth." God is jealous: (1) For *truth* in his worship. He would have us *think* of him as glorious in power, wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and love. Our thoughts of God can be but limited at the best. They need not be untrue. But untrue and dishonouring to him they certainly will be if we come at them through the means of any graven image. We do not even except the crucifix. It represents the bodily form of Christ. It may represent the nails, the wounds, the spear, the crown of thorns, the pain-crushed brow; and we confess it may be possible, by looking at these physical marks, to receive so vivid an impression of the physical suffering that we may be wrought up to agony in thinking of it! But even then this is only knowing Christ after the flesh; it is making an idol of his humanity; and in sympathy with the anguish of his bodily woes, we may altogether miss the acting of faith in that atoning sacrifice which lay among the things unseen and eternal! (2) For *spirit* in his worship. The worship paid to a spiritual Being is nothing if it be not spiritual worship. But in the endless bowings and prostrations, genuflexions, cross-

[1] **Mosheim, vol. i. p. 366.**

markings, and waving of the body at the word "Jesus," there is, at least in appearance, a taking for granted that bodily postures are spiritual attitudes. (3) God would have man lifted up to a higher level by the worship of him. But the sorry record in history of the breaches of the second law shows us four transitions: (*a*) An object which at first represents the Being who is worshipped, comes at length to be worshipped.[1] (*b*) Worship paid through the body will sink to merely bodily worship. (*c*) When the lofty platform of spiritual worship is quitted, religious service will inevitably lose its meaning. Sense first comes as "an aid to faith," and then is put in the place of it! (*d*) When this is the case, the vitalizing force of religion is gone, and man, sinking in religious vitality, sinks also in morality (see Jer. vii. for an illustration of this in the Hebrew people; see Rom. i. for illustrations of it in the Gentile world). 2. *From the Divine administration.* "Visiting the iniquities," etc. It would not have seemed wonderful to have found this second sanction appended to such sins as murder, adultery, etc.; but how is it that it follows on so apparently slight an offence as the use of graven images? *Because of the sure and inevitable quadruple transition already referred to.* He who comes to lose the life of religion will, so far, be undermining the foundations of morality, not only for himself, but for those who come after him. (1) What a man is, and what his family are or may be, are regarded as bound up together by an unalterable law of God. (2) Evil follows on from generation to generation. A ghastly inheritance to hand down—formalism and idolatry! (3) But if a man maintains the true spiritual worship of God in his family, that too will be handed down to those who follow him as a priceless heritage; not only to those who come in the physical line: our Lord's words in John viii. should teach us to look beyond that. (4) In the mercy of God the influence of a man's *good* is more lasting than the influence of his evil. Evil—to third or fourth generation. Good—to thousands [of generations]. The influence of Paul, *e.g.* at this moment, is prodigious; that of Nero is *nil*. *Learn, in conclusion:* 1. We receive an influence from the generations which preceded us; we shall transmit one to the generations that will follow. (We do not think this latter consideration is sufficiently pressed on the people, either on its physiological or on its spiritual side.) 2. Whoever wishes to ensure a prolonged influence that shall blessedly affect generations to come, let him bend all his force to the upholding of the worship of God in purity, in spirit, in truth. So much depends on this. The weal of the land in which we dwell is dependent thereon. Oh! for our own sakes, for our country's sake, for our children's sakes, let us contend earnestly for the maintenance of the worship of God in simplicity and in truth!

Ver. 11.—*The third commandment. Reverent regard for the Divine Name.* The "Name" of God is the form of speech for God himself. "To take" the Name of God means "to take it up"—to use it in any way, which may be done either by speaking *to* him, *of* him, *for* him, or *against* him. "To take up this Name in vain" means to take it up falsely or vainly. And inasmuch as it has been so grievously common to use the Name of God profanely in oaths, this third commandment has come to be regarded chiefly as a prohibition against swearing. It is *that*, but it is a great deal more. This commandment is "exceeding broad." It may be wronged, not only by an undue limitation of it, but also by a too slavish adherence to the letter of it; *e.g.* according to the teaching of the rabbis, certain oaths were harmless if the Name of God was not specifically mentioned in them (cf. Matt. xxiii. 16—22). Further, the expression "in vain" was interpreted as meaning "if you take an oath you must fulfil it;" take as many oaths as you please, so long as you do not break them, and thus turn them into falsehood. The effect of this cold and superficial teaching of the rabbis was twofold. It created artificial distinctions which our Saviour did not recognize, and it obliterated such as were of great importance in his eye. It is needful for us, then, to be guided by the spirit of our Lord's teaching, if we would rightly develop this third law. Since our Saviour in his Sermon on the Mount removed the glosses with which the rabbis had overlain the Law and restored it to its pristine clearness and purity.

I. WHAT IS FORBIDDEN BY THIS THIRD COMMANDMENT? We are all aware that some have regarded our Saviour's words, "Swear not at all," as prohibitive of solemn oath-

[1] See Dr. R. W. Dale's book, 'The Ten Commandments,' pp. 48, 49.

taking in a court of justice. We cherish all respect for those who so regard them, but we cannot view them in this light, for the following reasons: (1) The occasion on which our Lord uses the words seems to refer rather to habits in private life. (2) Christ and his apostles solemnly appealed to Heaven. (3) In Heb. vi. the oath of God is spoken of by the sacred writer, and we cannot suppose this would have been if *all* oath-taking were wrong. We cannot think that, even by way of accommodation, the Most High would represent himself as doing that which it would be always wrong for his creatures to do. (4) In prophetic language there is predicted a swearing by the Name of God, which is regarded as obviously right (Isa. xlv. 23; see also ch. vi. 14). These reasons seem to us to set the matter entirely at rest. And the view that Christ was referring to men's ordinary conversation when he said, "Swear not at all," is confirmed by Matt. v. 37; the meaning of which evidently is: "If it is needful for you to interlard your conversation with sundry adjurations, you are the victims of a spirit of falsehood which has 'the evil one' for its father!" Further, this precept covers a far wider range than that of swearing. It forbids any "taking up" of the Divine Name which is not true as to loyalty of purpose, actual fact, and after-fulfilment. This precept manifestly prohibits: 1. *All scoffing at sacred things;* not merely at the *word* "God," or at the doctrine of the Divine existence, but ridiculing the Bible as the Book of God, the sabbath as the day of God, Christians as the people of God, and religion as obedience to God. The mild and supercilious scorn of modern scepticism is equally a violation of this precept—it tramples under foot the Son of God. 2. *Perjury is another form of violation of this command.* The idea of swearing is that of calling God to witness; and to invoke that great and awful Name to witness a lie is one of the most grievous breaches of this law. 3. *Profanity also is here forbidden*, i.e. taking the Name of God on the lips on every trifling occasion. This is now thought, as indeed it is, ungentlemanly, to a far greater extent than was the case fifty years ago. So far well. Only let us take care that for a custom to be *out of fashion*, does not act with us more powerfully than its offensiveness to God, in inducing us to give it up! Some are more concerned at a hole in their manners than at a breach of morals. These things ought not so to be. 4. *Frivolity in reference to Divine things is a transgression of this command.* This is by no means to be confounded either with scoffing or with profanity. It may be found where there is great reverence for God, great kindness of heart, combined with an excessive fondness for raising a laugh. And where this is the case, even sacred things are but too seldom exempt from frivolous treatment. We recall some acquaintance whose chief, yea, whose only apparent fault, was the extreme tendency to turn everything into a joke, even things most sacred. Many were ready to excuse the frivolity for the sake of the talent it revealed. But they are "nowhere" now. Their levity was their ruin. Wit and humour have indeed a place of no mean value in social life. Social evils are often exposed more effectively in scorn and satire than in graver speeches. But there is no tendency of any man which needs to be more wisely cultured, more carefully and prayerfully guarded, and more conscientiously directed, than that to which we are now referring. Apart from this, there is exceedingly great danger of its leading to the "taking the Name of God in vain." 5. There may be a breach of this commandment without frivolity (as usually understood), even where there is no sense of humour and no talent for witticisms, in the indulgence of a vicious habit, much more easily formed than broken off, of *interlarding the conversation with certain well-known epithets.* We know what these were in Christ's time (see Matt. xxiii. 16—22; v. 33—36). This is conceited talk, and it is sinful talk. 6. *False teaching for God breaks this law* (see Jer. xxiii. 21—24, 31). There are several ways by which, in teaching others, the Name of God may be taken falsely. Either (1) by declaring as God's what he has *not* said; or by (2) denying what he *has* said; or (3) by calling in question the truth of what he has spoken. The first was common in the days of Jeremiah; the second and third are at once more ancient and more modern. *Whenever any ambassador for God gives his own thoughts as if they were God's message*, he is taking the Name of God in vain. Or if a man, while professing to speak for God, is speaking with the desire to exalt himself, he is guilty of the same sin. 7. *Hollowness and formality in the professed worship of God are breaches of the third commandment.* We take God's Name in vain if we sing "the songs of Zion" with a vacant heart, or outwardly join in the prayers of the sanctuary

without devotion in the soul (Ezek. xxxiii. 30, 31; Isa. xxix. 13). Oh, the number of times we have been on our knees and have used the Name of God in "indolent vacuity of thought"! "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" 8. *We may break this commandment by vowing unto God, and then not fulfilling the vow.* When at the Lord's table, we take the sacramental oath of obedience to our Great Commander, and if we are not true to that, we add sin to sin by "taking the Name of God in vain."

II. How is this precept guarded? "The Lord will not hold him guiltless," etc. God may or may not mark this sin by visitations of temporal judgment; there are many cases in which levity has been the ruin of a man, even temporally. But the probability is that the more occult and deceptive forms of this sin will leave no appreciable mark on a man's earthly career. The marking of the guilt will be between God and a man's own soul. Hollow prayers bring no blessing; empty worship no growth in grace. Violated vows will bring down the displeasure of God. If God were to visit upon us all the sins of unreality and formalism, of mechanical routine, and of heartless work in his service, we should be lost men! "God often sees more in our prayers to disgust him than to please him," says Charnock. The Lord pardon the iniquity of our holy things!

III. How should this precept be used? 1. *As a probe.* Possibly, when a preacher takes this text, some may say, "We don't need that. We never break God's law so!" Possibly not, in the conventional sense in which the text is often used now. But what about that conversation laden with frivolity? What about that lesson which had more of self than of God in it? What about the songs of the sanctuary, enjoyed for the sake of the music, without a thought of the words? What about the forgotten vows? Surely we can all recall so many breaches of this third commandment that, if we had not a pardoning God, we should be shut up in despair! 2. *To quicken to penitence.* By so much as our conviction is deep that we have broken this commandment a thousand times, by so much should our penitence be deep *and definite* before God. 3. *To lead us to earnest entreaties for forgiveness.* If we were not permitted to ask this, it would be all over with us, even if the third commandment were the whole of the Law. 4. *To lead to fervent prayer for daily heart-renewal.* "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If the heart is right the tongue will be right. "If a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." Well may we pray that every word we speak may be conformed *to truth* (*for in each of the eight ways named above there is a violation of truth*). When our heart, thoughts, words, and deeds are in harmony with God's nature and will, then shall we be true to the duty implied, and free from the sin forbidden, in the third commandment.

Vers. 12—15.—*The sabbath, or a rest-day for man.* (For a notice of the variations between the wording of this command in Exod. xx. and in this chapter, see Exposition.) No Christian preacher could wisely deal homiletically with the question of the Divine intent in the appointment of a seventh-day rest, without noting, in connection with our text, the teaching of our Lord and his apostles thereon. In developing the true doctrine and use of our rest day, let us—

I. Indicate several principles from which our conception of the Hebrew sabbath must start. The Hebrew sabbath has a far-back look. "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God." What spaces of time the "six days" represent we may perhaps never know in this life. One thing is clear—a "day" of Divine action *must* be indefinitely longer than one of man's days. This far-back look, moreover, reveals to us a method of Divine work, after which ours is to be modelled. As man's nature is made in God's image, so our time is to be portioned out after God's order. Further, the basis of the right observance of the day is that of "*rest.*" The word "sabbath" means that; whatever else may have been connected with the day, the notion of *rest* lay beneath all. While the Hebrews were to regard the observance of the day as a part of their covenanted duty as a nation, yet the rest was not for them as Hebrews only, but as *men.* The sabbath was made *for man.* Work was to be laid aside, that man might give himself up to *a holy and happy day of rest and worship.* With a view, moreover, to securing all this, the work of the six other days was to be arranged.

II. The subsequent precepts are all in the same direction. Never is there

anything out of harmony with this benign command to rest (see Exod. xvi. 29; xxiii. 9—13; xxxi. 13; xxxiv. 21; xxxv. 1—3; Lev. xix. 3, 30; xxxiii. 3; xxvi. 2; Numb. xv. 32—36). Of such importance to the good of the people was their rest day, that if a man attempted to turn it into a day of common work, he was to be stoned! Severity to the one was a guard of mercy round all! If the people could not or would not guard their rest day for themselves, the great Lord who gave it would shield it for them all! In course of time these precepts were grievously disobeyed, either by an entire neglect of the day, or by a merely *formal* observance of it (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21; Neh. ix. 14; x. 31; xiii. 15, 16; Isa. i. 13; lvi. 2; lviii. 13; Jer. xvii. 19—27; Ezek. xx. 12, 13; xxii. 8, 26). Later on, when Jesus Christ came, many had lost the spirit of the day in the letter; so that the day which was given to man as a boon of mercy had come to be a chafing yoke and a grievous burden. Consequently, *not even Jesus Christ was a sufficiently strict sabbath-keeper for the Pharisees* (Matt. xii. 1—8; Mark ii. 23—28; iii. 1—5; Luke xiii. 10—17; John v. 1—16; vii. 23, 24). Hence, Jesus in his teaching respecting the sabbath, did not *divert it from*, but *restored it to*, its original intent. The sabbath *as God made it*, was restful, beautiful, and *free*. As rabbinical teaching had *perverted* it, it was rigid and burdensome. Men came to be on the sabbath under a hard yoke; but it was *man's* yoke, not God's (see in Dr. Geikie's 'Life of Christ' abundant illustrations of this).

III. NEW TESTAMENT INDICATIONS VARY IN FORM BUT ACCORD IN SPIRIT. We find in the New Testament some passages which indicate some observance of the *first* day of the week (John xx. 19—26; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10). It is remarkable how few there are of such. We have no specific precept to direct us with regard to a Christian sabbath. There is nothing *very* clear on the matter, either in the Gospels or the Epistles. Judaism is waning; what is *peculiar to it* dies away; what is world-wide and for humanity, lives. We seem to see the seventh day receding from our gaze, its lustre fades and is lost in the brightness of the first day. There is a dissolving view. Winter is succeeded by spring. Here is something which has Christ's sanction and apostolic warrant, viz. meeting on the first day. *It* is the day of religious assembling, the day of "breaking bread." The God of Sinai has invested the Son of man with all power in heaven and in earth. He is the Lord of the sabbath. Memories of the great deliverance wrought by him eclipse those of the deliverance from Egypt. Wherefore, ever after, rest-day becomes "*the Lord's* day." Ignatius says, "Let every friend of Christ celebrate the Lord's day." Justin Martyr, "On the Lord's day, all Christians in the city and in the country assemble together, because that is the day of the Lord's resurrection." Tertullian, "The Lord's day is the holy day of the Christian Church. So gradually, however, did the seventh-day sabbath change into the first-day rest, that we find for a while *both* days observed. Accordingly we find, in 'The Apostolic Constitution,' both days named as days for the assembling of the Church; that on the sabbath *and* on the Sunday the slaves should rest from their labours, and attend church with the rest to hear the sermon. But as the new skin is forming under the surface, the old is getting looser and looser. Yet for a time, *there are two coverings*. Soon, however, the old is shuffled off, and only the new is seen. The sabbath is lost, but rest-day reappears as *the Lord's day!*

IV. HOW STANDS THE REST-DAY NOW? The fourth commandment had a natural basis and a religious one. It gave a day of rest for man *as man*, and, as such, has never been repealed. God has never taken away the world's rest-day. It is ours still—a priceless heritage. The *religious* side of the Hebrew sabbath, though abolished *so far as the observance of Jewish rites is concerned*, was at once taken up by the Christian Church, and Christians have, as we well know, by meeting for worship on the first day, recognized the principle of a *world's rest-day*, and have used it for the higher purposes of the kingdom of heaven. And now to us the Lord's day is (1) our day of rest from earthly toil; (2) the day of hallowed calm; (3) of richest memory; (4) of united worship; (5) of mutual recognition of our common relationship to one God and Saviour; (6) of spiritual training; (7) of holiest service for the Master; (8) of noblest outlook (see Dr. R. W. Hamilton's 'Horæ Sabbaticæ').

V. WHAT IS OUR DUTY WITH REGARD TO OUR REST-DAY? 1. As men, let us regard it as an inestimable boon for the right use of which we are responsible to God. We are so made, as to our physical constitution, that we *require* one day's rest in seven. Then

let us *take* the rest gratefully. 2. As citizens, we have a trust to guard for our fellow-countrymen. Legislation can never direct a man how to spend his rest-day, but it may do something to guard it for him. While we use the rest wisely, so that it makes us not only brisker animals, but holier men, let us also give others the rest. 3. As Christians, we have a sacred day for sanctuary worship, and for home and school instruction. We should do everything to show the young that the Sunday is a bright, light, cheery day, remembering that whatever helps best to *health, rest, worship, and holiness is,* and *always has been,* lawful on the sabbath day. 4. As workers for God, the rest day is our glorious day of special service for Christ and for souls, in the very fatigue of which the spirit finds refreshment. Then surely we enter into the Master's spirit. Our meat is to do the will of him who hath sent us, and to finish his work.

Ver. 16.—*The fifth commandment. Honour due to parents; or, the religion of home life.* Many are the passages in the Word of God which speak of or refer to the duty of children to their parents; *e.g.* Exod. xxi. 15, 17; Lev. xix. 3; xx. 9; ch. xxi. 18—21; xxvii. 16; Ps. lxxviii. 5—8; Prov. x. 1; xiii. 1; xx. 20; xxiii. 22; xxx. 17; Jer. xxxv. 18; Ezek. xxii. 7; Matt. xv. 4—9; Col. iii. 20. It is worthy of careful noting, that when God would launch forth into the world a new national life, he lays great stress on the recognition of and regard to *family sacredness.* At the outset of the redemption from Egypt, family life was specially hallowed (cf. Exod. xii. 24—27; xiii. 8, 9). The covenant of circumcision handed down from Abraham was to be observed. Children were to be sealed as the Lord's, and brought up in his fear. That is here assumed. It was the understood law. And now, when a moral code for the nation and for the world for all time is to be laid down, the very next precept to those relating immediately to the honour due to God himself, is this—"Honour thy father and thy mother." Not, indeed, that they were to render them a blind obedience, for see Ezek. xx. 18, 19. If the parents were bad, the best honour the children can render them is to become better than they were. So that we may note, once for all, in passing, that the commandment recognizes it as incumbent on parents to see that their lives and rules are such as their children *can* honour, and that *their* precepts accord with those of the Father of spirits. Throughout our homiletic application of this fifth commandment, we shall assume this to be the case. It is, indeed, understood by many, that this command is to be regarded not only as requiring obedience in the family, but "as requiring the preserving the honour and performing the duties belonging to every one, in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals;" and as forbidding "the neglecting of or doing anything against the honour and duty which belongeth to every one, in their several places and relations." Doubtless this is so. But there is quite as much as we can compass in the brief space afforded us, in the specific duty named in the text. Let us—

I. INQUIRE IN WHAT WAYS THIS PRECEPT MAY BE FULFILLED. 1. During the earlier stages of life, while needing the fostering care and sheltering love of the home, *implicit obedience* is a child's first duty. We not only say that it is next to his duty to God, but that it is a *part of it.* The parent's precepts may be distasteful, even rigid, but if they are right, it is the child's part implicitly to obey. 2. *Honouring* parents is the form which obedience will take when the child is growing up towards manhood. No wise parent would think of directing a lad of sixteen as closely as he would a child of six years; at the same time, though the father may give him more liberty, it may not be either wise or right on the son's part to *take* all the liberty which is given. At that age his own sense of honour and right ought to be sufficiently strong to guide him; and respect and reverence for his parents will create a loyal regard to their wishes when once they are known, and will lead him to deny himself a great deal that might be gratifying to him, rather than cause pain to or cross the wishes of those to whom he owes his life. Rude words to a parent, "answering again," disputing his rule in the house, will be utterly out of the question where a youth wishes to live in the fear of God. 3. Supporting them may become a duty. There will come a time, if the parents are spared to see their children grow up in life, when they will lean on the children, rather than the children on them. If the children are worthy, they will *let* their parents lean on them, and will show them that they can be as faithful to their parents in their weakness, as the parents when in their strength were to them. 4. Becoming an honour

to them is another way of honouring them, *i.e.* by living so that they can feel proud of what their children *are*, quite apart from what they do. If a father can say, "My son never gave me an uneasy thought about him," that is such a testimony as a son might well wish him to be able to bear. 5. By guarding very jealously the sacredness and purity of England's family life, the commandment may be obeyed. We may honour our parents by honouring that holy marriage tie which made them what they were to us. 6. By guarding and handing down to others the holy faith in which they have trained us (Ps. lxxviii. 1—8; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9). We may well desire to honour them by taking on our lips that dear Name which gladdened them in life and sustained them in death. 7. There is another way of honouring parents which we would there were no occasion to name. But there is a drift clearly to be discerned in some directions of English life, which makes a warning imperative (see Matt. xv. 1—9). The Jewish rabbis put their Church and their rabbinical rules between a child and his parents. Modern (so-called) priests are doing the same now. Hence this rule: Honour your parents by refusing to let any priest edge his way in between you and them. In Divine institutions, the priest is *nowhere* compared with the parent. And under the Christian economy he has no right to be. He is humanity's pest and plague. "Honour thy father and thy mother," and never allow a priest to tamper with the sacredness of home!

II. BY WHAT SPECIAL ARGUMENTS MAY A CHRISTIAN TEACHER ENFORCE THIS DUTY? 1. Here let us set in the front a reason given by Paul in Eph. vi. 1, "It is right (δικαιον)." There is another word which is usually translated "right," viz. εὐθυς, which is the equivalent of "straightforward." But the word here used is "just." Obedience to parents is simply a piece of bare justice. For, consider how much we owe them. When we first came into being their care and watchfulness guarded and supplied us long ere we knew aught. They thought us, perhaps, something *wonderful*, when no one else thought anything of the kind, save in the reverse sense. Ought not all this to be repaid? 2. It is well-pleasing to the Lord. He has in this "set us an example, that we should follow his steps." 3. There is a specific promise made to the obedient and loyal, *as such*, "That it may go well with thee," etc. In the culture of home obedience will be found a strong safeguard of character. Vicious excesses will not exhaust. Insubordination and recklessness will not blight life's prospects. Hence *cæt. par.* such a life, being the purest and happiest, will also be the longest. 4. Such home virtue is a contribution of no mean value to the stability of a state. The reference of Moses is to the weal of the nation as well as to that of the home. The downfall of Israel's glory is attributed to two evils: neglect of sabbaths, and making light of father and mother. No nation can prosper without purity in the home. 5. Such virtue brings great joy. "A wise son maketh a glad father." There is joyousness on both sides. This is the beauty with which God's blessing makes the plants of virtue to bloom. It is like the fragrance exhaling from a bed of violets quietly blossoming in a shady lane. 6. The neglect of this will ensure many unavailing regrets on both sides in after life. "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." Many an undutiful son, when laying his parents' remains in the grave, would give all he has if he could but call them back, if he could atone for his sin, or could cancel the past! Disobedience treasures up sorrow. God may and will forgive the sin, when repented of, but the penitent will never forgive himself; he will often moan out, "Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth!" 7. The curse of God will rest on those who are loose and disloyal at home. Richard Knill so regarded this fifth commandment, that he would not even go out as a missionary without his mother's consent. He said, "*I know that God never smiles on a boy that breaks his mother's heart.*" (See Prov. xxx. 17.) And who does not know how often it is proved true, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again"? Jacob deceived his father, and his sons deceived him. Can any observant man reach middle life without having had oft to make such notes as these: "A" honoured his parents, and honour has attended him. "B" *dis*honoured his parents, and his lamp has gone out in darkness? Though *the* judgment has not yet come, yet there is a judging process of God's providence continually at work. 8. The observance of this rule is the best possible preparation for serving our generation according to the will of God. He who is a blessing in the home will never be a curse out of it! The habits of self-restraint, of courtesy, of respect to superiors, well learnt and practised at home, will not be thrown off when outside its

walls. Men learn to command well by first obeying well. Even Christ's own preparation for active service was found in filial obedience at home; and he is not only our perfect example, who shows us what to do, he is also our omnipotent Saviour, who will give us strength to do it. Be it ours to repent not only of sin in general, but of *the* sin of disobedience to parents. Let us ask his forgiveness as well as theirs, if the latter is yet possible. Let us implore his renewing grace that we may henceforth keep this and every command, not only because it is written in the Book, but because the love of it is graven on our hearts. It will be no small addition to the joy of retrospect, if, as we afterwards look back on our home life, we can think of it as one of filial loyalty on one side and of parental delight on the other!

Ver. 17.—*The sixth commandment. The religion of the temper.* If a preacher were to announce this as a text in one of our Christian congregations, some of his hearers might be disposed to say, "Such a text might be appropriate enough if the preacher were expounding the Word of God to Zulus, but for us civilized, not to say Christianized, people, it is out of place!" Obviously such a remark would be based on an acknowledged fact, that *murder* is one of those sins against God which are also a crime against human law, and that no one in a congregation of ordinary character would be likely to dream of committing it. That is so. But we are apt to forget that even among Christian congregations it was not always so. When Peter is writing to believers, he deems it needful to say, "Let none of you suffer as a *murderer*," etc. And even now, in heathen lands, in many an audience of men just reclaimed from barbarism, it might be necessary for a missionary to preach from this text, adhering to it simply in the negative form, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" In endeavouring now to "open it up" for pulpit use, we would recall to the reader some elementary principles concerning the law already named. 1. That the Law was first given in infantine form. God laid down precepts rather than assigned reasons. 2. That the form in which the Divine Being could put the most effective guard around human life was by a stern and strong prohibition like this, proclaimed amid thunder and lightning, terror and flame. 3. That though the form of the precept is negative, yet it has a positive significance, of such depth and breadth that, even though we may shrink with horror from transgressing the former, it is by no means an elementary stage of Christian character which any one has reached if he attains to the latter. So far were the Jewish rabbis from catching the spirit of this command, that they dealt with it as if the negative prohibitions of the act of murder were the whole of its meaning. Our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount, shows us how much deeper than this the precept goes (see Matt. v. 21—26). And the Apostle Paul, in Rom. xiii. 9, 10, indicates what positive virtue must be cultivated, the maintenance of which will make it impossible to transgress the sixth commandment. If we include in our Homily a notice of these later teachings, it may appear that, even with all our advances, there is something here for us to study, some holy practice for us yet to strive after, urged upon us by weighty reasons, which, though not presented in the world's childhood, are set in full force in "these last days." Let us, then—

I. LOOK AT THE MEANING OF THIS COMMAND. It is sixfold. 1. It forbids the taking of human life from passionate vindictiveness. The Hebrews had, as we have, two verbs with the distinctive meanings of "to kill" and "to murder." We see in the quotation in Matt. xix. 18, and from the reference in Matt. v. 21, that the Saviour regards the command as a prohibition of passionate lawlessness. But even had we not that light from Christ's teaching, the legislation of Moses himself would shut us up to the same conclusion. For in the administration of justice and in necessary war, the taking of life was commanded (see Numb. xv. 35; xxxv. 31; Exod. xxi. 12—14). So that, unless we regard the lawgiver as setting enactment against enactment, there is in this commandment a prohibition of passionate outbreaks, but neither of capital punishment nor necessary war. 2. It forbids any carelessness by which the life or weal of our neighbour would be risked (Exod. xxi. 28, 29). Wherever human life is risked by insufficient precaution, there is a breach of the sixth commandment. 3. It forbids that anger which takes the form of a revengeful spirit. So Christ teaches. This precept strikes at the thoughts and intents of the heart. Every time a schoolboy angrily lifts a hand to hurt his school-fellow, he is breaking in spirit this commandment. 4. It forbids

that indifference in our life to the power of example which would put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in a brother's way (see Matt. xviii. 1—3; Rom. xiv. 5). If by careless living we "destroy" him for whom Christ died, we are breakers of this law. 5. It forbids dislike and hatred to our brother, and also a selfish isolation and neglect of him (1 John ii. 9—11; iii. 14, 15). If we are merely pursuing our own ends in life, and are not caring whether our brother is saved or lost, this law condemns us. If we even refrain from helping our brother in difficulty or trial, we are guilty (Prov. xxiv. 11, 12; Isa. lviii. 6, 7). We may "kill" by withholding the help which might save! 6. It requires, therefore, the cultivation of that kindly spirit of genial benevolence, which would seek in every way to promote the gladness and safety of the society in which we move, and of men at large. Negative in form, the sixth commandment is positive in intent. "Thou shalt not kill" is but the elementary form in which God asserts the great law of mutual dependence and interdependence. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law." Would we keep the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill"? Let us read it in the New Testament light, "Thou shalt *help* thy neighbour." "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law."

II. WE WOULD THROW OUT A FEW HINTS AS TO THE GROUND ON WHICH THIS PRECEPT IS OR MAY BE ENFORCED. 1. The preciousness of man in God's sight. He who killed a beast had to make it good; but no satisfaction might be taken for the life of a murderer (see Gen. ix. 6). 2. The spiritual nature of man. 3. The high and holy destiny designed for man forbids any tampering on our part with him or with it.

III. WE HAVE, MOREOVER, IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, A NEW SPRING OF ACTION DISCLOSED. This should actuate us in refraining from violating, and in seeking to fulfil, the law of love. 1. The incarnation of the Son of God is so touching a revelation of the greatness of man, and does of itself so elevate him, that no one realizing it can trifle with man. 2. The atoning sacrifice gives new views of man. After the Apostle Paul has been referring to the death of Christ, he says, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." Christ's death for every man has shown us a halo of glory around every man. We look at him no more according to the accidents of birth, position, colour, clime; we judge all men thus: "*Christ died for them.*" Oh! it is this cross which teaches us that reverence for human nature, which else we had lost altogether. 3. The incarnation and the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God not only give us the moving spring whereby to rise to a proper view of the greatness of man, but also the supreme reason for devoted love to him, for Christ's sake (1 John iv. 11, 20; see Eph. iv. 31; v. 1, 2). With what immeasurable strength does the gospel bind us to fulfil "the royal law," "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"!

IV. THIS NEWLY ILLUMED PRINCIPLE OF LOVE WILL ENSURE THE FULFILMENT OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT, AND WILL EVEN MAKE A BREACH OF IT IMPOSSIBLE. God would have us lifted up by his love to so high a level, that we shall learn to love like him, even with a love (1) of good will, (2) of compassion, (3) of forgiveness, (4) of actual service, (5) of self-denying sympathy and devotion. This is the love which "is born of God." This is the Divine philosophy of obedience to law. Learn, in conclusion: 1. *It is to revelation alone that we owe the clearest view of human dignity.* It is not from philosophy, nor from natural science that we learn to appreciate man. Whatever science may have to say as to his physical organism (and what it can say must depend on its own appropriate evidence), it is the "image of God" which he bears, that is his true dignity, and around it is the Divine guard so stringently placed. 2. *From God's revelation to man we learn respect for man as man.* Human life is held very cheaply in lands where the gospel is unknown, and even in lands where it is known by men who reject it. There are some, indeed, who reject gospel light, yet borrow gospel morality, and call it theirs, while others who treat it as "a strange thing" are already darkly suggesting a "morality" gross as that of pagan days. 3. *From God's revelation we gather the only guarantee for human security and peace.* It is by the cross and by the cross alone that the unity of man in a world wide brotherhood of love will ever be secured. 4. *It is only by the new life bestowed by the Spirit of God that we come to possess and practise this love to which the cross constrains.* We may all of us have refrained from an open breach of the letter of the sixth commandment. Not one of us can stand its searching test in the light of God's pure Word! Ah! "*this commandment fit for Zulus*"? There is not a man amongst us who in the

presence of its all-searching light, is not utterly condemned! (Jas. ii. 10.) "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law!"

Ver. 18.—*The seventh commandment. The religion of the body.* In the second part of the Decalogue there are stern prohibitions against sin, without any positive indication of the opposite virtue. Nor is there a hint of how to attain such a life as shall make an offence against the commandments impossible, so that unless we recognize the educatory purpose of the Law, we shall at once underrate it and yet overrate it. We shall underrate it if we forget that it was just what was wanted, and all that could be serviceable at the time of its promulgation; we shall overrate it if we think that the mere prohibitory letter of this precept expresses the whole will of God in the matter to which it refers. We will, therefore, set side by side therewith, New Testament teachings. First, let us look at Matt. v. 27—29. Just as in referring to rabbinical teaching on the sixth commandment, Jesus Christ tells us that it is not only the open act of murder which is forbidden, but even the spirit of anger and revenge which might lead to it; so here, it is not merely the open act of physical degradation which is forbidden, but even the spirit of unhallowed passion which, if unbridled, might lead to *it*. Nor must we stop here. The New Testament opens up to us the Divine will in the positive direction (1 Thess. iv. 3—5). We are told also what is the true secret of attaining a life which conforms to that will (Gal. v. 16). If we cultivate the life of God in the spirit, the lower life will be in due subjection. Reasons, moreover, which were not given in Israel's childhood are given now (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20); while the issues of a life in which these are lost sight of, are put before us in dread array (1 Cor. ix. 27). Hence a homiletic treatment of this seventh commandment can only be effective as it deals with it as but one branch of a subject, wide, deep, and high, viz. "*The religion of the body.*" Observe—

I. GOD CLAIMS THE GOVERNMENT OF OUR WHOLE NATURE. We regard man's nature as triple—body, soul, and spirit. As an acute and learned divine remarks, "The body is the link between the soul and the world, the soul is the link between the body and the spirit; the spirit is the link between the soul and God." It is in reference to our spirit-nature that we are made in the image of God. *He* is "the Father of spirits." The same Book which reveals God to us, reveals us to ourselves. Any one who understands the structure of his own nature, will perceive which part thereof was meant to rule the rest. The body is to be at the service of the soul, the soul is to be regulated by the spirit, and God is to govern all. But it is by the great work of redemption that the stamp of true dignity has been most clearly impressed on man. The Apostle Paul tells us that it was through the cross that he learned truly to estimate human nature (2 Cor. v. 16). And elsewhere he argues, "Ye are bought with a price; *therefore* glorify God in your body." Christ is "the Saviour *of the body*." If we are the Lord's, *our body* is the temple of the Holy Ghost. No part of the body is base unless basely used. All its functions are to be discharged "in sanctification and honour."

II. THIS SACREDNESS OF OUR WHOLE NATURE, AS REDEEMED BY CHRIST, SHOULD LEAD TO A "RELIGION OF THE BODY" ON THE PART OF THOSE WHO HAVE NOT ENTERED ON THE MARRIED STATE. This seventh command is far broader in spirit than the mere letter would indicate. It condemns all impurity of every kind, it forbids us to let the lower self run off with the higher, and, like the preceding commands, though negative in form, it is positive in substance. It bids us: 1. Let our own nature be duly honoured, and self-respect be diligently cultivated. 2. Observe towards others that self-same respect which we owe to ourselves, on the same ground, and for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. The art of "bridling the whole body" is one of the most important in a life of godliness.

III. A DUE REVERENCE FOR THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN NATURE WILL IMPART SANCTITY TO THE MARRIAGE TIE. Marriage is God's holy ordinance. It is not a sacrament, in the same sense in which Baptism and the Lord's Supper are. Neither is it *merely* a civil contract, as is sometimes shockingly said. It is a union of two in the closest ties of nature, based on an affinity of spirit which leads each to see in the other what each most admires. It is a union of spirit in the Lord (if it be all that it should be); each one of the two ceases to live in and for himself or herself, and begins practically to unlearn selfishness by living for the other, and thus the reciprocal outgoing of affection is a formative action of spirit, and tends to the very noblest culture of life. And

where the Divine idea of marriage is carried out, the purely natural side of it will be by no means the only one or even the highest (see Matthew Henry's touching words on the creation of woman, and also Kalisch's most admirable remarks in his commentary on Exod. xx. 14, on the position of woman under the Hebrew economy) There are spheres of duty which are most appropriately filled by men, *e.g.* those in professional and commercial life; there are other spheres which are most appropriately filled by women, *e.g.* those in the quiet of the home. And the work of one is the supplement and complement of the work of the other. Hence each one looks to the other for the discharge of special service. Thus there is a mutual leaning on one another. And if the crowning joy of married life be present in both being one in the Lord, in their spiritual fellowship they fan each other's love to him who died for them. Each will supply what the other lacks. Perhaps the strength of the man may lie chiefly in intellectual power. That of the woman will lie in tenderness, and also in far keener and surer perceptions and more swiftly acting intuitions. Thus, through one being the fitting complement of the other, they become mutual helpers in all that is right and wise and true; and as even before they were made one, each one knew how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, so, when they are one, each honours the other, by making the sacred union subservient to virtue and to the honour of God. Thus rolling years do but deepen the fondness and sweetness of their love, and if it becomes calmer and less demonstrative, it is because it has become fuller, richer, and stronger. When youthful ardour dies down, the holy tie is holier than ever; their very souls become knit together in one. The care of one is the care of both; the joy of one is the joy of both; and any unkindness that stings one wounds both. As two trees side by side in a grove, their arms interlace and interlock, yet each has its separate root. So husband and wife, as trees of the Lord's own right hand planting, do through the whole of this earthly life become interlocked with growing firmness, while their one Saviour in whom they live is the common joy of their spirits, their one hope for eternity! That there are innumerable cases in which a noble type of Christian excellence is reached by the unmarried, we all know. While marriage opens up those claims in the discharge of which the most symmetrical character is usually formed, yet Divine grace can so sway the spirit as to culture it nobly for eternity, irrespectively of these sacred ties. There are fathers and mothers in Israel who are so by spiritual relationship. Thus, when our nature is duly honoured in ourselves and others, by its uppermost part being kept uppermost, out of loyalty to Christ, it is possible for both the married and unmarried to glorify God *in their body* as well as in their spirit.

IV. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT IF THROUGH THE REDEEMING GRACE OF GOD WE HAVE OUR WHOLE BEING THUS LIFTED UP INTO A HIGHER REGION, THE STERN "THOU SHALT NOT" OF SINAI WILL BE NEEDED NO MORE. We shall have risen to a sphere in which the transgression of the seventh commandment will be impossible (see 1 John iii. 9; Gal. v. 16, 24). The sure guarantee of our keeping this law, in the spirit as well as in the letter, is for us to be so re-created by God's Spirit, that it shall be impossible for us to break it. "The law is not made for a righteous man."

V. WE SHOULD NOT FAIL TO NOTE THE IMPERATIVENESS OF THE LAW. If there are those who are not in the region of a higher life, as indicated above, they should be reminded that this law, in its wide sweep and searching depth, condemns all impurity of every kind; it discerns "the thoughts and intents of the heart." Hence the words in Matt. v. 28; hence the warnings in Mark ix. 43, 45, 47. *One indulged sin will drag the whole man after it.* "Science," says Dr. Farrar, "confirms by decisive evidence that the Lord avenges the sins of the flesh. It tells us that men must possess in manhood the sins of their youth; that if they sow to the flesh, they will of the flesh reap corruption; that the punishment of sensuality, working not by special interventions, but by general laws, bears a fearful resemblance to the sin itself; that the Nemesis of a desecrated body is an enfeebled understanding, a tormented and darkened soul;" and—the writer might have added—a face from which the lustre of the Divine has departed, and in which the lines of a true manhood are manifestly vitiated and defaced, and even exchanged for lines of sin and of shameless vice. Let all take heed and remember: 1. That where each one's weak point is, a sentinel should be kept on watch. 2. We are not safe till the very thoughts are under control. 3. Only the Spirit of God can give us power equal to this. 4. Unless we keep ourselves in subjection we shall be cast away.

Ver. 19.—*The eighth commandment. The religion of the hand.* There is much to be said in favour of the proposition that utility is the foundation of virtue; and provided that the sentence be well cleared up and guarded from abuse, and provided also that the word "utility" be lifted up to its highest, and spread over its broadest significance, the maxim is less objectionable than it would otherwise appear. While it, however, has been and will be discussed in the philosopher's class-room, for ages, we may safely go so far as to say, "That is right which renders the highest service to mankind, and by its having this tendency, we know it to be right." Now, among serviceable institutions is that of property, which, as men are constituted, is a necessity of social weal. If rightness consists in recognizing the rights of each, the necessity of property comes out of the equality of natural rights. If a man is alone in the world, he may call it all his own. If there is a brother man with him, they must divide it between them. Apart from the institution of property, one incentive to labour would be gone. Who would be likely to toil day by day for that from which he would obtain nought when the work was over? Now, it is the social law of the institution of property, Divine yet natural, yea, natural *because* Divine, the existence of which is here assumed, and the recognition of which is here enjoined: in the barest and most elementary form, it is true, yet in the very form best according with the circumstances under which it was given; in a negative form, too, like the other commands, but yet with a positive intent. Perhaps there is no one of the commandments which is more extensively commented on, and repeated in so many forms in the Old Testament, nor one the violation of which is so variously prohibited. Our simplest mode of treating it homiletically seems to be to point out in turn the negative prohibition, and the positive duty which is to be set over against it.

I. LET US INDICATE THE NUMEROUS FORMS INTO WHICH THIS PRECEPT IS THROWN IN SCRIPTURE. If we regard *the spirit* of it, and read it by the light of Old Testament teaching, we shall find it set in great variety of ways. 1. It forbids our depriving any man of any right whatever (Lam. iii. 35, 36). 2. It is forbidden to gain an undue advantage at another's expense (Exod. xxiii. 3, 6, 8, 9; Lev. xix. 15; ch. xvi. 19, 20). 3. It is forbidden to accumulate wealth by unlawful practices (Prov. x. 2; xv. 6). 4. It is forbidden to take long credit (Prov. iii. 28; Lev. xix. 13). 5. It is forbidden to oppress a poor man in his cause (Exod. xxii. 26, 27; ch. xv. 7, 10—13, 17, 18; Prov. xxii. 22, 23; Micah ii. 1—3; iii. 1—4). 6. It is forbidden to pay insufficient wages (ch. xxv. 4; xxiv. 14, 15). 7. To lend money in any oppressive or exacting form (Exod. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 35—38; ch. xxiii. 19). "The name 'usurer'—*neshec*—which is derived from biting, sounded badly, since no one chose to be likened to a hungry dog, who fed himself by biting others" (Calvin). 8. To take advantage of the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless (Exod. xxii. 21—24; ch. x. 17—19; Lev. xix. 33, 34). 9. Unfair trading (Lev. xix. 35, 36; ch. xxv. 13—16; Prov. xi. 1; xvi. 11; xx. 10, 23; Micah vi. 10—12). 10. Imperilling another's property (Exod. xxi. 33—36). 11. Life-long slavery (Exod. xxi. 2; ch. xv. 12—18). 12. Connivance at wrong (Prov. xxix. 24). 13. Respect of persons (Exod. xxiii. 1—3). 14. Revengeful mischief even in war-time (ch. xx. 19, 20). 15. Removing a neighbour's landmark (ch. xix. 14). 16. Withholding from the service of God (Mal. iii. 8, 9). Whenever we withhold what is due to God, or keep back what we owe to man,—if the master is unjust to his servant, or the servant wastes the time or the goods of his master; if a man is guilty of trickery in trade, by adulteration of goods, or scant weight, or short measure; if a man is in any way deprived of his own right or freedom; if we take undue advantage of any one for our own benefit, we are guilty of breaking the command "Thou shalt not steal."

II. LET US INDICATE THE PRECEPTIVE WORDS WHICH ARE SET OVER AGAINST THESE PROHIBITIVE ONES. In the fuller teaching of Moses there was not wanting an indication of an opposite duty, the cultivation of which would make a breach of the eighth commandment altogether out of the question. The people were to aim at cherishing a kindly feeling for each other, and instead of wishing to enrich themselves at another's expense, they were to seek to enrich others, and to find their joy in helping the needy (Exod. xxiii. 4; Lev. xxv. 35; ch. xv. 7—10; xxii. 1—3; xxiii. 19; xxiv. 19). While in Proverbs, the contrast between sloth and industry is said to be one mark of difference between the righteous and the wicked.

III. THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS STILL MORE EXPLICIT. (See Acts xx. 35; 1 Cor. x. 24; Phil. ii. 4, 5; and *specially* Eph. iv. 28.) The *words* of our blessed Lord lingered in the apostles' ears as the strains of a lovely song. His *life* too seemed to say, "Be ever ready to give up what is your own, if thereby you can help another." So that not only is there to be such respect for the rights of others, that we do not infringe on them by abstracting from his property; but over and above the institution of property, which is recognized and guarded, there is the institution of labour, which is to be looked at, utilized, sanctified, so as to subserve the enrichment of others. So that we come at this specific rule: *Labour, and sanctify your labour for others; then you will be in no danger of depriving them of the fruits of their labour!* The political economist says, "Regulate labour so as best to subserve the production of wealth." So far, good. But Christian maxims go higher, and say, "Pursue and regulate labour with a view of promoting each other's well-being." Now, in this sanctification of labour there are four rules to be observed. 1. *Labour as servants of Christ.* This is a specific direction both for employer and employed. Both are amenable to him who is the Head and Lord of the human race. In his eye the interests of the human family are the supreme concern on this globe. Material wealth is to him as nothing. Men are his purchased possession; and if by labour we increased the material wealth of this country a thousand-fold, if thereby one soul were destroyed, his curse would rest upon such labour. 2. *Labour with an eye to the glory of God:* not only as his servants, but so that all our labour may promote that great end for which he lived and died; and just in proportion as this is the case, will Christ approve our toil. 3. *Labour in accordance with and for the promotion of another's good.* We are to let all our labours be in harmony with another's well-being. We may not make ourselves rich at the expense of others; but only as our weal accords with theirs. All this, of course, applies nationally as well as individually. It is as clearly wrong for a nation to steal a continent as for a man to steal a shilling! And if we so labour as to ignore the good of another, we shall find that "there is a God that judgeth in the earth!" 4. But it is not enough that there should be an absence of spoliation or greed, nor that labour should *merely accord* with human good; it is required of us that *one direct object and aim of our labour should be the increase of our wealth that we may have the wherewith to give.* As between man and man, the great God upholds our right to the produce of our labour. As between ourselves and *him*, he says, "Use for your brother's good, the wealth you get. You are but a steward. Nothing is yours absolutely. What hast thou that thou hast not received? Work, that you may get. Get, that you may have to give." "The poor shall never cease out of the land." If, by any sudden spurt, wealth could be equalized to-day, it would be unequal in twenty-four hours, and in twelve months scarcely a trace would be left of the readjustment. Some would be workers and some idlers; some spendthrifts and some misers; and any rectification of property, apart from the right-setting of men, would be of no avail. And, at any rate, so long as there are claims upon our sympathy, so long our labour is to have this stamp upon it: *Labour, to gain the power of giving;* and this is the antidote for any danger of breaking the eighth commandment. Yet, strange to say, there are not wanting those who object, on grounds of "political economy," to the withdrawal of a man's gains for the purposes of benevolence (see Mr. Herbert Spencer, *Contemporary Review*, xix. 556). Now, no one would question that there is a large amount of unwise charity; but the proportion is insignificant between that and the vast amount of ill-gotten and ill-used wealth in our cities and towns. The former is not worth naming by the side of the latter. And the hearts of men are not so over-generous that they need to be dissuaded from giving, by arguments which could hold only if men were nought else but wage-getting animals! But whoever fulfils his labour in a spirit of loyalty to Christ and of kindliness to his brother, will find in labour so discharged, a holy and blessed discipline of character. Shall *we* live under the low, selfish calculations of earth, or under the higher regulations of heaven? There *is* a wealth—a wealth most to be coveted—which comes not as a heritage of birth, but as the reward of giving to others according as they have need. Acting on worldly maxims, a man might live for a thousand years and he will never have it. Acting on Christ's rule, he will reap it as sheaves of golden grain. It is this: "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy!"

Ver. 20.—*The ninth commandment. The religion of the tongue.* This command gives us a precept touching our words. Inasmuch, however, as it is here given to us in barest, briefest, most elementary form, it would not be well if in the homiletic treatment of it we did not place side by side therewith the varied Scriptures which set before us the duty of regulating our speech. We will ask, and endeavour to answer, five questions concerning this commandment.

I. WHAT IS HERE PROHIBITED? Just as the sixth commandment throws a guard around human life, the seventh around purity, the eighth around the rights of property and labour, so this ninth throws a shield over every man's reputation. A stern "Thou shalt not injure thy neighbour's fair name" is one of the mandates of Sinai, issued amidst thunder and fire! The *immediate* reference would seem to be to bearing testimony in a court of justice. A part of the judicial code of Moses had reference to this (ch. xix. 16—19). But the precept goes further than this in its spirit. We read in Exod. xxiii. 1, "Thou shalt not raise (or receive) a false report;" literally, "Thou shalt not bear it;" *i.e.* you are to have nothing to do, either in making or taking it. Further (Lev. xix. 16), we are not to give way to gossip and scandal (see Ps. xv. 3). Nor are we to make any statement that is prejudicial to the interests of another, unless we are sure of its accuracy, and unless also the good of society requires us to make it. Further (Ps. xxxiv. 13), our lips are to speak no deceit nor guile of any kind, either in what is said or in the manner of saying it. If we needlessly tell of another's wrong act, instead of seeking to cover it, under the appearance of virtue in denouncing it, God may see a spirit of malice or revenge in naming it; and any act of another's mentioned in such a spirit is sure not to be construed by us in perfect fairness, and therefore it will certainly become, so far as it is unfair, a false report, whatever foundation of fact there may be in it. The precept, moreover, forbids sitting in judgment on individuals, so as to denounce *them* when we are contending against what we consider to be unsound in their faith, or unright in their practice. But further still does the precept reach. It forbids any *thoughtless* word which might unwillingly injure another (see Matt. xii. 33—37). How true is Heb. iv. 12! Every uncharitable thought of another, which might prompt an uncharitable word respecting him, is condemned by the holy Law of God!

II. WHAT IS THE POSITIVE DUTY TO BE OBSERVED? We have only to look at gospel law, as brought out by the Apostle Paul in Eph. iv. 25—32, to see this. 1. *Truth* is ever to mark our speech. The true in thought is to be aimed at, in order that there may be truth, absolute truth, on the tongue. No "pious frauds" are allowable. 2. *Love* is to rule. While a supreme regard to truth will guard us from violating it consciously, a due cultivation of the spirit of love will guard us from forming those harsh judgments of others which might lead us to violate truth unconsciously by misjudging their actions. 3. Where truth and love reign, there will be *self-restraint.* A check will be put on unkind feeling of every sort. "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Note further. In this ninth command the relations between men are supposed to be reciprocal. "Thy neighbour." If any ask, Who is my neighbour? let Christ give the answer, "*You may make yourself neighbour to any man by cherishing a readiness of disposition to do him a kindness*" (see Luke x. 29—37). No distinction of race, colour, or clime is to be allowed to stand in the way of our being true neighbours to men, the wide world over.

III. BY WHAT RULE, STANDARD, OR MODEL, SHOULD WE BE GUIDED? 1. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself.*" That, applied to this command, would mean, "Be as careful of another's reputation as you are of your own." There is another rule. 2. *Be imitators of God.* "Let all evil-speaking . . . be put away from you . . . and be kind to one another . . . even as God in Christ hath forgiven you." The world's rule is: exalt yourself at the expense of others. Christ's rule is: exalt others at the sacrifice of yourself.

IV. WHAT REASONS SHOULD WEIGH ON US IN LEADING US TO RESTRAIN THE TONGUE IN THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS? 1. The fact urged by Paul, that "we are members one of another." In social life we are dependent on each other for the enjoyments which sweeten it, the luxuries which enrich it, the comforts which gladden it, and for the necessaries which make it possible; and, excepting so far as truth governs words and acts, the very props of social life are wanting, and its cohesive force is gone. If the eye refused to be true to the brain, or if the ear, the hand, or the foot resolved to be at

variance with the decisions of the will, life would soon be intolerable, and must ere long come to an end. Even so, we cannot tamper with the law of truth in speech without doing our part towards poisoning the currents of thought, feeling, and action which flow through society, and so far as we bear false witness of any kind with the view of gaining advantage at another's cost, we are aiding the infernal work of setting men at variance with each other, by loosening the bonds of mutual confidence which should unite them all! 2. *If the tongue is duly bridled, the whole body will be under command.* So the Apostle James declares (Jas. iii. 2). Our whole being is to be in subjection to God, body, soul, and spirit. And that means that we are to guard our lips. If we are successful here, that indicates so far a mastery over ourselves. We can bridle the whole body if we can but curb the tongue. "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." A man may do very much to make or mar himself according as he has learned the right government of the tongue. 3. *If the tongue is not bridled, we have no religion at all!* So the same apostle (Jas. i. 26). Let us lay that word to heart. Whatever may be the outside profession, if we do not govern our tongue for God, if we use it for gossip, trifling, scandal, slander, our very profession of Christ's name is a cheat and a lie. 4. The thought of *the coming judgment* should lead us to govern our tongue (Matt. xii. 37). One would think that such words as these would make men more careful how they use the tongue! Are we so governing our words that we should confront without shame all those that we have ever spoken, when set in array before us? "We *must* all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." How will backbiters, slanderers, and retailers of gossip meet the eye of the Great Judge of all?

V. How ARE WE TO LEARN OBEDIENCE TO THE PRECEPT OF THE TEXT? 1. Let us awake to the importance, as before God, of remembering his perfect knowledge of our words (Ps. cxxxix. 4). Let us cultivate the impression such a thought is calculated to produce. 2. Let us resolve and act (see Ps. xxxix. 1). So said David. Let such a resolution be formed and carried out. 3. Much may be done by auxiliary means, in the way of lessening the temptation to offend with the tongue. Very much of the habit of idle gossip results from unintelligence. Some have nothing to talk about, and for want of a well-stored mind, they fall a-slandering their neighbours. Over and above other means which are more directly religious of reducing the evil of an unbridled tongue, there is this serviceable one: furnish the mind with so much valuable knowledge, that you will be so occupied with useful talk that you have no time for idle words. 4. Let there also be devout attention to the more spiritual aspects of the case. Let the earnest prayer go up (Ps. cxli. 3), and, remembering the Saviour's words, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," let us earnestly plead with God for daily renewal in the spirit of our mind, since, when the heart is right, the words cannot be wrong. Maybe some of us used to think concerning the ten commandments, "All these have I kept from my youth up." But, alas, so far from that, unless we are converted and renewed, we shall never keep even this one. Under its sévere tests we have broken down thousands of times, and have abundant reason to cry, "God be merciful to me the sinner!" A tree is known by its fruit. The righteousness of the Law never will be fulfilled in us as it must be if we are to enter heaven, unless our hearts are so sanctified, and so imbued with the spirit of love, that by never violating charity in the thoughts we think, we never violate it in the words we speak. May God thus sanctify us! "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

Ver. 21.—*The tenth commandment. The religion of the heart.* This commandment is in some respects the most manifestly sweeping and searching of all. It even more fully than the others illustrates Heb. iv. 12. If any reader has thought that in making such heart-work of the preceding, we have gone beyond the scope of the Decalogue, this verse should serve to correct such an impression, for it deals *verbally* with the unexpressed wishes of the soul, and lays a restraint upon them. We will first of all—

I. INQUIRE INTO THE GROUND WHICH THIS PRECEPT COVERS. Recognizing the neighbourly relation between man and man, and people and people, and implying the duty of each individual and of each nation cherishing a kindly feeling for another, it not only forbids the violation of neighbourliness by any outward act of unkindness and wrong, but even the *desire* out of which such unneighbourly acts might arise. "Thou

shalt not covet." "As it was given," said an earnest preacher, in the winter of 1870, "in the first instance to a nation, it is natural to consider some of the ways in which a nation may violate it. The history of the world is stained and darkened by the crimes to which nations have been driven by the spirit of covetousness. A great and prosperous people cannot endure that the corn-fields and vineyards and the noble river which can be seen from its frontiers should belong to a neighbouring power." "Sooner or later it is almost certain that this national covetousness will end in a war of aggression or conquest. Some pretext will be found for a quarrel . . . by some means or other there will be a justification discovered, or created, or alleged, for seizing by force of arms what the heart of the nation longed for" (R. W. Dale). But since the command forbids even the covetous *desire*, the justification alleged may be as wicked as the war itself; it may be but a cloak to hide from the undiscerning that covetousness which not the thickest veil of night can hide from him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. It is, however, chiefly with the application of this command to the individual that we have now to do. It forbids: 1. Desire after lower good to the neglect of the higher. 2. Desire after improper objects. 3. Desire after lawful objects carried to an improper degree. 4. Desire to gain any object in an improper manner. 5. Any desire after what belongs to another, which is inconsistent with the rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It forbids too: 6. Discontent with the allotments of Divine providence. A discontented spirit is but one form of covetousness, albeit it is a very unamiable one. We are not to be envious of another's possessions, nor for a moment to allow the wish, if our neighbour is rich and we are poor, that his wealth and our poverty should change hands. On the other hand, there is to be a thankful content with the mercies we possess, and a joy in our neighbour's joy if he has more than we have. So far from wishing to gain advantage at another's cost, we are to rejoice in another's good as really as if it were our own. So runs the precept (Rom. xii. 15). It is much easier to "weep with them that weep," than it is to "rejoice with them that do rejoice." When we do the former, we may have the secret thankfulness that we are spared the sorrow of others; but when the latter, our joy is apt to be checked by the secret wish that we were possessors of their cause of joy. Our obedience to this precept is not complete till we can "weep" or "rejoice" with others with *equal* readiness. In a word, the tenth commandment requires *entire unselfishness*. "Love is the fulfilling of the Law."

II. THIS COMMAND MAKES VERY REMARKABLE REVELATIONS. Sin is defined by the Apostle John as "the transgression of Law." Consequently, wheresoever the Law reaches, there would the transgression of it come under that term, "sin." Hence, by the Law is the knowledge of sin. We find accordingly that one of the most noted characters in New Testament history gained, not only from the Decalogue, but from this particular precept, his first deep convictions of sin (see Rom. vii.). Making a like use of it, we see: 1. That this law reveals that to be sin which else would not have been suspected as such. If we were asked by some to point out the marks of sin in the world, they would refer us to war, oppression, tyranny, etc. But God's Word strikes at the *lusts* out of which these evils come (Jas. iv. 1). 2. This law reveals to us how deeply sin has struck its roots in our nature, that it has permeated and saturated our very *thoughts*, and made them selfish. 3. We see too by the same light that many an apparently good act before men has been rotten by reason of the "lust" in which it had its root. 4. So that we also learn that a man may be altogether blameless in the sight of his fellows, and yet be condemned in the sight of God. God judges acts by motives. Have *all* our *motives* been pure? 5. Thus we see that there is quite enough in heart sins to shut us out from the kingdom of heaven. 6. Thus, by this commandment, and *a fortiori* by all the commandments together, there is revealed to us the impossibility of any one who starts with a burden of accumulated guilt, attaining to the righteousness which is of the Law (Rom. vii. 9, 10). Thus the Law reveals a mischief which it is not its province to cure.

III. WHILE LAW REVEALS MISCHIEF, THE GOSPEL REVEALS A REMEDY FOR IT. 1. It shows us how grace would cut up covetousness by the root. (1) Our Lord shows us by his teaching that our true wealth consists in what we *are* rather than in what we have (Luke xii. 13—20). (2) When penitent, he forgives the past. (3) He re-creates the soul, and lifts us up *by promises* to a higher level (2 Pet. i. 3, 4; Matt. vi. 33; Luke

xii. 29; Heb. xiii. 5). (4) Nor is the element of holy warning wanting (1 Cor. x. 1—6, 12). 2. It shows us a sphere in which the natural ambition may have legitimate play without degenerating into lust. For, it may be urged, "If we had no desire after the improvement of our condition, we should do away with enterprise? Ought not a young man to be anxious to rise in the world?" Certainly. *But not at the expense of others.* In a right direction a man not only may, but should, make the very utmost of himself for which his power capacitates him (1 Tim. iv. 8; Prov. xxx. 5—9). Another may say, "I have the organ of acquisitiveness very strongly developed. I am so made that I must get, so that if I am anxious to have more, I am only acting out that which is imbedded in the structure of my physical frame." *Acquisitiveness!* an excellent organ to have, and one which makes it specially desirable to decide of what its possessor shall be acquisitive. If it is a necessity of any one's nature to be ever getting, the greater the need that he should be rightly getting the right. Now, while God's Law condemns acquisitiveness in the wrong direction, yet God's grace and gospel open up the grandest possible field for its exercise. By all means let any one develop that noble capacity (Prov. iii. 16; iv. 5—7; 1 Cor. xii. 31). The surest way of guarding against covetousness of ill will be so to develop this eagerness after good that the other cannot coexist (1 John ii. 15). There is no faculty of our nature which can be developed to finer issues than this desire of having, if it be reset by Divine grace, and guided by the Spirit of God. No function of the soul is common or unclean, unless we make it so. Here is the right sort of covetousness (Phil. iii. 8), "*That I may win Christ.*" Let all our power of coveting go out after him. He will bring with him durable riches and righteousness. The wealth we have *in* him will be vastly more than aught we can have from him, and by "the expulsive power of a new affection" he will wean us from the false craving for earth, and ever satisfy us with himself!

Vers. 22—33.—*The Law as a whole, and its effect upon the people.* In the account of the reception of the Law which we have in the Book of the Exodus, it would seem probable that we have a record which was penned at or near the time of the occurrence. The one before us is declared to be some thirty-nine years after. Moses was then verging towards the end of his career. He indulges in a retrospect of the eventful scenes, and rehearses them in the ears of the people. As we have seen in the first Homily, he "dug" into the Law, and dug up its contents. With this passage as our guide, as we have looked at each command in the Decalogue separately, let us survey it in its entirety.

I. THE LAW IS TO BE REGARDED AS A UNITY. It is not made up of isolated precepts. Our Saviour declares that it is summed up in two commandments. And the apostle reminds us that "Love is the fulfilling of the Law:" love to God the root, and love to man the fruit. Taking them in order, the first four require of us a love that shall worship God alone, honouring his nature, revering his name, and guarding his rest day for his special service. The six later ones enjoin love to man, requiring loyalty in the home, restraint in the temper, purity of the body, fidelity of the hand, government of the tongue, unselfishness in the heart. What a space of ground all that covers! What part or power of our being is there that is not held in its comprehensive grasp? And how deeply it strikes! It is a "critic" of the thoughts and intents of the heart. No superficial obedience can meet its claims. It is not difficult to see the purpose which it was designed to serve. It was the basis of Israel's national life and legislation. It was for the instruction of the nations round about (ch. iv. 6). And though it was set on a basis of redeeming mercy, it was designed to awaken the conscience to a sense of sin, to take the people to school, and thus to become their child-guide unto Christ. As compared with the simpler patriarchal dispensation, it was an apparent retrogression for the purpose of a spiritual education. It was a form, written, of that high, that holy, that eternal law of righteousness which is the same for all times, all places, and all peoples, yea, of that Law of perfect love which the Divine Being fulfils in absolute perfection, and after which he would have his creatures conformed.

II. THIS LAW CONTAINS WITHIN ITSELF THE EVIDENCE OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN. An able American commentator on the Laws of Moses (Dr. Wines), tell us of a distinguished lawyer who had been sceptical on the subject of Divine revelation,

and who undertook the study of the Old Testament with a view of satisfying himself as to the validity of its claims to be an inspired writing. When he came to the Decalogue, and had given it an attentive perusal, lost in admiration of its superhuman perfection, he exclaimed, "*Where did Moses get that Law?*" He applied himself to the study of the question, and the result was the removal of every sceptical doubt, and the attainment of a clear and earnest conviction of the Divine original of the Law. Nor is it surprising that a legal mind, accustomed to weigh evidence, should come to such a conclusion; for when we know how early in the world's history this Law was promulgated, it is very marvellous to find that an infant nation should, at starting, have a code of moral law so complete; yea, so elevated, that no other nation at that time presented anything like it, and that even now, 3300 years afterwards, not the wisest man in the world can suggest anything loftier! The kingdoms of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, have furnished us with nought like this, to say nothing of the Roman, Grecian, and Persian empires, the earliest of which was not founded for centuries after. And if, leaving the merely civil and political side of legislation, we ask for an embodiment of a moral and religious code on which legislation could safely be based, we do not find aught to be compared with this. Nor, if we look at the record of the national life of the very people to whom this Law was first given, do we find that even they approximated to conformity to it. In fact, nothing is more marked in their subsequent literature than their grievous departure from their own standards. When man makes any code of laws, those laws reflect himself and his own standard of attainment. But here is a code far beyond the attainment of any yet recorded nation. It is not necessary, however, to go to ancient nations to show that this Law betokens a higher than human origin. Look at legislation now. Look at the moral sentiment of peoples now. What is the cry? Love thy neighbour as thyself? Emphatically *no!* But "take care of your own interests, and let your neighbours look after themselves!" "Remove your neighbour's landmark as you think well!" Why, if no nation in the world is good enough to adopt the standard of the Decalogue, could it have *created it*, without ever having had any of its educating influence? And if no nation now could do it, how could they who were just liberated from centuries of slavery? But more than this. This Law is high above the attainment of well-trained Christian congregations. Let a minister proclaim the mercy of God in forgiving sin, and his preaching may charm. Let him insist on the demands of God's righteousness, and while some earnest holy souls will lay it to heart, and humble themselves before God, many will be offended at the enforcement of righteousness; and even now many a minister is persecuted for righteousness' sake. *This Law from man? No!* it is too good for that. When man is brought face to face with its holy heart-searchingness he *hates* it! But again. Take the most advanced and holiest Christian you can find. Let him stand in full front of this holy Law—and soon he will be crying out, in agony, "God be merciful to me the sinner!" "But," it may be said, "are not Christians always preaching up to a higher level than that of their attainments?" Certainly; but why? Because they feel and know that here is a Law which they certainly did not originate, which is infinitely above them, and which, by being so, proclaims its intrinsic authority, and proves itself Divine. When such a Law is given, conscience can look at it and say, "*That's right.*" But to *create* a code above itself, is what no nation ever was able to do. This Law shines by its own light, and is "a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path."

III. WHEN PERCEIVED IN ALL ITS GRANDEUR, THIS HOLY LAW FILLS WITH AWE AND TERROR. The thunder, lightning, flame, etc., revealed a majesty that Israel could not endure (vers. 25, 26; cf. Heb. xii. 18—21). But all this terror was nothing compared with the dread that comes over a man when his inmost self is confronted with the Law in its deep heart-searchingness (cf. Rom. vii. 9).

IV. GOD TREATS THE TERROR VERY GRACIOUSLY. 1. Israel was called near to the mount to meet with God, that they might learn a solemn awe, and then sent back to their tents, to wonder and to do. 2. God hearkens to their voice, and appoints a mediator—even Moses (Gal. iii. 19, 20). *We* are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. xii. 24). 3. Israel is reminded that what is needed on their part is, not emotion, but devotion (ver. 29). God wants of us a heart to love and obey. Of itself, the Law does but shut us up to see the necessity of a power for righteousness which

it cannot give (Gal. iii. 21). God has made with us a new covenant. The old covenant says, "Do this, and you will live." The new one says, "Live, and you will do this" (cf. Jer. xxx. 31; Heb. viii. 6—13). 4. The people are assured that faithful obedience to the Law of God will ensure the well-being of the nation, its long continuance in the land, and the comfort and peace of the family as well as of the individual. Even so. We have in the Law of God a rule of life absolutely perfect. What is wanted is but obedience to it. This is the one thing to be desired (Jas. i. 22). It is bitterly to be lamented when this obedience is not given (Ps. lxxx. 8—16). When this is the case, the Law becomes a silent accuser (see John v. 45). It is this unwillingness to keep God's Law which is charged against men as sin. It is of this sin of disloyalty that men are called on to repent (Rom. ii. 1—16; Ezek. xviii. 30; Matt. iii. 2; Luke xiii. 3; Acts xx. 21). God in his great love offers to law-breakers, when penitent, the privilege of starting afresh (Acts ii. 38). God forgives the penitent, and imparts new life and strength through the power of the Holy Ghost, to re-set and restore the nature disorganized by sin. Then the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled as men walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Then life has found its true support, is tending to its right issue, is realizing its highest ideal, and has its noblest outlook. Let us all, then, conscious of innumerable failures in obedience, penitently throw ourselves on Divine grace and love, and seek for energy Divine to work in us, cancelling the guilt of the past, creating the life of God within; so will it be well with us for ever and ever!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The Abrahamic covenant renewed.* So solicitous was God for the well-being of Israel that, on critical epochs in their history, he reminds them of their privileged condition. Three main thoughts arrest our attention—

I. COVENANTED BLESSING SECURED. God has not stood out for the maintenance of his rights; he has stooped to fetter his liberty—to bind himself to generous deeds. 1. *He allows us to hold proprietorship in him.* We can claim him to be "*our God.*" The Proprietor of all worlds permits fallen men to assert proprietorship in him! Herein is love! We can call upon him, in justice, to fulfil his self-imposed obligations. 2. *A covenant implies reciprocal engagements.* It is a deed of grace. God binds himself as a Friend and Defender to us, on condition that we bind ourselves in obedient loyalty to him. Failure on one side releases the other party from his pledge. 3. *A covenant includes mutual consent.* No covenant is really valid, is not complete, until both parties have sworn to observe it. There may be command, law, decree, proceeding from God to man; but no covenant is really in force until we personally have accepted its terms, and bound ourselves by willing act to observe it. *Then*, our whole being—property, talent, blood, life, are pledged.

II. MEDIATION PROVIDED. This is a further mark of condescending grace. When two parties are alienated, it is always deemed an advantage to one party to have a mediator chosen from its ranks. God allows a man to mediate between Israel and himself. "I stood between the Lord and you." 1. *Such mediation was needful, because of mutual disparity.* Man is finite; God infinite. Man is for self; God is self-oblivious. Man is earthly minded; God is purely spiritual. That the two may coalesce in sentiment, purpose, life, mediation of some sort is required. 2. *Mediation is needful, because of man's selfish fear.* The people were "afraid, by reason of the fire"—afraid for their own interests and pleasures. Were men impelled by wisdom, they would count it the highest privilege possible to approach God. What, though we have sinned;—inasmuch as God has revealed himself as the Source of mercy, and has deigned to visit us, should we not gladly respond to his proposal, and draw nigh? What, though he is dressed in garments of flame;—if we are penitent, the consuming flame will consume *only* our sin; it will benefit and burnish *us*. This is our honour and our joy—to come very near to God, and to gain larger acquaintance with him. If renewed, our former aversion is turned into longing desire. 3. *This mediation was very imperfect.* It served a present purpose, viz. a mediation for communicating truth, a mediation for obtaining favour. It speaks a volume for the character and faith of Moses, that he

was not afraid to draw near. Imperfect though he was, he displayed a rare spirit of self-sacrifice. "Pardon, I pray thee, this people! or else, blot out my name from thy book!" Here was a vivid type of Jesus.

III. HUMAN OBLIGATION INCREASED. In the very nature of things, kindness on the one side begets obligation on the other. 1. *This obligation is personal.* "The Lord hath not made *this* covenant with our fathers, but with *us*." God's covenant with men is renewed age after age. It is a covenant with *us*, if we will accept the terms. Are we willing to be *his—wholly his?* Then the covenant is settled, "ordered in all things and sure." 2. *This obligation is all-embracing and complete.* It includes every part of our nature, every moment in our history, every interest we have in life. Attention is demanded. The ear must be reserved for God. Intellect is pledged. We must "*learn* the statutes and judgments." Active and dutiful service is due. Like the true Son, our intention must be, "I do always the things that please" the Father!—D.

Vers. 6—21.—*The Divine plan for the conduct of our life on earth.* Had we been left in ignorance what the Divine intention in human life was, it had been a calamity indeed. Waste and failure must have been the disastrous result. For every honest-minded man, ample direction from the Supreme Source of authority is supplied. The most cogent argument is not always the most convincing. God might *here* have prefaced his ten words with a proper assertion of his indisputable sovereignty. But he prefers to appeal to his recent interposition—his emancipation of the people from Egyptian bondage. As if he had said, "*I*, who released you from grinding misery—*I*, who created your liberty, and founded your nation, *now* command your loyalty. Let the lives which *I* have ransomed be spent as I now direct."

I. HOW HUMAN LIFE IS TO BE DIRECTED GOD-WARD. 1. *That God must be supreme in our regard and affection.* "Thou shalt have none other gods before *me*." This claim is founded in absolute right. The Proprietor has complete dominion over the work of his hands. If his workmanship does not please him, he is at liberty to destroy it. His claim is further pressed on the ground of his transcendent excellence. Essential and unapproachable goodness is *he;* hence his claims on worship rest upon his intrinsic worth. And his claim to reverent regard proceeds likewise on human benefit. God's glory and man's advantage are only different aspects of the same eternal truth. To give him *all* is to enrich ourselves. 2. *That God must be supreme in our acts of worship.* To picture him forth by material images is an impossibility. The plausible plea of human nature has always been that material forms serve as *aids* to worship the Unseen. But the facts of human experience have uniformly disproved this hypothesis. It may cost us severe exertion of mind to lift our souls up to the worship of the true God; yet this very exertion is an unspeakable advantage. God has no pleasure in imposing on us hard tasks *for their own sake;* yet, for the high gain to his servants, he does impose them. Throughout the Scriptures, idolatry is represented as spiritual adultery; hence, condescending to human modes of speech, the displeasure of God is described as *jealousy.* Jealousy is quick-sighted, deep-seated, swift-footed. All revelation of God is an accommodation to human ignorance and feebleness. The visitation of punishment upon the children, and upon the children's children, is not to be construed as excessively severe, much less as unrighteous. The thrice-holy God can *never* be unjust. The idolatrous spirit would be entailed to children by natural law; hence punishment would culminate in final disaster. The *menace* was gracious, because, if parents will not abstain from sin for their own sakes, they sometimes will for the sake of their children. The mercy shall be far more ample than the wrath. The anger may be entailed on a few, and that in proportion always to the sin; the mercy shall flow, like a mighty river, to "thousands." True worship fosters love, and stimulates practical obedience. 3. *God's authority is supreme over our speech.* The faculty of speech is a noble endowment, and differentiates man from the inferior races. The tongue is a mighty instrument, either for evil or for good. (1) We take God's Name in vain when we make an insincere or superficial profession of attachment. We wear his Name lightly and frivolously if our service is formal and nominal. (2) We take his Name in vain when we are unfaithful in the performance of our vows. Men pledge themselves to be his in moments of peril, and forget their pledges when safety comes. (3) We take God's Name in vain when we

use it to give force and emphasis to a falsehood. Whether in private converse, or in a court of justice, we use God's Name to produce a stronger persuasion in others' minds, we contract fearful guilt if we use that sacred Name to bolster up a lie. (4) We take God's Name in vain whenever we use it needlessly, flippantly, or in jest. The moral effect upon men is pernicious, corrupting, deadly. The penalty is set forth in negative language, but it is intended to convey deep impression. Others may hold it as a venial sin; not so God. 4. *God's authority over the employment of our time.* All time belongs to God. He hath created it. Every successive breath we inspire is by his sustaining power. Since we are completely *his*, his claim must be recognized through every passing minute. But just as he allows to men the productions of the soil, but requires the firstfruits to be presented to him—the earnest of the whole; so also the firstfruits of our time he claims for special acts of worship. One day in seven he requires to be thus consecrated; but whether the first or the seventh depends wholly on the mode of human calculation. The grounds on which the institution rests are many. Even God felt it to be good to "rest" from his acts of creation. In some sense, he ceased for a time to work. Review and contemplation formed his sabbath. His claims to have *his* day observed are myriad-fold. If sabbath observance was beneficial for Jews, is it not for Gentiles? If it was a blessing to man in the early ages, has it now become a curse? Even the inferior creation was to share in the boon. Strangers and foreigners would learn to admire the gracious arrangement, and learn the considerate kindness of the Hebrews' God.

II. WE LEARN HOW OUR LIFE IS TO BE CONDUCTED MAN-WARD. 1. *In accordance with the degree of kinship.* A parent has claims beyond all other men upon our love, obedience, and service. Parents are deserving our heartfelt honour. They claim this on the ground of position and relationship, irrespective of personal merit. Parents stand towards their children, through all the years of infancy, in the stead of God. For years the human babe is wholly dependent upon its parent; and this serves as schooling and discipline, whereby it learns its dependence upon a higher Parent yet. The disposition and conduct required in us towards our parents is the same in kind as that required towards God. Filial reverence is the first germ of true religion. Hence the promises of reward are akin. The family institution is the foundation of the political fabric. The health and well-being of home is the fount of national prosperity. If parents are honoured, "it shall be well with thee." *This*, a law for individuals, a law for society, and a law for nations. 2. *Our duty towards all men.* We are to respect their *persons*. Their life and health are to be as dear to us as our own. We are to respect their *virtue*. The lower passions are to be held in restraint. Occasions for lust must be avoided. A bridle must be put upon the glances of the eye. We are to respect their *property*. This duty has extensive scope. It means that we should deal with others as if they were ourselves. All dishonest dealing, false representations in commerce, overreaching in bargains, fraudulent marks, are condemned. We are to have respect to their *reputation*. It ought to please us as much to see a conspicuous virtue, a generous quality, in another, as if it shone in ourselves. Idle tale-bearing is forbidden, as also detraction, slander, unfavourable interpretation of others' deeds, and suspicion of their motives. We are charged, as the servants of God, to "love our neighbours even as ourselves." 3. *This Divine Law carries its sanctions into our interior life.* "Thou shalt not covet." Improper and irregular desires are to be repressed. Like a wise Ruler, God proceeds to the very root of sin—to the very core of evil. 'Tis easiest to strangle the serpent at its birth. If only this fountain were pure, all its streams would be likewise pure. Let the salt of purification be applied here! There *is* scope for coveting—a direction in which it may lawfully run. It may run Godward. It may fix its eyes and its hands on heavenly treasures. For in securing these we defraud no one else. Therefore, we may with advantage all round "covet earnestly the best gifts." Desire after heavenly gifts and riches is never untimely or excessive, never irregular or inordinate. Hence, as an antidote to a covetous disposition, we may well nourish heavenly hope. "Delight in God" will bring a most satisfying fruition of desire. Sowing in this fertile field yields a prolific harvest. The Decalogue is complete. God "added no more." Authority centres here.—D.

Vers. 21—33.—*Character determines environment.* I. THE STORMY ELEMENTS OF

NATURE SERVE AT TIMES AS THE FITTING ROBES OF DEITY. All natural objects are the projections in space of his creative voice. He spake and they appeared. *He* is still behind all phenomena—the only real substance. Since he is all-wise, the sole fount of knowledge, the true Revealer of secrets, he is properly said to be apparelled with *light*. The rainbow is his diadem, the morning sun is his radiant face, the thundercloud his chariot. To human eyes, he can only be visible in such forms as these. His holiness can be visibly expressed in no other form than fire. The profound inscrutableness of his will is best made manifest by the "thick darkness." His insufferable glory is attempered by a cloud. His kingly power is betokened by a "great voice." Such is his fitting environment.

II. THE NEAR APPROACH OF GOD IS INTOLERABLE TO SINFUL MEN. The unrenewed man shrinks from contact with absolute purity. He is in an uncongenial atmosphere —like a fish out of its native element. What tremendous losses foolish man submits to rather than abandon sin—losses of privilege, friendship, joy! So Peter prayed, when the vision of Christ's wondrous power dawned on him, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But the renewed man yearns and pants for a nearer, and yet nearer, approach to God. "I pray thee, show me thy glory!" *This* is his joy—to be near God, to grow like him. And yet, how often do we shrink from the passage of death, the passage by which we penetrate into the inner palace of Deity! Whatever brings us into nearer fellowship with God ought to be welcomed.

III. A SIGHT OF GOD KILLS EITHER THE SIN OR THE SINNER. There is no question that God intends the former, but if the guilty man will not part with his sin—identifies *himself* with *it*—then he too dies. To *know* God, and his redeeming Son, is tantamount to eternal life. But to know God only in his judicial character, to have defective acquaintance with him, alarms and kills. The love of sin perverts the judgment, and destroys good logic. These Hebrews said, "We have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth;" and then they inconsistently add, "Therefore why should we die?" In presence of that mystic flame, they promise loyal obedience. If only life may be spared, and God's commands be conveyed in a less alarming manner, they pledge themselves to be his liege servants. Alas! men little know their own weaknesses! So men still say that if they had such a revelation as they wished—such in *degree*, and such in *kind*—they would yield compliance! Yet the real difficulty arises not from defects in the external revelation, but from the internal disposition.

IV. GOD'S APPORTIONMENT OF HONOUR AND DISHONOUR APPROVED BY MEN. How different his language to different persons! To some, "Go, get you into your tents again;" to another, "Stand thou here by *me*." To dwell near to God, and to enjoy his revelations of light and love—this is really man's crowning privilege, *this* his heaven. Yet the bulk of men are blind to their own good, dead to noblest joy. To possess any pleasure, their environment must be suited to their character; the external must correspond with the internal. "Depart from me!" says man to his Maker. "Depart from *me!*" responds our God. "Out of our own mouths we are judged."

V. OBSERVE GOD'S INTENSE LONGING FOR MAN'S GOOD. How pathetic are such ejaculations as these, "Oh that there were such a heart in them, to fear *me* always!" 1. Religion must be a matter of the heart. 2. Religion is not a compulsory, but voluntary, service. 3. Religion commands the allegiance of the whole man—his reverence, submission, and practical service; and *that* not spasmodic, but continuous. 4. Religion brings largest benefit to ourselves and to our children. Even bad men have, *at times*, desires after a better life—fitful moods of regret and aspiration. God, in his wondrous patience, smiles on these—approves a passing thought or a transient feeling—and says, in his paternal love, "Would that this frame of feeling continued!" These are the openings of opportunity's golden door.

VI. THE WORLD'S OBEDIENCE IS DEPENDENT ON HUMAN MINISTRIES. The majority of men will not listen to God unless he speak to them through human agencies. Men will only read God's Word as it is written, in large capitals, in saintly lives. Thus God commanded Moses: "*I* will speak unto *thee*: . . . *thou* shalt teach *them*, that they may do." The pardoned man becomes God's interpreter to the world. "Speak *thou* to us," they say, "and we will hear." "As Christ was, so we are to be in the world"—

light-bearers. The heathen nations learn only *through the Church* the redeeming work of God.—D.

Vers. 1—33.—*Reminiscences of Horeb.* I. THE COVENANT. (Vers. 2, 3.) 1. Proposed by God (Exod. xix. 3—7). 2. Accepted by the people (Exod. xxiv. 7). 3. Entailed obligations on subsequent generations (cf. ch. vi. 2). In this covenant, formally ratified by sacrifice (Exod. xxiv. 6, 7), Israel (1) accepted Jehovah to be its spiritual and temporal Sovereign. (2) Pledged itself to observe his Law. (3) Was adopted by him as his peculiar people. (4) Had every blessing secured to it on condition of obedience (Exod. xxiii. 22—27). The new covenant in Christ, while in many respects different from, and superior to, that of Horeb, yet resembles it in several of these particulars.

II. THE LAW. (Vers. 6—22.) 1. Holy in its nature. 2. Internally complete as a summary of duty. "He added no more" (ver. 22). 3. Explicative of the character of God. The *absoluteness* and *unity* of God, *e.g.* taught in first commandment; his *spirituality, jealousy* of his *honour, sovereignty, love,* and *mercy,* in second commandment; his *holiness,* in third commandment; his *searching of hearts,* in tenth commandment; while in all he appears as the Source of moral obligation, and the Guardian of rights. 4. To be kept from the motive of love (ver. 10). This Law is not abolished, but fulfilled in Christ, by whose Spirit its precepts are written in the minds and hearts of believers (2 Cor. iii. 3; Heb. viii. 10).

III. THE MEDIATOR. (Vers. 5, 22—33.) The mediation of Moses was: 1. *Craved by the people* (vers. 23—28). The manifestation of God's holiness overwhelms sinful men (cf. Isa. vi. 3—6). Moses not only *endured* this manifestation, but went up alone into the thick darkness where God was. How exceptionally great he appears in this! 2. *Acquiesced in by God* (vers. 28—32). This transacting through a mediator was in harmony with the principle of his dealings with them from the first. A figure of the mediation of Christ. 3. *Suitable in itself.* As tending to enhance in their minds the impression of God's holiness and the feeling of their own sinfulness.—J. O.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The covenant at Horeb.* Here spoken of as distinct from the older covenant made with the patriarchs (Gen xv., xvii.).

I. ITS RELATIONS TO THE COVENANT MADE WITH THE FATHERS. It was not a new thing absolutely. It rested on that older covenant, and on the series of revelations which sprang out of it. It could not disannul that older covenant (Gal. iii. 17). It could not run counter to it (Gal. iii. 21). It must, though "superadded," be in subserviency to it (Gal. iii. 15—26). But that covenant made with the fathers was: 1. Of promise (Gal. iii. 18). 2. Couched in absolute terms. God pledged his perfections that the promise conveyed in it would be ultimately realized (Rom. iii. 3). 3. In which an interest was obtained by faith (Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 3—23). 4. While yet it bound the person received into covenant to a holy life (Gen. xvii. 1). The new covenant could "make void" the older one in none of these particulars.

II. ITS DISTINCTION FROM THE COVENANT MADE WITH THE FATHERS. 1. It was a *national* covenant, having reference primarily to national existence and prosperity. 2. It was a covenant of *Law.* It was (1) connected with a promulgation of Law, and (2) required obedience to the prescribed Law as the condition of acceptance. Does this look like a retrograde step in the Divine procedure, a contradiction of the covenant with Abraham? Seemingly it was so, but the backward step was really a forward one, bringing to light demands of the Divine holiness which it was absolutely essential man should become acquainted with. Two points have to be noticed: (*a*) that obedience was not made the *ground of admission* to the covenant, or aught else than the condition of *continuance* in privileges freely conferred; and (*b*) that the requirement of obedience did not stand alone, but was connected with provisions for the removal of the guilt contracted by transgression and shortcoming. This brings into view the peculiar feature in the covenant of Horeb—the hidden grace of it. In form and letter it was a strictly legal covenant. Obedience to the Law in all its parts, and without failure, was the technical condition of the fulfilment of promise, and of continuance in covenant privilege (cf. Matt. xix. 17; Rom. x. 5; Gal. iii. 10). The fact that atonements were provided to remove the guilt which otherwise would have broken up the covenant, is proof that

such was its constitution. The same fact shows that in the structure of the covenant it was recognized that sin and shortcoming would mark the history of Israel; that, on the strictly legal basis, standing in the state of acceptance was impossible. A theoretically perfect obedience no Jew ever rendered. His standing in no case was in virtue of a perfectly fulfilled Law, but was *due to forgiving mercy, which daily pardoned his shortcomings, and gave him an acceptance which these shortcomings were as constantly forfeiting.* It was faith, not works, which justified him; while yet, in harmony with the unalterable law of moral life, it was his duty to aim at the realization of the ideal of righteousness which the Law presented. Just as with Abraham, the faith which justified him, and did so before a single work had issued from it (Gen. xv. 6; Jas. ii. 23), was a faith which "wrought with works," and "by works was faith made perfect" (Jas. ii. 22). It follows from these peculiarities, and from the statements of Scripture, that it was: 3. A *preparatory* and *temporary* covenant. Its leading design was to develop the consciousness of sin, to awaken a feeling of the need of redemption, to evince the powerlessness of mere Law as a source of moral strength, to drive men back from legal efforts to faith, and so, finally, to prepare the way for Christ (Rom. iii. 20; Gal. iii. 23, 24, etc.). In this we discern the reason of the severe and threatening form in which it was couched, and of the terrors which attended its promulgation. It was a covenant which could not of itself save or do aught but kill (2 Cor. iii. 6—12).—J. O

Ver. 5.—*Mediation.* I. MEDIATION IN GENERAL. Mediation has a God-ward side and a man-ward side. The requirements of God's holiness—the needs of man's heart. 1. *On God's side,* communion with sinners can only be maintained on terms which uphold righteousness and law, and do not derogate from the sanctity of the Divine character. 2. *On man's side,* there is (1) the feeling of *weakness and finitude,* awakening terror in presence of the Infinite (vers. 25—27). (2) The feeling of *sin,* giving rise to the craving for a holier one to stand between him and God. (3) The feeling of *need*—the soul's longing for fellowship with God; giving rise to the desire for one to mediate in the sense of making peace, of bringing about reconciliation (Job xvi. 21).

II. THE MEDIATION OF MOSES A TYPE OF THAT OF CHRIST. We trace the resemblance: 1. *In his willingness to mediate.* So did Jesus most willingly undertake to stand between God and sinners (Heb. x. 5—10). 2. *In his acceptance as mediator* (ver. 28). So was Christ called to this office by the Father, invested with all the powers necessary for the right discharge of its duties, and accepted in the discharge of them (Isa. xlix. 8; Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5; Heb. v. 4—11). 3. *In the work he did.* (1) Conveying God's words to the people (cf. John xvii. 6—9). (2) Conveying the people's words to God (ver. 27). Jesus is in like manner the medium through whom prayer, worship, etc., ascend to the Father (Eph. iii. 18; Heb. iv. 14—16). (3) Frequently interceding for them, and obtaining pardon for their sins (Exod. xxxii. 11—15; Numb. xiv. 13—21, etc.). So does Jesus ever live to intercede for us, and advocate our cause (Rom. viii. 34; 1 John ii. 1). (4) Even, on one notable occasion, offering himself as a sacrifice for their sin (Exod. xxxii. 32). What Moses *would* have done, had it been possible so to save the people from destruction, Christ did (Gal. iii. 13, etc.).—J. O.

Ver. 8.—*The iniquity of the fathers visited on the children.* I. A FACT AMPLY ATTESTED. Borne out 1. *By Scripture instances* (Josh. vii. 24; 2 Sam. xii. 14; 1 Kings xxi. 21, 29, etc.). 2. By *observation and experience.* The case of children suffering in mind, body, character, and fortune, as the result of the sins of parents, is one of the commonest and saddest things in life. 3. *Science.* The law of heredity. (For illustrations, see Rev. Joseph Cook's 'Lectures.') 4. *Literature.* Especially do the Greek tragedies give expression to, and strikingly work out, this thought.

II. A FACT MYSTERIOUS, YET TO BE VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF VARIOUS RELIEVING CONSIDERATIONS. The difficulty is one of natural, quite as much as of revealed, religion. The following considerations relieve it only in part: 1. Every original disadvantage will be taken into account by the Searcher of hearts in estimating personal responsibility (Luke xiii. 48). 2. The final judgment on a man's character will turn, not on inherited tendencies, but on what he has made himself by his own moral determinations (Ezek. xviii.). 3. The less favourable conditions in which the sins of parents have placed the individual cannot turn to his ultimate disadvantage if he struggle well

and persevere to the end (see 'Speaker's Commentary' on Exod. xx. 5). 4. It is open to the evil-doer to cut off the entail of punishment by choosing for himself the way of righteousness (Ezek. xviii. 15—18). God is reluctant to contemplate the heritage of evil descending further than the third or fourth generation, while thousands of generations are spoken of in connection with the blessing. 5. Experience of the effects of a parent's evil-doing is designed to act as a deterrent from like sins. The child is less likely to imitate the parents' vices, suffering these results, than if entirely exempt. 6. The Law is the consequence of a constitution of society originally intended for the conveyance, not of evils, but of blessings. This is a consideration of importance as throwing light on the equity, as well as on the goodness, of Divine providence. The design of the organic constitution of society is obviously to hand down to succeeding generations the moral gains of those which precede. It is sin which has wrought the mischief, reversing the operation of a constitution in itself beneficent, and making that which is good work death to so many.

Lesson—The tremendous responsibility of parents, and of all who have it in their power to influence the destinies of posterity.—J. O.

Vers. 12—15.—*The sabbath.* I. WHAT? The essential point in the institution is the sanctification to God of a seventh part of our time, of one day in seven. Which day of the seven is observed is indifferent, not in the sense of being left to individual choice, but in respect of any inherent sanctity in one day above another (Rom. xiv. 5). The day is made holy by the Divine appointment, and by the uses we put it to. We sanctify the sabbath: 1. *By observing it as a day of rest from secular toil.* The need of a rest day in the week is universally acknowledged. Every effort should be made to extend the boon as widely as possible, and to avoid infraction of the rights of others in connection with it. Our aim should be to lessen Sunday work, not to increase it. Apply to railways, steamboats, post-office work, museums, etc. 2. *By devoting it principally to religious uses.* It is only by conserving the sabbath as a day sacred to religion that we can hope to preserve it as a day free from toil. We need, for spiritual purposes, all the opportunities it gives us.

II. FOR WHOM? The answer is—for man. This is shown: 1. From *its primeval origin.* That the sabbath dates from creation is implied in the narrative in Genesis (ii. 3), in the terms of the command (Exod. xx. 8—11), in Christ's words (Mark ii. 27), in the argument in Hebrews (iv. 3, 4), and in the recently deciphered Chaldean traditions. While it may be argued, that if designed to commemorate creation, this is a matter which concerns all men equally with the Jews. 2. From *its place in the moral law.* It is certainly remarkable, if the sabbath is a purely Jewish institution, that it should be found embodied in the first of those two tables which by their contents, as well as by the manner of their promulgation, are shown to be of a distinctly moral nature. 3. *From the respect paid to it by the prophets* (see Isa. lviii. 13, 14). The language here employed is very different from that which prophets were accustomed to use of purely ceremonial institutions. 4. From *Christ's defence of it.* It is noticeable, and supports our view, that while frequently charged with breaking the sabbath law, the Saviour never once admits the charge. He carefully defends himself against it. He unceremoniously clears away the rubbish which the Pharisees had heaped upon the institution; but the sabbath itself he never speaks of as a thing to be abolished. He sets it in its true light, and shows high respect for it. 5. From *its reappearance in the new dispensation in a form adapted to the genius and wants of Christianity.* The *name* sabbath is not found in the New Testament, applied to the first day of the week, but the *thing* appears in that weekly festival of the Apostolic Church—the Lord's day. 6. From *the proved adaptation of the sabbath to the constitution of man's nature.* The seventh-day rest is found by experience to be essential to man's welfare. It ministers to physical health, mental vigour, moral purity, and religious earnestness. The sabbath-keeping nations are by far the happiest, most moral, and most prosperous. These reasons combine to show that this institution is one intended and adapted for the whole human family.

III. WHY? The institution, as seen above, is grounded in deep necessities of man's nature. It is, moreover, a suitable recognition of the Creator's right to our worship and service. But further, it is: 1. *Commemorative* (1) of creation, (2) of redemption—in

the case of Israel, of redemption from Egypt (ver. 15); in the case of the Christian, of redemption through Christ. 2. *Prefigurative*—of the rest of heaven (Heb. iv. 9).—J. O.

Ver. 16.—*Honour to parents.* We prefer the arrangement which regards the fifth commandment as the last of the first table—honour to parents being viewed as honour to God in his human representatives.

I. PARENTS STAND TO THEIR CHILDREN IN THE RELATION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DIVINE. They represent God as the source of their offspring's life; they have a share of God's authority, and ought to exercise it; but much more ought they to represent God to their children in his unwearied beneficence, his tender care, his exalted rectitude, his forgiving love. With what intelligence or comfort can a child be taught to think of a Father in heaven, if its earthly parent is wanting in dignity, kindness, truthfulness, or integrity? How many fathers are thus spoiling for their children their whole conceptions of God! And with what anxiety and care should earthly parents study to leave such an impression on their children's minds as will make the idea of God delightful and consolatory to them, while inspiring them towards him with proper feelings of reverence!

II. PARENTS ON THIS ACCOUNT ARE TO BE HONOURED BY THEIR CHILDREN. They are to be regarded with affection, treated with respect and deference, promptly and cheerfully obeyed, and, where needful, liberally supported (Matt. xv. 4—7; 1 Tim. v. 8). Even the failure of parents to do all their duty to their children does not exonerate the children from the obligation of treating them with respect. Young people need to be reminded that failure in this duty is peculiarly offensive to God. We are told that when Tiyo Soga visited this country, a particular thing which astonished him was the deficiency in respect for parents compared with the obedience which prevailed in the wilds of Kaffraria.

III. THE HONOURING OF PARENTS HAS ATTACHED TO IT A PECULIAR PROMISE. Length of days and prosperity. The promise is primarily national, but it has fulfilments in individuals. 1. A *special blessing* rests on the man who shows his parents due respect. That has often been remarked. 2. There is also a *natural connection* between the virtue and the promise. Respect for parents is the root at once of reverence for God and of respect for the rights of others. Hence the place of the commandment in the Decalogue. It engenders self-respect, and forms the will to habits of obedience. It is favourable to the stability, good order, and general morals of society. It therefore conduces to health, longevity, and a diffusion of the comforts of life, furnishing alike the outward and the inward conditions necessary for success.—J. O.

Ver. 22.—*Moral Law.* I. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS A DISTINCT PART OF GOD'S REVELATION. 1. They were spoken by God's own voice from the midst of the fire (ver. 24). 2. They only were thus promulgated; "he added no more." 3. They were written on tables of stone. 4. They were deposited in the ark of the covenant (Exod. xxv. 16). These facts show that they held a distinct place in the Law-giving at Sinai, and that they are not to be confounded with the ceremonial and judicial statutes, subsequently given.

II. THE GROUNDS OF THIS DISTINCTION. The Decalogue was: 1. An epitome of universal moral truth. 2. Internally complete as such—the first table laying down our duties to God, as respects his being, his worship, his Name, his day, his human representatives; the second forbidding all injury to our fellow-men (injuries to life, property, chastity, character), while requiring by implication the fulfilment of all positive duties, and the regulation even of our secret thoughts. 3. The basis of the covenant with Israel. The foundation on which all subsequent legislation was reared.—J. O.

Vers. 23—28.—*The element of terror in religion.* I. THE FACT OF TERROR. It is not unnatural that man should tremble in presence of any near manifestation of the Divine. The chief cause of this terror is the consciousness of sin. Guilty man fears his Judge. The text is an instance of this terror, but the same thing has often been witnessed. 1. *In presence of unusual appearances of nature.* Comets, eclipses, unusual darkness, thunderstorms, earthquakes, etc. 2. *Under the powerful preaching of judg-*

ment. Felix under the preaching of Paul (Acts xxiv. 25). Massillon bringing the French court to their feet in terror, as he described the Lord's coming. Whitfield's oratory and its effects. 3. *In prospect of death.* There are few in whom the approach of death does not awaken serious alarms. The effect is most conspicuous in times of sudden danger, as in shipwrecks, etc.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF TERROR. Usually, as here: 1. *It extorts confession of the truth.* The Israelites spoke of God in juster terms than ever they had done before, or perhaps ever did again. Terror draws from the soul strange acknowledgments. The white face of the scoffer shows how little, in his heart, he disbelieves in the God he would fain have disavowed. The self-righteous man is made suddenly aware of his sins. The blasphemer stops his oaths, and begins to pray. The liar for once finds himself speaking the truth. 2. *It awakens the cry for a mediator.* Thus we see it leading men to send for ministers or lay Christians to pray for them, or crying for mercy to the Saviour or to saints. 3. *It prompts to vows and promises.* In their terrified moods, men are willing to promise anything—whatever they think will please or propitiate God (ver. 27). They will repent, will pray, will go to church, will make restitution for wrongs, will abandon vices, etc.

III. THE INEFFICACY OF TERROR AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CONVERSION. Terror, when excited by just views of sin, has its uses. It breaks up the hardened crust of indifference, ploughs into the nature, and prepares it for the reception of better teaching. But terror of itself cannot change the heart. It is the message of love which alone can exalt, renovate, and truly convert. Not the Law, but the cross. The Law is only useful when employed as a schoolmaster to bring to Christ. These Israelites soon forgot their terrors, and in less than forty days had made for themselves a golden calf. The jailor's terrors (Acts xvi. 27) would have wrought death, but the words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. (ver. 31), made him live anew.—J. O.

Vers. 28, 29.—*God's desires for man's good.* A gleam, from amidst the terrors, of the Divine loving-kindness and tenderness.

I. GOD WELCOMES IN MAN THE FAINTEST TRACES OF A DISPOSITION TO RETURN TO HIM. (Ver. 27.) This trait in the Divine character is scarcely recognized by us as it should be. We are apt to take for granted that till conversion is absolutely complete—till it is in every respect sincere and thorough, it can obtain no favour in the eyes of Heaven. Scripture teaches, on the contrary, that God wills to recognize in man any signs of turning towards himself, and would fain, by holding out encouragements, ripen these into thorough conversion (1 Kings xxi. 27—29; Ps. lxxviii. 34—40; Jonah iii. 10).

II. GOD IS NEVERTHELESS AWARE OF ALL THAT IS LACKING IN HEARTS NOT COMPLETELY SURRENDERED TO HIM. The professions of the Israelites did not deceive him. He knew the superficiality of their states of feeling. They lacked yet "one thing" (Mark xi. 21)—the entire surrender of their hearts to him. We have the same discernment in the New Testament (John ii. 25; Acts viii. 21; Rev. iii. 1; cf. 1 Kings xv. 3; Matt. xiii. 20, 21).

III. GOD DESIRES IN MAN THAT THOROUGHNESS OF CONVERSION WHICH ALONE CAN SECURE OBEDIENCE, HAPPINESS, AND PERSEVERANCE. What God desires in man is heart-religion; this has: 1. Its seat in the heart. 2. Its principle in the fear of God. 3. Its outcome in obedience. 4. Its test in perseverance. 5. Its reward in blessedness. It is God's love which here speaks, but also his righteousness, which is necessarily averse from whatever is unreal, and desires to see goodness triumphant.—J. O.

Vers. 1—21.—*The Decalogue.* Moses here recalls the Sinaitic covenant, and wishes the Israelites to remember that, though given to their fathers primarily, it was also applicable to them. They were in many cases present as children then, and they were represented by their parents. Moses speaks with authority as having been mediator (ver. 5) on the occasion.

There are the following lessons to be learned from the Decalogue as here given:—

I. THE COVENANT IS BASED UPON A MERCIFUL DELIVERANCE. God gives his Law to his people after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It is intended to be a rule of life for those already redeemed. The gospel precedes the Law—Moses the

deliverer precedes Moses the lawgiver; the Lord was first known as the fountain of freedom, and then as the fountain of that Law within whose bounds freedom is to be realized.

II. THIS LAW COVERS OUR RELATIONS BOTH TO GOD AND MAN. 1. The Laws relating to *God*. These embrace the four which come first, *i.e.* (1) the law against *polytheism* or *atheism*. This law is broken when we live "without God in the world," ascribing to luck, chance, or fortune what is due to God's providence. It is broken when we worship *self*, or *fame*, or *ambition* (cf. 'The Life and Letters of J. H. Thornwell, D.D., LL.D.,' p. 142; also Dale's 'Ten Commandments;' Washburn's 'Social Law of God;' and Crosby's 'Thoughts on the Decalogue'). (2) The law against *sensuous worship*. For the second commandment is broken in so far as our worship is not "in spirit and in truth." (3) The law of *reverence*. Any spirit of undue familiarity which leads to the least trifling before God is a breach of this third commandment. (4) The law of *consecrated time*. This fourth commandment is an acknowledgment that *all* time is God's by right, and the seventh portion *should be* by special obligation. In Deuteronomy the sabbath is based, not on creation, as in Exodus, but on the deliverance from Egypt. Each great providence increases our obligation thus to acknowledge God. Hence the Lord's day is made commemorative of our Lord's resurrection.

2. The laws relating to *man*. These embrace the succeeding *six*, thus: (1) The law of the *family*. This is the first commandment with promise (Eph. vi. 2). (2) The law of *social love*. For we are to avoid not only murder, but the unholy anger of which it is the manifestation (Matt. v. 22). (3) The law of *social purity*. We must be pure in thought, as well as in act, as our Lord has shown us (Matt. v. 28; also Mark vii. 21—23). (4) The law of *honesty*. This must be in God's sight and in man's (2 Cor. viii. 21). (5) The law of *veracity*. Restraining the turbulent tongue (Jas. iii. 6, 9). (6) The law of *contentment*. The curbing of covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. iii. 5).—R. M. E.

Vers. 22—33.—*How Moses became mediator*. The ten commandments were a *direct* communication from God to Israel. But it was too much for their sinful, terrified souls to stand, and so Moses is entreated to stand between God and them, and be the medium of communication between them. The Lord approved of the arrangement, and installed Moses into the office (cf. Exod. xx. 18—21). This suggests—

I. THE CRY FOR A MEDIATOR AROSE OUT OF THE FEARS OF MEN. The surpassing glory of God makes such a terrific impression on the hearts of sinners that they cry instinctively for mediation. It is a need of mankind when aroused to a true sense of the majesty and purity of God.

Those who question the necessity of mediation are really wanting in the due sense of God's exceeding majesty and glory.

II. THE OFFICE OF A MEDIATOR NECESSITATED MUCH PERSONAL SELF-DENIAL. It was doubtless a great honour conferred on Moses; but it was also a great burden. Thus he declared his own fears in the circumstances. "I exceedingly fear and quake" was his testimony about the experience on the mount. Besides, the forty days' seclusion and fast and all the attendant anxieties and troubles showed that it was most assuredly *no* sinecure.

And these trials of Moses only faintly typify the severe strain and trial borne by Christ, the one Mediator between God and man.

III. THE MEDIATION WAS LAW-GIVING. Moses was to convey "the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments" of God unto the people. It was didactic—its purpose was the conveyance of truth. It was a *prophetic* office, consequently, which Moses in this instance received. The *priestly* was made over to Aaron, on the principle of a "division of labour."

And so Christ is the great mediating Prophet. He came forth from the secret place of God to convey to us what God is. He came down from heaven. He testified about heavenly things (John iii. 11—13). And in the perfection of mediation, he embodied the truth, and was able to say, "I am the truth" (John xiv. 6). Jesus was a living Law.

IV. OBEDIENCE SHOULD RESULT FROM THE MEDIATION. The whole Law was a "commandment with promise." This is shown in ver. 33. The children of Israel

were to conduct themselves obediently as the children of God, and they would realize in all its breadth the promise of the fifth commandment. The Law was a Law of well-being (ver. 29). Obedience was the condition of continued prosperity in the land.

And the same arrangements continue. Obedience to God's Law still secures the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Not, of course, that the saints are always prosperous in this world; were this the case, saintship would be a very mercenary business. But other things being equal, the tendency of obedience is to present as well as future well-being. God makes no promise, but threatening, to the disobedient.—**R. M. E.**

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 1—3.—Some connect this with what goes before, and take it as a sort of epilogue to the preceding discourse; but it is rather to be regarded as introductory to what follows. Being about to enjoin upon the people the commandments they were to obey in the land on which they were about to enter, Moses prefaces this with a general announcement of what he was about to deliver, and with a statement of the reason for such deliverance, and of the benefits that would flow from the observance of what should be enjoined.

Ver. 1.—**These are the commandments.** In the Hebrew it is, *This is the commandment*, i.e. the sum and substance of the Divine enactment; equivalent to "the Law" (ch. iv. 44). "The statutes and judgments" (rights) are in apposition to "the commandment," and explain it.

Ver. 2.—The reason for this announcement of the Law was that the people might fear the Lord, so as to keep all that he enjoined, they and their children, from generation to generation, and that they might thereby continue long in life, and in the enjoyment of the advantages accruing from the land of which they were about to take possession.

Ver. 3.—God had promised from the first to the patriarchs that he would make of their posterity a great nation (Gen. xii. 1; xvii. 6; xviii. 18). But the fulfilment of this promise was conditioned by their continuing as a people in the fear of God, and in obedience to his Law. Everything, then, depended on their hearing what Moses had been commanded to teach them, and observing to do it (cf. Lev. xxvi. 9, etc.). **In the land**, etc. This is to be connected with the clause, "that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily;" the land was to be the scene and sphere of their prosperity and increase. Some would render thus: "As the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee a land," etc., *i.e.* a place in which thou mayest prosper and increase; the other, however, is the more natural construction and rendering. There is, indeed, no preposition before "the land" in the Hebrew; but nothing is more common in that language than for the accusative of a noun to be used adverbially to describe the place where anything is done. **Milk and honey**; emblem of fruitfulness and sweetness (Song of Solomon iv. 11); proverbially descriptive of Canaan, as rich in pasturage for flocks, and abounding in flowers whence the bees could extract honey (cf. Exod. iii. 8, 17).

Vers. 4—25.—THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT. "In the fear of Jehovah all true obedience is rooted (vers. 2, 3); for this is the first and most intimate fact in the relation of Israel and Jehovah (ch. v. 26). But where the supreme fear of Jehovah hinders men from allowing self to preponderate in opposition to God, there will be no stopping at this renunciation of self-will, though this comes first as the negative form of the ten commandments also shows, but there will come to be a coalescence of the human with the Divine will; and this is love, which is the proper condition of obedience, as the ten commandments also indicate (ch. v. 10)" (Baumgarten).

Ver. 4.—**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.** This is an affirmation not so much of the *moneity* as of the *unity* and *simplicity* of Jehovah, the alone God. Though Elohim (plu.), he is one. The speaker does not say, "Jehovah is alone God," but "Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah" (comp. for the force of אֶחָד, Exod. xxvi. 6, 11; Ezek. xxxvii. 16—19). Among the heathen there were many Baals and many Jupiters; and it was believed that the deity might be divided and communicated to many. But the God of Israel, Jehovah, is one, indivisible and incommunicable. He is the Absolute and the

Infinite One, who alone is to be worshipped, on whom all depend, and to whose command all must yield obedience (cf. Zech. xiv. 9). Not only to polytheism, but to pantheism, and to the conception of a localized or national deity, is this declaration of the unity of Jehovah opposed. With these words the Jews begin their daily liturgy, morning and evening; the sentence expresses the essence of their religious belief; and so familiar is it to their thought and speech that, it is said, they were often, during the persecution in Spain, betrayed to their enemies by the involuntary utterance of it.

Ver. 5.—To the one indivisible Jehovah undivided devotion and love are due. Hence the injunction, **Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.** The "heart" is the inner nature of the man, including his intellectual, emotional, and conative faculties; the "soul" is the personality, the entire self-consciousness; and the "might" is the sum of the energies, bodily and mental. Not by profession merely is Jehovah to be loved; the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, is to be yielded to him in holy and devout affection (cf. Matt. xxii. 37; Mark xii. 33; Luke x. 27; Rom. xii. 1). The last letter of the first word, and the last letter of the last word in this verse are larger than the ordinary size (*majuscula*), and as these two form the word for witness (עד), the Jews say that they are written thus "that every one may know, when he professes the unity of God, that his heart ought to be intent and devoid of every other thought, because God is a *witness*, and knoweth everything" (R. Bechai, fol. 195, quoted by Michaelis, 'Bib. Heb.,' *in loc.*).

Vers. 6, 7.—Where true love to God exists in the heart, it will manifest itself in a regard to his will, and in the diligent keeping of his commandments. Hence his words were to be not only in the memory of the people, but laid upon their heart (cf. ch. xi. 18), that they might be ever present to the thought and will. They were also to be inculcated upon their children, and to be the subject of conversation on all fitting occasions between them, the members of their household, and even their casual associates. **Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children**; literally, *Thou shalt sharpen them to thy children*, impress them upon them, send them into them like a sharp weapon.

Ver. 8.—The words of God were to be bound for **a sign** [a memorial or directory] **upon thine hand**, the instrument of acting, and to be as **frontlets** [fillets or bands] **between thine eyes**, the organs of direction in walking or moving, and so on the forehead, the chamber of thought and purpose; and they were to inscribe them on the posts of their houses, and on their gates. The purport of this is that they were constantly and everywhere to have these commandments of the Lord in view and in mind, so as to undeviatingly observe them. It seems, however, to have been a custom widely prevalent among the ancient Eastern peoples to carry about their persons slips of parchment or some other material, on which were written sentences of moral or religious import; and such sentences they were also wont to inscribe on conspicuous places of their dwellings; usages still to be found among the Moslems (see Wilkinson, 'Ancient Egyptians,' iii. 364; Lane, 'Modern Egypt,' i. 338; Russell, 'Nat. Hist. of Aleppo;' Thomson, 'Land and the Book,' i. 216), and the latter of which was not altogether unknown among Western nations (cf. Virgil, 'Georg.' iii. 26, etc.), of which traces may still be seen in Switzerland, Germany, and on old houses in both England and Scotland. This custom originated, probably, in a desire to have the sentiments inscribed always in mind; but for the most part these inscriptions came to be regarded as amulets or charms, the presence of which on the person or the house was a safeguard against evil influences, especially such as were supernatural. By the Jews this custom was followed; and they regarded it as authorized by the injunction of Moses in this passage. Taking his words literally, they had their tôtâphoth and their mezuzah, the former of which—the phylacteries of the New Testament—were strips of parchment, on which passages of the Law (Exod. xiii. 2—10, 11—17; ch. vi. 4—10, 13—22) were written, and these, enclosed in a box, were bound on the forehead and left wrist, and worn at prayers by the worshippers; the latter a slip of parchment, on which were written certain passages of Scripture (vers. 4—9; ch. xi. 13—21), and which, enclosed in a reed or cylinder, was fixed on the right-hand doorpost of every room in the house (see arts. 'Mezuzah' and 'Phylacteries' in Kitto's 'Biblical Cyclopædia,' 3rd edit.).

Vers. 10—12.—As the Israelites were about to enter upon the possession of a rich and fertile land, where everything for their accommodation and comfort was already provided for them, there was a danger of their being so engrossed with their new possessions as to forget the Lord and his gracious dealings with them. They are, therefore, here warned against the danger to which they would be thus exposed. **House of bondage** (Exod. xiii. 3).

Vers. 13—18.—**Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God.** The fear of the Lord—that reverent awe which is akin to love—is the

beginning of wisdom and the foundation of piety; where it is in the heart it will lead to serving of the Lord in holy obedience; and they in whom it dwells will swear by his Name, recognizing his presence and omniscience, and not daring to asseverate anything but what they know to be true. Thus, really believing in God and reverently worshipping him, the Israelites would be careful not to go after other gods, or to give to any object that homage which is due unto Jehovah alone, knowing that this he will not endure or suffer with impunity; for he is a jealous God, and them that thus dishonour him he will destroy (Exod. xx. 5; ch. iv. 24, etc.). Thus also they should be kept from murmuring against God, and thereby tempting him—putting him, as it were, to the proof, and calling in question his presence and his power, as they had done at Massah (Exod. xvii. 1—7). Without this genuine religious principle there will be no sincere worship, no true reverence, no real obedience, rendered unto God. But where this dwells in the heart it will influence the whole life, so that the commandments of God shall be diligently kept, and that which is good and right in his sight shall be done.

Ver. 19.—**To cast out**, etc.; rather, *to the casting out of*, etc. The infin. here expresses the carrying out of the action intimated in the words, "that it may be well with thee" (cf. Exod. xxiii. 27, etc.; xxxiv. 11).

Vers. 20—25.—The injunction to teach the words of the Lord to the children (ver. 7) is here more largely explained. When asked by their sons the meaning and reason of the commandments and institutes which they observed, they were to show them what the Lord had done for his people in bringing them out of Egypt and establishing them in Canaan, and how he had enjoined on them all these statutes that they might fear Jehovah their God for their good always, and for their preservation and safety.

Ver. 22.—**Signs and wonders** (cf. ch. iv. 34).

Ver. 25.—**And it shall be our righteousness**; literally, *And righteousness shall be to us*, i.e. we shall be held righteous by God if we observe to do all that he has enjoined (comp. Rom. x. 5; vi. 16; Phil. iii. 6). **Before the Lord**, *i.e.* not only in his sight, but according to his judgment, so as to be approved of him (cf. Ps. lvi. 13; cxvi. 9).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Obedience to God conducive to the highest good.* The Lord God had launched forth into the world a new nation, the basis of whose constitution was specifically religious. The worship, fear, and service of the one living and true God were the prime duties enjoined on the people, without which no bare morality as between man and man was accepted before him. In this paragraph, however, we get no indications of duty which have not previously been included in the ten commandments. How can we? The whole ground of duty was covered by them. Still, the same truths are ever being thrown into forms fresh and new. The primal laws of duty are not many; they may soon be recounted. But we need "line upon line, precept upon precept," that the very precepts which perhaps we deem commonplace may be graven on our hearts, and there become living powers! In the three verses before us the enjoined duties are summed up in the one phrase, "the commandment" (ver. 1: the word is singular, and includes in its meaning both statutes and judgments). Four expressions show how "the commandment" is to be kept. 1. There is to be a fear of the Lord; a fear based on trust, not on distrust. 2. The Divine appointments are to be the rule of life. 3. The nurture and training of the family are to be in entire harmony therewith. 4. This family loyalty to God is to be continuous and unswerving—"all the days of thy life." And in wealth and variety of diction the Legislator points out that in this loyalty of being Israel would find its *well*-being. Whence we get the topic for our present Homily: *That our highest interests are ensured by the fulfilment of the Divine commands.* Observe—

I. IT IS SUPPOSED THAT MEN WILL NOT BE INSENSIBLE TO THE QUESTION—"WHAT WILL BE MOST PROFITABLE TO US?" As a matter of fact, they *do* regard the measure of profit likely to accrue, as something which regulates their movements. Nor is there anywhere in the Word of God any censure passed on this. In fact, even our Saviour himself appeals to considerations of profit in Matt. xvi. 25, 26. So also does the Apostle Paul in 1 Tim. iv. 8. The working of self-love is recognized without rebuke in the Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as* thyself;" and it is even remotely enjoined in the words, "Do thyself no harm." The distinction between self-love and selfishness

is very decided, yet is far too little noticed. Selfishness is having regard to our own interests *in distinction from* those of others; self-love has regard to our own interests *in harmony with* those of others. The first is sinful; the second is lawful; yea, more, to fight against our highest interests would be wrong. We may demur to the maxim that "utility is the foundation of virtue," and rightly so, if "utility" be taken in the selfish aspect thereof. But if by "utility" we mean "the tendency to promote the highest good over the widest sphere, for all time," then the maxim is lifted up to a higher level, and becomes at least practically wholesome, even if it may be objected to on philosophical grounds. If, then, we do but entertain a right and scriptural view of what our highest interests are, it is lawful for us, and even binding on us, to have a regard to them; and it is to the desire in that direction that the passage before us makes its appeal.

II. IT IS SHOWN HERE THAT THERE IS A COURSE OF LIFE WHICH IS APPOINTED FOR US BY GOD. The appointments of God for us are specified here. We are to "fear the Lord." Evidently this is to be a fear, not of dread, but of love; for see ver. 5. In Ps. cxxx. 4 we read, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." God forgives, and so takes away the fear of the offender, that the fear of offending may take its place. There is to be dread of sin, but not of God. The fear is to be suffused with tenderness and brightened with joy (Ps. xxxiii. 1). See the phrases in this section, even touching in their pathos—"God," "thy God," "the God of thy fathers." Yea, it is our own God who lays down our life-rules, and by all the force of his tender love would he win us to obedience.

III. IN FOLLOWING GOD'S APPOINTED WAY WE ENSURE OUR OWN HIGHEST GOOD. (Vers. 2, 3.) The *elements* of good which obedience ensures are: 1. Peace. We remarked above that the fear of God, which we are called on to cherish, is one based on trust. The Christian form of this is reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ in all the aspects in which he is revealed to us as ours. The effect of this is named in Rom. v. 1. Then there will be peace of conscience (see Isa. xxxii. 17; Phil. iv. 6, 7; Matt. xi. 29). 2. Harmony. Our nature will be in self-accord when what we are and do corresponds to what we ought to be and do. There will be no schism between the judgment and the affections. 3. Health. Other things being equal, the man who is most obedient to God's laws will have the soundest health in body, soul, and spirit. The gladsomeness and ease of a sound and well-balanced constitution will be his. Hence: 4. Continuance will be a part of the reward—"that thy days may be prolonged" (see Ps. xci. 16; cf. Eph. vi. 3; Ps. xxxvi. 9, 28, 34). The *forms* in which the rewards of loyalty to God will show themselves are very varied. The *individual* will find that godliness has "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The *family* will find that "he blesseth the habitation of the just." The *city* will find that the keeping of God's commandments is among the things "which belong unto its peace." And "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth" will find that "salvation doth God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (see Isa. xxvi. 1, 2; xlviii. 17). It is a remarkable instance of the Divine condescension to our ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, that our God should stoop to teach us what is profitable to ourselves, and that he should deign in mercy to reward with honour and peace those who fear him (Ps. lxii. 12). Mercifully meeting us on the low ground on which we too frequently stand in looking out for profit, God would raise us up to the higher platform of a pure, self-abandoning self-forgetfulness and love, in which we are content to be nothing, that God may be all in all. For observe—

IV. APPARENT EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE ARE EXCEPTIONS ONLY IN APPEARANCE. Sometimes obedience to God may be attended with a most unusual amount of affliction or of persecution. Take, *e.g.* the roll of worthies referred to in Heb. xi. 32—39. Can we say it was for their "profit" to serve God? Most certainly we can. For: 1. By their endurance they became witnesses for God, and served their generation in the very way they would most have desired could they have seen as God sees. 2. Their afflictions were the means of purifying their characters, strengthening their principles, and ripening their virtues. 3. In the midst of all, God was himself to them "their exceeding joy;" and what they had *in* him was, even on earth, an ample recompense for all that they had suffered *for* him. 4. They had respect to the recompense of reward (Heb. xi. 10, 16, 26). 5. Their sufferings are long ago forgotten in the rest of the unseen state

where they are "inheriting the promises" (Heb. vi. 12). They had faith to believe them and patience to wait for them, and now they have entered into "the rest." Who need wish to change their lot for the smoothest and most prosperous career of a man "without God in the world"? Virtue may for a while seem "to have the worst of it," but "they that are losers for God shall never be losers by him in the end."

V. OBEDIENCE IS EXPECTED TO BE THE RESULT OF AN INTELLIGENT AND CULTURED FAITH, AND NOT OF A BLIND ONE. Ver. 1, "The Lord your God commanded to teach you." Nowhere has the adage, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," less warrant than in the Word of God. The priests of a spurious or alien faith may inculcate blind submission. Not so any of the inspired writers, whether legislators, prophets, or apostles. Men were to be taught not only what God required, but why he required it, that they might render him the homage of a heart quickened to love through the truth which reached the understanding and "commended itself to every man's conscience." God appeals to reason (Isa. i. 18).

Vers. 4—9.—*Truth and godliness to be perpetuated by means of home training.* In this paragraph, the aged lawgiver rehearses the sum and substance of the Law he had delivered, and is showing what provision God had made in the structure of society for the maintenance and perpetuation of truth and godliness. It is easy to see how very incomplete his work would have been, had he not been guided to make provision for its perpetuation after his death. Doubtless God designs to use various kinds of workers in his field. Some may, like Whitefield, make a great impression while their oratory is swaying its thousands and tens of thousands. Others may be like Wesley, who not only moved the people for a generation by his pulpit power, but also prepared the way by his organizing skill for a great institution which should last for ages. Now, it is not for us to disparage one man because he does not do the work of another, but certain it is that, other things being equal, there is no comparison between the power of a man whose felt influence passes away with his life, and that of one whose works follow him, in the productions of his pen or the creations of his up-building skill. Now, it was not by one like Aaron, eloquent though he was, that the continuance of the Hebrew faith and life was to be secured. He gives us no proof of stability or of that kind of power which ensures its own reproduction. *That* was found in Moses, a man naturally slow of speech, who, in spite of his occasional outbreaks of vehemence, was yet a patient, wise, faithful leader, by whose practical genius provision was made for the permanence of Israel's religious ordinances and life. Moved by the Holy Ghost, he called into existence those great institutions of worship and teaching, by means of which even we down to this day are feeling the impulses which started from Mount Sinai. In the six verses before us, we have what may be called a threefold appointment of God, which in all its essential features is as much in force now as ever. We propose to study it, not so much in its historical and local aspect, as in its bearing on us and on all men for all time.

I. HERE, AT THE BACK OF NATIONAL LIFE, IS SET THE EXPRESSION OF A CONDENSED THEOLOGY. "The Lord our God is one Lord." Time was when this verse was quoted in the Socinian controversy in proof of the unity of God, as against the Trinitarians, though it has in fact no bearing on the matter at all. It refers, not to the nature of the Divine Being *in himself*, but is rather set over against the faiths with which Israel had been surrounded, of "lords many and gods many." In contrast from polytheism, it declares that there is but one Great Supreme, who is the Lord of heaven and earth. And this is not the basis of Israel's faith alone, but of ours likewise. We know more of God than the Hebrews did, but what they knew we retain. In atheism, the highest intellectual natures never can rest. Deism chills. Pantheism ignores personality. The God of the Bible, as revealed to us, satisfies the cravings of intellect and heart. In Jesus Christ, God is "manifest" as nowhere else. Nor should we leave out the touching word, "the Lord *our* God." We have one God and Father of all, to whom the vast and the minute are equally distinct, and by whose hand both are moved with equal ease; who, while he rolls the stars along, can take under his special sheltering love the widow and the fatherless; who hears the orphan's moan and dries the falling tear. It is our inestimable privilege to know that infinitely above us, combined with an arm of mighty power, there is a heart of tenderest love, whose great concern it is

to heal the wounds, to dry the tears, and obliterate the sins of a bleeding, weeping, guilt-stained world! What a revelation is this to our race! Well might Moses bid Israel "hearken"! For surely this one message to man, that there is a redeeming God whom he may call his own, is our gospel, our life, our joy, our crown!

II. FRONT OF THE CONDENSED THEOLOGY, WE HAVE HERE CONDENSED RELIGION. (Ver. 5.) The fundamental truth of theology is to be fruitful in practical godliness. God's revelation of himself *to* man is meant to be a redemptive power *in* man. Man has heart, soul, strength, understanding, emotion, will, energy. God would have no schism in our being. Our varied parts and powers are to be in tune. There is no need for us to present the sad spectacle of the heart going one way, while duty and conscience point another. Apart from the dissipation of force which that involves, what reproach and self-loathing such inward discord must ensure! Now, we have one inner faculty, even that of *love*, which is meant to rule, and does in fact rule, the man. According to the love, so intellect thinks, emotion feels, will decides, life moves. Our text says, let love be *all* concentrated on one grand object—God! Let him have all (see chs. x. 12; xi. 1, 13, 22; xix. 9; xxx. 16). Not even in the New Testament have we a greater commandment than this (Matt. xxii. 37—40). "The love of God which the gospel demands is more intensive and cordial than that which the Law of Moses demands of the Israelites, according to the gradual unfolding of the love of God himself, which was displayed in a much grander and more glorious form in the gift of his only begotten Son for our redemption than in the redemption of Israel out of the bondage in Egypt" (Keil). Thus closely related are theology and religion—God as revealed to us in Christ—that is theology; our love responding to God's—that is religion. Without the first, in what could the religious faculty find a proper object? Without the second, infinite love is defrauded of its rights! Still, a third question naturally follows: granted that in this interlacing of theology and religion we have both interpreted in meaning and both realizing their aims, what means can be devised to ensure the preservation of both through generation after generation?

III. HERE IS A SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT DIVINELY APPOINTED, TO CONSERVE AND PERPETUATE BOTH. 1. The home is here supposed to be a centre in which the conserving forces of truth and godliness are to be themselves conserved. What a profound principle Moses here indicates, viz. that a nation will be good or bad according to its home life! Wonderful! that an infant nation should, at starting, have this truth deep graven in its statutes;—our land will be as our homes are! 2. In the home, our God looks to the parent to give it its character, tone, and influence. A child's religious faith is, in a high and holy sense, to be chosen for him by anticipation, by those who were "in Christ before" him. 3. The truths mentioned in sections 1 and 2 are to be in the parents' heart, that they may be poured out anew from thence as rivers of living water. Hence the word in ver. 7, "Thou shalt sharpen them;" coming fresh out of the sanctuary of a living soul, they are to be pointed, quick, and breathing truths. 4. By a variety of ways, the parent is to see his child's spirit early saturated with the truths of God. (1) By talking of them, in the house and out of it (ver. 7). (2) By exhibiting them, not only in the literal sense (see art. 'Phylacteries'[1]), but in a higher spiritual one. (3) By writing them (ver. 9; see art. 'Mezuzah'[2]). Thus the child is *from the first* to be regarded as God's child, to be trained for him. He is to receive God's Word through the avenues of eye, ear, intellect, heart. Divine truth is to be ever before him, night and day, indoors and out. Those who gave him birth and who love him best, are to mould his young life for God; he is to grow up as the Lord's rightful possession, with the view of his afterwards saying, in the spirit of devout surrender, "I am the Lord's!" (Isa. xliv. 5).

Note—Whatever was essential in the days of Moses, in the training of children for God as the means of guarding a nation, is not less needful now (Eph. vi. 4). The wider the range of human learning becomes, the more needful it should be rightly directed; otherwise the greater the attainment, the greater the peril!

Vers. 10—19.—*"Dangers ahead! Beware!"* The forecast of Moses is here directed to a period when Israel would have taken possession of the promised land (ver. 10).

[1] In Dr. Alexander's edition of Kitto's 'Biblical Cyclopædia.' [2] Ibid.

There, their deliverance would be entire and complete. No longer would they be wanderers hither and thither, but would be occupants of a land that they would call their own. Neither from the nation to which they were once in bondage, nor from those which they were called on to supplant, would they fear aught any longer! And yet there is throughout this paragraph a voice of warning, as if danger would attend them still! It would be so. But the danger would be from within rather than from without: "When thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord," etc. Whence, observe—

I. NO AMOUNT OF OUTWARD PROSPERITY CAN DELIVER A MAN FROM HIMSELF! By the time the state of calm was attained, which is here indicated, there would cease to be danger from hostile foes, at least for a while; but there would be perils of another kind, which would attend them even in the promised land. If Israel could have left themselves behind, it had been otherwise; but alas! go where they might, they must perforce take themselves with them, with all their liability to err, all the proneness to sin, and all the temptation to doubt or to pride. And not all the spears and slings of warriors could put the people in such peril as the corruptions of their own hearts! And so it is with us now and ever. We carry ourselves about with us everywhere; we cannot escape. There is within each one's heart a "root of bitterness," "a root that beareth gall and wormwood;" and let earthly circumstances be as fair, as easy, and as pleasant as they may, yet, unless we heed the danger within, they can do but very little to ensure our peace. And herein lies the great mistake of monasticism, as even Augustine reminded his hearers. He told them that it was vain for them to attempt to flee out of the world in order to escape corruption, for wherever they might be they would carry the evil within them. Never let us look to outer circumstances alone to ensure our entire rest. Not even a perfect world could bring us that, unless we were first made perfect.

II. THERE ARE THREE PERILS SPECIFIED HERE TO WHICH PROSPERITY MAY EXPOSE US. 1. The first is that of "forgetting the Lord" (ver. 12). When fields and vineyards and oliveyards increase, and our cup is overflowing, then we are apt to lose sight of him to whom we owe all; and this not only in the receiving but in the using thereof (cf. Hos. x. 1). Too apt are we to say in our pride, "My river is my own; I have made it for myself." So also are we apt to let our enjoyments conceal our God from view, and to think only of the mercies, while we forget to glorify God in the use of them. Nor is it any uncommon evil for men to be so set upon the enjoyment of this world's comforts, as to forget almost or altogether that higher world for which they are bound to live, and that future life on which all soon must enter. 2. Another danger indicated is that of undue tolerance of the idolatries which were round about them (ver. 14). One effect of prosperity is easy-goingness; and that, unless checked and guarded, will degenerate into a looseness of principle, whereby, under cover of suavity and amiability, respect for the convictions of others may come to be substituted by our having no very strong ones of our own. Nothing is more common than to see worldly aggrandizement attended by deterioration of moral sensibility. 3. A third danger specified is that of "tempting the Lord" when prosperity meets with a check. This seems to be the danger indicated in ver. 16, by a reference to "Massah" (see Exod. xvii. 2—7). At this place of sojourn there was a lack of water. The people murmured. They tempted the Lord and said, "Is the Lord among us or not?" As if they ceased to believe in God's presence with them, the moment he made them thus feel their dependence upon him! Strange perversity! Yet how like ourselves! The course of worldly prosperity scarcely ever runs with absolute smoothness for many years together. And the self-will engendered and strengthened in times of ease leads men to repine and complain bitterly the moment that ease receives a check. In times of prosperity men forget God, and then when adversity comes they often complain as if God had forgotten them. How much does God see, even in the people he takes for his own special care, to tax his patience, and to try his long-suffering love!

III. BY WAY OF GUARDING THEM BEFOREHAND AGAINST THESE PERILS, MOSES SHOWS ISRAEL THE DUTIES WHICH THEY ARE DILIGENTLY TO OBSERVE. 1. They are to fear the Lord only (ver. 13). 2. They are to swear by him only (see LXX. and Matt. iv. 10), *i.e.* to cherish a profound reverence for him as the Author of all mercies, and as the sole Regulator of their lives. The honour of his Name is to be supreme. 3. They are to give

the supreme affection of the heart to God, so that they may not provoke his jealousy (ver. 15). 4. They are to serve him by constant obedience (ver. 18). By the constant recognition of these four duties, they will do much to guard themselves from yielding to the perils attendant on their growing wealth and ease. (This may be compared with the apostolic maxim, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.") Evil is most successfully counteracted by the positive and earnest pursuit of the opposite good.

IV. IF THESE DUTIES WERE LOYALLY DISCHARGED, EARTHLY PROSPERITY AND SPIRITUAL WEAL WOULD GO TOGETHER. Ver. 18, "That it may be well with thee," etc. Whether our earthly circumstances are helps or hindrances to us Godward, will depend much more on what we bring to them than on what they bring to us. And however, on the side of this life, things may favour us and circumstances befriend, it is only as they help us to serve God better that they are really blessings to us: it is "well" with us only when God is well pleased with us. So much stress did Moses attach to the maintenance of unswerving loyalty to God, that he intimates that the possession of the land is secured to them only so far as they are true to their Great Deliverer (vers. 18, 19).

V. SINCE THE TIME OF MOSES, THIS PARAGRAPH HAS BECOME FAR MORE SACRED TO US, BY THE USE WHICH OUR SAVIOUR MADE OF IT IN A TIME OF SORE TEMPTATION. It is never to be forgotten, that our Lord repelled the tempter by the words, "It is written," etc. Of the three passages used as weapons for the discomfiture of the evil one, two are taken from this very paragraph (see Matt. iv. 7, 10). So that we are warranted in using it as our armoury from whence we may fetch the darts which shall make the tempter flee. These precepts cannot be needed by us less than they were by the Son of man. From him let us learn a use of the Divine Word that may serve us in a thousand assaults of the destroyer. For not until we do this can we discover the varied uses to which we may put the Word of God in the actual struggle of life. We, like our Master, have to be made perfect through suffering. Now we may suffer from want, hunger, and privation; and at another time all the kingdoms of the world, in a moment of time, may be set before us, to dazzle by their glare. We need to take to us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Go wheresoever we may, let our surroundings be easy and prosperous as they may, dangers will attend us everywhere, till we cross the pearly gate across whose threshold sin never comes. At one time it may be that adversity makes us fretful and apt to tempt the Lord, and then at another prosperity may make us slothful, and a sinful indifference may lull us to sleep. Our chief dangers are from within. But here in this holy Book are promises to cheer us when drooping, and warnings to quicken us when sluggish. Here is an arsenal from whence we may fetch our weapons, and a storehouse whence we may draw our supplies. Yea, in this wondrous quiver there are arrows which will be sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, which shall pierce them to their fall!

Vers. 20—25.—*The value of history in parental teaching.* The Bible is pre-eminently a family Book. Israel's national life was supposed to find its centres of strength and permanence in godly homes. It would not be easy to find words which should overrate the importance of such a principle as this. That a young nation should at the outset of its existence have this laid down as a first law of its life: "The land will be as its homes are;" is an indication of the Divine guidance which was vouchsafed to him on whom, under God, the foundation of its national life depended. In the paragraph before us there are seven lines of thought suggested.

I. AS YOUNG LIFE COMES NEWLY INTO BEING, IT FINDS ARRANGEMENTS IN LAW AND PRECEPT READY TO HAND. Parental life holds a great trust in charge, to be committed to those who shall come after; that though one generation passeth away and another cometh, there may be no break in the continuity of holy thinking and living, from age to age. The Hebrews had their Law, which, as a revelation from God, was in advance of aught possessed by the rest of the world, and in which was couched the germ of larger truth that was to follow. There might be more light thrown upon it; there was never to be a forfeiture of it. Hence there were special reasons why parents should guard it intact for all the ages that were to follow.

II. YOUNG LIFE IS SUPPOSED TO BE AN INQUIRING LIFE. (Ver. 20.) It is not supposed that the children will lend themselves to either of two extremes: they will neither wildly tear up and obliterate "the old paths," nor will they walk in them heedlessly and without inquiry. The course here indicated is that which any sensible, well-disposed youth would naturally follow. He would ask, "What mean," etc. However a spurious priesthood may demand a blind and uninquiring faith, the Word of God never does anything of the kind. Reason is made for reverent inquiry, but it may be neither deified nor stultified. And what can be more charming than the honest, eager inquisitiveness of the young, asking for the reasons which govern the faith and worship that they find at work before their eyes? Specially delightful is such inquiry, when the parent is well able to give his answer.

III. THERE IS AWAITING THE YOUNG INQUIRER THE STORY OF A GREAT DELIVERANCE. (Vers. 21, 22.) The rescue from Egypt always formed the grand historic background of Israel's life (see Ps. lxxviii.; xcix.; cv.; cvi.; ciii. 7). Here was a disclosure of Divine love and care, the like of which had never been known. The great institution of sacrifice revealed provision for pardoning love. The precepts for the individual, the family, the nation, told what sort of a people God would have them be; while the oft-recurring strains, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom," "I brought thee up out of the land of bondage," would evoke all their national ardour, and create and foster an historic pride. The life-histories, too, of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would tell of the blessedness of having God as their God: and these, instilled into the heart with all the sweetness of fond parental love, would lead the young Israelite, when the teaching was sanctified by God's grace, to say right joyously, "This God shall be my God for ever and ever!" Yes! the young life ever coming on earth is not to be left to grope its way. The light from the past is to be handed down for the ages to come, that sire and son and son's son may rejoice in the same God, and ensure a blessed continuity of holy faith and consecrated life.

IV. THE GREAT DELIVERANCE WAS EFFECTED THAT THE RESCUED PEOPLE MIGHT BE A NEW NATION WORTHY OF GOD. Ver. 23, "That he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers." And in this new relation they were to be witnesses for God (Isa. xliii. 10). They were to be a distinct, compact people, with faith, laws, and polity, higher than the rest of the world, holding in trust for mankind, till the fulness of times, much precious truth which was to find its outcome in a great, world-wide deliverance which should overshadow all; while the Israel of God was to merge into a spiritual Israel, made up of all who are Christ's, known as a "peculiar people, zealous of good works."

V. IN THIS CONTINUED LIFE, WORTHY OF GOD, WOULD THE JUSTIFICATION OF ISRAEL'S FAITH AND OBSERVANCES BE FOUND. "It shall be our righteousness," etc. (ver. 25). It is scarcely possible to regard these words as having reference to any doctrine of justification by faith; for though, even as far back as Abraham's days, that *was* a doctrine, yet it was not formulated till the times of the gospel, by Paul. The meaning of the phrase seems to be: "This will be our justification of our position and claims; we claim to be a people of God, above all the nations that are on the face of the earth, and we shall vindicate that claim, not by words only, but by being what we profess to be." Thus would the parent quicken his child, and stimulate and inspire him to be *all* that his glorious faith bade him be—"holy unto the Lord his God!"

VI. IN THIS ARRANGEMENT, THE DIVINE BENEVOLENCE WAS AS MANIFEST AS GOD'S REGARD FOR HIS OWN HONOUR. Ver. 24, "To fear the Lord our God, for our good always." The glory of God and the good of man are in harmony. So has God constructed the universe, so doth he carry on his government, as to ensure that "they that honour him, he will honour." "All things work together for good to them that love God." "Great peace have they which love God's Law; and nothing shall offend them." "Godliness is profitable unto all things." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

VII. NOT ONLY WOULD ISRAEL, BY OBEDIENCE, ENSURE ITS OWN GOOD, BUT ALSO ITS CONTINUANCE IN THE LAND. Ver. 24, "That he might preserve us alive." Repeatedly do we read that the prolongation of Israel's days in the land depended on their loyalty to God. The land was given them, not for their own sakes merely, but for God's. If they continued there, faithfully witnessing for him, the land would be

continued to them; if not, they would have to quit, and give up the possession thereof to strangers. This is precisely the principle on which God governs the nations now. No nation can preserve itself in being by any other policy than that of obedience to God. Disloyalty to God and the right is the surest possible policy of decomposition. Even attempts at self-preservation which violate God's laws will fail of their end. And is it not of vast significance that these are the principles by which the young life of a nation is to be moulded? Whatever allowance must be made for changing circumstances, however true it may be that no nation now holds exactly the same place in the world that Israel did, yet it is also true that all the more substantial part of the seven lines of thought here indicated is unchanged and unchangeable. Christian parents are inheritors of the truth of God: they hold it in trust for their children: they, as they grow up, will inquire concerning it: its historic basis is the great deliverance effected by the Lord Jesus: Christians are now God's peculiar people: they are redeemed that they may be holy, and that in holiness they may train succeeding generations: and just in proportion as through them loyalty to the truth and to God is leavening their posterity, are they bringing honour to the cause they espouse. Hebrews were to be conservative. Christians are to be also aggressive. We are to be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." By the light of God's love we are to scatter men's darkness, and by the salt of God's truth are we to stay its corruption. And just so far as our nation is imbued with righteousness and truth, will it have within it the guarantee of its own perpetuation. The best defence is the armour of light. Without righteousness and the fear of God, not all the pretence and brag—not all the fleets or armies at command, can ever guard a nation from decay. "If the salt have lost his savour, . . . it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—"*Obedience the end of Law.*" All the machinery of law is abortive, unless obedience be the result. As a mother teaches her children, giving them "line upon line," frequent repetition and variation, so Moses patiently taught Israel. He was "faithful in all his house."

I. SEE THE INTERNAL EXCELLENCE OF GOD'S LAW. It has so many qualities of merit, that no one word in human language can express them all. They are "commandments," which word indicates the just authority from which they emanate. They are "statutes," implying their fixed and permanent character. They are "judgments," a description which denotes thoughtful deliberation, patient forethought, and sagacious decision. No greater benefactor can men have than a wise legislator. These Laws, if reverently observed, would have been "health to the marrow," and life to the nation.

II. THE DESIGN OF GOD'S COVENANT WAS HEARTY AND COMPLETE OBEDIENCE. It was unprofitable for God to command, or for Moses to teach, unless the people obeyed; just as it is futile for the husbandman to plough his land, pulverize the clods, sow the seed, water his crops, if no harvest ensue. The end which God had clearly in view—the only end worthy of him, was not Israel's possession of Canaan, nor prosperity there; the *final end* was obedience. The land was selected to be a theatre for practical righteousness. The land would be forfeited if righteous obedience did not abound. And obedience, to be acceptable, must be real. External conformity to law would not suffice. The whole soul must yield compliance. There must be harmony between man's will and God's. Obedience would foster reverence, and reverence would strengthen love. There is action and reaction amid the forces of the soul.

III. PIOUS OBEDIENCE IS ENTAILED. It is a moral inheritance passing from father to son. Formal and superficial obedience will not reproduce itself in others, will not bear seed of the true kind. But genuine, vital piety is contagious. If bad qualities are communicated, surely good qualities are also. Else truth would be feebler than error, virtue feebler than vice. Thorough, straightforward, transparent, cheerful piety is the greatest power in the world. For our children's sake, and for our children's children, let reverent obedience brighten and beautify our life!

IV. PIOUS OBEDIENCE PRODUCES PRESENT FRUITS. Its rewards are not wholly reserved

for the future. On earth some advantages are reaped. 1. *Length of days is a result.* "Thy days may be prolonged." A green old age is a beautiful thing. "The wicked shall not live out half their days." 2. *Numerous progeny is a result.* "Ye may increase mightily." A growing population is universally regarded as a token of material prosperity. "They of the city shall flourish as grass of the earth." *Success in all enterprise is announced as an effect.* "It shall be well with thee." 3. Robust health, domestic comfort, national peace, prolific harvests, security, contentment, honour,—*these* are among the fruits to be anticipated. Obedience is an investment of moral capital, which brings largest and safest results.—D.

Vers. 4—9.—*Love, the root-principle of obedience.* Attention is summoned for the reception of central truth, viz. the unity of the Godhead. At that period, this doctrine was in great peril. All the Orientals believed in "lords many and gods many." Science here confirms Scripture. The unity of design, running through all natural law and force, indicates clearly unity of the Creator. To know the true God is, for honest minds, to love him. But rebellion of heart has engendered repugnance towards God—dislike, hatred, enmity.

I. THE SOURCE OF ALL AUTHORITY IS A BEING OF ESSENTIAL GOODNESS. 1. *He is sole Monarch, incomparable and unapproachable.* He dwells alone, higher than the highest creature. The disparity between him and an archangel is immeasurable. 2. *He is absolutely perfect.* Every attribute and quality that is essential to perfection is found in him. "He is light," having no dark shade anywhere. 3. *He is the Source of life:* Jehovah—the Living—the Life-giving. All we have, and are, and hope to be, is derived from him. 4. *He has deigned to come into intimate relation with us.* He has made a voluntary compact with us. He calls us his people. He allows us to call him *our God.* We have a proprietorship in him.

II. THIS GOD DESERVES THE CENTRAL PLACE IN OUR HEARTS. Because of the moral beauty and essential goodness of our God, he is incomparably most worthy of human love. To give to any other a higher place in our affection than we give to God, would be an outrage against righteousness, fitness, and self-interest. For all these faculties and susceptibilities of the human heart have been fashioned by God himself, and have been fashioned for *this very* purpose, viz. that we should bestow our worthiest love on him. If this eternal design be frustrated, there is violence, disharmony, misery within. Such love is commanded. It is a duty as well as a privilege. Though we cannot instantly and summarily command our love, we can *indirectly.* We can fix our thought on the worthiest object of love. We can contemplate his charms. We can appreciate his goodness. We can assure ourselves of his love. It is to be an intelligent, reasonable, practical love.

III. THE LOVE OF THE LAWGIVER PRODUCES LOVE TO HIS LAW. Law is a projection of God's thought, a mirror of his mind, an overt act of love. The true child will highly esteem every known wish of its father. To have practical direction from an unseen father will be treasured as a choice token of that father's regard. If children, we shall hide every word of our father in our memory and in our love. Every wish of *his* heart will be a visible feature in *our* life. It may be painful to the flesh, but it will be pleasant to the soul. To the dutiful child, obedience is a luxury, a banquet of joy. "Oh! how I love thy Law!" exclaims the pious Psalmist. "Thy Law is within my heart." Thy Word is to me as honey, as the droppings of the honeycomb.

IV. LOVE IS THE MOTIVE-POWER OF SPEECH. The tongue is the servant of the heart. We speak freely and fluently of that which is dear to our hearts. The child will speak freely of its toys and games, the farmer of his crops, the artist of his works. If men esteemed and valued God's Word, they would spontaneously converse of it, morning, noon, and night. It would be a painful restraint upon our desire if we withheld our speech. This precept of Moses need not be an external law imposed upon us from without; it may become the living law within, "the law of the Spirit of life."

V. LOVE CONSTRUCTS ITS WHOLE LIFE ON THE MODEL OF GOD'S LAW. The *hand* will become the instrument of righteousness. On *it* will be written God's Word, viz. industry, honesty, restraint, generous kindness, helpfulness. God's Word will be our ornament. Instead of gold and jewels upon the forehead, "our adornment will be" modesty, chastity, cheerfulness, moral beauty. God's Name will be indelibly inscribed

upon our foreheads. Our domestic affairs will be ordered by the Divine will. We shall write his Word on the posts of our houses. Every home in which love dwells will be a temple. Order, active piety, frugality, peace, mutual service, will be the principles conspicuous in godly homes. And our municipal and political life will be conducted on the same line of obedience. Legislation, justice, taxation, commerce, literature, art, will all be consecrated to God's glory. As the flowers of earth send their fragrance heavenward, so from every act of ours a fragrance of homage should ascend to God.—D.

Vers. 10—19.—*The peril of prosperity.* Secular prosperity is hazardous. Unless the ship have ample ballast in the hold, a strong gale, however favourable, will be likely to capsize the ship and bury her in the caverns of the sea. The greater our earthly abundance, the greater our need of religious principle.

I. WISE MEN INHERIT THE FRUIT OF OTHERS' LABOURS. Under the leadership of God, the Hebrews inherited cities which the Canaanites had built, and vineyards which the Amorites had planted. If we knew *all* the facts of the case, we should admire this as an act of righteous wisdom. We *do* know that the iniquity of the Amorites was a cup full to the brim. The Hebrews, with all their faults, were a superior race. Similar displacements have gone on in all the lands of the world. It is an instance of the "survival of the fittest." Redeemed men are destined to be the lords of the earth. The Church shall possess and rule the world. "*All* things are ours." This inheritance of Canaan, with its cities and cattle and wealth, ought to have produced a deep sense of gratitude. All the Hebrews enjoyed they owed to the bountiful hand of God.

II. SUDDEN PROSPERITY IS A SEVERE STRAIN ON PIETY. The sense of daily and hourly dependence upon God for material food is an advantage; it is a constant incentive to gratitude and faith. Poor human nature cannot bear much indulgence. Poverty is more conducive to piety than wealth has ever been. Hence our Lord chose a state of poverty as most suited to his mission. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" So long as men continue in the flesh, they prefer a *visible* God to an invisible. So they say to gold, "Thou art my god." To be singular in religious belief and practice is always an arduous effort. The example of others has always been a sore temptation. Unless we can persuade *them* by the force of our superior faith, they are sure to bias us injuriously. Our safety lies in a stalwart and fearless piety.

III. TO FALL FROM THE FAVOUR TO THE FROWN OF GOD IS IMMEASURABLE AND COMPLETE. It would have been better for their peace and their reputation not to have inherited the land, than to be ejected from it again. It is a tremendous calamity, having been lifted high, to be thrown down. The effect of disloyalty among the Hebrews would not simply be a replacement in their former state; it would be destruction from the face of the earth. In the realm of morals, we cannot descend to a station we had occupied aforetime. If there is declension, retrogression, fall, it must be to a lower level than *that* we formerly held. The penalties imposed by righteousness are complete and remediless. We may well "stand in awe and sin not." It is perilous in the extreme to "try" God's patience—to make experiments on the long-suffering of God. *Suddenly*, he "whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold on judgment."

IV. HOPE IS AN INSPIRATION OF STRENGTH. Although Moses has addressed to them these cautions, and pointed out these perils, he will not think so meanly of them as to forecast their fall. He will cherish in his own breast the bright hope of their loyalty. He will call into exercise their own best principles and aspirations. He confidently predicts their wise and upward course, and sketches before their eyes their future greatness and security. Herein is wise generalship. If hope kindles her lamp in the human breast, all is not lost. This is Heaven's cordial for a fainting soul.—D.

Vers. 20—25.—*The parental office.* In the Mosaic economy, the parental office is made prominent, and parental influence is pressed into service. All God's arrangements for training mankind dovetail into one another.

I. THE DUTY OF A PARENT TO PROVOKE RELIGIOUS INQUIRY. No greater folly can be perpetrated than the attempt to repress inquiry. Inquiry is the king's highway to

wisdom, and who dare block it up? God loves to hear honest inquiry. To afford instruction is the delight of the Divine Spirit, but what instruction will be valued if no spirit of inquiry is awake? Some questions which we ask can never be solved; they are beyond the range of the human mind. Some questions God *will* not answer, because they are vain and useless. But honest questions, with a view to practical obedience, God delights to hear. You can do the young no better service than encourage their minds to inquire after religious facts. "What mean these things?"

II. THE DUTY OF A PARENT TO ANSWER FULLY CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS. It is childish folly to attempt to conceal our lowly origin. There is no real disgrace in an obscure parentage. To have been formerly enslaved, or imprisoned, or oppressed, through man's injustice, is an honour, not a stigma of reproach. There is no real shame, except such as proceeds from wrong-doing. It will do *us* good, it will do our children good, to see the "rock whence we were hewn, the hole of the pit from which we were digged." It will foster humility, gratitude, contentment, trust. It will lead us afresh to adore the Divine goodness, and to count ourselves and our children the servants of this mighty God. Never let true Israelites forget that all they have they owe to God! Unto this state of happy privilege a Divine hand has brought us.

III. THE DUTY OF A PARENT TO OPEN UP GOD'S BENEFICENT INTENTION. If any man is too indolent to investigate truth for his own sake, he may be provoked to do it for his children's sake. We should have such a firm conviction that every arrangement and command of God was "for our good always," that we can demonstrate it to our children. Our knowledge of God and of his practical dealings should be so broad and clear that we might see and feel that his care for our good was paramount. This is the first and loftiest end he seeks—not our enjoyment, but *our good*. Not to demonstrate his power, or his consistency, or his determination to conquer,—these are not his foremost aims, but "our good always." His costliest deed of condescension was the yielding of his Son to death. And where shall we seek the moving principle? In his own future glory merely? No! In his love for the world! Yet his glory, and man's real good, are but the separate threads that make one cord.

IV. THE DUTY OF A PARENT TO PROMOTE HIS CHILDREN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. "It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments." No more conclusive argument can parents use; no loftier end can they contemplate. *To become righteous*—this is to be the lofty ideal we set before our children. But commensurate with the grand acquisition must be the care that we promote it by proper and practicable methods. It is impossible for guilty men to regain righteousness by their own efforts or merits. But real righteousness is provided for us by the bounty of God, and is offered to us in Christ as a free gift. "He hath brought in everlasting righteousness, which is for all and upon all that believe." Our ambition for our children must be the highest—not that they be richly dowered, or learned, or placed in earthly rank, but that they may be internally and thoroughly righteous.—D.

Ver. 2.—*Descending obligations.* I. CHILDREN WITH THEIR PARENTS ARE INCLUDED IN THE COVENANT. This has been a general principle in God's dealings with his servants. We have it affirmed, both in the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 7—15) and in the later covenant with Israel (ch. xxix. 10—12). It was signified in the rite of circumcision. The Israelitish child was regarded as within the covenant, a genuine member of the theocracy, till by a personal act of apostacy—if unfortunately it should be so—he severed himself from its blessings. Similar language is used of the children of Christian believers (Acts ii. 39; 1 Cor. viii. 14). Received into the Church by baptism, they are recognized with their parents as interested in the promise; they are expected, on coming to years of discretion, freely to appropriate the obligations of the Christian life; and they are, in case of refusal, justly regarded as apostates from Christ.

II. THE STANDING OF CHILDREN IN THE COVENANT ENTAILS SERIOUS OBLIGATIONS ON THE PARENTS. 1. Religious *instruction* (vers. 6, 7, 20; Exod. xiii. 8, 14, etc.). The children had not been personally at Horeb. They had not seen the mighty works of God in Egypt and the desert. It was the duty of parents to acquaint them with the history, and to instruct them in their duties. 2. Religious *training*, which is education in act, as instruction is education in word (Gen. xviii. 19; ch. xxi. 18; Prov. xxix. 15, etc.). 3. Religious *example*. The parent is to be one who loves the Lord

for himself (ver. 5). The Word is to be in his own heart (ver. 6). Only thus will he teach with effect. All this has its counterpart in the duties of Christian parents (Eph iv. 4; 1 Tim. iii. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 15, etc.).

III. THE STANDING OF CHILDREN IN THE COVENANT ENTAILS SERIOUS OBLIGATIONS ON THE CHILDREN. Where parental duties had been fulfilled, the Israelitish child was under the most sacred obligations to choose and adhere to the God of his fathers, and to serve him in the way prescribed. There was in this no interference with freedom, for when God proposes covenant relations to a human being, while it is his privilege, it can never be aught else than his duty to accept them. In the Christian Church, a like obligation rests on the children of believers. The baptized child is bound to serve God, and, if properly instructed (Matt. xxviii. 19), it cannot evade the responsibilities thus laid upon it. Great is the guilt of a child brought up in a Christian home, if wantonly it apostatizes.—J. O.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The great commandment.* I. THE GROUND OF IT. A just view of God. The view given in ver. 4 is as comprehensive as it is sublime. It embraces two parts mutually complementary. 1. *God's absoluteness and unity*—"Jehovah one." 2. *God's personal relation to Israel*—"Your God." The two are combined: 3. In *the covenant name*—"Jehovah." This, on the one hand, denotes God as the Eternal—the ever-living, the self-*existent*, and therefore self-*consistent* One. On the other, it gathers into its rich significance the love, and truth, and faithfulness of centuries of gracious revelation. It will not awaken love to God to think of him merely as absolute Deity. It is the discovery of what else is contained in the Divine essence; above all, the revelation of his love, grace, and covenant-keeping faithfulness, which attracts affection. While, *without* the revelation of God as one and absolute—exclusive, self-subsisting Deity—it would be impossible to raise the demand for love to the requisite moral height. In Jesus Christ the revelation of God reaches its highest point. Only the Son could reveal him in the fulness of his glory and love.

II. THE HEIGHT OF IT. It requires not merely that God should be loved, but loved with all the powers of our being, and with all the energy of these powers. 1. *With clear intelligence*—"mind" (Matt. xxii. 37; Mark xii. 33). 2. *With undivided affection*—"heart." 3. *With entire self-surrender*—"soul." 4. *With strenuous energy*—"might." The right view of God is obviously presupposed in the command to love him. The command would be unmeaning as addressed to a polytheist, a pantheist, an agnostic, or even to a deist disbelieving in revelation. But this view of God being given, the demand, as obviously, could not be placed lower. God as Creator and Saviour cannot accept a place in our affections lower than the supreme one. He will have this or none. It is due to our morally perverted state that this demand should ever be felt by us to be unreasonable. Pure beings would not feel it to be so. They would delight in the exercise of love to God, and find it natural and easy. The angels, Christ, the just made perfect, love the Father thus. Nor ought the height of this demand unduly to discourage us. Love to God is truly begotten, though not yet perfected, in every heart which has made choice of God as its supreme Portion, and cleaves to him with constancy. God has the ruling place in such a heart, and it needs but growth to raise our love to its required purity and vigour. What is left unattained on earth will be attained in heaven.—J. O.

Vers. 6—9, 20—25.—*The religious education of children.* A matter much insisted on in these addresses (cf. ch. xi. 18—22). We learn—

I. THAT THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IS GOD'S WAY OF PERPETUATING VITAL RELIGION. Without this, religion would soon die out; with it, a holy seed will be kept up in times of greatest declension.

II. THAT THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN DEVOLVES PRIMARILY ON THE PARENT. The Church, Sunday schools, etc., may assist, but nothing can relieve the parent from this duty, or compensate for his neglect of it (Eph. vi. 4; 2 Tim. i. 5).

III. THAT THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IS TO BE CONDUCTED WITH GREAT CARE AND FAITHFULNESS. 1. Very *diligently* (ver. 7). It is to be gone about most painstakingly and systematically. "In thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." There is need for

specific teaching at regular times, but the text indicates a broader view of this part of parental duty. An element pervading the whole life, blending with all occupation, insinuating its pleasant influence in all our intercourse with our children. 2. Very *particularly* (vers. 21—25). A specimen is given of the careful instruction parents are to study to impart. 3. *Taking advantage of a child's natural curiosity* (ver. 21). The principle of curiosity is strong in children. It early manifests itself in reference to religion. The Bible, with its delightful variety of story, parable, proverb, etc., is peculiarly adapted for the instruction of the young.—J. O.

Vers. 8, 9.—*God's words to be valued.* The usages to which allusion is made suggest—

I. THE DUTY OF A HIGH VALUATION OF GOD'S COMMANDS. Only precepts highly valued would be treated as described.

II. THE NECESSITY OF TAKING MEANS TO SECURE THE KEEPING OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS IN REMEMBRANCE. We may keep the injunction in spirit: 1. By frequent reading of Scripture (Ps. i. 2; cxix. 11—16). 2. By frequent converse with others (Mal. iii. 16). 3. By frequent recalling of God's words to our thoughts (Heb. ii. 3). 4. By the use of such expedients as experience suggests—a privately marked Bible, etc.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF CARRYING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS INTO EVERY DETAIL OF LIFE. Hands, eyes, doorposts, etc.—our working, seeing, home occupations, etc.—J. O.

Vers. 10—16.—*The creature displacing the Creator.* I. THE PRONENESS OF THE HEART TO ADMIT THE WORLD INTO GOD'S PLACE. (Ver. 12.) The tendency is universal. A result of the Fall, in subverting the original constitution of man's nature. That result twofold: 1. In giving to the worldly and sensuous principles in the soul an undue predominance; while: 2. Destroying that love of God, and sense of dependence on him, which would counteract their operation. There may be no "going after other gods" in the sense of ver. 14, yet the first commandment may be broken by making the world itself our god—giving it the place of the true God in our affections. The principle of worldliness usually operates secretly. The heart is "secretly enticed," does not perceive the progress of its declensions (Hos. vii. 9), fights against the admission of it (Rev. iii. 17).

II. THE PECULIAR CONNECTION OF THIS TEMPTATION WITH PROSPERITY. (Vers. 10, 11.) Not, indeed, so peculiarly connected with it, but that the poor man may fall into the same snare. But riches unquestionably constitute a temptation which few succeed in resisting (cf. ch. viii. 11—19; Prov. xxx. 8, 9; Matt. xix. 22—27; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, 17, etc.). The temptation is the greater: 1. If worldly possessions *are very abundant* (ver. 11). 2. If the prosperity *is sudden* (vers. 10, 11). 3. If it *is freely enjoyed* (ver. 11)—"hast eaten, and art full" (ch. viii. 10).

III. THE SAFEGUARDS AGAINST THIS TEMPTATION. There *are* safeguards. Bible examples show that riches *may* be used with glory to God, happiness to self, and good to mankind (Abraham, Joseph, Job, Daniel, etc.). Among the foremost we would place the cultivation of a thankful spirit (cf. ch. viii. 10)—the remembrance of God as the Giver of what we have; also the remembrance of God's past mercies to us (vers. 12, 13). Other safeguards are: 1. *Serving God with our possessions* (ver. 13). The serving will include serving with our wealth, using what he has given for his glory, as good stewards, and not luxuriously and wastefully spending all on self (Luke xii. 15—21). 2. *Making public acknowledgment of God* (ver. 13). The spirit of this command is kept by being willing, on all proper occasions, boldly and without shame to avow God to be our God. The man of wealth who will do this is carried at one stroke above half the dangers of his position. 3. *Non-conformity to the world's ways* (ver. 14). It is not easy to avoid being led away by fashion, love of appearance, social custom, etc. The good man will beware of the snare, and keep aloof (Rom. xii. 2).

IV. THE PENALTY OF YIELDING TO THE TEMPTATION. (Ver. 15.) God's wrath is kindled and destroys the transgressor. 1. He is destroyed *spiritually*. 2. He may be *temporally* (Ps. xxxvii. 35; lxxiii. 18, 19). 3. He will be *eternally*.—J. O.

Ver. 16.—*Tempting God.*—Wealth has its temptations; so has poverty. It incites to unbelieving murmurs, and to a spirit called here "tempting the Lord."

I. THE NATURE OF THIS SIN. The peculiarity of it deserves to be carefully studied. It is apt to be taken for granted that "tempting God" means simply provoking him to anger. This, however, is a sense of tempting scarcely applicable to the Divine. God can be provoked to wrath, but he is not "tempted" thereby (Jas. i. 13). "Tempting," in the sense of the text, means "putting to the proof," "imposing tests." Professor Tyndall's famous proposal of a prayer test would have fallen under this description. That this is the right view of the sin is plain from the narrative, and from allusions in the Psalms. "They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exod. xvii. 7). "They tempted God in their hearts . . . they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Ps. lxxviii. 18—20). In this view of it the appositeness of the Saviour's quotation of the passage becomes more obvious (Matt. iv. 7).

II. THE OCCASION OF THE SIN. A result of the want of food and water. Poverty suggests this class of doubts, and inspires the thought of putting God to some test of his faithfulness. But the temptation may originate in other causes—in intellectual doubt, in a sign-seeking spirit (Matt. xvi. 1), in downright presumptuousness.

III. THE EVIL OF THIS SIN. 1. *Its root of unbelief.* It is a "limiting of the Holy One of Israel" (Ps. lxxviii. 41). 2. *Its querulous impatience.* Instead of trusting God, waiting upon him, and seeking light and help in a proper spirit, it flies in God's face, accuses him of unkindness, and complains of his injustice. 3. *Its daring presumption* in presuming to lay down rules to the Almighty, to which he is required to conform. God brings us into situations of trial, not that we may apply tests to *him*, but that he may test *us*—test our faith, our patience, our humility. For those who come successfully through the trial there is the great reward of having dark things at length cleared up, and of being purified and strengthened by the struggle. Failure, on the other hand, exposes to severe chastisements.—J. O.

Ver. 25.—*Our righteousness.* As contrasted with Pauline sayings, the text is an illustration of the maxim, "On the outside of things look for differences, on the inside for likenesses" (Hare). The form is that of the Law, the spirit is that of Christ, whose gospel is the key to the Law's utterances.

I. A REQUIREMENT WHICH ONE ONLY, VIZ. CHRIST, HAS PERFECTLY FULFILLED. "This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6). He "is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). How? In the strictly legal, as in the strict ideal sense, righteousness requires an absolutely perfect fulfilment of every one of God's commandments. The Jewish covenant required no less. The Jews were to live in their righteousness, *i.e.* in perfect keeping of the whole Law. But in point of fact, no Jew ever rendered perfect obedience. In many things, like others, he offended, and the covenant footing was only maintained through daily pardon of daily offences. Christ is our Redeemer from the curse thus entailed by transgression (Gal. iii. 13). As the Lord's righteous Servant, and Fulfiller of the Law, he has implemented the condition of acceptance in such a way that his obedience carries with it results to others as well as to himself (Rom. v. 17—21). In him the believer is justified. He claims him as the Lord *his* Righteousness. Christ has for him at once fulfilled the Law's precept, and abolished its penalty. Sinful in himself, in Christ his sins are covered, and justification is obtained (Rom. iii. 22—27; viii. 1—4; 1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Cor. v. 21).

II. A REQUIREMENT WHICH BELIEVERS IN CHRIST ARE ENABLED TO FULFIL, THOUGH IMPERFECTLY, YET ACCEPTABLY. The utmost that the Jew could render was that imperfect but sincere obedience which is still the mark of the true believer. The believer's *duty* is to render a perfect obedience; his *privilege* is that, falling short of this, his sincere though faulty obedience will be graciously accepted for the sake of Christ. In harmony with his calling, it was to be the Jew's aim to realize the righteousness which the Law set before him. But in his inability to do this the weakness of the Law revealed itself, and in contrast with this weakness (Rom. viii. 3) is the power of the gospel, enabling the believer to triumph, and to bring forth fruit unto holiness, the end of which is everlasting life (Rom. vi. 22). This also is a "righteousness of faith," as springing from faith, and rendered possible through it. It is *his* righteousness, yet in a deeper sense not his, but Christ's, for it is the work of Christ living in him (Gal. ii. 20). It is not the ground of acceptance, but a result of it;

not a title to heaven, but meetness for it. It is itself a gift of grace, part of Christ's salvation (Matt. v. 6; Eph. v. 9, 10; Phil. ii. 12, 13; 1 Pet. ii. 24; 1 John iii. 7—10; with Rom. vi., vii., viii.).—J. O.

Vers. 1—5.—*The essence of the Decalogue is love.* Moses here applies the Decalogue to their present circumstances. He wishes them to enter Canaan in an obedient spirit. He knows that the well-being of the commonwealth depends upon it. To assist them in the understanding of the Law, he sums it up in one all-embracing principle of love. God as the supreme object is to receive the homage of the entire nature of man.

I. MOSES INSISTS ON THE UNITY AND ABSOLUTE CHARACTER OF GOD. This would distinguish Israel from the polytheists around them. "Jehovah our Mighty One is one Jehovah"—the uncaused, self-existent One in his absolute unity and strength. All perfection is thus briefly attributed to him.

II. GOD CAN BE THE OBJECT OF LOVE. His unity is not an unsocial thing. Within his being there are social qualities demanding, and from all eternity receiving, satisfaction. Hence we believe in what Jon. Edwards called a "social Trinity." Our social nature is the reflection of God, since we were made in his image. His unity does *not* imply that in the by-past eternity, before anything was made, he was alone. It was the fellowship of "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"—three Persons in the one Godhead.

The Trinity makes God lovable, for it is the condition of the satisfaction from all eternity of his social qualities.

III. GOD DESERVES THE LOVE OF OUR WHOLE BEING. Heart, soul, and might are to be enlisted in this service. Our love to him should be intellectual and also emotional; it should be passionate and strong; an all-embracing energy of our nature.

All our faculties are appealed to by the Divine nature. 1. Our *understanding* is enlisted by God as the *Infinite Mind.* All our intellectuality finds its counterpart and culmination in the infinite intellectual powers which God possesses and exercises. We rest upon his superior intellectual power. 2. Our *affections* are enlisted by God as the *Fountain of affection.* God is a Heart of unspeakable tenderness as well as a Mind of infinite grasp. And so he elicits the love of the heart as well as of the mind. 3. Our *will* is swayed into passionate devotion by God as the *Infinite Will.* If the spectacle of will in resistless benevolence commands the homage of our powers, then God entrances our whole will-power into passionate devotion. 4. Our *strength* is enlisted by God as the embodiment of vital energies and powers in their highest form. So that as a matter of fact, God fits into every fold of human nature and elicits its loving and adoring homage.

IV. LOVE MAKES LAWKEEPING DELIGHTFUL. The Law is not a pain to any who love the Lawgiver. Love is the essence of true loyalty. It makes service freedom. It is this which we must cultivate daily, and then life becomes delightful.—R. M. E.

Vers. 6—25.—*Family training is to propagate the Law.* The Law has as its essence love. In the family, love's home and circle, this Law is to be propagated. And here we are to notice—

I. PARENTS ARE TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH GOD'S CAUSE. The Jews were directed to wear portions of the Law upon their persons. This is the sign of identification with it in a rude age. The idea is *parental profession*, a glad identification of themselves with the Lord's cause.

II. THE HOME IS ALSO TO BE CONSECRATED AS A GODLY HOME. God's Law was to be written on the posts of the house and on their gates. This, like the last, meant the identification of the house with God's cause.

Now, there is as much difference between an ungodly home and a godly one as between an unconverted person and a converted one (cf. Pressensé's 'La Famille Chrétienne,' a most admirable course of sermons).

III. THE CHILDREN ARE MANIFESTLY MEANT TO BE THE COMPANIONS OF THE PARENTS. The little ones are to have their parents' society at home and abroad, at morning and at night (ver. 7).

The mistake made by many parents is not making themselves sufficiently companionable. It is companionship that after all determines the bent of children.

IV. THE HOME TRAINING IS TO BE RELIGIOUS. God's Law is to be brought in, morning, noon, and night, as the great interest. Of course, if parents are to do this as God intends, his Law must be a great personal interest to themselves. They must delight in it and love it, and make it a matter of study continually.

V. AMID THE SECULARITIES OF EDUCATION THE HOME MUST BE THE MAINSTAY OF RELIGION. With the parent the responsibility of training and interesting the children in religion eventually rests. To the well-ordering of Christian homes, Church and State must alike look as the last refuge.

The adjustment of rival interests in education is well-nigh impossible, and so it becomes all the more needful that the home should be made to supply the religious element, whatever course educational arrangements and legislation may take.

VI. PROSPERITY MUST NOT ENGENDER ATHEISM. This is the warning here given to Israel. God might be forgotten amid the success and prosperity of Canaan. For it is prosperity, not adversity, which as a rule engenders atheism. The prosperity of the prodigal led him away to the far-off land of forgetfulness of God, while his adversity brought him back (Luke xv. 11—32).—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

ENTIRE SEPARATION FROM IDOLATROUS NATIONS ENJOINED.

Vers. 1—4.—The Israelites were about to enter on a country occupied by idolaters, and they are commanded not to spare them or to allow them to continue in their proximity, or to have any friendly relations with them (cf. Lev. xxvii. 28). The Lord would cast out these nations, and deliver them, though greater and mightier than they, into their hands; and they were to smite them and place them under the ban; they were to make no covenant with them nor form any alliances with them (cf. Exod. xxiii. 32; xxxiv. 12—16), lest they should thus be drawn into idolatry, and so the anger of the Lord be kindled against them, and his vengeance brought upon them.

Ver. 1.—(Cf. Gen. xv. 19—21.) Of the ten nations named by God in his promise to Abraham, only six are mentioned here, those omitted being the Kenites, the Kennizites, the Kadmonites, and the Rephaim. The Rephaim were by this time extinct as a tribe, Og, "the last of the Rephaim," having been conquered, and he and his people destroyed by the Israelites. The three other tribes lay probably beyond the confines of Canaan, in that region promised to Abraham, but which was not included in the territory conquered by the people under Joshua. This may account for their not being mentioned here. One nation, the Hivites, appears here which is not in the enumeration in Genesis. This name seems to have been borne by more tribes than one, or by a tribe existing in divisions widely scattered, for we find the Hivite in the centre of Palestine (Gen. xxxiv. 2), in the Shephelah (Josh. ix. 7; xi. 19), in the land of Mizpeh under Hermon (Josh. xi. 3), "in Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon to the entering in of Hamath" (Judg. iii. 3), and among tribes in the north of Canaan (Gen. x. 17; 1 Chron. i. 15). Their principal settlement was probably in that part of the country where the Antilibanus range terminates in Mount Hermon.

Ver. 3.—**Neither shalt thou make marriages with them.** Brought into intimate relations with idolaters, they might be seduced into idolatry; and where marriage was contracted with an idolater, the children might be brought up in idolatry. Such unions were forbidden.

Ver. 4.—**From following me**; literally, *from after me*, i.e. from being my servant and worshipper. **Suddenly**; rather, *speedily* (מַהֵר, infin. of מָהַר, to be quick, to hasten, used as an adverb).

Vers. 5—8.—They were not only to have no fellowship with the idolaters, but they were to root out their idolatry, everting their altars and destroying their idols; and this because they were a holy people, graciously chosen of God to be his special possession—a high privilege and honour which they were to be careful not to cast away.

Ver. 5.—**Cut down their groves**; rather, *cut* or *hew in pieces their ashērahs*. These were, apparently, wooden pillars of considerable height, which were firmly planted in the ground (comp. Judg. vi. 25—27; ch. xvi. 21), and were consecrated to the worship of a female deity, the companion of Baal; probably the same as that afterwards known as Astarte, the Venus of the Syrians (see note on ch. xvi. 21).

Ver. 6.—**An holy people**; a people consecrated to God, to be holy as he is holy (cf. Lev. xi. 43—45; xix. 2; xx. 26; xxi. 6; ch. xxiii. 14). **A special people unto himself**; literally, *to be to him for a people of property* (סְגֻלָּה), a people his own, his peculiar property (cf. Exod. xix. 5; ch. xiv. 2; xxvi. 18; and, for the meaning of the word, 1 Chron. xxix. 3, "mine own proper good;" Eccles. ii. 8, "peculiar treasure of kings"); LXX., λαὸς περιούσιος, applied by St. Paul to Christians as the chosen and special property of Christ (Titus ii. 14). **Above all people**; rather, *out of* or *from among all the peoples*.

Ver. 7.—**Set his love upon you.** The Hebrew verb meaning primarily to cleave to, to be attached to, is used to express ardent and loving affection (cf. Gen. xxxiv. 8; ch. x. 15; Isa. xxxviii. 17). **The fewest of all people.** It might have been supposed that, in choosing a people to be his special treasure, the Almighty would have selected some one of the great nations of the world; but, instead of that, he had chosen one of the smallest. They had, indeed, grown till now they were as the stars for multitude; but it was not in prospect of this that they were chosen. The election of Israel was purely of grace.

Ver. 8.—**Because the Lord loved you.** Targum Onkelos, "Because he had complacency in you;" Vulgate, *quia vobis junctus est.* "Instead of saying, He hath chosen you out of love to your fathers, as in ch. iv. 37, Moses brings out in this place love to the people of Israel as the Divine motive, not for choosing Israel, but for leading it out and delivering it from the slave-house of Egypt, by which God had practically carried out the election of the people, that he might thereby allure the Israelites to a reciprocity of love" (Keil).

Ver. 9.—**To a thousand generations**; rather, *to the thousandth generation.* As God is faithful to his covenant, and will show mercy and do good to those that love him, whilst on those who hate him he will bring terrible retribution, the people are warned by this to take heed against rebellion and apostacy from him (comp. Exod. xx. 5).

Ver. 10.—**And repayeth them that hate him to their face.** The phrase, "to their face" (אֶל פָּנָיו, to their faces), has been variously explained. It has been taken as meaning, instantly, *statim, haud cunctanter* (Vulgate, Gesenius); openly, manifestly, *palam* (Grotius, Calvin, Michaelis); during life, *in hac vita* (Targum, Vatab.); in their presence, in their own sight (LXX., κατὰ πρόσωπον: Rosenmüller). The last seems the best. פָּנֶה signifies properly, front, and אֶל פָּנִים, to the front, before, in presence (cf. Lev. ix. 5; Exod. xxiii. 17). The hater of God should be repaid, so that the man should himself see and feel that he had been smitten of God (cf. Isa. lxv. 6; Job xxxiv. 11; Ps. lxii. 13). And this retribution should come speedily: **He will not be slack to him that hateth him**; *i.e.* he will not delay to repay him.

Ver. 11.—As God would thus summarily avenge himself of his adversaries, the people are exhorted to keep all his commandments, statutes, and rights.

Ver. 12.—On the other hand, obedience would bring blessing. **Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken.** The Hebrew conveys the idea of a reward as consequent on their hearkening; as there would be retribution for transgression, so would there be recompense for obedience. The Hebrew word represented by "wherefore" in the Authorized Version (עֵקֶב, from עָקַב, the heel) denotes that which comes after, the end or last of anything (Ps. cxix. 33, 112), hence recompense, reward, wages, as the end or result of acting (Ps. xix. 11; xl. 15; Isa. v. 23, etc.). The clause might, therefore, be translated, *As a consequence* or *recompense of hearkening, . . . it shall be that,* &c. **Judgments**, *i.e.* rights, rightful claims (מִשְׁפָּטִים). God, as the Great King, has his rights, and these are to be rendered to him by his subjects and servants. **The mercy**, *i.e.* the kindness, the favour (חֶסֶד), showed in the promises which God gave to their fathers, and engaged by covenant to fulfil.

Ver. 13.—This favour would take effect in a blessing on the fruit of the womb, the produce of the field, and the increase of their flocks and herds (comp. Exod. xxiii. 25—27). **Thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.** These comprise the fruitful products of the soil, and in their combination express general fertility and abundance. By *corn* (דָּגָן) is undoubtedly to be understood the cereal products generally used for food. It may be doubted if *tirosh* (תִּירוֹשׁ) properly means wine. The word is often rendered in the Authorized Version by new wine, and this is the meaning generally given in the lexicons. As, however, it is almost constantly joined with corn and oil, the immediate products of the soil—at least as unchanged by any process or manufacture—it is rather to be regarded as designating ripe grapes than wine. That, moreover, which was to be *gathered* (ch. xi. 14), which might be *tithed* (ch. xii. 17; xiv. 23), which might be described as *fruit* (2 Chron. xxxi. 5), as *being in the cluster* (Isa. lxv. 8), and as capable of being *dried up* or *parched* (Joel i. 10), and *trodden* (Micah vii. 15), could not be a fluid like fermented wine. As the grape

juice, however, was that from which wine was elicited, *tirosh* is sometimes used tropically for wine (Isa. lxii. 8; Hos. iv. 11), just as *corn* is used for bread (Lam. ii. 12; Hos. vii. 14). The *oil* here mentioned, and elsewhere joined with *dagan* and *tirosh*, is the pure fresh olive oil (יִצְהָר, from צָהַר, to shine), obtained by pressure from the berries of the olive, and used for food as well as for other purposes by the Jews (see notes on ch. viii. 8). **Flocks of thy sheep.** The Hebrew is very peculiar here; the same expression occurs only in this book (ch. xxviii. 4, 18, 51). Literally rendered, it is *the Astartes* (Ashtaroth) *of thy sheep*. Kimchi says it means "the females of the sheep" (נקבות הצאן), and this Gesenius adopts, rendering the phrase by "ewes." Astarte ('Ashtoreth, plu. 'Ashtaroth) was the Phœnician Venus, and it is supposed that the females of the flock were called Astartes or Venuses, as propagating the flock. There is, however, another way of explaining the word as here used, by referring it to a root *'ashar* (עָשַׁר), signifying to be multiplied, to be rich; whence the name given to the females as the multipliers of the flock, without any reference to Astarte.

Ver. 15.—The mercy of God should be showed to them also in preserving them from sickness, especially of a virulent and dangerous kind, such as they had seen in Egypt, where disease has in all ages readily assumed a malignant character ('Encyc. Brit.,' art. 'Egypt'), and where especially cutaneous diseases of the worst kind prevail (comp. ch. xxxviii. 27). Such diseases the Lord would rather cause to fall on their enemies.

Vers. 16—26.—The heathen they were utterly to extirpate from the land which God was about to give them; mighty as these nations were, they were not to be afraid of them, for God would be with his people, and would deliver these nations, with their kings, into their hands. Not all at once, however, should the former occupants of the country be driven out; this should be done by degrees, lest, the land being suddenly depopulated, the wild animals would increase too much, so as to be a source of danger and trouble to the settlers; but ultimately they should be utterly destroyed, and with them all the objects and implements of their idolatrous worship.

Ver. 16.—**And thou shalt consume**; literally, *eat, devour* (וְאָכַלְתָּ). Unless they consumed them as one consumes food, they would be a snare to them, by tempting them to join in their idolatry.

Vers. 17, 18.—**If thou shalt say in thine heart.** The thought might rise in their minds, How can we ever compete with nations so much more powerful than we? But such thoughts they must repress, remembering what God had done for them to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and resting assured that the same would he do to the Canaanites.

Ver. 19.—**Temptations**, etc. (cf. ch. iv. 34; vi. 22).

Ver. 20.—**Hornet** (cf. Exod. xxiii. 28). Instances are on record of armies being obliged to give way before swarms of insects by which they were attacked (as in the case of Julian, who was compelled by a host of flies and gnats to change his route in retreating from Parthia; Amm. Marcell., 24, 8); but it may be doubted if the statement here is to be understood literally, and not rather figuratively, as expressive of many and varied evils with which the fugitive Canaanites were to be visited until they were extirpated (cf. Josh. xxiv. 12, compared with x. 22—27).

Ver. 22.—(Cf. Exod. xxiii. 30.)

Ver. 24.—The kings also of these nations should they utterly destroy, so that their memory should perish from the earth.

Vers. 25, 26.—The idols of the Canaanites they were utterly to destroy by fire, not saving even the silver or gold with which the images were overlaid, lest, if that were coveted and retained, it might bring them under the ban which fell on all things connected with idolatry; as happened in the case of Achan (Josh. vii.).

Ver. 26.—**Cursed thing**; *a thing devoted* (חֵרֶם), either, as in this case, to destruction (comp. also 1 Kings xx. 42; Zech. xiv. 11; Mal. iii. 24; [iv. 6]) or, as elsewhere, to God (Lev. xxvii. 21; Numb. xviii. 14).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*A holy people's policy of self-preservation.* We have in this paragraph a glance onward to the time when Israel's march through the wilderness would be completed, and when the people to whom God had given the land should be confronted with those who had it previously in possession. In our Homily on it let us observe—

I. WE HAVE HERE POINTED OUT THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH ISRAEL WOULD TAKE

POSSESSION OF THE LAND. 1. There was a great covenant promise which had been handed down to them from preceding generations, and which involved results which would be far-reaching both as to time and place, touching every family of man, through every age of time. In a word, it was nothing less than the Divine covenant of human redemption, in the fulfilling of which a Great Mediator should come, while *in* Israel the purity of the line of his descent was to be guarded, and by and for it there was to be held in possession a tract of land on which the great work of the Mediator should have its earthly basis and historic ground. 2. With this far outlook in view, Israel was to be a people "unto the Lord their God." It was to hold a place among the nations which was unique. One of the smallest as to territory and numbers, it was to strike the deepest as to its worth and power! 3. Hence Israel was to be a *holy* people (ver. 6). It was to bear a specific character *religiously*, as it was to take a peculiar place *historically*. Hence its moral and spiritual elevation is the first thing to be secured. The revelation of God which the people possessed had no mean uplifting power. The eternal God was Israel's refuge, and underneath were the everlasting arms. The institutions of mediation, priesthood, sacrifice, were deep and solemn lessons in the evil of sin and the righteousness of God. And the moral law which Israel possessed was so pure, so complete, even in the infancy of the people, that to this day not the wisest men of the world can find a defect therein, nor can they suggest aught to supplement it. 4. Israel would, nevertheless, be in great danger (ver. 4). The land of Canaan, though beautiful, fruitful, and gay, was a nest of impurity. The foulest pollutions were debasing the people, and, apart from some special guard, they were far more likely to infect Israel with the *virus* of their idolatry than Israel was to cleanse them by the strength of counteracting virtue. And when we come to think of what vast importance to the world was the choice of one people who should serve as leverage for the rest, we discern the reason for the imperative injunctions which follow as to the policy which Israel was to pursue with reference to the peoples of Canaan.

II. HERE IS A THREEFOLD LINE OF POLICY ENJOINED. 1. A policy of separation (ver. 3, "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them"). Thus does the Most High, in the early training of a people for himself, let them see how completely they are to be the Lord's; and that marriage, which from the worldling's point of view is so apt to sink into a mere union of bodies, is, from the point of view of one who would be holy to the Lord, to be at once regulated by God and elevated for him. Who cannot see the impossibility of married life being as blessed as it may be if husband and wife are dissevered on the very matter on which joint sympathies should be fondest and strongest? The principle here enjoined is carried over into the New Testament, in such words as these: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." In this stern interdiction of mixed marriages under the Law, our God would teach us for all time that life's dearest bond is to be formed only in subjection to his will whose we are, and whom we should serve. 2. A policy of religious intolerance (ver. 5). As Israel was to possess the land for God, so it was to suffer his worship alone to be observed. Whatever was contrary thereto was to be taken out of the way. An external religion is virtually destroyed when its external observance is made impossible. 3. A policy of extermination in war. The Canaanites had had their day of grace (Gen. xv. 16). And now, lest they continue to pollute the land, they are to be swept away "with the besom of destruction" (see Homily on ch. i. 1—8). If Israel had no Divine command to this effect, no one would pretend to justify this part of their policy. If they had, it needed no justification. God may sentence a people to ruin in any way he pleases. And when a nation has given way to such nameless and shameless wickedness that its land groans beneath the burden of its crimes, it is mercy to the world when the evil is "stamped out." And though such exterminative policy on the part of any nation can be justified only on the ground of a Divine warrant, yet the warrant having been given in this case, that policy does but illustrate a truth which the Most High has again and again declared, that no nation has any absolute right in itself or its land. It holds its existence subject to God's will, and to that will alone; and if it is good for the world that it should give place to others, he will cause it to pass away, and will bring another people on the soil.

III. ISRAEL'S POSITION AND POLICY, SO REGARDED, FURNISH US WITH PRINCIPLES OF ETERNAL AND UNIVERSAL APPLICATION. They are these: 1. The actual value of any

nation or people in the world depends on the degree to which they subserve God's purpose, and not on the extent to which they fulfil their own. Nations have but a passing loan of power from the Great Supreme, held in trust for his honour and the world's good; and when they lose sight of that, they are grievously forgetting the things which belong unto their peace. 2. If a nation is to preserve itself for God, corrupting influences are to be put away. We have seen (Homily on ch. ii. 24) how much importance is attached by God to the training of the family. We see in this paragraph how much importance is also attached to those influences *which go beforehand* to *make* the family. How does the Most High set himself against all those corruptions that poison the social fabric and break up the sacredness of the home! And how jealously does he guard his own worship from the defiling additions and commandments of men! 3. When a nation is loyal to its God, by putting away sin and nurturing righteousness, it will ensure the Divine blessing and its own permanence (ver. 9). God reserves the entry through the gates of honour to "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth." 4. The elevation ensured and given to nations which promote righteousness is the one which, if we see as God sees, we shall value most. Godless men may covet an ascendency backed by guns and swords, armies and fleets. The believer in God covets only an uplifting that comes of the Divine blessing on "a wise and understanding people." 5. If loyalty to God and truth is wanting, a nation ensures its own downfall (ver. 10; see Ezek. xvii.; xxvii. 3; xxviii. 2—10; Amos ii. 9; Obad. 3, 4). 6. What Israel was designed to be among the nations, regenerated men are in their own nation—"a holy people unto the Lord their God." They are "the light of the world," "the salt of the earth." The earth is full of corruption, and is and must be rapidly decomposing unless some salt be thrown into it to check the decomposition. Christians are the "salt" of the earth. Their value is in their "savour," not in their name. And if they let the "savour" die out, no name of discipleship will be of any use to them. (On savourless salt, see Thomson's 'Land and the Book,' p. 382.) Christians may not separate their Christianity from their citizenship. They are to be Christian citizens; and do we not learn by abundant teachings in the Old and New Testament that God spares many a guilty city for the sake of the righteous that are therein? (See the history of Abraham's intercession for Sodom.) And can we forget the teaching of the prophet Ezekiel, that nations may become so corrupt that even the righteous element therein avails not to stay the ruin (Ezek. xiv. 12—21)? 7. Hence the principles involved in this paragraph should convey, and should be made the basis of, an earnest warning and appeal to men to remember that the day of grace for the nation, as well as for themselves, has its limit. God is long-suffering. He bears long, but he will not bear always (cf. Isa. v. 3—7; i. 5—24; Luke xix. 41—44; xiii. 6—9; Matt. xxi. 33—44; Rev. ii. 21—23). Oh, how earnestly should men turn to God while yet there is hope! For their own sakes, that they may be saved, and for the sake of others too, that they may become co-operators with God in purifying and saving men!

Vers. 12—15.—*Temporal prosperity a result of obedience to Divine Law.* The aged lawgiver in this paragraph shows the people how largely their well-being depends on obedience to God, and also to what an extent that well-being would be manifest even in temporal matters; in the healthfulness of body which would be enjoyed by them, and in the success with which they should tend their flocks and herds. They should be free from the sicknesses and diseases with which Egypt abounded; and should, in the enjoyment of such immunity, have the sign and token of the blessing of Heaven on an obedient people. Now, it has long been regarded as one mark of the old covenant, that, in condescension to the people, God spake so much of temporal blessings as the reward of obedience in the early messages which were delivered to our fathers. It is also looked on as one specific mark of New Testament teaching, that the promises of God now lie mainly in the direction of spiritual good; and so much has this aspect of things come in our days to be looked at, that it is by no means unlikely that we may be in danger of carrying our views thereon to such an extreme as to regard temporal comforts as *no mark at all* of Divine approval. It is well worth our while, therefore, to look into this matter, to see if we can so formulate the teaching of God's Word thereon as to show the harmony between it and the actual facts of life on this question: How far may abundance of temporal good and freedom from sickness be looked at as a proof of

Divine favour? We shall regard the actual history before our eye as at once a basis for, and an illustration of, our remarks.

I. GOD HAD IN GREAT MERCY REMOVED ISRAEL FROM EGYPT, WHICH WAS NOT ONLY THE SEAT OF POLITICAL OPPRESSION, AND A REGION OF FOUL IDOLATRY, BUT ALSO A LOCUS AND FOCUS OF MANY PESTILENTIAL DISEASES. (See Mr. Lane's 'Modern Egyptians;' the art. 'Egypt' in 'Encyc. Brit.;' and in Smith and Kitto's Dictionaries of the Bible.) Probably the land of Goshen might be a healthier district than the region of the city itself; still it is extremely questionable whether such a race as Israel was designed to be, could, even physically, have been with any certainty developed in Egypt itself. It is no mean mercy to have our earthly lot cast in a healthy locality. It is not possible, indeed, to escape temptations from without or from within, go where we may, but it is certain that (*cæt. par.*) it is much easier to resist evil and to cultivate virtue where climate and atmosphere tend to promote bodily vigour. The history of the world affords proof enough that climatic influences will not do everything for man; but that is no reason for underrating their value, nor for losing sight of the mercy where "the lines are fallen to us in" healthful and health-giving places.

II. THOUGH FREE FROM LIABILITY TO EGYPTIAN DISEASE, ISRAEL'S HEALTHFULNESS AND WEAL WOULD DEPEND ON OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAW. No land can give us any immunity from the consequences of breaking law, however life-giving its breezes. God's physical and moral laws are interlaced and intertwined. Obedience or disobedience to either may have its full effect in its own direction. Obedience or disobedience to both will have its complicated effects in both directions. Many speak of law as if it acted without God; and, maybe, some think of God as if he acted without law. We need not commit either mistake. Let us carefully avoid both. Let us reverence every law of God, physical or moral, *because* it is his; and let it be our study to understand them in every department in which they are presented to us. Mr. Binney once made the startling statement, that, "barring accidents, a man can live pretty much as long as he pleases!" By which he meant, of course, that there are certain Divine laws and rules, obedience to which tends to the preservation of health, and consequently to the prolongation of life. And, if these laws are neglected, we may create disease, affliction, and trouble for ourselves, and breed even death, however healthful the locality in which we dwell. Hence it is not surprising to find in this paragraph another principle indicated.

III. SUPPOSING THE PEOPLE TO BE OBEDIENT TO GOD'S LAW, HEALTH AND WEAL WOULD FOLLOW BY WAY OF NATURAL CONSEQUENCE. The original (ver. 12), by a peculiar Hebrew idiom, shows this. "And (it) shall be (the) *heel*," i.e. the end, and so the consequence. Whatever may be the kind of weal desired, the laws of God in that direction should be studied, understood, and followed. Whether in the regulation of the production or sustentation of life; in agricultural pursuits; in the spheres of capital and labour, and their mutual relations; in the creation, distribution, increase, and expenditure of wealth; in the higher region of the cultivation of the national and social virtues of truth and goodness; in the still higher region of family piety; or in the highest region of all, even that of personal love and devotion to God, the old words will be proved true, "Them that honour me, I will honour." No doubt we are often meeting with cases which seem anomalous; they accord with no known rule whatever. But we shall find that we do not know the whole of such cases, nor even enough of them to enable us to judge concerning them. Till we know more we must suspend judgment. No perplexities of this sort give any warrant for disturbing first principles. In *any region* in which God has laws we may have duties; and it is a very partial and unhealthy piety which would underrate intelligent action in any department. In whatever department there is neglect, in such we may expect failure. And where there is obedience, there will be the reward.

IV. THOUGH THE REWARD MAY COME IN THE WAY OF NATURAL CONSEQUENCE, YET NONE THE LESS IS IT GOD'S BLESSING. The result is from him, because the Law is from him. Nor is it one whit the less from God, if we are able to trace every step of the coming of a blessing. A man's work is not less his because he does it somehow. Nor is it attributed the less to him because it is known how he did it. Why should men be less reasonable in recognizing God's work, when the laws of the working are manifest to us? "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," is one truth; "the blessing

of the Lord, it maketh rich," is another. We may ignore neither, but should reverently admit and act on both.

V. ON WHAT A FRAIL CONDITION, HOWEVER, WAS ISRAEL'S NATIONAL WEAL SUSPENDED! "If ye hearken to these judgments," etc. The laws were right, kind, benevolent. The land was beautiful, fertile, healthful. All that was wanted was obedient people. Israel needed as much to be delivered from themselves as to be rescued from the Egyptians. And, in fact, there was among them a redeeming and sanctifying work, carried on through God's Spirit, though it is not named in this paragraph; nor was it as fully revealed as now, how, in his infinite grace, our God created in his people the obedience which, in his Law, he commands. "The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The Law given to Israel was a child-guide with a view to Christ. The first covenant proved brittle in their hands, and so they learned the need of another, which should be for ever safe in God's hands. The first says, "Do this, and live." The second, "Live, and you will do this." And even now, putting the matter generally, we may say God governs nations, as nations, by the first covenant. He governs his own believing people by the second. Hence, in dealing with men and nations, the Christian preacher has ever to expound and enforce the everlasting laws of righteousness, and by revealing men's failure therein to convict of sin; while in building up the Church he has to show the glory of the Holy Ghost as the Creator and Sustainer of spiritual power.

Vers. 17—25.—*An anxious question, or dreading difficulties.* In this paragraph there are some verses which are in the main a repetition of the enforcement of the policy of separation and extrusion which Israel was to adopt towards the Canaanites. But there is one distinctive feature in it which presents several points altogether new, the historical side of which we may first look at, that we may there see how peculiarly full this passage is of bright and gladsome teaching for us.

Here is a question (ver. 18) which Israel would not be unlikely to ask, at least occasionally. Doubtless, just at the time when they were in the flush of joy at the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts, or when they had experienced some great deliverance from pressing want, their hearts would be brave and strong. But, like some others since have been, they were largely the creatures of circumstance. Now up, now down. Now so elated that they think they can get through anything, now so depressed that they dread everything. The time would come when in view of the possible struggles which the possession of Canaan might involve, many an Israelite would say, "These nations are mightier than I; how can I dispossess them?" and they must have been more than human if the heart did not now and then give way. For there were seven nations to supplant; and over and above the numerical force against which Israel would have to contend, there would be the fact that they were strangers to the land; they had been kept in serfdom; they were unskilled in the art and practice of war; so that, on the human side, the advantage was very greatly with the Canaanites, while Israel incurred a very serious risk. Now, though Jehovah was very wroth with the people when in their guilty unbelief they proposed to turn back at the evil report of the spies, he sees a great difference between a deeply rooted distrust, and an occasional cloud that may shade the spirit; and while in his holy wrath he condemns the first, in his tender compassion he anticipates and guards against the second. Hence, from vers. 18 to 24, we have the cheering voice of the great lawgiver, grandly uttering, in his hundred and twentieth year, words to empower the heart, and showing Israel, in the Name of the Lord of hosts, how much more there is to animate them than there can possibly be to discourage and depress. He (1) reminds them no fewer than eight times of the Name of the Lord their God; (2) bids them look back to past miracles and wonders, and to see in them pledges of future help; (3) shows them how the providential action of God, which was *for* them, would be against their foes; (4) assures them that God would be among them as an ever-present Helper and Friend; and (5) points out that, though the process of driving out the Canaanites might be slow, yet if it were done more rapidly, it would be attended with great peril from other and unexpected quarters; that both tribes of men and herds of beasts would be kept in abeyance for their sakes; so that though they were led by a tedious route, it would be the safest way! Now, surely we ought not to pass over a passage so full of

interest and instruction for our everyday life as this, presenting to us, as it does, two distinct lines of thought.

I. THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE AS ANXIOUSLY DREADED BY US. "These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them?" These Israelites were not the only people who have cast glances ahead, and who, foreseeing, as they thought, difficulties in the distance, have exclaimed, "How shall we get through them?" We do not refer now to such as have no living faith in God, and who are perpetually giving way to dark and sinful unbelief; nor have we mainly in view those who have never yet been led out of "the house of bondage." But, keeping as closely as we can to the cases suggested by the paragraph, we refer to those who, through mercy, know what a great deliverance has been wrought for man in Christ; to whom that redemption has become a living power through the energy of the Holy Ghost; and who yet, notwithstanding all, have their moments of despondency, when looking or trying to look far ahead,—they see innumerable obstructions confronting them, and ask in anxious sadness, "How can we meet them all?" This main inquiry may take one or more of the following forms: 1. The special ends and aims even of my earthly life; how can I accomplish them? 2. The difficulties in the way of my much-loved work for Christ; how can I overcome them? 3. The hardships to be met in running the Christian race; how can I encounter them? 4. The many hindrances which oppose themselves to the advance of the cause of God; how can the Church overcome them? 5. All the foes, without and within, which threaten the possession of Canaan; how can we vanquish them? Say, is there to be found any believer in whose spirit such questions as these do not now and then arise, and who does not occasionally shiver from the chill of a doubting forecast? Therefore let us see in this passage—

II. THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE GRACIOUSLY ANTICIPATED AND PROVIDED FOR BY GOD. The following points will be found, explicitly or implicitly, in the paragraph: 1. "The Lord *thy* God." That Name is a guarantee of all you want by the way. "Greater is he that is for you than all they which can be against you." There is more meaning in that one Name than in all other names besides. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" 2. God will go before you to clear the way (ver. 20). All nature waits on him. Fire, thunder, lightning, hail; flies, worms, locusts, hornets; ay, men, devils, angels, must do his work when he calls. 3. God will be with you, to empower you in the way (ver. 21). If God is not on our side, there is but weakness, whatever the seeming power. If God is on our side, there is power, whatever the seeming weakness. 4. God will choose his own best methods of helping you in the way (ver. 22). "Little by little." A more rapid clearance would have brought other dangers. God "gently clears our way." 5. God's past deliverances are pledges that he will not forsake you by the way (vers. 18, 19; see Ps. lxiii. 7; Rom. viii. 32; v. 10). 6. It is one of "the secrets of the Lord," to cause us to meet and grapple with things and beings mightier than we are, that we may cease to rely on ourselves, and be flung upon him, the Almighty One, for strength. The tendency to self-trust and self-laudation is very strong (see ch. viii. 17, 18). Study the history of Gideon, and his band of three hundred men. This education in trust is also an education in holiness. We have, by meeting difficulties which are beyond us, to learn how much we want God. And yet God will not be with us except as we are loyal to him (see Josh. vii.). Ah! it is by these difficulties in life, by our manner of meeting them, and by God's dealing with us under them, that we are to be *educated for eternity!* Oh! if all were smooth, if we had no complications to meet, no trials to bear, how might we go on drifting down the stream, slumberously calm, dangerously secure, till we awoke, perhaps, too late, to find ourselves a wreck and a ruin! It is by these breaks in our peace, by these cares and hard struggles, which fling us on our God, that we are taught how much we want him, and how ill we could do without him! On the journey of life we have all entered, and the supreme question for us is not, "Will it be smooth or rough?" but "How will it end?"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*Israel's iconoclastic mission.* Material idolatry is the great peril of humanity. To what corruption and misery such idolatry leads, *we* in Christianized

England can scarcely conceive. What the history of our world would have been if that hotbed of Canaanite corruption had continued, it would be difficult to imagine. Many methods were open to God by which he might arrest that plague of vice; out of them all, his wisdom selected *this*, viz. to employ the Hebrews as his ministers of destruction.

I. CONSIDER MEN AS ELECTED BY GOD TO OFFICE AND TO SERVICE. We may safely suppose that every nation fulfils some purpose foreseen by God—perhaps appointed thereto by him. Possibly every man, though he may not rise to the realization of God's highest ideal, yet may fulfil some inferior purpose of God. The Hebrews had a very special honour conferred on them. They were chosen unto holiness, chosen to be the ministers of God's righteousness. The glory was eminent, and the Jews failed to reach it. The Most High God condescended to enter into closest alliance with Israel, deigned to be called their God, and took their interests into his care. So long as they kept his commandments, he kept his covenant. His faithfulness was an infinite quantity, but it was conditioned by Israel's obedience. No evidence was lacking to Israel touching the friendly protection and help of Jehovah. Their loyalty as *subjects* was met cordially by his favour as *Sovereign*. Their admitted weakness was met by the Divine strength. Their poor, shallow love was met and recompensed by his rich affection.

II. THE GROUNDS OF GOD'S CHOICE. 1. *This is declared negatively.* It was not on the ground of their numbers or their strength. *That* strength and magnitude of the nation were the effect of God's choice, not its cause. They were not chosen because of superior holiness, but with a view to make them holy. Some reason there is for God's choice, but that reason is not often revealed. Possibly it is too recondite for man's understanding, or the further pursuit of the inquiry might divert him from practical obedience. 2. *It is stated positively that this choice was the outcome of love.* There must have been the potency, perhaps the promise, of good in the Hebrews, in order to attract the love of God. If there was no positive wickedness, God would delight in them as the product of his own skill. His gracious dealings hitherto had been *in respect of the oath made to their fathers.* God's great love to Abraham had perpetuated itself in his seed. Who can measure what a life of blessing each one of us may communicate to generations yet unborn? Divine grace in us is not terminal.

III. THE DESIGN OF GOD'S CHOICE—GENERAL AND SPECIAL. *The general design was holy character.* Choice to office and to honour depended on attainment of character. *Holiness* is the highest perfection of man, therefore the highest design of God. Holiness is a far higher acquisition than wisdom or strength. The seven nations of Canaan were greater and mightier than Israel, yet those nations fell before the holy people. Purity shall eventually displace power. Right *is* genuine might. *Holiness* has, by Divine appointment, an everlasting tenure. *The design of God's choice of Israel was also special*, viz. *to overturn idolatry.* The *general* vocation included the *special.* To be holy would necessitate conflict with sin. Light must contend with darkness. Opposite principles must contend for the mastery. The holier we become, the more resolute will be our battle with idolatry. We shall feel towards it, and act towards it, as God does. For us to *live* (if we be God's consecrated sons), and for us to *oppose idolatry*, is identical. "No peace with sin" is our loyal motto.

IV. THE REALIZED RESULTS OF THE DIVINE CHOICE. Already the Hebrews had obtained a signal triumph over the Egyptians, as the proof of God's gracious intentions towards them. *That* triumph was singular, surprising, and complete. *He*, who could secure such a triumph for Israel, could give them easy conquest over any adversary. They knew how to touch the secret springs of success. The pathway to renown was open. There was scarcely room for a doubtful issue, for from a greater foe God had already delivered them.

V. THE HONOUR CONVEYED IN THIS CHOICE, VIZ. TO BE CO-WORKERS WITH GOD. God would cast out the seven nations of Canaanites, therefore the Hebrews must smite them. God would deliver them up, therefore Israel was to destroy them. In every step they were to be coadjutors with God. We are not to suppose that the Canaanites were passively slaughtered. In every case they provoked severity of treatment. So completely had the idolaters identified themselves with idolatry, that, to destroy the latter, Israel had to destroy the former. When God, the Great Proprietor of all,

imposes a command upon us, however repulsive to our own feeling, it would be flagrant disloyalty on our part, yea, gross sin, to disobey. Punishment by the sword cannot be a more unrighteous act than punishment by cholera or by plague; and if men admit the justice of the one, they should also of the other. Human pity must sometimes be kept in abeyance.

VI. GOD'S DESIGNS, IF NOT FOLLOWED, VISIT MEN WITH DESTRUCTION. The alternative of not executing God's high commission was appalling. If any false sentiments of pity diverted them from the plain path of duty, the Hebrews would have become partakers of idolaters' sins. Any concession or compromise with the Canaanites would be (and in fact *was*) fatal to themselves. Can one touch pitch and not be defiled? The slightest connivance with the abomination would be a moral poison. They too would be accursed. For God will not endure to be trifled with. To his friends he is infinitely gracious, and blesses, for their sakes, their posterity; but his foes he repayeth to their face. We have to make our choice between complete devotement to God's cause and complete destruction.—D.

Vers. 12—26.—*Reward in proportion to arduous service.* The enterprise upon which the Jews were entering was one of prodigious difficulty. They had to contend at the same time with stalwart human foes, and with the internal foes of evil lust. Here was a splendid field for eternal renown. In proportion to the difficulty of the enterprise would be the glory of success.

I. OBSERVE THE DISCOURAGING ASPECTS OF THE UNDERTAKING. 1. *Their adversaries were more numerous than they.* The adhesion of numbers to a particular side naturally excites enthusiasm. Yet, in war, unless order and discipline be maintained, mere numbers have contributed to defeat. 2. *The Canaanites were actually in possession.* They could, therefore, choose their military positions, and felt that they were fighting for their altars and their homes. 3. *The Hebrews were the subjects of internal fears.* Their fathers had actually refused to fight with the giant races of Canaan, and had turned back again into the desert. The habit of fearless courage was not suddenly engendered: it was a growth. 4. *The Hebrews had also a lingering lust for the costly things devoted to idolatry.* To suppress their own concupiscence was as arduous as to withstand the Amorites. Hence, on many occasions, their hearts counselled compromise and alliance. 5. *They could anticipate only tardy results.* If there had been the prospect of swift progress of triumph—the rapid march from victory to victory—they could have braced themselves up for a brief campaign. But they knew that slow processes of siege, with its privations and exposures, were essential. God had forewarned them that he would not drive out the heathen suddenly, lest other evils should ensue. They had to contend with their own impatience. 6. *The necessity for extermination added to the difficulty of the war.* If, when the Canaanites had suffered defeat in two or three pitched battles, the Hebrews had been permitted to accept a surrender and make them tributaries, their task had been comparatively easy. But the command of Jehovah was unmistakable: Israel was bound to destroy their foes, "with a mighty destruction," till they were consumed. So neither can we have peace until every sin within us is completely annihilated.

II. OBSERVE THE ENCOURAGING ASPECTS OF THEIR WORK. 1. *God's immeasurable might.* The *visible* features of the undertaking were depressing enough; but faith could discover an invisible Ally, who was more than a match for all opposition. If we can only realize that God is on our side, we shall be confident of victory. 2. *God's past deliverances should assure us for the future.* What an unchanging God has done for us, he *can* and *will* do again. Omnipotence is never exhausted. It is impossible for God to be inconsistent with himself. 3. *God's plain promises of help.* If we can only be absolutely sure of a promise from God, we may set at defiance every fear, and calmly face every foe. "He is not a man, that he should lie." 4. *Proofs that God is even now present.* "The Lord thy God is among you." If we would only rub off from our eyes the drowsiness of unbelief, we might see the tokens of God's presence on every side—the footprints of his feet, as he leads our way. The Good Shepherd always goes before his sheep. 5. *In God's service the meaner forms of life often become efficient allies.* The locusts have been commissioned to do service for God. In Egypt, flies and lice formed a brigade in his army. So *now* also wasps and hornets were sent

out as sappers and miners to prepare Jehovah's way. Let no insignificant helper be despised!

III. THE LARGE REWARDS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE. 1. *The rewards were based on Divine equity.* If *we* keep his precepts, *he* will *keep* his covenant. A singular thread of equity runs through all God's dealings. History supplies a thousand examples. We may find fresh ones daily in our own observation. 2. *The rewards are various and ample. They embrace the present and the future.* To be the conscious object of God's love is a rich reward; and the smile of God will make all our ways to prosper. Large and rapid increase has been, from the Creation, a mark of Jehovah's favour. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." 3. *The rewards are distinctive.* Not only do they impart a large measure of personal enjoyment, but they are known and recognized by others as the rewards conferred by God. They make men conspicuous among their fellows. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." As our work and warfare are spiritual, so are our rewards spiritual also. Our reward, as conquerors over sin, is manifold, generous, enduring, satisfying. God will surely distinguish between the righteous and the wicked—between him that serveth him well, and him that serveth him not. In honour, they shall be as the antipodes asunder.—D.

Vers. 1—6.—*Judgment without mercy.* This decree is to be viewed—

I. AS A JUST JUDGMENT ON PEOPLES WHOSE INIQUITIES CRIED FOR VENGEANCE. The doomed nations had been long borne with (Gen. xv. 16). Their iniquities were of a kind and degree of enormity which imperatively called for a Divine interposition (Lev. xviii. 27, 28; ch. ix. 4). This was the true ground of God's dealings with them, and furnishes a sufficient answer to all cavils. The destruction of the comparatively innocent with the guilty may be explained in part by the existence in the offspring of the hereditary evil of their race. How often, under the Divine government, do we see illustrations of the same principle—the temporal consequences of transgression overflowing on those related to the transgressor! The lesson taught is God's inflexible determination to punish evil. There can be no ultimate toleration of sin in God's universe. It must be judged, rooted out, and the sinner who identifies himself with it destroyed.

II. AS A CLEARING FROM IDOLATRY OF THE LAND OF GOD'S ABODE. Not only could the practice of idolatry not be endured, but even its unhallowed monuments must not be permitted to remain, polluting with their presence the land of God's habitation—the peculiar seat of his majesty, the place of his holiness. Every trace of these impure worships must be swept away (ver. 5). The lesson taught is God's hatred of idolatry. It is a secondary matter that the gods are of wood and stone, and the worship one of altars, groves, and pillars. There is the formal idolatry of heathenism, and there is the less-avowed, but not less real, idolatry of hearts which have set up rival objects to God in their secret places—which have substituted the creature, in some form of it, for the Creator. The forms are as numerous as ever were the idols of heathen temples. A man may be an idolater of reason; he may worship art; he may bow at the shrine of mammon (Matt. vi. 24; Eph. v. 5); his god may be the praise of men; he may fling himself to be crushed before the worse than Juggernaut car of fashion; he may be a votary of lewdness. The worship may be avowed, or hidden away in secret desires and imaginings. It may be rendered in the most diverse places—in the laboratory, at the desk, in the art studio, in home circles, on the broad stage of public affairs, in the saloons of gay society. The real point of importance is that it is of the nature of idolatry, and that God abhors it and declares it to be incompatible with his residence in the heart. "The idols he shall utterly abolish" (Isa. ii. 18).

III. AS A PROTECTION TO THE ISRAELITES THEMSELVES. The tolerated presence of idolatry in Canaan would have been to the Israelites an irresistible temptation (ver. 4). We are taught: 1. To seek our friendships and alliances elsewhere than among the ungodly. 2. That it is our duty, not only to avoid occasions of sin, and to keep as far out of harm's way as possible, but to labour for the entire removal from our midst of what experience shows to be a deadly snare (Isa. lvii. 14).

Finally, severe as these commands are, we see reflected in them the three principles which, under widely different forms of manifestation, are to this hour to regulate the

relation of God's servants to the evil of the world. 1. No toleration of it (Matt. v. 29, 30). 2. No communion with it (2 Cor. vi. 14—18). 3. Unceasing war against it (2 Cor. x. 4; Col. iii. 5).—J. O.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Marriage in the Lord.* This law, forbidding marriages with the ungodly, is one for all time. The apostle revives it in 1 Cor. vii. 39. That marriage should be only in the Lord is evident—

I. FROM THE TRUE IDEA OF MARRIAGE. Two individuals unite their lives, and enter into a fellowship the most intimate possible—to what end? Surely that their natures may be raised to greater perfection, and that they may be better enabled to attain the ends of their existence. This implies a certain harmony of disposition, an essential accordance in the views taken of life and its duties. It is a union, as one has said, not merely between two creatures, but also between two spirits. But what communion, it may be asked, can exist in spiritual respects between two persons severed from each other in the deepest principles of their lives?

II. FROM A REGARD TO THE DIVINE BLESSING. Where one partner is irreligious, the blessing cannot rest upon the home in the same degree as where both are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Pet. iii. 7). Believers are to "agree" as touching what things they shall ask (Matt. xviii. 19). Variances even in godly households result in prayers being "hindered" (1 Pet. iii. 7). How much sadder the case of a home, so-called, where husband and wife stand so far apart that they cannot unite in prayer at all! And who that values God's blessing would willingly enter into a relation which inevitably stints and limits it?

III. FROM THE DANGER ACCRUING TO SPIRITUAL LIFE. The danger is not imaginary (1 Kings xi. 3). Where spiritual life is not destroyed, as we may hope that often it is not, yet nothing but harm can come from an association in every respect adverse to it. How intolerable to a spiritual mind to endure "the blight of all sympathy, to be dragged down to earth, and forced to become frivolous and commonplace; to lose all zest and earnestness in life; to have heart and life degraded by mean and perpetually recurring sources of disagreement" (F. W. Robertson)! This is the species of living death to which unequal yoking not unfrequently leads. The effects on offspring are also to be considered. Yet such marriages are rushed into, and, in the prevalent anxiety to make marriage the stepping-stone to wealth and social position, seem likely to become increasingly numerous. Would that men were wise, that they understood these things!—J. O.

Vers. 6—9.—*Reasons for non-conformity to the world, and for aggression on its evil.* I. THE HOLINESS OF OUR CALLING. (Ver. 6.) The believer stands to God in the relation described in this verse. He is one chosen from the unholy mass to be peculiarly God's property. He belongs to God in body, soul, and spirit. He is a vessel for the Master's use. His every power is to be consecrated. What higher dignity could a human being sustain than that? But the obligations are coextensive with the honour. This man is, in virtue of his holiness, summoned to take up an attitude of non-conformity to the world (Rom. xii. 2). In virtue of the same holiness, he is bound to unite with others in a sacred crusade against its evil.

II. THE GRACE OF OUR ELECTION. (Ver. 7.) This puts another powerful weight into the scale. Standing in so close and honourable a relation to God, the believer is bid look to the rock whence he is hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he is digged. Who made him to differ? Whence this mercy shown peculiarly to him? We need not press texts on election in favour of any special theory. Sufficient that every believer is willing to confess, as regards his own salvation, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). An elective purpose comes to light in his spiritual history (Eph. i. 4, 5). When tracing his salvation to its source, he is constrained to say, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 4, 5). All this implies special obligation to God's service.

III. THE MIGHT OF OUR REDEMPTION. (Ver. 8.) The redemption from Egypt, with its tragic accompaniments and mighty signs and wonders, was but a faint type of the

greater deliverance which God has now wrought for his Israel in Christ. We are entitled to put the greater for the less, and to plead the stronger claims which the redemption from sin and wrath establishes on the redeemed soul. The cost of our salvation is Christ's blood. What return can we conceivably make exhaustive of our obligations to Father and Son for so great a sacrifice?—J. O.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Lessons from history.* I. A LESSON IN GOD'S GOODNESS. In putting Israel into possession of the land of promise after so long a period of waiting, and at the cost of so much miracle, God gave the nation an irrefragable proof of his covenant-keeping faithfulness. How many difficulties, to the human eye, stood in the way of the fulfilment of that promise! And by what nice adjustments of providence, and what a subtly linked succession of events, was the fulfilment at length brought about! Israel had to be taken down to Egypt, there preserved till it grew and multiplied, passed through the iron furnace of affliction, brought up again with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm, conducted and provided for in the wilderness, legislated for and organized, strengthened to overcome its enemies. At what an expenditure of wisdom and power was all this accomplished! And how much forbearance and tenderness had to be shown to the people themselves in the course of their rebellious history! Faithfulness was thus emblazoned on every part of God's dealings with them. Another and greater promise, which hung still longer in suspension, has been fulfilled in the coming of that "Seed" in whom already all families of the earth are beginning to be blessed (Gen. xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 16). This fulfilment, above all, demonstrates that Jehovah, he is God, the faithful God, keeping covenant with them that love him.

II. A LESSON IN GOD'S SEVERITY. (Ver. 10.) That had been taught to Israel by many passages in their own history. They had seen God's judgments upon Pharaoh. They had experienced his severity in the plagues, etc., which had swept their own camp in punishment of disobedience. They had witnessed a whole generation turned back to perish in the wilderness. The lesson was now to be taught them by the destruction of these wicked nations. And as if to burn it more deeply, and for ever, into their minds and consciences, the sword of execution was put into their own hands. The two lessons need to be read together. God's severity, divorced from the discoveries of his grace, might appear to the on-looker harsh and cruel, whereas, as Bible history shows, judgment is "his strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21). On the other hand, the remembrance of his severity is needed to prevent the abuse of his goodness (Rom. xi. 22).—J. O.

Vers. 12—16.—*The rewards of obedience.* If Israel fulfilled its vocation, in keeping itself separate from the idolatries of the heathen, and in destroying them from the land; if further, in possession of the land, it adhered to God's commands, God would make his blessing rest on it in every sphere and department of existence.

I. TEMPORAL PROSPERITY IS A LEGITIMATE OBJECT OF DESIRE. Otherwise it could not be named as part of the blessing, nor could the hope of it be held out as an encouragement to the obedient. We naturally desire to see our affairs prospering. We justly rejoice in the prosperity of our nation. We are glad when trade is brisk, wages good, the comforts of life diffused through the different orders of society. But: 1. Prosperity is to be desired only in subordination to higher ends (Matt. v. 33). 2. Only in so far as it is good for us (3 John 2). 3. Not in excess (Prov. xxx. 8, 9). If God, in the exercise of his higher wisdom, withhold prosperity from us, the loss will be compensated by better blessings (Mark x. 29, 30).

II. TEMPORAL PROSPERITY, IN SUCH MODES AND DEGREES AS GOD SEES BEST, IS AN EFFECT OF THE DIVINE BLESSING. Godliness has promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come (1 Tim. iv. 10). It naturally tends to prosperity. Religion teaches men to be sober, righteous, and godly (Titus ii. 12). It condemns idleness, waste, dishonesty, and the whole series of vices which wreck health, squander property, and destroy confidence. Where religion prevails, men will be industrious, conscientious, orderly, and reliable. But, in addition to this natural tendency of religion to prosperity, there rests on the good man's lot what is distinctively spoken of as the Divine blessing. This will mingle itself with all he has and with all he does. It gives him favour in the eyes of men (Gen. xxxix. 21). It opens up his way for him (Ps. xxxvii. 5). It

protects him from injury (Ps. xxxvii. 33, 39). It overrules all events and influences, so that they work for his good. This is forcibly illustrated in the text, where blessing is represented as descending on the home, on the products of the land, on flocks and herds, on the bodily life, etc. The counterpart of the blessing is the curse (ver. 15). The wicked often prosper, but it is prosperity unblessed and unenduring.—J. O.

Vers. 17—25.—*God for us.* The numbers, strength, and fortified security of the seven nations made the conquest of Palestine a task of difficulty, and might naturally produce a disheartening effect on the invaders.

I. A NATURAL FEAR. (Ver. 17.) Like disheartening feelings may assail ourselves in presence of the strong spiritual opposition to be encountered in seeking to win the world for Christ. Our enemies are neither weak nor few; we will do well not to underrate them. The larger part of the globe is yet unoccupied by Christianity. Heathen systems are in possession, supported by the combined influences of tradition, custom, prejudice, and superstition, and presenting an apparently impregnable front to the thin ranks of their assailants. At home, how much of the Christianity is merely nominal! and how much of it is corrupted! We live in days of intense worldliness. The sceptical spirit, likewise, is pronounced and active. Brain and pen power of the highest order is enlisted in its service. Unbelieving science, infidel philosophy, rationalism in the Church. The press is a tower of strength to anti-Christian views of life and duty. While, at the other end of the social scale, the multitudes are sunk in indifference and vice. How are all these enemies to be overcome? May we not fear that, work as we will, we cannot succeed? The fears are groundless; but they are not without their use, if they make us feel that the conquest of the world is not to be achieved without much hard fighting.

II. A GROUND OF ENCOURAGEMENT. (Vers. 18—22.) This encouragement resolves itself into the simple truth that God is for us. He is mightier than our enemies, and will work on our behalf to secure their overthrow. 1. *With supernatural power.* In the past he had shown "signs and wonders," and had brought forth his people with a mighty hand (vers. 18, 19). The same power would help them still. It is encouraging to recall the supernatural strength for conquest which the gospel has already displayed. Think of our own land penetrated by a faith which sprang up 1800 years ago in remote, despised Judæa, with churches for Christ's worship dotting almost every street of every city, town, village, hamlet, throughout its length and breadth! How Utopian would such a work of conquest have seemed at the beginning—a dream of insanity! And this Divine energy for conquest inheres in the gospel to-day as truly as it did of old. 2. *With providential aids* (ver. 20). "Hornets"—types of secret, providential allies working under God's direction. The forces of providence are on the side of those who are working for the advancement of his kingdom. There are such secret allies in men's own hearts. We may compare to the hornets the secret thoughts and feelings—the stings of conscience, guilty fears, feelings of dissatisfaction, etc.—which, operating within, drive men out to join issue with the Spirit in his truth. God has his "hornets" also for arousing his own children out of their sloth and self-indulgence and forgetfulness of duty—sharp trials, vexations, griefs, etc.

III. A METHOD OF CONQUEST. "Little by little" (ver. 22). A law of providence and grace. Little by little God gives a man conquest over the evil in self, and his nature is sanctified. Little by little the world is conquered for Christ. The reason of the law is obvious. There is no advantage in having more than can be rightly used; *e.g.* a man who has more money than he can turn to good account, who has a larger estate than he can manage, who reads more books than he can mentally digest. The best method is "little by little"—mastering, consolidating, using what we have, before hasting to get more.—J. O.

Vers. 25, 26.—*The cursed thing.* The Israelites were not to desire the silver and gold on the graven images. They were not to take it. They were not to bring it into God's house. They were to detest and abhor it, to count it an abomination, a cursed thing, and to beware lest, by lusting after it, they became accursed like unto it. We are taught a lesson—

I. OF DISINTERESTEDNESS IN GOD'S SERVICE. No motive of gain was to be allowed to

mingle with their work. Their service was to be disinterested. Under the cloak of religious zeal there was to be no gratification of covetousness.

II. OF AVOIDING OCCASIONS OF SIN. The gold and silver of the idols tended to ensnare. There would be a temptation to a superstitious and idolatrous use of it (Judg. viii. 27).

III. OF REFUSING GAIN DERIVED FROM IMMORAL SOURCES. Tho Church is not profited by an influx of the money of the worldling. Still less are the gains of sin to be coveted by her: money derived from gambling, immoral speculation, bubble companies, gin-palaces, sale of irreligious and immoral books, etc.

IV. OF HEARTY DETESTATION OF EVIL. The gildings of vice have an attraction for many who dislike the thing itself. But vice is to be abhorred in its gilded forms, as in every other. "Looking begets liking."—J. O.

Vers. 1—5.—*Extermination with a moral purpose.* When the Israelites were to cross into Canaan, they were directed to *exterminate* the seven nations they would find there. This is their commission. The invasion is to be conducted upon this principle. And here let us notice—

I. NATIONS, LIKE INDIVIDUALS, MAY BECOME INCORRIGIBLE. There can be no doubt that sin tends to a final and incorrigible condition if the Divine mercy is not accepted and allowed to exercise its undermining power. These nations of Canaan were manifestly in this hopeless, utterly ruined state. God regarded them as beyond redemption, and their continuance would only prove pestilential.

It is well for individuals, as well as nations, to realize this sad possibility.

II. GOD HAS EVERY RIGHT TO REMOVE INCORRIGIBLES FROM THE EARTH. As Creator, he has given them every advantage and chance. But the deceitful heart has spurned admonition and mercy. The result is that there is nothing left for them but to be cut off righteously, and that without remedy.

But the propriety of extermination should be determined by the Lord himself (cf. Dr. Mozley's 'Old Testament Lectures,' No. IV., on 'Exterminating Wars').

III. THE ISRAELITES WERE SENT INTO CANAAN TO ESTABLISH THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD. They were not to be ashamed of their religion, but to establish it, and to allow nothing to interfere with it. As Abraham had entered Canaan centuries before as the promulgator of a new religion, so his descendants were to enter into the promised land with the view of establishing the religion of Abraham in spite of all possible opposition. They were not ordinary but *religious* emigrants.

IV. THE SPARING OF THE CANAANITES WOULD ONLY ENDANGER THEIR RELIGIOUS FAITH. Some people think they may associate with irreligious people, and even marry them, in the hope of bringing them to a better way of thinking. The plea is generally one got up in the interests of self-pleasing instead of duty. But such hopes are generally disappointed; and the Apostle Paul warns us distinctly against the temptation (2 Cor. vi. 14).

Now, the Israelites were warned against making any covenant with the Canaanites or showing any mercy towards them. Association would only lead to apostacy on the part of Israel. It would be allowing the pestilence to propagate itself. The alternative for Israel was "Exterminate these incorrigible sinners, or by their seductions they will lead you on to your destruction at the hands of a just God" (ver. 4).

V. EXTERMINATION MAY CONSEQUENTLY, IN SOME CASES, BE THE ONLY COURSE CONSISTENT WITH THE DIVINE HONOUR AND THE INTERESTS OF HIS KINGDOM. If people have a right to preserve themselves from a physical pestilence, have they not an equal right in the case of moral pollutions? Besides, the clear direction of God vindicates the whole procedure as right as well as wise (cf. Jellett's 'Moral Difficulties of the Old Testament,' p. 38; also Dr. Arnold's 'Sermons on Interpretation of Scripture,' p. 31). —R. M. E.

Vers. 6—8.—*On the election of nations.* We are here introduced to remarkable words touching the election of, or we might say, *selection* of the Jews. The leading principles of the Divine administration are here set before us. The following points may be noticed:—

I. THE JEWS WERE SELECTED NOT ON ACCOUNT OF ANY NATIONAL SUPERIORITY.

Moses tells them that, numerically, they were the fewest of all people. It was not numerical strength, nor national advantages of any kind, which induced God to select them.

II. THEY WERE SELECTED BECAUSE GOD CHOSE TO SET HIS LOVE UPON THEM. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; . . . but because the Lord loved you." It was sovereign love which is its own reason. And, in the last resort, it is to this we must come. We can give no better account of the matter than that God chose to do it.

III. THE DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT WAS THE PROOF OF HIS SOVEREIGN LOVE. Hereby he kept his promise made to their fathers, and fulfilled his own gracious purpose. The series of judgments, the outcome of his mighty hand, which proved how infinitely stronger it was than the hand of Pharaoh, while severe to Egypt, were love-tokens to Israel.

IV. THE CHOICE OF ISRAEL WAS WITH A VIEW TO THEIR BEING A HOLY PEOPLE AND A SPECIAL PEOPLE UNTO THE LORD. Electing love extended to a nation or a people is really a Divine *investment*. The result is the holiness and consecration of the people. It is this holiness, this sense of consecration, which proves the electing love of God. And this is all the more intense when it is seen clearly that God's love is manifested, not on the ground of national or personal merit, but as a matter of free grace.

And, doubtless, the Jews proved themselves a special people, although far from a perfect people. They were the custodians of the holy oracles for ages. They showed, and they still show, wonderful linguistic and other qualifications. All this, let us believe, is due to that grace and Divine development through which, as a nation, they were permitted to pass.

The practical application of this subject is surely this: 1. To receive God's mercy under an abiding sense that it is undeserved. 2. To cultivate the sense of obligation to God for his undeserved mercy, which it is intended to foster. 3. And to realize the consecration of spirit through which all that is noble in human life comes. God saves us that we may serve him. He shows us his loving-kindness that we may become through it "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—R. M. E.

Vers. 9—16.—*The Divine veracity.* Moses here speaks of the Divine faithfulness to those that *love* him, and also to those that *hate* him. Those who love him will have his mercy unto a thousand generations; those who hate him will have their hatred returned. He will repay such to their face.

Let us look at the Divine veracity in the two aspects of blessing and of judgment.

I. GOD'S GRATITUDE FOR MAN'S LOVE. God has a love of sovereignty, as we have just seen, which has no reason but itself; and he has also a love of *gratitude* for love shown to him. It is of this Moses here speaks. It is thus expressed elsewhere: "I love them that love me." And here notice—

1. *When we love God we try to keep his commandments.* This is exactly what Christ, incarnate Love, claimed. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Love is the spirit in which Law should be kept, and through which Law becomes blessedness.

2. *Obedience secures blessing.* God promised Israel certain temporal blessings: increase of the nation and fertility of soil and increase of their flocks and herds. And, in the rude age in which they lived, it was needful to encourage them by such very sensible signs.

This is not so needful now. The blessing comes now in more *spiritual* ways, but still it comes in the wake of obedience. Answers to prayer are still doubted by men who doubt God's existence and reign, but they are most thoroughly believed in by believers. The blessing comes to those who look for it.

3. *It is expected to characterize generations.* For this is the greatest blessing of all when the succeeding generation grows up true to God. It is this form of the Divine faithfulness which is most sought—that even to a "thousand generations" they may remain true to him.

II. GOD'S RIGHTEOUS WRATH AT MAN'S HATRED. Under a righteous government, hatred should have its retribution just as well as love its reward. So is it with God. Men may hate him, and when he repays them to their face they are getting only their due.

God is as faithful in his threatenings as in his promises. Why should he not be so? And his hatred can have but one issue—destruction! How needful, then, to lay down the arms of our rebellion! If our hard hearts cherish any hatred towards him, the sooner we repent of this the better, and take refuge in his love. He waits to be gracious; but, should we despise his mercy and still do him the injustice to hate him, we must prepare for encountering his righteous wrath.—R. M. E.

Vers. 17—26.—*Canaan gradually won.* The winning of the whole land seemed a great task—too great for sense and sight. But the Divine programmes, though comprehensive, are taken in detail. The Israelites are to win the country little by little, and remove the people gradually. In this patient work they may expect the co-operation of God.

I. THE WORK BEFORE US SEEMS OF OVERPOWERING DIMENSIONS. Must we win a victory over all the evil within us? and then contemplate a victory over all the evil around us? Both problems are vast. The more we know our own hearts, the greater seems the extent to be won. The more we know of the world around us, the more appalling seems the proposal of God. It is a great work we are asked to do certainly.

II. BUT BY-PAST DELIVERANCES OF GOD ARE INTENDED TO REINFORCE OUR FAITH. Just as the mighty deliverance from Egypt was set before the Israelites to encourage them in their invasion, so our individual conversion should reinforce our faith in the power of God. The God who can conquer such hearts as ours can surely help us in further conquests. We hope for victory because of victory already won.

III. VICTORY IN DETAIL IS BETTER THAN VICTORY WHOLESALE. We imagine that victory at once over all internal and external enemies would be better than victory covering long years and entering into vast details. But, if Israel had been able to smite all the Canaanites dead at a blow, the beasts of the field would have so overrun the land that it would have been reduced to wilderness, instead of being a land of promise. It is better, therefore, to overcome the Canaanites gradually. They will protect the inheritance from the wild beasts till the heirs arrive.

In like manner, it is better—

1. *To beat our sins in detail.* We are better acquainted with our own nature and God's grace when we have to deal with our sins in detail. We get gradually better and purer and more humble. This is better than a leap into perfection out of sin.

2. *It is better to win the world in detail.* God is not going to give the earth to his people some fine morning, and save us the trouble of winning it. It is better for us to plod on, winning country after country, and individual after individual, and the whole world at last.

3. *The promised land is to be made a holy land.* The Israelites were to remove the Canaanites and their abominable modes of life and worship, to make of Palestine a holy land. Jerusalem—Elkoods—the holy city, is to be the expression of the Divine idea.

Let us conform our hopes to God's magnificent designs, believing that the gradual is generally the best, the microscopic work the most beautiful in the end.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

FURTHER EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE, ENFORCED BY A REVIEW OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS.

Vers. 1—6.—That they might be induced the more faithfully to observe all the commandments which had been enjoined upon them so as to go on and prosper, they are called to remember the experiences of the forty years in the wilderness, when God guided them and disciplined them for their good. He humbled them that he might test the state of their heart and affections towards him, using the distress and privations to which they were subjected as means of bringing out what was in them, and of leading them to feel their entire dependence on him for help, sustenance, and guidance. Not only by commands difficult to be obeyed laid on men, and by mighty works done in their view, does God prove men (cf. Gen. xxii. 1, etc.; Exod. xv. 25; xx. 20); but also by afflictions and calamities (Judg. ii. 22;

iii. 4; Ps. xvii. 3; lxxxi. 7, etc.), as well as by benefits (Exod. xvi. 4). Humbled so as to see his own weakness, chastised out of all self-conceit by affliction, man is brought to submit to God, to hear and obey him; and along with this the experience of God's goodness tends to draw men, in grateful acknowledgment of his mercy and bounty, to yield themselves to him and sincerely and lovingly to serve him (cf. Rom. ii. 4).

Vers. 1, 2.—God's dealings with the Israelites were disciplinary. Both by the afflictions and privations to which they were subjected, and by the provision they received and the protection afforded to them, God sought to bring them into and keep them in a right state of mind towards him—a state of humble dependence, submissive obedience, and hopeful trust. But that this effect should be produced, it was needful that they should mark and remember all his ways towards them.

Ver. 3.—God humbled the Israelites by leaving them to suffer hunger from the want of food, and then supplying them with food in a miraculous manner. They were thus taught that their life depended wholly on God, who could, by his own creative power, without any of the ordinary means, provide for the sustaining of their life. **And fed thee with manna** (cf. Exod. xvi. 15). It is in vain to seek to identify this with any natural product. It was something entirely new to the Israelites—a thing which neither they nor their fathers knew; truly bread from heaven, and which got from them the name of *manna* or *man*, because, in their wondering ignorance, they knew not what to call it, and so they said one to another, *Mán hoo?* (מָן הוּא), *What is it?* and thenceforward called it *man*. **That he might make thee know**, etc. "Bread," which the Jews regarded as "the staff of life," stands here, as in other places, for food generally; and the lesson taught the Israelites was that not in one way or by one kind of means alone could life be sustained, but in the absence of these God could, by his own fiat, provide for the sustenance of his children. **Every** word—literally, *all*, everything whatever—**that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord**, *i.e.* all means which God has by his word provided, or by his word can provide, for the sustenance of life. So our Lord cites this passage in replying to the tempter, who had suggested that if he was the Son of God he might relieve himself from the pangs of hunger by commanding the stones which lay around to become bread. Our Lord's reply to this is virtually, "I have this power, and could use it, but I will not; for this would imply impatience and distrust of God, who has engaged to sustain the life of his servants, and who can, by the mere word of his mouth, by his creative will, provide in an extraordinary way for the sustenance of life when the ordinary means of life are wanting." "Jesus means to say, 'I leave it with God to care for the sustaining of my life, and I will not arbitrarily and for selfish ends help myself by a miracle'" (De Wette, note on Matt. iv. 4; see also Meyer on the place).

Ver. 4.—As the manna furnished by God's creative power saved them from hunger, so by God's providence and care their raiment was marvellously kept from decay, and they had not to go barefoot from their sandals being worn out. **Waxed not old upon thee**; literally, *did not fall away, waste away from upon thee*. This cannot mean that such was the abundant supply of raiment to the Israelites in the Arabian desert, that there was no need for them to wear garments rent and tattered from long use, as they had large flocks and herds whence a sufficient supply of wool and leather could be obtained, and there were among them skilled artificers, by whom these could be made into articles of clothing (Rosenmüller, J. D. Michaelis, etc.). For, as Knobel observes, "This were something too insignificant beside the miraculous manna; and besides, this does not lie in the expression, which rather intimates that the clothes upon them were not worn out nor fell from them in rags, because God gave them a marvellous durability." At the same time, there is no reason to suppose that the Israelites did not make use of such supplies as were within their reach for purposes of clothing, any more than that they lived only on manna during the forty years of their wandering. Still less need we resort to such fanciful suppositions as that the garments of the Israelitish children expanded as they grew up, like the shells of snails—which is the notion of some of the Jewish rabbins, and adopted by some of the Christian Fathers (see Deyling, 'Obss. Sacc.,' II. xvii. p. 247). **Neither did thy foot swell.** The verb here is found in only one other passage (Neh. ix. 21), where this passage is repeated; and the meaning is doubtful. The LXX. render here by ἐτυλώθησαν, *became callous;* but in Neh. the rendering they give is διερράγησαν, *were torn*, the object torn being, according to the Cod. Vat., πόδες αὐτῶν, *their feet*, according to the Cod. Alex., τὰ ὑποδήματα αὐτῶν, *their sandals*. In ch. xxix. 5, the shoe or sandal is specially mentioned in the same connection as here. The verb, however, cannot mean tear or torn, neither does it mean swell; the idea involved is rather that of softening, or melt-

ing, or flowing; and the meaning here seems to be, "Thy foot did not get into a bruised and wounded state"—which would have been the case had their sandals not been preserved from breaking or being worn out.

Ver. 5.—Thus God educated, disciplined, and trained his people as a father does his child. **Chasteneth.** The idea is not so much that of *punishment* or *chastisement*, properly so called, as that of *severe discipline* and *training*. God made them feel his hand upon them, but ever for their good; the end of the discipline to which they were subjected was that they might keep his commandments and walk in his ways, so as to enjoy his favour (cf. Heb. xii. 5, etc.).

Vers. 7—20.—The land on which they were about to enter is described as a good land, fertile and well watered, and yielding abundant produce to its cultivators; and they are cautioned against forgetting, in their enjoyment of the gift, the bounty of the Giver, or congratulating themselves on having achieved the conquest of such a land, instead of gratefully acknowledging the grace which had sustained them during their protracted wandering in the wilderness, and by which alone they had been enabled to take possession of that favoured land.

Vers. 7, 8.—**Brooks of water,** running streams, mountain torrents, and watercourses in the narrow valleys or wadys; **fountains,** perennial springs; **depths,** "the fathomless pools from which such streams as the Abana (now Barada), near Damascus, spring up full-grown rivers, almost as broad at their sources as at their mouths" (Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 214), or this may include also the inland seas or lakes, such as the sea of Galilee and Lake Hûleh. Palestine is in the present day, on the whole, well supplied with water, though the distribution is very unequal, many parts being almost wholly destitute of supply, except from what may be collected from rain in tanks or cisterns; and there is no reason to suppose it was different in the ancient times. As compared, however, with the desert to which the Israelites had been so long accustomed, and even with Egypt from which they had escaped, the country on which they were about to enter was well watered.

Ver. 8.—"Palestine has been celebrated in all ages for three products: corn, wine, and oil, which still continue to be its most valuable crops" (Ibid., p. 189). The principal corn crops were wheat and barley. The vine was largely and carefully cultivated; the olive required little cultivation, being almost a spontaneous growth, and forming one of the most valuable productions of the country; the fig was also indigenous in Palestine, and still grows there, both wild and cultivated, in abundance; that the pomegranate (*rimmon*) also was very abundant may be inferred from the number of places named from this (cf. Josh. xv. 32; xix. 7, 13; Judg. xx. 45, 47; xxi. 13; 1 Chron. iv. 32, etc.). **Honey.** The word so rendered (*d'bash*) is used both of the honey of bees (Lev. ii. 11; ch. xxxii. 11; 1 Sam. xiv. 26, etc.; Ps. lxxxi. 17; Prov. xvi. 24, etc.), and of the honey of grapes, a syrup obtained by boiling down the newly expressed juice of the grape to a half or third part of its bulk, and still known among the Arabs by the name of *dibs* (Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' ii. p. 442; Smith, 'Bib. Dict.,' *s.v.* 'Honey'). In the wilderness, the people had murmured that they had been brought into an evil place, no place of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; and where there was no water to drink (Numb. xx. 5). Moses here tells them that the land they were about to occupy was not such a place, but one abounding in all those things of which they had found the wilderness so destitute.

Ver. 9.—**A land whose stones are iron.** Minerals do not abound in Palestine; the hills are for the most part calcareous; but by the side of the limestone in the north of Canaan ferruginous basalt appears in large masses, and on Lebanon ironstone abounds. Near Tiberias are springs largely impregnated with iron, as are also those at Hasbeija, on the Hermon range, as well as the soil around that place. Traces of extinct copper works are also to be found on Lebanon (cf. art. 'Metals,' in Kitto and Smith; Ritter, 'Geography of Palestine,' i. 248). The Israelites, however, do not seem to have carried on mining operations themselves, but to have been content to obtain supplies of the useful metals from their neighbours (2 Sam. viii. 8; 1 Chron. xviii. 8; xxii. 3, 14).

Ver. 10.—**When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God.** "From this place the Jews have made it a general rule, or, as they call it, an affirmative precept, that every one bless God at their meals, that is, give him thanks for his benefits; for he blesses us when he bestows good things on us, and we bless him when we thankfully acknowledge his goodness therein" (Patrick).

Vers. 11—14.—Wealth is apt to engender in the possessor of it a spirit of self-gratulation and pride, and abundance of good things to induce men to be luxurious, "to trust in uncertain riches," and to be for-

getful of the bounteous hand from which all that they enjoy has come. Against this the people are here cautioned and warned.

Ver. 15.—**Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness**, wherein were **fiery serpents**, etc. "The fiery serpent" and "the scorpion" (sing.) are in apposition to the "wilderness," and illustrate its terribleness. *Fiery serpents*—*ὄφεις τοὺς θανατοῦντας*, LXX.—or burning serpents, so called from the burning pain caused by their bite; probably the cerastes, or one of the naja species (cf. Numb. xxi. 6).

Ver. 16.—The grand end of all God's dealings with the Israelites in the desert, both the trials to which they were subjected and the benefits they received, was that he might do them good ultimately. **Thy latter end**; not the end of life, as in Numb. xxiii. 10, but the state ensuing on the termination of their period of discipline and probation in the desert (cf. Job viii. 7; xlii. 12; 2 Pet. ii. 20). God thus dealt with the Israelites as he still deals with his people; he afflicts them not for his pleasure but for their profit (Heb. xi. 12); he subjects them to trial and varied discipline that he may fit them for the rest and joy that in the end are to be theirs.

Vers. 17, 18.—The blessing in store for them was God's free gift to them; and when they came to enjoy it they were not to allow themselves to **say in their heart**, *i.e.* to think or imagine, that the prosperous condition in which they were placed was the result of their own exertions; they were to ascribe all to God's gracious bounty, for from him had come the power by which prosperity had been gained, and this he had given, not on account of any merit in them, but that he might fulfil his covenant engagements to their fathers. **Get wealth** עָשָׂה חַיִל, to make strength, to gather substance (Gen. xii. 5), to procure wealth (Ruth iv. 11, margin; Ezek. xxviii. 4). **As it is this day.** "As was quite evident then, when the establishment of the covenant had already commenced, and Israel had come through the desert to the border of Canaan (see ch. iv. 20)" (Keil).

Vers. 19, 20.—Moses enforces his counsel by reminding them again that only destruction awaited them should they forget the Lord their God and apostatize from him (cf. ch. iv. 25, etc.; vi. 14).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Life's meaning discerned by the retrospect of it.* The remark has not unfrequently been made that incidents closely connected cannot be rightly understood till the time has come for them to be reviewed in their entirety as matters of history. What is true of events generally, applies in all its force to the wonders included in the rescue and wanderings of the people of Israel. And that which may be said of them, holds good, in this respect, of the life-story of God's children now. Two words would sum up the pith of their experience—"redemption," "training." Redeemed first, trained afterwards. Redeemed, that they might be trained; trained, that they might become worthy of the redemption. Both the redemption and the training had in Israel's case a depth of meaning of which the people knew little at the time, but which Israel's God intended from the first. Afterwards, their varied experiences, when reviewed as a piece of history, became matter for grateful record and adoring praise. The paragraph before us now is "*the aged lawgiver reviewing the experiences of Israel in their wanderings.*" Four lines of meditation open up—

I. THERE ARE MANY LESSONS WHICH GOD'S CHILDREN NEED TO LEARN. 1. "To humble thee" (ver. 2), *i.e.* to bring them to feel their dependence on God. This, indeed, seems such an obvious truth, that men ought not to need to be taught it. But we must remember that, before we are redeemed, our training for eternity has never begun at all, and that when redemption is with us a realized fact, we then present ourselves to God only in the rough, relying on his love to make us what we should be. And one of the lessons we have thoroughly to learn is that "without Christ we can do nothing." 2. "To prove thee" (ver. 2). A double proof is indicated. (1) What they were: "To know what was in thine heart." (2) What they would do: "Whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." There is no subject on which the young convert is so ignorant as—himself; and he never can become what a Christian should be till he sees his own conceit. He must become a sadder man ere he can be a wiser one. 3. "That he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone." It has been remarked that, as Moses in this clause refers to the manna, the

meaning is: (1) That it is not from nature but from nature's God that supplies come. (2) That God is free to adopt any course he pleases in providing food. Doubtless this is true. But it is not the whole truth, nor do we deem it *the* truth here intended. We know that with these words our Saviour repelled one assault of the tempter. This being so, we are set somewhat on a different track for their interpretation (cf. Matt. iv. 3, 4). Our Saviour's reply is, in effect, "Man has a double life, not only that of the body, but also that of the spirit; you ask me to nourish the lower at the expense of the higher—to get food for the body by a negation of the self-sacrifice for which I came. It is not bread alone which sustains the man. He has a higher self, which lives on higher food, and I cannot pamper the lower at the cost of the prostration of the higher." Now, with such light thrown on the passage by our Lord, we are led to regard the words of Moses as referring not only to the supply of food, but rather to the entire discipline in the wilderness, as intended by God to bring out to the people the reality and worth of the nobler part of man. Our God cares more for growth of soul than for comfort of body. His aim is not only to find us food, but to train us for himself. Nor was it that they only might learn these lessons, but that others in after time might see on what rough and raw material the Great Educator will condescend to work, and with what care he will work upon it.

II. GOD ADOPTS VARIED METHODS OF TEACHING THESE NEEDED LESSONS. The clauses in the paragraph indicate these. 1. There was "the way" by which they were led. It was not given to Israel to choose it. It was not the shortest way. It was "the right" way, appointed by God. 2. The method of sending supplies: "Day by day the manna fell." They were thus taught to live by the day. 3. The disappointments they met: "These forty years." If they had been told, when they set out from Egypt, that so long a period intervened between them and Canaan, they would scarcely have set out. And if God were to unveil to us the incidents of coming years, we could not bear the sight. 4. The wants they felt: "He suffered thee to hunger." God sometimes lets his people feel how completely they are shut up to him. 5. Yet there were constant proofs of thoughtful care (ver. 4). We do not understand any miracle involved here, still less so odd a one as the rabbis suggested, that the children's clothes grew upon their backs. The meaning of Moses surely is, "God so provided for their wants that they needed not to wear tattered garments, nor to injure their feet by walking without shoes or sandals." 6. There was also chastening (ver. 5). This word includes not only correction but all that belongs to the training of a child (cf. Heb. xii. 7; 2 Sam. vii. 14; Ps. lxxxix. 32; Job vii. 17, 18; Prov. iii. 11, 12; Rev. iii. 19).

III. THERE IS A REASON INDICATED HERE WHY GOD TAKES SO MUCH PAINS TO TEACH THESE LESSONS. Ver. 5, "As a man chasteneth his son." We might well ask, Why should the Great Supreme do so much to educate into shape such raw and rough natures as ours? That he should do so at all is, *per se*, far harder to believe than any apparent variation of the ordinary course of physical nature. The reason is found in the words, "Ye are sons." Israel was God's son, even his firstborn. Believers are the adopted children of God; hence the greatness of their destiny, and the earnestness of their Leader in training them for it. It may be said, indeed, by an unbeliever, "*I have all these changes in life, but they are not training me*," etc. No, because the one condition is wanting under which all these come to be a training—sonship. This order is never reversed—rescued, *then* educated. If men have not known the first, they cannot understand the second.

IV. IF GOD CARES SO MUCH TO TRAIN, WE SHOULD CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHAT HIS TRAINING MEANS. (Vers. 2, 5.) Let us understand what a high moral and spiritual aim God has in the culture of this life of ours! *The life of a man* is not a mere material something, on a physical basis; it is the expression of a plan of God. Then let us be as anxious to be rightly educated for eternity, as God is so to educate us. Never let us allow the lower ends of life to master the higher (ver. 6). Ever let us keep the end of life in view. For eternity we are meant, and for eternity we should live. *Some have life largely in retrospect, even now.* Do they not see that the past is explained by the present? Even so the present will be explained by the future (John xiii. 7). Let them rejoice that they have a Father who guides by the way which he sees to be right, and not "according to their mind." *Some have life before them.* 1. Let it be the supreme desire to let life become what God wants it to be—a continuous advance

in preparation for heaven. This is of more consequence than all the ease and comfort in the world. 2. Recognize and praise the kindness of God in giving men these chequered experiences of life, if they do but educate for higher service. Don't let us wonder if we cannot understand God's ways at the time. We shall in the end. 3. If we want God to train us for glory—first, we must come out of Egypt. The education cannot begin in the land of bondage,—we must first be the Lord's free men; then, let us leave the way and method of the culture entirely to God. If he were to let us choose the way, what mistakes we should make! Our faith in God even in youth should be such as to lead us to say, "Father, my supreme desire is to grow like thee, and to live with thee. I know not by what paths I need to be led, nor through what discipline I need to be brought, to bring about this end. I leave all in thy gracious hands, desiring that thine infinite wisdom and love should order all things for me. Here I am. Take me as I am, all guilty and defiled. Make me what I should be; and if by thy grace I am ripened for and led to Canaan, then will I sing, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to him which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!'"

Vers. 7—10.—*The duty of thankfulness for the bounty of God in nature.* The people of Israel were being led by the Lord their God to a land beautiful, luxuriant, fruitful. (For an account of the productions of Palestine, of the fertility of its soil, and of the treasures hidden in its hills, see works by Kitto, Stanley, Wilson, Thomson, and others; as well as Bible dictionaries and cyclopædias, under the several headings.) Evidently, at the time Moses uttered the words before us, the people had not reached that land; though they were expecting shortly to do so. In view thereof, Moses bids them (ver. 10) bless the Lord their God for the good land he had given them. Hence our subject: "the duty of recognizing the hand of God in the bounties of nature, and of thankfulness for the use of them."

I. THERE IS A MARVELLOUS ADAPTATION IN EXTERNAL NATURE TO THE CONSTITUTION AND WANTS OF MAN. (Each of the varied terms used in vers. 7—9 will afford vast scope for the expansion of this thought. And the wider the range of knowledge, the greater delight will such expansion afford to one who longs to make others see the variety of the Divine goodness.) What a vast and prolonged preparation must there have been to fit this world for the use of those who should hereafter dwell upon it! And then, when all is ready, man, the crown of God's earthly creation, comes last upon the scene, with "all things put under his feet."

II. ALL THE WEALTH OF EARTH IS A GIFT TO MAN. "The good land which he hath given thee" (ver. 10). It is but reasonable that we look at the profusion of riches upon and within the earth as a "gift." "What have we that we have not received?" Where were we when "the foundations of the earth" were laid? Yet some would have us adopt a "religion of humanity," as if humanity were to be praised for the physical basis of its own existence! A Power not in man nor of man hath given us all.

III. THE GIFT COMETH FROM A PERSONAL BEING. "The Lord thy God for the good land which *he* hath given thee." The Power from which nature's wealth cometh, is not a blind non-intelligent force. For man's own intelligence has to be accounted for; and even if impersonal forces could have wrought out matter, it is axiomatically certain that impersonality could not produce personality. So far natural religion can go. But our text takes us further.

IV. NATURE'S WEALTH COMETH FROM THE LORD OUR GOD. "*Our* God." He is not an "Unknown." We may not set up an altar, Ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ. We know him as a redeeming God, as One who delights to exercise loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment in the earth. And since God is revealed to us in Christ, we learn thereby that the long preparations of earth have been going on with a view of setting up on it the new creations of redeeming grace. This is "the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory." Oh, the boundless meaning of the expression, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"!

V. ALL THIS SHOULD CALL FORTH SPECIAL THANKFULNESS FROM OUR HEARTS AND LIPS. "Thou shalt bless," etc. We may go very far beyond the merely personal consideration which Moses suggests here. We know more clearly, therefore we should

praise more intelligently, devoutly, and warmly. Israel might include some, *we* should take in all, the following considerations, to stimulate to intense thankfulness. 1. We were nothing, had nothing, and yet we have all given to us "richly to enjoy." 2. We are sinful, and have forfeited thereby even our natural claim. Yet all is continued to us, in unwearying kindness and unabated faithfulness. 3. We have not only the actual possessions of earth's wealth, but are put in possession of the mind and purpose of the Great Framer of all, that ours may be the praise of understanding hearts. 4. We read that God wills to have on this globe a ransomed people, ours, therefore, may well be the jubilant praise of redeemed men. 5. We are not here merely to enjoy this world and then to know no other, but to enjoy this world as a stepping-stone to another. Hence ours should be the triumphant shout of men with a glorious destiny ahead, and of those who use this world so as to help them to a better. Finally: 6. The present form of earth is destined to fall away. God will "make all things new" (Ps. cii. 26; Heb. i. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 13). We for whom this world was made, will then be rejoicing in God, and will be enraptured to see what ever-advancing forms of beauty "he hath prepared for them that love him." Thus ours should be the praise of men on whom even the too oft-repeated dirge, "passing away," leaves no trace of gloom or of regret. If we are the redeemed of the Lord, our life may be a song of thanksgiving, and our death a shout of victory!

Vers. 11—18.—(See Homiletics: ch. vi. 10—19.)

Ver. 16.—(See Homiletics: ch. viii. 1—6.)

Vers. 17, 18.—*Danger of self-glorification.* The enjoyment of God's mercies, which should be so provocative of thankfulness, may become a snare, if we are not careful to guard against their misuse. Several of the dangers to which prosperity makes us liable are dealt with in the Homily referred to above. Here, there is one specially named, which is perhaps the most common of all, viz. that of attributing success in life to one's own skill, or wisdom, or might: "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (see Ezek. xxviii. 4, 5; xxix. 3; Ps. xii. 3; Judg. vii. 2). So strong is the tendency to accredit ourselves with any gains which may be ours, in a vain, self-glorifying spirit, that we cannot be too anxious to guard against it, by exposing the sin and evil of it.

I. IT IS UNTRUE. However much care we may have taken to ensure success, whether we gain our end or no, has been dependent at every moment on a conjunction of circumstances, which we were as powerless to bring about or to avoid, as to create the tides or arrest the moon. And even the ability to take care, and to put forth effort, has been a gift. We are violating the first rudiments of most certain truth, when we take the credit of success in life to ourselves.

II. IT IS DISLOYAL. For it is God who gives us the power to get wealth. We owe all we have to his bounty, and even the very breath we draw, to his unceasing care. The laws on which we have relied to bring prosperity have been of God's creation. And for a creature to plume himself on the gifts of the Creator, who can adequately set forth *such* injustice to high Heaven?

III. IT IS UNGRATEFUL. For, as if it were not enough that the Most High should have all our faults to bear with unceasingly—is it not marvellously ungrateful that creatures who would have long ago been cut down except for the long-suffering of God, should pride themselves on the abilities which have been in such forbearance continued to them?

IV. IT IS MOST MISCHIEVOUS IN ITS EFFECTS. For it nurses pride, instead of fostering thankfulness. It genders selfishness, it freezes benevolence, and will surely breed a covetous, tyrannous, haughty disposition, if not fought against and overcome.

V. IT IS OFFENSIVE IN GOD'S SIGHT. (Prov. vi. 16, 17; Jas. iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5.) God sets himself in array against pride of heart. How can it be otherwise? "What communion hath light with darkness?" God will dwell with the contrite and humble spirit, but "the proud he knoweth afar off."

VI. IT IS THE REVERSE OF THAT WHICH GODS DESIGNS. (Ver. 16.) For the varied experiences of life are an appeal of God to men as moral beings, "to humble them and

prove them;" and if, in spite of all, any take the credit to themselves of their own prosperity, God's own intent in their life-history is being reversed.

VII. IT WILL SOONER OR LATER BRING HUMILIATION AND SUFFERING. (Prov. xxix. 23.) Again and again does our Saviour also lay down this principle, that pride exposes to much shame (Matt. xxiii. 12; Luke xiv. 11; xviii. 14). It is not for us to say, in any individual case, in what form the debasement or disappointment will come. But come it will. It may be in one or more of the following ways: 1. By the removal of the wealth which was gained, and a sudden plunge from prosperity to adversity. It is sad when men have to part with all before they will learn that God gave all! 2. By depriving men of any further power to attend to worldly concerns, they may have to see their utter helplessness without God. 3. By a searching dealing with the spirit in the furnace of tribulation, God may graciously burn up the pride, and purge away corruption. But the process is a terrific one, even here. It is being saved, "yet so as by fire." Still, it is better to be saved, even thus, cost what it may (1 Cor iii. 18). It is only when God succeeds in "humbling" us, that he can do us good "at the latter end." 4. If, after all warnings, teachings, and strivings, God's voice is still unheard, and pride still rears itself up against him, he will reckon the proud one as "the chaff which the wind driveth away." And oh, how will this self-elation shrivel up then (see Isa. ii. 10—22)! God will not give his glory to another (1 Sam. ii. 30; Mal. iv. 1). What reversals of position will that day witness! That which the world reckoned as "great wealth" will come to nought, and the "wealthy" one will be bankrupt for eternity; while those who in lowliness of spirit have received thankfully the least of God's gifts, shall have *him* as their "exceeding great Reward." To such he will say, "Friend, come up higher!"

Vers. 19, 20.—(See Homiletics: ch. xxviii.)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The moral uses of memory.* The memory of man exerts a mighty influence over his history and his destiny. Minus memory, man would be altogether another being. Remembrance of the past is a guide-post, or a beacon, for the future.

The key-word of this passage is "all:" "all the way;" "every word;" "all the commandments."

I. THE SCOPE OF MEMORY. "All the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee." 1. *Remember thy needs*—how many, how various, how urgent. Our hourly dependence upon material substance for food, and upon a Power beyond and above ourselves, ought to make us profoundly humble. Is there an occupant of this globe so full of need of many sorts as man? 2. *Remember thy special perils.* Every man has his particular dangers, as the Hebrews had in the desert—perils arising from outward circumstance, moral temptations, evil powers, personal defects and infirmities, distinctive vocation. 3. *Remember God's suitable supplies.* Their needs in the desert were *unique* and *unprecedented;* yet God was prepared for every emergency. It was open to him either to diminish the need, or else to institute new methods of supply. What if the sandy soil refused to yield a harvest! *He* can distil a harvest from the dewy air. What if flax be wanting as a material from which to fabricate raiment! *He* can stay, by a volition, the progress of decay and wear. What though the journeys tend to injure and blister the feet! *He* can make the skin durable as iron and brass. There shall be special blessing for special need. Every man's history is more or less *special.* Every point of *our* past history teems with footprints of God. Placed under the microscope of pious memory, every atom yields surprising lessons, sparkling truths.

II. THE MORAL USES OF MEMORY. They may be summed up under one head, viz. to perceive that God was in every event—that every word of God is a force for giving life. 1. *A calm review of the past discovers the moral purpose God has kept in view.* As when a man stands in the midst of complicated machinery, he is deafened by the roar, and bewildered by the manifold movements, that he cannot detect the definite end which that machine serves. To gain that knowledge, he must move away, and

take in by one glance the effect of the whole. So, amid the whirl and excitement of passing events, we do not discern the definite purpose God has in view. We must get a bird's-eye view from a new elevation. To reduce the pride of man's heart, to persuade him that God rules, are laudable purposes of Divine leadings. 2. *The remembrance of the past exhibits the fatherly disciplines of God.* Mingled tenderness and severity is conspicuous in God's dealings. We can see *now* that we had the sunshine of his favour when we kept the pathway of obedience, and that as often as we became wayward, the rod of his indignation fell. We can see *now* the likeness between God's treatment of us, and our fatherly treatment of our children. Faithful discipline is better every way than foolish fondness. 3. *Memory revealed to them the fact that God was making in their life a great experiment.* The vicissitudes and hardships and surprising deliverances in the wilderness were now seen to be tests, by which God would discover whether the people were worthy of Canaan, competent to be the depository of his truth. The object was to *prove* them, whether they could be entrusted with this Divine mission. So, every man's life is God's experiment. The question to be solved in each of our lives is this, "Are we worthy a place in God's eternal kingdom?" Every effort is made by God to make this experiment successful. 4. *A review of the past serves to show that man has a nobler life than that of the body.* The main purpose why the Hebrews had been fed for forty years on manna was *this*, viz. to demonstrate that our well-being is not dependent on material things. Man lives not by bread, but by the Divine word. Even bread itself is a product of God's word. All the processes of mastication, digestion, assimilation, are the effects of Divine command. Our entire life is nourished by the word of God. Practical obedience is to the soul's life what digestion is to the life of the body. "My meat and drink is to do the will of my Father in heaven."

III. THE BENEFICENT EFFECTS OF A MEMORY DEVOUTLY EXERCISED. If we remember "all the way"—its subtle and intricate windings, and the faithful leadership of our Guide; if we appreciate the vital value of "every word" of Jehovah; we shall resolve henceforth to keep "all his commandments." 1. *Remembrance will excite gratitude.* Our gratitude is largely deficient, because we do not consider and reflect. If memory will fulfil her office well in supplying fuel for the altar of the heart, the flame of love will burn with a more constant glow. 2. *Remembrance of Divine favours will convince us that God's interests and ours are identical.* It is the natural effect of sin to persuade us that God is our enemy. We say, "Depart from us." But, when with unbiased mind we ponder the proofs of God's kindness, we yield to the evidence that he is a true Friend. Experience teaches us that it is our interest to obey. 3. *Remembrance of past favours aids the operations of conscience.* The conscience becomes hard before it becomes blind. Whatever keeps alive *feeling* in the conscience benefits the whole man. If there be light and life in a man's conscience, he will resolutely say, "I must not sin. I will fear God and keep his commandments." 4. *Vivid remembrance of God's past goodness is a vigorous incentive to obedience.* A sense of obligation for the past cannot fully express itself, except in acts of hearty obedience. When we realize fully that our every step has been under God's guidance, that every good thing has come from our Father's hand, and that every *word* of his is empowered to give us joyous life,—then are we constrained to say, "All that the Lord commandeth us will we do."—D.

Vers. 7—20.—*Wealth perilous to piety.* God's policy in the government of men is to win by prodigal kindness. A churlish parsimony has never been found with him;—the very opposite. An open eye discovers widespread munificence—a royal banquet. The present is only a sample of the future. The full inheritance is always the object of hope. The children of a king have large expectations. This passage contains—

I. A NOTABLE INSTANCE OF DIVINE MUNIFICENCE. 1. *The heritage of Israel was a "good land."* Both climate and soil were suited to every variety of natural production. The fruits of the North, and the fruits of the Tropics, might alike find a home there. Untold ages had passed, during which God had been slowly preparing that land for Israel, and storing it with elements of fertility, and wealth of minerals. 2. *Others had been employed to bring the virgin soil under culture.* The harder and more unprofitable toil had been accomplished. The house of Israel was already well furnished, as when

a bridegroom brings home his bride. 3. *There was every variety of provision.* This betokened thoughtful foresight and tender affection. No needed good had been overlooked. The beneficent Creator had furnished, not only the necessaries of life, but every luxury. Whatever could please the palate, or gratify a taste, or invigorate the health, was there. These were pictures of heavenly good; for as yet the people could not appreciate the imperishable treasures of the spirit-land. 4. *This inheritance was unpurchased and unreserved.* It made them, body and soul, debtors to God. Had they preferred to purchase it with money, they had nought of their own; they could not create the medium of barter. They had not obtained it by the merit of obedience. They were the recipients of distinguished favour—pensioners on the Divine bounty. If it be said that they obtained the land by right of conquest, it must be counter-said that the Lord had given them victory. The battle was the Lord's. Herein God designed to conquer their proud spirits by the generosity of his love. 5. *This inheritance was not the final end.* God had ulterior purposes of good yet beyond, towards the realization of which this was a stepping-stone. His next design was to "establish his covenant with them." At present, they were reaping the fruit of their fathers' faith. This was a reward for Abraham's piety. If they should prove faithful, they too should be promoted to higher things. Canaan was not a home, but a school-house.

II. THE PASSAGE CONTAINS VALUABLE COUNSEL. The counsels of clear-eyed, venerable wisdom are more precious than pearls. 1. *The counsel prescribes grateful recollection.* Having received such measureless kindness, it would be the rankest villany to forget the Giver. Over the sunken rock of ingratitude a triple beacon stands: "Beware!" Give this murderous reef ample sea-room. *Here* many a gallant ship has gone to pieces. 2. *The counsel directs suitable requital.* "Thou shalt *bless* the Lord thy God!" But can man confer any blessing on his Maker? Can we add to God's wealth or enjoyment? In a sense we can. Dispositions are accepted as deeds. If we are not willing to give to God *all we have*, our hearts are base. We can bring him the wealth of our love. We can bring him the music of our praise. We can bring him the devotion of our lives. Does his voice whisper to us from heaven, "It is well that it is in thine heart"? Does he smell the sweet savour of our sacrifice? 3. *The counsel includes practical obedience.* Obedience, if genuine, will be complete. It will embrace every known command. If we observe some commandments, and consciously neglect others, *this is not obedience*; we are merely doing our own will. Whether we perceive the reason of the command or not, we shall honour it as our Lord's will—as our Lord himself. No matter what compliance costs, we will give it. Ours not to reason why. True obedience is hearty, complete, perpetual.

III. THIS PASSAGE INDICATES IMMINENT PERILS. 1. *Wealth often leads to fleshly indulgence.* With abundance in our possession, it is easier to indulge the appetites than to deny them. Yet the higher life can only be developed at the expense of the lower. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom." 2. *Wealth breeds self-sufficient pride.* It serves to weaken our sense of dependence upon God. When from our visible stores every felt need can be supplied, we are prone to forget the unseen Giver. Most men may well thank God that the temptations of wealth dwell not under their roofs. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" In the hot-bed of riches, the flower of sweet humility does not thrive. 3. *Wealth loses sight of its own origin.* It has a short memory for obligations. The millionaire soon forgets the days of poverty and struggle—forgets the Friend who succoured him in his extremity—kicks away the ladder by which he rose. Riches naturally encumber and stifle the flame of religious feeling. 4. *Riches beget in us false confidence.* Like Nebuchadnezzar, we say, "Is not this great Babylon, that *I* have built?" We find a delicious pleasure in hearing our own skill and sagacity praised. The tide of natural feeling sets strongly towards self-trust. 5. *Riches tend towards idolatry.* In the days of poverty we did not object to be accounted singular; but in the time of wealth we aspire to do as others do. It is arduous to have to think for one's self, to rely upon one's own judgments, to pursue a course which men will ridicule. If others bow down to their own net, or rear a popular idol, we too must bow down and worship it. Wealth has given us prominence, set us on high, and we must not risk our new reputation. It is easier to drift with the stream than to stem it. 6. *Justice, with her balances and sword, is always nigh.* No man can defraud God. If the Amorites were thrust out

from the land because they had become flagrant idolaters, so also shall the Israelites if they become votaries of idols. As the Hebrews conquered the Canaanites, so did the Assyrians vanquish the Hebrews. One law shall prevail for all. If we have not been overwhelmed in one disaster, we may be overtaken suddenly by another minister of justice. Sin shall bear its own proper fruit. Every nation and every individual shall "go to his own place." From the summit of earthly magnificence to the lowest pit of misery, there is often a single step. "I saw," says Bunyan, "that there was a way to hell, even from the gate of the celestial city." "Be not highminded, but fear." Riches make a slippery descent to ruin.—D.

Vers. 2—6.—*The uses of adversity.* It is a great matter when in any experience of life we can read the Divine purpose in bringing us through it. The speaker in these verses unfolds the design and lessons of the wilderness discipline. Our Lord, in the temptation, found an application to himself (Matt. iv. 4). Every believer will find the same in seasons of adversity.

I. ADVERSITY A DIVINE ORDINANCE. (Ver. 2.) 1. *Divinely sent.* "The Lord thy God led thee" (cf. Matt. iv. 1). Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness. Adversity may come through natural laws, as the necessary result of sin or folly; even so it is of God's ordinance—the punitive expression of his will. But adversity is not necessarily punitive. The best man living may be led into straits of affliction, of which his own actions are not in the least the causes (Job i., ii.). It is God who has "led" him thither for some purpose of his own. 2. *The duration of which is divinely determined:* "these forty years." God marks for us the term of our probations. Jesus was "forty days" without bread (Matt. iv. 2).

II. THE GRACIOUS USES OF ADVERSITY. That of the Israelites was designed: 1. *To humble them.* It aimed at destroying the spirit of self-dependence, out of which comes pride and haughtiness (vers. 17, 18). It made them feel how absolutely they depended for everything upon God—taught them how at every step they hung upon his will. 2. *To teach them reliance.* Faith is reliance on a Divine Power working for us and in us. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Faith cannot tell, but it waits God's time and God's way of providing, confident that in his own way he *will* provide. This was Christ's attitude in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 4). 3. *To test obedience.* Adversity acts as a test of the disposition. The end of God's discipline is to bring to light hidden lines of character, and to advance life to a crisis. It forces us to moral determination. Will we obey God or will we not? The younger generation of Israel, whatever their faults, showed by their conduct then and thereafter (Josh. xxiv. 31) that the discipline of the wilderness had not been without good results.

III. GOD IS WITH US IN ADVERSITY. Though bread failed, God fed them with manna (ver. 3). Their every want was supplied. Jesus teaches us to trust the Father for the supply of all our needs (Matt. iii. 25, 34). His own trust, vindicated in the refusal to make stones into bread, was rewarded by angels ministering unto him (Matt. iv. 11). He "ate angels' food" (Ps. lxxviii. 25). *Our* wants are not supplied by miracle, but by providence, which is all-sufficient to provide for us in every ordinary case.—J. O.

Ver. 3.—*Not bread, but God's Word.* The lesson of the manna gathered up into one concise sentence. It teaches us—

I. To SEE GOD IN SECONDARY CAUSES. The Word of God is as truly the creative and nourishing principle in ordinary bread as it was in the *extraordinary* supply of manna. It is not bread, as something subsisting independently, but bread as the product of Divine power, and as possessing properties which the Word of God imparts to it and upholds in it, which is the staff of life and the object of our prayers (Matt. vi. 11).

II. To BELIEVE IN GOD ACTING ABOVE NATURE AS WELL AS IN IT. If God wills life to be sustained, he can sustain it in other ways than by bread. He is not tied up to one set of means. He can act, if it pleases him, independently of means altogether, the creative word being sufficient to sustain. This is the direct meaning of the text, and a part of the significance of Christ's answer to the tempter (Matt. iv. 4).

III. To RECOGNIZE IN MAN THE EXISTENCE OF A HIGHER LIFE THAN THE PHYSICAL.

The physical is not the highest in us. We do not live by bread alone. A higher life is found in depending on God's Word, in obeying it, and in abiding by it, whatever the immediate consequences. The lower life may need to be given up that the higher may be saved (Matt. xvi. 25).—J. O.

Ver. 5.—*God the Chastener.* I. CHASTISEMENT IS A NECESSITY OF OUR MORAL NATURE. He is no wise parent who spares the rod when the good of the child requires that chastisement be administered. Gentler methods failing, the undutiful son *ought* to be chastised. He *deserves* it. He *needs* the discipline. It acts wholesomely upon him, awakening conscience, begetting respect for paternal authority, deterring from evil, leading probably to penitence and submission.

II. CHASTISEMENT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF GOD'S TREATMENT OF HIS CHILDREN. His chastisements proceed from love (Heb. xii. 6). They are wisely meted out, and are always for our profit (Heb. xii. 10). God can *bear* to punish. He will not allow our faults to slip. He will make us feel when we do wrong, hedging up our way, and laying stripes upon us. God's children have the comfort of knowing that they are thus in a Father's hand, and that in all they suffer they are being chastened by unerring love and wisdom.

III. CHASTISEMENT IS A PART OF GOD'S DISCIPLINE OF US FOR WHICH WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL. Not murmuring, but submitting to it. Without this chastisement: 1. How forgetful of God would we soon become! 2. How haughty and self-willed! 3. How dilatory in duty!—J. O.

Vers. 7—10.—*The good land.* I. A LAND OF GREAT NATURAL ADVANTAGES—*a wealthy possession.* Wood, water, metals, a fertile soil, good pasturage, honey in the clefts of the rocks, etc. (ch. xi. 11, 12; xxxiii. 13—16, 19, 25). Dr. Dykes remarks on it as uniting, as no other does, the two indispensable conditions of central position and yet of isolation, and points out that few regions offer so few temptations to corrupt the simplicity of their inhabitants, or better facilities for the defence of their liberties ('Abraham,' ch. iii.). A yet richer inheritance awaits the Christian, who is brought through the fire and water of tribulation to "a wealthy place" (Ps. lxvi. 12; 2. Cor. iv. 17, 18; Heb. xi. 16; 1 Pet. i. 4).

II. A LAND OF GREAT OUTWARD PLEASANTNESS—*a beautiful possession.* The speaker dwells in captivating detail on the features of its beauty—its hills and valleys, gushing with springs and cleft with innumerable water-courses; picturesque in its scenery, richly cultivated, diversified in its natural productions; blending with its agricultural and pastoral beauties the graces of the vine-clad slope, of the olive garden, of orchards of luscious fruits. A type of the fairer land beyond—the Canaan of the skies.

III. A LAND OF EXHAUSTLESS PLENTY—*a satisfying possession.* "Eat bread without scarceness," etc. (ver. 9). God was not ashamed to be called their God, having provided for them so rich a possession. Yet how poor were its satisfactions as compared with those which await believers (Rev. xxi. 4)!

The land was given them in fulfilment of promise; for the possession of it God had been preparing them in the wilderness; and the sharpness of the desert experience made the rest and delights of it sweeter when they came. "Trials make the promise sweet," etc.—J. O.

Vers. 10—19.—*The dangers of wealth.* I. WEALTH IS DANGEROUS WITHOUT THE PREVIOUS TRAINING OF ADVERSITY. Those who, cradled in the lap of luxury, have never known struggle and difficulty are rarely persons of meek, humble, chastened dispositions. As rarely are those whose schemes have been so uniformly prosperous as to give colour to the thought, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." The former class lack moral fibre, are seldom competent to grapple with the problems of earnest life, shrink from action, and consequently fall an easy prey to the temptations of their wealth. The others are bold, daring, self-sufficient, and superior to religious considerations. They waive God aside from their plans and schemes—"I do not need that hypothesis"—and refuse to worship, honour, pray to, or serve him. Adversity, to a certain extent, tends to correct these faults. It teaches humility and

dependence, proves the heart, and forms it to habits which enable it to use wealth rightly.

II. WEALTH IS DANGEROUS, EVEN WITH THE TRAINING OF ADVERSITY, UNLESS THE LESSONS OF ADVERSITY HAVE BEEN IMPROVED. Adversity, unhappily, does not always produce in men's hearts the salutary effects which philosophy assigns to it. It may harden instead of softening and subduing. Multitudes pass through it and are none the better. They are unyielding, unsubmissive, impenitent. They grow bitter in spirit, and accuse the God of heaven. In such a case the return of prosperity, or the gift of it, is no blessing. The heart gets haughtier than ever, and God is defied (Obad. 3, 4). It is a serious question for a *nation* to put to itself, after passing through a period of adversity, Is it morally the better for its sufferings? For, if not, the revival of prosperity will mean but the revival of the old follies, extravagances, and inflations—the very things which formerly led God to turn his frown upon it.

III. THERE IS A DANGER, WHEN WEALTH COMES, OF THE LESSONS LEARNED IN ADVERSITY BEING AGAIN FORGOTTEN. This is the peculiar danger apprehended in the text. Wealth has so subtle and ensnaring an influence, it draws the affections so stealthily away from God, that no temptation is to be compared with it in point of insidiousness. A threefold danger: 1. Undue elation of heart. 2. Forgetfulness of God. 3. A spirit of self-sufficiency and self-glorification. The preventive lies in the cultivation of a thankful spirit (ver. 10), and in the recollection that the power to get wealth is not of ourselves, but from God (ver. 18). This is the root-error in the matter—stopping at second causes, putting nature and nature's laws, or our own wisdom, energy, and forethought, in place of him without whom we could not think a thought, move a muscle, or carry through to completion one of our purposes. Best preventive of all is the laying up of treasure in heaven; for, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. vi. 19—22).—J. O.

Ver. 10.—*The blessing of a thankful spirit.* I. A THANKFUL SPIRIT CONSERVES THE BLESSINGS OF THE PAST. It goes back on God's dealings with it. It keeps alive the memory of his goodness. It delights in counting over the blessings it has received (Ps. xl. 5). In it the fountain of gratitude can never get frozen up, for the springs are daily flowing from a warm heart (Ps. ciii. 1—4).

II. A THANKFUL SPIRIT ENABLES US TO USE ARIGHT THE BLESSINGS OF THE PRESENT. It guards against sinful elation, against proud self-sufficiency. It keeps us from forgetting whence our blessings flow. By a sense of God's goodness daily renewing itself, it makes the heart kind and sympathetic, sensitive to the wants and woes of others. The spirit is softened and sweetened. Under adversity, it conduces to resignation and cheerfulness.

III. A THANKFUL SPIRIT HELPS US TO PRAY FOR BLESSINGS IN THE FUTURE. Hence the rule that prayer is to be accompanied with thanksgivings (Eph. v. 20; Col. iii. 15; Phil. iv. 6). Thanksgiving strengthens faith, gives encouragement, enables us to pray with due submission to God's will, prepares us for the reception of the blessings that we seek. Without thankfulness for past mercies, it is impossible to pray aright for future ones.—J. O.

Ver. 16.—*Good at the latter end.* I. GOD'S DISCIPLINE OF US IS NOT WITHOUT ITS END. No man even, whose action has any meaning in it, but has an end in what he does. It may be alleged that God's action has regard to men only in the mass; that in that view of it his action has an end; but that a special purpose is not traceable in his dealings with individuals. The truer philosophy sees purpose everywhere. The individual soul is of interest to God. He deems it worthy of being an end in itself. Though subordinately to the general good, he shapes his providence with a view to its individual well-being (Matt. x. 29—31). For—

II. GOD'S DISCIPLINE OF US IS MEANT TO TURN TO OUR ULTIMATE ADVANTAGE. "To do thee *good* at thy latter end." The *immediate* object of God's discipline is to form character; to create and develop love, trust, and obedience; to uproot evil dispositions; to break down self-will and self-dependence. The *ultimate* end of it is the service and blessedness of heaven. There may be some service which God is preparing us for on earth, some possession he wishes to give us, some trust he is about to repose in us,

But heaven is the goal of all (2 Cor. iv. 17; 1 Pet. i. 7; Rev. iii. 10—13; vii. 13—17).

III. THE END OF GOD'S DISCIPLINE OF US WILL NOT BE FULLY SEEN TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED. Till then our duty is to do present work, and improve by present training.—J. O.

Vers. 1—6.—*The lessons of the wilderness.* Moses here recalls the leadings of God in the wilderness, for the warning and instruction of the Israelites. And we are taught, surely, such lessons as these—

I. THE WAY OF SALVATION IS ONE ALSO OF HUMILIATION. This is, indeed, God's plan, "to hide pride from us." The way of salvation through Christ is *humiliating.* We are proved by it and made to see what is in our heart.

II. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS A WAY OF MARVELLOUS MERCY. For God supplies our wants and sustains us in a truly marvellous way, like the Israelites in the wilderness. Thus—

1. *The manna was to teach them dependence on his word.* It was given when they were hungry and despairing; it was given daily; its only guarantee of continuance was God's promise;—all was, therefore, to keep them depending upon his sure word.

And life's discipline brings us to the same persuasion that man must live upon the promise proceeding out of the mouth of God (cf. Matt. iv. 4). Our Saviour vanquished Satan's insinuation that he must use his miraculous power or perish, by resolving to continue trusting in God.

2. *The raiment did not wax old, to strengthen still further their trust.* It was a wonderful arrangement which allowed them forty years' wear in the wilderness out of the same garments. It must have been good clothing from Egyptian looms. But after starting there it remained, resisting the tooth of time. Each Israelite had evidence on his person of a particular providence.

3. *Neither did the pilgrims become footsore.* Their feet did not swell. They were made equal to their journey. The wilderness was not *too* rough for them. Their freedom from bodily inconvenience must have been a great source of satisfaction and comfort to them.

In a similar way does God supply all our need and fit us for our pilgrimage.

III. GOD'S CHASTISEMENTS ARE PATERNAL. So was it with Israel in the wilderness. They suffered at the hands of God, but it was what wayward children might expect from a faithful parent.

So is it with ourselves (cf. Ps. ciii. 13; Heb. xii. 1—14). Pain becomes blessed when we know that love sent it for a gracious purpose. We are all in the hands of a Father in heaven. He deals with us according to his infinite wisdom and love. Let us make more of the lessons of this wilderness journey than ever, and go on in the strength of God towards the everlasting home, profiting by his chastisements on the way.—R. M. E.

Vers. 7—20.—*God forgotten amid second causes.* The support of the wilderness was manifestly miraculous. They could not doubt their dependence there upon God. They might murmur even amid daily miracle, but they could not doubt it. It would be different in Canaan, and it is in view of this Moses warns them. There they would get sustenance in ordinary ways; and they might say that their own power, and not God's blessing, made them wealthy.

I. THERE IS A VERY GREAT TENDENCY TO FORGET GOD AMID THE ORDER OF NATURE. It is supposed God has nothing to do, because we get our supplies through steady "second causes." But God claims recognition when he blesses us through ordinary channels as well as when he blesses us through extraordinary. The natural order is either due to God or arranged itself. We have not credulity sufficient for the latter hypothesis, and must accept the former.

II. WHEN GOD ASKS US TO BE FELLOW-WORKERS WITH HIM, IT IS NOT TO BE ENGROSSED WITH OUR WORK AND TO IGNORE HIS. In the wilderness God fed them out of his own hand, so to speak. But in Canaan he directed them to work for their daily bread. They were raised from being "spoon-fed" to be "fellow-workers." The temptation in Canaan was to think that their own hand and power had produced the wealth.

It is the same still. From being fellow-workers with God, men, by mere forget-

fulness, pass into the delusion of being sole workers. Life is workable, they think, without God. Atheism is the principle underlying such a life.

III. THIS UNHOLY INDEPENDENCE OF SPIRIT IS THE SURE PRELUDE OF NATIONAL DECAY. It is not national "self-reliance" which serves a state, but national reliance upon God in the use of the means he has appointed. Nations that think they can get on alone are left at length to do so, and God-deserted they perish.

The Canaanites were illustrating this in their own case. They should be a warning to Israel. Living without God in the world, depending on themselves, they were about to be removed violently from their ancestral seats. It was so afterwards with Israel. They were as a nation effaced from the land where they had been placed in probation. The captivity of the ten tribes was terrible, and so was that of Judah and Benjamin.

It is this which nations must still guard against. God will not be ignored. If nations attempt it, they only efface themselves. Dying dynasties and scattered nations proclaim the existence and retribution of God.

IV. HOW NEEDFUL, THEN, TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S HAND IN ALL THINGS! The procession of nature—all that is beautiful in second causes, has come from him. The "First Cause" may surely be allowed to work through "second causes" without forfeiting his right to recognition and thanksgiving. Our times are largely atheistic, because our little knowledge of second causes affords such fussy occupation to us, that we have not taste or time to see the First Cause behind all and using all for his glory.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

DISSUASIVES FROM SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Vers. 1—6.—Israel might acknowledge that it was of God's free gift that they possessed the land of Canaan, and yet might flatter themselves by thinking it was because of their righteousness and goodness that the gift was bestowed. To guard against this, Moses tells them that not because of their righteousness would God go before them and drive out the mighty peoples that then occupied the land, but because of the wickedness of these peoples themselves were they to be extirpated (vers. 1—6). He further reminds them of their transgressions in the past, and how they thereby came under the Divine displeasure, and were saved from destruction only through his earnest intercession (vers. 7—24).

Ver. 1.—**This day**; at this time, very soon. **Nations**, etc. (cf. ch. vii. 1). **Cities** (cf. ch. i. 28).

Ver. 2.—**Anakim** (cf. ch. i. 28). It was a common saying, **Who can stand before the sons of Anak!** But even these gigantic foes should be unable to stand before Israel (cf. ch. vii. 24).

Ver. 3.—**Understand therefore this day**; rather, *And thou knowest to-day* or *now*. The expression corresponds to ver. 1, "Thou art to pass . . . and thou knowest." In the victory they had obtained over Sihon and Og, they had already had experience of the Lord's going before them, and leading them on in triumph. The repetition of the **He** in this verse is very emphatic. **Consuming fire** (cf. ch. iv. 24). **Quickly**, or *suddenly*. There is no contradiction here of what is said in ch. vii. 22; for there the reference is to the possession of the land by Israel, here it is to the destruction which was to come on the Canaanites—the former was to be by degrees, the latter was to come suddenly and overwhelmingly. **As Jehovah hath said unto thee** (cf. Exod. xxiii. 23, 27, etc.; ch. ii. 24, etc.).

Vers. 4, 5.—**Speak not thou in thine heart** (cf. viii. 17). The distinction between **righteousness** and **uprightness** (straightness) of heart, is that the former (צֶדֶק) has reference to rectitude of conduct, the latter (יֹשֶׁר) to rectitude of motive and purpose. "By naming justice [righteousness], he excludeth all merit of works, and by righteousness [uprightness] of heart, all inward affections and purposes, which men might plead, notwithstanding that they fail in action. Yet these two are the chief things which God respecteth in men (Ps. xv. 1, 2; 1 Chron. xxix. 17)" (Ainsworth).

Ver. 6.—**Stiffnecked**, *hard of neck*; stubborn, obstinate, rebellious.

Vers. 7—25.—Moses reminds them of many instances of their rebelliousness by which they had provoked the Lord, from the time of their escape out of Egypt until their arrival in the plains of Moab. Their rebellion began even before they had wholly escaped from their oppressors, before they had passed through the Red Sea (Exod.

xiv. 11). Even at Horeb, where, amid the most affecting manifestations alike of the Divine majesty and the Divine grace, just after the Lord had spoken to them directly out of the fire, and whilst Moses had gone up to receive the tables of the Law, on which the covenant of God with Israel was based, and whilst that covenant was being struck, they had sinned so grievously as to make to themselves a molten image, which they worshipped with idolatrous rites (Exod. xxxi. 18—xxxii. 6; cf. ch. xxiv. 12, etc.).

Ver. 9.—The clause, **Then I abode . . . water**, is a parenthesis; the sentence runs on from **When I was gone**, etc., to **Then** [not *And*] **the Lord delivered unto me**, etc.

Ver. 10.—**The day of the assembly**; the day when the people, called out by Moses, were gathered together in the plain at the foot of Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 17).

Vers. 12—14.—(Cf. Exod. xxxii. 7—10.) **Let me alone**; literally, *Desist from me*, i.e. Do not by pleadings and entreaties attempt to prevent me; in Exod. xxxii. 10 the expression used is, "Let me rest; leave me in quiet (הַנִּיחָה לִי); cease to urge me."

Ver. 17.—Moses cast from him the two tables of stone on which God had inscribed the words of the Law, and broke them in pieces in the view of the people, when he came down from the mount and saw how they had turned aside from the right way, and were become idolaters. This was not the effect of a burst of indignation on his part; it was a solemn declaration that the covenant of God with his people had been nullified and broken by their sinful apostacy.

Vers. 18—20.—Moses interceded with God for the people before he came down from the mount (Exod. xxii. 11, etc.); but this he passes over here, merely referring to it in the words, "as at the first," and makes special mention only of a subsequent intercession, that mentioned in Exod. xxxiv. 28. In the account in Exodus nothing is said of Moses interceding for Aaron specially, as well as for the people generally; but prominence is given to this here, "not only that he might make the people thoroughly aware that at that time Israel could not boast even of the righteousness of its eminent men (cf. Isa. xliii. 27), but also to bring out the fact, which is described still more fully in ch. x. 6, *sqq.*, that Aaron's investiture with the priesthood and the maintenance of this institution was purely a work of Divine grace" (Keil). That Aaron, however, was regarded as especially to be blamed in this matter is clearly intimated in Exod. xxxii. 21, 22.

Vers. 22—24.—Not only at Horeb, but at other places and on other occasions, had Israel provoked the Lord to wrath by their contumacy. **At Taberah**, by their complaining and discontent (Numb. xi. 1—3); **at Massah**, by their murmuring because of the want of water (Exod. xvii. 1, etc.); **at Kibroth-hattaavah**, by despising the manna, and lusting for flesh to eat (Numb. xi. 4, etc.); and at **Kadesh-barnea**, when on the confines of the promised land, they distrusted God, reproached him for having brought them there to be destroyed, and sought to return to Egypt (Numb. xiv. 1, etc.; ch. i. 26). "The list is not arranged chronologically, but advances from the smaller to the more serious forms of guilt. For Moses was seeking to sharpen the consciences of the people, and to impress upon them the fact that they had been rebellious against the Lord (see at ver. 7) from the very beginning, 'from the day that I knew you'" (Keil).

Ver. 25—29.—Having enumerated these instances of the rebelliousness of the people, Moses reverts to the apostacy at Sinai, in order still more to impress on the minds of the people the conviction that not for any righteousness or merit of theirs, but solely of his own grace, was God fulfilling to them his covenant with their fathers.

Ver. 25.—**Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, as I fell down** at the first; rather, *the forty days and forty nights in which I fell down.* The reference is to the intercession before Moses came down from the mount, described in Exod. xxxii. 11—13. (For the form of the expression, cf. ch. i. 46.)

Vers. 26—29.—In these verses the substance of Moses' intercession is given, and it is substantially in agreement with the account in Exodus. Moses pleaded with God not to destroy that people which was his own, which he had redeemed for himself and brought out of Egypt; besought him to remember their pious ancestors, and not to look on the stubbornness and sin of the people; and urged that the Divine honour was concerned in their being conducted to Canaan, and not let perish in the wilderness.

Ver. 28.—**The land**, that is, the people of the land, as in Gen. xli. 36—the Egyptians; the verb, accordingly, is in the plural. Were the Israelites to perish in the wilderness, the Egyptians might say that God had destroyed them, either because he was unable to obtain for them the land he had promised them, or because he had ceased to regard them with favour, and had become their enemy. Neither of these could be, for were they not the people of his inheritance, and had he not showed his

power already in delivering them out of Egypt?

"As Moses in this chapter recalls to the remembrance of Israel this and that *place, time,* and *occasion* of their sinning, so should each one often seriously reflect on his past life. This conduces to humility, to watchfulness, and to effort at improvement" (Herxheimer).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—(See Homily on ch. iv. 23, 24.)

Vers. 4, 5.—(See Homilies on ch. iii. 11; vii. 1—11.)

Vers. 6—12.—*A six-weeks' religion; or, emotional religiousness not vital godliness.* The homiletic treatment of the incidents referred to in ch. ix. 1—x. 5, will require a careful comparison of these chapters with the fuller account in Exod. xxxii.—xxxiv. The special object, however, which Moses has here in view, is to show how entirely God's mercy to Israel was a self-moved one, and that it was not due to any virtue on the part of the people. So far from that, they had been wayward from the first. Even in Horeb (for such is rather the force of the particle rendered "also" in ver. 8), "Even in Horeb, ye provoked the Lord to wrath." Here is suggested our first study of this sad incident in Israel's history. Its occurrence was on this wise—

About fifty days after leaving Egypt, they were gathered beneath Mount Sinai, to receive the Law from the Great Supreme. They reverently watched when Moses went up; they saw the bounds put, beyond which they must not pass; they trembled at the majesty which was before and above them, and awaited the words which should be spoken. The words of the vow went up from their lips, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Having received the Law, Moses went down and rehearsed it to them. A *second* time they responded, "All that," etc. This was not enough. The Law was to be written, and read over to them, that their vow might be neither blind nor rash. And a *third* time the same response was returned. Whereupon the covenant was ratified with blood, which was sprinkled on the book and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant," etc. (see Exod. xxiv. 3—8). It seemed as if a fair start had been made. Egypt had been conquered, the people had thankfully accepted the new state of things on which they had entered, and nothing was wanting but the carrying out of that allegiance they had so repeatedly vowed. Moses, however, has yet to be a while in solitude with God, to receive further instructions; hence, having made arrangements for the conduct of affairs in his absence, he again ascends the mount, and is there for forty days. Unable to understand the reasons for so long a delay, the people think that Moses has disappointed them, or that he is lost on the mountain, or has perished in the flame! The thought, once conceived, gathers strength, and the very people who a few weeks before had seemed so impressible for good, are now as inflammable for evil! They rush upon Aaron, saying, "Up," etc. They wish for something to strike the senses. The pure conception of an unseen God they were not cultured enough to retain. Aaron was far too easily wrought upon by them. If it be thought that he expected the people's love of finery to be stronger than their idolatrous propensity, and that they would withdraw *their* demand when he made his for their ear-rings, etc., we save Aaron's principle, but at the expense of his judgment. Anyway, the calf is made. It is not the calf, however, that they worship, for they proclaim a feast *to Jehovah*; it is the second commandment they are breaking, not the first. Alas! alas! their triple vow, ratified with blood, they break, and in less than six weeks they are openly and riotously setting at nought the very Law they had sworn to obey! How can such a fearfully rapid retrogression be accounted for? If we regard it as a mere piece of history, with which we have no concern, we shall miss the intent of the writer (for see 1 Cor. x. 1—12). Here are men who at one moment bid so fair, yet so shortly after upsetting all! The theme thus opened up to the preacher is surely this—"*Emotional religiousness not vital godliness.*" No one with much knowledge of human nature, and certainly few pastors of any lengthened experience, can have failed to observe cases far too nearly resembling that before us, of a merel

transient emotion in religion, raising the hopes of anxious observers one day, only to disappoint them ere many days are over, and compelling the plaintive words, "Your goodness is like the morning cloud and the early dew, it goeth away!" And, maybe, the change is as inexplicable to themselves as it is disheartening to others. It may be helpful if we try to remove the perplexity by a study of several inquiries which such cases suggest.

I. How far does this emotional religiousness go? There may be a "receiving the Word with joy;" giving to it, not only a respectful attention, but even mental credence, gladsome admiration, and a profound conviction that the gospel message exactly meets the need of guilty, sinful man. And when the beauty, purity, and triumphant issue of a genuine Christian life are set forth, there may be an eager desire awakened to know its blessedness, and an inward resolution formed to serve the Lord. The young inquirer seems, perhaps, at such a stage to have been wafted, as by a Divine breath, to a region of halcyon calm, and with the sincerity and dash of a Peter says, "Now I am saved; though all men should deny Christ, yet I never will!" And such a case is looked at with tender, glad, yet anxious hopefulness, by some that are watching for souls more than they that watch for the morning. And yet, notwithstanding all, there is a grievous defect, not yet apparent to human eye, but destined ere long to reveal itself to the bitter disappointment of many a thoughtful friend!

II. What is there defective in this case? There is: 1. Defective knowledge of self. 2. Defective knowledge of what the Christian life is, as one of "patient continuance in well-doing." 3. Defective knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. 4. A non-apprehension of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sole Source of life, energy, and power. 5. Emotion is mistaken for principle, and feelings about religion for a real surrender of heart and life to God.

III. Severe tests await such a one. (Cf. Matt. xiii, 20, 21; Luke xiv. 27, 28.) Days in which all things run smoothly are not those which test of what stuff men are made. No one's life, however, is made up of smooth days only. There are occasions which put every part of a man on the rack. And there are testing times in store for the young emotionalist. 1. Affliction for the Word's sake will come. 2. Persecution may come. 3. Scepticism, or cross-currents of public sentiment may disturb. 4. Or abounding worldliness may bring a chill or even a blight. Some trial or other will surely come to test each and all. It may come suddenly as a storm of wind on a lake, or may act slowly yet surely as the waters wear away the stones. Somehow or other, come it will; and where there is profession without possession, sad will be the end, for—

IV. Such tests will be fatal. Only forty days after their vow, Israel broke down. The terrors of Sinai could not maintain Israel's loyalty. Nor will even the pathos of Calvary, of itself, avail now. The following results will follow, sooner or later, if beneath the outward vow there has been no surrender of heart and life to God. 1. Emotion will die out. Men cannot live at fever heat; it is not desirable that they should. If beneath the emotion there is living principle, though the emotion lessen, *that* will strengthen. But if there is no such living principle, the emotion will leave nought behind it but sadder lack of it than ever. 2. External membership will come to be rested in, as if it "covered a multitude of sins." 3. There will be a growing indifference to the higher and more spiritual work of the Christian life—both in private, social, and Church duties. 4. There may even be a collapse into a state of more thorough worldliness than before any profession whatever was made; and "the last state of that man is worse than the first." Of all the members of Christian congregations, those are the hardest to move who made a profession in a swell of emotion, without quickening of conscience or the renewal of the heart!

V. What is needed in such cases? 1. Deep and genuine conviction of sin and repentance before God; a quickening unto righteousness, which is born of the Spirit. 2. Heart-surrender to God; this cannot be brought about through being borne along in a crowd as on a wave of religious ecstasy, any more than the patients in a hospital can be cured *en masse*. 3. New life towards God, created, sustained, perpetually increased by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, renewed by faith, and aided by communion with God.

In conclusion. Let all beware of trusting to "frames and feelings." Emotion is

not devotion. And on the other hand, let us take care not to fall into the opposite error. "Ah," say some, "see what comes of religious excitement. It is time there was a protest against it!" But we make no protest whatever against excitement, but against *mere* excitement, which is a very different thing. Because a blaze cannot be kept up without fuel, that is no reason why, with plenty of fuel constantly supplied, a fire should not be kept ablaze! It is true that if there is nought but emotion, it must die out and be followed by a collapse; but that is no reason for letting real life be attended with so little emotion, that others see scarcely any signs of the life at all. Ah! what we all want, and always want (and, thank God, what we may always have), is a fulness of life, direct from him, which only *he* can give, and which, through the cross, and by the power of the Spirit, can alone be maintained, perfected, and glorified!

Vers. 13—21, 25—29.—*True greatness manifested in a great emergency, by self-sacrifice and intercession.* As were marked in the previous Homily, these incidents can only be rightly arranged by a preacher, for the purpose of preaching thereon, so far as the entire narrative is before his view. Hence a junction of this paragraph with Exod. xxxii. is imperative, and will here be taken for granted. There would seem to have been a compilation of several documents. It is not easy to gather therefrom, *with exact precision*, the order of events, though there is no difficulty in setting the whole with sufficient consecutiveness for all the purposes of practical teaching. Note—

I. HERE IS A GREAT CRISIS. Israel was making a feast unto Jehovah, letting the calf represent to them the God who had brought them out of Egypt. The people were observing the customs of the very nation from which they had been redeemed—dancing before the idol, polluting themselves with unclean and unhallowed rites, and making the hills to re-echo with their boisterous revelry and song! And all this beneath that very mount where they had sworn, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do!" 1. In the first instance, the lamentable defection of the people was made known to Moses, either by a silent suggestion from the Great Invisible, with whom he was in adoring fellowship, or by one of the angel bands with whom he was surrounded (Exod. xxxii. 7, 8). 2. God bids Moses "go down"—not merely, as might at first seem, "go down and see," but "Continue the fellowship no more; leave me alone; I will make of thee a great nation. Let my wrath wax hot against them, that I may consume them!" Awful words (vers. 13, 14)! 'Tis a terrible crisis in the great leader's experience. With agonizing heart, he comes down to see—not without pleading with God for Israel (see below)—and he reaches Joshua, where, though even yet too far off to see, he is near enough to hear the shouts wildly ringing through the air. 3. At length Moses gets near enough to see (ver. 16). *There they are!*—the calf, the dancing, the impure orgies as of a heathen feast! Oh, how bitter must have been the anguish of Moses at such a sight! 4. And what an alarming possibility he had to face—even that of the entire rupture of the whole covenant between the people and Jehovah! Hear how the Voice on the mount spake, "Thy people have broken the covenant; let me alone," etc. In what stronger way, ah! in what other way, could the people at such a time have been taught that, as they were now actually breaking the very covenant God was confirming with Moses for them, if God now dealt with them after their sins, he would have cast them off completely? *They* were not necessary to the fulfilment of the covenant made with their fathers. Moses was of Abraham's seed, and God might have begun afresh with him, and have made of him a nation greater, mightier, more loyal than they! Was there ever such a crisis? With all the responsibility Moses had resting on him, he must have been crushed had he not been divinely sustained. But great crises bring out the greatness of great men. Moses was a man "slow of speech," and probably slow to act, but he had strong convictions of truth and duty, and when wrought up to a white heat, he would show the true nobility of his character.

II. THE GREATNESS OF THE CRISIS OCCASIONS A REMARKABLE SERIES OF ACTS ON THE PART OF MOSES. 1. He is angry (Exod. xxxii. 19). This was a holy anger; the sight roused the meekest of men, and well it might. It would have been wicked in Moses if he had not been angry! There is a wide difference between a passionate feeling of personal resentment, and indignation at witnessing an outrage on right. The

holier a man is, the more will he suppress the one, the more will he develop the other! 2. He breaks the tables (ver. 18). This is a symbolic act, reminding the people that by their apostacy they had violated their covenant vows. 3. He grinds the calf to powder, etc. (ver. 21). Another symbolic act, meaning, "This sin will come back to them again; it will mar their joy for long to come." 4. He calls Aaron to account (Exod. xxxii. 21—24). "There came out this calf." Aaron! you, the eloquent man, making a silly speech like that! Oh, the wonderful touches of nature in the Old Book! Moses, the truly brave man, though slow of speech, can speak to purpose at such a time as this; but Aaron, eloquent as he is, when his conscience is ill at ease, makes the lamest and tamest excuse. 5. He ascertains how far the contagion has spread (Exod. xxxii. 25—29). Was it a revolt of all the people, or had many been drawn away at suggestion of the few? "Who is on the Lord's side?" 'Tis not enough for people *to be* on the Lord's side, specially in days of abounding iniquity; they must *say* on which side they are. The sons of Levi come forward, and are entrusted with the awful task of stamping out the evil. Better for 3000 to die than for 2,000,000 to be infected with a mortal poison! That was a holy defensive war. And it speaks volumes for the grandeur of the moral power of Moses, that he could so inspire the men of his own tribe to chastise the revolt and save the people. 6. But the most striking feature of the spiritual heroism of Israel's leader is, that he pleads with God. In this he reveals a force of character and an unselfishness of spirit which are far too rare even in these "advanced" times. Let us watch this pleader. (1) He acknowledges the greatness of the sin. At first, before he was near enough to see, he asks, "Lord, why doth thy wrath?" etc. But afterwards, he puts no such question. "Oh! this people have sinned a great sin." He cannot palliate it. (2) He entreats the Lord not to consume them, but to turn from his fierce wrath, and to bring them yet into the promised land. (3) He uses arguments in prayer. (*a*) The honour of God's Name among the nations. Joshua, David, Jeremiah, did the same. (*b*) He pleads the Divine acts already put forth on behalf of the people, as if he would say, "Didst thou not know from the first what they were?" (*c*) He pleads the Divine promises; "remember Abraham," etc. (4) Moses prays for Aaron (ver. 20)! Aaron "can speak well," but he acted ill. He broke down when put in charge. Though appointed by God as special helper to Moses, he proved himself unreliable. Yet not a word of complaint appears to have been uttered to him, only a prayer offered *for* him by the very brother who had relied on him in vain! (5) There is a more wonderful feature still in his prayer, viz. this: a conception which to self-seekers would have been most captivating, has for him no charm whatever—"I will make of thee a great nation;" "let me alone, that I may destroy them," and I will begin afresh with you, and make you the head of a less unworthy race! Would not that have fired his ambition, if he had had any? But no! see the lot which he preferred (Exod. xxxii. 32, 33): "No! I cannot accept any position, however elevated, if they perish! Oh, forgive them! If not, *let us all perish together*." Noble captain he! if the ship sinks, he will go down with it. He would rather not live if vessel and passengers are beneath the waves! (Cf. Rom. ix. 2, 3, with which passionate fervour the prayer of Moses may well be compared.) (6) This intercession was long continued (ver. 25): "forty days and forty nights!" All this while the cry was ever and anon going up from his heart, "Forgive them! forgive! forgive!"

Have we not here, in Moses, a model of intercessory prayer? Men who can thus plead with God are the greatest heroes of the Church. We can imagine that some may object, and may seek to turn the edge of the truth, so that it makes no impression, by saying, "Ah! but see what a great occasion that was! give us an occasion like that, and maybe we should pray like that! It is folly to bring the acts of a man at a period of such intense excitement, and tell us that we ought to pray like that. We are told that we cannot live at boiling point; then, why adduce Moses, on such an occasion, as a sample of what we should do on ordinary occasions?" No, we do not *always* want boiling water, but what sort of water would that be which no amount of heat ever could get to boil? We do not and cannot expect to be always in the midst of violent crises. But who are the men who are to be relied on when the crises come? Where was Aaron now? What of him? There is no indication that he ever caught a glimpse of the tremendous crisis he had helped to bring about! "*There came out this calf!*" How Moses could restrain himself at such words, we cannot imagine.

But even if Aaron had not shown such utter inability to perceive the seriousness of the moment, how could he now take any active part in vindicating the injured rights of God before the people, or in craving mercy for the people from God? Complicity with evil means paralysis of power in speeding the right. If Aaron had not had a brother to plead for him with God, he would have been swept away with the besom of destruction! He can talk well rather than stand firm. There is a similar contrast here between Moses and Aaron, to that between Abraham and Lot. Abraham pleaded for the doomed city. Lot's aims in life had been too selfish for him to be a pleader. And we fear there are some who, if their own dear land were brought to a mighty crisis, would just read the daily papers to gratify curiosity, or to give them something to talk about, but as for taking the case of a nation on their hearts before God, they could do nothing of the kind! If they are succumbing to the evils of the day, they can have no strength in intercessory prayer, nor can they be of any use in national struggles. The Moses of Exod. xxxii. is the same self-forgetful Moses of Exod. ii. If men want to be the heroes of their age, let them try the power of intercessory prayer. Such heroism is of a kind the world cannot appreciate, but is recorded in God's book of remembrance; "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Vers. 22, 23.—Taberah (see Homily on Numb. xi.). Massah (see Homily on Exod. xvii.). Kibroth-hattaavah (see Homily on Numb. xi.). Kadesh-barnea (see Homily on ch. i. 19—40).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 4—7.—*Self-righteousness.* Strange capacity of human nature for self-delusion! It was an extraordinary error to fall into, when the Jew began to fancy that by his own power and might he had conquered Palestine (ch. viii. 17). Yet more extraordinary was the delusion that he had been brought into the land on account of righteousness. The two errors sprang from the same root. The worldly mind, which spurns at the acknowledgment of God's bestowal of what it has, has its counterpart in the self-righteous mind, which attributes God's dealings with it to its superior sanctity. Self-exaltation, pride, in both. In the one case, "*my* power," etc., in the other, "*my* righteousness."

I. THE NATURE OF THE ERROR. A magnified opinion of one's righteousness. The idea that it is *our* righteousness which is the meritorious ground of the bestowal of blessing. The Jews might not suppose that they were absolutely righteous—though some of the later Pharisees seem almost to have got this length (Luke xviii. 11). But they thought that they were *so* far righteous as to have established a claim on God's justice for what they had. This is a state of mind into which men glide half unconsciously. We often say it "in our hearts," when we would be ashamed to avow it with our lips. The self-complacency, *e.g.* which accepts prosperity as the reward of superior virtue; the self-satisfaction which esteems such reward due to it; the complaint of injustice which is raised when blessings are removed,—betray its presence. In the spiritual sphere, the tendency is evidenced in the denial of the need of salvation; in the self-justifying spirit which refuses to accept the position of one condemned, and justly exposed to wrath; in the reassertion in subtler or coarser forms of the principle of salvation by works. In whatever degree a man thinks himself *entitled* to acceptance with God, and to spiritual blessings, whether on the ground of obedience to prescribed rules, or on the ground of internal characteristics (faith, holiness, etc.), he is permitting himself to fall into this error.

II. THE SOURCE OF THE ERROR. The Israelites might fall into it: 1. *By emphasizing their acts of obedience and forgetting their rebellions.* This, as Moses shows, is practically what they did. It is not an uncommon fault. We forget our sins, and, thinking only of obediences, slide by easy stages into a self-satisfied and pleased view of ourselves. 2. *By comparing themselves with the former generation.* They had not been, as their fathers were, absolutely disobedient and recalcitrant. They were going up to possess the land. This comparing of ourselves with others is not wise. If a little in advance of our neighbours, it is extremely apt to inflate our consciousness of

integrity (2 Cor. x. 12). 3. *By arguing from the fulfilment of promise.* God had promised victory and possession on condition of obedience. Having got the blessings, they might argue that, in God's judgment, they must have been obedient. We, in like manner, may argue from God's kindness to us that we must have been peculiarly pleasing to him. Hence that we are *deserving* of what we have received. The spring of all is the natural egoism of the heart. It is its own centre. It wishes to exalt and glorify itself. It has no idea of glorying only in God. It is self-exalting, not God-exalting (1 Cor. i. 29—31; Gal. vi. 14; Phil. iii. 7—10).

III. THE REFUTATION OF THE ERROR. Even perfect righteousness would not justify self-righteousness. The very indulgence of the self-glorying spirit refutes the contention of righteousness. Whoever is the righteous man, it is not he who boasts of righteousness!

"For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee."

But: 1. *We are not righteous.* The only justifying righteousness is a perfect one, and that no man can plead. The legal ground is destroyed when we admit failure in even one point (Jas. ii. 10). 2. *We are, in many ways, disobedient and rebellious.* Past acts testify against us. Our daily life testifies against us. He knows little of self who does not read, in his disinclinations to duty, in his reluctant performances, in his rebellions at difficulties, in his secret impatience, in his frequent inclining to things forbidden, the signs of a wayward and rebellious disposition.

The true ground on which blessing is bestowed is wrapped up in that old oath sworn to the fathers (ver. 5), in the seed of Christ, in whom only we have acceptance.—J. O.

Vers. 8—22.—*The sin at Horeb.* Moses dwells on this sin, alike as memorable in itself, and as illustrating the proposition that the people had again and again forfeited their covenant standing by their acts of disobedience.

I. THE ENORMITY OF THIS SIN. 1. It was a sin *committed immediately after solemn covenant with God* (ver. 9). The transactions recorded in Exod. xxiv. 3—9 were not yet forty days old. The people had literally heard God speaking to them. They had acknowledged the solemnity of the situation by entreating Moses to act as mediator. They had formally, and under awful impressions of God's majesty, pledged themselves to life-long obedience. Yet within that brief space of time they broke through all restraints, and violated the main stipulation of their agreement, by setting up and worshipping the golden calf. A transgression showing greater levity, temerity, deadness to spiritual feeling, and perversity of disposition, it would be difficult to conceive. Perhaps the case is not a solitary one. Can none remember instances of solemn vows, of sacred engagements, of deep impressions, almost as soon forgotten, almost as recklesly followed up by acts of flagrant transgression? 2. It was a sin *committed while Moses was in the mount, transacting for them* (vers. 9—12). Moses, for an obvious reason, rehearses the circumstances of his stay in the mount, and of his interview with God. He had gone to receive the tables of the Law. He recalls, as in striking contrast with the levity of the multitudes below, his rapt communion of forty days and nights. Sin needs a background to bring it out in its full enormity. That background is furnished in these details. The people are pointed to the tables as the rule of the obedience they had pledged themselves to render. They are reminded that their sin was perpetrated at a time when God was yet transacting with them, and when their minds ought to have been filled with very different thoughts. Do we reflect on the aggravation given to our own sins by the presence of our Mediator in the heavenly mount, and by the ceaseless and holy work he is there conducting on our behalf? 3. It was a sin of *daring enormity in itself.* The making of the golden calf, after what had happened, can only be characterized as an act of shocking impiety. The worship was doubtless accompanied by profane and lewd revellings. This under the eye of their God and King.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE SIN. 1. *It involved the forfeiture of covenant privilege,* signified by the breaking of the tables of the Law (ver. 17). This was the first light in which the Israelites had to view it. It refuted their idea that they got the land in virtue of their righteousness. True, the sin had been committed by the

preceding generation, but the covenant being national, and laying obligations on all, involved them as well as their parents in the consequences of disobedience. If they stood still in covenant relation, it was of God's mercy which had restored them. For a time that covenant was actually broken. Nor, if that argument was necessary, had they failed in their own persons to renew the deed of apostacy (ver. 22). Every believer feels that his standing before God is likewise of pure grace. Were sins imputed to him to his condemnation, he could not stand a single hour. 2. *It provoked God to hot displeasure* (vers. 19, 20). As all daring and presumptuous sin does. 3. *But for Moses' intercession, it would have involved them in destruction* (vers. 14, 19, 20). This was no mere drama *acted* between God and Moses, but a most real wrath, averted by the real and earnest intercession of a godly man. Had Moses not interceded, the people would have been destroyed. Not that we are to conceive God as swayed by human passions, or as requiring to be soothed down by human entreaty. But sin does awaken his displeasure. There burns in his nature a holy wrath against it, which, when he decrees to consume his adversaries, is not to be laid aside save on such ground as we have here. It is the existence of wrath in God which gives reality to propitiation and meaning to his mercy. Learn: (1) How evil sin is in the sight of God. (2) How fearful in its results to the transgressor. (3) How mighty intercession is in procuring pardon.—J. O.

Vers. 24—29.—*Moses' intercession.* I. IN THE SPIRIT OF IT: 1. How absolutely *disinterested* (ver. 14)! He sets aside, without even taking notice of it, the most glorious offer ever made to mortal man—"I will make of thee a nation," etc. 2. How intensely *earnest* (ver. 18)! Moses feared greatly. He had a most overwhelming sense of the reality of the wrath he sought to avert. But his heart was agonizing to save his nation, and he seemed to clasp the feet of God in the spirit of one who would not, could not leave, till he obtained what he sought. A lesson in prayer. 3. How perseveringly *prolonged* (ver. 25)! He prayed by his silence as well as by his speech. The whole scene is a striking illustration of the intercession of the Saviour.

II. IN THE MATTER OF IT. It is not much, as M. Henry remarks, that he can say for them. He appeals, however, to three principles in the Divine character which really govern the Divine action. 1. To God's *regard for his own work* (ver. 26). The finishing of work he had begun (Phil. i. 6). 2. To God's *regard for his own servants* (ver. 27). The love he bears to the fathers (ch. iv. 31; x. 15). 3. To God's *regard for his own honour* (ver. 28). He cannot bear to think of God's action being misconstrued—of God's honour being compromised. Points in God's heart on which all intercession may lay hold.—J. O.

Vers. 1—6.—*Against self-righteous conceit.* Sanguine expectation of success in war is a potential force of immeasurable value. If the expectation be ill-founded, it is worse than none. It will not stand as substitute for other equipment, but it serves as a final edge upon the well-tempered blade. Like the figure "nought," which increases the sign of value only when added to other figures, so sanguine anticipation of triumph is only forceful when based on solid qualities.

I. OBSERVE THE FORMIDABLE CONTEST. God has never encouraged his servants to underrate difficulties. Jesus Christ did not overcolour the advantages of his service. 1. *The Amorites were superior in stature.* This might, in itself, become an instrument of strength; it might prove a source of weakness. The larger the machinery, the greater motive power is demanded. 2. *The Amorites excelled in martial courage.* "They were mightier." The land had become divided into petty kingdoms, and it is evident that deadly wars between the tribes were frequent. Such practice had developed warlike skill. 3. *They fought behind well-built ramparts.* Their cities were fortresses, while the Hebrews, unskilled in war, had to fight in the open field. Defenders of bastioned homes have great advantage over foreign assailants. 4. *The Amorites possessed a wide reputation.* This would serve to brace to the highest pitch the courage of the inhabitants, while it would serve to dismay the besieging army. Every visible and material advantage was on the side of the Canaanites.

II. LEARN THE SECRET OF ISRAEL'S TRIUMPH. 1. *God's alliance outmatches all martial*

opposition. The *unseen* power is always greater than the *seen.* God's arrows find their way through the best-jointed harness. The simple breath of Omnipotence withers all opposition. Whatever we omit to take to the battle-field, let us not omit to take God. 2. *Occult forces often lead the van.* In advance, even of their vanguard, unseen pioneers would sap the foeman's strength. As fire devours the stubble, so would the Canaanites' strength become as rottenness. Hornets, pestilence, lightning, hail—a thousand agencies God employs as the real army in advance of the human host. 3. *God's work and man's reciprocally interlace:* God will never do our part; we can never do God's part. There is scope everywhere for human agency, but it must never invade the Divine province. We are to work because God works *with* us—*in* us. God promised that he "would bring down the enemy;" Israel was "to drive them out."

III. MARK THE GROUNDS OF GOD'S AWARD. He fought on the side of Israel, and against the Canaanites, *for specific reasons.* Some of these are mentioned for the instruction of men. Strong inducements disposed the Hebrews to regard themselves as the favourites of Heaven, on the ground of their superior goodness. This was corrupt fruit from an evil tree. These were false flatteries, forged by Satan. Against these fortresses of self-righteousness Moses was directed to hurl the battering-ram of reproof. 1. *Human righteousness not meritorious.* It is not meritorious, because it is deficient. All true righteousness has some merit; but if the unrighteousness in a man's life exceed the righteousness, then blame must exceed approval. The Canaanites were evicted because of moral rottenness, the fruit of gross idolatry. Loyalty to God alone could entitle the Hebrews to replace them. In *this* they had been signally wanting. 2. *Material possessions have often a vicarious origin.* They are given to one for the sake of another. The faith of Abraham had borne a long succession of fruits. There is a principle of moral solidarity in the human race. We are not distinct units, but component parts—members one of another. 3. *We see the inviolability of God's promise.* To our purblind eyes that promise often seems to fail; yet failure is absolutely impossible. *His* time and *man's* time do not always correspond. God's words must be taken as expressive of God's conceptions. *His* words are expansive enough to contain an infinitude of meaning.—D.

Vers. 7—17.—*Human memory a repository of guilt.* The memory of man is a book of God: and, though the entries may be temporarily obscured, yet the light of eternity will make them all legible. The present tendency of sin is to weaken memory; its effect, to obliterate recollection. Our profoundest gratitude is due to the man that reminds us of our falls.

I. REMEMBER SIN IN THE LIGHT OF ITS OBJECT, VIZ. OF GOD. Discourtesy to a king is a graver offence than discourtesy to an equal. Sacrilege is worse than common theft. 1. *This was sin against a known God.* The evidence of his existence had been made as clear to them as noonday. The main attributes of his character had been plainly revealed, especially power and justice and goodness. They could not wear a mask of pretended ignorance. 2. *He had been to them a most generous God.* For their release signal power had been displayed. The course of nature had apparently been interrupted. To deliver them hosts had been destroyed, and the majestic hand of God had supplied their daily meal. 3. *He had been a much-suffering God.* They had been like petulant, discontented children; and he had been to them a pitiful and indulgent Father. In the midst of needful supply they had been basely unthankful. They had wounded him in the tenderest parts of his nature, insulted his majesty, spurned his laws, and covered him with contempt. Yet he had spared them. He had imposed on himself strong restraints, so that righteous anger should not break forth. The noblest features of human love are but feeble reflections of his patient compassion; and against such a God their sin was hurled. 4. *He had been a God in covenant with them—their God.*

II. REMEMBER SIN IN THE LIGHT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. We perceive things best when placed in absolute contrast. 1. *There was the sin of inattention.* God had deigned to speak, but they "would not hear." The ear had been fashioned for this special end that they might hear God's voice; they had abused and injured the delicate faculty. They that *will* not hear *shall* not hear. 2. *There was the sin of ingratitude.* We can conceive of no baser sin than this. 'Tis a double crime—a violation of heart and conscience.

3. *There was the sin of disbelief.* The God of truth had promised, but they had treated his word as a lie. They had enjoyed ocular demonstration of his faithfulness, yet they trusted their own fears and fancies rather than their God. 4. *There was the sin of overt rebellion.* They professed to regard God as their Leader and King; yet, as soon as service was irksome to flesh and blood, they resented his authority. Once and again they chose human leaders in opposition to the Supreme King. 5. *There was the sin of self-will.* Their characteristic sin was "stiff-neckedness." "Our wills are our own," said they in substance; "who is Lord over us?"

III. REMEMBER SIN IN THE LIGHT OF SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. 1. *Theirs was sin against the light.* While others had only the light that comes through nature, they had possessed the light of special revelation. They had not appreciated the light. In various measures they had preferred the darkness. 2. *It was sin against the inner light of conscience*—sin against personal convictions of duty. They had trifled with the regal voice of conscience, and bribed it to be silent. They had encouraged appetite and passion to speak, and their clamorous voices had prevailed. 3. *Theirs was sin against faithful warning.* The penalties of contumacy had been prominently set before them. The hints of nature and the dark presages of conscience had been supplemented by the clear announcements of Divine warning. For the fascinating fruit of present pleasure they risked expulsion from the garden—loss of the great inheritance. 4. *It was sin against covenant engagements.* They had made an overt treaty with God to serve him. When the Voice from heaven had spoken at Sinai, they had quaked and said, "All that the Lord our God shall speak unto us will we do." Every step in their deliverance had been taken on the understanding that they would be loyal servants of the heavenly King. Thus every element of wickedness was mingled in their conduct. And is it not in ours also? 5. *It was sin in the very presence of God—sin at Sinai.*

IV. REMEMBER SIN IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE. 1. *They had seen the direful effects of disobedience in others.* Their eyes had beheld what God did to the Egyptians for their impious arrogance. They had seen their own comrades die for their petulant murmurings. They had seen a host of people slain for idolatry. Poisonous serpents had slain a myriad. The earth had opened and swallowed the sons of Korah. Their own memories contained abundant records that the fruit of transgression was death. Yet they sinned still. 2. *They had seen the rewards of obedience among themselves.* So long as they had followed the precepts of Jehovah they had prospered. They had sprinkled their doorposts with the Paschal blood, and the angel of destruction had spared their firstborn. They had crossed the Red Sea by a perilous path, and had gained a mighty triumph. They had followed Moses into the wilderness, and had been daily fed by a miraculous hand. It was obvious that obedience secured blessing. They had seen Moses exalted to regal power by virtue of his unwavering faith in God. 3. *They had felt the scourge of Divine anger for their own follies.* For eight and thirty years they had sojourned in the wilderness beyond what was needful, because they would not believe God's promise. A thousand ills had afflicted them, every one of which was a chastisement for sin. Yet they dallied and coquetted with the accursed thing, as if it were a pleasant toy. And are we any better than they? If unpardoned, memory is preparing a scourge of scorpions with which to chastise us. "Son, remember!"—D.

Vers. 18—29.—*The place of human mediation.* The best men have always desired to intercede for the bad. True holiness is benevolent.

I. MEDIATION CONCERNS ITSELF WITH THE INTERESTS OF BOTH PARTIES. Moses had at heart the honour of God—the maintenance of his just rule, while he also identified himself with the well-being of the Hebrews. If there be, on the part of the mediator, a leaning to the interests of the one party rather than the other, his office will fail. One party or both will reject him. His mission proceeds on the ground that there is an advantage common to both to be obtained by reconciliation. There is a point where God's interests and man's touch and blend. The business is to find that point, and to persuade both parties there to meet.

II. MEDIATION IS ITSELF A FRUIT OF DIVINE MERCY. The disposition in the heart of Moses to intercede was a disposition implanted by God, and all the energy with which

he pursued this mission was energy sustained from heaven. Further, the willingness, on the part of God, to allow any suit on behalf of rebels, was an act of pure mercy. It is no less absurd than profane to speak of man, the mediator, as showing more benevolence than God. The whole arrangement is one of purest kindness, and Moses was richly blest in his generous undertaking.

III. MEDIATION REQUIRES THE MOST COMPLETE SELF-SACRIFICE. For forty days and forty nights Moses was prostrate before the Lord. Personal needs, personal interests, personal honour, were all forgotten. Here was the completest devotion of himself to this cause. There is a profound mystery in this number of *forty*. It is not a natural cycle. Like the number seven, it is sacred to religion. For forty days and nights Moses waited before God, undergoing spiritual receptiveness for the revelation of his will. For forty years the Hebrews dwelt in the wilderness. For forty days Elijah tarried in Horeb. For forty days Jesus endured the temptations of the desert. For forty days he abode with men subsequent to his resurrection. All that human nature could endure, Moses endured to obtain pardon for Israel. For if pardon be too cheaply bought, it is not valued. Only in the lurid light of sin's curse do we see the glory of forgiveness.

IV. MEDIATION ACKNOWLEDGES SIN TO THE FULL. There is no extenuation of the deed, no paring down its dimensions, no cloaking any part of its baseness, no endeavours to put other colours on it than its own. It is because sin is so malignant and so ruinous that it is so desirable to rescue the sinner from its awful spell. It is because it is so dishonouring to God that it is worth while, at any price, to remove it from his universe. The anger of Jehovah is no mere passing or capricious feeling. It is sentiment arising out of the most righteous principle. Such anger against sin is essential to the Godhead. We need not be afraid of the introduction of anthropomorphic conceptions. The longer Moses remained prostrate before God, the clearer came into view Israel's sin in the light of the Divine purity.

V. MEDIATION INCLUDES THE LARGEST REPARATION. The mission of Moses as mediator had a part manward as well as Godward. The whole work was not done upon his knees. With both his hands he brake and burnt the graven image, dishonoured the deity they had fashioned, reduced it to powdered dust. This would expose the impotence of the idol, the vanity of the idol system, and the insane folly of presenting to such a molten image Divine honours. Nor was this all. The fine dust that remained after the burning was cast into the brook, so that they were compelled to drink it in the exigency of their thirst. St. Paul tells us that the rock from which this stream flowed symbolized Christ; hence we see, in a figure, how the living stream from him, the Fount, bears away our sin into oblivion. Repentance upon our part is not thorough, nor sincere, unless we make whatever reparation is within our reach.

VI. MEDIATION EMBRACES VERBAL INTERCESSION. The final outcome of mediation is prayer. "Father, forgive them!" said the dying Saviour. "He ever liveth to intercede." 1. *Moses pleads God's proprietorship in this recreant people.* "They are thine inheritance." "The Lord's portion is his people." From them he shall obtain more satisfaction than from planets and stars and suns. 2. *God's self-consistency is an argument in prayer.* He had already redeemed them from Egyptian bondage. He had taken great pains with them hitherto, and had expended great power on their behalf. And he had not done this in ignorance. The latent evil in their hearts he had perceived. The future of their lives he had foreseen. Hence it would be consistent with his past favours to dispense fresh mercy. 3. *God's covenant and promises are proper arguments in prayer.* He loves to be reminded of his engagements, because this remembrance deepens our sense of his faithfulness. He had engaged to bring this people to the land of promise, not for their sakes, however obedient they might be, but for their fathers' sakes. Hence their rebelliousness did not vitiate the original engagement; and although individuals might justly be destroyed—yea, that whole generation—still the posterity of Abraham must eventually enter the land. 4. *The reputation and credit of God form also staple arguments in prayer for others.* The natural effect produced on men's minds by God's dealings must be taken into account. Our God is not indifferent to the homage and praise of men. It is to him a great delight to receive the incense of heartfelt love. His reputation in his universe is a very precious thing,

and it becomes us on all occasions to guard it well. He has formed us into a people for this very purpose, "that we should show forth his praise."

VII. HUMAN MEDIATION, IF EARNEST AND PERSEVERING, SUCCEEDS. "The Lord hearkened unto me at that time also." Here is great encouragement for our intercession now! Abraham did not cease to gain successes for Sodom until he ceased to pray; and had he continued, possibly the city might have been spared. What genuine and honest intercession has ever failed? "The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Every instance of successful intercession recorded in history is a cordial to revive our drooping faith. Is not God even now waiting to hear human intercession, that he may do great things for his Church? "Give him no rest, till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."—D.

Vers. 1—6.—*The policy of reprobation.* Moses here indicates very clearly what lay at the foundation of the invasion. It is to be carried on successfully as a judgment upon Canaanitish sin. It is no merit in the victors, but the demerit of the vanquished, which determines the Divine dealings. In one word, it is a policy of *reprobation*. And here let us observe—

I. THAT REPROBATION IS THE OPPOSITE OF APPROBATION. Great confusion of thought exists upon this subject through losing sight of this. The conduct of the Canaanites had been going on from bad to worse, and it was impossible for God to approve of it. He had no alternative but to loathe them for their iniquities, and to arrange their fate accordingly. Reprobation in the last resort, in the case of those finally impenitent, is a necessity with God; he cannot but loathe those guilty of such conduct (cf. Robert Hall's 'Help to Zion's Travellers,' p. 45).

II. A VICTORY IS AT ALL EVENTS A JUDGMENT ON THE VANQUISHED. It has indeed been said that the next worst thing to a defeat is a victory, by which it is indicated that both sides suffer, but the vanquished more than the victors. In the invasion of Palestine, the Canaanites were to be vanquished because of their disobedience. It was judgment to them—God's judgment, and thoroughly deserved.

III. IT MATTERS NOT TO GOD, AND SHOULD NOT TO HIS SERVANTS, HOW GREAT HIS ENEMIES MAY BE. The Canaanites were men of gigantic size, with great cities, fenced up to heaven. They were outwardly much more than a match for Israel. And this was doubtless to try the faith of Israel, and to see if they would live by sight in this matter, or trust in their Almighty King. It is for the Lord's people to remember that "greater is he that is for them than all that be against them," and that with God they are sure of ultimate victory.

IV. SUCCESS IS INTENDED TO TEST THE PEOPLE OF THE LORD. Israel is told expressly that they are a stiffnecked people. The conquest is not to be on account of any merit of theirs. But it will test their loyalty to God. It has been observed that conquest has generally exercised a retributive influence upon the conquerors (Goldwin Smith, in *Fortnightly Review* for July, 1877). It was for Israel to determine whether their stiffneckedness would continue or would succumb. If they interpreted their triumph properly, as the gift of free grace, they would settle down after it to grateful obedience.

V. THE INVASION IS A TYPE OF DIVINE GRACE MANIFESTED STILL. Sinners are like the Israelites, with nothing in the way of merit to recommend them. But God comes in his gospel and offers them a complete victory over sin, Satan, and the world, as a free gift.

These enemies seem gigantic like the Canaanites. We could not overcome them in our own strength; but greater is he that is for us than all that be against us. We find ourselves coming off more than conquerors through him that loved us.

And every spiritual victory is meant to test and strengthen us. It should increase our gratitude and ensure increased obedience.

It is well, moreover, to remember that the triumphs now are granted as free gifts, not as rewards of merit. After we have as disciples done our very best, we should be ready to acknowledge that we are only unprofitable servants, we have only done what it was our duty to do.

God is able to give us the victory over our greatest enemies, but he will do so in such a way as to secure the heartfelt gratitude and homage of his believing people. He is a faithful Promiser; having made the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he will

not forsake their seed, but give the victory in his own time and way to all who trust him.—R. M. E.

Vers. 7—29.—*Humiliating memories.* Following up the idea of their waywardness, Moses proceeds to recall instances of it. The remembrance of sin is salutary, if it induces humiliation; but detrimental, if it induces a repetition of the sin. When assured of its forgiveness, we should forget it, so far as the remembrance would provoke repetition. Moses here recalls sin, that it may be salutary in the remembrance.

I. THEIR REBELLION HAD BEEN CONTINUAL. (Vers. 7, 24.) It would seem that the pilgrimage of the people had been one long rebellion—God manifesting his mercy, man manifesting his ingratitude. And may this not be said of all the Lord's people? They have been rebellious in the midst of manifold mercy.

II. THE SIN AT HOREB WAS A SPECIAL PROVOCATION. (Vers. 8—12.) So grievous had it been that God threatened them with destruction. It took place while the mediator was, through fasting and prayer, receiving the Law. The circumstances made it more aggravated.

And it is well to remember our special provocations of God, if we are thereby strengthened against a repetition of them.

III. THE DANGER INCURRED BY ISRAEL WAS VERY GREAT. (Vers. 13, 14.) God proposed to consume them in a moment, and to make of Moses a nation greater and mightier than they. It was at once a testimony to the enormity of their sin and a test of the magnanimity of Moses. Instead of accepting the great opportunity, he set himself to intercede for the pardon of their sin.

IV. IT INVOLVED THE BREAKING OFF OF COVENANT RELATIONS. (Vers. 15—17.) The two stone tables were the sign of the covenant existing between God and them. Moses had just been negotiating the settlement. But now one party had proved unfaithful, and so he had them broken before their eyes. Their idolatry had broken the commandments, and so the relations between God and them were meanwhile at an end.

V. THE INTERCESSION WAS PROLONGED AND SUCCESSFUL. (Vers. 18—21, 25—29.) The intercession of Moses was even more severe than the previous mediation. The second period of forty days and nights was a most severe ordeal through which to pass. It shows that intercession is most laborious duty, if adequately discharged. It shows, moreover, that the intercession of Christ, of which that of Moses was typical, is a most serious and severe service. It has been very properly called the prolongation of the atonement; just as the atonement is a most magnificent intercession (cf. Dr. Hugh Martin on 'The Atonement,' pp. 104—168). The two are complementary. The agony of Moses on the mount must have been most severe and trying—death under ordinary conditions is nothing to it.

VI. OTHER REBELLIONS OF A MINOR CHARACTER MUST ALSO BE NOTICED. (Vers. 22, 23.) Taberah, Massah, Kibroth-hattaavah, and Kadesh were all scenes of rebellion against the Lord. The history was a sad one, but the remembrance of it would humble them, and fit them for that complete reliance upon the Lord on which their triumph must rest.

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you in due time." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This is the law for nations as well as for individuals. Salvation and victory are through paths of humiliation, which make all the sweeter the blessing when it comes. Sin is thus *sanctified* in the remembrance when it leads to humiliation and victory beyond it.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

RENEWED EXHORTATIONS TO OBEDIENCE.

Vers. 1—11.—*Moses' intercession and its results.*

Ver. 1.—At that time. When Moses thus interceded, God commanded him to prepare two new tables of stone, and to construct an ark in which to keep them (cf. Exod. xxxiv. 1, etc.). Directions had been given for the construction of the ark before the apostacy of the people, and it was not made till after

the tabernacle had been erected, nor were the tables placed in it till the tabernacle had been consecrated (cf. Exod. xxv. 10, etc.; xl. 20). But as the things themselves were closely connected, Moses mentions them here together, without regard to chronological order.

Vers. 6, 7.—Not only did God, of his grace and in response to the intercession of Moses, give to the people, notwithstanding their apostacy, the ark of the covenant with the new tables of the Law, but he followed this up by instituting the high priesthood; and, when Aaron died, caused it to be continued to his son Eleazar. This Moses reminds the people of by referring to a fact in their past history, viz. their arrival at Mosera, where Aaron died, and Eleazar succeeded him in his office. **Beeroth of the children of Jaakan** (*wells of the sons of Jaakan*); the same place as Bene-jaakan (Numb. xxxiii. 31), probably the Horite tribe, called 'Akan (Gen. xxxvi. 27), for which, apparently, should be read Jakan, as in 1 Chron. i. 42. **Mosera**; Moseroth, plu. of Mosera (Numb. xxxiii. 30). As Aaron died there, Mosera must have been in the vicinity of Mount Hor. **Gudgodah**, Hor-hagidgad (Numb. xxxiii. 32); *cave of Gidgad*, a place of caves. **Jotbath**, Jotbathah (Numb. xxxiii. 33), a district abounding in streams, whence probably its name, *Jotbathah*, pleasantness, from יָטַב, to be good, to please. None of these places have been identified. Robinson mentions a Wady el Ghadaghidh, a broad sandy valley diverging from the Wady es Jerâfeh, in the desert of Et-Tîh, and this has been supposed to indicate the site of Gudgodah; but the difference of the consonants in the two words is such as to render this identification more than doubtful. In the Arabic of the London Polyglott, גדגדה is represented by جلجل (*Judjuda*), which is totally different from *Ghadaghidh*. All the places, however, must have been in the 'Arâbah, and in the region of Mount Hor, or not far distant. That the places mentioned here are the same as those in Numbers cannot be doubted. The two passages, however, relate to different journeys; that in Numbers to the journeying of the Israelites from the wilderness of Sinai to Kâdesh, that in Deuteronomy to the march in the fortieth year, when they went from Kâdesh to Mount Hor.

Vers. 8, 9.—Moses, here resuming the form of address, refers to the separation of the tribe of Levi to the holy service.

Ver. 8.—**At that time**; the time when the covenant was restored at Sinai, not the time when Aaron died. The appointment of the tribe of Levi for service took place in connection with that of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood (Numb. iii. 4). The service to which the tribe of Levi was chosen appertained to the tribe as such, including the priests as well as the non-priestly Levites, though parts of it specially belonged to the one class rather than the other. Thus the **bearing of the ark** was the special duty of non-priestly Levites, the Kohathites (Numb. iv. 4, etc.; 1 Chron. xv. 15); but was also, on peculiarly solemn occasions, discharged by the priests (Josh. iii. 6, etc.; vi. 6; viii. 33; 1 Kings viii. 3, 6, etc.). **To stand before the Lord to minister unto him** was the special function of the priests (ch. xvii. 12; xxi. 5; Ezra xl. 46; xliv. 15, 16); but as the service of the Levites was also a sacred service, they too are said to stand to minister before the Lord (ch. xviii. 7; 1 Chron. xv. 2; 2 Chron. xxiii. 6; xxix. 4, 5, 11, 12). **To bless in his name** does not mean, as some propose, to invoke the Name of God, or to praise his Name, but to pronounce a benediction or invoke a blessing on the people in his Name (cf. 2 Sam. vi. 18; 1 Chron. xvi. 2). This was the special duty of the priests (cf. Numb. vi. 22—27; ch. xxi. 5; 1 Chron. xxiii. 13), but might also be done by others (as by David), and in this benediction the Levites might join (2 Chron. xxv. 27).

Ver. 9.—(Cf. Numb. xviii. 20—24.)

Vers. 10, 11.—Moses here sums up the general result of his intercession. As at the first, he was on the mount the second time forty days and forty nights; and in response to his pleading, the Lord willed not to destroy Israel, and commanded him to resume his place as leader of the people, and conduct them to the promised land. "This commandment and promise was a testimony that God now was reconciled unto them by the intercession of Moses" (Ainsworth).

Vers. 12, 13.—God had showed great favour to Israel; what return did he require? Only what, without any prescription, they were bound to render—fear, love, and obedience (comp. Micah vi. 8). **To fear the Lord thy God** (cf. ch. vi. 2, 13). **To walk in all his ways**; to receive his truth, accept his law, and follow the course of conduct which he prescribes (cf. Gen. xviii. 19; Ps. xxv. 4, 5; lxvii. 2; Acts xviii. 25, 26). **To love him** (cf. Exod. xx. 6). "Fear *with* love! Love without fear relaxes; fear without love enslaves, and leads to despair" (J. Gerhard). There is a fear with which love cannot coexist—a fear which hath torment, and which love casts out as its antagonist (1 John iv. 18); but the fear of God which he requires is that pious reverence which not only can coexist with love to him, but is not where love is not. **And to serve the**

Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. Love prompts to service. Wherever love fills the heart, it seeks expression in acts of service to its object; and where no such expression comes forth, the evidence is wanting of the existence of the emotion in the bosom (cf. John xiv. 15, 23; Gal. v. 13; 1 John iii. 18). **For thy good** (cf. ch. v. 29; vi. 24). "In serving the Lord the glory redoundeth unto him, the benefit to ourselves; for them that honour him he will honour (1 Sam. ii. 30), and 'godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come' (1 Tim. iv. 8)" (Ainsworth).

Vers. 14, 15.—To love and serve the Lord, Israel was specially bound, because of God's love to them and choice of them to be his people. He, the Lord and Proprietor of the universe, was free to choose any of the nations he pleased, and needed not the service of any, but of his free grace he chose Israel, in whose fathers he had delight, to love them (cf. Exod. xix. 5). **The heaven and the heaven of heavens;** the highest heavens, all that may be called heaven, with all that it contains. **Delight** ("set his love upon," ch. vii. 7); literally, *cleaved to, was attached to.* "Affection, love, choice, the three momenta prompting from the innermost impulses to the historical act" (Lange).

Ver. 16.—They were, therefore, to lay aside all insensibility of heart and all obduracy, to acknowledge God's supremacy, to imitate his beneficence, and to fear and worship him. **Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart.** As circumcision was the symbol of purification and sign of consecration to God, so the Israelites are enjoined to realize in fact what that rite symbolized, viz. purity of heart and receptivity for the things of God. This is enforced by the consideration that Jehovah the alone God, the Almighty, is mighty and terrible without respect to persons, and at the same time is a righteous Judge, and the Protector of the helpless and destitute.

Ver. 17.—**God of gods** (Ps. cxxxvi. 2). Not only supreme over all that are called god, but the complex and sum of all that is Divine; the Great Reality, of which the "gods many" of the nations were at the best but the symbols of particular attributes or qualities. **Which regardeth not persons;** is not partial, as a judge who has respect to the condition and circumstances of parties rather than to the merits of the case (cf. Lev. xix. 15; Acts x. 34; Eph. vi. 9; Jude 16). **Nor taketh reward;** doth not accept presents as bribes (cf. ch. xvi. 19; 2 Chron. xix. 7; Job xxxiv. 19; Micah iii. 11).

Vers. 18, 19.—As the impartial and incorruptible Judge, God **executes the judgment of the fatherless and widow,** vindicates the right of the defenceless (Ps. lxviii. 6; cxlvi. 9); and as the God of the whole earth, he **loveth the stranger,** helpless, and it may be oppressed, and **giveth him food and raiment.** Following him, Israel, as his people, were to be benevolent to the stranger, inasmuch as they themselves had been strangers in Egypt, and knew by experience what it was to be a stranger (cf. Exod. xxii. 20; Lev. xix. 33, 34). They were to love the stranger as God loves him, by relieving his necessities (cf. Jas. ii. 15, 16).

Ver. 20.—Reverting to his main theme, Moses anew exhorts Israel to fear Jehovah their God, and to show true reverence to him by serving him, by cleaving to him, and by swearing in his Name (cf. ch. iv. 4; vi. 13; Acts xi. 23). Such reverence was due from Israel to God, because of the great things he had done for them, and those terrible acts by which his mighty power had been displayed on their behalf.

Ver. 21.—**He is thy praise,** *i.e.* the Object of thy praise; the Being who had given them abundant cause to praise him, and whom they were bound continually to praise (cf. Ps. xxii. 3; cix. 1; Jer. xvii. 14). **Terrible things;** acts which by their greatness and awful effects inspired fear and dread into those by whom they were witnessed. **For thee;** literally, *with thee,* i.e. either in thy view or towards thee, for thy behoof (comp. ch. i. 30; 1 Sam. xii. 7; Zech. vii. 9; and such an expression as "deal kindly [literally, *do kindness*] with," Gen. xxiv. 49, etc.).

Ver. 22.—Among other marvellous acts toward Israel, was one done in Israel itself; they, whose fathers went down to Egypt only seventy in number (Gen. xlvi. 26, 27), had, notwithstanding the cruel oppression to which they were subjected there, grown to a nation numberless as the stars (cf. Gen. xxii. 17; ch. i. 10; Neh. ix. 23).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5, 10, 11.—*The results of the intercessory prayer of Moses.* In these verses we have a very brief statement of the results of the pleading of Moses for Israel with God, which can only be duly appreciated when set side by side with the fuller account in Exod. xxxiii., xxxiv. It is clear, even from the few words here given us, that the Lord's wrath was turned away, that the covenant and the covenant promise were

again renewed. But we must at least indicate the points of detail ere we can gather up the sublime teachings of the whole.

I. THE RESULTS OF THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES. 1. *Generally.* "The Lord repented," etc. (Exod. xxxii. 14). The passage in Numb. xxiii. 19 is by no means contrary to this. It means that there is no fickleness nor falseness in the Divine promises, and that the fulfilment of them is not subject to human caprice; which is gloriously true, and in perfect harmony with the before-named words. These do not denote a change in the mind of God, but rather a change in the Divine acts. God's promises are, in an important sense, conditional, and his threatenings too. If we reject the promise and fail to rely upon it, it will not be fulfilled in our case; so, if we repent and turn from sin, the threatenings will cease to apply to us. The virtual withdrawal of promise or threatening is called "repenting," not because God changes his will, but because he varies his action. God may plan and effect a change without ever changing a plan. 2. *In detail.* (1) There were two manifest tokens of the Divine displeasure. (*a*) Exod. xxxiii. 7; the tabernacle of Moses, where he would hear the causes of the people, and maintain the mediatorship, was removed from within the camp to the outside of it. Still, mercy and judgment were blended, for the pillar of cloud did not forsake them. (*b*) Exod. xxxii. 34, 35; this is very obscure; but it at least means that, though they were forgiven, yet they were chastised. In after times, the Jews were wont to say that never any trouble came upon them without an ounce of the dust of the golden calf in it. The intercession of Moses, though it secured inestimable blessings, yet did not avail to remove all reminders of their sin, or to make things as though it had not been. (2) Dire threatenings were removed one by one. (*a*) They should not be consumed, still, only an angel should go with them (Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3). (*b*) The Divine presence *should* go with them (vers. 12—14). (3) Abounding mercy is vouchsafed. The mercy is gradually brought out more and more fully, as Moses pleads more and more persistently. (*a*) Though the tabernacle is out of the camp, yet communication with Jehovah is still maintained (Exod. xxxiii. 9). (*b*) The old promise is renewed (Exod. xxxiii. 12—14). "Rest!" Rest in God. What less, what more, could they desire? (*c*) There was a formal renewal of the covenant (ch. x. 1—5). (*d*) Jehovah grants a new disclosure of his glory. The recent exhibition of the frailty of man might well have crushed Moses if he had not been sustained by a new vision of God. And what a vision! What a declaration! Nowhere else on earth had a Name so glorious then been proclaimed (Exod. xxxiv. 6—9). (*e*) The long-continued communion with God illumed the face of Moses (Exod. xxxiv. 29—35). Was this supernatural or miraculous? Supernatural? Yes. Miraculous? No. We believe intensely in *the religion of the face* (see Acts vi. 15; *vide* a lecture by Joseph Cook, of Boston, on 'The Solar Light'). Moses was full of the Holy Ghost. The lustre without was but the index of the light within. He had gone in unto God to plead for others, and he was rewarded openly, by bringing down from the mount a radiance that told with whom he had been! If our faces were oftener directed towards God in intercessory prayer, they would certainly beam with new light, and men would take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus. (We have passed very rapidly over these details, as they have been dealt with separately in the Book of the Exodus, for the purpose of devoting somewhat more space to gathering up the lessons taught us thereby.)

II. THE LESSONS TAUGHT BY THIS NARRATIVE. 1. We see here the abounding mercy of God—how slow he is to anger, how ready to forgive. We can imagine, indeed, an objector interposing here, and saying, "Precisely the reverse. The fact of the severity of God's judgments being abated, removed, and even exchanged for mercy, just in response to the intercession of Moses, seems to make Moses appear more merciful than God." Perhaps it seems so at first, but it only seems. And even the seeming ceases when we look all round. For was it not the same God whom Israel had offended, who had given them Moses, who taught him to pray, and who sustained his pleading power? So that the lines of judgment and of mercy have a common meeting-point in the same hand. Besides, we must never forget that the Great Father adapts himself in the methods of his teaching to the capacities of the child in learning. And even the severity of the judicial sentence comes out of mercy. When will men learn the profound truth in Ps. lxii. 12? The greatest mercy which can be shown to a people is to educate them in righteousness. How constantly are men making the mistake of

regarding suffering as the grievance rather than sin! as if it were not the sin which is the people's bane, and the suffering consequent on it which is really their guard, that they may learn to dread the sin which brings such sorrow with it. And if the Great Lord, over and above the merciful threatenings which show the evil of sin in his sight, provides Israel with such an intercessor as Moses, and if by virtue of his pleas will withhold the dreaded stroke, and for the uplifted arm of justice will show the directing and sheltering hand,—both the one act and the other are joint illustrations of that glorious Name, the Lord *thy* God! There is no schism in the manifestation of that Name. The terror and the kindness perfectly accord, and it is only our defective sight which makes them appear inharmonious in hue. The very God who guards Law by the holiest sanctions, has provided also in his government for the efficacy of interceding prayer! "He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." 2. This mediatorship of Moses is but one illustration of the working of a permanent law, that God wills to be approached by his saints in prayer on behalf of others. It were well if some were to collate the intercessory prayers in the Bible, and the passages which bear on the theme of pleading for others. The Apostle Paul understood the blessedness of intercessory prayer. He himself rose to a glorious height in this sublime act, and yet he declares his own dependence on and appreciation of the prayers of the saints. Nor do we at all understand *the priesthood of believers*, till we regard this as one of its special privileges, functions, and duties. Let those who "profess and call themselves Christians" see to this. Let them rise to this high and holy service. Let them enter into their closets, fall on their knees, and pour out before God petitions for all. We sometimes ask whether the yearning spirit of intercession is dying out amongst us (Joel ii. 16—18). 3. This Divine law, of the power of intercession, has its supreme illustration in a greater than Moses (Heb. vii. 25), even in him, of whom in so many respects Moses was a type. Human mediation may achieve much, but ah! even the men who plead most with God for others do feel most *their* need of One to plead for them! There, there, at the Father's throne, is One who, having given himself a ransom for many, does present his own work as the ground on which the coming sinner may be forgiven, accepted, and saved. 4. There are three things which no intercession, either of saints on earth or of a Saviour in heaven, can secure. Why? Because in the nature of things they are impossible, and therefore for them no holy one can intercede. (1) No intercession can secure men against either the inward smart or physical consequence of committed sin, even though it may have been repented of and forgiven. There is nothing in the freeness of Divine grace to afford the slightest encouragement to men in playing or parleying with sin. "In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them," is as irrevocable a law as any other. It is quite true that if the worldling, or the drunkard, or the fornicator, repents, he will obtain mercy; quite true that he will be a child of God, and will be trained for the Father's house. But—the enfeebled will, the sapped strength, the deteriorated judgment, the haunted and haunting memory of evil, will abide with him, and will cast their shade over all his remaining days. The bitter taste of committed sin will come up into the soul a thousand times; and though it is true that even *that* will be sanctified, and will prompt new prayers for restraining and renewing grace, yet, oh, how far more peaceful would life be, if such nausea had not been made an enforced part of its experience! While no penitent need despair of mercy, yet, for all that, he may well dread the sins which, even after forgiveness, will "bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder"! (2) No intercession can secure pardon for sin which is not repented of and forsaken. Hence, whoever there may be who is valuing the prayers of others on his own behalf (and few, surely, would be *so* indifferent as to set *no* value on a father's, mother's, brother's, sister's prayers), let us remind such a one that, unless he repents of sin, those petitions will avert no sorrow, no judgment, no ruin. No; not even the atonement of Christ was ever intended to save people *in* sin, but *from* it. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (3) If repentance be delayed, there may come a point beyond which no intercession will avail, because the "day of visitation" is past (see Jer. vii. 16). There is a limit beyond which not even the vine-dresser dares to ask for further postponement of the sentence (Luke xiii. 9; see Luke xix. 41—44; Rev. ii. 21). "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation" (cf. Isa. v. 3—6). And if after all the blended judgment and mercy in the

way of providence; if after all the teachings, prayers, and intercessions as means of grace; if after all the striving of God's Spirit with men, there is a steady, stout, obstinate resistance to all,—then, such is the view of the holy ones on earth and in heaven, such the view of our Great Intercessor, of the evil of sin and the honour of God, that not from one pleader, however powerful or however tender, can there come even one more request for any further arrest or delay of the judgments of God. In the treatment of every sinner, love, justice, mercy, forbearance, will all have played their part, and if, after all the patience of a God and the entreaties of man, impenitent he still remains, all heaven will acquiesce in the justice of the verdict—his blood shall be upon his own head!

Vers. 12—16.—*Israel's duty summed up and touchingly enforced.* The rehearsal and review of Israel's waywardness, in which the great lawgiver had been reminding the people how much God had had to bear with from them, must have been extremely painful to him, as it was reproachful for them. That part of the review closes with the eleventh verse. And then follows thereon one of the most tender and touching appeals to which the old man could give vent. The two first words of the twelfth verse, "And now," convey a world of meaning. We think we see the lips of Moses quiver, we hear his voice falter, we note the tear standing in his eye, as, with intensely deep pathos and loving solicitude, he shows Israel how past waywardness on their part, and forbearance and forgiveness on God's part, gave them an urgent reason why they should seek henceforth to love, not in word only, but in deed and of a truth. There are two lines of thought suggested by this paragraph.

I. HERE IS THE SUM OF ISRAEL'S LIFE-DUTY NEWLY ENJOINED. This may be set under six heads, which will be but enumerated here. 1. They must cease their rebellious spirit: "be no more stiffnecked." 2. They must fear the Lord their God. 3. With fear they must blend love. 4. To love and fear they must add loyalty of action, by walking in God's ways. 5. They must observe alike the commandments or moral precepts, and the statutes or several appointments. 6. And finally, they must guard against all merely surface work: "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart." Though there were many more rites in Judaism than there are under Christianity, yet a merely ritual service was no more acceptable then than now. This summing up of life's duty should be compared with that in Micah vi. 8.

II. HERE IS A GREAT REASON FOR DISCHARGING THAT DUTY ENFORCED BY TENDER APPEAL. In this appeal, as we venture to call it, there are but few words. But how full of meaning they are! The word "now"—*nunc*, at this time; and as put here it may suggest six queries, each of which contains a most tender reason for future loyalty, which the preacher may well urge with all possible force. We will name the queries one by one. 1. *And now, Israel*, have you not been thus wayward long enough? Is it not time that you reconsidered the position in which you stand with reference to Jehovah? Look! See where you are! Think how long you have been trying God's patience and long-suffering! 2. *And now, Israel*, since God has continued to spare you, since he has forgiven you and not cast you off, since he has consented to bear with you still,—will you not renew your vows, with less, indeed, of self-confidence, but with more of penitential loyalty? 3. *And now, Israel*, think again, "what doth the Lord thy God require of thee?" Is it more than what is reasonable and right? Could he ask less consistently with his righteousness and honour? Are not all his commands wise and right? Is it not an easy yoke to love a God so kind, to fear a God so holy, to obey a God so faithful and true? 4. *And now, Israel*, look at the fact that all God's commands are for your good (ver. 13)! A perfect obedience would ensure perfect content. All the while you have been rebellious against the Lord, you have been fighting against your own highest interests. God's honour and your happiness require precisely the same course of life. 5. *And now, Israel, do* remember this, for consider how great is the Divine condescension in caring for you at all (ver. 14): "Lo! the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is." And what, what but infinite love should lead him thus to stoop from his high throne to care for you? It is not for your righteousness, for you are a stiffnecked people. No account can be given of why God should care for you so, save that he loves to do it. Then surely the reason is overwhelmingly strong for your gratitude, loyalty, and love. 6. *And*

now, Israel, seeing these things are so, could you do less for such a God than he asks of you, even if he did not ask it? So rich should be your joy in him, so reverent your fear, so devout your love, that you would with ready mind *give* God all, even if he did not require all. *What he is to you should lead you to be to him* all that he would have you be. Such seems to us to be a true expansion of the pathetic plea which this passage contains, which the connection in which it stands necessarily suggests. How much stronger every one of the six points may be made from the evangelic standpoint, the Christian preacher will in a moment see. By as much as the love of God in the great redemption in Christ Jesus is a grander disclosure than his love as revealed in the deliverance from Egypt, by so much should each argument be the more tender and strong. When we read, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," what *can* the proper response for our hearts be but this, "We love him, because he first loved us"? Such love should constrain us to obey, even if we had no written Law by which obedience was required.

Ver. 17—xi. 1.—*God no respecter of persons.* Having reminded the people of their duty towards God, the aged lawgiver next shows the people what their God is to them, and draws from thence a new argument for obedience and love towards him. In doing this, however, while there is much which we treat of in other Homilies, there is one special sentence, peculiar to this passage, which is yet made so much use of in the teachings of other parts of the Word of God, that we feel called on to note it as the centre point of this paragraph, to show what the truth is which is indicated therein, and the bearing of that truth on the various phases of life and duty. We have in the Word of God no fewer than ten or twelve quotations or uses of this text, each one setting it in some special aspect as a point of doctrine, or drawing therefrom some special inference on a matter of duty. These several allusions, direct or indirect, will suggest the plan of this Homily. The verse thus frequently referred to is the seventeenth. "For the Lord your God . . . regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward."

I. WHAT DO SUCH WORDS MEAN, AS A STATEMENT OF TRUTH? We might not have seen much in them, if the Holy Ghost had not inspired the sacred writers to quote them so frequently in new and varied lights. Being thus quoted, however, we ought to show by reference to the several quotations, the varied phases of their meaning. 1. *God knows no distinctions in his moral government of the nations.* This is suggested by the words in this passage. Moses says, in effect, to Israel, "You have been chosen, out of all the nations, to receive a special revelation, and to be made the bearers of a special mission to the world; but do not think that because of that you are at liberty to trifle with the rules of the Divine Law: God will not tolerate sin in you any more than he will in other nations. Think not that he frowns on iniquity on Canaan and regards it more mildly with you. 'He regardeth not persons.' And only as you are loyal to him, and faithful in doing the right, will he smile upon you." 2. *God makes no distinction in the basis on which men are accepted in his sight.* The Apostle Peter throws quite an unexpected (and we fear to a large extent an unperceived) light on these words in Acts x. 34. He is preaching to Cornelius; he is opening the kingdom of heaven to the Gentile. To induce him to do this, he needed the vision of the great sheet let down from heaven. That gave him a new revelation. God's grace was larger than he had thought for. He had never seen till then the deep meaning of the words in his old legislator's code. He saw them *then*, and they shone with glory—"Of a truth . . . but *in every nation*." As if he had said, "I used to think that because our nation was favoured with more light, therefore it stood on another basis for acceptance and safety. And now I find that the great plan of God's grace so covers the globe, that *in every nation*, he who fears God and follows the light is accepted with him!" Men are saved, not according to the measure of light they have received, but according to the use they have made of the light which God has given them. 3. *God is exercising over every man a present judgment according to perfect impartiality.* The truth just now referred to made so deep an impression upon the Apostle Peter, that he refers to it again in 1 Pet. i. 17, and would have the thought of the absolute impartiality of God act as a perpetual influence on believers, generating and maintaining a holy fear. There is no favouritism with God. He regards not the person, but the deed; "judging according to every man's *work*." 4. *God revealed*

this attribute of his in the Lord Jesus Christ. For this side-light on the truth, we are indebted to a scribe, an uninspired man, who, possibly indeed in flattery, but we rather think otherwise, intimates that this attribute of impartial equity, which his lawgiver attributed to the Divine Being, was manifest conspicuously in the Lord Jesus Christ (see Mark xii. 14). However he may have meant it, he certainly uttered a profound and glorious truth. For who, on earth, ever so clearly showed himself no respecter of persons, as our Divine Lord and Master? 5. *Precisely the same feature of God's government will mark the final judgment* (Rom. ii. 11, 16). There will be one rule of righteousness, which will be inflexibly adhered to then, and which not even the glorious grace manifested in the gospel will deflect or obscure. Not from the most hidden souls, nor from the most prominent, will any impeachment of the Divine righteousness ever rise up. The great system of mediatorial administration may then reveal a plan of larger grace than ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, but most assuredly there will be no flaw in its equitable impartiality, for "there is no respect of persons with God." That very impartiality will bring about many startling changes, for "many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

II. TO WHOM ARE THESE WORDS APPLIED IN SCRIPTURE, AS A DIRECTORY OF DUTY? 1. *They are applied to the querulous.* This absolute righteousness being revealed as an attribute of God, should teach men to be cautious, who are too ready to pass judgment on the ways of God when they are past finding out. Such is the use to which Elihu applies the doctrine. He did not understand Job's case, perhaps, any better than Eliphaz, Bildad, or Zophar; but in this point he is undoubtedly correct. We *know* God *is* righteous, therefore we must not impeach what he *does*. 2. *They are applied to magistrates and judges* (see 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7). The like equity to that which marks the Supreme Judge should characterize all who have to administer justice in any nation. 3. *They are applied by Paul as a guide in religious controversy* (Gal. ii. 6). "God accepteth no man's person, therefore," says Paul, "neither might I. Truth with me must be supreme, and even if James, Cephas, or John, who seemed to be pillars, were to utter aught inconsistent with the gospel or grace of God, whosoever *they* are, it matters not." The truth, not the person, commands our homage. Well would it have been if in all ages this had been a guiding principle in the controversies of the Church. Well would it be, if it were men's guide now. 4. *The words are applied to individual treatment and judgment of others in the varied relations of private life* (Col. iii. 25). A man, however lordly, or however lowly, will receive from God a reward or penalty according to *what he hath done*, and not according to his station in life. And we, like God, must apply like moral rules all round, and never justify a bad act because done by a rich man, nor depreciate a good act because done by a poor one. 5. *They are applied to masters with regard to their treatment of servants* (Eph. vi. 9). We must not forget that the "servants" here referred to were "slaves." Neither Jesus Christ nor his apostles, any more than Moses had done, made any open attack on slavery. But by teaching this principle of the equality of men in God's sight, they dropped a truth which, when it had time to grow, would cause slavery to fall, by uplifting the people to so high a standard of moral virtue that it would no longer be tolerated by them. And even now there is need for the continued reiteration of the same truth, that masters on the one hand may feel their responsibility to God for dealing justly with their servants, and that servants may feel their responsibility for doing justice to their masters. 6. *They are applied to Church members, in reference to their treatment of the poorer members* (see Jas. ii. 1—9). Church life is social life gathered round the cross. "Life's poor distinctions vanish here." "The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the Maker of them all." Each one is at liberty to form his own private circle of friendship, according to taste, culture, etc. But in Church life, work, and worship, all ranks meet on one common platform, acknowledging "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and recounting in song one common salvation. The artificial distinctions set up by men are nothing in the eye of God. To reproduce them in the Church is an offence in his sight. If here we have respect of persons, we commit sin, and are convicted of the Law as transgressors. 7. *The principle implied in the words is taught by the evangelist in its most impressive form in the cross of Christ.* Such, surely, is the conclusion to be drawn from the weighty words of the Apostle Paul, "Wherefore,

henceforth know we no man after the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16). "Wherefore;" because Christ died *for all*. "Henceforth;" from the time that we understand the world-embracing purpose of his death, do we know no man after the flesh. The little distinctions men make so much of here, all vanish in the light of the cross. We ask not whether men are rich or poor; we ask not their name, nationality, or rank. "Christ died for all." That stamps on every man's brow the inscription, "Dear to Christ." Wherefore he will be dear to us for Christ's sake, the wide world over, whatever his caste, country, colour, or clime. If Christ died for all, we preach to all. So that the very principle which under the old covenant is enforced by Law, is under the new created by love. That selfsame impartiality disclosed from Horeb in the methods of Law, is again revealed from Calvary in the methods of God's grace. And thus, through Old and New Testaments the appeal is the same, though made first through thunder, and afterwards through tears. "Be ye imitators of God." Plant your feet firmly on the revealed doctrine of the impartial equity of God. Accepting that, acquiesce with loving submission in the mysteries of his ways, even when they are in the deep waters, and when his footsteps are not known. Then seek in your sphere to follow God in his. Let the judge and magistrate in his decisions, the disputant in his arguments, the private individual in his home sphere, the master in ruling, the servant in obeying, the Church member in his worship and fellowship with his brethren, the evangelist in evangelizing,—all remember that as there is no respect of persons with God, there must be none with them. And let all strive to be like God, who in his Law encircles all men with one bond of duty, while in his gospel he holds them all under one dispensation of grace!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Tokens of mercy.* Various pledges of his forgiveness were given by God to the people.

I. THE RENEWAL OF THE TABLES. (Vers. 1—5.) 1. *Reconciliation to God is only possible through return to obedience.* God cannot but require that we accept his commands, and make them the rule of our life (Matt. v. 19, 20; Rom. vi. 13—23). Such return to obedience is involved in gospel faith (Rom. vii. 4). "Repent ye" (Mark i. 15). 2. *The Law is one and unalterable* (ver. 4). We must change; God cannot. 3. *The Law underlies the mercy-seat* (ver. 2). A testimony against sins, yet the foundation of the covenant. In redemption, the covenant obligation is not annulled, but fulfilled representatively in the spiritual Head—Christ. In receiving Christ, the Law's Fulfiller, we bind ourselves to be fulfillers of it also, as no longer servants of sin, but of righteousness (Rom. vi.). Our justification is in him; his Spirit of life is in us (Rom. viii. 1, 2; Heb. x. 16).

II. THE SETTLEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF RELIGION. (Vers. 6—10.) The renewal of the high priesthood in the person of Eleazar (ver. 6); the separation of the tribe of Levi for the service of the sanctuary (vers. 8, 9). The existence of ordinances is a proof of continued mercy. God punishes unfaithfulness by removing the candlestick out of its place (Rev. ii. 5). The gospel ministry is Christ's gift to his Church (Eph. iv. 11). *Means* of grace end with the close of the *day* of grace (Matt. xxviii. 20; 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2), and the removal of the individual from their midst ends the day of grace to him (Heb. ix. 27).

III. THE COMMANDMENT TO GO FORWARD. (Vers. 7, 11.) We also are commanded to go forward—to advance to the conquest of the world—to press to heaven. So long as that command stands unrepealed, so long may sinners be assured that the day of grace lasts, and that they are warranted in believing in the mercy of God towards them.—J. O.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The supreme requirement.* With this Moses began (ch. vi. 4), and with this he ends. The sum of the Law, and the sum of all his exhortations. It all and always comes back to this (Eccles. xii. 13): "What doth the Lord require of thee?" etc. We have here: 1. The *central* requirement. 2. The *all-embracing* requirement. 3. The *indispensable* requirement; that for which nothing else can be accepted as a

substitute. 4. The requirement of *kindness*—"for thy good." 5. A *reasonable* requirement. This love and obedience were due from Israel for God's mercies to them. As in the gospel, grace precedes, obedience follows. Saved by grace, we are to make such return as is possible by loving and fearing God, and diligently keeping his commands (Luke vii. 47; Rom. vi. 13; vii. 6; Eph. ii. 8—11).—J. O.

Vers. 14—22.—*The supreme persuasive.* The revelation of God's character in its double aspect of exalted might and of condescending grace.

I. GOD EXALTED, YET STOOPING. (Vers. 14—16.) The wonder of revelation: 1. *That One so exalted should stoop at all.* The wonder is not abated by reflecting that infinite perfection must include infinite mercy with every other attribute. It fills us with amazement to think of the Possessor of heaven and earth stooping to hold friendly converse with his creature, man. The Bible dwells on the thought with astonishment (1 Kings viii. 27; Ps. viii. 3, 4; cxlvii. 3—6; Isa. lvii. 15). Modern science indirectly testifies to the wonder in objecting that, with our enlarged conceptions of the universe, it is impossible to believe that God should feel the special interest in man which the Bible says he does. 2. *That One so exalted should stoop so far.* God's depth of condescension seen peculiarly in the gospel. (1) In sending the Son. (2) In surrendering him to death. (3) This for enemies. (4) In dwelling by the Spirit in imperfectly sanctified hearts (John iii. 16; Rom. v. 6—10; viii. 32; 2 Cor. vi. 16—18; Gal. v. 17). The persuasiveness of the revelation lies in its *blending* of majesty with grace.

II. GOD MIGHTY AND EQUITABLE, YET TENDERLY SYMPATHETIC. (Vers. 17—20.) Another aspect of the Divine greatness, blending with lowliness, which attracts the heart. The combination of great strength with great gentleness; of judicial sternness with humane consideration of those in distress, are sufficiently rare to be always striking. We marvel when, in the hero of a hundred battles, we discover a heart of woman's tenderness; when in the judge whose strictness on the bench every one remarks, we light on a spring of deep and genuine compassionateness. It is this combination we see in God. A God of gods, a Lord of lords; great, mighty, terrible, sternly just; yet, what might seem incompatible with this, tenderly and touchingly compassionate. His might and equity, so terrible to evil-doers, he throws as a shield around the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger. He executes their judgment. They are his peculiar care. Them, above all others, will he not allow to be wronged (Ps. lxviii. 5).

III. GOD OMNIPOTENT, YET HIS OMNIPOTENCE EXERTED IN DEFENDING AND BLESSING HIS CHURCH. (Vers. 21, 22.) Power in itself awakens fear; power known to be engaged in our protection and for our good inspires the highest confidence. Moses recalls to the Israelites, as a reason for fearing and loving God, his acts of power on their behalf, especially his power as exerted in their extraordinary increase. God's power may be viewed as displayed: 1. In the Church's *redemption* (Col. i. 13). 2. In the Church's *increase* (Acts v. 38, 39). 3. In the Church's *protection from her foes* (Matt. xvi. 18; Acts iv. 24, 31). The individual Christian will have reason to rejoice in the same power as exerted in his conversion (Eph. i. 19), in his upholding (Jude 24), in his protection (Rom. viii 35—39), in his ultimate salvation (1 Pet. i. 5).—J. O.

Ver. 16.—*Heart circumcision.* I. HEART CIRCUMCISION IN ITS IMPORT. 1. *Betokens the existence of natural impurity.* The rite of circumcision, as the initiatory rite of the covenant, taught that man, in his natural, unpurified state, is unfit for fellowship with God. "In us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no good thing" (John iii. 6; Rom. vii. 18). It was a symbol of the putting away of "the filth of the flesh"—a truth now signified in baptism (Col. ii. 11; 1 Pet. iii. 21). 2. *Illustrates the painful nature of the renunciation of fleshly lusts.* The operation was sharp, painful, bloody. It vividly set forth at once the necessity of renouncing the lusts of the flesh, and the pain attendant on the act. We are called on to *mortify* our members which are upon the earth (Col. iii. 5). The process is described as a *crucifying* of the flesh, with its affections and lusts (Gal. v. 24). The deepest form which this renunciation can assume is the renunciation of the principle of self-will in its entirety, the sharp excision of evil in its root. 3. *Implies the grace of the covenant.* The reception of God's grace as exhibited in the covenant

is the condition of the possibility of this renunciation. We achieve it, not in our own strength, but through the impartation of a new principle of life. Paul makes it a result of faith in the risen Christ (Col. ii. 12). The circumcised heart marks the accepted and restored recipient of the grace of God—a child of the spiritual covenant, one born again.

II. HEART CIRCUMCISION IN ITS NECESSITY. 1. *As distinguished from outward circumcision.* The latter was valueless without the former. Being but a symbol, its sole worth lay in that which it represented. The true Jew was he who was one inwardly, whose circumcision was "that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). The remark applies to baptism. It also is but a symbol, and without the grace which it exhibits, and the inward renewal which it betokens, it is a dead work, a valueless rite, leaving its subject as little a Christian as at first. So with all ceremonies. 2. *As a positive qualification for God's service.* Pure obedience can flow only from a pure heart, a renewed will. It is not a fruit of the flesh. The flesh must be renounced, and a new and spiritual nature begotten in us before we can render it. What is needed is not *reformation*, but *regeneration*—a new birth, a new creation, a new heart (John iii. 3; Rom. vii. 18—25; viii. 7; 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. v. 16—25).—J. O.

Ver. 19.—*Love the stranger.* The precept has numerous applications—

I. To LITERAL STRANGERS. Persons from foreign countries, or from distant parts of our own country, settling in our midst. Why should these be treated so often as intruders, "incomers," persons to be jealously watched and suspected, instead of being taken by the hand and welcomed?

II. To THE UNFRIENDED AND HELPLESS. To all whose hearts are lonely, and their lives destitute of the cheer given by the love and sympathy of friends. To the fatherless and the widow—strangers in a very true sense in a world where selfish interests so hugely predominate.

III. To YOUNG MEN IN GREAT CITIES. Often lost for lack of some one to take a kindly interest in them.

IV. To STRANGERS TURNING UP IN CHURCHES. Coldness here repels many who might otherwise be won to interest in religion, and secured for Christ. Brotherly and friendly attention, a kind word, the warm shake of a hand, the courteous offer of a pew,—how far will they often go? They are, like "good words," worth much, and cost little.

Show kindness to strangers: 1. *Because they peculiarly need it.* "The heart of a stranger." 2. *Because God loves them.* He will avenge their wrongs. He will reward kindness shown to them (Matt. xxv. 35). 3. *We may be placed in similar circumstances.* Changes in fortune (Ruth i. 19—22).—J. O.

Ver. 20.—*Religion in brief.* A text made illustrious by our Saviour's use of it. Like ver. 12, a summary of duty, but in a form giving prominence to the truth that fear of God works from within outwards. This central religious principle particularizes itself into—

I. SERVING HIM—or religion in deed. In resistance of all seductions to a counter-service (Matt. iv. 10). In the faithful and diligent discharge of all duties.

II. CLEAVING TO HIM—or religion in heart. Fear and love, rooted in faith, here reveal themselves as an energy of trust and adherence. They dread separation from God as the worst evil. They hold by him for support, for keeping, for strength, for direction.

III. SWEARING BY HIS NAME—or religion in word. This includes religious oaths, but denotes also willingness at any time to make public confession of God.

IV. REJOICING IN HIM. "He is thy praise" (cf. Phil. iv. 4).—J. O.

Vers. 1—5.—*The Law deposited in the ark.* The first attempt to convey God's Law to man in a written form had proved a failure. The human links in the system had snapped. Moses had overrated the people's loyalty. The people had overrated their own strength of purpose. So far, the Law had been to them a ministration of death. But knowledge grew out of experience.

I. WE SEE THE HUMAN FACTOR IN DIVINE REVELATION. The conceptions that

dwell in God's mind are incomprehensible until they are put into human mould. This introduction of a human element implies limitation, but does not imply error. The prophet becomes the channel through which Divine communications flow; but the prophet needs great subjective preparation to receive the message. He must leave the throng and bustle of men, ascend above the low cares of earth, and spend forty days in communion with heavenly realities, before he is competent to receive the gift of Divine Law. Such absorption of mind in Divine fellowship will make us also susceptible of larger revelation. Obedience likewise to Divine command fits us for this fellowship.

II. WE SEE THE PERMANENCY OF GOD'S LAW. 1. *The words that were written on these second tablets were the same as were written on the first—were the same as were spoken in the flame.* Though man may violate and break his Law, God does not modify nor reduce his claims. 2. *They were recorded on stone,* on the granite stone of Sinai. There is significance to be found in the material chosen. In many respects stone tablets would involve inconvenience, but the impression to be made on men's minds was of the first importance, and God does nothing without reason. 3. *They were to be preserved in a chest.* Thus they would be handed down from age to age as the unchanging will of God.

III. WE SEE THE SUCCINCTNESS OF GOD'S COMMANDS. These cardinal precepts were but ten, which might easily be laid up in memory, and recited by aid of the fingers. In the absence of writings, this natural aid to memory would be in common use. Yet, though few in number, these ten words were pregnant with meaning—were living seeds of truth, which, planted in the soul, would yield a copious harvest. The two stone tablets may have been ordered to correspond with the two hands, or to embrace man's twofold relationship—Godward and manward.

IV. THE CONSERVATION OF THE LAW IN THE ARK IS HIGHLY SUGGESTIVE. 1. *It is suggestive of mystery.* Since the human mind cannot measure the universe, mystery is necessary—mystery is wholesome discipline. 2. *It is suggestive of protection.* The stony tablets needed protection against the ebullitions of Moses' anger. They needed to be hid to prevent their becoming an object of idolatry. 3. *It is suggestive of value.* They had both an extrinsic and an intrinsic worth. They would be valued as rare and unique. They ought to have been valued more highly still as the records of God's will. 4. *It is suggestive of the use men should make of them.* This hidden deposit is symbolical. As the material temple is the symbol of the human soul, in which God most of all prefers to reside, so the word of God is required to be enshrined within. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart." The word is the true forerunner, which prepares the way for the entrance of the Living God.—D.

Vers. 6—11.—*Progress.* Progress is the law of human life. Perfection is reached only by steady advancement.

I. PROGRESS IS MARKED BY DISTINCT STAGES. There are times for action, and times for rest. Neither body nor mind can, in our present state, bear the strain of continuous exertion. There is an advantage in an occasional halt, by which we can review the past, measure our progress, examine our resources, and reconnoitre the future. The soul is many-sided, and advance in knowledge, devout feeling, practical exertion, self-denial, cannot be made at one and the same time. To-day we gain clearer perception of heavenly truths; to-morrow we exercise our best affections on abject sufferers; the day following we fight with the enemy with sword and buckler.

"Each morning sees some task begun,
Each evening sees its close."

II. PROGRESS IS ACCOMPANIED BY CHANGEFUL INCIDENT, PAINFUL AND PLEASANT. At one halting-place Aaron died, and the camp was plunged into bitter mourning; at another halt they came upon streams of refreshing water. Yet all events may minister to the soul's progress. There are no absolute impediments to the highest progress. "Out of the eater comes forth meat." "All things work together for good." The *order* of experience usually happens, as in this case, viz. first the bitter, then the sweet; first loss, then gain. The evening and the morning make one day. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

III. THERE IS PROGRESS TOO IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOD'S PLANS. At another stage of their pilgrimage, God chose the tribe of Levi to minister unto him in sacred things. Heretofore, the firstborn in each family was claimed by God as his special minister; now a particular tribe is selected on the ground of its zealous exertions in God's cause. Character, not the accident of birth, is the basis of God's approval. In God's kingdom, *he* bears the palm who merits it. Higher service is to be accounted the most honourable reward. Promotion to a nearer fellowship with God—this ought to be our richest joy.

IV. THERE IS PROGRESS SHOWN ALSO IN THE NATURE OF DIVINE AWARDS. It had been considered hitherto that the supreme mark of Jehovah's favour was the gift of Canaan. *Now* the people are gradually led to perceive that there is something better than *that*. One tribe, and *that* the most signally separated by God for favour, is deprived of participation in the promised land. The Levites, like Abraham, though dwelling in the land, shall possess no personal property in fields or vineyards. Their advantage it shall be, to be exempt from the cares and ambitions and jealousies pertaining to landed estate. An inheritance shall be theirs, boundless in extent; satisfying in its nature; inalienable in its tenure; uncorrupting, yea, ennobling, in its effect upon the possessor; uncreated, and therefore undecaying. Their inheritance was *God himself*. He who has God, has all things. The universe is his.

V. TRUE PROGRESS IS THE RESULT OF COMBINED CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION. In the busy life of our Lord, communion with God and intense activity sweetly blended. To be always on the mount would make us pietists and recluses and mystics—hot-house plants. To be always on the field of action will make us narrow, hard, arrogant, self-reliant. Both sides of our nature must grow in ratio, if we are to be full-orbed, attractive Christians. The ferry-boat of the gospel, which is to carry men to the other side, must be rowed with two oars—prayer and labour.

VI. THE PROGRESS OF ONE IS THE PROGRESS OF MANY. A useful principle of emulation appears in human nature. It is painful to be left behind in the race. If we cannot be in the front, we wish to be near it. Every man has a following. We cannot go to heaven or to hell alone. With more or less of persuasiveness, every man is saying, "Come with me!" Is *my* influence beneficial or baneful?—D.

Vers. 12—22.—*Knowledge of God the parent of obedient faith.* Every honest view we take of God's service brings to light fresh features of attractiveness. It is the only right course. It satisfies conscience, reason, affection, desire. Having right dispositions and purposes in life, all larger knowledge of God makes service pleasant; yea, true service ministers to our best life.

I. THE REASONABLENESS OF GOD'S SERVICE MAY BE DEDUCED FROM THE PERFECTION OF HIS CHARACTER. 1. *His supremacy.* He is "God of gods." He stands alone, the sole Creator, but himself uncreated. His claims upon his creatures are absolute, unlimited, and unconditioned. 2. *His equity.* If, at any time, men suspect any unrighteousness in God, it is because of some obliqueness of vision, or some defect in their mental instrument, or some deficiency of knowledge. No shadow of partiality has ever once been found in him. The favourites of God have been the most chastised. 3. *His immense power.* He is "mighty and terrible." A breath of God can create; a breath can destroy. "With the breath of his mouth he will slay the wicked." 4. *His goodness and pity.* His goodness is profuse, is distributed with royal generosity, without stint. But his special care is reserved for the helpless. Widows and orphans have exceptional protection and defence. He makes *their* case his own, and becomes their unseen Patron. Human monarchs lavish their favours upon those who can do them most service; God lavishes his kindness upon the most needy. Want is the passport to his storehouse. Infinite worth belongs to him.

II. THIS REASONABLENESS OF SERVING GOD IS SEEN IN HIS GRACIOUS TREATMENT OF MEN. 1. *There was no need, so far as we can discover, that God should be served by men.* The heaven was *his*, and all previous orders of intelligent beings. The earth also was *his*, and all its various contents. Here was large scope for the display of his perfections. If men were rebellious, he could readily crush the race, and sweep it from the face of the earth. And no other motive for his kindness to men can we discover, than that of generous and irrepressible love. 2. *He has made covenant engagements with them.*

Moses never fails to remind Israel that the God of heaven was *their God*. With condescending grace, that excites our perpetual surprise, God had chosen them to be recipients of special blessing. He had found "delight in their fathers;" and for the fathers' sakes had loved the children. *We*, too, who believe in Christ, "are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." God regards renewed men as his treasure, his portion, his jewels. They are dear to him as "the apple of his eye." There is no service he will not render for them, "no gift will he withhold." He has redeemed them with life-blood, and esteems them as unspeakably precious. They are destined to share his society, his possessions, his throne, his image. God has bound himself to us by most solemn compacts, and all his vast resources are pledged to us. It is a covenant made in heaven, and "is ordered in all things and sure."

III. THIS REASONABLENESS IS SEEN IN THE SELF-ADVANTAGE OF SERVING GOD. 1. *It is "for our good."* Every command may not be pleasant to flesh and blood, nor always to appetite and inclination; but obedience is salutary to all the better parts of man's nature. "In keeping his commandments we have great reward." There is large *present* benefit, and there is larger *prospective* good. 2. *It is a credit to us to serve such a God.* "He is our praise." The statesmen and ambassadors and generals of England count it high honour to serve Britain's queen. How vastly greater the honour to serve the King of kings! We may suffer passing reproach from our attachment to Christ, but reproach is like the early hoar-frost, which the ascending sun will scatter. If men do not perceive the honour, it is because they are blind. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." 3. *God's past goodness excites our largest hope.* God had already done great things for Israel. He had multiplied them in Egypt a thousandfold. Nor had he reached the end of his power nor the end of his intentions. What he had done was only a sample of what he yet meant to do. A world of good is yet in store for each believer. We shall never touch the furthest limits of God's beneficence. "Eye hath not seen it." To his faithful servants the invitation is repeated a thousand times over, "Come up higher."

IV. THIS REASONABLENESS IS SEEN IN THE KIND OF SERVICE REQUIRED. Nothing more is demanded than our thoughtful reason and enlightened conscience approve. 1. *Reverence.* We have only to know God in order to yield him the reverence of our souls. If we could perceive his inherent majesty, his real excellence, and his unsullied purity, we should (if feeling were right) instinctively yield to him the profoundest reverence of our hearts. Were it not for the corrupting effects of sin, this would be natural. 2. *Submission to his superior will.* By virtue of his wisdom, he has a right to counsel. By virtue of his relation as Monarch, he has a right to command. By virtue of his supremacy as Creator, he has claims on every part of our nature and on every moment of our time. His will is excellent, benevolent, unerring. To take his will, not ours, for chart and compass is simplest duty, ay, is largest privilege. "Be no more stiffnecked." A pliable will alone makes a dutiful child. 3. *Hearty love.* That we can love at all is due to him. The power to cherish love, to receive love, is his gift. Hence, if we love at all, our love belongs to him. If we love in proportion to benefits received, or in proportion to the worth of the object, or in proportion to the love expended on us, then all our love will centre in God. 4. *Practical service.* Genuine love will always seek some channel for its outflow, and service for love's object is a delight, and is only love in active exercise. It would be a restraint and a pain for love to be silent. She would justly count it bondage to be caged up within the heart. Having feet, it would be a restraint not to walk; how great the honour to be able to walk in God's paths, in the highways he himself doth take! True service for God is freedom, life, joy, heaven. If we love we must obey. 5. *Such service makes us Godlike.* God counts it a joy to serve us, though he is under no obligation of law or right so to do. To serve him means that we grow like him. We imitate him first in actions, then in disposition, then in purposes, then in character. Said Moses significantly to Israel, "God loveth the stranger. . . . Love ye therefore the stranger." Through every hour of every day we may be climbing heavenwards, becoming Godlike. Every duty may become to us an instrument actively moulding us into the image of perfection. The obedience that springs from love is a pathway of flowery pleasantness, ascending gradually to the hills of frankincense, and to the presence of God.—D.

Vers. 1—5.—*The covenant renewed.* The severe intercession of Moses succeeds at last, and he is directed to get two tables like unto the first, and to bring them up to God for his inscription upon them. He was also directed to make an ark for their reception. There was thus provided the tables of the testimony, and a place in which to keep them.

And here we have to notice—

I. MAN IS ASKED TO PROVIDE THE TABLES. God loves the co-operation of his people as far as possible. "Fellow-workers with God" is our highest honour. Just as when Christ was raising Lazarus he allowed men to roll away the stone (John xi. 39—41), so when he would write the Decalogue anew, he directs Moses to provide the tables. This is better than to encourage man's indolence by God doing all.

In the very same way it is upon "the fleshy tables of the heart" God writes his Law (2 Cor. iii. 3). Man, so to speak, provides the material, offers his heart for the sacred inscription, and thus becomes a living epistle, known and read of all men.

II. GOD'S WILL IS UNCHANGING. The two new tables received the same words as the first which were broken. The second edition of the Decalogue was identical with the first. God's will may be stereotyped, it is so perfect and changeless.

Man may be wayward; but God will not alter his standard to suit man's low ideal. The Divine plan is to keep before man the unchanging Law, and bring him by easy stages up to it. There is no depreciation of the Divine requirements.

III. THE ARK WAS PRIMARILY INTENDED AS A DEPOSITORY OF THE LAW. This chest of shittim wood, made strong and beautiful, was evidently meant as a "safe," where this precious deposit, this oracle of God, should be placed. There was nothing so precious in the keeping of Israel. It was their great riches. What advantage had the Jew? "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

And this ark not only typified the care taken of the canon, but also it would seem Christ himself, who, as the Ark, kept the Law in its entirety; it was the expression of his own will, and it was the deposit within him. "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17).

IV. SANCTIFIED MEN ARE SIMILARLY TO BE DEPOSITORIES OF GOD'S HOLY WILL. Those who are regenerated hide God's Law in their hearts, as Christ says prophetically he did (Ps. xl. 8). The preservation of the sacred books has been wonderful—but better is it to have truth settled in the soul and manifested through the life. The blessedness of him who makes God's Law his meditation day and night is great indeed (Ps. i. 2). "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 16, 17).

When God's word and will are so deposited; when human hearts receive, like Lydia's, the truth,—then is it carried not only through the wilderness of life, but out into "the undiscovered lands." The ark of shittim wood, so strong and precious, only faintly images the more precious receptacle of the human heart, rendered by Divine grace strong and true, which accepts of God's word of promise, and becomes thereby partaker of the Divine nature and escapes the corruption of the world (2 Pet. i. 4).—R. M. E.

Vers. 6—9.—*The separation of the sons of Levi.* The tables of stone in the ark had to be committed to special officers. These were the sons of Levi. God called them to this, a high and glorious honour surely. They were also to minister unto him and to bless in his Name. To this order of men no mere temporal inheritance was given; God was their inheritance.

I. IT IS SURELY DESIRABLE THAT A SPECIAL ORDER OF MEN SHOULD BE SET APART FOR THE CUSTODY OF THE DIVINE WORD. This was the primary office of the sons of Levi, custodians of the ark of the covenant. In this respect they resemble the Christian ministry, whose great office is to keep and to propagate the Divine Word. In the "division of labour" to which human wisdom brings us, it is surely important that a special class should be charged with the sacred deposit of the Divine Word. Men secularized by business cannot be expected to handle the Word of God with the wisdom and power of those who are set apart for this special purpose.

II. THE SONS OF LEVI WERE ALSO TO BE MINISTERS UNTO GOD. They were directed

to stand and officiate. They were the ministers of *God*. They were *his* servants, not man's. We do not now refer to the *priestly* rites, through which they passed according to the Mosaic Law. These were special and temporary. They typified the priestly office fulfilled by Christ, and, when fulfilled, no longer needed. But the general idea of ministration in God's presence and for the Lord is surely the very essence of the ministerial office.

III. THE SONS OF LEVI WERE ALSO TO BLESS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. They were charged to pronounce certain benedictions in God's Name. And this right is manifestly continued in the Christian Church. The pronouncing of the benediction is surely something more than a mere prayer breathed to heaven for the blessings specialized. Is it not the assurance on the part of God's officer that the blessings are conveyed to those waiting to receive them (cf. Numb. vi. 24 and 2 Cor. xiii. 14)?

IV. IT WAS ARRANGED THAT THE LEVITES SHOULD NOT BE SECULARIZED, BUT SHOULD LIVE AT THE ALTAR OF GOD. "Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance, according as the Lord thy God hath promised him." This means that this tribe was not to be secularized by worldly anxieties and common cares. The Lord guaranteed their support by arrangements at his altar.

And "ministerial support" should mean no more! It is a Divine expedient to secure a class of men for his service, emancipated from secular cares and troubles. The privilege of studying and enforcing God's Word is great and glorious. We only ask such support as ministers as will preserve us from corroding cares, and enable us with free spirits to give ourselves to this high business.

It is this only we ask for, the freedom from the secularity which the world demands even when one is most watchful, in business struggles, against it. It is when a believing Church gives the ministry of Christ such emancipation all round that they may expect the ministerial office to be fulfilled with superior power and to command the ablest men.—R. M. E.

Vers. 10—22.—*New obedience.* Moses, having detailed the success of his intercession in Horeb, and that the threatened doom was averted and the pilgrimage proceeded with, goes on in this passage to analyze the obedience to be rendered. It is all summed up in fearing the Lord, walking in his ways, loving him, serving him with heart and soul, and keeping his commandments. Let us try to grasp the description of *new obedience* here presented.

I. ISRAEL WAS TO BE A GOD-FEARING PEOPLE. A fine word this, "the fear of God"—not indicative of slavish consternation, but of reverential awe. It is the fear which springs from a fitting sense of God's greatness and majesty. He is too great and too glorious (ver. 17) for any of his people to trifle with or to presume upon him, as in the familiarities of ordinary intercourse.

II. AND CONSEQUENTLY ISRAEL WILL SERVE GOD WITH HEART AND SOUL. For when in faith we fear God, we find that "faith worketh by love," and so we throw ourselves "heart and soul" into his service. We adore his excellencies, and then are "proud to serve him." His commandments become our *songs* in the house of our pilgrimage, and we find in keeping them a great reward (Ps. cxix. 54; xix. 11).

III. THE NEED OF SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION WILL THEN BE FELT. "The circumcision of the foreskin of the heart" can only mean the use of all lawful means to restrain the wilfulness and waywardness of the heart. The lusts must be subdued, of which self is the centre and selfishness the essence. God has become central and supreme, and so all that interferes in any way with his rights must be "cut off," no matter how painful the process be. This is the cure for "stiffneckedness."

IV. THE CARE OF THE FATHERLESS, WIDOW, AND STRANGER, IS FELT TO BE DIVINEST DUTY. God is impartial, he respects not persons. He is just in all his reign. But he is also compassionate, and makes the defenceless and the helpless his special care (vers. 17, 18).

And in this we feel it our privilege as well as duty to follow him. This is manifested in—

1. *Orphan societies.* Where the widow is considered with the fatherless, and as much of the wrecked home as can be kept together is tried by loving care to be pre-

served. We are finding more considerate ways every day of ministering to the lonely and the desolate.

2. *Hospitality.* This means *love* manifested to a stranger because he is a stranger. There is a speculative hospitality that is poor and mean; and there is a Divine hospitality that asks those who cannot repay the attention, and asks them for the good Lord's sake.

For if we are redeemed of God, like Israel, we must feel that it is due to God's kindness to strangers. We were naturally "aliens," but his love made us friends, and we have entered into his fellowship and joy. It is this felt obligation which sustains the attention to "strangers" which the Lord enjoined.

It is evident that the Jewish religion was intended to be a lovely thing because a thing of love; a matter of broad and genial sympathies and of noble efforts after divinest duties.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

Moses here renews his exhortation to obedience, enforced by regard to their experience of God's dealings with them in Egypt and in the wilderness, and by consideration of God's promises and threatenings. The blessing and the curse are set before them consequent on the keeping or the transgressing of the Law.

Vers. 1—12.—Israel was to love the Lord, and manifest this by the steadfast observance of all that he had enjoined upon them.

Ver. 1.—**His charge**; what he has appointed to be observed and done (cf. Lev. viii. 35; Numb. i. 53); more fully explained by **his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments.**

Ver. 2.—**Know ye**; take note of, ponder, lay to heart. The words that follow, **for . . . seen**, are a parenthesis thrown in by the speaker to attract the attention especially of the older generation, who had witnessed the acts of the Lord. The words, *the chastisement*, etc., are to be connected with *know ye*, as the object of the knowing, **And know ye this day the chastisement**, etc. **Which have not known, and which have not seen**; *supp.* "what ye have known and seen." **Your children**; those born during the wandering in the wilderness. **Chastisement**; not punishment, but discipline, education, training (LXX., παιδεία), including both correction and instruction (cf. the use of the Hebrew word מוּסָר in Prov. i. 2; v. 12; vi. 23, etc.). **His greatness . . . stretched out arm** (cf. ch. iii. 24; iv. 34).

Vers. 3, 4.—(Cf. ch. iv. 34; vi. 22; Exod. xiv.)

Ver. 5.—**What he did unto you in the wilderness.** The doings of God to the people in the wilderness comprehend the manifestations of his omnipotence, both in their guidance and protection, and in the punishment of those who transgressed. One instance of the latter is expressly referred to—the destruction of those who joined in the insurrection of Korah (cf. Numb. xvi. 31—33). Moses does not mention Korah himself here, but only his accomplices Dathan and Abiram, probably, as Keil suggests, "from regard to his sons, who were not swallowed up by the earth along with their father, but had lived to perpetuate the family of Korah;" perhaps also because, though Korah was at the head of the insurrection, Dathan and Abiram were the more determined, audacious, and obdurate in their rebellion (cf. Numb. xvi. 12—15, 25, 26), so that it came to be named from them.

Ver. 6.—**All the substance that was in their possession**; literally, *every living thing* (Gen. vii. 4, 23) *that was at their feet*, i.e. all their followers (cf. "all the people that follow thee," Exod. xi. 8; "all the men that appertained unto Korah," Numb. xvi. 32).

Vers. 7—9.—Thus from what they themselves had witnessed does Moses admonish the elder members of the congregation, summoning them to recognize in that the purpose of God to discipline and train them, that so they might keep his commandments and be strengthened in soul and purpose to go in and possess the land, and to live long therein (ch. i. 38; iv. 26; vi. 3).

Ver. 7.—For *but*, read *yea*: **Yea, your eyes have seen**, etc.

Vers. 10, 11.—An additional motive to fidelity and obedience is here adduced, drawn from the peculiar excellence and advantages of the land. Canaan was not like Egypt, a country that depended for its fertility on being irrigated by man's labour or by artificial processes, but was a land where the supply and distribution of water was provided for in natural reservoirs and channels, by means of which the rain which God, who cared for the land, sent plentifully

on it, was made available for useful purposes. In Egypt there is little or no rain, and the people are dependent on the annual overflowing of the Nile for the proper irrigation of their fields; and as this lasts only for a short period, the water has to be stored and redistributed by artificial means, often of a very laborious kind. **Wateredst it with thy foot.** "The reference, perhaps, is to the manner of conducting the water about from plant to plant and from furrow to furrow. I have often watched the gardener at this fatiguing and unhealthy work. When one place is sufficiently saturated, he pushes aside the sandy soil between it and the next furrow with his foot, and thus continues to do until all are watered. He is thus knee-deep in mud, and many are the diseases generated by this slavish work. Or the reference may be to certain kinds of hydraulic machines which were turned by the feet. I have seen small water-wheels, on the plain of Acre and elsewhere, which were thus worked; and it appeared to me to be very tedious and toilsome, and, if the whole country had to be irrigated by such a process, it would require a nation of slaves like the Hebrews, and taskmasters like the Egyptians, to make it succeed. Whatever may have been the meaning of Moses, the Hebrews no doubt had learned by bitter experience what it was *to water with the foot;* and this would add great force to the allusion, and render doubly precious the goodly land which drank of the rain of heaven, and required no such drudgery to make it fruitful" (Thomson, 'The Land and the Book,' ii. 279; edit. Lond. 1859). Philo describes a machine of this sort as in use in Egypt ('De Confus. Linguar.,' Opp. i. 410, edit. Mangey); and in that country, "a garden of herbs" is still generally watered by means of a machine of simple construction, consisting of a wheel, round which revolves an endless rope to which buckets are attached; this is worked by the feet of a man seated on a piece of wood fastened by the side of the machine, labour at once monotonous and severe (Niebuhr, 'Voyage en Arabie,' i. 121, 4to, Amst. 1776; 'Description de l'Arabie,' i. 219, 4to, Paris, 1779; Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' i. 542; ii. 21).

Ver. 12.—**Careth for**; literally, *searcheth* or *inquireth after*, i.e. thinks about and cares for (LXX., ἐπισκοπεῖται, *oversees;* cf. Job iii. 4; Ps. cxlii. 4; Jer. xxx. 17; Ezek. xxxiv. 8; Isa. lxii. 12). **The eyes of the Lord thy God**; *i.e.* his special watchful providence (cf. Ps. xxxiii. 18; xxxiv. 15; Ezek. iv. 5). It was a land on which Jehovah's regard was continually fixed, over which he watched with unceasing care, and which was sustained by his bounty; a land, therefore, wholly dependent on him, and so a fitting place for a people also wholly dependent on him, who owed to his grace all that they were and had.

Ver. 13.—Being thus wholly dependent on God, it behoved them to be careful to attend to his commandments and to obey them, that so his blessing might be continued to them and to the land. If they would love and serve the Lord as they were bound to do, he would give them the rain of their land, *i.e.* rain for their land, such as it required (cf. "rain of thy seed," Ps. xxx. 2, 3), in the proper season, the early and the latter rain, so that they should fully enjoy the benefits of the land.

Ver. 14.—**The first rain**; the rain which falls from the middle of October to the end of December, which prepares the soil for the seed, and keeps it moist after the seed is sown. **The latter rain**; that which falls in March and April, about the time when the grain is ripening for harvest; during the time of harvest no rain falls in Palestine. But if they allowed themselves to be deceived and misled, so as to apostatize from the Lord and serve other gods and worship them, the Divine displeasure would be shown in the withholding from them of the blessing, so that they should miserably perish.

Ver. 16.—**That your heart be not deceived**; literally, *lest your heart be enticed* or *seduced* (יִפְתֶּה). The verb means primarily to be open, and as a mind open to impressions from without is easily persuaded, moved either to good or evil, the word came to signify to induce in a good sense, or to seduce in a bad sense. Here the people are cautioned against allowing themselves to be enticed so as to be led astray by seductive representations (cf. Job xxxi. 27; Prov. xx. 19 ["flattereth"]; Job v. 2 ["silly one"]; Hos. vii. 11).

Ver. 17.—**He shut up the heaven.** "The heaven conceived as a womb" (Schulz); cf. Gen. xvi. 2. The want of rain was regarded as a sign of the Divine displeasure and as a curse (1 Kings viii. 35; Zech. xiv. 17; Rev. xi. 6).

Vers. 18—20.—(Cf. ch. vi. 7—9.)

Ver. 21.—(Cf. ch. iv. 40; vi. 2.) **As the days of heaven upon the earth**; as long as the heavens continue stretched over the earth, *i.e.* to the end of time, for ever (cf. Job xiv. 12; Ps. lxxxix. 29; Gen. viii. 22).

Vers. 22—25.—If they were sedulous to keep God's commandments, and faithfully adhered to him, loving him and walking in all his ways, he would drive out before them the nations of the Canaanites, and cause them to possess the territory of nations greater and mightier than themselves. Every place on which the soles of their feet should tread should be theirs, *i.e.* they had but to enter the land to become possessors

of it. This is more exactly defined as restricted to the land the boundaries of which are given—from the Arabian desert on the south to Lebanon on the north, and from the river Euphrates on the east to the Mediterranean on the west (ch. i. 7). **From the wilderness and Lebanon**; read, *even unto Lebanon*; רַבְּנוֹן is for עַד־הַלְּבָנוֹן (cf. עַד הַיָּם in the end of the verse). **The uttermost sea**; rather, *the hinder sea* (Numb. xxxiv. 6), the sea that lay behind one looking to the east (ver. 26; cf. ch. vii. 24; ii. 25; Exod. xxiii. 27).

Vers. 26—32.—Moses, in conclusion, refers to the blessing and the curse consequent on the observance or the transgression of the Law, and prescribes that when they had entered on possession of the land the blessing should be proclaimed from Mount Gerizim, and the curse from Mount Ebal.

Ver. 26.—**Behold, I set before you**; place for your consideration (ch. iv. 8; xxx. 15), so that you may see whither tends obedience on the one hand, and disobedience on the other.

Ver. 28.—**Other gods, which ye have not known**; in contradistinction to Jehovah, the revealed God, made known to them by word and deed.

Vers. 29, 30.—(Cf. ch. xxvii. 11.) **Thou shalt put the blessing**; thou shalt give (תִּתֵּן), *i.e.* give forth, utter, announce, proclaim (cf. Gen. xlix. 21; Job i. 22 [gave, *i.e.* uttered impiety to God]; Ps. l. 20 [gavest, didst utter, slander]). The two mountains named stand opposite to each other, with a valley between, about two hundred yards broad at the widest part, in which stood the town of Shechem, now Nablûs. They were selected for the purpose mentioned, doubtless, because of their relative position, and probably also because they stand in the centre of the land both from north to south, and from east to west. It has been suggested that Ebal was appointed for the uttering of the curse, and Gerizim for the uttering of the blessing, because the former was barren and rugged, the latter fertile and smooth; but this is not borne out by the actual appearance of the two hills, both being equally barren-looking, though neither is wholly destitute of culture and vegetation. That Gerizim was selected for the blessing because of its position on the south side of the valley "towards the region of light," while Ebal was appointed for the curse because it was on the north side, can be regarded only as an ingenious fancy. In ver. 30, the position of the two mountains is defined as **on the other side of Jordan**, *i.e.* on the side opposite to where the Israelites then were, the western side; and as **by the way**—rather, *behind the way*—**where the sun goeth down**; *i.e.* the road of the west, the great road which passed through the west-Jordan country, and which is still the main route from south to north in Palestine (Ritter, iv. 293, etc.; Robinson, iii. 127), passing Nablûs and the two mountains on the east, so that they are *behind* it. **Which dwell in the champaign**; in the 'Arâbah (see ch. i. 1), "mentioned here as that portion of the land on the west of the Jordan which lay stretched out before the eyes of the Israelites, who were encamped in the steppes of Moab" (Keil). **Over against Gilgal**; *i.e.* not the Gilgal mentioned in Josh. iv. 19, which was east of Jericho (*hod.* Jiljûlia), nor the Gilgal of Josh. xii. 23 (probably the modern Jiljulieh, in the plain of Sharon), but the Gilgal of Josh. ix. 6; x. 6; and 2 Kings ii. 1 (*hod.* Jiljilia), to the north of Bethel, from which there is "a very extensive prospect over the great lower plain, and also over the sea" (Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' iii. 138); so that the mountains by Nablûs may be very well described as "over against it." **Beside the plains of Moreh**; for "plains" read *oaks* (cf. Gen. xii. 6; xxxv. 4).

Vers. 31, 32.—The assurance that they should pass over Jordan and possess the land of Canaan, is assigned as a reason and motive why they should **observe to do all** that God had commanded them.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—9.—*The voice of God in passing events to be heeded, interpreted, and obeyed.* As in former paragraphs, we have here much repetition of the same teachings which had been already given. We therefore select for homiletic treatment the one distinctive feature which marks it. The people of God are now on the verge of Canaan. Multitudes of them had been born since the march through the wilderness had begun forty years before. They could not have seen the wonders in Egypt, nor could they know, except by report, of the manifestations of the Divine displeasure at the rebellious spirit manifested by the people during the first years of their course. But there are still some seniors left who had seen all. To these Moses makes his appeal, ere the discourse in which he exhorts to obedience is brought to a close. And he urges them

anew, from a consideration of the deep meaning of the events which their own eyes have seen, to learn to be faithful and obedient. We by no means understand Moses as intending to say that the children are not before him to hear his words, but rather that the argument he is now using is specially for the sires rather than the sons. It is in effect this: "You, the seniors among the people now, *have seen* all these things. God has spoken in them directly to you: therefore, it is incumbent upon you to assign to these events their true meaning, and to give them their rightful power over you." Whence we get the topic named above for our Homily: "*The voice of God in passing events to be heeded, understood, and obeyed.*"

I. HERE ARE STIRRING EVENTS WHICH HAD OCCURRED UNDER ISRAEL'S OWN EYES. Three of them are specially named. 1. The plagues brought on Pharaoh and the land of Egypt. 2. The overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. 3. The overthrow of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. (For remarks on these, see Exposition, and Homilies *in loc.* For much light on the second, see Brugsch's 'Egypt.')

II. HERE IS A SPECIFIC MEANING GIVEN TO THESE EVENTS. They are all called "*chastisement*" (ver. 2). They are not only referred to as works of greatness, deeds of power and of terror, but their moral meaning (which is infinitely more important) is given in the word "chastisement." It is of very much more consequence to understand the *meaning* of an event, than to merely have the event stored up in memory as a piece of history. In fact, it may fairly be questioned whether the latter is of any value at all. Of what value is it to a student to know that King John signed Magna Charta, unless he knows the meaning thereof, as related to the rise and growth of the British Constitution? Even so it is not of the slightest service to know of Red Sea wonders, nor of the plagues in Egypt, unless their place and meaning in history are known. This is the case likewise with events of much greater moment. Not even the wonders of Gethsemane and Calvary are exempted. If regarded only as incidents in history, apart from their spiritual, redemptive meaning, they will serve us nothing. "As the body without the spirit is dead," so facts without their significance are dead also. Hence it is that the attention of Israel is recalled to these olden wonders as "chastisements" from the Lord their God.

III. THESE EVENTS MAY BE DIVIDED INTO TWO CLASSES; in each class a like principle is illustrated, though in a different form. 1. The first two were the chastisement of Egypt on behalf of God's oppressed people, showing them the strength of his arm and the value of his covenant love. 2. The third was the chastisement of the chosen people themselves, when they rebelled against the divinely appointed order with reference to the priesthood. In the former cases, God's jealous love on behalf of his people was proven; in the latter case, God's jealousy for his own honour, in maintaining his appointed order and ordinances unimpaired. In the former, that jealousy chastised Egypt for Israel's sake; in the latter, Israel for Jehovah's sake. Thus Israel would have before them the lesson that, as God in his love would snap the fetters that bound them, so in his purity he would remove the stains that disfigured them; that as they rejoiced in the love of God which was round them as a mighty guard, so they might also cherish a holy fear of that purity which would mark its displeasure at their waywardness and sins.

IV. SUCH EVENTS, SO FULL OF MEANING, SHOULD HAVE A CONSTANT EFFECT IN IMPELLING TO OBEDIENCE, AND IN QUICKENING AND SUSTAINING A REVERENT FEAR AND LOVE. God meant much in bringing them to pass, and they should mean much in the use they made of them (vers. 8, 9). If they laid them to heart, and acted out the lessons they were designed to teach, they would continue in the land which God had assigned to them. The reference in the phrase, "that ye may prolong your days in the land," is rather to Israel's continuance as a nation, than to the long life of the individual. *National continuance dependent on national obedience,* is the one truth most frequently named in the exhortations of Israel's lawgiver.

V. ALL THIS HAS A PRESENT-DAY APPLICATION TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD NOW. Forms change; but principles never. There are few passages, even in the grand old Book, that open up a wider scope or a sublimer field for the preacher's efforts than the one before us. The following enumeration of the successive links of thought may be helpful. Our pages give no space for more. 1. At the background of the Christian dispensation there are solid and substantial historical facts on which we can ever fall back.

2. Though the facts, comprised in the birth, cross-bearing, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, did not occur in our times, yet the evidence thereof has come down to us in unbroken line, and with unimpaired force. 3. The meaning of these facts is even better known now than it was at the moment of their occurrence; for their significance has been recorded for us in books which have survived fire and flood, and have reached us in all their integrity. 4. There are other sets of facts connected therewith of which we are witnesses, viz. that the gospel of Christ has been the power of God unto salvation to those who believe it, and that believers therein are the guardians of it, holding it in trust for others. 5. Those thus guarding the faith of Christ are the present "commonwealth of Israel;" taking the place in this economy of the Israel of old. They are not indeed visibly one now as in ancient days. But they form a host a hundredfold more numerous, ranged under differing names, yet guarding the ancient faith. 6. Those Churches which are faithful to their acknowledged mission, prolong their days in the land; while those which, either in faith or life, are less loyal and true to their God, die out, and "the candlestick is removed out of its place." 7. This law of Church life is a perpetual declaration of God's jealousy for his honour. "In proportion to their faithfulness or unfaithfulness," says a modern writer, "particular Churches overcome the world, or are overcome by the world." Thus God shows his care for these supreme facts of our faith, by saying to Churches, "If you guard them, you live; if you guard them not, you die." In the great redemption which is in Christ Jesus, God has broken the fetters which bound man. In his watchful jealousy, he will bring honour to the Church which holds forth and acts out his redemption, and will bring shame to one which represses it, weakens it, or turns the grace of God into lasciviousness. Just as our God cared not for Israel to remain a nation unless they preserved his honour unimpaired, so he cares not for the continued existence of any Church, unless it is "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints." 8. While, however, the claim and demand of God upon the fidelity of his Israel now is as strong as ever, yea stronger, the mode in which that claim is presented is vastly more tender than in ancient days. In the Epistles to the seven Churches we have a kind of appeal to the Christian Israel, analogous to this of Moses to the Hebrew Israel. But, in lieu of the thunder, trembling, and flame of Sinai, we have the pathos and love of Gethsemane and Calvary. Can we resist such appeals as those which Christ presents? Can we consent to keep back from man the cross, with all its fulness of meaning; or fail to respond to it by intensest love and closest obedience? May our once suffering and now glorified Lord make us faithful, and keep us so till death!

Vers. 10—17.—*The order of nature subservient to moral purposes.* (For information concerning methods of irrigation in Egypt, see the Exposition, and works on the subject.) Moses here reminds the people: 1. That the land of Canaan would not require artificial irrigation, as that of Egypt had done; that it was a land specially cared for by God, who gave it the early rain after the sowing, and the latter rain before the harvest; so that there would be no occasion for them to put forth the same kind of labour that had been performed in the land of their bondage. 2. That if they were obedient and true to their vows, the fruitfulness of Canaan would be ensured through the continuance of the early and the latter rain. 3. But that if they allowed themselves to be seduced to the service of other gods, the Lord's wrath would be kindled, the heaven would be shut up, the rain would be withheld, and so from want of sustenance the people would perish. Now, it is evident that this is one of those passages with which what is called "modern thought" ventures specially to come in conflict. We do not now concern ourselves with any physical theory of the working of nature which the Hebrews may have had. Moses did not give them any. It was not his province, which was simply to teach them the moral and spiritual laws under which they were placed; to show them that these were such as to subserve their training in righteousness, and that nature itself was so regulated by Jehovah, as to be a most important factor in the educational forces which were at work on their behalf. The series of thoughts here given opens up a most important theme for pulpit teaching; viz. *The order of nature subservient to moral purposes.*

I. LET US INDICATE THE MAIN THOUGHTS WHICH ARE CONTAINED IN THIS PASSAGE. 1. The sending of rain from heaven is an act of God (Jer. xiv. 22). This is a truth

taught by natural religion, and recognized in the whole of Scripture. 2. The sending of the rain from heaven is an act of, and to us a proof of, the Divine benevolence (Matt. v. 45). 3. There was manifest kindness to Israel, in leading them to a land so spontaneously and richly fruitful as Palestine. In Egypt, where rain falls so seldom, God had taught man to water it by artificial means, and compensated for the want of rain by the periodical rise of the Nile. But whereas in Palestine there was no such phenomenon, and as the people would have perished therein from want, had artificial means of watering it been required ere these irrigating measures could have been carried out, it was no mean mercy that they were led to a land which did not need them. They lose very much who do not see proofs of Divine care in these natural counterpoises and compensations. Moreover, had the fruitfulness of Canaan been dependent on Israel's "watering it with the foot" they might, in their ignorance, have attributed its fertility to their own wit or wisdom; but no *such* self-laudation could well arise where all had been secured for them by a Power not their own. 4. Nevertheless, however richly Canaan might be blessed with the rain of heaven, that gift of God was by no means absolute or irrevocable, but would be so bestowed as to serve the purpose of a moral training. In 'Footnotes from the Page of Nature,' Dr. Macmillan clearly shows that there is a law of nature, by virtue of which each order of life exists for the sake of that which is above it. We have but to widen and generalize this principle, and we get exactly the same truth in the Word which is revealed in the world, viz. that the physical exists for the moral, and is so regulated as to be subservient thereto. All things are for man. "He giveth us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." And if thus God cares for the bodily wants, how should he but care the more for the moral growth of the creature—man? 5. From this general principle, two details naturally follow. (1) That rain will be continued if the people are obedient. (2) That if they disobey, and serve otlher gods, rainlessness and dearth will be the sad reminders of their sin (see ch. xxviii. 23, 24; 1 Kings viii. 35; xvii. 1; 2 Chron. vi. 26, 27; vii. 12—14; Jer. xiv. 1—7, 17—22; Amos iv. 6—8; Hag. i. 7—11; Hos. i. 8, 9). It is no valid objection to say that there is no *nexus* between the obedience or disobedience of a man, and the fall of rain. For, first of all, in such a statement there is a gross *petitio principii*. The whole thing in question is assumed; and secondly, according to the fourth principle named above, the Scripture theory is, not only that there is a *nexus*, but that it is a known and intelligible and a reasonable one: viz. God gives or withholds rain. He values his people's comfort, but their virtue more. *He* varies the course of nature so as to subserve the latter end. Hence there is a connection between human obedience to God, and a shower of rain. The obedience is *to* God, the rain is *from* him. But let us now pass on—

II. To SHOW HOW THESE THINKINGS SHOULD GUIDE US IN REFERENCE TO SOME OF THE PRESENT PERPLEXITIES OF HUMAN THOUGHT. And perhaps we may meet these, and clear up the passage before us, most effectually, by at once putting the question, "*Is it right to pray for rain?*" We must again divide this question into two; and must first ask, "What do we mean by praying for rain?" or "What *is* that praying for rain for which alone any devout and intelligent believer would argue?" 1. It is not meant that those who never pray at all should pray *but* for rain, and selfishly beg a gift from a Being to whom, except when they are in trouble, they do not care to speak. 2. It is not meant that men should ask distrustfully, as if they thought their words would move the Most High to pity. 3. It is not meant that any request for rain should be absolute, or sent up in a spirit of querulousness or dictation. 4. It is not thought that any law of nature needs to be interfered with, or altered, or modified, in order to bring an answer to such a request. But: (1) It is known and believed that all nature is perfectly plastic in the Creator's hands. (2) It is contended that God can modify the *course* of nature without varying a *law*. Why, even man can do this: he can drain a morass, or carry off a lake, and change the climate and vegetation of a district for ever afterwards; and if man can do this in part, surely God can do it infinitely. (3) It is urged that those who in *every* thing by prayer and supplication make their requests known unto God, need not alter their course because the present trouble is a want of rain; but that they may lay this, in common with all other things, before God in prayer: reverently acknowledging his greatness, humbly acknowledging that their sins deserve his rebuke, and submitting thereto with lowliness and contrition of heart. (4) It is

asserted that any such devout souls, in any distress whatever, can, may, ought to entreat the Lord their God that he would have mercy upon them, remove his stroke, and grant them their request. This is that for which alone we contend. Now, there are reasons for taking up such a position, which cannot be set aside, and when put together in cumulative force, they seem to us to leave no special difficulty on this point remaining. (1) There is a God and Father of all. (2) He loves to be approached in prayer (Ps. l. 15). (3) Whatever is a care on his children's heart is a care on his (Isa. lxiii. 9; 1 Pet. v. 7). (4) God's great concern for the people is their moral training (ch. viii. 2—5). He so distributes physical good that the higher end may be subserved. (5) We are taught by our Lord himself to pray, "Give us day by day our daily bread;" and if so, it follows that we may pray for the continuance of the means on which the supply of daily bread depends. As rain is one of the very chief of these means, it follows that the children of God *may* pray for rain. But it may be objected, 1: The laws of nature are fixed. Be it so. The *course* of nature is not (see remarks above). God may modify an order without altering a law. What man can do in limited measure, God can do in unlimited degree. Objection 2: Prayer cannot change the mind of God. True. We neither seek nor desire to do this. We do not know what is the mind of God until he tells us. He has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive." If then it is the mind of God that his creatures should ask before receiving, it is of no use to think that the mind of God will change, and that they will receive without asking. Objection 3: If, as is affirmed, sin is the reason for drought, then the only thing which meets such a case is putting away the sin, and not *prayer!* We reply, the Scriptural teaching is that there must be confession, repentance, and prayer (see 1 Kings viii. 35). Not one alone, but all combined. Thus all the objections fail. Finally, we would conclude with one earnest inquiry, the working out of which would demand a long discourse. We can but put it, and let it drop as a seed into some hearts. Given, man as a moral being, with indefinite possibilities of development for holiness or sin, which theory of the constitution of nature most accords with the constitution of man? That which represents physical force as controlled for the purposes of his moral culture, or that which represents the nobler aspirations as hopelessly baffled by a non-moral, bare physical force? Reader, "Consider what we say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

Vers. 18—21.—(See Homily on ch. vi. 4—9.)

Vers. 22—25.—*The moral power of national righteousness.* There was a definite territory assigned by God to Israel. They were promised *it*, but the prohibition against going beyond what God had allotted them, was as remarkable and strong as the assurance of their possessing such allotment. The bounds here specified are stated afresh in Josh. i. 3, 4. In the days of Solomon these boundaries were actually theirs. But, as is well known, they were a people untrained for war; in regard to military skill and warlike appliances, other nations were vastly more than a match for them, leaving out of the question Israel's paucity in numbers. But (and it is not the least striking feature in the Mosaic legislation) they were to have power of another kind, even that which was moral, a power arising from their righteousness, and also dependent upon it. And in this passage: 1. Moses afresh reminds the people of their duty—to keep the commandments of the Lord their God. 2. He points out that their loyalty to God and assurance of his protection would give them irresistible strength. 3. The knowledge of this higher order of moral life, and of the promised guard of their covenant God, would so influence the other nations that they would be inspired with dread (see Josh. ii. 9, 10, 11). 4. This dread of Israel which the nations round about would feel would clear their way, would ensure their conquest, and would be a security for them in retaining their possessions. From all this we get one of the most important lessons suggested which can possibly be taught on national affairs, viz. *That the kind of power over other nations, which a people may well desire the most, is that which comes from the influence of its own righteousness.*

I. NATIONAL POWER IS UNIVERSALLY COVETED. Nor, provided sundry conditions are fulfilled which will be presently named, is this wrong. No nation ought to consent to be a cipher among nations. Just as really as a man may well wish to be something

amongst his follows, so should a people wish to be something in the regard of neighbouring states.

II. IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE POWER OF A NATION OVER OTHERS SHOULD BE THAT OF THE HIGHEST KIND. One nation may be chiefly great in its commercial enterprise, another in its culture of art, a third in the renown of its orators or poets, a fourth in its philosophic wisdom, a fifth in its military or naval fame; but there is a power, unlike all these, after which Israel was bidden to aspire.

III. THAT IS THE POWER MOST TO BE DESIRED WHICH WOULD MAKE IT WORTH WHILE TO PERPETUATE THE NATION POSSESSING IT, FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD'S GOOD. Moses, under Divine direction, is continually recognizing this, by putting Israel's continuance in the land as conditioned on their loyalty to Jehovah and his laws.

IV. THE ONLY POWER WHICH IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO THE WORLD'S GOOD IS THAT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. This unites a people. This gives clear heads, strong frames, valiant hearts. A nation whose heart is soundly righteous will not fight unless it must; but if it must, it will fight grandly and for a righteous aim.

V. THIS POWER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL HAVE A MANIFOLD EFFECT WITH REGARD TO OTHER NATIONS. 1. As a rule, it will ensure their good-will. 2. Appealing as it does to man's sense of justice, it will help to ward off attacks from without. 3. Where it fails to do this, and where an attack has to be resisted, if in the hour of their need they cry unto God, they will find that he shields them in the day of battle (see 2 Chron. xx. 1—29).

VI. THIS POWER MAY EVEN BE DEVELOPED AND STRENGTHENED BY REPEATED AND ARDUOUS CONFLICT. (See 2 Chron. xx. 29.) When a people are with one heart loyal to God, and do with one voice cry unto him, they will find out that Jehovah hears, and that God speeds the right. And may we not appeal fearlessly to every one of our readers, and say, Is not this power of righteousness pre-eminently that which the world wants? This being so, we may bring this series of remarks to a close by observing—

VII. THAT THE GREAT GOD OF NATIONS WILL SET HIS SEAL OF APPROVAL ON PEOPLES THAT SO CLEAVE TO THE RIGHT, BY GIVING AGAIN AND AGAIN THE VICTORY TO THAT WHICH, HUMANLY SPEAKING, IS THE WEAKER SIDE. Scripture cases of this abound: Israel and Pharaoh; Gideon and the Midianites; Hezekiah and Sennacherib; Jehoshaphat and the Ammonites; and (in another sense) Elijah and the priests and prophets of Baal. The Word of God is continually showing us that power is not always where it seems to be, but very often where it seems not to be: Joseph, Daniel, Peter, etc. From all these considerations, there may be drawn out an earnest appeal to men, even if they aim at nought higher than to be the true lovers and guardians of their country and nation, to seek for the sake of their own dear land, to love and to practise righteousness. Nor let it be supposed that this statement is at all affected by the fact that we are "not under the Law but under grace." Grace reigns through righteousness, and only through righteousness. Infinite grace has offered a Sacrifice which has done away with the need of continuing the sacrifices of the ceremonial law. But grace never has and never will abate one jot or tittle of the demands for righteousness which mark the moral law. Never! And if we are rescued from condemnation, if we are made sons of God, it is not that we may be absolved from the obligation to righteousness; but that "the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in us" from the spontaneity of personal choice, without the need of any command to enforce or pressure to constrain. And inasmuch as only in a perfectly righteous people can there be an absolute guarantee of permanence, it follows that only the people in the commonwealth of Israel will constitute "the eternal city." For there "the people shall be all righteous," and then "they shall inherit the land for ever." Righteousness and permanence are thus linked together in the prophetic outlook of Isaiah, as really as in the legislation of Moses (see Isa. lxi. 21). In this new and nobler world, righteousness will come into being, not as a response to a Divine command, but as the product of a Divine creation. And then around it there shall be an eternal guard. No enemy from without shall dare to attack; no foe from within shall weaken. "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

Vers. 26—28.—*The dread alternative before every man.* Perhaps, strictly speaking, the final paragraph of this chapter includes vers. 26—32. The reader thereof will,

however, observe that, while in its entirety it deals with the blessing and curse, yet the first three verses deal with them as resting *on the* people, the remaining verses regard them as pronounced *by* the people. The theme indicated by the latter half is treated on at ch. xxvii. We therefore confine our remarks to the former section of these words. They present to us the dread alternative which is before every man, as our theme for consideration. Lest any should seek to blunt the edge of our words by saying, "We don't like the word 'curse;' it belongs to an older dispensation," we would observe at the outset that the same alternative is presented to us, though it may be in other words, by the Lord Jesus Christ, in John iii. 18—21. We do not say that there is no difference in meaning beyond the varied phraseology, but simply point out just now, that, under Christ, as under Moses, there is set forth the sharp contrast, in one case of blessing and curse, in the other case of acceptance and condemnation. One or other of these belongs to every man. Here is a mighty theme, in which the preacher has "by manifestation of the truth to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

I. MAN HAS A MORAL NATURE. The denial of this by some, and the baseness of the lives of others, no more interfere with the general truth of this, than cases which are abnormal in the physical world do with well-ascertained truth in the physical departments. Man has a *συνείδησις*, a power of discerning moral distinctions. If he fails to give proof of that, he is a perishing man.

II. THE POSSESSION OF A MORAL NATURE INDICATES THE EXISTENCE OF MORAL LAW. This is, in fact, the objectivity which is before the moral sense, and perceived by it.

III. THE EXISTENCE OF A LAW IMPLIES THAT OF A LAWGIVER; the existence of a moral law, that of a moral Lawgiver, who is himself the Lord of right, the God, "with whom is our account." The moral sense of man postulates this; the all but universal conviction of mankind affirms it; the sense of sin is its constant demonstration. The experience of men like Enoch, who in the olden time "walked with God," is proof that at any rate some human spirits lean on the Eternal One, as really as the body depends on air and food.

IV. THE MORAL LAWGIVER REVEALS HIMSELF. Not only do previously mentioned facts show *that* he is, but we know also *what* he is. The Law given by Moses, and the proclamation of Jehovah's Name to him, disclose the greatness of the Divine being; the fuller word of prophet and psalmist likewise. The Incarnate Son revealed him. The Holy Ghost unveils him to the watchful eye and yearning heart. "The Lord *your* God."

V. THE GREAT LAWGIVER HAS GIVEN DEFINITE COMMANDS. Chiefly, *as* Lawgiver, in the Law. Chiefly, as also a great Benefactor, in the gospel. In the one aspect his Law is "do;" in the other his Law is "receive." In the former a course of life is marked out in detail; in the latter, a redemption by infinite grace is made known for "the obedience of faith." So that, as it speaks to us, Law says (for we are under Law to Christ), "Receive in loving faith the redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, and then, by the renewed energies of a God-inspired life, walk not after the flesh but after the spirit."

VI. THE DIVINE LAWGIVER REGARDS MEN ACCORDING TO THEIR MEASURE OF LOYALTY TO THE RIGHT AND THE TRUE, *i.e.* as far as they have the opportunity of knowing what is right and true; for some nations may even as yet not have any written law. In such case Peter's words apply (Acts x. 34, 35). We can suppose others who have the Law only. *We* have the revelation of God both in Law and in gospel; to us is the word of salvation sent (cf. John vi. 29). According as we receive it or no, God approves or disapproves, accepts or disowns. Is it possible to suppose it otherwise? Can any one think that a holy Lawgiver should give forth a perfect Law, and then be unconcerned as to whether men obey it? Can it be imagined that he should send his only begotten Son into the world, and then leave it optional with men as to how they should treat him to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth? There is indeed (see Homily on ch. x. 17—xi. 1) no respect of persons as to rank, or caste, or colour, or clime. The wide world over, right and equity are the Divine delight; but since right is right, and God is God, there must eternally remain the great gulf fixed between the loyalty of heart which he approves, and the disloyalty of soul which the Most High cannot but condemn. The throne of the Eternal is established in righteousness.

VII. THIS APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF GOD IS THE BLESSING OR CURSE. (Cf. Ps. i. 6.)

And it would be well could it be impressed on every conscience that, even if there were no certainty of any visitation or punishment from God in token of his displeasure, yet that displeasure itself is so awful a curse, that to be conscious of it is the germ of hell; while, quite apart from aught that he may send to us, the consciousness of having his approval is a sufficient, a heavenly, an "exceeding great" reward! The light in which God views us is of infinitely more moment than the gifts he sends or the chastisements he inflicts. Take an illustration from a lower sphere. Let it be supposed that a man whose life and writings are corrupting the morals and helping to blight the faith of his countrymen, is admitted, in course of events, to the assembly of British senators. He is there as one of its members. But he knows that the grandest, purest, most philanthropic and self-sacrificing of human-kind regard him and his views with unutterable loathing, not because of any vindictive feeling against him, but because of the solemn interests which in his hands are imperilled and shamed. Nothing is done *to* him; but he knows that this is how he and his views are regarded by those whose esteem is most worth having. Would not such a state of things be intolerable torture to him? Or supposing him "past feeling," would his case be the less pitiable? Or supposing him so puffed up with pride and conceit as to regard the rest of his fellows as kept virtuous by a superstition whose elevating power he does not desire to know, would not the disapproval of the mass of the people—too deep for any words to express—be as a blighting curse upon him, even though no other penalty were imposed; and would not that disownment be a heavier penalty than any outward punishment could be? But oh! what, what is the disapproval of man, or of men, compared with the frown of God?

VIII. THIS APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL WILL, SOONER OR LATER, BE MANIFEST. It is true, in more senses than one, "Thou art a God that hidest thyself" (cf. Ps. l. 21). But "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." The curse will show itself *in nations*, by their humiliation and destruction. So Egypt, Tyre, Chaldea, Jerusalem, etc. It will reveal itself *in families* by a "sword in the house" for many a long year (1 Sam. iii. 13, 14; 2 Sam. vii. 14). It will be manifest *in the individual*. This κρίμα—yea, κατακρίμα—of God has three stages. 1. A present, though it may be a comparatively silent one, either in a stinging conscience, or one "seared as with a hot iron." 2. A further one, on the exchange of worlds, when earth and sense are thrown off, and the Great Invisible is near. "Now, Mr. T——," said a departing sinner to the missionary who was by his bedside, "my judgment has just begun!" 3. A future one, at the day of judgment, when God shall judge the secrets of men (cf. Matt. xxv. 31—46). Disobedient hearts are but treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, to be disapproved, finally, by him from whose sentence there can be no appeal. Is not a heavy curse, indeed, involved in all that?

IX. HERE IS GROUND ENOUGH FOR SOLEMN APPEAL TO MEN. "I set before you this day a blessing and a curse." Oh! if men would but take the pains to quit a while in thought this busy scene in which they live and move almost in perpetual whirl; if they would but anticipate by earnest reflection that usherment into the presence of God which their departure hence must bring; if they would but set the judgment scene, as sketched by Christ, before their view, methinks they would see the deep and solemn reason why the preacher now—even now—says, "Flee from the wrath to come." For the wrath will come, *i.e.* it will manifest itself. It exists now. The eternal antagonism of a holy God to ill of every kind necessitates it. And as surely as God is ever on the side of right, so surely will he have it shown, ere long, that such is the case. Then let the sinner, condemned even now by his own conscience—how much more by God!—flee for refuge from the coming storm. There is a refuge; it is ours the moment that we flee to it. But if when the storm comes we are not found there, we must perish—perish with the double disapproval of Heaven on our heads: disapproved as breakers of law; disapproved as neglecters of grace.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 2—10, 18—22.—*Obligations arising from personal experience.* "Chastisement" (ver. 2) in its wide sense of discipline. The educative process by which God

converted, or aimed at converting, the hordes who left Egypt into a nation of brave, free, God-fearing, self-respecting, obedient men and women. This education blended deliverance with judgment on their enemies; loving-kindness in the bestowal of mercies, with severe chastisements in cases of rebellion; attention to their necessities, with frequent exposure to adversity, and consequent trial of their faith and patience. They had been put to school with the Almighty as their Teacher; their lesson-book was the whole extraordinary series of occurrences in Egypt and the desert; the end of the training was to form them to obedience.

I. THREE PHASES OF GOD'S INSTRUCTION OF HIS CHURCH. 1. *The shattering of worldly power hostile to the Church* (vers. 3, 4). Pharaoh, in his pride and obstinacy, is a type of world-power universally, in its opposition to God's kingdom (Rom. ix. 17). But though again and again the waves have thus roared, and the floods have lifted up their voice (Ps. xciii. 3, 4), the Lord on high has shown himself mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea (cf. Ps. lxxxiii.; Isa. xxxvii.; 1 Macc. iv.; Acts iv. 23—34; Rev. xix. 19; xx. 8, 9). 2. *The preservation and guidance of the Church itself* (ver. 5). In securing the perpetuation of a godly remnant in times of greatest apostacy (1 Kings xix. 18; Rom. xi. 5; Rev. iii. 5; xi. 3; xii. 17); in providing her with a succession of godly teachers (Matt. xxviii. 20; Eph. iv. 11—14); in supplying her necessities, spiritual (John vi. 32, 33; 1 Cor. x. 4; xii. 13; Eph. iii. 16; Phil. iv. 19) and temporal (Matt. x. 9, 10; Acts iv. 34; 1 Cor. ix. 14; Phil. iv. 15, 16); in opening up the path of duty (Acts xvi. 10; Rom. xv. 30, 31; 2 Cor. x. 13—17), in conducting her from one stage of attainment to another (Eph. iv. 12, 13). 3. *The overthrow of antichristian rebellion within the Church* (ver. 6). The insurrection of Korah and his company may be taken as representative of antichristian movements generally. These are bound to arise, but will infallibly be crushed (2 Thess. ii. 3—13; 1 John ii. 18; Rev. xvii.).

II. OBLIGATIONS ARISING FROM EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S WONDERFUL WORKS. The older portion of that generation had personally witnessed the wonderful works referred to. This gave them a certain advantage, and made disobedience doubly culpable. These works of God had been: (1) in origin, supernatural; (2) in kind, of stupendous magnitude; and (3) had extended over a long period of time. Those who have lived through any period signalized by remarkable workings of God on behalf of his Church, or whose individual experiences have been remarkable, may learn a lesson. Apply to reformation times, times of religious revival, of deliverance from persecutions, of the forth-putting of God's power in missions, etc. (2 Chron. xxxi. 25, 26; Ezra iii. 10—13; vi. 22; Esth. ix. 27; Ps. xl. 10; cxvi. 6—9; Acts xv. 12). Such experiences: 1. *Furnish peculiar evidences of God's grace and power, of the reality of his working in salvation and judgment.* These evidences, while not losing their value to later generations, are necessarily of greatest force to those who witness the events. 2. *Create impressions of God's character and attributes not so readily created by report.* It is much to hear of the wonderful works of God from credible witnesses, but hearing with the ear cannot equal, in impressiveness and force, seeing with the eye (Job xlii. 5). 3. *Imply a personal discipline which others have not had the benefit of.* The lessons of our experiences may be conveyed to posterity, but the results of them in personal character remain with ourselves. All this lays on those who have had such experiences very special responsibilities. These relate (1) to personal obedience (ver. 8); and (2) to the education of children (vers. 18—21). How are our children to know of God's mighty works in former days, or get the benefit of our own experiences; how are they to be convinced, moved, or instructed by these things, save as the result of diligent parental teaching? —J. O.

Vers. 10—18.—*Canaan and Egypt.* I. ITS CONTRAST WITH EGYPT. (Vers. 10, 11.) Not, like Egypt, a land rainless and artificially watered. It had no Nile. It drank in water from the rains of heaven. It was thus in a peculiar way a land dependent upon God. Egypt's fertility depended on God also, but less directly. Its contrivances for irrigation gave it, or might seem to give it, a semi-independence. Palestine was a land, on the contrary, whose peculiar conditions made it dependent for fruitfulness on the direct gift to it of rains from heaven. It was a land requiring a providential adjustment of conditions—a daily care—to make it yield the utmost it was capable of (ver. 12).

The truth here figured is that God wills the believer to put his life day by day under his immediate care. The worldly man may desire, and in a measure may be allowed to attain, a position of relative independence of God: he may get (within limits) the ordering of his own plans and ways, and by ingenious contrivances and manipulations of laws of nature, he may think to put himself beyond the power of God's interference with him. But the godly man will neither desire this nor be content with it. He wishes God's eyes to be upon his lot day by day, "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." There is, within the ordinary providence of God, a *special* providence to be recognized over God's people, over Christ's Church, and over nations that adhere to God's ways.

II. THE RESULTS OF THIS CONTRAST TO THE INHABITANTS. (Vers. 13—18.) The directness of the dependence of Canaan on God's care made it, to a greater degree than Egypt could have been, suitable for the operation of a system so intimately bound up with temporal rewards and punishments. Should the people prove obedient, God engages to bless them with rains, and make the land fruitful (vers. 13—16). But should they disobey, the peculiar conditions of the land put it in his power to scourge them, as he so often did, with drought and famine (1 Kings xvii. 1; Joel i.; Hag. i. 10, 11). So he threatens (vers. 16, 17). It is a blessed but a perilous position which God's people are called to occupy. It secures to them unwonted favours, but it exposes them also, if disobedient, to chastisements and punishments of a peculiarly direct and severe kind. The higher the position of nearness to God, the greater the responsibility which that position entails upon who enjoy it.—J. O.

Vers. 26—29.—*The great alternative.* I. GOD SUMMONS US TO DECISION. 1. His revelations *lay the ground for it.* "Light is come into the world" (John iii. 19). 2. They *demand it.* Men would trifle, but God says, "Now" (2 Cor. vi. 2). Men would put off, but God urges to decision (Josh. xxiv. 15). 3. They *shut men up to it.* When light comes, decision is inevitable. We must settle what our attitude towards it will be. In decreeing *not* to choose, we in reality *do* choose.

II. THE DECISION TO WHICH GOD SUMMONS US TURNS ON A SINGLE POINT. The point is obedience. Will we obey or will we not (ver. 27)? It was so under the Law, and it is so under the gospel. What the gospel asks from us is "the obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26). This tests our disposition thoroughly. True faith carries with it the surrender of the will to God and Christ. It is the root and principle of all holy obedience. Men will not come to Christ; why? The reason is that they cannot bring themselves to yield up their wills to him as he requires. They "love the darkness rather than the light" (John iii. 19—22). Refusal to decide for Christ is equivalent, for the time being, to deciding *against* him (Matt. xii. 30).

III. THE DECISION TO WHICH GOD SUMMONS US INVOLVES THE ALTERNATIVE OF A BLESSING AND A CURSE. That was what it came to then, and it is the same still. Blessing or curse; life or death. Whether God is to be our God, blessing us, renewing our inward life, enriching us with his Spirit, bestowing on us grace here and glory hereafter; or whether we are to live beneath his frown, withering up under it in body and soul, and vanishing at last into outer darkness. It is an old question whether a man can voluntarily choose what is for his hurt. Possibly he cannot without first listening to the tempter who bids him believe that the course he pursues will *not* be for his hurt. But none the less is every sinner taking the path which ends in destruction (Matt. vii. 13). His interest, did he but see it, or would he but believe it, is entirely in the line which God wishes him to follow. The terminus of the one road is death (Rom. vi. 21), of the other life everlasting (Rom. xi. 22).—J. O.

Vers. 22—26.—*Vastness of promise.* An inspiring statement of what God would do for the obedient nation. Shining through it we see the promise to the Church. God promises—

I. VICTORY OVER ALL ENEMIES. (Ver. 23.) The strongest spiritual foes will go down if we cleave to God. Though greater and mightier than we, they shall be overthrown.

II. ENLARGEMENT OF BOUNDS. (Ver. 23.) They would grow numerous, fill the land, and spread beyond it. A wider prospect is held out to the Church. Her possession

is the earth. If faithful, she has the means within herself to spread abroad her conquests, and occupy from sea to sea.

III. MORAL SUPREMACY. (Ver. 25.) Israel's power would be acknowledged—her influence felt. Men would dread her hostility. The felt presence of God in a man, or in a Church, has a power to inspire fear. Its awing effect is felt often where it is not acknowledged.—J. O.

Vers. 29, 30.—*Gerizim and Ebal* (cf. ch. xxvii.). This putting of the blessing and the curse on Gerizim and Ebal had significance—

I. AS A SOLEMN TRANSFERENCE OF THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE TO THE LAND OF POSSESSION. Blessing and curse, representing the award of eternal righteousness, must follow us so long as disobedience is possible. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom. viii. 13). "That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Heb. vi. 8). In heaven there is "no more curse" (Rev. xxii. 3), but only because, confirmed in holiness, God's servants can no more fall away.

II. AS A SOLEMN REMINDER OF THE TENURE ON WHICH THE LAND WAS HELD. We cannot render perfect obedience, but our duty is to aim at it. The condition of inheritance is that we are doers of the Father's will (Matt. vii. 21).

III. AS CONNECTED WITH A SOLEMN RENEWAL OF VOWS. Fitting on such occasions that both blessing and curse should be remembered.—J. O.

Vers. 1—7.—*Ocular demonstrations of God's nearness increase human responsibility.* Men disposed to scepticism often ask for clearer proof of the existence of God. But they deceive themselves. If they used well such evidence as they have, they would find it ample. We should not overlook the fact that the Hebrews, under Moses, and that the Jews in the days of Christ, had clearest demonstrations of God's presence. Yet they believed not; they were conspicuous examples of unbelief.

I. EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF RELIGION HAVE BEEN SUPPLIED TO SOME PERSONS ABUNDANTLY. 1. *The Hebrews had every possible demonstration of God's existence.* The Most High deigned to reveal himself to the eye and to the ear, in forms adapted to produce complete conviction, and to overthrow all doubt. The people were more than content. They asked that such overpowering displays of the Godhead might be withdrawn. 2. *They were convinced of the regal power of Jehovah.* To resist *him* they plainly saw was an impossibility. Pharaoh was the personation of worldly power; yet Pharaoh and his captains and astrologers and host had been completely swept away by the breath of Jehovah's power. The irresistible might of Jehovah was as evident as their own existence. 3. *They saw that the Omnipotent God was the Friend of men.* That all the resources of Jehovah were employed on behalf of his friends, not one in the Hebrew camp could question. God had used every plan to persuade Pharaoh to yield compliance, and it was only after long waiting and repeated warning that vengeance was decreed. 4. *They had plainest proof of the judicial faithfulness of God.* For they had themselves suffered his chastisements. Resistance of Divine authority had been followed by judgment among the Hebrews, as among the Egyptians. Favouritism, exceptional treatment, escape from magisterial detection,—these things were out of question. The inviolable rectitude of God's administration was clear as noon-day.

II. EXTERNAL EVIDENCES SERVE AS A MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY. 1. *They satisfy all the requirements of intellect.* Responsibility depends on two things, viz. (1) sufficient information; (2) ability to obey. If between opposing probabilities there is the smallest preponderance in favour of belief in God, such balance of probability must determine our conduct. Hereafter, hesitation is criminal. Every piece of additional evidence is additional responsibility. It relieves us from the weakness of recurring doubt. God makes due allowance for deficient knowledge. "The times of human ignorance God winked at," *i.e.* overlooked. 2. *External demonstration does not ensure spiritual impression.* The diligent inquirer will find a thousand evidences of duty where an indolent man will see none. So where within a man feeling is susceptible, a tithe of existing knowledge will suffice to produce glad obedience. It is incumbent on men to *weigh well* all the evidence of religion they

possess, and to respond, in feeling and affection and active effort, to every claim which conscience recognizes. 3. *It is a duty to ascertain our personal responsibility.* We may find benefit in comparing our privileged position with the position of others. If, with the measure of knowledge we possess, we are still rebellious, what is likely to be the conduct of those less privileged? If *we*, to whom special revelation has been made, waste the possession, will not our own children pronounce our condemnation, because we have denied to them the help of our testimony?

III. EXTERNAL EVIDENCES MAY ONLY INJURE OUR SOULS. 1. *Misuse of superior knowledge is a crime.* If God has condescended to give us instruction respecting himself and his purposes of mercy, it is sheer ingratitude on our part to neglect it. Blindness has deprived us of the highest good. 2. *Resistance of conscience does permanent injury to the soul.* The abuse of any material instrument is an injury. The conscience is an instrument of the soul's life. To neglect its magisterial voice is to make ourselves deaf. To resist its instincts is to strangle them. Not to act according to our enlightened reason, is to injure reason as an instrument. If we recklessly nip the first buds of affection, we necessarily destroy its proper fruit. In thoughtless resistance of truth, men are preparing the elements of a direful doom. While obedience to God makes a man strong, rebellion effeminates all the nobler powers of the soul. It enervates, corrupts, destroys. 3. *Unfaithfulness to convictions will necessitate severest retribution.* It is an ascertained fact that punishment will be in proportion to desert. The servant ignorant of his Lord's special requirements is counted worthy of some stripes; but he who knew his Lord's will, and flagrantly neglected it, is awarded "many stripes."

The mere possibility of Israel's unfaithfulness kindled the earnest anxiety of Moses.—D.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Obedience leads to prolonged possession.* We may learn here—

I. THAT COMMANDS MAY CARRY A SUPREME OBLIGATION, THOUGH SPOKEN BY MAN.

II. THAT OBEDIENCE IS VAIN, UNLESS IT COVERS THE WHOLE AREA OF DUTY.

III. THAT COMPLETE OBEDIENCE IMPARTS STRENGTH TO THE WHOLE MAN.

IV. THAT SUCH STRENGTH PRESSES INTO THE POSSESSION OF NEW KINGDOMS.

V. THAT THE OATH OF GOD, AND THE DEVOUT ACTIVITY OF MAN, CO-OPERATE FOR THE HIGHEST ACQUISITIONS.—D.

Vers. 10—17.—*Valuable possessions reserved for the righteous.* The land of Palestine has always been a coveted prize by the surrounding nations. Compared with the territory south and east, it possesses qualities of excellence and beauty. But its fertility depends upon the rain supply, and rain supply was suspended on righteous loyalty.

I. A MORAL PURPOSE UNDERLIES THE GEOLOGICAL CONFIGURATION OF OUR GLOBE. God can never experience surprise in the beneficial coincidences of events. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." If heaven has been undergoing a process of preparation from a period anterior to the formation of our globe, we need feel no surprise that, in arranging the strata of the earth, God should have been animated with motives of righteous benevolence towards men. And if the structure of hill and valley is the visible projection of a generous moral purpose—a part of the plan for the religious education of men—we may conclude that all the forces and phenomena of nature have vital connection with the religious development of our race. Israel was sent into Canaan because amongst its hills and valleys its history and fortunes could best be unfolded.

II. GOD'S PATERNAL CARE OF MEN EXTENDS TO THE WHOLE OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT. The sagacious love of God condescends to every minutiæ of human life. Our God has infinite leisure for everything. His eyes are daily upon our farms and shops. He is our Bulwark and defends our coasts. He knoweth what we have need of.

III. THE RICHEST EARTHLY POSSESSION LEAVES MEN WHOLLY DEPENDENT ON GOD. Instead of our possessions liberating us from dependence on God, they increase our dependence; for *now* we need his protection for our property as well as for ourselves. Possessions (so called) are only channels through which true blessing flows, and our great business is to keep the channel clear. The hills of Canaan obtained their irrigation from the springs of heaven, and only obedient faith can unlock these springs.

IV. FILIAL OBEDIENCE SECURES MATERIAL PROSPERITY. Such prosperity is the

picture and symbol of spiritual good. But material benefits were the only rewards which these Hebrews could appreciate. "Godliness is" still "profitable for *all* things." The source of all real prosperity is in heaven.

V. EVEN SECRET SIN SETS IN MOTION A SERIES OF GIGANTIC EVILS. The heart is easily taken by semblances and promises of good. The falsehoods of Satan are very plausible. A sentinel needs to be placed at every portal of the soul. Self-deception ends in total destruction. We do not sin alone, nor suffer alone.—D.

Vers. 18—21.—*God's Word potent to dominate the whole life.* The Word of God, like light, is diffusive. It propagates itself. So long as its proper field of activity is unoccupied, it must spread. It radiates its magnetic influence on every side.

I. TRUTH, POSSESSING THE HEART, BECOMES THE FOUNT OF ALL RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLE. As the pulverized soil is the proper home of seed; as the housewife's dough is the proper home of leaven; so the heart of man is the proper abode of truth. On stony tablets, in books, or in speech, it is only in transit towards its proper destination. Received and welcomed into the soul, it begins a process of blessed activity; it vitalizes, ennobles, beautifies every part of human nature. It is the seed of all virtue and goodness—the root of immortal blessedness.

II. RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLE DOMINATES ALL OUR ACTIVE POWERS. The hand is the servant of the heart. What the mind plans, the hand executes. To bind God's precepts upon our hands is to remind ourselves that the hand, as the representative of active faculty, belongs to God. Embargo is laid upon it to do no violence to others' persons or to others' property. It must not strike nor steal, for it has become an instrument sacred to God. Nor must it be defiled with idleness, for it is the property of him who incessantly works, nor may the eye wantonly wander after forbidden objects. The eye led Eve into transgression. "Let thine eye look straight before thee." "Look not upon the wine when it sparkles in the cup." The eye is a potent instrument for evil or for good.

III. RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLE, SPRINGING OUT OF LOVE OF TRUTH, MAKES US WITNESSES FOR GOD. As on the high priest's forehead there was inscribed the motto, "Holiness unto the Lord;" so, in substance, the same truth is written on every servant of God. He is a consecrated man. His finely arched brow is his glory, and his glory is devoted to God. In every circumstance he desires to magnify his God. His house is God's house; hence on gate and lintel the precepts of God are conspicuous. Hospitality and contentment, peace and kindness, dwell there, for it is the home of God.

IV. RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLE MOULDS POSTERITY. What we are, in great measure our children will be. Moral qualities are entailed. In their tender years, their young nature is plastic and impressible. If our hearts are full of God's truth, it will rise and overflow our lips as water from a well. Far from being an irksome task to speak God's truth, it will be a pleasurable instinct. All time, from early morn till evening repose, will be too short to utter all God's truth. "Living epistles" describe the office of the godly.

V. RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLE SECURES PERMANENT ENJOYMENT. Truth in the heart is translated into righteousness in the life, and righteousness makes heaven. No enjoyment can be perfect in which our children do not share; and in sharing our joys with our children, we multiply our joys beyond all arithmetical measure. Such days of consecrated service will be "days of heaven upon earth."—D.

Vers. 22—25.—*He who best serves is most fit to rule.* Golden links of life unite our pious love with universal conquest. "All things become ours, if we are Christ's."

I. LOYAL OBEDIENCE GENERATES LOVE. It is quite true that love is the mother of obedience; it is also true that obedience fosters and intensifies love. The earth receives heat from the sun, but it gives out heat likewise. The sentiment of love in the breast will dwindle and die unless it have practical exercise. Diligent and thoughtful service will bring us nearer God, make God more precious to us, and bind us to him in tenderer bonds. There is an interlacement of affection. Our desires send deep their roots in God, and an indissoluble alliance is the result.

II. UNION WITH GOD SECURES HIS PRACTICAL AID. We are required "to cleave to him." The effect is that he will cleave to us, and prove a real Ally, an almighty Helper. He will drive out all our foes for us, however great and mighty they be. Our foes

become his foes. He identifies himself with our cause; or, what is the same thing, we identify ourselves with *his*.

III. DIVINE ASSISTANCE MAKES US ALL-CONQUERING. "No man shall be able to stand before us." Good men will be drawn to us in sacred friendship; bad men will be held fast in the mysterious spell of awe. We shall be known as the friends and allies of God; and, in proportion as we are like him, men will feel for us the dread they feel for God.

IV. SUCH VALIANT STRENGTH WILL INTRODUCE US TO UNIVERSAL INHERITANCE. "Every place whereon the soles of our feet shall tread shall be ours." In such covenant alliance with God, we shall walk through his universe as "*his heirs*." Every element of material substance, every event in time, every circumstance and experience, shall conduce to our profit. The world shall be laid under tribute to our best life. We shall extract advantage and joy from adversity itself.—D.

Vers. 26—32.—*Startling alternatives.* Our life is hourly a choice of alternatives. We can go to the right or to the left. Choice is incessantly demanded, and the issues of our choice are momentous.

I. THE REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL MAY BE A SOURCE OF ABSOLUTE BLESSING. Such revelation is the disclosure of man's true paradise. It is the opening of the door of God's own palace; and, unworthy though we are, we may enter and find rest. To do God's will is to be Christ-like—is to be a true son, and to possess a son's joy. Every step we take along that way of obedience is a step nearer God, from whose smile we obtain exquisite pleasure, and in whose society we find our heaven.

II. WE CANNOT REMAIN THE SAME, AFTER OBTAINING THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL AS WE WERE BEFORE. Necessity requires that we should be either better or worse. You cannot dwell for an hour in the society of a good man, and continue in the former state of feeling. The fire that does not melt, hardens. To know God's will, and not to do it, inflicts unspeakable mischief upon the soul. Resistance of inward convictions begets callosity of heart, and blasts the budding life of conscience. Wanton treason against God is incipient hell. It is the darkening of the understanding, and the enslavement of the will. No blacker curse can enwrap a man than this.

III. MATERIAL NATURE FORECASTS THE ALTERNATIVES OF BLESSING OR WOE. The visible universe is a projection of God's thought, and all the forces of nature are the agents of God. We find upon this globe elements that minister to our development and strength and joy. We find also elements that are repulsive, menacing, and destructive. The cloud-capped peaks may draw around us the lightnings of vengeance, or may melt the laden cloud and distil showers of blessing. The twin mountains of Ebal and Gerizim were baptized as perpetual preachers of life and death. We may find "sermons in stones," lessons in leaves, counsels in running brooks.

IV. MATERIAL POSSESSIONS ARE NOT ABSOLUTE BLESSINGS. God here distinctly assures the Hebrews that they shall enter Canaan; but whether they should dwell under the frowning peaks of Ebal, or on the sunny slopes of Gerizim, was suspended on their loyal obedience. Even to the possessors of the promised land, there stood the dark possibility of the curse. Neither money nor learning makes a man; it is the power to use it.—D.

Vers. 1—9.—*Divine judgments upon others, to ensure obedience in us.* Moses wishes to bring all possible motive to bear upon the people to secure their obedience in Canaan. He has just been speaking of their national development from a family of seventy to a multitude as numerous as the stars. Such a blessing should encourage them to love the Lord their God, and to "keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway." Obedience is thus founded upon *gratitude*, which is God's invariable plan.

But in these verses before us, Moses takes what we may call the *converse* method. He calls up in succession the judgments with which God visited both the Egyptians and their own forefathers on account of disobedience. He calls upon them to recognize (יִרְעֻתֶם) the "chastisement" (מוּסַר) with which God had signalized the disobedience of the Egyptians and of the Israelites. The following lessons are in these verses suggested.

I. GRATITUDE IS THE FOUNDATION OF NEW OBEDIENCE. This is God's plan. He

does not say, "Obey, and I will save you for your obedience," but "Take salvation as a free gift, and then obey me as a matter of gratitude." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." He secures the love by sovereign mercy, and receives obedience as his return upon his investment. Obedience is God's dividend upon his investment of love.

Those who would make "good works" the *root* of salvation instead of the *fruit* of salvation, are reversing the whole procedure of God.

II. GRATITUDE MAY BE REINFORCED BY A STUDY OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF INGRATITUDE IN OTHERS. For what God strikes at is ingratitude. The Egyptians were ungrateful. They should have recognized God's *mercy* in their fertile land, in their civilization and advancement, in the mission of Moses, and in the character of the earlier plagues. God had visited Egypt with his love—love which was undeserved, love which remained unrequited. When he revealed "his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm," it was against Egypt's ingratitude and consequent disobedience. The *dénouement* at the Red Sea was judgment upon ingratitude and persevering impiety.

Now, the study of all this, here recommended by Moses, was well fitted to foster gratitude in the hearts of the Israelites. Here was unrequited love receiving its vindication in the series of disasters which culminated in the Red Sea. "We must be thankful," they might well say, "that our ingratitude in past years has not been similarly treated, and for the coming time we must cultivate gratitude and the obedience it secures."

III. GRATITUDE MAY ALSO BE REINFORCED BY A STUDY OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF SELF-CONFIDENCE. For this seems to be the idea of Moses in bringing forward the case of Dathan and Abiram. As descendants of Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob, they imagined that they had the right to the *primacy* in Israel. Hence they disputed the rights of Moses and of the priestly line of Aaron. They insisted on their right of *primogeniture* as valid in the government of God.

But God recognizes no such personal claims, and he visited the presumption with swift destruction. The study of this "chastisement" would deliver Israel from all confidence in themselves. They would recognize that personal claims are not accepted by a sovereign God; that in consequence they must in humility approach him, thankful for spared lives and continued mercy, and anxious to testify by obedience to their genuine thankfulness.

IV. OBEDIENCE WILL BE FOUND TO BE THE SECRET OF STRENGTH AND SUCCESS IN THE INVASION. For while obedience rests on gratitude, it elicits gratitude from God. If God expects us to be grateful for his love, he shows us the example in being grateful for ours. "I love them that love me," he says (Prov. viii. 17); and again, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John xiv. 21; see also ver. 23). Now, this is what we do not hesitate to call *Divine gratitude.*

Hence Israel found that obedience rendered thankfully to God received a grateful reward from him in strength to invade and conquer the land of Canaan, and, secondly, in strength to prolong their days in it. A similar experience is realized by God's servants still. Obedience is rewarded graciously and gratefully. Strength is found equal to our day, as we make our pilgrimage to God. How important, then, to obey from a proper motive, and at the same time to receive with proper delight the gracious return which a grateful God bestows!—R. M. E.

Vers. 10—17.—*The land of promise.* Moses now proceeds to indicate the characteristics of Canaan, and to contrast it with Egypt, which they had left. Egypt is not dependent upon the rains of heaven as Canaan is. The overflowing Nile has only to be guided along the water-courses in the proper season, and the fertility of the Nile valley is secured. The work of irrigation, the watering with the foot (ver. 10), is the one thing needful in Egypt. But Canaan depends upon the continual care of God, his eyes being on it from the beginning to the end of the year, dispensing "the first rain and the latter rain," in order to the harvest. In Egypt, the blessing is given "wholesale"—the Nile brings down from the interior the water the valley needs. In Canaan,

the mountain ridge between the Nile valley and the valley of the Euphrates, there is constant dependence experienced upon the bounties of heaven. This suggests—

I. THAT CANAAN WAS A SPLENDID LAND IN WHICH TO TRAIN UP A SPIRITUAL PEOPLE. It was not naturally so fertile as either the valley of the Nile or the valley of the Euphrates. Hence famine touched it more quickly than either Egypt or Assyria. But it was fitted to foster dependence upon God and hope in him. If the inhabitants were obedient, then the land might flow with milk and honey; if disobedient, it might become brown and bare through the withholding of the rain.

Hence we find, in Egypt and in Assyria, a turning of the people to the worship of the *inorganic* and the *organic* forces of nature respectively. The valleys, being in some measure more independent of the changing seasons, seem to have nurtured independence of God; while the hills of Syria, like the Highlands of Scotland and of Switzerland, fostered more faith in the Supreme. "Those Syrian hills," says a living writer, "are the Spirit's throne, where, lifted above the deserts of earth, it sits nearest to heaven, while spread beneath it on either hand, resting on the desert's level as their home, are nature's twin provinces of matter and life, rich and green with the beauty and greenness of time, always imposing and often victorious in the region of sense; but doomed, like all things visible and temporal, to fall before the power which shall yet clothe itself with their glory, and which is itself unseen and eternal."

II. THE BLESSINGS WERE GUARANTEED ON CONDITION OF MAN LOYALLY CO-OPERATING WITH GOD. Canaan was no land for indolent lotus-eaters; it was not—

"A land where all things always seem'd the same!"

It was a land where man must co-operate with God in order to the blessing—a land where man realized the dignity of being a "fellow-worker with God." It would be a land of promise and of real blessing on no other condition.

If man were asked for no effort, if everything grew to please his taste and palate spontaneously, if daily bread came without even the trouble of asking, it would be a land of danger and of moral death. Better was it for Israel to have themselves bound by a wholesome destiny to dependence on God and co-operation with him, than if the land bore spontaneously all man's needs.

III. WE NEED LOOK FOR NO OTHER LAND OF PROMISE IN THIS WORLD OR THE NEXT. The idea of "independence" is the great danger of the human heart. We would be indebted to nobody, not even God, if we could. Alas, for our pride! Now, it so happens that we cannot become independent of God's bounty, no matter how hard we try. And it is best so. The land of promise is the land where we depend *humbly* upon God, and are thus most independent of persons and things around us.[1] The land of promise is where we do our honest share of public work, and get our share of the fruits of industry.

And in the life beyond death we need not desire an inglorious idleness, which is some folk's notion of "everlasting rest," but we shall have there the privilege of serving God "day and night in his temple." A life of consecration is the true "land of promise." It is the only deep enjoyment, it is the only worthy inheritance.

Let us then resolve (1) to trust God so lovingly as never to harbour even in thought the hope of independence of him; and (2) to co-operate with him as life's highest privilege and honour. We have entered "the land of promise" when we have learned to trust God; and we are enjoying it when we have learned to be "fellow-workers with him."—R. M. E.

Vers. 18—25.—*Family training an element of success.* As in ch. vi. 6—25, Moses again insists on the words of God being preserved among the people by faithful family instruction. The "home school" is, in fact, the great factor in national success. Education must give due prominence to the family institution, as the providential unit of mankind. And here let us notice—

I. GOD'S WORDS ARE TO BE RECEIVED FIRST OF ALL INTO THE HEART. It is when individuals, and especially parents, receive God's testimony into the heart, as Lydia did

[1] Cf. Sir Henry Taylor's 'Notes from Life,' Essay ii., 'Humility and Independence.'

(Acts xvi. 14), that it is likely to bloom out in a fitting public profession. It is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," and then "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). As the ark received the tables of the Law, so the heart of man is to be the depository of the Divine commandments.

II. GOD'S WORDS ARE TO BE KEPT BEFORE OUR OWN EYES AND THE EYES OF OTHERS. This seems to be the idea about the frontlets between the eyes—in this way others had the words displayed for their benefit; whereas the placing them upon the hand was for the individual's own memorial (cf. Isa. xlix. 16). So the person heartily interested in God's Word will make arrangements to remind himself continually of it, and also to keep it before the minds of others. Religion thus becomes not only a constant personal experience, but a constant public profession.

III. GOD'S WORDS ARE TO BE THE STAPLE OF HOME TRAINING. The children are to be taught them at home, when the "home school" is gathered together. God's words are also to be the staple of conversation when parents and children are enjoying their saunters together. And the first thought of the morning and the last at night should be of God's commandments. In this way the indoctrination of the rising generation is to be secured. Well would it be for us still if these old Jewish rules were practised.

IV. THE HOUSEHOLD IS TO MAKE PUBLIC PROFESSION OF RELIGION AS WELL AS THE INDIVIDUAL. Some individuals content themselves with a personal concern in religion, and are willing to be members of a household which does not collectively identify itself with God. But the Jew was to write God's commandments on the doorposts and on the gates of his house. The household was thus to be God's. The fact is that households need conversion just as individuals do. There is as much difference between a religious household and a worldly one as there is between a converted and an unconverted individual. The direction given consequently to the Jews covered the household as well as the person, and was thus perfect.

V. THE RESULT OF SUCH FAITHFULNESS WILL BE COMPLETE SUCCESS. The Lord engages to drive out the nations from before them, even though they be greater and mightier than Israel. He will make the obedient ones resistless. He will make the fear of them to fall like a nightmare on their enemies, and not one of them will be able to stand before them.

And surely all this is but a type of the *success* which still waits upon God's obedient people. Not, of course, that temporal success is the form of success desired or granted now. Many of God's people continue poor, but they succeed in life nevertheless. When they have grace to show a contented spirit amid their limited resources, they succeed in demonstrating that God is all-sufficient, and are the best testimony to the reality of religion before men. When the saints can sing with Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," etc., "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. iii. 17, 18), they have really prospered in all life's essentials. It is thus in various ways the Lord fulfils his covenant engagements, and makes all that his people do to prosper (Ps. i. 3).

Obedience is consequently the charter of success. But we leave to our loving Father to determine what our success will be. We do not insist on its assuming the form of gold and silver, venison and champagne. The success of self-conquest, the success of being public benefactors, the success of serving our generation by the will of God ere we fall on sleep,—this is better far than the success of invading hosts with the laurels dipped in gore.

"Not fruitless is thy toil
If thou my cross wouldst bear;
I do but ask thy willing heart,
To grave my image there.

"For each net vainly cast,
Stronger thine arm will prove;
The trial of thy patient hope
Is witness of thy love.

"The time, the place, the way,
Are open to mine eye;
I sent them—not to gather spoil—
To labour patiently."[1]

R. M. E.

Vers. 26—32.—*Life's solemn alternative.* Moses here sums up his exhortation with the alternative of a blessing or a curse. Obedience secures the blessing; disobedience the curse. He also directs them to go through a solemn service when they reach Mounts Gerizim and Ebal, by pronouncing the blessings and the curses from these mountains respectively. By the law of association, the very landscape was to witness to the truth of God. We are here reminded of such lessons as these—

I. GOD'S MINISTERS, LIKE MOSES, ARE CONSTANTLY TO SET BEFORE THE PEOPLE THE SOLEMN ALTERNATIVE OF A BLESSING OR A CURSE. The gospel is the offer of a blessing to those who are willing to trust God as he asks them to do; while, on the other hand, it is of necessity backed up by a threatened curse, if men refuse to trust him, and will not humble themselves before him. Each one chooses for himself either the blessing or the curse, and there is no use in laying the blame on others.

II. THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL IS AFTER ALL A PREFERENCE OF OTHER GODS TO THE ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD. The idolatry which was the danger and temptation of Israel is reproduced in all who reject the mercy manifested in Christ. Some other object of worship has really been selected; the world, or wealth, or self, or power is expected to do for the unbelieving soul what God alone can. His attributes are made over to these creatures, and a false confidence takes the place which the true should occupy. Unbelief is really idolatry at bottom.

III. THE SOCIAL STUDY OF GOD'S PROMISES AND THREATENINGS IS MOST IMPORTANT. Moses, to impress the people more, directs them to assemble at Gerizim and Ebal, and there, dividing into two congregations, to go through the blessings and the curses publicly. The solemnities of that occasion would doubtless be greatly sanctified. In the very same way, the private study of God's Word is not sufficient. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. lxxxvii. 2). The solemn and leisurely study of God's Word in public is owned more than any private study of the Word can be. Both are needful, but our expectation should be highest in connection with the public preaching of God's Word. When a minister takes the people in an interesting manner through the truth contained in a paragraph, or even in a verse, there is much more realized than in the more hurried private reading. The sanctions of social worship are most important, and he is not in a safe way who despises them.

IV. NATURAL ASSOCIATIONS MAY OFTEN BE HELPFUL TO THE CAUSE OF TRUTH. Scenes of great historic deeds become in a measure sanctified. They are "holy places" to the human race. Battle-fields, birthplaces, senates, forums, as well as churches, become hallowed to the historic mind. The laws of association secure a perennial influence. The soul must be dead indeed who can visit such scenes unmoved.

It was this law of association which Moses brought into play in connection with Gerizim and Ebal. Never afterwards would they be visited by the descendants of these Israelites without a solemn feeling, and a recall of some at least of the blessings and the curses uttered there. Without any sympathy, therefore, with the "consecration" of places as generally understood, which may savour largely of superstition, we cannot but admit that natural associations should not be disregarded. Indeed, it is in this way the world is becoming richer with the years. Places are becoming every year associated with noble deeds—*Gerizims* are being multiplied as scenes of blessing; on the other hand, *Ebals* are also increasing, like beacons, on the dangerous places of human experience; but both undoubtedly meant by Providence to influence for good, and, through the law of association, our race. And some souls have "the place of mercy" marked clearly in their experience, and can sing—

"Oh, sacred hour! oh, hallowed spot,
Where love Divine first found me!

[1] 'The Shadow of the Rock, and other Religious Poems,' p. 132.

Wherever falls my distant lot,
My heart will linger round thee.
And when from earth I rise to soar
Up to my home in heaven,
Down will I cast my eyes once more
Where I was first forgiven." [1]

R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PARTICULAR LAWS.

CHAPTER XII.—CHAPTER XXVI.

Moses, having in his first address cast a glance at the events which had transpired between Sinai and the plains of Moab, and in his second recapitulated what had happened at Sinai, repeated the Decalogue, and urgently counselled the people to be obedient to the Divine commandment, and steadfast in their adherence to Jehovah as their God and King; proceeds now to set forth certain laws which it specially behoved them to observe. These are for the most part the same as those already recorded in the previous books; but a few are new, and are to be found only here. No special order or plan of exposition is here observed; the speaker uses that freedom of discourse which was fitting in a popular address. One or two historical narratives are interpolated; but the address as a whole is hortatory, and is designed to direct to the proper regulation of the ecclesiastical, social, and domestic life of the Israelites when they should be settled in Canaan.

CHAPTER XII.

PLACES AND MONUMENTS OF IDOLATRY TO BE DESTROYED; JEHOVAH TO BE WORSHIPPED IN THE ONE PLACE WHICH HE SHALL CHOOSE; INSTRUCTIONS AS TO THE USE OF FLESH FOR FOOD; AND CAUTIONS AGAINST BEING ENSNARED INTO FOLLOWING THE HEATHEN IN THEIR MANNER OF SERVICE.

Ver. 1.—**These are the statutes and judgments** (cf. ch. iv. 1; vi. 1). Moses, as the servant of God, had taught Israel statutes and rights, as God had commanded him (ch. iv. 5); and now he recapitulates the principal of these for their guidance in the way of obedience. These they were to observe all the days of their life upon the land that was to be given them; the land was the Lord's, and there, as long as they possessed it, the Law of the Lord was to be paramount.

Vers. 2, 3.—In order to this, Israel was, as soon as the land was possessed, to destroy all the objects and means of idolatrous worship in the land. **Upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree** (cf. Isa. lvii. 7; Jer. ii. 20; iii. 6; xvii. 2; Hos. iv. 13; 2 Kings xvi. 4; xvii. 10). The heathen had their places of worship on lofty elevations, probably because they imagined they were thus nearer to the object of their worship; and they sought also the shade of woods or thick-foliaged trees (Ezek. vi. 13), under which to perform their rites, as tending to inspire awe, and as in keeping with the mysterious character of their rites. These places of heathen worship in Canaan the Israelites were utterly to destroy, along with the images of their deities and other objects of idolatrous worship. **Burn their groves**; *their asherahs*, idol-pillars of wood (cf. ch. vii. 5).

Vers. 4—6.—The heathen placed their altars and offered their worship wherever they thought fit, according to their notions of the deity and his service; but Israel was not to do so unto Jehovah their God: he himself would choose the places where he was to be worshipped, and there alone might they come with offering and service. As the revealed God—the God whose being and perfections had been made known, not by a vague revelation of him in nature merely, but expressly by his putting or recording his Name historically and locally among men (cf. Exod. xx. 24)—so should there be a definite place chosen and appointed by him where he would come to receive the worship of his people, where he would record his Name, and where he would be known for a Refuge and a Helper to all who put their trust in him (Ps. xlviii. 3; lxxvi. 1, etc.; Dan. ix. 18). The Name of God is God himself as revealed; and he puts his Name on any place where he specially manifests himself as present (cf.

[1] From Randolph's selections, entitled 'Unto the Desired Haven,' p. 119.

1 Kings viii. 29), and which is consequently to be regarded as his habitation or dwelling-place. Hence the temple at Jerusalem was in later times known as the place of the Name of Jehovah (Isa. xviii. 7), the dwelling-place of his glory (Ps. xxvi. 8). But he is the God of the whole earth, and therefore, wherever he is pleased to reveal himself, in whatever place he makes his Name to be known, there he is to be worshipped. There is no reference in this passage to the temple at Jerusalem specially, as some have supposed; what is here enjoined is only a practical application of the Divine promise, that in *all* places where God would record his Name, there he would come to bless his people (Exod. xx. 24). The reference here, therefore, is quite general, and applies to any place where, by the Divine appointment, the tabernacle might be set up and the worship of Jehovah instituted. **Unto his habitation shall ye seek.** To seek to any place means, primarily, to resort to it, to frequent it (cf. 2 Chron. i. 5), but with the implied purpose of inquiring there for something, as for responses or oracles, when the place resorted to was that in which God had put his Name.

Ver. 6.—To the appointed place all their sacrificial gifts and offerings were to be brought, and there they were to keep their holy feasts. The gifts are classified in groups. 1. **Burnt offerings and sacrifices,** the two principal kinds of altar offerings, with which meal offerings and drink offerings were united (Numb. xv. 4, etc.). 2. **Tithes and heave offerings** (cf. Lev. xxvii. 30—33; Numb. xviii. 21—24). The heave offerings are described as of **your hand,** either because offered by the offerer's own hand, or to indicate such gifts as were made off-hand (so to speak), voluntary offerings made in addition to the legal offerings from an immediate impulse of grateful emotion. 3. **Vows and freewill offerings,** sacrifices which were offered in consequence of vows or of spontaneous impulse (cf. Lev. vii. 16; xxii. 21; xxiii. 38; Numb. xv. 3; xxix. 39). 4. **Firstlings of their herds and of their flocks** (cf. Exod. xiii. 2, 12, etc.; Numb. xviii. 15, etc.).

Ver. 7.—**And there ye shall eat before the Lord.** The injunction here and in ver. 17, respecting the eating by the offerer of the firstlings of his flocks and herds, appears to be inconsistent with the injunction in Numb. xviii. 18. There it seems as if the *whole* of the flesh was to be given to the priest. "And the flesh of them shall be thine.[the priest's], as the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine." This may be taken to mean that just as the wave breast and the right shoulder are the perquisites of the priests in the case of other offerings, as *e.g.* the peace offering, so in the case of the firstling offering the whole flesh shall be the priest's; and thus taken, the passage presents an unquestionable discrepancy to that in Deuteronomy. But probably the passage is not to be so taken. The particle translated "as" (כ) not unfrequently occurs in the sense of "according to, after the manner of," implying conformity to some rule or model (Gen. xliv. 2; Exod. xxi. 9; xxxix. 8; Lev. v. 10; Numb. viii. 4; ix. 3; xxix. 18; Ps. vii. 18; Zech. ii. 10 [6], etc.). The passage, therefore, may be rendered thus: *And the flesh of them shalt thou take after the manner (or according to the rule),* of the wave breast, etc., *i.e.* not the whole of it, but only these parts. So the **LXX.** seem to have taken the passage: *καὶ τὰ κρέα ἔσται σοι, καθὰ καὶ τὸ στηθύνιον τοῦ ἐπιθέματος· καὶ κατὰ τὸν βραχίονα τὸν δεξιὸν σοι ἔσται.* Of some of the offerings the whole was received by the priest, as in the case of the sin offering and trespass offering (Lev. vi. 25, etc.; vii. 1, etc.); while of others only certain portions, viz. the wave breast and the heave shoulder, were given to him, as in the case of the peace offering (Lev. vii. 28, etc.). The purport of the law in Numb. xviii. 18 is that, in respect of the firstling offering, the allotment to the priest shall be after the same manner as in the peace offering. There is thus no discrepancy between the two passages. The animal belonged originally to the offerer; when he brought it before the Lord part of it was consumed on the altar, part of it was assigned to the priest, and the rest, as a matter of course, remained with himself. The law in Numbers, addressed to the priest, intimates what *he* might claim as his portion; the law in Deuteronomy, where the people are addressed, directs them how to use the portion that remained with *them.* It may be added that, even supposing that all the flesh was given to the priest, yet, as it had to be consumed on the day in which the sacrifice was offered, and as every clean person in the house might partake of it, it is almost certain that the offerer would, as a matter of course, share in the meal, as was usual in the case of sacrificial meals. **Rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto;** enjoy whatever your hand may gain, whatever you may earn, all the good which the **Lord may** give you (cf. ver. 18; xv. 10; **xxiii. 20;** xxviii. 8, 20). The phrase is peculiar to Deuteronomy; but comp. Gen. iii. 22; Isa. xi. 14.

Vers. 8—10.—In the wilderness, while leading a nomadic life, no certain place could be appointed to them for the observance of sacred rites; each man did in that matter as suited his own convenience. But after they were settled in Canaan it should

no longer be so; a certain order and fixed locality should be determined for their worship and service; when they had passed over Jordan the Lord would give them rest from all their enemies, and then all irregularity and arbitrariness in the matter of worship must cease, and all their gifts and offerings must be brought to the place which Jehovah their God should choose. **Ye dwell in safety**; rather, *dwell securely*, not only safe from assault, but without fear or anxiety (cf. Judg. viii. 11; xviii. 7).

Ver. 11.—**All your choice vows**; *i.e.* all the vows of your choice, all that ye choose to make; the vow was purely voluntary; it became obligatory only after it was made.

Ver. 12.—Of their offerings they should make a festive meal for themselves and their household; and of this the Levite who might happen at the time to be resident among them was to partake. **Rejoice before the Lord.** This phrase occurs frequently in this book (ch. xiv. 26; xvi. 11, 14; xxvi. 11; xxvii. 7); elsewhere it appears only once—Lev. xxiii. 40, where it is used with reference to the Feast of Tabernacles. Moses now enjoins this festivity to be observed in connection with all the sacrificial meals. **The Levite that is within your gates.** The Levites had no share in the land as the property of their tribe; but they had towns allotted to them among the different tribes (Numb. xxxv.), so that in this way they were dispersed through the nation. Hence, perhaps, they are described as "within the gates" of the rest of the people. Or, as the Levites seem to have itinerated in the discharge of various offices among the people, the phrase may designate them as on this account occasionally resident among others in their community; just as "the stranger that is within thy gates" means the person of some other nation who for the time being was resident in any of the towns of Israel.

Vers. 13—16.—They were to beware of offering sacrifice in any place that might seem to them best; their offerings were to be presented only in that place which God should choose. But this did not imply that they were not to kill and eat in their own abodes whatever they desired for food, according to the blessing of Jehovah their God. Only they were to abstain from eating of blood (cf. Gen. ix. 4; Lev. vii. 26); that they were to pour on the earth as if it were water. **Burnt offering**; this is named *instar omnium*, as the principal offering. **Whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.** To "lust," in old English, means simply to will, choose, desire; it is the same word as "list," or, as it is sometimes spelt, "lest," and does not, as now, imply anything evil. **As of the roebuck, and as of the hart**; probably the gazelle and fallow deer. **As these were animals that could not be offered in sacrifice, the distinction between clean and unclean, on the part of the eaters, did not come into consideration.**

Vers. 17—19.—(Cf. vers. 6, 7, 12.) **Thou mayest not eat**; literally, *thou art not able to eat*; i.e. there is a legal inability to this. So the verb to be able (יָכֹל) is frequently used (cf. Gen. xliii.; Numb. ix. 6; ch. xvi. 5; xvii. 15, etc.).

Ver. 20.—**When the Lord thy God shall enlarge thy border.** These laws were to continue in force even when God should, according to his promise (Gen. xv. 18; Exod. xxiii. 27—31), extend the boundaries of their land.

Vers. 21—23.—**If the place . . . be too far from thee**; this supplies the reason for the alteration of the law in Lev. xvii. 3. **Only be sure**; literally, *only be strong*; i.e. be firm and resolute, steadfastly resisting the temptation to eat it. **The blood is the life** (cf. Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xi. 1; xvii. 11). The word used is *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ). By this word the Hebrews designated the animal life-principle in men and in beasts; and as without this the body was a mere inert mass, the word came to be used for "life" generally. Of this life the blood was believed to be the seat, and was regarded as the symbol, so that to shed blood was tantamount to the taking away of life. As the blood, moreover, was the life, in it was supposed to lie the propitiatory power—the power, when shed, of atoning for sin, as the giving of life for life. The prohibition of eating it doubtless had respect to this. It was not merely to prevent ferocity in men towards the lower animals (as Rosenmüller suggests) that the eating of blood was interdicted, but specially because there was in this a sort of profanation, a putting to a common use of what appertained to a sacred rite.

Vers. 26, 27.—**The holy things**; *i.e.* the offerings prescribed by the Law; "hallowed things" (Numb. xviii. 8; cf. Lev. xxi. 22). **Which thou hast**; literally, *which are to thee*; i.e. which are binding on thee. **Thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood**; *i.e.* the flesh and the blood of the burnt offerings which were to be laid upon the altar (Lev. i. 5—9). **The blood of thy sacrifices** (*zebachim*) **shall be poured out upon the altar.** This refers to the ritual of the *shelamim*, or peace offering (Lev. iii. 2, 8, 13). The word *zebach* (זֶבַח) is never used in the Pentateuch of an atoning sacrifice (Oehler, 'Theology of the Old Testament,' ii. 2); it is used only of such offerings as furnished a sacrificial meal; hence it is added here, **and thou shalt eat the flesh.**

Vers. 29, 30.—**Here the speaker reverts**

to the admonition with which he began this part of his address (ver. 2); and warns the people against having any intercourse with the Canaanites in their idolatrous practices. **That thou enquire not after their gods.** It was a general belief among the heathen that to ignore or neglect the deities of a country was sure to bring calamity (cf. 2 Kings xvii. 26); hence the need of cautioning the Israelites against *inquiring* after the gods of the Canaanites when they should be settled in their land.

Ver. 31.—**For even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to their gods.** Elsewhere the phrase used is "make to pass through the fire" (ch. xviii. 10), or simply "make to pass through to Molech" (Lev. xviii. 21; Jer. xxxii. 35). This has led some to maintain that the ceremony described was merely a februation, a lustration by fire, and not an actual burning alive of these victims; but there can be no doubt that both among the Ammonites and the Phœnicians, and indeed wherever the worship of Baal or Molech was followed, the offering of children in sacrifice by burning prevailed (Münter, 'Religion der Karthager,' p. 18, 2nd edit.; Selden, 'De Diis Syris Syntag,' i. c. 6, pp. 93, 257, edit. Beyer, Amst., 1680).

Ver. 32.—The admonition in this verse is best regarded as forming an intermediate link between this chapter and the following, "closing what goes before and introductory to what follows" (Keil).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—32.—*Regulations for Divine worship: specific rules embodying permanent principles.* With this twelfth chapter an entirely new set of instructions begins. Up to this point the exhortations have been for the most part moral: now they are positive. Hitherto the precepts have been, speaking generally, concerning duties which God commanded because they were right; but from this point they concern duties which became right because God had commanded them. Of all specific directions which Moses gave to Israel, none could possibly be more important than those which had to do with the Divine worship. A true, wise, spiritual worship, established and maintained, would do very much to ensure Israel's weal in every other respect; while if corruption was admitted and tolerated here, its ill effects would soon be seen through the length and breadth of their land. In dealing homiletically with this chapter, we must take it as a whole. To sever it into paragraphs would be to conceal its unity; taking it, however, as one, we shall see how very far more than is generally supposed, the observance of God's worship among the Hebrews was based on everlasting principles both as to its matter and its manner; and that while there was much ritual in external forms, yet Judaism was not ritualistic in any sense which would imply the efficacy of ritual by itself to bring about spiritual results. Let us enumerate the principles which here are embodied in the directions for the worship of God. The forms in which the principles are expressed may change; the principles themselves, *never!*

I. Hebrew worship was to be in all respects a protest against surrounding idolatry. (Vers. 2, 3, 29—31.) They were not only to carry out a policy of destruction, in sweeping from the land every vestige of ancient heathen worship (see Homily on ch. vii. 1—11), but were to avoid everything like imitation of it. Theirs was a new nationality, a new deliverance, a new faith, and it must be a new kind of worship, corresponding in its purity to the holiness of Jehovah, and in its intelligence to that knowledge of him which they were expected to cultivate in themselves and hand down to others. And so now, if there are corrupt forms of worship, such as Rome's pagan ceremonies baptized with the Christian name, the worship of God's true Church must needs be a protest against it, and a contention for "the simplicity which is in Christ."

II. It was to be according to Divine direction. They might not consult their own religious sentiments, as the heathen did, in choosing *e.g.* the tops of the hills for worship, because they thought so to get nearer God. Israel must consult revelation, and follow it. So with the Church of God now. True, we have not such minute rites enjoined as Israel had, for we need them not now. But in our New Testament writings all needful instructions are given for those who would worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

III. The Divine rules were to be precisely adhered to. They might not be swerved from, either by addition or diminution (ver. 32). This is indeed but an

extension of principle No. 2; but it requires in our day to be noticed separately; since many will admit, generally, that worship must be according to Scripture, who nevertheless also maintain that the Church may direct as to forms of worship. But we cannot forget two facts: one, that at the close of the New Testament there is a like caution and prohibition to that given here; another, that the entire course of Church history shows us that men know not where to stop when they once diverge from "the Book," and that departures therefrom little by little, even under Church authority, do ultimately land men in the complicated and superstitious ceremonial of the Church of Rome.

IV. THERE WAS TO BE (after they were settled in Palestine) ONE PLACE WHICH GOD CHOOSE TO PUT HIS NAME THERE. And this place where God would meet with his people is called, in the beautiful Hebrew phrase, God's *rest* (ver. 5), "his habitation" (cf. Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14). Thus would God, in his condescending love, launch a new thought into the world, in a form in which the people could understand it; viz. that God's home is with his believing worshippers. It was necessary, for a while, to associate that truth with one special *place*, until "the fulness of times" should come, when One should say—John iv. 20—24; Matt. xviii. 20; and when Christians should learn that *they* are the home of God (1 Cor. iii. 16; Eph. ii. 22).

V. TO THIS PLACE THE TRIBES WERE TO COME AND WORSHIP TOGETHER. Thus the unity of God's redeemed people in him, would be continually before their eyes. Though the times in the year were not many when the people were thus to meet as one nation and commonwealth, yet they were frequent enough to ensure their thoughts turning thereto, either by retrospection or anticipation, from one year's end to another. Here is the germ seed of the doctrine of the unity of God's Church. Many tribes, one redeemed people. And is it not precisely this principle which is brought out in the New Testament, only in far grander form? (see Rev. vii.; Eph. ii.; John xvii.; Rom. xii.). Is not the Christian unity a union of many tribes and tongues in one deliverance, and one Deliverer?

VI. THE FORMS OF ISRAEL'S WORSHIP WERE TO BE SUFFICIENTLY VARIED TO REFLECT THE CHANGING ASPECTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE. These forms are sevenfold. In each case, however, an offering was brought to God. It might be typical, symbolic, eucharistic, dedicatory, or votive. (For specific treatment of each kind, see Kurtz, and Kalisch, *in loc.*) There were: 1. Burnt offering. 2. Sacrifices. 3. Tithes (ch. xxvi. 12). 4. Heave offerings. "Quæ sponte dabatur Deo" (Buxtorf). 5. Vows (Ps. lxxvi. 11). 6. Free-will offerings (1 Chron. xxix. 17; ch. xvi. 10). 7. Firstlings of herds and flocks (Exod. xiii. 12; Neh. x. 35—37; Prov. iii. 9; Ps. lxvi. 13—16). How varied! There were sacrifices of atonement and of consecration; offerings of consecration and thanksgiving. Each changing scene of life was to call forth its act of devotion to God.

VII. IT WAS TO BE A FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD WORSHIP. (Ver. 18.) Not the head of the house only, but the children, yea, even the little ones had their recognized place in the house of God (ver. 12). And the slaves too! The stranger and the sojourner might also come. *The religion of the family was a keystone of Israel's national life;* and it will be a very serious thing for any nation, if family religion comes to be slighted or ignored. Never let us rob the children of their rightful place in Christian ordinances and in the house of God.

VIII. IT WAS TO BE A JOYFUL WORSHIP. Ver. 12, "Ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God." The pagan worship never was or could be a glad one. The heathens feared their gods, dreaded them, sought to propitiate them, but as for being glad in them because of any loving care on the part of their gods towards them, they knew nothing at all about any such blessing. But Israel did. They worshipped Jehovah, a redeeming God, who had manifested his Name to them. Hence such psalms as the twenty-third and the one hundred and third, could be prepared for their gladsome worship and song. Much more may we "Rejoice in the Lord."

IX. ISRAEL'S WORSHIP WAS TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PEOPLE. (Ver. 19; and see ch. xviii. 1—8.) Thus were the people at large from the first to be educated "in giving to God," and in maintaining, at their own cost, the worship and ordinances of God, so as to hand them down intact and untainted to their children and their children's children. How clearly is this principle reproduced in the New Testament! (see 1 Cor. ix. 9—14). Though there is far less detail, yet it is not supposed that

less will be done, but rather more; such verses as 2 Cor. viii. 7—9, how much they imply and suppose! Surely it would be well if our Churches everywhere recognized the nine principles of Divine worship which we find laid down by Moses. It may fairly be made a question whether even the purest Church is found recognizing them all; and yet, which one of the nine is repealed or even modified under the gospel? Of necessity, forms have changed. But so long as we need the ordinances of Christian worship at all, so long must we assert and maintain all that we find inculcated here: simplicity *versus* false ceremonialism; exact loyalty to Divine direction; recognizing the Church as "the rest" of God, where the tribes are many, but the commonwealth one; letting the worship reflect life's varied moods; letting it be a joyous family worship, maintained and supported by our contributions and our prayers.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Destruction of monuments of idolatry.* Israel's entrance into Canaan was the entrance of true knowledge, of pure forms of religion, of cleansed morals. The worship of Jehovah was the very antithesis of that of which these altars, pillars, and graven images, were the polluted memorials. "What did the grove conceal? Lust—blood—imposture. What sounds shook the fane? Alternate screams of anguish and the laughter of mad votaries. What was the priest? The teacher of every vice of which his god was the patron and example. What were the worshippers? The victims of every woe which superstition and sensuality can gender, and which cruelty can cherish" (Isaac Taylor). Why should the last trace of these hateful worships not be removed from the land of God's abode? (see on ch. vii. 1—6). These commands had—

I. A GROUND IN RELIGIOUS FEELING. Even the dumb memorials of iniquity will excite in pure minds feelings of horror and revulsion. It is positive pain to look upon them. The only sentiments which these monuments of a dark polytheism—suggestive of every species of wickedness, and steeped in foulness through the cruel and lustful rites once associated with them—could awaken in the minds of devout worshippers of Jehovah were those of inexpressible abhorrence. The sooner they were swept away the better. Healthy moral instincts will lead us to hate "even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

II. A GROUND IN PRUDENCE. It removed from Israel's midst what would obviously have proved a snare. Prone of their own motion to idolatry, how certainly would the people have been drawn into it had idol sanctuaries, idol altars, idol groves stood to tempt them at every corner, met their gaze on every hill-summit. A wise legislation will aim at the removal of temptations. The business of legislation, as has been well said, is to make it as easy as possible for the people to choose virtue, and as difficult as possible to choose vice.

III. A GROUND IN POLICY. The design of Moses, to gather the life and religion of the people round a central sanctuary, would plainly have been frustrated had innumerable sacred places of repute, associated with the old idolatry, been allowed to remain unshorn of their honours. On the same principle, missionaries, in order to prevent relapses into idolatry, have often found it needful to get their converts to collect their idols, and unitedly to destroy them—burning them, it may be, or flinging them into some river.—J. O.

Vers. 6—29.—*The central sanctuary.* There are difficulties connected with this law from which conclusions have been drawn adverse to the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy. These arise: 1. From the lack of evidence that the law was in force in the days of the judges and earlier kings. 2. From the practice of judges, kings, prophets, and other good men in offering sacrifices elsewhere than at the prescribed centre. 3. From the mention of other sanctuaries in the history (*e.g.* Josh. xxiv. 26; 1 Sam. vii. 26, LXX.). But: 1. Ver. 10 shows that it was not *contemplated* that the law should come into perfect operation till the land was settled, and till a place for a fixed centre had been definitely chosen. In point of fact, the unsettled state of matters lasted till the reign of David (2 Sam. vii. 1). Accordingly, in 1 Kings iii. 2, it is not urged that

the law did not exist, or that it was not known, but the excuse is advanced for irregularities that "there was no house built unto the Name of the Lord until those days" (cf. 1 Kings viii. 29; ix. 9; 2 Chron. vi. 5, 6). 2. While the law lays down the general rule, it is not denied that circumstances might arise, in which under proper Divine authority, exceptional sacrifices might be offered. This fully explains the cases of Gideon (Judg. vi. 18, 26), of Manoah (Judg. xiii. 16), of David (2 Sam. xxiv. 18), of Solomon (1 Kings iii. 4, 5), of Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 31). 3. Even while the tabernacle was at Shiloh, the ark, for reasons unknown to us, was moved from place to place—a circumstance which accounts for sacrifices being offered at the spots where, for the time being, it was located (Judg. xxi. 2). We may infer the presence of the ark in Judg. xx. 26 and on various other occasions. 4. It is not fair to plead, as contradictory of the law, the falling back on local sanctuaries in periods of great national and religious disorganization, as when the land was possessed by enemies (Judg. vi. 1—7), or when the ark was in captivity (1 Sam. vi. 1) or separated from the tabernacle (2 Sam. vi. 11); much less the prevailing neglect of this law in times of acknowledged backsliding and declension. In particular, the period following the rejection of Eli and his sons (1 Sam. ii. 30—35) was one of unusual complications, during which, indeed, Samuel's own person would seem to have been the chief religious centre of the nation. 5. It may further be remarked that the worship at local sanctuaries, having once taken root, justified perhaps by the exigencies of the time, it would be no easy matter to uproot it again, and a modified toleration would have to be accorded. Whatever difficulties inhere in the view of the early existence of this law, it will be found, we believe, that equal or greater difficulties emerge on any other reading of the history. This law was—

I. AN ASSERTION OF THE PRINCIPLE THAT GOD'S WORSHIP MUST BE ASSOCIATED WITH HIS PRESENCE. (Vers. 5—11.) The sanctuary was constituted by God having "put his Name" there. Under the New Testament the worship of the Father "in spirit and in truth" is liberated from special sacred places (John iv. 24), but the principle holds good that his being "in the midst" of his people is essential to worship being acceptable (Matt. xviii. 20).

II. AN IMPORTANT MEANS OF KEEPING ALIVE THE SENSE OF NATIONAL UNITY. The union of the tribes was far from being close. Tribe feeling was often stronger than national feeling. A powerful counteractive to the local interests, and to the jealousies, rivalries, and feuds which tended to divide the nation, was found in the central sanctuary, and in the festivals therewith connected. Like the Olympic games in Greece, the sanctuary festivals formed a bond of unity for the entire people, helped them to realize their national distinctness, and awakened in them lofty and patriotic aspirations. In the Christian Church, everything is valuable which helps to develop the sense of catholicity.

III. A MEANS, FURTHER, OF INFUSING WARMTH AND VITALITY INTO RELIGIOUS SERVICES. In religion, as in other matters, we need to avail ourselves of social influences. We need public as well as private worship. The self-wrapt man grows cold. There is a time for outward demonstration, not less than for internal meditation. Sharing our gladness with others, it is multiplied to ourselves a hundred-fold. The importance, in this view of them, of the sanctuary festivals, was very great. They were, from the nature of the case, "events," matters to be looked forward to with interest, and long to be remembered after they had taken place. They involved preparations, and often long journeys. Everything about them—the journey in company with neighbours, the season of the year, the friendly greetings, the exhilaration of the scene as they neared the sanctuary, the varied and solemn services at the sanctuary itself—was fitted in a singular degree to exalt, awe, quicken, and impress their minds. Such influences, even in gospel times, are not to be despised.

IV. A COUNTERACTIVE TO IDOLATRY. It put something in place of that which was taken away. It provided counter-attractions. Negation is not an effective instrument of reform. If we remove with one hand, we must give with the other. Our methods must be positive.—J. O.

Vers. 5—9.—*Public worship.* A necessity of our spiritual life. Prompted by a community of privileges, interests, feelings, hopes, duties, temptations, aspirations; "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. iv. 3—7). It is required in it—

I. THAT GOD BE PRESENT WITH HIS PEOPLE. We meet in his Name. His presence is promised (Matt. xviii. 20). Without that presence sought and obtained, worship is in vain.

II. THAT IT BE PURE AND SCRIPTURAL. Not "will-worship" (Col. ii. 23); not corrupted by the ingrafting upon it of heathen superstitions. Christianity has often been thus corrupted. The papal mariolatry and worship of images, with the wholesale importation into Christianity of rites and ceremonies drawn from paganism, is a glaring instance. God forbids any mixture of the old worship with the new. The very names of the gods of the Canaanites were to be destroyed (ver. 3). Worldliness, not less than superstition, may intrude itself into worship, and destroy its purity (John ii. 13—17; Jas. ii. 2, 3).

III. THAT IT BE ORDERLY. (Ver. 8.) Paul pleads for order in the Christian Church (1 Cor. xi., xii.).

IV. THAT IT GIVE EXPRESSION TO THE VARIED WANTS OF THE RELIGIOUS NATURE. (Vers. 6, 7.) The prescribed sacrifices constituted a complex medium for the expression of the complex life and aspirations of the nation. It is to be noted that, save on days specially devoted to the remembrance of sins, a predominatingly joyful tone pervaded the services. This tone of joy should characterize yet more decidedly the services of Christians, coming before the Lord, as they are commanded to do, "to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (Phil. iv. 4; Col. iii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 5).

V. THAT IT BE ASSOCIATED WITH REMEMBRANCE OF THE POOR. (Vers. 7, 12, 18; ch. xvi. 11, 14.) One of the first effects of Christ's love in a heart should be to open it up in sympathy and kindness to all in need (Acts ii. 45; iv. 34, 35; Rom. xv. 25; 1 Cor. xii. 26; 2 Cor. viii., ix.).—J. O.

Vers. 15, 16, 20—26.—*The Divine regulation of food.* All animals for food had formerly to be killed at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. xvi. 1—8). Probably the rule was not strictly observed (ver. 8), but in view of the occupation of the land, the prohibition is relaxed. Note—

I. OUR RIGHTS IN THE USE OF FOOD TAKE THEIR ORIGIN FROM GOD. This is taught in the account of creation (Gen. i. 29, 30), in the grant of flesh to Noah (Gen. ix. 3, 4), in the Levitical restrictions on animal food (Lev. xi.), and in passages like the present.

II. OUR MANNER OF THE USE OF FOOD OUGHT TO BE GLORIFYING TO GOD. "Eating and drinking" is to be to God's glory (1 Cor. x. 31). 1. God's gift to be recognized in food. A motive for thankfulness. 2. God's blessing to be sought upon it. The example of Christ in this respect is noteworthy (Matt. xiv. 19, etc.). 3. Self-restraint is to be exercised in the partaking of it. The blood was not to be eaten.—J. O.

Ver. 19.—*The Levite.* The dues of the Levites consisted mainly of the tithes. The value of this legal provision has been frequently exaggerated. The mistake has lain in comparing it with the average of income over the whole nation, instead of with the incomes of the wealthier and middle classes. Comparing it with these, it will be found to have been liberal, but not excessive, even supposing it to have been conscientiously paid. This, however, it would seldom be. No tribunal existed to enforce payment. All depended on the conscientiousness of the individual tithe-payer. It is easy to see that an income of this sort was in the highest degree precarious, and that in times of religious declension, the body of the Levites would be reduced to great straits. These facts sufficiently account for the reiterated injunctions not to forsake the Levite, but to include him in every festive gathering. Three reasons for his liberal support: 1. His calling deprived him of the usual means of livelihood. 2. His office was one of service for the people. 3. His relation to the altar made neglect shown to him a dishonour done to God. Paul applies, in 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14, to the gospel ministry.—J. O.

Vers. 29—32.—*Unworthy inquiries.* We have here—

I. BALEFUL SUPERSTITION. The ground of these inquiries about the gods of the place was a lurking belief in their reality. There was a superstitious feeling that the woods, hills, streams, etc., must have their deities, whom it would be well to propitiate and worship. The country as a whole, and special districts of it, had gods, and, Jehovah

notwithstanding, the superstitious part of the community stood in dread of them. Superstitions are hard to eradicate. We have examples in the survival of the belief in witches, fairies, charms, omens, lucky and unlucky days, etc., among ourselves. Till a recent period, it was the custom in parts of the Scottish Highlands to sacrifice bulls to local saints. And the practice of burying a live cock for the cure of epilepsy is said to survive till the present hour. Born of ignorance, and acting as a check on all enlightenment and progress, superstition is the parent of innumerable evils, besides debasing and enslaving mind and conscience. Its influence should be combated by every legitimate means.

II. PRURIENT CURIOSITY. The superstitious motive did not act alone. This itching desire to hear about the gods of the place, and how the nations served them, was symptomatic of a prurient disposition. There was, unfortunately, too much in the way in which these nations had "served their gods" to excite and interest the passions of the dissolute. It is a dangerous token when those who ought to know better begin to manifest a prurient curiosity about what is evil. It leads to prying into matters which had better remain hidden, to inquiries at persons whose very society is dangerous, to the reading of obscene books, the visiting of bad places, the keeping of immoral company, etc. At the bottom of such inquiries there is invariably a secret sympathy, which is bound, as time advances, to yield fruit in evil practices.

III. SERVILE IMITATION. The idolatry of the Israelites was signalized by a strange want of originality. They invented no gods of their own. They were content to be imitators. The nations before them had gods. The nations around them had gods. They wanted to be like the rest, and have gods too—hence their inquiries. A curious illustration of the force of the principle of imitation. It is one of the ruling principles in human nature. Imitation is easier than invention. The tendency invariably is to "follow the crowd." It matters nothing that it is "to do evil." The fashion of the time and place must be observed. There are people who would almost rather die than be out of the fashion. Yet what a weakness is this, and how opposed to all true and right manhood! "Be not conformed to the world" (Rom. xii. 2).—J. O.

Vers. 1—3.—*The invasion a religious one.* The Israelites were instructed to exterminate the Canaanites in consequence of their sins, as we have already seen; but in this passage we have strict injunctions given to destroy the places of worship which the Canaanites had used, "upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree," etc. They were, in fact, to be *iconoclasts*, and they were to leave no vestige remaining of the Canaanitish worship.

I. IT WAS THUS MADE EVIDENT THAT THE INVASION WAS RELIGIOUS IN ITS CHARACTER. Palestine, as we have already seen, was not a country of exceptional *natural* advantages. It was a good training school for a spiritual people. When the Lord, then, sent his emancipated people in to carry out such a programme as the destruction of the Canaanitish worship, it was evident to all that religion lay at the basis of the invasion. It was no tribal feud, but a contest for religious supremacy. As Abraham, their forefather, came to Canaan to be the exponent and founder of a new religion, so the descendants are required to expound the religion still more forcibly by putting down all traces of the heathen worship.

II. THE MULTIPLICITY OF CANAANITISH PLACES OF WORSHIP REALLY EXPRESSED THE POLYTHEISM OF THE PEOPLE. The Canaanites believed in the "gods of the hills," and "gods of the valleys," and "gods of the grove." Hence they erected altars with melancholy frequency over the land. It was not a sense of the omnipresence of a Supreme Being, but a belief in a multiplicity of gods, which led to such multiplicity of places of worship. The land was polluted with idols. Every green tree was supposed to overshadow a god. Altars, pillars, and groves sheltered and surrounded graven images. The *desecration* was all-prevailing.

III. THE POWER OF ASSOCIATION NECESSITATED THE COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF THESE SIGNS OF IDOLATRY. If polytheism expressed itself so universally, then association would assert in the Israelitish mind a corresponding power, and lead weak minds to the idea that an idol was surely something in the world, when it secured such recognition. No wise leader could allow such temptations to remain before his people. Hence the Israelites are instructed to spare no trace of the old worship. Intolerance may be a duty in pure self-defence. It was a duty in this case divinely ordained.

IV. CURIOSITY IS NOT TO BE LEFT ANYTHING TO FEED UPON. For there is a prurient curiosity which only leads to sin. All humouring of this is evil. When a soul insists on tasting the fruit of forbidden trees, as a matter of curiosity, he only repeats the act of our first parents in Eden. No possible good can come of it. Much curiosity is indulged only to the deterioration of soul and body. Now, this would have been a danger with the Israelites. The worship of the Canaanites was so sensual and horrible, that the less known about it the better. Hence the command to destroy every vestige of it. It would be well for Christians more frequently to restrain their curiosity than they do. In many cases it would be well if every vestige of sinful practices were destroyed, instead of being preserved to satisfy an "idle curiosity."

V. THE WHOLESALE DESTRUCTION OF THE PARAPHERNALIA OF IDOLATRY WOULD BE THE BEST OF ALL DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE NOTHINGNESS OF THE IDOLS. For if these gods of Canaan had any power, they might be expected to vindicate their majesty against these spoilers. But Israel never suffered anything from the destruction of the idolatry. The only danger arose from the destruction not being as complete in some cases as God intended it should be. And it is important to have the impotence of God's foes made matter of demonstration. Sooner or later this is the case.

VI. THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST HAS ALSO ITS INTOLERANT, AS WELL AS ITS TOLERANT, SIDE. In a sermon on Matt. xii. 30, "He that is not with me is against me," Vinet, the greatest of the moral analysts, has expounded *L'intolérance de l'Evangile*, just as in a companion sermon on Luke ix. 50, "He that is not against us is for us," he expounds *La tolérance*.[1] It is well to realize that religion is not an easy-going matter, making things pleasant all round, but something requiring stern and uncompromising conduct oftentimes. We may suffer as much by an unenlightened latitudinarianism as by an unenlightened attachment to non-essentials in use and wont.—R. M. E.

Vers. 4—14.—*Centralization in worship.* It is quite unnecessary that we should here enter upon the criticism which has been raging upon this important passage, as indicating something post-Mosaic. The directions in Exodus do not necessarily imply a multiplicity of altars at the same time, but rather successive alterations of locality in conformity with the requirements of the pilgrimage. Besides, the genius of the Jewish worship implied the centralization of it in contrast to the multiplicity of places arising out of polytheism. The idea of a central altar is implied in the erection of the tabernacle at Sinai, and all the legislation which gathers round it. We believe, therefore, that Moses, in here formulating the centralization in worship, was merely making plainer what had already been implied.

I. CENTRALIZATION IN WORSHIP SEEMS A CONVENIENT STEPPING-STONE FROM THE DANGERS OF POLYTHEISM TO UNIVERSAL SPIRITUAL WORSHIP. Abraham, in setting up the new worship in Canaan, had erected altars at the different places where God appeared unto him. His fine intellect realized that it was the One God he worshipped at the different places. His descendants also, in their pilgrimage to Palestine, realized that it was the One God who called upon them out of the cloudy pillar to halt from time to time, and to erect his altar, and whom they there worshipped; and they would also feel that this direction about a single central altar was but the necessary corollary to the entire legislation. The ideal of worship, to which the Old Testament dispensation pointed, was, "when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John iv. 23); meanwhile it was most important to have the Divine unity publicly recognized and expressed by a central altar. At this they were to aim when settled beyond the Jordan.

II. THE CENTRAL ALTAR IS TO GATHER ROUND IT JOYFUL WORSHIPPERS. (Vers. 6, 7.) Burnt offering, sacrifice, heave offering, etc., were to reach their climax in the eating before the Lord the peace offering, and in the *joy* which springs from fellowship. This is the purpose of all worship. If joy be not reached, then the worshippers are living below their privileges.

III. ALLOWANCE IS MADE FOR THE EXIGENCIES OF THE MARCH AND OF WAR. Means of grace have to be extemporized often in times of battle and marches, and men

[1] 'Discours sur Quelques sujets Religieux,' pp. 214—237.

must do what is right in their own eyes, in a way that would not be lawful in times of settled avocations and of peace. Moses is instructed, therefore, to remind them of the freedom they necessarily practise in the unsettled condition, which must be relinquished when they settle down beyond the Jordan (vers. 8, 9).

IV. GOD RESERVES THE RIGHT OF CHOOSING THE CENTRAL PLACE OF WORSHIP. (Vers. 10—14.) This prevents all licence in such an important matter. It is not what they think advisable, but what God directs, that they are in the locality of worship to follow. This reservation is surely most significant. It indicates that in worship, which is the payment of due homage unto God, his will and wisdom are to be regarded as supreme. The right God holds in his hand of indicating whether he is to be worshipped in one place or everywhere.

V. GOD REVEALED THE CENTRAL PLACE IN DUE SEASON. A good deal of the current criticism seems to overlook the distinction between the *principle* of centralization in worship and the *place* where it was to be observed. The principle was stated long before the place was indicated. It was centuries before Jerusalem became the recognized centre of the Jewish religion. Had the name been indicated earlier, it would have prevented the natural development of the ritual in Canaan. It is not necessary to suppose that Moses had any definite idea of the central place when he uttered on the banks of the Jordan the will of God. God can express his will through historical developments, just as he can through natural developments. "The nature of things" may be justly regarded as the expression of the Divine mind; and so may a historical procession.

Meanwhile, it is well for us to rejoice in the freedom and universality of spiritual worship to which we have come. Now the true worshippers, emancipated from the cumbrous ritual through its fulfilment in Christ, can "worship the Father in spirit and in truth" in every place.—R. M. E.

Vers. 15—19.—*Private worship not the substitute for public.* While the central altar was ordained for the reception of the sacrifices and the place for the love-feasts of God's people, they were also allowed to slay and eat flesh meat at home. It must, of course, consist of the flesh of clean animals, and the blood must be carefully poured out unto the Lord; but, after these precautions, it was perfectly possible for the Jew to live luxuriously at home. In these circumstances he might say that the flesh killed carefully at home tasted as sweet as any peace offering enjoyed at the tabernacle, and that he would not trouble himself about the journey to the central altar. Such a conclusion the Lord expressly forbids. How, in such circumstances, will the Levites be sustained? Such private luxury must not be substituted for the public peace offering and the Levitical support connected with the ritual.

I. THERE IS A GREAT TEMPTATION WITH LUKEWARM PEOPLE TO MAKE PRIVATE WORSHIP DO DUTY FOR PUBLIC. It is insinuated that the Bible can be as well studied, and prayer as faithfully observed, and praise as joyfully rendered, amid the sanctities of home as in any congregation. But the fact is that the private worship is a sorry substitute for the public. Not to speak of the promise, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion better than all the dwellings of Jacob," there is in the public congregation a power of sympathy, solemnity, and attention which is missed elsewhere. The private services, when separated from the public, fail to reach the professed ideal, and religious feebleness is the usual result.

II. PRIVATE CELEBRATIONS OF PUBLIC SOLEMNITIES ARE MOST PROPERLY FORBIDDEN. The Jew might have excused himself from journeying to the central altar by resolving on the solemnities at home. "I can share the tithes, and firstlings, and vows, and free-will offerings, and heave offerings with my neighbours, and not bother taking them to the tabernacle." And so men can still abstain from membership in Church organizations under the plea of private baptisms and private "tables;" but all this presumption is an abomination unto the Lord.

III. IT DENIES TO THE PUBLIC MINISTERS OF GOD THEIR DUE RIGHTS. For Levitical support, so carefully guarded in the commandment here, is surely equivalent to "ministerial support" still. The ministry of the Word means an order of men set apart from the secularities of life to give themselves unto prayer and to the ministry of the Word (Acts vi. 4). If it is highly expedient, as well as divinely ordained, that such an order

should exist, then it is a serious responsibility on the part of any private person to refuse to acknowledge this Divine ordinance and its attendant rights. The pitifulness of the excuse, moreover, in refusing ministerial support because of private scruples, must strike the most superficial judge.

IV. THE LORD LEAVES THE LEVITE AS A CHARGE UPON THE GENEROSITY OF THE PEOPLE. The Levite was to be as a guest within the gates of the Jew (ver. 18). All the rights of hospitality, so to speak, were to be his. Moreover, it was to be an unending charge. "Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth." Thus an order of men are left upon the generosity of the people, to have their share as long as the world lasts. So is it with the Christian ministry. Public services, the public organizations of the Church, are all to be continued till the end of time, and hence the ministry will continue. Nor will its support severely tax the loyal Christian people.

We see how intimately the interests of God's servants are bound up with proper views about private and public worship. If these are judiciously disseminated, there is no fear of the Lord's servants being neglected. God's rights in the ordering of his worship must be first vindicated and recognized, and then his servants' rights will follow.—R. M. E.

Vers. 20—28.—*The sanctity of blood.* The central altar was for the reception of the blood. And while the Jews remained in pilgrimage, every time they killed an animal out of their flocks or herds for family use they carried the blood to the tabernacle, that it might be duly disposed of by the priest. In case of the roebucks and harts, their blood was not sacrificial; it was therefore ordained that it should be poured out on the earth, and carefully and solemnly covered up. When they were settled in the land of Canaan, they were too far from the central altar to carry the blood of every animal out of the herd or flock which was slain to the appointed place. Hence they were allowed to deal with the domestic animals as with the products of the chase (ver. 22). It is to this fact of the sanctity of blood that we would now direct attention.

I. THE HEATHEN NATIONS WERE ACCUSTOMED TO MAKE DRINK OFFERINGS OF BLOOD. David refers to the fact when he says, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips" (Ps. xvi. 4). These drink offerings of blood arose, doubtless, out of the *bloodthirstiness* of the heathen themselves. Men of blood thought their god delighted in bloodshedding as they did. It was human passion projected into the religious domain.

II. GOD SO DIRECTED HIS WORSHIPPERS ABOUT THE DISPOSAL OF THE BLOOD THAT THEY COULD NOT REGARD IT IN ANY OTHER LIGHT THAN AS A MOST SACRED THING. It was to be carefully carried to his altar and disposed of by the officiating priests, or, if this was not possible, it was solemnly poured into the earth, and covered carefully from all profane uses. On no account was it to be eaten: this would have profaned it.

III. THE REASON ASSIGNED WAS THAT THE LIFE WAS IN THE BLOOD. "Life" is the gift of God, the mysterious something which escapes our observation in analysis, which baffles our productive powers, and which works such wonders in the world of nature. As God's gift, it is to be holy in our eyes, and disposed of as he sees best.

IV. THE VICARIOUSNESS OF SUFFERING GAVE IT ADDITIONAL SANCTITY. For shed blood meant life sacrificed to sustain other life. Our bodies depend upon vicarious suffering for their sustenance. Sacrifice underlies the constitution of the world. It was meet, then, that this principle should be recognized and sanctified in the sight of men.

V. BLOOD HAD ITS RELIGIOUS FUNCTION, NOT A PHYSICAL FUNCTION, TO DISCHARGE IN THE MOSAIC ECONOMY. The God of Israel did not delight in blood, as the gods of the heathen were supposed to do. He singled it out for a religious use. It was to be the material of a holy act, wherever shed. This was undoubtedly to keep it so out of the sphere of physical elements that it could symbolize fully "the blood of Jesus Christ," by which the world is to be saved.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—4.—*The doom of idolatry.* The reverse side of blessing is a curse. The abuse of the best things is the worst. In the ratio in which any institution has capacity

to benefit, has it capacity to injure. The sun can quicken life or kill. The temple is a stepping-stone to heaven or a snare of hell.

I. BOTH NATURE AND ART HAVE BEEN PROSTITUTED TO BASEST USES. If men cannot find God in themselves, they cannot find him in material nature. Some "look through nature up to nature's God." Some look through nature to darkness, sensuality, and despair.

II. THE BEAUTIFUL MUST BE SACRIFICED TO MORAL NECESSITIES. Æsthetics must yield to ethics. Our moral exigencies are paramount. The voice of taste is the voice of a charmer. The voice of conscience is the voice of a king. If the creations of art are inimical to the interests of righteousness, they must be destroyed. Eternal life is beyond all price. Whatever keeps man from the living God is doomed.

III. TRUE LIFE HAS A DESTRUCTIVE SIDE. The growth of a plant involves the death of the seed. The life of the body is sustained by manifold death. Eternal life comes by the death of the Son of God. The inner life of piety is quickened by the death of self. True love to God is the hatred of his foes. Jesus Christ "came to destroy the works of the devil."—D.

Vers. 5—28.—*Characteristic signs of Jehovah's worship.* All the religious institutions of Moses were bulwarks against the idolatry of the period, and were admirably suited to the intellectual and moral condition of the people. The worship of the true God was characterized by—

I. A SINGLE, GOD-SELECTED SHRINE. As the heathen had gods many, they had plurality of temples, altars, and shrines. The single, central temple of Jehovah promoted at least two worthy objects. 1. *It kept alive in the people's memory the unity of God.* In that age, so addicted to idolatry, this was of the first importance. Intellectual belief in the one God would not, *in itself*, go for much; yet it would be the foundation for reverence, love, and loyalty. 2. *It promoted most vitally the unity of the nation.* In the absence of representative institutions and periodic literature, the common worship of the people at a central shrine was the most active factor in national unity. On this largely, as an instrument, the strength and safety of the nation depended. In the absence of this cementing element, the tribes would speedily have become factions—distinct entities—like the Canaanites who had preceded them.

II. GOD'S WORSHIP WAS CHARACTERIZED BY PROFUSE AND VARIOUS OFFERINGS. Every event in the life of the Hebrews to be connected with God, and to be associated with religion. Earth was to be joined to heaven by vital arteries of intercommunication. Thus the favour and benediction of God would be enjoyed in every circumstance of daily existence, and a joyous sense of God's fatherhood be kept alive. The arrangement would check avarice and earthly-mindedness. It would make conscience tenderly alive to sin, and promote in a thousand ways practical righteousness.

III. GOD'S WORSHIP WAS A DELIGHTFUL OCCUPATION. "Ye shall eat before the Lord . . . and shall rejoice." In observing the rites of idolatry, the Canaanites practised wanton self-mutilations. They stained the altars with their own blood. They made their children to pass through the fire. This was the invention of the diabolic spirit. But in God's temple is the sunshine of joy, the light of his face. For man's hunger he prepares a "feast of fat things," fat things "full of marrow," "wines on the lees well refined." At prodigious cost to himself, he has supplied the "bread of life," and living water from deep wells of salvation. And his gracious voice greets every comer *thus*, "Eat, O friends; . . . yea, drink abundantly."

IV. GOD'S WORSHIP HALLOWS ALL RELATIONSHIPS AND BRIGHTENS ALL PURSUITS. In the temple, men became conscious of a Divine presence, and felt within the stirrings of a new life. Religion developed their better nature. It made them acquainted with new relationships, and opened their eyes to the value of old ones. It created new and more generous emotions. Fountains of kindly feeling were unsealed within them, and sweet waters of practical kindness flowed out to the poor and the stranger. A new light beautified all toil, and they rejoiced in all they put their hand unto. Those who had been the ministrants of this fresh life and joy—the Levites—were to have a special place in their sympathy and regard. Sacred ties of generous affection were to knit them in one brotherhood.

V. THE WORSHIP OF GOD SANCTIFIES THE COMMON MEAL. The recognition of God and

his claims allows us to enjoy all the provision of God with thankfulness and content. Every meal reminds us of God, and leads to fellowship with him. Each meal becomes a minor sacrament, and all food is consecrated to highest use. In this state of mind, excess of every kind becomes impossible, and the amplest enjoyment is not incompatible with vigorous piety.

VI. THE WORSHIP OF GOD TEACHES THE SUPERIOR WORTH OF HUMAN LIFE. All the requirements of the Levitical Law set forth the sacredness of life. Highest sanctions surrounded all life. The lives of inferior animals were generously cared for. But when the life of men was to be sustained, and sustained in richest vigour, the lives of animals were to be sacrificed. Yet even while this was done, the minds of men were to be impressed with a sense of the value of life; hence the blood of victims was to be poured upon the earth. As in redemption, so in daily sustentation, we are taught the costly price at which our life is procured. So high a value has God set upon man, that large sacrifices of herds and flocks are daily made for his behoof.

VII. CEREMONIAL LAWS POSSESSED AN ELASTICITY TO SUIT MEN'S ACTUAL NEEDS. Every moral law had an innate power and value, which never allowed a concession. To infringe a moral law, even the least, became a personal loss. But ritual law possessed a value only as the type and memorial of better things. Righteousness is of higher value than human convenience, but ritual is the servant of expediency. The shewbread was for the priests; yet David, in his hunger, might eat thereof and not sin. During the exigencies of desert life, circumcision was often deferred, the Passovers were irregularly observed, and to a large extent the Hebrews became "a law unto themselves." "If the Law of the Spirit of life" be within us, we shall discern when ritual may be profitably used and when it may be suspended.

VIII. THE WORSHIP OF GOD WAS FRUITFUL IN BLESSING. The design of God in every particular was solely the good of families, that "it may be well with thee, and with thy children." We do well to write this with a diamond pen on memory and heart, that God's claims and man's advantage are identical. The plan of human life is laid on the lines of righteousness, and along these lines alone is the road to immortal bliss. We cannot add to or take from the commands of God, without injury to ourselves and dishonour to him.—D.

Vers. 29—32.—*The subtle ensnarements of idolatry.* A spirit of vain curiosity is to be repressed at its beginning. So weak is human nature, and so subtle is the working of sin, that prying curiosity into evil customs works practical mischief. Human life, to be a success, must be a perpetual battle with moral evil. We cannot afford to parley with the enemy nor give him a single advantage. Incessant watchfulness is our safety.

I. IDOLATRY HAS GREAT FASCINATIONS FOR MAN'S SENSUOUS NATURE. There is in all men a yearning for *visible* signs of God. "Show us some sign!" is the natural demand of the human mind. Even Moses had passionately asked, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Satan employs a thousand wily artifices to corrupt the spiritual impulses of the heart. Speciously, idolatry asks to be tolerated as a *symbol*, and then detains our faith as if it were the *substantial object*.

II. IDOLATRY IS THE FRUITFUL PARENT OF VICE AND CRUELTY. We can never deal with forms of idolatry as if they were mere intellectual vagaries. The worship of material images has always been associated with sensuality, obscenity, and vice. It deteriorates human nature, hardens sensibility, and clips the wing of aspiration. When the seed has grown to the mature tree, human victims are demanded as oblations. "The children were compelled to pass through the fire." Atrocious cruelty is the last effect.

III. IDOLATRY IS HATEFUL IN GOD'S ESTEEM. It is impossible for us to err if we make the supreme God our model. To the extent that we know God, we must endeavour to assimilate our tastes to his, to love what he loves and to hate what he hates. Idolatry, in any form (whether of graven image, or material wealth, or human friend) is overt treason against God. If *we* cannot see the inherent wickedness of idolatry, it should be enough for us to know that it is an abomination before God, "a smoke in his eyes; a stench in his nostrils."

IV. IDOLATRY IS A SOURCE OF NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL RUIN. In that early period

of human history, the spirit of idolatry must have been rampant. It was the curse of the age. Although the Hebrews had seen the practical effects of idolatry in Egypt; although they had themselves been the executors of God's vengeance against idolatry in Canaan; nevertheless the tendencies to idolatry were, humanly speaking, irresistible. It had been the source of Pharaoh's overthrow. It had been the occasion of a great slaughter among the Hebrews under the peaks of Sinai. It was the parent of the vices and crimes that prevailed among the Amorites. Idolatry is doomed by an eternal decree, and if men persist in identifying themselves with it, *they* are doomed also. Let us be well guarded against so insidious an evil!—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

IDOLATERS AND ENTICERS TO IDOLATRY TO BE PUT TO DEATH.

Vers. 1—5.—The case supposed here is that of one professing to have supernatural intelligence, who should, by giving a sign or a wonder, endeavour to draw away the people to idolatry. Such a one was to be put to death.

Ver. 1.—**A prophet** (*nabhi*, נָבִיא); one who speaks from God, an interpreter to men of what God reveals or suggests to him (cf. for the meaning of the word, Exod. vii. 1 with iv. 16; also Jer. xv. 19). **Dreamer of dreams.** Not by visions or immediate suggestion only, but also by means of dreams, did God communicate with men (cf. Numb. xii. 6). The case supposed here, then, is that of one pretending to have had revelations from God through those media by which God was pleased to convey his will to men (cf. Hom., 'Iliad,' i. 62—

"'Αλλ' ἄγε δή τινα μάντιν ἐρείομεν. . . .
ἢ καὶ ὀνειροπόλον, καὶ γάρ τ' ὄναρ ἔκ Διός ἐστιν.")

Sign or a wonder. A *sign* was some event foretold by the prophet, and the occurrence of which was a token that something else which he announced would happen or should be done (cf. 1 Sam. ii. 34; x. 7—9; 2 Kings xix. 29; Isa. vii. 11—14; xxxviii. 7; Mark xiii. 4, etc.). A *wonder* was a miracle, the performance of which gave proof of a Divine commission (cf. ch. iv. 24). These signs, it is assumed, should come to pass; nevertheless, the people were not to listen to the man who gave them to go after other gods. The mere fact that he sought to persuade them to forsake the worship of Jehovah was sufficient to prove him an impostor; for how could one who sought to seduce the people from God be sent by God? The sign which was given to authenticate such a message could only be one of those "lying signs and wonders after the working of Satan," by which his emissaries try to deceive and mislead; and was permitted by God only that their fidelity to him might be tested and proved. They had already received God's message; they had his word; and no teaching which contravened that, however apparently authenticated, could be from him, or was to be accepted by them (cf. Jer. xxix. 8; Gal. i. 8, 9; 1 John iii. 1, etc.). Come what might, they were to **walk after Jehovah their God, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and serve him, and cleave unto him.** The false prophet, as a public enemy and a suborner of treason against the King of Israel, was to be put to death; and so the evil would be put away from among them.

Vers. 6—11.—A second case supposed is that of temptation to apostacy proceeding from some near relative or intimate friend. Not only was this to be resisted, but no consideration of affection or bond of friendship was to be allowed to interfere with the stern sentence which doomed the tempter to death; on the contrary, the person tempted was to be the first to lay hands on the tempter and put him to death. This was to be done by stoning, and the person he had tried to seduce was to cast the first stone.

Ver. 6.—**Thy brother, the son of thy mother**; thy full brother, allied to thee by the closest fraternal tie. **The wife of thy bosom**; the object of thy tenderest affection, whom it is thine to protect and cherish (cf. ch. xxviii. 54, 56; Micah vii. 5). **Thy friend, which is as thine own soul**; *i.e.* whom thou lovest as thyself. The word translated "friend" (רֵעַ, for רֵעֶה) is from a verb which signifies to delight in, and conveys primarily the idea not merely of a companion, but of a friend in whom one delights; and the definition of true friendship is the loving another as one's self (Aristot., 'Eth. Nic.,' ix. 5). As commonly used, however, the word designates any one with whom one has any dealing or intercourse; and so our Lord expounds it (Luke x. 29, etc.). **Secretly.**

If the temptation was in private, and so known only to thyself.

Ver. 8.—**Pity, spare, conceal.** The accumulation of terms serves to make the injunction more solemn and impressive.

Ver. 11.—The penalty publicly inflicted, and therefore generally known, would have a deterrent effect on the community, so as to prevent the recurrence of such evil.

Vers. 12—18.—A third case supposed is that of the inhabitants of a city being seduced by wicked men into idolatry. In this case inquiry was to be made as to the fact; and if it was found to be so, the inhabitants of that city were to be put to the sword, all their property was to be burnt, and the city itself reduced to a heap; so should the anger of the Lord be averted from Israel, and he would do them good.

Ver. 12.—**Hear in one of thy cities.** The Hebrew phrase, "to hear in" (שָׁמַע בְּ) has sometimes the meaning of to overhear, as in Gen. xxvii. 5; 1 Sam. xvii. 28; Job. xv. 8; sometimes it means simply to hear, as in 2 Sam. xix. 36 [35]; in Job xxvi. 14, it has the force of to hear of or concerning, though some think this questionable. This latter is apparently the meaning here: *If thou hear concerning any of thy cities*, etc. **Saying.** This introduces what is heard.

Ver. 13.—**Men, the children of Belial**; *the sons of worthlessness*, utterly worthless persons. *Beli ya'al* (a compound of בְּלִי, not, and יָעַל, to ascend, to have worth, to profit) means primarily that which is low, hence worthlessness, naughtiness, wickedness. In ch. xv. 9, Belial is rendered in the Authorized Version as an adjective, "wicked," and also in Neh. i. 11. In Ps. xviii. 4, it is rendered by "ungodly men." Most commonly it is treated as a proper name. But in all places the proper meaning of the word might be retained. The Hebrews described an object, of which any quality was predominantly characteristic, as the son of that quality. **Are gone out from among you**; have gone forth from the midst of you, *i.e.* have risen up among yourselves. **Withdraw.** The verb here is the same as that rendered by "thrust," in vers. 5 and 10. It conveys the idea of drawing away with some degree of force, not mere easy seduction, but impulsion by strong persuasion.

Vers. 14, 15.—After due inquiry, if it was found that such a thing had really been done in any of their cities, the extreme penalty was to be inflicted on the city and all its inhabitants—all were to be destroyed. **Smite . . . with the edge of the sword**; literally, *with the mouth of the sword*, as biting and devouring like a ravenous beast—a phrase for utter destruction.

Ver. 16.—**All the spoil thereof every whit, for the Lord thy God**; rather, *all the spoil* [booty] *thereof as a whole offering unto Jehovah thy God*; it was to be wholly devoted to God, and as such to be consumed by fire. "It was a destruction, and not properly an offering. Hence the author selects neither עוֹלָה nor חַטָּאת, but כָּלִיל, whole, whole offering (ch. xxxiii. 10; Lev. vi. 15 [22]), which word, in the law concerning offering, is no technical designation of any particular kind of offering. The rendering *omnino* is untenable" (Knobel). The city was to be made a ruin, never to be rebuilt; and thus was to be treated the same as a heathen, idolatrous city might be (cf. Numb. xxi. 3).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—*Temptations to depart from God to be resisted at all costs.* In the preceding chapter we had directions with regard to the worship of the true God. Here Israel is told what to do in case of temptation arising to worship false gods. The chapter in its entirety deals with this one topic. From it we might open up two main homiletic themes: (1) the treatment of error; (2) the test of truth. The second, however, we reserve till we come to ch. xviii. 21. The first, therefore, only, we deal with now. In doing this we must remember that Moses is not only the expounder of religious duty, but also of a judicial polity. He is not only the prophet, but the legislator. Israel's constitution as a nation was that of a *Theocratic Church-State*. It is supposed, in this chapter, that temptations to depart from God may come (1) from a professed prophet or wonder-worker, or (2) they may arise from the nearest relative or bosom friend, or (3) they may come from a town or city. In either case, the infection is to be "stamped out" at once. Any enticement to idolatry, come whence it may, is not to be tolerated for a moment. The wonder-worker is to be put to death; the friend is to be slain; the city is to be destroyed. All this may seem harsh. Perhaps it is not so harsh as it seems. There may be occasions when severity is the greatest kindness, and when tolerance would be the greatest unkindness. In the early Christian

Church, the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira seemed severe. But the instantaneous cutting out of the canker of hypocrisy was, as it were, the surgical operation which only would save the Church. So here. There are three principles which were at stake in such cases as those here supposed. 1. The supremacy of Jehovah was the key-stone of their national constitution. Consequently, the attempt to draw Israel away after other gods was treason to the State, and must be dealt with accordingly. 2. The aim of Jehovah in choosing Israel was to separate to himself a people for his Name. Hence if they did not forcibly repress idolatrous worship, the very reason of their separate existence as a people would cease. 3. Since the very continuance of Israel depended on the continuance of their *raison d'être*, for them not to stamp out idolatry would be to blot out themselves. It is a commonplace saying with reference to legislation, that it is to be tested—not by the query, "What is abstractly the best?" but by another, "What will be the best for such and such a people?" Now, looking at all the circumstances of Israel, it would be very hard to say that any better, or even any other mode of securing the desired end could have been adopted. Here, as throughout the legislation, the people are supposed to be in full sympathy with Jehovah, and are themselves to co-operate in carrying out his Law (see Homily on ch. xxvii.). We have no warrant to apply the rules here given in detail, anywhere, because we have nowhere existing any people that, on the earthly side of its life, occupies a like position to Israel. Therefore no argument for a like extirpation of heresy can now be rightly maintained, because no parallel can now be shown of a nation with like constitution. But nevertheless, as in the preceding chapter we had permanent principles embodied under specific rules, so it is in this.

I. WE HAVE TRUTHS OF SUPREME MOMENT INDICATED HERE, WHICH ARE CAPABLE OF APPLICATION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.[1] It is not possible to do more than briefly indicate the line of thought which such an application of the principles here laid down would involve. 1. Israel's place in the world is now filled by the Church of God, which is "the commonwealth of Israel," into which all enter who believe through grace. 2. The Church is set for the maintenance and defence in the world of the great truths of our most holy faith, and she is "earnestly to contend for the faith once (for all) delivered to the saints." 3. This Church is to be a self-governing body, having within itself all the powers and authorities for self-regulation and discipline. The Epistles to the seven Churches show this abundantly. 4. The Church is to be very jealous in guarding the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Amid all changes of public sentiment and opinion on minor points, she is to hold fast the cardinal truth, that no advance of public thought can warrant her in surrendering the one vital truth on which her existence depends, without which she would have had no existence, nor could show any reason why she should continue to exist. 5. This one truth, which she is to conserve intact age after age, is analogous to the one which Israel was so sacredly to guard. Israel was to keep watch over the truth—Jehovah, he is the Lord. The Church has now to guard the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (see 1 John iv. 1—4). The Church might as well cease to be as let that truth go. It is "the doctrine which is according to godliness." She is to guard the doctrine which tends to godliness, and to maintain the godliness which is to illustrate the doctrine. 6. She has within herself means and powers for the defence of the faith, and for visiting with monition, censure, suspension, or excommunication, those who deny it or disgrace it (1 Cor. v.; Matt. xviii. 17—20; Titus iii. 10, 11, etc.). 7. Her weapons are not carnal. She has no power to use the sword (Matt. xxvi. 52; 2 Cor. x. 3—8). 8. Nor has the Church any power towards those that are not within her pale (1 Cor. v. 12, 13), *i.e.* she has no power of judging. She has to be a witness for God to the outlying world, and that she may be this she is to keep herself pure.

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHAPTER HAVE A CONSTANT APPLICATION TO THE

[1] Bishop Wordsworth has a very long and elaborate note on this chapter, which is well worthy of perusal, in spite of the fallacy which—doubtless from oversight—runs through it. The author says that it was on the principles here laid down that the Jews condemned our Lord to death. Surely not. True, our Lord wrought miracles. But he never wrought them to confirm any message about going and serving other gods. The most perfect loyalty to the great invisible Father marked the "only begotten Son." This chapter does not seem to apply to him in any such way.

INDIVIDUAL LIFE. "Ye shall walk after the Lord" embodies New Testament teaching as well as Old. On the basis of the chapter before us, the following outline of thought may well be filled up. 1. Absolute loyalty to Christ should be the governing principle of life. The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Christ of the New. He is the Mediator of the new covenant. He is a Legislator of more glory than Moses (Heb. iii.). He appeals to us by righteousness, love, hope, fear. 2. Temptations to desert Christ's standard may pour in upon us from various quarters. The chapter suggests three. (1) A prophet. There may arise some new claimant for man's homage, or some philosopher who thinks to disprove the claims of Jesus by showing his own wondrous intellectual stature, etc. (2) The family. Seductions either to the false in faith or the corrupt in practice may come from those near and dear to us. (3) The city. A strong current of public sentiment, adverse to "the truth as it is in Jesus," may set in, and may threaten to carry us away. 3. These temptations are to be withstood at all costs. No "sign," no "wonder," is ever to be allowed to dazzle us for a moment. Christ's claims are so convincing to the conscience and heart, they are sustained by such overwhelming evidence, that nothing in any age can set them aside. The sovereignty of Christ is the fundamental law of our life. He will allow no rival whatsoever. Even if men should work miracles to lead us away from Christ, we are to follow Christ, and let miracles go for nought. Even under the Mosaic Law, miracles were not a *sufficient* test of truth. The doctrine they were intended to confirm must be put alongside therewith, and if this doctrine contravened the supreme canon of moral life, "Loyalty to God," it was to be set aside. So now. No physical wonder can ever justify us in ignoring supreme moral law. The Lordship of Jesus is our highest moral law. He is to us the embodiment of righteousness, truth, and love; yea, he is our incarnate God. 4. Though we may not visit our enticers with pains and penalties, yet, even now, the most sacred claims and relationships of our earthly life are to be renounced if they come into collision with our loyalty to Jesus (see Luke xiv. 26—33). Even though the temptations should come from all quarters at once, our loyalty to our Saviour is to remain unmoved. We may not halt, nor waver, nor seek a feigned neutrality (Matt. xii. 30). It will be a very far more serious thing for us if we let ourselves be seduced from loyalty to God as revealed in Christ, than it would have been for Israel if they proved fickle under the legislation of Moses (Heb. ii. 1—4; x. 28—31). How earnestly should we pray that we may be kept faithful to our dear Lord in heaven! How lovingly should we warn others, lest they swerve from their fealty to him (2 Pet. iii. 17, 18; Jude 17—25; Rev. ii. 10, 11; Matt. xxiv. 11—13)!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*False prophets.* In viewing the bearings of this passage on the credentials of revelation, two points should be observed. 1. The case supposed is one in which the prophet contradicts a revelation already received. 2. The prophet does not dispute the evidence of that earlier revelation. On the contrary, he admits it. He stands within the lines of it. He professes to speak under its authority. Yet he asks the people to violate its fundamental laws. This of itself was sufficient to convict him. His pretensions are disposed of by the simple fact that, professing to speak in the Name of God, he gives the people a message contradictory of what he admits God to have previously revealed. No sign and wonder can accredit contradictions. The prophet is inconsistent with himself, and is not to be listened to. Nay, his message had been anticipated, and the thing he bids the people do, expressly forbidden. Notice, then—

I. EXTERNAL MIRACLES DO NOT OF THEMSELVES ACCREDIT A REVELATION AS FROM GOD. (Vers. 1—3.) This prophet gives a sign or wonder—presumably a predictive word—and it actually comes to pass. The failure of his sign, according to ch. xviii. 21, 22, would have been a proof of falsity. The converse of this, however, that he speaks God's word because his sign has *not* failed, is not immediately to be admitted. There are other tests to be applied. In this case, the prophet's message is condemned because contradictory of what he himself allows to have been a true revelation. This

raises the question of the value of miracles as credentials of revelation. That they have a value is not disputed, but not as mere signs and wonders. This will be best seen by contrasting the sign or wonder given by this prophet with the evidence of the earlier revelation. If we take the Scripture account of the founding of the Mosaic dispensation, it is impossible to question the magnificence and convincingness of the displays of Divine power and holiness therein contained. In founding his dispensations (Mosaic and Christian), God has not only given evidence, but an *amount* and *kind* of evidence which put the source of the revelation—admitting the facts to be as stated—beyond all cavil. For here, it is not merely the fact of miracle which is to be regarded, but the number, nature, magnitude, variety, spiritual quality of the supernatural events, in connection with the self-evidencing divineness of the revelation itself. The difficulty as to whether the miracle proves the doctrine, or the doctrine the miracle, or in what proportions the two factors combine, has little place in the actual evidences of revelation. The two cannot be separated, either in thought or in fact. Grant the authenticity of the miracles of the Gospels or of the Pentateuch, and it will not be disputed that they originated with God, not with Beelzebub. To this mass of evidence, overwhelming in its sublimity and convincingness—evidence embracing the wonders of Egypt, the displays of God's power, love, and grace in the events of the Exodus, the miracles of the desert, the stupendous revelations of Sinai, etc.—the prophet opposes a few stray signs and wonders. Which were the people to believe? Plainly, no sign or wonder would have justified an Israelite in believing a prophet whose teaching contradicted the first principles of *his* revelation; as no sign or wonder would justify us in believing teachings contradictory of the first principles of *ours*.

II. THE RISE OF FALSE PROPHETS IS TO BE ANTICIPATED. (Ver. 1.) The passage takes it for granted that they will arise. They did arise in Old Testament times, and they will do so again. Their appearance is predicted in connection with "the last days" (Matt. xxiv. 11; 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 1). "Signs and wonders" will not be wanting (Matt. xxiv. 24; 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10). False teachers are included under the category of false prophets (Matt. vii. 15; 2 Pet. ii. 1). They assert as the truth of God principles and doctrines subversive of the revelation God has given. The readiness of people to believe them arises from want of knowledge (Eph. iv. 14); from the itch for novelties (2 Tim. iv. 3); from a diseased craving for the marvellous—witness the credulity displayed in connection with spiritualism (2 Thess. ii. 9—13); above all, from the adaptation of their teachings to the inclinations of depraved hearts (2 Tim. iii. 1—8).

III. THE RISE OF FALSE PROPHETS IS PERMITTED FOR THE SIFTING OF THE CHURCH. (Ver. 3.) God has thus much to do with their appearance that he permits it as a means of proving and sifting the Church. The trial is a searching and real one. The plausibility of their errors may occasion, even to believers, much mental conflict. But out of this conflict they come forth strengthened and purified, with firmer hold upon the truth, and clearer insight into Scripture. Those willing to be deceived are, on the other hand, led by the spirit of delusion. False prophets shake all but "the very elect" (Matt. xxiv. 24). The heresies, schisms, controversies, etc., which have agitated the Church, with the teachings of antichristian philosophy and science outside of it, have always had this effect of sifting, while in the end they have subserved the progress of the truth.

IV. THE TEACHING OF FALSE PROPHETS IS TO BE REJECTED. 1. Their doctrine is to be tried by its conformity with the rule of faith (Isa. viii. 20). John bids us "try the spirits," giving as the reason that "many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John iv. 1). 2. Their doctrine, if found contradictory of Scripture, is to be unhesitatingly rejected. 3. Of old, the prophet whose teachings struck at the foundations of the theocracy was to be put to death (ver. 5). This rule no longer applies. But it is the duty of the Church, in the exercise of her judicial functions, to deprive such a teacher of office and status in her ministry (see also 2 John 10, 11).—J. O.

Vers. 6—12.—*God or our brother.* Terribly stern is the duty here laid on the person enticed to idolatry. The law is adapted to an age of stern deeds, and to a people living under a stern dispensation. Yet, reflecting on the nature of the crime, on the constitution of the Jewish state, and on the issues to mankind which hung on the

slender thread of this one nation's fidelity, it is difficult to see how it could well have been less stern than it is. Its severity was perhaps its mercy. Note, too, that the criminal could be executed only after formal impeachment, fair trial, and conclusively established guilt (cf. ver. 14; ch. xvii. 2—8; xix. 15—21).

I. GOD ALLOWS NO CLAIM OF NATURAL AFFECTION TO INTERFERE WITH HIGHER DUTY TO HIMSELF. It is the same stern voice which we hear even in the Gospels (Matt. viii. 21, 22; x. 37; Luke xiv. 26). The demands of God on his people's supreme and undivided allegiance are not now a whit less rigorous than they were of old.

II. GOD WOULD HAVE US REGARD THOSE WHO DELIBERATELY ATTEMPT TO SEDUCE US FROM HIM AS OUR WORST FOES. They really are so, whether they think it or not. No language is strong enough to paint the crime of seeking to seduce a soul from its allegiance to its God. The guilt of the man who deliberately sets himself to counter-work a child's affection for its parent, and to produce alienation of heart between them, is trivial in comparison with it. The crime is that of soul-murder. For in fidelity to God lies the happiness of life here, and salvation in the world to come. We are not, therefore, to allow any private affection to blind us to the enormity of this crime. Those whom we cherish as dearest are only the more guilty if they take advantage of our affection to betray us into deadly sin.

III. GOD REQUIRES THAT WE DO NOT SPARE THOSE WHO ARE GUILTY OF THIS CRIME. We are no longer called upon—and we may be thankful for it—to impeach our seducers, and lead them out to death. Our religion requires that we return good for evil, that we pray for those who injure us, that we seek their conversion and salvation. But it does not require of us that we do not abhor their conduct, and severely reprobate and denounce it. We fail in duty if there is not placed on all attempts at spiritual seduction the immediate brand of our strongest condemnation.—J. O.

Vers. 12—18.—*A city under ban.* The case here supposed is even more appalling than the former one, for it is the inhabitants of a whole city who, with all that they have, are to be destroyed. Yet, as it is certain that godly persons, dreading the execution of this sentence, would leave this city as soon as they found out what was going on—being very possibly the bearers of the tidings to others—the curse would practically take effect only on those who were in league with the idolaters. Searching investigation was to precede the infliction of doom (ver. 14).

I. EVIL-DISPOSED PERSONS CAN DO MUCH HARM. A few men—"children of Belial"—perhaps, at first, but one or two, succeed in seducing, and ultimately in destroying, a whole city. Their cancerous influence speedily infected the mass. Like fire breaking out in a little corner of a building, it soon involved the whole place in ruin. "One sinner destroyeth much good" (Eccles. ix. 18). "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33). Evil is not to be thought lightly of, because at first confined to a few individuals, and circumscribed in its range of operations. It will spread faster than good.

II. THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF EACH CITY IS OF INTEREST TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY. Disease in one part of the social organism will speedily communicate itself to the other parts.

III. IMMEDIATE ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN TO REDUCE EVIL IN ITS CHOSEN SEATS. No longer, indeed, with carnal weapons. We have no warrant to proceed by fire and sword. A better way is open to us of reducing evil than by judicial slaughter. The wickedness of a city is doubtless a token of God's wrath resting upon it. If it repent not, his judgments will fall upon it with all the old severity. But it does not lie with us to give effect to these judgments; God keeps them in his own hand. Our work, meanwhile, is the happier one of seeking the reduction of evil by spiritual means—by reasoning, by persuasion, by preaching of the truth, by substituting good influences for bad ones. These weapons are adequate to the work for which they are given, and ought to be plied to the utmost. Places differ in spiritual character. There are those of which it may be said—as of Pergamos, "where Satan's seat is" (Rev. ii. 13)—that in them evil has a kind of stronghold. Against these, by preference, the assaults of God's servants should be directed. The apostles chose for their attacks the leading centres of pagan influence. One stronghold gained is worth a dozen outposts.—J. O.

Vers. 1—18.—*Idolatry to be treated as a capital crime.* This chapter relates to the Israelites themselves. As the government was a theocracy, idolatry in any form was *treason* against the Divine King, and justly punishable with death. The previous chapter (vers. 29—32) affords timely warning against sinful curiosity about heathen practices; and in this chapter the people are warned against all who would tempt them towards idolatry. The three cases mentioned are worthy of separate study.

I. THE FALSE PROPHET, WITH HIS SIGNS AND WONDERS. Moses admits the possibility of signs and wonders in the interests of idolatry. This raises the whole question of *miracles.* These may be "helps to faith," or they may be "a trial of faith."[1] It is evidently in the latter light that they are to be regarded when the wonder-worker wishes to lead them to idolatry. The horror of idolatry is really to fortify them against the miracle, so that, though it may try their faith, it will not overcome it. A miracle in itself, consequently, is not decisive, but must be taken along with the doctrine it proposes to support. God allows the miracle to be wrought by the false prophet to prove his people, "to know whether they love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul" (ver. 3).

The false prophet is to be taken, as a criminal convicted of a capital offence, and put to death. He has acted a traitor's part among God's subjects, and must suffer a traitor's doom. By this terrible judgment does God stamp out all tendency to idolatry.

II. THE NEAR RELATIVE AS A SEDUCER TO IDOLATRY. The false prophet might fail, and a near relative succeed. The public miracle, with its meretricious ostentation, might be withstood, while the unostentatious and secret insinuation of a near relative might prevail. Hence the instruction in these verses, 6—11, as to how the idol-loving relative is to be treated. Not only is the insinuation to be put away, but the person making it, no matter how nearly related, is to be treated as a public criminal, and put to death. All the sympathy which blood relationship ensures is to be set aside before this crime of appalling magnitude, and the relative is to cast the first stone at the apostate, the execution being completed by "the hand of all the people."

III. THE APOSTACY OF A CITY. In this collective case, after a careful investigation, the utter destruction of the city is to be carried out, the idolatrous inhabitants are to be put to death, with all their cattle, their property burnt with fire, and the city to be never afterwards rebuilt (vers. 12—18). The idolatry, in propagating itself, must be stamped out even more carefully than in the individual cases of apostacy already mentioned. The sin must not be tolerated in the theocracy.

IV. WE SHOULD SURELY LEARN FROM THIS HOW HEINOUS EVERY KIND OF IDOLATRY IS TO THE MOST HIGH. We may be idolaters through covetousness (Col. iii. 5), through ambition, through any disposition to look for succour to things or persons instead of to God. It may be as needful for us to be exhorted against this sin, as it was for those to whom John in his Epistle wrote, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 21). The temptation is strong to live by sense and sight instead of by faith.

It will help us in withstanding temptation to remember how heinous the sin is! It is not less a sin because now idolaters are not taken out to a public place and executed. We deserve execution, though we do not receive it. For idolatry is high treason against God. When we trust, *e.g.* in money or in men, so as to attribute to them the powers belonging really to God, we rob him of his rights and bestow them upon others. If this was a capital offence in the Mosaic times, it is no less offensive to the Lord now. He is changeless in his judgments, and so must regard the iniquity as in the same serious light as ever. In such circumstances it surely becomes us—

1. *To humble ourselves most penitently before God because of our idolatries.* We have been guilty of greater crimes than we suspected, and consequently should entertain the deepest possible penitence.

2. *We should carefully abstain from all tendencies to an idolatrous spirit.* "Keep yourselves from idols," says John. It shows how much is in our own power. We can abstain from much idolatry, if we are only watchful. In loyalty to God, out of respect for his honour and glory, we ought to keep ourselves in a trustful, humble attitude

[1] Cf. Canon Mozley, 'On Miracles,' 2nd edit., p. 26; also Taylor's 'The Miracles: Helps to Faith, not Hindrances.'

towards him, and reject every temptation to transfer our allegiance. We shall thus find ourselves going forward steadily in the exercise of spiritual purity and power.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—18.—*God's executioners upon idolaters.* No respecter of persons is God. The sin of all sins is idolatry, and such overt rebels against the supreme God shall be summarily punished, whether they be Amorites or Hebrews. As a rule, complete retribution is reserved for the future state; the full effect of evil ways is not seen in this life. Yet there are sins so flagrant—so mischievous in their present influence, that God employs his agents, personal or impersonal, to execute his verdicts promptly and manifestly. It is not that infinite justice is not content to wait; it is that God is so solicitous for the good of the human race, that he puts forth his hand to arrest the moral pestilence. In this chapter we learn—

I. THAT GOD HAD ASSURED ISRAEL OF HIS UNITY, SUPREMACY, AND GOODNESS. In that early age men had not indulged in intellectual speculation touching the existence of a God. Mind had not yet formulated its proofs, nor its disproofs. The tendency of depraved tastes and instincts was practically to ignore a spiritual Deity, and to put a rash confidence in inferior beings or in intermediate agents. The demonstrations which God gave of his supremacy, to Israel in Egypt, were demonstrations addressed to their practical experience. They had been bondmen. They had long endured a crushing oppression. They were reduced to a condition of abject and dependent weakness. By *whom* had they been rescued from Pharaoh's giant grasp? By whom? Not by any angelic champion, nor by any of the idols of the earth! Obviously, and without question, they had been recovered to freedom and to national life by the arm of Jehovah and by none other! Their new condition was the manifest proof that *God* reigned, and that he had gloriously triumphed. The unity and supremacy of the true God was established upon a solid basis. This cardinal truth shone upon the nation with the clear radiance of noon day. If anything was known *this* was known, that Jehovah was absolute Monarch—God of gods and Lord of lords. Of this grand truth Israel was a witness to all the nations of the earth.

II. THAT ISRAEL'S FAITH IN GOD WAS SOMETIMES PUT TO SEVERE TESTS BY THE PRETEXTS OF DIVINERS. The dream of fanatics would *at times* be verified. The arts of necromancers would *sometimes* succeed. Base motives of gain and renown would keep these pursuits alive. The specious successes *may* have been fortunate coincidences. They *may* have been specially permitted by God for wise and practical purposes. They served as a test for the faith of Israel. Faith never put to the proof would soon lose its tone and fibre. Granted that the prediction of a soothsayer found fulfilment, was this sufficient ground for sundering their loyalty to Jehovah?—any ground for recognizing the power of an idol-god? Granted that something might be said on behalf of intermediate intelligencies—agents and servants of the Most High—did this warrant their offering to *such*, honours which were the prerogative of Jehovah alone? Had not Jehovah *alone* redeemed them from Egyptian misery, and led them through the wilderness? And did not every impulse of gratitude, and every principle of reason, require that Jehovah alone should be worshipped? These artifices of soothsayers would serve to test their faith, and (if faith was sound) to brace and strengthen it. For this they should have rejoiced greatly, that the "trial of their faith, more precious far than gold, though it were tried by fire, might appear unto praise and honour and glory."

III. THAT GOD HAD APPOINTED ISRAEL TO BE HIS EXECUTIONER OF ALL IDOLATERS. The only reasonable ground on which the Hebrews could vindicate their possession of Canaan was, that the foul idolatries of the Canaanites had made them a pest and a curse upon the globe. And if now the conquerors should yield to the habits and vices of the conquered, reason and right would require that they likewise should be displaced. The Nemesis of extermination had fallen upon the dwellers in Canaan, not because they were Canaanites, but because they were *idolaters*. Abraham had been called out of Charran, and received the promise of Canaan, that he might be a living and loyal witness for God. And the special mission of Abraham's posterity was to stamp out idolatry, and to lift high the bannor of Jehovah. To do this effectually, no connivance with the cursed

thing must be tolerated. If the luminous agent employed to shed light makes alliance with the element of darkness, its mission is terminated: it is good for nothing. Hence, in order that the Hebrews might keep alive the lamp of heavenly truth, they must burn pure oil. The evil growth must be nipped in the bud. The dread disease must be checked at its very first symptom. If they are to continue "the sacramental host of God's elect," no secret foe must be concealed in the camp. The decree had gone forth, "Idolatry shall cease!" and Israel had been commissioned to execute that decree.

IV. THAT ISRAEL'S LOYALTY TO GOD REQUIRED THE SUBORDINATION OF ALL OTHER TIES AND CLAIMS. The ligaments of blood relationship are strong—dear as very life. The ties of friendship and of conjugal love are tender and sacred. No language can adequately set them forth. Yet God has a prior claim. His will forestalls every other obligation. The love which is due to him overleaps every boundary—absorbs every other affection. "With *all* the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," *that* love to him, if adequate, must be. And this superior and incomparable obligation of love will sometimes necessitate most painful self-denial—the amputation of a right hand, the sacrifice of a right eye. The demand made upon the Jews, to slay a wife or child, if addicted to idolatry, was a demand replete with awful severity; yet no one can question its righteousness. And if so be the will of God is clearly understood, natural inclination must yield to dutiful obedience. Said the immaculate Son, "I do always the things that please *him*."

V. THAT THE HABIT OF IDOLATRY MUST BE ROOTED OUT, THOUGH IT MAY REQUIRE THE MOST DRASTIC MEASURES. 1. *Searching investigation was first required* (ver. 14). They were to inquire—to inquire "*diligently*"—to search into the very heart of the matter. It would be a crime—yea, a murder—if they should act judicially on mere rumour or through any evil bias. The very utmost endeavours to reach the facts were required in the interests of truth and humanity. Certainty of the fact must precede any sentence of destruction. 2. *The perilous effects of evil influence* (ver. 13). Certain men of Belial can draw away into rebellion the inhabitants of a whole city. Some men of strong will and clever ingenuity are well adapted to lead their fellows; and men of weak judgment readily follow. Both classes err. Men of superior parts are highly responsible to use their powers as God-entrusted talents; and those possessing lesser capacity are bound to examine for themselves, and to suspend action until judgment is convinced. 3. *Where idolatry was clearly proved, the most complete punishment was exacted.* The whole Hebrew nation were at once converted into soldiers, and were summoned to assail that miscreant city. The body politic was to gather up into a point all its righteous strength, and expel that foreign evil from its midst. No mercy was to be shown; no life was to be spared. Not a lamb in the flock was to escape; not an ounce of spoil was to be gathered. The executors of God's vengeance must be above all suspicion of selfish and sordid interest. No material gain must accrue to them. The charred and blackened ruins of *that* city were to be a monument for ever of the righteous severity of Jehovah.

VI. THAT THE DESIGN OF PUNISHMENT IS THE MORAL GOOD OF SURVIVORS. (Vers. 5, 11, 17.) The effect anticipated was *this*, "All Israel shall hear, and fear, and do no more any such wickedness." On God's side the result would be that he would "turn and show them mercy, and multiply" their numbers. Very clearly was it announced that this judicial action was the action of God—that righteous and obedient Hebrews were the officers of Jehovah. In view of the magnificent results upon the whole nation, yea, upon the world, this grave disaster might be patiently endured. To spare the lives of these rebels, and yet to retain the favour of Jehovah, was a sheer impossibility. A severe choice was demanded. The remedy was painful, but the effect anticipated was precious. The smile of God, and the moral elevation of the nation, were the practical fruits. In these benign results, the survivors would have great occasion for grateful joy. The destruction of sinners is a beacon-light, to which *we* also should take heed.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

HEATHEN CUSTOMS OF MOURNING TO BE AVOIDED. NO ABOMINABLE THING TO BE EATEN. MEATS CLEAN AND UNCLEAN. TITHES.

Vers. 1—21.—Israel, as the people of God, chosen by him to be his children by adoption, must not only abstain from idolatry, but also avoid all heathenish usages and practices, such as those connected with mourning for the dead, and those pertaining to the use of food.

Ver. 1.—**Ye are the children of Jehovah your God** (cf. Exod. iv. 22, etc.). As his children, it behoved them to avoid all that would be offensive to him or indicate distrust in him. **Ye shall not cut yourselves**, etc. (cf. Lev. xix. 28; xxi. 5; Jer. xvi. 6; xlviii. 36, 37; Ezek. vii. 18; xxvii. 31). ("Ex hac opinione sunt illa varia et detestabilia genera lugendi, pædores, muliebres lacerationes genarum, pectoris, feminum, capitis percussiones." Cicero, 'Tusc. Quæst.,' iii. 26; see also 'De Legibus,' ii. 25.)

Ver. 2.—(Cf. ch. vii. 6.) The reason assigned here is an emphatic expansion of the statement in ver. 1.

Ver. 3.—**Any abominable thing.** Any abomination, *i.e.* anything which is an abomination to the Lord, having been by him pronounced unclean and forbidden; "anything which I have put far away from you (*i.e.* made to be abominable to you)" (Targum Jonath.). "Every creature of God is good," and "there is nothing unclean of itself" (1 Tim. iv. 4; Rom. xiv. 14); "but by the ordinance of God, certain creatures, meats, and drinks were made unclean to the Jews, . . . and this taught them holiness in abstaining from the impure communion with the wicked" (Ainsworth).

Vers. 4—20.—The regulations here concerning food, and the animals the use of which is forbidden, are substantially the same as in Lev. ii. There are, however, some differences between the two accounts which may be noticed. 1. In Deuteronomy, the mammals which may be used for food are severally specified as well as described by the general characteristic of the class; in Leviticus, only the latter description is given. 2. In the list of fowls which may not be eaten, the *ra'ah* (glede) is mentioned in Deuteronomy, but not in Leviticus; and the bird which in the one is called *da'ah*, is in the other called *dayyah* (vulture). 3. The class of reptiles which is carefully described in Leviticus is wholly omitted in Deuteronomy. 4. Winged insects are forbidden without exception in Deuteronomy; in Leviticus, the locust and certain other insects of the same kind are excepted. 5. Some slight differences in the order of enumeration appear.

Ver. 5.—**The hart**; *ayyâl* (אַיָּל), probably *the fallow deer*, or *deer* generally. **The roebuck**; *tsebi* (צְבִי), *the gazelle* (*Gazella Arabica*). **The fallow deer**; *yachmûr* (יַחְמוּר), *the roebuck*. **The wild goat**; *akko* (אַקּוֹ), *the ibex*. **The pygarg**; *dishón* (דִּישׁוֹן), some kind of antelope, probably the *Gazella Dorcas*. **The wild ox**; *the'o* (תְּאוֹ), probably the *bubale*, or *wild cow* of the Arabs (*Alcephalus bubalis*), a species of antelope. **The chamois**; *zamer* (זָמֶר), probably *the wild sheep* (*Ovis Tragelaphus*.

Ver. 13.—**The glede**; *ra'ah* (רָאָה). This word occurs only here, and it is supposed by some that, by an error of the copyist, substituting ר for ד, it has come instead of דָּאָה, as used in Lev. xi. 14. But it is more probable, as above suggested, that the *da'ah* of Leviticus is represented by the *dayyah* of Deuteronomy, and that consequently the reading *ra'ah* should be retained. This word, derived from רָאָה, to see, to look, would appropriately designate a bird of keen sight, one of the hawk species. The bird intended may be a buzzard, of which there are now several kinds in Palestine.

Ver. 21.—(Cf. Lev. xvii. 15; Exod. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26.) **The stranger that is in thy gates.** "The uncircumcised stranger that is in thy cities" (Targum), *i.e.* "a heathen who takes upon him that he will serve no idol, with the residue of the commandments which were commanded to the sons of Noah, but is not circumcised nor baptized (Maimonides, 'Issure Biah,' ch. xiv. § 7)" (Ainsworth). **Alien**; a foreigner, one not resident in the land of Israel.

Vers. 22—29.—A tithing of each year's produce of the cultivated ground was to be made; and this tithe was to be brought to the place which the Lord should choose, as also the firstling of the herds and flocks; and there a sacrificial meal was to be partaken of, that Israel might learn to fear Jehovah their God always, reverencing him as their Ruler, and rejoicing in him as the Giver of all good.

Ver. 22.—**Thy seed.** "Seed" here refers

to plants as well as what is raised from seed (cf. Jer. ii. 21; Ezek. xvii. 5, 6). The reference is to the second or festival tithe which was exclusively of vegetables.

Ver. 24.—In the land of Canaan, as the people would be dispersed over a wide tract, it might happen that the place which the Lord should choose was at such a distance from the usual residence of many that to observe this injunction would be to them very difficult, if not impossible. To meet this, therefore, it was enacted that the tithe might be commuted into money, and with this the things required for the sacrificial meals at the sanctuary might be purchased.

Ver. 26.—**Strong drink**; *shêcar* (שֵׁכָר). "Any drink which can inebriate, whether that is made from grain, or the juice of apples, or when honey is boiled into a sweet and barbarous potion, or the fruit of the palm [dates], is expressed into liquor, and the duller water is coloured by the prepared fruits" (Jerome, 'De Vit. Cler.').

Vers. 28, 29.—Every third year the whole tithe of the year's produce was to be set apart, not to be brought to the sanctuary to be eaten before the Lord, but as a portion in their towns for the Levite, the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless. **The end of three years**; *i.e.* as the third year expired, consequently, in the last year of the triennium (ch. xxvi. 12); just as "the end of seven years" means each seventh year (ch. xv. 1; xxxi. 10; Jer. xxxiv. 14). This was not an additional tithe, but the former differently applied; the tithe of the first and second years was to be eaten before the Lord at the sanctuary; the tithe of the third year was for the poor and needy.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The people of God when death is in the home.* If God chose out a people for himself, with the view of planting in the world a new and nobler faith, it is no wonder if he would have the people superadd to that a new and higher life. But if the life is to be higher in any sense which could be acceptable to Jehovah, it must be one based on the new faith and manifesting itself to others in a new deportment, *i.e.* it must be both an outer and inner life. But if the people are just emerging from a semi-barbaric condition, it is not at all improbable that they may need to be dealt with as we deal with children. We give them technical rules first, and they have to learn reasons afterwards. Possibly, as the child grows up and gets beyond the rules which bound him once, he may smile at them, or rather at the childishness which needed them in earlier years; while at the same time he would, or at any rate he should, feel thankful to those who stooped to teach him *so that he could understand them.*

In this chapter, we have several illustrations of God's thus dealing with Israel. We now take the one in the first two verses. It is well known that heathen nations were very violent in their shows of grief over their dead, tearing the hair, cutting the face, beating the breast, etc., while the cutting of the flesh was likewise submitted to in honour of their gods (see Exposition, *in loc.*). Now, it was of vast importance to give Israel to understand how *entirely* they were to be the Lord's, how fully he was theirs, and how the blest mutual relation changed the very aspect of that frequent and certain family sorrow—death. We have not here any full opening up of that, but there is scarcely any room to doubt that it formed a very important part of Hebrew teaching; for the fact that all these heathen rites and orgies over the dead were entirely forbidden would be sure to lead many, especially of the young, to ask for the reason of such prohibition. And when we remember how careful was the preparation for meeting the inquisitiveness of childhood in other matters, we cannot imagine that this was an exception to the general rule. The prohibition of old customs would clear the way for teaching a new doctrine. And, as applied to Israel of old, the following six positions may be asserted and maintained. 1. They were to be a separate people to the Lord their God, not only in all the varied relations of life, but also in the presence of death. 2. Old customs of surrounding nations, at the death of their friends, were to be done away, as a sign of the different meaning and aspect of death, to the people of the Lord. 3. This changed aspect of death followed from their blessed relationship to God, and from God's blessed relationship to them. 4. This relationship involved and assured Israel of the continued life of their holy dead in God. Surely it was scarcely possible for them to think of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, as extinct. True, the light on the unseen life in the grave was dim, and the gloom of the grave was deep. But still, it was very

far from having about it the hopelessness which marked the heathen world. 5. For, stretching far away in the future, there was the hope of a resurrection at the last day. This was involved in God's words to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham," etc. Many, perhaps the mass, of the people might not see that. But our Lord assures us that the doctrine is wrapped up there. 6. Consequently, there was no reason to justify a hapless, hopeless wail in the presence of death. Whence our subject for meditation is suggested to us—

THERE OUGHT TO BE A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD'S PEOPLE AND OTHERS IN THE PRESENCE OF DEATH. In one sense, indeed, there is none; or, at least, none which can be discerned. One event cometh alike to all, even to the righteous and the wicked, and the house of the good man may be as frequently darkened by "the shadow of death" as that of another who fears not God. But still, when death does come, there may well be a very wide difference between those who are the children of God and those who are not, especially when the departed one is a member of "the whole family in heaven and on earth" (and such cases only do we note in this Homily). When the Christian expositor is opening up the principle contained in these verses, he can do so from much higher vantage-ground than one who confines himself to the Old Testament teaching. Some such main lines of thought as the following will be the Christian unfolding of the principles so long ago laid down. 1. There is a blessed relationship between God and his people. It is initiated in the new birth by the Holy Ghost. Those thus born anew are children of God—not merely under a national covenant, as sharing a common privilege, but as brought into a personal covenant through the impartation of a new life. The mark of this new birth is the saving reception of Christ by faith, and the effect of it is to transfer men from the region of darkness to that of light, "from the power of Satan unto God," and from being subjects of a kingdom, to their being citizens in God's city and sons in God's family—"fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God." 2. This blessed relationship is sealed and made sure by "the blood of the everlasting covenant." They are redeemed with the "precious blood of Christ." 3. It is ratified by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the First-born out of the dead, and has "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." 4. This blessed relation continues undisturbed by the accident of death. "Christ died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him;" "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's;" "Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord of the dead and of the living." 5. The resurrection of Christ's own will as surely follow his as the harvest follows the firstfruits. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the Firstfruits of them that slept." 6. The distinctive features of the resurrection of the body are laid down for us by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. xv. Of these there are four. (1) That the body, as the seed, *must* be buried before it can rise again. (2) That the body sown is *not* the body that shall be. (3) That to every seed there is its own body. (4) That the precise relation or connection between the body that is sown and the body that will be raised is a secret in the mind of God. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him." These things we know: we know no more. If we let our affirmations go beyond the statements of Scripture, we shall plunge ourselves into inextricable difficulties, and we shall be even risking the credit of Scripture, since many will think that, in disposing of *our* affirmations, they demolish the teaching of the Book. In confining ourselves to the four points named by Paul in his great argument, we shall be remaining on ground that will ever be firm, and that can never be invaded. No physical science can affirm or deny either one or the other. There never lived, there never will live, the man who on scientific grounds can weaken either of them. Our holy and glorious faith is beyond such reach. 7. Therefore the reason for avoiding the hopeless sorrow of the pagan world is even vastly deeper and stronger than it was under Moses. If Israel might not sorrow as those without hope when they had the assurance, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," how much less should we, when earth has seen the Firstfruits of the great resurrection from the dead! How much light is thrown by Christ's grace and love into the portals of the grave, and what a hallowed and hallowing calm may pervade the chamber of death if our Lord is with us there! Yea, there is no real death to the believer. "Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death." He hath said, "If a man keep my sayings, he shall never taste of death." Then we may well bless our God that, amid the changing

scenes of earth, we stand on ground which can never be shaken. There ariseth light in the darkness.

"With joy we tell the scoffing age,
He that was dead has left his tomb;
He lives above their utmost rage,
And we are waiting till he come."

Vers. 3—20.—*The people of God at their own table.* However far these minute regulations may seem at first from being appropriate themes for homiletic teaching, a closer study of them may show that they contain an amount of instruction which we could ill afford to lose. There are two principles, not unfrequently noted, that should be brought to bear on this and other chapters which contain regulations that may be entirely unneeded now. One is, that associations of evil may make a custom prejudicial which is in itself harmless; another, that great reasons underlying small actions may lift up action to the height of the reason which prompted it. If, indeed, there should be some of these minute instructions for which we *now* see no reason, it would be no great tax on one's understanding, were we asked to give credit to so great a legislator as Moses for having had a good reason for them, although it may not be in force at the present time. Still, we are not altogether in the dark as to some reasons which might then be of great weight for the observance of the distinction between clean and unclean meats. Trapp suggests as reasons: (1) that they might recognize God's hand in the supply, and God's law in the use, of their meats; (2) that there might be a distinction between them and other peoples: (3) that they might be taught to study purity. Dr. Jameson suggests also sanitary reasons. We would venture to include these, with others, under seven heads. 1. The Israelites were the children of the Lord their God, and that special relationship was to show itself in the sober, pure, and devout regulation of the several customs at the family table. 2. There was to be a separation between them and other nations; and a more effective barrier to intercourse could scarcely be found than one which made association at the same table all but impossible. 3. They were to learn that even the common business of eating was to be governed by holy laws. 4. Thus, by minute obedience to precept, they were to be indoctrinated into the principles of holiness. 5. Their social board was to be a standing protest against idolatrous customs; and also, 6. A perpetual rebuke of impurity and of any infringement of sanitary law. Let no one, then, think of this distinction between clean and unclean meats as a trifling one. *Nothing is trifling which helps on the education of souls for God.* 7. When, moreover, we glance at the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we cannot but regard these regulations as also symbolic. This distinction in the lower orders of creation between clean and unclean, symbolized the difference between Israel and the nations from whom they were to dissociate themselves. The mass of the people may not have comprehended this. They were gradually led to understand doctrine by way of obedience to precept.

But, it may be asked, "What has all this to do with Christians now?" We reply, "Little or nothing, so far as these special details are concerned, but much every way, so far as we have to do with the principles which underlie these details." That so far as details go, the Law is done away, is understood. The symbolic meaning is no longer in force, hence the symbol is needed no longer. From the yoke of these forms we are emancipated (cf. Acts x.; 1 Cor. x. 24—31; Rom. xiv.; 1 Tim. iv. 3—5). But still, there is an analogy, of which it would ill become us to lose sight, between the position of Israel then, and the duty of God's Israel now. Supposing now we were asked, "In what way does the gospel teach us the duty of God's people at their own family table?" we might suggest six or seven consecutive lines of thought.

I. The Christian is to be, in spirit, as distinct from the world as Israel was from the nations round about. It is not intended by this that, in the ordinary walks of life, a Christian may not act with ungodly men; for in such a case, as Paul teaches, he must needs go out of the world to be free from them (cf. 1 Cor. v.). But in his own voluntary association, he is not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers;" the gospel mandate is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing."

II. The Christian, being a redeemed man, by the fact of that redemption is claimed for Christ alone. "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's." "We are the Lord's." Our body, soul, and spirit are entirely his. The claim of Jesus Christ over us is that he shall govern the whole of us, always and everywhere.

III. Hence, loyalty to Christ, and the conservation of our whole life for him, is to regulate every detail of our life, work, walk, and conversation. So the apostle shows in Rom. xiv. that, *e.g.* in the tiny matter of "eating herbs," the Lordship of Christ is to be the supreme regulator of religious conviction.

IV. Nowhere is this scrupulousness in loyalty to be more exact than in the regulation of our own table. It is at their own board that some strive to make the greatest display, or to pamper their bodies with a superabundance of luxuries. But both "the lust of the flesh" and "the pride of life" are declared to be "not of the Father, but of the world." Hence they can have no place in a consistent believer's home life.

V. A Christian man is bound, not only for Christ's sake, but for his family's sake, to cultivate only such associations as will help to make or maintain the purity, piety, and Christian elevation of his home. If he seeks the associations of the wealthy or great, regardless of their religious views or habits, he is exposing his own consistency and his children's weal to very serious risk.

VI. The entire concern of eating and drinking is to be regulated by Christian principle. No doubt with many, without thinking on the matter, sound feeling and common sense keep them from going very far wrong, and perhaps even from going wrong at all. Still, the surest way of keeping right in little things is to recognize fully and clearly the true and proper motive which should impel, even in the trivialities of life.

VII. So also it may be that high and holy principle may lead a believer, without laying down a hard-and-fast line for all, to practise abstinence from this or that, out of regard to the well-being of others, or to practise seasons of occasional fasting when preparing for special service (cf. Matt. xvii. 21; Rom. xiv. 21; 1 Cor. viii. 13).

VIII. There is one grand rule given by the Apostle Paul, covering the whole ground, appropriate to all occasions (1 Cor. x. 31). On referring to that verse, its force will be seen to be this: "You will find many occasions in your walks through life in which it may not at first be clearly manifest to you what course you should adopt. I cannot lay down separate rules for every possible case. Take this as a comprehensive, sufficient rule, at all times, and everywhere, 'Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'" And if we resolve to do only that which will most honour God, and seek grace from above to carry out our resolve, we cannot go far wrong. We shall not be unwise, but shall "prove what the will of the Lord is." We shall be "sincere and without offence till the day of Christ," to the glory of our Lord and Saviour.

Vers. 22—29.—*A threefold cord; or, the triple use of property.* These details which so frequently occur respecting the use of property, specially of that which is possessed or gained in the form of produce, may seem burdensome. Probably, to us, they would be so, but it is nevertheless a topic of perpetual interest for our day, to see how tenderly and lovingly the Great Father trained his people, by such minute regulations as were needful for them, to the practice and perception of principles which were to be ultimately the possession of the world—principles which would be a perpetual spring of holy and benevolent gladness. We say, advisedly, "practice and perception of principles," rather than "perception and practice." For though it may seem as if perception must come first, yea, though indeed it is logically prior to practice, yet when a race tainted with heathen customs and tendencies has to be educated out of them, the sure mode of effecting this is by giving them rules to be put into practice, as a leverage to raise them to value the principles which were the basis of those rules. Now in the paragraph before us we have "a threefold cord" of duty with regard to the religious use of the produce of the field. The question (with which the Exposition has dealt) whether the third-named tithe was actually such, or simply a special application of the second, does not affect the homiletic treatment of the paragraph before us. There is here indicated to us a triple use which was to be made of the produce of the

land. The enactment, however, is so framed as to be an appeal to the religion and devotion of the people; it is not a mere civil statute, enjoining that, if such devotement is not made, it is to be recoverable under pains and penalties. If a man failed in his duty in these respects, there was no compulsory enforcement thereof. It was a sin before the Lord.

I. THE FIRST APPLICATION OF PRODUCE WAS FOR GOD'S SERVICE. It is taken for granted here that this was well understood (cf. Lev. xxvii. 30). Hence we find the general precept in Prov. iii., "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." There was to be a thankful recognition of God as the Author of all their mercies, without whose care and bounty no land would yield its supply; while there was also to be a recognition of themselves as devoted to the Lord, and that so completely and entirely, that the maintenance of his Name, honour, worship, and ordinances among them, was to be their first and chief concern. This two-fold recognition was to find corresponding practice in the offering of the first tenth of their produce for God. Now we have, under the New Testament, no such detailed precepts. The appeal of apostles there is rather to honour, gratitude, love; while for the most part they take for granted that these emotions will prompt to a worthy course. Take, *e.g.* such an exhortation as this, "See that ye abound in this grace also, . . . for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. If love to Christ is maintained in due fervour, it will prompt to corresponding devotion; and if by such constraining devotion, offerings to and for God are regulated, there will be no need, as indeed no one now has the right, to tell any man how much he ought to give to God. When a man carries out in all respects the precept, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness," that will certainly include and ensure his honouring the Lord with his substance. The faith was "once delivered to the saints," *i.e.* once for all, that they might guard and honour it, and also diffuse it through the world, and, without much detailed injunction, it is assumed that believers will be ready to devote themselves, heart and soul, to the spread of their Master's honour.

II. A SECOND RELIGIOUS APPLICATION THEREOF WAS TO FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD USE. (Vers. 22—27.) When Israel should go up to the place the Lord their God should choose, they would go up to religious sacrifice and service. Hence all their family meals, *then and there*, would be baptized with the religious spirit. So all-pervading would be the presence of, and so sure the fellowship with, the Lord their God, that their family feasts on such occasions would be regarded as "eating before the Lord their God." And by thus eating before the Lord on these special occasions, they would learn to hallow home joys on every occasion. So ver. 23 intimates: "that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always." Considerable latitude was allowed them according to their distance from the place of meeting, etc.; they might first turn the produce into money, and then the money into provision, and so on. And they might purchase what they desired. For they were not slaves, but free men. They were the loved and happy people of the Lord, and as such were to rejoice before him in their family feasts, at their sacred festivals, that from the impulses of joy and gladness so sanctified then, they might come to realize how near God was to them, and how he would have them glory in him as theirs all the year round. *It is not possible to overrate the value of this, even now.* By a truly religious and devout man all the minor affairs of life are lifted up into the religious region. And he is not only at liberty to enjoy his possessions, when he has sanctified the firstfruits for God, but he *ought* so to enjoy them. God "hath given us all things richly to enjoy." And when a godly man gathers his family around him at his table, with the table abounding in ample provision, he may then joyfully "eat before the Lord his God," in the full assurance that such enjoyment is a part of the Divine intent, and that the love and care of God may and do put their own seal of hallowed and hallowing mirth upon the use of common things.

III. A THIRD RELIGIOUS APPLICATION OF PRODUCE WAS FOR THE USE AND ENJOYMENT OF OTHERS. (Vers. 28, 29.) Whether this special use which was enjoined for every third year involved the setting apart a third tithe, or whether it was a triennial application of the second, is a point the discussion of which belongs to others. But either way, the principle, we conceive, is the same, which we understand to be this, "Let a man be a *man* all round." God first, then home, then his neighbours. Such is to be the order of his action. A special care was to be taken of the Levite (who, by the

way, was to be thought of every year), as having charge of religious arrangements, but, besides these, how wide a scope is here opened up to a man's kindness and generosity! "The stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, . . . shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied." Is this an instance of *the hardness of Judaism?* They do not understand it who speak thus of it. Its spirit was kindness itself; for here the showing of goodness and benevolence to the poor and the needy is made a part of their religion. Need we ask the question whether Christianity has dropped this out? Details may change; principles, never! The Apostle James tells that the New Testament ritual is, "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Let us ask, in conclusion, *Which part of this threefold cord could be broken without serious injury?* For we see here that Judaism, in this triple direction of duty, does but recognize the triple relations of human life. We are related first and foremost to our God, to whom our supreme allegiance is due. We are related next to our home, to our families and households, whose interests and happiness it is our first earthly business to promote; and then to our fellow-citizens, to whom we are bound to do good, where we can and when we can. Finally, by way of ensuring the right discharge of other duties, special care is taken to guide Israel in regard to the right use of property. There is singular, yea, superhuman wisdom in this. Where a man's getting and giving are right, he is not likely to be far wrong in anything. Wisdom in adding to, and giving from, the contents of the purse, is a fair guarantee of wisdom in other directions. "The love of money is a root of all evil," and by so much as love of money tends to deteriorate character, by so much will its right use tend to elevate it. And the lifting up of character is the surest sign of the blessing promised (ver. 29)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Self-respect in mourning.* Mourning customs have significance, as testifying to the ideas of God, of human worth, and of immortality, held by those who practise them. Those here forbidden were degrading in their own nature, and embodied the false idea that God is pleased with the self-inflicted miseries of his creatures. They are condemned—

I. As DISHONOURING TO THE CREATOR. God, the Creator of the body, cannot take delight in seeing it abused. This proposition seems self-evident. The idea above referred to, and which lies at the root of so many false religions, viz. that it is pleasing to the Deity to see his creatures torturing and defacing themselves, is a libel on the Divine character. The body is rather to be reverenced as one of the noblest of God's works. It is to be studiously preserved and cared for. Religion, with reason, enjoins, "Do thyself no harm" (Acts xvi. 28).

II. As INCONSISTENT WITH SELF-RESPECT. There is a propriety and decorum becoming in beings who possess reason. Wild and excessive grief, indicating the absence of power of self-control, lowers us beneath the dignity of rational existences. Neglect of the person, and, still more, wanton self-injury, in grief, betokens a like absence of proper self-respect. Least of all is such conduct excusable in those who claim the dignity of being God's children. They, of all others, ought to set an example of propriety and seemliness in behaviour. They are "an holy people," and must study to deport themselves worthily of their high calling. The priests of Baal (1 Kings xviii. 28) behaved like maniacs. David and Job behaved like religious men (2 Sam. xii. 20; Job i. 20, 21).

III. As IMPLYING THE ABSENCE OF RELIGIOUS CONSOLATIONS. The early Jews were not without these (Heb. xi. 13, 14). We in the Christian age have them still more abundantly. Therefore must we not sorrow "as those which have no hope" (1 Thess. iv. 13).—J. O.

Vers. 3—21.—*Clean and unclean.* The distinction of clean and unclean appears to have rested—

I. On NATURAL GROUNDS. It is based to some extent on natural preferences and repugnances—an index, often, to deeper correlations. We instinctively recognize

certain creatures to be unfit for food. The Law of Moses drew the line practically where men's unguided instincts have always drawn it. A lesson of *respect for natural order.* In diet, as in higher matters, we do well to follow Nature's guidance, avoiding violations of her laws, and refraining from obliterating her distinctions.

II. ON CEREMONIAL GROUNDS. The prohibition against eating of blood had consequences in the region of cleanness and uncleanness of food. All flesh-eating and blood-eating animals—all beasts and birds of prey—were of necessity excluded. Ceremonially unclean themselves, they could not be clean to those eating them.

III. ON SYMBOLIC GROUNDS. The symbolic traits observable in certain animals may have had to do with their rejection. We can see reason in the exclusion of creatures of cruel and rapacious habits, of those also in whose dispositions we trace a reflection of the human vices. It may be pushing the principle too far to seek recondite meanings in the chewing of the cud (meditation) and the dividing of the hoof (separation of walk), or in the possession of fins and scales in fishes (organs of advance and resistance). But a Law impregnated with symbolism could scarcely reckon as clean a filthy and repulsive creature like the sow. The accursed serpent, the treacherous fox, the ravenous jackal, even had they been suitable for food in other respects, could scarcely on this principle have been admitted. The reptile tribes generally, and all tribes of vermin, were similarly unclean by a kind of natural brand. A lesson of *seeing in the natural a symbol of the moral.* Nature is a symbolic lesson-book, daily open to our inspection.

The distinction once ordained, and invested with religious significance, observance of it became to the Jews a sign and test of holiness. The general lesson taught is that of *sanctification in the use of food.* Holiness, indeed, is to be carried into every sphere and act of life. Eating, however, is an act which, though on its animal side related to the grossest part of us, is yet, on its spiritual side, of serious religious import. It is the act by which we supply oil to the flame of life. It has to do with the maintenance of those vital functions by which we are enabled to glorify God in the body. There is thus a natural sacredness about food, and it is to be received and used in a sacred fashion. That it may be "clean" to us, it is to be "sanctified by the Word of God and prayer," being "received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. iv. 3—5). It is to be remembered, too, that in the sphere of the higher life, if not in the lower, clean and unclean are distinctions of abiding validity. Intellect, heart, spirit, etc.—the books we read, the company we keep, the principles we imbibe.—J. O.

Ver. 21.—*Seething a kid in its mother's milk.* This precept, several times repeated in the Law (Exod. xxiii. 16; xxxiv. 25), may be connected with magical superstitions, but it is equally probable that the act was condemned as an outrage on the connection naturally subsisting between parent and offspring. It is thus related to the commands forbidding the killing of a cow and a calf on the same day (Lev. xxii. 28), or the taking a bird with its young (ch. xxii. 6), and to the precepts enjoining a scrupulous regard for natural distinctions—not sowing a field with mingled seed, etc. (Lev. xix. 19). It suggests—

I. THE DUTY OF CHERISHING THE FINER INSTINCTS OF OUR NATURE. The act here forbidden could hardly be called cruelty, the kid being dead, but it was unnatural. It argued a blunted state of the sympathies. A finer instinct, alive to the tenderness of the relation between parent and offspring, would have disallowed it. It is beautiful to see the ancient Law inculcating this rare and delicate fineness of feeling—this considerateness and sympathy even for dead animals. The lesson is that everything is to be avoided which would tend to blunt our moral sensibilities. The act has its analogue in higher relations. Not unfrequently has the affection of a parent been used by the ingenuity of cruelty to inflict keener tortures on a child; or, conversely, a child has been betrayed into disclosures afterwards used to injure the parent.

II. THE DUTY OF CONSIDERATION IN DEALING WITH IRRATIONAL CREATURES. 1. It is right that irrational creatures should be treated kindly. And if the Law required that this delicate consideration should be shown towards dead animals, how much more does it require of us kindly treatment of them while living! 2. Our behaviour towards irrational creatures, as seen above, reacts upon ourselves. In certain cases, this is

readily perceived. Most people would shrink from the wanton mutilation of a dead animal, even in sport, and would admit the reactive effect of such an action in deadening humane instincts in him who did it. But it is the same with all cruelty and unfeelingness. Any action which, in human relationships, would be condemned as unsympathetic, will be found, if performed to animals, to have a blunting effect on the sensibilities of the agent. A man's dog is more to him than a brute. He is a friend. We can carry into our behaviour towards the irrational creatures many of the feelings which actuate us in our personal relations, and the more we do it, the better for ourselves.—J. O.

Vers. 22—29.—*The second tithe.* We adopt the usual view, that the lawgiver is here regulating the disposal of what, in later times, was called "the second tithe." The hypothesis that the book was written at a late date, when the gift of tithes to the Levites, prescribed in Numb. xviii., had fallen into disuse, is unsupported by evidence. The provision in Deuteronomy would have furnished no support worth speaking of to the enormous Levitical establishments of the post-Davidic period (1 Chron. xxiii.—xxvii.; 2 Chron. xxix.); nor are we prepared to concede, what is often so conveniently assumed, the non-authenticity of these sections of the chronicler. We learn—

I. THAT PIETY AND CHARITY ARE TO BE LIBERALLY PROVIDED FOR IN THE APPORTIONMENT OF INCOME. The tithes were to be faithfully and punctually set apart as a first charge upon the Jew's income. The second or vegetable tithe was appointed to be consumed in feasts at the sanctuary, or, in the third year, at home. A lesson is taught here as to the duty of liberal, systematic, and conscientious giving for religious and charitable purposes. Christians, it is true, are not under Law, but under grace. But it will scarcely be pleaded that on this account they are less bound to liberality than Jews were. The argument is all the other way: if this was done under Law, how much more ought to be done under the impulse of love to Christ! Unfortunately, the duty of systematic and proportionate giving is but little recognized. It would put many a Christian to the blush if he would sit down at the year's end, and (1) reckon up the sum of his year's givings to Christ, and (2) calculate its proportion to what he has thought himself at liberty to expend upon his own comforts and pleasures. Nor will there be improvement in this matter till giving for religious and charitable objects is made a point in conscience, and till a suitable proportion of income is set apart for this purpose in advance. That proportion is to be determined by the degree to which God has prospered us (1 Cor. xvi. 2). The ever-widening operations of the Church at home and abroad, the constantly multiplying claims of a wise Christian philanthropy, render liberal givings increasingly necessary.

II. THAT OBEDIENCE TO THE SPIRIT OF A LAW IS OF GREATER IMPORTANCE THAN OBEDIENCE TO ITS LETTER. (Vers. 24—26.) God is not a hard master—reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed (Matt. xxv. 4). He is tenderly considerate of the circumstances of his people. He asks no more from them than they are able to render. Where laws could not be kept in the letter, modifications were introduced which made obedience practicable. This is seen in the accommodation of the laws of sacrifice to the circumstances of the poor (Lev. v. 7, etc.), in the rules for commutation (Lev. xxvii.), in the relaxation of the law about eating flesh (ch. xii. 21), in this law of tithes. Gleaming through these changes, it is easy to detect the principle that the letter of an ordinance is in all cases subordinate to the spirit of obedience which manifests itself through it; and that, while obedience to the letter is required where possible, the will, in circumstances where it cannot be observed, will readily be accepted by Jehovah for the deed.

III. THAT PROVIDED RELIGIOUS MOTIVES PREDOMINATE, AND OTHER DUTIES ARE NOT NEGLECTED, THE ENJOYMENT OF WHAT WE HAVE IS PLEASING TO GOD. (Vers. 25, 26.) True religion is not ascetic. It does not frown our joy. It regulates, but does not seek to banish, the pleasures of the festive board, and the flow of the soul connected therewith (John ii. 1—12; 1 Cor. x. 27; 1 Tim. vi. 18). The sanctuary services were associated with feasts, in which, of course, religious motives were expected to predominate. The eating was "before the Lord," and the guests were invariably to include the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. This would give a high-toned character to the feast, and would preclude coarse debauchery. Festivities should be su

conducted that God's presence can be invoked, and his blessing asked on all that is said and done.

IV. THAT THE ENJOYMENT OF WHAT WE HAVE IS ENHANCED BY SHARING IT WITH OTHERS. (Ver. 29.) This is a truth recognized in all festivity. But the Law gave the truth a peculiar turn when it bade the Jew seek his guests among the classes who were most in need. The Saviour would have us recall our feasting to the like pattern (Luke xiv. 12—14). Each feast of the kind prescribed would be an invaluable education of the disinterested affections in their purest exercise. How far we have departed from this idea may be seen in the stiff, exclusive, and ceremonious, if often superb and stately, dinner-parties and public feasts of modern society. Which type of feast contributes most to happiness? And is it not in fulfilling the duties of a warm-hearted love that we are most entitled to expect blessing from our Maker (ver. 29)? When Jesus made *his* great supper, he acted on his own principle, and invited the "poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind," to come and sit down at it (Luke xiv. 21).—J. O.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Sorrow is to be in holy hopefulness.* After guarding them so carefully from all idolatry, Moses next charges the Israelites not to imitate the heathen nations by mutilating themselves or making themselves bald for the dead. The reason assigned is their consecration unto the Lord. There must have been, therefore, in these heathen practices something unholy expressed. Let us first consider what this was, and then proceed to the lessons in the prohibition.

I. WHAT WAS MEANT BY CUTTING ONE'S SELF AND MAKING ONE'S SELF BALD FOR THE DEAD? It implied manifestly some *post-mortem* merit and service. It was akin to the *sacrifices* which often have been presented in connection with death. It was the sacrifice of something short of life, but yet valuable. It was the sacrifice of sightliness, if not of beauty, in the interests of the dead. It implied that something could be done for the departed by those who remained, and which self-denying love gladly undertook.

Hence these practices brought out the hopelessness of sorrow as it exists in the heathen world, and the desire to propitiate offended Deity by sympathetic suffering and sacrifice.

II. THE PROHIBITION SUMMONED THE JEWS TO HOPEFUL SORROW. The dead were to be regarded as in the hands of God, and he was to be trusted with them absolutely. No *post-mortem* sacrifices were to be attempted, but the cases left with implicit confidence to the ever-living and gracious Father. "Prayers for the dead" and "Masses for the dead" but express the pitifulness of human hope, and the dread and doubt with which the dead are left in the hands of God. Israel was prohibited from any such infirmity.

III. THEY WERE EVEN TO REGARD THEMSELVES AS CONSECRATED TO THE LIVING GOD, AND CONSEQUENTLY NOT TO BE DESECRATED THROUGH MUTILATION FOR THE DEAD. The danger sometimes is for people to forget their dedication to God amid all the loneliness of their sorrow. The dead absorb attention. God has been removing "idols," but the idols have become, through death, more and more to them. Too much cannot be made of the dead, they think, and so they would make a perpetual dedication of themselves to the dead, forgetful of their relations to the living God above. Now, it is this everlasting relation which God insists upon. Nothing can be better, surely, than in sorrow to be reminded, "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." It is just this which bereavement is intended to make emphatic. God claims us as his own: let not the dead make perpetual marks upon your persons, as if they had the right to your life-long service. This is *desecration* instead of *consecration*. Unreasonable attachment to the dead may be the denial of due consecration to the living God.

IV. UNCOMMON CONSECRATION TO GOD SHOULD BE OUR IDEAL. Israel was to be a peculiar people unto God "above all the nations that are upon the earth." All nations glorify God in some degree, even in spite of themselves. But his own people are wise in aiming at special consecration. There is nothing so important as the highest possible ideal. Devoted to this, we attain to something higher and nobler than is possible otherwise.

"Lord, we can trust thee for our holy dead,
They, underneath the shadow of thy tomb,
Have entered into peace; with bended head
We thank thee for their rest, and for our lightened gloom."

R. M. E.

Vers. 3—11.—*A holy people will eat sanctified things.* The regulation of the diet of the children of Israel was most important in view of their remaining a "peculiar people" unto God. In no way half so effectual could they, as a nation, be kept distinct from other nations, with whom it was undesirable on religious grounds that they should associate. By interdicting some of the animals used by surrounding and heathen nations, the Lord, as far as possible, prevented Israel's association with them. To this they had been accustomed in Egypt; for some of the animals they, as Israelites, would eat were regarded as sacred by the Egyptians, and on no account would be slain or eaten by them. Hence the slaves had never commingled with their taskmasters. The two rivers would not coalesce. The Canaanites and Phœnicians, again, ate freely of flesh that the Hebrew dare not touch; and even the Arab would eat such animals as the camel, the hare, and the *jerboa*, all of which—the latter translated "mouse"—were forbidden to the children of Israel.

I. THE REGULATION OF MEATS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT WAY OF SEPARATING ONE NATION FROM ALL OTHER NATIONS. For if association at table is an impossibility, all other association will be very superficial and comparatively harmless. "Nothing more effectual," says Dr. Kitto, "could be devised to keep one people distinct from another. It causes the difference between them to be ever present to the mind, touching, as it does, upon so many points of social and everyday contact; and it is therefore far more efficient in its results, as a rule of distinction, than any difference in doctrine, worship, or morals which men could entertain. . . . It is a mutual repulsion continually operating; and its effect may be estimated from the fact that no nation in which a distinction of meats was rigidly enforced as a part of a religious system, has ever changed its religion."[1] And we are surely taught the wisdom of *expedients* to keep up the desirable separation between the Church and the world. If every religious *custom* were abandoned, and the conduct of religious people were conformed in all particulars to that of their worldly neighbours, religion would soon become a name, and nothing more. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. xii. 2).

II. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ANIMALS SYMBOLIZED THE DISTINCTION WHICH SHOULD EXIST BETWEEN GOD'S PEOPLE AND THE WORLD. An excellent writer has suggested that in *individual* development we pass through the stages attributed to the organic world as a whole; children, for example, passing through the "parrot" or the "monkey" stage.[2] "Animated nature" seems designed to mirror "human nature," whether in its evil or in its good propensities. Man finds himself in the image of the lower animals as well as, on his higher side, in the image of God. In conformity with this arrangement, then, the Jew was trained to regard certain animals as clean and edible, while others were unclean and forbidden. Towards the one class he was drawn, from the other he was repelled. Now, in the clean animals may be discovered certain good qualities, which make them fit illustrations of the moralities expected from an Israelite. For example, the characteristic of *rumination*, which belonged to the clean animals, was a fit type of that *thoughtfulness* and quiet *meditation* which should characterize the people of God. Again, *sure-footedness* characterizes the animals with the cloven hoof, which symbolizes the *steadfastness* of religious character. Speed and cleanliness also characterize the fishes that were accounted clean.

On the other hand, the unclean beasts, birds, and fish illustrate most powerfully the lustful, selfish, and impure spirit which characterizes unregenerate man. Not only, therefore, did the distinction among the animals secure the desired national separation, but also that poetic outlook upon nature which discovers in it a great parable for the soul.[3] Thus Emerson says, "Every rational creature has all nature for his dowry and

[1] 'The Pictorial Bible,' on Lev. xi. [2] Cf. Secretan's 'Discours Laïques,' p. 74.
[3] Cf. Kurtz's 'Sacrificial Worship,' pp. 22, 23; also Principal Shairp's 'Poetic Interpretation of Nature;' Emerson's 'Miscellanies,' etc.

estate. It is his, if he will. He may divest himself of it; he may creep into a corner and abdicate his kingdom, as most men do, but he is entitled to the world by his constitution. In proportion to the energy of his thought and will, he takes up the world unto himself." What a richness of thought is thus afforded to the thoughtful soul!

III. THAT WHICH DIED OF ITSELF WAS ALSO EXCLUDED FROM THE DIET OF ISRAEL. In such a case there was no guarantee that the blood had been properly drained from the carcase, and that the atoning element had been solemnly eliminated from it. In fact, in such cases there is not the sacrifice of life which we have seen to obtain in the normal sustenance of the world. God's people consequently must avoid all contact with death, and keep themselves pure unto him. And this arrangement surely symbolized that watchfulness over our contact with the world, which should characterize all professors of religion. We must "keep our garments unspotted from the world," we must even in certain critical times "let the dead bury their dead," and deny ourselves that intercourse with the spiritually dead which otherwise might be most proper.

IV. A KID WAS NOT TO BE SEETHED IN HIS MOTHER'S MILK. A quotation from an old writer will best improve this commandment. "This is not the meaning of the command, Content yourselves to eat the kid, but take heed that ye eat not the dam also; neither is this the meaning of it, Ye shall not eat flesh with milk, as the Chaldee paraphrast paraphraseth it; neither is this the meaning of it, Take heed that ye seethe not the kid in the mother's milk, as the superstitious Jews expound it at this day; they will not seethe flesh and milk in one pot, neither will they cut both flesh and cheese with one knife; and amongst the precepts which they have written of things lawful to be eaten, they forbid the eating of flesh and milk together; but the meaning of the place seemeth to be this, Ye shall not eat of a kid as of a lamb (for so the LXX. translate it) so long as it sucketh the dam, for all this time it is as it were but milk; they might sacrifice it when it was but eight days old, but not to eat of it so long as it was sucking (1 Sam. vii. 9). 'Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered.'"[1] This would consequently form a ceremonial appendix to the *sixth* commandment, and would teach that abstinence from the semblance of cruelty which should characterize the people of the Lord. In accepting of God's bounty in the matter of flesh, care should be taken that no unnatural cruelty should be practised or encouraged.

The sanctified ones are thus taught to keep themselves separate from the world, to regard nature as a great parable for the soul, and to conduct themselves in that considerate spirit which should characterize the disciples of Jesus.—R. M. E.

Vers. 22—29.—*Systematic provision for fellowship with God.* From the arrangements about ordinary diet, we pass now to the minute directions about "eating before God." A tithe of the corn, the wine, and the oil, together with the firstlings of their flocks and herds, must be devoted to the purposes of fellowship. It is clear from this, then, that God designed a systematic storing of the tenth part of the Jewish income for the purposes of religion. If the Jew resided far from the tabernacle, then he was to sell the tithe, and turning it into money, he was to go up with this to the central altar, and there invest in whatever his soul desired, and partake of it all before God. In this the Levite was to have his share. Over and above all this, every third year there was to be a *second* tithe devoted to the delectation of the poor. Now, we learn from these arrangements—

I. THAT FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS THE CROWN OF TRUE RELIGION. A feast with God, he taking the best portions, his priests the next best, and the offerer joyful over the remainder of the sacrifice, constituted the glory of the Jewish ritual. All the sin offerings, burnt offerings, and meat offerings were valueless if not crowned by the peace offering and its feast of fellowship. No wonder our Lord makes out fellowship to be the substance of eternal life, when in his prayer he says, "And this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). If we are not led up into this acquaintanceship, our religion is a name and not a reality.

II. THE FELLOWSHIP IS WELL WORTH ANY EXPENSE IT MAY INVOLVE. While it is, of course, true that God's blessings are gratuitous, "without money and without price," it

[1] Weemse on 'The Ceremonial Law,' p. 137.

is also true that a niggardly soul will fall out of fellowship. In fact, fellowship with God will seem so precious as to be worth infinitely more than all our possessions, and any proportion of these required by God for the maintenance of fellowship will seem a small price. Our conviction will be that of the psalmist, "The Law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

Now, while God's favour is given freely, there must evidently be something about which he and we can have fellowship. In other words, fellowship requires a medium. Fellowship means having something in common. When we analyze all we have, we find that it is all "the gift of God." Jesus is his gift; the Holy Spirit is his gift; money is his gift; every good thing is his gift (Jas. i. 17). He has surely every right, then, to say to his people, "You must dedicate a proportion of my gifts to you, for the purposes of fellowship; let us have a tithe in common; let us rejoice mutually over it as *ours*." This was the principle underlying Jewish tithing—it is the principle underlying all genuine beneficence. We are only returning to God such a proportion of what he gives as shall be the medium of fellowship.

A peace offering at the tabernacle was a most precious commodity. It was an animal regarding which the worshipper and God agreed to say, "It is *ours*," and each to feast upon it. It was the organ and means of fellowship. It was a delight to God and to man. Who would not pay anything required for such a privilege? Man is honoured most highly in being allowed such a partnership with God.

III. THE SENSE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IN THE FEAST IS THE REAL PRESERVATION OF MAN FROM UNDUE INDULGENCE. It is noticeable that "wine" and "strong drink" (שֵׁכָר) might be included in the feast before God. The safety of the partaker lay in the sense of fellowship and its consequent consecration. Just as Paul afterwards maintained that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5). It is the unhallowed use of God's gifts which is the danger. The temperance reformation will do well to keep in view this Divine side of the question, where in the last resort the stress must be laid.

IV. THE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IMPLIES THE INVITATION OF OTHERS TO SHARE THE BLESSING WITH US. Our households and the Levite are to be partakers with us of our sacred feasts. For God does not encourage *lonely* satisfactions; but as he calls us into his fellowship, it is on the understanding that we shall invite others, and make the fellowship a family thing. Now, the support of the Levites was to be a matter of cheerfulness and religious privilege. It was to be a joy embraced rather than a mere debt moodily discharged. It is surely here that "ministerial support" must be pleaded and advanced. It is not to be something doled out, but a feast of fellowship, the call of God's minister to share in our good fortune and success.

V. THE CARE OF THE POOR MUST ALSO BE PUT UPON THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP. It has been made a matter of law. And doubtless there is a noble element in the fact that a nation, passing beyond what old moralists called *duties of debt*, has entered upon *duties of merit*. Still, the national obligation embodied in the "poor rates" is apt to sap a certain amount of individual sympathy. The care of the poor is not the feast of joy and fellowship God meant it to be.[1] The three years' system brought under our notice in this passage was an effort, apparently, to bring the lonely and needy classes up to the standard of fellowship and of joy that the religious Jew himself had attained. It was the systematic effort to make the needy ones *glad before God*. And it is here that we find the goal of our exertions, whether to support a minister, to comfort a stranger, or a fatherless child, or a widow. Let all be guests of our love, and lifted, if possible, into our light and fellowship with God. For this we should strive evermore.

VI. THOSE WHO THUS HONOUR GOD WILL BE BLESSED AND HONOURED BY HIM. Not, of course, that systematic beneficence should be in any sense a speculation. It is not beneficence if it is a selfish investment. But at the same time, God blesses the system which recognizes obligation to him and tries to discharge it. The accurate survey of circumstances which systematic giving implies tends to financial success. There is no reason why religious men should not be "successful merchants." Were systematic

[1] Cf. 'The Philosophy of the Poor Laws,' in Miss Cobbe's 'Studies Ethical and Social.'

beneficence more general, there would be less failure and heart-burning in the walks of business.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Against conformity with heathen customs.* Israel had been called to honourable privilege; therefore it was fitting there should be seemly conduct. Royal children should be royal in all their acts.

I. ISRAEL'S SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. They enjoyed a position superior to all the nations of the earth. 1. *They were the objects of God's choice.* Out of all the peoples and tribes which dwelt on this round globe, Israel had been selected for a noble purpose. We may not be able to divine the reason, for our knowledge is exceedingly small. Yet God, who does nothing unwisely, did in this matter the wisest thing. 2. *They had been chosen to sonship.* God had revealed himself to these Hebrews in a special and endearing character. Had he not informed them of his dispositions towards them and his loving interest in them, they would not have dared to call him Father. In special condescension he informed them that he would treat them, in all substantial respects, as a father doth his children. 3. *They had been chosen to righteous character.* By virtue of this choice, they were on the high road to perfection. Their destiny was not secured irrespective of their own will and choice. They were now consecrated to the Divine service of Jehovah, and must perform holy actions, foster holy habits, so as to acquire a holy character. This is man's highest reward—a heaven within.

II. A SPECIFIC PROHIBITION. A prohibition against self-mutilation. There were natural outlets for abundant grief—tears, sighs, and moans; these self-mutilations were unnatural and irrational. 1. *Because inordinate sorrow for the death of friends is sinful.* Moderate grief is allowable: it is the necessary concomitant of strong affection. But as we should enjoy every friend as a gift of God, so our sorrow at separation should be accompanied by filial submission. 2. *Because such symbols of mourning were often pretences.* Frequently, if not usually, this manifest sorrow was assumed. 'Twas mere trickery and falsehood. Such actions injured and deteriorated character. 3. *Because even the body is the property of God.* There is no part of his nature which the true Israelite does not recognize as belonging to God. Throughout, he is Jehovah's temple. Every faculty of body, every organ and member, is to be utilized for God, is to be preserved in health and vigour to do credit to Jehovah. "His Name is to be upon our foreheads." 4. *Because this self-mutilation would be conformity with heathen customs.* The practices connected with idol-worship were dictated by a spirit of cruelty—by the genius of Satan. Far as the east is from the west, or north pole from the south, were the followers of God to withdraw from heathen practices. As sane men flee from pestilence, so should pious men avoid the neighbourhood of sin.—D.

Vers. 3—21.—*Discrimination in meats.* The prohibition of some kinds of food proceeds upon the principle that it is not wise to gratify every appetite. There must be denial somewhere. If every desire and lust of the body be indulged, injury will ensue to the nobler capacities of the soul. Pruning of the wild growths of carnal desire is essential to real fruitfulness. Divine restraints are acts of genuine kindness. Discrimination in animal food was based on true wisdom.

I. BECAUSE IT WAS A SANITARY BENEFIT. In that early age, the sciences of physiology and health were unknown, and even now they are in their earliest infancy. We are, however, now aware of the fact that some (at least) of the flesh prohibited to the Hebrews is more or less unwholesome. Nor is it improbable that in that Eastern climate some flesh is more unwholesome for food than in our own land. As a father cares for the health of his child, so God cared for every part of Israel's well-being. Nothing escapes God's attention. "The Lord is for the body." With infinite tenderness, God legislated for the meals of the Hebrews, and gave them the advantage of his unerring judgment.

II. BECAUSE PARTIAL ABSTINENCE WAS SALUTARY FOR THE SOUL. 1. *It taught them that fleshly appetite was not to be gratified for its own sake—not for mere pleasure.* To strengthen and broaden the desires of the mind is an advantage in itself; but, excessive strength of bodily appetite is an evil, an injury to the real man. The lesson requires to be early learnt, that our nature requires government, that our highest good can be reached only by self-restraint and self-mortification. Bodily desires and

inclinations are designed to be servants, not masters. 2. *It exercised them in practical self-denial.* The noblest qualities of human character are acquired only by personal discipline. Some parts of our nature have to be repressed; some have to be stimulated. The fleshly propensities have always been unfriendly to the spirit's life. It is a lesson hard to be learnt, to forego lesser enjoyments for remote advantages. The favour and society of God amply recompense for all minor pains. 3. *The general rule of action was typical of higher truths.* All such animals might be eaten as "parted the hoof, and chewed the cud." There was, doubtless, a reason for this permission arising out of the constituent nature of the flesh. But spiritual lessons also were suggested, viz. that to be acceptable for God's service there must be with us mental digestion of his truth, and there must also be practical circumspection—in our daily walk a separation from worldly contamination.

III. BECAUSE THIS DISCRIMINATION IN MEATS WOULD CONSTITUTE A VISIBLE PARTITION FROM THE HEATHEN. To bring to a successful issue the Divine purposes in the Hebrew race, it was incumbent to maintain broad distinctions between them and the heathen round about. They lived a coarser and more animal life. Animal passions were fostered by the glutting of the appetites. Some of the animals denied as food to the Jews were used by the heathen for divination; therefore it was safest to label such animals and birds as an abomination. A wise captain will give to a sunken reef a wide berth. Further, these differences in social customs and domestic habits would serve as perpetual barriers against intermarriages with neighbouring tribes. This might appear unsocial and exclusive. But lesser good has to be sacrificed for loftier and eternal blessing. To every quibble of human reason it is surely enough to reply, "God knows best." This proscription of some kinds of food applied to the Jews only. They might supply to strangers among them food which they were forbidden to eat themselves. Thus a practical lesson was taught them that they were to be pre-eminently holy. The moral attainments of others were not to be the standards by which they should measure conduct. More plainly than speech did such prohibition say, "Be not conformed to the world." What it is allowable for others to do, may be sin for me to practise.

IV. BECAUSE THIS ARRANGEMENT SERVED FOR THE DAILY DISCIPLINE OF FAITH. Of the first importance was it that the faith of the Hebrews should be maintained, and that their faith should be practically displayed. Very clearly God had assured them that this was his will concerning them; and, whether any reason appeared for the demand or not, as his acknowledged servants they were bound to obey. Such a requirement had some correspondence with the test imposed on our first parents. The act forbidden might be in itself indifferent—having no moral character. Apart from the command, they might have eaten, or abstained from eating, without any violation of conscience. This would make the matter a better test of obedience. In abstaining from such and such meat, they did no one wrong; they violated no law of nature, no law of God: they did themselves no injury. They still had enough to meet all the necessities of hunger. Here, then, was a true test whether men would simply obey God's word, even though obedience should mean privation. This was the discipline of faith.—D.

Vers. 22—29.—*God's claim upon our money gains.* In every province of human life God requires his proprietorship to be recognized. The seventh part of our time is hallowed for his service. The firstfruits of corn were to be devoted to religious uses. The firstborn in the household belonged to God, and was to be redeemed by substitution. And now, of all their yearly gains, one-tenth was claimed by God.

I. THE GROUND OF GOD'S CLAIM. His claim proceeds from his proprietorship. Towards the Hebrews he was obviously and directly landlord. He had put them into possession of their estates, and rightfully could exact from them a rent. And with respect to all national substance, God is absolute Proprietor. He has an original and indefeasible right as Creator; and it is his supreme power that maintains in existence the treasures of the earth. Even the power we have to accumulate wealth is desirved from the same beneficent Source. It is his *gift*, not that he has conveyed to us the irresponsible right in it, but simply in the sense that we had nothing with which to purchase it. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

II. A DEFINITE PROPORTION DEMANDED. It was competent for God to make such terms as he pleased with men. He might justly have permitted for our own use a bare existence, and required us to devote to him the residue of our gains. Or he might very properly have exacted as his tribute one-half. Whatever had been his will in the matter, it would become us meekly to acquiesce. He *did* make known his will very clearly to the Jews, and his terms were very generous. So small a portion as one-tenth he condescended to take, and even this was expended in advantage for the nation. Many significant hints have we that, in unwritten form, this part of his will was made known to other nations. Among heathen tribes we find the custom prevails of consecrating one-tenth of their harvests unto idol gods; and when Abraham returned from the conquest of the invaders, he gave to Melchizedek the tithe of all his spoils. Hence we may regard the law, not as exclusively Jewish, but as intended for all peoples.

III. THE METHOD OF ASSESSMENT. No official assessor was appointed. The cost of collection was *nil*. Each man was to act as his own assessor, and to separate, at harvest-time, God's share of corn and wine and oil. It was a transaction between each man and his God. It was Israel's privilege to live under the shield of Jehovah's arm, and therefore "ever in his Great Taskmaster's eye." The penalty for dishonesty was not immediate, nor visible. Every plan was devised to suit the convenience of the debtor. He might bring his tithe to the temple, either in kind or in coin. Jehovah was no hard Taskmaster, but a considerate and generous King. Giving to him was only another form of receiving. The absence of intermediary officers was a spiritual advantage. It brought each man into direct contact with God, and taught him to act with integrity towards the "Searcher of hearts."

IV. THE EMPLOYMENT OF GOD'S TITHE. The tithe here spoken of is not the tithe of all profits, which was due to the Levite, but a second tithe. The first tithe was regarded as an equivalent to the tribe of Levi, for Levi's share in the allotted possessions. Each man in the twelve tribes received, in the original distribution of land, one-twelfth more than his due, from the fact that Levi did not participate. In return for this increment of property, each proprietor paid to the tribe of Levi yearly one-tenth of the produce of the land. This was due as a legal right, and as a just equivalent for non-participation in the territory. But this second tithe was peculiarly the Lord's. Nevertheless, it was returned, with added blessing, into their own bosoms. Its first use was to afford a banquet for the offerers themselves. The temple was to be the scene of sacred feasting. The guests might select such viands as pleased their taste. The overshadowing presence of Jehovah would serve as a sufficient check against excess. To this banquet, in which the entire household shared, they were to invite the Levite, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. The essential idea thus embodied was philanthropy. The institution was intended to foster a spirit of benevolence and charity. The presence of the poor in their midst was to be accounted a benefit. It offered scope for the exercise of noblest dispositions. There was to be no niggardly stint in this provision, for it was at Jehovah's cost, and the occasion was to be characterized by unrestrained joy.

V. THE MORAL ADVANTAGES WHICH ENSUED. 1. *It served as a practical reminder of God's proprietorship in them and in their possessions.* Nothing is more easy than to forget our obligations; and such forgetfulness is an immeasurable loss. Not an item was there in their persons, property, or enjoyments, but came from the hand of a generous God. 2. *It was a potent check upon their worldly-mindedness.* The propensity for selfish avarice is indigenous in human nature. Every wise man will welcome any breakwater that will withstand this mischievous tide of cupidity. Thus God, with wondrous forethought, provided a safeguard against the abuse of prosperity. He designs to make even worldly gain serve as a stepping-stone to piety. Money is nothing more than means to an end. Reconciliation with God, and personal holiness,—these are to be the aims of human life. 3. *It fostered kindly dispositions among all classes of the people.* Though, as the children of Abraham, they enjoyed great external privileges, they were not to despise the stranger. Yea, he too might be admitted to a full share in their blessings. Brotherly love is a reciprocal boon: both parties are blessed. The fountain of love is replenished in the very act of giving. The *helped* to-day may become the *helper* to-morrow. We are only stewards of God's possessions.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV.

THE YEAR OF RELEASE FOR THE BENEFIT OF DEBTORS AND THE EMANCIPATION OF HEBREW SLAVES. THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE FIRSTBORN OF CATTLE.

Vers. 1—6.—To the prescription of a tithe for the needy there is added a regulation for the behoof of debtors. The Israelites were not only to help the poor, but they were to refrain from what would be a hardship and oppression to them. Debtors, consequently, were not to be deprived of the benefit of the sabbatical year, for at the close of each seventh year there was to be a release. This does not imply that the debt was to be remitted, but only that the debtor was not then to be pressed for payment. As during the sabbatical year the land lay uncultivated, and the debtor consequently would earn nothing, it was reasonable that he should not then be pressed for payment. A law that every seventh year debts should be remitted, would have frustrated itself, for on such conditions no one would lend, and so there would be no debtors. This is an addition to the law of the sabbath-year (Exod. xxiii. 10, etc.; Lev. xxv. 2—7).

Ver. 1.—**Release.** The word thus rendered (שְׁמִטָּה, from שָׁמַט, to leave, to let lie fallow) occurs only here and in ver. 2; in Exod. xxxiii. 11 the cognate verb is used, and from this the word is best explained. The debt was to be *left* in the hands of the debtor, as the land was to be let lie or left untilled for that year.

Ver. 2.—**Creditor**; literally, *master of the loan of his hand*, equivalent to owner of what his hand has lent to another. Comp. the expression, "what was laid in his hand" (Lev. v. 21; Authorized Version, "in fellowship," Lev. vi. 2); and Neh. x. 32, "the debt of every hand" (Authorized Version, "the exaction of every debt"). **Neighbour**; here, *fellow-Israelite*. **Exact it of his neighbour**; literally, *press or urge his neighbour*, i.e. to pay. **It is called the Lord's release**; rather, *a release for Jehovah is proclaimed*; the sabbatical year, like the year of jubilee, was proclaimed, and it was for Jehovah, in his honour, and in accordance with his ordinance.

Ver. 3.—**A foreigner**; a stranger of another nation, having no internal social relation to Israel (נָכְרִי), as distinguished from the stranger who lived among them and had claims on their benevolence (גֵּר). Of such they might exact a debt, without regard to the year of release. "This rule breathes no hatred of foreigners, but simply allows the Israelites the right of every creditor to demand his debts and enforce the demand upon foreigners, even in the sabbatical year. There was no severity in this, because foreigners could get their ordinary income in the seventh year as well as in any other" (Keil).

Ver. 4.—**Save when there shall be no poor among you**; rather, *only that there shall be no poor among you*; q.d., this ordinance is not intended to prevent creditors seeking the payment of their just debts, but only to prevent there being poor in the land. The reason assigned is that the Lord would greatly bless them in the land which he had given them, so that the creditor would be no loser by refraining from exacting his debt from his brother in the seventh year.

Vers. 5, 6.—This blessing, though promised and certified, should come only if they were careful to observe and do all that God commanded them. The for at the beginning of ver. 6 connects this with ver. 4. **Thou shalt lend.** The verb in Kal signifies to borrow on a pledge; in Hiph. to lend on a pledge, as here; it is a denominative from the Hebrew noun signifying *pledge*.

Vers. 7—11.—The reference to the release leads to a prescription regarding readiness to lend to the poor. They were not to harden their hearts against their poorer brethren, nor were they, in the prospect of the year of release, to refuse to lend them what was necessary for their uses, but, on the contrary, were to open their heart and their hand to them according to their need, lest the poor should appeal against them to God, and sin should lie upon them.

Ver. 7.—**Harden thine heart**; literally, *make strong*, so as to suppress natural compassion and sympathy.

Ver. 8.—**Sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth**; literally, *the sufficiency of his need which he needeth*, i.e. whatever he might need to meet his requirements.

Ver. 9.—**A thought in thy wicked heart**; literally, *a thing in thy heart worthlessness*, i.e. a thing which is worthless and unworthy. The word used is *belial* (בְּלִיַּעַל), which does not denote that which is wicked so much as that which is worthless. Thus, "a man of Belial" is a worthless fellow—

not necessarily a wicked man (cf. ch. xiii. 13). **And it be sin unto thee**; *i.e.* entail guilt upon thee, and so expose thee to the Divine displeasure.

Ver. 10.—**Shall not be grieved**; literally, *shall not become evil*, i.e. shall not entertain a grudge. They were to give, not grudgingly or of necessity, merely through dread of God's displeasure, but cheerfully and spontaneously (cf. 2 Cor. ix. 7). For this God would bless them in all their works, so that they should not only be no losers, but should be gainers, by their generosity.

Ver. 11.—They were to open their hand wide to their poorer brethren, for there should always be such in the land. This statement is not inconsistent with that in ver. 4, for there it is the prevention of poverty by not dealing harshly with the poor that is spoken of; here it is the continuance of occasion for the relief of the poor that is referred to.

Vers. 12—18.—From injunctions regarding the treatment of the poor and of debtors the transition is easy to the law concerning slaves, inasmuch as it was through the stress of poverty that any became such from among their brethren. The law, as here laid down, is the same as that in Exod. xxi. 2—6, somewhat expanded; the most important addition being that the slave is not only to go free after six years of service, but is to be furnished by his master with the means of setting up a home for himself. The six years here specified are not to be confounded with the years ending at the sabbatical year; they are *any* six years during which the individual has been in bondage.

Ver. 14.—**Thou shalt furnish him liberally**; literally, *shalt lay on his neck*, i.e. thou shalt load him. The meaning is well expressed in the Authorized Version. This is the new prescription added to the earlier law.

Ver. 15.—Compliance is enforced by the consideration that the Israelites had been themselves bondmen in Egypt, and had been redeemed out of that bondage by God (cf. ch. v. 15; x. 19; xvi. 12; xxiv. 18, 22; Exod. xxii. 20; xxiii. 9; Lev. xix. 34). As God had dealt by them, so it behoved them to deal by others in like condition and need.

Vers. 16, 17.—It might happen, however, that the slave chose rather to remain with his master than to be manumitted, and in that case he was not to be forced to go free, which would be a hardship to him, but was to be, by a formal process of nailing his ear to the door of his master's house, constituted his slave for life (cf. Exod. xxi. 5). This was not a painful operation, especially as the servant's ear was probably already pierced for a ring; nor does any infamy appear to have been attached to the bearing of this badge of perpetual servitude. There is no mention here, as in Exodus, of the matter being referred to the judges; and this has led some to suppose that, by the time this later prescription was given, the earlier usage had passed away; but it is more natural to suppose that this usage was so regular and well known that it was needless formally to announce it.

Ver. 18.—Where a slave determined to have his freedom, the master was to set him free without grudge; **for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years**; literally, *double the hire of a hireling he hath served thee six years*, i.e. he hath saved to thee as much again as it would have cost thee to pay a hired labourer to do the same amount of work.

Vers. 19—23.—In ch. xii. 6, 17 and in ch. xiv. 23, reference is made to sacrificial meals, and to the appropriation of the firstlings of the herds and flocks thereto; Moses here reverts to this, and gives a fuller exposition of it. It is enjoined that, as all the firstborn were to be sanctified to the Lord (Exod. xiii. 2—13), they were not to work with the firstborn of their cattle, either by yoking the bullock to the plough or waggon or by shearing the sheep: these belonged to God, and were not to be put to any vulgar uses of men; year by year they were to be brought to the sanctuary, offered as sacrifices, and eaten before the Lord. If any of the firstborn animals were blind, or lame, or in any way blemished, such was not to be offered to the Lord, but might be used as food in their ordinary places of residence (cf. Lev. xxii. 19, etc.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Divine checks on human greed.* In this paragraph the institution of the sabbatical year is presupposed (cf. Exod. xxiii. 9—13; Lev. xxv. 2—7). During this year the land was to rest, and it would doubtless be conducive to after-fruitfulness to give the soil this respite, by letting it lie fallow every seventh year, for at this time

the effect of the rotation of crops was unknown.[1] We by no means affirm that such was the only reason for the appointment; yet nothing hinders us from regarding it as *a* reason. In that year there was to be a general remission of debts. To all appearance, there would, however, be one social danger arising from so peculiar an arrangement. Human nature, as regards capacity, aptitude, tact, kindness, hardness, etc., would differ as greatly among Hebrews as among any other peoples. There would be the wise manager, and the man who knew not how to manage at all. There would be some easily "taken in," and others watching for an opportunity of enriching themselves at another's expense. And among the harder men, the thought would naturally arise, "Well, if I must not work to increase my gains that year, I will at least secure all that I ought to have, by collecting all debts due to me, and this I will do with rigour." Now, here comes in this law mercifully guarding the weak against the rapacity of the strong, compelling men, at least outwardly, to show some regard for those who are somewhat behindhand in the race for life, and preventing the more successful ones from so exacting from poorer men as to reduce them to helpless dependence upon others. The following points may be noted. 1. The sabbatical year is here assumed, *ut supra*. 2. This year debts were to be remitted,—not cancelled, but pressure for payment was to be postponed. 3. Thus there was to be an enforced pause in the accumulation of wealth. 4. The sentiment of kindliness and forbearance as well as of justice in business life, was thus taught. 5. At the same time, there is a safeguard against the Hebrews being trifled with by foreigners by a misuse of this law. A foreigner (one who was so in all respects) might incur a debt in the sixth year, thinking that, as a Hebrew could not press for it the next year, he should have a long respite; while, as *he* was not bound by the Hebrews' Law, he could press for debts due to him! This would have been unequal. Hence God guards Israel against such inequality, and says, as a foreigner is not under this law so far as debts due to him are concerned, so neither is he included in it with regard to debts incurred by him; and the release is not intended to operate where its operation cannot be equal all round. 6. Moreover, there is in this law no encouragement to mendicancy, but rather such a check on pressure by the rich, and such an inculcation of regard for the poor, that beggary may be a thing unknown among them. The word "beggar" does not occur once in the Mosaic institutes (cf. Michaelis's 'Commentary on the Laws of Moses,' art. 142). Surely in all this there is abundance of material for homiletic teaching from a Christian point of view. The formal institution here referred to has passed away. But, if we follow out the formula already laid down, that *forms change, but principles never*,—we cannot be at a loss for an exposition of the ethical teaching which this paragraph suggests for all time. For, as is well remarked by Mr. Garden, "The spirit of this law is the same as that of the weekly sabbath. Both have a beneficent tendency, limiting the rights and checking the sense of property; the one puts in God's claims on time, the other on the land. The land shall keep a sabbath unto the Lord." "The land is mine." Let us, then, study *the Divine checks on human greed, as they are shown to us in the teaching of the New Testament.*

I. WE HAVE THE DISTINCT DECLARATION, "YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN." This is far wider and deeper than any analogous statement of Moses. For while Israel had been redeemed out of Egypt, so that God said, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee," we must all feel how infinitely short that comes of the tender pathos in 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. The phrase, "*Ye* are not your own," must needs cover the whole ground of all that we are and have. As "redemption" was the appeal at the basis of Israel's life, so is it in the case of God's people now.

II. WE ARE REDEEMED THAT WE MIGHT LIVE FOR GOD BY LIVING FOR OTHERS. We are expected to have "the same mind" which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. ii. 1—8). Note the argument involved in 2 Cor. viii. 7, 9; also that in Rom. xiv. 7, *et seq.* See the purpose of Christ's redeeming work, as stated in Titus ii. 14; and also the law of the Christian life in Gal. vi. 1—10. In these passages there is so much of duty indicated with regard to others, that though little of minute detail is now specified, yet Christian men cannot go far wrong if their lives are regulated thereby (1 Cor. x. 24).

[1] See art. 'Sabbatical Year,' in Smith's 'Bibl. Dict.'

III. THE PROHIBITION OF OUR LORD AGAINST COVETOUSNESS IS VERY STERN AND STRONG. (See Luke xii. 13—21.) At every stage of that paragraph there is some new and startling light in which the evil of covetousness is seen. 1. It cherishes a totally mistaken view of life (Luke xii. 15). 2. It is perilous (Luke xii. 20). Hence: 3. It is foolish (Luke xii. 20, 21). Strong checks these! Far stronger than Israel's.

IV. THERE IS A DIVINE STIGMA UPON COVETOUSNESS. (See Eph. v. 5; Col. iii. 5.) It is idolatry. It is giving to creature objects the regard which is due only to God. He would have us "in his light see light," and regard the greed of gain as an abominable thing.

V. THERE IS A DIVINE RULE FOR LABOUR. It is given us in Eph. iv. 28. The observance of this precept would prevent the social evil arising from covetousness on the one hand, and would create the good accruing from benevolence on the other. "Let him labour *in order that* he may have the wherewith to give!" How truly sublime! It is like the benevolence of God.

VI. THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER HAS SPECIAL INJUNCTIONS FOR THE RICH, with the giving of which he is charged. (1 Tim. vi. 17—19.) Thus the Christian code is by no means less comprehensive than the Mosaic. On the contrary, it is far more so. It is equally stringent in allowing no one to think of his property as his own.

VII. OUR GOD WOULD WIN AS WELL AS WARN. See Heb. xiii. 5, "Let your turn of mind be free from the love of money (*ἀφιλάργυρος*)." Why? "Because himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (see also 2 Pet. i. 4). We are permitted, in Christ, to call God "ours," to find in his love our joy, in his wisdom and strength our stay, in his wealth our supply. Hence we ought to be lifted up above any consuming racking care, and to be loyally obedient to God's will in the sanctified use of all that we have (Matt. vi. 33).

Let any one set side by side the Mosaic regulations in the paragraph we have just been considering, with the seven considerations adduced from New Testament teaching. Let him compare them with one another. And, if we mistake not, he will find more than ample material for other Homilies on the height, the breadth, the depth, and the length of Christian ethics, as covering the entire ground of the relations of man to man and of man to God, and as requiring no less exactitude in detail through less detail being specified. It is said (and we fear it is said truly) that the great hindrance to God's work in the world is that the Christian name does not carry with it Christian morality. Ah! if it did, how luminous would such morality appear! Let but the above considerations be universally acted out, *on all sides*, and no more strifes between capital and labour would ever be known. The rich would neither oppress, nor despise, nor neglect the poor; the poor would no longer be jealous of the rich. Both would recognize their mutual relation to and need of each other. While, with universal righteousness and kindness, mendicancy would be a thing unknown. And never, never, till there is a new principle of love infused through the various classes of society, will such a consummation be attained! Still, however sad our hearts may be as we consider how far we are off from the mutual regard between owner and labourer which even Moses enjoined, let each of us feel his personal responsibility for fidelity to the Divine Law. Only as this is felt and discharged by each, can it be felt and discharged by all. The Lord make us and all men to abound in good will, and may the supreme benevolence which has its source in heaven flow o'er the world as a pure river of water of life!

Vers. 7—11.—*The duty of kindness to the poor.* There seems to be at first sight a discrepancy between the phrase in ver. 4 and that in ver. 11. The former is, "Save when there shall be no poor among you;" the latter, "The poor shall never cease out of the land." The first phrase is, however, a reason assigned for the injunction which had been given: it is equivalent to, "Simply, that there be no poor among you," *i.e.* this or that was an appointment in Israel, in order that the number of the poor might be reduced to a minimum, and that those who were poor might not become abjectly so. But no such external law could ever prevent some from falling back in the race. As long as men's constitutions, capacities, and characters were widely different, so would their measure of success be. A levelling of circumstances could be brought about only through a levelling of men, after all had been brought to a uniform starting-point.

Such genial enactments as the one in vers. 1—6 might prevent beggary, but would not do away with poverty. "The poor shall never cease out of the land." This phrase is not to be regarded as indicating a Divine appointment that it should be so, but as a Divine declaration that it would be so. As long as men are what they are, and the varied features of temperament and ability continue as they are, so long will there be abundant scope for the exercise of sympathy and of kindly help. The points noticeable in this paragraph are five. 1. Year after year fresh claims on the kindly help of the prosperous would be presented by their poorer brethren (ver. 11). 2. These claims were to be generously and even gladly met, as if it were a delight. We need not charge the writer with ministering to idleness and beggary (see reference to Michaelis, in previous Homily). The word for, yea, even the conception of, a beggar, as we now understand it, is entirely absent from the Mosaic statutes. Honest and diligent work is supposed to be universal; though it might not be uniformly skilful or successful. 3. The desire to evade any obligation thus presented, was a wicked violation of the spirit of the Law (ver. 9). 4. The cry of the neglected or oppressed poor would rise up to God, and be heard. 5. The Lord would remember the sin of cruel neglect and unkindness, or of haughty coldness.

Now, this chapter generally, and therefore this paragraph as a part of it, may be viewed in one of two aspects: either as a section of the Mosaic code of jurisprudence, or as an inculcation of social duty. It would be obviously beyond or beside our province to deal with it in the former aspect; we are concerned solely with the latter. We need not ask whether, in our New Testament standard, kindness to the poor is enjoined? That is understood. Our one query is this—

NOW THAT WE ARE UNDER CHRIST, AS OUR LEADER, HOW IS THE DUTY OF KINDNESS TO THE POOR PUT AND ENFORCED? 1. That duty which Moses enjoined as the leader and legislator of Jehovah's people, our Lord Jesus Christ set on the ground of his own sovereign right, and enforced by his own example. In that wondrous chapter of John's Gospel, the thirteenth, we are told that, when our Saviour had washed his disciples' feet, he told them that he had given them an example that they should do as he had done to them, and also said, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master," etc. We cannot suppose that this one act of kindness and condescension was merely meant to be literally followed. It must have been a kind of representative deed, in which our Lord virtually said, "In whatever way you may comfort or soothe a worn and weary brother by ministering to his wants, do not shrink from doing it, even though it may involve many a lowly, self-sacrificing act." Surely this covers the ground indicated in this paragraph, and includes the duty of giving to the poor and helping the needy, whatsoever their need may be. 2. Our Lord regards the poor and needy as *his* poor: all, generally, because he died *for* them; some, especially, because he lives *in* them. Hence, whoever would act towards them so as to show them the power and glory of a living Saviour's sympathy, must let the poor feel through him the warm touch of a tender Saviour's love. Our Lord said in his intercessory prayer, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Thus believers are to act in the world in the name and on the behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the friends and benefactors of men. 3. Our Lord reckons a kindness shown to men for his sake, as if it were done to him. Even in the Old Testament we get a thought akin to this (Isa. lxiii. 9). But in the New Testament the truth is more clearly defined (cf. Acts ix. 4, where it is presented to us in connection with the reverse of kindness). In Matt. xxv. 31—46 it is shown us more strikingly still. Christ and his people are one; and a kindness done to men, out of love to him, is done to him. Is there not a wondrous touch of nature here? Would not a mother feel a kindness shown to her son, for her sake, as if it were shown to her? If the mother were in England and the son in New Zealand, she would feel the same. And if the son were even base and unworthy, and love did cling to him for the mother's sake, she could not feel the kindness the less. And we are permitted to take this thought up into the heavenly region, and to read the amazing words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, . . . ye have done it unto me." 4. Of so much importance is this kindness to the poor for Christ's sake to be reckoned by us, that we are to watch for and seize opportunities of doing "good unto all men, specially to them that are of the household of faith;" yea, so labouring, we are even to support the weak, recalling those priceless

words which an apostle was mercifully led to save from the peril of unrecorded sayings, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Whenever and wherever there is presented to us a case of genuine need, there is an opportunity for honouring our Saviour which we must not suffer to pass by unimproved. 5. There are New Testament warnings against the neglect of the poor, which are not only not less severe than any in the Old Testament—they are even more so. We may arrange them in three classes, giving one specimen under each. (1) 1 John iii. 17: If a man can knowingly neglect the poor, God's love is not in his heart. Where love dwells in the heart, there will be corresponding words on the tongue, and corresponding blessings in the hand. (2) Jas. ii. 5—9; v. 1—4: The Apostle James declares that to neglect or despise the poor is sin against God; and that the cries of oppressed poverty will be heard in heaven. (3) Matt. xxv. 31—46: Our Lord has explicitly told us that in the day of judgment, the one test which will be applied to men, and by which their destiny will be decided, will be that of kindness to the poor for his sake! Where that has been, penitence and faith have wrought out in love. Where that has not been, there has been no love, and, consequently, neither faith nor penitent obedience. It is not necessary to be openly wicked and profane, in order to incur rejection by the Great Judge at last. There may have been not a single vice which shocked society or violated outward propriety. Be it so. Even then the absence of the activities of love will be a man's ruin. He who has not lived to save his brother will not himself be saved. A piety that is known only by negatives will be disowned by our sovereign Lord; while genuine, active, unselfish love, though it may have had but a limited sphere for service, oft shedding a tear that it could do no more, will meet with the holy Master's loving recognition, and will receive his gracious reward!

Vers. 12—18.—*The rights of the slaves.* By some who are but slightly acquainted with the subject, and who have too strong an *animus* against the Old Book to deal fairly with it, it has been made a matter of complaint against our Lord and his apostles that they did not put down slavery with a strong hand. The same may be said of Moses. If, however, without prejudging the case, we reverently ask, Why was it that he, as a divinely commissioned legislator, tolerated the institution of slavery? we are but proposing a question which opens up a field for thoughtful study, and we shall not be left without a satisfactory answer. And in the answer which the facts will supply there will be contained a world of instructive teaching to the devout and thoughtful mind. (The student would do well to examine the articles of Michaelis on this subject.) Putting the case generally, so as to prepare the reader for the details which follow, we would say—Moses found slavery existing; he permitted its continuance, but he placed the slave-holder under such restrictions that the slaves would become conscious of their rights as men and as brethren; he so limited slavery itself, that no Hebrew could be a slave for life, except of his own voluntary will; and in his elevated ethical code, he repeatedly insisted on the equality of men before God; thus dropping in men's minds such seeds of truth that, when they germinated and brought fruit, the institution of slavery would cease, because the peoples would come to be *educated out of it!*

If now we briefly enumerate the several provisions connected with slaves and slave-holding, we shall see, in detail, the proof of the above general remark. 1. The Hebrew slave might be held for six years only; in the seventh he was to be permitted his freedom: excepting as provided in the eleventh detail. 2. There were other provisions, *e.g.* those connected with the year of jubilee, for ensuring the freedom of the slave, given in Lev. xxv. 3. Rigorous exaction and harshness were distinctly and sternly forbidden (Lev. xxv. 39—43). If these injunctions and the reasons for them are considered, it will be seen that Hebrew slavery was unlike any other that the world has known. 4. If a master by revengeful treatment inflicted serious bodily injury on the slave, such slave was to have his freedom (Exod. xxi. 26). 5. Undue punishment was avenged by the judges (Exod. xxi. 20, 21). 6. The slave might acquire property of his own, and might even amass enough to buy his own freedom (Lev. xxv.). 7. There were special decrees for the benefit of the slave. They were to be free from all manner of work on the sabbath day. They had a right to fruit which grew spontaneously during the sabbatical year. They were to have their share of the

feasts at the great national festivals. 8. If they accepted freedom at the end of the sixth year, they were not to be sent away empty, but were to be furnished by their master, liberally and gladly, with a sufficiency wherewith to "start on their own account." 9. The idea of freedom was ever kept before them. They might not sell themselves for life to any one. They were the Lord's freemen, and they were not to pervert the Divine thought by becoming life-long bondmen (Lev. xxv. 42). 10. As the nation rose in intelligence, their laws became more and more liberal. Provisions which were intended at first only for the menservants, were extended, even in the lifetime of Moses, to the maidservants likewise (cf. Exod. xxi. 7 and ch. xv. 17). 11. If a slave did not accept his freedom when he might have it, he was to have his ears bored, that so he might bear about with him the brand that he had chosen servitude for life (vers. 16, 17). Surely the object of this apparently strange enactment was to create among the people a disrespect for self-chosen servitude, and so, silently yet powerfully, to lift them above it. And yet one more feature should be noted, viz.: 12. When a foreign slave escaped from his master, the moment he touched the Hebrews' soil he was a free man! (ch. xxiii. 16). Surely no one can study all these details without seeing that the entire tendency of the Mosaic Law was to lift up the people, to advance their happiness, their freedom, their intelligence, and their mutual regard!

If now for a little we pass to the New Testament, to see how the apostles of Jesus Christ regarded and dealt with slaves and slavery, and what their teachings were on this subject, we find that very little is said. There is no denunciation of the institution, notwithstanding the very wide difference between slavery under the Hebrews and under the Greeks and Romans. But we find: 1. Rules for masters, demanding that they render unto their slaves that which is just and equal, since even they, with all their power, are not irresponsible, but have themselves a Master in heaven, to whom the slave is as precious as his owner. 2. They taught at the same time loyalty and obedience on the part of the slave, and urged on him the duty of so serving an earthly master that, in the very act thereof, he should serve a heavenly one. 3. That both master and slave would receive from their common Lord a reward according to their measure of fidelity; "knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, *whether he be bond or free*." 4. They laid down afresh, in the name of the Lord Jesus, the old Mosaic law, that "there is no respect of persons with God;" thus teaching the equality of all men in the eye of him "who judgeth according to every man's work."

Now, comparing the Old and New Testament treatment of slavery, what do we see? In the Old Testament a number of details which would work in the direction of freedom, and thoughts dropped which would bring slavery to an end. In the New Testament the details are not repeated. 1. Because, having been given once, repetition would have been of little service. 2. Because the apostles were not laying down laws for a commonwealth *in the same sense* that Moses was. But, though we have no repetition of details, we have (1) such an inculcation of kindness on one side and of loyalty on the other, as, when mutually heeded, would make slavery cease *to be* slavery in all save the name; and (2) such a clear enunciation of the truth, that in Christ there is neither bond nor free, that, when the power of this Divine impartiality was felt, slavery would ultimately cease both in fact and in name the wide world over!

Thus we see that the Divine Being in his infinite wisdom has seen fit to adopt a similar process under both the Jewish and Christian dispensations, viz. that of educating men by the power of truth and goodness up to such a level, that they voluntarily put down this or that social wrong, instead of thrusting it out at once by a violent hand. Had *e.g.* this wrong of slavery been forcibly put down, the spirit of enslaving would have still existed on one side, and an opening for unbridled lawlessness might have been created on the other. But by the Divine process, slower though it be, the master is lifted up above the level of the tyrant, the slave comes to be regarded as a man and a brother, and ultimately the last fetter shall be snapped, and men brought unto the glorious liberty of the children of God!

Nor can we do justice to our theme unless we point out, for practical use and fervent exhortation, the spiritual significance of the whole.

I. THE EQUALITY OF MEN BEFORE GOD. The Divine love and regard embrace all. The overshadowing wing of mercy covers all, and the free offers of mercy are made to all (Isa. lv. 1—7).

II. BECAUSE OF THE VALUE GOD SETS ON EVERY MAN, HE FORBIDS ANY MAN TO TAKE ANOTHER CAPTIVE, AND FORBIDS MAN SELLING HIMSELF INTO CAPTIVITY OF ANY KIND. "Ye are bought with a price; be ye not the slaves of men."

III. WE ARE FREE FROM HUMAN FETTERS THAT WE MAY BE ABSOLUTELY FREE TO SERVE GOD. "As free, but not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness; but as the servants of God."

IV. ABSOLUTE LOYALTY TO GOD IS THE SUREST AND BEST GUARANTEE OF FIDELITY TOWARDS MEN. Nothing would be wanting between master and servant now, if both were purely loyal to the Great Supreme. He who is bound by the vow of a holy consecration to serve a holy God, may be trusted with any department of human service.

V. TO THIS OUR GOD WOULD WIN AND LEAD US, BY PATIENT TEACHING AND GRACIOUS TRAINING. It takes long to perfect a world or even a class.

Ver. 21.—*Sacrifices to be without blemish.* A reference to passages in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, will show the frequency with which the injunction here contained was insisted upon, and the importance attached to it. Sacrifices offered to God must be without blemish. The entire Mosaic system of sacrifice was symbolic in relation to the Church that then was, and typical in relation to the Church of the future. We can scarcely miss the teaching of the enactment before us, if only we seek to interpret it with reverent and loyal hearts. Surely it taught two things in the region of law, and also two things in the sphere of grace. The former were: 1. That in the eye of the All-pure One, every moral flaw or defect was an offence, and therefore could not be accepted by him. 2. That as man was guilty before God, he could not, on the reckoning of bare law, be well-pleasing in the eyes of a righteous Being, to whom all evil was an abomination. The latter were: 1. That a flawless sacrifice was to be selected and offered to God by, and in the name, and on the behalf of, the guilty one. 2. That such flawless sacrifice, if offered in sincerity and penitence of spirit, would be accepted on his behalf. Now, we are not left to interpret the type as best we may, nor are we called on to offer the symbolic sacrifice. The antitype has come. The reality is ours. And an inspired interpretation of ancient rites is given us by apostles and prophets of our Lord and Saviour (cf. Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19; Eph. v. 27; 2 Pet. iii. 14; Jude 24; Rev. xiv. 5). With such teaching before us, we can see a sixfold significance in our text.

I HERE IS A DIVINE APPEAL TO THE CONSCIENCE. It says, in language which ought never to be mistaken, "the least speck of sin is an offence to God;" and guilty man cannot, on the ground of his own right, have any standing-ground for an instant before him. It is said that in the later days of the Jewish economy, when the offerer brought his sacrifice, the slaughterer (who was other than the priest) took a two-edged knife and ran it from the nape of the neck down the spine, laying it bare. Not unfrequently this would disclose a dark spot: this was a blemish; the animal was unfit for sacrifice, and had to be cast away. Hence the allusion in Heb. iv. 12, which, so understood, has in it marvellous power. For this blemish did not appear on the surface, it came not out to the light till the spinal marrow was exposed to view. Hence, see Heb. iv. 13, specially the marvellous phrase, "*πάντα δὲ γυμνὰ καὶ τετραχηλισμένα,*" κ.τ.λ. Every creature is "opened" unto the eyes of him with whom is our account. And though exterior conduct may be such as to commend itself to the eye of man, yet in the "marrow" of one's being there may be a sin which is an offence to God. May be? There *is*. There are sins upon sins, and there is sinfulness, which is the root and ground of all. And hence it must be the case that *sinful man has no right, on the ground of his own merits, to expect acceptance before God.* This is the very ground-work of evangelical theology. It is said, "Pectus facit theologum," but we would say rather (as has been remarked to us), "Conscientia facit theologum;" for only as this appeal to the conscience is felt, will the after-appeals properly tell.

II. HERE IS A DIVINE INVITATION TO FAITH. There was to be a sacrifice chosen, without blemish, which was to be presented by and on behalf of the offerer (John i. 29). God has provided a Lamb for a burnt offering, and for a sin offering too (Isa. liii. 6; 2 Cor. v. 21). (For a discussion of the grounds on which the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all could be valid for the race, see Dale on the Atonement, sect. x.) Suffice it here to say that this offering had the dignity of a Divine Sacrifice,

the appropriateness of a human one, and the "sweet-smelling savour" of a perfectly pure one. Besides which it had all the spontaneity of a voluntary offering, and all the generosity of a noble self-surrender for the sake of others; in making which the Redeemer was satisfied. And this offering which infinite love has made, loving faith may take and call its own; and abandoning all pretence to a standing-ground in native right, it may find an everlastingly firm one in sovereign grace!

III. HERE IS A DIVINE CALL TO PENITENCE. The sacrifice was to be offered with confession of sin (see Lev. xvi. 21). All the several ordinances which were spread over different sacrificial services in Israel, find their varied significances grouped in one, in the attitude of the sinner before the cross of his Saviour. Well might Watts write, "My faith would lay her hand," etc. While we accept the Divine Sacrifice for sin, penitential confession over sin should ever mark us (see Ps. li.).

IV. HERE IS A DIVINE DEMAND FOR RECTITUDE OF HEART. When we bring our offerings to the Lord, no defect should be knowingly tolerated by us. Grace gives no warrant to laxity, and true penitence will be scrupulously intolerant of it (Ps. lxvi. 18). The freeness of pardon to the penitent involves no modification of ethical stringency, for the fact is, wherever there is any known tolerance of ill, to that extent penitence does not exist. God puts away sin by forgiving it, only as we put it away by repenting of it and casting it off.

V. HERE IS A DIVINE SUMMONS TO DEVOTION. Jesus died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. And where a man, sorry for sin, intolerant of the evil in his nature, struggling against it, and pleading with God to uproot it, casts himself before God in this genuine uprightness of soul, none of the imperfections over which he mourns shall prevent the Divine acceptance of such an offering, presented, as it will be, in the name of the spotless Son of God. The virtue of his spotless sacrifice ensures the acceptance of ours. Every true and sincere penitent is, on this ground of free grace and dying love, as well-pleasing to God and as near to his heart as the purest angel before the eternal throne. The offering to God of a broken and a contrite heart is one which he cannot and will not despise (see also Heb. xiii. 15, 16).

VI. HERE IS A DIVINE PROPHECY, TO INSPIRE HOPE. These sacrifices of ours, offered in penitence, faith, and love, are still but imperfect. And the holiest souls are most alive to such imperfection, and most sorrowful over it. Hence it should be no small joy to find in the Word of God precisely the same expressions used to express the future purity of believers that are employed to indicate the perfection of the Redeemer's sacrifice. As the one Great Sacrifice was "without blemish and without spot," so all those who are themselves living sacrifices to God, shall be "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." He who received them at first on the ground of his own purity, shall create in them a spotlessness like his own. They shall be "without fault" before the throne of God. And he who died for them shall then present them as his own!

Have we not here (in conclusion) a remarkable illustration of what the Apostle Paul so often speaks of as "the righteousness of God"? Each one of these six steps is a fresh aspect of it. The first shows the righteousness of God in taking cognizance of sin; the second, the righteousness of God in offering a spotless sacrifice for sin; the third, the righteousness of God in requiring penitential acknowledgment of sin; the fourth, the righteousness of God in demanding intolerance of sin; the fifth, the righteousness of God in accepting our consecration in the name of a Sinless One, only when we penitently put away sin; the sixth, the righteousness of God in ensuring that those who are living sacrifices to him shall ultimately be perfectly freed from all sin! Thus from beginning to end "grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." "Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us *faultless* before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—"*The Lord's release.*" The sabbatic year was in many respects a year of mercy to the poor. The beautiful name given to it here—"the Lord's release"—suggests

gospel ideas. It finds its higher counterpart in that "acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 19), which is the true "Lord's release." Christ came "to preach the gospel to the poor," and "to preach deliverance to the captives" (Luke iv. 18). This "accepted time" is the period of God's forbearance with our sins (2 Cor. v. 19; vi. 2). It is the time also of forgiveness of sins to those who believe—a "Lord's release" indeed, not from money debts, but from spiritual ones (Matt. vi. 12), not temporary, but eternal. It is the time of the setting free of bondsmen—Satan's captives—those held in thrall by evil (Rom. vi. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 26). We are taught by this law—

I. THAT THE POOR HAVE A CLAIM ON THE FORBEARANCE OF THE RICH. (Vers. 1—5.) Such a claim will willingly be recognized by the loving heart. It will shrink from pushing hard on any one. It will put itself in the debtor's place, and bear with him as long as possible. This was the lesson enforced by the law of "the release." It secured for the poor debtor a whole year of grace. It interposed a check upon the creditor's selfishness, and rebuked him if disposed to press hard upon his brother. It did more, testifying by its very existence to God's sympathy with the poor, and to his desire that they should be mercifully treated. The harshly exacting spirit, however common, is not God's or Christ's (Matt. xviii. 23—35). It is assumed, of course, that the case of poverty is genuine. There is no evidence that, even during the sabbatic year, the creditor was not entitled to recover his debt from a man well able to pay it.

II. THAT THE POOR HAVE A CLAIM ON THE ASSISTANCE OF THE RICH. (Vers. 7—12.) Assistance goes beyond forbearance. The Law requires, not simply that lenders of money should not be harsh and unforbearing in exacting its repayment, but that, where need exists, they should be willing, nay forward, to render such assistance as is in their power. Honest poverty—for such only is in contemplation—creates a claim which those "having this world's good" (1 John iii. 17) are not at liberty to disregard. Heart and hand are to be alike open to the cry of distress. The giving is to be: (1) liberal; (2) ungrudging; (3) disinterested (cf. Matt. v. 42). Note: 1. Liberal assistance in a time of need is worth many doles spread over a longer period. 2. Assistance, where practicable, should be given in the form of loans. This is the idea of the law, and it is in harmony with the best modern opinion. Loans are preferable to simple charity; they do not pauperize; they develop the principle of self-help, encourage diligence and thrift, and foster the spirit of honest independence. Those who cannot be helped save by gratuities must, of course, be helped cheerfully.

III. THAT LIBERALITY TO THOSE IN NEED TENDS TO OUR OWN ENRICHMENT. (Vers. 4—7, 10.) No truly liberal man will make this the motive of his liberality. But as a secondary encouragement to liberal giving, and as removing fears of the possible results to one's own fortunes, it deserves to be considered. The liberal soul is usually not the loser, but the gainer, by its liberality. Selfishness defeats itself. Subtle spiritual laws operate to produce this result. 1. Liberality reacts upon the soul itself to ennoble and expand its powers. This tends in the direction of enrichment. 2. The liberal man is loved and trusted. He gets kindness shown him for his kindness to others (Luke vi. 30—39). He is one whom neighbours and friends are always willing to serve, and to speak a good word for. 3. God's blessing is upon him (vers. 4, 10). Through that blessing he is prospered. He divides and conquers. By opening his hand liberally, he gets more than he parts with. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth," etc. (Prov. xi. 24, 25).—J. O.

Ver. 11.—*The poor in the land.* The meaning is that there will always be greater or less scope for the exercise of the virtues of kindness and liberality,—that it is vain to hope for a Utopian condition of society in which there shall be absolutely no poor.

I. THIS DOES NOT IMPLY: 1. That many existing causes of poverty cannot be permanently removed. 2. That every attempt ought not to be made to reduce poverty within its narrowest limits. The saying, "Ye have the poor always with you" (Matt. xxvi. 11), is no utterance of fatalism. Much can be done to reduce poverty. With the growth of society, still more as a result of the spread of Christian principles, numbers of the causes of poverty now existing may be expected to disappear (idleness, intemperance, bad laws, merciless competition, class antagonisms, unfavourable sanatory conditions, etc.).

II. IT DOES IMPLY: 1. That under the most favourable conditions of existence on

earth a residuum of poverty is still to be looked for. (1) There are *diversities of talents*. There will always be those whose abilities only fit them for the humblest positions in society. And these may be left friendless, or health may fail them, or they may live to old age, and become dependent. (2) There are *vicissitudes of fortune*. These come to the most fortunate of men, reducing them oftentimes to great straits. And it is too much to expect that, even under millennial conditions, the causes of such vicissitudes will altogether cease to operate. 2. That while poverty lasts, it is our duty to help to bear its burden. Poverty, in a state of society such as we anticipate as the goal of history, need never be the painful thing it is now. With loving hearts, and hands ready to help, its sting will be taken away.—J. O.

Vers. 12—19.—*Bondmen.* No argument in favour of modern slave-holding can be drawn from Hebrew bond-service. The Hebrew bondmen, unlike modern slaves, were incorporated as part of the nation; had legal rights; took part in the religious feasts; if mutilated or injured, thereby obtained their freedom. On the sabbatic year the Hebrew bondman regained his freedom, going out, not simply free, but loaded with presents. We learn—

I. THE NATURAL RIGHT OF MAN TO HIS FREEDOM. (Vers. 12, 13.) Freedom is man's birthright. It cannot be bartered. He must not be robbed of it by violence. If from temporary causes the use of it is lost, the right itself is not destroyed. So the Jews were taught by the return of every Hebrew to his freedom in the seventh year. It is a primary and unalienable right of man, which here, like underlying rock, juts to the surface.

II. THE RIGHT OF SERVANTS TO EQUITABLE AND GENEROUS TREATMENT. (Vers. 13—16.) Bondmen were not to be regarded as mere "hands," still less as chattels. They were to be kindly treated, and dismissed with presents. It is a principle of equity which comes to light in ver. 18. We may apply it to modern times by saying that if servants are worth more to us than their wages, it is but fair that they should participate in profits. The principle is already being recognized, and has in it the germ of the solution of many difficult problems in political economy.

III. THAT LOVE IS THE TRUE RECONCILER OF SERVICE AND FREEDOM. (Vers. 17, 18.) It made the service no service—no real bond-service. Compare Jacob's service for Rachel (Gen. xxix. 20). Were the law of love to rule more than it does in the relations of servants and masters, of employers and employed, it would greatly sweeten trade, commerce, manufactures, and domestic life. There are doubtless faults on the side of servants as well as of masters—but how seldom is any earnest attempt made to break down feelings of antagonism, and to bring in healthier relations! The law of Christ is the true cure for strikes, lock-outs, combinations, etc. Apply to the service of God in Christ. Law here, but also love, and through the love freedom in obedience. The highest freedom is in obedience to the law of holiness.—J. O.

Vers. 19—23.—*The firstlings.* The solution of the apparent discrepancy between this passage and Numb. xviii. 18 seems to lie in the custom of inviting the worshippers to share in the feasts provided by their offerings. View the sanctification of the firstlings as symbolical. 1. *Of God's claim on the first and choicest of what we have for his own service.* (1) Of our property. (2) Of our affections. (3) Of our powers of body and mind. 2. *Of God's right to redeemed life.* The firstlings were redeemed by God for himself on the memorable night of the deliverance from Egypt (Exod. xiii. 12). God claims redeemed life as peculiarly his own (Isa. xliii. 1—4; 1 Cor. vi. 20). 3. *Of God's right to young life.* A symbol of early consecration. 4. *Of happy fellowship with God.* The fellowship was a fruit of the dedication of the best.—J. O.

Vers. 1—6.—*The year of forgiveness.* We have here what we may call the "poor law" of Palestine. The poor were to be regarded as "brethren," they were to be treated as neighbours, as members of the one society. Money was to be lent them to give them a start in life (vers. 7—11), and if they were unable to repay it by the seventh or sabbatic year, they were to be forgiven the debt, "to the end that there be no poor among you" (ver. 4, margin). Usury was thus discouraged between brethren. Loans were to be acts of generosity, and the idea was distinctly to be kept in view that

a person should sometimes lend, "expecting nothing again." With foreigners, that is, those not of "the household of faith," it might be different; the debt need not in this case be cancelled; the year of release was a Divine institution for the people of God. The Jews were intended, if obedient, to be creditors of the world, and debtors to none; and the poor brother was to have the joy in the sabbatic year of being forgiven.

I. THE DUTY OF FORGIVENESS WAS PRESCRIBED TO ALL THE BRETHREN. In fact, this poor law was the proclamation of the "brotherhood" of believers in the one God. Upon this forgiveness of debt was based. The creditor was to realize how much more blessed it is to give than to receive (Acts xx. 35); how blessed it is to be able to help a brother! Had the Jews been faithful, the parable of the good Samaritan would not have been such a wonder. It was just the spirit fostered by this institution of the year of release.

Now, this duty of forgiveness of the debts of brethren arises out of the forgiving character of God. As the common Father of these brethren in the faith, he inculcates forgiveness because he practises it. The experience of Israel in the wilderness was of a series of Divine forgivenesses, even though in forgiving them he took vengeance on their inventions (Ps. xcix. 8). And the beautiful parable about the two debtors (Matt. xviii. 23—35) is really meant to bring out the truth that *unforgivingness* is a violation of the family spirit encouraged by the king, and is the unpardonable sin.

II. THE IDEAL SET BEFORE THEM WAS TO BE THE EXTIRPATION OF POVERTY IN THE FAMILY OF GOD. It would most probably never be reached, but it is well to be aiming at the high and the noble, even though it may not be all attained. The marginal reading in ver. 4, which has received the *imprimatur* of Jonathan Edwards ('Works,' Tegg's edition of 1860, vol. ii. p. 164), brings out the beautiful aim thus set before Israel. The effort was to be to make Jewish poverty impossible. The same idea seized on the mind of the Church after Pentecost, leading to the trial of a *Christian commune*, wherein for a time it could be said, "Neither was there any among them that lacked" (Acts iv. 34). Poverty was for a time at least banished from the Christian Church. These strivings after an ideal shall be crowned at last with success when under the new *régime*, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat" (Rev. vii. 16).

III. THE OBEDIENT ARE INTENDED TO MAKE ALL MEN THEIR DEBTORS. The Lord promises his people, if they are only obedient, that they shall lend to many nations, but shall not borrow (ver. 6). It is sometimes thought to be a special benefit when a person can contract debt from all and sundry, his credit being so good. But it surely is a higher benefit to be in a position to *oblige everybody*. This is what God meant his people to be. Surrounding nations were to borrow from them, and own their indebtedness. And has not this a moral and spiritual side? The religious spirit is the *obliging* spirit, the spirit which hails with delight the opportunity of "doing good unto all men, especially unto such as are of the household of faith."

IV. IT IS THE SECRET OF SOVEREIGNTY TO BE ABLE TO OBLIGE OTHERS. For it is significant surely that the Israelites are told, immediately after the promise of being able to lend unto many nations, "and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee" (ver. 6). Rule arises out of obligation. Influence is acquired when we are able to befriend others. Doubtless many of the conquests of Israel were by *force* rather than by *finance;* but it is the peaceful acquisition of power that a Divine promise contemplates, and we begin to rule as "kings and priests unto God" when we become thoroughly obliging. It is thus love and loyalty are secured among men.

Thus we have in this arrangement of the year of release principles laid down that God has illustrated himself in his considerate and forgiving conduct towards us, and in which we are to try to follow him.—R. M. E.

Vers. 7—11.—*Open-handedness.* Having inculcated the forgiveness of a brother's debts during the sabbatic year, Moses now proceeds to speak of the open-handedness which should precede that year. It might be made a pretext for refusing a poor brother a helping hand that the year was almost on when the debt would be cancelled legally; but to make this a pretext for niggardliness would only betray wickedness of heart. The most beautiful consideration is thus inculcated for the poor; and as "the poor

shall never cease out of the land," there will be the call evermore for this open-handedness. Now this poor-law regulation is a most beautiful illustration of what God does for us; and something like it will yet supersede the hard-heartedness of our national systems.

I. GENEROSITY SHOULD NOT BE TOO CALCULATING IN ITS TURN. Doubtless, oftentimes it receives a noble return, but this should not be too much regarded, lest the speculative spirit mar the motive altogether. Nor again should we harden our hearts under the persuasion that our generosity is misspent, and that we shall never be repaid in any way. God has himself shown us true generosity in making his sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good, and in sending his rain upon the unjust as well as the just. And hence we are exhorted to "lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke vi. 35). There is something noble in an uncalculating generosity.

II. IT IS THE NEED OF THE POOR BROTHER WHICH WE ARE BOUND TO SUPPLY. That is, we are asked to supply him not with the luxuries or comforts of life, as if to these he had a right; but with his needs. The open-handedness will be considerate so far as not to encourage unworthy dependence. The brother will be helped in a brotherly way—enabled to help himself, and having his needs only supplied. This principle has been urged in connection with our national poor-law system. If it is lost sight of, then a premium is paid to idleness, and the "ne'er-do-wells" become the favourites of fortune.[1] Our Father in heaven acts in the same wholesome fashion. "He supplies all our *need* according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." He supplies us with salvation because we cannot save ourselves; he supplies us with what enables us to help ourselves. He could keep the whole world in idleness, "ladies and gentlemen at large," but he prefers to keep the whole world in work. Our reliance on God is for our need.

III. OPEN-HANDEDNESS FOR GOD'S SAKE IS SURE OF ITS REWARD. "The liberal soul shall be made fat." "He that watereth others shall be watered also himself." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." In this way the Lord showeth in both dispensations how "he loveth a cheerful giver." When a religious man, acting on principle, lives an open-handed life, he has the finest business stimulus. He works that he may have the more to give, and thus be the more God-like. There is nothing so hallows business in all its ramifications as this desire to be able to help those in need.

IV. IT IS A SOLEMN THOUGHT THAT THE POOR ARE NEVER TO CEASE OUT OF THE LAND IN THE PRESENT DISPENSATION. The unequal distribution of wealth, the improvident habits of many, and the pressure of population upon subsistence seem destined to keep the poor always with us. And in consequence our Saviour stepped out of his rich condition in the bosom and home of the Father and became poor, that he might call every poor man a brother, and leave the poor his legatees after his departure. We need the spectacle of poverty to move our hard hearts to the generosity required. Were abundance the rule, and no human being wanted bread, the selfishness of the race would know no bounds. But the poor ones call for the sympathy which Jesus so abundantly deserves, and we can now sell our spikenard and give to them with all the careful calculation which a Judas once desired (John xii. 1—8).

Let our help to others be systematic, because conscientious, and then shall it prove a perennial rill, benefiting the lives of many as it wends its way down the vale of years to the ocean that engulfs us all.—R. M. E.

Vers. 12—18.—*The freedom of the slave.* The seventh year was the year of *personal* release as well as release from debt. Slavery among the Jews was utterly unlike the slavery of modern times. It arose when a Jew became bankrupt; he might then sell his services to his creditor, and pay off his debt by honest work. But beyond *six* years his service need not continue. As soon as the sabbatic year came round he could claim his liberty. In such a case, his master is counselled to be generous when he goes,

[1] Cf. J. S. Mill's 'Political Economy,' bk. V. ch. xi. § 13; also 'The Letters and other Writings of the Late Edward Denison, M.P.,' p. 63, etc.

that he may have something with which to begin the world again. "Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him." On the other hand, if the service was so delightful to him that he would rather not leave, it was allowable to bore his ear through with an awl, that he might be recognized as a servant for ever.

I. LIBERTY IS RECOGNIZED IN GOD'S LAW AS EACH MAN'S RIGHT. It may be conditioned upon certain services, just as the liberty of Israel was conditioned upon God's redemption of them from Egypt; but come at last it will. No property in *persons* is recognized, merely in *services* for a certain definite period. Man-stealing, as we know from Exod. xxi. 16, was a capital crime, punishable with death, so that there is really no warrant in the Jewish institution for modern slavery.[1] Under Jewish law no involuntary servitude was allowed; and there was always the right to freedom in the sabbatic year.

And is there not underlying this arrangement for each man's liberty an under-tone of gospel truth? What is the gospel but a great provision for conferring spiritual liberty upon those who have sold themselves to sin, and are in bondage? The present dispensation is, in fact, the sabbatic year, wherein liberty is preached to the captives (Isa. lxi. 1, 2; Luke iv. 17, 18).

II. FREEDOM WAS TO BE CONFERRED IN A SPIRIT OF GENEROUS JOY. The ransomed one was not to be sent out empty-handed, but furnished liberally. Emancipation was not to be given with a grudge, but to be granted with joy and love-tokens besides. It was not to be something in which the master reluctantly acquiesced, but in which he gladly co-operated. In fact, God's joy in emancipating Israel from Egypt was to be the type of the joy of the Jewish master in liberating the slave.

And here again we have the type of the spiritual joy which the emancipation of souls should ensure in all who help therein. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." When he "drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing" (Luke xv. 10—25). No joy should be so deep as this of helping the slaves of sin to spiritual freedom.

III. LOVE ALONE COULD MAKE SERVICE PERPETUAL. For it is supposable that sometimes a slave found himself so happy with his master, especially if the master had made him his son-in-law (Exod. xxi. 4, 5), that he preferred slavery with love to liberty with separation. In such a case it was allowed him to have his ear bored and to become a perpetual slave, because a son. Such a service was indeed perfect freedom, because its spirit and motive were devotedness and love.

And it is this which is taken in Ps. xl. 6 as the prophetic type of the relation of Jesus Christ to his Father. He became by voluntary and loving contract the Father's Servant or Slave for ever. He found his service such a delight that liberty and independence could not be thought of.

And in this we surely follow in his steps. We are the Lord's slaves after having become the Lord's freemen. He delivers us from the slavery of sin, and then he introduces us to his service; and lo, we find it so blessed that we insist on our ears being bored, and our being made his slaves for ever. Now obedience is the slavery of love. When Law is delighted in, it is a "law of liberty," and the soul feels freedom perfect "under Law."

"Anywhere with Jesus, says the Christian heart;
Let him take me where he will, so we do not part;
Always sitting at his feet, there's no cause for fears;—
Anywhere with Jesus in this vale of tears.

"Anywhere with Jesus, though he leadeth me
Where the path is rough and long, where the dangers be;
Though he taketh from me all I love below,
Anywhere with Jesus will I gladly go.

* * * * *

[1] For a specious defence of slavery, cf. Thornwell's 'Collected Writings,' vol. iv. pp. 379—436; for the other side of the question, see Cheever's 'God Against Slavery,' especially ch. xiv., xv., xvi., xvii.

"Anywhere with Jesus, for it cannot be
Dreary, dark, or desolate where he is with me;
He will love me always, every need supply;—
Anywhere with Jesus, should I live or die."

R. M. E.

Vers. 19—23.—*The firstlings for God.* The firstlings which were males were not to be reared for work, but kept for communion. They were to constitute, if perfect, a peace offering before God; if imperfect, they were to be eaten at home, imperfect fellowship between imperfect persons. Just as in the firstfruits God claimed the first share; so in the case of the firstlings of the herd or flock, and the firstborn among men.

I. THE BEGINNINGS OF LIFE SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED AS GIFTS OF GOD, AND DEDICATED GRATEFULLY TO HIM. He is the Source of life; hence the firstlings should be the cause of quiet meditation and acknowledgment. Such increase should be the occasion of special fellowship with God, enlarging gratitude and dictating devotion.

II. IMPERFECTIONS IN GOD'S GIFTS SHOULD BE ACCEPTED BY MEN AS MORE THAN THEY DESERVE. The imperfect firstling, in being made a feast for men only, and not a sacrifice for God as well, seemed to say that, however imperfect God's gift may be sometimes, it should be gratefully accepted as beyond our desert. The blemished, the lame, the blind, when God sends them in his providence, we should not despise, but rather hail them as beyond our desert.

And if this was to be the case in the use of beasts, does it not throw clear light upon our conduct in the case of imperfect men? When children come into this world with any defect, let us not rebel against his will, but cherish the defective gift as reminding us how little we deserve, and by our love give such children compensation.

III. THE DEDICATION OF THE PERFECT FIRSTLING POINTED TO THE CONSECRATED FIRSTBORN, JESUS CHRIST. He is indeed the Firstborn of every creature. To him the firstlings and firstborn pointed. He was dedicated in life and death to the Father. He became the great Peace Offering which makes God and man one. And this suggests—

1. *The Father's delight in Jesus.* How it burst forth from time to time in "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"! What delight in our Lord's life! what satisfaction in his obedience unto death! God well pleased!

2 *Our delight in Jesus.* Jesus becomes the medium of communion. We have him in common with God. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). The more we meditate upon him, the deeper must be our delight.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—11.—*A bulwark against cupidity.* Material prosperity was the only form of blessing that had attractive charm for the Hebrews. Neither mind nor conscience was yet sufficiently developed to value higher good. God had to raise them by slow and successive steps. Material prosperity had its dangerous side. It might foster pride, self-sufficiency, a sense of overweening superiority, and might lead to tyrannous treatment of others. Or, used in devout recognition of God, it might give scope for generous impulses, furnish leisure for intellectual pursuits, aid the culture of the æsthetic arts, diffuse religious knowledge, and practically relieve human distress. The institution of the year of release was designed to serve as a flood-gate, by which the tide of material wealth might be turned into the fittest channel.

I. MATERIAL WEALTH, WITH ITS CONCURRENT POWER, WAS A FRUIT OF RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE. (Vers. 4, 5.) The acquisition of wealth is the effect of law. It does not follow an erratic course. If we can see the operation of fixed law in nature and in human life, we are constrained to believe that law (whether discovered or undiscovered) operates in getting wealth. In the case of the Hebrews, the law of earthly success was clearly revealed. In return for loyal obedience to Divine command, the soil should be fertile; early and latter rain should descend; a salutary awe should restrain the neighbouring tribes from predatory raids; the seasons should be auspicious; there should be plenty for man and for cattle. Still it is true that the "hand of the diligent maketh rich;" "them that honour me I will honour;" "godliness is profitable

unto all things." Yet earthly prosperity is not the badge of piety. Many of God's saints are in the ranks of the poor. Imprudent courses, though pursued by the righteous, end in disaster. Prudent courses in business, assiduously pursued, even by the profane, terminate in worldly success.

II. MATERIAL WEALTH IS VERY UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED AMONG MEN. Some men are creditors; some are debtors. Some begin life in affluence; some begin in poverty. Such varieties of human circumstance are best. They teach that the same hand that has fashioned material nature has moulded the externals of human life. Such a plan affords variety of occupation and pursuit. The poor are benefited by the "learned leisure" of the rich; the rich are benefited by the industry of the poor. Men require quiet freedom from bodily toil to investigate and to invent; men require the stimulus of hunger to perform arduous labour. It is a mutual benefit; the rich are as much indebted to the poor, as the poor to the rich. We learn also that material wealth is not the highest good that God has to bestow, or he would put it within every man's reach. It is but a visible symbol of invisible treasure.

III. MATERIAL WEALTH IS INTENDED FOR MUTUAL HELPFULNESS. It was never intended to be hoarded in caves or coffers. The possession of wealth carries an obligation to render high service to humanity. This very obligation to do good prevents an indiscriminate scattering of wealth. Simple communism would be an immeasurable curse. The industry and self-restraint which enable one nation to lend to another nation, give to the former immense influence and wholesome power. We are to distinguish between the objects of our help. We are not to treat brothers and fellow-citizens as we may aliens and strangers. We may exact from foreigners what, for a time, we have lent; but towards a fellow-citizen we should be lenient and indulgent, remembering that all wealth belongs absolutely to God. There is a volume of instruction in the fact that the Hebrews were restrained from parsimony by a Divine Law. Thus were they taught that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Generosity strengthens the sense of brotherhood.

IV. THE WEALTH THAT CLOSES THE HEART AGAINST CHARITY BECOMES AN ACTIVE CURSE. (Ver. 9.) It is possible to abuse the most beneficent law of God or man. This very provision of God that, at the end of the septennial period, release should be afforded to all debtors, might become very prejudicial to the interests of the poor. The approach of the sabbatic year might make the Hebrew capitalists parsimonious and close-fisted. "Beware of *this!*" saith God. "Such an act will be an act of unfaithfulness to me." Jehovah has constituted himself the Guardian of the poor. His eye is upon their straits; his ear is open to their cry. And if his stewards fail to fulfil their mission, to them it will be accounted sin. Thus we are taught to take large and extended views of human life. We are integral parts of a great system. Our conceptions of life must stretch beyond the narrow confines of time. We should aspire to think and feel and act as God does. *This* is God's great ambition, and for *this* he is now training us.—D.

Vers. 12—18.—*Slaves to be regarded as brethren.* Quiet revolutions are the most permanent and the most successful. Sudden and violent assaults upon social institutions are sure to provoke reaction. All great changes must commence in the thought and feeling of the people.

I. SOCIAL USAGES, THOUGH EVIL, MUST BE TEMPORARILY TOLERATED. It is difficult to realize the conditions of human life in the earlier ages of the world. Many found a livelihood, by the use of the sword and by violent plunder. The honest poor found very precarious opportunities for labour. Coin was almost unknown, and therefore wages must be paid in the form of food and raiment. Amid these circumstances, personal servitude became almost a necessity. It was a social usage liable to great abuse, and gradually degenerated into a system of evil oppression. Yet, as God patiently tolerates on his earth so many forms of evil, and quietly provides his remedy, so we should learn, not to connive at evil, but patiently to endure it, until a real remedy can be set in motion.

II. JEWISH SLAVERY WAS CURTAILED BY LIMITS OF TIME. In this way the back of the burden was broken. The bondage, which must terminate within a fixed period, was endurable. It inspired the oppressed with hope. It checked the violence of the

oppressor. The slave-holder, if severely exacting, would earn an unenviable reputation, and every device would be resorted to by the emancipated to avoid that man's service. His lands might remain untilled, his flocks neglected, his vineyards unpruned, because of his oppressive treatment of former slaves. Divine wisdom had fixed this short term of service as a barrier against human cruelty.

III. JEWISH SLAVERY WAS FURTHER RELIEVED BY A SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY. It is possible to show a spirit of kindness everywhere. If we have an unpleasant duty to perform, firmness may be always tempered with kindness. God would not allow the Hebrews to deal with their bondmen on terms of mere justice. They were not permitted to extort all that was in the bond. To make the largest possible gain out of human flesh and blood was strictly prohibited. They might continue the usage of slavery for a time, but the system should be relieved and penetrated and embellished by acts of kindness. The day of release was not to be a day of mourning for the masters. They were to share in the gladness of the emancipated, to send them away laden with flocks and with fruit. In proportion as had been the industry and fidelity of the bondman, would be (unless his master were a brute) the bountiful reward. This new spirit of fraternal benevolence would speedily undermine and overthrow the old usage of slavery. Such is God's process of change.

IV. GENEROUS KINDNESS MIGHT SECURE THE LIFELONG SERVICE OF THE SLAVE. There was no necessity that the condition of the bondman should be one of hardship. Love might surmount all custom, rise above law, and transcend all considerations of gain. The spirit of religion can find its way down to the root of all wrong, eradicate all the evils that curse society, and make human life beautiful as heaven. In the very midst of slavery, it is possible for love to operate, to soften asperities, and lighten burdens. To this practical affection the hearts of slaves would soon respond. Their service would rise in quality, and would increase in indefinite measure. Kindness is a most remunerative investment. And at the close of the term of service, many a bondman would decline his freedom, and prefer the service of such a master for the possible drawbacks and risks of liberty.

V. REMEMBRANCE OF OUR OWN OBLIGATION SHOULD MAKE US INDULGENT TO OTHERS. (Ver. 15.) If adversity has not made us tender-hearted, it has been wasted upon us. God has redeemed us from the bondage of sin, and redeemed us at costly price, and it is plain that we do not prize our redemption if we oppress others. The love of our heart, which God rightly claims for himself, he commands us to express in the form of practical kindness. God has identified his interests with the interests of humanity, so that we either promote both or neither.—D.

Vers. 19—23.—*The first for God.* As God is supreme, so his claim to recognition and obedience must have consideration prior to all other claims. Such priority is his indefeasible right; such priority best subserves the interests of men. The first day of the week he claims and hallows; the firstfruits of the soil he claims for religious offering; the first place in our affections he asks as his due; the firstborn, both of man and of beast, he marks as his own. This is his royalty.

I. THE REPRODUCTIONS OF LIFE A CONTINUOUS CREATION OF GOD. It is acknowledged on every side that life can only spring from life. No arrangements of material atoms—no processes of chemical change with which men are acquainted—can produce life. It is a force unique in itself, and can only rationally be traced to the creative power of a personal God. The potency to reproduce life, which God has placed in all the species, is as clearly a demonstration of his creative energy as if he manifestly and alone created each individual being. We cannot escape from the conclusion that he is sole Life-giver. "I kill," saith God, "and I make alive."

II. THE CLAIM ON THE FIRSTBORN ALONE IS A CONCESSION OF THE FULLEST RIGHTS OF GOD. He has a rightful proprietorship in all life. But he allows to man, as his liege vassal, dominion over the inferior races of his creatures. Acknowledgment of man's subjection must, however, be made; tribute must be paid to the Heavenly King. This arrangement is an act of combined justice and kindness. For man's highest good, he must be kept in perpetual remembrance of his dependence and his obligation. If the springs of gratitude in man's nature should dry up, his loss would be immeasurable. Every memorial we have of God is a gospel.

III. GOD'S CLAIM AND MAN'S ENJOYMENT ARE IDENTICAL. This devotement of the firstlings to God was no real loss: it was every way a blessing. It cherished in them a feeling of filial dependence. It took them up to the temple, year by year, and so brought them into close contact with eternal things. It served to link religion with the commonest affairs of daily life. It taught them that God found a pleasure in their enjoyments, and that his commandments were promotive of real delight. Thus the acts of Jehovah's worship were not identified with fasting and austerity, but with eating and drinking in the sacred temple. The pleasure was all the greater because it was social. In the banquet and festivity the whole household partook.

IV. IMPERFECT SACRIFICES PROHIBITED. Very evident is it that this demand of the firstborn was designed for spiritual instruction. However great God's care for our bodily life appears, his desire for our souls' well-being is immeasurably greater. By such visible and impressive methods God sought to teach the Jews that perfection of nature was God's design, and that such perfection would alone find a place in his heavenly temple. The best feelings and aspirations of our nature yearn after perfection. Nothing less will satisfy the mind of God; nothing less will satisfy us. "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness."

V. YET BLEMISHED LIFE IS BETTER THAN BARRENNESS. A lame or a blemished lamb—a firstborn—was not utterly useless. It served as food for man, it sustained human life. But it was deprived of the honour of being devoted to God. Imperfect service is not altogether useless in the world. If we do a kindness to a neighbour, though no love to God prompt the deed, some good will result. Continuance in good deeds will gradually lead to better feelings and to nobler purposes. He who serves well his fellow-men now, will ere long learn to serve God. Let us ever follow the best sentiments which arise within, though yet very imperfect.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER FESTIVAL, THE FEAST OF PENTECOST AND OF TABERNACLES. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND PREVENTION OF IDOLATRY.

Vers. 1—17.—(Comp. Exod. xxiii. 14—19; xxxiv. 18, 22—26; Lev. xxiii. On the Passover, see Exod. xii.; xiii. 3—10.) The other great festivals of the Israelites, the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, are not here referred to, because on these no assembling of the whole people at the sanctuary was required, and such assembling is the point of view under which the feasts are mainly regarded here.

Vers. 1—7.—*The Feast of the Passover.*

Vers. 1, 2.—**The month of Abib** (cf. Exod. xii. 2; xxiii. 15). The time is referred to as a date well known to the people. **Keep the passover**; *make* (עֲשֵׂה) *or prepare the passover.* This injunction refers primarily to the preparation of the Paschal lamb for a festal meal (Numb. ix. 5); but here it is used in a wider sense as referring to the whole Paschal observance, which lasted for seven days. Hence the mention of sheep (צאן) and oxen (בָּקָר) in ver. 2, and the reference to the eating of unleavened bread for seven days "therewith," *i.e.* with the Passover. The animal for the Paschal supper was expressly prescribed to be a yearling of the sheep or of the goats (שֶׂה), and this was to be consumed at one meal; but on the other days of the festival the flesh of other animals offered in sacrifice might be eaten. The term "Passover" here, accordingly, embraces the whole of the festive meals connected with the Passover proper—what the rabbins call *chagigah* (Maimon., in 'Korban Pesach,' c. x. § 12; cf. 2 Chron. xxxv. 7, etc.).

Ver. 3.—**Bread of affliction**; bread such as is prepared in circumstances of trial and pressure, when there is no time or opportunity for the application of all the means required for the preparation of bread of the better sort. The Israelites had in haste and amid anxiety to prepare the Passover meal on the evening of their flight from Egypt, and so had to omit the leavening of their bread; and this usage they had to observe during the seven days of the festival in subsequent times, to remind them of the oppression the nation had suffered in Egypt, and the circumstances of difficulty and peril amidst which their deliverance had been effected.

Ver. 4.—**No leavened bread**; properly, *no leaven* (שְׂאֹר) (cf. Exod. xii. 15). Not only was no leavened bread (מַצָּה) or dough

(חָמֵץ) to be used by them, leaven itself was not to be in the house (cf. 1 Cor. v. 7; see Kitto's 'Cyclop. of Bibl. Lit.,' vol. iii. p. 429).

Vers. 5, 6.—Not in their own houses or places of abode might the Paschal lamb be slain and eaten, but only at the place which the Lord should choose to place his Name there. On the first occasion, while the people were still in Egypt and had no sanctuary or specially holy place where Jehovah's Name was set, the Passover was eaten in their own houses; but when God should choose a place as his sanctuary, only there could the ordinance be observed.

Ver. 7.—**Thou shalt roast.** The verb here primarily signifies to be matured by heat for eating; hence to be ripened as by the sun's heat (Gen. xl. 10; Joel iii. 13; Heb. iv. 13); and to be cooked, whether by boiling, seething, or roasting. Here it is properly rendered by *roast*, as it was thus only that the Paschal lamb could be cooked. **And go unto thy tents;** return to thy place of abode; not necessarily to thy proper home (which might be far distant), but to the place where for the time thou hast thy lodging. The phrase, "thy tents," which originally came into use while as yet Israel had no settled abodes in Canaan, came afterwards to be used as a general designation of a man's home or usual place of abode (cf. 1 Sam. xiii. 2; 2 Sam. xx. 1; 1 Kings viii. 66, etc.).

Ver. 8.—**On the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly.** This is not placed in antithesis to the injunction, **six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread,** as if the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*mazzoth*) lasted only for six days and the seventh was to be devoted to a service of a different kind; it simply prescribes that the seventh day of the festival was to be celebrated by an assembling of the whole of those who had come to the feast; the festival was to be wound up with a day of holy convocation, in which no work was to be done (Lev. xxiii. 36). On all the days unleavened bread was to be eaten, and on the seventh there was besides to be a *solemn assembly to the Lord* (עֲצֶרֶת לַיהוָה), called in Lev. xxiii. 36, "a holy convocation" (מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ).

Vers. 9—12.—*The Feast of Weeks* (cf. Exod. xxiii. 16).

Ver. 9.—**From such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn;** *i.e.* from the commencement of the corn harvest. The seven weeks were to be counted from this terminus; and as the corn harvest began by the presentation of the sheaf of the first-fruits on the second day of the Passover, this regulation as to time coincides with that in Lev. xxiii. 15.

Ver. 10.—This feast was to be kept with sacrificial gifts according to the measure of the free-will offerings of their hand, *i.e.* voluntary offerings which they gave as the Lord had blessed them; nothing was specially prescribed, each was to give of his own free-will as the Lord had prospered him. The word translated "tribute" in the Authorized Version (מַסַּת) occurs only here, and is of doubtful signification. The LXX. render it by *καθὼς*, as, according to; it is identical with the Aramaic מסת, אכסא sufficiency, enough, and may be understood here of the full measure according to which their offerings were to be presented. The **freewill offering of thine hand,** here referred to, belonged to the gifts of burnt offerings, meat offerings, drink offerings, and thank offerings which might be offered at every feast along with the sacrifices prescribed (cf. Lev. xxiii. 38; Numb. xxix. 39). Of the latter no mention is made here, as the law regarding them was already sufficiently proclaimed (Numb. xxviii. and xxix.); and in a popular address it was rather to what depended on the will of the people than to what was imperative by law, that attention had to be directed.

Ver. 11.—**Rejoice before the Lord.** "The expression, *to rejoice before the Lord*, denotes here nothing else than to honour him by sacred songs; comp. Spencer, 'De Legg. Heb. Ritual.,' p. 881, edit. 3" (Hävernick, 'Introd.,' p. 157). **In the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there;** rather, *shall choose*, as in ver. 15.

Vers. 13—15.—*The Feast of Tabernacles*, properly, *Booths* (cf. Lev. xxiii. 33—44; Numb. xxix. 12—38). This feast was to be observed at the end of harvest, after the corn had been gathered into granaries, and the produce of the vineyard had been put through the press. Nothing is added here to the instructions already given respecting this festival; only the observance of it at the appointed sanctuary is enforced, and stress is laid on their making not only their sons and daughters and domestics, but also the Levite, the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger participators in their rejoicings. **Thou shalt surely rejoice;** rather, *thou shalt be wholly joyous;* literally, *rejoicing only;* Rosenm., "*admodum lætus.*"

Vers. 16, 17.—(Cf. Exod. xxiii. 17; xxxiv. 23.) The law is repeated here with the additional clause, "at the place which the Lord shall choose;" and the words, "not empty," are explained to mean with gifts according to the gift of their hands, according to the blessing of Jehovah their God, which he had given them.

Vers. 18—20.—Moses had at an earlier

period appointed judges to settle disputes among the people, and had given instructions to them for the discharge of their duty (Exod. xviii.; Deut. i. 12—18). Whilst the people were in the wilderness, united as one body and under the leadership of Moses, this arrangement was sufficient; but a more extended arrangement would be required when they came to be settled in Canaan and dispersed in towns and villages over the whole land. In prospect of this, Moses here enacts that judges and officers were to be appointed by the people in all their gates, in all their places of residence, which the Lord should give them.

Ver. 18.—**Judges and officers.** The "officers" (*shoterim*, writers) associated with the judges both in the earlier arrangements and in that which was to succeed were secretaries and clerks of court, and acted also as assessors and advisers of the judges. No instruction is given as to the number of judges and officers, or as to the mode of appointing them; nor was this necessary. The former would be determined by the size and population of the place where they were appointed, and the latter would, as a matter of course, follow the method instituted by Moses in the earlier arrangement (see ch. i. 13—15; Exod. xviii. 21—26).

Ver. 19.—(Cf. Exod. xxiii. 6, 8.) **Respect persons** (cf. ch. i. 17). **Pervert the words** [margin, *matters*] **of the righteous**; rather, *the case* or *the cause of the righteous.*

Ver. 20.—**That which is altogether just**; literally, *justice, justice.* The repetition of the word is for the sake of emphasis, as in Gen. xiv. 10, "pits, pits," equal to full of pits.

Vers. 21, 22.—In all states, the highest crime of which the judge has to take note is that of treason against the supreme power; and, under the theocracy, the act most distinctly treasonable was idolatry. In proceeding, therefore, to give some practical admonitions as to the things to be observed in the administration of justice, Moses begins by denouncing and forbidding this most flagrant form of iniquity.

Ver. 21.—**Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees**; *thou shalt not plant*, i.e. place or set up, *an ashêrah of any wood.* The ashêrah was an idol of wood in the form of a pillar, usually placed by the side of the altars of Baal. It was the symbol of Astarte, the great Canaanitish goddess, the companion and revealer of Baal. The two are usually associated in the Old Testament (cf. Judg. ii. 13; vi. 28; 1 Kings xviii. 19; 2 Kings xxiii. 4). The rendering "grove" has been taken from the LXX. and the Vulgate; but that it is an error is evident from 1 Kings xiv. 23; 2 Kings xvii. 10; and Jer. xvii. 2; where the ashêrah is said to be *under* a green tree; and from the use of such words as *make, set up, cause to stand, build*, to denote the action of producing an ashêrah (cf. 1 Kings xiv. 15; xvi. 33; 2 Kings xvii. 16; xvii. 10; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 19; 1 Kings xiv. 23), none of which are appropriate to the planting of a grove. Here, indeed, the word "plant" is used, but this is only because, as the ashêrah was sunk in the earth that it might stand firm, it might be figuratively said to be planted, just as nails driven in are said to be planted (Eccles. xii. 11, where the same verb is used; comp. also Isa. li. 16; Amos ix. 15; Dan. xi. 25).

Ver. 22.—Any **image**; *any pillar*, etc. The Hebrew word (מַצֵּבָה, *mazzebah*) denotes generally any pillar or stone that is set up, whether as a memorial (Gen. xxviii. 18), or as a sign (Exod. xxiv. 4; Isa. xix. 19), or for purposes of utility or ornament (Jer. xliii. 13). Here, as in other passages, it is a pillar or statue set up as an object of worship (cf. 2 Kings iii. 2; x. 26; Hos. x. 1; Micah v. 12).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Feast of the Passover.* (For a reference to the minute points of difference, necessitated by different circumstances, between the first passover and subsequent ones, see art. 'Passover,' in Smith's 'Bibl. Dict.;' see also the Exposition for its historical significance.) We now take for granted that all this is well understood by, and perfectly familiar to, the reader. Our purpose now is to "open up," not its historical meaning, nor even its symbolism for Israel, but its typical intent as foreshadowing gospel truths, showing how in Christ our Passover, and in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as our Passover feast, the far-reaching significance of the offering of the Paschal lamb is most clearly seen.

I. ISRAEL'S PASSOVER HAS ITS ANTITYPE IN CHRIST. So argues the apostle, in 1 Cor. v. 7, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." We cannot but feel here the wondrous

condescension of our God in permitting us to look at aught so sublime as the sacrifice of his dear Son, through the means of aught so humble as the Paschal lamb. Yet it is an infinite mercy that, whatever might so help the conceptions of his children then, and whatever may so aid them now, the Great Father does not disdain to use. 1. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Sacrificial Lamb; so John i. 29; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. He is spoken of as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and is beheld, in the Apocalypse, "a Lamb as it had been slain." He, too, is "without blemish." He was "without sin." In him alone is the ideal of a perfect sacrifice found. 2. The Passover was to be killed without breaking a bone thereof. This was fulfilled in Christ, that men might be aided in seeing the fulfilment of the type, through the close analogy of the treatment; and because "God would permit no dishonour to be done to the body of Christ, after the atoning act was complete" (Halley). 3. The blood of the first Paschal lamb was to be sprinkled on the posts of the doors, signifying that there must be the actual acceptance and application of the atoning blood, and that through the atoning blood so applied we are saved. 4. In the first instance, the lamb was offered without the intervention of a priest. So that, though priesthood was afterwards instituted for a time for educational purposes (Gal. iii.), yet the priest was in no wise necessary to ensure men's acceptance with God. 5. The flesh was to be eaten, in token of fellowship. It was thus "the most perfect of peace offerings," symbolizing and typifying communion with God on the ground of the atoning blood. In all these respects, how very far does the Christian Antitype surpass the Jewish type? Devout hearts may and do love to linger long in meditation on a theme so touching and Divine!

II. CHRISTIANS HAVE THEIR PASSOVER FEAST. 1. *Where?* Here we may be permitted to point out a distinction, which, though obvious enough at first mention thereof, yet is so far lost sight of in some directions, as to lead to serious error. In later times, though the lamb was slain at an altar, yet the feast thereon was at a table. So in heathen sacrifices too, the victim was slain at an altar, the sacrificial feast was at a table. Hence, analogy suggests that the spot where the Victim is slain should be called the altar, but that the sacrificial feast should be at a table. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." The altar here meant is the cross on which the Saviour died. Besides, it is only on the theory that the sacrifice is actually *repeated* at Holy Communion, that there can be any possible warrant for calling the Lord's table an altar. But this theory is absolutely negatived by the statements in Heb. x. 10—14. The Victim was offered once for all on an altar, even the cross; but we partake at the Lord's *table*, of the sacrificial feast. 2. *What is the meaning of the feast?* (1) It is a standing historical declaration of the offering of God's one Great Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. "Ye do show the Lord's death." It is declaration of the historic fact on the part of those to whom that fact is full of richest and most wondrous meaning. For it is the divinest expression of righteousness and of love that the world has ever known. (2) This sacrificial feast is the expression also of a sublime fact on the earthward side, viz. that by virtue of the redeeming efficacy thus continuously proclaimed, there has been formed a new commonwealth of Israel, to which belongs the freedom, immunity, and honour of a kingdom of God (see Eph. ii.). (3) It also seals a fellowship—a fellowship of redeemed souls, who have been bought with a price, and transferred from the kingdom of Satan to that of God's dear Son; in which they are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, having here below a union of hearts which will be perfected in an unseen state. This fellowship is openly sealed by their taking of one bread and drinking one cup. (4) It is a joint pledge of loyalty to the Church's Head and Lord; in renewing their remembrance of his love to them, they seal afresh their pledge of love and allegiance to him. Hence the Lord's Supper came to be called *sacramentum*, the Church's military oath of obedience to her Great Commander. (5) It is a service of thanksgiving. Hence it came to be called *the Eucharist*. The Passover feast was a grateful recall of a mighty deliverance. So is the Christian feast. (6) It is a declaration of hope and expectancy. "Ye do show the Lord's death *till he come*." Believers in Israel were expecting Canaan. We are waiting for the Son of God from heaven to bring us to our heavenly rest (Heb. iv.). 3. *How should the Christian feast*

be kept? i.e. in what spirit? (cf. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8). Three or four suggestions will embody the chief hints hereon thrown out in the written Word. (1) The Passover was to be eaten with unleavened bread. All leaven was to be put away. So are believers to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and of truth. They are "to examine themselves," and so to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. "As the scrupulous Israelites searched with lighted candles every hidden corner and dark recess of their houses for any latent particle of leaven, so let our language be, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart,' etc." (Bush). (2) It was to be eaten with bitter herbs, partly as in remembrance of the hard bondage and bitter sorrows of Egypt, and partly as shadowing forth the need of penitence for sin. We should mingle with our thanksgiving "penitential tears"—

> "And with our joy for pardoned guilt,
> Mourn that we pierced the Lord."

(3) It was to be eaten in a standing posture, as if ready to depart at a moment's warning. Even so we, as we gather round the sacramental board, are but on pilgrimage. We halt awhile to refresh us by the way, but we have, soon as our celebration-day is over, to renew our march in the desert, and to resume the toil and fight. We have not yet come to the rest and inheritance the Lord hath promised to give us. (4) The Apostle Paul says, "Let us keep the feast, not with the leaven of *malice*," etc., *i.e.* not with any ill feeling harboured in the soul, nor with ill actions practised in the life. For it is not only as so much evil in the individual that Paul there regards the κακία and πονηρία, but as so much pervasive leaven in the Church, that, if not cast out, will be its bane, yea, even its ruin (see 1 Cor. x. 16, 17). We should therefore cultivate always, and specially bring to the table of the Lord, a spirit of loving fellowship. So strongly did the early Christians feel this, that they were wont to ask of each other the mutual forgiveness of injuries before observing the sacred feast. And that same spirit of love, so specially incumbent then, should be the prevailing habit of soul with believers towards each other. For are not all redeemed by the same precious blood? Are not all members of one family? If our God loves us so much, in spite of our sins, as to own us as his, should not that shame us into a loving regard for each other in spite of our faults? With one Saviour, one salvation, one faith, one baptism, one hope, one home, well may we strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and to cultivate, in the fellowship of believers at the table of the Lord, the same spirit which alone will pervade the higher fellowship of heaven.

Vers. 9—12.—*The Feast of Weeks, or of Harvest.* (For the varied names given to this Feast of Weeks, see Kurtz, 'Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' pp. 376, *et seq.* For an interesting statement as to the value to Israel of these national gatherings, see Wine's 'Commentaries on the Laws of Moses,' bk. ii. ch. i.) This Feast of Weeks was not commemorative in the same sense as that of the Passover; it was connected, not with a great national epoch, but with the seasons of the year and the times of harvest. The method in which it was to be observed is stated in Lev. xxiii. 10, *et seq.* We find there, and in the various Scripture references to this festival, the following principles indicated. 1. That the Hebrews were to regard the produce of the soil as given to them by the bounty of God. 2. That they were to honour Jehovah by a public thanksgiving for his goodness. 3. That they were to yield the firstfruits to him. 4. That they were to rejoice and be glad before him, for what he was and for what he gave. 5. That they were to recognize the equality before God of master and servant. National festivals were holidays for the labourer, and times when good will and kindliness towards the "stranger, the fatherless, and widow" were to be specially manifested. 6. They were thus to recognize their national unity by showing their joint thankfulness for a common mercy. These festivals would strengthen Israel's feeling of kinship, and these united gatherings before the Lord their God would proclaim, as often as they were held, their separation unto him. 7. Though this was a harvest festival, and as such chiefly expressive of thankfulness for the bounty of God as seen in nature, yet it was not to be observed without the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the meat offering (cf. Lev. xxiii. 18—20). Other offerings were to be presented along with the offering for sin. Natural

blessings are given to sinful men only under a dispensation of mercy which comes through a bleeding sacrifice.

Now all these forms have passed away. But the principles which underlay them are of eternal obligation. We trust we can see, by means of these signs, the everlasting truths signified by them. In each of the particulars named above some permanent principle is enclosed.

I. THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH ARE TO BE RECEIVED BY US AS GRANTED TO US BY THE BOUNTY OF A GRACIOUS GOD. So commonplace, or rather so well-known, a truth is this, that it is not easy for us to picture to ourselves a time when a nation needed to have it engraven on its heart and conscience by such means as these divinely appointed festivals. Still, we cannot be unconscious of forces around us being at work which, if we succumbed to them, would lead us to think of the ordinary products of the harvest-field as coming simply in due course of law, and to regard the Supreme Being as so remotely concerned in earth's fruitfulness, that it would be but a slight step to take to think of him as not concerned therein at all! But in no part of the sacred records is any such thinking warranted. Reason itself would lead us to suppose that, if one order of creation is higher than another, the lower was made to serve it; and consequently, that if man be the highest of all, that the rest is ordered to serve him. The Psalmist expressed this when he sang, "Thou hast put all things under his feet." Our Lord Jesus Christ points us to the most common blessings, even to the sun and the rain, in proof of the good will of a heavenly Father. And this is at once the philosophy and the faith of a Christian. It is the conclusion of sober sense; it is the dictum of devoutness, piety, and love. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

II. THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH SHOULD THEREFORE BE RECEIVED WITH THANKSGIVING. The doctrine that God is the benevolent Author of all our mercies is not to be a barren and unfruitful dogma. It is meant to call forth thankfulness. It is said of the heathen, "*neither* were they thankful." They did not know enough of God to understand what true thankfulness meant. But we do. He is revealed in Scripture as having such watchful concern for our good, that we may well feel an exuberance of thankful delight that our daily joys come to us from a fountain of love. And it behoves us to pay our God the homage of grateful hearts.

III. THIS THANKFULNESS SHOULD BE EXPRESSED PRACTICALLY. The truly loyal heart will need no reminder of this. *Cela va sans dire.* Jacob needed no precept to lead him to say, "Of all that thou givest me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Nor, if our hearts are as sensitive as they should be to our own unworthiness and to God's loving-kindness, shall we fail to "honour the Lord with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase."

IV. OUR GRATITUDE TO GOD SHOULD TAKE THE FORM OF UNITED WORSHIP AND SONG. We may set apart special seasons for harvest festivals, or no, as circumstances dictate; but certainly the Divine provision for the temporal wants of man should find gladsome acknowledgment in the social worship of a thankful people.

V. A UNITED ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S KINDNESS TO US ALL SHOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF PROMOTING KINDLINESS AMONG EACH OTHER. If God makes us glad with his loving goodness, we should make others glad with our radiant kindness (1 John iii. 17; iv. 11). The love streaming from heaven is revealed for the purpose of creating benevolence upon earth. The blessings that come to us, unworthy as we are, from the pure benevolence of God, should make us eager, as much as in us is, to emulate the goodness of heaven!

VI. For, lastly, NOT EVEN IN THANKFULNESS TO GOD FOR COMMON MERCIES MAY WE FORGET THEIR RELATION TO THAT DIVINE REDEMPTIVE PLAN WROUGHT OUT BY THE GREAT SON OF GOD. Israel's rejoicing was to be sanctified by a sin offering; by which we see (1) that it is only because of God's mighty redeeming work that even the natural blessings of this earthly life are ensured to us. And (2) that it is only through the sin offering that our thank offerings are accepted before God. All our thanksgiving services *must* take the form and hue thrown on them by the fact that we are guilty men, living on the mercy of a forgiving and redeeming God. God expects the acknowledgment of this on our part. It would be unrighteous of him not to ask it, and unjust and ungrateful of us not to give it. Sin *is* in the world; and *our* sin has helped to make the world

what it is, as to the infusion of bitterness into it; it is only through the Divine redeeming energy of love which through and by our Lord Jesus Christ is being put forth, that the world still yields its treasures to the rebellious and ungrateful sons of men. So that with the praises for mercies so undeserved there should be a confession of sin, a turning anew unto the Lord, and a reconsecration of heart and life to him. For when we think how soon a slightly adverse action of God towards us might crush us; yea, that even the bare withholding of mercy would consume us; and when we add to that the thought of our innumerable provocations of One who cannot bear that which is evil, surely we must needs confess that there are no greater wonders than the patience, the love, the bounty of God!

Vers. 13—17.—*The Feast of Tabernacles, or of Ingathering.* "The festival of tabernacles, as originally instituted, presents but little symbolism. Its primary design was to give expression to joy and gratitude in view of the products of the earth, every kind of which had now been gathered; and it was therefore also called the Festival of Ingathering." As the Passover commemorated the first deliverance, so the Feast of Booths would recall the wilderness life. And "nothing was more natural than to associate in thought the richness of their inheritance with the probationary trials by means of which the nation had been prepared to possess it" (Atwater's 'History and Significance of the Sacred Tabernacle of the Hebrews,' Dodd and Co., New York, 1877). It is scarcely necessary here to do more than suggest the underlying principles which are presented here. They must needs have some similarity with those in the preceding Homily. Israel is taught the following truths: 1. After the corn and wine have been gathered in, and the anxieties of the year are so far over, they are then expected to look up gratefully to God as the Author of all. 2. God's mercies are to be enjoyed, in grateful and delightful repose. 3. With the gladsome rest there is to be associated a thankful memory of past guidance and help in the wilderness life. 4. In this rejoicing and thankfulness, master and servant are alike to share, as both equal in the sight of God. 5. By Israel's gladness, the sorrows of the poor, the sad, the lonely, are to be relieved, and the solitary ones are to be made conscious of a kindly care encompassing them. 6. The recognition of a reception of mercy is to be accompanied with a loving offering to God in return (vers. 16, 17). According to the blessing, so is to be the tribute. 7. Thus Israel's nationality is to be thrice sealed every year, as a specifically religious one, in holy and joyful covenant with the Lord their God. Manifestly on each of these points, Israel's temporary and local forms illustrated permanent and worldwide principles, in the exposition of which the Christian teacher may well delight.

Vers. 18—20.—(See Homily, ch. x. 17—xi. 1, "God no respecter of persons.")

Vers. 21, 22.—(See Homily, ch. v. 8—10, on "The second commandment," and also Homily, ch. xiii., on "Temptations to idolatry to be resisted.")

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The Passover.* The Passover was a sacrifice (Exod. xii. 2), and was connected with sacrifices (Lev. xxiii. 5—8; Numb. xxviii. 15—26); hence "flock and herd" (ver. 2) covering the sacrifices of the seven days' feast. It was the sacrifice which mediated the new relationship established between Jehovah and the people on the night of the Exodus. There was a fitness, at so solemn a crisis in the history of the chosen nation, in the line of demarcation between them and the Egyptians being drawn so strongly in atoning blood. Not for any righteousness of theirs, but through God's mercy, under cover of blood of atonement, was Israel—collectively a part of Egypt, and individually partakers of its guilt and corruptions—spared the stroke of judgment. The sacrifice then offered was: 1. *Pacificatory.* In their blood-sheltered dwellings, the Israelites enjoyed the presence of God, communion with God, peace with God. A feast of peace was held upon the flesh, as in the later peace offerings.

2. *Purificatory.* It sanctified the people in view of their departure from Egypt; and separation as a peculiar people to Jehovah—in view also of his peculiarly near approach to them in their deliverance. 3. *Protective.* As warding off the stroke of the destroying angel. Later Passovers, as the yearly presentation of the blood implied, were not only *commemorations*, but in some sense also *perpetuations* of the original one. The Passover, as observed from year to year, was—

I. A MEMORIAL. It stood as an historical monument, testifying to the reality of the events of the Exodus. In this view of it, it is of great value. No criticism of documents can impair its witness. It is a Bible outside of the Bible, confirmatory of the Bible narratives. No one has yet succeeded in showing how a festival like the Passover could have been introduced at any period later than that to which it historically refers. It has, so far as we can make out anything in history, been observed by the Jews from the very beginning of their national existence. Note to what it testifies—1. To the fact of the Exodus. 2. That the Exodus was accomplished without warlike resistance from the Egyptians. 3. That it was looked forward to, prepared for, sacrifice offered, and a sacrificial meal eaten, in anticipation of it. 4. That the preparations for departure were hurried, yet orderly. 5. That on the night in question a judgment fell on Egypt, from which the Israelites were exempted—a circumstance which gives to the feast its name, the Passover. The festival has thus all the value of a contemporary witness, and fully corroborates the Scripture history. The Lord's Supper, in like manner, is an historical witness, not to be got rid of, testifying to acts and words of our Lord on the night of his betrayal, and furnishing clear evidence as to the light in which his death was regarded by himself.

II. A TYPE. The typological features have often been dwelt on. 1. The *lamb*—select, unblemished, of full age, subjected to fire, unmutilated (John xix. 36), fitness of the victim to represent Christ (Isa. liii. 7). 2. The *blood*—atoning, need of personal application, sole shelter from death, under its shelter inviolable security (Rom. viii. 1). 3. The *feast*—the slain lamb the food of a new life (John vi. 51—57); a feast of reconciliation and peace, with fellow-believers, with bitter herbs (affliction, repentance), and without leaven—memorial of haste (ver. 3), but also emblematic of spiritual incorruption, of the purity which is to characterize the new life (1 Cor. v. 7—9); no part of the flesh to remain till morning (ver. 4), for same reason, to avoid corruption; the feast to last seven days—a week, an entire circle of time, symbolical of life-long consecration to holiness of walk. 4. The *redemption*—great, once for all, a redemption by blood and by power, from wrath, from bondage. All these types are conspicuously fulfilled in Christ.

III. AN ORDINANCE. 1. The first and chief of the feasts (ver. 1). 2. To be observed regularly (ver. 1). So now the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. xi. 25). 3. At the central sanctuary (vers. 2, 5, 6). Christians should seek to realize their unity with all saints at the Lord's table. 4. With due seriousness and solemnity (vers. 2, 6).—J. O.

Vers. 9—13.—*Pentecost.* I. A SACRED RECKONING. "Seven weeks shalt thou number," etc. (ver. 9). A week of weeks, seven times seven, hence the name, "Feast of Weeks" (ver. 10). The count began with the offering of the sheaf of firstfruits on Nisan 16, the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. xxiii. 11). Till that sheaf was offered, no Israelite was permitted to eat of the new corn (ver. 14). With the arrival of the fiftieth day, inclusive of the second of Unleavened Bread, the labours of the harvest were presumed to be ended, and this festival ensued, at which baken loaves were presented to Jehovah (Lev. xxiii. 17), in token of consecration to him of the fruits of the harvest, and of dedication of the life which bread sustained. There is, intended or unintended, a beautiful symbolism in this sacred count, the divinely allotted period for the labours of the harvest, its days reckoned by heaven's calendar, the end, an "appearing before God" in the sanctuary. The harvest began with consecration (in the Passover sheaf), it ended with it (in the presentation of the wave loaves). So has the Christian his allotted work-time in the world, a sacred cycle of weeks, rounded off in God's wisdom for the work he means to be accomplished (John ix. 4); work in the Christian harvest-field, a work beginning in consecration, carried on in the spirit of consecration, and the termination of which is "entrance into the joy of the Lord."

II. A HARVEST THANKSGIVING. This was distinctly the idea of the Pentecostal festival. It was characterized: 1. By a devout recognition of the Divine bounty in the fruits of the earth. 2. By a voluntary dedication to God of part of what he had given. There was the public ceremony of the two wave loaves. But the Israelite was required in addition to keep the feast with "a tribute of a free-will offering of his hand" (ver. 10). The offering was to be voluntary, yet not without rule, but "according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." 3. By a willing sharing of God's bounty with the needy (ver. 11). The stranger, the fatherless, the widow, were, as usual, not to be neglected. The remembrance of former bondage in Egypt was to furnish the "touch of nature" which would make this duty easy (ver. 12). Note: (1) Our gifts to God are worthless, save as they are the expression of a willing mind (2 Cor. viii. 7—16; ix. 6—14). (2) Our gifts to God ought to be proportionate to our prosperity (1 Cor. xvi. 2). (3) God's goodness to us (in harvests, in trade, in business generally) ought to be acknowledged by liberal gifts for his service. (4) God's goodness to us (in deliverances, etc.) should open our hearts in sympathy for others.

III. A GOSPEL TYPE. The figure of the firstfruits finds an abundance of applications in the New Testament. It is employed of the Jews (Rom. xi. 16), sanctified in their covenant heads; of Christ, the "Firstfruits" of them that sleep (1 Cor. xv. 20—23); of first converts in a particular district (1 Cor. xvi. 15); of believers generally, as "a kind of firstfruits" of the redeemed creation (Jas. i. 18); of the 144,000 of the Apocalypse (Rev. xiv. 4), possibly "all the Church of Christ at any time on the earth; a limited company at any one time, capable of being numbered" (Rev. vii. 1—9). A more direct relation must be traced between the presentation of the firstfruits at Pentecost and the events consequent upon the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit (Acts ii.). It is surely not to be ascribed to accident that, as our Lord died on the Friday of the Passover—probably on the 14th of Nisan—so the disciples were kept waiting for the promised effusion of the Spirit till "the day of Pentecost was fully come;" and that on this day the great ingathering of three thousand took place, embracing representatives from "every nation under heaven"—a truly glorious offering of "firstfruits." May we pursue the coincidence further, and see in Christ, the solitary sheaf, raised from the dead on the same day that the first-cut sheaf was presented in the sanctuary (Nisan 16), the firstfruits of the harvest in prospect; while in the Church constituted and consecrated at Pentecost, the day of the offering of the wave loaves, we have the firstfruits of the harvest as realized. The wave loaves correspond in significance to the meat offering, and still more nearly to the shewbread. Bread, as the staff of life, the nourishing principle, stands for the presentation to God of the life so nourished, involving the recognition of him as the Nourisher of it. In the possession of the believing heart by the Spirit of God, as the indwelling and abiding principle of spiritual life, we have the full realization of this thought, the fulfilment of the types of meat offering. The passage, Jas. i. 18, suggests the deeper idea that the Church constituted at Pentecost is itself only a kind of firstfruits of redemption. It is so in relation: 1. To the latter-day effusion of the Spirit (Acts ii. 17—20). 2. To creation as a whole (Rom. viii. 19—24). Other two points may be noted: 1. If our dates be correct, Pentecost, like the Resurrection, fell on the first day of the week—the Spirit was given on the Lord's day. 2. As Pentecost was held by the Jews in commemoration of the giving of the Law, so God signalized it as the day of the giving of the Spirit, thus superseding the old dispensation by the new.—J. O.

Vers. 13—16.—*The Feast of Tabernacles.* I. A FEAST OF THE INGATHERING. (Ver. 13.) Held in the seventh month, when all the fruits of the earth had been gathered in. Thus: 1. Every stage of labour was sanctified by the recognition of God. At the Passover, when the sickle was thrust into the virgin grain; at Pentecost, when the cereal crops were harvested; and now, at the close of the agricultural year, when the season's labours had yielded to the husbandman their full results. 2. The fruits of labour were sanctified by dedication to God. The usual feasts were held, and shared with the needy (ver. 14), and free-will offerings (vers. 16, 17) were presented to God. Bountiful giving is the appropriate return for bountiful receiving.

II. A MEMORIAL OF PAST WANDERINGS. (Lev. xxiii. 43.) During the seven days of the festival, the Israelites were to live in booths. This symbolized, and served to

remind them of, the wandering, unsettled life of the desert. Booths were erections of simpler construction, and more in keeping with an agricultural festival, especially after the settlement in Canaan, than tents would have been. But there may have been an allusion also to actual circumstances of the journeyings, *e.g.* the first halt at Succoth, *i.e.* booths (Exod. xii. 3; see Stanley). This memorial was instituted: 1. That in the midst of their prosperity they might not forget the days of their adversity (ch. viii. 12—18). 2. That they might be reminded of God's gracious care of them. Booths or huts may, as Keil thinks, have been used instead of tents with reference to this idea. The booth was a shelter, a protection. So God promises to be to his Church, as he had been in the past, "a booth for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and rain" (Isa. iv. 6). 3. That their enjoyment of the goodness of the land might be enhanced by feelings of warm gratitude, awakened by the sense of contrast.

III. AN IMAGE OF PRESENT PILGRIMAGE. Though settled in Canaan, the Israelites were not to regard themselves as in possession of the final rest (Heb. iv. 7, 8). The pilgrim state continued (Ps. xxxix. 12). It does so still. We still inhabit tabernacles (2 Cor. v. 1). Spiritual rest, the inward side of the Canaan type, is attained in Christ; but the full realization of the rest of God lies in eternity. Till heaven is reached, our state is that of pilgrims—wilderness wanderers. "The admission of this festival into Zechariah's prophecy of Messianic times (Zech. xiv. 18) is undoubtedly founded on the thought that the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles is an expression on the part of the nations of their thankfulness for the termination of their wanderings by their reception into the peaceful kingdom of Messiah" (Oehler).—J. O.

Vers. 18—21.—*Model judges.* I. JUDGES OCCUPY A HIGH AND RESPONSIBLE POSITION. 1. They are necessary. They require to be set up "in all thy gates . . . throughout thy tribes." 2. They represent God (ch. i. 17). They are called "gods" (Ps. lxxxii. 1). They are clothed with a portion of God's authority (Rom. xiii. 1). 3. They are set to uphold the sacred interests of justice. 4. They may, by wresting judgment, or by hasty and wrong decisions, inflict irremediable injury on the innocent. 5. The right discharge of their functions conduces in the highest degree to the stability, happiness, and material prosperity of society.

II. JUDGES ARE REQUIRED TO EXECUTE JUST JUDGMENT. 1. They are not to be swayed by private partialities—political, social, ecclesiastical. 2. They are not to make distinctions between rich and poor, *i.e.* "respect persons." 3. They are not to accept bribes. 4. They are, as administrators of a justice which is impersonal, to judge in every case according to absolute right.—J. O.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Passover, a memorial of deliverance.* The institution of the Passover (Exod. xii.) was preliminary to their deliverance from Egypt, just as the Lord's Supper was preliminary to the death of Jesus Christ, which it was designed subsequently to commemorate. On the first occasion it was a sacrifice presented *at home*, as was most proper. But when the central altar was set up in Palestine, it became the centre of the Passover festival, and to it the Jews in their multitudes repaired. This secured a national assembly under very solemn circumstances, and was an important element in sustaining the national spirit.

I. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE SOUL FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN SHOULD BE HELD IN PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE. The Passover was the yearly celebration of national redemption. By it the Jews were annually reminded that they were a redeemed people. Gratitude to God would be elicited, and that self-denial and abstinence from evil which the unleavened bread typified. And it is evident that a similar memorial is contemplated in the New Testament dispensation. The Lord's Supper coming regularly round is intended to recall the deliverance from sin and guilt which we believe God has wrought for us, and to foster that holiness of walk which should characterize the redeemed of the Lord.

II. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE SOUL HAS BEEN THROUGH SACRIFICE. The Passover taught this, if it taught anything. Egypt had to part with her firstborn before God's firstborn, Israel, could be redeemed (Exod. xiii. 15). This was evidently the idea—the firstborn of Egypt must die to ensure the liberty of the firstborn of God (Exod. iv. 22,

23). This was the spirit of the Mosaic commission, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 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 firstborn."

But if the involuntary sacrifice of the Egyptian firstborn be primarily referred to in the Passover, it unquestionably refers secondarily and typically to the great voluntary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through which our souls are redeemed. Hence Paul speaks of "Christ our Passover being sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7). Just as the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel that the destroying angel might spare the inmates, so the blood of Christ is sprinkled on our hearts and consciences, and our safety from condemnation becomes assured.

III. THE UNITY OF THE SACRIFICE THAT REDEEMS US WAS STRIKINGLY ILLUSTRATED AT THE PASSOVER. None of the flesh was to remain until the morning, all was to be eaten or burnt with fire. The sacrifice was to be a finished unity, not a protracted feast, which might through delay become corrupt. So with the sacrifice of which it is the type. Jesus Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many (Heb. ix. 28). He was not allowed to see any corruption (Acts xiii. 37). The unity of the sacrifice —the once for all—was thus strikingly brought out.

Upon this our assurance of acceptance rests. We have now no doubt that the satisfaction is complete. "It is finished," said Jesus triumphantly on the tree. It is surely a matter of great moment and thankfulness to have our case disposed of at once, without uncertain delays, without any possible appeals. God is satisfied, and we are justified and free.

IV. SALVATION BY SACRIFICE IS WITH A VIEW TO HOLY LIVING. The Feast of Unleavened Bread *followed* the Passover. Leaven was the type of self-indulgence and sin. The unleavened bread indicated how hastily they had to flee out of Egypt, and how little consideration for self there could be in their flight. Paul interprets the reference for us when he says, "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 8). The feast of unleavened bread symbolized, therefore, the life of holy living which succeeds our salvation. Self-righteousness reverses this Divine order. It insists on the holy living meriting the salvation; but God gives the salvation gratuitously, and respects the holy living as a matter of gratitude. We should not make the way more difficult than God has done.—R. M. E.

Vers. 9—12.—*Pentecost, the Feast of Firstfruits.* Fifty days after the Passover, or a week of weeks, came the second great national festival, when offerings were presented unto God of the firstfruits of the harvest, and a people already blessed recorded their thankfulness. It was also made a celebration of the giving of the Law from Sinai, which took place, according to calculation, exactly fifty days after the Passover. In consequence of this twofold reference to the harvest and to the giving of the Law, this Pentecostal festival acquired more popularity than was to be expected. In fact, from Acts ii., it seems to have drawn Jews and proselytes from all lands. These two references suggest a *moral* and a *typical* lesson respectively from the feast.

I. IT WAS THE EXPRESSION OF HARVEST THANKSGIVING. Here we have its moral meaning. It was an acknowledgment that God is the Author of the harvest, and should have the firstfruits. We never shall prosper unless we are grateful to the bountiful Giver. And the joy of harvest will be all the deeper when it is entertained before God. In harvest homes there should be the religious element continually. If God be forgotten, it is sheer and base ingratitude.

II. IT WAS TYPICAL OF THE PENTECOST OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. The Jews celebrated on this festival the giving of the Law, and the blessings attending it. An interesting parallel may be traced between the Pentecost at Sinai and the Pentecost at Jerusalem.

1. The Jews celebrated the giving of the *Law*, while we celebrate the proclamation at Pentecost of the *gospel*. We have here a parallel and also a contrast. The gospel is the Law magnified and delivered as love.

2. The Jews received the Law as the rule of life after their deliverance through the *Paschal sacrifice*, as we receive the message of love on the foundation of *Christ our Passover* sacrificed fifty days before.

3. There were *wonderful works* attending both the Pentecosts: the fearful thunderings and lightnings at Sinai, and the rushing mighty wind and fire in the upper room at Jerusalem; the sound of the trumpet at Sinai, the sound of the gospel in many languages at Jerusalem.

4. There were *important effects* following both Pentecosts: thus the fear of the Israelites at Sinai, and the conviction of sin at Jerusalem; the separation and ceremonial at Sinai, Moses being constituted mediator, and the fellowship resulting at Jerusalem, when the three thousand were added unto the Church.

III. SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE WAS FOSTERED BY THE FESTIVAL. In giving to God "according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee," servants, Levites, strangers, and the widow and fatherless are sure to be considered. This was the case too after Pentecost. The *Christian commune* was tried, which was a mighty though unsuccessful effort of beneficence. This law of beneficence must be obeyed by all Christian men.—R. M. E.

Vers. 13—17.—*The Feast of Tabernacles—life a tented state.* This was the third great festival, and it was after all the harvest and vintage had been gathered home. It was celebrated in the seventh month, from the fifteenth day to the twenty-second. It is also noticeable that it began five days after the great Day of Atonement, which was on the tenth day of this same seventh month. Sin pardoned, and the harvest saved, these were surely twin blessings at which poor sinners might well rejoice.

I. THE FESTIVAL WAS TO REMIND THE ISRAELITES OF THE PILGRIMAGE IN THE WILDERNESS. Their scttling in Canaan was not to blot out the memory of their previous pilgrimage, and how they dwelt with God in tents. The same danger threatens God's children still. This world gets so settled and *home-like* that we forget the pilgrimage which life is meant by God to be. We need the exhortation of Peter, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. ii. 11).

II. THE FESTIVAL WAS TO BE A JOYOUS ONE. It would be joyous on three accounts: (1) because of the ingathered harvest; (2) because of the complete atonement so recently past; (3) because of the time of year, the glorious October of Palestine. Hence the festival would be virtually a tenting out in the pleasantest time of the year, with minds delivered from all anxiety and fear.

And this is to indicate the high-water mark of Christian experience. We are living below our privileges if we are not rejoicing in God's providential goodness, and in his atoning grace, and in his beautiful world. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4).

III. THE FESTIVAL FOSTERED HOPE. For if life as it now is should be regarded as a pilgrimage, an unsettled state, then each time we are reminded of this we learn to look for a better condition and more permanent abode. If I am reminded that I dwell in a tent of flesh, easily taken down, I learn to hope for the building of God, the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1).

"A while on earth we roam
In these frail houses which are not our home,
Journeying towards a refuge that is sure,—
A rest secure.

* * * * *

"For in our Father's house
A mansion fair he has prepared for us;
And only till his voice shall call us hence
We dwell in tents."

IV. THE FESTIVAL FOSTERED FORETHOUGHT AND THRIFT. It had all the wholesome effect on them which an annual picnic has upon working people. They look forward to it and make preparation for it. Now, these festivals at the centre of the national worship were to be joyful and liberal times. They were not to appear empty-handed before the Lord. They were to be able to give at his altar and be hospitable as they had opportunity. Hence the festival cultivated thrifty habits in order to be open-handed when the glad day came. So should religion make us all!—R. M. E.

Vers. 18—20.—*Impartial judges.* We have here the election of judges or magistrates laid down as a duty. In the election they are to secure impartial and incorruptible men. A bribe is not to be thought of by the judges—nor are they to respect persons. And here let us notice—

I. THAT ALL JUDGMENT AMONG MEN IS THE FORESHADOWING OF A DIVINE JUDGMENT AT THE LAST. We live under a moral Governor who has not yet delivered final judgment upon his creatures. That final review of life is naturally expected from the imperfect justice of the world. Men in their judgments can at best only approximate to what will be the Divine decision.

II. GOD DEMANDS IMPARTIAL JUDGES FROM HIS PEOPLE BECAUSE HE IS THE IMPARTIAL JUDGE HIMSELF. The impartiality of God's administration will be vindicated at last. All seeming violations of the principle will be exhibited in their true light. For instance, God's plan of salvation is the very essence of impartiality, since it proposes to save men without regard to any personal consideration, as a matter of free grace alone. Whosoever takes exception to this is taking exception to the Divine impartiality.

Again, in providence we shall doubtless find that, by a series of compensations and of drawbacks, each person's lot in life is impartially and graciously ordered. The "favourites of fortune" find some drop of bitterness in their cup, and the sweetness is more apparent than real.

III. MEN NEED NOT TRY TO BRIBE GOD, HOWEVER THEY MAY SUCCEED WITH MEN. For although this may seem a strong way of putting it, it is nevertheless the attempt that sinners thoughtlessly make. For instance, when an anxious soul thinks that a certain amount of conviction of sin, a certain amount of penitence, a certain amount of frames and feelings, will secure acceptance and peace, he is proposing to bribe God. It is as if an insane person tried to corrupt a judge on the bench by the present of a bundle of rags—"all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." God will take no bribe. He will accept no man's person. Unless we give up the idea of personal claim and personal fitness for his reception of us, we cannot be accepted.

IV. WE MAY EXPECT AN IMPARTIAL JUDGMENT AT THE LAST. It is Jesus who is to sit on the throne when the appeal cases from the injustice of earth to the justice of heaven are heard. He knows our cases so thoroughly that he cannot, as he would not, err. All wrongs shall then be righted; all unfair advantage taken shall then be condemned. "Behold, the judge standeth at the door." Let us see to it that we learn of him impartiality, and men shall regard us as truly Godlike in our dealings with them!—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Passover a memorial and a prophecy.* In a singular and a miraculous manner, the national existence of the Hebrews had commenced. God had signally interposed as their Champion, in a way altogether unparalleled. Without question, it was an event pregnant with vast issues to the history of mankind. Every opportunity was afforded Pharaoh to escape from destruction. The host of God, composed of natural forces and invisible powers, enclosed him gradually within narrower and narrower bounds, until the king himself was captured and destroyed. This was a conspicuous step in the development of the redemptive scheme. In that night of destruction the elect nation was born.

I. EMANCIPATION OF NATIONAL LIFE FROM BONDAGE IS A FIT SUBJECT FOR YEARLY COMMEMORATION. It is God's will that such commemoration should be observed, and be observed in a most religious spirit. The effect of such commemoration upon the minds of the people would be most beneficial. The nation is but a collection of units; and as every unit had shared in the boon, so every unit should partake in the acknowledgment. It is a sin when we forget our participation in national blessings. Our pious example will be a benign stimulus to others.

II. GRATEFUL COMMEMORATION SHOULD PERPETUATE ALL THE METHODS AND INCIDENTS OF THE DIVINE DELIVERANCE. 1. *Life had to be sacrificed in order to obtain that redemption.* It was, in the most proper sense, a *redemption.* They had belonged to God; a usurper had despoiled God of his right; hence, the people had to be "bought back." Natural agencies had been employed to soften Pharaoh's heart; but in vain. Nothing short of the death of the firstborn sufficed to procure deliverance. Therefore the commemoration of the event fitly included the sacrifice of the lamb.

2. *The release had been with haste.* *This* incident was deserving of commemoration. So urgent was Pharaoh's desire that they should depart, that they had not time to bake their daily ration of bread; hence the yearly commemoration was to be with "bread unleavened." Bodily appetites must be forgotten when the golden moment of emancipation dawns. 3. *The sense of obligation should be deep and abiding.* On this account, the commemoration was appointed to extend over seven days. Gladness was to be tempered with self-denial and pain.

III. GRATEFUL COMMEMORATION TAKES THE FORM OF DEEDS AND SELF-SACRIFICES. The gratitude that contents itself with words is cheap and shallow. God delights to hear the language of deeds. This is the real language of the heart. It feels the pain of restraint and disappointment, if it may not bring some visible expression of its love or perform some service for its friend. In the case of the Hebrews, long journeys had to be undertaken, lambs had to be slain, much time had to be devoted to the sacred festival. Yet all this was performed with radiant gladness.

IV. THE COMMEMORATION OF THE PASSOVER WAS TO BE OBSERVED UNDER THE SOLEMN SANCTIONS OF RELIGION. Under the theocratic government, every public act was baptized at the fountain of religion. Religion was not simply a particular department of the State: it was a spirit of heaven that ennobled and beautified every public deed. The Paschal lamb might not be slain anywhere, it must be slain at the temple gate. It was an offering made to God, and God at once returned it, with added blessing to the offerer. Thus, year by year, they professed that their emancipation was a gift from God, that national life and earthly home and prospective hope came from the goodness of God.

V. NATIONAL EMANCIPATION WAS A PROPHECY OF THE WORLD'S REDEMPTION. A man is a type of a nation; a nation is a type of the world. What God *has* done for a nation, he is prepared to do (if need be) for the race. We too are under bondage, in the grasp of a mightier tyrant than Pharaoh. "Christ our Passover is for us slain." From all on whom is the effectual mark of Messiah's blood, doom is removed. "They shall never perish." Their destiny is the heavenly Canaan—the new Jerusalem. We too have our Paschal feast—the Eucharist. As the deliverance of the earthly Israel was complete, "not a hoof was left behind," so Christ Jesus shall eventually be Victor over all his foes. Redemption of the true Israel is in progress.—D.

Vers. 9—17.—*The Feasts of Weeks and of Tabernacles.* For the moral improvement of the Hebrews, it was desirable to keep alive among them the recollection of their early history. Prior to the invention of printing, and when written records would be scarce, memory and affection and conscience were impressed by the annual festivals. The Passover commemorated the national birth; the Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the tent life of the desert. The joys of harvest and of vintage were things unknown in the wilderness.

I. MATERIAL BLESSINGS AFFORD PREGNANT REASONS FOR RELIGIOUS JOY. A frequent effect upon the mind of some large influx of wealth is to produce a sense of independence and self-sufficiency. The very event which ought, most of all, to lead men's thoughts up to God, leads to self-gratulation and self-trust. Now present need is met. We have stores of abundance. We can say to ourselves, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Therefore we must counteract this tendency. In very kindness to men's souls, God ordained this festival. He would have us to look from the gift to the Giver. It is his will that we should rejoice abundantly, but that our joy should be religious joy—a joy consecrated at the temple gate.

II. THE FESTIVE SEASONS ARE FIXED ACCORDING TO A RELIGIOUS MEASUREMENT. (Ver. 9.) The year is a measurement of time fixed by a natural cycle. So also is the month, so also the day. But there is nothing in nature that marks the commencement and the close of the week. This is a measurement specially ordained of God. The visible universe is not the whole of existence. Another voice breaks upon the ear, softer than the music of nature, and more full of authority than the voice of Cæsar—a voice which makes a new boundary in time, and bids us to count our days by sevens.

III. RECEIVING SHOULD PROMPT US TO A PROPORTIONATE GIVING. (Ver. 10.) The gift to be brought to the temple is not specified. It might be a gift of corn, or of

fruit, or of wine, or of money. The form of the gift was left to the option of the husbandman; but *some* tribute was required, and the amount must be proportionate to the abundance of his crops. If plain and imperative law could make the Jews generous-hearted, God did his utmost to cultivate in them this excellence. Avarice was scouted by Divine Law.

IV. RELIGIOUS JOY SHOULD BE DIFFUSIVE. This giving to God was to be an act of gladness. It was not allowed to be with grudging or with gloom (ver. 11). God had no personal need for these material presents. They were expended at once in new blessing and joy. Not only was the household to share in the festive gladness, in the banquet and the song; but the servant, the stranger, the poor Levite, the widow, and the orphan also. God's copious goodness in the harvest was designed to enlarge all narrow affections, and to thaw, in streams of kindness, all frozen sympathies. At such a season, they were reminded that they were not proprietors of anything, but put in offices of trust as the stewards of God.

V. A SENSE OF OBLIGATION SHOULD INSPIRE OBEDIENCE. (Ver. 12.) The hour of prosperity is the hour of reflection. By the law of associated ideas, the contrast is suggested. The mind, free from the pressure of care, retraces the past. We think of the "rock whence we were hewn, the hole of the pit whence we were digged." The recollection of our lowly origin—the dust of the ground—ought to affect us tenderly; and our sense of devout obligation should stimulate new and larger obedience. If I owe so much to God, what can I otherwise do than keep his commandments with mind and heart and soul? *Complete* obedience is a dictate of earliest intelligence.—D.

Vers. 18—22.—*The administration of justice.* True religion is related to true morality as the parent is related to the child. God cares as much that right dispositions should prevail between man and man as between man and God. By an eternal decree, religion and morality have been cojoined, and no man can put them asunder. He that loves God will love his brother also.

I. THE ADMINISTRATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IS ENTRUSTED TO IMPERFECT MEN. The laws of the Jews were framed in heaven, and were conveyed to men by the mediation of angels, but the administration and execution of these laws were imposed on men selected from among themselves. What men cannot do, God will do for them; what men can do for themselves, God requires them to accomplish. This administration of Divine Law by men was a magnificent training for higher office. In the best sense, God desires that men "should be as gods." By handling the affairs of justice, they would best grow in the understanding of the Divine government.

II. EVERY TOWN WAS A TYPE OF THE WHOLE KINGDOM. Magistrates were to be appointed in every community, who should be kings in their sphere of jurisdiction. Such magistrates were the people's choice, and thus they were initiated into the art of self-government. Justice well administered in every town would secure the order and well-being of the nation. The burden of governing the whole nation would thus be reduced to a thousand infinitesimal burdens—each one easily to be borne. Duty well done in every individual sphere would make the world happy and prosperous.

III. THE SACRED INTERESTS OF JUSTICE OUTWEIGH ALL PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS. Gifts from friends are not to be despised; but if they have the feeblest tendency to weaken our sense of right or to bring discredit on public justice, they must be declined. If a man accepts the office of a ruler, he must be prepared to forego many private advantages and pleasures. He is the steward of public interests—the servant of justice. He is no longer his own master. Personal friendships must be forgotten in the judicial court. No regard must be had to any other interest save the interest of righteousness. *One* thing the magistrate must do, and *one* only; he must be the mouthpiece of eternal righteousness. He may err, but he *must be honest.* Simple integrity of purpose is the chief qualification to rule. He who candidly desires to do right will be guided by an unerring hand.

IV. THE CAUSE OF PUBLIC JUSTICE IS SERVED BY PUBLICITY. The administration of justice was to be in the gate—in the place of public concourse. From the free conflict of public opinion sparks of truth will be elicited. So weak and vacillating is ofttimes human purpose, that the blaze of mortal eyes is needed to keep that purpose steadfast. This mode of administering justice had also a deterrent influence on the immature and the vile; it educated the public conscience.

V. JUSTICE HONESTLY ADMINISTERED SECURES NATIONAL PROSPERITY. It is the lesson of universal history that official injustice loosens all the bonds of society, and brings a kingdom into utter ruin. Men will patiently tolerate many abuses of power, but the public abuse of justice quickly brings deadly retribution. On the other hand, an honest and prompt administration of righteous law is the seed of order, content, and mutual confidence. It gives a sense of security; it fosters patriotism; it develops courage; it brings the smile and benediction of God.—D.

Vers. 21, 22.—*The pathways to temptation to be shunned.* A rash and hare-brained pilot may venture as near as he can to a sunken reef, but a wise captain will prefer plenty of sea-room. It is no proof of wisdom to tamper with temptation. One cannot handle pitch without being defiled.

I. GOD WISHES TO IMPART TO MEN HIS OWN FEELING TOWARDS IDOLATRY. (Ver. 22.) To be like God is the summit of every good man's ambition. This is God's intention also. But the attainment can only gradually be made. We must have God's thoughts rooted in us; we must cultivate similar feelings; we must cherish similar purposes or we cannot be like him in character. Idolatry corrupts the soul and generates death. To know and worship God leads up to richest life.

II. EXTERNAL AIDS TO IDOLATRY MUST BE CAREFULLY AVOIDED. A stone which is a stumbling-block to a child has no peril for a strong man; for the sake of the young and the weak, the stone should be taken out of the way. It is wise and noble to abstain from self-indulgences which will imperil the piety of others. A shady grove would be pleasant enough for worshippers in the scorching climate of the East; nevertheless, if it shall tend in the least measure to lure the ignorant into idolatry, we will forego the pleasure. This is Godlike, to deny self in order to bless others. If umbrageous groves make my weak brother to offend, I will endure the noontide heat so long as life shall last. Our mental tastes, our love of the beautiful, our desire for pleasure,—all must give way to honest endeavour for the moral elevation of the race.

III. GOD'S FATHERLY KINDNESS IS EXPRESSED IN THESE PLAIN PRECEPTS. We might reach these wise maxims as reasonable deductions from moral principles; yet they come to us clothed with irresistible authority, when they appear as the revealed will of God. A twofold light blends to point out the path of human conduct, viz. the light of conscience and the light of Scripture; yet these twin rays emanate from the selfsame sun.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVII.

SACRIFICES TO BE OF ANIMALS UNBLEMISHED. IDOLATERS TO BE SOUGHT OUT, CONVICTED, AND PUT TO DEATH. THE HIGHER JUDICIAL COURT AT THE SANCTUARY. ELECTION AND DUTY OF A KING.

Ver. 1.—Not only was the setting up of idols an offence to be punished by the judge, but also all profanation of the service of Jehovah, such as the offering in sacrifice of any animal, bullock or sheep, that had any blemish or defect (cf. Lev. xxii. 19—24). **Evilfavouredness**; literally, *any evil thing*, i.e. any vice or maim (cf. Lev. xxii. 22, etc.).

Ver. 2.—In ch. xiii., Moses enacts what is to be done to those who seduce into idolatry. Here he declares what is to be done to those who are so seduced. **Done wickedness**; literally, *done the evil*. The definite article is prefixed; it is not any kind of wickedness that is here denounced, but the special sin of idolatry, *the* wickedness κατ' ἐξόχην. All idolatry was to be strictly suppressed—those convicted of it to be put to death by stoning.

Ver. 3.—(Cf. ch. iv. 19.) **Which I have not commanded**; *i.e. have forbidden*, a meiosis, as in Jer. vii. 31.

Ver. 5.—**Unto thy gates**; judicial proceedings were conducted at the gates of the city, and in some place outside the walls the sentence was executed on the condemned criminal (Neh. viii. 1, 3; Job. xxix. 7; ch. xxii. 24; Acts vii. 58; Heb. xiii. 12), just as, during the journey through the wilderness, it had been outside the camp that transgressors were punished (Lev. xxiv. 14; Numb. xv. 36).

Vers. 6, 7.—Only on the testimony of more than one witness could the accused be condemned (cf. Numb. xxxv. 30); and the hand of the witnesses was to be first against him to put him to death—a rule which would tend to prevent accusations being

lightly adduced, as none would venture to witness against any one unless so deeply convinced of his guilt that they were willing to assume the responsibility of inflicting on him the last penalty with their own hands. **Worthy of death be put to death**; *i.e. adjudged* or *appointed to death;* literally, *the dead man shall die.* מֵת, the part. of מוּת, to die, is here equivalent to בֶּן מָוֶת, son of death (1 Sam. xx. 31), or אִישׁ מָוֶת, a man of death (1 Kings ii. 26), *i.e.* one assigned to death, already the property of death, and so as good as dead. **Put the evil away**; literally, *consume* or *sweep away the evil.* The verb בָּעַר means primarily to consume by burning.

Vers. 8—13.—So long as Moses was with the people, they had in him one to whom, in the last resort, cases might be brought for decision which were found too difficult for the ordinary judges (Exod. xviii. 19—26). But, as he was not to be always with them, it was needful to provide a supreme court, to which such cases might be carried when they could no longer be decided by him; and such a court is here appointed to be held at the sanctuary.

Ver. 8.—**A matter too hard for thee**; literally, *too marvellous;* something extraordinary, and which could not be decided by the ordinary rules of the judicature. **Between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke**; *i.e.* in cases where blood had been shed and death had ensued, either accidentally or from murderous intent (cf. Exod. xxi. 13, etc.; Numb. xxxv. 9, etc.); in cases of disputed rights and claims (cf. 2 Chron. xix. 10); and in cases where corporeal injury had been suffered, whether in strife or from assault (Exod. xxi. 18, etc.); and, in general, wherever **matters of controversy**—disputes as to what was lawful and right, might arise in their towns and villages. In all such cases recourse was to be had to the court at the sanctuary—"to the priests the Levites," *i.e.* the priests who were of the tribe of Levi, and to the judge presiding there—the lay judge associated with the high priest as president (see Oehler, in Herzog's 'Encyclop.,' vol. v. p. 58). It is not intended by this that an appeal was to lie from the lower court to the higher, or that the parties in a suit might carry it at once to the supreme judge; the meaning rather is that, when the ordinary judges found a case too difficult for them to deal with, they were themselves to transmit it to the supreme court for decision.

Ver. 9.—**Enquire**; what, namely, is "the sentence of judgment;" and this the judge should declare. **Sentence of judgment**; literally, *word of right, verbum juris,* declaration of what was legally right.

Vers. 10—12.—This sentence, being founded on the Law, the suitors were to accept and implicitly obey. If any through pride or arrogance should refuse to accept the interpretation of the Law given by the priests, or to submit to the sentence pronounced by the judge, he was to be regarded as a rebel against God, and to be put to death, that others might be deterred from the like presumption (ch. xiii. 11). **The sentence, which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall shew thee**; rather, *which they shall declare to thee from that place which the Lord shall choose.* **According to the sentence of the law**; literally, *according to the mouth of the Law;* i.e. according as the Law prescribes, according to the purport of the statute.

Vers. 14—20.—Israel, being under a theocracy, did not *need* an earthly king; but neither was this thereby precluded, provided the king chosen by the people were one whom Jehovah would approve as his vicegerent. In case, then, of their coming to desire to have a king over them like the nations around them, Moses gives instructions here as to the choice of a king, and as to the duties and obligations resting upon those who might be elevated to that office. The form in which these are conveyed clearly indicates that, at the time this was uttered, the existence of a king in Israel was contemplated as only a distant possibility.

Ver. 14.—**When thou art come unto the land**, etc. This phraseology, which is common to the laws which respect the affairs of the Hebrews after they should be settled in Canaan, implies that this law was given whilst they were yet outside the promised land. It is plain also, from the tenor of the whole statement in this verse, that the legislator in this case is providing for what he supposes may happen, is likely to happen, but which he by no means desires should happen. Moses foresaw that the people would wish to be as the nations around them—governed by a king—and he legislates accordingly, without approving of that wish.

Ver. 15.—The prohibition to choose a foreigner indicates that the people had the right of election. In what way this was to be exercised, and how it was subject to the Divine choice, is not declared. Judging from what actually happened in subsequent history, it would appear that only on special occasions, such as the election of the first king or a change of dynasty, did God take the initiative, and

through a prophet direct the choice of the people; ultimately the monarchy became hereditary, and it was understood that the prince who succeeded to the throne did so with the Divine approval, unless the opposite was expressly intimated by a message from God.

Vers. 16, 17.—Certain rules are prescribed for the king. It is forbidden to him to multiply horses, to multiply wives, and to amass large treasures of silver and gold, and he must have a copy of the Law written out for him from that kept by the priests, that he might have it by him, and read it all the days of his life. The multiplying of horses is prohibited, because this would bring Israel into intercourse and friendly relations with Egypt, and might tend to their going back to that country from which they had been so marvellously delivered; a prohibition which could only have been given at an early stage in the history of the people, for at a later period, after they had been well established in Canaan, such a prohibition for such a reason would have been simply ridiculous. The prohibition to multiply wives and to amass large treasures has respect to the usage common from the earliest period with Oriental monarchs to have vast harems and huge accumulations of the precious metals, as much for ostentation as for either luxury or use; and as there was no small danger of the King of Israel being seduced to follow this usage, and so to have his heart turned away from the Lord, it was fitting that such a prohibition should be prospectively enacted for his guidance. Both these prohibitions were neglected by Solomon, and probably by others of the Jewish kings; but this only indicates that the law was so ancient that it had come in their time to be regarded as obsolete. The rule that the king was to write him a copy of the Law for his own constant use does not necessarily imply that he was to write this with his own hand; he might cause it to be written by some qualified scribe for him.

Ver. 18.—**A copy of this law**; literally, *a double of this Law*, i.e. not, as the LXX. have it, "This reiteration of the Law" (*τὸ δευτερονόμιον τοῦτο*), but a duplicate or copy of the Pentateuchal Law. The Jews understand by "double" that *two* copies of the Law were to be made by the king (Maimon., 'De Regibus,' c. iii. § 1); but this is unnecessary: every copy of a law is a double of it. **Out of** that which is **before the priests.** The priests were the custodians of the written Law (ch. xxxi. 26); and from the text of their codex was the king's copy to be written.

Ver. 19.—**And it shall be with him**, etc. It was to be carefully kept by him, but not as a mere sacred deposit or palladium; it was to be constantly with him wherever he was, was to be the object of his continual study, and was to be the directory and guide of his daily life (cf. Josh. i. 8; Ps. i. 2; cxix. 15, 16, 24, 97—99, etc.).

Ver. 20.—**That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren.** "Not imagining himself to be above all laws, nor slighting his subjects, as unworthy of his notice, but taking a due care to promote their happiness" (Patrick). **He, and his children**; properly, *his sons* (בָּנָיו). The legislator anticipated not an elective monarchy, but one hereditary in the same family (cf. Michaelis, 'Laws of Moses,' pt. i. § 54).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—(See Homily, ch. xv. 21, on "Sacrifices to be without blemish.")

Vers. 2—7.—*The sacredness of personal reputation seen in the regulations concerning human testimony.* So far as this passage presents to us the doctrine that idolatry, being apostacy from God, was treason to the Hebrew commonwealth, and was to be punished with death, the matter is dealt with in the Homily on the thirteenth chapter. An inquiry of great importance would sooner or later arise, and would, therefore, need to be provided for in the Mosaic institutes, viz.: "On what evidence shall any one be adjudged guilty of such a crime?" It will be seen here that, while God so guarded his own honour that it might not be sullied with impunity, so he guarded the reputation of the people that it might not be assailed or impeached on any frivolous pretext or any unproven report. The exactitude in the order of expression in the fourth verse is very noticeable: If it be so—and it be told thee—and thou hast inquired—diligently—and, behold, it is true—and the thing certain—then, and not till then, may the penalty be inflicted. Observe: 1. Every one was held to be innocent till he was proved otherwise. 2. No one's character was put at the mercy of any one unattested witness. 3. He

who reported with his tongue should be the one to smite with his hand! (ver. 7).[1] A mighty stroke of policy this, to guard personal honour from assailment! It might sometimes make crime more difficult of proof, but it gave the innocent a wondrous guard against unjust accusation. Many would be ready to backbite who would shrink from stoning another. Men by thousands may be found who would not break bones, but who think nothing of breaking hearts. 4. The people were to co-operate in putting away the evil when once it was proved to exist. "Slow to suspect, but quick to put down evil," was to be the moral rule of their conduct in such cases. Now, of course, it is not our province to deal with all this from the purely legal point of view, as a matter of jurisprudence; but we cannot fail to indicate the moral principles which are here involved; and which a Christian teacher would do well to set in the light of Matt. vii. 1, 2. Observe—

I. OUR GOD WOULD ENLIST THE SYMPATHIES OF HIS PEOPLE IN PUTTING DOWN EVIL. We are to be workers together with him. He has redeemed us that we may be zealous of good works.

II. HE WOULD HAVE US VERY SENSITIVE to the honour of *his* Name, but also very sensitive to the spotlessness of *each other's* name and fame. This passage is quite as remarkable for the guard it throws around man, as it is for the concern it would evoke for the honour of God (see Ps. xv. 1—3; Lev. xix. 16; Ps. xxxiv. 13; 1 Pet. iii. 10).

III. WE MAY NOT REGARD ANOTHER AS GUILTY ON THE BARE EVIDENCE OF RUMOUR. Each one's reputation is too sacred in God's eye and ought to be too precious in ours for this. It is humiliating to think such precepts as these should be needed. "The Law is not made for a righteous man," and it is a sad proof of how much unrighteousness there is in the world that such a law should be needed still. Every one is to be regarded as innocent till he is proved guilty.

IV. IF THE PUBLIC GOOD REQUIRES IT, ILL REPORTS SHOULD BE EXAMINED. It may be painful work, but it has to be done sometimes. But we are tempted to think it would be a mighty safeguard against ill reports being raised on any light or frivolous pretext, if he who first moved secretly with his tongue were always required to be the first to smite openly with the hand!

V. SUCH REPORTS ARE TO BE PROVEN TRUE ERE ACTION IS TAKEN THEREON. No man's repute is to be smitten at a venture. To all men it is precious as life. The best men value it more than life. They would rather give up their breath than part with their honour. And the legislation of high heaven upholds them!

VI. PROVEN EVIL IS TO BE PUT AWAY. We are to be very slow to believe ill of another; "slow to speak." But when such ill is proved beyond doubt, then it behoves us to censure, to expose, to condemn it, and to put it away. We are to stand by a brother till he is shown to be guilty, but that once done, regard both for God and man requires us to disavow all sympathy with wrong, and to co-operate with the Great Supreme in the extirpation of ill.

Vers. 8—13.—*Religion the guard of justice.* In the preceding chapter, vers. 18—20, judges and officers are specified as appointed by God to be the guardians of justice and right. The Hebrew is very emphatic in ver. 20, "Justice, justice, shalt thou follow," etc. Manifold complications, however, would be sure to arise as the nation advanced, and as the primitive simplicity of their first settlement passed into more fixed arrangements as to property, etc. In such difficult cases, it might not be easy, and perhaps it would not always be possible, for the judges and *shoterim* to determine what *was* just. The legislator is here bidden, therefore, to make provision in case such perplexities should arise. When the people should come to the land which the Lord their God gave them, there would be one place which the Lord would choose to put his Name there. There should "thrones of judgment" sit. The priests, who would have to offer sacrifices and to intercede for the people before God, would also be expected to be so versed in the Law of God, that they could appropriately be regarded as the highest court of appeal, by whose decision the highest sanctions of religion would be brought to declare and enforce "justice, justice." Their decision was held to be given

[1] See in Keil on 'Pentateuch,' vol. iii. p. 381 (footnote), quotation from Calvin.

them by light from on high.[1] And when such decision was in accordance with the Divine will, the people were bound by it. To resist it was "a presumptuous sin;" and, withal, it was one of so deep a dye, that it was not safe for Israel that any man should continue among them, who spurned the highest decisions which could possibly be given. At the same time, there were sundry checks and counter-checks against the abuse of this law. The authority of this highest court was relative or conditional, not absolute. If priests became unfaithful, and their judgments unjust, then the sin of presumption was chargeable upon them (cf. ch. xviii. 20; see also Jeremiah's, Ezekiel's, and Malachi's charges against such unfaithful expounders). Note, further, that as early as the time of the Judges, when the priests profaned their office, God set them aside, and wrought and taught by means of the prophet Samuel. So that the supreme court bound the people only so far as it was what it was designed to be, even God's appointment for securing justice, by investing it with the sublime sanctions of religion. But when it was that, and so far as it answered its end, its utterances were to the people as the voice of God.

Now, we all know that, as a formal institution, this court of appeal has long since passed away. But we greatly mistake if there are not couched here sundry momentous principles, of which no age, country, or race can afford to lose sight. These principles are—

I. THAT RELIGION IS THE TRUE GUARANTEE OF JUSTICE BETWEEN MAN AND MAN. That in the course of time the essence of religion may have so evaporated, and its place be so taken up by forms and ceremonies, that the connection between religion and justice may seem to be lost, must be admitted to be a possibility, but it does not alter the principle here enunciated. The guarantee of justice between man and man is found in a power of appeal on both sides to a law of immutable right mutually acknowledged. To such a law conscience, the regulative faculty, points with steady finger. Such law obeyed, she approves the obedience, and when disobeyed, she condemns the disobedience. Both the approval and the condemnation of the voice within are witnesses to the existence and government of a Great Judge of all, who, seated on the throne of universal empire, issues his mandates to the world! And in the appeal from human acts to the judgment of the Great Supreme, lies the safeguard of justice between man and man.[2] In a word, religion is the sole adequate guarantee of morality. Both are comprehended under the one word, "righteousness." Religion is righteousness towards God; morality is righteousness towards man. If man ever comes to regard himself as the supreme existence, empowered to *make* right right, and wrong wrong, instead of regarding himself as subject to the everlasting laws of right, the best and dearest privileges of the human family will be in imminent peril, and at best can endure but for a while!

II. RELIGIOUS SANCTIONS FIND THEIR EXPRESSION IN THE LAW OF GOD. See Ps. xix., in which the Psalmist extols the pure and holy Law of Jehovah, as being the written expression of perfect right. In the ten commandments the various phases of the right in act or thought are set forth. And according to the ordinance alluded to in this paragraph, when a case arose which was too difficult to be solved by the lower authorities, it might be taken up to a higher court, that the will of the Lord might thereby be discovered by the most trustworthy exposition of the bearings of God's Law on each particular case.

III. GOD'S HOUSE IS TO BE THE SEAT AND CENTRE WHERE RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ENTHRONED, EXPOUNDED, AND ENFORCED. If in Israel a poor man could not get justice elsewhere, he was to be sure of it in God's house. It was a pious Hebrew's delight to inquire in God's temple. And we do not think adequately of the temple service if we merely regard it as consisting of sacrifice and mediation; the holy house was also a place where men could learn the mind and will of God in their bearing on the life of man both in general and in specific cases. And one of the delights of the Psalmist's

[1] See Biblical Dictionaries on 'Urim and Thummim;' and also a suggestive chapter on the same topic in Hengstenberg's 'Egypt and the Books of Moses,' p. 149, *et seq.*

[2] See a sermon entitled, 'The House of Commons and Atheism,' by R. W. Dale; and also an article, 'Religion and Morality,' by Rev. Stanley Leathes, in *British Quarterly Review*, July, 1880.

heart was this: "there are set thrones of judgment." And so now, in God's house, not only are we bidden to "behold the Lamb of God," but "to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

IV. GOD'S MINISTERS ARE TO BE THE EXPOUNDERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. There are no priests now, as of yore. But the Church of God has a ministry, and by this ministry the truth of God is to be "opened up" and "commended to every man's conscience as in the sight of God."

V. WHEN GOD'S HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS LAW IS EXPOUNDED TO THE PEOPLE, THEY ARE LOYALLY TO ACCEPT IT, SUBMIT TO IT, AND OBEY IT. And this, not because of him whose voice speaks, but because of him in whose behalf the preacher speaks. Men are to receive the truth, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God (cf. 2 Cor. x. 5).

VI. REFUSAL TO OBEY THE WILL OF GOD, WHEN CLEARLY EXPOUNDED, IS A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN. (See passages where same Hebrew word is used which is here rendered "presumptuous," specially Ps. xix. 13.) The epithet indicates the greatness of the sin. It is one which Jehovah specially hates, severely rebukes, and utterly condemns. He "resisteth the proud." He hides things from the wise and prudent. He scorneth the scorners. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. First pride, then shame. "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

Vers. 14—20.—*Kings subject to the King of kings.* In this paragraph we have directions to be attended to in case Israel should, in the course of time, desire a king. As things were, the Lord God was their King; and it would be a sinful discontent with the Divine arrangements if they wished any change in that respect in their national constitution. It would show an envious desire to be like unto the nations round about, and a craving after the pomp and display of the heathen world. Still, if such a wish should spring up, they are not to be violently coerced into the maintenance of the theocracy. They are to have their way. A dangerous permission this, but maybe it is a necessary one, to educate the people out of their perversity. The permission, however, is not left without its restrictions. Here are rules for the people, and also rules for their king whenever they should have one. The people are told that they must defer to the will of the Lord their God as to who should be their king; and also that they might not set one over them of an alien nation (ver. 15). And as for the king who should be chosen, for him there are four prohibitions and four commands. The prohibitions are these: (1) the king is not to take them back to Egypt; (2) nor to multiply cavalry; (3) nor to amass wealth; (4) nor to multiply wives to himself. The commands are these: (1) The Law of God is to be written, (2) retained, (3) read, (4) obeyed by him; and only as this is the case is there any promise of the stability of his throne. (For a grand commentary on all this, read 1 Sam. xii.) The history of the Hebrew nation continuously discloses the folly and danger of people and kings departing from the Law of God. Hence we have a fine homiletic theme for the preacher, when called on to preach a sermon on national affairs.[1] It is this: *Obedience to the Law of God the only stability of thrones.*

I. IT IS BY RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT THRONES ARE FIRM. Righteousness—according to the root of the word—is acting according to relation. Such is the significance of δικη. It is acting in harmony with the relations between man and man, and between man and God. When a sceptre is swayed rightly, the throne is established. 1. God has created man with power to perceive a distinction between right and wrong, and with a faculty which approves one and condemns the other. 2. When the right is manifestly done, the people are content. 3. Content of the people gives cohesion to the nation and support to the throne. 4. God's blessing is promised to the righteous. The signs of that blessing are seen in continuance and prosperity.

II. THE ONLY AUTHORITATIVE EXPOSITION OF RIGHT FOR THE WORLD IS IN THE WRITTEN LAW OF GOD. (See preceding Homily, Div. II.) Dr. Matthew Arnold speaks of the force pervading the Old Testament as "a power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." This is the peculiarity of Hebrew literature. Their kings are always estimated according to whether they did right "in the sight of the Lord."

[1] Dr. Jameson's 'Commentary' has several helpful illustrative references. The student may also, with advantage, consult Wine's 'Commentaries on the Laws of Moses.'

III. CONSEQUENTLY, IT IS BY OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WRITTEN LAW THAT THRONES ARE MADE SECURE. This grand old Book is the charter of the people's liberties, because it demands that kings rule righteously. It is the monarch's best safeguard, because it insists on a method of government which will ensure the loyalty of a grateful people, and the blessing of the monarch's God! With regard to kings and nations, it is true, "Great peace have they which love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them." Earthly kings will ever find it true, "Them that honour me, I will honour."

Ver. 16.—"*No retreat!*" *or* "*The gate behind us closed.*" "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way." In these words, Moses reminds the people that Egypt once quitted was quitted for ever. If they should come in the course of time to desire and to choose a king, he must by no means take them back to Egypt; their dark experience of Egyptian bondage was never to be repeated. They should return that way no more. The only course open to them was to go onward to the realization of their destiny as a free people, for the gate behind them was closed, never to be opened again. The text may naturally be regarded as God's voice to his emancipated host, saying, "*No retreat!*" We shall apply this to the life of believers. It is true in two spheres.

I. IT IS TRUE IN THE SPHERE OF BEING. With regard to the old state of sin, out of which the children of God have been brought by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus and by the power of the Holy Ghost, it is true, "ye shall henceforth return no more that way." 1. *They may not if they would.* They have quitted the broad road which leadeth to destruction, and, through the gateway of repentance, have entered on "the King's highway of holiness." Having once come over from Satan to Christ, it is altogether forbidden them to dream of a return. Whosoever he be who has avowedly quitted the service of sin for that of the living God, never must he think of returning to the world he has left. Back to his old life of sin? Never! He is to reckon himself henceforth as "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God," and, whether living or dying, he is to be the Lord's. 2. *They would not if they might.* Not only is it the Law of God that they must not retreat, but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus leads them to say, "We will not, by the help of God." And herein is the blessed freedom of the new creature in Christ Jesus. What God wills, he wills. He has voluntarily left the world, and voluntarily he remains out of its camp. The very thought of "returning any more that way" is anguish to him. He has said to earth, once for all, farewell; to sinful pleasures, farewell; to the pride of life, farewell. He has cast in his lot with Christ, and he esteems reproach for him greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. He would not move a step that is not towards God and heaven. He has done with the vanities of earth, and can return no more that way!

II. IT IS TRUE IN THE SPHERE OF TIME. We can neither retrace the steps we have already trodden, nor recall nor reproduce the circumstances of bygone days or years. 1. *We cannot recall, or change, or obliterate the past, even if we would.* The trials and cares of bygone years are gone, never to be repeated. The actions of past years are done, and however we may desire it, they cannot be undone. There is no such thing as recalling a single moment, to correct what has been amiss, nor erasing a single word or deed so as to prevent its issues travelling on to eternity! We may do something now to shape future years, but—to alter past years—nothing. For good or ill they have left their mark. We can alter nothing. We can "return no more that way." 2. *The pilgrim, Zionward, would not retreat if he could.* The child of God who has been, however imperfectly, endeavouring in Divine strength to serve and please his Father in heaven, reviewing his years with their trials, afflictions, and cares, feels it to be a great joy to him that he can return no more that way. He would not linger here. He wants to speed him onward. He ofttimes sings at eventide, with thankful heart, "a day's march nearer home." The goal of his being is ahead. To serve God here is blissful. But he longs, not to repeat past imperfections, but to "go on unto perfection," to press forward towards the higher service of the heavenly world. He feels and knows that all the Divine arrangements for him are mercy and truth. He would not change them. Mercy shuts off the past beyond recall. Mercy opens the future.

"Then, welcome, each declining day,
Welcome, each closing year!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The blemished.* I. THE PRINCIPLE INVOLVED. God is to be served with our best. He rejects the blemished for his service. 1. He is *entitled* to our best. 2. He *requires* it of us. 3. Withholding it *argues unworthy views of God* and of what is due to him. It usually implies contempt of God and hypocrisy in his service (Mal. i. 12, 13).

II. APPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE. God is to receive from us: 1. The best of our *time*—when the head is clearest, the energies most vigorous, the capacity for service greatest, and when there is least distraction. We offer the blemished when we engross these portions of our time for self, and give to God only our late hours, or hurried snatches of a day crowded with unspiritual and exhausting occupations. 2. The best of our *age*—youth, the prime of manhood and womanhood, with all the service these can render. We offer the blemished when we conceive the purpose of dedicating to God, in old age, powers already worn out in the service of the world. 3. The heartiest of our *service*. Service performed half-heartedly and grudgingly falls under the category of blemished sacrifices. Work done in this spirit will never be well done. Services of devotion will be huddled through, sermons will be ill prepared, the class in the Sunday school will be badly taught, visitation duties will be inefficiently and unpunctually performed. It is the presentation to God of the torn, lame, and halt. 4. The first of our *givings*. Givings should be hearty, liberal, of our first and best, and in a spirit of consecration. To give what "will never be missed" is a poor form of service. It is little to give to God what costs us nothing. Still more conspicuously do we offer the blemished when we devote to God but the parings of a lavish worldly expenditure, or give for his service far below our ability.—J. O.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Sabæism.* The crime here ordained to be punished by death was sabæism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies. Though this was in some respects the noblest, as it seems to have been the most ancient, form of idolatry—the purest in its ritual, the most elevating in its influence, the least associated with vice, it was not to be tolerated in Israel. Its apparent sublimity made it only the more seductive and dangerous. It was a departure, though at first a very subtle and scarcely recognizable one, from pure monotheism—the beginning of a course of declension which speedily led in Egypt, Phœnicia, Babylonia, India, and most other nations to the grossest abominations. That the seductive influence of sun and star worship was powerfully felt by the ancients appears from Job xxxi. 26, 27. In Egypt, according to M. de Rouge (quoted by Renouf, 'Hibbert Lecture'), "the pure monotheistic religion passed through the phase of sabæism; the sun, instead of being considered as the symbol of life, was taken as the manifestation of God himself." Max Müller tells us ('Hibbert Lecture,' p. 13) that the "oldest prayer in the world" (?) is one in the Rig-Veda, addressed to the sun. The term for God, which is common to the Indo-Germanic races (deva, dæva, theos, deus, etc.), proves that the conception of the Divine among them was formed from that of light, and that the objects of their religious worship were the effects and appearances of light. All ancient mythologies turn, as their principal subject, on the sunrise and sunset, the battle between light and darkness, etc.

We learn: 1. It is the beginnings of evil which need most jealously to be guarded against. 2. Evil is not the less, but the more to be feared, that its first forms are usually pleasing and seductive. 3. It does not excuse evil that in its earlier forms it is still able to associate itself with worthy and noble ideas. 4. The workings of evil, however deceptive its first appearances, invariably end by revealing its true iniquity and hideousness. How astonishing the descent from the first enticing of the heart to worship sun or moon, and so to deny the God that is above, to the abominations and cruelties of Baal and Moloch worship! Yet the later excesses were present in germ from the beginning, and the descent was as natural and logical as history shows it to have been inevitable.—J. O.

Vers. 4—8.—*Criminal procedure.* I. THE RIGHT OF THE CRIMINAL TO A FAIR AND FULL TRIAL. The right is asserted in the Law of Moses as strenuously as it could be anywhere. However abhorrent his crime, the criminal had every protection against unjust treatment which the Law could afford him. He must be formally impeached, tried before judges, and legally convicted under stringent conditions of proof. The evidence of one witness, however apparently conclusive, was not to be accepted as sufficient. A second must confirm it. The principle is a plain dictate of justice. Suspicion, rumour, dislike of the individual, or even moral certainty of his guilt, form no sufficient ground for condemnation. He is entitled to demand that his crime be *proved* under legal forms. A person really guilty may thus occasionally escape, but better this should happen than that the innocent should suffer. Lessons: 1. The rule of criminal jurisprudence should be the rule of our private thoughts, and of our expressed opinions about others. We are entitled to hold no man guilty of deeds for which we have not explicit proof. 2. While moral certainty of guilt may be created by proof which would not warrant judicial condemnation, we should beware of admitting as proof that which at the most only *seems* to tell against the person under suspicion. 3. Where no better ground exists for unfavourable judgment than vague, unsifted rumour, or the dislikes and prejudices with which a person is regarded, it is the grossest unfairness, and often great cruelty to the person concerned, to entertain evil reports, or even to allow them in the slightest degree to influence us. 4. Where opportunity for investigating reports to the discredit of another does not exist, or where we have no call to undertake such investigation, our duty is not to judge at all (Matt. vii. 1). The utmost we should do is to exercise caution.

II. THE GRAVE RESPONSIBILITY WHICH RESTS ON WITNESSES. This was well brought out by requiring that the hands of the witnesses should be first upon the condemned person to put him to death. We may note: 1. That those who prefer serious accusations against others, ought to be prepared publicly to substantiate them. Were this more insisted on than it is, it would quash in the birth not a few malicious accusations. 2. That blood-guiltiness rests on those who, by false testimony, whether borne publicly or in private, effect another's ruin.—J. O.

Vers. 8—13.—*The priest and the judge.* The priests, in association with a judge or judges (ch. xix. 17), constituted a supreme tribunal to which difficult causes were carried, and whose judgment was to be final. The priest had naturally a place in this supreme court: 1. As representing God in the theocracy. 2. As a member of the distinctively learned class of the nation. 3. As one whose special office it was to teach and interpret the Law of God (Lev. x. 11; ch. xxxiii. 10; Ezek. xliv. 24; Mal. ii. 7). The differentiation of functions in society has long since taken learning in the law out of the hands of the clergy, but we may remark—

I. THAT SPIRITUAL AND CIVIL FUNCTIONARIES MAY RENDER EACH OTHER IMPORTANT ASSISTANCE. The spheres of civil and spiritual jurisdiction are indeed distinct. Yet as the lawyer and judge, with their legal expertness, their knowledge of forms, and their experience in sifting evidence, are often of the greatest service in processes purely ecclesiastical, so, on the other hand, the best of them stand in need of that higher direction and enlightenment of the conscience from God's Word, which it is the business of a body of spiritual teachers to supply. The ministers of religion have a function: 1. In upholding the Law of God as the supreme standard of right. 2. In furnishing general enlightenment to the conscience. 3. In reminding judges, the highest of them, of their duties and responsibilities before God as set "for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Pet. ii. 14).

II. THAT LAWS BASED ON GOD'S WORD HAVE ATTACHING TO THEM A DIVINE AS WELL AS A HUMAN AUTHORITY. The duty of the priest was not to invent laws, but to interpret the existing Law of God. To it all cases of right had ultimately to be appealed. God's Law, as exhibiting the unalterable principles of right, underlies human law and gives to it authority. Whatever may happen in courts on earth, no decision will stand in the court of heaven which that Law is found to condemn. Laws *e.g.* which invade rights of conscience, which (as in slave-holding countries) place the life of one man at the mercy of another, which are favourable to illicit relations of the sexes, which make light of divorce, which bear unequally on different classes of the

community, which prop up abuses, etc., may be submitted to, but cannot be justified. Where, on the contrary, the law of a land is in essential harmony with the principles of righteousness, obedience to it becomes a duty of religion. He who sets it at nought strives with God not less than with man, is "as they which strive with the priest," and does "presumptuously" (cf. Hos. iv. 4).—J. O.

Vers. 14—20.—*The king in Israel.* We have here—

I. THE DESIRE OF A KING ANTICIPATED. (Ver. 14.) Moses anticipates that, when settled in the land, the people would desire a king, that they might be like other nations. This was: 1. A desire *springing from a wrong motive.* (1) As involving a low estimate of their privilege in being ruled directly by Jehovah. It was the glory and distinction of their nation that they had God so nigh them, and were under his immediate care and sovereignty. But they could not rise to the sublimity of this thought. They deemed it a grander thing to have a mortal as their king, to be like other nations, and be led, judged, and ruled by a visible monarch. Their demand was a substantial rejection of God, that he should not reign over them (1 Sam. viii. 7). (2) As involving the idea of a king modelled on the pattern of the kings around them. The king they wished for was one who would embody for them their own ideas of splendour and prowess, and these were of a purely carnal type. Saul, their first king, had many of the qualities which answered to *their* notion of a king, while David, ruling in humble subordination to the will and authority of Heaven, answered to the *Divine* idea. Piety and submission at every point to the will of God are not elements that bulk largely in the common conception of a monarch. (3) As involving self-willedness. The people did not humbly present their case to God, and entreat him for a king. They took the law into their own hands, and demanded one, or rather they declared their intention of setting one over them, irrespective of whether God wished it or not. 2. A desire *in some respects natural.* The spiritual government of an invisible Ruler was an idea difficult to grasp. The mind craved for some concrete and visible embodiment of that authority under which they lived. It probably lay in God's purpose ultimately to give them a king, but it was necessary that they should be made first distinctly to feel their need of it. The need in human nature to which this points is adequately supplied in the Messianic King, Christ Jesus. The central idea of the Kingship of Christ is the personal indwelling of the Divine in the human. In Christ, moreover, is realized the three things which ancient nations sought for in their kings. (1) An ideal of personal excellence. "Heroic kingship depended partly on divinely given prerogative, and partly on the possession of supereminent strength, courage, and wisdom" (Maine). (2) A leader inspiring them with personal devotion. (3) A bond of unity in the State, the monarch representing, as he does still, the whole system of law and authority which is centralized and embodied in his person. "The king is the dot on the *i*" (Hegel). The kingship in Israel typified that of Christ.

II. THE ELECTION OF A KING PROVIDED FOR. (Ver. 15.) The position of king in Israel was essentially different from that of the monarch of any other nation. While discharging the same general functions as other kings (ruling, judging, leading in battle), his authority was checked and limited in ways that theirs was not. He was no irresponsible despot, whose will was law and who governed as he listed. He filled the throne, not as absolute and independent sovereign, but only as the deputy of Jehovah, and ruled simply in the name and in subordination to the will of God—in this respect affording another marked type of God's true king, whom he has set on his holy hill of Zion (Ps. ii.). This fact gave rise to a second peculiarity, that he had no authority to make laws, but only to administer the Law already given. The manner of his election corresponded to these peculiarities of his position. 1. He was chosen under Divine guidance (cf. 1 Sam. x. 20, 21). 2. The Divine choice was ratified by the free election of the people (1 Sam. x. 24). From which we learn (1) that the throne is strong only when it rests on the free choice, and on the loyal affection of the body of the people. (2) That kingly, like all other authority, is derived from God. This is a truth of general application, though it was in a peculiar sense true of Israel. The Scripture gives no sanction to the "right Divine of kings to govern wrong." But popular sentiment has always recognized that a certain "divinity doth hedge a king." Ancient nations (Egypt, etc.) held him to be the representative of God on earth. The

state and style with which a monarch is surrounded, and the homage paid to him, are expressions of the same idea. He embodies the functions of government, and has honour, majesty, and high-sounding titles bestowed on him on that ground. But this is simply to say that in certain respects he represents Deity. To constitute perfect "Divine right," it would be necessary: (*a*) That a monarch should occupy the throne with perfect Divine sanction. Most rulers, on ascending the throne, try to make out, however weakly, some shadow of right to it. (*b*) That he should govern in perfect accordance with the Divine will. The only perfect case of ruling by Divine right is the reign of Christ.

III. THE CHARACTER OF THE KING DELINEATED. (Vers. 15—20.) He was to be an Israelite—one of themselves. Then: 1. He was *not to multiply horses to himself;* that is: (1) He was not to be ambitious of military distinction. (2) He was not to place his main reliance for the defence of the nation on extravagant military preparations. (3) He was not, for the sake of supposed material advantage, to lead the people into ensnaring alliances. 2. He was *not to multiply wives to himself.* That is: (1) He was to avoid enervating luxury. (2) His court was to be chaste and pure. Cf. Tennyson, 'To the Queen:' "Her court was pure; her life serene," etc.; and 'Dedication' to the Idyls—

> "Who reverenced his conscience as his king;
> Whose glory was, redressing human wrong;
> Who spake no slander, no, nor listened to it;
> *Who loved one only,* and who clave to her," etc.

3. He was *not to multiply to himself silver and gold;* that is, he was not to affect the dazzle of imperial splendour, but to be simple and unostentatious in his manner of life. But: 4. He *was to be a diligent student of the Word of God.* (1) He was to write out with his own hand a copy of the Law. (2) He was to read in it diligently all the days of his life; the result of which would be: (*a*) That he would be kept in the way of obedience; (*b*) that his heart would be preserved humble towards God and his brethren; and (*c*) he and his seed would enjoy prosperity on the throne. What a noble sketch of the model king, yet how contrary to current ideas of royal greatness! We have happily been taught in our own country to appreciate the advantages of a pure court, and to feel its wholesome influence on the general tone of morals, and we are able to understand, also, the beneficial effect of uprightness and piety in a sovereign in adding to the love, esteem, and reverence with which the sovereign is regarded; but how far are we from dissociating the greatness of a reign from its external splendour, its military conquests, the wealth and luxury of its aristocracy, the figure it displays in the eyes of other nations, and the terror with which it can inspire them! Nor do we look in sovereigns generally for all the virtues which we find in our own, but are apt to condone want of piety, and even acts of great iniquity, if they but prove themselves to be bold, energetic, and enterprising rulers. The character of the sovereign is in some respects of less moment than it once was, but its influence for good or evil is still very great, and the evil fruits reaped from the court life, say of a Charles II. or a George IV., are not exhausted in one or a few generations. Piety upon the throne will lead to piety in the court and throughout the nation, and will give an impulse to everything else that is good. Whereas an evil and corrupting example sows seeds of mischief, which may involve the nation in the greatest losses and disasters (see Massillon's sermon, 'Des Exemples des Grands').—J. O.

Vers. 1—7.—*Idolatry a capital crime.* The closing verses of last chapter prohibiting groves near God's altar may be taken in connection with the verses now before us as constituting the solemn prohibition of idolatry. God will not have any rival, either sun, moon, or any of the host of heaven, not to speak of the more miserable idolatries of things on earth; he makes idolatry a capital crime, and decrees death as its penalty. This brings out the enormity of the sin in the eyes of God; and it does not follow, because idolatry is not still visited with death, that it has become a lighter matter in the eyes of "the Judge of all the earth."

I. THE TEMPTATION TO NATURE-WORSHIP. When men are not watchful, they live by

sight and forget the life of faith. Others make the senses the only organs of knowledge, and base their so-called philosophy upon sensation. It is not to be wondered at, in such circumstances, that nature-worship prevailed in olden times and prevails still. A great deal of the antitheistic science of the present time is, when analyzed, just nature-worship. When men in their headstrong self-confidence attribute independent powers to nature; when they maintain—on what grounds they do not tell us, for it is a matter of *faith*, not of sight—that the "reign of law" is workable without God, then they are really *idolizing* nature. It seems a light thing to men to eliminate God from his works, but the sin will have to be answered for before the Judge.

Besides, it was more excusable in the old Israelite than in the modern philosopher. The heavenly bodies in these Eastern countries are so magnificent that the impression produced upon the gazer is akin to worship. It was little wonder if in an unwatchful moment he "beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and the heart was secretly enticed, or his mouth kissed his hand" (Job xxxi. 26, 27). The temptation to worship the heavenly bodies was strong and natural.

II. IN GOD'S SIGHT THE WORSHIP OF NATURE IS A CAPITAL CRIME. It is worthy of a violent death. Directions are given for the solemn execution. The witnesses, of whom there must be a plurality at least, are first to lay their hands upon the head of the idolater, then the whole people, doubtless through their representative elders, showing their acquiescence in the severe sentence; and then he is to be stoned to death. The idea is manifestly that he is unworthy of living longer when he has so far forgotten and ignored the claims of God.

And assuredly our scientific nature-worshippers are equally guilty, nay, more guilty, in God's sight. If they are not put to death by public law, it is not because their sin is changed in its heinousness, but because God has made their case a reserved one for himself. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

III. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE ARE LEFT ONE WAY OF GETTING RID OF THE EVIL, AND THAT IS BY GOOD. God having withdrawn the prerogative of vengeance from men for sins against himself, and reserved the case for his own dealing with it, he has given us our direction in the words, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21). The Israelites in their rude time were directed to remove the idolater by *force*; we are to get rid of him by loving persuasion. The former was the easier remedy. To heap coals of fire on the head of our opponent and enemy is not so easy an operation. But it can be done. God shows us the example himself. While reserving the prerogative of vengeance, he meanwhile manifests himself in Jesus Christ as the God of love. Though provoked by man's idolatries, he subjects him to the treatment of his love, and goes forth in converting power to meet his enemies. Of course the love is sometimes lost upon them, as we are accustomed to say. The appeal is rejected, but they have got the opportunity, and must account at last for despising it.

In his loving footsteps let us follow. The nature-worship and manifold idolatries are amenable to the treatment of enlightened love. Let us study candidly and carefully the case, and administer with all tenderness the remedy. It may be that in some cases the old picture may be reversed. Instead of the imposition of hands in order to destruction, it may be an imposition of hands in ordaining to Divine work those who formerly ignored God altogether. However this may be, our duty is clear to try to overcome this particular evil by good.—R. M. E.

Vers. 8—13.—*The ruling power of the priests in the Jewish Church.* The government among the Israelites was first by an eldership elected on the representative principle. Thus in Gen. l. 7 we find at the funeral of Jacob "all the elders of the land of Egypt." Again, when Moses came from Midian to emancipate his brethren, he was directed to consult "the elders of Israel," who were to go in with him before Pharaoh (Exod. iii. 16, 18). After the Exodus, the priests were appointed as the ministers of religion; and with these were associated the elders selected to the number of seventy from those already in office, and to whom God gave his Spirit (Numb. xi. 16, etc.). When the people settled in Canaan, they were directed to elect judges for judgment. This was the distribution and development of the eldership. And in case of any special difficulty, the aggrieved parties were to repair to the place of the central altar, and there lay the matter before the priests and the judge. It follows that the

priests had co-ordinate ruling power with the elders or judges, that they were *rulers* and officiating ministers besides. And here we have to notice—

I. THESE CHURCH OFFICERS EXERCISED THEIR AUTHORITY UNDER GOD AS KING. The Church was a theocracy, and God was regarded as ever present with his officers and people. The same is true in the Church still. It is a theocracy; an ever-present Jesus still presides even where two or three are met together for the purposes of Church government (Matt. xviii. 20).

II. THE PRIESTS AND THE JUDGE ARE TO SHOW THE PARTIES THE DIVINE LAW ON THE SUBJECT. The decision is to be expository of existing law, not a decision on the ground of expediency. Now this necessarily follows from the Kingship of God. His will must be paramount. His officers simply try to find out his will. A national parliament may manufacture laws; but Church officers take their laws from the inspired Statute-book. It is exposition of Divine Law that the ruler in God's Church is really concerned with.

III. THE CHURCH OFFICERS REQUIRED IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE FROM THE PEOPLE TO THEIR INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S WILL. In a rude age this was needful, implicit obedience such as we require from children. But when we reach the corresponding part of the New Testament economy, the exhortation is, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). The right of private judgment is admitted, and regulates the obedience. Just as when children grow to manhood, the implicit obedience demanded gives place to persuasion and the appeal to conscience.

IV. PRESUMPTUOUS DISREGARD OF GOD'S WILL EXPRESSED BY THE PRIEST AND JUDGE WAS PUNISHED WITH DEATH. This was disobedience in its generic form, and came under the penalty of death, just as in Eden. The aggrieved parties had appealed for light to God's officer; he was to be their Arbitrator, and they contracted to abide by his decision. Disobedience under such circumstances would overthrow the order both of Church and State. Hence the death penalty.

Presumptuous disregard of Divine commandments is not now less heinous than it was then, though it may escape for the time being such a terrible penalty. The judgment of God is only postponed. Should the presumption continue, the penalty will come at last with compound interest.

V. THE PATIENT STUDY OF GOD'S WORD IS SURELY A DUTY WHEN PRESUMPTUOUS DISREGARD OF GOD'S WILL IS SO HEINOUS A SIN. It should be our supreme desire to know what God would have us to do. This can only be known through systematic and patient study of the holy oracles. The priest with the Urim and Thummim is not now available. We must content ourselves with a quieter way. The Book is given instead of the oracle, and we are directed to consult it for ourselves. Approaching it in a patient, obedient spirit, we shall find it unlocking many a mystery to us, and affording us the light we need.—R. M. E.

Vers. 14—20.—*The limitations of monarchy.* We have here provision made for the probable demand of the people for a *visible* king like the other nations. The *unseen* King did not make the same sensation in their view, and hence Moses is inspired to anticipate the unbelieving demand. And here notice—

I. THE UNSEEN KING MUST HAVE THE SELECTION OF THE VISIBLE ONE. It is in this way that the monarchy, when it came, was kept under the control of God. The theocracy was still the fountain head of power. The people were not to choose their king. He was to have *Divine right.*

It is noticeable that, in giving them Saul, the Lord made emphatic the *sensationalism* that lay under the demand, for the visible king was head and shoulders above his brethren. David was also a big man, else Saul would never have offered him his armour, when proposing to fight the giant. And it is noticeable how the sensationalism is rebuked in the enemies of Israel producing Goliath as a champion, before whom it is evident that the big Saul feared and quaked.

II. THEY ARE NOT TO EXPECT OR TO THINK OF A STRANGER KING. Thus the patriotism of the people is fostered. It is one of themselves that is to have the kingship when it comes. It is interesting to notice this deliverance after the reservation already noticed. God's choice is thus guaranteed to Israel. He will stand to the nation, if the nation will be faithful to him.

III. THE KING IS NOT TO RELY UPON THE CAVALRY ARM. Palestine, being mountainous, did not require cavalry. Infantry would be more effective. Cavalry, if raised and relied on, would necessitate an alliance with a cattle-breeding country like Egypt, and would be the precursor of a "spirited foreign policy," such as proves ruinous to a pastoral people such as Israel was meant to be. There was thus a wise restraint laid upon the foreign policy of the nation; as God desired their separation from surrounding nations, and their religious stability upon the mountain ridges of Palestine, he warns them against this danger. Besides, the cavalry arm until recently was the most powerful in the service, and the charge of cavalry is something to be proud of or to fear. Now, of course, artillery has put cavalry out of its vaunted position. The temptation was to "trust in horses and in chariots," and not in the Lord. Hence the warning.

IV. THE KING IS NOT TO HAVE A SERAGLIO. For through the wives he will surely be unmanned and have his heart turned away from God. It is the *spiritual* disasters of polygamy which are here insisted upon. A divided heart socially must entail a divided heart spiritually. No wonder the Psalmist prayed, "Unite my heart to fear thy Name."

V. NOR IS THE KING TO AIM AT GREAT RICHES. For wealth is a great snare, and it competes with God for the heart. Money, like cavalry, is a most natural foundation of trust. A too wealthy monarch is likely to be worldly minded and unspiritual.

VI. THE KING IS TO MAKE A SPECIAL STUDY OF THE DIVINE LAW. He is to get a copy for himself—he is to have it daily read to him—and he is to allow its humiliating influence to be exercised over him so as to be obedient always. And if obedient, he is promised an hereditary interest in the throne. He was thus to be kept in subjection to the unseen King.

And though *we* may not aspire to kingships, we can profit by the warnings here prophetically addressed to the coming kings of Israel. For it is surely for us to *allow nothing seen and temporal to threaten our faith in God.* It may not be horses and chariots; it may not be money; it may be men in whom we are tempted to trust. Whatever it be, whether persons or things, that tempts us from our trust in God, it must be avoided. Better is it to be friendless, to be poor, to be solitary, than to be sceptical. Wordly success is where scepticism is born. The idols multiply as wealth and luxuries increase. There is something, we think, to hold by in the strain of life.

And whatever our position in this world, let us feel always not only our trust in God, but our subordination in all things to him. If he is King of kings, he is certainly Lord over us. Let us live under the theocracy, and serve him with our whole hearts.—R. M. E.

Ver. 1.—*The prevention of religious fraud.* Men who pride themselves on honesty towards their fellows are often dishonest in dealing with God. They are punctual in observing appointments with men; they are unpunctual in reaching the house of God. When the principle of piety in a man is weakened, he will stoop to many artifices to deprive God of his due.

I. AN IMPERFECT SACRIFICE SPRINGS FROM BLIND PARSIMONY. When piety declines, a man becomes the slave of his senses. He is moved or terrified only by what is visible. He is afraid of a human frown; he is impervious to the Divine displeasure. The lamb which is unfit for barter, and which is scarce fit for food, will be deemed good enough for sacrifice. Yet how mentally blind is the man! What thick scales he has manufactured for his eyes! Yet, "he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" And cannot God, with a breath, blast that man's prosperity, and cage his soul in bondage? He had thought to snatch from God a dollar, and lo! he loses everything!

II. AN IMPERFECT SACRIFICE VITIATES ITS SYMBOLIC EFFICACY. These animal sacrifices had many moral uses. They developed the sentiment of gratitude for gifts bestowed. They expressed the penitence of the offerer, who thereby confessed that for his sins he had deserved to die. And inasmuch as a lamb or a heifer was immeasurably inferior to man, the sacrifice betokened the offering of a better Sacrifice, which should be a real atonement. Now, if men were permitted to bring a blemished victim, it would no longer prefigure him who is the "Lamb without blemish and without spot." In such a case, the faith of the offerer was dead.

III. SUCH RELIGIOUS FRAUD WAS INCIPIENT ATHEISM. Here was the budding of blackest sin—the first step on a slippery decline, which would land one in death. If I can set aside God's plain commands, as my selfishness desires; if I can treat God as my equal or my inferior, and devote to him only what is useless for myself;—I am on the very borders of utter atheism, and to-morrow shall be ready to say, "There is no God." Rankest unbelief often springs from practical disobedience. There is no neglect of God without self-injury.—D.

Vers. 2—7.—*Idolatry a crime against society.* Whether the fact be obvious to all men or not, *it is* fact that sin against God is also sin against human society. The relation of the Hebrew nation to God, is a type of the relation which God sustains to every nation. He is the Creator of individual life and of individual endowments. He is the Source of all the moral forces which bind men together in civil society. He has appointed to each nation its habitation, and has enriched it with more or less of material good. Hence every nation is under obligation to acknowledge and honour the one creating and reigning God.

I. THE CRIME. The crime consisted in esteeming the creature above the Creator. This was a direct breach of treaty between God and the nation. On God's side the engagement was to bring them into the land of Canaan, and secure them against foes. On Israel's side the engagement was to worship no other Deity but Jehovah. Hence the violation of a covenant so openly made and frequently ratified was a flagrant sin. Yet with every nation such a covenant is made *by implication.* If life is obtained from the invisible God, it is held on conditions imposed by him, and every item of conduct which is contrary to his known will is an act of rebellion. If rebellion against an earthly king is counted highest crime, incomparably greater is a deed of open rebellion against the King of kings. Idolatry is the root-stem of grossest immorality.

II. THE DETECTION AND PROOF OF THIS CRIME. In proportion to the greatness of the crime must be the carefulness of investigation. No punishment is to be inflicted on the ground of suspicion or prejudice. Human life is to be accounted precious, but the interests of righteousness are more precious still. On both these grounds, the scrutiny must be *thorough.* To prevent any injury to the sacred cause of justice, through error, or incompetence, or malice, one witness must be incompetent to obtain a verdict. Security against injustice comes from corroborated testimony and from independent witnesses. While every man is bound, in his sphere, to think and act righteously towards his neighbours, he must safeguard himself against hasty judgments and against the whispers of slanderers. In many positions in life we are called to act in the place of God.

III. THE PUNISHMENT DECREED. It was death by stoning. In that early age, and especially in the desert, there were no mechanical contrivances for suddenly extinguishing life. They were largely the children of nature, and possessed but few inventions of civilized life. The sagacity of Supreme Wisdom had placed frail man among natural forces, which might easily be employed in terminating bodily life. This arrangement impresses men with a sense of dependence. His bodily life succumbs to a stone. The unit must be sacrificed to the well-being of the community. "No man lives for himself."

IV. THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE EXECUTION. The chief witness against an offender, became, by God's appointment, executor of the judicial sentence. This secured economy in the administration of law. It secured, to a large extent, veracity among witnesses, and moral certainty of the rightness of the verdict. Yet, that obloquy might not attach itself to one man alone, the whole community were charged to take part in the execution of the sentence. The deed would thus be the common deed of all. This practice would foster oneness of sentiment, oneness of purpose, and would promote harmonious national life.—D.

Vers. 8—13.—*High court of appeal.* We can imagine a condition of human society in which wrong-doing would at once declare itself by some visible pain or sign. We can imagine a condition of society in which God would himself step forth and punish every offence against truth or virtue. But then, men would lose the benefits of moral

training which the present system ensures. This necessity for men to take part in the administration of justice brings large advantage.

I. HUMAN INTERESTS OFTEN BECOME VERY COMPLICATED. The interests men have in property, liberty, reputation, often become very involved. This arises largely from the operation of *selfishness*. Every item which will add to a man's self-importance he will sue for by every process of law. This comes from the neglect of the comprehensive precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Another great difficulty in the administration of justice arises from men's untruthfulness. The day will dawn when a stigma of shame will brand the man who withholds or violates the truth. If now, in every judicial inquiry, the whole truth, pure and simple, were forthcoming, decision and verdict would be a simple result.

II. THE MOST HOLY WILL BE, CÆTERIS PARIBUS, THE MOST SAGACIOUS. The man who lives nearest to God will obtain the most of God's wisdom. He will be free from base and selfish motive. He will be the most trusted by his fellows. He will have fullest access to God when intricate questions have to be solved. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." But pretended piety will serve no practical good.

III. EVERY JUDGE AMONG MEN ACTS SPECIALLY IN THE STEAD OF GOD. To be the administrator of justice, to adjudicate between right and wrong, is the highest office which men can fill. No position is more responsible; none more honourable. For all practical purposes, *his* decision must be regarded as the decision of God. Otherwise, there will be no termination to litigation and strife. From the verdict of the highest human judge, there is but one court of appeal, viz. the court of heaven. Without doubt, many judicial decisions on earth will be reversed by the Great Judge of all. This is sweet solace to the injured now. Yet it is nobler to suffer wrong at the hands of men than to resist by violence. For the present, we are to accept the sentence of the judge as absolute and obligatory. Our feet must diverge neither to the right hand nor to the left.

IV. CONTUMACY IS CRIME, PUNISHABLE BY DEATH. To despise the verdict of the judge is to weaken the authority of the State—is to sow the seeds of anarchy and ruin. Defective administration of law is better than none. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry." Yet, if contempt of human authority be accounted a capital crime, how much more criminal must be contumacy against God!

V. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT HAS FOR ITS END THE GOOD OF THE COMMUNITY. It is an advantage to remove from the circle of human society a pest—a firebrand. The authority of law, the sacredness of justice, are set on high in flaming characters, and on all classes of the community the impression is salutary. Reverence for constituted authority is strengthened, and unbiased minds learn the heinous wickedness of disobedience. The effect is virtue, order, peace.—D.

Vers. 14—20.—*Limitations round about a king.* A king is the creation of a nation's will. The nation does not exist for the king, but the king exists for the nation. His proper aim is not personal glory, but the widest public good.

I. KINGS ARE THE PRODUCT OF A DEGENERATE AGE. Since the King of heaven is willing to give his counsel and aid to men, it is for our honour and advantage to live under the direct administration of God; and it is only when piety and faith decline that men clamour for a human king. The conquests of Canaan by Israel had been most complete when Israel most carefully followed the commands of God. To sensitive minds, it would have been a dagger-thrust to imitate the practices of the degenerate heathen.

II. DIVINE LIMITATIONS ABOUT THE CHOICE OF A KING. In condescension to human infirmity, God will allow the elevation of a man to the throne. Through our own caprices, God ofttimes punishes us. Yet God kindly sets barriers about our capricious wills. For martial purposes, foolish men would often choose a stalwart giant, some Goliath, to be their king, though he be of foreign birth; or some successful warrior to lead them forth to battle. This is prohibited. The nation is to be self-contained. All the elements of prosperity may be found within its own borders. The will of God must be respected. God himself will select the man, point him out by

unmistakable methods, and the nation can do no more than gratefully accept God's wise decision. *He* will choose; *they* must anoint.

III. DIVINE LIMITATIONS ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF A KING. To him does not belong the privilege to gratify every taste and temper. The very contrary. He is under greater obligations than any other man to restrain himself. Temptation will surround him on every side; but he must meet temptation with vigilance, patience, firmness. To be a true king, he must first conquer himself. He must restrain carnal ambition. He must restrain love of display. He must restrain the passion for conquest. He must restrain sensual pleasure. He must restrain his avarice. His real distinction is not to have many horses, many wives, or great riches. His distinction is to be wise administrator of righteousness, the protector of public liberty and peace. To fulfil faithfully the functions of a king, he must walk circumspectly in the narrow way—be a loyal subject to the King of heaven.

IV. LIMITATIONS ABOUT THE PRIVATE LIFE OF A KING. His first concern must be respecting his personal fitness for such responsible office. No pains must he spare to obtain complete equipment. He must count no labour severe or menial by which he may qualify himself for kingly duties. His first duty is to obtain completest acquaintance with the will of God. To this end he must possess a copy of God's written Law, and in this Law he must meditate day and night. The spirit of this Law must animate his being and breathe in all his speech. God's Word must be his *vade mecum*, his daily compass and chart. He must move among his courtiers and governors as a visible embodiment of truth and purity, a living transcript of the Divine will. This is a true pattern of a king—a man who excels in wisdom, having learnt of God; a man who is eminent for pious obedience, and writes in largest characters the model of a noble life. Such a man shall live. "Though he die, his influence and rule shall live."—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVIII

RIGHTS OF THE PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES. THE ARTS OF DIVINATION OF THE HEATHEN TO BE AVOIDED. PROPHETS PROMISED WHOM ISRAEL MUST HEAR. THE FALSE AND PRESUMPTUOUS PROPHET TO BE PUT TO DEATH.

Vers. 1—8.—After the ruling powers, the judges and the king, come the priests and the Levites. In regard to them Moses repeats here the law as before laid down (cf. Numb. xviii. 20, 23, 24).

Ver. 1.—**The priests the Levites, the whole tribe of Levi**; *i.e.* the whole tribe of Levi, including both the priests and the general body of the Levites. **They shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire.** "The offerings of the Lord made by fire" (literally, *the fires* or *firings of Jehovah*), here referred to, were the meal offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering (cf. Numb. xviii. 9). **And his inheritance**; *i.e.* of Jehovah, what was appropriated to him, and from him to the tribe of Levi, such as tithes, firstlings, and firstfruits.

Vers. 2, 3.—**As he hath said unto them** (cf. Numb. xviii. 20). **The shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw**; *i.e.* the front leg, the two jaw-bones, and the rough stomach of ruminants, in which the digestion is completed. These were regarded as the choice parts of the animal, and were to be given to the priests in addition to the wave breast and heave leg of the peace offerings (Lev. vii. 32, etc.; Numb. xviii. 11), which belonged to the firings of Jehovah, mentioned in ver. 1. To these the priest had a rightful claim; they were his due (מִשְׁפַּט, *mishpat*, right). "This right was probably accorded to the priests as a compensation for the falling off which would take place in their incomes in consequence of the repeal of the law that every animal was to be slaughtered at the sanctuary as a sacrifice (Lev. xvii.; *vide* ch. xii. 15, *sqq.*)" (Keil). According to Josephus ('Antiq.,' iv. 4, 4), Philo ('De Præmiis. Sacerdot.,' p. 832, Opp., tom. ii. p. 235, edit. Mangey), the Talmud, etc., this injunction relates to the slaying of animals at home for private use, and not such as were killed for sacrifice. But the use here of the sacrificial phraseology, **who offer a sacrifice** (זֹבְחֵי הַזֶּבַח, who slay victims for sacrifice—a phrase nowhere found except in connection with sacrificial rites) is adverse to this; and besides, how could such an enactment be carried out? how could people, residing at a distance, convey to the priests the portions due to them every

time they slaughtered an animal for domestic use? At the same time, the sacrifices here referred to do not seem to be included in the offerings by fire above mentioned; and these gifts to the priest seem to have been something over and above his ordinary dues. There is probability, therefore, in the suggestion that "the reference is to the slaughtering of oxen, sheep, or goats, which were not intended for *shelamim* in the more limited sense, *i.e.* for one of the three species of peace offerings (Lev. vii. 15, 16), but for festal meals in the broader sense, which were held in connection with the sacrificial meals prepared from the *shelamim*" (Keil).

Ver. 4.—In addition to the firstfruits already prescribed by the Law to be given to the priests (Numb. xviii. 12, 13), Moses here enacts that the first fleece of the sheep shall be given. All these, though legally prescribed, were free gifts on the part of the people; the neglect of the prescription incurred only moral blame, not judicial penalty.

Ver. 5.—The reason assigned for the enactment is that God had chosen the priest to stand and minister in the Name of Jehovah, *i.e.* not only by his appointment and authority, but with full power to act as mediator between the people and God. **Him and his sons for ever**; referring to the establishment of the priesthood in the family of Aaron.

Vers. 6—8.—Only a portion of the Levites were engaged in the service of the sanctuary; the rest lived in their towns throughout the country. It might happen, however, that a Levite, moved by pious feeling, would come to the place of the sanctuary to worship there; and it is prescribed that such a one should fare as his brethren the Levites engaged in the service of the sanctuary fared; he should minister along with them, and share with them in the gifts of the worshippers; and this in addition to any private means he might have from the sale of his patrimony. **Where he sojourned.** The Levite, though not homeless, was regarded as only a sojourner in the land, inasmuch as the tribe had no inheritance (חֵלֶק) there. **They shall have like portions to eat**; literally, *they shall eat portion as portion*, i.e. share and share alike. **That which cometh of the sale of his patrimony**; literally, *his price upon* [the house] *of* [his] *fathers*, i.e. the produce of the sale effected on the house he inherited from his ancestry (cf. Lev. xxv. 33).

Vers. 9—22.—Moses was not only the leader and ruler of the people, he was also the medium through which God communicated with the people, gave them his laws, and conveyed to them his word and will. In this respect his place could be supplied neither by priest nor by king. In the prospect of his demise, therefore, there required to be instituted another office, that of a prophet, one who should be between God and the people, as the channel through which Divine communications might pass to them. This office Moses here announces that God would establish among them when they had entered the promised land.

Ver. 9.—**The abominations of those nations**; *i.e.* certain forms of superstitious usage by which the heathen sought to procure the favour of their deities, to obtain from them direction and counsel, and to penetrate into the hidden future of events. Moses charges the people to avoid all such usages, and not even to learn to do after such abominations (cf. Lev. xviii. 21; Numb. xxiii. 23; Lev. xix. 26, 31).

Vers. 10, 11.—**Maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire** (see note on ch. xii. 31). **That useth divination** (cf. Ezek. xxi. 21, where the different methods of divination are enumerated). **An observer of times.** This is according to the Targum, *observans horas*; the LXX. have κληδονιζόμενος, "one who augurs what is to happen;" Vulgate, *qui observat somnia atque auguria.* The word (מְעוֹנֵן) is part of a verb which signifies to cover, to use covert arts, to practise sorcery; though some derive it from the noun עָנָן, a thick cloud, and explain it as "interpreter of clouds;" while others trace it to עַיִן, the eye, and explain it as "one who cheats by optical fascinations" (so the Syriac, *fascinans oculis*), or "one who divines by inspection—an augur." **An enchanter**; one who practises magic, or divines by signs (cf. Gen. xliv. 5; Numb. xxiv. 1). It is sometimes said that the verb of which this word is a part (נָחַשׁ) is a denominative from נָחָשׁ, a serpent; whence it is inferred that the species of divination indicated by this word is *ophiomancy*, or divination by serpents, but this is not generally accepted by scholars. **A witch** (מְכַשֵּׁף; LXX., φαρμακός: Vulgate, *maleficus*); probably one who pretended to cure diseases, or procure some desired result, by means of nostrums and philtres. In the enumeration of the wise men of Babylon (Dan. ii. 2), the Mecashephim have a place beside the Hartummim, and in Gen. xli. 8 and Exod. vii. 11, they are joined with the Hachamim or Magi of Egypt; and this favours the conclusion that their sorcery had a quasi-scientific basis. The English word "witch" is now restricted to the *female* practiser of unlawful arts; formerly it was applied to *males* as well, if not

chiefly (Tronch, 'Select Glossary,' p. 306). **A charmer** (חֹבֵר חָבֶר); a dealer in spells, one who by means of spells or charms pretends to achieve some desired result. The verb here used primarily means to bind, and the species of magic indicated is probably that practised by binding certain knots, whereby it was supposed that the curse or blessing, as the case might be, was bound on its object; this was accompanied apparently with incantation (Ps. lviii. 5). Comp. English *spell-bound*, and the phrase, "to rivet charms" (Jonson, 'Sad Shepherd,' ii. 2). A species of incantation known to the Romans consisted in tying knots with threads of different colours, three in number, which were supposed to become a *bond* to secure an object (cf. Virg., 'Eclog.' viii. 76, 77). **A consulter with familiar spirits.** This phrase conveys something different from what is expressed, in the Hebrew. שֹׁאֵל אוֹב is one who asks or inquires of an Ob, that is, a Python, or divining spirit. This spirit was supposed to be in the person of the conjurer, and to be able to reveal to him what was secret or hidden in the future (Lev. xx. 27; 1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 8; Acts xvi. 16). The notion of "a familiar spirit," *i.e.* a spirit not dwelling in the person, but with which he is intimate—generally the spirit of one who formerly lived on earth—is a modern notion not known to Scripture. The persons here referred to were probably ventriloquists (LXX., ἐγγαστρίμυθοι), and used their faculty in this respect for purposes of magic, pretending that they had within them a spirit which they could consult, and by which they could predict what would happen or reveal what was hid. **Wizard.** The English word "wizard" did not originally convey the idea of anything evil in the person of whom it was used; Milton applies it to the Magi who came to worship at Bethlehem ('Ode on the Nativity,' iv.); it meant merely "the wise one," or "the knowing one;" and thus is an exact equivalent for the Hebrew word here used (יִדְּעֹנִי, knowing, wise, from יָדַע, to know). **A necromancer**; one who professed to call up the dead, and from them to learn the secrets of futurity (cf. 1 Sam. xxviii. 7). (See on all these names the learned and copious dissertation of Dr. Holmes, art. 'Divination,' in Kitto's 'Bibl. Cyclop.,' 3rd. edit., i. 682.)

Ver. 12.—**All who practised such arts were an abomination unto the Lord, and his people are forbidden to have anything to do with them.** They are connected here with the Moloch-worship; because of the intimate relation between idolatry and the use of magical arts; and Moloch-worship is specially mentioned, probably because it was the form of idolatry with which the Israelites were most likely to come in contact, both where they then were and also in Canaan; not, as Keil suggests, because that form "was more intimately connected with soothsaying and magic than any other description of idolatry"—an assertion for which there is no evidence.

Ver. 13.—**Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.** The word translated "perfect" properly means *entire, whole*, answering to the Latin *integer;* it is used only in a moral sense, and is best rendered by "upright;" the Israelites were to be upright and sincere with, *i.e.* in relation with, Jehovah their God.

Ver. 14.—Though the heathen whose land they were to possess sought to diviners and enchanters, Israel was not to do so; as for them (the אַתָּה at the beginning of the clause is an emphatic nominative), Jehovah their God had not suffered (נָתַן, given, granted, allowed) them to do such things.

Vers. 15—22.—There should be no need for Israel to turn to heathen soothsayers, or diviners, or such like, because from amongst themselves, of their own brethren, would God raise up prophets like unto Moses, who, as occasion required, would reveal to them what God willed them to know.

Ver. 15.—**A Prophet.** The Hebrew word so rendered (נָבִיא) is a derivative from a verb (נָבָא), which signifies to tell, to announce; hence the primary concept of the word is that of announcer, or forth-speaker; and to this the word "prophet" (Greek προφήτης, from πρό φημι, I speak before or in place of) closely corresponds; the prophet is one who speaks in the place of God, who conveys God's word to men, who is an interpreter of God to men. (As illustrative of the meaning of the word, cf. Exod. vii. 1; iv. 16.) Hence Abraham is called a prophet (Gen. xx. 7), and the term is applied to the patriarchs generally (Ps. cv. 15); God conveyed his mind to them, and they spoke it forth to others (cf. Amos iii. 7). **Like unto me.** When the people heard the voice of God speaking to them at Sinai, and from the midst of the fire uttering to them the Ten Words, they were struck with terror, and besought that they might not again hear that awful voice, but that Moses might act as mediator between God and them—might hear what God should say, and speak it unto them (ch. v. 22—27). Moses thus became God's prophet to the people; and of this he reminds them here, as well as of the circumstances amid which he entered specially on this office (cf. vers. 16, 17). The phrase, "like unto me," does not necessarily imply

that the prophet who was to come after Moses was to be in every respect the same as he; all that is indicated is that he would act as Moses had acted as a mediator between God and the people in the way of conveying his will to them.

Ver. 16.—**In the day of the assembly** (cf. ch. ix. 14; x. 4).

Ver. 18.—**And will put my words in his mouth**; will so reveal to him my mind, and so inspire him to utter it, that the words he speaks shall be really my words. The question has been raised whether, by the Prophet like unto Moses, here promised to the people of Israel, is to be understood some eminent individual, or whether this refers to the prophetic διαδοχή, or succession, that was to continue under the theocracy. For the latter the context strongly speaks, for (1) the contrast between what God here forbids the Israelites to do, viz. to resort to diviners and soothsayers, and the provision he would make for them so as to render this needless, point to a succession of prophets rather than to one individual; (2) the reference in what follows to the discrimination of false prophets from true prophets, shows that a multiplicity and a succession of prophets was in the view of the speaker, not a single individual; and (3) as a succession of priests, of judges, and of kings was contemplated in this part of the Mosaic legislation, the presumption is that a succession also of prophets was contemplated. At the same time, the use of the singular here is remarkable, for nowhere else is the singular, *nabhi*, employed to designate more than one individual; and this suggests that the reference here may be to some individual in whom not only was the succession to culminate as in its crown and eminence, but whose spirit was to pervade the whole succession,—that each member of it should exercise his functions only as that Spirit which was in them did signify (1 Pet. i. 11). It is possible also, as O. von Gerlach has suggested, that "Prophet" here may be used as "seed" is in Gen. iii. 15, and that this is a prediction of Christ as the True Prophet, just as the assurance to Eve was a prediction of the Messiah, who, as the Head and Crown of the "godly seed," should end the conflict with the serpent and his seed by a crushing victory. It is to be considered also that, whilst the words "like unto me" do not necessarily imply a resemblance in *all* respects between Moses and the Prophet here promised, and whilst they may be well applied to One superior in many respects to Moses, it would be taking them at much below their real worth were we to understand them of one greatly inferior to Moses, as all the prophets who succeeded him in Israel were until the Chief came (ch. xxxiv. 10; Heb. iii. 1—6). Finally, there can be no doubt that the Jews expected that the Messiah would appear as the Prophet by pre-eminence, and that they founded that expectation on the promise here recorded (cf. John i. 21; vi. 14; Acts iii. 22—26; vii. 37). It may be added that our Lord seems to apply this to himself, when he says to the Jews, "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me" (John v. 45, 46; cf. also xi. 48—50). How early and how widespread was the expectation that the Messiah would come as a prophet, may be inferred from the existence of this among the Samaritans (John iv. 25). It is to be concluded, then, that this promise has reference ultimately to the Messiah, the Great Revealer of God, between whom and Moses there should be a long succession of prophets, so that there should always be a medium of Divine communication between Jehovah and his people.

Vers. 19—22.—To the Prophet who should thus speak to the people all that God should command him, they were to pay the utmost deference, and to his words they were to render implicit obedience.

Ver. 19.—**I will require it of him**; I will judge him and punish his disobedience (cf. Gen. xlii. 22; 2 Sam. iv. 11; Ps. x. 13, etc.).

Ver. 20.—If, however, a prophet should presume to speak in the Name of the Lord what the Lord had not commanded him to speak, or if he should speak in the name of other gods, not only was no regard to be paid to his words, but he was himself to be treated as a blasphemer, and to be put to death.

Vers. 21, 22.—The test by which it was to be discovered which was the true prophet and which the false, was the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of his prediction. The reference here is to the prediction of proximate events—events that were to happen within a limited period, but which were not such as one not divinely instructed could foresee. When such came to pass, the pretensions of the prophet were thereby substantiated, and his authority established (cf. 1 Sam. iii. 19; John ii. 18, etc.). This was a more certain test than such as was offered by signs and wonders (ch. xiii. 2, etc.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The support of the ministry the duty of God's people.* In a note on a corresponding passage in Numb. xviii. 21, 22, Dr. Jameson remarks, "Neither the priests nor the Levites were to possess any allotments of land, but to depend entirely upon him who liberally provided for them out of his own portion; and this law was subservient to many important purposes, such as that, being exempted from the cares and labours of worldly business, they might be exclusively devoted to his service; that a bond of mutual love and attachment might be formed between the people and the Levites, who, as performing religious services for the people, derived their subsistence from them; and further, that, being the more easily dispersed among the different tribes, they might be more useful in instructing and directing the people." This suggestive note seems to us to contain the pith of the Mosaic instructions concerning the maintenance of the Levites. (For the several details, see Exposition.) We can scarcely fail to see in this passage principles far wider in their application than to the Jewish people alone, and reaching much further onward than the times of the old covenant. And though, as it falls to the lot of the preacher to expound these principles, it may not quite fall within his preference to do so, if he is, like the Levites, supported by the contributions of the people, yet, when he is continuously expounding the Word of God, he may not omit to teach the people that "he that is taught in the Word should communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." This is part of the "counsel of God," and should not be withheld, since it is not for his own sake, but for the sake of the entire ministry of the Lord Jesus, for which, if he is faithful, he will plead. The principles which may be expounded by the ministers of the New Testament are these—

I. A GODLY, ABLE MINISTRY IS THE WANT OF THE PEOPLE. True, there are now no sacrifices to be offered, nor is there any complicated ritual of service to be performed; but there is a mighty work to be done in heralding the gospel "to every creature," and in "building up the body of Christ." And so long as sin and ignorance prevail, so long will the people need those who will lead the way in seeking their expulsion and extinction. For this end our Lord has instituted a New Testament ministry. The work now to be fulfilled is that of teaching and preaching Jesus Christ (Eph. iv. 1—16; 1 Cor. ix.). "Faithful men, able to teach," are to be appointed. These are the qualifications. The Church needs no priesthood in it. It is itself the priesthood for the world. Ministers do not come now in a family, a tribe, or line. The figment of apostolical succession is "less than nothing, and vanity." It is not by the law of "a carnal commandment" that any ministry is valid now. But wherever God's Spirit fills a man with holy yearning for this work, where the needful gifts are imparted, where God's providence leads and clears the way, and the divinely inspired voice of a free Christian people says to him, "Come and be our teacher and guide in the ways of the Lord," there are calls to a ministry such as cannot be mistaken, and such as ought not to be ignored. And when, on such a ministry, the seals of Divine approval are set, when the minister can see the law of Christ which is promulgated by his lips, reproduced in men's hearts and lives, when he can see many a wanderer reclaimed through his pleading and prayers,—then can his ministry show a like validity even with that of Paul, for he, like him, can point to one and another and say, "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you, for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord."

II. THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD DEMANDS THE DEVOTION OF THE ENTIRE LIFE. We by no means intend here that none should teach or preach but those who can give their whole time thereto. But that, as a part of the application of the "division of labour" in the Church, the demands on those who make the ministry of the Word their care are such, that only the entire consecration of their life to it will enable them fittingly to meet them. To take the oversight of the flock of God: to give unto each one their portion of meat in due season: to visit the fatherless and widow, the poor and the sick: to observe the signs of the times: to know what Israel ought to do, and to direct them in doing it: to keep abreast of the thinking of the day, whether helpful or adverse: and

so to declare the whole counsel of God, as by manifestation of the truth to commend himself to every conscience:—all these things go to make up a work so varied, so momentous, so exhausting, that nothing less than "giving himself wholly" to it can enable any man even approximately to discharge it.

III. THIS BEING THE CASE, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE MINISTER SHOULD NOT BE ENTANGLED IN IMPEDING CARES. The Levites were not to have great estates that might draw off their interest from the duties of their office, nor were they to be left at an uncertainty respecting the supply of their temporal need. Even so now. It will greatly fetter and hamper a minister if he is entangled with the affairs of his life, whether by having so much on his hands that his time is absorbed in secular, which ought to be devoted to sacred, things; or by having so little on which he can rely, that the anxiety about feeding the people with living bread, is diverted from its proper channel, by anxiety about having the "bread that perisheth" for himself and his.

IV. CONSEQUENTLY IT IS AN ORDINANCE OF GOD THAT THE MINISTRY, WHICH IS FOR THE PEOPLE, SHOULD BE THE CARE OF THE PEOPLE. This may be set on several grounds. 1. It is manifestly *right*. If a man gives up all ways of securing temporal comforts for the sake of serving the people, they are bound to secure him the temporal comforts in some other way. 2. The Apostle Paul distinctly lays it down as an appointment by the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. ix. 14). (Paul waived this right, rather than hinder the gospel by pressing it, as is now done under like circumstances; but it was a right, nevertheless, and a Divine appointment.) 3. Wherever a people cause a minister to be embarrassed in temporalities, they will suffer for it. The minister's work, teaching, and preaching will all bear the traces of such embarrassment, and will be the weaker for it. 4. This Divine ordinance helps to promote the mutual care of minister and people for each other. They reap his spiritual things; he reaps their carnal things. 5. There is also thus a high and holy spiritual education of the people, in calling out their own kindly and just activities to uphold that ministry by which they themselves are upheld. The ministry is not to be found for them, but to be maintained by them. Thus there is seen to be a guard against abuse of position on either side.

V. ISRAEL WAS TO GUARD ITS OWN PRIESTHOOD AS BEING ITSELF A PRIESTHOOD FOR THE WORLD. So Churches are to guard the honour of their own ministry, because they have a ministry for the world. It is not for the ministers' own sakes that they are to be thus cared for, but on account of the high and holy cause which they represent, and which they seek, however imperfectly, to maintain. They are to be esteemed very highly in love *for their work's sake*; for the work which they fulfil is that which is purifying and saving the world. It is, in fact, by thus supporting a ministry that the Church is fulfilling its commission, "to preach the gospel to every creature." Of course, it follows from all this, that a ministry can claim such and such support, only so far as it is carrying out the Divine intent, or seeking in all fidelity to do so. It is not that God has put clergy as a kind of official police over the people; but that those who love righteousness are to show it by upholding the preaching of righteousness, and that those who love their Saviour's Name are to sustain the heralds of that Name, both at home and abroad.

Vers. 9—14.—*"Spiritualism" condemned.* In the verses forming this paragraph, there are nine terms or phrases, each with its own special meaning,[1] pointing to some pagan superstition, against which Moses is warning the people. The variety and number of such terms show us how great a hold a spurious "spiritualism" had upon the people. The phenomena connected therewith, however, present to us an aspect of history that is worthy of careful study. In some sort, the pagan customs of olden times connected with divination may seem so completely out of date, that it may be thought useless for the preacher to allude to them now. But though some details connected therewith may vary, yet the two purposes for which men "divined" of old, are still

[1] The student may with advantage consult Gesenius for the elucidation of each term; pp. 603, 736, 644, 544, 418, 258, 18, 335, 209 (Bagster's edit.), contain the explanation required. The following works may be consulted:—Wallace on 'Miracles and Spiritualism;' Crook on 'The Phenomena of Spiritualism;' Asa Mahan on 'Spiritualism.'

sought to be accomplished, viz.: (1) the ascertainment of destiny; and (2) a peep into the invisible realm of the departed. And not only so; but the methods of a modern so-called "spiritualism" are so nearly analogous to those of ancient times, that it is as needful for the preacher now to warn the people against them, as it was for Moses to warn the Hebrews. Even among them, the roothold of this superstition was so strong, that Isaiah had to caution the men of his time against it, and to remind them of the more excellent way (see Isa. viii. 19, 20). But it is very remarkable that neither Moses nor Isaiah closes up the matter at once by saying, "You may as well give up all that, for you cannot possibly hold any communication with the departed." Neither of them suggests that the invisible world is absolutely closed against all possible access. Various reasons for this may be surmised. It may be that the question of the abstract possibility or otherwise of communications with the departed, formed no part of God's revelation to Moses; or that God has not seen fit at any time to inform us thereon, deeming an education on the moral bearings of the question, of far greater moment than intelligence on its physical or metaphysical aspects. Any way, certain it is, that we are *not* called on to ask, *Can* we converse with the dead? But we are rather forbidden to attempt it. Five reasons are suggested as we compare and unite the teachings of Isaiah and Moses.

I. IT IS UNREASONABLE. "Should not a people seek unto their God?" If they wish to commune with spirit, there is one Great Infinite Spirit with whom they can hold fellowship, who has said, "Call on me in the day of trouble." From him we may get at any time all needful light on the daily path, and all needful intercourse with the spiritual world. We may hear a voice behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." And if we may consult the Great Supreme, why leave the highest authority, for the sake of consulting any others?

II. IT IS UNNECESSARY. For what is that we really need? Light *for* the future, but not light *on* it; and light *concerning* the invisible world, but not light *into* it. And these are given to us in the revelation of the Divine Word (see next Homily). The connection between this paragraph and the next should not be lost sight of. Moses says, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet," etc. (ver. 15), *i.e.* not only one Prophet in the fulness of time, but also from time to time as may be needed, prophet after prophet shall be sent you to direct you in the truth, so that you will have no excuse whatever for seeking light elsewhere, or in any forbidden ways. If that was true of Israel, how far more is it true of us! What a fulness of light and truth have we in Christ! And now that we have an unction from the Holy One to teach us the deep things of God, it is a wildly foolish and needless step to go knocking at the gates of the invisible world!

III. IT IS USELESS. It might very fairly be asked, "If you get an answer, how are you to verify its worth?" But Isaiah practically impales the "spiritualists" on the horns of a dilemma. "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;" *i.e.* supposing you consult the dead, and get an answer from them, that answer will either accord with "the Law and the testimony," or it will not. If it does, you are no better off than you were before, for you had it in the Book before you inquired. If it does not, still you are no better off, for "it is because there is no light in them," and if they have no light, they certainly cannot give any to you! So that either way the inquiry after the dead is utterly useless. And besides, who ever heard of anything alleged to be communicated by "the spirits" which contained aught that was not previously known? We have an infinitely more sure "word of prophecy," and we shall be guilty of the veriest folly if we forsake it for the random guessings of "spiritualism." Hence—

IV. IT IS SINFUL. The preacher may press this on the following grounds. 1. It is a wayward effort to force an opening into a region which God as yet sees fit to conceal from view. 2. It comes of a wish to get light on future issues rather than on present duty. Duty is ours, events are God's. 3. It involves the neglect of a rule which God has given, and a search after one which he has not. 4. It is a waste of time. 5. It puts a prying curiosity in the place of a lowly, loyal obedience. 6. It springs out of a guilty unbelief or from dissatisfaction with the ways of God. Why, even among the heathen who knew not God, it was regarded by him as an "abomination;" how much more must he so regard it among a people to whom he has revealed

himself in deepest, tenderest love? Have men not yet learnt that it is mercy which hides the future, and shrouds in veil the realm of the dead? Who of us could bear to have either curtain drawn aside? Oh! it is no wonder that this spirit of false inquiry should be forbidden by God. We should frown on it in others, sternly and constantly, and it should not be so much as named among us as becometh saints.

V. THERE IS ANOTHER AND A BETTER WAY OF GETTING ALL THE LIGHT WE NEED. "The Law and the testimony." Here are the words of God which are to direct us. Here we may "inquire of God," and to the lowly, childlike heart the Book will be full of divinest, holiest teaching. It will give us light on the daily path, and guide us to a course which has "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It abounds with promises that will cheer life's gloom, and chase away the darkness even from the grave. It opens up immortality and life. By its light we know that our departed ones in Christ, though absent from the body, are present with the Lord. Cheered by its words of hope, we can sing, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory!" We are not treading uncertainly. We walk not at random. We are not helplessly drifting down a current. We are "firm on the rock." We are surrounded with light from him who is "the Light of the world;" and with all this, cannot we wait a while, and let him who is redeeming us reveal the mysteries of the spirit world to us in his own good time rather than our own? Hush! these longings to know beforehand. Let us keep to the written Word. It tells us quite as much as we can bear to know while in these tabernacles of clay. Be it ours to study the Book of God: to take it not only as *a* guide, but as *the* guide; *not* simply as the only guide, but as the *all-sufficient* one, "until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

Vers. 15—22.—*God speaking to man through man.* The Exposition, as well as the Commentaries of Jameson and Keil, may, with great advantage, be consulted on this passage, and also Hengstenberg's 'Christology,' vol. i. pp. 96—107. Our brief homiletic sketches assume that the student has already mastered the exegesis, and comprehended the intent of the passage. Its connection with the preceding paragraph is obvious. The people had been warned against having recourse to familiar spirits, etc., on the ground that such practices were an abomination unto the Lord their God. But Moses would not only warn the people off the wrong ground, he would direct them to the right, by showing them the completeness of the Divine arrangements for supplying them from time to time with all the religious teaching they would require, in a way far more adapted to their condition and circumstances than by any unveiling of the secrets of the invisible world. They are reminded that when God came in grandeur to speak to them at Mount Sinai, they could not bear the sight nor the sound. They begged that Moses would speak to them, and not Jehovah; "lest we die," were their own words. So that it was clear they would be entirely unable to bear anything approximating to a full disclosure of the Divine. It must be toned and tempered within the limits of their capacities of reception and of their powers of endurance. Otherwise, it would fail of its end, by crushing those whom it was meant to train. Hence he who "knoweth our frame" graciously promises to speak hereafter to the people in their own dialect, as it were, and on their own level, by "raising them up a Prophet, from the midst of them, of their brethren, like unto Moses;" and thus would the needful messages from God be kept up, making it quite unnecessary for them to make use of unauthorized means of getting supernatural light. There would be, from time to time, one prophet raised up after another, culminating in *him* to whom they all gave witness. Thus our theme is, "*God speaking to man through man.*"

I. UNLESS A DIVINE REVELATION WERE ATTEMPERED TO OUR WEAKNESS, WE COULD NOT BEAR IT. The cry of Israel at Sinai, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die," is a "touch of nature." No man could bear the full blaze of God's glory. Unless there were a "hiding of God's power," we should be crushed by the revelation of it. We could no more endure the full disclosure of the Divine than our eyes could bear to gaze on the splendours of a noonday sun. Hence God, "who knows our frame," and who, therefore, knows what we can bear, meets our weakness by his tender mercy.

II. IN ORDER THAT THE REVELATION MAY BE SUCH AS WE CAN RECEIVE, GOD HAS SPOKEN TO MEN THROUGH MAN. As Sinai's terror, with the voice of Jehovah, was too much for Israel, Moses says, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from

the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me." Each of these phrases is emphatic, and is intended as the antithesis to the notion of overwhelming force. The meaning of Moses is twofold. 1. There shall be from time to time a prophet sent to you, through whom you may hear the voice of God. 2. There shall be hereafter a great Prophet, who shall be to you as the living Voice of God; but he shall be also "of your brethren, like unto me." We know how true both are. There was from time to time a line of prophets who spake for God. There has come to earth a Prophet greater than all beside. *They* always pointed onward to another; *he*, never, save as a heavenly gift from him was by him held in reserve, even the gift of the Holy Ghost. Thus God has come into communion with our race, to reveal his mind and will.

III. NEW MESSAGES, COMING IN A WAY SO SUITED TO US, FROM SO CONDESCENDING A GOD, BRING THEIR OWN AUTHORITY WITH THEM. (Ver. 19.) The message is not to be set at nought because the voice which speaks it is but human. If a prophet speaks only what the Lord hath spoken, though he may be a weak and frail instrument, though the burden of his message may be almost more than he can bear, yet, being borne along by the Holy Ghost to utter such words, they come with Divine authority. "The treasure is put into earthen vessels;" but though the vessel is earthy, the treasure is Divine.

IV. THIS AUTHORITY REACHES ITS CLIMAX IN THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Such, surely, is the import of the scene known as "the Transfiguration" (Matt. xvii.). Moses and Elias are there—the representatives of the Law and the prophets. They speak of the decease which Christ should accomplish at Jerusalem. Presently they vanish from the spot, and no one is left with the disciples save "Jesus only." Then a voice out of the cloud said, "*Hear him.*" In Acts iii. 20—26, we have the Apostle Peter's application of the very passage before us to the Lord Jesus Christ as *the* Prophet to whom all the rest did point. (See also Heb. i. 1—31; and for New Testament teaching as to the authority of Christ, and the importance of hearing and obeying him, see Heb. ii., ix., x.) So full is the revelation of God by Christ, that it is not only a revelation through him, but in him (John i. 1—18).

From these four principles involved in the paragraph, there are four inferences which may be safely and profitably drawn. 1. If the voice of God speaks to us suitably and adequately through the medium of human voices, then it is utterly needless for us to seek information and light by any forced attempts at gaining messages from the invisible world (see preceding Homily). 2. We are here furnished with a test as to what is truly a Divine message or no. There is, in fact, a twofold test. It is partly moral and partly physical. (1) Partly moral (ver. 22, "When," etc.). It is as if Moses said, "You only require a guide in case a 'prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord,' for if he does not, you know what to do (cf. ch. xiii.). If he speaks in the name of other gods, you must reject him at once." Note: Any supposed message from God which violates the dictates of enlightened reason and conscience, must be set aside. (2) Partly physical. If a prophet speaks in the Name of the Lord, they are then to watch and see if the thing comes to pass; and if not, then they may be sure that the prophet is a mere pretender; "he hath spoken presumptuously." 3. Here is an antidote to fear. "Thou shalt not be afraid of him." What is the connection between this and the preceding? Is it not this? Suppose that the "prophet" declares that this or that is about to happen, do not give way to excitement and alarm. Follow the voice of God, of which you are sure, and obey that, and come what will, all is well with you. You can afford to do this; "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business," and whether what the prophet declares come to pass or no, you are sure to be safe, if you have maintained unswerving loyalty to God. Nothing can harm you. So with us under the New Testament dispensation. Many affix dates to this or that. We heed them not. We have but to "wait for the Son of God from heaven." 4. The reception of the Divine message is a part of that obedience which every man owes to high Heaven. Its acceptance is not merely the adoption of a number of opinions. Oh no! Opinions are one thing, convictions are another. A man "holds" opinions, but convictions "hold" a man. His conscience is held fast in their grip. Even so it is with those who receive the words of the living God as their guide through life to immortality. Their whole being is held firmly in their strong yet loving and tender hold. A sceptic once said to the writer, "I tell you candidly, that if I wanted to point out the best specimens of humanity, I should point to some of *your way of thinking*."

So he put it, "of your way of thinking." How little does the outsider or unbeliever dream of the hold the Father's words have on us! Our whole being takes shape and outlook from them. Our fealty to him whom we know and love supremely, makes "the law of his mouth to be better to us than thousands of gold and silver."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*God's provision for the priests and Levites.* From the limitations of the monarchy, Moses next turns to the provision for the "priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi." They were not to receive any estate in Canaan beyond the suburbs of certain cities. They were to take "the Lord as their inheritance." We have already seen that Palestine was a good land for training up a *spiritual* people; it was a land where *dependence* upon God was constantly enforced. But among this people, thus invited to depend upon God, there was a tribe whose dependence upon God was to be further stimulated by the absence of any tangible inheritance. Their life was thus to be a life of *trust* in God's continual care. In these circumstances the Lord made certain laws about the priests' due. He took good care of the tribe that trusted him. It has been supposed that the animals, of which the priests were to have a definite part, were not merely sacrifices, but also those privately slaughtered, and the words (זֹבְחֵי הַזֶּבַח) translated "them that offer a sacrifice" will bear the rendering "those who slaughter animals." Still, it seems more probable that it was by the central altar that the priests and Levites were to live. Assuming this, then, the following lessons are here taught.

I. THOSE WHO TRUST GOD SHALL NEVER BE DISAPPOINTED IN THEIR ALLOTTED PORTION. For as a matter of fact, "the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw" were deemed dainty portions of the animal. The best portions ascended to God in the altar fire, and then the second best were assigned to the priests and Levites, while the offerer was content with what was left. God and his ministers were regarded as the *guests* of the Jewish worshippers, and, as the guests enjoy the best which we can offer in the exercise of our hospitality, the support of the priests and Levites was amply secured. These dues of the priests and Levites seem to have been regularly paid while the people remained true to God; of course, their support would suffer in sinful and idolatrous times, yet, even when they suffered with the neglect of God's altar, it was suffering with God.

And as a rule those who trust God are not disappointed with his provision. Even when it is limited in amount, he is sure to give sublime compensations. Though ministerial support is not what it ought to be, there is no class of men who enjoy life so much as God's servants.

II. THOSE WHO ARE THE LORD'S CHOSEN SERVANTS ARE CALLED PRE-EMINENTLY TO THE LIFE OF TRUST. There is a great temptation to encircle ourselves with so much worldly possession as that trust in God will be difficult and seem superfluous. In other words, there is an effort to be able to live by sight rather than by faith. But the Master whom we serve is realized by faith, and his kingdom must be propagated by faith. Hence he so arranges the lot of his servants that a loud call for faith is always ringing in their ears, and they should never neglect that call. The priests and Levites were at liberty to purchase land and leave it to their children, and doubtless many of them so far "made assurance doubly sure, and took a bond of fate." Yet the life of faith, the dependence upon God's altar, was better and wholesomer than the life of sight.

III. THE PEOPLE HAD NO RIGHT TO WITHHOLD THE PRIESTS' AND LEVITES' DUE BECAUSE OF ANY PRIVATE PATRIMONY INDIVIDUALS MIGHT POSSESS. A good deal of deficient ministerial support is due to the people very unfairly discounting private incomes and often exaggerating them, so as to save themselves. Ministers may inherit means through the kindly consideration of parents and friends; but this is no reason why people should hold their hand in the matter of ministerial support. The Lord specially provided that the Levite (ver. 8) should have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony. The truth is that private means invariably

go to make a public ministry more effective, if the ministry is true at all. They are not selfishly utilized, but used as a matter of stewardship. In such circumstances, instead of being a hindrance to liberality, these private possessions should be a stimulus, as they are so much more in the line of things devoted to the Lord.

IV. DUE RESPECT SHOULD BE SHOWN TO A DEVOTED SPIRIT. The case of the Levite here referred to corresponds to a minister who has responded to a Divine call, against what one might call the dictates of worldly prudence. He has followed the inward impulse (ver. 6), and come to aid the priests at the central altar from his snug patrimony at home. Such devotion is to be considered and rewarded. The Levite, who was so interested as to relinquish his country life and patrimony, deserved the payment of the dues at the altar. So with the generous devotion of the ministers of God. When men relinquish good worldly prospects for the Church, their doing so should be considered.—R. M. E.

Vers. 9—14.—*Divination forbidden.* The process of divination, in its different forms here referred to—"divination," "observing the heavenly bodies," "enchantment," "witchcraft," "charming," "consultation of spirits," "sorcery," and "necromancy"—was an effort to discover secrets by unwarrantable methods. It was man's longing for revelation undergoing degradation through the imaginations of men. It had been practised by the predecessors in Canaan, and in consequence they were being cast out. The Israelites were to deem it abomination, and unworthy of the people of God. From the succeeding verses, it is evident that it is to be contrasted with the Divine order of prophetical inspiration, and in consequence rejected with detestation.

I. OUR IDEAS OF REVELATION SHOULD BE WORTHY OF GOD. We have no right to expect God to degrade himself in the methods of revelation. Our own instincts should lead us to abhor such processes as have been adopted to secure the secrets of the Most High. All the mean and abominable ways which are here enumerated ought to have been renounced by thinking men instead of adopted. They are all unworthy channels for God's messages. Astrology, enchantment, necromancy,—all are miserable makeshifts for a decent mode of revelation.

God has in "divers manners" certainly made known his will to men (Heb. i. 1). He has used dreams (Gen. xxxvii. 8; Job xxxiii. 15), revealing to the soul, whose avenues of sensation are temporarily closed, the information it needed. The dream was the condition of the communication (Gen. xxviii. 12—22). God spoke when he had got man's ear shut to other things. And we can see this to be a most worthy way! Then by *angelic* visits he oftentimes revealed his will, instances of which are many in the Bible. This also was worthy. Last of all, by *inspiring men*, that is, through human nature, which is also eminently worthy of God. But the divination process is and should have been regarded as mean and contemptible.

II. IT IS EVIDENCE OF THE GREAT CREDULITY OF MEN THAT DIVINATION HAS IMPOSED UPON THEM. In connection with "spiritualism," for example, we have examples of credulity now corresponding exactly to the divination of the earlier times. As if such mean methods would be adopted by the Infinite Majesty, who has spoken in these last days by his Son! The power of belief is incalculable. Credulity is the believing power exercised on false objects and on insufficient evidence. We have ample faith in the world, if we could only get it rightly directed. And sometimes we find men who are most sceptical about religious matters, most credulous about the novelties of spiritualism. They yield to phenomena a credence that they deny to the well-authenticated Word.

III. GOD'S PRESENCE IS TO DETERMINE OUR CONDUCT. When Moses says, "Thou shalt be perfect with (עִם) the Lord thy God" (ver. 13), the idea seems to be that the overshadowing Presence is to determine our conduct before him. We will strive to be perfect as he is, and not look for mean methods from him.—R. M. E.

Vers. 15—22.—*The promised Prophet.* From speaking of the paltry expectations about divination, Moses goes on to speak of the general plan of Divine revelation. The people had had the splendid chance of *direct* communion with God, without any mediation. God spoke to them from heaven at Sinai; but so afraid were they of *immediate* revelation that they implored Moses to mediate the message for them. He became consequently,

with God's full approval, the human medium through which the Divine will was conveyed, which means God's *prophet*. They had had no difficulty in accepting the Divine messages through him. Now, Moses assures them that this method of mediation through human beings will continue. He puts the promise in comprehensive form, and says that through a Prophet like to himself will God continue to speak to them after he has gone, and his message they will reject at their peril.

I. LET US OBSERVE THE APPROPRIATENESS OF GOD REVEALING HIMSELF THROUGH A HUMAN BEING. For man is in the Divine image; if this be not the case, we can have no knowledge whatever of God. Man is the image of God; and hence God reveals himself to men through a man. The office of *prophet* is the most appropriate way of revealing God's will. And when we carry on this line of thought, we are landed in the idea that an *incarnation of God* alone could adequately convey to man the mind and nature of God. If any one wishes to follow out this line, he will get splendid help in Mr. R. H. Hutton's admirable essay on 'The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence.'[1]

II. IT SEEMS CLEAR FROM THE PROMISE THAT A SINGLE PROPHET AFTER THE SIMILITUDE OF MOSES IS TO BE THE MEDIATOR FOR THE AGES. Now, only one Person answers this description, and this is Jesus Christ. He was and is incarnate God. His Spirit he alone could take, and through its gift to men in the different ages make them the channel of God's revelation. As a matter of fact, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" and the prophets were his instruments in the history of the Church. God has spoken in the last days by his Son; and the prophets between Moses and Christ were really the inspired messengers of the one Great Prophet of God. This is the idea of Peter that the Spirit of Christ spoke in the prophets.[2] We thus see one Person embracing the mediating work of the different ages, and accomplishing it through holy men.

III. THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS, THEREFORE, BECOME THE CLIMAX OF DIVINE REVELATION. The previous revelations were but foreshadowings of this perfect manifestation of God. A human history became the embodiment of Divine thoughts, mercies, self-denials, and self-sacrifice. The blaze of divinity that was intolerable at Sinai becomes not only bearable but entrancing in the face of Jesus Christ. The blinding brilliance has been so toned down that man can rejoice in Jesus as "God manifest in the flesh." "We beheld his glory"—it did not blind or scare men as at the holy mount.

IV. THE DISREGARD OF THE WORDS OF JESUS IS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH. This is the penalty pronounced. We see it in another form in the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." If disobedience to Moses was visited in many cases by death, how much more disobedience and disloyalty to Christ! (cf. Heb. x. 28—31). The gospel has penalties of the severest kind for its rejection, as well as bliss beyond compare for its reception. The alternative is thus clearly set before us.

V. THE PROPHETS SENT OF GOD SUBMIT TO THE TEST OF FULFILMENT, WHILE FALSE PROPHETS ARE TO BE DETECTED BY THEIR FAILURE. God's method being a human mediation, is liable to be imitated, and men from time to time will profess to be prophets, when they have no real commission. Now, God has such a control of the future that no unassisted, uninspired man can forecast it successfully. Sooner or later he is found out. Happy guesses soon run out, and the person is discredited. Hence it was the duty of Israel to weigh well the communication of the professed prophets, and to see wherein they were confirmed by subsequent events. The true prophets had their word fulfilled, and were Christ's messengers; the false prophets had their word discredited, and were acting presumptuously.

Let us hear the Great Prophet, and give him credit for all the predictions of the minor and but human prophets.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The Lord our inheritance.* True of the priests and Levites, it is true also of each believer, that "the Lord is his inheritance" (Ps. xvi. 5, 6). He is in this respect a "priest unto God" (1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 6).

[1] 'Essays,' vol. i. pp. 227—284.

[2] 1 Pet. i. 11; also Hengstenberg's 'Christology of the Old Testament,' vol. i. pp. 104—115.

I. THE MEANING OF THE EXPRESSION. Inheritance—equal to lot, part, share. Inheritance in families—the share which each receives of the patrimony. In the partition of Canaan, each tribe had its lot, its portion, its share. God's portion or inheritance was the tithes, with the prescribed parts of the sacrifices, the firstfruits, etc. Levi had as his portion God himself, involving a share of the provision from God's table (ver. 1).

II. THE GRANDEUR OF THE TRUTH. 1. *The believer possesses God.* God is a better possession for the soul than any of his gifts. "It is a thought which lies at the foundation of all true religion, that God himself is the Supreme Good, the true and real portion of the soul. . . . More intimately than light becomes the possession of the eye on which it streams, or air of the organs of breathing which inhale it, or the food we eat, assimilated and diffused through the physical system, incorporates itself with the nature of him who partakes of it, does he, that Infinite One, the Light of all our seeing, the Bread of Life, the nutriment of our highest being, become the deep inward portion of each soul that loves him" (Caird, sermon on 'The Christian's Heritage'). 2. *In possessing God, the believer possesses all things.* And this, though in an outward sense he has nothing (2 Cor. vi. 10; cf. 1 Cor. iii. 21—23). (1) God provides for him out of the fulness at his command. Possessing God, the Possessor of all, he knows that he will want "no good thing" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). Temporally and spiritually, he will be provided for, kept, saved, delivered (Ps. xxxvii. 3, 9, 11, 25, 34; cxxi.; Isa. xxxiii. 16; Matt. vi. 33; Eph. i. 3). (2) All things work together for his good (Rom. viii. 28). (3) He perceives and enjoys God in all things, as none else can (Ps. civ.). (4) He is one of the "heirs of God" in "the times of the restitution of all things" (Acts iii. 24), when the redeemed enter on their glory (Matt. xxv. 34). Let the saint reflect on his inheritance in God. (1) How surpassingly rich it is! (2) How delightsome it is! (Ps. xvi. 6). (3) How enduring it is—eternal! (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18). (4) How all-satisfying it is! (Ps. lxxiii. 26).—J. O.

Ver. 5.—*The priesthood.* Israel, as a holy nation, consecrated to God's service, was "a kingdom of priests" (Exod. xix. 6). This priestly character of the nation was represented formally in the tribe of Levi. The distinctive duties of the priesthood were discharged by the sons of Aaron, who were thus the priests strictly so called.

I. THE PRIESTHOOD IN ITSELF. 1. Chosen and set apart by God. "Chosen him out of all thy tribes." 2. Holy, indicated by bodily perfection (Lev. xxi. 16—24), holy garments (Exod. xxxix.), rites of dedication (Lev. viii.), ceremonial regulations and restrictions (Lev. xxi., etc.). 3. Represented the people before God (Exod. xxviii. 12). 4. Made propitiation for sins (Heb. v. 1). 5. Gave forth oracles (Numb. xxvii. 21). 6. Had for these purposes the right of approach to God.

II. THE PRIESTHOOD AS TYPICAL. 1. Of *Christ.* The high priest, in particular, was typical of Christ as (1) the One Medium of approach to God (John xiv. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5). (2) Inherently holy, absolutely without sin (2 Cor. v. 21). (3) Representing the Church before God in his person, work, and intercession (Heb. iv. 14). (4) In his having made reconciliation for the sins of the people—himself both Priest and Sacrifice (Heb. ii. 17; x. 12). (5) In being the organ of Divine revelations (Matt. xi. 27). (6) For this priestly work—to which he was divinely ordained (Heb. v. 5)—Christ has free and immediate access to the holiest of all, and has gained admission to the same for his people (Heb. ix. 12; x. 19). 2. Of *believers.* (1) Chosen (Ps. lxv. 4). (2) Consecrated (1 Cor. i. 2). (3) Having freedom of approach to God (Heb. x. 19). (4) Offering spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. ii. 5). (5) Interceding for the world.—J. O.

Vers. 6—8.—*Love to the sanctuary.* God loves those who love the sanctuary.

I. LOVE TO THE SANCTUARY SEEN. 1. In desire for it (ver. 6). 2. In pain at being deprived of its ordinances (Ps. xlii. 1—7; lxiii.; lxxxiv.). 3. In overstepping the bounds of bare duty in attendance on it (ver. 6).

II. LOVE TO THE SANCTUARY REWARDED. 1. By acceptance of those repairing to it. 2. By provision made for them (Ps. lxiii. 5).—J. O.

Vers. 9—14.—*Magic.* I. A STERN PROHIBITION OF CANAANITISH PRACTICES. The practice of magic is known to have been extensively developed in ancient Egypt and Chaldea. Numerous indications occur of its existence among the Canaanites

(*e.g.* 1 Sam. xxviii. 7—10). The lower kinds of magic are of rank growth in all barbarous and semi-civilized communities. The priests combine the functions of diviners, prophets, exorcists, thaumaturgists, physicians, and makers of idols and amulets. The magic of the ancients was distinguished as good or bad, according as it was exercised to conjure diseases and to combat demoniacal influences, or was abused to work harm. This last, which was avowedly diabolical in its character, was what was properly called "sorcery," and was universally regarded with horror. The noteworthy fact, however, is that the books of Moses make no distinction as to kind, but forbid absolutely the practice of every species of magical art. Moses recognizes no magic that is good; he classes all under the same category of "abominations." The text is in principle a prohibition of the use of all such arts, whether the pretender to magical power believes in its efficacy or not. It prohibits, further, resort to such as profess these arts. The "spiritualistic" delusions of our time in all their varieties (spirit mediums, rappings, planchettes, etc.), with "fortune-telling," and superstitious practices supposed to bring good or to avert evil "luck," are condemned by the passage.

II. A REASON FOR THIS PROHIBITION. 1. The nature of the practices as "abominations." They were: (1) Irrational. (2) Evil. Moses, as noticed above, recognizes no "good" magic. It is viewed either as imposture or, assuming its reality, as demonish (Satanic). It was connected with foolish and wicked rites. 2. The character of the people as "perfect" (ver. 13). There could not be perfect love to God and communion with him, and trafficking with the devil at the same time. Love to God, faith in him, and entirety of devotion to him should preclude these superstitions. What he wills his people to know he will teach them by proper means; what he conceals they have no right to seek by means that are improper (Isa. viii. 19).—J. O.

Vers. 15—20.—*Prophecy.* The term "Prophet" covers the whole series of Old Testament prophets, culminating in Christ, the Prophet like unto Moses *par excellence* (see *infra*).

I. PROPHECY IN GENERAL. The prophet—what? Etymologically, one "boiling or bubbling over" with the Divine inspiration. No mere religious genius, but one truly and supernaturally inspired. A revealer and declarer of the will of God. Future events were foretold: 1. As signs. 2. In warnings and appeals. 3. In denouncing God's judgments. 4. In administering comfort. 5. In unfolding the Messianic hope. 6. In unfolding the Divine purpose underlying providential developments. Prediction is thus a true and vital element in prophecy, but it is far from being of the essence of it. It is the function of the prophet either to declare new truth—truth gained by direct revelation, and given forth with the authority of Heaven as a "word of the Lord," or, taking up truth already revealed, to revive and enforce it with supernatural power and fervour, applying it to the circumstances, exigencies, and evils of his particular time. "The *pro*phets were men who, when facing the people, stood as it were *before God*, and thus spoke *fore* and *for* him" (Morison).

II. PROPHECY AND MOSAISM. It is noteworthy that Mosaism contemplated the rise of prophecy from the first, and left room for it in the arrangements of the economy. It even required it for the carrying forward of its objects to completion. The dispensation was not a final one. The kingdom of God had a future which it was the task of prophecy gradually to disclose. The Law enclosed innumerable spiritual germs, which it was the function of prophecy to expand and develop. It had, moreover, underlying its ceremonialism, a spiritual basis, which it was the business of the prophets to bring to light, and to recall to people's minds when they appeared in danger of forgetting it. Prophecy was thus a standing witness to the life, freshness, and power which lay in the heart of a religion largely wrapped up in legal forms. Then there was the necessity for new light and guidance under the conditions of advancing national life, and in times of national emergency. The Law left not a little scope for extended applications of its fundamental principles, and it lay with the prophets to furnish the direction required. All this, in addition to their more general function of rebuking, warning, and testifying, in times of declension, which, with the carrying forward the development of revelation in its relation to Christ and his kingdom, may be regarded as the chief part of their work.

III. PROPHECY AND HEATHEN MANTICISM. The connection shows that prophecy is given in lieu of the heathenish practices that are forbidden. If God forbids divination,

necromancy, consultation of familiar spirits, etc., he gives something better—something that will lawfully supply the craving which these superstitions unlawfully sought to gratify. The soul: 1. Craves for a knowledge of God's will. 2. Desires guidance in critical times of life. 3. Ponders anxiously its relations to the invisible world and to the future. 4. Feels its personal unfitness for intercourse with God. These cravings were the strength of heathen sorcery, etc., and they were provided for in prophecy. This, it may be noticed, is throughout a characteristic of revelation—it does not simply remove the bad, but provides for the supply of the cravings to which the bad appeals. —J. O.

Vers. 15—19.—*The Prophet like unto Moses.* These chapters bring before us prophet. priest, and king—offices pointing forward to and culminating in Christ. Christ is distinctively, and in the complete sense, the Prophet like unto Moses (Acts iii. 22), Christ and Moses were alike—

I. As FOUNDERS OF DISPENSATIONS. It was the greatness of Moses that he was employed by God in inaugurating a new era in the history of his kingdom—in introducing a new order of things—in settling the foundations of a new economy. In this respect he stood at the head of the Old Testament line of prophets, and in a sense stood apart from them. "The Law was given by Moses" (John i. 17). He had the ordering and settling of the "house" of God in the form in which it was to last till Christ came, who, "as a Son over his own house," would revise its arrangements and reconstitute it on a new and better basis (Heb. iii. 2—7). Prophets subsequent to Moses stood within the lines of the economy already established. They could enforce and maintain, but while predicting the advent of a new age in which great changes would be wrought, they had no authority of themselves to introduce such changes. It was reserved for Christ to "change times and seasons," and so to alter and remodel Mosaic institutions, or supersede them by new ones, or abolish them by giving the substance for the shadow, as to place the Church upon a permanent and moveless basis, and adapt it for the reception of the Gentile nations.

II. IN THE FREEDOM OF INTERCOURSE WHICH THEY ENJOYED WITH GOD. Moses enjoyed, as was necessary, the freest intercourse with heaven. God spake with him, not in a vision, or dream, or in dark speeches, but "mouth to mouth" (Numb. xii. 6—9), "face to face" (ch. xxxiv. 10). This is made, in the passage last quoted, a feature of distinction between Moses and later prophets in Israel. In Christ, this peculiarity of the relation of Moses to God reappears in higher form. Intercourse with the Father reaches the highest degree of closeness and intimacy, the Son being in the Father, and the Father in the Son (John xiv. 10). Christ's insight into his Father's will was perfect (John v. 20, 21). His communion with the Father was habitual and uninterrupted. The New Testament apostles, in an inferior degree, shared in this higher footing, were habitually possessed by the Spirit, and spoke and wrote under his calm and abiding influence.

III. As MEDIATING BETWEEN THE PEOPLE AND GOD. (Vers. 16—18.) It was when the people were deeply conscious of their need of a mediator that this promise was vouchsafed. It had only, as regards mediation, a very inferior application to the Old Testament prophets. The fulness of its meaning comes to view in Christ.

These points involve others, as *e.g.* the resemblance between Christ and Moses: 1. In the degree of authority with which they were clothed, and in the mighty signs and wonders which authenticated their mission (ch. xxxiv. 11). 2. In the fulness and grandeur of the revelations made through them. 3. In the severe penalties attaching to disobedience to their words (ver. 19; Acts iii. 23; Heb. ii. 1—5; x. 28, 29).—J. O.

Vers. 20—22.—*The false prophet.* The failure of the word of a prophet was decisive proof that he had not spoken by Divine inspiration. Had his word not failed, it would not have followed that he was a true prophet, but it showed conclusively that he was a false one when his word *did* fail.

I. CERTAINTY OF FULFILMENT IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD'S WORDS. If *e.g.* the prophecies of the Scriptures could be shown to have been falsified by events, it would, by the rule laid down in this fundamental prophetic charter, conclusively disprove their claims to inspiration. It is vain to think of defending the inspiration of the

prophets, while conceding, with rationalistic writers, occasional failures in their predictions. The prophets themselves do not shrink from this test, but confidently appeal to it (Isa. xxxiv. 16). This shows how different their inspiration was from the ordinary inspiration of genius, both in their estimation of it and in fact. No man of genius, however wide his range of vision, be he a Bacon, a Shakespeare, a Goethe, or a Carlyle, would like to rest his reputation on the absolute unfailingness of his words. While prophecy affords conspicuous instances of the certainty of fulfilment characteristic of God's words, it is to be remembered that this certainty inheres in all God's words alike. No word of God or of Christ will fall to the ground unfulfilled (Matt. xxiv. 35). The thought should comfort God's people, and make his enemies tremble. Applies to promises and threatenings equally with predictions and doctrines.

II. THE PREDICTIONS OF SCRIPTURE ABIDE THIS TEST OF TRUE PROPHECY. The force of the evidence from prophecy can only be properly felt by those who have been at pains to examine the Bible predictions in detail. But it does not need more than an examination of the principal instances to convince us that here we have no chance guess-work, no mere forecasting of natural sagacity. We might point to the predictions in Deuteronomy respecting the future of the Jewish nation, and the punishment which would overtake them for their sins (ch. iv. 25—29; xxviii. 45—68); or to the Messianic prophecies (*e.g.* Isa. liii.); or to particular predictions delivered long before the events predicted occurred, or could have been foreseen, as when Amos (B.C. 787) predicts of Israel at a time when the king and nobles were lying on beds of ivory, and indulging in every species of dissipation and amusement—"Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose Name is The God of hosts" (Amos v. 27), or when Micah (B.C. 710), a hundred years before the Captivity, foretells of Judah, "Zion for your sake shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps" (Micah iii. 12); "Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there shall the Lord redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies" (Micah iv. 10). Discovery has not tended to discredit, but in several striking instances has confirmed the truth of prophecy, as in regard to Ezekiel's prediction of the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar (ch. xxix. 8—16), a prediction pronounced by Kueuen and sceptical critics to be a mere guess, falsified by the event, but now strikingly confirmed from a contemporary hieroglyphic inscription (see *Expositor*, vol. x.). And while it is true that an isolated sign and wonder is not proof sufficient of Divine inspiration (ch. xiii.), it is certain that, taking into account the character of the prophets, the kind and number of their predictions, the holiness of their message, and the coherence of what they taught with earlier revelations, the evidence of their Divine commission is as strong as could be wished—is, in fact, decisive.—J. O.

Vers. 1—8.—*The true priest is the highest type of man.* God here lays down the lines along which men may rise to the dignity of the true priesthood. The ordinance did not secure the ideal reality. "The Law was weak through the flesh." Human choice and endeavour were requisite to attain to God's ideal priest. It is his privilege to receive from God, and to reveal to men.

I. DIVINE CHOICE AND HUMAN DESIRE MUST COMBINE TO MAKE A REAL PRIEST. The man, though born a Levite, must "come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose" (ver. 6). The human will must co-operate with God's will. This is the product of the second birth. In this ancient arrangement, we see the forecast of the Christian life—the true priesthood.

II. THE PRIEST'S OFFICE IS, NOT FOR HONOUR, BUT FOR SERVICE. "He shall minister in the Name of the Lord his God." In other words, he shall serve in the stead of God, and by his authority. This is the hardest work, yet the most honourable. No toil or self-sacrifice can he decline while appearing in the stead of God, for he serves the noblest part of man. In God's kingdom there is no honour apart from character; and character is attained by service.

III. THE PRIEST'S EARTHLY NEEDS SHALL BE MET WITHOUT ANXIETY ON HIS PART. "They that minister at the altar shall partake of the altar" (vers. 3, 4, 8). While we are employed on the King's errands, the King will provide our rations. We have a

Divine guarantee that bodily wants shall be supplied, for God himself is our inheritance. It is surely better to trust the Fount rather than the stream, the First Cause rather than the intermediate channel, the Creator rather than the creature. The priest shall be supplied before other men, for the firstfruits of corn and wine and oil are his. They that serve God without stint shall never be forgotten.

IV. THE TRUE PRIEST OCCUPIES THE APEX OF THE SOCIAL PYRAMID. The true priest really rules. For him all other orders of men toil. For the priest to possess any earthly inheritance would be a burden, a care, an injury. *Others* till the ground *for him*, thresh his corn, and winnow his grain. As a god, he receives. For other men the inferior creation toils and groans. The unreasoning animals bear his burdens and do his will. Yet *these* men, served well by the subordinate orders of life, wait upon the priest, and minister to his human wants. And in return, the real priest ministers to the hunger of the soul, and supplies light and guidance and hope. The real priest is the greatest benefactor to the human race; the counterfeit priest is a *pest*.—D.

Vers. 9—14.—*Gross superstition the alternative of true religion.* The popular superstitions of every age are very seductive. Our only safeguard against them is complete loyalty to the living God. The indwelling Spirit is a Guide and a Defence.

I. MAN GENERICALLY CRAVES TO UNRAVEL THE FUTURE. In every sane mind the inquiry arises, "What is beyond phenomena? What is to happen to-morrow?" The present enjoyment may satisfy animals; it does not satisfy man. He has a faculty that lives in the future. He is ever forecasting life. This inquisitiveness, if repressed, becomes a passion—an insatiable fire. If there is no true oracle that will give reply to his queries, he will betake himself to false ones. If no reply is forthcoming, he is driven hither and thither by the demon of unrest.

II. THIS CRAVING FOR REVELATION LEADS TO CHILDISH SUPERSTITIONS. This conscious want of the soul clearly indicates that some provision has been made by God; but, lacking *this*, men betake themselves to a thousand subterfuges. The more shrewd and avaricious among them trade upon this prying curiosity, and invent a thousand frauds for self-enrichment. In olden times, every village had its self-anointed oracle; every nation has had its modes of divination. No price has been too great to pay for this envied knowledge. Parental feeling has been freely sacrificed at this blood-stained altar. Fathers have made their loved ones to pass through the fire, in order to avert supposed disaster. Without doubt, the devil has been the moving genius in these systems of enchantment.

III. CRUEL SUPERSTITIONS HAVE LED TO HEAVIEST DISASTERS. So deeply rooted had these systems of diabolic divinations become in the land of Canaan, that to extirpate them it was necessary to extirpate the people also. We are not at liberty to suppose that the Amorites were destroyed because of aberrations in intellectual belief. But the fruit of superstitious belief is soon experienced in sensuality, bestial excess, witchcraft, murder, war. Under such influences society is rent in pieces; every man's hand is red with rapine and blood. At length it becomes an act of necessity to remove such a people from the face of the earth. The deeds of the Canaanites had become a stench in Jehovah's nostrils—a detestation that could no longer be endured. Hence their extermination.

IV. OUR ONLY SAFETY IS IN LOYAL OBEDIENCE TO GOD. No resting-place can be found for intellect or heart of man between degrading superstition and religious faith. Who can solve mysteries but God alone? If God reveal to us our line of duty just to the extent that we really need it; and if, in addition, he give us the assurance that the soul's need shall be met as fast as that need arises;—*this* will satisfy every reasonable request. Men can and must trust the true God. As a child walks along the darkest road quite contentedly so long as its hand is in its father's hand, *so* with equal confidence may we confide in the safe and unerring guidance of our Almighty Parent. We have in God a perfect Friend; all that is needed for well-being is complete submission. "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God." To have recourse to witchcraft or divination is practical treason!—D.

Vers. 15—22.—*Presages of the true Prophet.* Captious men of the present day complain that they cannot see God—cannot hear his voice. In their heart they do

not wish to see him. He will not reveal himself, as an object of curiosity, to the eye of speculation. He reveals himself to the conscience and to the loyal heart. But men do not wish to see him as the embodiment of righteousness. They shudder and flee away. Yet in no other way *can* they see him than as he truly is. In this circumstance of mutual estrangement there is need of a mediator—prophet.

I. GUILTY MEN DEBAR THEMSELVES FROM PERSONAL FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. There is nothing in common between unrighteous men and a righteous God. They are mutually repellent. The heart-language of such men is *this*, "Let us not hear again the voice of the Lord our God; neither let us see this great fire any more." To *them*, his voice is the thunder of war; to *them*, his presence is a consuming fire. They have no eye except to see his burning anger. Hence they flee to hide themselves. Their wish projects itself into reality; he removes himself.

II. MEN'S DESIRE TO HOLD COMMUNICATION WITH GOD THROUGH A MEDIATOR CONCEDED. The gracious disposition of God towards men yields to his creatures' necessity. Ask what they will, if righteousness be not dishonoured, it shall be done. The all-wise God candidly admits that the Jews had, in this matter, spoken well. But the mediator must be a prophet. He must convey the thoughts and dispositions and will of God to men. Human obedience, to have any worth, must be intelligent—the fruit of choice and purpose.

III. THE PERFECT PROPHET IS INTRODUCED BY SUCCESSIVE STAGES. Our moral instincts often outrun our clear intelligence. The Jews desired an intermediate agent, who should convey God's will to them; but they scarcely knew what it was they asked for. Could any mortal man clearly reveal the mind of the Eternal? Would not the pure stream be defiled by the impure channel? Nevertheless, God will do the best for them in their present condition. As yet the perfect Prophet will not be understood nor appreciated. Knowledge of God's character and purpose sufficient for the present shall be revealed by imperfect men—types of the coming perfect Mediator. By easy gradations, the human family must be divinely educated.

IV. THE TRUE PROPHET IS A PERFECT VEHICLE OF GOD'S THOUGHTS. "I will put my words in his mouth." Unless the prophet be a mere mechanical automaton, his words must be the result of his thoughts. If God shall use a human person to reveal himself to men, he must use his mind, heart, and will: yea, his entire being. This has been realized only in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. Hence he could say, "The words that I speak, I speak not of myself: but that Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Hence, again, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also." For the advent of this real Prophet, humanity stood for centuries on the outlook, on the watch-tower of hope.

V. CONTUMACY OF THE TRUE PROPHET IS CONTUMACY AGAINST GOD. Such is the value of this Divine gift, that to treat it with indifference is heinous crime. No human penalty may be annexed, but God himself undertook to punish the deed. Hunger is God's voice within the body, and he who disregards that voice shall surely die. Pain is God's voice in human nerves, and he who neglects that summons shall die. Truth is everywhere the voice of God, and to turn deaf ears to truth is to deprive one's self of life. And, by parity of reasoning, the voice of God is heard more clearly and more authoritatively yet, in the person of his dear Son: it is his prerogative to give to men eternal life. Hence, to turn a deaf ear to him is folly, contumacy, despair, ruin. God will exact a most fitting retribution.

VI. GOD SUPPLIES A TEST BETWEEN THE FALSE PROPHET AND THE TRUE. The eagerness of men to discover the Prophet of Jehovah, led many to impersonate him for the purpose of personal reputation and gain. Every true prophet of God came with sufficient credential, so that no candid mind need have been deceived. They had the power to read the near future: this was a token of their heavenly commission. But better still, their message commended itself to the conscience of the hearers; and *thus* might every hearer find in an honest conscience that the herald was from God. If the prophet summoned men to repentance and assured them of a share in the mercy of God, they could readily ascertain for themselves whether relief came to their burdened consciences—whether better feelings arose in the heart. The truth is never very far distant if we really wish to find it.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIX.

LAWS CONCERNING CITIES OF REFUGE. LANDMARKS NOT TO BE REMOVED. LAWS CONCERNING WITNESSES.

Vers. 1—13.—Moses had before this enunciated the law concerning cities of refuge for manslayers, and had already pointed out the cities on the east of the Jordan that were to be set apart for this (Numb. xxxv. 11, etc.; ch. iv. 41, etc.). He here repeats the law with special reference to the appointment of such cities "in the midst of the land," on the west of the Jordan, in Canaan itself; and he supplements the instructions formerly given with directions as to the maintenance of roads to the cities of refuge, and as to the division of the land, so that there should be a city of refuge in every third of the land.

Ver. 3.—**Thou shalt prepare thee a way.** In the East, the roads were for the most part mere tracks made by the feet of animals used as beasts of burden or for travelling; and this continues to be the case in Palestine and many other parts of the East even at the present day. That roads, however, properly so called, were not unknown to the Hebrews, even in early times, is evident, not only from this passage, but also from Lev. xxvi. 22; Numb. xx. 17; xxi. 22; ch. ii. 27; 1 Sam. vi. 12. The design of the injunction here was that every facility should be afforded to the fugitive to escape to the place of refuge. In later times, it was enacted that the roads leading to these cities should be repaired every year in the month Adar, and every obstruction removed.

Vers. 4—7.—(Cf. Numb. xxxv. 11, etc.)

Vers. 8, 9.—In case their land should be extended, in case they should come to possess the whole territory promised by God to the patriarchs, so that their domain should reach from the Nile to the Euphrates (Gen. xv. 18)—an event which should be realized only if they should continue steadfast in their obedience to all that God had enjoined upon them, and an event which in point of fact never was realized, for even under David and Solomon there were extensive territories within these limits which were not incorporated with the kingdom of Israel—in that case they were to add other three cities of refuge to those already appointed.

Ver. 10.—The design of appointing these cities was to prevent the shedding of innocent blood, which would be the case were the unintentional manslayer killed in revenge by one of the relatives of the man he had slain; in this case the guilt of bloodshed would rest upon the nation if they neglected to provide for the escape of the manslayer.

Vers. 11—13.—These cities, however, were not to be places of refuge for murderers, for those who from hatred and with wicked intent had slain others; if such fled to one of these cities, they were not to be suffered to remain there; the elders of their own city were to require them to be delivered up, that the avenger might put them to death (Numb. xxxv. 16—33, etc.). In the earlier legislation, it is enacted that the congregation shall judge in such matters, and that by their decision it should be determined in any case whether the person who had slain another was to be allowed to remain in a city of refuge or be delivered over to the avenger of blood. With this the ordinance here is not inconsistent; the elders were not to act as judges, but merely as magistrates, to apprehend the man and bring him to trial.

Ver. 14.—To the ordinance concerning cities of refuge Moses appends one prohibiting the removing of landmarks; if these had been placed by a man's ancestors to mark the boundaries of possessions, they were not to be surreptitiously altered. Landmarks were held sacred, and a curse is pronounced against those who remove them (ch. xxvii. 7; cf. Job xxiv. 2; Prov. xxii. 28; xxiii. 10; Hos. v. 10). Among other nations also landmarks were regarded as sacred (cf. Plato, 'De Legibus,' viii. p. 842; Dionys. Halic. ii. 17; Plutarch, 'Numa,' 16; Ovid, 'Fast.,' ii. 639).

Ver. 14.—**They of old time**; *i.e.* those of a former age (רִאשֹׁנִים, earlier ones, ancestors, predecessors). The word does not necessarily imply that the age described as "former" was removed at a *great* distance in the past; it might designate men of the immediately preceding age. The LXX. have here *οἱ πατέρες*, and the Vulgate *priores*. That the law here given was uttered whilst Israel was yet outside of Canaan, is evident from what follows in this verse.

Vers. 15—21.—To secure against injury to life or property through inadequate or false attestation, it is enacted that more than one witness must appear before any-

thing can be established; and that, should a witness be found on trial to have testified falsely against his neighbour, he was to be punished by having done to him what he thought to have done to his neighbour (cf. ch. xvii. 6; Numb. xxxv. 30).

Ver. 15.—The rule in ch. xvii. 6, regarding accusations of idolatry, is here extended to accusations of every kind before a court of justice; a single witness was not to be admitted as sufficient to convict a man of any offence, either civil or criminal.

Ver 16.—**To testify against him** that which is **wrong**; literally, *to testify against him defection*, i.e. from the Law of God. The speaker has apparently in view here all such defections from the Law as would entail punishment on the convicted offender. In ch. xiii. 5 [6], indeed, the crime described here as "that which is wrong" (margin, "falling away") is specially the crime of apostacy to idolatry; but the word (סָרָה), though usually expressing apostacy from Jehovah, has properly the general sense of a deflection from a prescribed course (from סוּר, to go off, to go aside), and so may describe any departure from what is constituted right.

Ver. 17.—**Both the men**, *i.e.* both parties at the bar, **shall stand before the Lord**; *i.e.* shall come to the sanctuary where Jehovah had his dwelling-place in the midst of his people, and where the supreme judges, who were his delegates and representatives, held their court (ch. xvii. 9).

Ver. 19.—**Thought**. The verb here used (זָמַם) means generally to meditate, to have in mind, to purpose; but it frequently has the subaudition of meditating evil (cf. Ps. xxxi. 37; xxxvii. 12; Prov. xxx. 32, etc.).

Ver. 20.—(Cf. ch. xiii. 12.)

Ver. 21.—The *lex talionis* was in this case to be observed (cf. Exod. xxi. 23; Lev. xxiv. 20). Practically, however, a pecuniary compensation might be accepted for the offence (cf. Josephus, 'Antiq.,' iv. 8, 35).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The cities of refuge.* The appointment of cities of refuge by Moses is of great interest, as yielding a study in Jehovah's ways of educating his people, and of giving light and truth to men. We will see—

I. THE PLACE THIS INSTITUTION OCCUPIES IN HISTORY.[1] So far as we are aware, there is nothing just now existing among civilized nations with which it is altogether analogous. The most recent regulations which seem to be a kind of reflection of it from afar, are those in the mediæval Church, called "the right of sanctuary." Ecclesiastical historians inform us that the right of refuge in churches began as early as the days of Constantine; that at first only the altar and the interior of the Church was the place of refuge, but that afterwards any portion of the sacred precincts availed. This privilege was "not intended to patronize wickedness, but to give a place of shelter for the innocent, or, in doubtful cases, to give men protection till they could have a hearing, and to give bishops an opportunity of pleading for criminals." These refuges allowed thirty days' respite, though under the Anglo-Saxon law of King Alfred but three days were granted. It speaks but little for the advance of opinion then that the right of refuge was denied, not only to the openly wicked, but to heretics, apostates, and runaway slaves. In after times this right of sanctuary was granted even to notorious criminals, not excepting such as were guilty of treason. In early ages there were *asyla* among the Germans. Before that, among the Romans. In founding Rome, Romulus made it a place of refuge for criminals from other states, for the purpose of peopling the city. Further back, in the Greek states, the temples, altars, sacred groves, and statues of the gods possessed the privilege of protecting slaves, debtors, and criminals. And, if we go back further still, we find among Oriental peoples a custom known by the uncouth term, "blood-revenge," according to which, if a murder had been committed, the nearest of kin to the murdered man had a right to pursue the murderer and take

[1] Scripture passages: Exod. xxi.; Numb. xxv.; Josh. xx. The student will find much help on this subject by consulting Herzog's 'Encyc.,' art. 'Blood Revenge;' Bingham's 'Eccl. Hist.,' ii. 565, *et seq.*; art. 'Asyla,' Smith's 'Dict. Ant.;' Keil on Joshua, ch. xx.; Calvin; 'Speaker's Comm.,' and Jameson's ditto, *in loc.*; art. 'Asylum,' 'Encyc. Brit.;' Dr. Beard's art. 'Cities of Refuge,' in Alexander's Kitto's 'Bibl. Dict.;' Wines' 'Comm. on the Laws of Moses;' Langhorne's 'Plutarch,' i. 52; Wilkinson's 'Ancient Egyptians;' Lane's 'Modern Egyptians,' i. 145, 270—272; Gesenius and others, *sub verb.* גֹּאֵל (*Gôel*).

vengeance on him. It is said that among the Arabs this right exists to the present day. In what form it existed among the ancient Egyptians we are able to infer from Mr. Lane's statement that it exists in almost savage wildness among the moderns. And we might gather, from the way in which Moses uses the term "avenger of blood," that the Hebrews may have been familiar with it, as having seen it practised in Egypt, or as having received the custom from the nations among whom their fathers dwelt prior to going down into Egypt. This right of the nearest of kin to avenge a murder in a family is called *goelism*, from the word "göel," which has the two apparently incompatible meanings of "next of kin" and "avenger of blood." So that there are actually two institutions known of, in the light of which we have to look at these cities of refuge. One, goelism; the other, the right of sanctuary. Each of them was open to abuse. If the former had unrestricted sway, private revenge might bear very hardly on one who had accidentally killed another. Supposing the second to be left without guard, it might become the means of screening from justice criminals of the worst type The first abuse was common among Oriental nations; the second, amongst Greeks, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, and the mediæval sanctuaries of Europe. And it is only as we set the Mosaic institution in the double light of the earlier ones out of which it came, and of the later ones which came out of it, that its real value can be seen. Hence we see—

II. THE PURPOSE IT SERVED IN THE MOSAIC LEGISLATION. There is one fundamental principle on which the Mosaic civil code is based, *i.e. the value of patient culture*. Moses found certain abuses existing. He did not sweep them away at once, but aimed at educating the people out of them. With regard to this right of revenge, he established such a remarkable system of checks and counter-checks as surely only a superhuman wisdom could, in that age, have devised. Our space will only allow us to indicate these very briefly. 1. Moses recognizes the sacredness of human life, both to God and to man. 2. He provides that, when a wrong is done to society, it should be in some way recognized, and that society should have its own safeguard against the repetition thereof. 3. A great step would be gained if such reparation for the wrong as is needed for the sake of security could be gained without any peril of the wild play of private revenge (ch. xix. 6; Numb. xxxv. 24). 4. A broad distinction is to be made between wrongs (Numb. xxxv. 25). 5. The examination of the case and the decision upon it were put into the hands of the people through their elders and judges. 6. The cities of refuge were selected where justice was most likely to be done; even from the cities of the Levites. 7. All this was doubly fenced from abuse. For (1) No murderer was to be screened (Numb. xxxv. 31). (2) No one was to be reckoned as a murderer on the unsupported testimony of one man. So that the goel had no power except there were corroborative evidence of guilt. 8. The reason is given in Numb. xxxv. 33, 34. Now, when we know that all legislation has to be tested, not by the question, "What is absolutely the test?" but by "What is the best the people can bear?"—surely these laws give indications of a guidance and wisdom not less than Divine.

III. THE TYPICAL FORESHADOWINGS IN THIS INSTITUTION ARE NOTEWORTHY. They are many. The preacher may well luxuriate in working them out. 1. Outraged right requires vindication. 2. In vindicating the right and avenging the wrong, equity and kindness are to be studiously guarded. Grace is to reign through righteousness. 3. God, in his kindness, provides a refuge from the haste or excesses of private revenge. 4. God gives special directions concerning them. There was to be one in each district, so that the fleeing one might not have too far to go. The place was to be accessible; good roads thither were to be made. The Jews caught the spirit of the directions, and had direction-posts put at the corners of roads, with the words "Refuge! refuge!" plainly put thereon. The same rule for a Hebrew applied to the stranger and foreigner. The refuge did not avail if a man did not flee thither. And there were sins for which it did not avail at all (see vers. 11, 12, and Numb. xxxv. 29—34); and where the refuge did avail it was only the death of the high priest which set a homicide entirely free from the consequences of his blood-shedding.

IV. THERE ARE SOME RELATED TRUTHS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD WHICH ARE NOT FORESHADOWED IN THESE CITIES OF REFUGE. Two of these there are, and those so remarkable, that it is not surprising if some do not regard the cities of refuge as being

typical at all. 1. Though the manslayer was to flee *to* the city, yet he was to flee *from* the goel. The opposite is the case under the gospel. We said that the word "goel" had two meanings, viz. that of "nearest of kin" and "avenger of blood," because the nearest of kin *was* the avenger of blood. But as the student traces the Bible use of this word, lo, it has a third meaning, even that of *redeemer* (Isa. xli. 14; xliii. 14; xliv. 24; xlviii. 17; liv. 5, 8; lx. 16). *Jehovah is the Goel.* The Lord Jesus Christ is our next of kin, the avenger of wrong, the Redeemer. He has vindicated the majesty of Law by bearing the stroke, that it may not be inflicted on the penitent. He is at once our City of Refuge and our Göel. We flee to him, not from him. 2. The refuge was provided for the delay of judgment till the case was examined. Here, refuge is for the penitent, that he may never come into judgment at all. He may say and sing—

"Should storms of sevenfold thunder roll,
And shake the globe from pole to pole,
No flaming bolt shall daunt my face,
For Jesus is my Hiding-place."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*Cities of refuge.* The institution of cities of refuge (cf. ch. iv. 41—43) seems to have been peculiar to the legislation of Moses. It is an institution reflecting strong light on the wisdom, justice, and humanity of the Mosaic code. The system of blood revenging, while securing a rude kind of justice in communities where no proper means existed of bringing criminals to public trial, was liable to great abuses (ver. 6). The usage was, however, too deeply rooted to be at once abolished, and Moses, by this ordinance, did not seek prematurely to abolish it. The worst evils of the system were checked, and principles were asserted which were certain in course of time to lead to its abandonment. In particular the two principles were asserted: 1. The distinction between accidental homicide (vers. 4, 5) and intentional murder (ver. 11). 2. The right of every criminal to a legal trial. It is a proof of the wisdom of the institution that, under its operation, blood avenging seems very early to have died out in Israel.

These old cities of refuge, though their grey walls have long since crumbled to decay, have still much about them to interest us. We can scarcely regard them as ordained types of gospel realities, but they certainly furnish valuable illustrations of important gospel truths. To a reader of the New Testament, Christ is suggested by them, and shines through them, and the best use we can make of them is to learn from them the need of seeking a like security in Christ to that which the manslayer found in his strong city (see *infra*).—J. O.

Vers. 1—13.—*The cities of refuge as types.* Using the word in a popular and not in a theological sense, we may speak of them in this way. We have in the law ordaining them—

I. A VIVID PICTURE OF THE DANGER OF THE SINNER. In certain points the contrast is stronger than the resemblance. 1. The manslayer might be guiltless of the crime imputed to him. His act may have been unintentional. He had in that case done nothing worthy of death (ver. 6). To slay him would have been to shed "innocent blood." The sinner who seeks refuge in Christ cannot enter this plea. His sins are only too real and inexcusable. 2. The avenger of blood may have pursued the manslayer unjustly. He may have sought his death in blind fury and passion. His hot heart would make no distinctions. The Avenger whom we have to fear is holy and just. His breast harbours no vindictiveness, nor does he pursue without just cause. Yet he does pursue, for sin is the one thing which God cannot tolerate in his universe, and he will not allow it to pass unjudged and unavenged. These are points of difference, but in the one point of awful and immediate danger, the parallel is exact. Outside the walls of the city of refuge the manslayer knew that there was no safety for him. A sword was unsheathed which would certainly drink his blood, if the pursuer could but overtake him. Delay meant death, and he would not tempt it by pausing one instant

in his flight. Is the situation of the sinner out of Christ any less perilous? "The wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). The sword of justice is unsheathed against him. Whither shall he flee to escape his danger? Concealment may have been possible from the avenger of blood, but it is not possible from God. Nor will any other refuge than Christ avail. The man in shipwreck, who scorns to avail himself of the lifeboat, but prefers to cling to the solitary hulk, filling with water, and doomed soon to go to the bottom, is not more certain of his fate than is the transgressor of God's Law, rejecting Christ, letting his day of grace slip past, and clinging vainly to his own righteousness or to any other mocking hope. "Neither is there salvation in any other," etc. (Acts iv. 12).

II. A VIVID PICTURE OF THE SECURITY OF THE REFUGE PROVIDED IN CHRIST. In Christ, our Saviour, God has provided a secure and accessible refuge for the sinner. Here again there is a point of contrast as strongly marked as is the feature of resemblance. The refuge city was, after all, only a refuge for the innocent. The manslayer may have been rash and careless, and in that sense blameworthy, but he was not a wilful murderer. For the deliberate murderer there was no asylum (vers. 11—14). He was to be taken even from God's altar, and put to death (Exod. xxi. 14). In this respect the gospel presents features different from the refuge of the Law. It is true that even in Christ there is no refuge for sinners wedded to their sins. If murderers may come to him, it is no longer with murderous, impenitent, unbelieving hearts. But, on the other hand, of those who turn to him in penitence, there is none whose sins are so black that the Saviour will not take him in. The guiltiest and most red-handed may wash in his blood, and be cleansed from their stains (1 John i. 7). This is the peculiarity of the gospel that as, on the one hand, it proclaims the absolute need of salvation to those who may think themselves too good for it; so, on the other, it holds out welcome to those who might be tempted to think themselves too bad for it. There is none beyond the pale of God's mercy save he who puts himself beyond it by his own unbelief. Christ is a Refuge for sinners: 1. In virtue of the offices he sustains. 2. In virtue of the work he has accomplished. 3. In virtue of the position he occupies—appearing in heaven in the presence of God for us. In him believers are safe. They are freed from condemnation (Rom. viii. 1). They are justified—saved from guilt and wrath—under Divine protection, and certain of acquittal in the judgment (Rom. v. 1, 9, 10; viii. 31—39). They "have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (Isa. xxvi. 1).

III. A VIVID PICTURE OF THE SIMPLICITY OF THE WAY OF SALVATION. The way to the city of refuge was direct and plain. The roads were kept in good repair. A sufficient number of cities was provided to make the refuge readily accessible from every part of the land. It was God's desire that men should reach the refuge, and every facility was afforded them for doing so which the case admitted of. How fit an image of the simplicity and directness of the gospel method of salvation through *faith in Christ!* "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). "It is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom. iv. 16). Faith includes the three ideas of believing in, accepting of, and resting in Christ. Doubtless, to some, faith seems anything but easy. Carrying with it the surrender of the heart to Christ, it is, in one view of it, the hardest of all conditions. But it is hard only to those who love sin more than they desire salvation. The soul that sees the evil of its sin, and has a deep desire to escape from it and to be reconciled to God, will never cease to wonder at the simplicity of the way by which its salvation is secured.

IV. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE NECESSITY OF ABIDING IN CHRIST FOR SALVATION. The manslayer had to abide in the city till the high priest's death. If he went beyond it he was liable to be slain (Numb. xxxv. 25—29). Our High Priest never dies, and we must abide in our city if we would be safe (John xv. 4; Col. i. 23; Heb. iii. 14; x. 38, 39). The conclusion of the whole is, the duty of availing ourselves at once of this Refuge "set before us" (Heb. vi. 18).—J. O.

Ver. 14.—*Removing the landmark.* 1. A dishonest act. 2. A deceitful act. 3. A covetous act. 4. An injurious act. Nothing would as a rule be more keenly resented than this mean attempt to rob the owner of land of a bit of his ancient possession. —J. O.

Vers. 16—21.—*False witness.* God's brand is here placed upon the crime of false witness. It was to be severely punished. Every one is interested in the suppression of such a crime—the parties whose interests are involved, society at large, the Church, the magistracy, God himself, of one of whose commandments (the ninth) it is the daring violation. The rules here apply primarily to false witness given in courts of justice, but the principles involved may be extended to all forms of the sin.

I. FALSE WITNESS IS IN GOD'S SIGHT A GREAT EVIL. 1. It indicates great malevolence. 2. It is grievously unjust and injurious to the person wrongfully accused. 3. It is certain to be taken up and industriously propagated. A calumny is never wholly wiped out. There are always found some evil-speaking persons disposed to believe and repeat it. It affixes a mark on the injured party which remains on him through life.

II. FALSE WITNESS ASSUMES MANY FORMS. It is not confined to law courts, but pervades private life, and appears in the way in which partizans deal with public men and public events. Persons of a malicious and envious disposition, given to detraction, can scarcely avoid it—indeed, live in the element of it. Forms of this vice: 1. Deliberate invention and circulation of falsehoods. 2. Innuendo, or *suggestio falsi*. 3. Suppression of essential circumstances—*suppressio veri*. 4. The distortion or deceitful colouring of actual facts. A lie is never so successful as when it can attach itself to a grain of truth—

> "A lie that is all a lie may be met and fought with outright;
> But a lie that is part of a truth is a harder matter to fight."

III. THE FALSE WITNESS BORNE BY ONE AGAINST ANOTHER WILL BE EXPOSED AT GOD'S JUDGMENT SEAT. The two parties—he who was accused of bearing false witness and he who alleged himself to be injured by it—were required to appear before the Lord, and to submit their cause to the priests and judges, who acted as his deputies (ver. 17). It was *their* part to make diligent inquisition, and, if the crime was proved, to award punishment (vers. 18, 19). The punishment was to be on the principle of the *lex talionis* (vers. 19—21). So, at Christ's judgment seat, the person who has long lain under an undeserved stigma through the false witness of another may depend on being cleared from wrong, and the wrong-doer will be punished (Col. iii. 25). Meanwhile, it is the duty of every one to see to the punishment of this crime, not only in cases of actual perjury, but in every form of it, and not only by legal penalties, but—which is the only means that can reach every case—by the emphatic reprobation of society, and, where that is possible, by Church censures.—J. O.

Vers. 1—13.—*The cities of refuge.* The blood-feud, as we know, was carried out remorselessly among nomadic nations, the manslayer having to be slain, even though his manslaying were purely accidental. In other words, there was no distinction made between *manslaughter* and *murder* by the nomadic nations in the rude early ages. But, by the Lord creating the cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan, to which the manslayer could repair, and where, if it was manslaughter only, he could remain without molestation till the death of the high priest, a distinction between these two crimes was carefully made.[1] The city of refuge was a divinely ordained place of peace for the person who had only slain his neighbour accidentally. In case of premeditated murder, the person was to be taken even from God's altar and executed.

I. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE HEREBY TAUGHT THAT ALL SINS ARE NOT EQUALLY HEINOUS IN GOD'S SIGHT. Morality must differentiate and distinguish, not treat sin in the lump. Morality is undermined where revenge treats manslaughter and murder alike. The Old Testament morality was thus a great advance on the morality of the time.

II. THIS ARRANGEMENT ABOUT THE CITIES OF REFUGE SHOWED THAT THERE WAS A WAY OF PARDON PROVIDED FOR AT LEAST SOME SINNERS UNDER THE LAW. The Law is sometimes regarded as merciless rigour, whereas its sacrificial ceremonies and such an arrangement as this before us proclaimed pardon and escape for some sinners. An undertone of mercy was heard underneath the thunder of its wrath.

Now, the way of pardon is instructive. It was to be *prepared.* Towards the cities of refuge the best roads of the country converged. Directions were given to keep them

[1] Cf. Mozley's 'Ruling Ideas in Early Ages,' pp. 200—221.

clear, that the man who was fleeing for his life might have his fair chance of escape.

And what *agony* must have been experienced along that way! The possibility of being overtaken, and having the life taken away, must have made the race to the city a desperate ordeal.

And then the imprisonment there till the death of the high priest must have made the manslayer walk very softly all those days. When at last the high priest died, he was free!

Now all this, we believe, is typical of the gospel. The soul is, like the manslayer, guilty of shedding innocent blood. Doubtless not intentionally, but much evil is wrought by want of thought, as well as by want of heart. We are *all* guilty. But a way has been provided for our safety. It is a way of anxiety, of solemn thought, and eventually of peace through the death of him who is our High Priest. Safety in the city of refuge is the symbol of safety in Jesus Christ; while he is also the High Priest whose death delivers and restores the exile. It takes the two things, the city of refuge and the death of the high priest, to bring out all that Jesus is to sinful men.

III. THERE WAS UNPARDONABLE SIN UNDER THE LAW, AS THERE IS UNDER THE GOSPEL. The murderer was not protected in a city of refuge, but delivered up to execution. Murder was one of the sins which the Law deemed unpardonable. We mean, of course, unpardonable so far as this life and world are concerned.

Now what we have to notice is that, under the gospel, there is an unpardonable sin (Matt. xii. 31; Mark iii. 28, 29). And about this sin our Lord is very explicit. It is *unforgivingness*, the perpetuation of the murderous spirit in impenitent mood. We do not hold that the blood of Jesus Christ is insufficient to cleanse away all sin (1 John i. 6, 7)—the very opposite. But so long as a soul regards others with an unforgiving temper, it is manifest that the Divine grace has been kept at bay. God will not forgive those who are not forgiving. Forgivingness and forgiveness are twin sisters, and they visit the soul together. If God has really forgiven us, we shall find ourselves in a forgiving mood, the least we could do in the circumstances; but conversely, if we continue in hard, unforgiving mood, it is proof positive that we have not yet experienced God's forgiveness. How deeply the gospel probes our carnal nature, and conquers it!

IV. VENGEANCE CANNOT BE DISPENSED WITH IN GOD'S GOVERNMENT, AND WE NEED NOT CALCULATE UPON SUCH A DISPENSATION. The avenger of blood was the officer for the time being of public justice. It was a public duty he was called to discharge. And public justice still has its revenges, and will, as long as criminals continue. It is the same with God. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The weapon is a dangerous one for us to handle, but God will take charge of it, and will use it as the interests of good and all-wise government require.—R. M. E.

Vers. 14—21.—*The law of retaliation.* When we consider "retaliation," we find that it is the converse of the "golden rule." In fact, it is giving back to a person his breach of that rule to see how he likes it. It is just a rough method of teaching rude, selfish souls that there is retribution in all selfish practices; the gun may be fired maliciously, but it sooner or later lays the sportsman in the dust. Now, it is morally right that those who do to others as they do not wish others to do to them should have precisely their own paid back to them. It is simple justice.

I. PUBLIC JUSTICE MAKES PROVISION FOR THIS IN EVERY CIVILIZED COUNTRY. When Jesus directed his disciples not to retaliate, but to cultivate the spirit of non-resistance to evil (Matt. v. 38—42), he did not wish them to take the law into their own hands, but to leave to *public justice* what in the olden time had to be settled privately. He certainly did not mean that his disciples should screen men from the processes of public law, when they had made themselves amenable thereto. His advice regarded the edifice of public justice as raised by advancing civilization, and taking up consequently many matters which private parties in a ruder age had to deal with.[1]

II. RETALIATION WAS IN THE EARLY TIME A DUTY WHICH INDIVIDUALS OWED TO

[1] Cf. Mozley's 'Ruling Ideas in Early Ages,' p. 184, etc.

THE PUBLIC. It is too often supposed that revenge is such a gratification that men need no exhortation to take it. But we find men that are too cowardly to retaliate, men who would rather let the greatest ruffians escape than risk anything in giving them their desert.[1] Before the erection of public justice, therefore, as a recognized and well-wrought institution, it was necessary to sustain the courage of the people against lawlessness by making retaliation a public duty. The avenger was not a man thirsting for blood, but one who would very likely have remained snugly at home instead of risking his life in retaliation. Men have to be "whipped up" oftentimes to the requisite courage for public duty.

III. RETALIATION, WHEN FAITHFULLY CARRIED OUT, WAS A CHECK ON SELFISH CONDUCT AND A HELP TO A HIGHER MORALITY. The golden rule of doing unto others as we would that they should do to us was the goal at which the morality of the Old Testament was aiming. One way of leading up to it is by carrying out its opposite, and giving to the wrong-doer an idea of what it is to receive what we do not desire. We have to practise this in the correction of children. When they act a cruel part by others, they get a taste of suffering themselves, just to let them know what it is like.

IV. AT THE BACK OF ALL GOD'S MERCY THERE IS THE ALTERNATIVE OF STRICT JUDGMENT IN CASE HIS MERCY IS REFUSED. The gospel is the golden rule in its highest exemplification. It is God doing unto man as he would have man do unto him were he in such circumstances. But if men reject the Divine mercy, and will not receive God's love, then there is no other alternative but strict justice. And strict justice means retaliation. It is giving back to man what he dares to give to God. If man refuses God's love, and, instead of accepting and returning it, gives to God hate; then it is only right, eternally right, that he should receive what he gives. God cannot but hate as utterly abominable the soul that hates him who is essential Love. Wrath is the "love-pain of God" (*Liebes-schmertz Gottes*), as Schöberlein has called it. It is forced on him by the action of his creatures. They have had the opportunity of love, but, since they refuse it, they must be visited by wrath.

Hence there is nothing weak about the Divine administration. Its backbone is justice; but special arrangements were made in the atonement of Jesus to allow of God being "justly merciful;" when, however, this just mercy is rejected, God must return to the stricter lines, and deal with the ungrateful as they deserve. In the retaliation of God there is, of course, nothing mean and nothing selfish. His vengeance is in the interests of public morals, and a necessary part of a wise administration. There should be no trifling, then, with the Divine offer; for, if it be not accepted, men must prepare for wrath.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—10.—*The cities of refuge.* The territory of Canaan was allotted to the Jews for *this* special end, that the principles of the heavenly kingdom might be practically unfolded on earth. In the Divine treatment of men, as members of the body politic, justice and mercy were to be harmoniously blended. Human life was uniformly treated as precious, but righteousness was revealed as more precious still.

I. SEVERE INJURY TO MEN MAY BE WROUGHT SIMPLY BY THOUGHTLESS INADVERTENCE. The physical laws of nature are stupendous forces, which man must well investigate and comprehend, if he would wisely control. They are evidently intended for the welfare of mankind, and prove very useful servants, but very dangerous masters. In the infancy of science and technical skill, great peril arises to human life from gigantic forces which we have not learnt to command. The fall of an axe, the course of a projectile, is according to the operation of fixed law. Careful observance of this law is life; heedlessness is death. "Evil is wrought by want of thought, as well as want of heart."

II. THE DUTY OF THE STATE POLITIC TO PROVIDE FOR THE NECESSITIES OF THE UNFORTUNATE. Before the Jews entered into possession of the promised land, God gave them instruction how to fulfil responsible duties. If it was a claim of justice that refuge cities should be provided for unwary manslayers, then justice would equally require that provision should be made for all sorts of unfortunates and afflicted ones. To stay the hand of private revenge—to prevent the effusion of innocent blood—

[1] Cf. Mozley, *ut supra*, p. 185.

private vigilance does not suffice; it must be the business of the State. The whole community is addressed by God, as if it were a single person. In some respects, each man and each woman has to act separately and alone; in some respects, they have to merge self into the family, and the family into the nation. Man must learn to act as part of a greater whole.

III. THE FAMILY TIE IS ALWAYS STRONGER THAN THE NATIONAL TIE. It is obvious that this is the natural order. If a man was inadvertently killed, some blood relation would, in all likelihood, espouse the cause of the injured, and thirst to avenge the injury. Men feel bound to protect each the other against the assaults of violence. There is an understood compact for mutual protection. But, in proportion as affection becomes diffused and spreads over a larger area, so it becomes attenuated. What it gains in extension it loses in intensity. Therefore checks and restraints are needed for immoderate family feeling.

IV. HUMAN FEELING IS MORE RAPID IN ITS MOVEMENTS THAN THE JUDGMENTS OF REASON. On the whole it is best that it should be so. Self-preservation often depends on the spontaneous movement of instinct. But whenever human life is not in imminent peril, it is becoming that sane men should reflect and ponder before they yield to vindictive feeling. It is quite possible that the man killed was the more blameworthy; perhaps the only blameworthy of the two; yet the vengeful blood of neighbour or friend of the dead waits for no inquiry, but rushes off to add another to the tenants of Hades. This also is the work of the devil, and must be resisted. We must learn to bring all instincts and feelings under the sceptre of reason and love. Haste usually is a mark of weakness or of madness.

V. REVENGE IS INVIGORATING: SORROW AND FEAR ARE ENERVATING. If, under ordinary circumstances, two men were well matched in strength and courage, the one who has unwarily killed a neighbour is so enfeebled by sorrow or by fear (or by both), that he is no longer a match for the other. On the other hand, the man who undertakes to champion the cause of the dead is lifted into almost superhuman stature and strength. For the moment he feels as if girded with omnipotence, and acquires fleetness, courage, and strength over the quailing person of the manslayer. Therefore, every possible facility must the state politic afford for the relief of the manslayer against the avenger.

VI. TERRITORIAL PROPERTY CARRIES WITH IT RESPONSIBLE DUTIES. Material property has its dark side as well as its bright. It brings burdens as well as enjoyments. With every increase of territory, God required that there should be increase of refuge cities, and that roads should be prepared along which the unsinning manslayer should flee. All earthly blessings have their drawbacks, but heavenly possessions are unalloyed. They are pure gold without admixture, sun without shade, summer without winter.

VII. RELIGION ENNOBLES AND BEAUTIFIES EVERY EARTHLY LOT. The land which we inherit, or which furnishes for us a temporary home, is a gift from God. He has not parted with the freehold. It is *his* absolutely, and in the use of it his will is ever to be consulted. We have but a life enjoyment in it. As it is a free gift from him, we are bound to respect all the clauses he embodies in the trust. He is to be recognized and revered perpetually. The refuge cities were the residences of the priests; the elders of these cities were priests of Jehovah, therefore they were representatives of Jehovah's mercy. These cities were emphatically "cities of salvation." Their walls were deliverance; their gates, praise. They were symbols of Calvary—types of the great redemption.—D.

Vers. 11—13.—*Lex talionis.* The refuge provided by mercy is open to abuse. The perversity of man will poison the streams from the heavenly fountain. But in this city of peace none shall abide except those who have clean hands. False hopes are doomed to crushing disappointment. Even from the gate of heaven there is a back way to the prison-house of hell. The man of blood eventually destroys himself.

I. HATRED IS INGENIOUS IN ACCOMPLISHING ITS NEFARIOUS ENDS. Hatred has an insatiable appetite. It drives a man in whom it dwells, as with a slave-master's whip, to do its base behests. It robs him of his sleep at night, that he may lie in ambush for some innocent victim. All day long he is driven to most odious tasks by this spirit

of mischief. Without interruption, hatred holds its busy conclave in the dark caverns of the soul, and presses into service every faculty of the man, until it has clutched its prey.

II. THE MURDEROUS MAN FLATTERS HIMSELF THAT HE SHALL BE SAFE. He is conscious that vengeance is in store for him. No sooner is the deed done than cowardly fear seizes him. The righteousness of God has fleet-footed detectives in its service. Nevertheless, cunning falsehood comes to him as the devil's comforter. Though his hands be stained through and through with blood, he will wear gloves of innocence, a mask of pretence. It were a nobler thing to brave the matter out, and defy all opposition. But this the sinner cannot do. He quails before the omniscient eye; and, however insecure the hiding-place, he cheats himself with the hope of escape. Guilty as his conscience affirms him to be, he seeks a place among the innocent. For the sinner no refuge can be found. The earth shall cast him out.

III. THE POWER OF DEATH IS A SOVEREIGN FUNCTION OF THE STATE. "The elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence." Human life is too precious to be placed at the disposal of private revenge; therefore the chief province of the state politic is to protect life against violence. *Unbiased* natures are the only proper judges of right and wrong. Justice will speak only in the calm atmosphere of sincerity and truth. The representative power of the whole community is the only power which fully suffices to vindicate the claims of righteousness. This is God's vicegerent upon the earth. Hence magistrates are described as "gods."

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOBLER THAN PITY. There are circumstances in which Pity must not speak—a time for her to be silent. "Thine eye shall not pity." There are some situations in which her presence would be out of place, her action injurious. But Righteousness must never be absent. The very atmosphere in God's kingdom is penetrated with her vital breath. Her sceptre is the sceptre of God, and exerts a potent influence over every department of human life. Righteousness is the soul's proper robe, and without it she can nowhere fitly appear. All true prosperity is the fruit of righteousness. It cannot go well with any nation, nor with any man, until guilt is put away. Even compassion for others must be a righteous compassion.—D.

Ver. 14.—*Caution against fraud.* Nothing that concerns man's welfare and joy is beneath God's care. The vast extent of his kingdom hinders not his guardianship over every minute interest of his creatures. Even landmarks, boundary stones, are under his protection.

I. GOD IS TO BE RECOGNIZED AS THE ABSOLUTE PROPRIETOR OF ALL THINGS. As the Creator and Upholder of the universe, he has supreme claim to this solid globe. "The earth is the Lord's." Nor has he ever parted with his rightful claim, for he keeps the globe hourly in existence, and so continually proclaims his control over it. It is his gift to men, not in the sense that he has transferred all his rights to others, but only in the sense that we were unable to purchase from him. We hold every possession from him in trust, and are bound by such terms and conditions as his will may impose.

II. IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT LAND SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED AS PERSONAL ESTATE. Although evils result from the division of the land into personal property, greater evils would result from communal or indiscriminate possession. The fields would not be well cultured. The land would not yield her prolific plenty. Dispute and strife would be the chronic state of society. Personal property is essential to healthy life in the State. Yet men are stewards, and not absolute proprietors.

III. BOUNDARY LINES BETWEEN OUR OWN AND OTHER'S POSSESSIONS ARE TO BE SCRUPULOUSLY RESPECTED. The arrangements of personal property offer a fine field for self-restraint, as well as for neighbourly kindness. If we had been destitute of all possessions, we should be denied the enjoyment of helping others. A man who has regard for the health of his own soul, will not remove his neighbour's landmarks by so much as a single inch. He will rather lose a pound than take by fraud a penny. This Divine command is but a tiny branch springing out of the root principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—D.

Vers. 15—21.—*Bulwark against perjury.* "The tongue is an unruly member, and cannot easily be restrained." Private slander is base enough, but its basest utterance

is when, in the sacred halls of justice, it swears away a man's reputation or his life. It is doubtful if a deed so black is done in hell.

I. PERJURY IS SO COMMON AS TO NECESSITATE A PUBLIC STIGMA ON HUMANITY. "One witness shall not rise up against a man." If every man had been known as truthful, the testimony of one witness on any accusation would be ample. The narration of *one* eye-witness or ear-witness ought to be enough. For a truthful man would always speak within the limits of truth, and would promptly express his doubt, if certainty could not be reached. But the common experience of humanity has been that the bulk of men will prevaricate and conceal the truth, even under the solemn sanction of an oath. Hence it has been found wise to condemn no man judicially, unless more than one witness can be found. Cumulative evidence is required to obtain a valid sentence. This can be interpreted in no other way than a public testimony to the depravity of man. The prisoner obtains the benefit.

II. PERJURY IS A CRIME, TO BE TRIED IN THE HIGHEST COURT OF THE REALM. The accused and the accuser in such a case shall "stand before the Lord." This is not so much a sin against man as a sin against God. The sacred person of Truth has been publicly violated, and the wisest and holiest in the land are commissioned by God to be the judges. As often as we violate the truth, we insult the God of truth, and stand before God for judgment. Hence it is of the first importance that we cultivate truthfulness in our thoughts and in our speech.

III. IN PROPORTION TO THE GRAVITY OF THE CHARGE SHOULD BE THE THOROUGHNESS OF THE SCRUTINY. Although we may expect to know the will of God in any particular case by laying our own minds open to the action of God's Spirit, we are still bound to pursue the most diligent and thorough inquiry. God rewards, not the indolent, but the patient searcher after truth. He that *does* the truth will discover the truth. "God helps those who help themselves."

IV. INTENDED MISCHIEF IS TREATED AS ACTUAL CRIME. The character and quality of a deed depend upon the moral intention. Whether the intention becomes an overt act will often depend upon outward opportunity and circumstance. But God sees the incipient motive and purpose; in his court, judgment passes upon the offender. Human courts are to be, as far as possible, copies of the court of heaven. Hence the perjured witness, who seeks to visit judicial penalties upon the head of the innocent, is himself as guilty as if his base project had succeeded. "Into the pit which he had digged for another he shall fall himself." The gallows which Haman prepared for Mordecai, served for his own doom. This is God's law of retribution.

V. THE END SOUGHT IN THIS JUDICIAL EXECUTION IS THE PUBLIC GOOD. The sacrifice of one life is intended to bring advantage to the many. The moral effect is most precious, viz. regard for righteousness—public abstinence from crime. Every man should be filled with *this* patriotic sentiment—the higher virtue of the nation. We may do good in our circle, either intensively on the minds of a few, or extensively on the minds of the many. In doing good to others we do good to ourselves. "We are members one of another."—D.

EXPOSITION

CHAPTER XX.

DIRECTIONS CONCERNING WARFARE IN GENERAL, AND FOR THE BESIEGING OF CITIES IN PARTICULAR.

Vers. 1—20.—The instructions in this chapter are peculiar to Deuteronomy. As the people of God, Israel was not a warlike nation; they were rather to abstain from warfare, and as a general rule to cultivate the arts of peace. But they had before them at this time the prospect of a serious and protracted conflict before they could occupy the land which God had assigned to them; and they might in future years have to go to war to maintain their independence and repel aggression. In view of this, instructions are here given regarding the conducting of military service.

Ver. 1.—When they found themselves opposed by an army more numerous than their own, and better furnished with the material of warfare, they were not to be afraid or discouraged, for Jehovah their God, who had brought them out of Egypt,

would be with them to protect and help them (cf. Ps. xx. 7). **Horses and chariots.** In these, which constituted the main strength of the nations with which they would have to contend, the Israelites were deficient; and to them these were always objects of terror in war (Josh. xi. 4; xvii. 16; Judg. i. 19; iv. 3; 1 Sam. xiii. 5).

Ver. 2.—**The priest.** Not the high priest or any one of the priests, but the military priest, the priest appointed to accompany the army, "the anointed for the war;" מְשִׁיחַ הַמִּלְחָמָה, as the rabbins designate him (cf. Numb. xxxi. 6; 1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Chron. xiii. 12). His business was to exhort the people, and to encourage them by reminding them that the Lord was their Leader, and would help them in the conflict. The formula of his exhortation is given in vers. 3, 4.

Vers. 5—7.—**The officers;** *the shoterim*, the keepers of the genealogical tables (ch. xvi. 18). It belonged to them to appoint the men who were to serve, and to release those who had been summoned to the war, but whose domestic relations were such as to entitle them to exemption. If there was one who had built a house, but had not dedicated it, *i.e.* by taking possession of it and dwelling in it; or if there was one who had planted a vineyard and had not eaten of the fruit thereof; or if there was one who had betrothed a wife, but had not yet married her;—such were to be allowed to return home, lest they should die in battle, and it be left to others to consummate what they had begun. According to Josephus, this exemption was for a year, according to the analogy of ch. xxiv. 5. **Dedicated;** probably formal possession was taken of the house by some solemn ceremony, followed by a festive entertainment. **Vineyard.** The Hebrew word (כֶּרֶם) here used designates "a field or park of the nobler plants and trees cultivated in the manner of a garden or orchard" (Ges.); so that not vineyards alone, but also oliveyards and plots of the more valuable fruit trees may be intended. **Hath not eaten of it;** literally, *hath not laid it open, made it common*, i.e. begun to use it, to gather its produce for common use (cf. ch. xxviii. 30; Jer. xxxi. 5). Trees planted for food were not to be used before the fifth year of their growth (Lev. xix. 23, etc.; cf. ch. xxiv. 5).

Ver. 8.—The *shoterim* were also to allow any that were naturally timid and faint-hearted to return to their homes, lest, if they remained with the host, others, infected by them, should lose courage and become unfit for service. **His brethren's heart faint;** literally, *flow down* or *melt* (cf. Josh. vii. 5). In ch. i. 28, this verb is rendered by "discouraged."

Ver. 9.—The next thing the *shoterim* had to do was to appoint captains to lead the people who were going to war. The army was divided into bands or companies, and over each of these a captain was placed, whose it was to command and lead (cf. Numb. xxxi. 14, 48; 1 Sam. viii. 12; xxii. 7; 2 Sam. xviii. 1). **Captains of the armies.** The phrase, "captain of a host" (שָׂרֵי צְבָא), usually designates the general or commander-in-chief of the entire army (Gen. xxi. 22; 2 Sam. ii. 8; 1 Kings xvi. 16, etc.); but here the phrase is used in the plural of the chiefs of the companies or detachments of which the whole was composed.

Vers. 10—20.—*Directions concerning the besieging of towns.* In the case of a town at a distance, not belonging to any of the Canaanitish tribes, on advancing against it they were first of all to summon the inhabitants to a peaceable surrender and submission (cf. Judg. xxi. 13). If this was complied with, the inhabitants were to become tributary to the Israelites and serve them; but if this was refused, the town was to be besieged, and, when taken, all the males were to be slain, and the women and children, as well as all the booty that was in the place, were to be taken as the prey of the conquerors, who were to appropriate the spoil to their own use.

Ver. 10.—**Then proclaim peace unto it;** *i.e.* invite it peaceably to surrender.

Ver. 11.—**Shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee;** literally, *shall be to thee for tribute and service.* The word rendered by "tribute" (מַס) denotes properly tribute service, service rendered as a tribute, whether for a season or in perpetuity (cf. Gen. xlix. 15; Judg. i. 30, 33, 35; 1 Kings v. 13; ix. 21; Isa. xxxi. 8 [Authorized Version, "discomfited"]).

Ver. 14.—**Shalt eat the spoil;** consume it for thine own maintenance.

Vers. 16—20.—This was for cities at a distance; it was to be otherwise with the cities of the Canaanites. To them no offer of peaceful submission was to be made, and when the city was taken, all the inhabitants without reserve were to be destroyed. This was in accordance with God's command to Israel (Exod. xxiii. 31—33; xxxiv. 11—16; ch. vii. 1—3), and as a precaution against the risk of the people being seduced into idolatry by the heathen should they be allowed to remain in the land. But whilst engaged in besieging a town, they were not to destroy **the fruit trees that were** outside the walls;

but trees that were not for food they might cut down and use in their operations against the city.

Ver. 19.—**To employ them in the siege**; literally, *to come*, i.e. *that they should come into the siege before thee*, i.e. either as thine adversary or to be used by thee for the siege. **For the tree of the field is man's life.** This may mean that the tree supplies food for the sustenance of man's life. But as the words stand in the text, they can only be rendered thus: "For the man *is* a tree of the field." This gives no good sense, or indeed, any sense at all; and hence it is proposed to alter the reading of the text so as to produce a meaning that shall be acceptable. From an early period the expedient has been resorted to of reading the clause interrogatively, and, instead of regarding it as parenthetical, connecting it with the following words, thus: "Is the tree of the field a man to come into siege before thee?" So the LXX., Rashi, etc. It has been thought that only a very slight change in the punctuation is required to justify this rendering (הָאָדָם instead of הָאָדָם); but more than this is acquired: the subject and object are hereby reversed, and this is more than can be allowed. From an early period also it has been proposed to read the clause as a negation, "For the tree of the field is not a man to come into siege before thee." So the Targum of Onkelos, Abarbanel, Vulgate, etc. The sense here is substantially the same as in the preceding, and the same general objection applies to both. To both also it may be objected that by this way of taking the passage Moses is made to utter a sentiment at once puerile and irrelevant; for what need to declare formally, or in effect, that a tree is not a man? and what reason is there in this for not cutting down fruit trees any more than other trees? In the margin of the Authorized Version an alternative rendering is proposed, "O man, the tree of the field is to be employed in the siege." But admitting this as a possible rendering, it is exposed to the objection, on the one hand, that it is improbable that in a prosaic address like this an explanatory appeal would be introduced; and on the other, that it is inconceivable that Moses would in this casual and startling way anticipate what he goes on in the next sentence to express deliberately and clearly. The passage has probably suffered at the hands of a transcriber, and the text as we have it is corrupt. The sense put upon it in the Authorized Version is that suggested by Ibn Ezra, and in the absence of anything better this may be accepted. The fruit tree is man's life, as it furnishes that by which life is sustained, just as, in ch. xxiv. 6, the millstone is called a man's life, inasmuch as it supplies the means of life.

Ver. 20.—**And thou shalt build bulwarks against the city . . . until it be subdued**; literally, *That thou mayest build a siege*—i.e. an instrument for besieging, a rampart, or bulwark—*against the city, till it come down* (cf. ch. xxviii. 52).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—20.—*Wars to be regulated by Divine precepts.* The directions given by Moses in this chapter may serve to show the spirit in which wars should, if undertaken at all, be entered on and prosecuted. We are not called upon here to moot the question whether war is under any circumstances justifiable; since the principle on which the Hebrew lawgiver proceeds is that of tolerating for a while certain socially accepted customs, mitigating whatever in them is evil, and gradually educating people out of them altogether. In order to estimate the value of this chapter, it should be compared with the war customs of the nations round about. Dr. Jameson's "Commentary" has some valuable references thereon. Here are directions: First, as to the men who are to serve. They are to be sifted. In each of the four cases of exemption there is an obvious significance. Having been chosen, they are then to be organized. And their attitude and courage in the war were to be those of men who knew that the Lord their God was with them. Note: *No war should be entered on in which the presence and help of God cannot be expected and implored.* Secondly, as to the mode of carrying on or entering on war. The nations of Canaan are to be "stamped out," that a great pollution may be driven from the world. With this exception the Hebrews are to avoid war, if possible (ver. 10), and are only to engage in it if forced thereto by the people by whom they were opposed. When in war, no wanton destruction was to be allowed. They were to build bulwarks against invaders, but were not to destroy the subsistence of a people by cutting down fruit trees, etc. How wonderfully humane and even tender are these regulations compared with the customs of other nations at that time!

By them, in fact, the old pagan war spirit is repressed, and a war policy discouraged. The main pursuits of their life are to be found in the tillage of the soil. A standing army was unknown among them. War was not to be encouraged by an indiscriminate levy of men, nor was it to be pursued at the cost either of the industrial pursuits or of the domesticities and sanctities of life. If even in those days the war spirit was to be kept in subjection, much more should it be so now! The preacher may at appropriate times and seasons develop herefrom Bible principles respecting war. 1. War itself, in any form, is regarded in the Word of God as but an accompaniment of a transition state of things. It is not to last always (Ps. xlvi.; Isa. ii.; Luke ii.). Hence all should desire and pray that it may speedily come to an end. 2. Aggressive and unprovoked war for the mere purposes of conquest, finds no sanction whatever in the Word of God. Israel's wars of conquest were to be limited within assigned bounds. 3. War should never be resorted to except in a case of stern necessity. Israel was to make the effort to avoid war, if possible. 4. Supremacy in war should never be the chief care of a people. It should at all times regard war as but an occasional and awful necessity, and should see more glory in avoiding it than in conquest. 5. When war is engaged in simply from sheer necessity, its horrors should be mitigated by a humane regard for the enemy's welfare. There is more honour in kindly consideration for an enemy than there is in crushing him. To deprive him of the means of livelihood is a barbarity infinitely to be condemned. 6. When war becomes a stern necessity, so that it cannot righteously be avoided, it may then be invested with religious sanctions, and the blessing and help of God may be expected, asked for, and relied upon; then a people may say, "In the Name of our God we will set up our banners" (Ps. xx.). For success in such a war, a united people may look up to their God, and they will find that Jehovah hears. There can be no finer instance of this than the one recorded in 2 Chron. xx. The prayer of Jehoshaphat is sublime. The answer came. 7. When thus a people can confidingly look up to the Most High, and in the full assurance of being right can ask his blessing, there should be no faint-heartedness known among them. They may be strong and of a good courage. The Lord God goeth with their armies, and he will give them success.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*War.* The wars of the world form a large part of its history. Savage nations delight in war, revel in its bloodshed and barbarities. Their heaven is a Valhalla. Civilized communities, while averse from having wars waged on them, are not always so averse from waging war on others. Military ambition, lust of conquest, hope of enrichment by pillage, the wiping out of old grudges, may instigate them to this course. Wherever or however waged, wars are a source of incalculable misery. It may be said of them, "It must needs be that wars come, but woe to that man by whom the war cometh!" War is not to be sought, it is to be by every legitimate means avoided, but it may become a necessity. In this case it must be bravely undertaken, and our trust placed in God for his help.

I. RELIGIOUS COURAGE NEEDED IN WAR. It is a not uncommon idea that the influence of religion is adverse to the hardier elements in character. The Christian faith in particular is thought to inculcate a meek passivity of disposition, which, if not absolutely inconsistent with patriotism, courage, and other soldierly virtues, is at least unfavourable to their development. The man of spirit and the devout man are supposed to represent two opposite and incompatible types of character. This idea is strange, when we remember how largely the images and illustrations of the Christian life in Scripture are drawn from warfare. But it is sufficiently refuted by reference to facts. The meekness and unwearied forgivingness which is to characterize the Christian in his private relations is perfectly compatible with the most unflinching heroism in the discharge of public duty, and in the service of his country in her appeal to the God of battles. Christian meekness is not softness or effeminacy. On the contrary, it is an aspect of the highest courage, and develops moral qualities which make it easier to act courageously in any circumstances in which the individual may be placed. Civil liberty has seldom fared better than in the hands of God-fearing

men. Instead of being the worst, they make the best soldiers. An army of soldiers, God-fearing and thoroughly disciplined, has usually proved more than a match for vastly superior forces of the enemy: Cromwell's Ironsides, the Scotch Covenanters, the Cameronians. As fine examples of the soldierly character, we may name Colonel Gardiner, Sir Henry Havelock, Captain Hedley Vicars. It would be the life and strength of our armies were they composed of such men from the top to the bottom of the scale.

II. WARLIKE COURAGE NEEDED IN RELIGION. We may apply the exhortations of these verses to the spiritual warfare. The gospel summons us to warfare. 1. With evil within us. 2. With the spiritual forces of evil around us. 3. With the hydra-headed incarnations of that evil in the institutions and customs, sins and follies of society. It would be well if, in this campaign against evil, we could command in our ranks the same union, the same strict discipline, the same steadiness of action, above all, the same heroic bravery and endurance and preparedness to face the worst, which are often seen in earthly armies. Courage and readiness to sacrifice for Christ all that his cause demands, is a first condition of success in the spiritual warfare. There must be faith in the cause, devotion to the Leader, enthusiasm in his service, and the spirit of those who "love not their lives unto the death" (Rev. xii. 11). Instead of this, how often, when the battle approaches, do our hearts faint, fear, tremble, and are terrified because of our enemies! Victories are not thus to be gained. We forget that he who is with us is more than they who are against us. The Lord is more to those in whose midst he is than all the horses and chariots and multitudes of people that can be brought against them.—J. O.

Vers. 5—10.—*Exemptions* Three classes were exempted from service in war, and one class was forbidden to take part in it. The exempted classes were: 1. He who had built a house, but had not dedicated it. 2. He who had planted a vineyard, but had not eaten of its fruit. 3. He who had betrothed a wife, but had not married her. The class forbidden to engage in the war was the class of *cowards* (ver. 8). These regulations—

I. HAD AN IMPORTANT BEARING ON THE STABILITY OF SOCIETY. War has naturally a disturbing effect on industry and commerce. It unsettles the public mind. It creates a feeling of insecurity. It prevents enterprise. These evils would be intensified in a state of society where, besides the danger of the country being overrun by hostile armies, each adult male was liable for service in the field. In such a condition of society there would obviously be a disinclination, when war was imminent, to acquire property, to institute improvements, or to enter into any new engagements. The man who built a house would not be sure that he would live to dedicate it; the man who planted a vineyard, that he would live to eat of it; the man who betrothed a wife, that he would be spared to take her. This provision of the Law was therefore calculated to have a reassuring and tranquillizing effect, and would so far counteract the tendency of warlike rumours to paralyze industry and the arrangements of domestic life.

II. WERE AN IMPORTANT ALLEVIATION OF THE EVILS OF WAR. They aimed at exempting those who, from their circumstances and prospects, would feel most keenly the hardship of a call to service. Ver. 7 connects itself with the importance attached in ancient nations to the perpetuation of the house. "According to modern notions, a forlorn hope would naturally be composed of men who had not given hostages to fortune. Such, however, was not the light in which the matter presented itself to the Greek mind. The human plant had flowered. The continuance of the house was secure. It was therefore comparatively of little moment what befell the man whose duty to his ancestors had been fulfilled" (Renouf). The sentiment here expressed was that of ancient nations generally.

III. WERE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN SECURING EFFICIENCY IN THE ARMY. The army was plainly better without the cowards than with them. One coward may do harm to a whole company. But, besides these, it was likely that persons serving by compulsion, in a spirit of discontent at disappointed prospects, and for the sake of their prospects unwilling to part with their lives, would prove but inferior soldiers. At any rate, there was policy in recruiting the army only from those who had a fixed stake in the welfare of the nation. The man with house, wife, and vineyard was more likely to

be ready to shed the last drop of his blood in defence of his treasures than one wholly unattached, or attached only in hope.

LESSONS. 1. Those entering the Christian warfare need to count the cost (Luke xiv. 25—34). 2. In Christ's service there are *no* exemptions. 3. Nevertheless, consideration should be shown in the work of the Church for those who are peculiarly situated. 4. The danger of being entangled in spirit in Christ's service (2 Tim. ii. 4). 5. The faint-hearted are no strength to a cause (Judg. vii. 3). 6. Numbers are not the only thing to be considered in reckoning the efficiency of a Church or of any body of spiritual warriors.—J. O.

Vers. 10—20.—*Forbearance and severity.* If these rules embody a severity happily rare in modern warfare, they also exhibit a forbearance which many modern nations might well learn from. We have here—

I. WAR'S HORRORS MITIGATED. 1. *Peace was invariably to be offered before attack to a foreign city* (vers. 10, 11). It is presumed that the war was just, and undertaken with the sanction of Jehovah. If peace was accepted, no one was to be injured, but only tribute imposed. The peacemaking spirit is pleasing to God (Matt. v. 9; Rom. xii. 18). 2. *In the case of a city taken by storm, no women, children, or cattle were to be destroyed* (ver. 14). The amount of self-restraint which this implies can only be appreciated after reading the accounts of warfare as anciently conducted. But we may get some light upon it by studying the horrors of the sack of a city, even in modern times, and under European, or even British, generalship (see histories of the Peninsular wars). 3. *In the sparing of trees useful for food* (ver. 19). War conducted on these principles, however severe in certain of its aspects, cannot be described as barbarous.

II. WAR'S SEVERITIES EXEMPLIFIED. 1. *The resisting city, if foreign, was to be punished by the slaughter of its adult males* (ver. 13). This, which sounds so harsh, was perhaps a necessity from the circumstances of the nation. It certainly typifies the "utter destruction" which shall fall on all resisting God's will, and placing themselves in an attitude of hostility to his kingdom on the earth. 2. *The Canaanites were to be completely exterminated* (vers. 16—18). This case differs from the other in being the execution of a judicial sentence, as well as an indispensable means to their own preservation against corruption (ver. 18). A general type of the fate which shall overtake the ungodly.—J. O.

Vers. 1—20.—*Religious wars.* We have in this chapter an instructive direction about the prosecution of a religious war. For, after all, *war* may be the only way of advancing the interests of nations. Disputes become so entangled, and great principles become so staked in the disputes, that war is welcomed as the one way to peace and progress. It is an awful expedient, but there are worse things than war. "Cowardice," said Rev. F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, "is worse. And the decay of enthusiasm and manliness is worse. And it is worse than death, ay, worse than a hundred thousand deaths, when a people has gravitated down into the creed that 'the wealth of nations' consists, not in generous hearts—'Fire in each breast, and freedom on each brow'—in national virtues, and primitive simplicity, and heroic endurance, and preference of duty to life;—not in *men*, but in silk and cotton and something that they call 'capital.' Peace is blessed. Peace arising out of charity. But peace springing out of the calculations of selfishness, is not blessed. If the price to be paid for peace is this, that 'wealth accumulate and men decay,' better far that every street in every town of our once noble country should run blood!" From the directions in the chapter before us, we learn such lessons as these—

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE CAUSE, AND NOT THE NUMBERS IN THE FIELD, IS TO BE THE FOUNDATION OF TRUST. The Jews were going into Palestine as the Lord's host, and, even though a minority sometimes, they were sure to win. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" was to be their ground of confidence. And our Lord contemplated the victory of a minority in his illustration about calculating the cost. "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" (Luke xiv. 31). A good cause, like a good king, is worth ten thousand soldiers (2 Sam. xviii. 3). David's great sin was trusting in *numbers* and not in *God* (2 Sam. xxiv. 2, etc.).

II. A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE ADMITS OF THE WAR BEING ENTERED UPON RELIGIOUSLY. The priest was to give them an oration before the battle, showing that they were going to fight the Lord's battles, and that he would be with them (vers. 2—4). Of course, this has been imitated often by those who had *not* right on their side. Yet the hypocrisy of a party or people is in itself a testimony to the need for a religious spirit characterizing combatants. The most depraved feel somehow in the tremendous game of war that they are appealing to the God of battles, and should at least acknowledge him in entering the contest.

III. THE ARMY SHOULD BE WEEDED OF THE CAREFUL AND THE COWARDLY. Provision is here made for the dismissal home of those who are careworn about an undedicated habitation (ver. 5), or about a newly acquired vineyard (ver. 6), or about a betrothed wife (ver. 7), and also for the dismissal of those who are faint-hearted (ver. 8). The combatants should be as free as possible from care, and from the infection of cowardice. They might have sung, with the modern minstrels—

"We want no cowards in our band,
That from their colours fly;
We call for valiant-hearted men,
Who're not afraid to die."

IV. IN ORDINARY CONQUESTS, PEACEFUL PROPOSALS ARE FIRST TO BE TRIED. (Vers. 10—15.) If these are entertained, well and good; if not, then the conquest will be all the surer of having shown the preliminary consideration. This was to regulate any foreign conquest into which they might be forced. When the victory was won, the male adult population were to be put to the sword, because they had forfeited their lives by rejecting the peaceful proposals; but the women and children and property were to be the prey of the invaders. We have here the suggestion of arbitration, from which much is properly hoped in mitigation of war.

V. BUT IN THE CONQUEST OF THE IDOLATROUS NATIONS OF CANAAN, EXTERMINATION WAS THE ONLY SAFETY FOR THE INVADING HOST. By their abominable idolatries they had forfeited all right to life, and their continued existence would only have been a snare to Israel. Children and women as well as adult males were to be included in the desolation. This apparently harsh decree has its counterpart still in the government of the world. A storm or pestilence does not respect children any more than men. It shows that the Great Ruler does not intend the present state of things to be *final*. A judgment to come is surely the logical lesson of such a feature of war and of providence. The innocent who suffer with the guilty shall get their compensation in the other life.

VI. THE RAVAGES OF WAR ARE TO BE KEPT WITHIN AS NARROW LIMITS AS POSSIBLE. This seems to be the lesson in this arrangement about the protection of fruit trees in the siege (vers. 19, 20). The future peaceful and prosperous state of things is to be considered, and no more harm done by the stress of war than is absolutely unavoidable.

We have thus great principles applicable to all the warring period of human progress. Wars are still desperate remedies. A time is coming when "the war-drum shall throb no longer;" but meanwhile, let wars be prosecuted in a religious spirit and with all religious precautions, when they must be engaged in. A noble illustration of what may be done in war-time by Christian men is afforded by the "Christian Commission" in the United States. Its 'Annals,' written by Rev. Lemuel Moss, Home Secretary of the Commission, Philadelphia, 1868, form a handsome volume of 752 pages, which amply repay perusal. We must *fight* for principle, if we cannot secure its triumph by more peaceful means; but one day all will submit to it, and war be needed no longer. May God hasten the happy day!—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—9.—*Military service to be voluntary.* In war, forced service is worse than useless; it is a source of weakness—a cause of defeat. For successful warfare, all the skill and energy of every soldier is demanded; and unless the hearts of the warriors are in the conflict, no triumph can be anticipated.

I. TO BE LOYAL FRIENDS OF GOD, WE MUST SOMETIMES TREAT MEN AS FOES. If we are truly God's children, we must count God's friends to be our friends, God's foes to be our foes. We are not our own. We cannot expend life according to our personal will.

We are the property of another—the Supreme King. Therefore we must do his work and fight his battles. Our notion of what is right and just must be made subordinate to *his*. Our minds are often too much biased with selfish feeling to judge what is right, if left to ourselves; but we shall not err if we closely follow the precepts of our God. The interests of God's kingdom are to be held by us as paramount over the interests of man's kingdom.

II. GOD'S PRESENCE IN BATTLE OUTMATCHES ALL HUMAN FORCES. The source of conquest is not in the visible material of war. Victory is *not* on the side of the largest battalions. This is the creed of the infidel. If there were no God, it might be true. Mere numbers of combatants have as often hindered triumph as helped it. If God be ranged on the one side, it is a most unequal contest. The issue is a foregone event. Multiply human weapons or develop human skill as much as you please; let all the powers of arithmetic be exhausted in the computation; and still the finite is confronted by the Infinite. "Before him the inhabitants of the world are as grasshoppers." "If God be for us," vain is all opposition. Simple faith is the best equipment.

III. GOD'S PRIEST IS THE INSPIRER OF TRUE COURAGE. The sanctions and the inspirations of religion may be obtained for the business of war. The true priest will not heedlessly lend his sanction to *any* emprise of war, nor will he withhold his benediction from a righteous contest. By virtue of his office, he is the messenger from God to the royal court, as well as to the people. If ever the oracle of the sanctuary should be consulted, it is when war is imminent. It is not the business of the priest to initiate war; but if war becomes a duty, it is the business of the priest to encourage and inspire the host of God's elect. The true priest is in close accord with God. God's heart beats within his heart; God's will finds prompt response in him. Hence the priest's voice is the human exponent of God's thought. God's strength is through him conveyed to the mailed warriors, for he speaks with just authority.

IV. GOD WILL ACHIEVE VICTORY ONLY THROUGH THE RIGHT-HEARTED. Unless the soldier's mind and heart and soul be in the conflict, he had better tarry by his fireside. A few earnest, ardent warriors are preferred to mere array of numbers. If any soldier found more delight in his habitation or in his vineyard than in the success of battle, he might forthwith return. With the double-minded and the half-hearted God does not work. The channel must be emptied of self if Divine energy is to pass through it. We are not to conclude that God prefers the few to the many. But he will have the *right* kind of agents, or he will not work through them. The thirsty man does not prefer one drop of water to ten; but he does prefer one drop of wholesome water to a gallon of poisonous beverage. God works according to wise methods, and sends help through fitting channels. The best media through which he conveys military conquest is unselfish devotion to his cause. The consecrated soldier is the predestined conqueror.

V. LEADERS IN GREAT ENTERPRISES ARE TO BE SELECTED FROM THE COURAGEOUS FEW. Men will most faithfully follow those leaders whom they have themselves chosen. As the faint-hearted were unfit to go to the battle, so were they unfit to choose captains over the host. The courageous are also the most judicious. Accurately measuring the work that has to be done, they can the better judge who are the most competent to do it. The brave heart and the clear eye go together. These captains, so appointed, would be strong in the consciousness that they enjoyed the esteem and support of the troops. Such an arrangement gives the best guarantee for efficient leaders. On the same ground, the rulers of the Church should be chosen on the ground of spiritual fitness—solely on the ground of moral qualification.—D.

Vers. 10—20.—*The terrible side of human duty.* Sin has made such fatal havoc in our world, that the most severe remedies have to be applied. In the administration of these remedies God has chosen to employ men. Thus he allies himself with us and makes us partners with him in the administration of his kingdom. "Such honour have all his saints."

I. THE AIMS OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED. Every aim which is formed in God's mind is a seed of righteousness. Therefore it *must* grow and come to perfection. Necessity enters into its very essence. No power on earth or in hell is able to hinder its accomplishment. Who shall withstand the will of Omni-

potence? Righteousness shall, sooner or later, be triumphant. All opposition to Jehovah's will shall eventually be crushed out. He who created is able also to destroy. For the present his patient love provides other remedies; and if remedial measures fail, then fell destruction shall sweep into eternal darkness all opposition to his supreme will.

II. THE ENDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS MAY BE ATTAINED BY PEACEABLE MEANS IF MEN WILL SUBMIT TO GOD'S TERMS. (Ver. 10.) Terms of peace were to be offered by the Hebrews in their wars with outlying nations. The main condition of peace and friendship was the relinquishment of idolatry. If men will fear and serve God, they shall live. To know God as *our God* is life eternal. If men *will* turn their backs upon the sun, they must dwell in shadow; so if men will sever themselves from the Source of life, they inevitably die. Not once, but often, does God offer to us reconciliation, blessing, peace. By every method of persuasion and entreaty the Father of our spirits has endeavoured to win us to paths of righteous obedience. His will is our sanctification; purity or perdition—here is the alternative!

III. THE EXECUTORS OF JEHOVAH'S WILL SHALL BE AMPLY REWARDED. "All the spoil thereof shalt thou take unto thyself" (ver. 14). The harder the work, the more abundant shall be the reward. God's remuneration is ever ample and munificent. Most carefully does he weigh every hardship we endure for him. Our every tear he puts into his bottle. Blind unbelief may count him an "austere Master," who requires irksome and painful work; but the man of filial temper will run on most difficult errands, and his language is uniformly this, "I do always the things that please him;" "They who suffer with their Lord now shall be glorified by-and-by together."

IV. EXCESSIVE WICKEDNESS INVOLVES MEN IN COMPLETE DESTRUCTION. Terms of peace were offered to less guilty nations lying in Israel's vicinity, but for the inhabitants of Canaan—such was their moral rottenness—there was no alternative but destruction. "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (ver. 16). It is well for us to learn that there is a stage in our moral disease when the remedy of mercy ceases to take effect. It becomes "a savour of death unto death." "With the breath of his mouth shall he slay the wicked." When the heart has become identified with rebellion, when *all* feeling is averse from God, when total depravity has set in,—then God abandons the man to his inevitable doom. "Israel would have none of him, . . . so he gave them up to their own hearts' lust." This is man's blackest doom. Yet this is mercy for others.

V. THE WORK OF DESTRUCTION SHOULD BE BLENDED WITH PRUDENT KINDNESS. In laying siege against a city, not an axe was to be laid upon any fruit tree. Here we have a sample of God's thoughtful and generous love for men! Whatever can minister to the need and comfort of his servants shall be secured to them. Though engaged in the awful work of destruction, he does not forget mercy; he is planning all the while for his servants' good. Though a frown is upon his face, tenderest love is active within his heart. More careful is he for us than we are for ourselves. Not a want, however minute, is by him overlooked. The desolating flood is upon the earth, but an ark is provided for Noah. The rain of fire is consuming Sodom, but Lot is safe in Zoar. "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered."—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXI.

EXPIATION OF UNCERTAIN MURDER. TREATMENT OF A CAPTIVE TAKEN TO WIFE. RIGHTS OF THE FIRSTBORN. A REBELLIOUS, REFRACTORY SON TO BE JUDGED AND PUNISHED. A MALEFACTOR WHO HAS BEEN HANGED TO BE BURIED ERE NIGHTFALL.

One general idea, viz. the sacredness of human life and of personal rights, connects the laws in this chapter together, as well as connects them with the laws in the two preceding chapters.

Vers. 1—9.—If a body was found lying dead from a wound, and it was not known by whom the wound had been inflicted, the whole land would be involved in the guilt of the murder, unless it was duly expiated as here directed. First, the elders and judges (presumably of the neighbouring towns;

cf. Josephus, 'Antiq.,' iv. 8, 16) were to meet, the former as magistrates representing the communities, the latter as administrators of the law, and were to measure the distance from the body of the slain man to each of the surrounding towns, in order to ascertain which was the nearest. This ascertained, upon that town was to be laid the duty of expiating the crime.

Ver. 3.—**An heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke**; a young cow which had not been rendered unfit for consecration, nor had its vital force impaired, by being subjected to forced labour (cf. Numb. xix. 2).

Ver. 4.—**A rough valley**; literally, *a stream of perpetuity*, a perennial stream (cf. Ps. lxxiv. 15, Authorized Version, "mighty rivers;" Amos v. 24); but here rather the valley or wady through which a stream flowed, as is evident from its being described as **neither eared**—that is, ploughed (literally, *wrought, tilled*)—**nor sown**; a place which had not been profaned by the hand of man, but was in a state of nature. "This regulation as to the locality in which the act of expiation was to be performed was probably founded on the idea that the water of the brook-valley would suck in the blood and clean it away, and that the blood sucked in by the earth would not be brought to light again by the ploughing and working of the soil" (Keil). **Strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley**; rather, *break the heifer's neck*. As this was not an act of sacrifice, for which the shedding of blood would have been required, but simply a symbolical representation of the infliction of death on the undiscovered murderer, the animal was to be killed by breaking its neck (cf. Exod. xiii. 13).

Ver. 5.—**And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near**. The presence of the priests at this ceremony was due to their position as the servants of Jehovah the King of Israel, on whom it devolved to see that all was done in any matter as his Law prescribed. The priests present were probably those from the nearest Levitical town. **And by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried**; literally, *And upon their mouth shall be every strife and every stroke*, i.e. by their judgment the character of the act shall be determined, and as they decide so shall the matter stand (cf. ch. x. 8; xvii. 8). In the present case the presence of the priests at the transaction gave it sanction as valid.

Ver. 6.—**The elders of that city**. The elders, by the significant act of washing their hands, indicated that they threw off from them, utterly repudiated, the charge of blood-guiltiness on the part of the town which they represented (cf. Ps. xxvi. 6; lxxiii. 13; Matt. xxvii. 24).

Vers. 7, 8.—This act they were to accompany with a solemn declaration of their innocence of this crime, and of their entire ignorance of the perpetrator of it; and with an earnest cry to God that the sin which had been done might be forgiven. **Be merciful ... unto**; *be propitiated* towards (literally, *cover*, כִּפֶּר לְעַמֶּךָ; for the phrase, כִּפֶּר לְ, see Lev. i. 4). **And lay not innocent blood**; the blood of the innocent man who has been slain.

Ver. 9.—In this way they were to deliver themselves as a nation from blood-guiltiness. "Expiation was made by the killing of the transgressor when he could be found (ch. xix. 13; Numb. xxxv. 33); when he was not known, by the process here described. Of course, if afterwards he were apprehended, he would suffer the penalty he had incurred" (Knobel); so also Keil, Herxheimer, etc., after the Talmud ('Sota,' ix. 7).

Vers. 10—14.—If an Israelite saw among captives taken in war a woman fair of aspect, and loved her, and took her to be his wife, he was to allow her a full month to mourn her lost kindred, and become accustomed to her new condition, before he consummated his union with her. This refers to captives from other nations than those of Canaan, with whom the Israelites were to form no alliance, and whom they were not to take captive, but either wholly destroy or render tributary (cf. ch. vii. 3; Numb. xxi. 1, etc.; Josh. xi. 19).

Ver. 12.—**She shall shave her head, and pare her nails**. The shaving of the head and the paring of the nails, as well as the putting off of the garments worn when taken captive, were signs of purification, of separation from former heathenism, preparatory to reception among the covenant people of Jehovah (cf. Lev. xiv. 8; Numb. viii. 7). *Pare her nails*; literally, *make* or *prepare her nails*, i.e. by cutting them down to a proper size and form (cf. 2 Sam. xix. 25, where the same word is used of dressing the feet and trimming the beard). The Targum of Onkelos takes this in quite an opposite sense, rendering, as in the margin of the Authorized Version, "suffer to grow," and the rabbins who adopt this meaning suppose that the design of the prescription was that the woman, being rendered unlovely, the man might be deterred from taking her to be his wife. But this is altogether alien from the spirit and scope of the passage.

Ver. 13.—**The raiment of her captivity**; *i.e.* the raiment she had on when taken captive; this she was to lay aside, that she

might put on garments of mourning. **A full month**; literally, *a month of days*; the period of mourning was forty days (cf. Gen. l. 3).

Ver. 14.—Should the man afterwards come no longer to have pleasure in her, he was to let her go whither she would, but he was not to sell her for money or use any violence to her. **Thou shalt not make merchandise of her.** The verb in the form here used occurs only here and in ch. xxiv. 7; derived from a root which signifies to gather or press, it properly means to press for one's self, to lay hands on one, to use violence to one.

Vers. 15—17.—If a man have two wives, one of whom is a favourite and the other disliked, and if his firstborn son be the child of the latter, he is not to allow his love for the other to prejudice the right of the son, but must allow him, both in his own lifetime and in the disposition of his property after death, the full privilege and right of a firstborn son.

Ver. 16.—**He may not make**; literally, *is not able to make*; i.e. is legally incapable of making.

Ver. 17.—**A double portion**; literally, *a mouth of two*; i.e. a portion (so "mouth" is used in 2 Kings ii. 9; Zech. xiii. 8) equal to that of two; consequently, the firstborn inherited twice as much as any of the other sons. Amongst all nations and from the earliest times, the right of the eldest son to pre-eminence among his brethren has been recognized; and in legislating for Israel, Moses so far simply sanctioned a usage he found already existing; the assignment, however, of a double share in the inheritance to the eldest son is a new and special provision, mentioned only here. **Beginning of his strength** (cf. Gen. xlix. 3).

Vers. 18—21.—If a son was refractory and unmanageable by his parents, if, given to sensual indulgence, he would yield neither to reproof nor to chastisement,—the parents were to lay hold on him, and lead him to the elders of the town, sitting as magistrates at its gates, and there accuse him of his evil ways and rebelliousness. The testimony of the parents was apparently held sufficient to substantiate the charge, and this being received by the elders, the culprit was to be put to death by stoning.

Ver. 20.—**He will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.** Gluttony and drunkenness were regarded by the Hebrews as highly criminal. The word rendered by "glutton," however (זוֹלֵל, from זָלַל, to shake, to shake out, to squander), includes other kinds of excess besides eating. It designates one who is prodigal, who wastes his means or wastes his person by indulgence. In Prov. xxiii. 30, the whole phrase (מְזוֹלְלֵי בָשָׂר) is given—squanderers of flesh, *i.e.* wasters of their own body, debauchees. In Prov. xxviii. 7, the word is translated "riotous men" in the Authorized Version. Disobedience to parents was deemed an offence which struck at the roots of the whole social institute.

Ver. 21.—The penalty of such crimes was death; but the power of inflicting this was not among the Hebrews—as among some other ancient peoples, the Greeks and Romans, for instance—left with the father; the punishment could be inflicted only by the community, with the sanction of the magistrate. A Hebrew parent might chastise his child with severity, but not so as to affect his life (Prov. xix. 18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, but raise not thy soul [let not thy passion rise so high as] to slay him"). While parental authority was sacredly preserved, a check was by the Law imposed on hasty passion.

Vers. 22, 23.—When a criminal was put to death and was hanged upon a tree, his body was not to remain there over-night, but was to be buried the same day on which he was executed.

Ver. 22.—**If a man have committed a sin worthy of death**; literally, *If there be on a man a judgment of death*; if he lie under sentence of death. **Hang him on a tree.** This refers not to putting to death by strangling, but to the impaling of the body after death (cf. C. B. Michaelis, 'De Judiciis Pœnisque Capitalibus in Sac. Script. Commemoratis,' in 'Sylloge Commentt. Theolog.,' edita à D. J. Pott, vol. iv. p. 209). This was an aggravation of the punishment, as the body so impaled was exposed to insult and assault (cf. Numb. xxv. 4; Gen. xl. 19).

Ver. 23.—**He that is hanged is accursed of God**; literally, *a curse of God*. Some take this as meaning an insult to God, a contemning of him, "since man his image is thus given up to scorn and insult" (Rashi). But the more probable meaning is "a curse inflicted by God," which the transgressor is made to endure (cf. Gal. iii. 13). **That thy land be not defiled.** The land was defiled, not only by sins committed by its inhabitants, but also by the public exposure of criminals who had been put to death for their sins (cf. Lev. xviii. 24, 25; Numb. xxxv. 33, 34). On this law Joshua acted (cf. Josh. viii. 29; x. 26, 27).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The preciousness of one human life in the sight of God.* The value of this paragraph can be duly appreciated only as the indifference with which pagan nations of old regarded human life is studied and understood. As a piece of civil legislation, it is far superior to anything in the code of the nations around at that time. Dr. Jameson remarks that in it we have undoubtedly the origin or the germ of modern coroners' inquests. The following points in it are worthy of note. 1. It is a rule to be observed when they should be settled in the land of Canaan. 2. It indicates that from the first, each human life should be regarded as an object of common interest to the whole people, and that it was to be one of their prime points of honour, that no human life could be tampered with without arousing national indignation and concern. 3. God would teach them, that if it should be found that any one's life had been trifled with, it was a sin against Heaven as well as a crime against earth. 4. That this sin would be laid at the door of all the people if they were indifferent to the fact of its commission, and if they did not make full inquiry respecting it, and solemnly put it away from among them. At the back of this piece of civil legislation, yea, as the fount from which it sprang, we get this beautiful, sublime, and comforting truth—"*Each human life an object of Divine concern.*"

I. IN WHAT WAY HAS GOD MANIFESTED HIS CARE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL? 1. *This* passage is pregnant with blessed teaching thereon. We have: (1) The fact of man's ill-treatment of men recognized. (2) Rebuked. (3) Marked out as a brand of shame on any community which tolerates it. (4) In demanding an account thereof, God foreshadows his own coming judgment. 2. The Lord Jesus Christ taught it in terms more beautiful, more clear (Luke xii.; Matt. xviii.; Luke xv.). How often does Christ lay stress on "one"! 3. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ for every man, is a standing proof of every man's worth before God; so the apostle argues (2 Cor. v. 16). 4. The Spirit of God stirreth in every man to move his sluggish nature that it may rise toward heaven. Materialism merges the man in his accidents. Pantheism drowns him in the All. Deism hides him in vastness. Ultramontanism smothers him in the Church. Cæsarism makes the State all, the individual nothing. Christ rescues the one from being lost in the many, and cries aloud, "It is not the will of your Father in heaven that *one* of these little ones should perish."

II. WHAT SHOULD BE THE EFFECT ON US OF GOD'S CARE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL? 1. It should fill us with intense thankfulness that we are not lost in the crowd (see Isa. xl. 27). We are so apt to say, "God has too much to do to think of us," that we need to meditate often on the words, "He careth for you." 2. It should impress us with the dignity of man. When God fences every man round with such a guard against ill treatment from others, it may well lead us to "honour all men." 3. It should teach us the solidarity of the race. The weal of one is a concern to all. 4. It should teach us to cultivate the spirit of a universal brotherhood. "Have we not all one Father?" 5. It should lead us to aim at saving man. If God cares for all, well may we. 6. It should make us very indignant at any doctrines concerning the constitution and destiny of man, that would put him, or even seem to put him, on a level with the brute creation. 7. We should take every opportunity of warning men that, if ever they trifle with the interests and destinies of their brother man, God will call them to account at his bar. The voice of Abel's blood cried unto God from the ground. If a neglected, mutilated, slain body of any one, however obscure, was found in Israel's fields, they were responsible to the God of nations for inquiry and for expiation. No one is at liberty to cry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" When he maketh inquisition for blood, he forgetteth not the cry of the humble (see Ps. xciv.). And terrible beyond all power of expression, will be the shame and dismay, at the bar of God, of those who have trifled with human interests, and who go into eternity laden with the guilt of their brothers' blood!

Vers. 10—14.—*The female captive; or, Divine regard for woman's safety and honour.* Any one who is acquainted with the fearful licence practised among many

nations towards female captives taken in war, can surely appreciate the humanizing influence which the injunction in this paragraph was intended to exert. The law here laid down may or may not be abstractly the best; but if it was the best that the people could bear: if it would certainly lift up the people a step higher in their regard for womanly honour: if, moreover, it would have the effect of enforcing a restraint upon the passions of men at that most perilous of all times, even that of war,—then the hallowed influence which was shaping Hebrew legislation becomes clearly manifest. A woman taken captive as a prisoner of war was not to be a plaything of passion, but was to be dealt with honourably; to feel that she might part with the symbols of slavery, enter into relation with the covenant people, become invested with the rights of a daughter of Israel, and learn to worship, love, and glorify Israel's God! (For details, see the Exposition, and also valuable remarks in Keil and Jameson.) And if, in the issue, there was no true and proper home for her, she was to have that most precious of blessings—liberty! In opening up the theme suggested here—*Divine care for woman's safety and honour*—some seven or eight lines of thought may be taken up and worked out by the preacher. 1. Here is a Divine protest against the tendency of men to make woman a mere tool of passion. This book is the charter of woman's honour and happiness. 2. Our God would aim at bringing about the true nobility of woman, by means of educating the people up to the standard at which it shall be a point of honour with them to insist upon it. 3. To secure this end, State laws should be stringently framed. 4. Not even in war-time, nor in connection with our soldiery, is it ever to be tolerated that woman should be at the mercy of the stronger sex. 5. The right place of woman is in the love and protection of one to whom she is dearer than his own soul; and no more honourable place need she desire than that assigned her by Solomon in his description of "a virtuous woman." Many of the holy women of Scripture illustrate this. 6. Under the gospel, woman's position is yet more strikingly asserted. "In Christ Jesus there is ... neither male nor female." In religious relationship man and woman are, *cæteris paribus*, on an equal footing. 7. While, in the home, the wives are to be in subjection to their own husbands, yet the sway of the husband is to be with a love pure and tender, like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is only where the purifying and love-creating power of the gospel is known, that woman rises to her right position in the home, the family, the social circle, and the nation. The legislation on her behalf, which Moses began, has been going on under Judaism and Christianity for long ages, with what results we know in our happy homes. But how much we are indebted for these happy homes to the influence of Jewish and Christian law, can best be told by those who know the dark places of the earth, still "full of the habitations of cruelty."

Vers. 15—17.—*Home partialities never to warp home justice.* This paragraph indicates deep insight into human nature, and a far-seeing wisdom which surely indicates its superhuman origin. It is designed to restrict the action of the father with reference to the inheritance of the children, in cases where there were two families, not, apparently, by two wives living at the same time (as if the passage favoured polygamy), but rather by two of whom the second became the wife after the death of the first (comp. Jameson and Keil). It would probably, nay, almost certainly, occur, that one of the two would be thought more of than the other; the influence of the second wife, being later and withal continuous, might be exerted with the husband in favour of her own children, to the detriment of his by the former wife. And thus a son who was the father's firstborn might be put at a disadvantage through later preferences coming athwart his proper claims. Moses here teaches that he may not be dispossessed of the right of the firstborn, even though another should come on the scene who should be the firstborn in a second family. The principle on which this is based is indicated in the title of this Homily—"*Home partialities never to warp home justice.*" The following lines of thought may serve as a plan on which to enforce this principle.

I. It is an acknowledged duty of parents to care for the temporal weal of their children (see 2 Cor. xii. 14). There is indeed, on the part of some, a consuming desire to leave large fortunes to their families—a desire so great as to be inconsistent with faith in God's care. This is to be avoided on the one hand, while at the same time the opposite extreme is to be shunned on the other.

II. There are certain rights which belong to the children, supposing their father is possessed of an inheritance which he *can* leave them. Of course, if he has none, this paragraph in detail does not apply. Even in such a case, however, a parent owes it to his family to leave them the best of all heritages—a holy example, God's blessing, and a father's prayers! If he leaves them this, they will not want.

III. It is not impossible, nor even improbable, that circumstances may occur giving rise to partialities in a parent, which may lead him to consult the interest of some of his children to the detriment of that of others. Cases like that named in this paragraph are notoriously fraught with peril in this respect. And where such is the case there should be a special guard.

IV. These partialities are dangerous. They are so even during the father's life-time, but the results thereof after his death are likely to be serious and even disastrous. It is not possible to calculate the mischief wrought upon children, when the earthly name which should ever stand to them dearest in affection and highest in honour, is associated with an inequality by which some are advantaged and others wronged. No bitterness of feeling can surpass that which is thus engendered. It will wrap in shade an otherwise most venerated name.

V. God would teach us that *he* is ever watchful over the right in families, in every respect. The same Being who says to the children, "Honour your parents," says also to the parents, "Honour your children." As he would guard the heads of the house from being trifled with by the sons, so would he guard the sons from any injustice on the part of their parents. A wrong on either side towards the other is a sin against God. And so largely does the observance of the right in the family concerning money and property, affect the well-being of the State, that it is here made a part of the civil code of the "commonwealth of Israel," that no parent shall be at liberty, whatever his preferences, to ignore the standing claims of his children.

Vers. 18—21.—*A bad son a State peril.* This is a very remarkable provision. It is based on the well-known fact that there are some who need a strong deterrent to keep them from being a plague and peril to a State, and also on the all-important principle, that whoever is a pest and nuisance in the home, is the bane of the commonwealth to which he belongs. Moses had just laid down the duty of the parent to deal justly with his sons, whatever his personal partialities might be. He now lays down the extent and limits of parental authority over the son. He does not give the father the absolute power of life and death in reference to the child, as some ancient codes did, but, without abolishing that power altogether, he places such checks upon it that while, on the one hand, if a bad son became so outrageous that his life was putting others in peril through its poisonous influence, he would have before him the possibility of capital punishment; yet, on the other hand, this penalty could only be inflicted with the sanction of the elders of the city; the consent of both parents was required ere he could be brought before them; and they (the parents) were expected to be able to say that they had exhausted every known means of reclaiming him before they brought him to that tribunal. It is evident that the law is enacted with the intention of being so deterrent that it may never need to be put into execution. And thus indeed it seems to have proved. For there is no known instance in Jewish history of its having been carried out.[1] Forming part, as it did, of an ancient civil code for the Hebrew nation only, it is not in force with us now, and we are not called upon to appreciate its real worth as a guard to the stability of the Hebrew nation. But here, as elsewhere, even in obsolete statutes, we discover permanent principles, which it behoves preachers to develop and enforce, if they would not "shun to declare the whole counsel of God." The truth here taught is this—*A bad son is a State peril.* Five lines of thought may with advantage be followed out here, with the view of impressing this truth upon the hearts of the people.

I. A STATE IS WHAT ITS HOMES MAKE IT. It cannot be otherwise. It is made up of its own cities, towns, villages, and hamlets. Each one of these is made up of its homes. If they are all good, little legislation will be required; if they are

[1] Josephus ('Ant.,' xvi. ch. xi. § 2) gives an instance in which Herod the Great availed himself of it. (See Jameson, *in loc.*)

all bad, no legislation will avail, even if it could be secured. And according as the good or bad element preponderates, will a State be secure and prosperous or otherwise.

II. AN INCORRIGIBLE SON IS THE BANE OF ANY HOME. It is not within our present province to illustrate or even take up the truth that it is extremely unlikely any son will become incorrigible, unless there is some grievous failure in duty on the part of the parents in not correcting him betimes, and in not keeping the reins in their own hands. It is, unhappily, too often true—"his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." But, however it may come about, the truth is the same, that where a son hearkens not to the voice of his father, and despises to obey his mother, there will be in any home in which such is the case, a source of deep sorrow and indescribable misery; there will be an example fraught with evil influence to the other members of the family. "One sickly sheep infects the flock."

III. SUCH A HOME, SO POISONED, MAY BECOME A CENTRE OF UNSPEAKABLE MISCHIEF. For the sons who act so mischievously in the house are, as a rule, those who wander far and wide in pursuit of forbidden pleasure, giving way to the lusts of the flesh, and to sins of the tongue, polluting others wherever they go. Thus a moral miasma, pestilential and even deadly, may be carried from street to street, and from town to town.

IV. THOSE THUS POLLUTED WILL TAKE THE POISON TO OTHER HOMES. One home will infect others. Each infected home will spread the contagion. And so the evil will spread far and wide, not only in an arithmetical, but in a geometrical progression, till even in the course of one or two generations, it will assume a proportion which baffle all powers of calculation to formulate it, and a virulence which may defy the most powerful legislation to arrest it.

V. HENCE THE VERY EXISTENCE OF SUCH A CENTRE OF EVIL OUT OF WHICH SUCH COMPLICATED AND WIDESPREAD MISCHIEF MAY ARISE, IS A SOURCE OF GRAVE PERIL TO ANY COMMONWEALTH IN THE WORLD! It may not be seen nor even suspected when in germ. But germs of evil are fraught with all the evil of which they are the germs.

1. Learn how far-seeing are the provisions of this Mosaic law! What seems severity to the individual is really mercy to the nation. Preventive measures, though severe, may be most genuinely philanthropic. 2. Learn how great is the importance of wisdom and firmness in maintaining parental authority. 3. Learn the need of early habits of obedience to parents. An obedient son is a joy and honour to his parents, a credit to the home, an element of safety in a State. But "God never smiles on a boy that breaks his mother's heart." So said Richard Knill. Finally: What we have said thus far is valid, even if this life were all. But if to this life we add on the next, and bethink us of the amazing issues projecting themselves from time into eternity, who can adequately set forth the importance of taking heed to those early steps on which depend the direction of this earthly life, when on it depends the weal or woe of the life which is to come?

Vers. 22, 23.—*Upon the tree!* These words form part of the criminal code of the Hebrews, and though as such they may be regarded as practically obsolete, yet they contain principles which will never wax old, and are, moreover, so frequently alluded to in the New Testament, that they furnish us with a starting-point of no mean interest for a devout Christian meditation. The case supposed in the text is not that of a man being put to death *by* crucifixion, but of his having suffered capital punishment, and of his body being afterwards hung upon a stake and put to an open shame by the exposure, as having been one of the vilest of criminals. Such an exposure after death was to be, so to speak, the expression of the execration of the people. It would be their public brand upon detestable guilt. And, when thus the public detestation and horror of wickedness had been expressed, that accursed thing was to be taken down that night and buried out of sight for ever, as a sign that the curse had spent itself. This *vox populi* was *vox Dei*. "He that is hanged is accursed of God."

Now, it may be asked, "Why take up the time of a congregation by recalling an obsolete enactment like this?" Our reply is, Let us now turn to Acts v. 30. Peter knew how the Jews would regard these words—"whom ye slew *and hanged on a tree*." They would understand their significance to be, "You put him to an open shame, as

though he, the best of men, were one of the vilest malefactors." Shall we call this the "irony of history"? How was it that God let the treatment of the basest of criminals be accorded to the holiest of our race? We often speak of it as a "mystery of Providence" when some great trouble befalls a good man. But of all such mysteries there is none so great as this. As a bare piece of history unexplained, there is no fact which in all its surroundings is so inexplicable as this, that Jesus Christ of Nazareth should have died amid such deep disgrace and shame. "Hanged on a tree!" Let us go further on. Read 1 Pet. ii. 24. Note the emphasis, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body *on the tree*." Here is an explanation of the strange fact. He was pressed down with others' woes, and burdened with the guilt of others' sins. And why? What was the effect of all? Read again. In Gal. iii. 13, 14, the apostle, quoting these words of Moses, shows us that in the fact of the ignominious death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the tree, we are to see at once (1) the Divine execration of sin, and (2) the Divine redemption of the sinner.

I. Under a moral government, a righteous governor will, yea, must append blessing to good, and affix a curse to evil. If any one asks *Why?* we do not know that any one can answer further than to say that suffering is the desert of ill, and gladness the appropriate consequence of well-doing. No other theory would be workable in any well-ordered family, or nation, or city. In the family, paternal punishment expresses the father's sense of wrong done. In the State, punishment marks the nation's sense of wrong done. And these are but echoes of that Divine disapproval of sin to which the conscience of man with certainty points. And it is well known and understood that the disapproval and condemnation of wrong on the part of any government is never to be confounded with, but is very far removed from, personal vindictiveness. No government, indeed, would command the confidence of the people under which crime could be carried on with impunity. Without branding crime against a State, no government could long exist. That brand is "the curse of the law."

II. There is a law above all human laws. The latter are partial and defective, and may become obsolete. The everlasting law of righteousness is co-eternal with the Great Supreme. He judges the world in righteousness. Every child of man is answerable to his tribunal. Every deed, word, and thought are scanned by his all-seeing eye, and are estimated rightly by his unerring judgment. And he, the Great Judge, brings against each and all the charge of being law-breakers (see Rom. i., ii.). The Jew is so because he has broken a written Law; the Gentile, because he has broken an unwritten one. All the world is guilty before God. Under such circumstances, what is a righteous Being to do to secure the stability of his throne? To connive at sin? To pass it by, and take no notice of it? To let the sinner have the same grace as if he had never sinned? No; there must be a declaration, a demonstration, of his righteousness, as Paul calls it. And the demonstration of righteousness certainly involves the condemnation of sin.

III. If we are sinners, as we are, the Divine condemnation of sin places us under a curse. We must be careful to understand that in the Divine curse there is nothing vindictive, excessive, defective, or ineffective; there is nothing in it out of harmony with the everlasting love of righteousness which is the bulwark and safeguard of the Divine government of souls. As many as are of the works of the Law are—continue to be—under the curse. As long as a man's life is unright, by God's law he abides under condemnation.

IV. Guilty men *are* under the curse; a Guiltless One *comes* under it. So Gal. iii. 13, "being made a curse for us," rather, "having become a curse." (Let the student note here, as in John i., the careful use of, and the distinction between, the words for "being" and "becoming.") The Son of God, the Law-maker, comes and dwells with the law-breakers, and becomes as one of them. Joyfully taking their place, he bears their burdens and accepts their liabilities as if they were his own! He is pressed down as with a great weight. His sweat is as it were great drops of blood. He goes to *the tree*. The deepest indignity the Law knows is his. He is numbered with the transgressors. He is put to "an open shame." He dies as the worst of malefactors died—*on the tree!* The One who stands pre-eminent among men for the purity of his life stands out also conspicuously among men for the humiliation which attends on his death! He hangs on a tree, as if accursed of God!

V. Our Lord Jesus Christ then represented our race, and for them had become a curse. A stupendous transaction was then and there effected, to which we know of no parallel in heaven or on earth (cf. Matt. xx. 28; 1 Pet. ii. 24; 2 Cor. v. 21; John i. 29). Note: 1. He was of such dignity that he *could* represent the race. 2. His act was entirely spontaneous; he *willed* to do it. 3. It was the Father's appointment that he *should* do it. 4. Foreseeing the result of his work, he *rejoiced* to do it (Isa. liii. 11 (Hebrew); Heb. xii. 1, 2). Amid the external humiliation, the thought of saving men thereby, bore him on and bore him through.

VI. By bearing the curse on himself upon the tree he bore it off from us. He has redeemed us therefrom. He has bought us up out of it. He who deserved it not, was pressed down by it, that we who deserved it might be lifted up out of it. Sin having been, in him, condemned—once, completely, righteously, eternally—the righteousness of the Lawgiver was demonstrated. Then was his love free to act towards us apart from Law, on the principle of grace.

VII. The curse being thus rolled away, the way is prepared for the coming in of the blessing. However fully and freely infinite love now heaps blessing on blessing on the vilest sinner, not from one quarter of the universe can the murmur rise up that God thinks lightly of sin, when, in order to lift its weight off the guilty sinner, the Infinite Son of God has taken the whole load upon himself, and atoned for sin by his own sacrifice!

VIII. The blessing comes to men when they repent and believe. So argues Paul in both his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. See especially Rom. iv. 16, and the wonderful parallel between the first and the second Adam in Rom. v.

IN CONCLUSION. 1. Let us adore and magnify the grace and righteousness of God in the atoning work of Christ on the tree. The manifold perfections of the Divine nature shine forth here in combined lustre. Thousands have objected to the doctrine of the atonement. No one ever objected to it who did not first misapprehend it. 2. Let us cultivate deep, serious, and earnest thinkings as to the evil of sin, thus branded with the curse of God. Only low moral conceptions can consist with the denial of the necessity for an atonement. 3. Let us see that we rely entirely and penitently on the work of the Son of God on our behalf. 4. Let us defend the manifold glories of the cross against all deniers and opponents. 5. Let us, before whom this Divine act of self-surrender stands as the warrant of our hope, have it ever before us also as the model and standard of our life. And, in studying ever more and more fully the meaning of Christ's self-surrender to God for us, shall we find the inspiration of our self-surrender to God for others!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Atonement for unknown sin.* We have here a ritual applicable to cases where murder has not been expiated by the apprehension and execution of the murderer. The mystery has remained unravelled. The elders and judges, in such a case, are to come and measure which city is nearest the slain man, and the elders of that city are then required to take the heifer prescribed and make atonement, that the country may be delivered from the guilt of innocent blood. The heifer is to be one in the full vigour of life, which has not been wrought with, and consequently expressed in the fullest form the life-producing power to which the violent death stood as a contrast.[1] She is to be taken down into a "rough valley," or, as the words (נַחַל אֵיתָן) more accurately mean, "a perennial stream," and there is her neck to be struck off, and the blood thus violently shed is to pass away in the never-failing stream. While this is taking place, the elders of the city are to wash their hands over her, in protestation of their innocence, and to pray for deliverance from the guilt, and it shall be forgiven them.

I. AN UNDISCOVERED MURDER IS PROPERLY IMPUTED TO THE DISTRICT WHERE THE VICTIM HAS BEEN FOUND. In a well-ordered society life should be safe. When it is

[1] Cf. Kurtz's 'Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' p. 427.

proved unsafe, society cannot plead "Not guilty." Locally, it must be allocated, and so the city nearest the victim has the crime *imputed* to it. The sense of guilt is distributed territorially, and the elders, or representatives of the people, are required to clear themselves by the special rite here described.

Sin has thus wider relations than to the individual who has committed it. It may lie at the door of a city, or of a neighbourhood, and in their collective capacity they may be required to deal with it.

II. THE DISTRICT THUS GUILTY THROUGH IMPUTATION IS MOST PROPERLY SUMMONED TO A RELIGIOUS SERVICE. It is surely a matter for general humiliation that such a crime could be secretly committed, and the murderer escape. It should lead to special religious exercises. It would be a very seemly thing if neighbourhoods where great crimes have gone undiscovered were to unite in supplicating God's mercy, in view of the guilt thus contracted.

III. A WAY OF DELIVERANCE FROM THE IMPUTED GUILT IS GRACIOUSLY PROVIDED. It consisted of the following elements.

1. The *violent death of an innocent and full-blooded animal.* The cruel killing of the heifer was a repetition of the tragedy, and was well fitted to bring its guilt before them. Thus was a sense of sin deepened.

2. *Its shed blood was carried away on the surface of the never-failing stream.* In this beautiful, poetic way, the providential removal of innocent blood, did God convey the idea of removing the guilt from the district concerned.

3. *Over the heifer so slain the elders were to wash their hands and protest their innocency.* In this way the most solemn sanctions were associated with their plea of "Not guilty."

4. *And they were further to intercede for the removal of the imputation against Israel.* Only after this minute ritual had been gone through was the assurance of forgiveness pronounced by the priest.

IV. IN THIS WAY WE DISCOVER A TYPIFICATION OF THE PARDON PROVIDED BY CHRIST. And here we do well to notice, as facts incapable of dispute—

1. That *people who are innocent have often to incur imputation along with the guilty.* The children of evil-doers incur an evil repute, although they may be perfectly innocent. It is a law of society as at present constituted—the innocent are grouped with the guilty.

2. *Jesus Christ is One who has voluntarily accepted of the imputation of sin, though innocent, and suffered in consequence.* Just as the innocent heifer was paraded with the guilty district, and alone suffered because of the committed and undiscovered sin, so Jesus takes up his position in the sad procession, and is the selected, yet voluntary, Victim.

3. *The Holy Spirit, as a perennial stream, carries the sense and sight of blood-guiltiness away.* For, without the Spirit's help, the shed blood of Jesus might only increase human guilt; with his help it takes all the guilt away.

4. *Those who wish pardon must not be too proud to ask for it.* "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So have we the gospel vividly presented to us.—R. M. E.

Vers. 10—14.—*Through love to liberty.* We have here a regulation or law of war. Captives might be sold as slaves, but through love they might reach the position of a wife in a Jewish household, and if she did not please her conqueror, then she was to be made free again. So that the possible fate of the captive was "through love to liberty."

I. LOVE IS THE BEST CURE FOR THE ILLS OF WAR. The men were to be slain: women might be kept as a prey (ch. xx. 14). It was a blessed issue when the conqueror was himself conquered by his captive. Then slavery was over, and love brought liberty. The passion of hate had given place to the passion of love. The better time had come.

II. BUT THE PASSION MUST BE SUBJECT TO WISE RESTRAINT. A month's mourning is allowed the beautiful captive, during which her person is sacred in the house of her captor. She bids farewell to her relations, whether living or dead, for she is going to be the wife of a Jew; and her intended husband has time to think quietly over his passion of love, and to see whether it is lasting or no.

III. HER PRIVILEGE WAS TO BECOME THE FREE WIFE OF HER JEWISH LORD. If a happily ordered marriage, it must have been a joyful issue of the war. The terrible ordeal had proved to her the path to honour and social blessedness and peace. All the agony had given place to enlarging love.

IV. AT THE VERY WORST, SHE REGAINED HER LIBERTY. The love had in this case proved transient—she had not pleased him—they would not be happy together. In such a case she was given a legal title to liberty. If not loved, she had the next best privilege of being free.

In this arrangement, consequently, we have love and liberty in the house of a husband; or liberty, if the love proves fickle and the match ill arranged. This was a beneficent arrangement compared with the licentiousness which usually accompanied war.

V. WE MAY CONTRAST THIS WITH THE LOVE AND LIBERTY GUARANTEED US BY CHRIST JESUS. Our Lord, in fact, offers us his love, oh, how strong and how true! And in his love there is liberty, the liberty wherewith he makes his people free. No uncertainty hangs over his offer to us; no slavery is possible in his house. We shall, in fact, have reason to bless him for conquering us for loving purposes, and any anguish his conquest may have cost us, will be amply compensated in his royal and limitless love.

Conquest, love, and liberty for ever is the experience through which we pass in the hands of Jesus, the Conquering Hero, and no one ever regrets entering upon it, for it is enjoyment indeed!—R. M. E.

Vers. 15—17.—*The rights of the firstborn in the house of a bigamist.* Bigamy was not encouraged by the Mosaic Law. Where it took place in man's passion, the Law stepped in to regulate the relations in the household impartially. The house of a bigamist may be the scene of sudden jealousies and dispeace, but God steps in to forbid it being the scene of injustice. The discomfort is providentially inseparable from the bigamy—it would have been a pity had it been otherwise! But the Lord steps in to prevent flagrant injustice being done to the children solely through the father's caprice. Caprice may be permitted up to a certain point, with all its painful checks, but it will not be suffered to perpetuate undeserved wrong.

I. THE RIGHTS OF THE FIRSTBORN CONSISTED IN A DOUBLE SHARE OF THE FAMILY PROPERTY—TWICE AS MUCH AS THE OTHER CHILDREN. This was that he, as the beginning of his father's strength, and as acknowledged head of the family, might be able to sustain its honour properly. It was for this portion Elisha prayed when he desired a double portion of Elijah's spirit; not twice as much, but twice as much as the other sons of the prophets (2 Kings ii. 9). And this is what Jesus gets from the Father, according to the promise, "I will make him my Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" (Ps. lxxxix. 27). There was another right of the firstborn, in having a seed raised up for him in case of his premature decease. This also has its import in the case of Jesus.

II. BECAUSE A FIRSTBORN'S MOTHER WAS HATED WAS NO REASON WHY HE SHOULD BE DENIED HIS RIGHTS. The dark cloud of hate was not to envelop him, and keep him out of his double portion, or his right to a seed, if he prematurely died. And yet this was what Jesus received in the way of treatment. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." As the Firstborn of humanity, he deserved the double portion, yet had not where to lay his head. He was denied his rights among men.

III. FROM THE CAPRICE OF MEN WE MAY ALWAYS LOOK UP TO THE IMPARTIAL JUSTICE OF GOD. This was the protection of the firstborn in the house of a bigamist. God was on his side. This was the protection of Jesus amid the injustice of men—the Father was along with him. He always did what pleased him. And whenever we feel aggrieved through the capricious conduct of our fellows, let us always look up confidingly to our Father above.

The Lord is just, at all events. We may rely on his vindication of our case in the great day, if not before.—R. M. E.

Vers. 18—23.—*Parental authority enforced.* It is plain that parents are to deal with their children to the best of their ability: but in case a stubborn and rebellious

son would not hearken to father or mother, would not appreciate chastisement, and had become a drunkard and glutton, then the parents were directed to bring the case before the elders of the city, and the impenitent, licentious son was to be taken away from the earth by public stoning. The public law was thus, in the last resort, to back up parental authority and to remove the "scapegrace."

I. PARENTAL AUTHORITY IS TO BE EXERCISED TO THE UTMOST. Father and mother are both to do their best to save their son from being a public disgrace. They are to use the rod, to chasten him, if nothing milder will do. Only after they have prosecuted their parental authority to the last degree are they to seek the public officers.

II. GLUTTONY AND DRUNKENNESS ARE TREATED AS CAPITAL OFFENCES UNDER THE THEOCRACY. They are incompatible with membership in God's kingdom. Hence they are deemed worthy of death. Because they are not now so severely visited by public law does not imply that they are less heinous in God's sight than they were then.

III. IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE LAST RESORT WHEN PARENTS WOULD BRING FORTH THEIR SON FOR PUBLIC EXECUTION. What a wearying of love and patience there must have been before such a commandment as this would be carried out! The father and mother would bear long before they would bring themselves to make of their child a public infamy.

IV. THE EXECUTION OF THE SCAPEGRACE WAS A SOLEMN DEDICATION OF HIM, BY IMPOSITION OF HANDS, TO DEATH BY STONING. Such a public disgrace must have had a very wholesome effect in deterring reckless children from self-abandonment. We do not hear of any instance of such an execution. Drunkenness and gluttony were not common crimes in Israel.

V. IT WOULD SEEM THAT GIBBETING WAS ADDED TO THE STONING, TO EMPHASIZE STILL MORE THE DISGRACE IN SUCH CASES. When this was carried out, it was understood that the gibbeted person was taken down at sundown, so as not to defile the land, and was buried without delay. As accursed of God, the corpse was as soon as possible put out of sight into the tomb.

VI. IT IS INSTRUCTIVE TO THINK OF JESUS CHRIST BEING EXPOSED TO JUST SUCH A PUBLIC INFAMY. He was made a curse for us. He was hanged on a tree, gibbeted as a malefactor. What love led him to place himself in such a position! The authorities took him, and in his Father's and mother's presence they did him to death, as if he had been a disobedient and disgraceful Son. Thus did he deliver us from the curse of the Law. We receive honour because he accepted shame. The "holy Child Jesus" was nailed to the cross, was suspended on a tree, as if he were accursed of God. May we all profit by his voluntary humiliation, and imitate him as the holy, consecrated Child!—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—9.—*Purification from guilt of an uncertain murder.* The explanation commonly given of this peculiar ceremony seems unsatisfactory. Keil's view, that "it was a symbolical infliction of the punishment that should have been borne by the murderer, upon the animal which was substituted for him," is contradicted by the fact that, for deliberate murder, the Law, as he admits, provided no expiation, while the object of this ceremony was plainly in some way to remove blood-guiltiness. Fairbairn's explanation (in his 'Typology') is even more far-fetched, that the heifer was "a palpable representative of the person whose life had been wantonly and murderously taken away." The key to the ceremony is, we think, to be sought for in another direction. The central idea is that a responsibility attaches to a whole community for crimes committed in its midst. The members of the community are implicated in the guilt of the murder till they absolve themselves by bringing the murderer to justice (vers. 8, 9). In the case here treated of, the murderer is unknown, and a rite is appointed by which the share of the community in his blood-guiltiness, which cannot be removed in the ordinary way, by executing justice on the criminal, is otherwise abolished. The heifer, in this view, represents neither the murdered man nor his murderer, but the people of the city, who seek to purge themselves from guilt by putting it to death. It is their own guilt they seek to get rid of, not the criminal's. Expiation was not admitted for the actual murderer, but the responsibility for the crime, which, failing the visitation of justice on the criminal, devolved on the community—for that, expiation was admitted. The animal, suffering vicariously, in full posses-

sion of its vital powers, while the elders of the city washed their hands over it, and declared their innocence of all knowledge of the murder, sufficed to secure that "the blood should be forgiven them"—forgiveness implying previous imputation. The valley, "neither cared nor sown," was, in its desolation and sterility, a fit place for such a transaction, which, while it cleansed the city, left the curse upon the murderer, and indeed made the spot a sort of witness of his yet unexpiated guilt. We learn: 1. That responsibility attaches to each and all in a community for crimes committed in its midst. 2. That the community is not absolved till every effort has been made to discover the perpetrators of crime and to bring them to justice. 3. That the punishment of murder is death. 4. That to ignore, connive at, or encourage crime in a community, involves the authorities in the criminality of the deeds connived at. 5. That all parties, the people (represented by the elders), the magistrates (judges), the Church (priests), are alike interested in bringing criminals to justice.—J. O.

Vers. 10—15.—*The captive wife.* The kindness, thoughtfulness, and strict justice of the Mosaic laws is very striking. The Law here interposes to secure—

I. CONSIDERATE TREATMENT OF ONE BEREAVED. (Vers. 10—14.) The case supposed comes under the law of ch. xx. 14. The woman was a captive in war and a heathen, yet the Israelite is required to respect her chastity, and, if he conceive a passion for her, must not only make her his wife in a proper manner, but must allow her a full month to bewail her dead relatives. The question of religion is a difficult one in such cases, but we may suppose that no force was applied to captives and strangers further than forbidding to them the outward practice of idolatry. The laying aside of the symbols of captivity, and the purificatory rites of cutting the hair and nails, could only imply reception into the fellowship of the covenant nation in the event of the woman freely accepting Jehovah as her God (cf. Ruth i. 15, 16). Learn: 1. That the tumult and disorder of war is no excuse for immoral licence. 2. We are to consider the situation and feelings of those whose circumstances place them at our mercy. 3. Natural affections are to be respected underneath all differences of creed and race.

II. PROTECTION FOR ONE UNFRIENDED. (Ver. 14.) The captive stranger wedded to an Israelite was not left to be treated by him as he listed. Her unfriended position exposed her to the risk of suffering from her husband's caprice and unfeelingness. While, therefore, he is permitted, if he lose delight in her, to divorce her—for the "letting her go" must be construed in the light of ch. xxiv. 3—he must on no account sell her or detain her as a captive. Another instance of God's care for "the stranger." Hasty marriages, founded on passion inspired by mere external attractions, seldom result in lasting happiness.—J. O.

Vers. 15—18.—*The firstborn of the hated wife.* The firstborn, in patriarchal and tribal societies, had recognized rights and honours, correlative with the duties and responsibilities which his position as prospective head of the household entailed on him. The principle is here asserted that individual preferences and partialities are not to be allowed to set aside the rights of the son who is lawfully the firstborn. Men would fain, sometimes, bend justice to their likings. Where an Israelite had two wives, either together or in succession, the one loved and the other hated, he might be tempted to pass by the son of the hated, and confer the rights of the firstborn on the son of the wife whom he loved, though it was the son of the hated wife who was entitled to that honour. With strict impartiality, the Law steps in and forbids this act of injustice. It demands that the son of the hated wife have all his rights. It will tolerate no tampering with them. Lessons: 1. The evils of polygamy. 2. The sin of allowing likes and dislikes to influence us to acts of injustice. 3. The danger of natural preferences degenerating into blameworthy partialities. 4. The duty of doing always what is right, whatever the bent of our private inclinations.—J. O.

Vers. 18—21.—*The rebellious son.* A law of this kind, which left it to the parents themselves to impeach their disobedient son, while ordaining that, when the charge was proved against him, and it could be shown that the parents had duly corrected him, the offender should be put to death, would, we may believe, very rarely be enforced.

In cases so aggravated that its enforcement was necessary, the penalty, judged by the usages and state of feeling of the time, would be thought anything but severe. The law, whether enforced or not, was a standing testimony to the enormity attaching in the eyes of God to the sin of filial disobedience. We learn—

I. INSUBORDINATION TO PARENTS IS A GRAVE OFFENCE AGAINST SOCIETY. It is treated here, not simply as a private wrong, but as a crime. Hebrew society rested so largely on the patriarchal basis that the due maintenance of parental authority was a necessity of its existence. The theocratic principle, according to which parents were invested with a peculiar sacredness as representatives of God, likewise called for the repression of incorrigible disobedience. But, whatever the form of social order, a spread of the spirit of insubordination to parents is the invariable prelude to a universal loosening of the ties and obligations of corporate existence. "It has been found," says Dr. Fleming, in his 'Moral Philosophy,' "in the history of all nations that the best security for the public welfare is a wise and happy exercise of parental authority; and one of the surest forerunners of national degradation and public anarchy and disorder is neglect or contempt of domestic happiness or rule."

II. PARENTS ARE NOT ENTITLED TO COMPLAIN OF THE DISOBEDIENCE OF CHILDREN, SAVE WHERE THEIR OWN DUTIES TO THEIR CHILDREN HAVE BEEN FAITHFULLY DISCHARGED. To secure a conviction, the parents had to show, not only that they had done their best to bring the son up in right ways, but that they had corrected him, and otherwise endeavoured to reclaim him from his vices. Before parents are entitled to complain of the disobedience of children, they must have done their utmost (1) by instruction, (2) by admonition, (3) by correction, (4) by example, (5) by a firm assertion of parental authority generally, to keep them from error. Parents who neglect these duties have little cause to wonder at a son turning out ill; the wonder would be if he should turn out well. It is they, as much as the son, who deserve blame. Lesson: Compare with the behaviour of this rebellious son our own treatment of our heavenly Father.—J. O.

Vers. 22, 23.—*Accursed of God.* The criminal who had committed a sin worthy of death, and was put to death under the law, was viewed as dying under the ban or curse of God. When the crime was very execrable, and the criminal might be regarded as perishing under God's most awful curse, the fact was intimated by exposing the body on a tree. Compare the old custom of hanging a notorious criminal in chains. The placing of the body on a tree was not that which made the person accursed, but was an external sign or token of his being an accursed one. It was, therefore, a singular and striking feature in God's providential arrangements, not only that the death of Christ should be brought about as a result of judgment passed on him by the constituted authorities of his nation, pronouncing him guilty of the worst of all crimes under the theocracy, that of blasphemy, but that in the manner of his death even this external token of ignominy should not be wanting. In this act, the placing of Jesus on the cross, the sin and madness of the world were overruled, as in several other instances (Matt. xxvii. 25, 29, 42; Mark xv. 27, 28; John xi. 50), to give unwitting expression to the highest truth. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13). The crucifixion of Jesus signifies to us: 1. *The world's judgment upon Christ.* It put him to death as one accursed of God. It treated him as the worst of malefactors, and interpreted his death upon the cross as a sure token of God having forsaken him (Matt. xxvii. 43). To many it may have appeared as if the inference were just. The Sanhedrim had convicted him of blasphemy, and their verdict seemed confirmed by the failure of Christ to deliver himself out of their hands. A true Christ would not thus have succumbed before his enemies. The cross was the refutation of his claims, and the proof of his being an impostor, justly doomed to die. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa. liii. 4). The world was wrong, for Jesus was never dearer to his Father than in that hour when he hung upon the tree; but, in a sense unknown to itself, it gave utterance to a truth. 2. *Christ's submission to a cursed death for the world.* The subjection of the sinless Christ to the death of the cross is a fact which requires explanation. If the world put him to death as one accursed, it is none the less true that he voluntarily submitted to this suffering

and ignominy, and that the Father permitted him so to be "made a curse." A yet more mysterious feature in the death of Christ is that, in the direst hour of his agony, the Father seemed to side with the world, by withdrawing from him the light and comfort of his presence (Matt. xxvii. 46). Christ was dealt with by Heaven, not less than by men, as One under a curse; if not a sinner, he was treated as if he were one. The apostolic writings lay stress on this as a fact of essential importance in the work of Christ for man's salvation (2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13). Subjection to the curse of the Law in the name of the world of sinners with whose lot he had identified himself, was not *all* that was necessary for their redemption from that curse, but it was involved in what was necessary. Any theory of atonement which leaves out the recognition of Christ "made sin" for us by voluntary endurance of sin's doom, must, on scriptural grounds, be pronounced at least incomplete.—J. O.

Vers. 1—9.—*The creation of righteous, public sentiment.* The influence of man upon man is omnific; it touches him at every point. The potency of influence depends on character, rank, age, station. The character of kings is soon reflected on their courtiers. From this principle is born the adage, "Like priest, like people." Crimes proceed from depraved sentiment, and sentiment can be purified by righteous influence.

I. CRIME COURTS CONCEALMENT. All crime is cowardly, base, mean. It fears the light. This may furnish a test for acts that lie near the boundary lines of morality, and admit of question. If the fierce light of righteous opinion is dreaded, the thing is already condemned. So lacking in fortitude and courage is the murderer, that he will seldom confess the truth unless conscience scourges him with intolerable remorse. Yet it is, in well-organized society, an exceptional thing if the murderer escapes. The movements of Divine providence usually furnish some clue to the red-handed man. Still, if amid the infirmities of human government the culprit should escape, he is amenable to another jurisdiction where concealment is impossible. Every crime shall eventually be seen in a blaze of noontide light.

II. MAGISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY IS INDICATED. Crime is not merely injury against an individual, it is an assault upon society. If murder pass with impunity, no life will soon be safe. In the human race there is a solidarity of interest. Men constitute a *family*. Cities have a character as well as persons. The real leaders in society are laden with heavy responsibility. It is their paramount duty to foster healthy public sentiment; and if this sentiment does not penetrate far enough to prevent crime, it should penetrate far enough to detect crime. Every man can contribute something to influence public morals, and magistrates should lead the way.

III. PUBLIC ABHORRENCE OF CRIME IS IMPRESSIVELY SHOWN. The minds of men are more impressed by deeds than by words, especially by symbolic acts surrounded by the sanctions of religion. It was of the first importance that the city elders should be beyond any suspicion of connivance with the deed. Therefore they must publicly purge themselves by solemn attestation. A valuable heifer was to be selected, and the elders were required to decapitate the victim—a public protest that this would be their own desert if in any degree they had been accessories to the crime. The natural scene selected for this rite was significant. It was to be done in a rugged valley given over to barrenness or natural desolation; being an impressive picture of sin's effect. Accompanying this solemn immolation—this appeal of innocence to Heaven—there was the most explicit utterance of words; so that the honour of the rulers might shine out clear and bright. Magisterial authority is founded on public regard. It was, moreover, a representative act. Every citizen spoke through these elders.

IV. MEDIATION IS HERE FORESHADOWED. It is possible by our thoughtlessness to "become partaker of other men's sins." We all share, in greater or lesser measures, in the guilt of the race. There are sins of ignorance, and to these a measure of culpability belongs. Evils might have been prevented if we had been more faithful. But, by God's appointment, substitution is permitted. Other blood may be shed, by virtue of which we may be redeemed. "The blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin;" nor can the blood of man. No material compensation can be made for moral wrong. But moral effects may be produced by substitution, which shall be equally just and more beneficent. As the priests of olden time were mediators between God and the Jews, so we have a Great High Priest, who is a *real* Mediator, having royal interest for us with God.

V. PENITENCE AND PURITY ARE TWIN SISTERS. (See ver. 9.) There is an appeal for mercy: "Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel." Some measure of culpability must be felt in every solicitation of mercy. For mercy is that principle in God which conveys blessing when no merit exists. And if true penitence moves in the breast, it is the parent of reformation; its purpose is amendment. It seeks not only removal of burdens, but the destruction of the evil thing. In the hour of penitence, new love and new hate are born. Unless fruits of righteousness appear, penitence is only pretence. The sincere cry for mercy is always followed by "doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord."—D.

Vers. 10—14.—*The captor captured.* God's laws are accommodations to human infirmities. To require from men summarily, and as the result of law, perfect conduct of life is impracticable. Hence legislation, to be successful, must be adapted to the case, and must lead by gradations to a nobler life. This law, though tolerant of lesser evil, is a marked amelioration of earlier custom—a step towards order and purity.

I. FEMALE BEAUTY WINS THE HEARTS EVEN OF WARRIORS. There are other conquests, and nobler, than military conquests. Beauty snatches the palm from strength. In the very hour of victory the conqueror has laid all his spoils at the feet of a gentle woman. Love rules the camp. External beauty has its uses. Real beauty is the exponent of some hidden worth. It eloquently says, "There is some goodness here: search and find it out." And beauty has its perils too—it may excite sexual passion which cannot be controlled.

II. CONJUGAL UNION IS TO RESULT, NOT FROM SUDDEN PASSION, BUT FROM WELL-TRIED LOVE. This sudden desire to have his captive as his wife was required to be tested by time. Calm reflection is to precede a union so full of possible results. Beauty may fling her robe of colour about the haze of dawn, but the gay haze of dawn does not constitute the day. Mere bloom on summer fruit will not meet the hunger of the man. Marriage is a temple of God, and must not be built on an imaginary foundation. The charm of the fair captive's locks was to be temporarily removed, so that the lover's desire might rest, not on fleeting accessories, but on personal worth. Ill-assorted marriages are a fertile curse. Sympathy in religion is essential to a prosperous marriage union.

III. THE NATURAL FEELINGS OF WOMAN, AS WOMAN, ARE TO BE SCRUPULOUSLY RESPECTED. We may not understand all the purposes this Jewish law was designed to serve; but certain it is that, though a captive, the natural feeling of filial sorrow was to be allowed, yea, expected. To repress or root out the affectionate feeling of a daughter would be mutilation of the soul. A forgetful daughter will never be a worthy wife. Nothing in our external fortunes—not even success in war—warrants our playing the tyrant. It is for the benefit of the human race that woman should be treated on equal terms. Her fine endowments have a noble part to play in the culture of humanity.

IV. MARRIAGE HAS ITS DUTIES AS WELL AS ITS ENJOYMENTS. By the custom of that barbarous age, the captive, whether male or female, became the absolute property of the captor. He could reduce her to slavery. But if he chose to make her his wife, he conveyed to her rights which could not be alienated. It became henceforth his duty to protect her and all her interests. She was secure against the lust of avarice. God threw around her the shield of his sacred Law. But the very necessity for this commandment disclosed the rampant greed for gain which rules in some men. Thankful ought we to be that God removes such a possible temptation out of our way. Not by God's consent is marriage ever contracted or terminated for the sake of money gain.—D.

Vers. 15—17.—*Monogamy essential to domestic peace.* Every indication of God's will is a finger-post to felicity. A wise man will not wait for peremptory law. The faintest whisper of Jehovah's will is law to him. Without doubt, that each man should be the husband of one wife was the ordination of God.

I. THE FIRSTBORN SON IS PLACED IN A POSITION OF SPECIAL PRIVILEGE AND POWER. All human government is built upon the model of the family. Within the compass of

the family the firstborn was a sovereign, had sovereign rule and responsibility. In families like Jacob's, where there were many children and dependents, *this* was a position of eminence and power. In every case, special duties devolve upon the firstborn. He has often to act as the representative of the family, and to defend family rights. He becomes the natural arbitrator in family disputes. His influence, for good or for evil, is great. Therefore, to sustain his position and power, a double portion of the ancestral estate was his.

II. THE PRIVILEGE OF THE FIRSTBORN IS INALIENABLE. For a time the firstborn son is sole heir to his father's rank and riches; hence, for reasons external to him, it would be unjust to depose him. And injustice always leads to strife, disorder, and mischief. Filial reverence would be undermined. Seeds of hatred would be sown. The removal of the father's authority by death would be the sign for feud, litigation, and waste. What God has ordained let not man disturb. Our earthly possessions are entrusted to us temporarily by God, and the entailment has been determined by the Divine Proprietor. For the just management of our secular estates and of our family concerns, we are accountable at the great assize. Favouritism among children is a prolific evil.

III. THIS PROSPECTIVE MISCHIEF ISSUES FROM A PLURALITY OF WIVES. God has often tolerated among men what he has not approved. He does this, in some respect, every day. If he had imposed capital punishment upon the violation of monogamy, the effect, in many cases, would have been unchastity. Law, in order to be effectual, can never transcend the highest level of moral sentiment prevalent in the age. Otherwise judges themselves would be culprits, and no one could be found to administer the law. But the family intrigues, quarrels, and miseries which spring from a plurality of wives are God's visible brands and scourges on disobedience. What works best for society, for the human race, is (in the absence of other instruction) the revealed will of God. Wherever there is more than one wife there must be divided affection, divided interests, divided authority. The house is divided against itself.—D.

Vers. 18—21.—*A slippery path to ruin.* It is of the first importance that a child should begin life well. A twist in the young stem will develop into a gnarled and crooked tree. A slight divergence at the outset of a voyage may end in a complete reversal of the ship's course. Early obedience is the pathway to a prosperous life; disobedience leads to death. The tongue that curseth its father shall be scorched with devouring flame.

I. SELFISH INDULGENCE DESTROYS FILIAL REVERENCE. The human body is to be the servant of the mind. If the appetites and lusts of the body are allowed to rule, the mind becomes a slave, and all the better principles are manacled and enfeebled. We begin life as dependent children, and the fresh sense of loving obligation should be an antidote for selfishness. But if we set out in life with a resolve to please self, we are already on the way to ruin. Reverence for the parental character, and regard for parental authority, are the only solid foundations for a noble life. To feed unduly the body, and for gratification alone, is to starve the soul. Sensuality fosters self-will.

II. REBELLION IN THE CHILD DESTROYS SONSHIP. Disregard of authority soon chokes and strangles filial feeling. The tie of sonship is snapped. The qualities and attributes of a son are wanting. There is a relationship of body, but no true relationship of soul. Alienation has sprung up instead of vital union. The lad may dwell under the old roof-tree, but in reality there is a great gulf between him and his parents: he is a descendant, but not a son. To be the children of God there must be resemblance of character.

III. UNFRUITFUL CHASTISEMENT IS A TREMENDOUS CURSE. The medicine that does not do good, does harm. The flame that does not melt, hardens. Parental chastisement, when needed, is an imperative duty, but should be administered with wisdom, self-restraint, and pity. The obstinacy of the son is not unfrequently due to the foolish leniency or unrestrained severity of the parent. Chastisement is a serious experiment, and always produces some effect, either favourable or unfavourable. We are not the same men after trial or pain that we were before.

IV. THE STATE MUST SUPPORT PARENTAL AUTHORITY. So valuable is human life that the State wisely claims the sole power of capital punishment. If the disciplines and chastisements of home have failed to produce a virtuous citizen, the whole com-

munity must deal with the incorrigible reprobate. The State cannot afford, for its safety's sake, to allow a firebrand to be let loose in its midst. The example and influence of such a miscreant would be fatally mischievous. The whole State has vital interests to serve, and it would be sheerest folly to sacrifice them to a drunken madman.

V. PERSISTENT REBELLION LEADS TO AN IGNOMINIOUS END. It must be a duty, the most painful for human nature to perform, to surrender a son to public execution. Yet it sometimes *is* a duty. The hope of amendment has been quenched. To continue such a one in life has become a bane to himself and to others. If all remedies have failed, destruction must ensue. All the men of the city shall put their hand to the deed. This may be done by personal service or by representation. The mad career of the culprit ends in pain, loss, and perpetual disgrace. It is a symbol of the great judgment doom.—D.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The doom of law the embodiment of Divine curse.* The suspension of a human body on the gallows-tree is the utmost climax of ruin and disgrace. It is the fullest exponent of the public detestation and horror for the deed. In this case the curse of men is the curse of God. But this curse was not to continue. Blessing was to be perpetual, abiding, uninterrupted; but the curse was to endure for a moment. The body so accursed was to be buried before sunset. Many reasons have been assigned for this.

I. BECAUSE VINDICTIVE ANGER SHOULD BE KEPT WITHIN DUE BOUNDS. Anger against monstrous crime is a great assistance in the performance of painful duty. We are braced to do under stress of anger what we could scarcely do in calmer moods of feeling. Anger has its use, but should not be prolonged. When the painful deed is done, vengeful passion should cease. To this end let the lifeless body be buried out of sight.

II. BECAUSE THE HUMAN FORM IS SACRED AS GOD'S TEMPLE. The temple may be in ruins, yet sentiments of veneration hover round the ruined shrines. We know that yonder executed man was the workmanship of the living God. Every vein, and artery, and muscle, and nerve in that mutilated body was the handiwork of God. With that man's history God had taken pains; and over his mistaken course God had grieved. We think of what that man might have been, how fruitful in goodness and virtue! how meet for Divine service and honour! And the spectacle of that man's doom should arouse our fear. We may well stand in awe of sin. To commit such a corpse with gentle pity to the grave will do us good.

III. BECAUSE MORAL DEFILEMENT WOULD OTHERWISE RESULT. The exposure of a dead body in that climate beyond a single day would taint the atmosphere and damage health. But to accustom the minds of men to such a ghastly spectacle would tend to moral defilement. It would serve to harden their better feelings, and make too familiar the exhibition of Jehovah's curse. In our present condition sacred things may become too common. Here especially "familiarity breeds contempt." No greater evil can befall the soul than when it becomes heedless of Divine judgments.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII.

REGULATIONS REGARDING CATTLE STRAYED OR THINGS LOST, THE APPAREL OF THE SEXES, THE TAKING OF BIRDS, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSES. CONFUSIONS TO BE AVOIDED. FRINGES TO BE MADE ON VESTMENTS. PUNISHMENT OF WIFE-SLANDER, ADULTERY, RAPE, FORNICATION, INCEST.

Vers. 1—4.—Moses repeats here the law formerly given (Exod. xxiii. 4, 5), with additional details. Not only the ox or the ass that had strayed was to be taken and restored to its owner, but articles of raiment, and, in short, anything that had been lost was, when found by another, to be carefully kept until it could be restored to the person to whom it belonged.

Ver. 1.—**Go astray**; wandering at large. The Hebrew verb means primarily to seduce, draw aside, or entice (cf. ch. xiii. 6); and in

the passive conveys the idea of wandering through being drawn away by some enticement. **Hide thyself from them**; *i.e.* withdraw thyself from them, avoid noticing them or having to do with them. **In any case**; certainly, without fail.

Ver. 4.—An animal that had fallen was also to be lifted up, and the owner was to be assisted to do this. In Exodus, it is specially declared that both these services are to be rendered, even though the parties are at enmity with each other, and the one is the object of hatred to the other.

Ver. 5.—The divinely instituted distinction between the sexes was to be sacredly observed, and, in order to this, the dress and other things appropriate to the one were not to be used by the other. **That which pertaineth unto a man**; literally, *the apparatus* (כְּלִי) *of a man*, including, not dress merely, but implements, tools, weapons, and utensils. This is an ethical regulation in the interests of morality. There is no reference, as some have supposed, to the wearing of masks for the purpose of disguise, or to the practice of the priests at heathen festivals of wearing masks of their gods. Whatever tends to obliterate the distinction between the sexes tends to licentiousness; and that the one sex should assume the dress of the other has always been regarded as unnatural and indecent (comp. Seneca, 'Epist.,' 122, "Nonne videntur contra naturam vivere qui commutant cum feminis vestem;" and Juvenal, 'Sat.,' vi. 252—

"Quem præstare potest mulier galeata pudorem
Quæ fugit a sexu?")

Such a change of vesture is here declared to be an abomination to the Lord, because of its tendency to immorality.

Vers. 6, 7.—(Cf. Lev. xxii. 28; Exod. xxiii. 19.) These precepts are designed to foster humane feeling towards the lower animals, and not less to preserve regard to that affectionate relation between parents and their young which God has established as a law in the animal world. **That thou mayest prolong thy days** (cf. ch. v. 16; Exod. xx. 12).

Ver. 8.—Still less was human life to be exposed to danger through neglect of proper precautions. The houses in Palestine, as in other parts of the East, had flat roofs, and, as these were much frequented by the inhabitants for various purposes (cf. Josh. ii. 6; 2 Sam. xi. 2; xviii. 24; Neh. viii. 16; Matt. x. 27; Acts x. 9), it was necessary that a battlement or balustrade should surround the roof, in order to prevent persons falling over. Hence the direction here given.

Vers. 9—11.—(Cf. Lev. xix. 19.) God has made distinctions in nature, and these are not to be confounded by the mixing of things distinct. The ox and the ass were chiefly used in husbandry; but, as they were of different size and strength, it was not only fitting that they should not be yoked to the same plough, but it might be cruel so to yoke them.

Ver. 11.—**A garment of divers sorts**; *sha'atnez*, a kind of cloth in which threads of linen and threads of woollen were interwoven. The meaning of the word is uncertain. The LXX. render by κίβδηλος, "spurious, bad;" Aquila, by ἀντιδιακείμενον, "variously disposed, diverse." No Semitic etymology can be found for the word, and as the Hebrews derived the textile art from Egypt, the home of that art, the word is probably of Egyptian origin.

Ver. 12.—(Cf. Numb. xv. 38.) **Fringes**; properly, *tassels*. The tunic of the Hebrews appears to have been divided at the bottom in front, and back, so that four corners or wings (כְּנָפוֹת) were made, to each of which a tassel was appended (Greek, κράσπεδον, Matt. ix. 20; xxiii. 5, etc.).

Vers. 13—29.—The laws in this section have the design of fostering purity and fidelity in the relation of the sexes, and also of protecting the female against the malice of sated lust and the violence of brutal lust. (For the case supposed in ver. 13, cf. 2 Sam. xiii. 15. On the whole section see Michaelis, 'Laws of Moses,' pt. ii. § 92; Niebuhr, 'Description de l'Arabie,' ch. viii.; Burckhardt, 'Bedwins,' p. 214.)

Vers. 22—29.—Four cases are here distinguished. 1. That of a married woman who has been unfaithful; in this case both the woman and her paramour are, when detected, to be put to death (ver. 22). 2. That of a virgin betrothed who is assailed in a town, where she might have cried for protection, but did not; in this case also both were to be punished with death as adulterers (vers. 23, 24). 3. That of a virgin betrothed who has been forcibly violated in the field, where, if she cried for help, her cry was in vain; in this case only the man should be liable to be put to death, whilst the woman was to be held innocent (vers. 25—27). 4. That of a virgin not betrothed with whom a man has had carnal intercourse; in this case the man should be required to pay a fine of fifty shekels of silver to the damsel's father, and to take her to be his wife, from whom he could not be separated during life (vers. 28, 29).

Ver. 30.—To these is appended a general prohibition of incestuous connections, the first provision in the earlier law being cited as a sort of index to the whole (**Lev. xviii. 7, etc.**).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The duty of cultivating neighbourly kindness.* It will be a valuable study in Divine ethics if we first of all show what it is which is here required of the Hebrews, and then, with the Mosaic teaching for a starting-point, advance further and see how far in Christian ethics there is incorporated all that was valuable in the Mosaic, while there is added thereto that which belongs peculiarly to the law of the gospel.

Moses, in this paragraph, enjoins acts of neighbourly kindness. To whom is this kindness to be shown? To "thy brother." He may be (1) a brother by kinship, (2) an unknown individual (ver. 2), or (3) an enemy (cf. Exod. xxiii. 4). In either case a like kindness is to be shown. There is contained in Lev. xix. 18 the general precept out of which these details of kindness would come. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This was to be the human aspect, the social side of a godly life. The basis of love to man would be found in loving God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. And as God had redeemed the people from Egypt, that they might be to himself a peculiar people to show forth his praise, they were to regard this redemption as uniting them in one bond of brotherhood, with interests and aims in common; hence each was to regard another's good as being as dear to him as his own. From this point let us now proceed to develop in outline the Christian law of kindness to others.

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ENFORCES THE LAW OF KINDNESS ON HIS OWN AUTHORITY. (Cf. Matt. v. 43.) He not only reproduces the old law, but clears it from the ambiguities and disfigurements with which rabbinical teaching had obscured it. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." Moses had said the first, the rabbis had added the second. Christ tears off this addition. Again, when the lawyer said, "And who is my neighbour?" Christ gave him the parable of the good Samaritan, in which he virtually said, "That depends upon yourself; whoever cherishes a kindly spirit to all, he is the neighbour, however far off in place or nation." The Christian law is, "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men." We are to know no barriers in race, colour, or clime; no, nor is even hatred or ill will on the part of others to prevent our seeking their good.

II. THIS KINDNESS TO OTHERS IS NOT THE WHOLE OF RELIGION, BUT ONLY THAT PART OF IT WHICH HAS TO DO WITH MAN. Love to God is the first command. This is the second. Benevolence without religion is incomplete; religion without benevolence is vain. Both must abound in the truly Christian life.

III. THE REASON OF BOTH IS TO BE FOUND IN THE DIVINE LOVING-KINDNESS TO US. See Matt. vii. 12: note the force of the word, "therefore," in the latter verse. Because God is so ready to bless you, be you ready to bless others. This great redeeming love of God for our race should lead us to see in all men members of one vast brotherhood, which God would encircle in his girdle of love, and draw together by the thought that, as he cares for all, each should care for the other! "Let no man seek his own, but every one another's wealth" (1 Cor. x. 24).

IV. THE INSPIRATION TO BOTH IS TO BE FOUND IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Here, here are we to find the love that must kindle ours. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." If we owe so much to redeeming love, ought we not to show a corresponding love for others? What said Paul? "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God; if we be sober, it is for your cause, for the love of Christ constraineth us." "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Vers. 5, 13—21, 22—24, 25—27, 27—29, 30.—*Divine care for sexual honour.* In these, as in so many of the precepts of this book, we find civil precepts invested with religious sanctions. Nothing is more important for the honourable maintenance of social life, than that both men and women should honour each other's sex as well as their own. Those that do otherwise are an abomination to the Lord their God. There are five or six different cases supposed in the verses referred to at the heading of this

Homily: (1) clothing (ver. 5); (2) impeached or impaired reputation (vers. 13—21); (3) adultery (vers. 22—24); (4) rape or seduction (vers. 25—29)—two cases; (5) unlawful marriages (ver. 30). Such sins would have been thought nothing of among the Canaanites. God would have his people lifted up above them. Hence it is needful that they should be specifically named, and that the people should be solemnly told of the odiousness of these sins in God's sight, that thus they might become odious also in their eyes. While all will feel that such subjects need great wisdom in handling them, yet undue reticence thereon may work direful harm. Many need to be told with great plainness of speech, "He that breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him." Our theme is—"*Sexual dishonour odious in the sight of God.*" The following lines of thought suggest themselves.

I. God has made our nature, in every part thereof, for himself.

II. In making man, male and female, God has opened up to each wondrous possibilities of love, of holiness, of usefulness, by each rendering to the other due honour in accordance with Divine Law.

III. By as much as the joy and culture are great when God's sexual laws are obeyed, by so much are the misery and debasement great when they are disobeyed.

IV. He who trifles with himself or with others in regard to the holiest of all human relations, will find that sins of impurity nip his nature in the bud, embitter life beyond all power of expression, and render true greatness altogether impossible. One sin will drag the whole man after it. Hence our Lord's solemn warnings in Matt. v. 29, 30; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47. Hence—

V. We should look upon God's order in nature with devout and reverent regard.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Kindness to animals a religious duty.* There is a most valuable note in Dr. Jameson's 'Commentary' on this passage. "The Hebrews," says Trapp, "reckoned this commandment the least of all in the Mosaic Law, yet is there such a promise attached thereto." "This law," says another annotator, "teaches a spirit of mercy; it would also tend to prevent the extirpation of any species of birds which in a country producing many snakes and insects might cause serious injury." And, on the other hand, the permission here given might also tend to prevent too rapid increase. And manifestly, here is a check put on the destructive and plundering tendencies of man, and a quiet lesson taught them that they are to regard as sacred the affectionate relation between parents and their young, which God has established in the animal world. It is not a little remarkable that we find a like promise attached to this precept as to the fifth commandment. How is this? May not the reason be thus stated? It is a duty to cultivate kindness of disposition in all respects and towards all beings. The cultivation of uniform kindliness, whether to man or beast, will have a marked effect in the elevation of personal character, and in sweetening the surroundings of life. And he who out of pure love and obedience to God shows mercy everywhere, will be himself a partaker of mercy. The following may serve as starting-points of thought. 1. The lower creatures are put at the service of man. He is permitted to have service from them and enjoyment in them. 2. This enjoyment and service which man desires in and from them are to be had only in harmony with due regard to them as the creatures of God. 3. The cultivation of kindness to all creatures is, therefore, a religious duty. And the duty of so cultivating it is not only a part of the morality of the Law, but a part of the morality of that gospel which is for every creature. 4. Where such benevolence is universally cultivated, the seal and sign of God's approval thereof will be enjoyed.

[Note the command in ver. 10, "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." This prohibition prevented great inhumanity (see Jameson, *in loc.*). See also marginal reference for another possible intent thereof.]

Ver. 8.—*Risks to human life to be minimized.* It is well known that "the roofs of the Israelitish houses were flat, as they mostly are in the East;" the inhabitants often walked upon them. Hence it is easy to see that a danger might exist of one falling off a house, if there were no battlement, parapet, or guard of some kind around it. And against this Moses is taught of God to warn the people. In the structure of their habitations the safety of the indwellers is to be rigidly consulted; and any trifling with human life, by the erection of insecure buildings, would expose the builder to blood-guiltiness in the eye of God.

I. There is in the social world a mutual interdependence of man upon man. "We are members one of another."

II. This fact renders it possible for each man in his own department greatly to help or seriously to injure others. In no sphere is this more manifest than in house-building; in attention to the details, the health and comfort of multitudes are concerned.

III. God charges upon each one a due regard to the well-being of others, in distinction from a selfish absorption in his own imaginary interests.

IV. Wherever, through neglect in his own department, of another's good, the health, comfort, or life of men are threatened or injured, God holds the man accountable for any mischief which may accrue. Other men may or may not be able to bring the sin home to the defaulter. But "God shall bring *every* work into judgment; with ***every*** secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Vers. 9, 11.—*Evil associations to be avoided.* "The essence of the crime (Zeph. i. 8) consisted, not in wearing a woollen and linen robe, but in having it in a particular form according to a favourite superstition of ancient idolatries" (Lev. xix. 19). So also as to sowing with divers seeds; it was a superstitious custom of the idolaters, and hence it is to be avoided. Note: *Evil associations* may *make* it wrong to follow or observe that which is *in itself* harmless. With the principle which underlies this passage thus stated, compare 1 Cor. x. 23 to end.

I. God, having called his people out of the world, would have them distinct from the world.

II. In carrying out this distinction in practice, Christians are bound to regard the *influence* which their practice will have upon others, as well as the practice itself.

III. It is quite possible that (as in the case of eating meats offered to idols) there may be rites, customs, habits, in which this or that Christian could indulge without injury to himself, and yet which, owing to the force of public sentiment and opinion, would tell prejudicially upon him, and lower his influence for good.

IV. When such is the case, he is to take the higher ground, not shrinking from being deemed puritanic—and to abstain not only from that which is wrong in itself, but from much which, owing to evil associations, has about it a suspicious look of worldliness and self-indulgence.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Love unfeigned.* The precepts in these verses fairly anticipate the gospel love of one's neighbour, and even its inculcation of love to enemies (cf. Exod. xxiii. 4, 5). Whatever authority the scribes in Christ's time imagined themselves to have for their saying, "Thou shalt hate thine enemy" (Matt. v. 43), they did not find it in the Law. Even towards the heathen—save in the sense in which each nation desires the destruction of its enemies in war—they were not taught to cherish feelings of bitterness and hostility. Ch. xxiii. 6 forbids seeking the welfare of Moab and Ammon, but this does not amount to hatred of these peoples (cf. ch. ii. 9, 19), while the command to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (ch. xxv. 19) is, like the command to exterminate the Canaanites, grounded in special circumstances, and is to be regarded as exceptional. Those who express horror of the sanguinary spirit of the Mosaic code should study the precepts before us, and reflect how far the race is from having yet risen to the height of them. They forbid—

I. SECRET REJOICING IN ANOTHER'S MISFORTUNE. Such rejoicing may have its source in: 1. *Enmity.* The statute in Exodus particularly specifies the ox and ass of an "enemy" (Exod. xxiii. 4). The enemy is further defined, not as one whom we hate, but as one who hates us (ver. 5). Yet if his ox, or sheep, or ass is seen going astray, we are not to hide ourselves or forbear help, but are to bring it back to him. So with all his lost property—we are to take it home and keep it for him. Or, if his ass fall under a burden, we are to help him to lift it up. How natural the disposition to act otherwise! No one knows that we have seen the stray beast. We may reason that we are not bound to interfere. A secret joy, even, may steal into our minds at the thought of an enemy's misfortune. The Law taught the Israelite to think and act

very differently. It gave him the lesson of forgiving injuries, of loving enemies, of returning good for evil. 2. *Envy.* The precept in this passage speaks merely of a "brother." Through envy or some other wicked feeling, even where there is no enmity, we may be tempted to rejoice in the lessening of another's prosperity. But neither is this hateful principle to be allowed to sway us. 3. *Malice.* This is the disposition which delights in what injures another for its own sake. So diabolical a state of feeling might be deemed impossible did not experience of the world afford too many proofs of its existence. There are unquestionably malicious and spiteful natures who, irrespective of any personal interest in the matter, derive an absolute gratification from seeing misfortune overtake those around them. The faintest beginning of such a spirit ought surely to be most jealously guarded against.

II. SECRET RETENTION OF ANOTHER'S PROPERTY. What is found is not to be appropriated or concealed. If the owner is unknown, the beast or lost article is to be taken home, and kept till he can be discovered. Though he is an enemy, his goods are to be faithfully restored to him. This, again, is a form of virtue which only strength of moral principle will enable one always to practise.—J. O.

Ver. 5.—*Man and woman.* Woman has her rightful place and function in society. So has man his. Their places, while complementary, are distinct. In modern society, a variety of influences—competition in business, difficulty of finding suitable employment, the levelling tendency of the age, which is impatient even of distinctions that have their ground in nature—combine to thrust women into spheres and work not in keeping with womanly character. The distinction of the sexes is to be preserved: 1. In *dress.* 2. In *manners.* Unwomanly boldness and assertiveness in company or before the public is as unpleasant as foppish effeminacy is in men. 3. In *occupations.* Few would like to see women jostling men in the Exchange, pleading at the bar, or sitting in parliament. The feeling is not one of mere sentiment, but rests on inherent differences in the calling of the sexes. It deserves to be considered whether the line is not unduly crossed as it is in many forms of female occupation. It is certainly so crossed in some: barmaids; occupations involving an excessive tax on the female strength; manufactory work, where the system allows of the mingling of the sexes under conditions certain to demoralize, etc. (see Lecture on 'Sex in Industry,' by Joseph Cook—'Monday Lectures').—J. O.

Vers. 6—12.—*The minutiæ of conduct.* The Law descends to very slight points of conduct. It keeps in view that character is made up of the result of our actions in the million trivial details of life. "Trifles," said Michael Angelo, when a friend thus characterized the slight finishing touches he was giving to a statue—"trifles make perfection." Matters which in themselves are of little moment acquire importance from the associations they awaken, the ideas they suggest, the consequences they lead up to. Little traits of humane behaviour (vers. 6, 7), the habit of considering the bearings of what we do on others (ver. 8), respect for the ordinary and obvious distinctions of creation (ver. 9), etc., have all their influence on character, their effect in making us what we ultimately become. We may suggest, as lessons from these verses, that our conduct is to be marked: 1. By *humanity.* (1) To animals. (2) To our fellow-men. In vers. 6, 7, the act forbidden is one akin to killing a cow and calf on the same day, or to seething a kid in its mother's milk (cf. on ch. xiv. 21)—an unfeeling violation of the sacredness of the relation between parent and offspring. Or the parent bird may be presumed to be taken only in wantonness, the young ones being really of service. This would be an act of cruelty. Humanity may be a motive in the precept of ver. 10—"ox" and "ass" being obviously "unequally yoked together" (cf. Paul's allusion with application to marriage with unbelievers, in 2 Cor. vi. 14). 2. By *caution.* This is strikingly inculcated in ver. 8. How many accidents might be avoided if greater conscientiousness and caution prevailed in the different departments of labour! A shipbuilder puts in the side of a ship one wormy plank, and years after this costs the whole ship's crew their lives. 3. By *simplicity.* This is a lesson which may be learned from the precepts against mixing kinds (vers. 9, 11). 4. By *mindfulness.* The law of fringes in Numb. xv. 38—if this refers to the same thing—was intended to aid memory In another view of the precept, it inculcates decency and propriety.—J. O.

Vers. 13—30.—*Chastity.* The Mosaic Law is strict and stern in its requirement of purity in all that pertains to the marriage relation. Its strictness, however, is united with a fine sense of justice, and its shield is, as usual, extended for the protection of the innocent.

I. THE DEFAMED WIFE. (Vers. 13—19.) No act can be conceived more cruel or dastardly than that of a man who groundlessly assails his wife's character, accusing her of ante-nuptial unchastity. As the matter was one proof of which was not directly possible, and the man's word was all that could be adduced on his side, the Law threw the onus of clearing herself upon the woman through her parents, and indicated the mode of doing so. The "forty stripes save one" was a punishment not too heavy for this sort of false accusation.

II. THE UNCHASTE WIFE. (Vers. 20—24.) Three cases are distinguished, each punishable with death. 1. A woman found to be unchaste at time of marriage (vers. 20, 21). 2. Adultery after marriage (ver. 22). 3. A betrothed woman ravished with her implied consent (vers. 23, 24). In the last two cases, the partner in guilt dies also. In the first, he only escapes, because he is unknown. Yet that unknown seducer, the cause of the woman's fall—a fall which shame subsequently tempted her to conceal—was not lost to the eye of him who sees secret crime, and will repay it. Little do such seducers think of the life-long shame and sin and misery to which they may be dooming the unfortunate victims of their wiles. God knows it, and will bring them to account. The severe penalties attached to conjugal unfaithfulness place in a startling light the gravity of the offence in the Divine esteem, and form a striking contrast to the light tone adopted about such matters in society.

III. THE WOMAN RAVISHED. (Vers. 25—29.) The cases specified are those of rape. 1. If the woman was betrothed, and could not save herself, she was to be held innocent, but her violator was to be punished with death. 2. If she was not betrothed, the man who had injured her was heavily fined, and was compelled to take her to wife, with no right of subsequent divorce. Possibly our own law might fitly imitate that of ver. 29.—J. O.

Vers. 1—4.—*Consideration for man and beast.* We have here such express directions given as should have made of the Israelites a most neighbourly people. The finding of lost oxen, or sheep, or asses, or raiment, is here made to carry with it the obligation of brotherly kindness; the animals or lost property must be restored to the owner, if he be known, or kept until he makes himself known. It is the law of love in practice.

I. THERE IS A NATURAL INCLINATION TO SHIRK ALL POSSIBLE TROUBLE. There is a drop of laziness in all of us, and, if indulged, it will lead to many an unbrotherly act. In the case supposed there is no witness present; the lost property is unexpectedly found; how much trouble it will save to pass on and leave it to its chances in the hands of others! And so we are tempted to array ourselves in the cloak of selfishness, and to spare ourselves all possible trouble.

II. THE CASUAL DISCOVERIES OF DAILY LIFE CONSTITUTE DUTIES LAID BY THE OMNISCIENT ONE TO OUR HANDS. There is no such thing as chance so far as God is concerned. Much has the *appearance* of chance to us, but, when reconsidered, it is the all-wise arrangement of God. "For what is this chance?" says a very able writer. "It either has a real existence or not. If it has no existence, then when you say that a lot is determined by chance, you say that it is determined by nothing; that is, you say, Here is a sensible effect produced by no cause at all. This is pure nonsense. If your chance is a real being, what sort of being? Either it has life, intelligence, and power, or not. If not, then you say that millions of effects (for there are millions of lots in the world) are produced by a cause which has neither power, nor intelligence, nor life; that is, you say that millions of actions are performed by an agency which is essentially incapable of any action whatever. And this is as pure absurdity as the former. If you say that your chance is a living, intelligent, and active being, I ask who it is? and how you get your knowledge of it? You certainly imagine it to possess omnipresence and omnipotence; for you suppose it capable of producing, at the same moment, millions of effects in millions of places; and thus you have found out a being that displays perfections of God, and yet is not God. This conclusion is as blasphemous

as the others are insane. There is no retreat. Survey the subject in any possible light, and you are driven to this issue, that the lot is, by the very nature of the case, a direct appeal to the living God, as Governor of the world" (Dr. J. M. Mason's 'Considerations on Lots'). Hence discoveries, however casual, which throw us into new relations to persons, animals, or things, should be accepted as Divine duties laid to our hands. God's call is in them to be faithful and brotherly.

III. THE SHIRKING OF RESPONSIBILITY AND TROUBLE IS REALLY REBELLING AGAINST AN ORDINANCE OF GOD. If we have found the missing property, we have really been sent of God to be its stewards. To hide ourselves in our self-care is to rebel against his ordinance, and do despite to his gracious arrangements. It is to make self-pleasing the rule of life, instead of the pleasing of God. And as a rule it will be found that the person who thus caudles himself and passes on trouble to others becomes heir of unexpected vexations himself.

IV. A THOROUGHLY OBLIGING AND HELPFUL SPIRIT HAS A WORLD OF COMPENSATION IN THE APPROVAL OF HIS OWN CONSCIENCE, IF NOT IN THE GRATITUDE OF MANKIND. Benevolence is its own reward. The kindness lavished on man and beast carries its own compensation with it. The sense of being brought to the opportunity of brotherly kindness by a gracious God, and of being his servant in showing his spirit, is surely worth all the trouble our kindness costs. So that, even supposing the recipients of our kindness were ungrateful, the kindness would still be well worth doing for its own sake.

But then gratitude is not so rare a thing as people would suppose. It is entertained often when not very eloquently expressed. It is sometimes too deep for utterance. And to think that we have become creditors of our fellows, so as to deserve their gratitude, is satisfaction indeed.

> "For merit lives from man to man,
> And not from man, O Lord, to thee."

If we have any wisdom, therefore, we shall gladly cultivate the brotherly kindness here inculcated, for life becomes by it more blessed and more noble.—R. M. E.

Ver. 5.—*The philosophy of clothes.* We have here particular directions as to the maintenance of the distinction of dress between the sexes. On the termination of what Carlyle calls "Adamitism," in his 'Sartor Resartus,' when through the fall of man fig leaves were first resorted to, it is evident that the Lord was not content therewith as the device of self-conscious modesty, but gave them "coats of skins." These "coats," we can well believe, were differentiated, so that Eve's was in some particulars distinct from Adam's. This distinction in dress between the sexes, begun, let us suppose, immediately after the Fall, is designed by God to continue; and we have here the law prohibiting any exchanges of apparel, so as to conceal one's sex. It is, in fact, an earlier "philosophy of clothes" than Carlyle has given us.

I. THE PROMISCUOUS INTERMINGLING OF THE SEXES IS MOST UNDESIRABLE. Of course, this is quite another thing from the entire separation of the sexes as it prevails among Orientals. The latter custom proceeds on the supposition that there can be no social intercourse between them except licentious intercourse; and is the poor precaution of deep depravity. But suppose that men and women were wont to dress alike, there could be no enforcement of decorum such as difference in dress renders possible. The sexes are intended to be distinct, and cannot profitably be intermingled.

II. IT IS A DEEP INJURY TO BOTH SEXES TO OBLITERATE THE DISTINCTIONS PROVIDENCE HAS MADE. Whatever tends to render the male sex effeminate and the female sex masculine, is an injury to both. The tendency of the times is in this direction; women are being introduced to fierce competitions with men: we have had women, forgetful of their sex, even entering the prize-ring, to afford amusement to brutal onlookers; we have women persistently knocking at the door of professions fit for men only; while, on the other hand, we have a number of occupations, which will readily occur to every one, where men are made effeminate, and which could be most fitly discharged by women; and those reformers are not friends of either sex who try to break down the barriers between them.

If Providence has made the one sex different from the other, then it is idle by any manipulation of ours to obliterate the distinction.

III. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS A DEEP WRONG TO EXAGGERATE THE DEFECTS WHICH PROVIDENCE HAS ALLOTTED TO EACH BY ENLIGHTENED SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION. We thoroughly sympathize with the effort to do away with the exaggerated "subjection of women," upon which Mr. Mill in his book has so ably insisted. The education of each sex should be as broad and liberal as possible. But no education can ever remove the inequality which naturally obtains between the sexes.[1] Let education consider the providential purpose of sexual distinctions, and work on these lines, and then, and then only, need we expect permanent amelioration for oppressed sisters.

IV. MODESTY IS ONE OF THOSE SOCIAL GRACES WHICH SHOULD BE FOSTERED AND NOT RESTRAINED. We have heard of men whose command of their emotions was so perfect as never to allow their modesty to appear by any chance. It may be harmless or ludicrous in men; but it is ruin to women, and whatever tends to make them "Amazons" or "Trojans" is to be reprobated most earnestly.

V. IT TAKES THE TWO SEXES COMBINED TO GIVE A COMPLETE IMAGE OF THE DIVINE NATURE. When God said, "Let us make man (אָדָם) in our image, after our likeness," he used the generic term, and hence immediately resorts to the plural verb, "and let them have dominion (וְיִרְדּוּ)," etc. (Gen. i. 26). The idea is that it takes the female with the male to complete the Divine image. There is a *maternal* element as well as a *paternal* and a *filial* in the Divine nature (cf. Isa. xlix. 15 with Ps. ciii. 13 and John viii. 29). And it is interesting to notice among the theological vagaries and conceits of such a man as Theodore Parker, that he was forced to call his God, "Infinite Father and Infinite Mother," a set-off to his dreary unitarianism.[2] If then we find the sexual distinctions to be but the reflection of elements in the Divine nature, then a halo of true glory is thrown around each. In their respective spheres the sexes are exhibiting traits of divinity, and all effort at obliterating the distinctions through artificial means, will be found only to obliterate the Divine. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have their counterparts in the development of humanity, and it is well clearly to see this. May the sexes carry on their respective missions so faithfully that earth may soon reflect in undimmed lustre the various qualities of God!—R. M. E.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Birds' nests.* The command to spare the mother bird while the young might be taken, comes in significantly after the law distinguishing the sexes. The female sex is intended for motherhood; it "binds the generations each to each," as our Laureate says. On the exercise of this function the continuance of the species depends. Hence the command here is at once humane and intended to ensure the continuance of the species. Birds are very needful to keep down grubs and insects, and give the land a chance of due fertility. Hence the sportsman's enthusiasm was thus kept in proper check.

I. WHILE GOD GIVES THE ANIMALS TO MAN FOR FOOD, HE WOULD HAVE THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE THOUGHTFULLY MADE. There must be thought and deliberation about the selection of the young birds, about the pouring out of the blood, etc. All this introduced a humane element into the act.

II. THE FREEDOM OF THE DAM WAS ENSURED BY THE SACRIFICE OF THE YOUNG—A PERPETUAL LESSON ABOUT SUBSTITUTION AND SACRIFICE. As the mother received liberty, the Jewish sportsman would be led to think of the law of substitution and of sacrifice upon which all his religious hopes were built.

III. MOTHERHOOD WAS THUS RENDERED SACRED IN THE EYES OF THE JEWS. The idea, sacred in the woods among the wild birds, would become sacred elsewhere. "The mothers in Israel," instead of being sacrificed *to* their children, would be honoured *by* them, which is the Divine order. The young generation should bear the burden rather than the old. To such a line of thought the law about birds' nests would naturally give rise.—R. M. E.

[1] Cf. Huxley's article on 'Emancipation, Black and White,' in his 'Lay Sermons,' pp. 23—30.

[2] Cf. Frothingham's 'Life of Theodore Parker,' pp. 283, 529.

Vers. 8—12.—*Linsey-woolseys.* The different directions here given may be reduced to one idea, that of *genuineness.* The houses were to be substantial edifices, not endangering the lives of others by defective buildings or deficient battlements. The vineyards were to be sown with pure seed, that the plants might have a fair chance of growing luxuriantly. The ploughing was not to be done by an ox and ass together, for though the oxen are so small in Palestine as to be yokable with an ass, the contrariety in temper and inequality in power would prevent good work. Linsey-woolsey was to be avoided as poor stuff compared with either woollen or linen alone. And finally, the fringes were to be made upon their garments, to be at once a finishing and a distinction in the clothes of the chosen people. God gave them thus a *uniform.* The great idea here, consequently, is that God's people should be distinguished by the *genuineness* and honesty of their life-work.

Carlyle's preaching against *shams* is here forestalled, and we may surely learn from the directions here such lessons as these—

I. TO BE THOROUGH IN ALL OUR WORK. This is God's great lesson for us in his own government of the world. The beauty of the flower of the grass, which is to perish and be cast into the oven so soon, tells us to be microscopically minute and thorough in the most transient work. There are no short cuts through "shoddy" to real worth and real usefulness; but all should be genuine if we would serve our generation by the will of God.

II. LET US NOT BE ASHAMED TO BE CALLED GOD'S PEOPLE AMID LIFE'S HARD WORK. The Israelites were to wear their fringes, to go in uniform, and be *pious peasants.* The linking of genuine work with professed piety is altogether admirable. "Sublimer," says Carlyle, "in this world know I nothing than a peasant saint, could such now anywhere be met with. Such a one will take thee back to Nazareth itself: thou wilt see the splendour of heaven spring forth from the humblest depths of earth, like a light shining in great darkness."[1] What we need is genuine piety to secure conscientious work. We shall not have better work till we have better men. Saintly workmen would discover for us the way back to Eden.

III. LET US FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF THE PEASANT OF NAZARETH. For our Lord became poor, and wrought as an artisan, and lived with the common people, to make a life of labour for ever glorious. Nowhere do pride and vanity receive such reproof as in the life of him who wrought so nobly in Nazareth. And when he exchanged the carpenter's bench for the work of the ministry, it was only to work harder than before. "He went about doing good." "He had no leisure so much as to eat." So busy was he that he had frequently to steal from sleep the time for prayer. In his example we have the ideal of genuine, hearty labour, and so far as we follow him shall we be safe and happy.—R. M. E.

Vers. 13—30.—*Expedients to secure purity.* We have here various wise expedients to control the licentiousness of the people, and secure, so far as possible, social purity.

I. DEFAMATION OF CHARACTER WAS SEVERELY PUNISHED. A husband could not, with impunity, defame a newly married wife; for should there be proof forthcoming that his charge was false, he was to be publicly chastised, to pay a fine of one hundred shekels of silver to his father-in-law, whose good name and peace he had threatened, and to be bound to his wife all his days.

II. WHOREDOM WAS MADE A CAPITAL CRIME. If the charge made against his wife prove true, then she is to be stoned to death for her sin. Immorality was really treason towards the Divine King, it was incompatible with his kingdom, and so was put into the category of capital crimes. The *morale* of the theocracy was really higher in idea than that of any other kingdom then or now existing.

III. ADULTERY WAS ALSO A CRIME FOR WHICH BOTH OFFENDERS MUST SUFFER DEATH. Here the two parties are criminals against the theocracy, and such a flagrant crime cannot be tolerated within it. The morality is severe and wholesome.

IV. ADULTERY COMMITTED WITH A BETROTHED DAMSEL IS TREATED JUST AS ADULTERY WITH A MARRIED WOMAN, FOR SHE IS AS GOOD AS MARRIED. Both parties

[1] 'Sartor Resartus,' Library Edition, p. 221. These words were written, it is now believed, with the ideal of his father before him.

in this case also must pay the penalty of death. Such severe measures were the wisest expedients in the end.

V. IN CASE OF ADVANTAGE BEING TAKEN OF A BETROTHED DAMSEL, THE RUFFIAN IS TO PAY THE PENALTY OF DEATH. If the taking away of life is justly punished with death, so should the murder of virtue. As a rule, our laws are too lenient towards ruffians that ruin women. Were a few of them sent to the gallows it would be no more than they deserve.

VI. IN CASE OF A VIRGIN THAT IS NOT BETROTHED, THE MAN WHO TAKES ADVANTAGE OF HER IS COMPELLED TO MARRY HER, AND TO PAY TO HER FATHER A SUBSTANTIAL FINE. The case thus dealt with is different from the preceding. It proceeds upon inquiry. The man is not carried by his passion into an act of great wrong towards one whom he can never hope to have as his wife, which was the last case; but he takes the case into his own hand, where no previous betrothal bars the way. He can make reparation, and he is compelled to do so. Again we say that our laws would be greatly improved if a spice of the severity of the Jewish law went to make the cowardly ruffians who disgrace society suffer more severely for their deeds.

VII. INCEST WAS FORBIDDEN. There is no mincing of matters, since all these abominations abounded among the Canaanites, and must be checked in Israel.

VIII. PURITY IS THUS SEEN TO BE GOD'S AIM. "Be ye holy; for I am holy," is God's direction. We must be as "chaste virgins" presented unto Christ. The social purity of Israel was only to reflect their spiritual purity as towards God. Our own lesson in these regulations is clear. We must not even in the slightest thought prove unfaithful to our Saviour and Lord. He is the Husband of the Church, and requires a faithful wife.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—4.—*Brotherly service in daily life.* In a healthy state, our souls should so overflow with love, that every neighbour should be regarded as a brother. If the esteem should not at first be reciprocated, our kindness would soften his asperity and make him a better man. In the long run, kindness will produce kindness.

I. PROPERTY HAS ITS CARES AS WELL AS ITS ADVANTAGES. Our earthly possessions have many drawbacks, and are always subject to injury and loss. Hence it is wisdom to hold them lightly, and to grieve little over their diminution. This insecurity is an indication of their inferiority. But the possessions of the soul, viz. wisdom, righteousness, faith, love, patience, are inalienable. The "things unseen are eternal."

II. EARTHLY LIFE IS A FINE FIELD FOR KINDLY SERVICE. The ills and trials which are incident to the present life provide full scope for active sympathy and help. We can scarcely imagine a condition of life in which could be afforded such room for the culture and discipline of the best affections. Every station in life gives opportunity for doing service to others. Every day we hear some new call to duty. We thus train ourselves for higher service. We become more qualified to do good on a large scale, are qualified to rule.

III. NEGLECT TO SHOW KINDNESS IS A SIN. 1. It is sin, inasmuch as it is a plain violation of God's command. As Creator and King, he has a right to make law and to enforce it. 2. It is sin, inasmuch as it is disloyalty to our best feelings. The instinct to show kindness is a part of our constitutional nature. 3. It is sin, inasmuch as it consciously allows injury to be done. The ox or ass that has wandered to-day, will have wandered further (if not recovered) to-morrow; may be irrecoverable then. The gold that is not occupied rusts. To hide our light under a bushel is sin.

IV. GENEROUS KINDNESS IS MORE REMUNERATIVE THAN SELFISHNESS. Generous and self-forgetful kindness brings returns of blessing to the soul. The treasury of the heart is enriched. We gain wealth that is imperishable. We obtain a good name among men, and live in their affectionate memory. We secure, in some measure, the favour of our God. We are in truth, by kindly service, laying up large store of good for coming days. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive."—D.

Ver. 5.—*Against deceptions in dress.* Truthfulness in act is as needful as truthfulness in speech. Our very dress is a manifesto of truth or of falsehood. God has

stamped a visible distinction in the appearance of the human sexes, and it is fraudulent to obliterate them.

I. SIN OFTEN ROBES ITSELF IN A FOREIGN GARB. If sin always appeared in her true habits, but few would court her society. It is her plan to put on a false appearance. Vice usually succeeds because she wears the semblance of virtue. It is the policy of the devil to hide the real nature of sin. Her native blackness would alarm many, if it were seen. The felon flatters himself that it is all fair game. Murder is palliated as just revenge. Profligacy is defended as the impulse of nature. Unchastity paints her face, and robes in others' dress.

II. THE SLIGHTEST APPROACH TO SIN SHOULD BE SHUNNED. The Bible nowhere frowns on innocent merriment. But frolics, that lead to sin, are to be branded as detestable. A wise captain will give a wide berth to perilous quicksands. We cannot keep the sparks too far away from a cask of gunpowder. It is wise to close both ears to the bland voice of the guilty enchantress. Avoid the first step of temptation.

III. DECEIT IN ANY FORM IS DETESTABLE BEFORE GOD. We cannot too highly value a true standard in moral conduct. 'Tis more precious far than a standard for purity of gold or for correctness in speech. Such a standard God has furnished us in his own feelings and judgments. Pretence of any kind is as smoke in his eyes. He is light, faithfulness, and truth. To be transparent, candid, straightforward, is to be Godlike.—D.

Vers. 6, 7.—*God's care for birds.* God's tender care extends to microscopical insects. Nothing is too minute to escape the notice of his eye. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground" without attracting his regard. In proportion as we become conformed to God's image, we shall cherish tender feeling for every living thing.

I. FOR MAN'S GOOD BIRDS LIVE AND BREED. They please the eye with their gay plumage. They regale our ears with pleasant song. They furnish our tables with food. They teach us lessons of cheerful trust. Devoid of anxious care, they daily feast upon the Divine bounty; and a ray of sunshine is repaid with melodious song. They fulfil a mission as the teachers of mankind. To birds we are indebted for considerable pleasure. For us they live: be ours no wanton cruelty.

II. IN THEIR MATERNAL CARES THEY APPEAL FOR GENTLE CONSIDERATION. We may wisely learn a lesson from their maternal affection, from the exposure of their own lives to defend their young. It will foster tender feeling in us to observe this self-forgetfulness in mother birds. But to take advantage of this self-exposure—this noble defence of their offspring—for the purpose of capturing the parent, will deaden and demoralize our own sensibilities. We may furnish a meal for our bodily appetite; but we shall at the same time injure our nobler parts, strangle our nobler feelings.

III. FUTURE PROSPECTS ARE TO BE PREFERRED TO PRESENT PLEASURE. It is a short-sighted policy to use for present need everything within our reach. It is wholesome discipline to deny one's self now, in the hope of greater future good. The farmer foregoes the sale or the use of his grain, that he may have wherewith to sow his fields in the coming season. So to spare the life of the parent bird is to secure in return many other lives A source of future profit should not thoughtlessly be destroyed. Self-restraint is an exemplary virtue.—D.

Ver. 8.—*The perils of inadvertence.* Thoughtlessness is the parent of much mischief. To reach a state of security and bliss, there must be life in our every part—in intellect, foresight, prudence.

I. MAN IS EXPOSED TO MANY NATURAL EVILS. Although lord and interpreter of nature, nature afflicts him in many ways. She scorches him with heat, freezes him with cold, pierces him with pain. Man has skill and power to bring nature under his dominion, if he will duly exert himself for this purpose. Nature is willing to be ruled, and to become the servant of man; but consents to be ruled only in accordance with Divine law. Our duty is to examine these laws, and to bring her into subservience to our true interests. Herein lies scope for the training of mind, heart, conscience, will—training for a higher sphere.

II. NATURAL LAW IS NEVER SUSPENDED TO SUIT MAN'S IMPRUDENCE. Be a man ever so pious, or be he engaged in work ever so benevolent, a moment's imprudence may cut short his life. He may mistake poison for medicine; he may leave open a gas-tap;

he may imprudently trifle with some natural force; and pain or death will result. If he build a house, in order to protect himself and family from the rigours of the climate, any imprudence in the erection may bring on him heavier evils than those he thought to avert. The want of a parapet on the roof may expose his children to a sudden and painful death. We cannot too much admire God's thoughtful care in prescribing such regulations as these.

III. INADVERTENCE MAY PRODUCE GIGANTIC MISERY. It is not enough to have good intentions or gracious dispositions; mind, as well as heart, must be in active exercise. A foolish man is a curse to society Wisdom is greatly needed to produce a prosperous life, and to make a man useful to others. Eli was a good man, but exhibited great folly in the management of his sons, and disaster came thereby upon Israel. Reason is entrusted to every man to be used, and if the powers of intelligence are allowed to rust, the result is loss to ourselves and calamity to others.—D.

Vers. 9—12.—*Directions in minor matters.* What was, in primitive days, matter for direct revelation from God, is now ascertained by scientific observation. Herein we learn that revelation and science spring from one origin and subserve one end—the good of men. And herein we may learn God's fatherly care for his children in the days of their infancy.

I. GREATEST FERTILITY IN NATURE IS TO BE SOUGHT. It is man's province to bring out the greatest productiveness in fields and fruit trees. Pruning, manuring, and grafting are essential. The vine needs especial care, and is susceptible of great increase of fruitfulness. So delicate is the blossom of the vine that the pollen of other plants in the vicinity, coming into contact, injures the formation of the fruit. It is a joy to God to see the trees of the field fruitful; how much more to see abundant fruitfulness in us! "Herein is our Father glorified." The least of God's commandments is profitable to observe.

II. NEEDLESS BURDENS ON ANIMALS FORBIDDEN. Every beast is appointed to be the servant of man; but man is required to act towards the inferior creation in God's stead. The burden of service laid upon oxen and asses is heavy enough; let it not be wantonly increased. Both the ox and the ass suffered from an unequal yoking in the plough. God saw the painful effect, and felt grieved. Animal feeling is a gift from God, and is intended to be for enjoyment. We may act in harmony with God, and increase that enjoyment; or we may, in part, frustrate his plan. In every act of man God takes lively interest. All day long he is approving or censuring.

III. OUR PIETY IS TO BE SEEN IN OUR RAIMENT. It is very probable that this prohibition about dress was to counteract a custom among idolaters—a custom which led to superstitious feeling. Some solid reason was at the root of the counsel, whether we can discover that reason or not. Our raiment is in some measure the exponent of our religion. If "Holiness to the Lord" is predicted as the motto to be found on the bells of the horses, so, and much more, should consecration to God be conspicuous on our dress and demeanour. Our raiment often serves as an ensign, and denotes to what party we belong—the Church or the world. If simplicity, modesty, beauty, sterling quality, be in our dress, these are ornaments of our holy faith. Whatever we do, or however we dress, be this our aim, to please God. A child will never be ashamed to acknowledge its father.—D.

Vers. 13—21.—*Slander, unchastity, and fraud.* No blame can lie against the Scriptures because they legislate on such detestable matters. The blame must lie at the door of depraved humanity, which perpetrates such deeds and makes Divine legislation necessary. The obscenity appertains to the vices, only praise belongs to the remedy.

I. A WOMAN'S CHASTITY IS HER MAIN DOWRY FOR LIFE. If she possess not this virtue, she is worse than worthless; she is a plague and a pest—a moral dunghill. Apart from chastity, she can fill no proper place in society. Her true function is ended. She is only a discredit to the human name. Her light is dense darkness. The streams of life are polluted. The fountain of bliss is corrupted at its source. Rottenness is at the core of society. No language can exaggerate the evil.

II. SLANDER AGAINST A WIFE'S CHASTITY IS THE BLACKEST OF SINS. In proportion to

the vileness of the sin and the severity of the penalty, is the baseness and guilt of the man who makes the accusation falsely. This is a climax of sins of speech, which nothing can surpass. Slander of any sort is heinous sin, and slander against an intimate friend is more heinous yet; but slander against one's wife—and against her chastity—is most heinous of all. Fines and scourging are lenient punishment for such a monster.

III. THE PENALTIES OF SIN ARE IN PROPORTION TO INJURY DONE. On the principle laid down in a previous law, the penalty for false accusation was fixed according to the nature of the deed falsely alleged to be done. In this case, the slanderer well deserved such a result. But then the injured wife would be injured all the more. In the dread penalty imposed on him, she would have to share. Hence, for her sake, the husband's life is spared. To calculate all the effects produced by one act of sin is impossible to the finite mind of man; yet (unless pardon, full and complete, be enjoyed) in proportion to these perpetuated effects will be the penalty meted out to the sinner. We may well "stand in awe."—D.

Vers. 22—30.—*Various penalties for unchastity.* Purity in domestic life is at the root of national prosperity.

I. THE NEGLECT OF VIRTUE'S SAFEGUARDS IS GUILT. (Ver. 24.) If a sentinel recklessly leave open a portal in the beleaguered city, it is treason; it is as if he had betrayed his king. To see a house on flame, and to give no warning, is to become accountable for the destruction of a city. To neglect the physician's counsel in time of disease is to be guilty of death. So to make no resistance to the tempter is to court his approach. To go to the battle without sword, or spear, or shield is to invite defeat. Idle women may be said to tempt the devil.

II. NEGLECT OF DUE PRECAUTIONS OFTEN LEADS TO A TERRIBLE SURPRISE. Oftentimes we underrate what strength the tempter has until we are in his clutches. So long as we knew temptation only by hearsay, we imagined it easy to escape or to overcome; but when brought suddenly under its subtle, wily influence, we are surprised how easily we are overcome.

III. THE CONSENT OF THE WILL IS NEEDED TO CONSTITUTE A SIN. Whatever we are compelled to do by an external power, and against all the opposing force of our own will, this is not sin. Injury and loss may follow, but unless the will consents there is no moral culpability. The essence of sin lies in the inclination. A man may violate all the precepts of the Decalogue by a glance of his eye—ay, by a volition of his will. Whether the overt act follow or not may depend on favourable or unfavourable outward circumstance. The same mischievous effects will not follow, but the sin is there. Therefore, "Keep thy heart with all diligence."

IV. GENEROUS MINDS WILL PUT THE BEST POSSIBLE CONSTRUCTION ON HUMAN CONDUCT. (Ver. 27.) How generously minded a man may be, he is bound to be true. He cannot dissemble facts. He is under obligation to condemn the slightest sin. With the evil thing there must be no connivance. But if it be possible, with due regard to virtue, to give two interpretations on a deed, fairness to the doer requires that we give the interpretation the most favourable and generous. To a prisoner at the bar, the judge gives the full benefit of any doubt; and equal justice should be dealt to men in all our judgments upon them. If there be bright spots in their character and deeds, let us fasten our eyes upon these. It will do us good. To search out the diseased parts of humanity, and to find secret pleasure in contemplating these moral sores,—this will do us harm. As we measure our sentiments and judgments out to men, they will measure to us again. We may be blind to our own blemishes—we usually are; but others will readily find them out; and if we are harsh and ungenerous in our estimate of men, they will return the treatment, perhaps with compound interest. It is wise, every day, to foster in our breast the charity "that believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CIVIL RIGHTS. WHO MAY AND WHO MAY NOT ENTER INTO THE CONGREGATION. UNCLEANNESS IN THE CAMP TO BE AVOIDED. RECEPTION OF FUGITIVE SLAVES. LICENTIOUS PERSONS TO BE REMOVED, AND GIFTS THE PRICE OF IMPURITY TO BE REFUSED. LAWS REGARDING USURY, VOWS, AND CERTAIN DUTIES OF CITIZENSHIP.

Vers. 1—8.—Five classes of persons are here excluded from the congregation of the Lord.

Ver. 1.—Mutilation was performed by the two methods here specified—crushing and excision. The exclusion of persons who had suffered this from the congregation, *i.e.* from the covenant fellowship of Israel, the πολιτεία τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (Eph. ii. 12), was due to the priestly character of the nation. Israel was a kingdom of priests (Exod. xix. 6), and the admission into it of one in whom the nature of man, as made by God, had been degraded and marred, would have been unfitting; just as all bodily blemish unfitted a man for being a priest, though otherwise qualified (Lev. xxi. 16—24). This law, however, was one of the ordinances intended for the period of nonage; it had reference to the outward typical aspect of the Israelitish constitution; and it ceased to have any significance when the spiritual kingdom of God came to be established. Even under the theocracy, eunuchs were not excluded from religious privileges; they could keep God's sabbaths, and take hold of his covenant, and choose the things pleasing to him, and so be part of the spiritual Israel, though shut out from the fellowship of that which was outward and national (cf. Isa. lvi. 4).

Ver. 2.—**A bastard**; one born of a harlot; so the Hebrew word (מַמְזֵר), which occurs only here and in Zech. ix. 6, is said to mean; LXX., ἐκ πόρνης; Vulgate, *de scorto natus*; the Talmud and the rabbins represent the word as denoting one begotten in adultery or incest (Maimon., 'Issure Biah,' c. xv. §§ 1, 2, 7, 9); so also the Syriac *bar gamo*, "son of adultery." **To his tenth generation**; *i.e. for ever*, ten being the number of indefiniteness (cf. Gen. xxxi. 7; Numb. xiv. 22; Job xix. 3; Ps. iii. 6, etc.).

Ver. 3.—As Ammon and Moab had met the Israelites with hostility, and had brought Balaam to curse them, a curse had thereby been brought upon themselves, and they also were to be for ever excluded from the congregation of Israel.

Ver. 6.—**Israel was not to seek**, *i.e.* care for and use means to promote, the welfare of these nations. Individuals, however, of these nations might be naturalized in Israel, and as proselytes enter the congregation, as the case of Ruth proves. It was against the nations, as such, that this ban was directed, and this they had brought on themselves by choosing to be enemies of Israel when they might have been friends and allies.

Ver. 7.—It was to be otherwise with the Edomite and the Egyptian; though the former had refused permission to the Israelites to pass through their land, and the latter had oppressed and wronged the nation, yet as the former were connected with Israel by a bond of kindred—**for he is thy brother**—and the latter had received Israel to sojourn in their land, where, notwithstanding the oppression which clouded the later times of their sojourn, they had reaped many benefits, they were not to abhor these nations or place them under a ban of perpetual exclusion; descendants in the third generation of an Edomite or Egyptian might be naturalized in Israel.

Vers. 9—11.—When the people went forth to war, all impurity and defilement was to be kept out of their camp. **When the host goeth forth**; literally, *when thou goest forth as a camp* or *host*. As in the wilderness the camp was to be kept pure (Numb. v. 2, etc.), so also in the future, when they went out to war, all defilement was to be removed from their host. **Every wicked thing**; rather, *every evil thing*, evil in the sense of blemish or uncleanness (cf. ch. xvii. 1).

Ver. 13.—**A paddle upon thy weapon**; rather, *a small spade* (the word properly means a *pin* or *nail*) *among thy furniture*, or, according to another reading *among thy implements* or *accoutrements*; they were to carry with them along with their implements of war a tool for digging in the earth.

Ver. 14.—The camp was to be kept holy, because God went forth with their armies, and in his presence there must be nothing that defileth or is unclean. **That he see no unclean thing in thee**; literally, *nakedness, shamefulness of a thing*, i.e. anything that one would be ashamed of.

Vers. 15, 16.—A slave that had escaped from his master was not to be given up, but allowed to dwell in the land, in whatever part he might choose. The reference is to a foreign slave who had fled from the harsh treatment of his master to seek refuge in Israel, as is evident from the expression, בְּאַחַד שְׁעָרֶיךָ, "in one of thy gates," *i.e.* in any part of thy land. Onkelos, עַבְדָּא עַכְמָאי, "a slave of the Gentiles." **His master**; the

word used is the plural *adonim*, masters. The use of this for a human master or lord is peculiar to the Pentateuch (cf. Gen. xxiv. 9, 51; xxxix. 2; xl. 1; Exod. xxi. 4, 6, 32, etc.). In this use of the term there is no reference to severity of rule, as if this were a plural intensive.

Vers. 17, 18.—Amongst idolatrous nations prostitution was in certain cases regarded as an act of religious service (cf. Herod., i. 199), and both males and females prostituted themselves especially in the worship of Astarte. All such abominations were to be unknown in Israel (cf. Micah i. 7). **Whore**; *kedêshah* (קְדֵשָׁה), a female who prostituted herself in the worship of an idol. **The price of a dog**; not money obtained from the sale of a dog, but the gains of the *kadesh*, or male prostitute, here called a dog, as the type of all uncleanness (cf. Rev. xxii. 15).

Vers. 19—25.—Certain civil rights and duties are here prescribed.

Vers. 19, 20.—An Israelite might lend on interest money, or victuals, or other property, to a foreigner, but of one of his own people he was not to take interest for a loan (cf. Exod. xxii. 24; Lev. xxv. 36, 37).

Vers. 21—23.—A vow to the Lord, once made, was to be religiously kept; the Lord would require it, and to refuse or neglect to pay it would be held a sin. No one, however, was under any obligation to vow—that was to be a purely voluntary act. **That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform**; . . . **according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God of free-will** (נְדָבָה, spontaneously). (For the law concerning vows in general, see Lev. xxvii. and Numb. xxx.)

Vers. 24, 25.—In the vineyard or cornfield of a neighbour they might eat to appease hunger, but no store of grapes or of grain might be carried away. **At thine own pleasure**; literally, *according to thy soul*, i.e. desire or appetite (cf. ch. xiv. 26). **Pluck the ears with thine hand** (cf Matt. xii. 1; Luke vi. 1). Among the Arabs of the present day the right of a hungry person to pluck ears of corn in a field and eat the grains is still recognized (Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' ii. 192; Thomson, 'Land and the Book,' ii. 510).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. **1**—8.—*Stern safeguards sometimes needed.* It was no small part of the education of the Hebrew people at once to stamp as disreputable the practices of bodily mutilation which were common enough among heathen nations. The honour of the congregation of the Lord was bound up in its freedom from complicity therewith. Eunuchs and illegitimate offspring were excluded from the congregation of the Lord, lest the moral virus connected with the associations of their life should be as poison in the camp. Hence this shield against its poisonous influence is to be preserved down "to the tenth generation," both as a brand on former sin and as a guard against future evil. Sentence of exclusion is also passed on the Ammonites and Moabites (see Gen. xix. 36—38). The stain on the origin of these races is grievous. And the new generations had, by their hostility to the people of God, and because of their superstitious arts, shown that nought but peril could attend their admission, for a long time to come. To seek "their peace and prosperity" would have been an increase of peril, as well as a connivance at wrong. Hence it was forbidden (ver. 6). That this, and not the cultivation of needless hostility or revenge, was intended by these prohibitions is clear from vers. 7, 8. Two extremes are to be avoided. No rancour or grudge is to be cherished over past ills inflicted, and yet kindliness of feeling is not to be allowed to degenerate into even apparent friendship with ungodliness and sin. In these facts and precepts the following teachings are included or suggested.

I. The perfection of social life can only be secured when the several members of any society are holy unto the Lord.

II. The outside world presents very much that is the reverse of this, even all kinds of spiritual and sensual wickedness.

III. While it behoves us to cherish a spirit of true benevolence towards all, yet we may never wink at sin.

IV. It may be necessary for us to adopt stern measures towards others, even that of banishment (1 Cor. v. 6, 13), in order to avoid contamination.

V. We may well cherish, and teach others to cherish, a special hatred of sins of the flesh, since it may not be for many, many generations that blood-poisoning thereby

ceases to corrupt or taint the life. Surely men would more frequently check themselves in sin if they would remember for how long they may enfeeble the constitutions and embitter the lives of those who may hereafter owe their existence to them.

Vers. 9—14.—*Cleanliness a religious duty.* The Law of Moses may be regarded as fourfold—moral, ritual, civil, and sanitary. The precepts in this paragraph are an example of the last-named part thereof. They refer to the inculcation of cleanliness, both in camp and in person. And not only so, but to the observance thereof in time of war. While, perhaps, at such times special evils would result from the neglect of such regulations, yet, on the other hand, it would be precisely when movements were irregular, uncertain, and attended with much excitement, that there would be the strongest tendency to fail in their observance. But no amount of war-pressure would be any excuse for uncleanliness. We get here, moreover, an illustration of that which so often occurs in the Law of Moses, viz. that duties of the lowest, humblest, and most common order are urged on the people by the highest and noblest sanctions; and many a teacher may find reason for urging to cleanliness of habit from such a text as ver. 14, "The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp; . . . therefore shall thy camp be holy." The precise application of the text must, of course, vary with locality and circumstance; but the principle of it includes the following.

1. The presence of the Lord God is everywhere. 2. He is in the "camp" of his people as a special light and guard. 3. Hence every such home may be regarded as a temple of God, the palace of the Great King. 4. In such homes the most menial acts may be acts of service done for God: common work may be dignified by great motives. 5. It will be regarded by a wise Christian man as a part of his duty which is by no means to be neglected, to maintain order and unsullied cleanliness in person and home. This will be part of his life-worship—the living translation of "*laborare est orare.*" This duty needs special enforcement in some quarters. Many a humble Christian cottager elevates his home and all therein, by having it so beautifully clean that, on every piece of furniture, on every wall, on every floor, it seems as if the words were graven, "*Holiness to the Lord.*"

Vers. 15, 16.—*Israel's land a refuge for the oppressed.* (For "the Mosaic treatment of slavery," see Homily on ch. xv. 12—18.) To the features of his legislation thereon this must be added that, as soon as ever a foreign slave set foot on Hebrew soil, he was free. Israel's land was for him the land of liberty!

Vers. 17, 18.—*Unholy wealth may not be put to Divine uses.* (See Homilies on ch. xv. 1—6; xiv. 22—29.) The same law which regulates the appropriation of wealth rightfully gained forbids the dedication to any holy use of wealth sinfully gained.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The opposite working of like principles.* The difference here permitted between lending to brethren and to strangers resembles that allowed in ch. xv. 1—6 (see Homily thereon).

Vers. 21—23.—*Vows to God to be performed.* The vow here made is supposed to be entirely voluntary. It was "a free-will offering." In Numb. xxx. 3—8, abuse is guarded against. Vows made without the knowledge or consent of the father or husband were to be of no force. No priest had any warrant from the Mosaic institutes to come between a young woman and her father, or between husband and wife. Vows to God were to be completely spontaneous, as between the soul and God. They were not to be extorted by others, nor yet to involve the entanglement of others.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Kindliness to neighbours a duty of the holders of property.* This is a very instructive precept. "In vine-growing countries grapes are amazingly cheap; and we need not wonder, therefore, that all within the reach of a passenger's arm were free. The quantity plucked was a loss never felt by the proprietor, and it was a kindly privilege afforded to the poor and wayfaring man" (Jameson). "Thou mayest take for necessity, not for superfluity" (Trapp).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The excluded from the congregation.* Certain principles underlie these exclusions which it is worth our while to note. It will be seen that, though bars of this kind are done away in Christ, there was a fitness, under the theocracy, in the exclusion of the classes specified from full participation in covenant privilege, such exclusion being in harmony with the idea of "a holy nation"—type in earthly mould of the ideal kingdom of God.

I. THE EXCLUSION OF THE MUTILATED. (Ver. 1.) The idea here is that the preservation of the body in its vigour, and in the entirety of its functions, is a duty which we owe to God; that mutilation of it or dishonour done to it is dishonour done to him—a species of profanity. Those in whom this work of dishonour had been wrought, unfitting them for the discharge of the distinctive functions of their manhood, were barred from entrance to the congregation. The ban is removed under the gospel (Isa. lvi. 3—5).

II. THE EXCLUSION OF THE CHILDREN OF INCEST. (Vers. 2, 3.) "To the tenth generation" seems to be a periphrasis for "for ever" (Neh. xiii. 1). The rabbins take the term "bastard" to refer to children born of incest or adultery. These were to be excluded through all their generations. This principle, irrespective of the ground stated in ver. 4, would have sufficed to exclude Moab and Ammon. The truth conveyed is that the impure are unalterably debarred from membership in God's kingdom. God's kingdom is a kingdom of purity. In its final form nothing of an impure nature will be found in it. Impurity of heart and life exclude from inward membership in it now, and will do so for ever. Known impurity should exclude from Church fellowship on earth (1 Cor. v. 1, 2). The outward bar no longer exists, and the offspring of impure connection, if children of faith, are welcomed to the spiritual fold. But the *tendency* of sins of parents still is, as of old, to exclude children from the fellowship of believers. The unchurched little ones grow up outside the pale of ordinances, and tend, in course of generations, to become increasingly estranged from the means of grace. Parents who sin themselves out of Church fellowship thus do their children, as well as their own souls, an irreparable injury.

III. THE EXCLUSION OF THE UNMERCIFUL AND OF THOSE WHO SHOWED HATRED TO GOD'S PEOPLE. (Vers. 4—6.) The principle here is obvious. Christ expressly excludes the unmerciful from all participation in his kingdom (Matt. xxv. 41—46). And there can be no "peace" and no "prosperity" to those who are actuated by hostility to God's kingdom. So long as they retain this character, we cannot wish it for them. Hostility to Christ's people is hostility to Christ himself (Acts ix. 4, 5), and reacts fatally on the soul (Matt. xxi. 44). It draws upon it God's indignation, and ends in final exclusion from heaven.

IV. THE ADMISSION OF THOSE WHO SHOW KINDNESS TO GOD'S PEOPLE. (Vers. 7, 8.) The Edomite and the Egyptian were not to be abhorred; their children *might* be admitted in the third generation. The Edomites had not been as friendly as they might have been, but they had at least furnished the Israelites with victuals in their march, while the Egyptians had for a long time shown them kindness and hospitality. For these things they "had their reward." Acts of kindness to God's people do not entitle to admission into God's kingdom, but they show a "nighness" of spirit to it, and are remembered in God's dealings with the doers of them, and may issue in their final salvation (Matt. x. 42). Note: Past kindnesses are not to be forgotten because of a late change of disposition. The Egyptians were kindly remembered, though their treatment of the Israelites had latterly been very cruel. It is to be remarked also that the tone in which Edom is uniformly referred to in this book does not in the least harmonize with the late date assigned to it by many critics. Edom, in the time of the prophets, had become Israel's implacable foe.—J. O.

Ver. 5.—*The curse turned into a blessing.* No enchantment, no curse of evil men, can prevail against the people of God. Contrariwise, God will turn the curse into a blessing. In Malachi, on the other hand, he threatens to "curse the blessings" of the

wicked (Mal. ii. 2). How does God turn the curse into a blessing? 1. Directly, *by substituting a blessing for a curse.* The curse is not merely not allowed to take effect for harm, but God puts a blessing in its stead. A Divine law of compensation comes into operation. The wicked is punished, and the object of his unrighteous hatred consoled and rewarded, by the curse being read backward, and made a reason for conferring blessing. The very curses of the wicked are thus a means of enrichment to the good. Balaam's curses were thus changed into blessings (Numb. xxiii., xxiv.). 2. Providentially, *by overruling the designs of evil men for their own confusion, and for his people's good.* We have examples in the histories of Joseph (Gen. l. 20), of Mordecai and the Jews (Esth. vi.—x.), of Daniel (Dan. vi.). The persecutions of the Church have thus been overruled for the extension of the gospel (Acts xi. 19). The highest example is the crucifixion of Christ (Acts iii. 13—19). 3. Spiritually, *by turning outward afflictions into means of spiritual good.* (1) Afflictions humble, chasten, purify (Job xlii. 4, 5; Ps. cxix. 71). (2) God can turn afflictions into sources of comfort and joy, into occasions of higher glory to himself, into means of salvation and glory to the saint (Acts xvi. 25; Rom. v. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; iv. 17; Phil. i. 19). (3) God can overrule even punishment of sin for our ultimate good. Levi (Gen. xlix. 7).—J. O.

Vers. 9—14.—*Purity in the camp.* The camp was to be free from: 1. Moral pollution (ver. 9). 2. Ceremonial pollution (vers. 10, 11). 3. Natural pollution (vers. 12, 13)—M. Henry. This, because God was in its midst. He was there to work for their deliverance and for the confusion of their enemies. We are taught—

I. THAT MILITARY LIFE IS NO EXCUSE FOR LAXITY IN MORALS, OR FOR A LOWERED STANDARD OF PROPRIETY IN CONDUCT. The opposite opinion too commonly prevails. Immoralities are winked at in soldiers and sailors which would not be tolerated in ordinary society; nay, are sometimes half justified as a necessity of their situation. When public opinion is in this easy state, we cannot wonder that the individuals themselves are not very strict about their behaviour. They find Acts passed, *e.g.* to protect them in their evil courses, and they naturally suppose that they have a kind of sanction for their immorality. Officers do not always set the men the best example. This is in every sense to be deplored. Immorality does not change its nature in the barrack-room or on the march. Rather, when "the host goes forth" we should try to put away from us "every wicked thing." Only then can we confidently expect God's presence to go with us, or look to him for aid in battle. Compare Carlyle's account of Cromwell's army ('Cromwell,' vol. ii., at end), and the "prayer-meeting" of the leaders. See also Baillie's account of the encampment of the Scotch Covenanters at Dunse Law ('Letters,' i. 211).

II. THAT PURITY IS REQUIRED IN THE CAMP OF THE CHURCH, IF HER WARFARE IS TO BE SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHED. In spiritual conflicts, above all, we must look to spiritual conditions. The Church is an army of Christ. She is organized for aggressive and defensive warfare. Her only hope of success lies in the presence of the Lord with her. But can she hope for this presence if she is not careful to maintain her internal purity? True, she has no commission to search the heart, and must be content to allow tares to mingle with the wheat (Matt. xiii. 24—31). But it is within her province, in the exercise of discipline, to remove obvious scandals, and by rebuke and censure, as well as by positive teaching and persuasion, to keep down worldliness, irreligion, and sensuality, when these make their appearance in her midst. She ought to pray, labour, and use her authority for the maintenance of her purity. The purer she is internally the more resistless will she be in her assaults on evil without.—J. O.

Vers. 15—23.—*Various precepts.* No very close connection exists between the precepts in these verses, yet they are variously related, and suggest by their juxtaposition lessons of importance. We have—

I. A WORD SPOKEN IN THE INTERESTS OF LIBERTY. (Vers. 15, 16.) 1. The fugitive slave is not to be given back to his master. The case is that of a slave escaping from a heathen master. The *spirit* of the Mosaic Law is wholly opposed to slavery. This precept anticipates our own law, that a slave setting foot on British territory is free. 2. Every encouragement is to be given him to settle in the land. He is not to be

oppressed or treated with unkindness, but is to be allowed to settle where he pleases. The holy land was thus a true asylum for the oppressed.

II. A BLOW STRUCK AT LEWDNESS. (Vers. 17, 18.) The lawgiver alone, so far as we know, among ancient nations, lays his axe at the root of this great evil. He refuses to it the least toleration. He is right. The prevalence of lewdness in a land blights and withers everything good. It saps the manhood of the nation, destroys its love of liberty (2 Pet. ii. 19), turns religion to hypocrisy (Matt. xxiii. 25—29), kills humane feeling, dissolves domestic ties, and degrades the wretched victim of it to the lowest point of brutishness—

"It hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!"

BURNS.

The contrast between the noble severity of the Bible teaching on this subject, and the wretchedly low tone of the teaching of such writers as Bolingbroke, or even of Hume, is very noteworthy.

III. CHECKS IMPOSED ON COVETOUSNESS. 1. The lender is not permitted to exact usury from his brother (vers. 19, 20). That the taking of interest was not regarded as in itself sinful is plain from the permission to take usury from a stranger. But in the circumstances of the time, and in view of the design of the lawgiver to check rather than to encourage extensive commercial operations on the part of the Jews, the law was a wise one, and tended to repress covetousness in a form which would very readily have developed itself. Lending was to be free and cordial, and God's blessing, the best usury, was promised in return. 2. Vows were to be faithfully performed (vers. 21—23). This checked covetousness, so far as that might prompt the person vowing to grudge payment when the time for paying his vow arrived. The vow was in his own choice, but, if made, it was to be religiously performed (Eccles. v. 4, 5). It is easier to vow than at the proper time to make the sacrifices which the vow demands.—J. O.

Vers. 24, 25.—*The vineyard and corn-field.* This law may be regarded: 1. As another check on covetousness. It restricted the operation of covetousness in the owner, and taught him to be generous and charitable. 2. As part of the Jewish provision for the poor (cf. ch. xxiv. 19, 20). 3. As a lesson in honesty. It taught those who used the privilege to restrain themselves to their immediate wants, and to respect on principle the rest of their neighbour's property. It taught them to be honest by trusting them. 4. As giving every one an interest in the fruitfulness of the land. Custom and the force of public opinion would guard the law from abuse.—J. O.

Vers. 1—8.—*The congregation of the Lord jealously guarded.* There has been considerable controversy about what the term "entering into the congregation of the Lord" signifies. It cannot be the Old Testament equivalent for our "communicants," or "Church members;" for it would seem from Exod. xii. 48, 49, that Jewish privileges were open to strangers on condition of their circumcision. Nor need we interpret it as merely indicating the marriage connections which Israelites were to avoid. We are satisfied with the interpretation, received by many, that the congregation (קָהָל) does not always signify the sum total of the people, but the great assembly of elders. The prohibitions in this passage would, therefore, mean prohibitions from holding office in the theocracy; in fact, they show those who were ineligible to the Jewish eldership. The ineligible parties are—

1. *Eunuchs.* For physical perfection was indispensable in a kingdom typically and ideally to be perfect. Besides, it has been said that this excluded class are deficient in courage, which the elders required.[1]

2. *Those whose family had the "bar sinister" within ten generations.* This was a great penalty against concubinage, and must have made the Jews most particular about the legality of their marriages.

3. *Amorites and Moabites.* They are treated like those with the "bar sinister," as

[1] Cf. Jennings's 'Jewish Antiquities,' p. 97.

a judgment on their inhuman treatment of Israel. So that there was caution to be exercised in the admission of outsiders to the honours of the Jewish commonwealth.

4. *Edomites and Egyptians.* They could not enter themselves, but their *grandchildren* were eligible. They were not kept waiting so long at the door as those previously mentioned. This jealous guarding of the gate is surely instructive.

I. IT SHOWS US THE DUTY OF LAYING HANDS SUDDENLY UPON NO MAN. This was Paul's direction to Timothy regarding the ordination of elders (1 Tim. v. 22). Their selection was so important, that it should not be hastily or carelessly done. They should get time to prove themselves as worthy. And our ideal of Church officers should be so high as to allow of the introduction of no ill-qualified person through our haste or careless selection.

II. A CHURCH SHOULD MAINLY PRODUCE ITS OWN OFFICERS. Just as breeding is so important physically, so is Church training spiritually. It is the children in the tenth generation of the bastard who are, so to speak, by their ecclesiastical development through nine previous generations in ecclesiastical connection, to wipe out the ill effects of the "bar sinister." The grandchildren of the Edomite and Egyptian are to be eligible, because for three generations connected with the Church. That Church will be strong who can train up from among her own children the officers she needs.

III. OFFICE IN GOD'S CHURCH SHOULD BE THE HIGHEST AMBITION. For people are not in a wholesome state when they place offices in the world before those in the Church. God's service is *highest* service, whatever current opinion may be. Let the thought of holding office in the Church of God be held before Church members as the very noblest ambition for themselves or their children, and then shall the Church be placed upon the pinnacle it deserves.—R. M. E.

Vers. 9—14.—*A pure camp for a pure King.* After insisting on purity giving power in war (ver. 9), and giving direction to men about putting away uncleanness which may be due to natural causes, Moses urges the precaution, because the All-seeing One walketh through the camp, Inspector of all their ways (ver. 14). The directions here given might have been urged on *sanitary* grounds, but Moses puts them deliberately upon *religious*. For the experience among Orientals and Occidentals is that something more than sanitary reasons is needed to overcome man's indolence and keep him clean.

I. CLEANLINESS MAY BE RAISED INTO A PHASE OF GODLINESS. In the proverb is is said to be next to godliness; but here Moses makes it a part of godliness. Religion comes to the aid of science, and helps by its sanctions the wise regulations suggested by science. Witness how painfully slow remedial and sanitary measures are in getting adopted. It would be well if religion could aid the civil power in making sanitation a sacred thing in the eyes of the people.

The reason why cleanliness is not more sacred than it is is a latent Manichæanism, which seems to lurk in human nature; as if matter were essentially unholy, and could not be made sacred. But the religion of Christ lays hold of body as well as soul, and urges a *mens sana in corpore sano*, and promises the perfection of its idea in a bodily resurrection. There is, consequently, a physical side to our religion, which should find expression in the consecration of cleanliness, and divers washings, and food and drink; all that religion may be a more manly and efficient thing. We believe thoroughly in the religious duty of denouncing dirt.

II. RELIGION IS LIFE SPENT IN THE REALIZED PRESENCE OF GOD. "Thou God seest me" is the watchword of religion. When all our life is brought under his eye, when we believe that the commonest and most trivial things are not beneath his notice, when we desire to hide nothing from him by night or by day,—then the light of his pure being illumines and regulates all, and the highest purity is reached. "Muscular Christianity" is a good idea, if by it we mean that Christianity has a physical as well as spiritual sphere. No efforts of our own, muscular or otherwise, will ever save us; but, being saved by Divine grace, our whole being, muscles and all, is at God's service. Religion in everything is the sense of God all through, and this should be our aim.

III. GOD IS THE CAPTAIN ONLY OF THE PURE. A holy camp is the preliminary to God leading Israel successfully against the enemy (ver. 14). The pure in heart see God and follow him to victory. It is the state of the camp of Israel, not the state of

their enemies, that is all important. If Israel is impure, it will soon prove impotent. The pure are, in the long run, the powerful. God is on the side, not of the heaviest, but of the purest battalions. Really religious men are ultimately, under God, victorious.—R. M. E.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The Hebrew fugitive law.* We have here a most remarkable law, entirely in the interests of the slave, and showing conclusively that no such thing as property in mankind was recognized in the theocracy. When a slave ran away, the person to whom he repaired is directed to harbour him and give him a place with his servants, but *not* to restore him to his former master. Here, then, is a fugitive law such as permitted no such monster as a slave-hunter to defile the land of Palestine.

I. THE BIBLE RECOGNIZES NO PROPERTY IN MAN. We cannot do better than quote from Dr. Cheever's 'God against Slavery.' He says, "The Jewish Law strictly forbade any one from ever returning unto his master that servant that had fled from his master to him. If an ox or an ass had strayed from its owner, any one finding the beast was commanded to restore it to its owner as his property; but if a man's *servant* had fled away, every one was in like manner *forbidden* to restore him, demonstrating in the strongest manner that a servant was never regarded as property, and could not be treated as such. A man's ox belonged to him, and must be restored to him as his property; but a man's servant did not belong to him, and could not be his property, and, if he chose to take himself away, was not considered as taking away anything that belonged to his master or could be claimed and taken back by him. It is not possible for an incidental demonstration to be stronger than this."

II. RUNAWAY SLAVES ARE ENTITLED TO AN OPPORTUNITY OF EARNING A LIVELIHOOD. Not only is he *not* to be restored, but he is also to be allowed a place in the establishment to which he has escaped. Doubtless he had a good idea of a vacancy being there, and the need for an extra servant. In such a case he is to get his chance, and be allowed without oppression to earn his livelihood. We do not assert that every human being, no matter how "heart-lazy," has a right to a living; but every one has surely a right to a livelihood. It is the organization of labour and livelihoods, rather than poor-laws, that should engross the attention of philanthropists.

III. WHILE MEN HAVE NO RIGHT TO OUR PERSONS, GOD HAS—WE ARE HIS. We are God's slaves. "We are bought with a price," and therefore bound to glorify him with our bodies (1 Cor. vi. 20). He has a title to us by virtue of *creation*; but for him we should not have existed. He has a title to us by virtue of his *providence*; for in him we not only live, but move and have our being. He has a title to us by virtue of *redemption*; for he has redeemed us at no less a cost than the blood of his Son. He has a title to us by virtue of his *inspirations*; for any good and holy desires and aspirations we entertain are through the indwelling of his Spirit. If we intelligently recognize our position, we shall own our obligations to him, and acknowledge we are slaves of God. But his slavery is "perfect freedom." Better to be the Lord's slave than the world's freeman. His Law is "the perfect Law of liberty," and when under it we are realizing that broadest phase of freedom which has made his slaves the mightiest of men.—R. M. E.

Vers. 17—25.—*Money-making must be above suspicion.* We have in these verses an excellent lesson upon mercantile morality. There are too many people in this world who are not at all particular how money is made, if only it be made. "The wages of iniquity" are as welcome to them as to Balaam. But it is plain from these verses that the Lord does regard the way money is won, and will not handle what has come licentiously himself, nor give any countenance to his people in doing so.

I. MONEY MADE BY WICKEDNESS IS ABHORRED OF GOD. The wretched woman who lives by her own dishonour, the wretched man who lends himself to licentiousness, are both intolerable to the Divine King. The idols of the heathen may receive the wages of licentiousness, and be served by lewd women, as the history of heathenism shows, but God will have no such dedications polluting his house. As the Holy One, he will not be served by the deliberately unholy and profane.

II. MONEY MADE OUT OF THE NEEDS OF THE POOR SAINTS IS ALSO AN ABOMINATION TO GOD. It was a noble law that Jew was not to play the money-lender to Jew. To

extort from a brother what his needs can ill afford to pay, is forbidden. The Jews were to be brothers indeed, in readiness to lend without hope of recompense. And although this arrangement may not be literally binding under this dispensation, there is a general idea abroad of the undesirableness of making money out of God's poor people. There is to be special consideration shown surely to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. vi. 10). We should suspect a man of worldliness who extorted big interest from a struggling Church, when well able to advance the desperately needed loan.

III. A SPHERE FOR USURY IS RECOGNIZED BY THE LORD. The stranger may borrow under an engagement to pay interest. This is only right. If usury were universally forbidden, the world of commerce would come to a standstill. Capital would not accumulate if it had no reward awaiting it. The stranger, consequently, comes and asks the favour of a loan. He has no claim on you for it, but he is willing to pay a fair price for the obligation. The whole edifice of commerce rests upon the legality of such a transaction. It is a mutual benefit.

At the same time, there may be extortion and speculation in usury, just as in other lines of business; and God shows that "extortioners" (1 Cor. vi. 10) have no part in his kingdom. It is *selfishness* pure and simple, and in its most tyrannical and despicable form.

IV. ALL VOWS REGISTERED IN CONNECTION WITH OUR MONEY-MAKING MUST BE FAITHFULLY PERFORMED. It is almost a natural instinct that vows should be made unto the Lord in connection with our prosperity. Often a person struggling to realize an "honest profit," while the transaction is only in progress, and the issue is still uncertain, dedicates a proportion, if the Lord send him success; or a proportion of a new crop, if it be a good one. Such vows must never be recalled, but always honourably met. "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Eccles. v. 5).

V. THE RIGHTS OF THE HUNGRY SHOULD ALSO BE RESPECTED IF A LAND IS TO ENJOY SUCCESS. The vines are so productive in Palestine, when properly cultivated, and the vineyards so unprotected, that a hungry passenger may fill himself and no one be a bit the poorer. Or he may enter the field of standing corn and make what use he can of his hands. In other words, the hungry was regarded as having a right to satisfy the cravings of nature and to pass on.

And when it was placed on the statute-book as a *right*, it saved the poor man's self-respect and never interfered with his personal freedom. This "poor-law" gives man his need without asking him to surrender his liberty. This is its beauty, it meets the pressing necessity without destroying the person's legitimate self-respect. Liberty is more precious to any upright soul than bread; and it is a wholesome instinct which, as far as possible, should be respected in any beneficent national arrangement.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—6.—*Loss of sacred privilege a grievous penalty.* In such passages as this, very much more is intended than is expressed. We have to read between the lines, for only they who lived in those days of Jewish life could comprehend the shadowy hints, the pregnant suggestions, which are here reduced to words.

I. THE ABUSE OF REPRODUCTIVE VITALISM IS A GIGANTIC SIN. The law of the natural kingdom, with regard to every species of life, that its "seed should be in itself," obtains in man its highest form. But here human inclination, passion, will come into play. It is an honour which God has conferred upon us, in that he has made us agents co-operating with him in the perpetuation of the human race. And the abuse of this function is followed forthwith by the Divine censure. In many cases, judgment swiftly follows upon the heels of the sin. As at Bethpeor, sudden and overwhelming penalty fell upon the Jewish culprits who yielded to the seductive snares of the Moabite women, so that there fell of the Hebrews four and twenty thousand men; so summary vengeance falls upon such transgressors still. Adultery and incest are stamped with the red brand of God's hottest wrath. One feels in reading the shameful narrative of Lot's incest at Zoar, as if the historian had not left on it the burning stigma of indignation; but we may draw no such conclusion from his silence. In this chapter we perceive how the blank is filled. The issue of that incestuous intercourse are branded with perpetual shame.

II. THIS GIGANTIC SIN BEGETS A SERIES OF GIGANTIC EVILS. 1. *It begets callous selfishness in posterity.* God did not forget that the Moabites and Ammonites refused the common necessaries of life to the Hebrews, who sought nothing more than a friendly passage through their territory. Although this sin was a branch and offspring from the first, it was something new, and demanded fresh chastisement. For every offence in God's kingdom there is prepared a just measure of retribution. 2. *It begets malicious opposition.* They hired, in their blindness, the services of Balaam, the sorcerer, in the hope that he would blast and ruin them with his witchery and curse. The end was frustrated. The purchased curse was changed into blessing. Nevertheless, the intention was criminal. The hearts of the Moabites burned with hate for their kinsmen; and base intentions shall be scourged. 3. *It begets idolatry and blind fanaticism.*

III. SUCH EVILS CULMINATE IN JUSTEST PUNISHMENTS. Suitable penalties begin to appear in this life. 1. *There is the loss of external privilege.* Such "shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord." What! not when the present generation has passed away? No; not to the tenth generation! No; not for ever. Possibly the culprits despised the privilege, mocked at the loss. But none the less was it an immeasurable loss, a terrible privation. It is not said that a penitent Moabite should not be forgiven—should not obtain eternal life. Yet the loss of external instruction and help lessened the probability that penitence would visit the soul. We do ourselves wrong when we contemn religious privilege. 2. *There is the loss of friendly intercession.* "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity . . . for ever." Prayer for such is interdicted. Brotherly sympathy is denied. The Hebrews were ordained to be a nation of priests. The intention was that, by virtue of their growing piety, they should be, as an entire nation, the priests of the Lord, while foreigners should immigrate to be their husbandmen and vine-dressers. By reason of the Jew's superior knowledge of God, they might be successful intercessors for other nations. But from this gracious privilege the Moabites and Ammonites were permanently excluded. Despise not the prayers of the devout.—D.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Terminable chastisements.* The sting in God's curse is its irreversibleness. The bitter draught is dashed with mercy when we have prospect that it shall cease.

I. THE CONDUCT OF SOME MEN IS A STRANGE ADMIXTURE OF GOOD AND BAD. There were some fine traits in Esau's character commingled with coarse and selfish obstinacy. Light was interfused with darkness. The treatment of Israel by the Edomites was not the most friendly, nor was it decidedly hostile. It was marked by haughty reserve rather than by malignant hostility. So also the Egyptians were not wholly antagonistic to Israel. For more than four hundred years the Hebrews had found sustenance and shelter in Goshen. If the last Pharaoh had oppressed them with bitter bondage, a former Pharaoh had blest them with unusual kindness. From desolating famine, Egypt had shielded them. This shall not be forgotten; it shall temper chastisement. The remoter peoples shall be admitted to God's kingdom, while those nearer at hand shall be excluded.

II. SUCH CONDUCT RECEIVES DUE MEASURE OF CHASTISEMENT. It is impossible to entertain the best feelings of affection towards such persons. Yet we are to be just in our estimate of them. We are not to fasten our eyes only on the dark side of their characters. As far as it is possible we should be generous in feeling. "Thou shalt not abhor them." Tho present generation of such, and their children, shall be excluded from the privileges of the righteous. But *there* the ban shall terminate. If children of wisdom, we shall endure such chastisement with patient resignation—

> "For patient suffering is the link
> That binds us to a glorious morrow."

III. THE INHERITANCE OF BLESSING IS IN REVERSION. "Weeping may endure for a night: joy cometh in the morning." The night is temporary; the day will be eternal. However dark be their present lot under the frown of Jehovah, the light of hope shines beyond—lights up the future. We live in our children. It alleviates our present burden when we are assured that our children shall be exempt. More often

should we stand in awe of sin, if we did but perceive the miseries we were entailing on posterity. The revelations of the future are a valuable guide for the present.—D.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Sympathy for the oppressed.* It is supposed that oppressive forms of slavery existed among the neighbouring nations; and it might be anticipated that the oppressed would seek asylum among the people of God. The social atmosphere was to be that of healthful freedom, which is fatal to inhuman thraldom.

I. WE SEE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP IN ITS EXTREME LIMITS. One is a master; one is a slave. One has risen to power; one has sunk into weakness. Humanity has immense capacity for rising and falling. Such abject dependence may be the result of external calamity, or it may be the effect of culpable folly.

II. THIS PROPRIETORSHIP IN MAN IS CAPABLE OF GREAT ABUSE. A slave-master must have great self-restraint if he does not abuse his purchased power. To no man ought irresponsible control over his fellows be entrusted. The temptation to encroach on human rights is too great to be put within any man's reach. Good men will use every position they occupy so as to do good to others; and even a slave-holder may be a source of large blessing. On the other hand, coarse and cruel men can turn the institution into a nest of villainy.

III. ABUSE OF SLAVERY MAY BECOME SELF-CURATIVE. A reflecting master will calculate that, if he injure his slave, he injures his property—he injures himself. But in moments when passion is dominant, a reckless slave-holder will think nothing about consequences. Yet his slave may flee. The common instincts of humanity will impel disinterested persons to aid the fugitive. And the successful flight of one will encourage others to make the attempt.

IV. THE OPPRESSED HAVE A CLAIM UPON OUR PRACTICAL SYMPATHY. The Hebrews could not easily discover the real merits of quarrel between a foreign slave and his master. But they would know that a slave would not leave his master and his home without sufficient cause. It was a precarious chance how an alien slave would find a livelihood. Therefore the refugee had a claim upon the Hebrews' sympathy. The oppressed of every land have a large place in the heart of God, and every friend of God will strive to imitate his deeds. Emmanuel's land is to be the land of liberty. Liberty may not suddenly be given to every man, in any condition of mind; yet liberty is man's birthright—his true inheritance; for this he is to prepare. A man is dwarfed, stunted, deformed, if he be not free.—D.

Ver. 18.—*Unacceptable offerings.* The value of religious offerings in God's sight is not measured by their magnitude, nor by splendour, but by the spiritual motive that originates them.

I. GOD HAS NO NEED OF HUMAN OFFERINGS. He is absolutely independent of his creatures. "The gold and silver" are already *his*. If he had need of these things, he would create them. The advantage of religious offerings belongs to man. The offerer is the party blest. Spiritual benefits (not to be measured or weighed in earthly balances) are obtained in exchange.

II. ILL-GOTTEN GAINS ARE BY HIM REJECTED. To accept such would be to connive at wickedness. It is often for this profane end that men bring them. They hope thereby to make the residue the more safe, and a base calling the more respectable. In a word, they desire to take God into unhallowed partnership with themselves. To him this can be only abomination—a stench in his nostrils.

III. RELIGIOUS OFFERINGS ARE MEASURED BY THEIR MORAL WORTH. The mite of the widow was estimated by the genuine love that inspired it. It was a solid nugget of spiritual affection. Seldom has the love of the human heart been so completely converted into a material gift. It was but one remove from creation. That widow would have poured out her very soul in creating gifts for God if she might. It is this sterling and practical love which God values. Offerings that are not the exponents of grateful feeling are nothing worth. God has a scale of moral arithmetic, and all religious offerings are placed in the balances of the sanctuary.—D.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Usury lawful and unlawful.* From all conduct the element of selfishness is to be eliminated. All forms of honourable commerce are permitted,

because, while the end is gain, it is not solely gain; seller and buyer both obtain advantage.

I. OUR CONDUCT IS TO BE REGULATED BY RELATIONSHIP. Kindly feeling is due unto all men. We should honour man *as man*. Yet the conduct which is commendable to a stranger is not commendable to a father. According to the degree of propinquity should be the degree of affection. A brother has claims upon us which a stranger has not. Our stock of affection is limited; we are to bestow it on most suitable objects. Our capacity for doing good is measurable; we must expend it with care.

II. MONEY GAIN IS NOT THE BUSINESS OF LIFE. There are occupations nobler than money-getting. Contentment is better than gold. The culture of the mind is better. The discipline of the moral powers is better. Brotherly kindness is better. The diffusion of knowledge is better. Earthly prosperity is to be hailed especially as a condition for doing good. To have, and yet to refuse to help, is a sin. That man's gold is a curse.

III. YET MONEY GAIN, WITHIN PROPER LIMITS, IS WISE AND HONOURABLE. Properly viewed, moderate usury is but a species of commerce. If with my loan of a thousand pounds a shrewd merchant makes a gain of a hundred pounds in addition, it is just that I should receive a part thereof, as the earning of my loan. If one has money capital and another has skill and a third has time, it is simply equitable that the temporal earnings of the partnership should be divided, in some proportion, among all. If I obtain fair usury for the use of my money from honest traders, I have power to help impoverished brethren to an extent I could not otherwise. God had not intended that the Hebrews should be a commercial nation. Their business was to be witness-bearers to the world of heavenly truth.—D.

Vers. 21—23.—*The place of vows.* It is not obligatory to make vows; it is obligatory to fulfil them. We are often free to contract an obligation; we are not free to violate it. A man is not bound to marry; having married, he is bound to cherish his wife.

I. VOWS IMPLY SPECIAL ACTS OF KINDNESS ON THE PART OF GOD. The ordinary course of God's bounty baffles verbal description. The forethought, the active energy, the well-laid plans, the unslumbering attention, the changeless affection, which are required for the preservation of human life, no language can express. But this is not all that God does for us. In times of unusual perplexity, special guidance is often vouchsafed to us. When surrounding events seemed most adverse to our interests, in answer to prayer, sudden deliverance has come. A precious life was in jeopardy: human help was unavailing; but God graciously interposed, and midnight suddenly became a summer noon.

II. VOWS IMPLY, ON OUR PART, DEFECTIVE PIETY. Vows are made under the influence of excessive fear or from an influx of sudden joy. In a time of sharp distress, a man will put himself under special obligation, if God will grant his request. Or, when some expected good has fallen to one's lot, in the impulse of sudden gladness we vow to devote some special offering unto God. Now, this is not wrong. Still there is something better. It is better to be always in a frame of trustful feeling, so that we may welcome whatever God ordains, and realize that what God does is best. It is better to rely upon his promise that help shall come in times of need! It is better to cultivate the habit of frequent offerings to God's cause, so that no vow is needed to prick us up to the full discharge of duty. The vow implies that we cannot trust ourselves *at all times* to give to God his due. Therefore our endeavour should be to cultivate a childlike and a steadfast faith. It is good that the "heart be established with grace."

III. VOWS CREATE FOR US A NEW OBLIGATION. Having made a debt, we are bound to pay it; but it is better not to accumulate a debt. Men lay a trap to catch themselves. Conscious of deficient trust and love towards God, they take advantage of some favourable state of feeling to make new obligations from which it shall be difficult to escape. In their better moods of mind they create new motives and new sanctions for religious conduct, which they cannot remove when the better feeling has vanished. They use the rising tide to bear their barque away. They utilize summer piety to provide for winter coldness. But having framed a religious vow, truth requires that it should be scrupulously kept. To violate a vow would injure our own soul's life—

would deaden and stupefy conscience, would justly provoke our God. No common sin is this.—D.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Possession of earthly things only partial.* The mode and condition of human life in this world serve a moral purpose. A material body requires material food; material food implies material possessions. The use of these affords fine scope for the development of many virtues. Without material possessions, selfishness would scarcely be possible; nor could some moral qualities, as generosity, find a field for exercise.

I. EARTHLY ESTATE ADMITS ONLY OF A PARTIAL POSSESSION. We cannot retain for our exclusive use the beauty of the hills, or the fragrance of the flowers within territory called "our own." It is not possible for us to appropriate to our personal use all the products of our fields. Restrict the enjoyment as we may, we can succeed only to a limited extent. And why should we make the attempt? It adds immensely to our real pleasure to share the products with others. Indiscriminate appropriation of harvests would do good to no one. It would diminish productiveness. It would create waste; it would promote idleness. But profuse generosity is not only pleasurable: it is profitable. We gain the esteem of men. The whole community bands together to protect our crops. God smiles on our fields and our toil.

II. HUNGER HAS UNQUESTIONABLE CLAIM ON NATURE'S PRODUCTS. Be our skilful labour to secure a harvest what it may, the largest possible, yet we cannot forget that God too has contributed largely to make our fields productive. In God's contribution to the result, his poor ones ought to share. Lest the ordinary philanthropy of men might not suffice for this need of poverty, God himself has taken the poor under his sheltering wing; he has become their Champion, he has proclaimed a law for the protection of the needy. Inasmuch as God retains absolute proprietorship over all created things, and counts the richest men as his chief stewards, he has fullest right to determine on what conditions his bounty shall be enjoyed. When man has added his labour to the result, when he has garnered his crops, the condition is changed; but so long as it is standing in the field, hunger may find a meal.

III. THOUGH HUNGER HAS A CLAIM, COVETOUSNESS HAS NONE. The labourer or the weary traveller had a statutory right to relieve his existing hunger; he had no right to carry any fruit or corn away. This would be to abuse a precious privilege. "Thus far might they go, and no farther." The path of obedience always has been narrow. Here was a test of trust in God. He who has provided a meal for the hungry man to-day can also provide another meal to-morrow. Or, if one door is closed, cannot God open another? Covetousness is suicidal. In the long run it defeats its own ends. Careful obedience is a firstfruit of genuine trust. Give a bad man an inch, and he will take an ell. By this he may be known. But a good man is as careful of another man's possessions as of his own. This is but another outcome of the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LAWS RESPECTING DIVORCE, AGAINST MAN-STEALING AND INJUSTICE.

Vers. 1—4.—*Of divorce.* If a man put away his wife because she did not any longer please him, and she became the wife of another man, by whom also she was put away, or from whom she was severed by his death, the first husband might not remarry her, for that would be an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, and would bring sin on the land. This is not a law sanctioning or regulating divorce; that is simply assumed as what might occur, and what is here regulated is the treatment by the first husband of a woman who has been divorced a second time.

Vers. 1—4.—These verses should be read as one continuous sentence, of which the protasis is in vers. 1—3, and the apodosis in ver. 4, thus: "If a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she doth not find favour in his eyes, because of some uncleanness in her, and he hath written her a bill of divorcement, and given it in her hand, and sent her out of his house;

and if she hath departed out of his house, and hath gone and become another man's; and if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house; or if the latter husband who took her to be his wife, die: her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife," etc.

Ver. 1.—**Because he hath found some uncleanness in her**; literally, *a thing or matter of nakedness*, i.e. some shameful thing, something disgraceful; LXX., ἄσχημον πρᾶγμα: Vulgate, "aliquam fœditatem." In the Targum of Onkelos, the expression is explained by עֲבִירַת פִּתְגָם; "aliquid fœditatis" (London Polyglot); "iniquitas rei alicujus" (Buxtorf); "the transgression of a [Divine] word" (Levi). On this the school of Hillel among the rabbins put the interpretation that a man might divorce his wife for any unbecomingness (Mishna, 'Gittin,' ix. 10), or indeed for any cause, as the Pharisees in our Lord's day taught (Matt. xix. 3). The school of Shammai, on the other hand, taught that only for something disgraceful, such as adultery, could a wife be divorced (Lightfoot, 'Hor. Heb. et Talm.,' on Matt. v. 31, Opp., tom. ii. 290). Adultery, however, cannot be supposed here because that was punishable with death. **A bill of divorcement**; literally, *a writing of excision*; the man and woman having by marriage become one flesh, the divorce of the woman was a cutting of her off from the one whole. Lightfoot has given (*loc. cit.*) different forms of letters of divorce in use among the Jews (see also Maimonides, 'De Divortiis,' ch. iv. § 12).

Ver. 4.—The woman was held to be defiled by her second marriage, and thus by implication, the marrying of a woman who had been divorced was pronounced immoral, as is by our Lord explicitly asserted (Matt. v. 32). The prohibition of a return of the wife to her first husband, as well as the necessity of a formal bill of divorcement being given to the woman before she could be sent away, could not fail to be checks on the licence of divorce, as doubtless they were intended to be.

Ver. 5.—A man newly married was to be exempt from going to war, and was not to have any public burdens imposed on him for a year after his marriage. **Charged with any business**; literally, *there shall not pass upon him for any matter*; i.e. there shall not be laid on him anything in respect of any business. This is explained by what follows. **Free shall he be for his house for one year**; *i.e.* no public burden shall be laid on him, that he may be free to devote himself entirely to his household relations, and be able to cheer and gladden his wife (comp. ch. xx. 7). "By this law God showed how he approved of holy wedlock (as by the former he showed his hatred of unjust divorces) when, to encourage the newly married against the cumbrances which that estate bringeth with it, and to settle their love each to other, he exempted those men from all wars, cares, and expenses, that they might the more comfortably provide for their own estate" (Ainsworth).

Vers. 6—14.—*Various prohibitions.*

Ver. 6.—**No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge**; rather, *the handmill and the upper millstone* (literally, *the rider*) *shall not be taken* (literally, *one shall not take*) *in pledge.* Neither the mill itself nor the upper millstone, the removal of which would render the mill useless, was to be taken. The upper millstone is still called the rider by the Arabs (Hebrew *rechebh*, Arabic *rekkab*). **For he taketh a man's life to pledge**; or *for* (thereby) *life itself is pledged;* if a man were deprived of that by which food for the sustaining of life could be prepared, his life itself would be imperilled (cf. Job. xxii. 6; Prov. xxii. 27; Amos ii. 8).

Ver. 7.—*Against man-stealing:* repetition, with expansion, of the law in Exod. xxi. 16.

Vers. 8, 9.—The law concerning the leprosy is in Lev. xiii., xiv. By this law the priests are directed how to proceed with those afflicted with leprosy; and here the people are counselled by Moses to follow the directions of the priests in this case, however painful it might be for them to submit to the restrictions that would be thereby imposed upon them, remembering what the Lord did to Miriam the sister of Moses, how even she was separated from the camp by the express command of God until she was healed (Numb. xii. 14). Michaelis, Keil, and others, following the Vulgate ("Observa diligenter ne incurras plagam lepræ sed facies quæcunque docuerint te sacerdotes"), understand this passage as inculcating obedience to the priests, lest leprosy should be incurred as a punishment for disobedience. But it is improbable that a general counsel to submit to the priests should be introduced among the special counsels here given; and besides, the formula הִשָּׁמֶר בְּ means, "Take heed to yourself in respect of" (cf. 2 Sam. xx. 10; Jer. xvii. 21), rather than "Beware of," or "Be on your guard against."

Vers. 10—13.—If one had to take a pledge from another, he was not to go into the house of the latter and take what he thought fit; he must stand without, and allow the debtor to bring to him what he saw meet to offer. He might stand outside and summon the debtor to produce his pledge, but he was not insolently to enter the house and lay hands on any part of the owner's property. To stand outside and call is still

a common mode of seeking access to a person in his own house or apartment among the Arabs, and is regarded as the only respectful mode. There would be thus a mitigation of the severity of the exaction, the tendency of which would be to preserve good feeling between the parties. If the debtor was needy, and being such could give in pledge only some necessary article, such as his upper garment in which he slept at night, the pledge was to be returned ere nightfall, that the man might sleep in his own raiment, and have a grateful feeling towards his creditor. In many parts of the East, with the Arabs notably, it is customary for the poor to sleep in their outer garment. "During the day the poor while at work can and do dispense with this outside raiment, but at night it is greatly needed, even in summer. This furnishes a good reason why this sort of pledge should be restored before night" (Thomson, 'Land and the Book,' i. 192, 500). The earlier legislation (Exod. xxii. 25, 26) is evidently assumed here as well known by the people. **It shall be righteousness unto thee** (see on ch. vi. 25).

Vers. 14, 15.—The wage of the labourer was to be punctually paid, whether he were an Israelite or a foreigner (cf. Lev. xix. 13; the law there is repeated here, with a special reference to the distress which the withholding of the hire from a poor man even for a day might occasion).

Ver. 16.—Among heathen nations it was common for a whole family to be involved in the penalty incurred by the head of the family, and to be put to death along with him (cf. Esth. ix. 13, 14; Herod., iii. 118, 119; Ammian. Marcell., xxiii. 6; Curtius, vi. 11, 20; Claudian, 'In Eutrop.,' ii. 478; Cicero, 'Epist. ad Brut.,' 12, 15). Such severity of retribution is here prohibited in the penal code of the Israelites. Though God, in the exercise of his absolute sovereignty, might visit the sins of the parent upon the children (Exod. xx. 5), earthly judges were not to assume this power. Only the transgressor himself was to bear the penalty of his sin (cf. 2 Kings xiv. 6).

Vers. 17, 18.—The law against perverting the right of strangers, widows, and orphans is here repeated from Exod. xxii. 20, 21; xxiii. 9, with the addition that the raiment of the widow was not to be taken in pledge. To enforce this, the people are reminded that they themselves as a nation had been in the condition of strangers and bondmen in Egypt (cf. Lev. xix. 33, 34).

Vers. 19—22.—(Cf. Lev. xix. 9, 10; xxiii. 23.) Not only was no injustice to be done to the poor, but, out of the abundance of those in better estate, were they to be helped.

Ver. 21.—**Thou shalt not glean it afterward**; literally, *Thou shalt not glean after thee*, i.e. after thou hast reaped and gathered for thyself. It is still the custom among the Arabs for the poor to be allowed to gather the berries that may be left on the olive trees after they have been beaten and the main produce carried off by the owner. All the injunctions in this section are adapted to preserve relations of brotherliness and love among the people of the Lord.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Permissive legislation.* No treatment of this passage can be appropriate which does not set it in the light thrown upon it by Matt. xix. 1—12. The heading we have given to this outline indicates a point on which special stress should be laid whenever an expositor has occasion to refer to it. In the course of time, men had come to regard this passage in the light of a *command*. Hence the wording of the question in Matt. xix. 7. But our Lord informs us that it was simply *permissive*. Divorce, under the circumstances here named, was tolerated a while by Moses owing to "the hardness of men's hearts," but that the original Divine arrangement contemplated the indissolubility of marriage. The entire principle of the Mosaic Law was that of educating the people out of a semi-degraded state into something higher. Its method of doing this was by giving the people the best legislation they could bear; tolerating some ill for a while rather than forcing on the people revolutionary methods. The more gentle and gracious, though the slower process, was to sow the seed of higher good, and to let it have time to grow. The following Divine teaching on marriage may well be brought forward with this passage as a basis.

I. That the marriage bond is holy in the eye of God, and ought ever to be recognized as very sacred by man.

II. That by God's own declared appointment this most sacred of all nature's ties is indissoluble.

III. That however, owing to the degeneracy of national habit and thought, civil

legislation may suffer the legal cessation of the marriage bond, yet it can in no case be severed, save by death, without heinous sin on one side or on both.

IV. That the claims of married life are such that, with them, not even the exigencies of military service are unduly to interfere (ver. 5).

V. That the highest and purest enjoyments of wedded life come to perfection only when it is entered on and spent in the Lord Jesus Christ. The law was but a παιδαγωγὸς εἰς Χριστὸν (see 1 Cor. vii. 39).

Vers. 6—22.—*Neighbourly love and good will to be cultivated in detail.* One golden thread runs through all the varied precepts of this chapter. They are most interesting illustrations, one and all, of the spirit of humanity and of far-reaching wisdom which pervades the Mosaic Law. The following headings include the gist of the several injunctions here given, and show also their relation to each other. 1. Man's "inhumanity to man" is sternly restrained. No Israelite, however poor, is to be kidnapped and sold into foreign slavery (ver. 7). 2. No one might be deprived of the machinery, tools, or implements on the use of which his daily bread depended, for a pledge (ver. 6). It is doubtless to this humane regulation that we owe the ancient common law of this realm, that no man shall be distrained of the necessaries of his trade or profession as long as there are other things on which the distraint can be made. 3. A man's house is to be his castle. No one may enter it, even to fetch a pledge (vers. 10, 11). The exception to this is in the case of leprosy, in which instance the priest had a right to enter a man's house to see into the state of things, *i.e.* home is to be inviolable save where the public security demands it otherwise. Hence a special caution is given to avoid anything which might bring such a plague upon them. The case of Miriam should be before their eyes (vers. 8, 9). 4. If the poor man has pledged that in which he needs to sleep, it is to be restored to him before sundown (ver. 13). 5. Hired servants were not to be oppressed, but were to have fair and even generous treatment (vers. 14, 15). 6. The spirit of the checks upon blood-revenge, which are found in connection with the cities of refuge (see Homily thereon), is never to be violated, and no one is to suffer any civil penalty on account of another's sin. Justice is to operate always (ver. 16). 7. No advantage is ever to be taken of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. They who are deprived of earthly helpers on whom they might lean are to find their safeguard in the sentiments of honour and benevolence which pervade the people (vers. 17, 18). 8. Not only is no wrong to be done to them, but their aid and comfort are to be specially studied, in the time of harvest, and in the gathering in of the olive and the grape (vers. 19—22). 9. The reason for such cultivation of kindness to others is that God had been kind to them (vers. 18, 22).

I. The requirements of God in the social relations of life are righteousness, justice, mercy, love, and good will to all.

II. God has fenced round the poor, the weak, the widow, and the fatherless with a special guard.

III. A wrong done by man to man is sin against God.

IV. The inspiring motive for our showing love to others is the love of God to us (cf. Micah vi. 8, 9).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Divorce.* The Hebrew Law, "for the hardness of men's hearts," found it necessary to "suffer" many things not approved of absolutely (Matt. xix. 8). Divorce was one of these. It was permitted on grounds of strong personal dislike (ver. 3). The Law was inapplicable to adultery, that being judged a capital offence. While permitting divorce, Moses obviously aims at restricting it, and shows, by his modes of expression, how alien this rupture of the marriage bond is to the original institution. We may learn—

I. THAT THE RIGHT OF DIVORCE IS ONE TO BE STRICTLY GUARDED. Divorce, even where most justified, is a great evil. It is the rupture of a tie intended by the Creator to be indissoluble. Adultery warrants it, but it must be deemed not the least part of the evil that so unhappy a cause for the dissolution of marriage should exist. The

revelations of the divorce courts are most injurious to public morality. Facilities for divorce, such as some advocate, would lead to serious mischiefs. Besides being wrong in principle, they would create inconstancy, lead to domestic unhappiness, inflict hardship on children, prevent efforts being made to mend matters by forbearance and compliance. Frequent divorces blunt the sense of the sacredness of the marriage union, and so lead to licentiousness. "At the time when divorces were most frequent among the Romans marriages were most rare; and Augustus was obliged, by penal laws, to force men of fashion into the married state" (Hume). Moses restrains divorce thus far that he requires it to take place: 1. By means of a legal document. 2. For reason given. 3. He debars the man divorcing from remarrying the woman divorced if, in the interval, she has been married to another. The Christian law recognizes no legitimate ground of divorce save adultery (Matt. v. 32).

II. THAT RIGHT VIEWS ON DIVORCE ARE CONNECTED WITH A SENSE OF THE INHERENT SACREDNESS OF THE MARRIAGE RELATION. This is suggested by the terms employed in ver. 4. A husband is prohibited from remarrying his divorced wife if in the interval she has been the wife of another, and the ground given for the prohibition is that "she is defiled." But why "defiled"? The expression could not have been used had the first marriage been regarded as perfectly nullified by the legal divorce. The statement that a divorced woman, remarrying, is "defiled," implies that deep view of the marriage relation given in Genesis (ii. 24), and reiterated by Christ (Matt. xix. 3—10). And it will be found, in practice, that light views of the sacredness of the marriage relation invariably work in the direction of increasing facilities for divorce. "The sceptical party in France not long ago proposed to make marriage dissoluble at the pleasure of the parties whenever the woman had passed the age at which child-bearing was no longer to be expected" (R. H. Hutton, in *Expositor*, January, 1881). The writer just quoted ably argues that strict views on marriage, and divorce, are not possible, save under the sanction of a supersensual morality.—J. O.

Ver. 5.—*The man newly married.* The precept is in addition to those in ch. xx. 5—8. It provides that the newly married man shall be left free to enjoy the relation into which he has entered for a whole year, not being required to serve in war, and not being liable to be called from home on public business. It may be inserted here as tending to prevent divorces. We learn: 1. That it is the duty of the husband to love and cherish the wife (Eph. v. 29). 2. That it is the interest of the State to do what it can to endear the marriage relation. 3. That laws should be framed in a spirit of kindness, and with consideration for the happiness of the subjects. This law shows kindly consideration for the wife, (1) in not depriving her of the husband of her youth in the months of their early love; (2) in allowing time for the husband's affections to become securely fixed, so preventing inconstancy.—J. O.

Ver. 8.—*Leprosy.* I. A JUDGMENT TO BE DREADED. Leprosy is viewed here, as usually in Scripture: 1. *As a stroke of Divine judgment.* It was not always such (Job ii.). Nor did the stroke of Divine judgment always take this form (Uzzah, Jeroboam, Ananias, etc.). But it was a frequent form of punishment for sins of a theocratic nature (Uzziah, Gehazi, etc.). It is seldom safe to interpret judgments (Luke xiii. 1—6), but we may expect God's stroke in some way to fall upon ourselves if we persistently despise his laws. 2. *As a symbol of spiritual corruption.* The worst penalty with which God can visit any one is to smite him with soul leprosy, to leave sin to have its natural dominion over him, to allow its corruption to work and spread through his inner man.

II. A WARNING TO BE PONDERED. They are bid remember the case of Miriam. We do well to lay to heart the instances we have known of sin working out punishment and death. Miriam's case suggests the additional thought of pardon on repentance, and of the prevalence of intercession in obtaining forgiveness for offences (Numb. xii. 9—16).—J. O.

Vers. 6—15.—*The treatment of the poor.* The helplessness and dependence of the poor expose them to much harsh treatment. The poor man has, however, his Friend and Judge in God, whose Law here steps in for his protection. It ordains—

I. THAT THE NECESSARIES OF LIFE ARE NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM HIM. The millstone (ver. 6). His raiment, which if taken in pledge is to be restored by nightfall (vers. 12, 13). These are considerate provisions. It is the excess of cruelty to press law against a man to the extent of depriving him of the necessaries of life. This would apply to needful clothing, to a bed, to cooking utensils, to the tools by which he earns his bread. It is nearly as bad to receive and keep these things in pledge or pawn. Help, free and ungrudging, should be forthcoming to all honest persons in need, without driving them to such straits. If men will not work, neither should they eat (2 Thess. iii. 10), but while this may be a reason for refusing to support them in their indolence, it can be no reason for helping them to strip themselves of the necessaries of their existence. Instead of taking a man's tools from him, he should rather be encouraged to retain and ply them, "working with his hands the thing that is good," that he may both support himself and "have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. iv. 28).

II. THAT HIS PERSONAL FREEDOM IS TO BE RESPECTED. (Ver. 7.) No strong or rich neighbour was to be allowed to steal, enslave, or sell him. The stealing of a man was punishable with death. And the spirit of the Law carries us beyond its letter. It requires that we respect the poor man's freedom in all the relations of his life. Whatever the degree of his dependence, it does not entitle another to force his convictions, or do aught that would interfere with the exercise of his rights as man or citizen. Yet how often is compulsion and intimidation applied to those in dependent situations to compel them to act, not as their consciences approve, but as their superiors desire! He who takes advantage of a man's weakness to do anything of the kind is a "man-stealer" in principle and at heart.

III. THAT HIS DWELLING IS NOT TO BE INVADED. (Vers. 10, 11.) The fine sense of justice, the delicacy of feeling, in these precepts, is certainly remarkable. The poor man's house is to be as sacred from invasion as the house of the wealthy. Even his creditor is to wait outside, and let the man fetch as his pledge what he can best spare. We are taught a lesson of respect for the domiciliary and proprietary rights of the poor. Many act as if the homes of the poor were not entitled to have their privacy respected in the same way as the homes of the rich. The Law of God teaches otherwise. We owe it to God, and we owe it to the humanity which is in our poorer brethren as well as in us, that we treat them and their belongings with precisely the same amount of respect that we would show to persons in a better social position.

IV. THAT HIS WAGES ARE TO BE PAID WITH REGULARITY. (Vers. 14, 15.) Every day, the text says, and in the East this was necessary. During the Indian famines it was found that the persons engaged on the relief works had to be paid in this manner. Great suffering was sometimes experienced from the neglect of the rule. The law extends to hired service of all kinds, and enjoins in principle regularity in payment of wages. A like principle applies to the payment of tradesmen's accounts. We have heard tradesmen complain bitterly of the inconvenience to which they were subjected from the singular want of consideration displayed by wealthy families in this particular. Accounts are allowed to run on, and payment is withheld, not from want of ability to pay, but from sheer indolence and carelessness in attending to such matters. While to crave payment would, on the tradesman's part, mean the forfeiture of custom.—J. O.

Vers. 16—22.—*Doing justice and loving mercy.* I. EACH SOUL IS TO BEAR ITS OWN SIN. (Ver. 16.) This verse lays down the rule of human jurisprudence. Loss and suffering to the innocent, as a result of the course of justice inflicting punishment on the guilty, cannot always be avoided. But this is an incidental, not a designed result. With those wider movements of Divine justice, which seem to turn on the federal constitution of the race, and involve different principles, human justice has nothing to do. The rule for us is that the punishment of crime, with loss and suffering resulting therefrom, is to be confined as much as possible to the guilty person.

II. JUSTICE IS TO BE DONE TO THE WEAKEST. (Vers. 17, 18.) The stranger and fatherless and widow are again taken under the Law's protection. Their right is not to be perverted. The widow's raiment is not to be taken in pledge. There should need no inducement to do what is right, but Moses reminds the Israelites of their own past condition as bondmen. Oppression is doubly disgraceful when those guilty of it are persons who have themselves tasted its bitterness, or who have themselves been

mercifully dealt with (Matt. xviii. 23—35). We cannot sufficiently admire the combined justice and tenderness of these Mosaic precepts.

III. PROVISION IS TO BE LEFT FOR THE NEEDY. (Vers. 19—22.) These are beautiful rules. The Jews were under the Law, but it was a Law the fulfilling of which was "love." The variety of ways in which the Law seeks to instil love into the hearts of the chosen people would form a study eminently suitable for the pulpit. The poor we have always with us, and they should be often in our thoughts. (Southey's poem, 'The Complaints of the Poor.') In the corn-field, among the olives, in the vineyard, they were to be remembered. When the wealthy are gathering in their abundance, then is the time for remembering the needy. Thus will the heart be kept warm, covetousness checked, our own happiness best secured, the wants of the poor supplied, their blessing obtained, a treasure laid up in heaven. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth" (Prov. xi. 24).—J. O.

Vers. 1—6.—*The rights of women.* The tendency of the true religion has been to secure and respect the rights of women. Now, we have here women's rights brought under notice in two cases—in a case of separation, and in a case of war. Moses, "because of the hardness of their hearts," allowed divorce, because it prevailed to a lamentable extent in society in his time. He suffered them to divorce their wives, but insisted on a *written* divorce. Among other nations an *oral* divorce was sufficient, and so a divorce might be from the flimsiest caprice. Again, Moses forbade any coming together as man and wife again, a custom which prevails among the Arabs when the oral divorce is so lightly undertaken. Hence we notice in this law given by Moses—

I. THE DIVORCE OF THE WOMAN MUST BE DELIBERATE AND FINAL. Woman was not to be the toy of man's caprice; she was not to be lightly sent away, and, when sent away by the husband after deliberately writing her divorce, she was never to be taken back again. In this way Moses really consulted the rights of women. They had a right to a deliberate statement of the grounds of their divorce; they had also a right to be protected from further interference on the part of their former husbands. It was a wise expedient considering the degeneracy of the time. It is an improvement assuredly on the arrangements of Mahomet.

Our Lord still further secured the rights of women in ordaining that nothing but infidelity on the part of the wife should dissolve the marriage union (Matt. v. 32).

II. WAR MUST NOT ROB A NEWLY MARRIED WIFE OF HER HUSBAND; SHE HAS A RIGHT TO HIS SOCIETY FOR A YEAR WITHOUT MOLESTATION. This was placing the interests of a single woman above the interests of the State. This was exalting the bride to a throne of highest honour surely. Other systems and the world as well may degrade woman, but God's Law elevates her and enthrones her.

III. NOR IS SHE THROUGH HER HUSBAND'S DIFFICULTIES TO LOSE EITHER OF HER MILLSTONES FOR THE GRINDING OF THE CORN. Here was another right of the housewife. No legal distraint could reach the little mill which ground the corn at home and kept the wolf from the door.

Thus in her sorrows and in her joys God stood her Friend, and insisted on her rights. A similar shield should be thrown over her still. It is by securing her in her rights at home that woman's cause shall be advanced. She is intended to be a queen in the household. Everything that makes her position there more secure, everything that makes the home sacred even from the intrusion of a national war at certain times, everything that makes her feel the foundation firm below her,—is in the interests of public weal. But if she is carelessly thrown into the competition with the stronger sex, she will get deteriorated. The rights of women constitute a much longer subject than even Mr. Mill has made it.[1] May the interpreter in due season appear!—R. M. E.

Ver. 7.—*Man-stealing a capital crime.* We have already noticed the merciful fugitive law which forbade any one to restore a runaway to his master. That was the *cure* of existing evil. Here we have the *prevention*, which is better still. For man-stealing and man-selling are the origin of slavery, and the Lord attaches to this the penalty of death. As Cheever said of it, "God be praised for this law! It strikes through and through the vitals of this sin."[2]

[1] Cf. his 'Subjection of Women.' [2] 'God against Slavery,' p. 110.

I. LIBERTY MUST BE MAINTAINED UNDER THE PENAL SANCTION OF DEATH TO HIM WHO INVADES IT. The ruffian who would steal and sell a brother deserves to die. His treason against the liberty of his fellow is an unpardonable sin against society, and he should get no quarter. No wonder men have fought and died for liberty when God surrounds it with such tremendous sanctions.

II. HOW MUCH GREATER THE CRIME OF BRINGING MEN INTO SPIRITUAL BONDAGE! And this is done daily. What is the meaning of the power exercised by superstitious priesthoods over their devotees? Is it not "spiritual despotism"? And should not the crime of man-stealing awake a suspicion in such hearts that their procedure is the exact analogue in the spiritual sphere? It should be combated and resisted unto the death, as destroying that heritage of liberty with which the Lord has endowed all men. —R. M. E.

Vers. 10—22.—*Consideration for the poor and needy.* After giving a cursory reference to leprosy as a Divine judgment to be divinely removed and ceremonially purged away (vers. 8, 9), Moses enters in these verses into the consideration which should be shown to the poor and needy. The debtor is not to be pressed for his pledge, and, if raiment, it must be restored in time for him to sleep with due clothing. The hired servant, engaged for the day, is to get his pay punctually at sundown. The widow, fatherless, and strangers are to have justice dealt to them, and in harvest generous gleanings are to be left for them. The Law inculcates consideration and mercy.

I. THE GENEROSITY INCULCATED BY THE LAW MADE IT A MESSAGE OF MERCY TO ALL MEN. For even suppose no sacrificial system preached, typically, the Divine pardon and love, the mercy enjoined upon others argued mercy in the Lawgiver himself. He could not have commanded so much mercy, and manifested none.

II. THE POOR WERE SAVED FROM UTTER MENDICANCY BY THE LIBERALITY OF THE LAW. They got their need supplied by working for it. It was better to glean than to have it laid without any cost or trouble to them at their feet. They were free, and had to bestir themselves; thus self-respect was fostered, and real, wholesome work prescribed. No wonder that mendicancy was unknown. But nowadays things are made too easy for the "ne'er-do-wells," and a laziness that sacrifices self-respect and liberty on its altar is the blessed result!—R. M. E.

Ver. 16.—*Responsibility not to be transferred according to human caprice.* We desire to notice this interesting direction. It is a contrast to the second commandment. There God represents himself as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children." We see it also in the law of heredity operating in nature. But it is a weapon which God retains in his own hand. We may for wise purposes treat men in the lump, and blend in common consequences the innocent and guilty. But man in his judgments must be particular to execute only the guilty.

I. HUMAN JUDGMENTS MUST BE FINAL IN THIS WORLD SO FAR AS THE JUDGING IS CONCERNED. Men do not get the chance of setting matters right in another world. They judge once for all, and if they execute the innocent, they have no reparation in their power.

II. GOD'S IMPERFECT JUSTICE IN THE PRESENT WORLD IS THE CLEAREST INDICATION TO CONSCIENCE THAT THERE WILL BE A JUDGMENT IN THE OTHER WORLD. Were his justice here perfect, or were there no judgment at all, men would say there is nothing to arrange in another world. But now there is enough to show God reigns, and enough left over to indicate a judgment to come.[1]

III. GOD'S PREROGATIVE OF TRANSFERRING RESPONSIBILITY IS THE SECRET OF OUR SALVATION. For he has laid on Jesus, the Innocent One, the iniquity of us all. He has visited the iniquity of the children upon him who is called our "Everlasting Father." The consequence is we are saved, and in salvation there is ample compensation for all who have to all appearance suffered unjustly here.—R. M. E.

Ver. 5.—*Nuptial joy.* Joy has its special seasons. The year has but one spring.

[1] Cf. 'Wolfe's Romains,' 6th edit., pp. 325—327.

Human life has but one nuptial feast. The freshness and charm of a first marriage can never be repeated. Around this special joy God has thrown a wall of defence.

I. NUPTIAL JOY IS A CARE OF GOD. In every act of Jesus Christ's earthly life, he could have said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Thus, when he became a guest at the marriage feast at Cana, he appeared and spake and acted as his Father's Representative. His miraculous deed was the expression of his Father's pleasure. On every honourable marriage the sunshine of Jehovah rests. In all the beginnings of human life God's fatherly interest centres. That human life may be full of joy is his main concern.

II. NUPTIAL JOY IS SUPERIOR EVEN TO CARES OF THE STATE. The marriage union is the spring-time of a man's life; let no rough wind of war blast it! To spoil the nuptial joy is to spoil a man's life. Other things can wait; this fleeting season of a man's history cannot be recalled. Others can fight the battles of his country better than can he; for at such a time his heart will be elsewhere than the battle-field. To send such as he is to invite defeat. It is not simply a permissive law; it is obligatory: he *shall* not go. To be pressed into military service on his marriage day might sour his temper, exasperate his feelings, dissipate his young love, ruin his earthly home, and blast his domestic prospects. Pious homes are the nursery grounds for God's kingdom.

III. NUPTIAL JOY HAS ITS LIMITATIONS. Such exemption prevailed for a year: then it ceased. The fresh and fragrant spring must give way to fruit-bearing autumn. Joy is a preparation for arduous service. It is worse than useless, if it begets only indolence. It is the parent of new exertion. It recreates the mind. It braces and vitalizes all the active energies. As sleep prepares for labour, so pleasure equips us for higher attainments. We need the spirit of wisdom to use our joys to advantage.—D.

Vers. 6, 10—13.—*Prohibited pledges.* Wealth is power; in every nation we need the safeguards of law to prevent such power from becoming tyranny. The poor are ever liable to become the prey of voracious avarice.

I. A SEASONABLE LOAN IS A PRICELESS SERVICE. Men can render service one to another in a thousand different forms. Redundance of possession on the part of one may serviceably supply the deficiencies of another. One man has riches which he cannot profitably employ, another has trade for which his money capital is insufficient. One man has accumulated experience, another has penetrative wisdom, another has technical knowledge. All this is equipment for useful service. So, in the spiritual kingdom, one has tender feeling, another has gift of prayer or gift of speech, another has extended influence. All human endowments are a common fund to be distributed for the benefit of all. There are occasions in human life when a loan is more useful than a gift. Temporary exigencies sometimes arise, for which loan, on fitting security, is the wisest alleviation.

II. FOR LOANS SUITABLE PLEDGES SHOULD BE TAKEN. 1. *This serves as a check upon facile borrowing.* If loans are granted on too easy terms, we may encourage a man in reckless commercial speculation, or destroy the natural checks on personal extravagance. 2. *This serves to prevent strife.* Borrowers have ofttimes a short memory for liabilities. While human nature has its imperfections and society its scoundrels, it is wiser to have solid guarantee for the redemption of loans, and honest borrowers will not object to give suitable pledges for honesty. 3. *Pledges are needed on the ground of uncertain mortality.* "We know not what a day may bring forth."

III. PLEDGES WHICH TOUCH A MAN'S LIFE ARE PROHIBITED. Money-getting is never to be so pressed as to impinge on the domain of life. Human life is a sacred thing, and must not be trifled with. It has latent capabilities, and may yet become a source of blessing to myriads. Gain becomes as the small dust, an inappreciable thing, when placed in the balance against a human life. The gold of a continent is a bubble in comparison with a man's soul.

IV. GENEROUS SURRENDER OF POVERTY'S PLEDGES AN ACT OF PIETY. Pledges are tell-tales of common dishonesty. If truthfulness and honour were as prevalent as they ought to be, no pledge would be needed. A man's word ought to be as good as his pledge. It often does a man good if we make his honour the only pledge. He is ennobled by our confidence. He rises in self-respect. Debts of honour are often paid prior to those which have material security. If we form a high estimate of men, they will often strive to reach the ideal.

Generous treatment of the poor secures their warmest interest on our behalf. The poorest of the poor has still access to the audience-chamber of the heavenly palace. Their simple suit on our behalf will sometimes secure blessings which no arithmetic can measure. Deeds of kindness done to the indigent are done to God, for God identifies himself with them. "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." If the concession be an act of sterling love, pure from the alloy of selfishness, it is an act of righteousness—the fruit of the Divine Spirit's grace. This is not self-righteousness, for genuine love to men is a gracious affection. It does not begin with self; it does not terminate in self. God is its object; hence it shall be counted for righteousness. As Abraham's faith counted for righteousness, so does also genuine love.—D.

Ver. 7.—*Slave-traffic a capital offence.* Slavery, in modified form, has always prevailed in Eastern lands; and, with prudent limitations, was tolerated among the Hebrews. To promulgate laws for men, which transcended their moral sense, would defeat the ends of law. God has continually to lead men from lower levels to higher. A man may voluntarily sell his liberty for a time. But to deprive a man of liberty by violence is a scarlet sin; and man-stealing is rightly branded with the deepest indignation of God.

I. LIBERTY IS ESSENTIAL TO MAN'S FULLEST LIFE. Any form of bondage is a curtailment of life, a mutilation of the man. His outward condition may be bettered. He may have more food and warmer clothing and a healthier home, but the real man is injured. He is not fully susceptible of self-development. The springs of life are poisoned. He learns to despise himself, and to despise oneself is a step on the slippery road to ruin. Yet liberty is a human right not well understood. It must be distinguished from licence. True liberty has its limits and its checks. A man is at liberty to part with his liberty for a time. Every man who toils for his bread is compelled to do this. Yet even this temporary cessation of his liberty must be voluntary.

II. TO DEPRIVE A MAN FORCIBLY OF HIS LIBERTY IS TO DEPRIVE HIM OF HIS LIFE. The life of the body is not the whole of a man's life. The intellect, affections, choice, will, have a life more precious than the life of the body. To steal a man or to kidnap a child is to interfere, wantonly and injuriously, with the proper life of the person. The outward conditions of training and probation are not such as God ordained. The man's eternal prospects, as well as his earthly possibilities, are blighted. And all this moral damage is done for paltry gain. The man who can lend himself to such a business as slave-mongering is lost to all goodness, lost to shame. He is a disgrace to the human species—a tool of Satan.

III. FOR SUCH A CRIME THE GOD-APPOINTED PENALTY IS DEATH. No heavier penalty is imposed by the civil magistrate, because no heavier penalty is possible. Such a monster must be removed from the scenes of human society, because his presence is pestilential, demoralizing, deadly. Where human judgment ends, God's judgment begins. Such a one is hurried before the higher court of heaven, is arraigned before the great white throne of the Eternal, and fullest justice will here be meted out. My soul, be thou free from such taint as this!—D.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Leprosy symbolic.* God has intended the material world to be a schoolhouse, and every event a vehicle of moral instruction. The sick-chamber may become an audience-room, where lessons of heavenly wisdom are conveyed by the Spirit of truth. Leprosy was singled out by God to be a visible picture of sin; so that "out of the eater there might come forth meat." Out of seeming evil, good can be distilled.

I. LEPROSY HAD A RELIGIOUS CHARACTER. More was meant by the infliction than was seen by the bodily eye. It was mysterious in its origin, and irresistible in its progress. It gradually spread and covered the whole man. It touched and injured every faculty. The intention was salutary, viz. to lead the sufferer's thoughts to the discovery of a deeper malady, and to awaken desire for a more enduring cure. The outward is an index of the inward. Leprosy is a type and picture of sin.

II. LEPROSY REQUIRED RELIGIOUS TREATMENT. It was vain to seek the offices of an ordinary physician. Earthly remedy *was* and still *is* unknown. The sufferer was required to visit the priest. Direct application to God was to be made. Meanwhile, the leper was to be completely isolated. He might not consort with his fellows,

Hereby he might learn the disastrous effects of sin, viz. in disintegrating society; and hereby he might in solitude mourn over sin, and seek its cure. The only possibility of the removal of leprosy was in religious obedience. Every part of the prescription was furnished by God, and was to be applied by God's ministers. Completest submission was a condition of cure.

III. LEPROSY, IN ITS CAUSE AND CURE, HAD AN HISTORIC TYPE. This type was furnished by Miriam. Her specific sin was known; it was insubordination to authority. Her chastisement was sudden. It came direct from God in the form of leprosy. The injured man became her intercessor. God graciously responded to the suit of Moses. Temporary separation and strict seclusion were the method of cure. Golden lessons lie here. Every leper may confidently follow this indication of God's will. If he healed Miriam, can he not also heal me?

IV. LEPROSY HEALED WAS CHARGED WITH RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS. As a healed man will cheerfully recompense the physician for his pains, so God required the restored leper to express his gratitude in the form of animal sacrifice. His gratitude could not be expressed in empty words. He was not permitted to bring that "which cost him nothing." In the slaughter of the devoted victim, the grateful man would confess that he himself had deserved to die, and that God had permitted a substitute. If the man were fully penitent, the sight of the dying substitute would vividly impress his heart with a sense of God's mercy. In every arrangement which God made, the good of man was sought. The method will often seem strange to our dim vision, but respecting the beneficent end there can be no question.—D.

Vers. 14, 15.—*Omitted duty ripens into curse.* Thoughtlessness is a flimsy excuse for neglected duty. It is a sin to be thoughtless. One talent is buried in the earth. In proportion to the mischief produced is the punishment thereof.

I. WE HAVE HERE A CASE OF OBLIGATION FULLY MATURED. 1. The rich is debtor to the poor. Obligation between the several ranks of society is equal. The rich rely for many services upon the poor. The king depends upon the cook. The labourer gives his strength, the employer contributes his money. There is as much obligation on the one side as on the other. 2. At a fixed point of time the obligation is matured. Henceforth the neglect of the obligation becomes sin. My obligations to-day differ from those of yesterday. The element of time plays an important part. Obligations grow. 3. Obligations are implied as well as expressed. Custom is unwritten law. Riches carry with them no warrant for arrogance. Riches have cursed the man if they have made him churlish.

II. NEGLECTED OBLIGATION ENTAILS UNKNOWN MISERY. We cannot follow the effects of thoughtlessness into all their intricate ramifications and to their utmost issues. What would be regarded as a trivial disappointment on the part of one man may be an agony of pain to another. Wages expected and deferred may mean to a needy labourer pinching hunger, not only to himself, but to feeble wife and to helpless babes. A gloomy and sleepless night may follow. Bitter and angry feelings may be engendered. Faith in human integrity may be lost. Self-restraint may vanish. For want of a nail a shoe was lost, a battle was lost, ay, an empire fell!

III. NEGLECTED OBLIGATION MAY BRING HEAVY CURSE UPON THE CULPRIT. It is not safe to treat any human being with contempt, especially the poor. God is the avowed Champion of such. The command, "Honour *all* men," is as binding as "Thou shalt not steal." The cry of the injured man in his distress is sure to pierce the skies. The ear of God is specially attent to his children's suffering cry, even as a mother catches the plaintive wail of her firstborn infant. Swiftly God attaches himself to the side of the oppressed, and takes upon himself the burden. The injustice done to the man becomes an insult done to God. The deed alters in its character, intensifies in its immorality, becomes heinous sin. Vials of wrath are preparing for the head of the unthinking transgressor. It will be as the sin of blasphemy or of murder unto them.—D.

Vers. 16—18.—*Public justice to be pure.* Unseen principles of justice lie at the foundation of human society, and if rottenness and decay appear in these foundations, the social structure will soon topple and fall. Visible prosperity is built upon invisible

justice. In the absence of justice, property becomes untenable, commerce vanishes, peace spreads her wings for flight. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

I. THE MAGISTRATE'S TEMPTATION. Human nature, at its best, is accessible by temptation; and it is well that from the eyes of the nation a fierce light beats upon the judicial bench. If only the ear of the judge be open to the fascinating voice of self-advantage, if his hand be open to a bribe, wickedness will put on the most ravishing charms to deflect him from his duty. Because he occupies a seat so conspicuous, temptation selects him as a special target for her poisoned arrows. Yet even for temptation he may rejoice, for according to his trials should be his moral triumphs. Avarice may tempt him. Love of ease may tempt him. His own tastes and predilections may tempt. The praise of the powerful may tempt. He will become either the stronger or the weaker for the discipline, will grow in moral courage or in cowardice.

II. THE MAGISTRATE'S QUALIFICATION. *The* qualification for the judicial throne is ardent love of justice. As only a wise man can be a teacher, so only a just man can be a true judge. No matter what may be the nationality of the litigants, no matter what their colour, social rank, or sex, every one has an inherent claim on public justice. To pervert judgment is to arouse all the elements of wrath in heaven and earth. The judge is the visible exponent of justice; he wears the garb of justice, and if in him there dwells not the soul of justice, he is a sham and a pretence. Heart devotion to public justice is the only anchor that can hold him fast amid those currents and whirlpools of evil influences which ever surge around him. Things unseen are the most potent.

III. THE MAGISTRATE'S RULE OF ACTION. This is clearly made known to him by God, viz. that punishment is to be personal, not corporate. The child is not to die for the father. Where there is corporate guilt there must be corporate punishment. But this is no contravention of the rule. The inducement is often great to release oneself from the pains of unravelling a complicated suit; or, if relatives of the accused seem to be accessories to an evil deed, a judge is often tempted to embrace all the suspected family in one punishment. The light of truth is to be his only guide; love of justice his compass; the revealed will of God his chart. To him human life is to be held a sacred thing; not one life is to be needlessly sacrificed. It is a sad fact that judges have been amongst the greatest criminals; they have slain many innocent men.

IV. THE MAGISTRATE'S INSPIRING MOTIVE. Many motives may wisely influence him. He, too, must appear before a higher tribunal, and submit his whole life to judicial light. But the motive here pressed upon him is gratitude derived from past experience. The history of his nation is to mould his character and to teach him the value of human justice. He is expected to sympathize with the oppressed, to enter into their griefs, because he is a part of a nation that has felt the sharp scourge of oppression. He has learnt by national experience that, when justice by man is denied, God appears in court and champions the cause of the oppressed. He is the representative of a nation that has been redeemed. He himself is a ransomed one, and is under peculiar obligation to serve his Deliverer. His time, his capacity, his legal knowledge, his influence are not his own; he is redeemed, and belongs to another. Past deliverances are not to be lost upon us, or *we* are lost. To forget the lessons of the past is self-injury, yea, is heinous sin. In every station and office fidelity is demanded.—D.

Vers. 19—22.—*Autumn generosity.* If a man is not generous towards his poorer neighbours in time of harvest, he will never be generous. If the profuse generosity of God be lavished upon him in vain, his moral nature must be hard indeed. As men "make hay while the sun shines," so should we yield to benevolent impulses while God surrounds us with sunshine of kindness. As we are undeserving recipients, we should share our unpurchased bounty with others.

I. WE HAVE HERE A FITTING OCCASION FOR GENEROSITY. God supplies us with fitting seasons for getting good and for doing good. It is not always autumn. We cannot gather corn and olives when we please. We have to wait the arrival of the season, and this season is God's provision. We must gather *then* or never. Opportunity can

never be trifled with. If abundance has been put into our hands, let us forthwith use it well, or it may be suddenly taken from us. If an unusual generous impulse be upon us, it is wisest to respond to it freely, to give it largest scope, for this is a visit of God to us for good.

II. FITTING OBJECTS FOR GENEROSITY ARE PROVIDED. Were it not for the existence of the poor, there would be no outlet for generosity in a practical and material form. There would be no discipline for the best part of our nature. It would be a pain and a loss to us if the instinct of benevolence within us found no field for its exercise. Thankful ought we to be that the poor shall not cease out of the land. The fatherless and the widow come to us as the sent of God, to loosen the sluices of our generosity, and to do us good. We are almoners of God's royal bounty.

III. DELICATE PLANS FOR CONVEYING GENEROSITY. The finer forces of our bodily nature are conveyed to every part by most delicate, almost invisible, ducts. Nerve-power is distributed from the centre to the circumference by minutest channels. So, too, should we employ the most refined delicacy in relieving the necessities of the poor. Let not our gift be spoilt by any assumption of superiority, nor by any arrogant rudeness. It is a noble thing to respect the manly feelings of the poor, and to touch with fairy finger the sensibilities of the suffering. We are to study, not only how much we can give, but especially how best to give it. From the harvest-field and the olive-grove we may learn this delicacy of kindness. Both the quantity and the quality of our service are important in God's esteem.

IV. THE POTENT MOTIVE TO GENEROSITY. Remembrance of their own redemption was the mighty motive for all good deeds. This is the constant refrain of God's message. As God is not wearied in reiterating the lesson, neither should we be wearied in hearing it. We are the objects of God's tenderest love. He has set in motion his most prodigious energies to rescue us from misery. He has emptied his treasury of blessings so as to enrich us, and the end for which he has enriched us is that we may enrich others. Ye have been ineffably blessed, do you bless in return.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV.

LAWS RELATING TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT, LEVIRATE MARRIAGES, AND WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

Vers. 1—3.—The first and second verses should be read as one sentence, of which the protasis is in ver. 1 and the apodosis in ver. 2, thus: **If there be a strife between men, and they come to judgment, and they** (*i.e.* the judges) **give judgment on them, and justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked deserve to be beaten** (literally, *be the son of blows*), **that the judge,** etc. It is assumed that the judges shall pronounce just judgment, and apportion to the guilty party his due punishment; and then it is prescribed how that is to be inflicted. In the presence of the judge the man was to be cast down, and the adjudged number of blows were to be given him, not, however, exceeding forty, lest the man should be rendered contemptible in the eyes of the people, as if he were a mere slave or brute. This punishment was usually inflicted with a stick (Exod. xxi. 10; 2 Sam. vii. 14, etc.), as is still the case among the Arabs and Egyptians; sometimes also with thorns (Judg. viii. 7, 16); sometimes with whips and scorpions, *i.e.* scourges of cord or leather armed with sharp points or hard knots (1 Kings xii. 11, 14). Though the culprit was laid on the ground, it does not appear that the bastinado was used among the Jews as it is now among the Arabs; the back and shoulders were the parts of the body on which the blows fell (Prov. x. 13; xix. 29; xxvi. 3; Isa. l. 6). **According to his fault, by a certain number;** literally, *according to the requirement of his crime in number;* i.e. according as his crime deserved. The number was fixed at forty, probably because of the symbolical significance of that number as a measure of completeness. The rabbins fixed the number at thirty-nine, apparently in order that the danger of exceeding the number prescribed by the Law should be diminished (cf. 2 Cor. xi. 24); but another reason is assigned by Maimonides, viz. that, as the instrument of punishment was a scourge with three tails, each stroke counted for three, and thus they could not give forty, but only thirty-nine, unless they exceeded the forty (Maimon., 'In Sanhedrin,' xvii. 2).

Ver. 4.—The leaving the ox unmuzzled when treading out the corn was in order

that the animal might be free to eat of the grains which its labour severed from the husks. This prohibition, therefore, was dictated by a regard to the rights and claims of animals employed in labour; but there is involved in it the general principle that all labour is to be duly requited, and hence it seems to have passed into a proverb, and was applied to men as well as the lower animals (cf. 1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18). The use of oxen to tread out the corn and the rule of leaving the animals so employed unmuzzled still prevail among the Arabs and other Eastern peoples (Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' ii. 206, 207; iii. 6; Kitto, 'Bib. Cycl.,' i. 86).

Vers. 5—10.—*Levirate marriages.* If a man who was married died without issue, his surviving brother was required to marry the widow, so as to raise up a successor to the deceased, who should be his heir. The brother who refused this duty must be publicly disgraced. The design of this institution—which was not originated by Moses, but came down from early times (Gen. xxxviii. 8), and is to be found amongst other nations than the Jews, and that even in the present day—was to preserve a family from becoming extinct and to secure the property of a family from passing into the hands of a stranger. The notion that the usage "had its natural roots in the desire inherent in man who is born for immortality, and connected with the hitherto undeveloped belief in an eternal life, to secure a continued personal existence for himself and immortality for his name through the perpetuation of his family, and in the life of the son who took his place" (Keil), seems wholly fanciful.

Ver. 5.—**Dwell together**; *i.e.* not necessarily in the same house, but in the same community or place (cf. Gen. xiii. 6; xxvi. 7). **And have no child**; literally, *have no son*; but this is rightly interpreted as meaning *child* (so the LXX.; Vulgate; Josephus, 'Antiq.,' iv. 8, 23; Matt. xxii. 25; Maimon., 'In Jibbum.,' ii. 6—9); for, if the deceased left a daughter, the perpetuation of the family and the retention of the property might be secured through her (cf. Numb. xxvii. 4, etc.).

Ver. 6.—**Shall succeed in the name of his brother** which is dead; literally, *shall rise up on the name of his deceased brother*; i.e. shall be enrolled in the family register as heir of the deceased, and shall perpetuate his name.

Vers. 7—10.—If the man refused to marry the widow of his deceased brother, he was free to do so; but the woman had her redress. She was to bring the matter before the elders of the town, sitting as magistrates at the gate, and they were to summon the man and speak to him, and if he persisted in his refusal, the woman was to take his shoe from off his foot, and spit before his face, and say, **So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.** The taking off of the shoe of the man by the woman was an act of indignity to him; it amounted to a declaration that he was not worthy to stand in his brother's place, and was scornfully rejected by the woman herself. As the planting of the shod foot on a piece of property, or the casting of the shoe over a field, was emblematical of taking possession of it with satisfaction (Ps. lx. 8; cviii. 9); and as the voluntary handing of one's shoe to another betokened the giving up to that other of some property or right; so, contrariwise, the forcible removal from one of his shoe and the casting of it aside indicated contemptuous rejection of the owner, and repudiation of all his rights and claims in the matter. To walk barefooted was regarded by the Jews as ignominious and miserable (cf. Isa. xx. 2, 4; 2 Sam. xv. 30). The spitting before the face of the man (בְּפָנָיו, in front of him) is by the Jewish interpreters understood of spitting on the ground in his presence (Talmud, 'Jebam,' 106; Maimon., 'In Jibbum.,' iv. 6—8). This seems to be what the words express (cf. ch. iv. 37; vii. 24; xi. 25; Josh. x. 8; Ezek. x. 8, for the rendering of בפני); and this, according to Oriental notions, would be insult enough (cf. Numb. xii. 14; Isa. l. 6; Niebuhr, 'Description de l'Arabie,' i. 49).

Vers. 11, 12.—**But** though the childless widow might thus approach and lay hold on the man, no licence was thus granted to women to pass beyond the bounds of decency in their approaches to the other sex. Hence the prohibition in these verses. The severe sentence here prescribed was by the rabbins commuted into a fine of the value of the hand.

Vers. 13—16.—Rectitude and integrity in trade are here anew inculcated (cf. Lev. xix. 35, etc.).

Ver. 13.—**Divers weights**; literally, *a stone and a stone*—a large one for buying, and a small one for selling (cf. Amos viii. 5). Both weights and measures were to be "perfect," *i.e.* exactly correct, and so just. (On the promise in ver. 15, see ch. iv. 26; v. 16.)

Ver. 16.—(Cf. ch. xxii. 5; xxiii. 12.) **All that do unrighteously**; equivalent to all that transgress any law.

Vers. 17—19.—Whilst in their intercourse

with each other the law of love and brotherly kindness was to predominate, it was to be otherwise in regard to the enemies of God and his people. Them they were to overcome by force; wickedness was to be removed by the extinction of the wicked. Moses has already repeatedly reminded the Israelites that they had utterly to destroy the wicked nations of Canaan; and he here closes this discourse by reminding them that there was a nation outside of Canaan which was also doomed, and which they were to root out. This was Amalek, which had attacked the Israelites in their journey at Rephidim, and had taken advantage of their exhausted condition to harass their rear and destroy those who, faint and weary, had lagged behind. For this they had been already punished by the Israelites, who, led on by Joshua, had turned upon them and discomfited them with the edge of the sword. This, however, was not enough; Amalek was to be utterly destroyed, and this the Israelites were to effect as soon as the Lord had given them rest in the promised land. It was not, however, till the time of David that this was done.

Ver. 18.—**And smote the hindmost of thee**; literally, *and tailed thee*; i.e. cut off thy tail, or rear. The verb (זָנַב) occurs only here and in Josh. x. 19. It is a denominative from זָנָב, a tail, and, like many denominatives, both in the Hebrew and in other languages, it has the sense of taking away or cutting off the thing expressed by the noun from which it is formed, like the English verb *to skin*, for example.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Humanity to be respected in judicial inflictions.* This passage is an interesting illustration of the restraints which the Law of Moses puts on the Hebrews, as to the semi-barbarous customs of other nations. It is well known that punishment by bastinado was common among the ancient Egyptians. It would be not unnaturally adopted by the Hebrews. There are here three matters to be noticed. 1. Here is a principle to be recognized (ver. 1). 2. The punishment (1) is to be inflicted in the presence of the judge, and (2) is not to exceed forty stripes. 3. The reason given is very impressive, "lest thy brother should seem vile unto thee," *i.e.* lest he should be so excessively punished as to be afterwards unfit for service, and lest he should be the common butt of any one who chose to dishonour him. *Human nature is to be respected*, even in carrying out legal sentences on crime. Trapp says, "The Turks, when cruelly lashed, are compelled to return to the judge that commanded it, to kiss his hand, to give him thanks, and to pay the officer that whipped them!"

I. The sight of a human being coming under the sentence of criminal law is matter for intense sadness.

II. The punishment to be inflicted on him should be such in matter and degree as to assert right principle, but not such as needlessly to dishonour him. For—

III. Humanity, in spite of crime, has dignity about it still. Sin and the sinner are not inseparable. God can kill one and save the other!

IV. With a view to a criminal's salvation, whatever of honour remains in his nature should be carefully guarded and tenderly appealed to.

Ver. 4.—*Labourers to live by their labour.* The use of this verse by the apostle has brought it out of an obscurity to which it might have been relegated. It is quoted by Paul in 1 Cor. ix. 10, and is there applied by him as an illustration in the ancient Law of Moses of the same principle which our Lord affirmed when he appointed that "they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (see Matt. x. 9, 10). We can scarcely go so far as John Calvin in reference to Paul's allusion to it. He says that Paul here says, *God does not care for oxen!* Surely his meaning is simply that it was not merely from his care for oxen that God commanded Moses to pen such a precept, but that there was a common care of God for all his creatures, and that if he cared thus for the less, it was very certain he would care even more for the greater. Labour, moreover, is to be like all native growths—it is to have "its seed within itself." All who employ labourers are to see that their workmen are sufficiently well paid to enable them to live by their labour. Any one desiring to develop this truth in relation to spiritual

toil would naturally rather take the New Testament texts referred to above. Keeping, therefore, simply to the earthly sphere, we remark: 1. No precept in this book which is connected with duty or character is too trivial to be "worthy of God." 2. An apparently small command may wrap up in it a great principle. 3. True benevolence will be kind and thoughtful to the humblest labourer even in minute detail. 4. God does not allow any one selfishly to monopolize the fruits of another's labour without giving the toiler adequate compensation for his toil. 5. The Great Defender of the rights of the working classes is—God! 6. It is a divinely appointed ordinance for ever that the power of toil is to be a means of self-support; that labour shall bring wealth to the labourer. Here is a blow struck at slavery.

Vers. 5—10.—*Family honour to be maintained.* This law supposes a state of society and a kind of public opinion which does not now exist, and in detail it is therefore obsolete. But the principle it involves is clear, viz. that in married life the honour of the family on both sides is an object of mutual interest and concern, not only during the events of life, but also in case of arrangements at and after death.

Vers. 11, 12.—*An offending hand.* This may be compared with Matt. v. 30. 1. Any member of the body may become an instrument of sin. 2. Where there is in any case special danger there should a special watch be kept. 3. Favourite, yet sinful lusts *must* be crucified, whatever the cost may be.

Vers. 13—16.—*Righteousness in trade imperative.* This paragraph requires no preparatory elucidation. The topic for a Homily which it gives is one of the most important in the range of human ethics. It furnishes six lines of thought. 1. In the providence of God men are thrown together for the purposes of trade. 2. Opportunity is thus furnished for the exercise of right principles of mutual justice and equity. 3. There is often given an opportunity also of taking advantage of others by unequal weights and measures. 4. God requires of us absolute justice to others, always and everywhere. 5. No false maxims of men, such as "business is business," can ever exonerate us from obligations to justice. 6. Our duty to man in this respect is enforced by a double argument. (1) The neglect of it is an abomination to God (ver. 16). (2) The observance of it will tend to long life, prosperity, and peace (ver. 15).

Vers. 17—19.—*Kindness to enemies is not to degenerate into sympathy with or indifference to ungodliness.* God is kind. God is terrible. When he riseth up against sin to punish it openly, who—who can stand? The repeated injunctions in this book, of kindness to enemies, the prohibitions against private revenge, etc., should effectually guard any against attributing to Moses any incitement of the people to revengeful retaliation. He utters a prophecy, as a prophet. In Exod. xvii. 16, the LXX. read, ἐν χειρὶ κρυφαίᾳ, κ.τ.λ., "by an unseen hand the Lord will war against Amalek." In Numb. xxiv. 20, Balaam foretells Amalek's doom. In 1 Sam. xv., the execution of judgment on Amalek is recorded; and thus is the meaning of our present paragraph explained. Note: 1. It is a very dangerous thing for a nation to harass or injure the people of God. 2. Such a nation may seem to prosper a while, but judgment is "laid up in store." 3. The retribution will come sooner or later in God's wonder-working providence. "Their feet shall slide in due time." 4. Whatever sympathy we may rightly feel for individual sufferers, the fact that God will ultimately avenge his people's wrongs may fill us with grateful joy.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The bastinado.* Professor W. R. Smith ('Old Testament,' p. 376) regards this law of stripes as indicating a late date for Deuteronomy. He argues from the customs of the free Bedouins. But it is perilous to reason from the customs of the Bedouins to the punishments in vogue among a people who had lived some centuries in Egypt, where, as is well-known, the bastinado was in constant use. The sculptures at Beni-Hassan represent the very scene here described. We learn—

I. THAT IT IS THE FUNCTION OF CIVIL MAGISTRATES TO PUNISH CRIME. (Vers. 1, 2.) They bear the sword for this purpose (Rom. xiv. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 14). The modern humanitarian spirit tends to exalt the reformatory and preventive ends of punishment, at the expense of the retributive. That every effort should be put forth for the reformation of the criminal which the case admits of, we cordially allow. But the danger is, in these matters, that sentiment degenerate into sentimentalism. Crime *deserves* punishment, and on that ground alone, were there no other, ought to receive it. No theory can be satisfactory which loses sight of retribution, and makes reformation and prevention the all in all.

II. THAT PENALTIES OUGHT TO BE SUFFICIENTLY SEVERE. (Ver. 2.) To be effective in early stages of civilization, penalties must be severe, prompt, and specific enough to be vividly conceived (cf. H. Spencer's 'Essays:' 'Prison Ethics'). The progress of society admits of the substitution of punishments appealing to a higher class of sensibilities. But even these ought adequately to express the measure of the criminal's desert. If Mr. Spencer were right, the slightest restraint compatible with the safety of the community, combined with compulsory self-support, would be punishment sufficient for the greatest crimes. The sense of justice in mankind rejects such ideas. Carlyle's teaching in 'Model Prisons' is healthier than this.

III. THAT PENALTIES OUGHT TO BE MEASURED. (Ver. 3.) It is difficult to believe that in our own country, at the beginning of this century, the theft of five shillings from the person was a crime punishable by death. Yet the statute-book bristled with enactments, of which, unhappily, this was not the worst. Such outrageous disproportion between crime and punishment must have robbed the law's sentences of most of their moral effect. Anomalies exist still, which it would be to any statesman's credit to endeavour to remove.

IV. THAT PENALTIES SHOULD NOT BE UNDULY DEGRADING. (Ver. 3.) Lest "thy brother should seem vile unto thee." The effect of excessive severity is to harden, degrade, dehumanize. It often drives the criminal to desperation. As a victim of the older criminal code expressed it, "A man's heart is taken from him, and there is given to him the heart of a beast." The tendency in modern feeling is toward the abolition of corporal punishments entirely, as degrading alike to him who administers them, and to those by whom they are endured. Observe: 1. The profound idea on which the law rested. The body, part of human nature, and sharing its dignity as made in God's image. 2. The best laws may be unjustly and cruelly administered (2 Cor. xi. 24, 25).—J. O.

Ver. 4.—*The oxen.* The apostle draws from this passage the general principle that the labourer is entitled to eat of the fruits of his labour (1 Cor. ix. 9, 10). His application teaches us to look for similar general principles wrapped up in other precepts of the Law. We learn—

I. ANIMALS ARE ENTITLED TO GENEROUS TREATMENT. The ox that trod out the corn was not to be muzzled. He was to be permitted to eat of the fruits of his work. Kindness to animals is a duty: 1. *Which man owes to the creatures.* Severe moralists, arguing that animals, being destitute of reason, are also destitute of rights, would bring all man's duties towards them under the head of duties to himself (*e.g.* Kant). Alford thinks this to be implied in Paul's language. But Paul's argument, if it is to be pressed in this connection, rather implies the contrary. It recognizes in the ox, on the ground of its being a labourer, a kind of right to be provided for. All that the apostle affirms is that the precept had an end beyond the reference to oxen, that the "care for oxen" was subordinate to the inculcation of a principle of general application. Our duty to the creatures rests on the ground that they are sentient beings, capable of pain and pleasure, and on the law of love, which requires us to diffuse happiness, and avoid inflicting needless suffering. 2. *Which man owes to himself.* For this view, while not the whole of the truth, is an important part of it. Leibnitz, in a small treatise written for the education of a prince, advised that, during youth, he should not be permitted to torment or give pain to any living thing, lest, by indulging the spirit of cruelty, he should contract a want of feeling for his fellow-men. Alford says, "The good done to a man's immortal spirit by acts of humanity and justice infinitely outweighs the mere physical comfort of a brute which perishes."

II. THE HUMAN LABOURER IS ENTITLED TO SHARE IN THE PROFITS OF HIS LABOURS. Theoretically, he does so every time he is paid wages. In the distribution of the fruits of production, the part which the labourer gets, we are told, is *wages*, the share of the landowner is *rent*, that of the capitalist is *interest*, and the Government takes *taxes*. Practically, however, wages are settled, not by abstract rules of fairness, but by competition, which may press so hard upon the labourer as (till things right themselves) to deprive him of his fair proportion of industrial profits. The wage system is far from working satisfactorily. As society advances, it appears to be leading to an increasing amount of bitterness and friction. Masters and men represent opposing interests, and stand, as it were, at daggers drawn. It is easier to see the evil than to devise a cure. Economists (Mill, Jevons, etc.) seem to look mainly in the direction of some form of co-operation. Their schemes are principally two: 1. Industrial co-operation. 2. Industrial partnerships—the system according to which a fixed proportion of profits is assigned for division amongst the workmen engaged in production.

III. MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL ARE ENTITLED TO BE SUPPORTED BY THEIR FLOCKS. This is the application made by Paul (1 Cor. ix.; cf. Matt. x. 10—12; Gal. vi. 6). Christian ministers, labouring in spiritual things, and by that work withdrawn from ordinary avocations, are to be cheerfully supported. The text applies to this case more strictly than to the case of workmen claiming to participate in profits. The workman claims but his own. The right of the minister to support is of a different kind. He labours in things spiritual, but, it is to be hoped, with a higher end than the mere obtaining of a livelihood. While, therefore, his support is a duty, it is, like duties of benevolence generally, not one that can be enforced by positive law. The right to support is a moral, not a legal one. It creates an obligation, but, as moralists say, an indeterminate obligation. It is an obligation to be freely accepted, and as freely discharged.—J. O.

Vers. 5—10.—*The levirate law.* At the root of this law, which obtained widely in the East, we find ideas and feelings such as these—

I. RESPECT FOR THE HONOUR OF THE FAMILY. In the East, as is well known, childlessness is reckoned a calamity, almost a disgrace. Hence, as well as for other reasons, the severity of the law in ver. 11. Hence also this custom of marrying a brother's widow, in order to raise up seed to the brother. The motive is plainly to avert disgrace from a brother's house, to wipe out his reproach, to hand down his name in honour. We may respect the feeling while repudiating the form in which it embodied itself. What touches the credit of our families ought to be felt to concern ourselves. Not in the sense, certainly, of leading us to uphold that credit at the expense of truth and of justice to others; but in the sense of doing everything we can with a good conscience to maintain or redeem it.

II. DESIRE FOR A PERPETUATED NAME. The men of the old dispensation, as Matthew Henry says, not having so clear and certain a prospect of living themselves on the other side death as we have now, were the more anxious to live in their posterity. The principle is the same at bottom as that which leads us to wish for personal immortality. What man desires is perpetuated existence, of which existence in one's posterity is a kind of shadow, affording, in contemplation, a like "shadow of satisfaction" to the mind. Positivism, in falling back from a personal to a corporate immortality, is thus a movement in the wrong direction. The exchange it proposes is the substance for the shadow. The desire to exist in the remembrance of posterity, and to be well thought of by them, is, however, a legitimate principle of action. It should operate in leading us to live good and useful lives, which is the secret of the only lasting honour.

> "Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

III. THE DISGRACE ATTACHING TO REFUSAL OF THE DUTIES IMPOSED ON US BY RELATIONSHIP TO THE DEAD. The disgrace in this case was emphatically marked (vers. 9, 10). The wishes of the dead should be very sacred to us. The duties which spring from the bond of relationship, or from express request, should, if possible, be

faithfully discharged. Aiding in the settlement of affairs, seeing provision made for a widow and children, accepting and fulfilling trusts, etc.—J. O.

Vers. 13—16.—*Morality in trade.* The Hebrew lawgiver lays just stress on honesty in weights and measures. The general principle is that of honesty in trade. Weights and measures connect themselves intimately with the ideas of justice, rectitude, impartiality. Justice is represented by a figure with scales and weights. Falsification of weights and measures is thus a representative sin, one which corrupts integrity in man with peculiar and fatal rapidity.

I. AN INJUNCTION MUCH NEEDED. Trade morality is at present at a low ebb. Mixed up with the thousands of honest transactions which no doubt take place every day, there must be admitted to be an enormous number which are more or less fraudulent. "On the average," says Mr. Spencer, "men who deal in bales and tons differ but little in morality from men who deal in yards and pounds. Illicit practices of every form and shade, from venial deception up to all but direct theft, may be brought home to the higher grades of the commercial world. Tricks innumerable, lies acted or uttered, elaborately devised frauds, are prevalent—many of them established as 'customs of the trade;' nay, not only established, but defended" ('Essays,' vol. ii., 'Morals of Trade;' cf. Smiles on 'Duty,' ch. iii.). The saddest feature in the outlook is the apparent prevalence of the feeling that trickery of this kind is absolutely essential to success—that a man can't get on without it.

II. AN INJUNCTION WHICH OUGHT TO BE ENFORCED. But how? By a fearless exposure of dishonesties, and by a loud and firm demand on the part of every upright member of society for honest and truthful dealing. Only if the dishonest are a majority in society—a majority of overwhelming numbers—can they ultimately prevail against the honest. A determined combination on the part of persons of integrity would suffice to put them down. The man known to be honest should be supported, even at some pecuniary sacrifice. Custom should be unflinchingly withdrawn from men detected in tricks, and the stamp of public reprobation placed on such men and their doings. Means should be taken to diffuse information as to the arts and frauds by which dishonesty sustains itself. The causes of these dishonesties need also to be looked into—chiefly, according to Spencer, the indiscriminate respect paid to wealth. Love of the honour and position which wealth gives—the certainty of being looked up to, courted in society, applauded for success, with few questions asked,—this is the tap-root of the evil, and it is to be cured by distinguishing between wealth and character, and by honouring the former only when in alliance with the latter.

III. AN INJUNCTION WHICH IT IS EVERY ONE'S INTEREST TO ENFORCE. Trade dishonesty should, if possible, be checked: 1. *In view of its inherent immorality.* Nothing can be more despicable, more mean and disgraceful, than the lies, frauds, briberies, malpractices, adulterations, which, if the witnesses are to be trusted, abound in all branches of trade. These things are a blot on our country, the shame of which touches all. 2. *In view of its corrupting effect on morals generally.* Its influence spreads beyond itself. It saps principle, eats out faith in virtue, unfits the individual for every moral task. 3. *In view of its effects on national prosperity.* These are ruinous. God's displeasure rests on the nation, and he is certain to chastise it. But the sorest whip he uses to chastise it is the scourge of its own follies. Our dishonesties lose us (are actually losing us) our markets; lower us in the eyes of foreign nations; destroy credit; engender a spirit of general distrust; still worse, by undermining principle, they destroy the power of steady application to work, and increasingly substitute the motives of the gambler for those of the merchant content with lawful gains. The inevitable end is impoverishment and disgrace. 4. *As a measure of self-protection.* Each individual suffers as part of the whole. He is frequently cheated, sometimes incurs serious losses. Hard-earned money finds its way into the pockets of clever but unscrupulous scoundrels, who as rapidly squander it in reckless living. —J. O.

Vers. 17—19.—*Amalek.* Moses, in calling the sin of Amalek to remembrance, and enjoining destruction of that people, was not speaking "of himself." He but declared the will of God, long before announced, and solemnly recorded in a book (Exod. xvii. 14).

It was not "after the spirit or mission of the Law," as has been well remarked, "to aim at overcoming inveterate opposition by love and by attempts at conversion. The Law taught God's hatred of sin and of rebellion against him by enjoining the extinction of the obstinate sinner" ('Speaker's Commentary'). The lessons from the command are these—

I. GOD KEEPS IN REMEMBRANCE INJURIES DONE TO HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE. (Ver. 17.)

II. GOD SPECIALLY REMEMBERS INJURIES TO THE FEEBLE AND AFFLICTED. (Ver. 18.) The "fear of God," if nothing else, ought to restrain inhumanities. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me?*" (Acts ix. 4).

III. WRONGS TO THE CHURCH OF GOD WILL NOT PASS UNAVENGED. (Ver. 19.) Repentance, as in Paul's case, may reverse the sentence. If the sinner is obstinate, the doom will fall as certainly as in the case of Amalek (2 Thess. i. 9).—J. O.

Vers. 1—3.—*Earthly magistracy an argument for the heavenly.* It is not conceivable that God should have taken such pains, through Moses, to secure pure administration of justice in earthly courts, unless he had established a like court of judicature in heaven. So far as the will of God is embodied in the judicial procedure on earth, it is copied from the pattern of heavenly things.

I. A JUDICIAL COURT IS CREATED FOR THE DISCRIMINATION OF HUMAN CHARACTER. The purpose of all examination and testimony is to separate the evil from the good—to bring to light the righteousness and the wickedness of men. Justice delights more in vindicating and commending the righteous than in censuring and condemning the wicked. Justice found a nobler occupation in marshalling Mordecai through the city, and proclaiming his innocence, than in erecting the gallows for the execution of Haman. Human judges, however, can discern only what is palpable and conspicuous. They have not an organ of insight delicate enough to detect the lesser excellences and blemishes; nor can they penetrate into the interior nature of man. These institutions are only the *shadows* of heavenly things. But every man stands before the tribunal of a higher Judge, where not only actions, but motives, intentions, and feelings, are examined and weighed. Here, without the possibility of mistake, the righteous are justified, the wicked are condemned. Discrimination is perfect: separation will be complete.

II. A JUDICIAL COURT IS ORDAINED FOR THE PUNISHMENT OF EVIL DEEDS. 1. The true punishment is *measured by the scale of demerit.* It is enjoined to be "according to his fault." In God's sagacious judgment, every degree of blameworthiness is noted. Nothing appertaining to moral conduct is beneath the notice of God's eye. *We* value far too little moral qualities. As we grow like God, we shall gain in that penetrative power which discerns the beauty of goodness and the blackness of iniquity. 2. *Punishment is a loss of manliness.* "The judge shall cause him to lie down." His dignity shall be prostrate. Sin robs us of manliness, but the loss does not come into public view until punishment follows. To be righteous throughout is to be a man. 3. *Punishment is to be public.* The culprit is "to be beaten before the judge's face." This publicity is part of the penalty. It is summary—to be inflicted at once. And publicity is also a safeguard against cruelty and against excess. So God invites public recognition and public approval of his doings. The ransomed universe shall unite in the testimony, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

III. A JUDICIAL COURT REVEALS THE VALUE OF A HUMAN LIFE. The penalties were to be moderate, "lest thy brother should seem vile unto thee." The first ends of punishment are the reformation and improvement of the offender. If it is possible to teach the culprit the value of himself, and inspire him with a hatred of sin, we have done him unspeakable good. We do not spend so much in cutting and polishing a common stone as we do a ruby or a sapphire. Let our treatment of men be as if we esteemed them the jewels of God.—D.

Ver. 4.—*Doing good inseparable from getting good.* Active exercise of our powers is a primary condition of getting good. Real service for others is destined to gain reward.

I. SERVICE CAN BE RENDERED TO MAN BY VERY INFERIOR NATURES. The whole animate creation waits upon man. Every living thing upon the earth is a servant and

a lackey for men. He is a king here; and, if he have sufficient wisdom, he can rule all for his own advantage. Yet, in a higher sphere, man is only a servant. He who is served by all inferior beings is called to serve the Highest Being. The disparity between God and man is a disparity immeasurable; and yet God permits, yea, encourages, our intelligent and willing service. Inferior as we are to him, we can render efficient service to his kingdom and glory. This is man's truest honour.

II. SERVICE CONTRIBUTES TO PROVIDE AN ABUNDANT BANQUET. The labour of the oxen prepared the corn for men. So gross is our ignorance of the lower creation, that we do not perceive our indebtedness to the birds and insects, which play so useful a part in the preparation of our food. All well-directed service contributes something to the substantial advantage of man. There is a banquet of intellectual food, or a banquet for the æsthetic taste, or a banquet for the soul, resulting. Active labour serves both to create an appetite and to furnish a table.

III. SERVICE HAS CLAIMS UPON OUR GENEROUS RECOMPENSE. It would be nothing else than selfish cruelty to deny to the oxen a share in the result of their labour. Thus God cares for the oxen. Thus he cares for all the works of his hands. And does his kindly care for the inferior beasts diminish his tender regard for men? It immeasurably enhances it! Whoever or whatever does us useful service brings us under obligation. To the extent of our power we are bound to recompense such. This sense of indebtedness is a channel of blessing to the soul. The richest man is he who is the most generous. A muzzle is a shackle forged by wanton selfishness.—D.

Vers. 13—16.—*Religion inspires commercial life.* It is certain that God displays the liveliest interest in every department of human life. He is not only the God of the hills; he is God of the valleys also. He takes cognizance, not only of great things, but also of small. Can any man tell us what are small things? Not only on the portal of every church, but on the forefront of every shop—ay, on the beam of every balance, we ought to see the inscription, "To the glory of God alone!"

I. RELIGION CLAIMS A THRONE IN EVERY SHOP. True religion is the sunny smile from God's eye, and, as the common light of day penetrates into every nook and cranny of nature, so the light of God's love pierces into every interest of human life. It is not a romantic something which has merely to do with the region of existence beyond the grave; it is the life of our present life—the secret spring of every duty. Ordinary trade is a splendid field for the practical exercise of religious virtues, because the commercial activities of the age afford large facilities either for fidelity or for fraud. In every office and warehouse religion claims to set up her throne. In the smallest act of buying and selling she insists on having a voice.

II. RELIGION GOES TO THE ROOT OF THINGS—DETERMINES THE STANDARDS OF HUMAN ACTION. If the weight or measure be false, then every transaction will be false. Ingenious wickedness had invented two sets of standards—an over-large one for the man as buyer, an under-size for the same man as seller. This course of vile procedure carried the villainy into every item of the man's mercantile life. It is of the first importance that we set up right standards. The Pharisee in the temple was a perfect man, according to *his* standard. The rich young man who came to Jesus Christ for counsel was blameless, according to *his* standard. Men are prone to set up conventional standards, and measure themselves and every one one else according to *their* rule. Take heed that *your* standard is *God's* standard, "a perfect and just measure."

III. RELIGION IS BOTH DESTRUCTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE. "Thou shalt not have *this*; thou shalt have *that*." It first pulls down, then builds up. It first uproots, then plants. "Mortify your members, then add to your virtues." The old must be destroyed; the new must be sown and nursed. In our self-culture and in our training of others, it is not enough that we are repressive and prohibitive; the new growths will often cast off effete and injurious matter. Prune away barren boughs; encourage the development of the fruitful wood.

IV. RELIGION BRINGS COLLATERAL GAINS IN THIS LIFE. Her main reward is in the future, viz. possession of the Divine image; nevertheless, she confers many solid favours here and now. Real pleasure is her daily gift, and "length of days" is her special prize. "The wicked shall not live out half their days"—they die prematurely. Nor is long life on earth to be despised. There are, doubtless, moral advantages and gains

obtainable in this life, which are not obtainable in the life to come. Many of the means of discipline and pruning and reformation will end with this life. We are placed here for probation; and (if well-used) long school-life is an advantage unspeakable. To be esteemed by God as "the apple of his eye" is better than an earthly coronet. To be regarded by him as "abomination" is "concentrated curse."—D.

Vers. 17—19.—*Cowardice and cruelty avenged.* The feeling of resentment must be classed "low" among the moral sentiments. But this command to remember and to avenge the conduct of Amalek is not resentment. Abundant time was allowed the Amalekites to abandon evil ways and to cultivate friendly relations with Israel. But they continued, century after century, godless and hostile: hence their extinction.

I. ATHEISM BREEDS IN MEN BOTH CRUELTY AND COWARDICE. Against Amalek the gravest charge is, "he feared not God." This is the root of all his wickedness—the source of his base hostility to Israel. Practical atheism is the prolific parent of hateful vices. There was not a trait of nobleness in Amalek's conduct. It was cowardly and cruel. He attacked Israel in the rear—"smote the hindmost" stragglers—fell upon those already half-dead from fatigue. For a moment he gloried in the inglorious massacre, but only for a moment. The prayer of one man was more than a match for Amalek. In every age it is found that he "who fears not God" has no "regard for man." The influence of a bad man is perilously contagious. The whole tribe is embraced under the character of one man.

II. CRUEL TREATMENT LEAVES AN INDELIBLE IMPRESSION UPON THE MIND. Human nature is so constituted that a wrong done to us or to our fathers is held tenaciously in the memory, and provokes all the feelings to avenge the deed. Herein the Word of God is in accord with our mental nature. Human nature says, "Remember!" The Scripture says, "Remember!" "Thou shalt not forget it." Incidentally, we have here a proof that the Creator of the human mind is also the Author of Scripture. Injustice rouses up all the moral forces in the universe to inflict a fitting retribution; and very often God employs as his ministers of vengeance the victims of former oppression. The increase, the strength, the organization of Israel were to be employed early upon *this* end, viz. to extinguish Amalek.

III. INHERITANCE FROM GOD CARRIES WITH IT AN OBLIGATION TO DO HIS WILL. Rest is given to prepare for more difficult service. "When the Lord thy God hath given thee rest, . . . thou shalt blot out Amalek." God never gives to men any inheritance for exclusive selfish enjoyment. If we are not disposed for service, and even for warfare, the only consistent course is to decline God's gifts. He has plainly made known to men the conditions of his bequests. Before Israel possessed the promised land it was clearly revealed what was expected from the occupants of that inheritance. Nor is the inheritance of heaven a state of indolent repose. The voice that says, "Enter into joy," says also, "Be thou ruler." We read of disputes between Michael and the adversary. Who shall say that God will not employ his ransomed ones to put down rebellion in some outlying province?—D.

Vers. 1—3.—*Corporal punishment.* We have here directions given for the punishment of criminals. As the Hebrews had no gaol system, a properly graduated corporal punishment supplied most effectively its place. Moses here directs the judges to look carefully into the case, and to assign a certain number of stripes, which are never to exceed forty, the chastisement being given in the presence of the judge. Thus the largest measure of equity was introduced into their penal system.

I. RETRIBUTION OF SOME KIND IS CONSONANT WITH OUR IDEAS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. To be allowed to sin with impunity would be, we all feel, an immoral regulation under any government, and especially immoral under a theocracy. Punishment for sin is demanded by the human conscience. All quarrel with retribution as such argues a want of conscientiousness.

II. BUT RETRIBUTION SHOULD BE PROPORTIONAL TO SIN. This is what the law before us secured. The stripes were to be few or many, according to the crime, but never to exceed forty. The judgment was to be righteous and equitable all through.

III. WE LOOK INSTINCTIVELY FOR THE SAME EQUITY UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. And this is exactly what we have. And here let us observe—

1. *Sin is not allowed to go unpunished under God's government.* It has been very confidently asserted that, if people are penitent, no atonement is needed to secure pardon. But, supposing penitence a possible experience apart from the spectacle of a pierced and atoning Saviour (Zech. xii. 10), should we not have "sin with impunity" under the reputedly just government of God? Those who glibly talk of penitence being all that is required, have formed no broad or consistent notion of the necessities of government.[1] Now, the Divine arrangement has been to lay the "stripes" we deserve upon his willing Son. "With his stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5). The sin is punished in the person of a sinless and most willing Substitute, and the demands of justice met. We may be sure that, as the Father presided at the punishment, no more was laid on Jesus than the demands of simple justice and the exigencies of the government required. And—

2. *Unpardoned because impenitent sinners shall have their punishment graduated according to the strictest justice.* It has been asserted that punishment without end would be excessive for the sins of a short life on earth. But it is forgotten that "everlasting punishment" is the shadow simply of "everlasting sin." The latter, alas! is possible through the freedom of the creature; and as sin continues, so must punishment. At the same time, the graduation of punishment in the other world will be as accurate and as careful as the corporal punishment under the Law of Moses. In fact, it is this idea of stripes our Lord employs to express the truth. "And that servant which knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more" (Luke xii. 47, 48, Revised Version). It is thus clearly seen that the utmost care will be taken to graduate the penalties in the hereafter, so that no one shall have the least ground of complaint. The vulgar revolt against the everlasting punishment revealed in Scripture is due to the idea that the criminals are thrown pell-mell together and punished in the lump. With far greater care, however, shall each impenitent one have his penalties meted out to him than prisoners have under the most conscientious judges.

IV. INSTEAD OF BANDYING ABOUT ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF RELIEF UNDER PUNISHMENT, IT WOULD BE KINDER FOR CONTROVERSIALISTS TO INDUCE MEN THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST TO ACCEPT OF PARDON AND SO ESCAPE PENALTY. The spectacle at present is a sad one. Writers are pursuing the phantom of remission of sins and of punishment in the other life, as a new gospel for sinners, instead of urging their fellows to flee at once to Jesus, the only Refuge. This much is certain, "Him that cometh unto me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." Upon such a promise any soul may repose. But the uncertainty of speculation is proverbial, and can never be the sheet-anchor of any sane soul. Let men come to Jesus, and the question of punishment, so far as they are concerned, is settled for ever. Punishment gives way to pardon; while at the same time, it is felt that the sin has *not* gone unpunished.—R. M. E.

Ver. 4.—*The rights of labour.* The threshing in the East is done by oxen in many cases still, though horses, where procurable, are found more serviceable. While the animals were engaged in their weary round, they were never muzzled, but allowed to eat of the corn they were treading out.[2] It would appear, indeed, that it was the *straw* simply that they were to receive, and the *corn* was to be reserved for the men, their masters.[3] But the idea manifestly was the right of the patient animal to a share of the corn he was helping to thresh. It suggests the large subject of the rights of labour. Into this, of course, we cannot enter at any length. But we may observe—

I. THAT CO-OPERATION IN WORK HAS A RIGHT TO A SHARE IN ITS WAGES. This is recognized in the Mosaic Law regarding the lower animals, and the argument is cumulative with regard to man. "The labourer is worthy of his hire," said our Lord. "The workman is worthy of his meat" (Luke x. 7; Matt. x. 10).

[1] Cf. Hutton's 'Essays,' vol. i. p. 372; and 'Retribution in Relation to the Justice, Goodness, and Purpose of God,' by the Rev. F. L. Patton, D.D.

[2] Cf. Van Lennep's 'Bible Lands,' p. 81.

[3] Hengstenberg's 'Egypt and the Books of Moses,' pp. 223, 224.

II. THE SHARE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO SUSTAIN LIFE. The ox was expected to pick up on his rounds as much as would keep up his strength for labour. And in the same way, the wages of a labourer should be sufficient to sustain him in the position he occupies in society. The economic laws about the "wages' fund" are not so inexorable as to prevent such a plain principle being evermore kept in view. There is a heartlessness attributed to the laws of wealth that belongs to the capitalists themselves.

III. THERE SHOULD BE SYMPATHY BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYED. The very oxen occupy a position where sympathy must obtain between them and their keepers, if the work is to be properly performed. How much more must this obtain when the workers are our fellow-men! The late Sir Arthur Helps, in one of his early and anonymous volumes entitled, 'The Claims of Labour,' refers frequently to this. "You must not be surprised," he says to the employer, "at the ingratitude of those to whom you have given nothing but money." "Fortunately," he says in another place, "the proneness of men to regard with favour those put in authority over them is very strong; and I have little fear of finding any large body of thoughtful and kind masters suffering from permanent indifference or ingratitude on the part of their dependents." Sympathy between masters and men is more important even than adequate wages.

IV. BOTH JESUS AND PAUL APPLY THE PRINCIPLE TO MINISTERIAL SUPPORT. In the passage already noticed our Lord does so (Matt. x. 9—11; Luke x. 7). Paul also, in 1 Tim. v. 17, 18, makes use of it, referring both to the passage before us in Deuteronomy and also to our Lord's deliverance. In placing the ministry upon the same ground as other workers, it is clear that it is to be no exception to the rule of proportional reward. Of course, it is not supported as other and meaner occupations are. Every other occupation is beneath it in dignity, but every other almost is above it in reward. Its *rights* must be advocated; its claims are valid, and men deny them at their peril.—R. M. E.

Vers. 5—10.—*The rights of the firstborn.* We have already observed that the firstborn had a right to a double share of the family inheritance (ch. xxi. 17). We have before us another of his rights—a seed was to be raised up unto him by his younger brothers, that his name should not be put out in Israel. In a peasant proprietary such as existed in Palestine, we can easily understand the importance of such a regulation. It was, moreover, esteemed a most disgraceful act to refuse to raise up seed unto a dead brother, and the man guilty of it had to suffer the indignity of being spat upon, and of having his shoe contemptuously loosed.

Now, there can be no question that Jesus Christ occupies the position of Eldest Brother in the family of God. Not only was it declared prophetically, "I will make him my Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" (Ps. lxxxix. 27), but he is expressly called "the Firstborn from the dead," "the Firstborn among many brethren," and "the Firstborn of every creature" (Col. i. 18; Rom. viii. 29; Col. i. 15). Undoubtedly, then, the rights guaranteed by Jewish Law to the firstborn were intended to illustrate the rights of Jesus Christ.

I. JESUS CHRIST, LIKE THE DEAD FIRSTBORN, HAS TO DEPEND ON OTHERS FOR A SPIRITUAL SEED. For in the nature of things it would have been incongruous for Incarnate God to have entered into marriage with any daughter of Adam, and to have become physically a father. His condescension was surely great enough in becoming man at all, and it could not be expected that he would enter into still closer relations to the race. None ever stood in the relation to physical children of Jesus Christ. It would have made a confusion in the contemplated spiritual relationship. Hence our Lord had to look to others to raise him up a seed.

II. IT LIFTS THE FAMILY RELATION INTO THE HOLIEST LIGHT TO THINK THAT WE MAY BE RAISING UP A SPIRITUAL SEED FOR JESUS. How holy all marriage relations become when it is felt to be possible to be providing the Great Elder Brother with a spiritual seed! The children sent of God are then regarded as Christ's; we dedicate them to him in prayer, and perhaps also in baptism; we handle them and rear them as consecrated things; we train them up in his nurture and admonition, and we feel honoured in having any part in the formation of "the mighty family."

III. IT LIFTS THE PASTORAL AS WELL AS PARENTAL RELATION INTO THE HOLIEST LIGHT. In Weemse's book on the 'Ceremonial Laws of Moses,' where "the privileges

of the firstborn" are so fully discussed, the application is made to *preachers* rather than to parents. But we think that parents should feel the elevation of spirit and life which the idea of raising up a seed for Jesus is fitted to impart. And if parents should feel it, much more should pastors. We are meant to be the "spiritual fathers" of men. We have exceptional advantages in prosecuting the holy work. Oh, how glorious it is to think of adding by our faithful labours to the great family of God! It is the Name and honour of Jesus which we should seek to perpetuate by our pastoral labours. And so our aim is to have men born again through the incorruptible seed, the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. i. 23).

IV. ANY REFUSAL TO RAISE UP A SEED FOR JESUS WILL BE VISITED BY GOD IN DUE SEASON WITH DIRE DISGRACE. For the spitting in the face and the unloosing of the shoe are but symbols of the dire disgrace which shall overtake all who will not engage in this holy work. It is a work for Church members as well as for ministers. It lies as a responsibility upon every one that names the Name of Jesus, and is a younger brother or sister in the family of God. Woe be to the person who is indifferent to this!

And surely it should stimulate us to remember that the great ambition of Jesus is to have "many brethren." The mightier the multitude of redeemed ones the better. The glory and honour of Immanuel shall thus be the more thoroughly secured. He has no desire to be the solitary and selfish heir; but the whole plan of redemption is to have as many as possible "joint-heirs" with him. As families and as Churches grow in numbers and in loyalty to Jesus, his rights as Firstborn are being regarded and secured (Rom. viii. 17).

We cannot picture the dire disgrace which the refusal to secure the rights of Jesus Christ will entail. But the selfish souls will be the offscouring of all things; angels will despise them as having highest honour within reach, and not having the heart to accept it. Oh, let every one that has a word to speak and a kindness to perform in the Name of Jesus, do it in the holy hope of increasing the spiritual seed of the great and loving Elder Brother!—R. M. E.

Vers. 11—16.—*Honesty the best policy.* We have first a law of purity, which needs no exposition, but in its holy severity (vers. 11, 12) was fitted to check all tendency to lewd practices among the women of Israel. Then Moses passes on to speak of the crime of having divers weights and measures, and the effort to make money by dishonest practices. No blessing from God can rest upon such wilfully dishonest ones; if his blessing is to be experienced, it must be by a policy of honesty all round.

I. IT IS APPARENTLY EASY TO MAKE MONEY BY LIGHT WEIGHTS AND SHORT MEASURES. It is not only securing the ordinary profits, but gaining by the deficiency palmed off for the perfect measure. It is a gain by quantity as well as by price. And plenty of people who look only at the surface imagine that they can easily enrich themselves by a little dishonesty, which will never be detected. Inspectors of weights and measures are the embodiment of the suspicions of society.

II. IT IS A SYSTEM OF BUSINESS UPON WHICH NO DIVINE BLESSING CAN BE ASKED. No better test of the propriety of our procedure can be found than this. Will it stand the test of prayer? Can God, the All-holy One, be expected to bless it? Now, his whole Word shows that such practices are abominations to him. The stars of heaven will at length fight against such a policy.

III. NO TEMPORARY SUCCESS CAN COMPENSATE FOR AN UNEASY CONSCIENCE. Suppose that success waited on dishonesty invariably and proved lasting, life would be made miserable by the uneasy conscience. Stifled for a time, it rises like the furies at last, and makes life a lasting misery. No man ever trifled with conscience and did not suffer for it. Success becomes in such a case but a whited sepulchre; the experience within is but the rottenness of the tomb.

IV. HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY FOR PERSONAL PEACE AND FOR DIVINE BLESSING. We say that no man should so far outrage his conscience as to be dishonest. Honesty is a policy to be pursued for its own sake, as the only condition of personal peace. Were there no Divine blessing in question at all, conscientious men would be as honest as they are now.

At the same time, it makes the honesty all the happier that it lies in the sunshine of the Infinite Presence, and that his radiant smile is on it. There is no danger of a

mercenary spirit entering into such a relation with God. He so wraps us round that in his circle of love it would be most ungrateful and most dissonant to practise dishonesty.

With people under a theocracy, or reign of God, we should expect to find just weights and full measures. The visits of the inspectors should prove superfluous with all those whose life lies open as the day to the inspection of their King.—R. M. E.

Vers. 17—19.—*The extermination of the merciless.* The crime of the Amalekites was falling upon the hindmost, who were faint and weary. It was an act of judgment untempered by any mercy; and the decree of God is their extermination because they were merciless. Just as we see in another place that God won't forgive the unforgiving, so here we see that he will blot out the merciless from under his merciful heaven. "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (Jas. ii. 13).

I. THE MERCILESS DESERVE NO MERCY. In the case before us there was everything calculated to stir up mercy. The rearguard was feeble and faint and weary. Surely these Amalekites will pity the poor pilgrims, and show them some mercy. But no, they think they are all the better prey, and so they smite the people of God most mercilessly. In their heartless act they put themselves beyond the pale of God's compassion. He consigns them to extermination under the swords of Israel. Our conscience says, "Amen" to this decree. The Amalekites deserve destruction for their heartlessness.

What a word of warning to heartless people still! Let it be carried to a certain point, and God will hand them over to deserved destruction.

II. THE REARGUARD IS ALWAYS AVENGED. The tribe of Dan was directed to go "hindmost with their standards" (Numb. ii. 31). And it must have seemed a trial to be always in the rear and never in the van. But they were here taught that they had in God a special Avenger. He espouses their cause, and will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noonday (Ps. xxxvii. 6).

III. LET US CONTENTEDLY TAKE THE HINDMOST PLACE IF GOD GIVES IT TO US. All cannot be in the van, and the faithfulness of the rearguard is as much a matter of Divine observation as is the dash and courage which characterize the van.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER AT THE PRESENTATION OF FIRSTFRUITS AND TITHES.

As Moses began his exposition of the laws and rights instituted for Israel by a reference to the sanctuary as the place which the Lord should choose, and the place where religious service was to be rendered (ch. xii.), so here he follows up his address by a reference to the same. Of the gifts which had to be presented at the sanctuary there were two specially connected with the social and domestic life of the people, viz. the firstfruits and the second tithe. To these, by a natural transition from the preceding discourse—occupied as that is with injunctions regarding their social and domestic relations—Moses here refers for the purpose of prescribing certain liturgical forms with which the presentation of the gift was to be accompanied by the offerer.

Vers. 1—11.—Of the firstfruits the Israelite was to take a portion, and placing it in a basket, to bring it to the place of the sanctuary, where it was to be received by the attendant priest. The offerer was to accompany his presentation with the declaration, "I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us;" and the priest having set the basket down before the altar, the offerer was to make confession and prayer, gratefully acknowledging the Divine favour showed to Israel in choosing them to be a great nation, in delivering them out of Egypt, and bringing them into a rich and fertile land; and along with this his bounty to the individual who now presented the firstfruits of his land unto the Lord.

Ver. 2.—**The first of all the fruit of the earth.** (On the law of the firstfruits, see Numb. xviii. 12; ch. xviii. 4.) **A basket;** טֶנֶא, a basket of wickerwork.

Ver. 3.—**The priest that shall be in those days**; not the high priest, but the priests collectively, or the individual priest whose function it was to officiate on the occasion. The fruit presented was the sensible proof that the land was now in their possession, and the confession made along with the presentation was an acknowledgment of their unworthiness, and of the Divine favour as that to which alone they were indebted for the privileged position in which they were placed.

Ver. 5.—**A Syrian ready to perish was my father.** The reference is to Jacob, the stem-father of the twelve tribes. He is here called a Syrian, or Aramæan, because of his long residence in Mesopotamia (Gen. xxix.—xxxi.), whence Abraham had originally come (Gen. xi. 31), and because there the family of which he was the head was founded. The translation "ready to perish" fairly represents the Hebrew; the verb אבד means not merely to stray or wander, but also to lose one's self, to perish, to be in danger of perishing (cf. ch. iv. 26; Job xxix. 13; Prov. xxxi. 6, etc.). Different renderings of this clause have been given. The Targum, Vulgate, Luther, etc., have, "The Aramæan (*i.e.* Laban) oppressed my father;" The LXX., Συρίαν ἀπέλιπεν ὁ πατήρ μου ("My father left Syria"); others, "To the Aramæan my father wandered." But these either follow another reading than that of the received text, or they are expedients to soften down the apparent ignominy of the description. The probable allusion to the wandering, nomadic life of the patriarch, however, is not to be lost sight of. **With a few**; literally, *in men of few*; i.e. consisting of few men, as a small company; the father and head of the tribe is named for those belonging to him (cf. Gen. xxxiv. 30; xlvi. 27). **A great nation**, etc. (cf. Exod. i. 7, 9).

Ver. 6.—**The Egyptians evil entreated us** (cf. Exod. i. 11—22; ii. 23, etc.).

Ver. 8.—(Cf. ch. iv. 34.)

Ver. 10.—**Thou shalt set it**, etc.; either a general concluding remark, taking up the statement of ver. 4, or the offerer may have resumed hold of the basket, and after holding it in his hand while offering prayer, would solemnly deposit it before the altar.

Ver. 11.—**And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing**, etc.; *i.e.* with these bounties of God's providence make a feast for yourself and your household, and omit not to invite the Levite and the stranger to partake of it with you. As with the yearly tithe (ch. xiv. 23) and the firstlings (ch. xv. 20), so with this portion of the firstfruits, a festive meal was to consummate the service. According to the Law, the firstfruits were the perquisite of the priest (ch. xviii. 4; Numb. xviii. 12, etc.); but of these a portion was to be taken for this special service, and of that a feast was to be made.

Vers. 12—15.—On the occasion of presenting the tithes, a special service was also to be made. The tithe here referred to is the vegetable or predial tithe, which, at the end of each third year, as here prescribed, was to be converted into a gift to the poor and needy. This, properly the second tithe (LXX., τὸ δεύτερον ἐπιδέκατον), but usually called the third tithe (Tobit i. 7, 8; Josephus, 'Antiq.,' iv. 8, 22), is quite distinct from the Levitical tithe prescribed in Lev. xxvii. 30—33 and Numb. xviii. 21—32; and it is a mistake to suppose that the law here was designed to contravene or supersede that in the earlier books (see Kitto, 'Bibl. Cycl.,' iii. 1010). As this tithe completed the triennial series of tithes which the Israelites had to offer, it was fitting that in presenting it a solemn declaration should be made by the offerer to the effect that he had honourably and conscientiously discharged all the obligations in this respect which the Law laid upon him.

Ver. 12—**The third year**, which is **the year of tithing.** As each week ended with a sabbath, so a sabbatical year ended each cycle or week of years; and as on it no tithes were levied, "the year of tithing" here specified would be the third and the sixth years in each septennial period.

Ver. 13.—**Say before the Lord**; *i.e.* address him as present and ready to hear. The expression, "before the Lord," does not necessarily imply that it was in the sanctuary that the prayer was to be offered. Isaac proposed to bless his son "before the Lord," *i.e.* within his own house or tent (Gen. xxvii. 7); and so the Israelite here might in his own home make his prayer to the Omnipresent Jehovah. **I have not transgressed thy commandments**, etc. This is not a self-righteous boast; it is rather a solemn profession of attention to duties which might have been neglected, and refers, not to the keeping of every commandment, but to the having faithfully done all that the Law required in respect of tithes.

Ver. 14.—**In my mourning**; *i.e.* while ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. vii. 20; xxi. 1, etc.). **Neither have I taken away** ought **thereof for any unclean use**; rather, *Neither have I removed ought of it being unclean*; i.e. he had not only not eaten of it, but he had not removed any part of it from his house (ver. 13) while he was ceremonially unclean, in which state it was unlawful to

touch what was hallowed (Lev. xxii. 23). **Nor given** ought **thereof for the dead**; *i.e.* on account of the dead; he had not sent any part of it to where there was one dead, according to the custom for friends and relations to send to a house of mourning provisions for the mourners (2 Sam. iii. 35; Jer. xvi. 7; Hos. ix. 4; Tobit iv. 17). Or the reference may be here to the expenses incurred by the death of one for whose funeral the individual had to provide. This view is adopted by Dr. Thomson, who, remarking on this passage, says, "This was the strongest possible protestation that he had dealt faithfully in the matter of tithing and consecrated things and in charities to the poor. He had not allowed himself to divert anything to other uses, not even by the most pressing and unforeseen emergencies. It is here assumed, or rather implied, that times of mourning for the dead were expensive, and also that the stern law of custom obliged the bereaved to defray those expenses, however onerous. . . . The temptation, therefore, to devote a part of the tithes, hallowed things, and charities to defray these enormous, unforeseen, and providential expenses would be very urgent, and he who stood faithful at such times might safely be trusted on all other occasions" ('Land and the Book,' i. 149). The LXX. rendering, τῷ τεθνήκοτι, "to the dead," has led some to suppose that the reference here is to the placing of articles of food in the tomb along with the corpse; but though this custom prevailed among the Jews in later times, as well as among other peoples, there is no ground for supposing it to be referred to here. As all connected with a dead body was held to be unclean, as well as the body itself, a house of mourning with its inhabitants was held to be unclean, and into it, therefore, nothing that had been hallowed might be lawfully carried.

Ver. 15.—(Cf. Isa. lxiii. 15; lxvi. 1.)

Vers. 16—19.—Moses winds up his address by a solemn admonition to the people to keep and observe the laws and commandments which the Lord by him had laid upon them, reminding them that they had entered into covenant with God, and had thereby pledged themselves to obedience to all that he had enjoined, as he on his part had pledged himself to be their Benefactor, who would fulfil to them all his gracious promises, and would exalt them above all the nations of the earth.

Ver. 16.—**This day.** This refers generally to the time when this discourse was delivered.

Ver. 17.—**Thou hast avouched,** etc.; literally, *Thou hast caused Jehovah this day to say to be a God unto thee;* i.e. thou hast given occasion to him to declare himself to be thy God, and (as a consequence of this) that thou shouldest walk in his ways and keep his commandments. In declaring that he was their God, he virtually declared also that they were to be wholly obedient to him.

Ver. 18.—So, on the other hand, God had given Israel occasion to say that they were his special people, his treasured possession (cf. Exod. xix. 5, 6), whose it was, as such, to keep all his commandments, and to whom he would be faithful to fulfil all that he had promised.

Ver. 19.—(Cf. Jer. xiii. 11; xxxiii. 9; Zeph. iii. 19, 20.) **An holy people** (cf. Exod. xix. 5, 6). "The sanctification of Israel was the design and end of its election of God, and would be accomplished in the glory to which the people of God were to be exalted" (Keil).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*Joy in the use of temporal mercies; or, sanctification of our possessions to God warrants a holy joy in the use of them.* The order of thought is this: 1. In due time Israel would be in possession of the land which the Lord promised to give them. 2. Of this comfortable possession the gathering of the fruits thereof would be the proof and sign. 3. In accordance with a well-understood law, the firstfruits were to be offered to God (see reference). 4. In thus offering the firstfruits, the offerers were to go up to the house of the Lord, and present them to the priest, who was to lay them before the altar as offerings to the Lord. 5. This being done, there was to be an oral avowal of Divine mercy in pitying "the perishing Aramæan" from whom they were descended, in watching over the growth of their nation, in delivering them from Egypt, in giving them the good land, and in permitting it to yield them its fruit. 6. This being done, they could then rejoice before the Lord their God in the sacrificial meal which followed, in the companionship of friends invited to share with them the joy of harvest, and in the after use of the bounties of God's providence. For they

would be doubly blessed, as, over and above the temporal mercies themselves, they would share the benediction of him who gave them all things richly to enjoy. Good Bishop Wordsworth remarks that this passage exhorts to harvest thanksgivings in the Christian Church. Such services are undoubtedly fully in harmony with the spirit of the chapter. But it seems to us to contain principles of far wider scope, and of everyday application. They are four in number.

1. OUR GOD WOULD HAVE US RECOGNIZE HIM AS THE AUTHOR OF ALL OUR MERCIES. For such he is. Without him no land would yield its increase, nor would man have power or skill to cultivate the soil. Without him no sun would shine nor rain descend. It is easy to say that such and such a harvest came in the ordinary course of law. We at once press the questions, Who ordained these laws? Who causes forces to act according to them? For no law ever did or could make itself. "Law" is a purely mental conception. It is not an entity, save as mind ordains it, and it only operates as energy works by it. It is unsound in philosophy, as well as rotten in piety, if we fail to acknowledge God in all. Nor is it bare power that we have to recognize; but goodness, mercy, loving-kindness. And all these kindnesses of God he would have us acknowledge: 1. By a confession of our entire dependence upon him. 2. By grateful retrospect of the past; remembering and recalling through what scenes God has brought us year by year. 3. By grateful survey of the blessings which are around us now. Nor should we ever leave out of account that which is the substratum of this chapter (and indeed of all the chapters in this book), though not here specified in words, viz. that, as sinful beings, our natural claims on the Great Being as his dependent creatures have been forfeited by sin, and that the continuance to sinful beings of such heaps of mercy is due only to, and is indeed a part of, that redemptive grace which to Israel was disclosed in germ, but to us in its fulness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Such thanksgivings as we owe may well even now be offered in the house of the Lord; but they should daily be the promptings of grateful and devoted hearts. In private and in the family circle our song should be, "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits toward us?"

II. THE THANK OFFERING SHOULD NOT ONLY BE VERBAL BUT PRACTICAL. There was to be the offering of the firstfruits to the Lord (see Homily, ch. xiv. 22—29). When God gave all, what precept could be more appropriate? What can be more becoming than to let God have the first of everything? This is the principle which ran through these varied regulations as to firstfruits and tithe. Jacob spontaneously said, "Of all that thou givest me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Solomon urges, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." We have no distinctive proportion laid down in the New Testament as to our offerings to God. Yet the conscientious Christian should require no further hints than such as are found in 2 Cor. viii. 7—9; 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Circumstances have changed. Details will vary. Yet the great and mighty cause of God, even that of righteousness, truth, and love, has to be maintained and spread in the world by the efforts and offerings of those "put in trust with the gospel." And it will not be possible to be faithful to the claims of God and the demands of the times without a conscientious, systematic, proportionate giving of our gains to the Lord. Christians should never suffer the absence of detail in New Testament precepts on the subject of giving to the Lord, to be taken advantage of to the weakening of his cause who trusts our spontaneity. Let us not abuse God's confidence. Let the love of Christ constrain us.

III. THE GIVING OF THE FIRSTFRUITS TO GOD IS A TOKEN OF THE SANCTIFICATION OF ALL WE HAVE TO RIGHT AND HOLY USES. There is no better guarantee of a wise and right use of our substance than the conscientious dedication of firstfruits to our God. He who is conscientious enough in this respect may be safely relied on to spend rightly the rest of his gains, because the same conscientiousness which marks his first spendings will mark all the others.

IV. WHEN OUR GAINS ARE THUS RECEIVED IN A RIGHT SPIRIT, AND SPENT IN A RIGHT WAY, WE MAY REJOICE THEREIN BEFORE THE LORD. God hath given us "all things richly to enjoy." And men who know nothing of the Christian consecration of all things to God do not know how to enjoy what they possess. If men rejoice in earthly good for its own sake, it will soon cease to yield delight. "The world passeth away, *and the lust thereof.*" But when regarded, received, and spent in the way we

have already pointed out, it may yield a pure delight. For: 1. It will be enjoyed, as the gift of One who is our redeeming God, in covenant relation to us, and with whom we are at peace. 2. It will be enjoyed with a sense of *rectitude* which only those can have who have been severely right in the regulation of their gettings and givings. 3. It will be enjoyed, because gains so acquired and spent will be a means of grace to a man. Riches in such a case will expand the heart. 4. It will be enjoyed, because such a man will bear about with him the holy and blessed consciousness that he is fulfilling God's will and spreading God's cause in the right use of his gifts. 5. It will be enjoyed, because such a one knows that God's blessing is resting on him and on all he has, that, rich as may be his earthly good, though he enjoys it while it lasts, yet he can afford to hold it with a loose hand, for it is not his all, and that when he is called to part with it, he will find richer treasure still laid up for him in heaven, for when "flesh and heart fail, God will be the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever."

Thus and thus alone is it possible to extract from earthly good the full delight it is calculated and intended to yield. If we make worldly possessions the food of our souls, they will turn to ashes in the mouth. They bring no blessing with them. They will disappoint, and if they take their flight, as they so often do, we shall be left miserably poor. But if through the grace and Spirit of our God we are led first to choose God as our *all*, and then to use our all for God, we shall enjoy the life that now is, and enter on a fulness of joy in that which is to come.

Vers. 12—15.—*Integrity in the will a condition of acceptable and successful prayer.* We do not recall any passage in this book, on which we have as yet touched, that conveys a more striking impression than this of the purity and heart-searchingness of the Law of God. For elucidation of the several points of detail, the reader may consult the expository section. For our purpose now it is enough to say that it is assumed that the people will faithfully carry out the precepts and ordinances of God with regard to the tithes, to the offerings, to the poor, the fatherless, and widow, and the specific injunctions with respect to ceremonial purity. When this is done, *so that they can declare it before the Lord*,[1] then they may also plead with God for a blessing. They, having, with a clear conscience and an upright will, fulfilled to the extent of their knowledge the requirements of their holy religion, may then come and entreat their God for his benediction and smile, according to his promise. Hence we have presented to us for homiletic teaching the all-important topic—*Integrity in the fulfilment of Divine commands a condition of acceptable prayer.* We propose to show how constantly this principle is recognized in the Word of God, by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture.

Prayer is an inestimable privilege. That weak and sinful man should be permitted to unburden his spirit to the Father of spirits is a mercy so great, that no words can adequately express it. It is only on the ground of the One Sacrifice of Christ, of which the Hebrew sacrifices were but foreshadowings, that such fellowship between God and sinful man is vouchsafed. We may pray, because we "are not under Law, but under grace." But though through the aboundings of mercy sinful men are permitted to pray, yet it is on the understanding that they repent of their sin. And true though it be that we are under grace and not under Law, yet grace brings with it its own law; it is no licence to lawlessness. Throughout the Word of God this precious privilege is guarded from abuse. Prayer is not thrown open promiscuously. The shriek of a terrified man or the query of an inquisitive man is not prayer. "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted." "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight." Let us trace the recognition of this chronologically.

I. JOB KNEW OF IT. He asks in xxvii. 9, concerning a hypocrite, "Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?"

II. DAVID TEACHES IT LIKEWISE. In Ps. lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." He expects no answer to his prayer if in his inmost soul there is any tolerance of sin.

III. SOLOMON INDICATES THIS TRUTH. In the prayer at the dedication of the temple,

[1] See Keil on this phrase in ver. 13.

1 Kings viii. 35, 36, "If they pray towards this place, and confess thy Name, *and turn from their sin* . . . then hear thou," etc. In the Book of Proverbs the same truth is repeatedly taught (xi. 20; xv. 8, 29; xxi. 13, 27). True penitence and integrity of will are necessary conditions of appropriate prayer.

IV. ISAIAH IS BIDDEN TO PROCLAIM IT. In i. 18, there are words of priceless worth, which may well be a comfort to every penitent; but they are often quoted without sufficient prominence being given to the words which precede: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well," etc.; *then* follow the words, "Come now, and let us reason together," etc. Past sin is forgiven when it is forsaken, and only then.

V. EZEKIEL DECLARES THE SAME. There came to him certain of the elders of Israel, and stood before him to inquire of the Lord (see xiv. 1—11). Ezekiel is bidden to tell them that it is useless to inquire of God if they were cherishing any hidden sin; it would be a stumbling-block of iniquity, that would prevent any answer coming from God. How grievously the disheartened Saul found this out! (1 Sam. xxviii. 6.)

VI. MALACHI DECLARES THE LIKE LAW. He tells the people that they have withholden the tithes from God, and that consequently God is withholding the blessing from them (iii. 1—12). Thus in the varied ages of the Jewish Church this truth is uniformly taught, that cherished sin will block up the way of an answer to prayer.

VII. NOR IS THIS PRINCIPLE REPEALED UNDER THE NEW ECONOMY. Our Lord taught it. See Matt. v. 23, 24, in which we are forbidden to present any offering to God while anger towards a brother is cherished in the heart. In Matt. vi. 15, we are assured that he who forgives not is not forgiven. In John xv. 7, 16, our Lord shows his disciples that the condition of their freedom and success in prayer is fruitful obedience. The Apostle James also warns those to whom he is writing that the non-success of their prayer is owing to impurity in the will, and if they would that God should draw nigh to them, they must return unto him (Jas. iv. 3—8).

Possibly at this stage, or earlier, a difficulty may have suggested itself. It may be said (cf. Luke xviii. 11, 12) in that passage the Pharisee, who had been most punctilious in his discharge of sundry obligations, and most austerely proper in his outward conduct, is yet rejected. How is this? The reply is threefold. 1. He did not pray at all. Not one petition did he offer. 2. He thanked God *he was so good!* As if there were any merit in simply doing one's duty, or any cause for self-gratulation. 3. He looked down with scorn on others. He "exalted himself." His spirit was wrong, though his observances might be right. *Conscious rectitude of purpose, and self-complacency over performances, need never be confounded*, and only where they are so can this difficulty arise. In conclusion—

1. While we thank God for permission to pray, let us ever guard the dignity of prayer. 2. The mournful thought is suggested, How many there are who seem to be doing what they can to make it useless for them to pray! A man who tells lies over the counter cannot pray. A man who bribes or who accepts a bribe cannot pray. A man who forgives not, asks uselessly for forgiveness. The only advice to be given to such is to repeat the apostolic demand, "Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray." 3. How diligently should we, at times, search into our own hearts, to see if we are zealously putting away "the leaven of malice and wickedness"! The possibility that any secret sin may be shutting off any answer to our prayers should make us cry fervently, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." 4. Let none rush to the opposite extreme. Let none be disheartened at the stringency of the demands of God's grace; rather let the heart be unreservedly opened to God in gratitude for his holiness, and for his desire for the absolute purity of his people; rather let us be supremely solicitous to be "upright in heart." It is not where there is a distressing consciousness of falling in execution below our desires and yearnings that prayer is blocked out. Far from this. But the desire to cherish sin, or the refusal to do *the whole* will of God, makes prayer itself useless and sinful, because the heart does not submit entirely to God.

Vers. 16—19.—*The golden chain.* The end of the career of Moses was drawing nigh. Nothing could be more natural than that he should gather up all his powers to remind

the people of their solemn vows, and to repeat in their hearing the sum and substance of that code which was to regulate their personal life, their religious service, and their judicial procedure. Having done this, he closes with a brief but very earnest appeal to the people's heart and conscience. In it there is much that has, primarily, an historical and local bearing, but the principles included therein have a far-reaching, a worldwide, a permanent significance. The phrases used here are reproduced by the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. ii.), and are applied by him to Christians. What Israel then was, locally and theoretically, believers are now spiritually. The words here uttered by Moses form a golden chain, which we will examine link by link. We may thus come to see that, notwithstanding the lapse of ages and the advance of the world, this golden chain is as real and as complete as ever. With God the first link begins; with God is the last. The chain is on this wise: God sends a Law; this Law is accepted by the people; so accepting the Law they are received in covenant; people loyal to God are elevated among men; they are thus for a praise and honour and glory;—and all this is according to the word of the Lord, "as he hath spoken." Thus that which goeth forth from his lips as a declaration cometh back to him as a fulfilment.

First link: HERE ARE COMMANDMENTS, STATUTES, AND JUDGMENTS APPOINTED BY GOD. From beginning to end this is the distinct declaration of Moses and the postulate of the Hebrew faith. That the Law *was* received from Sinai is, historically, as indisputable as that the battle of Waterloo was fought. That this Law was of God was the proclamation from the first; while our homiletic studies in this book have, we trust, deepened our conviction that from none but God could aught so holy with such a claim have proceeded, and that this commandment, which is holy and just and good, does disclose the exceeding sinfulness of sin in a way which could only have been done through one taught of him who is the Lord of consciences and souls. This effort to educate the people in righteousness was the most startling stride in morals which the world had ever known. It was then, and remains still, the only attempt ever made to start into being a new nation with God alone for its acknowledged King, righteousness alone for the corner-stone of its polity, and a free and holy brotherhood alone for its citizenship. In reference to worship, there was the revealed law of sacrifice as the ground of acceptance. In regard to life, the rule was, "Love to God and love to man." It is precisely so now. Just as beneath the Law there lay unrepealed the Divine Abrahamic promise, so along with the gospel there is the rule unrepealed, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." There was a gospel with the Law; there is a law with the gospel.

Second link: THE PEOPLE HAD VOWED UNTO GOD THAT THEY WOULD OBEY HIS VOICE. (Ver. 17.) It is not noted, perhaps, with sufficient frequency and force how often, even amid the terror, thunder, and smoke of Sinai, the Lord threw the decision of this question upon the people's free consent. Not even their response in the moment of glad freedom and terrible awe was sufficient. God would not take the people by surprise nor fasten them unawares to an engagement they did not understand. They gave their assent, first to an oral inquiry, then to the Law when written in a book and read in their hearing, then to the covenant sealed with blood. So now. While, in one sense, God is Sovereign over us by a right none may dispute, yet there is another sovereignty to which he asks our willing, loving consent (Rom. xii. 1). He stoops to ask of us the love of our hearts.

Third link: THE COVENANT THUS ENTERED INTO BY LOVING CONSENT TO DIVINE SWAY IS DIVINELY RECIPROCATED. (Ver. 18.) "And the Lord hath avouched thee," etc. We must be careful, however, how we set this, or we shall obscure the gospel in the act of endeavouring to set forth its most priceless relations. We must not put the matter thus: "God loves us because we love him;"—that would be an entire reversal of the revealed order of things. But rather thus: "God loves first." When we respond to his love and are saved by it, he rejoices over us. The love of compassion becomes a love of complacency, and the Lord avouches us to be his "peculiar people." The Apostle Peter applies precisely this phrase to all believers (1 Pet. ii.). But, to an ordinary reader, the English phrase would not yield an approximation to its true meaning, which may be shown thus: the word *pecus*, cattle; *peculium*, property in cattle, private property, that which has been bought for one's self; and thus the phrase, "peculiar people," means a people whom God has secured as his own by purchase. Hence the New Testament phrases, "Ye are bought with a price," etc. God's satisfaction in man is complete only when man finds his home in God.

Fourth link: WHEN A MAN IS FOUND OF GOD, HE IS DESTINED FOR HONOUR AMONG MAN. (Vers. 18, 19.) "Then," says David, "shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments." And whenever the citizens of a state are loyal and obedient to God, the state which is leavened by them will certainly rise to honour and renown.

Fifth link: SUCH A LIFE WILL BE FOR A PRAISE AND A NAME AND AN HONOUR. For whose? Certainly God's (cf. Isa. xliii. 1, 21). A holy man is the noblest work of God on earth. The life he lives among men is, in its way, a revelation of God, and reflects honour on him.

Sixth link: This glory, being thus brought to God through the power of holy lives, will be best confirmation of the origin, meaning, and power of the written Word. "As he hath spoken" (ver. 19). The Word regulates the life; the life confirms the Word.

Note—Christian people have the vindication of the faith in their own hands. Argument may do much, but holiness will do very far more.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The presentation of the firstfruits.* This interesting ceremony: 1. Reminded the individual that the land and its fruits were God's. 2. Required from him a devout acknowledgment of the fact, with a gift in which the acknowledgment was suitably embodied. 3. Threw him back on the recollection of God's former mercies to his nation. 4. Secured a confession and rehearsal of these from his own lips. It served: 1. To create and deepen religious feeling. 2. To quicken gratitude. 3. To encourage free-will offerings. Two main points—

I. GOD'S MERCIES ARE TO BE GRATEFULLY REMEMBERED. These mercies are many and wonderful (Ps. xl. 5). The points dwelt on in this declaration are God's fulfilments of his promises in the increase of the nation (ver. 5), the deliverance from Egypt (vers. 6—8), and the bringing of the people into the land of Canaan (ver. 9), part of the firstfruits of which the worshipper now presented (ver. 10). We have here: 1. *National* mercies. Since in Israel Church and nation were one: 2. *Church* mercies. 3. *Personal* mercies. A similar review befits every Christian. What causes of thankfulness has he, not only in the remembrance of God's loving-kindness to him personally (Ps. xl. 1—4; cxvi. 1—19), but in the review of God's dealings with his nation, and still more in the consideration of his mercies to the Church! On the one side, our noble constitution, our just laws, our civil and religious liberties, our immunity from war—the fruits of long centuries of struggle and progress. On the other side, the facts on which the Church's existence is founded—the Incarnation; Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension; the gift of the Spirit: and the events of her extraordinary history—the progress she has made, God's goodness in preserving and protecting her, in raising up teachers and leaders, in purifying her by persecutions, in granting revivals, times of reformation, etc.; with the consideration of how in all promises have been fulfilled, prayers answered, deliverances vouchsafed, blessings bestowed, increase made.

II. GOD'S MERCIES ARE TO BE SUITABLY ACKNOWLEDGED. 1. *By recital of them before God himself.* Acknowledgment of mercies is as much a part of devotion as praise, confession, petition, or even adoration. The value of liturgical forms (within due limits) for purposes of prayer and acknowledgment, is not to be disputed. They (1) aid memory, (2) secure comprehensiveness, (3) guide devotion, (4) prevent irrelevancy, (5) create a bond of unity. Like hymns, they testify to the Church's catholicity amidst diversities of creed and polity. Their disadvantage, if preponderant in worship, is that they check too much the element of spontaneity. They discourage freedom and naturalness in the expression of the heart's feelings. The best form of Church order would probably be a combination of the liturgical with the free and spontaneous elements in worship—the latter decidedly predominating. 2. *By free-will offerings.* These are needed more than ever. The sphere of the Church's operations is yearly widening. 3. *By hospitality and charity* (ver. 11). Underlying all there is, of course, to be personal consecration in heart and life. It is *self* God wants—the love, reverence, service, devotion of self; not a mere share in self's possessions. Con-

fession (ver. 3), gifts (ver. 10), worship (ver. 10), joy (ver. 11), have their rightful place after that, and as the outcome of it.—J. O.

Ver. 12.—*The year of tithing.* Why so called? A double tithe was taken each year—the ordinary Levitical tithe (Numb. xviii. 21—28), which Deuteronomy, without mention, takes for granted; and the festal tithe, ordained as a provision for the sanctuary feasts (ch. xiv. 21—27). On the third year a tithe was to be devoted to festivities at home (ch. xiv. 28, 29). It is usually, but too hastily, assumed that this third tithe was but the second diversely applied. That in itself is unlikely, as the feasts at the sanctuary required to be held on the third and sixth years, as well as on the others, and the provision for these could not well be dispensed with. Neither does it explain the expression, "year of tithing;" for while, on this supposition, the tithe was differently applied, there was nothing unusual in the manner of taking it. Each year was a year of tithing (sabbatical years excepted), and this no more than the rest. The ordinary view, besides, is directly in the teeth of the testimony of Josephus, who may be supposed to have known the practice of his time. His statement distinctly is that one-tenth was to be given to the priests and Levites; one-tenth was to be applied to feasts at the sanctuary; and a tenth besides was, every third year, to be given to the poor. If this was so, we have a natural explanation of the phrase, "the year of tithing," and self-consistency is introduced into the laws. The tithe-laws in Deuteronomy are often represented as if in conflict with those in Leviticus and Numbers. Part of the plausibility of the objection lies in the use of the definite article in the English version—"all *the* tithe" (ch. xiv. 28; xxvi. 12)—which gives an impression of allusion to the *ordinary*, the *well-known* tithe. That impression is not created if we take the plain Hebrew—"a whole tithe"—which by its very nakedness suggests a new regulation. Deuteronomy legislates for its own purposes in connection with the centralizing of the worship at the sanctuary. The newer criticism seems to have abandoned the old ground, which made the Levitical laws the earliest. It assumes that the distinction of priests and Levites, with the body of legislation based on that distinction, took shape not earlier than the exile—a view hopelessly in conflict with the histories of the return. Indeed, so great was the disproportion in the numbers of priests and Levites returning with Zerubbabel—twelve or thirteen priests for every Levite—that the Levitical laws could only have been put in force with material alterations and modifications. They are in some respects singularly inapplicable to the very times in which they are supposed to have originated.—J. O.

Vers. 12—15.—"*A good conscience toward God.*" This solemn avowal, ordained to be made at the completion of the round of tithe obligations, was a wise safeguard against unpunctuality and neglect. The subject suggested is—*The importance of self-examination in respect of the fulfilment of duties of religion.*

I. SELF-EXAMINATION A DUTY. The text suggests that we examine ourselves: 1. As to religious givings. 2. As to our fulfilment of the duties of hospitality and charity. 3. As to the condition in which these duties have been performed—whether from the right motive (regard to God's commandment), and in a right state (the state of sanctification). Extend the principle to all duties of religion. Self-examination, to be of service, should be: 1. *Comprehensive.* 2. *Conscientious*—as "before the Lord thy God" (ver. 13), who cannot be deceived. 3. *Periodical*, as: (1) At the end of a year. (2) The close of a *financial* year. (3) Birthdays. (4) Even the end of a week. A review of this kind not an unsuitable sabbath day's employment.

II. SELF-EXAMINATION A SAFEGUARD. 1. *Prevents neglect.* Things which we ought to do—which, at bottom, we are willing to do—get frequently overlooked: (1) From inadvertency. (2) From unpunctuality. (3) From habits of procrastination. A review of the kind proposed would bring many of these forgotten duties to recollection, and would act as a check on the causes of forgetfulness. 2. *Brings practice into comparison with the standard of obligation.* When duty is known, it does not follow that it is always done, or that we are always aware of the extent of our shortcomings. We may be greatly deceiving ourselves in this very particular. There may grow upon us the vicious habit of comparing ourselves with others rather than with the standard of the Divine Law. And nowhere is self-deception more common than

in the matter of religious and charitable givings. People will be heard expatiating on the vexatiousness of the calls of this kind made on them, who, were they to put their givings all together, would find that they did not amount to so much as they have often spent on the gratification of some whim, perhaps on a single dinner-party. Self-examination would counteract the tendency to take our performances of duty so readily for granted. It would *e.g.* require the rich man to measure his givings directly with his income, and with the proportion of that income which he felt to be due to God. 3. *Reminds us of the obligations themselves.* For, besides the shortcomings in practice referred to, there is often no little danger that the standard of duty itself may get to be lost sight of. 4. *Makes hypocrisy more difficult.* The withholder of the tithes would scarcely venture to stand before God and make this solemn declaration. His tongue might well cleave to the roof of his mouth if he attempted it. He would feel that he must either go and do what he ought or hold his peace. The hypocritical professor shuns self-examination. Two thoughts in closing: 1. We cannot expect blessing, save as duties are honourably fulfilled (ver. 15). 2. Reflecting on fulfilled duties, we need to beware of Pharisaic pride (Luke xviii. 11, 12).—J. O.

Vers. 16—19.—*Avouching extraordinary.* A wonderful sight! Israel and God exchanging pledges, plighting troth, "avouching" fidelity each to the other. The people, by the heed they had given to Moses' exposition of the Law, perhaps by signs made as he proceeded, had avouched their willingness to abide in the covenant. God, in turn, had renewed his promises and pledges towards them. The covenant thus renewed was the same in essentials as that made with believers.

I. COVENANT WITH GOD INVOLVES ENGAGEMENT TO OBEDIENCE. (Ver. 17.) It did so under the Law. It does so under the gospel. The gospel exhibits grace, and involves at the outset the reception of that grace. Nevertheless, obedience is required of us. It is the end of our redemption. We die with Christ that we may rise with him to newness of life (Rom. vi. 4). "New obedience" is the proof of true discipleship. Every real believer will seek to render it. It is a condition of ultimate salvation (Rom. ii. 6—12).

II. COVENANT WITH GOD INVOLVES A RELATION OF PECULIAR NEARNESS. (Ver. 18.) This is borne out by all Scripture. God chooses us, in Christ, to a relation of nearness so remarkable that it has no counterpart, save in the Son's relation to the Father (John xvii. 21). The saints are his peculiar treasure (1 Pet. ii. 9, 10). He is their "Shield," and their "exceeding Great Reward" (Gen. xv. 1). They are nearer to him than the angels—

> "Near, near, so near,
> I cannot nearer be;
> For in the person of his Son
> I am as near as he."

III. COVENANT WITH GOD SECURES HIGH HONOUR AND BLESSEDNESS. (Ver. 19.) Great distinction was in store for Israel, should it prove obedient. God says he will make it high above all nations, "in praise, and in name, and in honour." Its honour would consist: 1. In the proud distinction of being God's people (ch. iv. 7). 2. In its high moral repute (ch. iv. 6). 3. In the material pre-eminence to which obedience would be certain to raise it (ch. vii. 12—16). Obedience, honour, blessedness, are three ideas ultimately inseparable. The "glory, honour, immortality" of heaven are for those who persevere in well-doing (Rom. ii. 7), for "an holy people." The honours in store for obedient Israel, great as they were, are not to be compared with the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" now revealed as the inheritance of believers (2 Cor. iv. 17).—J. O.

Vers. 1—11.—*Commemorations of national deliverance.* An instinct in man impels him to dwell with pleasure on his national beginnings and growth; and, in cases where that beginning sprang out from a specific event, that event has been the subject of public commemoration year by year. Of this Rome is a conspicuous instance. But the Jews were designed to be eminently a religious people; hence this commemoration was to be a simple act of piety—the presentation of firstfruits.

I. MAN IS THE OBJECT OF GOD'S LAVISH GENEROSITY. Everything round the Hebrew in his home reminded him of the exuberant kindness of his God. The land which he possessed was land which Jehovah had given him. The temple was the place which Jehovah had chosen "to place his Name there." The priest was God's gift. The corn and fruit of the land were produce "which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Each man was taught to look on himself as belonging unto God. Of everything the absolute Proprietor was God. Their history, their deliverance, their security, their renown, were all due to God. Behind every visible object, behind every visible event, they discerned *God*.

II. REMEMBRANCE OF GOD'S DELIVERANCES WAS TO BE PERPETUATED. It is vital to the interests of a man that he should know the "rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged." Are we from above, or from beneath? Are we the creatures of fortuitous circumstance, or has our life been planned by a Divine Artificer? Are all the forces and energies of life within ourselves, or are we dependent upon the will and the resources of another? 1. It is salutary to remember our original. "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." It will serve to beget in us humility. It will make us hopeful; for if we have risen so much, may we not rise higher yet? 2. It is salutary to remember the oppressions of men. "The Egyptians evil entreated us." Poor, selfish, changeful man can never be relied upon. Friendly to-day, they turn to be bitterly hostile to-morrow. "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." 3. It is salutary to remember the efficacy of prayer. "We cried unto the Lord." His ear is always open to human solicitations. The affairs of this universe do not unfit him to attend to our need. True prayer is never in vain. 4. It is salutary to remember God's interpositions. "He looked. He brought us forth. He hath given us this land." The affliction was essential to fitness for Canaan. Winter is essential to the fruitfulness of spring. When God begins to bless us, what limit shall there be? What? Only that which our incapacity to receive may impose! Being redeemed, our expectations are infinite.

III. GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S GIFTS MUST BE PRACTICAL. Words of thankfulness are cheap, unless accompanied by deeds. Songs of praise are sweet minstrelsy in the ear of God, but they must spring from the heart; and if the heart is grateful, the hands will be full of offerings. The firstfruits of all our increase belong to God as a matter of right. But duty is delight. This requirement is representative. We may not be husbandmen; still our firstfruits are due. The firstfruits of our time belong to God—the fresh dewy hours of every day. The first of our gains belong to God. Say not, "They are mine." Nay! they are *his*. The firstfruits of mental strength—our youth; the best of all we have belong to him. To secularize these is sacrilege.

IV. THROUGH ALL GOD'S GIFTS HIS INTENTION IS HUMAN GLADNESS. This gladness is fostered and fed by proportionate offerings. For this habit of religious offering will serve to draw away our confidence from our material possessions, and place it in the living God. This will strengthen and establish joy. It is surely better to trust the Fount than the channel—the Source than the stream. If every man on earth is not brimful of joy, it is not God's fault. To rejoice in God is our duty and our privilege. And this joy is contagious. "Thou shalt rejoice, . . . thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you." Joy makes men generous, and the recipients of our generosity will share our joy. There will be joyous action and reaction. We are to be the channels through which God will pour his joy into others' hearts. In return they will give us their prayers.—D.

Vers. 12—15.—*Complete consecration a condition of continued blessing.* The system of social dependence is ordained of God. By a deliberate act of wisdom, God devoted the Levites to poverty, or rather to an equitable interest in the whole land. The necessities of some are created as the most fitting outlets for the charity of others.

I. MEN ARE APPOINTED TO BE GOD'S ALMONERS. Not more really does the sovereign of an empire employ persons of rank to be his stewards and almoners than God employs us. To expend upon ourselves the whole of our earthly possessions is sin—is the worst of sins—is sacrilege. We hold in our keeping God's property. We are not at liberty to use it as we please. Nor is the amount which appertains to God determined by the caprice of human inclination. A definite portion is God's, and becomes in the

highest sense trust property. One-tenth of all our gains is the fixed proportion claimed by God. God identifies himself with the Levite, the widow, the fatherless. The Levites are his messengers. The poor are his friends. To deny them is to wrong him; and he will surely avenge the insult. On stated occasions, viz. triennially, each proprietor was required to render an account of his stewardship, and to make a solemn declaration that he had faithfully discharged his momentous trust. As often as we supplicate new favours we virtually protest our faithfulness.

II. SURRENDER TO GOD A CONDITION OF SUCCESSFUL PRAYER. In this passage the Hebrews were taught not to ask for God's blessing upon their land until they had confessed their complete surrender to God's revealed will. Pride bars the door which keeps out Divine favours. Pride chokes the channels so that the stream of God's bounty cannot flow. In like manner God acts in our earthly life. He will not give health except through the channel of food. He will not give strength except through the channel of exercise. He will not allow us to use steam or electricity except by surrender to his material laws. We do not really pray so long as any part of our nature is rebellious against his will. Lip-prayer is counterfeit. Genuine prayer is the up-going of the whole man.

III. GOD'S SOLEMN PLEDGES ARE CONDITIONED BY EARNEST PRAYER. God had sworn to the patriarchs to give this goodly land to their seed, yet his oath implied trust, surrender, prayer, upon their part. Indeed, if these things had been wanting in the Hebrews, no external possession would have been a blessing: Canaan would have been a curse. Material light is no boon unless there be an organ of human vision to enjoy it—unless the eye be open. Nothing really benefits a man until it actually enters his nature and becomes a part of himself. This is God's efficient act. "Ask, and ye shall receive." For all things promised of God, "he will yet be inquired of." Prayer gives the final fitness to receive.—D.

Vers. 16—19.—*The spiritual creation.* In the creation of the material world, "God spake, and it was done." But in dealing with rebellious men, obedience does not spontaneously follow on command. God has called into existence a substance that cannot arbitrarily be controlled—a human will. Therefore, to gain loyal response from human nature, God makes known himself as infinitely worthy of man's regard, indicates his authority, and sets forth the high advantages of his friendship. The largest obedience is man's real interest. It is the only path to promotion.

I. WE HAVE HERE GOD'S REVELATION OF HIS KINGLY AUTHORITY. It is his part to command—man's to obey. We cannot reverse or disturb this order without introducing anarchy and sorrow. 1. This revelation of God is always new. "This day" thy God hath commanded thee afresh. New discoveries of the extent, the wisdom, the graciousness, of God's sovereignty may be made to us every day. Every morning the voice of heavenly authority speaks to us afresh. 2. The spirit of wise authority is very imperative. "Thou *shalt* keep and do." It would not be safe for God to abandon any part of his prerogative. It would not be safe to allow men to diminish his sovereignty. We are creatures: he is Creator; hence it is supremely fitting that he alone should rule. 3. His commands are irrevocable. They are well designated "statutes," *i.e.* things well established. In the material world men are discovering how fixed and uniform are all God's laws. No deviation is allowed. Nor is it tolerated in the spiritual realm, and every new-born man says, "I will keep thy statutes with my whole heart." 4. Obedience embraces the whole man. Outward and ostensible service does not satisfy God, because they will bring no blessing to his creature man. These commands are for man as a spiritual being; and mere external service is hypocrisy. No fragrance is in our obedience unless heart and soul go out in our deeds. Obedience, to have any worth with God, must be the efflorescence of our love.

II. WE HAVE HERE MAN'S WILLING ACCEPTANCE OF THE COVENANT. The Jews, as one man, chose God to be their King, and swore to be loyal subjects. "Thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God." 1. It must be an act of personal choice. Whether we perceive it or not, our course in life is our own choice. We may never consciously have faced the question, nor put into words our decision; yet our life plainly shows that some decision has been made. Happy the man who, after due reflection, can calmly say, "The Lord is *my* God!" 2. The language indicates progressive obedience.

The loyal servant "*walks* in God's ways." He is not content with standing still. In proportion as he obeys, he sees more clearly the wisdom of the command—he finds more pleasure in loyal service. At first he obeyed because it was a plain duty; now he responds because it is a delight. "He loves the Law." 3. And hearty obedience brings clearer knowledge of our Master's will. Having learnt the wisdom and the pleasure of obedience, he is more eager to hearken to the Divine voice. His ears have been opened. He can hear the soft whispers of a voice which is unheard by others. He loves to hearken. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

III. WE HAVE HERE GOD'S GENEROUS PLEDGE OF LARGER GOOD. 1. Here is adoption. He solemnly avers them to be "his peculiar people." He gives them a special place in his regards. Before the intelligent universe he espouses them as his own. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." All his power is pledged for their protection. All his possessions become theirs. 2. He gives them an obedient disposition. His blessing can reach the interior will. If we have made a general surrender of ourselves to him, he imparts gracious strength to every energy of our souls. In response to our desire he makes us willing. "I will pour out my Spirit upon them, and cause them to walk in my statutes, and they shall keep my judgments, and do them." When men have embraced his external and written covenant, then "he makes a new covenant, and writes it upon their hearts." First there is what is natural, afterward that which is spiritual. 3. Here are eminence and honour secured. "To make thee high above all nations." Real glory is God's gift to his chosen. False honour and glitter Satan scatters abundantly among his votaries; but these are superficial and ephemeral. Satan cannot give what he does not possess. All honour belongs to God; and the dignities and eminence and glory which are God's, he has chosen to share with his saints. "Where I am, there ye shall be also." 4. Man's crown of beauty is promised: "that thou mayest be holy." Purity is the perfection of humanity. For this our spirits thirst. No external honour or greatness will satisfy us if we are not internally holy. And the purpose of God in our redemption is "that we may be conformed unto the image of his Son." "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness."—D.

Vers. 1—11.—*The dedication of the firstfruits.* A beautiful religious service is here associated with the dedication of the firstfruits. It was to be an act of worship. There was to be the appearance before the priest, the acknowledgment of God's great bounty to the forefathers as well as to the worshipper himself, the presentation of the firstfruits as a return of God's gifts to him, the setting of the basket before God, and the rejoicing in the Divine presence. All this is surely typical.

I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE PRIEST TO WHOM WE SHOULD BRING THE FIRSTFRUITS OF ALL OUR INCREASE. In other words, we should bring our systematic beneficence before Christ, and prayerfully deal with it before him. He is the Mediator for our liberality, as well as for every other blessing.

II. WE NEED CHRIST'S MERITS TO RENDER OUR LIBERALITY, AS WELL AS EVERY OTHER GRACE, FRAGRANT BEFORE GOD. For we should never forget that no single grace is really fit in its naked imperfection to be presented to God. It requires to be performed with the merits of our adorable High Priest. There should be no boasting about it, as if it could stand alone.

III. OUR LIBERALITY SHOULD BE THE OUTCOME OF OUR GRATITUDE FOR FAVOUR SHOWN TO THE FATHERS AS WELL AS TO OURSELVES. The Jew reviewed gratefully the national history, the Syrian origin, the Egyptian bondage, the Exodus, the entrance into Canaan, and the fruitfulness of the land of promise. All this history of God's goodness made the firstfruits simply the expression of gratitude.

It is on this grace that systematic beneficence is to be built. Nowhere else can a fitting foundation be found.

IV. OUR LIBERALITY SHOULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH AN ACT OF JOYFUL WORSHIP. In no other way can liberality be sustained. "On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. xvi. 2). Why on the first day of the week? Manifestly to associate the grace with the religious services of the resurrection day. No week-day liberality will last long—it requires a Lord's day, with all its holy associations and sanctions, to sustain the liberality of the people.

And this saves the spirit of liberality from the grudging that is so vexatious and so

worldly. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," and so he draws the giver into his own presence, and makes him joyful there, that he may offer in his liberality a "sacrifice of joyfulness."

V. THE JOY REACHED THROUGH LIBERALITY IS TO BE CARRIED INTO THE SOCIAL CIRCLE, TO MAKE HOME TRULY HAPPY. The Jew, after presenting his firstfruits, was to rejoice in every good gift of God, along with the Levite and stranger who formed part of his household. A cheerful giver is the secret of a happy home. His relations with his Lord being bright and beautiful, he brings the fragrance home.—R. M. E.

Vers. 12—19.—*Looking up for the blessing.* The interests of the dependent classes, "the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow," being considered and secured by the tithing of the third year, the Jew was directed then to look up for the Divine blessing on the land. The tithe was first paid, and then the blessing sought.

I. SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE SHOULD BE THE PRELIMINARY OF SUPPLICATION FOR BLESSING, AND NOT CONDITIONED UPON IT. There is a temptation to make liberality a matter of speculation, to vow a certain portion if a certain blessing is conferred. Now, this may be all very well regarding what is beyond a tithe, but the tithe is a settled proportion to be promptly and gratefully paid, and the blessing can then be honestly asked when the debt to God has been discharged.

II. THE TRULY LIBERAL WILL LOOK FOR SPIRITUAL BLESSING FOR HIS COUNTRY, AND NOT BE CONTENT WITH TEMPORAL. In fact, it was revival, as we should now call it, that the Jew after his tithing sought. And systematic beneficence should be regarded as the indispensable preliminary of revival, if Mal. iii. 10 has any meaning. It is manifest that illiberality may hinder spiritual blessing, and consequently liberality should be fostered as the manifest test of sincerity regarding blessing. If one is not willing to pay his share that every hindrance of blessing may be removed, he cannot be in earnest about it.

III. MOSES, AS THE MEDIATOR, GUARANTEES THE COVENANT BLESSINGS TO THE COVENANT-KEEPING PEOPLE. God had brought Israel out of Egypt, and was about to introduce them to the land of promise, that they might prove his "peculiar people," and be "high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour," and above all, be "an holy people." This was his covenant engagement. Hence Moses urges them to keep the commandments God has given them with all their heart and soul, and they shall find how faithful God is.

Obedience is consequently to be the manifestation of their faith in God as "Faithful Promiser." If he gave the blessings in all their fulness first, faith would have no room to grow, and his people would be able to live well enough by sight. But when they are asked to obey and be blessed in and through their obedience, faith has its beautiful sphere.—R. M. E.

PART III.

THIRD DISCOURSE OF MOSES. THE COVENANT RENEWED.

CHAPTER XXVII.—CHAPTER XXX.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

INSTRUCTIONS AS TO THE PUBLISHING OF THE LAW IN CANAAN.

HAVING set forth the laws and rights of Israel with special reference to the settlement of the people in Canaan, Moses proceeds to dwell more particularly on the sanctions by which obedience to the Divine institute was enforced. Before entering on these, however, he gives some instructions regarding the setting up and procla-

mation of the Law when they should have entered Canaan. These instructions Moses gives in conjunction with the elders of Israel, who are associated with him here, because on them would devolve the obligation to see to the fulfilment of what the Law enjoined after Moses had ceased to be the ruler and leader of the people.

Vers. 1—8.—The first instruction respects the setting up of pillars on which the Law was to be inscribed. Such a mode of publishing laws or edicts was common in ancient times. Pillars of stone or metal, on which laws were inscribed, are frequently mentioned by the classical writers. Lysias quotes a law from such a pillar in the Areopagus at Athens ('Eratosth.,' 31, 12); at Eleusis there were pillars on which laws were inscribed (Pollux, 10, 97); Plato speaks of pillars set up in the market-place, on which were laws for the regulation of traffic ('De Legg.,' xi. p. 916 E); and Polybius even uses the word "pillar" (στήλη) as synonymous with "law" or "conditions of treaty" ('Hist.,' xxiv. 4, 12; xxvi. 1, 4, etc. Comp. also Plato, 'Crit.,' p. 119 C, E; 120 A; Ps.-Demosth., p. 1370, 25; 1381, 10; Cicero, 'Cat.,' iii. 8; 'Phil.,' xiii. 3; 'Fam. Epp.,' xii. 1; Ovid, 'Met.,' i. 3).

Ver. 1.—**All the commandments**, etc.; all that up to this time I have enjoined upon you. The reference is to the entire Law as given by Moses.

Ver. 2.—**On the day when ye shall pass over Jordan**; *i.e. at the time*; "day" is here used in a wide sense (cf. Gen. ii. 4; Numb. iii. 1; 2 Sam. xxii. 1; Eccles. xii. 3; Isa. xi. 10, etc.). **Thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister.** The stones, the number of which is not specified, were to be large, because much was to be inscribed upon them, and they were to be covered with a coating of lime or gypsum (שִׂיד), in order to secure a smooth white surface on which the inscription might be clearly depicted. That the words were not, as Michaelis, Rosenmüller, and others suppose, cut in the stone, and afterwards covered with plaster in order to preserve them, is plain from its being enjoined that they were to be written *upon* (עַל) the stones so prepared; and besides, as this was intended to be a *proclamation* of the Law, the main purpose of the erection would have been frustrated had the inscription been concealed by such a covering as that supposed. Among the ancient Egyptians the practice of depicting records on walls or monuments covered with a coating of plaster was common (see Hengstenberg, 'Authentie des Pent.,' i. 464, English translation, i. 433); from them, doubtless, it was borrowed by the Hebrews. It has been suggested by Kennicott that the writing was to be in *relievo*, and that the spaces between the letters were filled up by the mortar or cement. This is possible, but it is not such a process as this that the words of the text suggest. "A careful examination of ch. xxvii. 4, 8, and Josh. viii. 30—22, will lead to the opinion that the Law was *written upon* or *in the plaster* with which these pillars were coated. This could easily be done, and such writing was common in ancient times. I have seen specimens of it certainly more than *two thousand years old*, and still as distinct as when they were first inscribed on the plaster" (Thomson, 'Land and the Book,' ii. p. 204).

Ver. 3.—**All the words of this law**; *i.e.* all the purely legislative parts of the Mosaic institute. By the "Law" here cannot be intended merely the blessings and the curses afterwards mentioned (vers. 14—26); nor is there any reason why this term should be restricted to the precepts of this Book of Deuteronomy, as if they only were to be inscribed on the stones: the term must be extended so as to cover all that Moses had at any time delivered to Israel as a law from God. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that *all* the reasons and exhortations with which the delivery of these, as recorded in the Pentateuch, was accompanied were to be inscribed along with the Law; still less that the historical details amidst which the record of these laws is embedded should be given. It may be questioned even whether *each* and *all* of the legislative enactments of the Torah, reckoned by the Jews to be 613, were to be recorded; for it might be deemed enough that the substance and essence of the Law should be thus presented. But even if the whole was to be inscribed, there would be no serious difficulty in the way of carrying this into effect, seeing there is no limitation as to the number of the stones to be set up.

Ver. 4.—The stones were to be set up on Mount Ebal (cf. ch. xi. 29). The Samaritan Codex and Version have Gerizim here, in place of Ebal; but though some critics have accepted this, it is generally regarded as an arbitrary alteration introduced to favour Samaritan pretensions (see the exhaustive and conclusive Dissertation of Gesenius, 'De Pentat. Samarit.'). All the ancient versions, as well as all the Hebrew manuscripts, support the received text.

Vers. 5—7.—Besides the monumental stones, an altar of whole stones, on which no tool had passed (cf. Exod. xx. 22) was to be erected, and burnt offerings and peace offerings were to be presented as at the estab-

lishment of the covenant at Sinai, followed by the statutory festive entertainment (cf. Exod. xxiv. 5).

Ver. 8.—The injunction to write the Law on the stones is repeated, with the addition that it was to be done **very plainly** (LXX., σαφῶς σφόδρα: Vulgate, *plane et lucide*), which shows that the main purpose of setting up the stones was that the Law might be easily known by the people (cf. Hab. ii. 2). The stones and the altar were fittingly placed on Ebal, the mount of cursing. For the setting up of the stones on which the Law was inscribed, and the building beside them of the altar, was the symbolical renewal of the covenant of God with Israel, and the establishment in Canaan of that dispensation which was "the ministration of condemnation and of death" (2 Cor. iii. 7, 9), and of that Law which, though in itself "holy, just, and good," can only, because of man's perversity and sinfulness, bring on those who are under it a curse (Gal. iii. 10).

Vers. 9, 10.—When Israel renewed the covenant with the Lord, by solemnly setting up the Law in Canaan, it became thereby the nation of God, and bound itself at the same time to hearken to the voice of the Lord, and keep his commandments, as it had already done (cf. ch. xxvi. 17, 18; Micah iv. 5).

Ver. 9.—**Take heed**; literally, *Be silent*; LXX., σιώπα, with silent attention listen (cf. Zech. ii. 13).

Vers. 11—14.—Having set up the Law and renewed the covenant in Canaan, Israel was to proclaim upon the land the blessing and the curse of the Law, as already commanded (see ch. xi. 29). For this purpose six tribes were to station themselves on Mount Gerizim, and six on Mount Ebal, the former to pronounce the blessing, the latter the curse. (On the situation of these two mountains, see at ch. xi. 29.) The six tribes by whom the blessing was to be pronounced were Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin, all descended from the two wives of Jacob—Leah and Rachel. The tribes by whom the curse was to be uttered were those descended from Zilpah, Leah's maid, viz. Gad and Asher; those descended from Bilhah, Rachel's maid, viz. Dan and Naphtali; with Zebulun and Reuben, both descended from Leah. As, in order to obtain a division of the tribes into two equal portions, two of the sons of Leah must be assigned to the second half, Zebulun and Reuben were chosen, probably because the former was the youngest of Leah's sons, and the latter had by his sin forfeited his birthright (Gen. xlix. 4).

Ver. 13.—**These shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse**; literally, *These shall stand upon the curse on Mount Ebal*; i.e. it shall belong to them to utter the curse.

Ver. 14.—The Levites—standing probably in some convenient spot midway between the two mountains (cf. Josh. viii. 33)—were to pronounce with a loud voice the blessing and the curse, so that all might hear; and the people were to give their assent, and take to themselves, as it were, the blessing or the curse as uttered, by a solemn **Amen**. By the Levites here are intended, not the sons of Levi generally, but that portion of them which belonged to the priesthood, and bare the ark of the covenant (cf. Josh. viii. 33).

Vers. 15—26.—The curses to be pronounced were twelve in number, probably to correspond with the number of the tribes. The blessings are not here recorded; but when the injunction here given was fulfilled by Joshua, the blessing as well as the curse was pronounced (Josh. viii. 34). And probably, as the Jews report, each, the blessing and the curse, was pronounced alternately (Talmud Bab., 'Sotah,' c. 7; Targum Hieros., *in loc.*; Surenhus., 'Mishna,' iii. 262). It has sometimes been doubted whether any human voice could be audible over so wide a stretch as that between these two mountains; but this need be no longer matter of doubt, for the experiment has been repeatedly tried in recent times with success (Tristram, 'Land of Israel,' p. 150; Bonar, p. 371; Stanley, 'Syr. and Pal.,' p. 13). In the clear atmosphere of the East sounds travel far. It is to be borne in mind also that it was not a single voice that had to make itself heard across the valley on this occasion, but a chorus of voices proceeding from a body of priests stationed apparently in the midst between the two companies (cf. Josh. viii. 33), and chanting in unison the words of each blessing or curse.

Vers. 15—26.—Each of the first eleven curses is directed against some particular sin already denounced in the Law. The twelfth curse is directed generally against all breaches of the Law, against those who fail or refuse to set up the whole Law and follow it as the rule of life and conduct. This shows that the sins specially denounced are selected by way of specimen, and also, perhaps, because they are such as could

for the most part be easily concealed from judicial inspection.

Ver. 15.—(Cf. Exod. xx. 4; Lev. xxvi. 1.)
Ver. 16.—(Cf. Exod. xxi. 17.)
Ver. 17.—(Cf. ch. xix. 14.)
Ver. 18.—(Cf. Lev. xix. 14.)
Ver. 19.—(Cf. ch. xxiv. 17.)
Ver. 20.—(Cf. Lev. xviii. 8; ch. xxii. 30.)
Ver. 21.—(Cf. Lev. xviii. 23; xx. 15.)
Vers. 22, 23.—(Cf. Lev. xviii. 9, 17.)
Ver. 24.—(Cf. Exod. xx. 13; Numb. xxxv 16, etc.)
Ver. 25.—(Cf. Exod. xxiii. 7, 8.)
Ver. 26.—(Cf. ch. xxviii. 15; Jer. xi. 3, 4.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—"*Very plainly.*" These words, "very plainly," suggest three lines of thought.

I. THEY SHOW SOMETHING THAT WAS ORDERED TO BE, viz. that the Law of God was to be written very plainly, as the permanent, standard expression of right, to which the people might appeal. It was not to be left to a floating tradition. To no such risks would God expose his teaching. There was no priesthood in Israel which had any monopoly of knowledge. The words were to be so clearly and accurately recorded that, upon all that pertained to life and godliness, the people might see for themselves what the Lord had spoken, and not be dependent on any sacerdotal interpretation whatever. How clearly does this fact indicate the mind and will of Jehovah concerning our race! God would not have us walk uncertainly. He would have the way of life so plain, that the "wayfaring men, though fools," need not err therein.

II. THEY SHOW SOMETHING WHICH HAS BEEN. The injunction has been carried out, not only in the matter here specially referred to, but in God's later disclosures also. 1. In the books which Moses left behind him there was a revelation of the Divine mind and will so clear and distinct, that no one reading even the Pentateuch with a loyal faith need ever have been at a loss to know that the ground of his trust was the forgiving love of God, and that the duty of life was summed up in love to God and love to man. 2. Later teachings are given with equal, yea, with increasing clearness. (1) Those of the prophets. (2) Of our Lord. (3) Of the apostles. In all, the main teachings are given "very plainly." Note: The plainness of Scripture is not of that kind which men outgrow as they get older. Those very passages which charm childhood with their simplicity, do come to have a fuller and deeper meaning for the "old disciple."

III. THEY SUGGEST SOMETHING WHICH SHOULD BE. 1. Let us ever regard the Bible as a Book for the people, and let us insist on its being made the ultimate standard of appeal. 2. Let us use it as God meant us to use it, not as *a* book, but as *the* Book; not as man's, but as God's. 3. With such a Book before us, let us walk (1) intelligently, as if we understood the meaning of life; (2) thankfully, as if we apprehended the glory of life; (3) earnestly, as if we knew the solemnity of life; (4) hopefully, as those who are advancing towards the goal of life.

Vers. 11—26.—*A grand "Amen!"* It is more than possible that, with the strong disposition there is nowadays to look on Judaism as obsolete, the chapter before us may be very frequently passed over as if full of curses that no longer have any effect; especially as Paul, in Gal. iii., says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law." But we are apt, perhaps, in dealing with the doctrinal aspect of these curses of the Law, in reference to the Atonement, to lose sight of their primary historical aspect in reference to Israel. But the significance of both altar and pillar, pillar and altar, should be taken into account. Here, in the valley between Gerizim and Ebal, the grandest assembly met that was ever convened. The Law was read in the people's hearing, and the people were to declare themselves ready to brand sin with their curse, as God branded it with his. In a word, they were in a glorious league with the Great King of heaven and earth, that, whatever he disapproved, they would combine to brand with the infamy of eternal shame. As Israel was expected then to be in league with God in denouncing wrong, so are Christians expected by the holy cross to swear eternal war against sin. This may be worked out in seven consecutive lines of thought.

I. God's people now are a divinely chosen commonwealth.

II. In subjection to God alone, this commonwealth is a self-governing body.

III. The only law for life which they accept is that of righteousness—righteousness, of course, *all round*, both as regards God and man.

IV. It was for this very purpose Israel had been chosen out of the peoples that, for the world's sake, there might be one nation in which righteousness was the supreme law.

V. Side by side with the records of a Law which demands perfect righteousness, there is the altar and its sacrifice thereon, speaking to the people of a Divine provision for forgiving the penitent.

VI. The penitent is set free from the curse of Law, that he may ever after co-operate with God in honouring the Law from whose curse he has been redeemed.

VII. The passionate concern for holiness, and the delight in a holy Law, which are begotten in them who are of "the commonwealth of Israel," ensure their entire sympathy with God in the everlasting curse pronounced against all unrighteousness.

VIII. Thus the pure and just Law of God may serve believers as an educatory force throughout their whole life. And in their incessant hatred and condemnation of evil is the saying true in the highest sense, *Vox populi, vox Dei.*

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The stones on Ebal.* This chapter is significant, as letting in light on the design of the Law, and on the nature of the Jewish covenant. We see from it: 1. That the Law could not give life. 2. That it was not designed to give life. 3. That its real aim was to convince of sin, and so to shut men up to the faith that would afterwards be revealed (Gal. iii. 23). Three topics in these verses—

I. THE ERECTION OF THE STONES. (Vers. 2, 3.) Stones were to be set up, coated with plaster (a custom of Egypt), on which were to be written, "very plainly," "all the words of this Law" (ver. 8)—either the Law in Deuteronomy, or the Pentateuchal laws generally. The stones were: 1. Significant reminders of the tenure on which the land was held. 2. Witnesses against the people in case of disobedience. 3. A testimony to the plainness with which the Law had been made known to them. The last point reminds us of our own privilege in possessing a clear and full revelation of the will of God in the Bible. Copies of the Bible are like these stones, witnesses against us if we disobey the gospel. "Light has come into the world" (John iii. 19). We are not left to the natural conscience, sufficient though that be to convict men of sin (Rom. ii. 14, 15). We are servants who know our Lord's will (Luke xii. 47). We have the light both of Law and gospel. Supremely great are our privileges, and equally great are our responsibilities.

II. THE STONES ERECTED ON EBAL. (Ver. 4.) But why on Ebal? Why on the mount of cursing? Had there been a Law which could have given life, "verily," Paul says, "righteousness should have been by the Law" (Gal. iii. 21). In that case, the appropriate place for the erection of the stones would have been Gerizim—the mount of blessing. But the Law could not give life. In itself considered, as requiring perfect obedience, it could only condemn. Its principal function—its economic scope and purpose—was not to bless, but to give "knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 19, 20; vii. 9—14; Gal. iii.). Hence the appropriate place for the stones being planted was on the mount of cursing.

III. THE ACCOMPANYING SACRIFICES. (Vers. 5—7.) 1. As the Law testified to sin, so the sacrifices testified to grace—to the provision in mercy which lay within the covenant for the removal of guilt. Burnt offerings and peace offerings, as well as the sin offerings, included the idea of propitiation. This was shown at the first forming of the covenant by the action of sprinkling the blood (Exod. xxii. 6—8; cf. Heb. ix. 19—23). Without sacrifice, without the means of removing, or at least covering guilt, Israel's position under the Law would have been a mockery. 2. The altar of unhewn stones testifies to the subordinate place which art ought to have in the worship of God. There was a special suitableness in the altar of propitiation being built of undesecrated

materials. Himself sinful, man's art would have polluted it. Only when propitiation had been made was art permitted to resume its function of ministering to the beauty of Divine service. But art, in religion, needs to be carefully guarded. It is false art when it drowns other thoughts in admiration of the finish, injuring worship by that which draws away the mind from worship. 3. The burnt offerings and peace offerings testified—the one to the entire consecration of heart and life which is the condition of acceptable service; the other, to the peace and fellowship with God which, on the ground of sacrifice, are attained through consecration and obedience.—J. O.

Vers. 9, 10.—*A people of God.* I. A PEOPLE BOUND TO GOD BY MANY TIES. Both by what God had done for them, and by the vows which, on different occasions, they had taken on themselves. They were his by covenant with the fathers. He had made them his by redemption from Egypt. He had covenanted with them at Sinai. The covenant being broken, he had, at Moses' intercession, graciously renewed it. He had kept covenant with the children, even when rejecting the fathers. Thirty-eight years he had led them in the wilderness, and once more had gathered them together, to hear them renew their vows of obedience. Which things are a figure. They remind us of the many bonds by which numbers of Christ's people are bound to his covenant. By redemption, by dedication of parents, by personal choice of the Saviour, by public profession, by repeated visits to his table, by special vows, etc.

II. A PEOPLE REAFFIRMED TO BE GOD'S BY RENEWAL OF COVENANT. We "become" the Lord's by revival and renewal of profession, as well as by original entrance into grace. As Christ's Sonship is from eternity, yet is dated from successive epochs—his birth (Luke i. 32, 35), his resurrection (Acts xiv. 33; Rom. i. 4)—so each new act of self-dedication, each new approach of God to the soul, each renewal of covenant, may be taken by the Christian as a new date from which to reckon his acceptance.

III. A PEOPLE UNDER WEIGHTY RESPONSIBILITIES. The believer's relation to God entails a solemn obligation to obedience. The very name, "people of God," reminds us of our "holy calling"—of the obligation resting on us to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. ii. 15, 16); exhibiting to the world a pattern of good works, and proving our discipleship by likeness of character to him whose Name we bear.—J. O.

Vers. 11—26.—*Ebal and Gerizim.* This ceremony turns on the idea of the Law as primarily entailing a curse. Blessings and curses were both to be recited (vers. 12, 13). But the curse seems to have been first pronounced, and it only is given in the record. It has the lead in the transaction. The explanation is obvious. Ver. 26 shows that, in strictness, none can escape the curse (Ps. cxxx. 3; Gal. iii. 10). A blessing is pronounced from Gerizim, but it is abortive, as depending on a condition which no sinner can fulfil. Hence: 1. The stones are all placed on Ebal. 2. All the sons of the bondwomen are placed on that mount (cf. Gal. iv. 21—31). This is preferable to supposing that prominence is given to the curse, inasmuch as, under law, fear rather than love is the motive relied on to secure obedience. The appeal to fear is itself an evidence that "the law is not made for a righteous man" (1 Tim. i. 9). It brings strikingly to light the inherent weakness of the economy (Rom. viii. 3). When a Law, the essence of which is *love*, requires to lean on *curses* to enforce it, the unlikelihood of getting it obeyed is tolerably manifest. As an actually working system, the Mosaic economy, while availing itself of the Law to awaken consciousness of sin and to keep men in the path of virtue, drew its strength for holiness, not from the Law, but from the revelations of love and grace which lay within and behind it. We learn—

I. THAT THE LAW IS COMPREHENSIVE OF EVERY PART OF OUR DUTY. A variety of sins are mentioned as examples. They relate to all departments of duty—duty to God and duty to man. The list is avowedly representative (ver. 26). Note: 1. *That it covers a large part of the Decalogue.* The first table is fairly represented by the second commandment, and a curse is pronounced on the making and worshipping of images (ver. 15). The precepts of the second table are involved in the other verses—the fifth commandment in the curse on filial disrespect (ver. 16), the sixth in the curse on murder (ver. 24), the seventh in the curses on the grosser forms of uncleanness (vers. 20—23); the eighth in the curse on removing the landmark (ver. 17); the ninth in

the curse on slaying another for reward, which may include perjury (ver. 25); while vers. 18, 19 may be viewed as forbidding breaches of the law of love generally. 2. *That the sins against which the curses are directed are mostly secret sins.* The Law searches the heart. 3. *That the usual care is shown for the interests of the defenceless* (vers. 18, 19). It is touching, in the heart of so awful a malediction, to find this tender love for the blind, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow. Wrath and love in God are close of kin.

II. THAT A CURSE WAITS ON EVERY VIOLATION OF THE LAW'S PRECEPTS. The position of Scripture is that every sin, great and small, subjects the sinner to God's wrath and curse. It derives this truth, not, as some have sought to derive it, from the metaphysical notion of sin's infinite demerit, as committed against an infinite God; but from its own deep view of sin, as involving a change, a deflection, an alteration, in its effects of infinite moment, in the very centre of man's being. There is no sin of slight turpitude. A holy being, to become capable of sin, must admit a principle into his heart totally foreign to the holy condition, and subversive of it. In this sense, he that offends in one point is guilty of all (Jas. ii. 10, 11). Sin is in him, and on a being with sin in him the Law can pronounce but one sentence. His life is polluted, and, being polluted, is forfeited. The curse involves the cutting of the sinner off from life and favour, with subjection to the temporal, spiritual, and eternal penalties of transgression. The denial of this article leaves no single important doctrine of the gospel unaffected; the admission of it carries with it all the rest. It gives its complexion to a whole theology.

III. THAT THE SINNER MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THE JUSTICE OF THE LAW'S CLAIMS AGAINST HIM. The people were required to say, "Amen." This "Amen" was: (1) An assent to the conditions of life proposed. (2) A recognition of the righteousness of them. The Law declares God's judgment against sin. And this: 1. *Is echoed by the conscience.* Fitfully, reluctantly, intermittently, yet truly, even by the natural conscience. The "Amen" is implied in every pang of remorse, in every feeling of self-condemnation. Every time we do that we would not, we consent unto the Law that it is good (Rom. iii. 16). The very heathen know the "judgment of God, that they which commit such things" as are here specified "are worthy of death" (Rom. i. 32). But it needs the spiritually convinced heart to render this "Amen" hearty and sincere. The true penitent justifies God and condemns himself (Ps. li.). 2. *Was acknowledged by Christ as our Sin-bearer.* In Christ's atonement, it has been truly remarked, there "must have been *a perfect 'Amen' in humanity to the judgment of God on the sin of man.* Such an 'Amen' was due to the truth of things. He who was the Truth could not be in humanity and not utter it—and it was necessarily a first step in dealing with the Father on our behalf" (J. McLeod Campbell). 3. *Will yet be joined in by the whole universe* (Rev. xv. 2; xvii. 1, 2).

CONCLUSION. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). In him no condemnation (Rom. viii. 1).—J. O.

Vers. 1—10.—*Safeguards for obedience.* The enthusiasm of Moses for God's Law is admirable, and no less admirable is his earnest desire for Israel's prosperity. That self-forgetful zeal for others' good was one main qualification in Moses to be the vehicle of God's revealed will. With singular sagacity, Moses presses into the earliest service, for the promulgation of Divine Law, the people themselves. The very stones of Canaan were to be written over with the substance of the Law, and in this way were to become monuments of the covenant between God and Israel. The people who had taken an active part in publishing that Law would feel bound in self-consistency to maintain it. Their title-deeds to Canaan they set up in sight of heaven and earth; and if afterward they should be disobedient, the very stones of the land would cry out against them.

I. AN OBEDIENT SPIRIT DELIGHTS TO EXALT AND PERPETUATE GOD'S LAW. Moses, instructed by God, was a wise observer of human nature; hence he engages the co-operation of the people in proclaiming the Law in the first flush of conquest. The first stones they touched with their feet on the other side Jordan were to be consecrated to the service of God's Law. Deficient in tools, they were not expected to grave them in stone, but to write them on plaster. This could be expeditiously done, and might serve to remind them how easily were the Divine commands effaced from human

hearts. As soon as God had begun to fulfil his part of the covenant, man must fulfil his. The people were to write "all" the precepts; for not one of them, however minute, was needless. What was sufficiently important for God to reveal, we may be sure was important enough for man to preserve. These stones, when inscribed with Divine legislation, were to be set up on a mount central in the land, to indicate the universal honour to which they were entitled. And probably Ebal was selected that the people might be awed by the curses which sprang from disobedience. To magnify the Law of the King is the loyal subject's delight. "Oh, how I love thy Law!"

II. AN OBEDIENT SPIRIT IS QUALIFIED TO ENTER UPON A LARGER INHERITANCE. (Ver. 3.) The language is significant. Having passed over Jordan, they were to select and prepare these monumental stones, to the end "thou mayest go in unto the land." Various measures of success were possible. They might destroy the Canaanites, and yet find little advantage or comfort from the inheritance. God could give with one hand and blast with the other. Though in the land, it might not yet open out its resources to them as a "land flowing with milk and honey." Every day they tarried in the land, they might pass into an inner circle of blessing. New waves of sunshine and blessing might sweep over them, so that every morning the inheritance might be to them new. Nature, in its beauties, its wonders, its products, is inexhaustible. With God as our Friend and Teacher, we may find accessions of good and gladness perpetually. Obeying his voice, we enter in; and still, as obedience grows, we enter into fuller possession increasingly.

III. AN OBEDIENT SPIRIT OBTAINS QUICKENING AND STRENGTH AT GOD'S ALTAR. It was forbidden the Hebrews to erect an altar for burnt offering anywhere except the place which God should choose for his abode. So vital, however, to the interests of the nation was this act of proclaiming the Law, that an exception was made in its favour. In the presence of the Law, men would feel their deficiencies and offences; hence provision was specially made for the confession of sin, for the presentation of sacrifice, and for the assurance of mercy. At the altar of burnt offering God and guilty man could meet; here reconciliation could be effected, and here new grace could be obtained. In the sombre light of the burnt offering, men would read the august meaning of the Law, and learn to cover that Law with honour.

But why must the altar be built of unhewn stones? We can only conjecture. Was it to symbolize the fact that God can allow no human interference or co-operation in the work of atonement? Was it to indicate that every part of God's will and Law must be kept perfectly intact, if man would be the friend of God? Was it to prevent any kind of graven work, the craft of human imagination, from adorning the altar of God; by which the minds of worshippers might be diverted from the one solemn act to be performed? There may be an element of truth in all these surmises.

IV. AN OBEDIENT SPIRIT FINDS UNEXPECTEDLY A BANQUET OF JOY. "Thou shalt eat, and shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God." On all sides God has provided the materials for a splendid repast, where every desire of the soul may be satisfied; but the pathway to that sumptuous feast is the pathway of hearty obedience. We can secure the annual harvest only by acting along the line of God's law in nature; and active co-operation with the Divine will is essential to our soul's satisfaction. The joy that thrills the heart of God he desires to share with us, but self-will too often robs us of the boon. "The meek shall eat and be satisfied."

V. AN OBEDIENT SPIRIT RECEIVES INSPIRATION FROM THE HIGHEST SOURCE. "Thou art the people of the Lord thy God; therefore thou shalt obey" his voice. Service which is done from motives of advantage—to gain favour or promotion from God—is mercenary. A selfish end is in view. The favour of the Most High is not merely the *end* we seek; it is the *source* whence all right desire and exertion spring. Thou art the Lord's: this is the chief inspiration of effort. Thou art the Lord's; therefore live as becometh such royal rank. Thou art the Lord's; therefore all his stores of help are at thy command." "Greater is he that is for us than all who can be against us."—D.

Vers. 11—26.—*The Decalogue nationally reciprocated.* It is obvious that the same God who prescribed its Jewish Law is the Creator also of the human conscience; for, just as the sword fits its scabbard, or as cog corresponds with cog in the mechanical wheel, so accord Mosaic Law and human conscience. They are natural counterparts.

I. MEN ARE RULED BY A SYSTEM OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS. Notwithstanding the development of the human mind, and the progress of civilization since Moses' day, human nature is still in its minority, still in a state of childhood. We do not yet see into the interior nature of spiritual realities. We do not see the inherent excellence of righteousness. We do not see the native beauty of obedience. Hence we need to be attracted by rewards and awed by punishments. We perceive the glory or the shame of moral conduct chiefly by its fruits. As we grow in piety, we shall value virtue and holiness for their own sakes, and think less about remote effects and consequences. At present we need the attendant pleasure and pain, the promises and threatenings.

II. FINAL SEPARATIONS OF MANKIND ARE HERE PREFIGURED. As the twelve tribes were here divided into two distinct groups, divided by the vale of Shechem; so all the tribes of men shall eventually be separated, and that by an impassable gulf. The principle of classification on Ebal and Gerizim was not personal merit or demerit (as it will be at the final assize), yet even this ultimate principle of separation seems to have been foreshadowed there. Only children of Jacob's married wives were placed on the mount of blessing; but Reuben, the firstborn, had forfeited this privilege by reason of his sin. As yet, the evil could be averted—the positions might be reversed; these dramatic proceedings were omens both of good and of evil, and were intended to arouse a torpid conscience. To heaven or to hell each man hourly gravitates.

III. GOD'S BLESSING OR CURSE TAKES EFFECT FROM CENTRE TO CIRCUMFERENCE. These mountains were situated almost central in the land. Soon this vast congregation would be scattered to their allotted homes, and thus the influence of this scene would be transmitted all over Canaan. Even this external transmission was typical. The blessing and the curse touched every interest and relationship of Jewish life—religion, home, society, government. The curse was invoked upon idolatry, undutifulness, avarice, oppression, unchastity, insubordination. It began in the inner chamber of the heart, and extended to the outermost circle of the social system. It begins at once, follows the crime as the shadow does the object, until it reaches into the most distant cycles of eternity.

IV. THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE IS THE RECIPROCAL OF THE MORAL LAW, THE ECHO OF ITS SANCTIONS AND ITS PENALTIES. Every healthy conscience utters its sincere "Amen" to every dictate of God's Law. When free from the mists and storms of guilty passion, it reflects, with the fidelity of a mirror, the decisions of God's royal will. Even when a man is the victim of judicial sentence, his conscience admits the justice of the doom. The culprit, in his calmer moods, is self-convicted and self-condemned. When God, by the lips of Moses, required all the tribes to affirm thus solemnly the curses due to disobedience, he knew that every man would heartily take his part in that august deed.

V. MEN BECOME THE ADMINISTRATORS OF GOD'S LAW. We cannot doubt that *one* reason why God required this public assent to the sanctions of his Law, was that each man might feel more deeply his responsibility toward himself and toward his neighbours. In proportion to our reverential regard for God becomes our concern for others obedience. The Levites more than once had girded on their swords, and, fired with zeal for their God, had slain their own countrymen. No resistance was attempted, for conscience had made cowards of the culprits. To the same end, David prays, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness." Moved by this impulse, men would seek "to please their neighbours for their good *unto edification*." Possessed with a pious disposition, they endeavour to make known on every side God's will, to preserve its remembrance among those disposed to grow oblivious, and to exalt its authority on every hand. Self-consistency required that those who had publicly pronounced the curses of the Law should jealously watch their own conduct—should tenderly caution others!—D.

Vers. 1—10.—*Law-abiding people.* We have here a direction about writing, upon great stones in Mount Ebal, the words of the Divine Law. Whether this meant only the blessings and curses, as Josephus thinks, or an abstract of Deuteronomy, or only the ten commandments, we cannot tell. But the idea implied is similar to the writing of the Decalogue in stone; it was to render *fixed* the Law on which the national policy was to rest. In other words, it was a symbolic way of declaring that Israel will be

a Law-abiding people. In connection with this display of the Law, there was to be an altar erected, on which burnt offerings and peace offerings were to be presented, and the people were to realize, as they had never before done, that they have "become the people of the Lord their God." The following ideas are, among others, suggested:—

I. THE LORD'S PEOPLE WILL GREATLY HONOUR HIS LAW. All disrespect shown to the Divine Law argues superficiality both in thought and in feeling. Even suppose it were not most practical and just and good, it ought to be held in high honour as proceeding from the Lord. How much more when it is so wise and so thorough in dealing with human and national life! The great business, therefore, of getting the Law written on the rocks of Mount Ebal must have impressed its sacredness upon the people, and have constituted a standing witness of their undertaking to obey it. It was the acceptance and the publication of Divine Law as that by which, as a nation, they would abide.

II. THE BURNT OFFERINGS INDICATED THEIR PERSONAL CONSECRATION TO GOD. A reference to this sacrifice[1] will show that the idea emphasized in the burnt offering is consecration. The fire is emblematic of the sublimating influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the whole being, the entire personality, is lifted heavenward. When, then, the Israelites gathered round the altar between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, and had plentiful burnt offerings presented by their priests, it was surely dedicating their persons unto God, vowing to be a holy people unto him. Just as the burnt offering comes first in Leviticus to indicate the consecrated attitude of a people redeemed from Egyptian bondage, so it comes first on their entrance into the land of promise. It was Israel asserting that they were not their own, but "bought with a price," and therefore bound to glorify God with their bodies, and their spirits, which are God's (1 Cor. vi. 20).

III. THE PEACE OFFERINGS INDICATED FELLOWSHIP BEFORE GOD. After the burnt offerings came the peace offerings, part of which was laid on the altar, part appropriated by the priests, and the remainder the portion of the people. It was a feast of fellowship between God and his people. It was the sacrament of the land of promise. It indicated peace and unity between God and man. What a precious and interesting service it must have been! The most magnificent congregation the world ever saw, and the most impressive service! Communion is based upon unity of mind and of will on the part of the covenant-keeping God and his Law-abiding people.—R. M. E.

Vers. 11—26.—*Responses.* After the writing of the Law, and the sacrifices, there was to be a great congregation, and half of the people were to assemble on Mount Gerizim to bless, viz. Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin; while the other half were to assemble on Mount Ebal to curse, viz. Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. Now, we know from Numbers that the order of march was this: Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gershon and Merari with the tabernacle, Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Kohath with the sanctuary, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. The order for the arrangement, therefore, was that the van, consisting of Judah and Issachar, marched to Gerizim; then Zebulun, the next tribe, marched to Ebal; then the Gershonites and Merarites marched to Gerizim; then Reuben to Ebal; Simeon to Gerizim; Gad to Ebal; the Kohathites to Gerizim; followed by Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, who were the followers of the ark; and lastly the rearguard, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali, to Ebal. No commander-in-chief ever disposed of his men more impartially than did Moses in this address beyond the Jordan. Now, we have one or two remarks arising out of this arrangement.

I. THE TRIBE OF LEVI, WITH ALL THE APPOINTMENTS FOR SACRIFICE, PASSED TO GERIZIM TO BLESS. In the march Levi was divided into two parts—the Gershonites and Merarites going fourth with the tabernacle furniture, while the Kohathites went eighth with the ark and sanctuary. But they unite at Mount Gerizim. Nothing could more clearly indicate the mercy and blessing embodied in the whole ceremonial law which the Levites represented. The Law in its judicial aspect might have its penalties and judgments, but it had its ceremonies of mercy to counterbalance these.

II. THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION STOOD ON MOUNT GERIZIM. When we consider

[1] 'Pulpit Commentary,' on Lev. i., Homily by the present writer

the tribes that defiled upon the mount of blessing, we see that they absorb the heroic in Israel. Reuben, Gad, Asher, Dan, Zebulun, and Naphtali were nobodies, so far as national heroism is concerned; whereas the other tribes became famous in the history of Palestine. It is surely significant that the weight of the nation is assigned to the mount of blessing.

III. THE PEOPLE HAD TO SAY "AMEN" TO THE CURSES AS WELL AS TO THE BLESSINGS PRONOUNCED IN THE NAME OF GOD. Some are ready with their responses to the blessings; they cannot get too much of them. But they demur to any curses issuing from God. They think they are unworthy of him. It so happens, however, that, in the great congregation between the mountains, the curses of Ebal had precedence of the blessings of Gerizim. The emphasis chronologically was given to the *curses*. And our consciences must acknowledge that the Law of God must carry out its penalties punctually, or it will forfeit all respect.

IV. A REVIEW OF THE CURSES HERE UTTERED SHOWS THAT THEY ALL REST UPON RIGHT. No one dare take up one of these curses and suggest its omission or alteration. It is absolute morality which assigns a malediction to such crimes as these. They have the hearty "Amen" of every unbiassed conscience.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE.

Having enjoined the proclamations of the blessing and the curse on their entering into possession of Canaan, Moses, for the sake of impressing on the minds of the people both the blessing and the curse, proceeds here to dilate upon both, dwelling especially upon the latter as that which the people the more needed to have brought home to them. As he proceeds, the language of terrible denunciation passes into that of no less terrible prediction, in which the calamities that should come upon the nation because of their apostacy and rebellion are clearly and pointedly foretold.

Ver. 1.—*The blessing.* The condition *sine quâ non* of all enjoyment of the Divine bounty was obedience on the part of the people to the word and Law of Jehovah their God. This rendered, the blessing would come on them rich and full, and abide with them (cf. vers. 2, 9, 13, 14).

Ver. 2.—The blessings about to be specified are represented as personified, as actual agencies coming upon their objects and following them along their path.

Vers. 3—7.—The fulness of the blessing in all the relations of life, external and internal, is presented in six particulars, each introduced by the word "blessed." Israel should be blessed in the house and in the field, in the fruit of the body, in the productions of the soil and the increase of herd and flock, in the store and in the use of what nature provided,—in all their undertakings, whether in peace or in war, at home or abroad. **Basket and thy store**; rather, *basket and kneading-trough* (see Exod. viii. 3; xii. 34); "the basket" representing the store in which the fruits of the earth were laid up, the "kneading-trough" the use of these for the supply of daily needs (ver. 6; cf. Numb. xxvii. 17; Ps. cxxi. 8).

Ver. 8.—The effect of the blessing should be seen, not only in the supremacy of Israel over all opposition, but in the abundance of their possessions, in the success of their undertakings, and in the respect in which they should be held by all nations. **Storehouses.** The Hebrew word (אֲסָמִים), which occurs only here and in Prov. iii. 10, is properly thus rendered. It comes from a root which signifies to lay up.

Ver. 9.—The Lord would establish them to be a people holy unto himself, in whose blessed condition all would see that they were indeed his people, favoured by him.

Ver. 10.—**Thou art called by the name of the Lord**; rather, *the Name of Jehovah is called upon thee.* The Name of God is God himself as revealed; and this Name is called or named upon men when they are adopted by him, made wholly his, and transformed into his likeness. This blessing Israel enjoyed as a nation—"Theirs was the adoption and the glory" (Rom. ix. 4)—but it was theirs only in symbol and in shadow (Heb. x. 1); the reality belongs only to the spiritual Israel, and this came to men in all its fulness when he who is "the image of the invisible God" appeared and set up his tent among men, full of grace and truth (John i. 12, 14).

Ver. 11.—**The Lord shall make thee plen-**

teous in goods; literally, *shall make thee to abound for good*; i.e. shall not only give thee abundance, but cause it to redound to thy felicity.

Ver. 12.—**His good treasure**; equivalent to *his treasure-house*, i.e. heaven, whence blessing should be poured out upon them (cf. ch. xi. 14; Lev. xxvi. 4, 5). He would so fructify their ground, and so bless their toil in cultivating it, that they should become rich, and be able to lend to other nations, and not need to borrow.

Ver. 13.—They should be manifestly superior to other nations, heading them and being above them, their leader and not their subject or follower (cf. Isa. ix. 13). Note the contrast in vers. 43, 44.

Ver. 14.—(Cf. ch. v. 29; xi. 28.) Moses ends as he began, by reminding them that the condition of enjoying the blessing was obedience to the Divine Law, and steadfast adherence to the course in which they were called to walk.

Vers. 15—63.—*The curse.* In case of disobedience and apostacy, not only would the blessing be withheld, but a curse would descend, blighting, destructive, and ruinous. As the blessing was set forth in six announcements (vers. 3—6), the curse is proclaimed in form and number corresponding (vers. 16—19). The curse thus appears as the exact counterpart of the blessing. The different forms in which the threatened curse should break forth are then detailed in five groups.

Vers. 20—26.—*First group.* The curse should come upon them in various forms of evil, filling them with terror and dismay, and threatening them with utter ruin (cf. Mal. ii. 2).

Ver. 20.—**Vexation**; rather, *consternation*; the deadly confusion with which God confounds his enemies. The same word is used in ch. vii. 23; 1 Sam. xiv. 20. **Rebuke**; rather, *threatening*.

Vers. 21, 22.—The afflictive visitations here named are such as destroy life; but the distinctive character of each it is not easy exactly to define. The **pestilence** is probably a generic term for any fatal epidemic. In the LXX. it is usually represented by the general word *θάνατος*, death. **Consumption**; literally, *wasting*; the designation of any species of tabes or marasmus. **Fever** (דַּלֶּקֶת, from דָּלַק, to be parched, to glow); **inflammation** (חַרְחֻר, from חָרַר, to burn); **burning fever** (קַדַּחַת, from קָדַר, to kindle): different species of pyrexia, the distinction between which has not been determined. **The sword.** Instead of חֶרֶב, sword, the Vulgate, Arabic, and Samaritan adopt the reading חֹרֶב, heat, drought (Gen. xxxi. 40); but all the other versions support the reading of the received text, and there is no reason why it should be departed from, more especially as drought is threatened in the verse that follows. **Blasting and with mildew**; diseases that attack the grain (Amos iv. 9); the former (שִׁדָּפוֹן, from שָׁדַף, to scorch, to blast) a withering or scorching of the ears caused by the east wind (Gen. xli. 23); the latter (יֵרָקוֹן, from יָרַק, to be yellowish) the effect produced by a hot wind, which turns the ears yellow, so that they are rendered unproductive.

Vers. 23, 24.—Terrible drought is here threatened; no rain should fall (cf. Lev. xxvi. 19); but instead thereof dust, both light as powder and heavy as sand, should fall upon them. The allusion is probably to those clouds of dust and sand which often fill the air in Palestine, when the heat is intense and there has been no rain for a season; the wind then becomes a vehement sirocco, and the air is filled with sand and dust, and is like the glowing heat at the mouth of a furnace (Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' ii. 123; Thomson, 'Land and the Book,' ii. 311).

Vers. 25, 26.—Utter defeat in battle (the opposite of the blessing promised, ver. 7) and dispersion among the nations are threatened, with the utmost indignity to those who were slain, in their bodies being left unburied to be devoured by birds of prey and wild beasts (cf. 1 Kings xiv. 11; Ps. lxxix. 2; Jer. vii. 33; xvi. 4, etc.). **Shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth**; literally, *shalt be a tossing to and fro to all the kingdoms*, etc.; "a ball for all the kingdoms to play with" (Schultz; cf. 2 Chron. xxix. 8; Jer. xv. 4; xxiv. 9; xxix. 18, etc.).

Vers. 27—34.—*Second group.* The Lord should afflict them with various loathsome diseases, vex them with humiliating and mortifying calamities, and give them over to be plundered and oppressed by their enemies.

Ver. 27.—**Botch of Egypt**; the form of leprosy peculiar to Egypt (Exod. ix. 9, etc.), *elephantiasis*, "Ægypti peculiare malum" (Pliny, 'Nat. Hist.,' xxvi. 1—5). **Emerods**; tumours, probably piles (cf. 1 Sam. v.). **Scab**; probably some kind of malignant scurvy. **Itch**; of this there are various kinds common in Egypt and Syria.

Vers. 28, 29.—Besides bodily ailments, mental diseases should come upon them—insanity, incapacity, confusion of mind, so that even at midday they should grope as a blind man gropes, *i.e.* under the most favourable circumstances they should be unable to find the right path, to hit on the right and safe course. It is of mental blindness that the word is here used (cf. Isa. xlii. 19; Lam. iv. 14; Zeph. i. 17;

Rom. xi. 25; 2 Cor. iv. 4). **Thou shalt grope** (cf. Isa. lix. 10). Thus afflicted in body and mind, their state should be one only of oppression and calamity, with no hope of deliverance.

Vers. 30—34.—The spoliation of them should be utter. All most dear and precious to them should be the prey of their enemies. Wife, house, vineyard, herd, and flock should be ruthlessly taken from them; sons and daughters should be carried into captivity, and their eyes should look for them in vain, with constant and wasting longing (cf. Jer. viii. 20; Amos v. 11; Micah vi. 15; Zeph. i. 13; 2 Chron. xxix. 9; Neh. xi. 36; Jer. v. 15).

Ver. 30.—**And shalt not gather the grapes thereof**; margin, "Hebrew, *profane*." This is the literal rendering of the verb; the meaning is that given in the text. A vineyard was, for the first three years after it was planted, held sacred (Lev. xix. 23); after that, its consecration ceased, and the fruit might be gathered for common use (cf. ch. xx. 6), and it was said to be profaned.

Ver. 32.—**And there shall be no might in thine hand.** Keil proposes to render here, "Thy hand shall not be to thee towards God;" and others, "Thy hand shall not be to thee for God," *i.e.* instead of God. But יָד here is not "the Mighty One, God; but simply "might, strength, power," as in Gen. xxxi. 29; Prov. iii. 27; Micah ii. 1. Literally rendered, the words are, *And not for might is thy hand*, the meaning of which is well expressed in the Authorized Version.

Vers. 35—46.—*Third group.* Moses reverts to the calamities already threatened (ver. 27), for the purpose of leading on the thought that, as such diseases separated the sufferer from the society of his fellows, so Israel should be separated from God and brought under the dominion of strangers as a punishment for rebellion and apostacy.

Ver. 35.—**A sore botch**; an incurable leprosy, affecting not merely the joints and extremities, but the whole body. Such an affliction would exclude a man from all fellowship and from all covenant privileges of the nation. So Israel, rendered unclean by their sin, should be cut off from covenant union with God.

Vers. 36, 37.—As a consequence, God would bring them under subjection to a foreign power, and they should be made to serve other gods, wood and stone (ch. iv. 28), and would become an object of horror, a proverb, and a byword among the nations (cf. 1 Kings ix. 7; Jer. xxiv. 9).

Ver. 38.—Even in their own land the curse would overtake them and rest upon them in all their interests and relations.

Ver. 39.—**Worms**; probably the vine weevil, the convolvulus or involvulus of the Latin writers (Pliny, 'Nat. Hist.,' xvii. 47; Cato, 'De Re Rust.,' c. 95; Plaut., 'Cistell.,' iv. 2), the ἕλιξ or ἑλίκη of the Greeks (Bochart, 'Hieroz.,' pt. ii. bk. iv. c. 27).

Ver. 40.—**Thine olive shall cast his fruit.** Some would render here "shall be plundered or rooted out," taking the verb יִשֹּׁל as the Niph. of שָׁלַל; but the majority regard it as part of the verb נָשַׁל, and render "shall drop off," or as in the Authorized Version. There is some doubt, however, whether the verb נָשַׁל can be used intransitively.

Ver. 42.—**Consume**; literally, *take possession of.* The name given here to the ravaging insect is not the same as in ver. 38; but there can be no doubt it is the locust that is intended.

Vers. 43, 44.—(Cf. vers. 12, 13.)

Ver. 46.—These curses would be for a sign and for a wonder, exciting astonishment and dismay in the beholder, and showing that it was indeed the hand of God that was upon the rebellious nation. **For ever.** This, though it may imply the final and utter rejection of Israel as a nation, does not preclude the hope of restoration of a part of Israel as individuals, or as a remnant remaining in or returning to faith and obedience (cf. Isa. x. 22; vi. 13; Rom. ix. 27; xi. 5).

Vers. 47—57.—*Fourth group.* In order still more to impress on the minds of the people the evil and danger of rebellion and apostacy, Moses enlarges on the calamities that would ensue on their being given up to the power of the heathen. Because they would not serve Jehovah their God, they should be delivered to be servants to their enemies.

Vers. 49, 50.—The description here given of the enemy to whom Israel was to be subjected, applies more or less closely to all the nations whom God raised up from time to time, to invade Israel and chastise the people for their rebellion—the Chaldeans (cf. Jer. xlviii. 40; xlix. 22; Ezek. xvii. 5—7; Hab. i. 6, etc.), the Assyrians (cf. Isa. v. 26; xxxviii. 11; xxiii. 19), the Medes (Isa. xiii. 17, 18); but there are features in the description which apply especially to the Romans; and the horrors delineated in the latter part of the section (vers. 52—57) carry one's thoughts immediately to the terrible scenes which transpired during the wars of Vespasian and Titus with the Jews as narrated by Josephus ('De Bell. Jud.,' vi.; see Milman, 'Hist. of the Jews,' bk. xvi.).

Ver. 49.—**As the eagle flieth.** The eagle was the common ensign of the legion in the Roman army; and by the Latin writers

aquila (eagle) is sometimes used for a legion (Cæs., 'Hisp.,' 30; cf. Matt. xxiv. 28).

Ver. 50.—**A nation of fierce countenance**; literally, *firm* or *hard of face*; i.e. obdurate and determined (cf. Prov. xxi. 29; Dan. viii. 23).

Vers. 52—57.—(Cf. Lev. xxvi. 29; 2 Kings vi. 24—30; Jer. xix. 9; Lam. ii. 20; iv. 10.)

Ver. 56.—So intense should be the hunger, that the delicate and sensitive woman, brought up in luxury, and who would not set her foot on the ground lest she should be fatigued by the exertion or offended by coming in contact with the base soil, but when she went abroad must be carried in a litter or borne by a camel or an ass,—even she should break through all restraints of delicacy and affection, and would secretly devour the very infant she had borne during the siege.

Ver. 57.—**Her young one**; literally, *her after-birth*. The Hebrew suggests an extreme of horror beyond what the Authorized Version indicates.

Vers. 58—68.—*Fifth group.* Even these fearful calamities would not be the consummation of their punishment. If they should be obstinate in their rebellion; if they would not observe to do all that the Law delivered by Moses enjoined on them; if they ceased to reverence and obey Jehovah, their God;—then should come upon them the curse in full measure, and long-continued chastisement should show how grievous had been their sin.

Ver. 58.—**This book.** Not the Book of Deuteronomy, which was not then written, but the Book of the Law, the Torah, delivered by Moses to Israel from God; and of which he had been, in his addresses to the people, recapitulating some of the principal points (cf. vers. 60, 61). **That thou mayest fear, etc.** It was not mere outward observance of the Law, not the mere "doing" of what was enjoined that was required, but the doing of it heartily and sincerely in the fear of the Lord, in the fear of him who had revealed himself to them by the glorious and awful Name, Jehovah, their God (cf. Lev. xxiv. 11).

Vers. 60, 61.—**The diseases of Egypt** are the plagues sent on Pharaoh and his people, as recorded in Exod. vii.—xi. Besides these, other plagues, not recorded in the Book of the Law, should come on rebellious Israel, so that they should be almost utterly destroyed.

Ver. 62.—(Cf. ch. iv. 27; x. 22; Neh. ix. 23.)

Ver. 63.—(Cf. ch. xxx. 9; Jer. xxxii. 41.) He, whose joy it had been to do them good, should rejoice over their destruction (cf. Prov. i. 26).

Ver. 64.—Those of them that survived the plagues that should come upon them, and the horrors of the siege, should be scattered amongst all nations to the ends of the earth, and there subjugated to the utmost indignities and sufferings.

Ver. 66.—**Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee**; literally, *Thy life shall be hung up before thee*; i.e. shall be like an object suspended by a thread which hangs dangling before the view, ready to fall or to be cut down at any moment. Comp.—

"Omnia sunt hominum tenui pendentia filo
Et subito casu quæ valuere ruunt."
(Ovid, 'Epp. ex Ponto,' iv. 3, 35.)

Ver. 68.—Worst of all, they should be again reduced to bondage, carried back to Egypt, put up for sale as slaves, and be so utterly despicable that no one would purchase them. **Bring thee into Egypt again.** "If the Exodus was the birth of the nation of God as such, the return would be its death" (Schultz; cf. Hos. viii. 13; ix. 3). **With ships.** They came out of Egypt by land, as free men; they should be carried back imprisoned and cooped up in slave-ships. **By the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again.** This does not refer to their being carried to Egypt in ships as different from the way by which they had come out from it, but simply to the fact that they should be carried back thither, contrary to what was expected when they so triumphantly came forth from it. **There ye shall be sold**; literally, *shall sell yourselves*; i.e. give yourselves up to be sold as slaves. Egypt may be here, as Hengstenberg suggests, "the type of future oppressors;" but there seems no reason why the passage should not be taken literally. It is a fact that, after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, the Jews were in large numbers carried into Egypt, and there subjected to most ignominious bondage; and in the time of Hadrian, multitudes of Jews were sold into slavery (Josephus, 'De Bell. Jud.,' vi. 9, 2; cf. Philo, 'Flacc.' and 'Leg. ad Caium.').

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*God's blessing promised to the obedient.* The aged lawgiver was finishing his course. Ere the end comes he would open up to the people once more the dread alternative of blessing and cursing, and would show them that they must accept

either one or the other. And so, before the Holy Land is taken possession of, they are reminded how very much the realization of the promises of temporal good depends on what they are. We cannot be too frequently reminded of the fact, however, that, though *primâ facie* this chapter looks as if people were then under Law; yet it was not so in reality. They were being educated by *the* Law; but under it the Abrahamic promise lay as firm as granite (Gal. iii. 17). This is seen by the fact that God speaks to them as their God. This was of his free grace. But, though this educatory law is based on grace, grace must bring with it its own law. Grace never gives the reins to lawlessness. But it teaches us that one of the motive forces by which God would quicken men to righteousness and educate them in it, is found in showing them that his providential arrangements are such that the shaping of their earthly destiny is, in some sort, in their own hands. "Of their *earthly* destiny," we say. For it is a well-known fact that Moses seldom, if ever, refers to the next state of being. The rewards and punishments known to the Pentateuch are almost entirely connected with this earthly state. Of course, there is nothing like a denial of a life beyond the grave. But it did not fall within the scope of the revelation given through Moses that another world should be brought clearly into view. We doubt not that there was mercy as well as wisdom in this arrangement; the people had as much revealed to them as they could bear, and more than they knew how to improve. There is a world of deep meaning in the disclosure of the laws of God's providence which are unfolded to them here. One would think that such promises as are made to the obedient would have been enough to win them to follow the will of God; and that the long-continued, terrific, appalling statement of what would follow on their disobedience would have been enough to dissuade them by "the terrors of the Lord" from venturing on the highway of evil. It would be easy to write a separate Homily on each verse in this paragraph, but, with such expansion, our work would extend to a most inordinate length. We will but suggest, and leave the expansion to others. We have but one more proviso to make before coming to our main divisions; that is this: Barring the special complexion here given to the chapter, owing to the peculiar feature of Israel's national constitution, the main laws of providential administration which were disclosed by Moses are still in force. Even now it is true, "Godliness is profitable unto all things: having promise of *the life that now is.*" And this is the truth which, in varied forms, is set forth here. Let us observe—

I. A MAN'S EARTHLY DESTINY IS, IN SOME SORT, IN HIS OWN HANDS. (Vers. 1, 2.) "*If thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God,*" such and such blessings shall "come upon thee, and overtake thee." If Israel sought success for its own sake, irrespectively of the rightness or wrongness of any methods adopted to secure it, there would be no guarantee whatever of their securing the end at which they aimed; and even if they should, the results would be fraught with evil; for "the prosperity of fools would destroy them." But if their supreme, their sole aim, was to do right, to serve and please the Lord, then the Divine blessing would be sure to follow them. "'Tis ours to obey, 'tis his to provide." If we do right, and leave the issues with God, we shall not be left without tokens of his approving smile (Matt. vi. 33). There may be large temporal gains, or there may not; but, with the much or with the little, that blessing will come which maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow therewith.

II. THE BLESSING ENJOYED BY THE OBEDIENT MAN WILL REST ON EVERYTHING WHICH HE HAS, AND WILL FOLLOW HIM EVERYWHERE. Let every clause in the paragraph be separately weighed. Would we set this in gospel light, if any one were to ask the question, "What are the signs of God's blessing which God's faithful ones enjoy, even in this life?" we would enumerate six of them. 1. They have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. They have a clear conscience; they know that the aim of pleasing God is right, whatever difficulties it may involve. 3. They enjoy what they have as from God, and as the loving gifts of a Father's hand. 4. If much be given, they delight to use it for God. 5. If little be theirs, they know that a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. 6. And, above all, the supreme proof of God's blessing is that gains and losses, joys and cares, health and sickness, do "all work together for good" to them; they minister to the growth of character, and help to make them better, wiser, and holier men.

III. THERE IS A SPECIAL LAW OF GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT WHICH ENSURES

THIS BLESSING TO THE OBEDIENT. (Ver. 12.) It may, at first sight, seem to be an antiquated setting of things which we find in this verse, in which it is said, virtually, that the amount of rain will depend on the amount of virtue, and that the accumulation of men's possessions will depend on their fidelity to God! The second sentence we can understand, since fidelity to God implies, among other things, fidelity in the use of God's appointed means of success; so that this is only saying, Use the right means rightly, and you will gain your end. But as to the former, who *can* understand it? *The amount of rain dependent on the measure of virtue*—how *can* such a thing be? We ask, first of all, *Hath the rain a father?* The reply is, *Yes*, beyond all question—God. But then God is the Father of spirits also. That is to say, there are two spheres: that of matter and force, and that of spirit; the one governed by physical laws, the other by laws which are spiritual; but all laws, whether physical or spiritual, are ordained and regulated by one Supreme Being, and in his hands there is unity of action therein. So that, concerning these two as governed by one God, we ask, Is there any relation at all between them? Does the fact of both sets of laws originating with the same Being give them a point of contact, or does it not? In a word, Is the world of physical forces governed without the slightest reference to the government of souls? or is it so governed as to help on the training of souls?—which? If the first alternative is true, the doctrine of ver. 12 is shut out. But who can believe that the Great Father, in governing the less, ignores the greater? We, at any rate, recoil in horror from a view so unworthy of God. We fall back, therefore, on the second alternative, which alone is reasonable, that the less is governed in the interest and on the behalf of the greater; that *things* are for spirits. But this principle allows room for the point of detail in ver. 12, and for ten thousand more details in the physical sphere. God would make the natural world a theatre for, and a means of, the evolution of principles and the growth of souls (cf. Amos iv. 6—13; Ps. cvii. 33—43). (See Homily on ch. xi. 10—17.)

IV. LOYALTY TO GOD TENDS, NOT ONLY TO TEMPORAL SUCCESS, BUT ALSO TO HONOUR. (See end of ver. 12 and ver. 13.) 1. Individually; men, in the long run, go pretty much for what they are worth. Faithful fulfilment of duty to God and man *must* tell, and will. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business; he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." 2. And collectively; if a nation has in it a preponderance of wise, true-hearted, upright men, such as fear God, love righteousness, and hate iniquity, nothing can prevent such a nation rising in the scale. Its prosperity will be manifest in its inward peace, in the readiness of other nations to deal with it by opening up commercial relations, and in the good will of other nations which it will certainly share. It will have the armour of light. Its virtue will be a wall of defence. "Its land will yield her increase; and God, even its own God, will bless it." "Happy is the nation that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." To such a nation it may well be said, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee" (Numb. xxiv. 5—9).

Vers. 15—68.—*Love veiled in frown.* Probably many may think that this is one of the most awful chapters in the Word of God. Certainly we are not aware of any other in which there is such a long succession of warnings, increasing in terror as they advance. In fact, Matthew Henry tells us of a wicked man who was so enraged at reading this chapter that he tore the leaf out of his Bible! Impotent rage! Impotent as if, when a man dreaded an eclipse of the sun, he were to tear up the announcements thereof. *It would come for all that!* So here; there are two historical facts, viz. that the children of Israel *did* depart from their God, and, that all these curses *did* befall them. Some are unspent even yet. Hence this chapter is a standing proof of the accuracy of the foresight which dictated its prophecies. But while we thus get, on the one hand, a verification of the words, and so a proof of their Divine origin, another question is raised, viz. How are all these terrible realities consistent with the love of God? Now, far be it from us to attempt any vindication of the ways of God. He is infinitely beyond any need of that. What he does is right, whether we can see it to be so or no. One thing only do we aim at now: that is, to guard men against any misinterpretation of those ways, and to point them to such teachings concerning them

as God has given to us. Our theme is—*Love veiled in frown; or, the terrors of the Lord a necessity of his infinite love.*

I. There are some in every nation whom it is absolutely necessary to sway by deterrents, and in the infancy of a nation fear is more potent than faith.

II. God has a curse as well as a blessing. His love is not a mere desire to make men as easy as possible. It is, first of all, a righteous love. When love has to deal only with righteousness, its benevolent aspect only will be seen; but when sin has to be dealt with, the case is very different.

III. It should be deeply graven in our souls that the black-looking and lowering storm-cloud of Divine wrath, though we call it "the curse of God," must never be thought of in any way which would be inconsistent with his pure and perfect love. The wrath of God is holy love frowning on wrong.

IV. When once the wrath of God is incurred, the sinner cannot elude it, any more than he can retreat from his own shadow.

V. Given the actuality of sin, and a far-seeing eye can with certainty descry some of the consequences thereof; an infinite eye can discern them all. (The list of predicted evils in this chapter may with great advantage be arranged and classified. All have been realized. See also the *Times*, November 18, 1880, for an account of the present anti-Semitic agitation in Germany.)

VI. We know that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but his vindication of his own laws is essential to guard righteousness as with a wall of fire! Hence—

VII. The truest kindness is seen in the enunciation of the most alarming warnings which can be given. The truest love is that which is most faithful. Hence it will often seem the most stern.

VIII. A like holy guard to that which is here thrown around the Law of God is also thrown around the gospel. Just as, on the one hand, this Law did not and could not annul the promise which had been made to Abraham and his seed, even so, on the other hand, not even the richness and glory of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ can ever annul the action of these stern, retributive laws of God's providence on those who continue in sin, and who reject the redemption brought in by the Son of God (see Heb. ix., x.).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The blessing.* Blessing and curse, as Keil says, are viewed in these verses "as actual powers, which follow in the footsteps of the nation, and overtake it" (vers. 2, 15, 22; Zech. i. 6). The blessing of God is a *vera causa* in human life. It is not to be resolved entirely into natural tendencies. A cheerful mind conduces to health; virtuous habits tend to prosperity, etc. But this is not the whole. Conspiring with natural tendencies, we must recognize a special providence, a designed direction of the beneficent powers of nature and life, so as to pour treasures of goodness on the favoured individual. Virtue has its natural reward in the approval of conscience; but it would not of itself suffice to bring about the exceptionally fortunate condition in the outward lot which these verses represent. So strongly was this felt by the philosopher Kant, that, as is well known, he postulates the existence of God, for the express purpose of bringing about an ultimate harmony between virtue and felicity.

I. THE SPHERE OF THE BLESSING. The covenant rested largely on temporal promises. Jehovah was doubtless felt by the believing soul to be a better portion than any of his gifts (Ps. xvi.; lxxiii.), and the relation which he sustained to his worshipper could not but be thought of as subsisting beyond death, and yielding its appropriate fruit in a future life (Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15; xlviii. 14; xlix. 14, 15; Heb. xi. 9—17). Yet, inasmuch as "life and immortality" had not been clearly brought to light (2 Tim. i. 10), his favour was specially exhibited in the abundant communication of earthly blessings. A higher order has supervened, and the temporal promises of these verses are swallowed up in better and more enduring ones (Heb. viii. 6). The gospel does

not sever the connection between godliness and prosperity. It gives it a new sanction (1 Tim. iv. 8). Were the obedience of God's children more uniform and perfect, and piety more widely diffused in communities, the connection would be more manifest than it is. But on the whole, temporal prosperity occupies a lower relative place in the New Testament than in the Old. 1. The spiritual man, serving Christ, and witnessing for him amidst the evil of the world, is more frequently exposed to persecution (Matt v. 11; x. 24, 25; John xv. 15—21). He has more occasion to take up the cross (Matt. xvi. 24). He may require to sacrifice all he has, with life itself, for Christ's sake and the gospel's (Mark x. 29, 30). 2. Temporal prosperity is in every case subordinated to spiritual good (2 Cor. xii. 7—10; 3 John 2). Bacon's saying has, therefore, truth in it, "Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God's favour." Adversity, however, even in the New Testament, is but a step to something higher. Spiritual compensations now; hereafter, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (Mark x. 30; 2 Cor. iv. 17).

II. THE OPERATION OF THE BLESSING. It is viewed as pervading every department of the earthly life. It mingles itself with all the good man is, with all he does, with the circumstances of his lot, with the powers of the natural world which constitute his environment. It rests on his person, on his household, on his possessions. It helps him against his enemies, making him wealthy and powerful (Abraham, Job), and exalting him to a position in which others are dependent on him. It attends him in city and field, in his coming in and going out, so that whatever he does prospers (Ps. i. 3). These promises demonstrate: 1. That the providence of God, in the sphere of the outward life, is free, sovereign, all-embracing. 2. That there is under this providence a connection between outward events and circumstances and spiritual conditions. 3. That, subordinately to higher ends, piety and virtue, under this providence, will be rewarded by prosperity. (See a valuable treatment of this subject in M'Cosh's 'Method of the Divine Government,' bk. ii. ch. 2.) Yet glorious as these promises are, they "have no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth" of the promises of the New Testament. Promises: 1. Of salvation (Rom. v. 9, 10). 2. Of spiritual blessings (Eph. i. 3). 3. Of a heavenly inheritance (1 Pet. i. 3, 4). 4. Of "riches" of goodness which will remain unexhausted through eternal ages (Eph. ii. 6, 7). 5. Of perfected transformation into the moral image of God (Ps. xvii. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 49; Col. i. 22; 1 John iii. 2).

III. THE CONDITION OF THE BLESSING. Obedience (vers. 1, 2, 9, 13, 14). 1. Legally, perfect obedience. 2. Evangelically, obedience habitual and sincere, albeit imperfect. The *meritorious* ground of a believer's acceptance, and of the blessings he receives, is the obedience unto death of Christ (Rom. v. 19—21). Christ expiates his sins, and fulfils *de novo* the condition of the covenant. It is well to remember, as explaining anomalies in the histories of righteous men under the old covenant, that the promises in these verses were primarily *national*. They could be realized to the individual only in connection with the obedience of the nation as a whole. When apostacy provoked God's judgments, pious individuals suffered in the general calamities. They suffered, too, as drawing upon themselves the hatred of the wicked. Hence the development in the Psalms and Prophets of the idea of the "Righteous Sufferer"—One whose afflictions are entailed on him by the hatred and injustice of the wicked, or who, innocent himself, suffers as a member of the body politic. This idea, which has throughout a Messianic reference, culminates in the prophecy of the "Servant of Jehovah" (Is. lii., liii.), who, by the holy endurance of sufferings for others, makes their sin his own, and vicariously atones for it.—J. O.

Ver. 8.—*The blessing that maketh rich.* I. FULL STOREHOUSES, WITHOUT GOD'S BLESSING, ARE NOT RICHES. God does not count a man rich further than the good things he has are of real and lasting benefit to him. Wealth unblessed of God is not to be desired. 1. Unblessed good *is* ill (Eccles. v. 10—15). 2. It *turns* to ill—is not enduring (Prov. xiii. 22), takes wings and leaves, is a curse to offspring (Eccles. v. 14, 15; vi. 2; Jas. v. 1, 2).

II. GOD'S BLESSING, WITHOUT FULL STOREHOUSES, MAKES RICH. 1. It enriches the little we have. A man with a moderate competence, and peace and comfort in the use

of it, may be richer than the man whose means are tenfold greater (Ps. xxxvii. 16). 2. It makes adversity a means of spiritual enrichment. 3. It is itself the best of all riches (Hab. iii. 17—19).—J. O.

Ver. 9.—*Established.* Probation, in the case of the faithful, ends in establishment. If Israel would keep the commandments, God would "perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle" them as "an holy people" to himself, and so confirm the promises made to the fathers. A like promise to the Church and to Christians (Acts xvi. 5; Rom. i. 11; Col. ii. 7; Heb. xiii. 9; 1 Pet. v. 10; 2 Pet. i. 12). Establishment is: 1. Unto holiness. 2. A result of God naming his Name upon his people (ver. 12, Hebrew), *i.e.* dwelling with them, and revealing his attributes in saving, sanctifying, blessing, and exalting them. 3. The reward of fidelity. 4. A proof of God's fidelity. God "hath sworn" to fulfil his word (Heb. vi. 17, 18; cf. 1 Cor. i. 9; Phil. i. 6).—J. O.

Ver. 10.—*The world afraid of the godly.* I. GOD'S PEOPLE CALLED BY HIS NAME. God calls or names his Name upon them, *i.e.* distinguishes, owns, chooses, recognizes them as his, by dwelling among them (2 Cor. iii. 16), by causing his blessing to rest upon them, by answering their prayers, by favouring their cause, by establishing their work (Ps. xc. 13—17). "God is love" (1 John iv. 8). His "Name" expresses pre-eminently that attribute of his character (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). It can, therefore, be revealed only upon or in relation to his own people.

II. NOMINAL AND REAL CALLING. "They are not all Israel which are of Israel" (Rom. ix. 6). Real, as distinguished from nominal, saints are marked: 1. By obedience to the Divine commands (ver. 9; Matt. vii. 22). 2. By separation from the world (2 Cor. vii. 17, 18). 3. By the power of holiness dwelling in them. 4. By manifold tokens of the Divine favour. Thus the world "sees" them to be what they are (Acts iv. 13).

III. THOSE KNOWN TO BE CALLED BY GOD'S NAME ARE FEARED. Worldly men fear them. They fear the holiness that resides in them. They fear their prayers. They fear their power with God. They feel that there dwells in them a Presence whom they have every reason to dread (Acts ii. 43).—J. O.

Ver. 13.—*Moral gravitation.* In studying the histories of the good men of the Bible, we notice how, notwithstanding the numerous causes which act adversely to their fortunes, the constant tendency of their piety is to lift them upwards. A law is none the less a law because other laws come in to interfere with, modify, suspend, or counteract its operation. A cork or other light body may be pushed under water, but the law of its nature is to rise to the top. Violence may abnormally depress the righteous man's fortunes, but the "law" of piety is to elevate them. Mingle lighter and heavier bodies in water, and the heavier gradually sink, while the lighter mount surfacewards. So piety, both from its own nature and by the blessing of God upon it, tends to raise a man in favour and influence, and gradually to improve his fortunes; while ungodliness as invariably drags him down. The good man gains ground; his enemies lose it. He mounts to be the head, and they sink to be the tail. He is uppermost; they are undermost. Illustrate from the histories of Joseph, David, Daniel. It is the same to-day. As years advance, the good man grows in influence; slowly but surely overcomes his first difficulties; is trusted, sought after, looked up to; rises in social position; ultimately occupies the seats of honour; while those who started life with him, but took a different course, gradually lose their advantages, fall one by one out of rank, and are driven to the wall (cf. Prov. iv. 8; xiii. 22, etc.).—J. O.

Vers. 15—48.—*The curse.* Like the blessing, the curse is a reality. It cleaves to the sinner, pursues him, hunts him down, ruins and slays him (ver. 45). Does some one say, "An exploded superstition"? If so, it is a superstition in the belief of which mankind has shown itself singularly unanimous. View its reality as attested: 1. By *conscience.* The criminal cannot divest himself of the belief that avenging powers are following on his track. 2. By *experience.* "Rarely," says Horace, "has Punishment, though lame, failed to overtake the criminal fleeing before her." Greek tragedy rests on an induction from the facts of life. 3. By *mythology.* It was a conviction, true

alike to conscience and the facts of life, which the Greeks sought to personify in the Erinyes, in Nemesis, and in Até, who clung to a man or to a family in punishment for some half-forgotten crime. 4. By *literature*, which is full of the recognition of avenging powers. The Bible confirms the substance of this varied teaching, but lifts the subject out of the region of mythology. Jehovah alone has power to bless and curse. The blessings and curses of men have no efficacy save as he gives it to them. His blessings and curses are part of the moral government of the world, and turn exclusively on moral conditions. This is the contrast between the Bible and the heathen idea of a curse. The curse was a prominent part of heathen sorcery, but was wrought with charms and incantations. Protection against it was sought, not in a life of virtue, but in counter-charms and amulets—in conjurations more powerful than those of the enemy. The Bible countenances no such superstitions. Incantations are valueless. A curse is futile against those whom God has blessed (Numb. xxiii. 20—23). The Bible doctrine is: 1. Simple. 2. Rational. 3. Ethical. That of heathenism (with its modern survivals, the evil eye, charms, witches, etc.) is conspicuously the reverse.

I. THE CURSE IN ITS NATURE. 1. *A natural fruit of sin.* Natural process is not the whole. But a larger place may be allowed it than it had in the blessing. The blessing is "gift;" sin's fruit is of "debt"—"wages" (Rom. vi. 23). Conceivably, yet without miracle, God might have withheld from virtue its appropriate outward reward. But no power, even that of God, could prevent the sinner from reaping wretchedness and woe as a result of sin. "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; *much more* the wicked and the sinner" (Prov. xi. 31). The wiser course is not to oppose God to the laws of our moral nature, but to recognize him in them, and to draw from them a knowledge of his character and will. These, like all punitive laws, are the executors of his judgments. The sinner, having placed himself in conflict with the laws of life, of society, and of the outward universe, necessarily suffers in mind, body, and estate. Sin introduces discord, disorder, lawlessness, into the *soul*. It blinds and infatuates (vers. 28, 29). It makes wretched. This wretchedness is aggravated: (1) By remorse and self-reproach. (2) By sense of Divine anger. (3) By opprobrium of society. (4) By imaginative terrors. Sin poisons the fountains of *health*, and induces diseases (vers. 22, 27, 35). The internal anarchy spreads outwards. The bonds of *society* are loosened; wealth accumulates in the hands of the few; the unhappy toilers, oppressed and spoiled, sink deeper and deeper in debt and wretchedness. At this stage the nation becomes an easy prey to the first strong power that cares to pounce upon it (vers. 29—38). 2. *An effect of hostile action on the part of God.* We fail of a complete view if we look only at the hostile relation of the sinner to God, and leave out of account the hostile relation which God assumes to the sinner. It is not merely that the sinner gets into conflict with himself and with the world around him, but nature and providence, under the direction of a hostile will, take up an antagonistic relation to him. Their movements are no longer for his good, but hostile and retributive (vers. 20—24). So the *mental* maladies of ver. 28 are more than the merely natural effects of sin (cf. 1 Kings xxii. 22). "The inquiring mind," says Dr. M'Cosh, "will discover designed combinations, many and wonderful, between the various events of Divine providence. What singular unions of two streams at the proper place to help on the exertions of the great and good! What curious intersections of cords to catch the wicked, as in a net, when they are prowling as wild beasts! By strange but most apposite correspondences, human strength, when set against the will of God, is made to waste away under his indignation, burning against it, as, in heathen story, Meleager wasted away as the stick burned which his mother held in the fire." Laws of nature are the warp, Divine providence the woof, of this awful garment of the curse with which the sinner clothes himself.

II. THE CURSE IN ITS OPERATION. Pictured in these verses in ample and vivid detail. The counterpart of the blessing (vers. 15—26). Takes effect in misfortune (ver. 20), sore diseases (vers. 21, 22), scourging by natural agencies (vers. 23, 24), invasions by enemies (vers. 25, 26). Action and reaction lead to the reproduction of these evils in aggravated forms. To worse bodily plagues (ver. 27) are superadded mental maladies (vers. 28, 29), issuing in renewed panic and defeat in war (ver. 29), with innumerable resultant calamities (vers. 30—33). Confusion and anarchy unite with oppression to produce madness of heart (ver. 34), disease pursues its ravages in

forms of increasing malignity (ver. 35), and the nation ultimately sinks in total ruin (vers. 36, 37). Meanwhile, co-operating with these causes to reduce it to subjection, the curse has been working in all labour and enterprise, thwarting, blasting, destroying (vers. 43, 44; cf. Amos iv. 6—12; Hag. i. 5—12; Mal. ii. 2). The full terribleness of the Divine curse, however, is only brought out in the New Testament. As the relation of God to the soul goes deeper than life in the world, so it extends beyond it. The worse part of the curse is the sinking of the soul in its own corruptions, with the drying up of its possibilities of life, peace, and joy, under the weight of the Divine displeasure—an experience of "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile" (Rom. ii. 8, 9). Happily, no man in this life knows what the full extent of that curse is (Isa. lvii. 16). A remedial system is in operation, in virtue of which no soul is utterly deserted of grace, and even the natural workings of sin are manifoldly checked, limited, and counteracted. Space is thus given for repentance, and salvation is possible. The end, however, if the riches of this goodness and forbearance are despised, will only be the more terrible (Rom. ii. 3—10).

III. THE CURSE IN ITS CAUSES. Sin, disobedience (vers. 45, 46). The curses written in this book were literally fulfilled. Israel would not serve the Lord with joyfulness and gladness of heart, therefore—sad retribution!—she had to serve her enemies "in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things" (ver. 48; cf. the prodigal son, Luke xv. 14—17). All sin ends in bondage. Nations that imitate Israel in her sins may expect to be made like her in her punishment.—J. O.

Vers. 37—42.—*God, Ruler in nature.* I. NATURAL OBJECTS ARE OF HIS CREATION. The Psalmist bids us lift up our eyes to the hills, and seek help from God, "who made heaven and earth" (Ps. cxxi. 2). It is this which enables him to help us, and makes it reasonable in us to implore and trust in his assistance; as well as leads us to fear his displeasure. Seed, vineyards, olive trees, are his creatures, and subserve his purposes. He who made can destroy.

II. NATURAL AGENCIES ARE UNDER HIS CONTROL. The *greater* agencies of nature—rain (vers. 23, 24), pestilence (ver. 21), diseases (vers. 27, 35). The *lesser* agencies—locusts (vers. 38, 42), worms (ver. 39), "powder and dust" (ver. 24). He marshals these agencies at will, appoints them their work, superintends them in the doing of it. He brings strength out of weakness, making the feeblest creatures the instruments of his most terrible strokes of vengeance.

III. THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE EARTH IS DEPENDENT ON HIS BLESSING. He gives, and he can at will withhold. It is a false science which sees only "laws" in the productiveness of nature, and ignores the hand and blessing of a living God.—J. O.

Vers. 49—59.—*The extremity of the curse.* A truly appalling description of the evils which would overtake apostate Israel; one, too, not more remarkable for the sustained vehemence and energy of its thought and diction, than for the minuteness and literality with which its predictions have been fulfilled.

I. THE PROPHECY IN THE LIGHT OF ITS FULFILMENT. The wonderfulness of these predictions is not removed by any date we may assign to the Book of Deuteronomy. For: 1. It is certain that the Assyrian and Chaldean invasions—to which a reference is no doubt included (Jer. iv. 13; v. 15)—fell far short of what was necessary for their complete fulfilment. (1) The Babylonian Captivity was only of seventy years' duration. (2) The Jews returned and remained long afterwards in possession of their land. 2. It is equally certain that, in the subsequent conquest of the nation by the Romans, with the dispersion that followed, and which lasts to our own day, every feature in the prophecy *has been* exhaustively fulfilled. (1) The Romans agree better than either Assyrians or Chaldeans with the description of the foreign foes in vers. 49, 50. (2) The sufferings of the siege (vers. 52—57) had their literal fulfilment in the Roman wars, and especially in the siege of Jerusalem under Titus (cf. Josephus, 'Wars of the Jews,' bk. v. 10, 3; vi. 3, 3, 4; vi. 8, 2). (3) "Hundreds of thousands were sold as slaves" (cf. ver. 68); "and the whole people were cast forth as wanderers among the Gentiles; and they have ever since remained a nation of exiles, unsettled, harassed, and oppressed, in many instances most cruelly, not only by pagans and Mohammedans, but also (to our

shame be it spoken) by Christian nations; and still remaining a distinct people, though without a home" (Whately, 'Evidences'). (4) "To serve other gods" may mean no more than to be banished from the territory of Jehovah, and to dwell in and be compelled to conform to the laws of a country where other gods are recognized (cf. 1 Sam. xxvi. 17). It is also true that, to shield themselves from persecution, the Jews have too often been willing to dissemble and conform to worships which their hearts abhorred (saint and image worship: adoration of the host, etc.); while in idolatrous countries their religion is frequently so corrupted as to be scarcely recognizable. The Beni-Israel, near Bombay, *e.g.* remain a distinct people, but, together with Jehovah, worship the gods of the Hindus. Predictions (1) so minute, (2) so extensive in their range, yet (3) so exhaustively verified by events, cannot be ascribed to accident, but constitute an irrefragable proof of the inspiration that dictated them. Their fulfilment converts the very unbelief and rejection of the Jews into a powerful argument for Christianity.

II. LESSONS FROM THE PROPHECY. 1. *The severity of God.* If the fulfilment of these predictions teaches anything, it is that God will not shrink from the punishment of sin. We shudder as we read the details of these curses—"plagues wonderful, . . . great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance" (ver. 59), and ask ourselves, Can God really tolerate the sight of, not to say inflict, such incredible sufferings? Yet we find that not one of these curses failed of its accomplishment. So solemn a fact bids the sinner pause and ponder *his* chance of escaping in the great "day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. ii. 5). 2. *The self-ruinous character of sin.* The fulfilment of these threatenings was largely, though not wholly, brought about by simply giving sin scope to work out its own evil results. The bitterest element in retribution must be the feeling which the sinner has of self-wrought ruin. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. vi. 8). Like water, which, left to itself, will not cease running till it has found its level; like a clock, which, left to itself, will not cease going till it has run itself completely down; like a tree, which, left to grow, cannot but bring forth its appropriate fruit;—so sin has a level to seek, a course to run, a fruit to mature, and "the end of those things is death" (Rom. vi. 21).—J. O.

Ver. 52.—*The high and fenced walls.* God's enemies will ultimately be driven from all their defences. Cities "great and fenced up to heaven" will be no defence to them, any more than they were to the Canaanites (ch. ix. 1). Horses and chariots (Ps. xx. 7), numbers, prowess, wealth (Prov. x. 15), arts of policy, leagues with foreign powers (Isa. xxx.), afford no protection when God is the besieger. Spiritually, the sinner will ultimately be driven out of every "refuge of lies." 1. Self-righteousness; every mouth shall be stopped (Rom. iii. 19). 2. False trusts (Matt. iii. 9; vii. 22). 3. Evasions and excuses (Matt. xxv. 26; Luke xiv. 18).—J. O.

Vers. 56, 57.—*The delicate lady.* (Cf. Isa. iii. 16—26.) The queens of select society have little reason to be vain of their excessive and artificial delicacy. They need not pride themselves in it, or think that it entitles them to look haughtily on others. For—

I. DELICACY IS NOT CHARACTER. It is consistent with a vain, light, scornful, wicked disposition. The tender and delicate lady in this verse is one of the enemies of God. The purest types of female character avoid those extravagances of delicacy which, indulged in, become second nature. Character alone entitles to respect. To be vain of beauty or breeding, when the heart is false and the life untrue to God, is to be vain of an ornamented husk within which lies rottenness. "'Tis only noble to be good."

II. DELICACY IS AN ACCIDENT OF FORTUNE. It is adventitious—an accident of position. Born in another sphere, she who boasts of it would not have had it. It is the product of artificial conditions, of which she reaps the benefit, but which she had no part in creating. It is not gained by her own exertions, or attributable to her worth or merit. If she values it, let her at least not despise others. She might have been the cottager, the cottager the lady.

III. DELICACY IS VALUELESS WHEN FORTUNE CEASES TO SMILE ON ITS POSSESSOR. No change of circumstances can rob of its value the possession of knowledge, talents, virtue, good breeding, or refinement. These will grace the humblest home, will

prove a passport to respect in any society. It is different with the fastidious and excessive delicacy of the belle. So entirely is this an appendage of a certain social position that, when that is gone, it perishes like a crushed flower. The admirers of the delicate lady have deserted her. She is treated with coldness, even rudeness. No one so helpless, so dependent, as she. She shone, like the moon, in a reflected brightness, and, foolishly inconsiderate, gloried in it as something of her own.

IV. DELICACY MAY BE COMPELLED TO STOOP TO THE BITTEREST DEGRADATIONS. This is the lesson of the verses before us, and we need not dwell upon it. But the thought of such possibilities should quell pride and awaken awe. The depths of want and woe to which the most delicately nurtured may sink, are only paralleled by the possibilities of joy that lie hidden in the most wretched souls, if they will but forsake sin and give themselves up to Jesus and the guidance of his Spirit.—J. O.

Ver. 63.—*God rejoicing in judgment.* The language in this verse is bold, almost beyond example. It jars with our conceptions of the Divine Being to think of him as "rejoicing" in the destruction of even the most obdurate of sinners. He declares that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth (Ezek. xviii. 32). Christ predicted Jerusalem's fall, but "wept over it" (Luke xix. 41). The language is best interpreted, not of actual joy felt by God in the execution of his judgments, but anthropopathically of the certainty, rapidity, and unsparingness with which, like waves chasing each other to the shore, strokes of judgment would descend, *as if* God took pleasure in inflicting them. The figure is derived from God's joy in the communication of blessings. As God's joy—in this case a real joy—was shown in the number and accumulation of the blessings, so would it be with the judgments—he would appear to rejoice in the sending of these also. We do not, however, ignore the fact that God must approve of, yea, rest with satisfaction in, every exercise of his perfections, even in the infliction of judgment. The verse, in any view of it, is a very terrible one in its bearings on the prospects of the wicked.—J. O.

Vers. 65—68.—*Mental torture as a result of sin.* The picture here drawn is true in an especial sense of the Jews in their state of exile, maddened, affrighted, and kept in continual torture and suspense by the persecutions and miseries they have been made to endure. We apply it to the state of the ungodly generally—a state of internal misery resulting from transgression.

I. UNAPPEASABLE RESTLESSNESS. (Ver. 65.) The sinner is destitute of peace (Isa. lvii. 21). 1. There is nothing to give it. No inward source of comfort. No perennial spring of satisfaction. 2. There is everything to take it away. (1) An evil conscience. (2) Sense of God's displeasure. (3) Inward disunion and anarchy. The consequence is that the sinner cannot settle. He does not feel at rest. He cannot be happy or contented in any place or occupation. Like a patient tossing under fever, he thinks that his uneasiness arises from his position, whereas it is his disorder. (Cf. 'Childe Harold,' i. 4, 5; or words of Tiberius to his senate—"What to write to you, conscript fathers, or how to write, or what *not* to write, may all the gods and goddesses destroy me worse than I feel that they are daily destroying me, if I know.")

II. FEAR AND TREMBLING OF HEART. (Vers. 65, 66.) "The wicked flee when no man pursueth" (Prov. xxviii. 1). The guilty conscience is full of terrors. It "does make cowards of us all." Gives rise to groundless fears (Joseph's brethren, Gen. xlv. 3; l. 15). Morbid working of imagination—starting in sleep (Richard III.), fancying sounds and movements (Macbeth). Works despair (Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii.). It unnerves and unmans.

III. LOATHING AND WEARINESS OF LIFE. (Ver. 67.) A sated despairing feeling, incapable of removal or alleviation. Ennui. Unbearable dragging on of time. "I may say that in all my seventy-five years I have never had a month of genuine comfort. It has been the perpetual rolling of a stone, which I have always had to raise anew" (Goethe). Cf. 'Childe Harold,' as above—

> **"He felt the fulness of satiety,**
> **Then loathed he in his native land to dwell;"**

or Matthew Arnold's lines—

"On that hard pagan world disgust
And sated loathing fell;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell," etc.

J. O.

Vers. 1—14.—*The purpose of temporal blessing.* After the "Amens" from Mount Ebal had been faithfully given, the Levites turned to Gerizim with the detail of *blessings*, and received from the assembled thousands the grand "Amen." We have in these verses before us the purpose of the blessing. The children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt by a Divine deliverance, they were about to settle in Canaan as the people of the Lord. They were a spectacle, therefore, to the rest of the world of how a people fared at the hands of the Lord in obedience or in disobedience. We must regard Israel as a visible experiment, so to speak, for the instruction of the rest of mankind. Now, the rest of mankind at this early stage could only appreciate such a reward as *temporal* blessing. Spiritual blessing would have been no demonstration to them, and have made no impression upon them. Hence it was temporal blessing which God in the *main* gave them. Of course, we do not at all accept the special pleading of Warburton, in his 'Divine Legation of Moses,' in favour of temporal rewards and punishments being *all* that the Law of Moses contemplates. There are significant references to a future life in the Mosaic books, but for the reason now stated, God was mainly working in the temporal sphere. Let us notice some of the particulars in which an *obedient* people were to experience blessing.

I. CITY LIFE was to be blessed. It has been said that "God made the country, but man the town." And doubtless the concentration of population in cities is fraught with peculiar temptation and danger. Yet God's Law is sufficiently "broad" to secure right order and government in cities as well as in country districts. If men would only carry out the law of love, if they would live by the golden rule, then cities would soon put on an air of holiness, and wickedness within them would hide its head. It is through the conscience and heart God's Law works, and city life can alone be elevated and regenerated thereby. If we had pious mayors, aldermen, and councillors, pious high sheriffs and officials, then corruption, rapacity, and self-seeking would disappear through a general and conscientious desire for the public good.

II. AGRICULTURE was to be prosperous. Palestine was intended to be occupied by a pastoral people, and peasant proprietors were to fill the land. It was to flow with milk and honey if man co-operated with God, and did his share honestly. The conditions of the country, as already remarked (cf. Homily on ch. xi. 10—17), fostered faith in God, and success was the outcome of constant dependence upon him. A dependent people wrought diligently and received the blessings of nature as the gifts of a faithful God. There was to be increase of cattle, of kine, of sheep, of the fruit of the field, and of all that is implied by "basket and store." In the basket, as Van Lennep somewhere observes, grapes, olives, and the like are collected, and so the blessing on the basket means general agricultural prosperity.

Now, there can be no doubt that piety is an excellent handmaid to agriculture. All the *cant* now talked in the name of science about God's practical exclusion from the "reign of law," is insufficient to overturn the plain truth that those who try to keep his commandments and live in his fellowship are more likely than others to fulfil the conditions of agricultural prosperity.

III. POPULATION will increase. The fruit of their body was also to be blessed. We can understand how important numbers are to national power. When the population advances in the sunshine of advancing prosperity, the elements of national greatness are secured. The *Malthusian* scare introduced into political economy was an exaggerated lesson upon prudence. Population progresses with sufficient check upon it in the ordinary struggles of life, without requiring such prophets of evil as the Malthusians have been. The prudence fostered, being of a worldly character, has degenerated, it is feared, in many cases, into licentiousness as legitimate, when marriage, except in most favourable circumstances, is deemed imprudent.

Now, it is well known that Palestine must have been very populous, containing about as many human beings to the square mile as the most densely populated countries at the present time,[1] and in its densely filled country districts testified to the general security which then existed.

IV. They will be VALIANT IN REPELLING INVASION. It is noticeable that foreign conquest is not contemplated when they are settled in the land. It is when the enemies rise up against them that the Lord will give them, as obedient people, the power to disperse them. The invasion may take place in one way, but their rout will be complete, they shall flee before Israel seven ways (ver. 7)—the perfect number indicating perfect defeat. The Lord will not encourage them in a "spirited foreign policy," but will make them invincible defenders of their hearths and homes.

V. They shall be in a position to LEND UNTO SURROUNDING NATIONS. Not only would they repel successfully all invasion, but be able to lay other nations under obligation. Now, we see that, in being able to *serve* others in this way, lies the secret of sovereignty and influence. The thrifty nations that can lend to others, so far get these others into their power. In the lending power God promises to Israel, if obedient, we see the germ of undoubted ascendancy.

No wonder, then, that other nations are to fear and to honour them, if this is to be their career. No wonder they are to be the head, and not the tail; to be above only, and not beneath. Obedience will prove the one condition of ascendancy.

Now, it is true that the world can think better in these latter days than it did in the days of Moses. Religion does not now need a demonstration of temporal prosperity nor a favoured nation. Religion now demonstrates its reality and sustaining power in making poor saints bright and joyful; in making suffering saints patient and hopeful; and in making the sorrowing ones resigned and confident of reunion. These are the "martyrs" now, and the seed of the Church. At the same time, it may be seen written clearly on the order of providence that "righteousness exalteth a nation;" that the religious nations, other things being equal, are the more prosperous. It cannot but be so. As nations get no resurrection as nations, only as individuals, it then comes to pass that as nations they must be judged in this world, and get their reward or punishment, as the case may be, while the individuals composing the nations may be asked in many cases to wait for their compensation and reward in the world to come. —R. M. E.

Vers. 15—68.—*A nation becoming a beacon.* If Mount Gerizim had the weight of the people on the side of the blessing, Mount Ebal had certainly the weight of the deliverance. No wonder the Law was to be written on its rocky tablets, since the major part of the Law consists in such denunciation of possible disobedience as might serve to render it improbable. As Dr. Arnold has said, "As if, too, warning were far more required than encouragement, we find that the blessings promised for obedience bear a small proportion in point of length to the curses denounced against disobedience."[2] We shall try to sum up the evils here threatened against Israel in case of their disobedience, and then point out their practical and present application.

I. DEGRADATION OF CITY LIFE. If the massing of people gives advantages to religious effort, it gives corresponding advantages to sin. Temptation becomes intensified. The leaven of corruption gets speedily through the compacter mass. The very mention of the city and its sins and sorrows brings a frightful panorama before us. Ignorance, drunkenness, irreligion, licentiousness,—all these are found in their most fearful forms in cities. No wonder that such a man as Dr. Guthrie delivered a series of special sermons on the subject.[3] Now, the Jews are threatened with a curse upon their city life in case of their disobedience. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum are but samples of doomed cities through the disobedience of the people (Matt. xi. 20—24).

II. AGRICULTURE will be cursed because of their disobedience. The land of promise

[1] Cf. Geikie's 'Life and Words of Christ,' vol. i. p. 22.

[2] Cf. 'Sermons on the Interpretation of Scripture,' pp. 44—50.

[3] Cf. 'The City: its Sins and Sorrows,' by Thomas Guthrie, D.D. See also a more formidable book, 'The Age of Great Cities,' by Robert Vaughan, D.D., where the bearings of modern civilization are carefully sketched.

will become, through drought and carelessness, a barren waste, like the worn-out lands of slave-holding people, which once were glorious virgin soil. And travellers have no difficulty in believing that Palestine is under the curse of God.[1] The threat of Deuteronomy has become a sad reality, and the land stands as a witness to the faithfulness of God to his threatenings.

III. A curse was to rest upon THEIR CHILDREN. No more terrible form of judgment can be supposed than this. Parents are touched deepest in their children. Hence it must have been a great trial for the wayward Jews to find their children deteriorating through their sin, and carrying in their persons the curse of God. Population dwindled, and instead of being the countless people they once were, they have become so small that it is one of the wonders of the world that they maintain their separate existence.

IV. DISEASES of the most frightful kind were to come upon them. Now, it would seem that certain diseases were peculiar to Egypt, and of these the Israelites were particularly afraid. Now, the Lord threatens them with all the diseases of Egypt, of which they were so afraid (vers. 27, 35, 60). The diseases with which the human frame is visited are certainly manifold and terrible. To attach them to sin in a way of natural law only makes the judgment the more terrible. Of course we cannot say special sickness is proof positive of special sin; but we can say that but for sin there would have been no suffering and no sickness; and that sin deserves all that is sent. The frightful character of the sickness and sorrows God sends is the expression of his detestation of man's sin.

V. FAMINE was a still worse curse. To perish with hunger because of the scarcity of food is terrible. To waste away for want of due nourishment is terrible. Yet this the Lord threatened, and ultimately sent as the history tells us.

VI. WAR AND SIEGE. The worst enemy of mankind is man. Of all judgments war is worst. And the siege endured in Jerusalem twice over transcends all others recorded in history. Of minor sieges at Samaria and elsewhere we need not speak. According to Josephus, eleven hundred thousand Jews perished in the course of the siege of Jerusalem under Titus by sword, pestilence, or famine. "Besides these eleven hundred thousand, ninety-seven thousand were taken prisoners; and these were reserved, not for the light sufferings commonly undergone by prisoners of war in our days, but for the horrors of the slave-market, and for a life of perpetual bondage."[2] It is believed that direct reference is made to the Roman eagles in vers. 49, 50, etc., and it is known that women ate their children in the terrible siege.

VII. DISPERSION AND BONDAGE. To those with national spirit dispersion must have been terrible. Emigration is now deemed bad enough, even though it may be to a better inheritance. But the Jewish dispersion threatened was captivity which we know came upon them at different times. The Babylonish Captivity was acknowledged by them to be in consequence of their sins, the recognized curse of God. And even after their return in part to Palestine, they came in for bondage to the yoke of Rome, and felt the yoke of iron on them.

VIII. The OFFSCOURING OF ALL THINGS unto this day. The Jews were threatened with such a scattering among the nations as would make them universally despised. And they have become so. Even yet, notwithstanding toleration and Jewish money-grubbing, the nation has not secured the respect of mankind. As Byron wrote—

> "Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
> How shall ye flee away and be at rest!
> The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
> Mankind their country—Israel but the grave!"

Such in brief are the judgments threatened, and, as history shows us, faithfully executed. The nation constitutes the *beacon* of history—the most terrible evidence of the perils of disobedience! The following lessons of a practical character are surely taught:—

1. *Of those to whom much is given shall much be required.* No nation was so favoured;

[1] Cf. 'The Land and the Book,' by Dr. W. M. Thomson, edit. of 1860, p. 341; Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 117—123; Kitto's 'Physical History of Palestine,' p. cxx., etc.

[2] Dr. Arnold, *ut supra*, p. 47.

but, neglecting its opportunities, no nation has been so cursed. It has been more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrha, than for the Jews.

2. *It is terrible when judgment has to begin at the house of God.* This is the meaning of the melancholy history. It is a tragedy at the house of God (1 Pet. iv. 17). "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall."

3. *The prophetic threatening did not prevent their apostasy.* Though as we believe, having their possible career through disobedience to direct judgment so carefully sketched, the prophecy lay for ages as a sealed, if not a neglected book.[1] We think, with the rich man in Hades, that categorical warning would reform any of our brethren, no matter how abandoned, but find it a mistake (Luke xvi. 27—31). He who knows the end from the beginning has by his prophecy demonstrated that warning is often despised just in proportion to its particularity and faithfulness.

4. *The judgment on earth is an image of a more terrible judgment beyond.* "For us, each of us," said Dr. Arnold, "if we do fail of the grace of God, . . . there is reserved a misery of which indeed the words of the text are no more than a feeble picture. There is a state in which they who are condemned to it shall for ever say in the morning, Would God it were even! and at even, Would God it were morning! for the fear of their heart wherewith they shall fear, and the sight of their eyes which they shall see." In forecasting what the doom of the impenitent shall be, we would do well to remember what God has done to sinners in the present life. Imagination may picture *post-mortem* pardons and insist on sentiment determining the doom of disobedience, even when perpetuated; but the history of judgment here on earth should make every sane man fear to speak lightly of the judgment beyond. May God preserve us all from such an experience, through the blood and merits of Jesus!—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—14.—*The present portion of a good man.* The natural world may be fitly regarded as the visible symbol of the spiritual world, the earthly state a lower copy of the heavenly. The order of cause and effect is as uniform in the spiritual sphere as in the material. Fire in contact with gunpowder will result in explosion. True seed in fitting soil will bear fruit. "Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap."

I. WE HAVE HERE A DESCRIPTION OF A GOOD MAN. 1. He is described by his teachableness. He "hearkens diligently unto the voice of the Lord." This is a trait of a true child. He has a sense of need, a sense of dependence upon another. He admits God's right to instruct and to command. He inquires after God, and reverently listens to his voice. It is his delight to hear the wise precepts of the unerring God. 2. He is described by his circumspection. He is observant of God's ways, discovers manifold and hidden indications of his will. Not only is his ear intent to the whispers of his Father, but his eye is open too. Blindness of mind has gone. 3. He is described by his completeness of obedience. He practically "does *all* the commandments of God." These came of old by the agency of Moses; but a good man detects within the human voice the Divine message—the authority of Heaven. And his entire conduct is determined by the known will of God.

II. GOODNESS IS ALLIED TO GREATNESS AS SURELY AS CAUSE TO EFFECT. "The Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth." As in nature it is certain that all botanical life shoots upward, or that gases, as they expand, also ascend; so in the spiritual kingdom it is certain that goodness will grow into eminence. 'Tis not merely an arbitrary decree of God; 'tis the outcome of the very constitution of the universe. The character of Jehovah is a guarantee that the constitutional principles of his empire do not change. Hostile influences and powers may for a time prevent goodness from receiving its due reward—just as superincumbent clay may prevent the young plant from shooting upward, but the final issue is certain. Faithful service shall be crowned with honour.

III. THE REWARD OF GOODNESS IS ITS OWN PERMANENCE. "The Lord shall establish thee an holy people" (ver. 9). "And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee." In the life of obedience "God helps those who help themselves." Separate acts become easier by repetition. They evolve into habits. Habits

[1] Cf. W. Robertson's Smith's 'Old Testament in the Jewish Church,' p. 363, etc.

tend to permanence and constitute character and foreshadow destiny. All proceeds by virtue of an eternal law: "God helps those who help themselves." It is easier for a good man to resist temptation now than it was in the first stages of his Christian life. Devotion has become the natural outflow of his soul, the fruitage of his new life.

IV. BEHIND ALL FORMS OF BLESSING A PERSONAL GOD MAY BE SEEN. The material food does not sustain bodily life; it is God acting through the food. Neither fertile land, nor good husbandry, nor auspicious weather, nor all combined, will in themselves secure a copious harvest; it is God acting through natural forces. "The Lord shall command the blessing." However riches may increase, if God smile not, there will be no joy. The house may be full of children; yet instead of ruddy health there may be wasting sickness—instead of intellectual vigour, imbecility—instead of laughter, weeping: the blessing of God is wanting. We may possess substantial homes, yet no security; marauders and incendiaries may infest the land. True prosperity is a Divine Father's benediction.

V. A GOOD MAN DELIGHTS IN DISTRIBUTING GOOD. He himself becomes an inferior God, a lesser source of blessing. "Thou shalt lend, and shalt not borrow." The Name of God is put upon him. He acts in God's stead, and imitates God in all things. The result of the Divine favour will be conspicuous. All people shall see the gracious distinction which marks and signalizes the friend of God. All his beneficent deeds will be covered with a glory not born of earth. His mysterious influence will spread far and wide. He becomes a "burning and a shining light; many will rejoice in his light."—D.

Vers. 15—44.—*The Nemesis of disloyalty.* It is instructive that Moses dilates with far greater fulness on the curses attached to disloyalty than on the rewards of disobedience. In the childhood of the world people were more under the influence of fear than of hope, more deterred by threatening than drawn by promise. The message of Moses was admirably adapted to the people's need.

I. THE EQUITY OF THESE CURSES. 1. Disobedience under such circumstances of privilege was eminently *base and blameworthy.* Disloyalty had no excuse. To refuse to hearken to the Creator's voice was sheer obstinacy, which could plead no extenuation. 2. *It was perjury.* They had sworn to be loyal subjects. They had acknowledged the just terms of the covenant, and had entered Canaan on the terms of pledged obedience. 3. *It was rebellion against their accepted King.* If such flagrant rebellion escaped with impunity, God would be dishonoured in the eyes of the universe. 4. *The curses were their own choice.* They knew clearly what the fruits of disobedience were. They had seen the fruits in others' fate—in the Egyptians, in their brethren, in the Canaanites. If they should choose other gods, they should be led into captivity, and *there* they should "serve other gods, wood and stone." 5. *The curses were the natural evolution of their crimes.* Sin is the seed of which penalty is the fruit. If they forsook God; God would forsake them. What could be more equitable? Men say, "Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." God says, "Depart from me; I never knew you."

II. THE EXTENT OF THE CURSE. 1. *It is a complete reversal of the purpose of God.* His purpose had been to bless—to bless abundantly. But sin changes the light into gloom, sweetness into bitterness, summer into winter, food into poison. At every point and through every moment the sinner is in direct and absolute antagonism with God. 2. *Every earthly possession becomes an instrument of pain.* The body, which is the organic instrument by which the soul has intercourse with the material world, furnishes a thousand avenues for pain. Our children are intended as channels of joy; they become channels of sorrow. Every possession becomes a source of anxiety and care. Every occupation bears a harvest of disappointment. Blight is upon all the summer fruit. Black portents fill every quarter of the sky. 3. *The natural elements become agents of woe.* The sun becomes as a fiery oven, while no cloud tempers the scorching heat. Fierce winds fill the heated air with fine dust, which afflicts the eye with disease and blindness. Inflammation of the blood and fever follow. The air is charged with pestilence, and men breathe it with every inspiration. Material nature fights for God. 4. *The curse includes disordered reason.* Nor can we

wonder. The delicate organs of the mind are sustained in vigour by God, and if he withdraw his hand, madness swiftly follows. 5. *In proportion to the previous exaltation becomes the degradation.* It is better not to be raised to eminence than to be lifted up and then cast down. This would be a stigma of reproach in the eyes of all the nations.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF THE CURSE. "It shall come to pass." 1. *It is fixed by an inherent necessity.* The law of Nemesis is embedded in the constitution of the universe. As surely as night succeeds to day, as surely as fire melts wax, so surely does penalty follow sin. Every dynamic force in nature is in league with righteousness against sin. 2. *It is made certain by Jehovah's word.* His word is a part of himself; and as his nature is unchangeable, so no word of his can ever be revoked. This is his prerogative: "I am Jehovah; I change not." 3. *It is made sure by the holiness of God.* For God to treat sin with levity or with impunity would be to do violence to his own nature—would be to act against himself. In the light of holiness sin must be consumed; and if it inhere ineradicably in the sinner, then must the sinner be consumed likewise. So long as God is holy he must, by the essential quality of his nature, pursue sin unto the death.—D.

Vers. 45—68.—*The remoter consequences of rebellion.* The evil if uncured aggravates itself—develops new symptoms; and as the evil grows, so misery increases likewise. The man of God forsees a yet further stage of misery in the distant future. His predictions of woe plainly point to the domination of the Roman eagles, and to the miseries consequent upon the final dispersion of the Jews. To the eye of God's prophet the long procession of coming woes is clearly revealed—a series of miseries stretching away through milleniums of years.

I. IT IS A NECESSITY THAT GOD'S RULE SHALL BE MAINTAINED. So long as the universe continues, the Creator must be King. Our only choice is whether we will have him as our Friend or as our Foe. "For he must reign." We must serve (ver. 47). To forsake God is not to gain liberty; it is only the exchange of a noble Master for a thousand petty tyrants. "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, . . . thou shalt serve thine enemies in hunger, and in nakedness." This is the only alternative. We oscillate like a pendulum between these two points—serving God and serving our enemies.

II. IN PROPORTION TO THE GOODNESS ABUSED IS THE CURSE THAT FOLLOWS. The language in the earlier part of these comminations clearly points to the overthrow of the people by the Assyrians. That calamity and the consequent captivity were the chastisements of wisdom—were part of the costly training by which Israel might have been recovered to the Divine favour. But even that severe correction soon lost its purifying effect. Another overthrow, more complete and galling yet, was therefore approaching. A yoke of iron was preparing for their neck, which should destroy their national life. More ruthless treatment should be endured under the Romans than under the Chaldeans. The sufferings in the siege were to be unparalleled. Mutual hate and rage would prevail. All the love of human nature would be turned into hateful selfishness. It would be the reign of hell upon the earth.

III. THE FATHERLY KINDNESS OF GOD IS DISPLAYED IN THIS FORECAST OF SIN'S EFFECTS. It must have been a pain to the heart of Moses (and greater pain still to the heart of God) to dwell on the terrific consequences of possible disobedience. It would have been more pleasant employment to have sketched out the prospects and rewards of righteousness. Yet in proportion to the pain felt in anticipating the desolation and misery of Israel, was the ardent love for Israel's good. If affection could erect beforehand any barrier which could withstand the torrent of evil, that barrier shall be erected. If love can abolish hell, it will. What language can measure the Divine love which thus pleads with men to eschew sin? Even a present sight of coming war does not deter men from sin.

IV. THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S THREATENINGS ARE A SIGN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. A thousand years elapsed before the woes foreshadowed were inflicted. With the Lord, "a thousand years are as one day." Nevertheless, every word spoken by Moses became a fact. The prophecy has been turned into history. In part, those prophecies are fulfilled to-day before our eyes: "Ye shall be plucked from off the land whither

thou goest to possess it;" "the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other;" "among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have any rest." The present condition of the Jews is a signal proof of the divinity of Scripture, an impressive symbol of the crushing judgments of God. Who can trifle with such a Being? Wisdom says, "Stand in awe, and sin not!"—D.

EXPOSITION.

RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB.

(Ch. xxviii. 69—Ch. xxx.)

CHAPTER XXIX.

The first verse of this chapter is placed in the Hebrew text at the end of ch. xxviii., but in the LXX. and Vulgate the arrangement is as in the Authorized Version, where it appears as the title of the section that follows. In that section is contained an address to the people by Moses, in which he appeals to them to enter anew into the covenant with the Lord, which had been before concluded at Horeb; denounces apostacy as what would lead certainly to their being rejected of God; assures them at the same time of God's readiness to restore them should they sincerely repent and return to him; and once more sets before them the blessing and the curse, and adjures them to choose the blessing.

Ver. 1.—**Beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.** This was not a new covenant in addition to that made at Sinai, but simply a renewal and reaffirmation of that covenant. At Sinai the covenant was, properly speaking, *made;* sacrifices were then offered, and the people were sprinkled with the sacrificial blood, whereby the covenant was ratified (Exod. xxiv.; cf. Ps. l. 5); but on the occasion here referred to, no sacrifices were offered, for this was merely the recognition of the covenant formerly made as still subsisting.

Ver. 2.—Moses addresses the nation as such, and reminds them of their dulness to apprehend the manifestations of God's grace which had been so abundantly afforded in their past history, in order that he may arouse them to a better state of mind, and stimulate them to hearken to the voice of God in the future.

Ver. 4.—**The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive,** etc. Moses says this "not to excuse their wickedness, but partly to direct them what course to take, and to whom they must have recourse for the amending of their former errors, and for a good understanding and improvement of God's works; and partly to aggravate their sin, and to intimate that, although the hearing ear and the seeing eye and the understanding heart are the workmanship of God (Prov. xx. 12), and the effects of his special grace (ch. xxx. 6; Jer. xxxi. 33; xxxii. 39, etc.), yet their want of this grace was their own fault and the just punishment of their former sins" (Poole). As they would not attend to God's word, as they had shut their eyes and their ears, that they might not see, or hear, or learn what God was teaching them by his conduct towards them, they had been left to themselves; and, as a necessary consequence, they had become as persons who had no eyes to see, or ears to hear, or heart to perceive what was set before them for their learning.

Ver. 5.—Having referred to the gracious dealing of God with them in the wilderness, Moses introduces Jehovah himself as speaking to them (cf. ch. xi. 14). (On vers. 5 and 6, see ch. viii. 3, 4; and on vers. 7 and 8, see ch. ii. 26, etc.; iii. 1, etc.)

Ver. 9.—**That ye may prosper in all that ye do.** The verb here used (הַשְׂכַּלְתֶּם) means primarily to look at, to consider or attend to, hence to become intelligent, to be prudent, to act wisely, and so to have success, to prosper. It is the prosperity which comes from wise and prudent action that God commends to his people (cf. Josh. i. 7, 8).

Vers. 10—15.—*Summons to enter into the covenant of the Lord with fresh ardour and cordiality.*

Ver. 10.—Translate: **Ye stand this day all of you before Jehovah your God, your chiefs, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, every man of Israel.** The two members are parallel: the heads or chiefs are the elders and officers, the tribes are all Israel. The Authorized Version follows the LXX., but against the idiom of the Hebrew. Ibn Ezra says רֹאשֵׁיכֶם is instead of רֹאשֵׁי, but this can hardly be.

Vers. 11—14.—The covenant was a national engagement, and as such included not only the adults and existing generation, but the little ones, the strangers resident in Israel, the lowest menial servants, that is, all the elements of which the nation was composed, as well as their posterity in coming

generations. **That thou shouldest enter into covenant.** The expression in the Hebrew is a strong one, indicating not a mere formal engagement, but a going thoroughly into the covenant; the phrase is used of the sword going through the land (Lev. xxvi. 6), and of one going into the pit (Job xxxiii. 28). **Into his oath.** Covenants were confirmed by oath (Gen. xxvi. 28; Heb. vi. 17); hence in Scripture the covenant of God is sometimes called his oath (ver. 14; 1 Chron. xvi. 16; Heb. vii. 28). (On ver. 13, cf. ch. xxviii. 9; xxvii. 9; Exod. xix. 5, 6.)

Vers. 16—29.—The summons to renew the covenant is enforced by a fresh exposition of the evil and danger of apostacy from the Lord. This is introduced by a reference to the experience which the people already had of idolatry in Egypt, and among the nations with whom they had come in contact during their march through the wilderness, from which they must have learned the utter worthlessness of all idols, that they were no gods, but only wood and stone.

Vers. 16, 17.—These verses are not a parenthesis, as in the Authorized Version. Ver. 18 is connected, not with ver. 15, but with ver. 17; there should be a full stop at the end of ver. 15. **Their idols**; literally, *their blocks* or *logs* (גִּלּוּלִים, from גָּלַל, to roll something too heavy to be carried), a term of contempt used frequently in Scripture of idols.

Ver. 18.—**Lest there should be among you**; rather, *See that there be not among you*, etc. The part. פֶּן, *lest*, at the beginning of a sentence, sometimes implies a prohibition or dissuasion, as Job xxxii. 13, "say not;" Isa. xxxvi. 18, "beware of saying" (Gesenius, Noldius *in voc.*). **Gall.** The Hebrew word so rendered (רֹאשׁ) is supposed by Gesenius to be the poppy plant, by Celsius to be the hemlock (it is so rendered, Hos. x. 4; Amos vi. 12, and by Œdman to be colocynth. It is probably a general name for what is poisonous and bitter; for it is used of poison generally (ch. xxxii. 32) and of the venom of asps (ch. xxxii. 33; Job xx. 16), as well as of poisonous roots and bitter fruits (see Kitto, 'Bibl. Cycl.,' iii. 701). Coupled here with **wormwood**, it must be a plant that is referred to; and the union of the two affords "a striking image of the destructive fruit borne by idolatry" (Keil).

Ver. 19.—**That he bless himself in his heart**;—congratulate himself—**saying, I shall have peace**—*i.e.* all shall be well with me—**though**—rather, *for*—**I walk in the imagination of mine heart**; literally, *in the firmness or hardness of my heart*, (שְׁרִירוּת, from שָׁרַר, to twist together, to be tough or firm); the word is always used in a bad sense in Hebrew, though not in Aramaic (cf. Ps. lxxxi. 13 [12]; Jer. iii. 17; vii. 24; ix. 13 [14]; xi. 8). **To add drunkenness to thirst**; a proverbial expression, of which very different explanations have been given. It is now generally admitted that the verb (סִפּוֹת) cannot be taken here in the sense of "add," but has its proper sense of pouring out, pouring away, destroying. The word rendered "drunkenness" (רְוָיָה, from רָוָה, to be sated with moisture, to be drenched) means rather "sated, drenched, well-watered;" and the word rendered "thirst" (צְמָאָה, from צָמָא, to thirst) is properly thirsty, and is used of dry land (Isa. xliv. 3); both are adjectives, and a substantive is to be supplied. Some supply נֶפֶשׁ, soul or person; others, אֶרֶץ, land. The former render, "The full [soul] with the thirsty" (Gesenius); or, "Them that are sated with them that are thirsty," *i.e.* as well those who have imbibed the poison as those who thirst for it (Knobel); or "That the sated [soul] may destroy the thirsty," *i.e.* that the impious one, restrained by no law and, as it were, drunk with crime, may corrupt others, also prone to evil, and bring on them destruction (Maurer). Those who supply "land," render "To destroy the well-watered [land] with the dry." This last seems the preferable rendering; but the general meaning is the same in either case, viz. that the effect of such hardness of heart would be to destroy one and all. "The Orientals are fond of such bipartite forms of expressing the whole (cf. Gesenius, 'Thes.,' p. 1008)" (Knobel; cf. ch. xxxii. 36).

Vers. 20, 21.—Though the sinner fancies all is well with him, and is hardened in his iniquity, and is leading others astray by his example, the Lord will not suffer him to rest in impunity, but will send on him terrible punishments. **The anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke**, *i.e.* shall break forth in destructive fire (cf. Ps. lxxiv. 1; Isa. lxv. 5; Ps. xviii. 8). **The Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven** (cf. ch. xxv. 19; Exod. xvii. 14). **The Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel**,—so that, excluded from the covenant nation, and placed beyond the sphere over which rests the salvation of the Lord, they will be exposed to destruction—**according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law**; rather, as in the margin, *is written*; the participle agrees with "covenant."

Vers. 22—24.—Future generations and foreign visitants, seeing the calamities with which the rebels had been visited, nay, all nations, should ask, in astonishment and

horror, **Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?** It is evident from this that Moses contemplates, and in fact here predicts, a defection, not of individuals or families merely, but of the nation as a whole from the Lord, and the punishment which came in consequence upon the nation. The words from "when they see" (ver. 22) to "wrath" (ver. 23) are a parenthesis, in which a reason for the main thought is given in a circumstantial clause; and the "say" of ver. 22 is resumed by the "say" of ver. 24.

Ver. 23.—And that **the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning,** etc.; rather, *sulphur and salt, a burning the whole land thereof, it shall not be sown,* etc. The words "sulphur," etc., are in apposition to the "plagues and sicknesses" of ver. 22, and thus so far depend on the "see." The description here is taken from the country around the Dead Sea, to which there is an express allusion in the close of the verse (cf. Gen. xix. 23, etc.). As this country, which before had been as the garden of the Lord, became, when the wrath of God was poured upon it, utterly desolate and waste; so should it be with the land of Israel when the plagues and sicknesses threatened were laid on it by the Lord.

Ver. 24.—**What meaneth the heat of this great anger?** The reply to this question comes in what follows (vers. 25—28).

Ver. 26.—**Gods . . . whom he had not given unto them** (cf. ch. iv. 19).

Ver. 27.—**All the curses**; literally, *every curse,* or *the whole curse* (cf. Dan. ix. 11, etc.).

Ver. 28.—**And cast them.** In the Hebrew the word *cast them* (יַשְׁלִכֵם) has one of its letters, the ל, larger than the rest, and another letter, י, which should be after the ל, is omitted; on which "Baal Hatturim noteth, There is a great *lamed* and a want of *yod,* to teach that there is no casting away like that of the ten tribes" (Ainsworth). According to Buxtorf, the large *lamed* represents the first letter of *Volam,* for ever, and the *yod,* the numeral 10, represents the ten tribes, whose perpetual omission from the nation of Israel is thus indicated ('Tiberias,' I. c. 14, p. 157).

Ver. 29.—By **secret** things, here, some understand "hidden sins," which are known only to God, and which he will punish (Targum Jon.); but the meaning rather is, things in God's purpose known only to himself: these things, it is affirmed, belong to him, are his affair, and may be left with him. On the other hand, the things revealed are the things made known by God to man in his Word, viz. his injunctions, threatenings, and promises; and with these men have to do. This verse is by some regarded as part of the answer given to the question of ver. 24; but others regard it as a general reflection added by Moses by way of admonition to his previous discourse. This latter view is the more probable, and the scribes may have had this in their mind when they distinguished the words, **unto us and to our children,** by placing over them extraordinary points (נְקֻדִּים עֲלֵיהֶם), in order to emphasize them, though by many this is regarded as a mere critical notation, indicating a various reading (Buxtorf, 'Tiberias,' I. c. 17, p. 179; Hävernick, 'Introd.,' p. 281; Bleek, 'Einleit,' p. 799).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Witnessing without seeing.* There is an instructive note on this passage in Dr. Jameson's 'Commentary.' For nearly forty years the people had been witnesses of the extraordinary care of God in watching over them, in supplying their wants, and in conducting them through the wilderness; and yet the constant succession of mercies had had no proper effect on them. They did not read the loving-kindness of God in all as they should have done. Having eyes, they saw not; having ears, they heard not. The form, however, in which Moses here throws this is remarkable. If his words are not understood, he may seem even to cast a reflection on God, for having given them such great mercies, while at the same time he withheld the one mercy which would make blessings of all the rest. Yet we cannot for a moment think that Moses intended anything of the kind. He evidently reproaches the people for their dulness. If there had been an earnest desire to understand the deep meaning of God's dealings with them, certainly the needful light and wisdom would not have been withheld. Our subject of thought arising hence is—*Spiritual stolidity; or, witnessing without seeing.* The following passages of Scripture should be studied in regard to this theme:—Isa. vi. 9, 10; lxiii. 9, 10, 17; Jer. v. 21; Ezek. xii. 2; xiv.; Matt. xi. 25; xii. 24; xiii. 14, 15; xv. 16; xvi. 9; xxi. 27; Mark iii. 5 (Greek); v. 23; vi. 52; viii. 10—13, 21; Luke vii. 29—35; xii. 56, 57; xix. 42; John iv. 33; vii. 17; viii. 31, 32, 47; ix. 39—41; xiv. 9, 22; 1 Cor. ii. 14; 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15; Ps. xxv. 14. Observe—

I. THERE IS A MEANING, RICH AND FULL, IN THE INCIDENTS OF LIFE. Each one's life is full of incident, from morning till evening, from the beginning of the year unto the end of it. There may not have been the succession of what is startling and striking, as there was in the case of Israel, but simply common mercies coming speedily and without pause, just as they were needed; the mercies one by one, fitting exactly into place, *as if* a gracious care had provided all. *As if*—do we say? That is it. A gracious care *has* provided all. That is precisely our present postulate. We should as soon think that the letters in a printing office would spontaneously arrange themselves into order for a printed book, as that the constant succession of our comforts in life should come as they do without any prearrangement. 1. Life's comforts and supplies are a constant disclosure of Divine loving-kindness. They reveal God (Ps. cvii. 43). 2. They are intended to help on the culture and growth of character. Even supplies which come in the physical region, when granted to moral beings, have a moral significance in them. 3. By winning us to God, his mercies are intended to lead us to repentance, and thus to open up to us a glorious goal in character and destiny.

II. THIS DIVINE MEANING IN THE MERCIES OF LIFE IS OFTEN MISSED BY THOSE ON WHOM THOSE MERCIES ARE BESTOWED. Of how many it may still be said, "Having eyes, they see not; and having ears, they hear not"! This may arise from one or more of several causes. 1. There may be some preconceived assumption or foregone conclusion which, if indulged in, will shut out all acceptance of any thought of God's loving-kindness in common life, or anywhere else. Some "high thought" may exalt itself against the knowledge of God. 2. There may be the lack of a spirit of loyalty, so that the individual is indisposed to read aright the messages of his Father's goodness. 3. There may be a misuse or non-use of the organs and faculties by which spiritual knowledge may be acquired. See 'Candid Examination of Theism,' by Physicus, which is a striking example of total failure in this respect. 4. There may be distraction of heart and soul by the whirl and rush of life, so that the spirit has no leisure therefrom to learn of God in "secret silence of the mind." 5. There may be entire indifference concerning the higher meaning of common things. Any one of these five causes will amply account for a man failing to learn of God through the experiences of life.

III. THERE IS NO ADEQUATE REASON WHICH CAN JUSTIFY SUCH A FAILURE TO LEARN LIFE'S LESSONS. For: 1. We have a revelation of God given to us in the Book, whereby we may come at the true interpretation of life. Israel had their Law, by which they might read their life. We have both the Law and the gospel. And the preciousness of human life in the eye of God is taught us in Luke xv., and in the light of such a chapter should the mystery of human life and Divine care be studied. 2. We have a distinct disclosure to us of the one condition on which religious knowledge and certitude can be acquired (John vii. 17; Ps. xxv. 8, 9, 14). 3. There is a direct and clear promise of wisdom to those who lack it and seek it (Jas. i. 5—7). The promises given by our Lord are also abundant. 4. There is the testimony of the experience of such as are taught of God. They can tell of his mercies, and sing aloud of his righteousness (Ps. xxxiv. 6; lxvi. 16). And such experience is or should be an invaluable help to those who have yet to learn "the secret of the Lord." Now, with this fourfold clue, it is altogether needless for any to misunderstand life's mystery and meaning. So that it follows—

IV. THAT TO BE AND TO REMAIN WITHOUT SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION IS MATTER FOR SERIOUS REPROACH AND REBUKE. It is not against God that the words of ver. 4 are spoken. He would have given them eyes to see, had they desired and sought that blessing. And so he will now. Hence there is a fivefold injustice done by us if we remain without the true knowledge of the rich meaning in our mercies. 1. There is injustice to the Word of God. 2. There is injustice to the God of the Word. 3. There is injustice to ourselves. 4. There is injustice to the mystery of life. 5. There is injury to our future and eternal destiny.

Well may we adopt for ourselves, on our own behalf, as well as on that of others, the prayers of the apostle for spiritual enlightenment (Phil. i. 9—11; Col. i. 9, 10; Eph. i. 15—18). For as we understand the mystery of God in Christ will all minor ones have the light of heaven poured upon them.

Vers. 10—21.—*Apostacy in heart a root of bitterness.* In the midst of this

paragraph there is an expression of which the writer to the Hebrews makes use as a warning. It is found in the eighteenth verse: "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." In the Epistle to the Hebrews xii. 10, the sacred writer says, "Looking diligently . . . lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." The root bearing gall and wormwood which Moses deprecates is, Apostacy from God who has revealed his will through him. That which the New Testament writer dreads, and to ward off which his whole Epistle was written is, Apostacy from God who has revealed his will through his only begotten Son. The parallels between the two possibilities would furnish a most instructive theme for the preacher; so likewise would the contrasts. We propose now to suggest a line of thought which may "open up" and impress on the heart and conscience the truth that heart-apostacy is a root bearing gall and wormwood.

I. THE CHRISTIAN, LIKE ISRAEL OF OLD, IS SURROUNDED WITH INFLUENCES THAT ARE UNFAVOURABLE TO FIDELITY TO ALL THAT HE BELIEVES AND HOPES. Israel was in the midst of other nations, who had a greatness and pomp with which they could not vie, who had a religious worship other than theirs, and a literature and learning which were greater than theirs; and it was not at all unnatural that now and then, at any rate, they should cast a longing look at them, and cherish a wish to rival them. And as their acquaintance with other nations increased in the course of the ages, it cannot be wondered at if they were tempted to depart from the simplicity of their monotheistic faith and worship. And now, the parallel between them and us is closer than ever it has been. Increasing research has brought to light much religious literature in the world, which pertains to varied religions, in which even fifty years ago our fathers thought there was nothing good. The great religions of the world—Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism—were looked on by some as almost totally bad. And now, some are so elated by the features of excellence that may be traced in one and another, and so startled by some parallels between the Christian religion and others, that they are tempted to indulge the thought that our faith is but one among many—the best, perhaps, of all the varied religions in the world, but yet differing from others rather in its superior measure of excellence, than in any features altogether and absolutely unique and incomparable. Hence—

II. THERE IS A DANGER OF APOSTACY OF HEART FROM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, ANALOGOUS TO THE PERIL WHICH BESET ISRAEL OF OLD. The peril to which Christians are now exposed is not merely the ordinary one arising from the fickleness of the human heart, and from the subtle temptations and fiery darts of the wicked one. With the larger knowledge just referred to of whatever excellence other religions may have, a new temptation is presented to the understanding, no longer to regard our Saviour as the one and only Redeemer, but as simply the Highest and Best of the Religious Teachers of the world. And so far as this temptation is yielded to, there may come a defection from the faith on any one or more—or all—of the five following points:—1. Christ may cease to be regarded as the only begotten Son of the Father. 2. His Godhead, and therefore his incarnation, may come to be denied, or at least may cease to be held as a part of the "faith once [for all] delivered to the saints." 3. His redemption, as at once furnishing us with a gospel of deliverance and a gospel of power, may be lost sight of as the distinctive feature of his work, to which no religion in the world can furnish a parallel or point of comparison. We have many religions in the world; there is but one gospel. 4. His example may come to be regarded as simply one that towers above that of other men, and as unattended with any power of lifting the world up to his own level. 5. And with all this, the dread and august majesty with which he, as the Mediator of our race, exercises all power in heaven and on earth, may be thrown into the background, and may thus cease to sway the heart and life. No one who understands the times can fail to see the reality of these dangers, and the serious proportions they are assuming. That amid the storm, the kingdom of Christ will be shaken, we have no fear whatever, but many may depart from the faith meanwhile.

III. SUCH APOSTACY WOULD BE A ROOT OF BITTERNESS. This of itself would require an entire homily to do it justice. We can but hint in outline. 1. If thus the heart loses its hold of Christ *as a Redeemer*, the attainment of salvation will henceforth become impossible. 2. If once the power of Christ ceases to renew, the old self will

reign, and evil passions be under no adequate control. Inferior power may curb the manifestation of passion, but only Divine power can tear up its roots. 3. Such defection from the faith will "defile" many. The evil will not stop with one. It will be infectious. 4. Such dishonour done to the Son of God will bring upon those who are guilty thereof the Divine displeasure. 5. The sure effect will be the breaking up and disbanding of the Churches which are poisoned thereby. There will be no reason why Churches *should* hold together, if their Divine Christ is gone, and there will be no power that *can* keep them together, if his Spirit is grieved and departs.

IV. HENCE AGAINST SUCH A GRIEVOUS RESULT CHURCH MEMBERS SHOULD CAREFULLY GUARD. "Looking diligently lest," etc. 1. They should watch the signs of the times, in order that, as far as in them lies, they may guard the Church to which they belong from the dangers with which the changeful currents of human thought may threaten them. 2. They should seek so to quicken the zeal and inflame the fervour of piety around them, that temptations to apostatize may have no power. 3. They should cherish a loving solicitude, and fervently pray, for each other, that mutual care and prayer may be an effectual guard against the approach of disloyalty in faith or even in thought. 4. Each one should be very jealous over his own heart. In others we can discern only fruit; in ourselves we can detect the root, of evil. Hence this watchfulness over our own spirits is doubly important, since it may be doubly effective. Even in others we may perhaps lop off the evil fruit, but in ourselves we can see that even the root is plucked up. For this, the only radical, certain, and absolute preventive of apostacy, the Spirit of God can effect, and he will, if we resign ourselves to his almighty hands. He can so renew and sanctify the heart that no "root of bitterness" can find any hold. He can make the soil so receptive of truth that any living seed of righteousness will at once germinate, and yet withal so destructive of error that any seed of evil casually dropping in will perish in its fall. Happy man, whose heart is in the effectual keeping of the Holy Ghost, and who is so sanctified that no germ of ill can find even a momentary home!

Vers. 22—28.—*Historical witnesses to the wrath of God.* The chapter preceding this is shaded, yea, dark indeed. Nevertheless, it is an exact forecast of the state of Israel at this very day. In fact, the comparison between the state of the land of Palestine and the words of the Book, suggests two lines of instructive thought.

I. HOW MANIFESTLY, IN THE DESOLATION OF THE HOLY LAND, IS SEEN THE EFFECT OF THE WRATH OF GOD! To this even Volney bears witness. He asks, "From whence proceed such melancholy revolutions? For what cause is the fortune of these countries so strikingly changed? Why are so many cities destroyed? Why is not that ancient population reproduced and perpetuated? A mysterious God exercises his incomprehensible judgments. He has doubtless pronounced a secret curse against the land. He has struck with a curse the present race of men in revenge of past generations" (quoted by Jameson, *in loc.*).

II. HOW IS THE ACCURACY OF THIS PART OF THE OLD BOOK THEREBY CONFIRMED! It is now a favourite canon of scientific men, that whatever cannot be verified must be relegated to the past and forgotten. To this there can be no objection, if those who insist on this negative will insist equally on the reciprocal positive, and say that whatever *can* be verified must be accepted. For it would be simply a proof, either of discreditable ignorance or of perversity, if men were to deny or to spurn the repeated verifications of the words of Moses in the subsequent course of history.

And it is of no use for men to declaim against the possibility of miracles, when there is the standing miracle before our eye, of some superhuman knowledge having forecast, three thousand years ago, precisely the line along which Hebrew history would move, down till the present day. While there is also this difference between miracle in mighty works, and miracle in prophetic words: The proof of the works is most clear to those who see them at the time; it may possibly diminish with the lapse of years. That of a prophetic word is *nil* at the time: it awaits confirmation from the lapse of years. And as long as our present historical records stand, so long will there remain the confirmation of the precision with which Israel's lawgiver, speaking in the name of Jehovah, laid down beforehand the lines along which the Jewish nation should move for thousands of years. When we put together the land and the Book, the work and

the word, and see the correspondence between them, we cannot but say, "This is the finger of God!"

Ver. 29.—*Secret things.* "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God." So says the great lawgiver. On a not dissimilar topic, Bishop Butler says, "We do not know the whole of anything." Is it not so? Who can tell *all* about a stone or about a blade of grass? Who can aver that the furthest star has been yet discovered, or tell us what lies beyond it? There are secrets among the minute; there are secrets among the vast.

I. LET US MAKE A DISTINCTION AS TO THE MANNER, KIND, OR DEGREE OF SECRECY. 1. Some things are secret, awaiting fuller discovery to reveal them. 2. Some things are secret, but await the unfolding of events in God's providence. 3. Some things are secret in one sense, but not in another. We often know manifestations, but not essences; phenomena, but not noumena; facts, but not modes or reasons. 4. There are some secret things which are altogether unknowable, and must long remain so; *e.g.* Who can give an account of the reason why sin was permitted to enter? Who can tell whether it will always exist? Who can explain the doctrine of the Trinity? Who can descry the reason why this man had such and such suffering? etc., etc. How soon, when we come to ask questions like these, are we in "a boundless deep, where all our thoughts are drowned"!

II. LET US INQUIRE, IN WHAT RESPECT DO SECRET THINGS BELONG UNTO GOD? They belong unto him: 1. To conceive them. 2. To will them. 3. To originate them. 4. To comprehend them. 5. To overrule them. 6. To conduct them to their final issue.

III. LET US ASK, WHAT EFFECT SHOULD THE FACT THAT SECRET THINGS BELONG UNTO GOD HAVE UPON US? 1. It should humble us to find out how incompetent we are to scan the Divine works and ways. 2. It is obvious that we *must* leave secret things with him to whom alone they belong. 3. It is manifestly *right* to leave them with him. 4. It should give us no uneasiness to leave them there. 5. We should be fully content to leave them there. For we have (1) a revealed will of love; (2) plain and straightforward duty to discharge; (3) a full gospel of redeeming mercy; and (4) a good hope through grace. What more can we want? 6. We should be adoringly thankful that God keeps in his own hands what we could not understand, and entrusts us only with what we can. 7. Thankfully leaving in God's hands what belongs to him, let us lovingly attend to that which belongs to us.

Ver. 29.—*Revealed things.* This verse is so full of meaning that it is not easy to do even approximate justice to it in one discourse. Hence we have reserved the latter part thereof for a suggested outline of a distinct homily: "Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law." The statement here made concerning the Law of God in particular, is true of the entire Word of God as the regulator of faith and life. Three lines of thought here naturally follow on each other.

I. WITHIN THE WORD OF GOD WE HAVE THE REVEALED MIND AND WILL OF GOD. He made known his ways unto Moses, etc. And now he hath spoken to us in his Son. The sum and substance of the Divine message is, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

II. THE MANIFEST OBJECT OF THIS REVELATION OF AND FROM GOD IS THAT WE MAY THEREBY HAVE AN ADEQUATE GUIDE FOR FAITH AND LIFE. "That we may do all the words of this Law" is the Old Testament form of setting this. The New Testament form is, "Preaching . . . repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

III. IN THIS RESPECT THE WORD OF GOD IS, EMPHATICALLY, "OURS." "Those things which are revealed belong unto us," etc. 1. They belong to us—our treasury of wealth. 2. They belong to us—our measure of responsibility. 3. They belong to us—our rule by which we shall be finally tried (Rom. ii. 1—16).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 2—9.—*Seeing, yet not seeing.* The Israelites had seen God's mighty works (ver. 9), yet God had not given them a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see (ver. 4).

I. NATURAL SIGHT WITHOUT SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT. Moses accuses the people of blindness to the facts of their own history. These facts included: 1. God's mighty works in Egypt; here, as in ch. iv. 34; vii. 19, classified as temptations, signs, and wonders (vers. 2, 3). 2. God's guidance of the people in the desert, which also was rife in signs and wonders (vers. 5, 6), and was a course of discipline (temptation, in sense of trial) throughout. 3. The victories over Sihon and Og (vers. 7, 8). No people ever saw so many miracles or passed through so extraordinary a curriculum as Israel did. Yet Moses says they had failed to apprehend the lessons of their history. Seeing, they saw not (Matt. xiii. 10—16). That generation may not have been so dull as the one which had preceded it, but even it had shown by recent rebellions (Numb. xx., xxi.) how far it was from having laid earnestly to heart the lessons of God's dealings with it. A like vail lies on every unspiritual mind (2 Cor. iii. 13—18). The Bible is a book of riddles to it (Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44—46). Christ is known only after the flesh (2 Cor. v. 16). The lines of a Divine leading in the events of life are not recognized. Warnings are scorned; prosperity is misused; adversity hardens. There is outward experience of facts, but, as in Israel's case, the Word preached does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it (Heb. iv. 2).

II. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT IS FROM GOD. Yet not arbitrarily given or withheld. It is given to those who feel their need of it, who seek it, and who act in faithfulness to the light already possessed (Ps. xxv. 9, 12, 14; cxix. 18; Matt. xiii. 10—16; John vii. 17). From none such will God withhold the "heart to perceive, and eyes to see." On the other hand, Divine illumination is indispensable to the knowledge of spiritual truth (cf. John vi. 45; 1 Cor. ii. 12—16; 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. i. 17). As the poet's eye is needed for the discernment of the poetic suggestions and analogies of nature, so is the spiritual eye needed to penetrate "the secret of the Lord." The eye in this case, as in the other, "sees only what it brings with it the power of seeing." And to gain this seeing eye, there must, as before remarked, be prayer—prayer and *obedience*. Without these two golden keys, no thought, no labour, no learning, no cleverness, will enable us to force the gates of the inner sanctuary of truth. God's world, God's Word, God's providence, will be alike mysterious; if spiritual instruction is offered, the reply will be "Doth he not speak parables?" (Ezek. xx. 49).—J. O.

Ver. 3.—*Temptations, signs, miracles.* (Cf. ch. iv. 34; vii. 19.)

I. THE RELATION OF THE TERMS. "Temptations" is a wider category than "signs," and "signs" is a wider category than "miracles" or "wonders." All "wonders," however, in the kingdom of God have the moral significance of "signs;" and all "signs and wonders" are "trials" of the disposition.

II. THE APPLICATION OF THE TERMS. 1. *Wonders*, meaning strictly, supernatural occurrences. 2. *Signs.* Anything is a "sign" which indicates God's presence (Luke xi. 20), which discovers a law of his working, which is a pledge of his grace, which furnishes a symbol of a spiritual reality. Miracles were "signs." Nature is a "sign" in her order, regularity, and invariableness (Gen. i. 14; viii. 22; ix. 13; Ps. cxix. 89—92; Jer. xxxiii. 25; Acts xiv. 17; Rom. i. 20). Every answer to prayer, every deliverance from trouble, every indication of the Divine will in providence, every specific warning and encouragement, is a "sign." 3. *Temptations*, i.e. tests or trials. "Trial" is a word of wide scope, for God tries us every moment, as well by things little as by things great. Every event in providence contributes to the formation, testing, and discipline of character. Naturally, however, we give the name "trials" to the harder and more severe experiences of life—those which most throw us back on our true selves, and reveal or determine character.—J. O.

Vers. 10—15.—*National covenanting.* This covenant—

I. WAS MADE WITH THE NATION AS SUCH. National covenanting finds modern

exemplifications in the Scotch covenants, and in the "Solemn League and Covenant" of 1643–44. Irrespective, however, of the particular stipulations of these covenants, the propriety of such engagements must be pronounced doubtful. The case of Israel can scarcely be pleaded as a precedent. Certainly, were God to reveal himself to any nation now as he did to that chosen race, grant it a revival of religion, give it laws and judgments, and summon it by positive command to an engagement of the kind, it would, as of old, be its duty to obey. Even then: 1. The covenant would involve a remodelling of the constitution of the State. It would be meaningless save on a theocratic basis, Church and State merging in one body, and breaches of covenant obligation being regarded and punished as crimes. 2. The arrangement would require for its successful working conditions of strictest isolation—such conditions as God in his wisdom devised for Israel. The difficulties in the way of such a covenant amount now practically to impossibility. In ancient times, the units of society were families, tribes, nations, the sense of individuality being comparatively weak; now the sense of individuality is strong, and every arrangement must take large account of the individual conscience. In Israel, again, Church and State were one, but they are so no longer, Christ's kingdom refusing to identify itself with any earthly polity. The modern state, based on popular representation, and declining to take cognizance of differences of creed, is least of all favourable to the coalescence of civil with spiritual functions. Oaths are to be deprecated in any case, save where absolutely called for. They ensnare consciences, and lead to profanation by the disregard of them by the irreligious. Large sections of the community must always be left outside of such covenants, and in so solemn a transaction, the right of the majority to bind the minority, and still more to bind posterity, must be questioned. The covenants, in Scotland especially, were the source of great religious inspirations, but the good was not unmixed with evil. On the other hand, the fact of such obligations being freely undertaken by a nation must be admitted to involve it in grave responsibility, and greatly aggravates the guilt of subsequent apostacy.

II. INCLUDED ALL CLASSES, AND HAD RESPECT TO POSTERITY. 1. *It included children* (ver. 11). Whatever may be said of national covenants, it is undoubted that, in the *spiritual* sphere, parents and children stand in very close relation. The act of a parent, himself in covenant with God, in dedicating his child to God—probably naming the Name of God upon it in baptism—entails on that little one the weightiest responsibilities. It is a child of the covenant, stands within its bonds, and is pledged to love, serve, and worship the God of its fathers. 2. *It bound posterity.* Covenanting apart, the people that is faithful to God and zealous for his glory, abounding in fruits of righteousness, may expect his blessing to distant generations; whereas the nation that forgets him, and abounds in impiety, infidelity, and wickedness, with equal certainty provokes his indignation, brings down his scourge, and bequeaths to posterity the inheritance of a curse.—J. O.

Vers. 16—21.—*The lying hope.* We have here—

I. INEXCUSABLE UNBELIEF. (Vers. 16—18.) The man who, turning from Jehovah, went after the gods by the nations, was doubly inexcusable. 1. The true God had been revealed to him. 2. The worthlessness of heathen idols had been demonstrated. He had the light, and could compare it with the darkness of the nations around. If not himself a witness of God's mighty works in Egypt and in the desert, he had heard of them from his forefathers, or could read of them in his Scriptures (ver. 20). The existence of the nation was a proof that such things had been done. Unbelief is not less inexcusable in us: 1. With the Bible in our hands. 2. With so large a body of evidences of Divine truth. 3. With centuries of experience of the regenerative influence of Christianity. 4. With a wide knowledge of heathen nations, discovering to us by contrast our own advantages. Unbelief may be: 1. Speculative. 2. Practical. It is enough that our practice be shaped on the hypothesis of the untruth of God's Word, to constitute us unbelievers (1 Tim. v. 8).

II. GROSS SELF-DECEIT. (Ver. 19.) The act of this wicked man is very remarkable. He blesses himself in his heart, and says, "I will have peace," at the very time that God's curses are being read out to him. Yet his case is not a solitary one. He does no more than men do every day in the teeth of the threatenings of the Bible.

Satan whispers, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. iii. 4); "Be it far from thee: this shall not be unto thee" (Matt. xvi. 22); and Satan, not God, is believed. We may explain this self-deceit: 1. From *want of consideration* (cf. Isa. i. 3). The wicked man does not really trouble himself about the curses. They are mere words to him. The mind makes no application, scarcely even asks the meaning, of what it hears. The oracle with which the wicked man consults is in his own heart (Ps. xxxvi. 1—5), and the "oracles of God" get no attention. 2. From *want of faith*. God's Word, even if attended to, could not compel belief in a heart already possessed by an opposite set of beliefs, and determined not to part with them. 3. From *self-will*. Will enters into the question of our beliefs; so long as it can twist evidence, resist unwelcome conclusions, find evasions and pretexts, it will not accept what is contrary to its ordinary bent. While, if the worst comes to the worst, it can cut the knot by a simple "I won't," and obstinately refuse to believe aught but what it likes. The account of the sinner's unbelief and self-deceit is therefore this: 1. He has not liked to retain God in his knowledge. 2. Unwelcome subjects have been banished from his mind. 3. Through unfamiliarity to his thoughts, the supersensual world has become less and less a reality to him. 4. He acquires the power of ignoring it, and ends by disbelief in it.

III. UNUTTERABLE FOLLY. (Vers. 20, 21.) Unbelief, unhappily for the sinner, cannot alter the actual state of the case. God's anger smokes against him, and will certainly destroy him. His sin, agreeable as it may appear at present, will yield at last gall and wormwood. Contending with the Almighty, he rushes on his ruin. The curses written in the Book will not fail to overtake him. It is easy for sinners to "laugh now" (Luke vi. 25), but there awaits them a terrible undeceiving—a day when they shall "mourn and weep."—J. O.

Vers. 22—28.—*The stranger's wonder.* The state of the Holy Land—

I. AN EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF REVELATION. The sterility of Palestine has been urged in disproof of Bible representations of its former fruitfulness and plenty. It should rather be remembered that, were the Holy Land in a less desolate state than it is, Bible predictions would not have been fulfilled—revelation would have been discredited.

II. A WONDER TO THE STRANGER. "Great God!" exclaims Volney, the unbeliever, "from whence proceed such melancholy revolutions? For what cause is the fortune of these countries so strikingly changed? Why are so many cities destroyed? Why is not that ancient population reproduced and perpetuated?" ('Ruins,' ch. ii.)

III. A JUST RETRIBUTION FOR SIN—pointing a warning to ourselves.—J. O.

Ver. 29—*Secret things.* The "secret things" of this verse were the things which God had *not* revealed regarding Israel's future—especially the time and manner of the fulfilment of those promises and threatenings which were made contingent on their obedience or disobedience. The things which *had* been revealed whetted their appetite to know more (cf. Dan. xii. 8; John xxi. 21). Moses in this verse discourages the prying of a too eager curiosity into things purposely kept secret, while directing the people to the things revealed as containing all that was necessary for the doing of their duty. The truth to be drawn from the passage is, that *the Bible is primarily a Book for practical guidance, not for solution of speculative difficulties or gratification of a vain curiosity.*

I. DUTY, NOT CURIOUS SPECULATION. The difficulties and mysteries inherent in the scheme of revelation are acknowledged. They may be usefully distributed into three classes. 1. *Those which are not peculiar to the Bible*, but inhere in all our thinking about the facts of existence. The Bible did not create, if it does not undertake to solve, the mysteries of the origin and existence of evil, of the suffering of the innocent with the guilty, of free-will and necessity, of the reconcilability of man's freedom with God's foreknowledge and foreordination. These are difficulties of all religion and philosophy, as well as of the Bible. 2. *Those which are peculiar to the Bible*—which emerge in connection with the scheme and process of revelation itself. Such are the doctrines of the Trinity, of the incarnation, of the atonement, of regeneration—doctrines all light and comfort to us on the practical side, and yet on the speculative side involving much that is baffling to the reason. 3. *Those which arise from our*

imperfect apprehension of the facts revealed—from the overlaying of them with mistaken theories and false interpretations. This last class of difficulties does not concern us here. If we ask, *Why* should so much be left unrevealed in Scripture? the answer is: 1. There is much that *cannot* be revealed—would not be intelligible to us. 2. The purpose of Scripture *does not require* more to be revealed than suffices for our guidance. 3. The existence of unsolved difficulties *acts as a moral test*, and aids the development of faith—faith, viz. as a practical principle, believing and trusting in God on the strength of what *is* revealed, difficulties notwithstanding (John xx. 29). This gives the key to our duty, in presence of these difficulties. We do not forget: 1. That things once kept secret are now revealed (Col. i. 26). 2. That in the course of ages God is ever making his counsels clearer. 3. That it is the privilege and duty of the Church to be always making progress in the knowledge of God's will, as far as he has chosen to reveal it (Eph. i. 17, 18; iii. 18, 19; Col. ii. 2). Nevertheless, it is the condition of earthly existence that "we know" only "in part" (1 Cor. xiii. 9). Our duty, therefore, plainly is, not to neglect the light we have in vain beating against the wires of the cage that confines us; but diligently to improve that light as the likeliest means of getting more. It is more important to get a fire put out than to know exactly how it originated; more important to escape from the burning building than to know exactly the course which the flames will take after we have left. We are not to forego prayer because it is mysterious to us how God can answer prayer; to forbear fleeing to Christ because we cannot frame a theory of the atonement; to renounce activity because we cannot reconcile free-will and Divine foreordination. Revelation resolves the central difficulty, how God can be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly; it gives light in abundance on the character of God, the way of salvation, the requirements of holiness; it makes much certain that to the natural reason must ever have remained doubtful. What folly, then, to make duty wait on the solving of speculative difficulties, many of which will probably never be solved on earth!

II. DUTY, NOT ANXIOUS PRYING INTO THE FUTURE. The "secret things" in regard to that also belong unto the Lord. His Word teaches us in a general way the issues of particular lines of conduct, but it lies with God to determine the when, how, what, and where of the actual event. His providence is a mystery unfathomable by all but himself. This, however, need not disquiet the children of God. He is their Father, and they can confidently trust their future to his wisdom and his love (Matt. vi. 26—34). Of little use is it to fret ourselves with fears and cares about what may possibly befall us. Do duty, and leave the issues to him who is above. Duty, not calculations of expediency. Those who steer by expediency rather than duty, in the hope to avoid evils, split on a worse rock than the one they shun.—J. O.

Vers. 1—13.—*The renewal of God's covenant with Israel.* Every act of obedience is a step of the soul upward. It leads us into clearer light and into purer air. The man is braced by the exercise. On the other hand, the neglect of a great occasion of blessing is an irreparable loss.

I. NOTE GOD'S GRACIOUS ACTIVITY ON BEHALF OF HIS COVENANT PEOPLE. Ancient Israel was sadly prone to forget what God had done for them. Ingratitude is base. It injures greatly the man who is guilty of it. We lose immensely by our obliviousness of God's kindness. For the Hebrews, God had exerted his power and pity in methods unprecedented. Almost every act of his for their deliverance was a miracle. The crops of Egypt were blasted in order to rescue the sons of Abraham. The firstborn of Egypt, of man and of beast, were slain to emancipate Israel. The king, his courtiers, and Egypt's military were submerged in the sea to deliver the Hebrews. For forty years they had been miraculously led and miraculously fed. For forty years their clothes had resisted all decay, and their sandals had not yielded to wear. Without ordinary bread—without wine—they had been kept alive; yea, had become robust and irresistible. Conquest over foes was already theirs, and Canaan itself was, in part, possessed. Never before—never since—has God so set aside his ordinary methods of providing for men, and revealed himself as the personal Friend of his people.

II. THIS GRACIOUS ACTIVITY CONTAINED PREGNANT PLEDGE OF HIGHER GOOD. Wondrous as were these acts of Divine kindness, they did not terminate in themselves. They were the earnests of something more—something higher. Every gift in the

desert and every conquest in Canaan contained a kernel of spiritual promise. These events through which the Hebrews passed, both prosperous events and adverse, were "temptations," or tests, by which to develop their faith and fortitude. Every carnal battle was drill and discipline for spiritual conflict. Very instructively are the miraculous deliverances here called "signs" (ver. 3). For signs and symbols they were of realities in the spirit-realm. The redemption from Egypt was the sign of a better redemption for the soul. Sinai foreshadows Calvary. The smitten rock prefigured Christ. The desert life was a type of the earthly pilgrimage. The brazen serpent symbolized the remedy for sin. By new and singular methods was the host of God's elect daily fed, and Moses plainly indicates the gracious intention of the plan, viz. that "*Ye might know that I am the Lord your God.*" The descending manna was an object-lesson. Every meal was a revelation of God. Within the food for the body was to be found richer food for the soul.

III. WE SEE MAN'S INSENSIBILITY TO THE GRACIOUS INTENTION OF GOD. In this address of Moses we discover an *apparent* contradiction. "Ye have seen," he says, "all that the Lord did" (ver. 2). "Yet," he adds, "the Lord hath not given you eyes to see" (ver. 4). But the contradiction is only on the surface. They saw, and yet they did not see. They saw the external event; they did not perceive the interior meaning. They had no eye for spiritual penetration. They had not the pureness of heart by which they might have seen God. And the blame of non-possession does not rest on God. Some gifts he bestows unasked. "He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." But the higher gifts for the soul he grants only to the meek and the prayerful. "Ask, and ye shall receive." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." The Hebrews saw the cloud, but did not see the God within the cloud. They saw the splendid coruscations of his glory, and they entreated that the vision might not be repeated. Their mouths were filled with material food, but they had no eye to discern the love which supplied it. They remained deaf to the soft whispers of the Divine voice—the voice within the human voice. They were too carnal to perceive the illustrious vocation to which they were called, or the magnificent destiny that lay in their path. Jehovah offered to be "their God."

IV. WE SEE A FRESH OPPORTUNITY FOR COMPLETE CONSECRATION. On the threshold of the promised land God summoned a halt. He reviews, by the mouth of Moses, their past history, reminds them of their mistakes, reproves their obtuseness of mind, and invites them to a renewal of the sacred covenant. Another chance was given them for spiritual reformation. Here was the commencement of a new epoch. Again, as in Horeb, God bids for man's allegiance. He renews his pledge to be in Canaan what he had been in the desert—their special Friend, their God. In this compact all the resources of God were secured to Israel. His power, his glory, his life, his home, were conveyed to them. All was to be theirs; but on *one* condition—and that condition was a necessity—that they should be loyal and true to him. What a splendid opportunity was there for a new beginning—for a fresh departure! So ever and anon God comes near to us, and offers to make a covenant with us—to be our Friend and God for ever. On the morning of every day—on every returning sabbath—he appeals to us afresh to make consecration of ourselves. If we will be indeed his people, he will be most truly our God. We too may "enter into his oath."—D.

Vers. 14—28.—*The government of God all-embracing.* The detective force in God's kingdom is perfect. Escape through the meshes of his Law is an impossibility. Every defaulter is within the custody of the Omniscient Eye. Arraignment, conviction, and execution proceed (sometimes leisurely) with the precision and certitude of irresistible law. In this paragraph—

I. WE LEARN THE ORGANIC UNITY OF THE NATION. Every individual is a member of the community—an integral part of the kingdom. "No man liveth unto himself." A citizen of an empire cannot demean himself as he please. He is bound to consider the well-being of the body politic. Hence Moses affirmed that the covenant made with the elders and officers present was a covenant also made with those not present. Whoever elected to share in the security and triumphs of the nation was bound to share in its obligations. We cannot belong to society and claim exemption from its laws. The individual is bound by the decisions of the nation.

II. WE LEARN THE GREAT USES OF EXPERIENCE. "Ye have seen their abominations." To a generation that had not seen the obscenities, impurities, and social corruptions of idolatry, it would be difficult to convey an adequate idea of the evil. It was, therefore, of the first importance that the experience of the Hebrews who had come up from Egypt should mould and inspire the convictions of the younger generation. Those who had seen the abominations of Egypt, felt its oppressions, and taken part in uprooting the corrupt races of Canaan, ought to have cherished a deep sense of the value of this covenant with God. The evil against which they solemnly leagued they knew to be a curse to men and an abhorrence to Jehovah. If only the treasures of experience were garnered and utilized, they would be worth more than mountains of silver and gold.

III. WE LEARN THE DECEPTIVE FLATTERIES OF SIN. "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart." 1. *The transgressor is intensely selfish.* He plots for himself, and thinks only of his comfort. "I shall have peace." 2. *The transgressor is essentially blind.* He imagines that although all others may be detected, he shall escape. He sees no immediate danger. He vainly fancies that his evil course is sagacious, and will bring prompt returns of advantage. 3. *The transgressor is a practical atheist.* Because human magistrates or human witnesses may not discover his crime, he concludes that God will not. In fact, he leaves God out of the calculation. He lays his plans and carries them as if there were no God. The great sin of men is *this*, viz. that "God is not in all their thoughts." Sin seldom appears in its true colour in this life. It is ashamed of its own fruits. It promises its dupes the fruits of righteousness. The creed of this world is that men "*may* gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles."

IV. WE LEARN THAT GOD'S DETECTIVES NEVER FAIL. "The Lord will not spare him." The secret conspiracy of the heart shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. If the culprit hide in the darkest den of a populous city, thence will Jehovah's arm drag him forth. "He besets us behind and before." If he be alone in his guilt, he is the more to blame, since he has no help or encouragement from others. All social influences have been deterrent from evil; but he has resisted them all with his obstinate folly. He has been singular in his sin; he shall be singular in his suffering. Against him the anger of Jehovah will burn with a white heat of justice. All the vials of righteous wrath shall be emptied on that guilty head. His name shall perish. He shall be "separated unto evil." The nation shall loathe him. The universe shall be banded together to punish him.

V. WE LEARN THAT THE EFFECT OF PUBLIC RETRIBUTION IS TO MAKE LUMINOUS GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. God delights in earth's fertility. He finds pleasure in fruits and flowers. But his delight in the fruits and flowers of the soul is so much greater, that he will blast all the beauty and fertility of earth in order to produce in men the fruits of holiness. His police force is enormous. Pestilence and earthquake, volcanic flame and electricity, human armies and microscopic insects, execute his judicial word. And the effect upon mankind is to excite inquiry. Wherefore this demolition and curse? Some solid reason must exist for this complete reversal of former blessing. The contrast is eloquent with meaning. The flames of Sodom shed a lustre on the Divine righteousness. The barren hills, with mute yet mournful tongue, declare God's faithfulness. A broken covenant explains it all! The hills shall flee; the stars shall fade; but not a word from Jehovah's lips shall ever miscarry. The sleepless sword of judicial vengeance shall pursue to the death every false thing.—D.

Ver. 29.—*The purpose of Divine revelation.* Taught by God's good Spirit, Moses discerned that the purpose of Divine revelation was not to gratify intellectual curiosity, but to qualify for practical obedience.

I. REVELATION IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE FOR GUILTY MEN. Knowledge of God, his attributes, and methods of operation may be obtained from investigation of man and nature. But the special knowledge of God's merciful dispositions and purposes respecting sinners can be acquired only from the direct revelation he is pleased to make. Whether rebellious men can be reconciled to God, and by what method; how the injured nature of man is to be renovated; whether any existence, or service, or promotion is possible beyond the grave;—these and other vital questions can be answered only by the voice from heaven.

II. REVELATION IS NOT COEXTENSIVE WITH REALITY AND FACT. There is yet a realm of the unknown which God has not disclosed to men. The class of "secret things" is in God's keeping. Such confidence have we in the benignity of the Most High, that we anticipate further revelations, yea, an unending series of disclosures; but the time and method of these gradual unveilings God has wisely reserved unto himself. One thing inspires a hope of increased knowledge: we have a Divine promise that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Compared with the unknown, the known is a speck, an atom, an alphabet only. The universe of knowledge is still beyond us, enticing our inquiry.

III. REVELATION IS A RESPONSIBLE TRUST TO ITS POSSESSOR. The "things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." So long as this revelation is quite external to us it cannot be said to be ours. To possess it, it must fill the understanding, move the affections, quicken the desires, cheer the conscience, mould the character. Then only does it "belong to us." Thus we are to conserve it, viz. by a wise appreciation and by practical use. It is to be handed down to our children intact; *i.e.* not the written scroll so much as the living belief. We are so to prize and practise this revelation that our children shall see it is our precious treasure, our anchor in trouble, our pole-star in darkness, our daily chart and guide. It belongs to us; therefore as wise men we should use it, yea, extract from it all the advantage we can. For the right improvement of the written Word we shall be counted responsible. We "are stewards of the mysteries of God."

IV. REVELATION IS MEASURED OUT FOR PRACTICAL USE. It is given to us "that we may do all the words of this Law." It possesses regal authority, for it is a "Law." In giving us this Law, God deals with us as with intelligent beings, capable of understanding his will, capable of rendering him efficient service. There is no niggardliness in any of God's gifts. As soon as we have improved to the utmost our knowledge of God's will, we shall receive more. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." Honest obedience enlarges the capacity of knowledge; it whets the appetite for higher spiritual acquisition; it awakens expectation. To know God and his Son Jesus Christ, this is life; this is an ever-expanding life—life eternal.—D.

Vers. 1—9.—*Time-defying habiliments.* After the extensive list of curses to be recited amid the mountains, Moses proceeds to speak of the perfect providences of the pilgrimage as a loud call to obedience out of gratitude. He points out not only the miracles connected with the Exodus, but also the arrangements of, as we should say, the commissariat. They had not to manufacture bread, for the manna fell from heaven; they had not to carry with them wine or strong drink, for the pure water out of the smitten rock followed them all the way. Nor had they to concern themselves about clothing, for their clothes defied the march of time, and their shoes stood intact all the rough journey of the wilderness. We have only to consider what such an arrangement saved them, and how at the end of the forty years' march, instead of "ragged regiments," they presented themselves in bright and impressive array, to conclude that this merciful care of their clothing as well as of themselves was a crowning experience of the wilderness. It has indeed been suggested that all here implied is a providential blessing upon their ordinary endeavours and barters with the surrounding tribes;[1] but we imagine there is much more in this reference to their time-defying garments. We are led to speak again of the "philosophy of clothes" (cf. ch. xxii. 5).

I. THE PURPOSE OF CLOTHES IS TO COVER OUR NAKEDNESS. This was shown in Eden, and as Carlyle says about his *alter ego* (*Teufelsdröckh*), "The utility of clothes is altogether apparent to him; nay, perhaps he has an insight into their more recondite and almost mystic qualities, what we might call the omnipotent virtue of clothes, such as was never before vouchsafed to any man. . . . Society, which the more I think of it astonishes me the more, is founded upon cloth."[2] And into this most proper purpose of hiding our nakedness, let us observe, the Lord entered in Eden and afterwards. Man is a spirit, but it is also evident that in this present world he was meant to wear clothes and to conform to decency thereby.

[1] Kitto's 'Pictorial Bible,' *in loco.* [2] 'Sartor Resartus,' pp. 58, 59.

II. THERE IS NO VIRTUE IN RAGGEDNESS. In fact, one of the prophets, in order to convey impressively the worthlessness in God's sight of our self-righteousness, uses this very figure: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isa. lxiv. 6). Suppose that Israel had reached the land of promise in desperate raggedness; it would have been no credit to themselves or to their God. It would, on the other hand, have made the invasion more perilous. But when, instead of "ragged regiments," they came with unworn uniforms from the wilderness, the very freshness of the appearance of the host struck terror into their adversaries.

III. THE FACT HAD EVIDENTLY FAILED TO STRIKE THE ISRAELITES AS IT OUGHT TO HAVE DONE. "Yet the Lord," says Moses, "hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (ver. 4). The unchanging, well-appointed host had ceased to be a marvel to itself, although it must have been a marvel to all other observers. The bright, unfading, well-kept dresses continually before their eyes failed to make adequate impression. They took God's goodness, as we are too prone to do, as a matter of course.

IV. GOD'S PROVISION FOR MAN'S BODY WAS A TYPE OF HIS PROVISION FOR MAN'S SPIRIT. The spirit of man has its hunger and thirst and nakedness, just as well as the body. And we are accustomed to see in the *manna*, which satisfied the hunger of the Israelites, a type of him who, as the Living Bread, came down from heaven (John vi. 49, 50); in the *water* from the smitten rock, which satisfied their thirst, a type of the Spirit, proceeding from the Son, to refresh the souls of men (John vii. 37—39). And why, we ask, should we not discern in the time-defying *garments*, which God so wonderfully preserved, a type of that righteousness with which he clothes our spiritual nakedness, which is unto all and upon all them that believe (Rom. iii. 22)? Round the human spirit, as Carlyle has put it, there lies a "garment of flesh contextured in the loom of heaven . . . it is sky-woven, and worthy of a God;" but around it he is pleased to place another garment, of which the unworn uniforms of Israel were types, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is sufficient to cover all our nakedness, and which stands defiantly against the powers of time. It is in this array and panoply that, as pilgrims, we shall reach the land of eternal promise. Vicissitude and change will work no havoc in this garment of God. In contrast to all man's "shoddy" and "ragged righteousness," it stands in perennial brightness, the time-defying clothing out of the commissariat of God. May we all be arrayed in none other as we approach the Jordan!—R. M. E.

Vers. 10—28.—*The land of promise becoming accursed.* Moses has tried the principle of *gratitude* with the Israelites, urging obedience from a sense of the great goodness of the Lord. And now he turns to the other principle of *fear*, which cannot be dispensed with in religion,[1] and urges obedience out of respect for the promised land, since if they are disobedient it will be turned to a land accursed. The land will in such a case become a witness to the curse of God, instead of continuing a standing evidence of his love; a beacon instead of a type; a wilderness instead of a paradise. And it is instructive to notice the exact danger Moses meets in this passage. The curses have already been pronounced; but it is just possible for some one to say that the curse is levelled at collective sin. National apostacy is contemplated, but an *individual* will never be noticed in his course of licentiousness. The wholesale is judged; the retail may escape. This is the idea that Moses here refutes. He shows that the individual shall be judged, and the land become accursed through the apostacy of individuals. We remark, then—

I. THE NATION APOSTATIZES THROUGH THE APOSTACY OF INDIVIDUALS. No nation as a public act apostatizes, but it gets rotten through individual action. When then a number of units, under the delusion that as units they shall escape, betake themselves to evil courses, blessing themselves in their hearts, saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst," then does rottenness enter into the state of Denmark! It is well for units not to pretend to under estimate their influence as an excuse for living as they please. The nation

[1] Cf. Mozley's 'Sermons Parochial and Occasional,' pp. 322—329.

suffers through the deterioration of its component particles. If the individual withers, the nation withers too.

II. INDIVIDUAL WAYWARDNESS MAY WORK THE RUIN OF A LAND. When we look into the admirable work of Van Lennep, we find him ascribing the barrenness of Palestine at present to the cutting down of forests, the fall of terraces, and the consequent want of rain.[1] A land thus lies at the mercy of individuals much more than we imagine. An individual may cut down the trees on his patch of freehold, and his neighbour follow his example, to carry on his self-indulgence with the proceeds, and the result may be the change of climate which turns a paradise into a waste. We have already seen that Palestine was peculiarly dependent upon bountiful provision in the shape of the early and latter rains; and if individuals, through the necessities begotten by their self-indulgence, outrage the arrangements of providence, the land becomes of necessity accursed.

III. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE HOLY LAND IS NOW AN EMBODIMENT OF THE CURSE OF GOD. Travellers are struck with the brown and barren aspect of the whole land. Spots here and there, of course, burst into beauty through the gift of rain, but as a whole the land is no longer "with milk and honey blessed," but under the anathema of Heaven. How much longer this blight is to rest upon its bloom we cannot say, but the fact is patent to all observers.

IV. THE MUTE APPEAL OF A STRICKEN LAND SHOULD NOT BE LOST UPON THE OBSERVERS OF IT. When the question of slavery was being discussed, before God settled it by permitting the American civil war, attention was directed to the "waste lands" created by the slave-labour. It was shown that the iniquitous system made virgin and splendid soil in the course of years, through monotonous cropping, a wilderness, and that the spectacle of the deterioration of the earth should weigh with thinkers.[2] And Nature is surely meant to speak to man's spirit by her deformities as well as by her beauties; by her manifest wrongs as well as by her manifold benedictions. Such a man as Ruskin, considering the question as art critics will, pleads eloquently for the natural beauty which the advancing needs of railway and of manufacture threatens with desolation. But such a wilderness as Palestine now is, such a wilderness as the slave states of America were becoming, speaks to the conscience of observers, and calls for penitence and tears. The muteness of the appeal, the golden silence, which characterizes such impressive scenes, should make each witness of the waste a penitent worshipper!

V. OBEDIENCE TO GOD WILL YET REGENERATE NATURE. We see the reverse of the disaster in Ps. lxvii. 5, 6, "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase." The wilderness shall yet blossom as the rose when the children of men shall learn their privilege and duty as children of God.—R. M. E.

Ver. 29.—*The purpose and limits of revelation.* This passage states fairly both the purpose and limits of revelation.

I. THE PURPOSE OF REVELATION. It is not to gratify curiosity, but to secure obedience in the successive generations. In other words, it is not speculative, but practical.

1. The objections urged against revelation largely consist in the *disappointments of speculative curiosity.* Because God did not inform man scientifically about the creation of the world; because he did not deliver an articulated theological system; because he did not compose a philosophical text-book;—therefore this popular, miscellaneous, and discursive Book cannot be Divine. But so far from such arguments being valid, they go to substantiate the Divine character of the Book. For—

2. It is *an intensely practical Book, inculcating on parents and children obedience to God.* It takes up man in the family, and urges him to obey God and try to get his children to obey him. It reveals God as a Father seeking the obedience and trust of his human children, and inviting them to the heaven of obedience to his commandments. It makes man understand sufficient about God to know the duty and the blessedness of obeying him. And here let us notice two important positions taken up

[1] Van Lennep, *ut supra*, p. 26. [2] Cf. Cairnes' 'Slave Power,' p. 77, etc.

by the revelation. (1) It declares that we have been made in the Divine image. Let men make us out to be physically in the image of the beast, we are spiritually in the image of God. And (2) it declares that for man's salvation God became incarnate. Mutual acquaintance and understanding are manifestly possible and practicable upon these terms. Man can reason upwards from his own nature, which, as Carlyle said, after Chrysostom, is "the true Shechinah;" and man can appreciate Godhead when revealed through a sinless human life. As a revelation, then, it is most reasonable.

II. THE LIMITS OF REVELATION. It leaves a realm of secrecy to God. That is, it does not profess to reveal God fully, for "he cannot, on account of his incomparable greatness and excellence, bring his plans and operations within the comprehension of his creatures."[1] The finite cannot take in the infinite. We only know in part. But we *know*. To doubt the possibility of knowing God would lead us straight to universal scepticism. Agnosticism has no logical halting-ground on this side of universal doubt.[2] Hence we venture not beyond the assigned limits of the knowable. We take all that God gives and use it reverentially. At the same time, we recognize a world beyond our ken, of essence and of purpose and of perception, which is God's alone. Our pride is broken; we are penitent before him, and we adore.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXX.

Vers. 1—10.—Though rejected and exiled because of rebellion and apostacy, Israel should not be absolutely or for ever cast off. When dispersed among the nations, if the people should return to Jehovah their God, he would again receive them into favour and gather them from their dispersion (cf. ch. iv. 29, etc.; Lev. xxvi. 40, etc.). Moses, looking into the future, anticipates that both the blessing and the curse would come upon the people according as they were faithful to their covenant engagement and obedient to God's Law, or were disobedient and unfaithful. But even when the curse came upon them to the full, this would not amount to final rejection; but God would, by the discipline of suffering, lead them to repentance, and then he would again bestow the blessing (cf. Neh. i. 9).

Ver. 1.—**Thou shalt call them to mind** (cf. 1 Kings viii. 47, where the same expression is rendered by "bethink themselves"). This is the meaning here also; it is not the mere recollection of the curse and the blessing that is referred to, but a general consideration of their own condition and conduct.

Ver. 2.—**And shalt return unto the Lord thy God**; return from the worship of false gods to worship and serve Jehovah the one true God, the God of their fathers, and the God whom as a nation they had before worshipped (cf. Neh. i. 8, 9).

Ver. 3.—**The Lord thy God will turn thy captivity.** This does not mean will cause thy captives to return, for (1) the verb in Kal (as it is here, שׁוּב) never has the force of the Hiph.; and (2) the returning of the dispersed is afterwards referred to as consequent on the turning of the captivity. The plural is used here as elsewhere to indicate the cessation of affliction or suffering (cf. Job xli. 10; Ps. xiv. 7; lxxxv. 2; cxxvi. 1, 4; Jer. xxx. 18; Ezek. xvi. 53). The rendering of the LXX. here is noticeable, καὶ ἰάσεται Κύριος τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου: "and the Lord will heal thy sins," *i.e.* will remit thy guilt and will deliver thee from the pernicious and destructive power of sin (cf. Ps. xli. 4; Jer. iii. 22; xvii. 14; Hos. xiv. 4; Matt. xiii. 15, etc.).

Vers. 4, 5.—Consequent on this deliverance would be the gathering of Israel from all the places of the dispersion and their return to possess the land which their fathers possessed, in greater numbers than their fathers were. This last statement suggests doubt as to the literal interpretation of this prediction, for, as Keil remarks, "If there is to be an increase in the number of the Jews when gathered out of their dispersion into all the world, above the number of their fathers, and therefore above the number of the Israelites in the time of Solomon and the first monarchs of the two kingdoms, Palestine will never furnish room enough for a nation multiplied like this." The reference in the following verse to a spiritual renewal suggests the inquiry whether the reference here is not to such a gathering and restoration of Israel as that

[1] Cf. Robert Hall's 'Works,' vol. vi. p. 54, etc.
[2] Cf. B. P. Bowne's 'Studies in Theism,' ch. i., etc.

which St. Paul describes in Rom. xi., when the branches that had been broken from the olive tree shall be again grafted into it, and all Israel shall be saved after the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. To Moses, and indeed to all the Old Testament prophets and saints, the Israel of God presented itself as a nation dwelling in a land given to it by God; but as the national Israel was the type of the spiritual Israel, and as Canaan was the type of the spiritual kingdom of God, the full import of what is said concerning the former is only to be perceived when it is viewed as realized in the latter. Certain it is that it was on this principle that the apostles interpreted the fulfilment of the Old Testament declarations concerning Israel, of which the explanation given by St. James of Amos ix. 11, 12 may be noted as an instructive example (Acts xv. 15—17). If the rebuilding of the ruined tabernacle of David is to be effected by "the residue of men" being brought to "seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom his Name is called," we need not shrink from interpreting this prophecy of Moses as referring to the restoration of Israel by the bringing in of Jew and Gentile into the one fold under the one Shepherd, the Shepherd of Israel (John ix. 16).

Ver. 6.—**The Lord will circumcise thine heart**; "when thou *wilt* become better, God will help thereto (cf. ch. x. 16)" (Herxheimer). When Israel should return to the Lord, he would take away from them the evil heart of unbelief, and give them the new heart and the right spirit. "Qui pravis affectibus renunciat is circumcisus corde dicitur" (Rosenmüller. Cf. Jer. xxxi. 33; xxxii. 39; Ezek. xi. 19, etc.; xxxvi. 26; Rom. ii. 29; Col. ii. 11).

Vers. 8, 9.—**Thou shalt return and obey**; *i.e.* thou shalt again hearken (see ver. 9, where the same expression is thus rendered). These two verses are closely connected, the former expressing the condition on which the aspect expressed in the latter depends. They should be rendered accordingly, **If thou shalt return . . . then the Lord thy God**, etc. (comp. Gen. xlii. 38; Exod. iv. 23, where a similar construction occurs).

Ver. 10.—Israel would then be restored the full enjoyment of privilege, would again enter into covenant union with the Almighty, and would be enriched with all the blessings of his favour (cf. ch. xxviii. 11, 63); only, however, on the indispensable condition of their hearkening to the voice of God and being obedient to his Law.

Vers. 11—14.—The fulfilment of this condition was not impossible or even difficult; for God had done everything to render it easy for them. The commandment of God was **not hidden from them**; literally, *was not wonderful to them*; i.e. hard to be understood or to perform (see the use of the Hebrew word in Ps. cxxxi. 1; Prov. xxx. 18); nor was it **far off**; it was **not in heaven**—*i.e.* though heavenly in its source, it had not remained there, but had been revealed—so that there was no need for any one to say, **Who will ascend to heaven, and bring it down to us, that we may hear it, and do it?** The idea is not, as Keil suggests, that of "an inaccessible height" which none could scale; nor is it, as suggested by Knobel, that of something "incomprehensible, impracticable, and superhuman;" it is simply a statement of fact that the Law had not been retained in heaven, but had been revealed to men. Nor was this revelation made in some far distant place across the sea, so that any need say, **Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?** On the contrary, it was very near to them, had been disclosed in words so that they could utter it with their own mouth, converse over it, and ponder it in their hearts (cf. Isa. xlv. 19; Jer. xxiii. 28; Rom. x. 6). In the allusion to the sea, the representation is not that of depth (Targum Jon.), but that of distance.

Vers. 15—20.—Moses concludes by solemnly adjuring the people, as he had set before them, in his proclamation of the Law and in his preaching, good and evil, life and death, to choose the former and eschew the latter, to love and serve the Lord which is life, and to shun apostacy and disobedience which are death (cf. ch. xi. 26, 27).

Ver. 17.—(Cf. ch. iv. 19.)

Ver. 19.—(Cf. ch. iv. 26.)

Ver. 20.—**For he is thy life**; rather, *for this is thy life*; to love the Lord is really to live the true, the higher life (cf. ch. iv. 40; xxxii. 47).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Dispersion not rejection.* It is very comforting to pass from so gloomy a chapter as the twenty-eighth to such a paragraph as this. In this thirtieth chapter, the onlook and outlook of Moses are much more extended than before. So distantly is his eye cast now, that he actually looks to the further side of the gloomy scene he had so recently sketched, and sees in the horizon a belt of glory bounding his view (ver. 9). So that, although the present darkness and distress into which the scattered

nation is plunged are the exact fulfilment of the Word of God, yet that same Word declares this to be a transition, and not a final state of things. "*God hath not cast away his people.*" Concerning them there is a twofold promise: (1) of their conversion to God; (2) of their restoration to their land. Both are certain. Both will be fulfilled. The first, in their conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ. The second, in whatever sense the Holy Ghost used the words, but what that sense is is not so clear. There had been a promise made to Abraham (Gal. iii. 8). The Law did not annul that (Gal. iii. 17, 18). Now, if we turn to the promise to Abraham, we find (Gen. xii. 1—8) there are three parts in it: (1) that Abraham should have a seed; (2) that his seed should bless the world; (3) that they should inherit the land. Now, when Paul expounds this Abrahamic promise, he shows: (1) that all who are Christ's are Abraham's seed (Gal. iii. 26); (2) that the promise made to Abraham was "the gospel" (Gal. iii. 8),—it was made to him, "foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith." But since the promise swells out to the full gospel, since the expression "Abraham's seed" includes all who are Christ's,—may not, yea, must not, the land-promise also swell out into something proportionately larger and grander? Such is the question.

Further. The same apostle not indistinctly teaches that, within the lines of his own exposition, there is mercy in store for Israel. What are these lines of exposition? 1. That Jew and Greek are one in Christ Jesus. 2. That the Jewish rites and ceremonies are for ever abolished. 3. That the commonwealth of Israel now is made up of men of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

In the application of these principles, the following steps of thought, *taken in order*, will enable us to summarize Scripture teaching thereon:—

I. There is a condition laid down in ch. xxx. 2.

II. The Lord Jesus has come, laden with blessings for Jew and Gentile (Rom. xi. 26).

III. As the Gentile obtained mercy through Jewish preaching, so the Jew is to obtain mercy through the instrumentality of the Gentile (Rom. xi. 30, 31).

IV. The Lord Jesus Christ declares (Luke xxi. 24) that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

V. The apostle declares (Rom. xi. 25) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

VI. A time is foreseen when Israel shall "turn to the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 15, 16). They will yet see Jesus as their Messiah.

VII. The prophets also speak of their conversion to God (Ezek. xxxvi. 21—32).

VIII. Then, too, will such predictions as Ezek. xxxvi. 24, 28, 34, 35, etc., be fulfilled, but whether in the literal or in the larger sense indicated above, we leave for the providence of God to show.

IX. The same Book which predicts all this tells us also of the means and agencies by which it shall be brought about. There will be providential movements (Ezek. xxi. 27). But the supreme agency will be the power of the Holy Ghost (Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27; xxxvii. 1—14; Zech. xiii. 10. For the means to be used by us, see Ezek. xxxvi. 37).

X. The reason or ground of all will be the sovereign good-pleasure of God (Ezek. xxxvi. 32; cf. Isa. xliii. 25).

XI. When Israel is thus restored, it will be like "life from the dead" (Rom. xi. 15). When the long-lost nation is thus regathered, when it returns with weeping and supplication to the Saviour, and, saved by him, sings the songs of Zion, then will it become by its evangelistic zeal what it now is by its sacred literature—a priesthood for the world!

XII. Concerning all this, the fulfilment of past prophecy is a prophecy of future fulfilment!

IN CONCLUSION. 1. Let us ever hold the Hebrew race in high honour. "Salvation is of the Jews." 2. Let us bear them on our hearts in prayer. 3. Let us watch the movements of God's providence. 4. Let us heed the cautionary words in Rom. xi. 18—21.

Ver. 6 (comp. with Jer. xxx. 31—34, and Heb. viii. 6).—*The old and new covenants.* It may not be uninstructive at this stage of homiletic teaching upon this book, to place on record the points of comparison and of contrast between the old and

new covenants; *i.e.* between the covenant made through Moses and that propounded and sealed through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. LET US NOTE THE POINTS OF COMPARISON. 1. Both are made with a people formed for God (Isa. xliii. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 9). 2. Both make God all in all (ch. xiv. 2; 1 Cor. vi. 20). 3. Both inculcate holiness (ch. vii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 15). 4. Both of them are based on sacrifice (Heb. ix. 22, 23). 5. Both teach a mediatorial administration (Lev. xvi.; Heb. viii. 6). 6. Both set before the people a future inheritance (ch. xii. 1). 7. Both urge to duty by the impulse of gratitude (ch. v. 6; Heb. iv. 9). 8. Both appeal to fear as well as to hope (ch. xi. 16; Heb. iv. 1).

II. THERE ARE ALSO POINTS OF CONTRAST. 1. In the form of the covenants. (1) They differ as to the extent of their compass. One includes a nation, the other men of every nation. (2) The spirituality of its genius, and paucity of definite rules and ritual is another mark of the New Testament covenant (cf. Rom. xiv. 17). (3) The new covenant has clearer revelations: (*a*) Of the law of sacrifice (comp. Leviticus with Hebrews). (*b*) Of the Divine character (Heb. i.). (*c*) Of the destiny of mankind (Heb. x. 25—31). (*d*) Of the tenderness of the Divine concern for man as man (Luke xv.). 2. In their promissory grounds they differ quite as widely. (1) The old covenant ensures objective good, if there is a subjective fitness for it; the new covenant promises subjective fitness that objective good may be secured. The one says, "Do this, and thou shalt live." The other, "Live, and you will do this" (ch. xxx. 6). (2) The security for the fulfilment of God's promises to us is far more strikingly seen in Christ than it could possibly be under Moses (2 Cor. i. 20). (3) The certainty of the fulfilment of the conditions of the covenant by those who are included in it, is provided for under "grace," as it was not under "Law." *This* covenant is "ordered in all things and sure," and is in no way contingent on the fickleness of human will. It is a "better covenant," and is "established upon better promises." And the reason of the difference is found in the fact that the first covenant was intended to serve an educational purpose, and so to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ to bring in a greater and larger one, under which regeneration unto salvation should be certainly secured (John vi. 37—40).

Vers. 11—14 (comp. with Rom. x. 6—13).—*The word of faith.* No Christian preacher is likely ever to deal with these words of Moses without setting by the side thereof the words of the Apostle Paul respecting them, in which, indeed, we have the best possible exposition of and commentary upon them. We propose to give an outline Homily thereupon.

I. THERE IS A "WORD OF FAITH" WHICH, THOUGH ANTICIPATED IN THE OLDEN TIME, IS NOW MADE THE BURDEN OF CHRISTIAN PREACHING. 1. There is a grand thesis to be maintained throughout all time, viz. that Jesus is Lord (Rom. x. 9; 1 Cor. xii. 3; Phil. ii. 11). 2. There is a twofold duty required with reference thereto. (1) Believing. (2) Confessing, *i.e.* (*a*) letting the faith cherished in the heart become a practical power in the life; (*b*) letting the tongue speak for him; (*c*) letting the noblest energy be spent for him. We see why these two and just these are named. Believing is the attitude of the soul Godward. Confession is the attitude of the life manward. Both are required. A faith which can content itself without a confession, and a confession which has not its root in faith, are alike valueless. 3. There is a double effect of this double act. (1) Faith—the Godward act—is followed by "righteousness," *i.e.* in Pauline usage, justification. (2) Confession—the manward life—issues in "salvation," *i.e.* the sound use of all our spiritual powers (cf. Acts iv. 9—12 (Greek) and 1 John i. 7). The effects are as the duties. Justification is a right-setting before God. Salvation, a transformed life before man. 4. For all this we have the sure guarantee of God's own Word (Rom. x. 11—13).

II. THERE ARE SOME NOTEWORTHY FEATURES ABOUT THIS "WORD OF FAITH." Moses had said, "It is not too hard, nor too high, nor too far off (cf. Hebrew), but it is very near," etc. Paul quotes this with some variation, saying: 1. "It is near." It speaks to man's inner self—to his conscience. 2. "It is in thy mouth." In words which can be uttered to the people and by them. 3. "It is in thine heart." The word "heart," being quoted from Moses, we take rather in its Hebrew sense, as meaning "understanding," and thus the phrase would signify, "It is intelligible to you." Being thus near, we have not to go to heaven to fetch a Saviour, nor to the grave to fetch him from the dead.

He came. The work is done—done for all, without distinction of persons. Done—once and for ever,

Hence—1. How large the encouragement to call on the Lord Jesus and be saved! 2. Men need not remain unsaved. 3. Men ought not to remain unsaved.

Vers. 15—20.—*A dread alternative.* While handling substantially the same momentous themes, the aged lawgiver, as if the thought were oppressing him that he should very soon speak his last word, becomes more and more intensely earnest, and mingles a solemnity and pathos which may well be followed by those whose work it is to "*warn* every man, and teach every man in all wisdom," that they may "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Here is presented to us a series of considerations, which are cumulative in their force, and which should be deeply pondered in strict order of progress.

I. HERE IS A GREAT MASS OF TRUTH SET BEFORE MEN'S CONSCIENCES AND HEARTS. There are a few words and phrases here given, in form most short and simple, yet in meaning how august! how deep! how high! They are such as these—God,—the Lord thy God,—good,—evil,—life,—death,—blessing,—cursing. "Dread words! whose meaning has no end, no bound." There are immeasurable, yea, infinite realities behind them. And having once been lodged in the conscience with the significance which is theirs, no power can dislodge them, nor can any one cause it to be to the man as if he had never heard them.

II. THERE IS A GREAT DUTY WHICH PRESSES ON MEN WITH WHOM THIS TRUTH IS DEPOSITED. (See vers. 16, 20.) To love the Lord, to obey him, to cleave to him, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and judgments,—this is obviously the right course for men to follow. On many grounds. 1. The Lord God is holy, and all his commandments are so too; and it is intrinsically and manifestly right to follow what is holy. 2. As our Maker and Preserver, God has supreme claims on our loyalty of heart and life. 3. As our Lawgiver, he has the infinite right to require our obedience. 4. As our Infinite Benefactor, having commended his love towards us, having bought us with a price, he has a claim of love as well as a right of law. And it is not possible for a man to dispute this claim unless his nature is becoming so perverted that he begins to call evil good, or good evil.

III. THERE IS A GREAT BLESSING WHICH WILL FOLLOW OUR LOYALTY AND OBEDIENCE. This is so under the gospel, as really as under the Law. For the Law rested on a basis of gospel, and the gospel brings with it its own law. How can it be otherwise? The gospel call is, "Repent, believe, obey." This is the precise and immutable order. The grace of God teaches us that "we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope," etc. And we know what is the promised issue: "Godliness . . . hath promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "For God is our life and the length of our days." Peace, joy, hope, and all joyful graces and blessings attend on a life which is in accordance with God's will.

IV. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE THAT OPPOSITE MORAL COURSES SHOULD HAVE LIKE ISSUES. Men going in opposite directions, in a right line, on a plane surface, from the same point, can never meet. If to love and obey God be good and tends to good, then the reverse must be evil, and can work nothing but evil. And such ill effects must, for aught we know, go on for ever and ever, unless something or some being interposes (ver. 18). The prolongation of Israel's life in the promised land, even though they reached it in peace, would depend on the continuity of their obedience to their God. They rebelled. Their kingdom was broken up; their people were carried captive; and the sad story already rehearsed became theirs. And if now men quit the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be—there must be, a sorer condemnation than for those who rebelled against the Law of Moses (Heb. vi., ix., x.; John iii. 36). The outlook for the despisers of Christ, in the next life, is darkness without a gleam of the light of hope in the distant horizon. And even in this life nothing but woe can possibly be to him who striveth with his Maker.

V. THERE ARE WITNESSES THAT WE HAVE NOT BEEN LEFT UNDIRECTED AND UNWARNED. (Ver. 19.) Compare with this solemn adjuration of Moses that of Paul in Acts xx. 26, 27; Phil. i. 8. "Heaven" was witness. For every warning given to men in God's Name is known and received on high. "Earth" is witness, for the record of the warning is published to the world. And the warning itself was heard by

thousands of ears, and was heard of by many thousands more. By the very directions of our Lord, we are to proclaim to the many, not to whisper to a few.

VI. SUCH OPEN HERALDING SHOULD PREVENT ANY ONE WHO HEARS THE MESSAGE FROM CHERISHING THE HOPE OF SCREENING HIMSELF UNDER FALSE PRETENCES. The following passages may be compared with our text:—Ezek. xxxiii. 2—5, 9; Matt. xii. 41, 42; viii. 11, 12. If any one, having heard the gospel message in all its fulness and freeness, should ever attempt to throw the blame of his destruction upon others, the light of eternity will be to his complete unmasking and discomfiture. No false pretences will stand in the judgment (Ps. i.).

VII. AN OUTLOOK SUCH AS THIS MAY WELL GIVE A DEEP AND DEEPENING EARNESTNESS TO A PREACHER'S TONE. Specially: 1. If he is nearing the close of his course. 2. If a year is approaching its close. 3. If he realizes the thought that soon, very soon, some of his hearers may be in the eternal world. 4. If he gives due heed to the thought that, even apart from the possible nearness of the next life, the accidents of time may make the period exceedingly short for teaching and warning any one individual.

VIII. AFTER ALL, THERE IS A LIMIT BEYOND WHICH NO HERALD FOR GOD CAN GO. He may teach and warn and plead, but when he has done that—*where his responsibility ends, that of the hearer begins*; ver. 19, "therefore choose life." The preacher witnesses. The hearer must be left alone with God and his own conscience to decide the all-important question, on which a whole eternity depends. Man can direct his fellow-man to God. He may plead and beseech, even weeping. He may, as in Christ's stead, pray, "Be reconciled to God." But on the hearer *alone* the full responsibility for the final step must rest. We may point to God: but we cannot come between the soul and God. We can herald the way: but we cannot lead the soul along the paths of righteousness (Ezek. xxxiii. 4). Hence the final word *must* be, "Choose life." "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." With the power of free choice man cannot interfere. With it God will not trifle. And what should be the effect of such an appeal, but to shut the sinner up alone with his God, that between him and Heaven the great matters of life and death may be decided, and that, with the judgment seat alone in view, in full sincerity of soul, the sinner, pressed with the weight of the Divine claims, may then and there "repent," and "yield himself unto God"? And if then, conscious of the feebleness of a will weakened by so oft determining on the wrong side, he cries, "Lord, help me, and I will be thine for ever," a regal love shall cancel past sin and completely forgive; and a gracious power shall cure the weakness and perfectly restore!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Israel's restoration.* The blackness of the picture of Israel's rejection and desolation is relieved by this rim of gold on the further edge. The verses seem to teach, not only that *if* Israel repent, mercy awaits it, but that Israel *will* repent; that a day of repentance is ordained for it—a day in which the veil that has been so long left lying on Jewish hearts will be lifted off, and the nation will mourn for him whom it has pierced and has so long rejected (Zech. xii. 9—14; Rom. xi. 25—33; 2 Cor. iii. 14—16). The result will be the incorporation of the Israelitish people into Christ's kingdom, with *possibly* restoration to the land given them as a national possession, and blessings, temporal and spiritual, beyond those bestowed upon their fathers (ver. 5). In a wider regard, the passage teaches—

I. THAT IN MAN'S CONVERSION, IT IS THE SINNER, NOT GOD, WHO CHANGES. Israel is saved at last, not by any lowering of the standard of holiness, or by any change in God's requirements, or by any new and easier way of life being discovered than that originally provided, but by Israel coming round to God's way of thinking, and doing in the end what God pleaded with it to do at first (ver. 2). After all their sorrowful experiences, the people are brought to this: that they must submit to do what they were told in the beginning that they ought to do. It is so always. There can be no change on God's part. If the sinner is to be saved, it is he who must forsake *his* thoughts and *his* ways (Isa. lv. 7). He must do at last what he now feels he has not the least

inclination to do—what, as years go on, he is getting the more disinclined even to think about. Will he do it? Is it likely? Is it certain? If ever it is to come about, what agonies of soul must be gone through before so great a revolution can be produced!

II. THAT CONVERSION IS SOMETIMES A RESULT OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE HARDNESS OF TRANSGRESSION. It is in the far-off country, broken, peeled, and scattered, that Israel, like the prodigal (Luke xv. 14—19), remembers the Father's house. Is not this a reason why God sometimes leaves a sinner to eat of the fruit of his own devices—to take the reins upon his own neck, and plunge wildly away into sin's wildernesses?—that he may taste the hardness of such courses, the bitterness, the emptiness, the essential unsatisfyingness of a life of evil, and so, if by no gentler methods, be brought back to ways of righteousness? The penalties which attend sin are, while retributive, also designed in this world for the sinner's correction (Hos. ii. 6—23; xiv.).

III. THAT THE MOMENT THE SINNER RETURNS, GOD IS READY TO FORGIVE HIM. We must not, indeed, post-date the mercy of God, as if that waited on the sinner's self-moved return as a condition of showing him any kindness. God's gracious action goes before conversion—leading, drawing, striving, enlightening, aiding; nay, it is this gracious action which leads to conversion. This is of itself a pledge that when conversion comes, he who has thus drawn us to himself will not say us "nay." But we have express assurances, backed by numerous examples, that whoso cometh he will in no wise cast out (Ps. xxxii. 5; John vi. 37; 1 John i. 9). There is: 1. Forgiveness, with reversal of sentence of rejection (ver. 3). 2. Redemption from bondage (vers. 3, 4; Col. i. 13). 3. Restoration to inheritance (ver. 5; Eph. i. 14). 4. A new heart and spirit (ver. 6). 5. Deliverance from enemies (ver. 7; 2 Thess. i. 5, 6). 6. Untold blessings (ver. 9; Eph. i. 3).—J. O.

Vers. 11—14.—*The word of faith.* Paul, in Rom. x. 6—10, applies these words to the "righteousness of faith," and contrasts them with the voice of the Law, which is, "The man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Rom. x. 5). That this application is not a mere accommodation of the words of Moses to a new subject, will be evident from a brief consideration.

I. ISRAEL AND THE "RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH." The constitution under which Israel was placed, while formally a *legal*, was practically an *evangelical* one. On the legal footing, on any other footing than that of the "righteousness of faith," the statement that the commandment was neither far to seek nor difficult to obey would not have been true. The Law, as requiring perfect holiness, obedience unvarying and uninterrupted, prescribed as the condition of life (Rom. x. 5) that which no one on earth, saint or sinner—the sinner's Saviour only excepted—has ever rendered. It was certainly "nigh," but, as a "ministration of death"—"of condemnation" (2 Cor. iii. 7, 9), its nighness was no boon. How, then, was the curse averted or acceptance made possible? Not by the ability of the Israelite to yield an obedience adequate to the Law's requirements, but by the introduction of the principle of grace. Sin was forgiven, and, shortcomings notwithstanding, the sincere worshipper accepted in "his full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience;" or rather, in view of his faith, of that spiritual trust in Jehovah in which these strivings after obedience had their origin (Gen. xv. 6; Ps. xxxii. 1, 2). The hidden ground of this acceptance was Christ, now manifested in the preaching of the gospel (Rom. x.). From this point of view, the commandment no longer towered above the Israelite, stern and forbidding, launching out curses against him, and filling him with dread and dismay; but its precepts were sweet and consolatory to him, and only filled him with the greater delight and love the longer he meditated on them or practised himself in obeying them (Ps. xix. 7—14; cxix.). It is in this evangelical spirit we are undoubtedly to read these exhortations of Moses, whose standpoint, therefore, essentially harmonizes with that of Paul.

II. ISRAEL AND THE NIGHNESS OF THE COMMANDMENT. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good" (Micah vi. 8). God had written to Israel the great things of his Law (Hos. viii. 12). He had made known his Name, his precepts, the conditions of acceptable service, the way of life; had given that people a revelation, full, clear, adequate, adapted to their mental stature, and to their condition as sinners. This takes

for granted the underlying evangelical element above referred to. Without that, the "commandment" would but have mocked their weakness. And it is this evangelical element in Moses' "commandment" which comes clearly to light in Christ, and which is embodied in Paul's doctrine of the "righteousness of faith." The words of this passage apply with increased force to the historical revelation of the Saviour. They strikingly suggest: 1. That man needs a revelation. 2. That he instinctively craves for one: "Who shall go up?" etc. 3. That he would sometimes make great sacrifices in order to get one: "Go up to heaven;" "go over the sea." But the revelation which man needs most of all is the revelation of a Saviour. He wants to know how he can escape from sin, from guilt, from wrath, from bondage; how he can be restored to holiness, to peace, to blessedness. The "commandment," in its wider sense, gave him this knowledge in part; the full discovery is in the gospel. The Word, in the preaching of this gospel, as well as in the circulation of copies of the Scriptures, and the innumerable opportunities enjoyed in Christian lands of getting acquainted with the way of life, has now come very nigh to us. It is in our mouths and in our hearts, while the salvation which the Word makes known is as readily available as the Word itself is simple and intelligible. "If thou shalt confess," etc. (Rom. x. 9).

III. ISRAEL AND THE PRACTICABLENESS OF OBEDIENCE. The word which Moses gave was one which *could be obeyed*—nay, obedience to which was easy. Only, however, provided there was circumcision of heart (ver. 6)—a sincere willingness to know and to do God's will (John vii. 17). To the natural heart the commandment is hard, and must always remain so. This, again, shows that the obedience Moses has in view is the spiritual, though not faultless, obedience of the believing and renewed heart—the result of possession of and standing in the righteousness of faith. Only through faith relying on a word of grace, and apprehending mercy in the character of God, is such obedience possible. Ability to render it is included in that "being saved," which Paul posits as a result of believing with the heart in the crucified and risen Christ (Rom. x. 9). Observe, further, how the Law, with all its apparent complexity and cumbrousness, resolves itself in Moses' hands into one "commandment" (ver. 11). It is this which makes the Law simple, just as it is the simplicity of the gospel that it reduces all "works of God" to the one work of "believing on him whom he hath sent" (John vi. 29). Amidst the multiplicity of commands, there was but one real command—that of loving the Lord their God (ch. vi. 4; x. 12; vers. 6, 10, 16, 20). In love is implied faith—the knowing and believing the love which God has to us. Love is faith's response to the revelation God makes of himself to man. Faith is thus the condition: 1. Of justification. 2. Of acceptableness in obedience. 3. Of power to render obedience.—J. O.

Vers. 15—20.—*A last word.* I. AN ALTERNATIVE. Life and death; good and evil (ver. 15); blessing and cursing (ver. 19). An alternative for the nation, but also for the individual. "Life" is more than existence—it is holy and happy existence. "Death" is not equivalent to non-existence. As respects the natural life, it is the separation of the living, thinking principle from the body, and is compatible with the survival of the soul in a future state. As respects the spiritual life—that life which the believer *has*, and the unbeliever *has not*, even now, while yet both have conscious being (1 John v. 12)—death is the cessation in the soul of all holy, spiritual functions, implying, indeed, a state of moral ruin, destruction, and disorganization, but by no means the wiping out of consciousness. "Eternal death"—a phrase not scriptural, though "eternal punishment" is (Matt. xxv. 46)—is not held by any one to *mean* "eternal existence in suffering;" but it is believed that a being who exists eternally, and exists consciously, whether in actual suffering or not, may yet in a very true sense be "dead." "Death," in this verse (ver. 15), is deemed compatible with experience of "evil." How strange that between *such* alternatives there should be a moment's hesitation!

II. A WARNING. (Vers. 17, 18.) If the heart is drawn away from God, and turns to idols, *i.e.* sets up any other objects in God's place, and forbears to give to God his proper love and honour, he whose heart does this, or the nation if it does so, shall surely perish. 1. An *awful* end. 2. A *certain* end. 3. An end of which *due warning* has been given.

III. AN APPEAL. (Vers. 19, 20.) "Therefore choose life," etc. On which note: 1. That choice or moral determination underlies our salvation. 2. That choice underlies the possibility of love to God. 3. That one deep choice in the heart's centre underlies all the separate acts of choice involved in a life of obedience. 4. That the choice God wishes involves the choosing of himself, with a view to love him, to obey him, and to cleave to him. 5. That the choice of God is the choice of life, and carries all lesser good with it.—J. O.

Ver. 19.—*Nature a witness.* (See for other instances, ch. iv. 26; xxxi. 28; xxxii. 1; Isa. i. 2.) The invocation of heaven and earth as witnesses turns on deep principles. They are "called to record"—

I. BECAUSE THE MIND RECOGNIZES THEIR PRESENCE AS WITNESSES OF ITS TRANSACTIONS. It projects its own consciousness on its surroundings, and feels as if earth and sky, sun, moon, rock, river, tree, mountain, were not inanimate but animate and sympathetic witnesses of its doings. It attaches its own thoughts to the outward objects. In presence of the scene of any great transaction, it feels as if the place retained its memory; still spoke to it of the past; thought, felt, rejoiced, accused, praised, according to the nature of the deed. Define as we will this feeling of a "Presence" in nature—this "sense of something far more deeply interfused," which we inevitably carry with us into our relations with the outward universe—it is a fact in consciousness, and furnishes a basis for such appeals as those of Moses.

II. BECAUSE GOD IS PRESENT IN HEAVEN AND EARTH AS A WITNESS OF WHAT IS DONE. (Cf. Matt. v. 34, 35.) Heaven is his throne; earth, his footstool. He is present in them, upholding them by the word of his power, and through them is a true witness of all we say and do.

III. BECAUSE HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE CREATURES THEMSELVES CONSPICUOUSLY FULFILLING THE ENDS OF THEIR CREATION. The universe as a whole is thus a standing protest against the apostacy and self-willedness of the sinner (Isa. i. 1, 2). It bears witness against him by its very fidelity to its Creator. "They continue this day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants" (Ps. cxix. 91).

IV. BECAUSE HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE SIGNAL MONUMENTS OF THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS AND IMMUTABILITY. (Ps. cxix. 89, 90.) They testify to the reign of law, to God's constancy of purpose, to the uniformity and inflexibility of his rule. They dash the sinner's hopes of his Word failing, of his threatenings not being put in force.

V. BECAUSE HEAVEN AND EARTH RETAIN AN ACTUAL RECORD OF WHAT IS DONE IN THEIR PRESENCE—a record which may admit of being produced. This is simple truth of science.

VI. BECAUSE HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE INTERESTED SPECTATORS OF WHAT IS BEING DONE. They have shared in the consequences of man's transgression; they will share in the glory of the manifestation of the sons of God. They wait the day of their redemption with earnest expectation (Rom. viii. 19—23).

That Moses, in connection with his appeal to the people, summoned heaven and earth to witness, was an evidence: 1. Of the *solemnity* of this appeal. It must be a matter of momentous importance when the universe is called in to witness it. 2. Of the *rationality* of this appeal. Nature and nature's God were on his side. He had the universe with him, though a foolish people might reject his counsel. 3. Of the *enduringness* of the issues which depended on this appeal. Neither the blessing nor the curse would work themselves out in a day. It needed *lasting* witnesses to take account of the fulfilment of God's words.—J. O.

Vers. 1—10.—*Divine discipline founded on known principle.* Human anger is often an uncontrollable passion. God's anger is directed, not so much against the man, as against his sin. God's anger is the acting of sound principle—a part of his righteousness. Hence, as soon as chastisement produces its designed effect, it ceases. Instantly that the wayward child turns to its Father, the Father turns to his child.

I. REPENTANCE OFTEN SPRINGS OUT OF THE BITTER EXPERIENCE OF TROUBLE. 1. Disobedience brings degradation. Moses foresaw that the elect of God would become, for their sin, captives in a foreign land. No chastisement would be more galling to their pride. Their renown as conquerors had spread far and wide. To be crushed, enchained,

and exiled was humiliation unspeakable. Such degradation is the native fruit of sin. 2. The curse would be felt the more as a contrast to former blessing. The ploughboy does not bemoan his lot, but for a prince to be tied to a plough would be a galling pain. So the prodigal boy, in the parable, was stung by the remembrance of former plenty. 3. Impression would be deepened by the recollection that this misery had been predicted. It was evidently no casual occurrence. They had brought the disaster upon themselves. They could lay the blame nowhere but on their own folly. Unless the moral nature be utterly dead, such experiences often lead to reflection, sorrow, and repentance.

II. REPENTANCE INCLUDES PRACTICAL REFORMATION. Repentance that expends itself in idle grief is a counterfeit. True repentance takes instant decision to retrace false steps. Darkness had come by turning away from the sun; now the penitent man turns fully toward it. He does not wait for others to act. He is not going to be deterred by others' indifference or by noisy ridicule. Call him "turncoat," if you will; there are worse characters in the world than turncoats. He is more afraid of God's anger than of man's paltry spleen. It is not only a halt in the downward course, but "right-about face." He returns unto the Lord. He now docilely listens to his voice; he honestly endeavours to practise all the Father's will. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is his daily prayer. His whole heart goes out in repentance. To repair past follies—this is his special work. So earnest is he in his new life, so marked a change and so beneficent is there in his character, that his children feel the impression, and catch the blessed contagion. As formerly his influence over his family was most baneful, so now it becomes vernal sunshine, like the fragrance of sweetest flowers.

III. REPENTANCE SECURES THE REVERSAL OF THE CURSE. No sooner do men return to God than God returns to them. Only level the barrier which sin has set up, and reunion of man with God is restored. The return of favour shall be most complete. No matter how far the curse had taken effect; no matter how far the separation had proceeded; no matter to what extremity of woe the rebels have been driven;—from thence will Jehovah gather them,—reconciliation shall be thorough. Omnipotence will outpour itself in benedictions. Let the frost of winter be ever so severe, the summer sun shall melt it. He who created the universe out of nothing can reverse all the wheels of adversity; and, out of ruins, rebuild a glorious city. As sin is the only source of disorder and woe, so repentance is the extinction of the cause of woe. If God takes in hand to restore his people to peace, all opposition is vain. The thing is done.

IV. REPENTANCE LEADS TO ENTIRE RENEWAL OF A MAN'S NATURE. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed." Honest endeavours after a righteous life shows to us a corrupt heart—a heart prone to love evil. The man who begins to pray for pardon soon learns to pray for purity. Nothing will satisfy the mind (when divinely illumined) short of complete regeneration. The repentant Jew discovered that the circumcision of the flesh effected nothing to deter from sin; *now* he perceives that circumcision of heart is the only real safeguard. At a later day, this inward change was more clearly pictured: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." To the same effect Jesus promised: "If ye . . . keep my commandments, I will send you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, who dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

V. REPENTANCE IN MEN AWAKENS PUREST JOY IN GOD. "The Lord will again rejoice over thee for good." So Jesus himself affirmed: "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." For reasons which we cannot fathom, the well-being of man is a matter of the liveliest interest with God. Union of nature, and of interest between man and God is intimate. "His glory is great in our salvation." To bring all his purposes and enterprises to a successful issue—this is a source of loftiest joy to God. "He will rejoice over us with singing." The gladness of Jehovah at the completeness and beauty of creation was great; a hundredfold greater will be his joy at the final success of redemption. Messiah will "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be *satisfied*."—D.

Vers. 11—14.—*Revealed truth clear and available.* Dishonest minds are wont to plead that religious truth is recondite, self-contradictory, hard to be understood. Its

obligations too, they aver, are impracticable, beyond the power of man to fulfil. Self-indulgence and impiety have never yet failed to frame excuses for their rejection of the Divine Word. But excuses avail them nothing. The indolent man has for long ages past learnt to say, "There is a lion in the path." Honest investigation soon finds the truth of God "worthy of all acceptation."

I. OBSERVE THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD. It is a "commandment." It comes to men with all the character of a law. It is not possible that we should treat it as we please. We are not permitted to mutilate or dismember it—not permitted to accept a part and reject a part. As in a tree the living sap runs into every branch and twig and leaf, so that we cannot pluck the tiniest part without breaking the vital current; so every part of God's Scripture is instinct with high authority, nor can we neglect the least commandment without defying the majesty of heaven. We are bound to bow our wills to it; it will, in no degree, bend its requirements to suit our tastes.

II. THE PERSPICUITY OF GOD'S WORD. Its essential truths are within the compass of every mind. Every man knows what it is to love; that love is due from each man to his Maker. Every child knows what obedience means; *that* obedience is due to the Father of our spirits. Truly, some facts concerning the eternal world are so profound that, like ocean-depths, human reason cannot fathom them. But these are not the facts which lie at the foundation of man's safety and hope. The practical duties which appertain to virtue and well-being are so plain that even a child may understand. Whatever difficulty lies in the way of human obedience, it does not lie in the haze or uncertain meaning of the revelation. The difficulty is *within* a man, not without him. The objects of faith are clearly revealed; we want only an eye to discern them.

III. THE ACCOMMODATENESS OF GOD'S WORD. On the part of scriptural truth, there is an exquisite fitness to meet the capacity of men's minds and the needs of their souls. "The word is nigh thee; yea, in thy very heart." There is perfect accord between the constitution of the man and the contents of revelation. The Bible is the counterpart and complement of conscience. It is obvious that the Lord of conscience is Lord of Scripture also. The Bible says, "Thou hast sinned;" and conscience admits the fact. The Bible says, "Thou art helpless to save thyself;" and conscience knows it true. The Bible declares that happiness is inseparable from obedience; and conscience feels that it is so. There is a living witness in every man (until gagged by sin) which testifies to the authority and necessity and reasonableness of God's Law.

IV. THE PRACTICALNESS OF GOD'S WORD. "That thou mayest *do* it." Religious truth is not revealed to gratify a prurient curiosity, not to afford matter for speculation, but solely to promote obedience. To *know* God's requirements will bring us no advantage unless we heartily and loyally *do* them. Accurate and orthodox beliefs convey, in themselves, no life nor joy. Right belief is barren and abortive until it brings forth active obedience. We are not to be judged at God's tribunal for our opinions or theories, nor for our religious creeds; we are to be judged of "the *deeds* done in the body." "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat," will be the grounds of the judicial verdict. Practical service is the end and purpose of Divine revelation.—D.

Vers. 15—20.—*An alternative choice.* The prophet's power to persuade and influence a people is great—unspeakably great; yet it is not irresistible. It has its limits. After all that has been said to him, a man feels that the determination and choice rest within himself. Reason may be convinced; judgment may give a decided verdict; still inclination may inordinately lean to the weaker side, and baffle all prudent calculations. The intense eagerness of Moses for the people's weal is a sublime spectacle of generous devotement—an unparalleled instance of ardent patriotism. Calling up all his powers of persuasive and passionate appeal, he makes a final effort to win the tribes for God. We have here—

I. ALTERNATIVE LINES OF CONDUCT. All possible courses of life are reduced to two —*one* of which every man must take; a third course is excluded. The two are separately described. 1. The course of loyalty is described: (1) *By the man's state of heart.* "To love the Lord thy God." This determines all that follows—the root out of which all flowers and fruits of obedience spring. This love arises from a right appreciation of God. "He is thy life," yea, the life of thy life. Without him, life is a shadow—a dream—outside show. "In him we live." "Christ is our life"—the Source

of all strength and goodness and joy. This love arises from near relationship. He is *our* God; he has entered into loving covenant with us—joined for ever his interests with ours. (2) *By the man's habit of life.* He "walks in God's ways." In those ways he finds God. It is the King's highway. He has daily companionship with Jehovah. All his tastes and wishes are gratified. His will is sweetly acquiescent in God's will. He steadily makes advancement in the beauteous life. He does not halt; he walks. (3) *By his practical obedience.* "He keeps his commandments and his statutes." He keeps them in memory, and has regard to them in every step he takes. They are written upon the tablet of his heart; they shine out in lustrous characters in all his actions. He guards them fron the assaults of others. As the stone tablets of the Decalogue were preserved in the ark of the covenant, so in the more capacious ark of a good man's heart, the commandments of God are kept. 2. So, also, the course of disloyalty is portrayed: (1) *As a dislike of God.* "If thine heart turn away." Through ignorance, or prejudice, or pride, or sensual indulgence, men grow in dislike of God, until his very Name is odious—his presence a very hell. Repugnance to God is the livery they wear. (2) *As wanton deafness.* "So that thou wilt not hear." The ear is only an instrument; the effective power comes from a deeper source. We gradually bring ourselves into a condition in which we hear only what we wish to hear. The bulk of men have made themselves deaf to God's voice. (3) *As weak compliance to temptation.* Thou "shalt be drawn away." The habit of most men is to float with the stream. They yield thoughtlessly to the influence of public example. They do as others do, speak as others dictate. (4) *As ignoble service of idols.* "And worship other gods." Man must worship somewhat. It is a necessity of his being. He is not self-contained; nor can he be satisfied out of himself. He worships power, wealth, fashion, social fame, fate, the devil.

II. ALTERNATIVE EXPERIENCE. 1. The course of loyality secures: (1) *All real good.* The good is not always apparent—not always immediate. Yet even the experiences of pain and calamity prove ultimately to the obedient soul a real good. The storms of winter are as needful to the best life as the warm breath of spring. All that is wise, pure, excellent, elevating, noble, useful, is to be gained in the pathway of obedience. Every stage accomplished is a new instalment of good. (2) *It secures increase of numbers.* Rapid multiplication was, humanly speaking, Israel's security. By this means, they could outnumber their foes. Through our children, blessing and gladness come. So is it in spiritual things. We taste the highest joy when we become the channels of Christ's life to men. We long to have many genial companions in the road to heaven. (3) *It secures Divine blessing.* "The Lord thy God shall bless thee." External possessions contain no blessing in themselves. The richest lands—the fairest scenes on earth, are stripped of charm, so long as they are enveloped in absolute darkness. It is the light of God's favour that converts possession into blessing. Hence the *little* of the righteous is better than the abundance of the wicked. If God's blessing be on our estates, *that* makes them secure. *That* blessing is the core and marrow of true prosperity. That blessing alone gives fragrance and gladness to life. This blessing is secured by the oath of God. 2. But the course of disloyalty is marked by the opposite experience. (1) *It is an experience of evil.* The table may groan under the profusion of dainty food, but there is a scarcity of food for the soul. The body may be pampered, but there is leanness in the spirit. Riches may increase, but they daily corrupt the mind. There may be noisy laughter, but it only covers inner sadness and hidden grief. No sorrow is sanctified. The real man is starved and ruined. (2) *There is distressing insecurity.* We are rich to-day; we may be paupers to-morrow. "Ye shall not prolong your days in the land." Apart from God's favour, we have not a day's lease of life—not the certainty that any possession of ours shall continue. We dwell on the verge of a volcano. The earth quivers under our feet. (3) *There is a sense of the Divine curse.* A life of disloyalty is a life of constant warfare with God—a conflict with Omnipotence. Every plan which impious men make is a plan to elude and defeat God. And they know they cannot permanently succeed. There is a dark pall overhanging every prospect—a night of gloom closing in their little day. The curse of a good man is an awful calamity: what must God's curse include?

III. ALTERNATIVE DESTINY. 1. *The destiny of the good man is life.* This means life in its fullest measure, in its highest form, in its perpetual developments. Gradually

all the elements of weakness and pain and decay shall be eliminated. Compared with the future life of the righteous, the present life is but childhood—the feebleness and ignorance of infancy. The life which is promised to the righteous is nothing less than the life of God. "We shall be like him." 2. *The destiny of disloyalty is destruction.* "Ye shall surely perish." This includes disappointment—the sudden collapse of all earthly hopes. It embraces shame and public reproach. The disloyal will be the laughing-stock of the universe. They shall be covered with confusion. This dark destiny includes poignant remorse. The unrighteous will know, to their deepest grief, that they might have been saved if they would. Such despair baffles all description.

IV. INSTANT CHOICE DEMANDED. We cannot do other than admire the condescension of God in pleading so pathetically with men. 1. *There is full instruction.* "I have set before thee life and death." Every element of needed information is furnished; and personal examination of spiritual facts is expected. Every man is bound to investigate, to ponder, to judge. 2. *There is authoritative command.* "I command thee." On the side of righteous precept there is supreme authority. Every appeal of God is an appeal to the noblest part of our nature—to conscience. Every solicitation of the tempter is an appeal to appetite and passion. 3. *There is tender entreaty.* To the activities of wisdom and authority is added the impulse of love. If man's benevolent love prompt him to use all measures to turn the disloyal unto God; how much deeper must be the love of God, of which man's affection is but a faint adumbration! With all the pathos which human sympathy can lend to entreaty Moses pleads, "therefore choose life." 4. *Heaven and earth are summoned to hear the solemn charge.* Angels note the fidelity of God's prophets. All heaven is interested in man's obedience. The joy of heaven rises to new heights with every accession of loyal subjects. And all the inhabitants of earth are interested in our obedience, whether they feel that interest or not. The future history of this world is in our hands—is being moulded by our deeds. What we are to-day determines what the next generation will be. Each man who hears the heavenly summons makes decision straightway, if not in form, yet in reality. Each man is writing the epitaph for his tomb—preparing his verdict for the last assize! Can we not to-day forecast our final destiny?—D.

Vers. 1—10.— *The restoration of the Jews.* So certain is the apostacy and the judgment on the land, that Moses assumes it as an accomplished fact, thereupon proceeding to predict a restoration of the "scattered nation" in case of their repentance. There must be the penitent return to God, and then God will restore them and bless them abundantly. It was this principle which was carried out in the restoration from Babylon, and which will be carried out in any future restoration of Israel. We have here the *raison d'être* of Jewish missions.

I. THE PENITENCE OF ISRAEL IS THE PRELIMINARY TO THIS RESTORATION. Their captivity and dispersion having arisen from their forsaking God, it is only reasonable that their penitence should precede their restoration. Into the question of the re-establishment of the Jews in Palestine we need not here enter. Dr. Brown, who has written so well on *the second advent*, and shown conclusively, we think, that it will not be premillennial, has also advocated a restoration of Israel to their own land.[1] However this may be, of one thing we may be certain, that the *spiritual* restoration of Israel will precede any *local* restoration. They will be restored to *God* before being restored—if restored they are to be—to Palestine.

II. TO THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE JEWS CHRISTIAN CHURCHES SHOULD INTELLIGENTLY DEVOTE THEMSELVES. The winning of them by and to the gospel is the most important service we can render them. No movement of the political chess-board is half so important as the winning of them back to God. When, moreover, the local restoration is problematical, while the spiritual restoration is the indispensable preliminary to any further good fortune,—the duty of Christians is most clear. The gospel of Jesus must be adapted to the peculiar circumstances of Israel, and pressed upon their attention with all the sweet persuasiveness Christian grace ensures.

III. JEWISH MISSIONS ARE THE TRUE COMPENSATION FOR THE PERSECUTION OF THE

[1] 'The Restoration of the Jews: the History, Principles, and Bearings of the Question, by Dr. David Brown. Edinburgh: 1861.

JEWS, TO WHICH, ALAS! THEY ARE STILL IN SOME QUARTERS SUBJECTED. For it must be remembered that the persecution of Israel, though allowed as a just retribution for their rejection of God, may be prosecuted in such an unholy spirit as to entail upon the persecutors the merited curse of God. Because there may be Shylocks among the Jews is no reason why men should wreak their vengeance on them. Indeed, the Lord threatens to put the curses upon their persecutors, when *they* have turned unto him.

If this be so, then it is the duty of Christian people to repudiate all persecution of the Jews as such, and to organize such mission work as may bring the truth and claims of God before the mind and heart of his ancient people. This will prove the true compensation to them. It will solace them under suffering and trial, and enable them to forget in the joys of a new life the pains and judgments of the old. Besides, the mission work undertaken by God's people may avert the judgments of Almighty God deserved by the nations that have persecuted the Jews. It is a matter of great thankfulness that England and America have an open door for Israel, and no sympathy with their present oppressors.

IV. THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL IS TO EXCEED IN GLORY THE PAST. This seems clear from this passage. The Jewish development is to exceed all past developments. They are to have a mighty population, great wealth, and God is to rejoice over them for good again. We do not regard a national organization as essential to influence. Christianity is now, for example, the mightiest factor in human society, and yet it is not organized *nationally*. Should the Jews by their rare linguistic powers, by their patient courage, by their singleness of aim, become when converted to Christianity the predominant missionary factor in the world, then we can see in such a restoration a more powerful and blessed influence than if they furnished to the world a new line of famous kings. It is not dynasties, but the devotion of the people, which goes to make a people mighty. The kingdoms over which men rule may not be defined in statute-book or in treaties. There are kingships exercised by humble, devoted, cross-bearing men, which explain the kingship of the crucified Nazarene. It is to this spiritual domination that we trust Israel shall yet come.

And this shall prove its glory. For glory consists not in the employment of physical and mechanical force, but in the exercise of self-denial and devotedness of spirit. As Carlyle has said in 'Sartor Resartus,' "The first preliminary moral act, annihilation of self (*Selbst-tödtung*), had been happily accomplished; and my mind's eyes were now unsealed and its hands ungyved." It is they who have realized this who are on the path of real glory. From their money-lending and money-grubbing the Jews, by Christianity, shall yet be delivered, to devote themselves in a more excellent way to the interests of mankind.—R. M. E.

Vers. 11—14.—*The revelation at man's door.* We have a very beautiful thought inserted by Moses regarding the proximity and handiness—if we may be allowed the thought—of God's commandments. It is used by Paul in the same connection, and so adapted to the gospel as to show its practical tenor (Rom. x. 6—9). And here we would observe—

I. EXTRAVAGANT NOTIONS ARE ENTERTAINED OF WHAT A DIVINE REVELATION OUGHT TO BE. It is thought that it should be some far-away affair, to which none but seraphic spirits could soar; as high as heaven, and requiring vast powers and efforts to reach. Or it is thought to be as recondite as matters lying in the deep-sea bed, demanding such diving apparatus as practically to put it out of reach of ordinary mortals. This is the favourite notion of the self-confident critics, that a Divine revelation must be something attainable only by scholars, appreciable only by the geniuses of mankind.

II. BUT AS A MATTER OF FACT, GOD'S REVELATION COMES DOWN TO EVERY MAN'S DOOR. God came down to Mount Sinai, and spoke to the people directly. The trouble then was that he was too near—too homely; they wished him further away. Then prophets came, and for fifteen hundred years the word was brought very nigh to men. At last God's Son became incarnate, and was each man's Brother, and brought the message so close to men that only the proud escaped it. The whole genius of revelation is contained in the remarkable words, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them

unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. xi. 25, 26). The revelation is for babes; for men of a childlike—not a childish—spirit; for men who have laid aside their pride and presumption, and can take truth trustfully from the Infinite Father.

The idea is surely monstrous that God cannot break his Divine bread small enough for his human children; that none but men of a certain mental calibre can get hold of the food or digest it. It is surely a diviner plan to bring the truth so plainly home that none have any excuse for rejecting it.

III. LET EACH OF US GIVE UP OUR GRAND EXCURSIONS BOTH SKYWARD AND SEAWARD, AND RECEIVE GOD'S MESSAGE BROUGHT NEAR US BY HIS SON. Pride is for ever leading men upon some aerial or aquatic adventure, searching the heights of heaven on the wing of fancy or of speculation, or exploring the deepest depths, professedly to find truth and God. Philosophy is invoked, and everything brought to the test of it. Now, all this must be sacrificed before we receive the truth. We must humble ourselves, and recognize the truth brought in Jesus Christ to our very door. If we required terrific effort to reach the truth, we would boast that we had succeeded through that effort. If it depended on great mental powers and struggle, we would take credit for both. But the fact is, it is brought so near to each of us, and so plainly home, that not one of us can boast of our discovery, but only chide ourselves that it was so long near us and so long overlooked!

IV. IT IS HERE THAT WE MUST BEGIN WITH THE JEWS. As a rule, they are so puffed up with pride and self-importance, that the gospel is overlooked in its glorious proximity and adaptation. They think they are such linguists and such thinkers that none can instruct them, and the result is that the simplicity of the gospel escapes their notice altogether. The grandeur of what is simple and comprehensible by all who are not too proud to consider it must be urged with earnestness. The apologetic now needed is, not what follows speculation to its utmost height or utmost depth, and boasts itself of learning as great as the objector has; but what takes its firm stand upon the *simplicity* of revelation as the supreme proof that it is Divine. It seems to us that some of the apologetic to which we are now treated is as pedantic as those it desires to convince, and, in a contest of mere pedantry, it is sure to be defeated. Rather should we assure men that it is pedantry and pride which keeps them from discovering the wondrous revelation that lies so near us. Let Gentile and Jew give up the weary wandering, the "will-o'-the-wisp" work of pride, and recognize the God who is knocking at each man's door.—R. M. E.

Vers. 15—20.—*Death and life set before the people.* In this earnest word which concludes a section of his address to the people, Moses is summing up his deliverance. It has been called by Hävernick "the classic passage" upon the subject of death and life as understood in Old Testament times.[1] "Shut out from the true community of life (*Lebensgemeinschaft*)," says Hävernick, "the sinner puts in only a pretended life (*Scheinleben*), without God, enduring and promoting ruin in himself, until death physical, with its terrors, overtakes him. The Divine penalty manifests itself to the sinner as death." Let us consider what is here suggested. And—

I. GOD IS THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE. He was before all things; in him they live and move and have their being; by him all things consist. Life physical is from him; but so also, and in a much fuller fashion, is life spiritual. The inner man is from him, and depends upon him for sustenance. And when his only begotten Son came into the world, he gave him to have life in himself (John v. 26), so that of him it could alone be said, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John i. 4). We recognize in God, therefore, "the Fountain of living waters," from which, to their own great damage, men are separating themselves, as if the broken cisterns of their own hewing could ever slake their thirst (Jer. ii. 13).

II. LOVE ATTACHES US TO THIS SPIRITUAL FOUNTAIN. As we love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, we find that we have begun to live. On the other hand, the loveless life is only a pretended life, and carries within itself the "Anathema Maran-atha" (cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 22). Love places our heart at a level with

[1] Cf. Kahle's 'Biblische Eschatologie,' note p. 29.

God's, and the riches of his life flow into us. As Emerson, writing of *gifts*, says, "The gift, to be true, must be the flowing of the giver unto me, correspondent to my flowing unto him. When the waters are at a level, then my goods pass to him and his to me. All his are mine, all mine his." It is exactly in this magnanimous spirit God deals with those who love him. All his life and fulness flow down to us; we cannot, of course, take all in—our measure is a small one, but we are filled up to our capacity with all the fulness of God (Eph. iii. 18).

III. LOVE GIVES BIRTH TO NEW OBEDIENCE. If we love God, we shall keep his commandments (John xiv. 15). In the eye of love, his commandments are not grievous (1 John v. 3). Our meat is found in doing the will of him that sends us, and in finishing his work (John iv. 34). We say with the Master, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy Law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 8). And so, in the terms of the passage before us, we walk in God's ways, and keep his commandments and statutes and judgments.

Now, this obedience strengthens the spiritual life. Just as exercise invigorates the body, so work of a spiritual kind invigorates the soul. We not only find rest in coming to Jesus, but refreshment in taking on us his yoke and his burden (Matt. xi. 28—30).

IV. SUCH A LIFE OF ATTACHMENT AND OBEDIENCE UNTO GOD TENDS TO PERPETUATE OUR POWER AND EXISTENCE. Other things being equal, a religious life tends to perpetuate physical power. The calm which pervades the faculties, the wholesome exercise which devotedness to God administers, the deliverance from fear which religion bestows in face of all possible vicissitude and change,—all this favours health and longevity. Of course, Christianity does not need now such outward testimonies as these. Many saints are sickly, and die young; but religion never made their sickness a whit more serious, nor shortened their career by a single day. They would have been less easy in their sickness, and it would have cut their thread of life more quickly, had they been strangers to its solaces and joys.

V. SEPARATION FROM THE SOURCE OF LIFE IS DEATH INDEED. In this striking passage, while "good" and "life" go together, so do "death" and "evil." The idea in death is not cessation of existence, but separation from God. Adam and Eve died the day they doubted God's love and ate the fruit. They ceased not to exist that day, but died out of fellowship with God. Hence we are not to associate an *annihilation* view with the Biblical idea of death. Men die when they are separated from God as really as the branch broken from the stem. Sin is the mother of Death (Jas. i. 15). It brings it forth, because it separates the soul from him who is the Fountain of life.

The Jews found in their national experience how deadly a thing it is to disobey their God and to depart from him. Nor shall their calamities cease till they return to him. Meanwhile, may we see to it that we cleave trustfully and lovingly to God, and have increasing life in his favour!—R. M. E.

PART IV.

FAREWELL ADDRESS OF MOSES, WITH HIS PARTING SONG AND BENEDICTION.

CHAPTER XXXI.—CHAPTER XXXIII.

EXPOSITION.

Moses had now finished his work as the legislator and ruler and leader of Israel. But ere he finally retired from his place, he had to take order for the carrying forward of the work by the nomination of a successor to himself in the leadership; by committing the keeping of the Law to the priests; and by anew admonishing the people to obedience, encouraging them to go forward to the conquest of Canaan, animating them with the assurance of the Divine favour and blessing, and pronouncing on them his parting benediction.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MOSES' FINAL ARRANGEMENTS AND HANDING OVER OF THE LAW TO THE PRIESTS.

Vers. 1—13.—*Last acts of Moses.*

Ver. 1.—**And Moses went**; *i.e.* disposed or set himself. The meaning is not that he "went away" into the tent of teaching, as one of the Targums explains it (London Polyglot, tom. iv. p. 377), which does not agree with what follows; nor is "went" merely equivalent to "moreover;" nor is it simply redundant;—it intimates that the speaking was consequent on Moses having arranged, disposed, or set himself to speak (cf. Exod. ii. 1; Josh. ix. 4; Job i. 4).

Ver. 2.—**I am an hundred and twenty years old this day.** When Moses stood before Pharaoh he was eighty years old (Exod. vii. 7); since then forty years had elapsed during the wanderings in the wilderness. **I can no more go out and come in**; I am no longer able to work among and for the nation as I have hitherto done (cf. Numb. xxvii. 17). This does not conflict with the statement in ch. xxxiv. 7, that up to the time of his death his eyes were not dim nor his natural strength abated, for this is the statement of an observer, and it often happens that an individual feels himself to be failing, when to those around him he appears to possess unabated vigour. There is no need, therefore, for resorting, with Raschi and others, to the expedient of reading "for" instead of "and" in the following clause; as if the cause why Moses could no longer go in and out among the the people was God's prohibition of his going over Jordan. This is simply another and collateral reason why he had now to retire from his post as leader.

Vers. 3—6.—But though Moses was no longer to be their leader, he assures them that the Lord would fulfil his engagement to conduct them to the possession of Canaan, even as he had already given them the territory of the kings of the Amorites; and he therefore exhorts them to be of good courage and fearlessly go forward to the conquest of the land (cf. ch. i. 21; x. 3).

Vers. 7, 8.—Moses, having in view the appointment of Joshua as his successor, also encourages him to go forward on the strength of the Divine promise. **Thou must go with this people.** This is a correct rendering of the words as they stand in the Hebrew text. The Samaritan, Syriac, and Vulgate have, "Thou shalt bring this people;" but this is probably an arbitrary correction in order to assimilate this to ver. 23. **And thou shalt cause them to inherit it**; *i.e.* shalt conduct them to the full possession of the land.

Vers. 9—13.—Moses turns next to the priests and the elders, and to them he commits the Law which he had written, with the injunction to read it to the people at the end of every seven years during the festival of the year of release, viz. at the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. xxiii. 34), when they appeared before the Lord. **At the end of every seven years** (cf. ch. xv. 1). The Law was committed to the priests and elders, not merely to preserve it in safe keeping, but that they might see to its being observed by the people; else why commit it to the elders whose it was to administer rule in the nation, as well as to the priests who alone had access to the ark of the covenant where the Law was deposited? Moses "entrusted the reading to the priesthood and the college of elders, as

the spiritual and secular rulers of the congregation; and hence the singular, Thou shalt read this Law to all Israel" (Keil). By the Law here is meant the Pentateuch; but it does not necessarily follow that the *whole* of the Pentateuch was to be thus read. As the reading was to be only once in seven years, it may be concluded that it was not so much for the information of the people that this was done, as for the purpose of publicly declaring, and by a solemn ceremony impressing on their minds the condition on which they held their position and privileges as the chosen people of the Lord; and for this the reading of select portions of the Torah would be sufficient. The Feast of Tabernacles was appointed as the season for the reading, doubtless because there was a connection between the end for which the Law was read and the spirit and meaning of that festival as a festival of rejoicing because of their deliverance from the uncertainty and unsettledness of their state in the wilderness, and their establishment in a well-ordered state where they could in peace and quietness enjoy the blessings which the bounty of God bestowed. **When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord** (cf. ch. xvi. 16). **Thou shalt read this law** (cf. Josh. viii. 34; 2 Kings xxiii. 2; Neh. viii. 1, etc.).

Vers. 14—23.—After nominating Joshua as his successor, and assigning the keeping of the Law to the priesthood and body of elders, Moses was summoned by the Lord to appear with Joshua in the tabernacle, that Joshua might receive a charge and appointment to his office. At the same time, God announced to Moses that after his death the people would go astray, and turn to idolatry, and violate the covenant, so that God's anger should be kindled against them, and he would leave them to suffer the consequences of their folly and sin. In view of this, Moses was directed to write a song and teach it to the people, that it might abide with them as a witness against them, rising up, as songs will do, in the memory of the nation, even after they had apostatized from the path in which the author of the song had led them.

Ver. 14.—**The tabernacle of the congregation**; properly, *the tent of meeting* (cf. Exod. xxxiii. 7; xxxix. 32). **May give him a charge**; may constitute him (צו; cf. Numb. xxvii. 19; "and constitute him in their sight," Gesenius), appoint and confirm him in this office.

Ver. 15.—**The Lord appeared . . . in a pillar of a cloud** (cf. Exod. xxxiii. 9; xl. 38; Lev. xvi. 2; Numb. xii. 5).

Ver. 16.—**Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers** (cf. 2 Sam. vii. 12; Ps. xiii. 3; lxxvi. 5; Dan. xii. 2; Matt. xxvii. 52; John xi. 11; 1 Thess. iv. 14). "The death of men, both good and bad, is often called a *sleep*, because they shall certainly awake out of it by resurrection" (Poole). **Go a whoring** (cf. Exod. xxxiv. 15; Judg. ii. 17) **after the gods of the strangers of the land**; literally, *after gods of strangeness of the land*; i.e. after gods foreign to the land, as opposed to Jehovah, the alone proper God of the land he had given to them.

Ver. 17.—**I will hide my face from them**; will not look on them with complacency, will withdraw from them my favour and help (cf. ch. xxxii. 20; Isa. viii. 17; lxiv. 7; Ezek. xxxix. 23).

Ver. 19.—**Write ye this song.** This refers to the song which follows in next chapter. Moses and Joshua were both to write this song, Moses probably as the author, Joshua as his amanuensis, because both of them were to do their endeavour to keep the people from that apostacy which God had foretold.

Ver. 23.—**And he gave**, etc. The subject here is God, not Moses, as is evident partly from ver. 14, and partly from the expression, **the land which I sware unto them; and I will be with thee** (cf. Exod. iii. 12).

Vers. 24—29.—After the installation of Joshua, only one thing remained for Moses to do that all things might be set in order before his departure. This was the finishing of the writing of the Book of the Law, and the committing it finally to the priests, to be by them placed by the ark of the covenant, that it might be kept for all future generations as a witness against the people, whose apostacy and rebellion were foreseen.

Whether this section is to be regarded as wholly written by Moses himself, or as an appendix to his writing added by some other writer, has been made matter of question. It is quite possible, however, that Moses himself, ere he laid down the pen, may have recorded what he said when delivering the Book of the Law to the priests, and there is nothing in the manner or style of the record to render it probable that it was added by another. What follows from ver. 30 to the end of the book was probably added to the writing of Moses by some one after his death, though, of course, both the song in ch. xxxii. and

the blessing in ch. xxxiii. are the composition of Moses (see Introduction, § 6).

Ver. 25.—**The Levites, which bare the ark**; *i.e.* the priests whose business it was to guard and to carry the ark of the covenant; "the priests the sons of Levi," as in ver. 9. According to Numb. iv. 4, etc., it was the Kohathites who carried the ark on the journey through the desert; but they seem merely to have acted in this respect as the servants or helpers of the priests, who alone might touch the ark, and by whom it was carefully wrapped up before it was handed to the Kohathites. On special occasions the priests themselves carried the ark (cf. Josh. iii. 3, etc.; iv. 9, 10; vi. 6, 12; viii. 33; 1 Kings viii. 3).

Ver. 26.—**In the side of the ark**; *at or by the side of the ark.* According to the Targum of Jonathan, it was in a coffer by the right side of the ark that the book was placed; but the Talmudists say it was put within the ark, along with the two tables of the Decalogue ('Baba Bathra,' 14); but see 1 Kings viii. 8.

Ver. 27.—**I know thy rebellion**; rather, *rebelliousness*, i.e. tendency to rebel. In Numb. xvii. 25 [10], the people are described as בְּנֵי מֹרִי, "sons of rebelliousness;" Authorized Version, "rebels."

Ver. 28.—**Call heaven and earth to record against them** (cf. ch. xxxii. 1). **These words**; the words of his charge, and especially the song he had composed, and which it would be the business of these officers to teach to the congregation.

Ver. 29.—**Ye will utterly corrupt yourselves**; literally, *corrupting, ye will corrupt* (הַשְׁחֵת תַּשְׁחִתוּן, *sc.* דַּרְכֵיכֶם); i.e. *your ways* (cf. for the phrase, Gen. vi. 12). **The latter days**; *the after-time, the future*, as in ch. iv. 30; Numb. xxiv. 14, etc. **The work of your hands**; the idols they might make (cf. ch. iv 28). By some, however, the phrase is interpreted of evil deeds in general.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*A new generation receiving the heritage of the past.* The closing scene of Moses' life is drawing nigh. The time is at hand when he and Israel must part, and the leadership must be undertaken by another. As far as can be done, two things have to be ensured—viz. the conservation of Israel's Law, and the conduct of the people to their goal. "God buries his ministers, but he carries on his work." Hence Moses first addresses all the people; then he turns to Joshua, confirming him as the future leader (vers. 7, 8); and finally to the priests, who are to be henceforth the custodians and guardians of the holy Law. Having thus handed over the leadership of an army, and the conservation of a faith, Moses has little else to do but to go up and die. Hence our theme—*A new generation entrusted with the heritage of the past.* Taking up this as a Christian preacher may be supposed to do, we find that seven consecutive lines of thought are suggested.

I. There has been given, prior to our time, a "precious faith," which has been handed down to the present day (vers. 12, 13).

II. Those who have been the leaders and warriors in God's Israel in past days have commended this faith to us, with all the earnestness created by their deep and strong convictions, which, in the hard school of experience and trial, were formed, fostered, and verified (vers. 3, 4).

III. The work thus entrusted to the men of the present is analogous to that which was required of the ancient people of God: (1) to clear the ground of alien faiths; (2) to occupy the ground so cleared; and (3) to maintain thereon pure worship, brotherly fellowship, and holy life.

IV. In the fulfilment of this work we shall enjoy the Divine presence (ver. 6).

V. God's providence will also go before us to clear the way (ver. 8).

VI. Consequently, it behoves us to go forward, to "be strong and fear not" (ver. 6); for—

VII. Where the responsibilities of the men of the past leave off, our responsibility begins.

Vers. 9—13.—*Importance of knowing the Word of God.* In resigning his commission into other hands, Moses had a double duty to discharge. There had been, in fact, a twofold responsibility resting on him more or less till the close of his life, which after his death would be divided. He was not only the leader of the people, but also

the receiver, transcriber, and guardian of the Law. As the nation became consolidated, this double work would certainly become too heavy for one man to discharge. Hence he commissions one man to be the leader of an army, and another set of men to be the conservators of the truth. Joshua is leader. The priests are to be the keepers and teachers of the Law. It is one remarkable feature of the constitution of the Hebrew commonwealth, that such stress is laid upon popular education. This was again and again made matter of Divine precept. And about this there were two main regulations: one, that it was to begin at home; another, that it was to have as its one golden thread running through all, that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom. Over and above, however, the home teaching from childhood, there was to be at stated times a public reading and enforcement of the Law. At this public reading, the people were to be gathered together. "Young men and maidens, old men and children;" the stranger that was within their gates was not to be forgotten. All, *all* were to hear the Word of God, that they might learn, fear, love, and obey.

It is to secure this most desirable end that Moses, having written the Law, delivers it to the priests, the sons of Levi, and gives them the charge of which the paragraph before us is the sum. Our theme is—*The value of the Word of God as an educating power in home and nation.* The points to be noted in the words of Moses here given, are these: 1. That both young and old were to have ever before them the truth that their life was for God, was to be permeated by Divine influence, and regulated by the Divine will. 2. That the will of God, so revealed as to be the true and sufficient regulator of life, was to be found in the Book of the Law. 3. That all classes of the people, home-born and alien, freemen and slaves, were to be taught what was the Divine will concerning them. 4. That the object of the teaching was that they might grow up with an intelligent apprehension of the deep meaning of life. 5. That intelligence was intended and expected to blossom into piety. Men were to "fear" the Lord their God, and to "observe to do all the words of this Law."

Our purpose in this Homily is to inquire, How far does all this hold good at the present day? When Moses wrote the Law, it served, as it did for ages after, as the people's literature. It would take a like place with the people that our histories of England do now, and would, moreover, serve them as the story-book for children, and the statute-book for all. And there was a time when to large masses of our people the Bible constituted the chief literary treasure of the home. And ere the people could read, the exposition and enforcement of its truths from the pulpit formed the staple of their education. But things are changed now. The increase of literary material in every direction is amazing. The vastly wider field of natural knowledge takes so much time and energy for its exploration, that the Bible is in danger of being "crowded out." And what may be called in an intelligible sense the literary rivals of the Bible are "legion." We propose to suggest a few lines of thought which the Christian preacher may work out, with the view of showing that an intelligent acquaintance with the Word of God is, if possible, more important now than ever it was. Many reasons may be urged for this.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE VARIOUS ASPECTS IN WHICH THE BIBLE MAY BE REGARDED. We need scarcely observe (save for the sake of completeness of setting) that our Bible is much larger than Israel's was, and that therefore by so much as this is the case there is much more to be affirmed of it now than could be of the old Book of the Law. 1. In the Bible we have a trustworthy history of Judaism and Christianity, in their origin and meaning. Of the first we have an outline during the main periods of its constitutional history; of the second, during the first generation after its planting. And so important are these features of history, that apart from them the history of the world cannot be understood. 2. We have the noblest ethical standard in the world. The moral law cannot, even in conception, be surpassed. 3. We have a revelation of a great redeeming plan steadily unfolded from Genesis to Revelation. 4. We have a disclosure of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. 5. We have the manifestation of power from heaven to begin a new creation of grace. 6. We have a body of doctrine for the life that now is. 7. We have glorious glimpses of the life which is to come. In all these respects the Book is unique. It has no compeer in any literature in the world!

II. AS THE CONTENTS OF THE BIBLE ARE UNIQUE, SO ALSO IS ITS OBJECT DEFINITE.

(See Ps. xix.; cxix.; John xxi. 31, *et al.*) That object is the regulation of life on earth, and the preparation of it for heaven. And the Book seeks to secure this by enforcement of duty, revelations of truth, disclosures of love, and offers of power.

III. NO AMOUNT OF NATURAL LEARNING CAN EVER COMPENSATE FOR DEFICIENCY OF KNOWLEDGE OR FAILURE IN PRACTICE CONCERNING MAN'S DUTY TO HIMSELF, HIS FAMILY, HIS NEIGHBOUR, AND HIS GOD. If he fails here, he fails everywhere. The more splendidly a vessel is fitted up, the more costly the wreck if she dashes on the rocks. To teach natural knowledge and leave out religion, is to furnish the vessel but to fail to make any provision for steering it aright.

IV. NATURAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE HANDS OF OTHER THAN VIRTUOUS MEN MAY BECOME AN INSTRUMENT OF ENORMOUS MISCHIEF. The attempt to blow up the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg is an illustration of what science and skill may do in bad hands. The disclosures after the destruction of the Tay Bridge showed us how science, art, and skill may do their best, and yet the greatest efforts of great men may be blown away in an hour by a single blast, through the weak points which unconscientious work had left, in the hope of being undetected.

V. THE GREATER THE STRENGTH THAT IS PUT FORTH IN ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE, THE GREATER THE ENERGY DEMANDED IN ORDER TO USE SUCH KNOWLEDGE WELL. The larger the vessel, the more power is required to propel her. So the wider the culture, the stronger does moral principle need to be in order that natural knowledge may be not a veil to conceal, but a book to reveal the Divine.

VI. HENCE THE CONCLUSION FOLLOWS: So far from the accumulating mass of natural knowledge making the Word of God less necessary as a guide to living well and dying well, the fact is, that *the necessity of Bible study is greater than ever!* No book can take its place. No study can supersede that of the ways of God to man. Some of the wisest men of the age (so far as science goes) confess themselves hopelessly in the dark with regard to man's origin, nature, and destiny. Ah! in the Book of God, and in that alone, can man learn that which shall make him wise unto salvation. Here alone can we learn the mystery of God's will which was hidden from ages and generations, but now is made manifest. Here alone can he be taught that godliness which hath "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Vers. 16—21.—*Faithful words silent accusers of those who heed them not.* In the several paragraphs of this chapter we find that Moses was borne along by the Holy Ghost to take a glance into the future. He had been instructed by God to give a charge to Joshua, and to surrender into his hands the leadership of the host. He had given to the priests their commission to guard the Law for the people. And now there remained but for him to give his final words to the people themselves. The Omniscient One foresaw that, after the death of their leader, they would become corrupt, forsaking the Lord, and ensuring for themselves and their children a heritage of woe. And hence it was mercifully provided that, even in the worst of times, their lawgiver's words should be for them a perpetual standard of appeal; so that, however the people might have fallen from the heights of virtue, they should still have the same trusty words to guide their path, and to direct and restore their life. While at the same time, these words would be a constant and silent witness against them for departing from the ways of the Lord. It is not at all unlikely that our Lord had this passage in mind when he said to the Jews, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust." That very Book, which if rightly used is "a lamp" to the feet and "a light" to the path, becomes, if neglected, a perpetual and silent accuser. Very earnestly and solemnly may the Christian preacher press this home "to every man's conscience in the sight of God." That selfsame purpose which was answered by securing permanent records of the Mosaic legislation, is also answered by permanent records of the Christian redemption. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament, like the legislator of the old, spake and wrote as they were borne along by the Holy Ghost. It is, therefore, over the larger sphere that we propose now to illustrate and enforce the truth that *neglected teaching becomes a silent accuser.*

I. WHEN OUR GOD LODGED IN THE WORLD THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN FAITHS, HE LOOKED ONWARD AND FORESAW THE FEATURES OF THE COMING GENERATIONS. (Cf. vers. 16—18; see also Acts xx. 29, 30; 1 Tim. iv. 1—3; 2 Pet. iii. 3; Matt. xxiv. 24.)

Whatever developments of ungodliness or of unbelief, of immorality or of heresy, may develop themselves, are all known to him who seeth the end from the beginning.

II. WITH FUTURE EVIL FULL IN VIEW, GOD HAS HAD HIS OWN WORD PUT DOWN IN WRITING. The words of Moses, of the prophets, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his apostles are faithfully recorded. They have suffered no material change through all the accidents of transition (Phil. iii. 1). Paul felt what a safeguard it would be for after ages to have his words written down, and sent to the Churches, that they might be by them guarded, distributed, and taught (see ver. 19).

III. THE WORD OF GOD, SO RECORDED, IS A PERPETUAL STANDARD OF APPEAL FOR EVERY AGE. Whatever corruptions may enter into or fasten on the Churches; however oral tradition may change the original form of Divine communication,—the *written* Word changeth not. How very soon Churches as Churches may drift far away from the true in faith and the holy in life, the Epistles to the Churches in Galatia, Corinth, Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Laodicea, tell. We see by them how very soon our faith might be seriously obscured or impaired if dependent merely on the oral transmission of any Church.

IV. BY THE PURE WORD OF GOD, ABERRATIONS MAY FROM TIME TO TIME BE CORRECTED. It is by the Church that the Word of God is kept and transmitted. It is by the Word so kept and transmitted that the Church is to be tested. Hence, whatever respect it may be appropriate to pay to the decision of a Church or of Churches, those decisions are valid only as they harmonize with what the Lord hath spoken in his revealed Word. Whatever will not abide the test of an appeal to the Book of God, with it Christian Churches and people should have nothing to do. Of how much importance our Lord regarded this final test is seen by his frequent appeal to what is written. Whether he was in conflict with the evil one, or was himself exposing or denouncing evil, his ultimate reference was to what God had said.

V. CONSEQUENTLY, BY HAVING IN OUR HANDS A PERPETUAL STANDARD OF REFERENCE, WE HAVE A CONSTANT AND UNVARYING GUIDE TO WHAT IS RIGHT BOTH IN FAITH AND PRACTICE. The accounts which we get of the after history of the Hebrew nation show us plainly enough how far adrift the people might soon have gone, if their faith had not been once for all enshrined and guarded in a book. And so it is in the New Testament. For though we get therein hints of the Church's life for but little more than two generations after they were formed, yet the severe lashings and rebukes which the Churches in Corinth, Galatia, and Colosse required, as well as the seven Churches, show with equal distinctness that our most holy faith might soon have been all but unrecoverable from the mass of corruption, if it, too, had not been recorded in the writings of the apostles and evangelists. But thus recorded it was, and through all the ages it has been guarded for us as a perpetual standard of appeal.

VI. IF, HOWEVER, WE ARE GUIDED BY THE VARYING OPINIONS AND SINFUL PRACTICES OF MEN, AND SO NEGLECT TO TAKE HEED TO OUR STANDARDS, THEY WILL BE PERPETUAL WITNESSES AGAINST US. (Ver. 21.) So our Lord tells the Jews in reference to the departures from the faith and the corruptions in life which marked his time (cf. John v. 54). And thus it must ever be. The very fact of having a standard of appeal serves two purposes. Which of the two it will serve so far as we are concerned depends on the use we make thereof. If we abide by it and conform thereto, it will verify our belief and justify our life. But if we depart from it, it can only act as a witness against us to condemn us. *Every privilege is thus two-edged.* If used aright, it helps us; if disused or abused, it will be for a perpetual reproof. So it is with parental advice, with a teacher's counsels, with a pastor's pleadings, with a Saviour's invitations: accepted and heeded, they will be a perpetual joy; but if made light of, they will plunge daggers into the soul.

VII. THIS SILENT ACCUSATION GOING ON NOW, FORESHADOWS A MORE SERIOUS CRIMINATION AT THE JUDGMENT DAY. (Cf. Matt. xi. 22, 24; xii. 41, 42.) The whirl of life, and the surroundings of flesh and sense, conceal from many the spiritual world. *But it exists.* And when we are summoned hence we shall see it and know it. We shall feel ourselves with God—alone. And this—this will be the beginning of that awful process of judgment which, on the last day, is to be consummated and sealed. And what sore condemnation must await those to whom God has spoken in his Word for years on years, but in vain (see Ezek. xxxiii.)!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Moses the aged.* I. A MAN MAY BE IN HEALTH AND VIGOUR, YET PAST CAPACITY FOR A CERTAIN WORK. Moses' "eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (ch. xxxiv. 7), yet he felt that he lacked the fire, the activity, the youthful energy, the elasticity of mind and body, which would have made him a suitable leader for Israel in the new period of her history. Greatness is tested by the magnanimity with which a man long used to power is able to lay it down when he feels that his day for effective service is past. Moses had served his generation nobly. There arose none like him. But, as has been said of Luther, who reached his meridian at the Diet of Worms, and whose end, had Providence pleased to remove him then, would have been like an apotheosis, "It is a law of history that every personality bears within itself a measure which it is not permitted to exceed" (Hagenbach). A new age was opening, and new powers were needed to do justice to its calls. The lawgiver, the prophet, the leader of the desert march, the meek, long-enduring, deep-souled man of God must give place to one more distinctively a soldier. The calm gifts of the legislator and statesman were not those which were most required for the work of conquest and settlement. Moses felt this, and felt, too, that he was getting old. The old man cannot enter as a younger man would into the thoughts, circumstances, and feelings of a new time. He belongs to the past, and is limited by it. His powers have lost their freshness, and can henceforth only decay. This was Moses' situation, and he had the dignity and wisdom to acknowledge it, and to arrange for the appointment of a suitable successor.

II. WHEN A MAN'S DAY OF SERVICE IS PAST, IT MAY BE KINDNESS IN GOD TO REMOVE HIM FROM THE WORLD. Moses' removal was a punishment for sin, but there was mercy concerned in it also. Long life is not always desirable. Had Moses lived longer, he could never have been greater than he is. He might have seemed less. Shades appear in the character of Luther after it had reached its meridian above spoken of—things which disturb and annoy us. Certainly, Moses' position, with Joshua as actual leader in the field, would not have been an enviable one. Joshua must increase, he must decrease. The impetuous soldier, the able strategist, the hero of the battles, would have eclipsed him in the eyes of the younger generation. He would feel that he had overlived himself. Fitly, therefore, is he removed before the decline of his influence begins. The great thing is to have done one's work—to have fulfilled the ends for which life was given. That done, removal is in no case a loss, and in most cases a boon in disguise (2 Tim. iv. 6—9).

III. WHEN THE SERVICES OF ONE MAN FAIL, GOD WILL PROVIDE FOR THE CONTINUANCE OF HIS WORK BY RAISING UP SUCCESSORS. So Joshua was raised up to succeed Moses.—J. O.

Vers. 3—8, 23.—*Joshua.* Joshua a type of Jesus, the true Leader into the rest of God (Heb. iv. 8). God has given him, as formerly he gave the son of Nun, for "a Leader and Commander to the people" (Isa. lv. 4).

I. THE MAN. Joshua as leader was: 1. Divinely *appointed* (ver. 3). 2. Divinely *led.* "He doth go before thee" (ver. 8). The captain had a higher Captain (Josh. v. 14). 3. Divinely *assisted.* "He will be with thee" (ver. 8). Our Leader is Emmanuel—"God with us" (Matt. i. 23). 4. He was to be *strong and courageous* (ver. 7). The ground of true courage is God being with us. It is said of the Saviour, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (Isa. xlii. 4). The perseverance of the Saviour is as deserving of consideration as the perseverance of the saints.

II. HIS WORK. While Joshua's and the people's, it was still more God's work (vers. 3, 4). With Joshua as leader: 1. The enemy would be overthrown (vers. 3—6). 2. All opposition would be overcome. 3. He would conduct the people unto the land of their inheritance (ver. 7). 4. He would cause them to inherit it (ver. 7), *i.e.* settle them in their possessions. Christ in like manner has overthrown the enemy (Col. ii. 15); has won an inheritance for his people (Col. i. 12); in his victory they are enabled to overcome the world (John xvi. 33; 1 John iv. 4); his cause is steadily

triumphing: he is conducting, and has already conducted, many sons to glory (Heb. ii. 10).—J. O.

Vers. 9, 24—26.—*The authorship of the book.* A clear testimony to the Mosaic authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy. The book, as Moses gave it to the priests, has plainly been re-edited, with the additions of Moses' song, Moses' blessing, and the account of his death; but only the wantonness of criticism can see "a different hand or hands" in ch. xii.—xxvi. from that employed upon the earlier chapters, or discern probability in the assumption that ch. iv. 44—xxvi. 19 once constituted a separate book. The unity in style and treatment is so conspicuous throughout—"the same vein of thought, the same tone and tenor of feeling, the same peculiarities of conception and expression"—that unity of authorship follows as a thing of course. The denial of it is incomprehensible. It is less certain whether the "Book of the Law" (ver. 26) comprehends Deuteronomy only, or the bulk of the other books of the Pentateuch as well. That Deuteronomy is represented as existing in a written form is plain from ch. xxviii. 58, 61; xxix. 20, 21, 27; and Moses had probably the written discourses in his hand when he delivered them. But Deuteronomy, as a written book, rests so entirely on the history as we have it in the previous books; is so steeped in allusions to it; implies so full and accurate a knowledge of it, from the days of the patriarchs downwards;—that the presumption in favour of that history also existing in a written form, in authentic records, which subsequent generations could consult, is so strong as almost to amount to certainty. It is incredible that Moses should have taken pains to write out these long discourses—discourses based on the history, and inculcating so earnestly the keeping of its facts and lessons in remembrance—and yet have taken no pains to secure an authentic record of the history itself; that he should not have compiled or composed, out of the abundant materials at his command, a connected narrative of God's dealings with the nation, down to the point at which he addressed it; incorporating with that narrative the body of his legislation. Confining our attention to Deuteronomy, there can be no fair question but that it gives itself out as from the pen of Moses. This claim is disputed, and the book referred to about the time of Josiah on grounds of style, of discrepancies with the Levitical laws, and of laws and allusions implying the later date. On the contrary, we hold that the critical hypothesis can be shown to raise greater difficulties than it lays, and that the difficulties in the way of accepting the book as a composition of Moses have been greatly exaggerated. We glance at a few of these difficulties.

I. STYLE. Professor W. R. Smith ('Old Testament,' p. 433) notes as a crucial instance the laws about the cities of refuge in Numb. xxxv., and Deut. xix. These laws are supposed to have been penned by the same hand within a few months of each other; yet, it is alleged, the vocabulary, structure of sentences, and cast of expression widely differ. But allowance must surely be made for the difference between a careful original statement of a law, and a later general rehearsal of its substance in the rounded style of free, popular discourse. And what are the specific differences? Deuteronomy, we are told, does not use the term "refuge," but "the cities are always described by a periphrasis." But the Deuteronomist simply says, "Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land" (ch. xix. 2); "thou shalt separate three cities for thee" (ch. xix. 7); "thou shalt add three cities more for thee" (ch. xix. 9); and *there is no periphrasis.* The phrase, "that every slayer may flee thither" (ch. xix. 3), "the slayer which shall flee thither" (ch. xix. 4), is derived from Numb. xxxv. 11, 15. But Deuteronomy and Numbers use different words for "accidentally." Admitted, but the words used are synonymous, and are only used in each case twice altogether—in Numb. xxxv. 11, 15, and in Deut. iv. 42; xix. 4. "The judges in the one are 'the congregation,' in the other 'the elders of his city.'" But Deuteronomy says nothing about "judges," and "the elders" who are once referred to in ch. xix. 12, plainly act in the name of the congregation. "The verb for 'hate' is different." Rather, "the verb for 'hate'" does not occur at all in Numb. xxxv., but the noun derived from it does (Numb. xxxv. 20), and is translated "hatred," while in vers. 21, 22, a different term, translated "enmity," is employed, which expresses nearly the same sense. Had these words appeared, one in Numbers and the other in Deuteronomy, instead of standing in consecutive verses of one chapter, they would doubtless have been

quoted as further evidence of diversity of authorship. So one book uses the expression "to kill *any person*," while the other has "to kill his neighbour"—a difference surely not incompatible with identity of authorship. "The detailed description of the difference between murder and accidental homicide is entirely diverse in language and detail." But in Deuteronomy there is no "detailed description" of the kind referred to. There *is* in Numbers (xxxv. 16—24); but Deuteronomy confines itself to one simple illustration from concrete life, admirably adapted, it will be admitted, to the speaker's popular purpose (ch. xix. 5). The statement in Deuteronomy, it is evident, presupposes the earlier law, and is incomplete without it, occupying only a dozen verses, as compared with over twenty in Numbers, while even of the dozen, three are occupied with a new provision for the number of the cities being ultimately raised to nine (ch. xix. 8—10).

II. DISCREPANCIES IN LAWS. Considering the number of the laws, the alleged discrepancies are singularly few. On the "tithes," see ch. xxvi. 12; on the "firstlings," ch. xv. 20; "the priests' due," in ch. xviii. 3, seems, like the "fleece" of ch. xviii. 4, to be *in addition* to the provision in Numb. xviii. 11—18; the law of carrion (ch. xiv. 21) is slightly modified in view of the altered circumstances of settlement in Canaan (cf. Lev. xvii. 15); and so with other instances. The chief modifications arise from the new legislation in regard to the central sanctuary, with the permission to kill and eat flesh at home (ch. xii. 20—24). On this depends the new tithe-laws (provision for the sanctuary feasts), the additions to the priests' portions, and various minor changes.

III. PECULIARITIES IMPLYING A LATER DATE. We need not delay on stray phrases, such as "unto this day" (ch. iii. 14), or "as Israel did unto the land of his possession" (ch. ii. 12). The instances usually cited are not of great force, and are easily explicable as glosses. More important cases are: 1. *The central altar.* On this, see under ch. xii. It suffices to meet most objections to observe that, on the face of it, the Law bears that it was not intended to be put strictly in force till certain important conditions had been fulfilled—conditions which, owing to the disobedience of the people, who during the time of the judges so often put back the clock of their own history, were not fulfilled till as late as the days of David and Solomon. For thus it reads (ver. 10), "When ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; *then* there shall be a place," etc. (cf. 2 Sam. vii. 1; 1 Kings iii. 2; v. 4). 2. *Priests and Levites.* The distinction between priests and Levites, which counts for so much in Leviticus and Numbers, is not, it is alleged, recognized in Deuteronomy. The phrase in use is not "priests *and* Levites" (which, however, as little as the other, occurs in the earlier books), but "the priests *the* Levites" (ch. xvii. 9, 18; xviii. 1; xxiv. 8; xxvii. 9). They are not distinctively "the sons of Aaron," but "sons of Levi" (ch. xxi. 5; xxxi. 9). "All Levites are possible priests." But the objection is deprived of its force when we discover, what any one can verify, that these same expressions were freely used, and used interchangeably with others, at a time when it is not doubted that the Levitical system was in full operation. This is the case in the Books of Chronicles, written, it is asserted, in the interest of that system, yet using this phrase, "the priests the Levites," without hesitation or sense of ambiguity (2 Chron. v. 5; xxiii. 18; xxx. 27). "The priests the Levites" mean simply the Levitical priests; and when the tribe of Levi as a whole is meant, it is either expressly designated as such (ch. x. 8), or the designation is appended to the other phrase as a wider denomination (ch. xviii. 1). Nor is the idiom a strange one. At first, the priests, "the sons of Aaron," stood out from the people with sharp distinctness, as alone invested with sacred office. The case was greatly altered after the separation of the tribe of Levi; when the designation "sons of Aaron" seems speedily to have been dropped for another identifying the priests more directly with their tribe. "Sons of Aaron" is not found in the latter part of Numbers. Priests and Levites had more in common with each other than either class had with the body of the people; and besides, the priests *were* Levites. So that to the popular eye, the tribe of Levi stood apart, forming, as a whole, one sacred body, engaged in ministering in holy things to God. Sacerdotal functions are attributed to the tribe, but not necessarily to all members of it (ch. x. 8; xviii. 7). (On the ministering of the Levites, comp. 1 Chron. xv. 2; 2 Chron. xxix. 11; xxxi. 2). The counter-theory, that this distinction had no existence under the kings, and first originated in the time of the exile, is without a jot of evidence in the Books of Kings, and only escapes foundering on the

statements in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, by robbing these books of their historical character. 3. *The position of the Levites.* Instead of being furnished with cities and pasturages, and enjoying an independent income from the tithes, they are represented as homeless and dependent, wandering from place to place, and glad to be invited, with the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless, to share in charitable feasts. (See on this, ch. xii. 19.) But if a time is sought for the composition of the book when this was the actual position of the Levites, no time is so suitable as that of Moses himself, before the tithe-laws had come into regular operation—when, in truth, there was little or nothing to tithe—and when the Levites would be largely dependent on the hospitality of individuals. The language would have a point and force to Moses' contemporaries, which it would have greatly lost had the circumstances of the Levites, at the time of his address, been more prosperous. They were dependent then, and might from very obvious causes come to be dependent again. Their state would not be greatly bettered in the unsettled times of the conquest. Nothing could be more appropriate in itself, better adapted to create kindly sympathies between Levites and people, or more likely to avert neglect of the tribe by withholding of their just dues, than the perpetuation of these primitive hospitalities. No doubt the Levites suffered severely in the days of the judges and under bad kings, but we are not to forget the power and splendour to which the order attained under David and Solomon, and the revivals it enjoyed under Hezekiah and Josiah. There is no evidence that their condition was so deplorably destitute in the later days of the kingdom as the critics represent. 4. *The law of the king* (ch. xvii.). The law, it is thought, is sketched in terms borrowed from the court of Solomon. The objection derives much of its plausibility from not observing that the description of Solomon's court in the Book of Kings (1 Kings x. 26—29; xi. 1—4) is, on the other hand, given in terms distinctly borrowed from this law. The familiarity of the writer of the Books of Kings with Deuteronomy is undoubted, and he plainly draws up his account of Solomon's luxury and splendour in such language as will impress the mind by its contrast to the law. We, on the contrary, reading the law, are apt to think of Solomon's reign as if *it* were the original, and the law the copy. Solomon did what Moses knew too well kings would be prone to do, and there was every reason for the warning that was given. The objections taken to the book cannot, therefore, be allowed to set aside its own decisive testimony to its authorship. If we adopt the hypothesis of the critics, we are involved in graver difficulties than those from which we flee. We must suppose a state of things as existing under the kings, in respect of the Levitical orders, which we have no reason to believe ever did exist, which there is great difficulty in believing to have existed, and which historical documents in the most express language tell us did not exist. We must suppose Josiah and his people deceived about the book, for they unquestionably took it for a veritable book of Moses, grieving that its words had been neglected by their fathers (2 Kings xxii.; xxiii.; 2 Chron. xxxiv.). We must explain away a multitude of the plainest allusions to the book, not simply in Joshua, but in the prophets, particularly in Hosea, whose pages are rich in such references (cf. ch. vii. 13; viii. 7—20; xi. 14—16, with Hos. ii. 8; xii. 8; xiii. 6; ch. xii. with Hos. viii. 11; ch. xviii. 18 with Hos. xii. 13; ch. xvii. 12 with Hos. iv. 4; ch. xxviii. 68 with Hos. viii. 13; ix. 3; ch. xxix. 23 with Hos. xi. 8; ch. xxx. 1—10 with Hos. xiv.; ch. xxv. 13—16 with Hos. xii. 7, etc.). We must suppose such a passage as Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings viii.), which is saturated with Deuteronomic language, to have been a free and unhistorical composition; though, if this be allowed for Deuteronomy, it need not trouble us with Solomon. Even then we are not out of difficulties, for the book itself is in many respects internally unsuitable to the times to which it is assigned; compare *e.g.* the mild tone of the book towards Edom—the kindly and brotherly relations which are enjoined—with the hostile tone to which we are accustomed in the prophets, where Edom is a sort of later Amalek, a standing type of implacable enmity to the people of God. If Deuteronomy is not by Moses, it bears false witness of itself, was misconceived by the writers of the later books of Scripture, imposed upon the Jews from the days of its first appearance, and has had its claims endorsed by Christ and his apostles in a way which makes them partners in the general delusion. —J. O.

Vers. 9, 24—27.—*The written Word.* The Law here put in writing and solemnly deposited in the side of the ark, is the foundation of our present Bible. All Scripture is built up upon it. On this consignment of the first instalment of the Word, we remark—

I. THE WRITTEN WORD EMBODIES AND IS THE VEHICLE OF AN AUTHORITATIVE REVELATION. The Law was first given, *thereafter* recorded. Revelation precedes the record of it. But this line must not be drawn too finely. The record is inspired (1 Tim. iii. 16), and is to us the revelation of the will of God. It *is*, as well as *contains*, the Word of God. The line must not be drawn too finely: 1. *Between revelation and its history.* The threads of revelation cannot be picked out from the texture of its history, and exhibited apart. They constitute one whole; the record embraces both. 2. *Between revelation and inspired prophetical discourses*—with psalms, poems, wisdom literature, etc., which unfold the principles of revelation, apply and enforce them, turn them into subjects of praise, or deal with them reflectively. For discourses, psalms, didactic literature, etc., *add* to revelation as well as unfold its meaning. 3. *Between revelation and the written Word.* For that, as above remarked, is the revelation to us. It is clothed with its own authority as inspired—an authority the nature and degree of which is a study by itself—and it is clothed with the authoritativeness (objective) inherent in the revelations of which records are preserved.

II. THE WRITTEN WORD IS NECESSARY FOR THE PERPETUATION OF REVEALED TRUTH. It embodies truth in a form which secures its transmission to posterity without material distortion or corruption. Tradition, however carefully guarded, would have been a most unsafe medium for the conveyance of important revelations. A body of facts and laws such as we have in the Pentateuch, or discourses like these of Moses, could not have been entrusted to it without certainty of mutilation. The Law, accordingly, was put in writing. A written revelation is one great proof of the wisdom and care of God. Variations in manuscripts rarely affect the substance of the message.

III. THE WRITTEN WORD IS A WITNESS FOR GOD AGAINST THE APOSTACY OF THOSE TO WHOM THE WORD IS GIVEN. (Ver. 26.) 1. If it does not prevent *corruption* of *doctrine*, it testifies against it. It was by appeal to the Scriptures that Josiah wrought his reformation in Judah (2 Kings xxiii.). It was by appeal to the Scriptures that the Reformers aroused Europe against the Church of Rome. 2. If it cannot prevent *apostacy in deed*, it remains as a witness against the apostates. It holds up the Law from which they have departed. It convicts them of rebellion. It denounces against them the penalties of transgression. While it invites them to repentance, and promises, if they return, healing of their backslidings.—J. O.

Vers. 10—13.—*Reading the Law.* (For an example of fulfilment of this command, see Neh. viii.) Observe—

I. IT WAS TO BE READ AT A RELIGIOUS FEAST. On an occasion of solemnity—at the Feast of Tabernacles (ver. 10). Our feelings in reading the Scriptures, or in hearing them read, ought always to be of a solemn and reverential kind. But it is well to avail ourselves of every aid which may lend solemnity and impressiveness to the reading of words so sacred.

II. IT WAS TO BE READ AT A TIME OF GENERAL LEISURE. In the sabbatical year—"the year of release." Leisure hours cannot be better employed than in making ourselves acquainted with "what God the Lord will speak" (Ps. lxxxv. 8). We should avail ourselves of the leisure of others to endeavour to instruct them.

III. IT WAS TO BE READ PUBLICLY. (Ver. 11.) The private reading of the Law would doubtless be attended to in many pious homes. But the practice would not be general (scarcity and expensiveness of manuscripts, want of education, religious indifference). The Levites were to teach Israel the Law (ch. xxxiii. 10; Lev. x. 11; Mal. ii. 7); but they might not do so, or the people might not wait on their instructions. The public reading of the Law, even once in seven years, was thus calculated to be of great advantage. As long as the practice was observed, multitudes would derive benefit from it. The reading was of the nature of a public testimony, but also, as we see in Neh. viii., for purposes of real instruction. The public reading of Scripture, with or without comment, is an important means of edification. Read with intelligence and judgment, the Word commends *itself*. And such readings are necessary. Many have Bibles, yet do not read them; many read and do not understand.

IV. IT WAS TO BE READ FOR THE BENEFIT OF OLD AND YOUNG. (Ver. 12.) All are interested in listening to the Word of God. Men and women, little children, strangers, no class but has a concern in it. None but may be edified by it. Children ought to be more recognized than they are in religious services. Need for making them feel that they too are interested in what is being said; that the Bible has a message for them as well as for their elders.

V. THE END OF READING GOD'S WORD IS THAT WE MAY BE ENABLED TO OBEY IT. (Ver. 13.)—J. O.

Vers. 16—22, 28—30.—*God's foresight of Israel's declension.* We learn—

I. THAT THE FUTURE IS PERFECTLY UNVEILED TO GOD. God claims this power as one of his prerogatives (Isa. xli. 22; xlii. 9; xliii. 25, 26; xlv. 20, 21). And no one can question but that these predictions have been strikingly fulfilled. The people *did* corrupt themselves and turn aside, and evil did befall them in the latter days (ver. 29).

II. THAT THE PLAINEST WARNINGS ARE FREQUENTLY DISREGARDED. Israel was under no government of fate. Had the people repented, they would have been forgiven. The predictions are cast in absolute form, only because God saw that warning would not be taken. He would only too gladly have revoked his threatenings, had Israel, roused to alarm, turned from its evil (cf. the case of Nineveh). This, however, it did not do, but, with these woe-laden prophecies spread before it, rushed madly on, as if eager to fulfil them. How like sinners still! The plainest declarations, the most explicit warnings, the direst threatenings, are as little recked of as if no Word of God were in existence. Strange that God's Word should be so disregarded, and yet profession so often made of believing in it (cf. Jer. xxxvi.)!

III. THAT GOD'S WORD HAS ITS USES EVEN THOUGH MEN PROVE DISOBEDIENT. It is to be spoken to them and taught them, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Ezek. ii. 7). It tells them the truth. It shows them their duty. It warns them of the consequences of disobedience. It upholds a witness for God in their apostacy (ver. 19). It renders them inexcusable. A solemn responsibility thus attaches to us in the possession of God's Word.

IV. THAT A TIME WILL COME WHEN THE SINNER WILL BE FORCED TO CONFESS THAT GOD'S WORDS AGAINST HIM HAVE ALL BECOME TRUE. (Ver. 17.) Only that time may come too late (ver. 18). "Missing God is not true repentance" (Keil).—J. O.

Vers. 1—8.—*The leadership made over to Joshua.* There is something wonderfully pathetic in the great leader, whose eye is yet undimmed, laying down his trust beside the Jordan. He is a hundred and twenty years old, but the Lord hath denied him the privilege of entering the land of promise. He now meekly resigns his command, and nominates Joshua as his successor. It might have discouraged the people, the loss of their great leader; but he points them upward to the Lord their God, who had been the real Leader in the Exodus and pilgrimage, and who was going at their head across the Jordan. Their faith in the invisible Leader is to be strengthened now that the visible and human leader is to be taken away from them. Besides, they are to have Joshua as the captain of the host. We notice here—

I. THE MEN APPOINTED BY GOD TO SPECIAL OFFICE RECEIVE FROM HIM SPECIAL PREPARATION. Moses himself had received a wondrous preparation, first at his mother's knee, next in the palace of Pharaoh, and next in the solitudes of Midian. And Joshua, who is to succeed him as leader, though not as lawgiver, has also received important preparation. He is first associated with Moses in the mount, as he is receiving the Law. He is thus trained to firm faith in the invisible King, and accustomed to his wonders. He is next exercised in battle, leading the Israelites against Amalek, and proving himself skilful in the field. He had also, as a spy, become minutely acquainted with the land of promise, and brought up with Caleb an encouraging report. None was so fitted as he for high command. Just, then, as the twelve were carefully trained to be the apostles of the Church, so was Joshua trained, and so is every one selected for important work.

II. THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE INVASION GAVE THE INVADERS THE BEST POSSIBLE STIMULUS. God is to go with them; they need in such a case fear no evil. Their foes may be gigantic, but greater is he that is for them than

all that can be against them. Their vantage-ground is that they can be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

And this is the one question to be asked always: Is God with us? If so, all is well. The work always succeeds of which he is the head.

III. THE WORK BEFORE THEM IS TO BE JUDGMENT. They are to enter Canaan as destroyers. It is *iconoclasts* that have been brought from Egypt. Their commission is death to the old religions of the country, and to the incorrigible devotees. They enter as "the scourge of God." And such a mission must have proved a warning to themselves. If called to be the executioners of the apostates of Palestine, they will surely guard against apostacy.

IV. IN THE INVASION THEY MUST ADHERE TO THE LETTER OF THE COMMANDMENTS. It is a terrible mission; but God leaves no loophole for them to escape it. He leaves nothing to licence; he gives them strict orders, and these must be carried carefully out. Thus are the rigours of the invasion brought under the shadow of his throne, and he, who is Sovereign and legitimate Avenger, commissioned Israel to execute his orders amid the criminal population of Palestine.—R. M. E.

Vers. 9—13.—*The literary executors of Moses.* It must have been a solemn act on the part of Moses, after having nominated Joshua as his successor in the leadership of Israel, to summon the priests and the elders, that they might be the custodians of his manuscripts, and deal with them as he desired. It was to the ministers of religion, and to the rulers elected by the people and ordained of God, that he gave this important charge. Of course they could not, as nowadays, publish in multiplied copies the carefully written Law. But they were directed to have a great congregation every seven years, at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, for the public reading of the Law. Hence in this sabbatic time, when no rain need be feared, but brightness and peace reigned by night and day in the land of promise, they were to make public, through reading, this important Law. This interesting arrangement suggests such lessons as these—

I. THERE IS NOTHING SO PRECIOUS AS GOD'S WORD. No wonder that special officers got special charge of it, when the first instalment was given and completed. It was a sacred deposit such as no other nation possessed. The Jew had surely a great advantage, inasmuch as there were committed to him "the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 2).

II. THE WIDEST POSSIBLE PUBLICATION SHOULD BE SECURED FOR IT. No better arrangement in times before printing can be imagined than this one of a great congregation with perfect publicity thereat. What an audience every seventh year! And amid the solemnity of the year of release, the sabbatic year, when time lay plentifully on their hands, they could not better spend a portion of the year than in meeting together to learn God's Law. It was a splendid, periodic publicity.

And is it not typical of that wider publicity which the printing press is now giving to the Divine Word? Assuredly it is a striking fact that the circulation of the most successful human publication dwindles into insignificance compared with the circulation of the Word of God. Men are trying to make it as widely known as possible.

III. SPECIAL SEASONS FOR THE STUDY OF GOD'S LAW ARE EMINENTLY DESIRABLE. Had this direction of Moses been faithfully followed, there would have been a revival of religion every seventh year. A new start would thus have been given to the study of God's will, and greater devotedness of spirit have been created throughout the many thousands of Israel.

Similarly, congregations and Churches should have grand assemblies for the express purpose of the public study of God's Law, not merely on the Lord's day each week, but at special and stated seasons. The "camp meetings" of America may have objectionable elements attaching to them; but it would be a good day for all the Churches, if some grand reunions could be devised, when the highest aim of mankind would be carried out in the study of God's Law.

IV. THE CHILDREN AS WELL AS ADULTS SHOULD BE MADE SHARERS IN THE SPECIAL STUDY AND BLESSING. The purpose of the arrangement was not only to publish truths as widely as possible among the adult portion of the population, but to interest also the children in the doctrines and discipline of the Church. Hence the meeting was to be an aggregation of families. It was to be "a gathering of the clans;"

young as well as old were to hear the wonderful works of God and his gracious commandments.

The special religious service, then, which the Churches should aim at, will be of the widest character. It should contemplate the presence of the young as well as the old, and be adapted to the revival of the Lord's work in all sections of the Church. There is power in the aggregation of individuals for religious purposes. The children must be kept in view in every effort to extend the kingdom. The family must be lifted, if possible, all of a piece, as a unit of God's own making, and in the elevation of families will come the elevation of nations.

There is something peculiarly bright and happy in the picture. The sky is cloudless and the people are living in booths "without carefulness." They have met together for the purpose of celebrating a feast, but there is to be a special study of the Law for the benefit of young as well as old. Old heads and young are bowed before the Majesty of heaven, anxious to know his will and how to do it. In such circumstances surely religion must be promoted. May we have grace to imitate such an excellent example!—R. M. E.

Vers. 14—23.— *The Lord's charge to Moses and Joshua.* Moses, in making over the leadership to Joshua, was only anticipating a more formal assignment of it by God himself. He directs the old leader and his successor to repair to the tabernacle, and there to receive their respective charges. The Shechinah appeared to convince the people of the reality of the Divine interview with the leaders. Moses is first informed of his own approaching end, of the certain apostacy of the people, and of the desirability of laying before them a song which would testify to the wickedness of the apostacy when it took place. Then Joshua is encouraged by the Lord himself and promised his presence.

I. LET US NOTICE THE EXPRESSION THAT MOSES IS TO "SLEEP WITH HIS FATHERS." The words (שֹׁכֵב עִם־אֲבֹתֶיךָ) are literally, "lie down with thy fathers," and in this connection are surely significant. They point assuredly to fellowship and rest with the fathers in another life. They cannot refer to any depositing of the remains of Moses in the same tomb as his fathers. His sepulchre was solitary and sacred; his lying down with his fathers, therefore, can only refer to the fellowship in a future life. This is the only place in the Pentateuch where this particular expression occurs, although we meet it in the Books of the Kings no less than twenty-six times. It was undoubtedly an intimation to Moses that he was about to enter into restful fellowship with his fathers, and was most welcome consolation at this peculiarly trying time.

II. APOSTACY NEVER TAKES GOD BY SURPRISE. He foresees it and makes provision for it, preparing his servants for its appearance, and preparing a proper recompense for the apostates themselves. It must be a remarkable experience to be in such a position as God, and to have prevision of all the future, so that there can be no element of surprise for him. His resources are so adequate that he is outside the region of finite surprises and difficulties.

III. SCEPTICISM IS THE DAUGHTER OF ABUNDANCE RATHER THAN OF WANT. It will be, the Lord says, when Israel has entered into the promised land, and enjoyed its milk and honey, and when they have waxed fat, that they shall turn to other gods and be guilty of apostacy. In the same way, our modern sceptics are men for the most part in comfortable worldly circumstances, and out of these spring doubts about the existence of God and suspicions that we can do very well without him, and with minor majesties. "It is on the bed of luxury," says Mr. Martineau, "not on the rock of nature, that scepticism has its birth. . . . And while from the centre of comforts many a sad fear goes forth, and the warmest lot becomes often filled with the chillest doubts, hidden within it like a heart of ice that cannot melt, you may find toiling misery that trusts the more the more it is stricken, and amid the secret prayers of mourners hear the sweetest tones of hope."

IV. PROPHECY IS A WITNESS SUBPŒNAED BEFOREHAND AGAINST GOD'S ENEMIES. We have here God giving a certain song which is to be a witness against Israel in the coming apostacy. And prophecy is the retaining of a witness long beforehand for the coming trial. It is proof positive that no varying moods of men can ever surprise God or thwart his magnificent designs. The substance of this song we are presently to consider.

V. JOSHUA RECEIVES ENCOURAGEMENT ABOUT A SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP AND THE PERPETUAL PRESENCE OF GOD. This means immediate success as a set-off to the sad intelligence about ultimate apostacy. Joshua is assured that God will be with him and ensure the success of the invasion. Hence Joshua is only to be a *lieutenant-general* under the invisible Leader and King. And Joshua desired nothing higher. The great honour was in being a fellow-soldier with God. It was God's battles he was going to fight, and it would be God's victories which Israel would win.

VI. IT IS A GREAT BLESSING AT LIFE'S CLOSE TO HAVE A SUCCESSOR TO CARRY ON OUR WORK, AND AN ASSURANCE THAT WE OURSELVES ARE SAFE BEYOND THE BORDER. There was much sadness about the close of Moses' career. He was reminded of his sin in his exclusion from Canaan. But he had compensation in Joshua taking up his work, and in the assurance of "rest beyond the river." He was going over to a better land than lay beyond the Jordan. He was passing on to peace with the sainted fathers who had preceded him. He had thus calmness and blessing given in the midst of his pain.

May we have work worth carrying on after us, and some one to succeed us in it; and may we have rest like that of Moses after our demise!—R. M. E.

Vers. 24—30.—*The Divine testimony deposited in the ark.* Moses, being thus commissioned of God to utter the inspired warning, loses no time in summoning the congregation. But while doing so, he gives precise directions to the Kohathites, who had charge of the ark, to deposit his manuscripts within it. Is anything to be learned from this consignment of the sacred books?

I. THE SACRED BOOKS ARE NOT COMPLIMENTARY TO HUMAN NATURE. The Pentateuch, in its tremendous charges and indictments against mankind, is in unison with the rest of the Word. It is a sustained witness against the human race. "Others may perhaps suspect," says Henry Rogers, "that Jewish vanity led the writers thus to ignore or treat lightly the affairs of all nations *except their own*. The answer is concise, but conclusive. Let Jewish vanity in general be what the reader pleases, these writers would seem to have had none of it. If they have passed by the glorious achievements of secular history, they have recorded all the infamies of their own nation; and, indeed, their principal references to *other* nations are as 'scourges' of their own—scourges justly sent, they confess and avow, for apostacies which had wearied out the patience of Heaven!" The marvel is that the Jews and Christians should conspire to preserve what is a most humiliating account of the race.

II. THE ARK WAS THE TREASURE-HOUSE OF GOD PROTECTED BY HIS PRESENCE. It was the "safe" of Israel, not, alas! "fire-proof," like Milner's, as the Babylonians demonstrated, yet as durable and as sacred as the times allowed. It was fenced around by the holiest sanctions. Nowhere could the manuscripts be so safe. Now, the ark is regarded as a type of Jesus; and if so, then the depositing of the Law within the ark would convey the idea of the Law of God being within the heart of Christ (Ps. xl. 8). In other words, Jesus Christ embodies the Divine Law or will, and is at once its most brilliant exposition and the most tremendous indictment of human nature. The Jews were not so careful of the living Law as their forefathers were of the written Law. They recognized its charge against themselves: the charge had become oral; it walked before them; it was something that they could not shake off except through the desperate alternative of assassination. They killed in Christ their living Conscience.

III. WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST TO TREASURE UP GOD'S LAW WITHIN OUR OWN HEARTS. We cannot have too much of the Bible in our minds and memories. The more we study it, the more like Christ shall we become. He whose "delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate day and night," is blessed, and he shall be like the tree whose roots are in the waters, duly fruitful and ever green (Ps. i. 2, 3). His conscience shall be reinforced and become increasingly tender; his heart shall be elevated in its affections and longings; and his mind shall be trained to what is high and holy. Thus is the whole being enriched and the life enlarged. May we deposit the Word of God with as much care in our hearts as the Levites did the rolls of Moses in the ark!—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—8.—*Putting off the harness.* Faith in God anticipates every event without distress. If God's plan cut across the grain of our own inclination, faith inspires us to say, "His plan is best." By virtue of a living faith, we can face death without anxiety, and advance to meet the last foe. We see in this passage—

I. FAITH ACQUIESCENT IN BODILY DISSOLUTION. Splendid triumphs were in sight. The Jewish host was about to complete its conquest; just about to realize full success after forty years of patient trial. Such an hour is the most precious in a man's history. Yet the faith of Moses saw a nobler conquest yet—a conquest over self, a conquest over the unseen foe. A voice from within—the voice of failing nature—whispered that he was no longer equal to the fatigues of a military campaign. And a voice from above told him that his work was done; and, though high reward was in store, justice exacted satisfaction for an earlier misdeed. Even a single blemish in a good man's life entails on him loss. We cannot cheat God. Without a murmur, Moses, like a little child, yields to his Father's decree, and meekly prepares to die.

II. FAITH REJOICING IN OTHERS' PROMOTION. In every age, faith has worked to the production of love. It is the extirpator of selfishness. Moses found as much pleasure in announcing that Joshua should lead the people to conquest, as that he should himself lead. Indeed, Moses felt that Joshua could do better than he could. He had been emphatically a legislator; now a warrior was needed. If God removes one servant, he provides a better. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I am nobler than thou." Each man has a place and an office of his own. If only God's work is well and truly done, faith will rejoice in the means.

III. FAITH CONVINCED THAT GOD AND MAN MUST CO-OPERATE FOR THE TRIUMPH OF THE KINGDOM. "The Lord thy God, he will go before thee;" and "Joshua, he shall go over before thee" (ver. 3). The presence of man, in action or in warfare, does not exclude the presence of God. Joshua could gain no triumph if he had gone alone. God has chosen to work through human agencies. By his wise appointment, Divine and human co-operation is a necessity. "The Lord shall give them up before your face, that *ye* may do unto them according to his commandment" (ver. 5). Nor is Moses' power and influence to be quite absent from the conflict. Being dead, he yet acted. His commandment regulated their conduct. His word was still a mighty spell. Each man can add something to the aggressive activity of God's truth.

IV. FAITH ASSURED OF GOD'S SELF-CONSISTENCY. God had succoured Israel in the past; therefore he would succour them again. He had begun to dislodge the Canaanite kings before Israel, therefore he would go on until he completed for them the conquest (ver. 4). Jehovah had foreseen all the weaknesses and unfaithfulness of Israel and yet he had commenced to give them triumphs. On what reasonable ground would he do this, unless he purposed to repeat his favours, and to subdue for them every foe? Half a conquest would be no boon to them. This would be a vexation to Israel, and a dishonour to God. The man of faith knows that God can never be at variance with himself. When we have discovered the method of God's procedure, we should act along this line in order to enjoy his help. In his footsteps let us plant our feet.

V. FAITH IN ONE STIMULATING IN OTHERS LATENT QUALITIES OF ENERGY. Although it appears that Moses was lacking in martial skill and prowess, his faith in God enabled him to stir up the hidden gifts of others. Faith foresees the victory, and confident hope is a great inspirer of strength. Like new nerve-power, it interlaces and braces all the active energies of a man. The voice of robust faith has always a magical charm over us. We perceive forthwith that the demand is most reasonable, and that largest exertion is our highest glory. It is easy to be strong when Infinite Strength is awaiting us. Every endeavour we make enlarges our capacity to receive more strength. The weaker parts of our nature perish under the strain, but newer and nobler elements fill up the room. And if God be with us, then fear of man departs. Faith is a prolific parent of courage.

> "Fear him, ye saints, and ye will then
> Have nothing else to fear."

And God can never fail the man of faith. Having pledged his presence, we are well

ensured. For him to forsake his friends is an impossibility. "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but never shall the covenant of his faithfulness fail."—D.

Vers. 9—13, 24—29.—*The honour appertaining to God's Law.* As our Lord, in the near prospect of death, employed his thoughts in comforting and instructing others, so Moses, instead of centring his thought upon himself, is only more eager to provide for the people's future obedience. Inasmuch as his days on earth were now very few, he yearned to crowd into them as much counsel and kindly warning as it was possible. To be of service to Israel—this absorbed the passions and desires of his soul.

I. GOD'S REDEMPTIVE LAW IS EMBODIED IN A WRITTEN FORM. To Moses it had been revealed that it would not suffice to instruct the people *orally* in the lines of religious duty. So pregnant with importance is the Law of God, that it must be reduced to writing, and carefully preserved. God's law concerning our bodily life—how to use food, how to heal disease, how to prolong our days—all this is revealed in other modes: this Law is written by the finger of God on the very structure of man. In such matters, God's will is to be discovered by investigation and by experiment. But the law of the soul's life is disclosed to us in a different way. How sin can be pardoned; how reconciliation between a guilty man and his Maker can be secured; how inward purity can be gained, and immortality reached;—all this is disclosed by God through his prophets, and reduced to a written form. If a perverse disposition prevails in a man, he may refuse to read the record, and so "count himself unworthy of everlasting life."

II. GOD'S REDEMPTIVE LAW IS COMMITTED TO TRUSTY STEWARDS. The Law of God written by Moses, touching purification and obedience, was placed in the custody of the priests (ver. 9), and secured in the ark of the covenant. This was both a realized fact and a symbolic figure. That ark is an emblem of Christ's Church, and the sons of Levi were the early representatives of genuine believers. The Christian family has become a royal priesthood; and one of their delightful duties is to conserve God's Law so as to hand it on to coming generations. By the loving care of loyal disciples, the oracles of God have been preserved intact. The vigorous life of the Church to-day is displayed in revising the exact text, translating it into other tongues, and unfolding it to the understanding of the people. We are "stewards of the mysteries of God."

III. GOD'S REDEMPTIVE LAW IS TO BE PERIODICALLY EXPOUNDED. Moses required this to be done once in every seven years. By this method, the recollections of those who had heard it aforetime would be revived, it would be impressed on memory with fresh force, and many would rise to a higher understanding and appreciation of its meaning. The recurring period is symbolic. Once every seven days the privilege now returns. Nor have we to journey to some metropolis to hear the sacred record. Printing has multiplied the copies of God's Law on every side; and it would be spiritual obtuseness if we did not recognize this modern invention as a new agency in God's hands for enlightening the human race. The Law was ordained to be "read in the year of release, and at the Feast of Tabernacles." This was the anniversary of the Sinaitic revelation; this festival was signalized for its unusual joyousness. And this fresh revelation of God's truth, in each septennial period, would add new zest to gladness. Good men would say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and they were to me as the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

IV. GOD'S REDEMPTIVE LAW IS TO BE BROUGHT WITHIN THE UNDERSTANDING OF ALL. The wisdom and the loving-kindness of God are displayed in his care for children. As he has abundantly provided for their bodily and mental wants in their long dependence upon parents, so too he provides for the enlightenment of their consciences by the ministry of his Word. Right impressions are very early made. It is the highest wisdom to entwine the tender affections of children around God and truth and heaven. Before they "know anything" else, God commands us to see to it that "they hear, and learn to fear the Lord our God." To neglect the religious training of the young is heinous sin. This is to deprive the host of God's elect of young recruits. "Instead of the fathers, must come up the children." God's will is abundantly revealed, to the end that we may do it.—D.

Vers. 14, 15, 23.—*The official investiture of Joshua.* It was fitting that a public transference of authority should be made from Moses to Joshua. The nobleness of Moses comes prominently into view. As John said of Jesus, so substantially Moses said of Joshua, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

I. THE OCCASION. The occasion had an aspect of mournfulness. Moses was about to die; nevertheless, no tinge of grief is in his words. He contemplates the event with calm serenity. His chief concern is a competent successor. The good of others was still Moses' uppermost desire. Promptly he responded to the Divine call.

II. THE PLACE. God had appointed the meeting to take place in the tabernacle. All great enterprises should be consecrated in the sanctuary. Here we touch the fountain head of effectual blessing. God has engaged to be found by us here. "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell!"

III. THE APPEARANCE. "The Lord appeared in a pillar of a cloud." So ineffably dazzling is the native glory of God, that no mortal eye can look upon it. We should be blinded by the excess of light. In accommodation to human weakness, God tempers his brightness by an attendant cloud. Such was the form in which he was pleased to appear upon the mercy-seat. Such was the mode of his manifestation on the Mount of Transfiguration. In our present imperfect state we need the intervention of the cloud.

IV. THE CHARGE. God's charge came to Joshua through human lips, yet none the less was it God's charge. We must suppose that Joshua was lacking that susceptibility of soul which is essential for the hearing of God's voice. Some can hear that voice direct; some can hear it only through transmission of others' speech. God's charge and Moses' charge were one, "Be strong and of a good courage." What God commands, God first gives. Says he to men, "Here is my entrusted strength: use it well! More is ready as soon as it is needed." Best of all, he adds, "I will be with thee."—D.

Vers. 16—22, 29.—*The last precaution against idolatry.* We cannot trace into all its ramifications the subtle influence of a good man's life. If it does not accomplish all that he has desired, it often achieves more than he imagines. It operates in directions he had not designed. The presence of a good man will often repress an evil which he cannot eradicate. All the faith and piety of Moses had hardly restrained the people from idolatry; his removal will be the loosening of the flood-gates which had held in check the wayward passion. We have in this paragraph—

I. GOD'S FORECAST OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE SIN. "This people will rise up, and go a-whoring after the gods of the strangers" (ver. 16). Moses himself had surmised this result. With hidden sorrow, he had observed the base teudencies of the people towards idolatry. As he forecast the time when warfare should cease, and the tribes should find themselves among the relics of idols, he trembled for the result. And now this surmise on his part was confirmed by a revelation from God. It is now a foreseen reality: "They will forsake me, and break my covenant." Worldly success and self-indulgence would lead to impiety. Yet this foreknowledge of Israel's certain sin did not deter God from promising to Joshua military success, nor did it deter God from using all practical measures to dissuade from sin. We conclude that God sees it best to employ all remedial measures, even when it is known that in the chief end they will fail.

II. WE HAVE GOD'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF CONSEQUENT CALAMITY. "My anger shall be kindled against them, . . . and I will forsake them." The series of evils that would spring from idolatry is vividly set before them; and no other motive can be conjectured for this than a generous desire to deter from sin. Love is more conspicuous in portraying the certain miseries of misconduct, than in promising the rewards of obedience. The former duty is done with personal painfulness; the latter is a delight. And not only will the severity of the punishment be keenly felt, but the people will also apprehend the reason of the calamity. They will trace it up to God's displeasure; yet will they not repent. Men are woefully blind to the iron force of sinful habit. To-day it is a silken thread; to-morrow it is an iron chain.

III. GOD'S LAST EXPEDIENT TO PREVENT SIN. Moses, the servant of God, was about to die; but his death was to be a sleep, and he should die with a song in his mouth. At first sight, it seems a strange expedient as a deterrent from sin. But the intention was, that by the sweet and flowing sounds of rhythm, the main facts of God's

covenant might be kept vividly alive in the people's memory. In the absence of printing, and cheap circulations of written documents, poetic forms will live when prose is quite forgotten. God condescends to employ every possible method by which a sense of religious duty might be preserved and perpetuated. The song would live by the action of known law, when the full sense would be ignored. Thus the song of Moses, "familiar in their mouths as a household word," would be an abiding witness against them. Said God, "It shall not be forgotten." By such gracious methods the Most High would win men unto obedience and life. The mightiest power is in gentleness. If this fails, all fails.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SONG OF MOSES AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS DEATH.

In accordance with the Divine injunction, Moses composed an ode, which he recited in the hearing of the people, and committed to writing, to remain with them as a witness for God against them. With this end in view, the ode is directed principally to a contrasting of the unchanging faithfulness of the Almighty with the anticipated perversity and unfaithfulness of his people. The poem may be divided into six parts. 1. An introduction (vers. 1—3), in which the importance of the doctrine to be delivered is announced. 2. The blamelessness and excellency of Jehovah are placed in contrast with the corruptness and perversity of Israel (vers. 4, 5). 3. The folly and ingratitude of the rebellious people is dwelt upon (vers. 7—18). 4. The purpose of God to punish and reject the rebellious generation is declared (vers. 19—23). 5. The fulfilment of this purpose in the judgments which should come upon the rebels, whilst mercy and favour should be showed to those that repented and were humbled under the hand of God (vers. 24—34). 6. And finally, the judgment which God would execute on the enemies of Israel, and the mercy he would show to his servants (vers. 35—43).

In this ode—"carmine plane divino" (Lowth)—Moses displays the genius of the poet, as in the other parts of this book he has showed the sagacity of the legislator and the skill of the orator. Vigour of diction, elevation of sentiment, vivacity of representation, beauty and sublimity of imagery, characterize this ode throughout. Nor is the piety less noticeable than the poetry; zeal for God, earnest desire for his honour, and devout reverence of his majesty pervade and inspire the whole. Remarkable also is this ode in relation to the later prophetic utterances in Israel. "It is the compendious anticipatory sketch and the common watchword of all prophecy, and stands related to it as fundamentally as the Decalogue to all laws, and the Lord's Prayer to all prayers. The legislator has here condensed in a song the prophetic contents of his last address (ch. xxvii.—xxviii., xxix., xxx.), wherewith he lives on in the memory and mouth of the people. He here sets before them their whole history to the end of the days. In this ode, each age of Israel has a mirror of its present condition and future fate. This mirror prophecy holds up before its contemporaries" (Delitzsch, 'Jesaias,' s. 33).

Ver. 1.—Heaven and earth are summoned to hearken to his words, both because of their importance, and because heaven and earth were interested, so to speak, as witnesses of the manifestation of God's righteousness and faithfulness about to be celebrated (cf. ch. iv. 26; xxx. 19; xxxi. 28, 29; Isa. i. 2; Jer. ii. 12; xxii. 29).

Ver. 2.—**My doctrine shall drop as the rain** The Hebrew verb here and in ch. xxxiii. 28 is properly rendered by "drop;" it expresses the gentle falling of a genial shower or the soft distillation of dew. The clause is best taken imperatively, as it is by the LXX., the Vulgate, and Onkelos: *Let my doctrine drop as the rain, let my speech distil*, etc. The point of comparison here is not the quickening, fructifying, vivifying influence of the rain and dew, so much as the effective force of these agents as sent from heaven to produce results. So might his doctrine come with power into the minds of his hearers. **Doctrine** (לֶקַח, from לָקַח, to take); that which takes one (Prov. vii. 21, "fair speech," by which one is captivated), or which one takes or receives, viz. instruction (Prov. iv. 2; Isa. xxix. 24). **Small rain**; gentle showers, such as conduce to the growing of herbs. The Hebrew word (דְּשָׁאִים) primarily means hairs, and is here used of

rain coming down in thin streams like hair. **Showers**; *heavy rain* (רְבִיבִים, from רָבַב, to be much or many, equal to multitude of drops).

Ver. 3.—**I will publish the name of the Lord**; literally, *I will call*, i.e. *proclaim*, or *celebrate*, etc. **Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.** The hearers of the song are summoned to join in the celebration of the Divine majesty. The word rendered "greatness" occurs only in this book (ch. iii. 24; v. 21; ix. 26; xi. 2), and in Ps. cl. 2. It is the greatness of God as the Almighty that is here celebrated.

Vers. 4, 5.—**He is the Rock, his work is perfect**; rather, *The Rock! his work is perfect*, i.e. blameless, without fault. God is called "the Rock" (הַצּוּר), as the unchangeable Refuge and Stronghold of his people, by which they are sustained, and to which they can resort for defence and protection at all times. The epithet is applied to God four times besides in this song (vers. 15, 18, 30, 31); it occurs also frequently in the Psalms (cf. Ps. xix. 14; xxviii. 1; xxxi. 2, 3; lxii. 2, 7; etc.). The Hebrew word, *tsur*, *çur*, or *zur*, appears in several proper names of the Mosaic period, as *e.g. Pedahzur*, "Rock delivers" (Numb. i. 10), a name of the same import as *Pedahel*, "God delivers" (Numb. xxxiv. 28); *Elizur*, "God is a Rock" (Numb. i. 5); *Zuriel* (Numb. iii. 35) and *Zurishaddai*, "the Almighty is Rock" (Numb. i. 6; ii. 12). "If Jehovah," says Baumgarten, "is here called *Rock*, without any qualification, the reason is that he is the only true rock, and all the strength and firmness of earth's stones is but an ectype of his unchangeable faithfulness and rectitude. If one cleaves to the dualism of spirit and nature, and regards the figure as a merely subjective, arbitrary union of the two, such an expression is simply unintelligible; but if we would understand Scripture and religious speech, we must with all earnestness accustom ourselves to recognize the spiritual ground in nature, and apprehend this in the Biblical expression (comp. Steffens' 'Religionsphilosophie,' i. s. 101, 102)." It is remarkable that none of the ancient versions have retained this epithet here. The LXX. have Θεὸς: the Vulgate, *Deus* ("Dei opera"); the Targum of Onkelos, תְּקִיפָא, "Mighty;" while the Peshito has simply the pronoun "his" appended to "works," ܥܒܝܕܘܗܝ. **For all his ways are judgment**; *i.e.* accordant with rectitude (cf. Ps. cxlv. 17). **A God of truth**; rather, *of faithfulness* (אֱמוּנָה, from אָמַן, to stay, or be stayed, to be firm). **They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children**: they are a perverse and crooked generation. Of this difficult passage the following seems the best construction and rendering:—*A perverse and crooked generation—not his children*, [but] *their spot—has become corrupt towards him.* The subject of the verb at the beginning of the verse is the "perverse and crooked generation," at the end of it, and between the verb and its subject there is interjected parenthetically the clause, "not his children, but their spot." *Spot* is here used in a moral sense, as in Job xi. 15; xxxi. 7; Prov. ix. 7. These corrupt persons claimed to be children of God, but they were not; they were rather a stain and a reproach to them (cf. 2 Pet. ii. 13; Isa. i. 4). The rendering above given is substantially that of De Wette, Knobel, Keil, and Herxheimer, by all of whom the "perverse generation" is regarded as the subject of the sentence. This is the view adopted also in the 'Speaker's Commentary.' Some would make "God" the subject, and render, "He hath corrupted to him, or to himself" (margin, Authorized Version; Ibn Ezra, etc.). Others take "spot" as the subject, thus: "Their spot or blemish hath corrupted before him children not his" (Lowth, Datho); but such renderings are forced, and proceed on constructions of the text which are illegitimate. Donaldson ('Jashar,' pp. 186, 223, edit. Sec.), following Lowth's construction, appeals to בָּנִים לֹא אֱמֶן בָּם (ver. 20) as a similar inversion. But the two cases are not parallel. To make them so, we must have here בָּנָיו לֹא מוּם בָּם, "his children in whom is no spot." Ewald takes מוּמָה as the noun here, instead of מוּם, and tracing it to the Syriac ܡܡܨ, *juravit*, renders "to him they, his not-sons, have corrupted their oath," *i.e.* have broken it; and this Fürst approves. But the phrase, "to corrupt an oath" is unexampled in the Old Testament, and there is no ground for changing the noun. The ancient versions vary considerably here: LXX., *ἡμάρτοσαν, οὐκ αὐτῷ τέκνα μωμητά*: Aq., *διέφθειραν αὐτῷ οὐχ ὑὶοὶ αὐτου*: Sym., *διέφθειραν πρὸς αὐτον οὐχ οἱ ὑἱοὶ τὸ σύνολον*: Vulgate, *peccaverunt ei et non filii ejus in sordibus*; Vet. Itala., *peccaverunt non ei filii maculati*; Syriac, "They corrupted but not him, children of defilement." These various renderings indicate that probably the text is and has long been corrupt. Some of the older English versions are worth noting on this verse. Rogers [Matthew], "The frowarde and overthwart generation hath marred themselves to himward, and are not his sonnes for their deformitie's sake;" Bishop's Bible, "Frowardly have they done agaynst him by their vices, not being his own children, but a wicked and froward generation;" Geneva Version, "They have corrupted themselves towards him by their vice, not

being his children, but a froward and crooked generation."

Vers. 6, 7.—Instead of gratefully acknowledging the Divine beneficence, and dutifully obeying the Divine will, Israel had perversely and foolishly requited the Lord for all his benefits, by apostacy from him. **Do ye thus requite?** The verb here signifies primarily to do to any one either good or evil, whether in return for what he has done or not (cf. Gen. l. 15; 1 Sam. xxiv. 18; Prov. iii. 30); then, as a secondary meaning, to reward, repay, requite, as here and Ps. xviii. 21. To bring more forcibly to their view the ingratitude and folly of their conduct, Moses dwells upon what God was and had been to the nation: **their Father,** in that he had, in his love, chosen them to be his people (cf. Isa. lxiii. 16; lxiv. 7; Mal. ii. 10); **their Purchaser,** who had acquired possession of them by delivering them out of Egypt (cf. Ps. lxxiv. 2); **their Maker,** who had constituted them a nation; and **their Establisher,** by whom they had been conducted through the wilderness and settled in Canaan. **Days of old;** the times of Israel's deliverance from bondage, and the times during which successive generations had lived and experienced the goodness of the Lord. The form of the word rendered "days" is poetical, and is found only here and in Ps. xc. 15, which is also ascribed to Moses. **The years of many generations;** literally, *years of generation and generation;* "ætatum singularum annos" (Rosenmüller).

Vers. 8, 9.—From the very beginning, when God first allotted to the nations a place and a heritage, he had respect in his arrangements to the sons of Israel, who were his portion, and had as it were kept their interest in view in all that he appointed and ordered. **According to the number of the children of Israel.** When the Most High portioned out to the nations the heritage of each, he reserved for Israel, as the people of his choice, an inheritance proportioned to its numbers. The LXX. has "according to the number of the angels of God," an arbitrary departure from the original text, in accommodation, probably, to the later Jewish notion of each nation having its guardian angel. **The Lord's portion is his people** (cf. Exod. xv. 16; xix. 5; 1 Sam. x. 1; Ps. lxxviii. 71). **The lot of his inheritance;** literally, *the cord,* etc., the allusion being to the measuring of land by a cord, equivalent to the portion by measure which Jehovah allotted to himself as his inheritance (cf. Ps. xvi. 6).

Ver. 10.—God's fatherly care of Israel. **In the desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness;** literally, *in the land of the desert, in the waste* (the formless waste; the word used is that rendered, Gen. i. 2, "without form"), *the howling of the wilderness.* "Israel is figuratively represented as a man without food or water, and surrounded by howling, ferocious beasts, and who must needs have perished had not God found him and rescued him" (Herxheimer). **The apple of his eye;** literally, *the mannikin* (אִישׁוֹן) of his eye, the pupil; so called because in it, as in a mirror, a person sees his own image reflected in miniature (Gesenius), or because, being the tenderest part of the eye, it is guarded as one would a babe (cf. Ps. xvii. 8; Prov. vii. 2; Zech. ii. 12). By Delitzsch and others this explanation of the word is rejected as not philologically justified, there being no evidence that the termination ן had a diminutive force; and as not in keeping with the earnestness of the passages in which this word occurs. They prefer the explanation *man image* to *mannikin.* Anyhow, the use of the word here must be taken as indicating that Israel is ever in the eye of the Lord, the object of his constant and tenderest care.

Ver. 11.—God's treatment of his people is compared to that of an eagle towards its young (cf. Exod. xix. 4). In the Authorized Version, the apodosis of the sentence is made to begin at ver. 12, and ver. 11 is wholly understood of the eagle and its young. To this arrangement it has been objected that it overlooks the fact that the suffixes to the verbs "taketh" and "beareth" are singulars, and are to be understood consequently, not of the eaglets, but of Israel. It has, therefore, been proposed to render the passage thus: *As an eagle which stirreth up its nest, fluttereth over its young, he spread out his wings, took him up, and carried him on his pinions. The Lord alone did lead him,* etc. The comparison is thus made to pass into a metaphorical representation of the Lord's dealing with Israel. One feels that there is something violent in this, for whilst God's care for Israel might be fittingly *compared* to that of an eagle towards her young, it is less fit to speak of God himself as if he *were* an eagle with wings which he spread abroad and on which he bare Israel. The rendering in the Authorized Version is on this account to be preferred, if it can be grammatically vindicated. And this it may on the ground that the suffixes may be understood of the "nest" as containing the young ("continens pro contento," a common rhetorical trope in Scripture; see Glass., 'Phil. Sac.,' p. 686; cf. Virgil, 'Æneid,' xii. 475, "nidisque loquacibus escam"); or the young may be referred to individually, "taketh it, beareth it," *i.e.* each of them; or, if the nest be understood, the whole body of them as therein contained. **Stirreth up her [its] nest** *i.e.* its nestlings; *provocans ad volan-*

dum pullos suos, Vulgate. This is the explanation usually given of the initial clause of this verse; but its accuracy has been questioned. Fürst would render the verb by "watches over;" but though רָעַר, as the Hiph. of עוּר, to watch, may have this meaning, it is undoubtedly used generally in the sense of rousing, exciting, stirring up. Knobel retains this meaning, but understands the clause of the exciting of the nestlings by the parent bird coming to them with food. This is certainly more in keeping with what follows; for when the eagle nestles or broods over her young, she does not excite them to fly. **Fluttereth over her young**; rather, *broods over, nestles*, or *cherishes* (יְרַחֵף). **Spreadeth abroad her wings**, etc. "I once saw a very interesting sight above one of the crags of Ben Nevis, as I was going in pursuit of black game. Two parent eagles were teaching their offspring, two young birds, the manœuvres of flight. They began by rising from the top of a mountain, in the eye of the sun;—it was about midday, and bright for this climate. They at first made small circles, and the young imitated them; they paused on their wings, waiting till they had made their first flight, holding them on their expanded wings when they appeared exhausted, and then took a second and larger gyration, always rising towards the sun, and enlarging their circle of flight, so as to make a gradually ascending spiral" (Davy, 'Salmonia;' see also Bochart, 'Hierozoicon,' ii. 181). The general reference is to God's fostering care of Israel, and especially his dealing with them when "he suffered their manners in the wilderness" (Acts xiii. 18), disciplined them, and trained them for what they were appointed to do.

Ver. 12.—**The Lord alone did lead him** (cf. Exod. xiii. 21; xv. 13). **With him**; *i.e.* along with Jehovah, as aiding him.

Ver. 13.—**He made him ride on the high places of the earth.** To ride over or drive over the heights of a country is figuratively to subjugate and take possession of that country (cf. ch. xxxiii. 29; Isa. lviii. 14). Israel, having subjugated Canaan, could eat of its produce, the increase of the fields, as his own. **Honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.** Canaan abounded in wild bees, which had their hives in crevices of the rock, and in olive trees, which grew on a rocky soil; as is still the case in Palestine.

Ver. 14.—**Butter of kine.** The Hebrew word (חֶמְאָה) here used designates milk in a solid or semi-solid state, as thick cream, curd, or butter. As distinguished from this is the **milk of sheep**; where the word used (חָלָב) properly denotes fresh milk, milk in a fluid state, and with all its richness (חֵלֶב, fatness) in it (cf. Gen. xviii. 8: Isa. vii. 22). **Fat of lambs**; lambs of the best, "fat" being a figurative expression for the best (Numb. xviii. 12). **Rams of the breed of Bashan**; literally, *rams, sons of Bashan*; i.e. reared in Bashan, a district famous for its cattle. **With the fat of kidneys of wheat**; *with the kidney-fat of wheat*; i.e. the richest fat, the best and most nutritious wheat. **And thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.** The blood of the grape is the expressed juice of the grape, which, being red, is compared to blood. The rendering "pure" here is not inapt. The original word (חָמַר, from חָמַר, to boil up, to foam, to rise in bubbles) describes this juice as it appears when pressed into a vessel, when the surface of the liquid is covered with froth or foam. There is no ground for the explanation "fiery wine" (Keil); wine in such a state was never among the Hebrews counted a blessing. That they had and used fermented wine is certain; but what they specially esteemed as a luxury was the pure unadulterated juice of the grape freshly pressed out and drunk with the foam on it.

Vers. 15—18.—Israel's ungrateful return for the Lord's benefits.

Ver. 15.—**Jeshurun.** This name, formed from יָשָׁר, righteous, designates Israel as chosen to be a righteous nation; and in the use of it here lies the keenest reproach of apostate Israel, as fallen into a state the opposite of that to which it was destined. "By using the name *righteous* in place of *Israel*, Moses ironically censures those who had swerved from rectitude; by recalling to memory with what dignity they had been endowed, he the more sharply rebukes the perfidy which was their crime" (Calvin). This name appears also in ch. xxxiii. 5, 26, and in Isa. xliv. 2; but in these places without any implied censure. By some the word is regarded as a diminutive from יָשׁוּר, the same as יָשָׁר, in the sense of *rectulus, justulus*, "the good little people" (Gesenius); others as a diminutive from יִשְׂרָאֵל, Israel, as a sort of term of endearment (Grotius). But the latter of these derivations is impossible; and as to the former, there lacks evidence of the termination *un* having a diminutive significance in Hebrew. Besides, neither here nor in ch. xxxiii. 5 would a term of endearment be suitable. **Waxed fat, and kicked** (cf. ch. vi. 11; viii. 10; xxxi. 20). The allusion is to an ox that had grown fat through good feeding, and had become unmanageable in consequence (cf. 1 Sam. ii. 26; Hos. x. 4). **Lightly esteemed.** The Hebrew is strongly expressive here: *Thou hast treated as a fool* (נָבָל, from נָבַל, to be foolish (cf. Micah vii. 6).

Ver. 16.—**They provoked him to jealousy.**

God had bound Israel to himself as by the marriage bond, and they by their unfaithfulness had incited him to jealousy (cf. ch. xxxi. 16; Exod. xxxiv. 15; Isa. liv. 5; Hos. i., etc.). **Strange** gods (cf. Jer. ii. 25; iii. 13).

Ver. 17.—**Devils**; *shedim*, a word which occurs only here and Ps. cvi. 37. It stands connected with the verb שׁוּד, to rule, and means primarily "lords." The LXX. render by δαιμόνια, demons. In Assyrian it is said to be a name for demigods. **Not to God**; rather, *to a not-God*, a composite term in apposition to *shedim*; the meaning is rightly given in the margin of the Authorized Version, "which were not God." **To new gods that came newly up.** The word rendered by "newly" (קָרוֹב) properly means "near;" it is an adjective both of place and of time; here it is the latter, equal to of a near time, recently—gods recently invented or discovered.

Ver. 18.—Moses here returns to the thought of ver. 15, for the purpose of expressing it with greater force, and also of leading on to the description he is about to give of the Lord's acts towards the nation who had so revolted from him. **Thou art unmindful**; LXX., ἐγκατέλιπες: Vulgate, *dereliquisti*. The Hebrew word שָׁיָה occurs only here, and the meaning is doubtful. From the rendering of the versions, it would seem to be allied to the Arabic سها, *saha*, *oblitus est*. **That formed thee**; literally, *that brought thee forth* or *caused thee to be born*; "qui te eduxit ex utero materno" (Jarchi. Cf. for the use of the verb, Ps. xxix. 9). In the Samaritan Codex, מחלל, "who hath glorified or praised thee," is the reading, instead of מחלך; and this the Syriac also expresses. The other versons, however, support the Masoretic reading.

Vers. 19—33.—Because of their rebellion, God would cast them off and visit them with terrible calamities.

Ver. 19.—When the Lord saw how they **had** departed from him to servo idols, he **abhorred** (rather, *spurned* or *rejected*) them in consequence of the provocation which their unworthy conduct had given him.

Ver. 20.—God himself comes forth to announce his resolution to withdraw his favour from them, and to inflict chastisement upon them; he would withdraw his protecting care of them, and see how they would fare without that; and he would also send on them the tokens of his displeasure. **A very froward generation**, etc.; literally, *a generation of perversities*, an utterly perverse and faithless race.

Ver. 21.—(Cf. ch. v. 16.) Because they had moved God to jealousy and provoked him to anger by their vanities, their nothingnesses, mere vapours and empty exhalations (הַבְלֵיהֶם; cf. Jer. x. 6; John ii. 8; 1 Cor. viii. 4); as they had forsaken him for a no-God, he would send retribution on them by adopting as his a no-people, and giving to a foolish nation, *i.e.* a nation not before possessed of that true wisdom the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord, the privileges and blessings which Israel had forfeited by their apostacy. By "a no-people" is not to be understood a savage tribe not yet formed into a community, but a people without God, and not recognized by him as in covenant union with him (cf. Rom. x. 19; Eph. ii. 12; 1 Pet. ii. 10).

Ver. 22.—(Cf. Jer. xv. 14; xvii. 4; Lam. iv. 11.) **The lowest hell**; *the lowest sheol*, the uttermost depth of the under-world. The Hebrew *sheol* (שְׁאוֹל) answering to the Greek ᾅδης, by which it is usually rendered by the LXX., is a general designation of the unseen state, the place of the dead. By some the word is derived from שָׁאַל, to ask, because *sheol* is ever asking, is insatiable (Prov. xxx. 16); but more probably it is from a root signifying to excavate, to hollow, and, like the German *hölle*, means primarily a hollow place or cavern. The Divine wrath kindles a consuming fire, that burns down to the lowest depths—to the deepest part of *sheol*—consumes the earth's produce, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. This does not refer to any particular judgment that was to befall the national Israel, but is a general description of the effects of the Divine wrath when that is poured forth in judgments on men.

Ver. 23.—**I will spend mine arrows upon them**; I will inflict on them so many calamities that none shall remain. The evils sent on men by God are represented as arrows shot on them from above. (Cf. ver. 42; Job vi. 4; Ps. vii. 13; xxxviii. 2; xlv. 5; lviii. 7; Zech. ix. 14; Homer, 'Iliad,' i. 45, etc.)

Vers. 24, 25.—The evils threatened are famine, pestilence, plague, wild beasts, poisonous reptiles, and war. They shall be **burnt with hunger**, etc.; render: **Sucked out by hunger, consumed with pestilential heat, and bitter plague; I will send against them the tooth of beasts and the poison of things that crawl in the dust.** When hunger, pestilence, and contagious disease had wasted and exhausted them, then God would send on them wild beasts and poisonous reptiles. *Shall be burnt.* The Hebrew word occurs only here; it is a verbal adjective, meaning, literally, *sucked out*, *i.e.* utterly exhausted; LXX., τηκομένοι λιμῷ. *Tooth of beasts and poison of serpents*; poetical for ravenous and poisonous animals (cf. Lev.

xxvi. 22). **Shall destroy**; literally, *shall make childless, shall bereave*, viz. the land which is thought of as a mother whose children were destroyed. The verb is here *sensu prægnanti*, shall bereave by destroying, etc. (cf. 1 Sam. xv. 23; Lam. i. 20; Jer. xviii. 21).

Vers. 26, 27.—Israel's desert was to be utterly destroyed, but God refrained from this for his own Name's sake. **I said, I would scatter them into corners**; rather, *I should say, I will blow them away*, i.e. disperse them as by a mighty wind. The verb here is the Hiph. of פָּאָה, to breathe, to blow, and is found only here. The rabbins make it a denominative from פֵּאָה, a corner, and this the Authorized Version follows; others trace it to an Arabic root, פאה, *amputavit, excidit*, and render, "will cut them off." The idea intended to be conveyed is obviously that of entire destruction, and this is not satisfied by the representation of their being scared or driven into corners. **Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy.** Various renderings and interpretations of this passage have been given. 1. *Were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy*, i.e. that I should be provoked to wrath by the enemy ascribing the destruction of Israel to their own prowess. 2. *Were it not that I feared a wrath upon the enemy*, with much the same meaning. 3. *Were it not that I feared the fury of the enemy*, i.e. against Israel—feared lest the enemy should be encouraged to rise up against Israel and ascribe their destruction to their own valour. Of these that most generally approved is the first. (On this reason for sparing Israel, see ch. ix. 28; Exod. xxxii. 12; Numb. xiv. 13, etc.; Isa. x. 5, etc.; Ezek. xx. 13, 14.) **Should behave themselves strangely**; rather, *should mistake* or *falsely pretend*. The verb is the Piel of נָכַר, to look upon, to mark, and conveys the idea of looking on askance or prejudicially, hence being ignorant of, mistaking, feigning, or falsely pretending. **Our hand is high**; rather, *was high*, i.e. was mighty in power.

Vers. 28—33.—The cause of Israel's rejection was that they were a people utterly destitute of counsel and without understanding. Had they been wise, they would have looked to the end, and acted in a way conducive to their own welfare, instead of rushing upon ruin.

Ver. 29.—**Oh that they were wise, that they understood this**; rather, *If they were wise they would understand this*. **They would consider their latter end!** *i.e.* the end to which they were going, the inevitable issue of the course they were taking.

Ver. 30.—If Israel were wise, they could easily overcome all their foes through the help of the Almighty (Lev. xxvi. 8); but having forsaken him, they were left by him, and so came under the power of the enemy.

Ver. 31.—The heathen had also a rock in which they trusted—their idol-gods; but even they knew and felt that their rock was not as the Rock of Israel, for, having often experienced the almighty power of God, they could not but acknowledge that he was mightier far than the gods whom they worshipped (cf. Exod. xiv. 25; Numb. xxxiii., xxxiv.; Josh. ii. 9; 1 Sam. v. 7). Moses is here himself again the speaker.

Ver. 32.—If the Rock of Israel was so much mightier than the rock of their enemies, how came it that Israel was beaten and put to flight by their enemies? The reason is here given: It was because Israel had become wholly corrupt and vitiated that they were forsaken of the Lord and left to the power of their enemies. **Their vine**; *i.e.* Israel itself (cf. Ps. lxxx. 9, etc.; Isa. v. 2; Jer. ii. 21; Hos. x. 1). **The vine of Sodom.** It has been supposed that there is reference here to a particular plant, and different plants have been suggested as deserving to be so named. But it is more probable that Sodom and Gomorrah are here advanced as types of what is depraved, and to the moral taste nauseous (cf. Isa. i. 10; Jer. xxiii. 14). **Gall** (cf. ch. xxix. 18).

Ver. 33.—The wine of these grapes is poison and venom. **Dragons**; *tannin* (cf. Exod. vii. 9, 10). **Cruel** [deadly] **venom of asps.** The *pethen*, one of the most poisonous of snakes, the bite of which was immediately fatal (Kitto, 'Bibl. Cycl.,' iii. 494; Smith's 'Dict.,' i. 21). These figures express the thought that Israel had utterly corrupted their way and become abominable; probably also it is intimated that, as they had imitated the impiety of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, they deserved to perish as they did (J. H. Michaelis).

Vers. 34—43.—Notwithstanding the iniquity of Israel and the judgments that should come upon them, God would have compassion upon them for his Name's sake, and would appear for their vindication and defence. The "this" in ver. 34 is by some understood of the sinful doings of the Israelites which God should not forget or overlook. So the Targum of Onkelos: "Are not all their works manifest before me, kept against the day of judgment in my treasures?" So also Calvin, "Quanquam de pœnis hunc versum quidam exponunt, acsi Deus assereret diversas earum species apud se paratas esse, quas depromat quoties libuerit: rectius tamen est de sceleribus intelligere." But there is a more comprehensive reference here. Not only the deeds of the transgressors, but the judgments that should come on Israel, and also God's interposition on their behalf, *were laid up*

in store with him, and sealed up among his treasures. All that had been done had been noted, and all that should happen was decreed, and should certainly come to pass. The "this" has thus both a retrospective and a prospective reference; it includes both the sin of the nation and God's dealing with them afterwards, as well as his judgments on their enemies.

Ver. 34.—**My treasures.** God's treasures contain not only a store of blessing, but also instruments of punishment, which as he sees meet, he sends forth on men (cf. ch. xxviii. 12; Job xxxviii. 22, 23; Ps. cxxxv. 7).

Ver. 35.—Render: **Vengeance is mine, and retribution for the time when their feet shall totter; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and that which is prepared for them maketh haste.** The tottering of the feet represents the incipient fall. God would manifest himself as the Avenger when their calamity began to come upon them.

Ver. 36.—**The Lord shall judge his people** (cf. Ps. cxxxv. 14; 1 Pet. iv. 17). **And repent himself for his servants;** rather, *and have compassion upon his servants.* **And there is none shut up, or left.** The words rendered "shut up or left" are a proverbial expression for "every one, men of all sorts" (cf. 1 Kings xiv. 10; xxi. 21; 2 Kings ix. 8; xiv. 26); but how the words are to be rendered or explained is uncertain. Rosenmüller renders as in the Authorized Version; Gesenius has, "the shut up and the let go free, the bond and the free;" so also Fürst and De Wette; De Dieu, "married and single, *conjugatus et cælebs*," referring to the Arabic usage in support of his conclusion ('Animad. in Vet. Test.,' p. 114), and this Keil approves. Ewald has "kept in (by legal impurity) or at large." The explanation of Gesenius and Fürst seems best.

Ver. 37.—The Lord would show his people the utter worthlessness of idols, and bring them to acknowledge him as the only true God. **Their gods;** the idols to which Israel had turned, the strange gods which they had foolishly and sinfully preferred to Jehovah.

Ver. 39.—**See now that I am, even I am he.** The Hebrew is more expressive, *See now that I, I am;* LXX., ἴδετε, ἴδετε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι (cf. Isa. xli. 4; xlviii. 12; John viii. 24; xviii. 5). Their own experience of the utter impotency of these idol-gods to help them or to protect themselves from the stroke of the Almighty was enough to convince them that they were no gods, and that he alone was to be feared and worshipped.

Vers. 40, 41.—These verses should be read continuously: **For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, As I live for ever, if I whet my glittering sword, and if my hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies,** etc. Lifting up the hand to heaven was a gesture intended to express that the person taking an oath appealed to God as a witness of his oath, and who would perish for falsehood (cf. Gen. xiv. 22); and "as the Lord liveth" was a common formula in taking an oath (cf. Numb. xiv. 21; 1 Sam. xiv. 39, 45; Jer. v. 2). As God could swear by none greater, he sware by himself (cf. Exod. vi. 8; Numb. xiv. 30; Isa. xlv. 23; Jer. xxii. 5; Heb. vi. 17), that if he did come forth to avenge himself of his enemies, he would not spare, but would do thoroughly what he had come forth to do. —*Glittering sword;* literally, lightning of sword (cf. Ez. xxi. 10 [15]).

Ver. 42.—**My sword shall devour flesh:** literally, *shall eat flesh;* "the edge of the sword is called its mouth, because, like a mouth, it is said to eat and devour" (Gesenius). **From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.** Different renderings of this have been given: LXX., ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς ἀρχόντων ἐχθρῶν, "from the head of the hostile princes;" "from the head of the chiefs of the enemy" (Gesenius, Fürst, Rosenmüller); "from the hairy head of the foe" (Keil, Herxheimer, Knobel). פְּרָעוֹת, the plural of פֶּרַע, hair, locks, signifies primarily hairs, and a head of hairs, and may be taken as equivalent to "a hairy head;" but the word is also used in the sense of "princes" or "chiefs" (probably because such were distinguished by copious flowing locks; cf. Judg. v. 2); hence the rendering, "head of the chiefs." The former is to be preferred here, for why chiefs or princes should be referred to in this connection does not appear (cf. Ps. lxviii. 22). The rendering of the Authorized Version is wholly unauthorized. This verse presents an instance of alternate parallelism; each half falls into two members, and of the four members thus constituted, the third corresponds to the first, and the fourth to the second; thus—

a "I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
b And my sword shall devour flesh;
a' With the blood of the slain and the captives,
b' From the hairy head of the foe."

Ver. 43.—"As this song commenced with an appeal to heaven and earth to give glory to the Lord (vers. 1—3), so it very suitably closes with an appeal to the heathen to rejoice with his people on account of the acts of the Lord" (Keil). **Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people.** The Authorized Version here follows the LXX., εὐφράνθητε ἔθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ, and so St. Paul cites the passage in Rom. xv. 10. The Jewish interpreters generally render, *Praise his people, O nations;* and this several Christian interpreters adopt. But as Rosenmüller

remarks, it is the Divine righteousness manifested in the vindication of his people from their enemies that is to be celebrated, and not the people themselves, as what follows shows. Here as elsewhere the *nations* and the *people* are in contrast.

Vers. 44—47.—Moses, having composed this song, came, accompanied by Joshua, and they together spoke it in the hearing of the people; after which Moses took occasion to urge upon them anew the importance of keeping the commandments of God.

Ver. 44.—**Hoshea the son of Nun.** Moses invariably writes this name *Jehoshuah* (Jehovah is help; cf. Numb. xiii.; ch. xxxi. 3, 7, 14, 20, etc.). The use of Hoshea here is due to the fact that this account is part of the supplement added by another writer to the writing of Moses.

Ver. 46.—(Cf. ch. vi. 7; xi. 19.)

Ver. 47.—**It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life;** these are not mere empty words; they are of vital import (cf. ch. xxx. 20).

Vers. 48—52.—On the day on which Moses rehearsed this song in the hearing of the people, his death was announced to him by God, and the command was again given to him to ascend Mount Nebo, thence to survey the promised land, and there to be gathered to his people. The same in substance, the command as given here differs slightly in form and in some minor particulars from that as recorded by Moses himself (Numb. xxvii. 12—14).

Ver. 49.—**Abarim** (cf. Numb. xxi. 10, 20). **Nebo** (cf. Numb. xxxii. 3, 38). An idol Nebo was worshipped by the Moabites (Isa. xlvi. 1).

Ver. 50.—**And be thou gathered unto thy people.** "To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This signifies," saith R. Isaac, "that he should be associated and joined to the souls of the just who are called *his people*. For the people of Moses were not buried in Mount Abarim, and therefore he doth not speak of gathering his body to their bodies, but of his soul to their souls ('Chissute Emuna,' i. 11)" (Patrick).

Ver. 51.—(Cf. Numb. xx. 13, 24.) **Because ye sanctified me not** (cf. Numb. xxvii. 14; 1 Pet. iii. 15).

Ver. 52.—**Yet thou shalt see the land** (cf. Heb. xi. 13).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*God the believer's Rock.* "Forms change: principles never." So have we had often to remark in discovering in and developing from this book the everlasting principles which are therein set in archaic forms. The song of Moses here recorded will yield us many illustrations of this kind of teaching. Its first four verses suggest three lines of thought.

I. THERE IS HERE A REVEALED DOCTRINE CONCERNING GOD. In the last song which the old man utters ere he climbs the mount of Nebo to die, he declares, "I will publish the Name of the Lord." 1. This Name is "*Jehovah*." The word involves self-existence, self-sufficiency, immutability, pure being, personality. "I am that I am" expresses all this. It would be a burning shame for any one to apply the term "anthropomorphic" to such a revelation as this. Such a conception may be revealed *to* man, but assuredly it borrows nought *from* him. 2. To this Being, greatness is ascribed; *i.e.* royal magnificence and splendour. The sovereignty of heaven and earth is there! 3. All moral perfections are in the "Name" of God (cf. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). 4. His work is perfect. The revealed attributes of God warrant us in drawing this conclusion. The intention of Moses here is to set the perfection of God's work over against the sin of man's. 5. His ways are judgment: *i.e.* they are according to justice. 6. He is the *Rock*. This epithet is a "piece of Mosaic." It was indeed used by others long after. But the use of it began with Moses. On the *rocks* of Sinai was the Law proclaimed. In the *rock-cleft* was Moses hidden. From the smitten *rock* the waters gushed forth. How natural for Moses to apply this figure to the eternal God! In ver. 31, Moses speaks of God as "our Rock." He was known to Israel as theirs, their own firm, changeless ground of strength, through all the changing years!

II. THIS DOCTRINE OF THE LIVING GOD AS THE ROCK IS FRAUGHT WITH COMFORT AND REFRESHMENT FOR MAN (ver. 2); *i.e.* what the rain is to the herb, what the showers are to the grass, that is this teaching concerning God to the soul of man. 1. Our heart wants God (Ps. lxxxiv. 2). 2. *Such* a God—*this* God is as rain and as dew: refreshing, enlivening, restoring. 3. This doctrine of God is meant to make the heart productive of holiness. God's revelation of himself is meant to draw men to himself; in doing this God saves them!

III. THE DOCTRINE THUS PROPOUNDED DESERVES TO BE UNIVERSALLY HEARD, LISTENED TO, AND BELIEVED. (Ver. 1.) Moses would summon all to hear it. It is: 1. For all classes. 2. For all lands. 3. For all the ages. The day will never come when this doctrine of God will be obsolete—never!

Vers. 5—14.—*Ungrateful men interrogated.* In almost every clause of this paragraph there is some specific allusion, for the elucidation of which the reader will refer to the Exposition. The commentary of Dr. Jameson thereon is very valuable. Our aim is strictly homiletic. The central words around which the preacher's expository thoughts may gather are these—"Do ye thus requite the Lord?" Three main lines of illustration are suggested.

I. HERE IS A REHEARSAL OF THE DIVINE LOVING-KINDNESS AND TENDER MERCIES. 1. There is the mercy of *redemption.* "Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee?" 2. There is the mercy of Divine choice of Israel as a people. "Hath he not made thee, and established thee?" (see also vers. 7, 8). 3. There is Divine leadership. "He led him about," etc. 4. There is Divine guardianship. "He kept him as the apple of his eye." 5. There is Divine help and training of the most tender kind. A wonderful description is given thereof in ver. 11. 6. There is abundant Divine provision for the wants of the ransomed ones (vers. 13, 14). Each one of these six points may be enlarged upon, as applicable to present gospel blessings and providential mercies.

II. HERE IS A STRANGE RESPONSE TO SUCH ABOUNDINGS OF MERCY. The burden of Moses here is not unlike that of a far later prophet, even Isaiah (see Isa. i. 2—4). The moan of many of God's prophets has been the same ever since; it is so now. The contrast between God's bounty and man's perversity causes a grief almost too heavy to be borne. Here are at least five complaints. 1. They are corrupt. 2. They are perverse, or false. 3. They are crooked, twisted. 4. They are foolish, not acting as reasonable men. 5. Instead of being like his children, they are a spot upon them—a stain (see Hebrew). The question may fairly be asked, Who are they of whom similar complaints may be made now? We reply: 1. Those who profess to be the people of God, and who show no signs whatever that their profession is real. 2. Those of God's children who are but half-hearted in their love and zeal. 3. Those who are ready with lip-service, but are grievously defective in Christian morality. 4. Those who have neither yielded themselves to God nor yet made any profession thereof. Of all such, similar complaints may be made to those here laid against Israel of old.

III. HERE IS A REASONABLE QUESTION. It is, indeed, a reproachful one. And if ever the servants of God now take it up and apply it to the heart and conscience of their hearers, it should be done with the utmost tenderness, even unto tears; remembering, on the one hand, how infinitely greater the mercies of God are now, compared with aught that Moses knew; and also considering themselves, how often they have been as ungrateful Israel of old, and that, if it had not been for almighty grace, would have been ungrateful still. The solemn and sorrowful interrogative—"Do ye thus requite the Lord?"—may be pressed home in a series of cumulative inquiries. It may be asked: 1. Is this the *natural* return for mercies so great? 2. Do not such love and care *demand* a holy and grateful life? 3. Can any reason whatever *justify* so poor a response as God has yet received? 4. Have men no *remorse* in the review of the contrast between God's mercies and their sin? 5. Should not remorse lead on to *repentance?* 6. And shall not this penitent life begin *now?* It is quite certain that, though God is long-suffering, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," he will not always allow his mercies to be thus trifled with (see Amos. iv.). But why, why should men compel us to present thus "the terrors of the Lord"? He would rather win by love. Judgment is "his strange work."

Vers. 15—18.—*God provoked to jealousy by an unfaithful people.* (On the whole subject of "anthropomorphism," which is alleged against the Old Testament representations of the Divine Being, see the Homily on vers. 1—4 of this chapter, and also Homily on ch. iv. 21—24). This paragraph is a continuation of the same theme as that touched on in preceding verses. It not only sets forth the waywardness of the people retrospectively, but also prospectively. In fact, it is more of a prophetic forecast than otherwise. Moses sees the people in the enjoyment of all the blessings of

God's providence; he looks onward, and, with the seer's eye, he beholds them in the promised land, their wanderings over, and their marches hither and thither exchanged for a settled life in a land of plenty and of delight. There they are prospering abundantly; and if they only used their prosperity aright they would be doubly blessed, even with that blessing which "maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith." But, alas! how different is the picture here drawn! And how precisely did the after-reality answer thereto! There is in these verses a logical order of thought, in the sketch given, first, of Israel's downward course; and then, of the effect of that on the relations between them and their God.

I. HERE IS A GRIEVOUS PICTURE OF SPIRITUAL DEGENERATION IN THE MIDST OF WORLDLY PROSPERITY. There are four steps in the descent. 1. Prosperity generates wilfulness, and a resistance to the Divine claims. If men can have their own way entirely, for a while, and secure precisely their own ends, such success, if not sanctified, will but create a self-will and self-assertion stronger than ever. "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." The restraints of duty, conscience, God, will be irksome, and will provoke to resistance. Men will "kick against the pricks." 2. Another stage will surely follow on. The irritation which was at first felt will subside, and insensibility will steal over the soul. "Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick." Stubborn obstinacy without the former stings of conscience. "Past feeling." The terrible symptom of a moral and spiritual paralysis! 3. To this there will follow a third stage. "He forsook God . . . and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." Here there sets in a thinking lightly of God altogether, and a forsaking of him. How true is the picture here given to the actual progress of sin in the soul everywhere! 4. To this succeeds not only neglect of God, but *the substitution of other gods* (vers. 16, 17)! This actually came about (see Jer. ii., specially ver. 13). The heart of man must have a supreme object of love; and if God be not enthroned in the heart, some rival will be seated there.

Note—How very little all possible worldly good can do for a man unless there is a process of spiritual renewal and culture going on, which will enable him to sanctify all to the highest purposes! Yea, more. If worldly prosperity is not sanctified to God and by him, it will be as a dead weight upon the spirit. It will engender, first resistance, then deadness, then estrangement, then idolatry! This is the sure and certain effect of an accumulation of worldly good, when its possessor is not led by Divine grace to use it wisely and piously. It is an evil much to be lamented that so many glory in the accumulation of things, while neglecting the culture and education of their souls. Why, even in common life, there are no more awkward, ungainly, and impracticable beings than those who have grown rich while neglecting to educate themselves. They have acquired a prodigious strength of self-will, without the knowledge of self-government. And of all men in the world, they are of the least use to their generation.

II. HERE IS A STRANGE EFFECT OF SUCH DEGENERACY ON THE DIVINE BEING. "They provoked him to jealousy" (see remark in "anthropomorphism," *ut supra*, and also Homily on ch. iv. 24). Of all the attributes or epithets applied to God, there is no one which endears him to us more than this: "jealousy"! What does it mean? 1. That God has a heart of love. 2. That his love yearns to be reciprocated. 3. That the reciprocation of love for which he yearns is the whole undivided love of our hearts. 4. That if such devoted love is not accorded to him, he feels wronged. 5. That if supreme love is bestowed on any other than God, his holy love is outraged; his pure indignation is "jealousy." And consider how great the wrong is which is thus committed against a gracious God. What would an earthly father think if his children, who lived on his bounty, thought only of eating and drinking, and cared not for *him*? What if the children thought more of their toys than of their father? *Ought* he not to be jealous? Would he—could he be a good father, and not be jealous? Surely not. It is easy to apply this in such a case. Christ teaches us to learn of the heavenly Father by means of earthly ones. Consider, moreover, (1) the wrong done to God, (2) the misplacement of *things*, (3) the injustice and injury done to ourselves, and (4) the injurious effect of wealth, brought about by such misuse of God's benefits.

III. TWO INQUIRIES CANNOT BUT SUGGEST THEMSELVES. 1. *How may such evil be guarded against?* This question supposes that the evil has not yet been fallen into.

"Prevention is better than cure." (1) Let us regard ourselves as of infinitely more moment than our possessions. What we *are* is beyond measure of more concern than what we *have*. Our culture for eternity is of the first importance. (2) Let us from the outset of life regard God as the Author of all good, and as therefore having the first claim on our regard. (3) Let us cultivate the devotional habit of receiving all our temporal comforts as from God. If we have used means to secure them, he it is who has given us the means to use; who has given us the power to use them, and who has made those means a success. (4) Let us seek wisdom from above to hallow all our good for God, and to "honour the Lord with our substance, and with the firstfruits of all our increase" (see Homily on ch. xiv. 22). (5) Conscious of the deceitfulness of the human heart, let us entreat our God to fill us with the power of the Spirit, as well as to give us providential mercies. Then, the first will ensure the sanctification of the second. The larger our possessions, the more we need of the Spirit of God, to ensure their becoming a blessing, and to prevent their becoming a snare. 2. *If we have fallen into such evil, how may we be recovered therefrom?* (1) Let the very suggestion that a spiritual paralysis may have stolen over the soul, startle us into the inquiry, Is this the case with us? (2) Let us inquire solemnly, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" (3) Let us repent before God of the wrong we have done to him in seeking from creature comforts the joy which he alone can give. (4) Taught by long and sad experience how a perverted nature may pervert all things, let us implore his renewing and sanctifying grace to enlighten our understandings, to regulate our affections, to mould our will, to empower and transform our life. If God fills us by his grace, then will earthly good be sanctified. Our God will be our richest joy of all, and every worldly comfort will yield us double joy, when hallowed by him and for him.

Vers. 19—25.—*An unfaithful people provoked to jealousy by God.* This paragraph is the antithesis of the preceding one. In form the expressions are archaic. The principles underlying these ancient forms of expression are for all the ages. In fact, there are few of the Old Testament passages which are more pointedly referred to in the New Testament; and none, the principles of which are more frequently reproduced. The various clauses are *seriatim* explained in the Exposition. We propose but to develop the main thought, which is indicated in the heading of this Homily. Its contents are fourfold. 1. God was provoked to jealousy by his people choosing a *no-God* instead of him. 2. The time would come when he would, as a punishment to Israel, choose a *no-people* instead of them. 3. Those who had been exalted in privilege should be deprived of their privileges, and should pass through the bitterest sorrows. 4. At the thought of their privileges passing away from them, and passing on to others, Israel should be provoked to jealousy.

Now, it would be a most instructive and impressive exercise to compare what is here said by God in his Word with that which actually came to pass. What does history say? Does it not confirm Moses at every point? The facts of history are these—

1. The people of Israel did fall away from the God of their fathers, and bring upon themselves the remonstrance of prophet after prophet, and were made in the course of God's providence to suffer sorrow upon sorrow.

2. The time did come when the kingdom of God passed away from them, and when they were no longer, as they once had been, the favoured people.

3. That kingdom of God passed over to the Gentiles.

4. At its so passing over, the Jews were exceedingly jealous and angry.

5. So much so was this the case, that Paul makes use of the fact in arguments to quicken both the Jew and the Gentile, as the case may be.

The following passages of Scripture should be carefully compared together, bearing as they do alike on the history, the principles involved therein, and their everlasting application:—Rom. x. 19; Matt. viii. 11, 12; xxi. 31, 43; Acts xiii. 46; Rom. ix. 30—32; xi. 11; Hos. i. 10 (latter part); Rom. ix. 25, 26; 1 Pet. ii. 10; Eph. ii. 11—13; Rom. xi. 13—25. From all which several all-important truths of permanent significance may be clearly deduced and powerfully applied.

I. THESE ARE TIMES OF GREAT RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGE WITH US. True, we are not *exclusively* a favoured race, in the same sense as was Israel of old. But our advantages

are not less because others share them with us. We have *all* that Israel ever had, and vastly more. "The kingdom of God is come unto us." The "word of faith" is nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart. We are bidden to "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," etc.

II. IF THESE PRIVILEGES REMAIN UNIMPROVED, OUR NEGLECT THEREOF WILL BE A GRIEVOUS SIN IN THE EYE OF GOD. We have but to read the Epistle to the Hebrews in order to find such an argument as this repeatedly presented, though in varying forms: If the Law of Moses was trifled with by any one, they did not escape punishment. But Jesus Christ is greater than Moses. By as much as he is greater than Moses, by so much are the sin and danger of neglecting him greater than those of neglecting the lawgiver of old.

III. BOTH CHURCHES AND NATIONS HAVE A DAY OF PROBATION GRANTED THEM, DURING WHICH THEIR PRIVILEGES ARE CONTINUED. (See Isa. xlix. 8; 2 Cor. vi. 2; Luke xiii. 6—9; Rev. ii. 5, 21; Luke xix. 42—44.) An unending probation is granted to no one.

IV. IF THE PERIOD OF PROBATION PASSES BY UNIMPROVED, OUR PRIVILEGES WILL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM US.

V. OTHER LANDS AND OTHER PEOPLES ARE READY, YEA, EAGER TO RECEIVE THE LIGHT WHICH SOME APPRECIATE SO LITTLE.

VI. MANY, MANY WILL COME FROM LESS FAVOURED LANDS AND FROM LESS CULTURED RACES, AND WILL STEP INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND BE SAVED; while many of the children of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. Hear what our Lord says to the Pharisees: "The publicans and harlots will go into the kingdom of God before you."

Vers. 26—28.—*The Divine mind influenced by reasons.* Moses, in uttering this song, is "borne along" (2 Pet. i. 21) by a power working through him and yet not of him, to make a most remarkable assertion in the Name of Jehovah; viz. that Israel's Deliverer was moved *by fear of the wrath of the enemy* not to destroy them altogether! How is this to be understood? Some might perhaps pass it over as a piece of obsolete anthropomorphism. So will not we. To us, many a sentence in the grand old volume, which at first sight seemed uncouth and almost repellent in its archaism, has on further study yielded up treasures of delight with which we would not willingly part. Perhaps it may be so here.

Note—The verb "I said," in ver. 26, is rendered by Keil, "I should say." This shows the sense more clearly, "*I should say, I will blow them away, I will blot out the remembrance of them among men; if I did not fear wrath upon the enemy* [i.e. "displeasure on the part of God at the arrogant boasting of the enemy, which was opposed to the glory of God" (Vitringa, quoted by Keil, *in loc.*)] *that their enemies might mistake it, that they might say, Our hand was high, and Jehovah has not done all this. For,*" etc. If we analyze these words, we shall find that they are separable into six main thoughts, expressed or implied. 1. That Israel was a people void of understanding. 2. That they consequently tried the patience of God, as falling very far below his ideal and their duty and honour. 3. That it would have been no great loss to the world if they should therefore be blotted out of being, and should actually drop out of the remembrance of the nations. 4. That if this extreme punishment should be meted out, then the adversary would glory over them and against them, and say that Israel's God either could not or would not guard the people whom he chose: that their enemies were mightier than their Redeemer. 5. That such a result would veil the glory of Jehovah, and make men uncertain whether God had a special people in the world or no. 6. That consequently, *for his own sake*, God would punish, but in measure; he would scourge, but not destroy. Hence there stands forth this great and glorious truth, *God will so govern and discipline his people as to reveal his own glory in them and by them.* This is the thought we now propose to develop in a series of considerations arranged according to the structure of the text.

I. GOD HAS AN ISRAEL NOW. (Eph. ii.; Heb. xii. 18—28.) The redemption from Egypt, the march through the wilderness, the formation of a commonwealth, the inheritance of Canaan, are all at once symbolic and typical of a greater deliverance, a nobler commonwealth, a spiritual pilgrimage, a heavenly home.

II. During the march of the Church of God through the wilderness of this world, GOD'S PEOPLE OFTEN FALL VERY FAR BELOW THE IDEAL SET BEFORE THEM. They try the patience of God, and excite the wonder, the laughter, and the ridicule of man. Think of what has been done in the name of religion! Think of the sharp controversies, the angry words, and the prolonged strife of Christendom! Think of the number of inconsistent professors, who cause our enemies to laugh among themselves! etc.

III. SO GRIEVOUS HAVE BEEN THE STAINS AND BLOTS THUS BROUGHT ON THE CHRISTIAN NAME, THAT MEN HAVE BEEN TEMPTED EVEN TO THINK THAT GOD'S CHURCH WAS AN INCUBUS IN THE WORLD; yea, that it might, with advantage to mankind, have ceased to exist. For certain it is that the great God could, even if his Church should become extinct, create a purer and nobler people in their stead, who would honour him and bless the world!

IV. MANY OF THE ADVERSARIES ARE WISHING FOR AND SEEKING TO BRING ABOUT THE CHURCH'S EXTINCTION. They would destroy the fellowship by sapping the life thereof. They would sap the life by undermining the faith. And never more eagerly than now—they are at work to educate men into the belief that God never had a people, that the people never had a God, and that all the faith they have been cherishing for ages has been based on a delusion and a lie!

V. IF SUCH A RESULT WERE TO ACCRUE, HOW WOULD THE ENEMY GLORY! They would say, "Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this." *If* only the Church should be driven from her moorings, *if* her anchor of hope should become unusable, and she should be drifted out to a wild, pathless, shoreless sea,—what glorying there would be in the enemy's camp! "Ha, ha! so we would have it!" "How would the powers of darkness boast if but one praying soul were lost!"

VI. SUCH A POSSIBILITY IS GUARDED AGAINST IN THE DIVINE COUNSELS. It is just such a provision that is indicated in the text. God will not let the "*adversaries behave themselves strangely*" in this way. *They will never have the chance!* The Church is built on a rock, from which it can never be dislodged. The day will never come when it will cease to exist. And ever will God remember the word on which he has caused us to hope!

VII. GOD GUARDS AGAINST ANY SUCH POSSIBILITY, BY DOING WHAT HE DOES FOR HIS OWN SAKE. The revelation of his own honour and glory in the eyes of men is too precious in his eye for him to let things so move on that all trace thereof is lost *to his own people* (cf. Isa. xliii. 45; Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 22, 32; Ps. cvi. 7, 8; Ezek. xx. 9, 14, 22). See too what argument Daniel uses in prayer (Dan. ix. 19). David also (Ps. xxv. 11).

For the sake of his own honour, God will purify his Church from all corruption by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning; and while thus jealous for his people's purity, he will as jealously watch over them, so that "upon all the glory there shall be a defence" (Isa. iv. 2—6; cf. 1 Cor. xi. 32; 1 Pet. iv. 17).

IN CONCLUSION. 1. Let the righteous rejoice, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. God's supreme aim is that his glory shall be revealed. The bringing of it forth to clear light is the aim and tendency of events, without let or pause. 2. Let all men clearly distinguish between the two providential processes which are ever, ever in process of fulfilment. One, the purification of the Church. The other, the condemnation and confusion of the world. 3. Let the wicked tremble. Or if they are too benumbed to tremble, let them at least cease to make merry over the corruptions of the Church. They may laugh now. They will not laugh always. The severing processes of God's judgment are going on now, and they will issue in "everlasting contempt" to the ungodly, and in the redemption of Israel from all his iniquities!

Vers. 29—35.—*The short-sightedness of sinners.* "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Such is the moan with which this paragraph begins. By "this" is meant the consequence which will certainly follow on their departure from God. By "their latter end" is meant the latter days of their history, when sins which were beforehand in germ should have wrought out to full development. We need not again recount the historical aspects of this serious outlook. We will but note, in a series of consecutive thoughts, the

truths which are here indicated, and which are of universal and perpetual application to individuals, families, and nations.

I. IT IS A MARK OF A VICIOUS SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS TO TAKE NO HEED TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF A COURSE OF CONDUCT. If men take no reckoning of their "latter end," it is the reverse of wise. Our Saviour asks, "What shall it profit a man?" etc. To take heed only to present appearances and to avoid all preparations for the future, is folly in the extreme.

II. WHETHER WE WILL OR NO, CERTAIN CONSEQUENCES ARE BOUND UP WITH CONDUCT BY A LAW WHICH NO CREATED POWER CAN AVERT OR MODIFY. They may be "sealed up"—hidden from sight at present, but they are "laid up in store" (Rom. ii. 5; 1 Thess. v. 3).

III. THE MOST HIGH RESERVES TO HIMSELF THE EXECUTION OF HIS OWN LAWS. "To me belongeth vengeance." Vengeance cannot safely be entrusted to frail and passionate man. Only in the hands of "the Judge of all the earth" is there an absolute guarantee that in its infliction there will be neither excess nor defect. No weakness will cause delay or halt. No vindictiveness will induce any variation from the right.

IV. HOWEVER LONG VENGEANCE MAY BE DELAYED, IT WILL NOT BE POSTPONED TOO LONG. "Their feet shall slide in due time."[1] Time is on God's side. In the moral world there is not a moment's pause. Character is ripening for good or for ill, and great issues are working out at every tick of the dial.

V. IN THE RIPENING OF CHARACTER AND THE ADVANCED ISSUES OF CONDUCT THERE WILL BE AWFUL RESULTS ON THE SIDE OF EVIL. The figurative expressions in each clause are of terrific significance. They indicate: 1. The failure of the refuge to which they had fled. 2. The collapse of their strength in great emergencies. 3. Bitterness of misery. 4. Venomous poison as the fruit of their vine of Sodom. Now is the day for accumulating; hereafter will be the day for the manifestation, of these hidden treasures of ill.

VI. THIS DAY OF AWFUL RECOMPENSE WILL COME UPON SINNERS SUDDENLY. "The things that shall come upon them make haste" (cf. Matt. xxiv. 36—44; Mark xiii. 35—37; 2 Pet. iii. 10). It is one remarkable feature of the Mosaic outlook, that the lawgiver scarcely ever refers to another life, but to the working out of God's judgments in this. The future life comes into view in the New Testament. The law of sowing and reaping holds good for both worlds (Gal. vi. 7).

VII. WITH AN OUTLOOK SO GRIEVOUS, THE THOUGHTLESSNESS OF SINNERS IS AN EVIL GREATLY TO BE LAMENTED. "Oh that they *were* wise!" etc. (cf. Jer. ix. 1; Ps. cxix. 136).

IN CONCLUSION. There is at least a threefold application of the text, which should be made use of to warn men against sin. 1. Those who have to direct or influence national affairs should remember that a wrong policy is a foolish one. No nation will continue to thrive that fights against God. 2. Heads of families should remember that, by a course of disloyalty to God, they are sowing the seeds of dishonour, grief, and shame in their families, and are entailing sorrow on the children of their care. 3. Let each individual learn that whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap, both in this world and in that which is to come. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!"

Vers. 36—43.—*Jehovah reigns; be glad!* This paragraph has about it a remarkably martial ring. It is not to be looked at as bald and literal prose. It is part of a song; it is laden with imagery, in which the God of Israel is set forth as a mighty Warrior, whose march none can hinder, whose inflictions none can withstand or evade. The *style* of the song was precisely appropriate to the age in which it was composed, and suited to the people in whose hearing it was addressed. The *truths* clothed in such Oriental garb are for all lands and for all time. For though there is an abundance of figure, yet not all is figurative. There are at least two phrases which are plain in their phraseology, and which furnish us with the key for the right interpretation of the others. One of these is found at the beginning of the passage, the other towards its close. The first is in ver. 36, "The Lord shall judge his people." The other is in ver. 43, "Rejoice,

[1] See a sermon of great power on this text in President Edwards's works.

O ye nations—his people."[1] The former assures us that all the various processes of judgment to which the seer's eye looks forward are in the hands of God. The second calls upon the nations to rejoice therein. *Between* these two, the varied details in the paragraph fall naturally into place. Our Homily will, therefore, be mainly an answer to one inquiry, viz. *What materials for joy are here given us?*

It is useless to bid any one to be glad unless a reason is given them why they should be so. A somewhat careful study of the paragraph in hand will show at least eight reasons for holy and grateful joy.

I. It is matter for joy that God reserves in his own hands the judgment of his people (ver. 36). Where else could it safely be? Who else has the power, the wisdom, the justice, the kindness, the knowledge required? If the sceptre of power were in any other hands, the guarantee of righteous administration would cease.

II. We may rejoice that in his judging processes God will convince his people of the folly of relying on any but on himself (vers. 37, 38). The reason of the peculiar imagery in these verses every student knows. The underlying thought is clear. It may be a sharp, but it is a necessary discipline, that every prop should give way which would prevent us from leaning on God alone.

III. We may rejoice in the severity with which a righteous God will deal with sin. Severity against sin is mercy towards the sinner (ver. 42). In the early conquest of Canaan, severity towards Achan and his accomplices was mercy towards Israel. In the early Church, judgment on Ananias and Sapphira was mercy to the Church. In both cases the canker of dishonesty and hypocrisy needed to be cut out by a strong and firm hand.

IV. We may rejoice that the ruling motive and the ultimate intent of God's dealings are love and mercy (ver. 43). Beyond the blackest clouds Moses sees in the horizon light and glory. The twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth chapters of this book, with all their threatenings, are followed by the thirtieth, with all its promises. Wrath in the *process*, mercy as the *product*.

V. Let us rejoice that in this law of recompense there is mercy in the educational process therein ensured (see Ps. lxii. 12). There is a wide difference between a fatherly correction and the infliction of a legal penalty. It is the former which God metes out towards his people. Their relation to him is one of grace, not of bare law.

VI. Let us rejoice that mercy will regulate the mode, the time, and the result of the chastisement. *The mode:* "Their power is gone," *i.e.* their false props are destroyed. *The time:* "He will repent himself," *i.e.* he will not be wrath for ever; when the infliction has answered its end, he will change his dealings. Though God never changes a plan, he may plan a change. *The result:* "He will be merciful unto his land," etc., *i.e.* he will be propitious. When his people are brought back from their wanderings, he will "cover" all their sin in eternal forgetfulness.

VII. Let us rejoice in the clear and perfect discrimination which will mark all the Divine dealings with his people and with his adversaries; ver. 43, "vengeance—mercy." Both form part of God's governmental methods. How can it be otherwise in a world of sin? The perfections of Jehovah guarantee that neither will infringe on the other. Tenderness will never weaken vengeance. Vengeance will never lessen tenderness. God alone knows the absolutely perfect adjustment.

VIII. Let us rejoice that the eye of the seer beholds brightness in the far distance. The gloom does but intervene; it does not cover the whole canopy of heaven, nor darken all the outlook. "Light is sown for the righteous." "Joy cometh in the morning" (ver. 43).

Let all these several particulars be woven together, and they will make one glorious pattern—at the sight of which we may well shout aloud for joy.

Learn—1. In such a review of the methods and outcome of God's providential dealings only those who are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ are in a position to understand them. Enmity cannot understand love. And where men are

[1] The Hebrew has not the word "with." It reads, "Rejoice, all ye nations—his people." Is it not possible that here the aged lawgiver's prophetic eye was gifted with supernatural strength, and that he foresaw a time when "all nations should come in, and make one undivided fold"?

"enemies in their mind by wicked works," they are certain to misunderstand God's nature, and to misinterpret his ways. Man's *first* duty is to repent of sin and obey God. Till he does this the mysteries of God will not be unveiled to him. 2. When we understand something of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, then the true key to the interpretation of providence is in our hands (Rom. viii. 34). Hence we can "rejoice in the Lord" (Ps. xxxiii. 1; Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4; Ps. xcvii. 1; xcvi.; xcviii.). 3. In proportion to the greatness of the love which furnishes the key for unlocking providential mysteries is the greatness of the sin which turns away from and finally rejects God. (See the use of this paragraph in Heb. x. 30, 31.) However deep the gloom which Moses depicts, he sees a rim of golden glory in the horizon, as if another dispensation were to follow. But the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sees no after-light for those who turn away from Christ. "For if we sin wilfully after 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. . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The contest of the sinner with God must end in the guilty one's ignominious and hopeless defeat; Amos iv. 12, "Because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

Vers. 44—47.—*Life at stake!* This paragraph—concerning which Keil is probably right in his surmise, that it proceeds from an editor's hand—sets before us in a quiet and incidental way, one of the most important transitions Israel had yet experienced. We have seen in ch. xxxi. 7, 8, that Moses gave Joshua a charge, and told him that *he* must lead the people into the promised land. After that came the utterance of this song. When it was uttered, *Joshua stood side by side with Moses.* Thus, just for once, the two leaderships overlap. The joint presence of both the old and new leaders this signifying, that, though the earthly administration changed hands, the same message would be passed, and not a word of Jehovah's would be lost. There are six features about this closing public scene of the life of Moses, which open up an invaluable line of thought. 1. Here is an assembly, met to hear Moses' last song. 2. Though it is the last, there is in it nothing new. It is the one message—God's goodness, faithfulness, and love, calling for their reciprocation and obedience. 3. This old message is reimpressed on their hearts. 4. The people were to command their children to observe it. The children were, in their home life, to receive an education for God. 5. This is urged upon them by the consideration that all that is precious to them in life depends on their obedience to God's message. 6. Moses and Joshua appear together before the people, as if to declare to them that the same teachings which the aged leader had laid down, the younger one would accept, enforce, and transmit. There was a change in human leaders, but not in Divine laws or the Divine message. And to all the solemn sanctions with which Moses guarded the Law, Joshua here pledges himself before the people and before his God. Hence we get this theme—*Amid all changes we have an unchanging message from above, on the observance of which our life depends.*

I. Let us clearly declare and show that there is at this moment a message of law and a revelation of grace, which have come to us, not of man, but by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, by the manifestation of God in Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost on and since the day of Pentecost. This message is, in sum and substance, given in John iii. 16; 1 Tim. i. 15; Rev. xxii. 17; Titus ii. 11—13. This message is the development of that which through Moses was given but in germ (John v. 46, 47; Matt. v. 17).

II. Here past and present generations meet, giving out the same words. We have now "the faith once [for all] delivered unto the saints." Aged patriarchs in their declining years do reiterate the same message they gave when in the vigour of youth. And young men, filled with the same spirit, and having their hearts kindled with the same fire, take it up with the earnest hope and prayer that it may suffer no loss in their hands! Often have a Moses and a Joshua thus stood side by side.

III. The message now is far fuller and clearer than it was when given to Israel of old. *How* much, Christian preachers and teachers can tell. Yet in three respects they are similar. 1. Both reveal the love of God, and recount a great deliverance, 2. Both solicit, in Heaven's name, the response of the peoples' hearts (see Rom. xii. 1;

2 Cor. v. 14—21; Rom. v. 8). 3. Both require, on the ground of Divine love to man, love to the redeemed brotherhood, and good will to all men (1 Cor. xiii.; John iv. 10—19).

IV. The commanding force of the gospel message through our Lord Jesus Christ is far greater than that sent through Moses. True, there was terror at Sinai; there is tenderness in Calvary. Moses orders; Jesus pleads. Moses speaks in thunderings; Jesus with tears. Yet must we not mistake tenderness for weakness, nor gentleness for lack of authority or of power. (See the entire argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews.)

V. All that can give fullest value to this life and joy to the next, depends on how we treat this message from God. "It is not a vain thing for you; it is your life" (ver. 47). The expansion of this would require many Homilies. We can but hint. 1. The enjoyment of peace with God (Rom. v. 1). 2. The growth of character in holiness. 3. The true enjoyment and use of this earthly life, as families, as nations, as individuals, depend on loyalty to God. "Godliness is profitable unto all things; having promise of the life that now is." 4. All our hope for the next life depends on our response to God; hence the close of the verse just quoted—"and of that which is to come." Apart from the acceptance of Jesus Christ by faith, and a life of loyalty to God, there is not a gleam of light or hope for the next life (see Heb. ii. 3). If God did not allow his message through Moses to be slighted with impunity, certainly he will not suffer men to "trample under foot the Son of God," and then leave them unpunished!

VI. What dread, what awful possibilities as to the fate of immortal souls are trembling in the balance, while they refrain from "yielding themselves unto God"! How earnestly and frequently may we with reason reiterate the words, "*It is your life*"! All that ensures life here and hereafter being a blessing, depends on the way men treat Jesus Christ and his salvation.

VII. However many changes there may yet be in the bearers of this message, yet, down to the end of time, God will never send a greater. Moses and Joshua. The old generation passing away, the new coming on the stage. They meet and greet. The faithful and tried veteran passes on the word. The younger messenger, with solemn vow to God before his brother man, receives it, and swears before high heaven that he will maintain the message unimpaired, and in his turn "commit it to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

"Thus shall the bright succession run,
Till the last courses of the sun."

Vers. 48—52.—*Death immediately in view.* The utterance of the sublime song which we have just treated on, was the last recorded public act of Moses. His work is all but done. He receives an intimation that the time is nigh at hand for him to "go up and die." The circumstances which gather round that death are most suggestive. The following passages should be compared together:—Numb. xx. 12; xxvii. 12—14; ch. i. 37; iii. 23—28; iv. 21, 22; Ps. cvi. 32. Historically, the following points are indicated in this paragraph:—1. Moses recognized the call to die, as well as the call to work, as from God; ver. 48, "*The Lord* spake," etc. 2. His joy in death would be checked by the remembrance of faults in life (ver. 51). It is by no means clear to us why so severe a sentence was imposed on Moses for one outburst of temper. Dr. Jameson suggests that there may have been other circumstances, which are unrecorded, to account for it. Possibly, however, the phrases, "for your sakes," "for their sakes," furnish a clue to the reason. The people might need thus to be guarded against presumptuous sin. 3. Visions of the glorious land in store for God's people would be granted him ere he quitted the earth. His joy would be rich, though not unalloyed (ver. 52). 4. The work which he had thus far carried forward must be completed by other hands. This is implied, and elsewhere expressed. 5. Moses, like the saints of God who went before him, must plunge into the unknown realm. He must "be gathered unto his people," as Aaron had been (ver. 50). 6. He would do so under the eye of the same God whom he so long had served. Till the very last he lives in fellowship with God. At the last he will die in fellowship with him.

No Christian expositor can fail to take note of the different aspect which death has

to believers, since "life and incorruption" have been brought to light by Jesus Christ. The believer, at death, enters the invisible world. The names for it are "Sheol" and "Hades." The former is a Hebrew word, the latter Greek. Both mean (practically) the same, though they present the mysterious realm of the departed under different aspects. To the Hebrew it is the all-demanding world. To the Greek, the unknown region. In the New Testament (Revised Version) the word Hades is reproduced. But though *the word* is reproduced, *its meaning* is changed. The *heathen* view of Hades was that of a mysterious under-realm of the dead—gloomy and without hope. The *Jewish* view of Sheol (LXX. Hades) was also that of a mysterious under-realm—gloomy, but with a hope of glory "in the awaking" (Ps. xvii. 15). The *Christian* view of Hades is that of an invisible realm of departed souls, who are entirely under the mediatorial administration of the Son of God; a region without gloom, of perfect rest and of glorious hope for the believer. "Absent from the body: at home with the Lord." "Whether we live or die, we continue to be the Lord's." Let us thankfully make use of this new light which Christ has thrown on the death of believers, in meditating on "*Christian dying.*"

I. THE CHRISTIAN IS ABSOLUTELY AT THE DISPOSAL OF HIS LORD, FOR WORK OR FOR REST, FOR LIVING OR FOR DYING. (Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. i. 20.) He will be prepared to say, "Lord, it belongs not to my care, whether I die or live." Work is worth doing only so long as Christ has it for us to do. Life is worth living only as we can serve Christ thereby.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY IN DEATH MUST SURELY BE CHECKED AT THE THOUGHT OF NUMBERLESS DEFECTS, FAILURES, AND FAULTS IN LIFE. Whether or no there have been any such serious outbreaks as that of Moses, there must come rushing into memory so much defective work, so much mixed motive, such an utter lack of anything done or said which rose up to even his own ideal, that he would despair of his future, if it were not for the abounding grace of God; and even then, though this grace keeps him from sinking, and he may feel assured that his sin is forgiven, yet it must bring a shade over his spirit to think there has been so much for which he needed forgiveness!

III. ACTIVE WORKERS AND LEADERS IN GOD'S CHURCH OFTEN LAY DOWN THEIR WORK WITH A STRANGE FEELING OF INCOMPLETENESS. Moses had brought the people thus far, *just to the verge* of the promised land! He would gladly have finished the work. But it was well for Moses to feel how entirely the work was of God and not of man. How many a worker would like to see this or that controversy closed, this or that Church settled, this publication completed, this convert a little more established in the faith! But no. It is as God wills, and that will is best.

IV. THOUGH GOD SUFFERS THIS SHADE OVER LIFE'S CLOSING HOURS, YET HE OFTEN CHEERS HIS SERVANTS BY BRIGHT VISIONS OF THE GLORY WHICH IS IN STORE FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. Ver. 52, "Thou shalt see the land before thee." Yes, and Moses knew that, though he must leave the work incomplete, there was yet a great future for God's Church, when the wilderness life was over. And so now. However decided may be the sense of unfinished work, with which God's servants close their earthly career, they have no misgiving as to God's finding others by whom the work will be carried on, nor have they a doubt as to the future triumphs of Christ and his cause. From the top of faith's Pisgah, they "see the land before them," and though it lieth afar off, yet the sight ravishes them. Lo! "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

V. MEANWHILE, THE SAINT MUST BREATHE HIS LAST BREATH, AND QUIT HIS HOLD OF EARTH, ENTER THE "GATES OF HADES" (Matt. xvi. 18, Greek), AND FIND HIS PLACE, TILL THE LORD COMES, IN THE INVISIBLE WORLD. Like Moses, he must be "gathered to his people;" but he knows a great deal more than it is probable Moses did, of what that means. The words in Rev. i. 18 are enough for faith, till God reveals the rest.

VI. HE WILL DO SO, LIKE MOSES, UNDER THE EYE AND CARE OF THE SAME GOD WHOM HE HAS SERVED IN LIFE. By directions from God, Moses would go up to die. And what he thought thereon may be gathered from the words of his own blessing. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Moses would not—could not fail to take the comfort of all this for himself. We have a like comfort more clearly given (1 Thess. v. 10). Once Christ's we are *never* out of his hands!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Beneficial teaching.* Moses was directed to instruct the people by composing for their use a song (ch. xxxi. 19, 21). A song is: 1. Memorable. 2. Easily handed down from mouth to mouth. 3. Of singular power to awaken sympathetic feeling (cf. influence of ballads, of Jacobite songs, of the 'Marseillaise,' of popular hymns). The action of song is not violent, but gentle and persuasive. It steals about the heart like rippling water or like sunlight, trickles into its pores, works as if by spirit-influence on its seats of laughter and tears, explores its innermost labyrinths of feeling. Here compared (ver. 2) to the gently distilling dew and rain.

I. THE DEW AND RAIN AS EMBLEMS OF THE TEACHING MOST LIKELY TO PROVE EFFECTIVE. Their action is: (1) gentle, (2) silent, (3) pervasive, (4) kindly; yet: 1. *Invigorative.* They revive, refresh, stimulate. 2. *Powerful.* Rocks shattered by drops of water in their pores and crevices. 3. *Deep-reaching.* They act on plants by watering *their roots.* Take a lesson from them. It is not the best kind of teaching which is loud and violent, which tries to *force* men's convictions. Convictions must have time to grow. Teaching must be loving. The earthquake, the whirlwind, the fire, have their own place, but "the still small voice" is needed to succeed them. The Lord is peculiarly in that. Angry scolding, petulant rebuke, biting censure, clever satire, seldom do much good. Love alone wins the day.

II. THE DEW AND RAIN AS EMBLEMS OF THE TEACHING MOST SUITABLE IN THE INSTRUCTIONS OF RELIGION. Moses employed it here. Christ employed it. "He shall not strive nor cry," etc. (Matt. xii. 19). Paul commends "truthing it in love" (Eph. iv. 15). "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25). This kind of teaching harmonizes best: 1. With the *subject* of religion—"the Name of the Lord" (ver. 3). God had revealed his Name to Moses (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7), and the attributes of mercy preponderate. 2. With the *end* of religion—the ascription of greatness to God (ver. 3). Religious teaching fails if it does not inspire men with such convictions of God's greatness as will lead them to fear, honour, worship, praise, and serve him. 3. With the special theme of the gospel—peace, love, good will to men. This song of Moses has to deal with stern truths, but even in its sternest passages it breathes the pathos of tender and sorrowful affection. It dwells largely on God's kindnesses and the people's ingratitude, and ends with loving promises. The song has numerous echoes in Isaiah.—J. O.

Ver. 4.—*God the Rock.* (Cf. vers. 15, 18, 31, 37.) This name for God occurs chiefly in this song of Moses, and in the compositions of David and of later psalmists. It was a name full of significance to those familiar with the desert. Rock—rock—rock—Israel had seen little else during the thirty-eight years of wandering. The older men could remember the seclusion and granitic sublimity of the rock sanctuary of Sinai. The congregation had mourned for Aaron under the shadow of Mount Hor, "rising high aloft into the blue sky, like a huge, grand, but shattered rock-city, with vast cliffs, perpendicular walls of stone, pinnacles, and naked peaks of every shape." They had witnessed the security of Edom in the hills in which now stand the wondrous rock-hewn ruin of Petra. They had traversed the defiles of the terrible and precipitous Arabah. When David was hunted in the wilderness, he, too, was often led to think of God, his Rock (Ps. xviii. 2; lxi. 2; lxii. 2, 7, etc.). It is wilderness experience which still makes the name so precious.

I. ROCK A NATURAL IMAGE OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. The image is not an arbitrary one. Nature abounds in shadows of the spiritual. It is what the mind puts into the objects of its survey which makes them what they are. "The Alps and Andes are but millions of atoms till thought combines them, and stamps on them the conception of the everlasting hills. Niagara is a gush of water-drops till the soul puts into it that sweep of resistless power which the beholder feels. The ocean, wave behind wave, is only great when the spirit has breathed into it the idea of immensity. If we analyze our feelings, we shall find that thought meets us wherever we turn. The real grandeur

of the world is in the soul which looks on it, which sees some conception of its own reflected from the mirror around it; for mind is not only living, but life-giving, and has received from its Maker a portion of his own creative power" (Dr. John Ker). Rock is thus more than rock—its awfulness, grandeur, immovability, everlastingness, strength, are born of spiritual conceptions. These attributes do not in reality belong to it. Rock is *not* everlasting, moveless, abiding, etc. Old rocks are being worn away, new rocks are being formed; the whole system had a beginning and will have an end (Ps. xc. 2). It is not that these attributes belong to rock, and are thence by metaphor attributed to God; but these attributes of God, being dimly present in the mind, are by metaphor attributed to rock. We clothe the natural object with shadowy attributes of Deity. God is the *true* Rock, the other is the image. God is rock, in virtue of: 1. The eternity of his existence (Ps. xc. 2). 2. The omnipotence of his might (Dan. iv. 35). 3. The wisdom of his counsel (Isa. xl. 13). 4. The immutability of his purpose (Ps. xxxiii. 11; Isa. xlvi. 10). 5. The faithfulness of his Word (Ps. cxix. 89, 90). 6. The rectitude of his government (Ps. cxlv. 17). Whence: 7. The perfection of his work. Christ is like the Father, eternal (Rev. i. 11), unchangeable (Heb. xiii. 8), all-powerful (Matt. xxviii. 18), faithful (John xiii. 1; xiv. 18—20), righteous (Rev. xix. 11), wise (Isa. ix. 6).

II. ROCK A NATURAL IMAGE OF WHAT, IN VIRTUE OF HIS ATTRIBUTES, GOD IS TO HIS PEOPLE. 1. A shelter (Ps. lxi. 3). 2. A defence (Ps. xviii. 2; lxii. 6). 3. A dwelling-place (Ps. xc. 1). 4. A shadow from the heat (cf. Isa. xxxii. 2). 5. A moveless standing-ground (Ps. xl. 2). 6. A foundation (cf. Matt. vii. 24). The rock smitten in the wilderness furnishes the additional idea of: 7. A source of spiritual refreshment. Apply throughout to Christ, the Rock on which his Church is built (Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Cor. ii. 11), the smitten Saviour (1 Cor. x. 4; 1 John v. 6), the spiritual Refuge and Salvation of his people (Rom. viii. 1, 34—39). Toplady's hymn, "Rock of Ages." —J. O.

Vers. 4—7.—*God's righteousness and man's iniquity.* The sin of man is only fully seen in contrast with God's righteousness and love. The light is needed to bring out the depth of the shadow. It reveals the "spot."

I. GOD'S FAVOUR TO ISRAEL. God's dealings with Israel had been marked by: 1. *Rectitude* (ver. 4). He had done everything that was just and right to them. His ways had been equal. He had given them just statutes. His covenant-keeping faithfulness had been signally manifested. There was not the shadow of a pretence for accusing God of injustice or of infidelity to his engagements. 2. *Love.* Love and grace had been more conspicuous in his treatment of them than even justice. It was shown in their election, in the deliverance from Egypt, in the guidance of the desert, in pardon of offences, in the many and undeserved favours which had been heaped upon them (cf. vers. 9—14). Rectitude and love have reached their fullest manifestation in the gospel. The cross displays both. It harmonizes their apparently conflicting claims, and exhibits them in new glories. God's character, revealed in Christ, is the condemnation of an unbelieving world.

II. ISRAEL'S REQUITAL OF GOD'S KINDNESS. (Vers. 5, 6.) Their requital was an incredibly base one. They corrupted themselves. They wantonly departed from the ways of right. They behaved ungratefully. Instead of imitating God in the example of rectitude he had set them, and walking before him "as dear children," they flung to the winds the remembrance of his mercies, and brought disgrace upon his Name. He was their Father (ver. 6), but instead of reflecting the features of his image, they dishonoured and discredited it (cf. Isa. i. 2—4, which appears to be based on this passage). Their sin was: 1. *Self-caused.* There was nothing which they had seen in their God to cause it, to account for it, or to excuse it. 2. *Irrational.* Their powers, given by God, ought willingly to have been devoted in his service. Obedience is the normal condition. Heaven and earth, undeviatingly obeying the law of their existence, condemn man's apostacy (ver. 1). The very brute creation testifies against him (Isa. i. 3). 3. *Ungrateful.* God had bought them for himself, had made a nation of them, and established them in Canaan. Yet, without compunction, they cast off his yoke. 4. *Foolish;* for the way they chose was the way of death, whereas in God's favour was life (ver. 47), with every blessing that heart could wish for. The same

remarks apply to sinners—despising the gracious overtures which God makes to them, with all the favours, temporal and spiritual, he has actually shown them, and careering on to their eternal ruin. "O foolish people and unwise!"—J. O.

Ver. 8.—*The world ruled for the benefit of the Church.* What this verse asserts is that in the providential distribution of the nations, and assignment to them of their special territories, respect was had from the beginning to the provision of a suitable dwelling-place for the chosen race. Our subject is—*The government of the world conducted with a view to the interests of the Church.*

I. A TRUTH FREQUENTLY TAUGHT IN SCRIPTURE. Both by facts of history, and by express statement. Israel's position brought it into contact, not only with petty neighbouring states, but with the mightiest empires of East and West. These appear in Scripture only as they affect the chosen race, but it is then made manifest how entirely their movements are directed and controlled by Divine providence. And the centre of God's purposes is always Israel. "For your sake," says God, "I have sent to Babylonia, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships" (Isa. xliii. 14; cf. vers. 3, 4). Is Egypt visited with famines—with scarce years and good years? The design is the working out of a certain plan in the chain of God's appointments for Israel. Is a Cyrus raised up in Persia? God saith of him, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure," etc. (Isa. xliv. 28). So is it throughout. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome, appear in all their relations with Israel as ministers of the Divine will, as simple executors of the Divine purposes, and their power is strictly limited by their commission. In harmony with this prophetic teaching are the express testimonies of the Epistles (*e.g.* Rom. viii. 28; Eph. i. 20—23; iii. 9—11). (1) Nature, (2) history, are ruled for the benefit of the Church.

II. A TRUTH IN ITSELF REASONABLE. Once admit the goal of history to be the establishment on earth of a universal spiritual kingdom—a gathering together in one of all things with Christ as Head (Eph. i. 10), and it is certain that herein must lie the key to all historical developments, the explanation of all arrangements and movements of Divine providence. The centre of interest must always be that portion of the race with which for the time being the kingdom of God is identified. "Just as, in tracing the course of a stream, not the huge morasses nor the vast stagnant pools on either side would delay us: we should not, because of their extent, count them the river, but recognize that as such, though it were the slenderest thread, in which an onward movement might be discerned; so is it here. Egypt and Assyria and Babylon were but the vast stagnant morasses on either side of the river; the Man in whose seed the whole earth should be blessed, he and his family were the little stream in which the life and onward movement of the world were to be traced. . . . They belong not to history, least of all to sacred history, those Babels, those cities of confusion, those huge pens into which by force and fraud the early hunters of men, the Nimrods and Sesostrises, drove and compelled their fellows . . . where no faith existed but in the blind powers of nature and the brute forces of the natural man" (Archbishop Trench).

III. A TRUTH FRAUGHT TO THE CHURCH WITH COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT. 1. When the powers of the world are threatening. 2. In times of internal decay. 3. Under long-continued trials.—J. O.

Vers. 10—14.—*A panorama of grace.* How Israel was found, led, taught, kept.

I. WHERE GOD FOUND HIM. (Ver. 10.) Partly metaphorical—the state of Israel in Egypt being likened to that of a man perishing in the desert; partly literal—it being in the desert that God found the people when he took them into covenant. An image of the helpless and hopeless condition of the sinner. Cut off from life, without shelter, provision, resting-place, or final home.

II. HOW GOD DEALT WITH HIM. (Vers. 10, 11.) That Israel was kept in the wilderness so long was his own fault. But grace overruled the discipline for good. The long sojourn in the desert made Israel's case, also, a better type of our own. There are ends to be served by this sojourn (John xvii. 15). God showed himself: 1. Condescending to Israel's *feebleness* (Hos. xi. 3, 4). 2. Mindful of his *ignorance*.

"Instructed him." 3. Watchful of his *safety*. "Kept him." 4. Careful of his *training* (ver. 11). The love and solicitude implied in such phrases as, "kept him as the apple of his eye" (ver. 10), and "as an eagle stirreth up," etc. (ver. 11), specially deserve notice. The apple of the eye is a sensitive part, which we protect with the utmost care, and from the *slightest* injuries. (On the eagle, see below.)

III. WHITHER GOD CONDUCTED HIM. (Vers. 13, 14.) To a land of plenty and rest. Made his defence the munitions of rocks. Provided him with all that heart could desire. So does God bring the believer to a large and wealthy place—a place of "fulness of joy," of richest satisfactions, of most perfect delights. Spiritually, even here, where the most unpropitious circumstances yield him unexpected blessings. Eternally and in perfected form hereafter. Note: God *alone* did all this for Israel, (ver. 12).—J. O.

Ver. 11.—*The eagle.* "The description is of a female eagle exciting her young ones in teaching them to fly, and afterwards guarding with the greatest care lest the weak should receive harm" (Gesenius). In this picture of the eagle's treatment of her young, note—

I. HER AIM. She aims at teaching them self-reliance. It is not God's wish that his children should go in leading-strings. They must be trained to prompt, fearless, self-reliant action. This was an aim of the discipline of the wilderness. Our action is to be in a spirit of dependence, but it is to be *active*, not *passive* dependence.

II. HER METHOD. She stirs up her nest. She does not leave her brood to the ignoble ease they would perhaps prefer. So God rouses his people to action by making their place uneasy for them. By placing them in trying situations, by removing comforts, by the stimulus of necessity, by the sharp provocation of afflictions, he goads them to think, act, and put forth the powers that are in them. It is not for the good of Christians that they should have too much comfort.

III. HER CARE. The experiment is not carried to the point of allowing the young to hurt themselves. She hovers over them, supports them on the tip of her wings, etc. God tries us, but not beyond our strength.—J. O.

Vers. 15.—18.—*Jeshurun.* I. A GOOD NAME BELIED. Jeshurun, equivalent to righteous. An honourable name, but sadly falsified by the conduct described. How many Jeshuruns have thus forsaken the God of their early vows! Notice, a good name is of no account without the good character. Balaam praised Israel's righteousness, and wished to "die the death of the righteous" (Numb. xxiii. 10, 21); but it is the *being* righteous, not the being *called* so, which makes the happy deathbed.

II. AN EVIL EFFECT OF PROSPERITY. "Waxed fat—kicked." How common! The effect foretold or warned against in earlier chapters (ch. viii. 12—18, etc.). Prosperity, then pride, then stubborn self-willedness. The self-willed heart refuses to submit to God's government; throws off the memory of past obligations, and treats God with ill-concealed indifference and dislike; turns from the true God to gods of its own choosing. Two steps in the great apostacy—forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out broken cisterns, etc. (Jer. ii. 13). Such conduct is (1) wicked, (2) ungrateful, (3) irrational, (4) fatal (vers. 22—25).

III. RESULT OF AN ITCH FOR NOVELTY. (Ver. 17.) The *newness* of the gods was a chief attraction. The worship of them was a change, a novelty. It pleased them by variety. 1. When God has been abandoned, men are at the mercy of the most trivial influences. "Itching ears"—"every wind of doctrine" (Eph. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 3). 2. When God has been abandoned, novelty is greedily accepted as a substitute for truth, in theories, in creeds, in styles of worship, in religious nostrums. 3. Apostacy from God means transference of the affections to that which is degrading. In this case to "destroyers," so the word means; devils, malignant deities. But we worship devils, or *the* devil (Matt. iv. 9), when we bow in spirit to the world's modes and shows; when we serve gold, or fashion, or the opinion of society; when we are slaves to lust of power; when we bow to a false *gnosis*, etc.—J. O.

Vers. 19—27.—*A God provoked.* Consider here—

I. THE REALITY OF WRATH IN GOD. Let it not be minimized or explained away.

"Instead of being shocked at the thought that God is wrathful, we should rather ask, *With whom?* and *For what?* A God without wrath, and a God who is wrathful on other accounts than for sin, is not a God, but an idol" (Hengstenberg). It is only, as this writer observes, when "man himself is not displeased with sin, when it assumes to him the appearance of a bagatelle," that he no longer perceives why God should feel wrath at it. But man, we may observe, is by no means disposed to treat lightly sins *against himself*. He never feels that he does not "do well to be angry" on account of these or against the person who does them. A very slight wound to his honour makes him clamour for satisfaction. A God who is incapable of moral indignation would be equally incapable of moral love, and could not, with truth, be spoken of as dispensing mercy. Wrath and love are opposite poles of one affection. Where there is no offence, there needs no forgiveness.

II. WRATH IN GOD, WHEN IT BURNS AGAINST MEN, IS TERRIBLE IN ITS EFFECTS. Two aspects of its operation: 1. Leaving men to themselves (ver. 20). When God hides his face from them, there need be little doubt what the "end" will be. Yet can the sinner complain if he is at length permitted to eat the fruit of the devices which nothing will persuade him to give up? 2. Heaping on them positive inflictions (vers. 22—25). It is a fire, burning to destroy them. It is noteworthy that the conflagration of the Divine wrath is represented as not only taking in *sheol*, but as widening till it embraces the whole earth (ver. 22). This, in connection with the glimpse at the calling of the Gentiles in ver. 21, points to the future universal extension of the outward dispensation of grace. The extension of the kingdom of God brings all nations within the range of the Messianic judgment (Matt. xxv. 31). The wrath of God is not represented in less terrible colours in the New Testament than it is in the Old. The individualized description of these verses (vers. 24, 25) figures out terrors of a future life too painful to allow the mind to dwell upon them.

III. WRATH IN GOD IS, IN THIS LIFE, NOT DIVORCED FROM MERCY. Not at least so long as hope of recovery remains. He would fain make punishment subservient to conversion. This is the thought in ver. 21. Israel is not cast off for ever. God is seeking to provoke it to jealousy by a transference of his regard to the Gentiles. His retaliation has a merciful as well as a wrathful design. Mercy waits on every sinner, courting his repentance.

IV. THE MANIFESTATION OF WRATH IN GOD IS LIMITED BY REGARD TO HIS HONOUR. (Vers. 26, 27.) God is jealous of his honour. He will take from his adversaries the power of boasting against him, by marvellously restoring those who, had they received their full deserts, would have been utterly destroyed. This stays his hand from expending his wrath against them to the uttermost. We may read this otherwise, and say that zeal for his honour leads God to spare them, that he may glorify his Name by causing mercy to rejoice over judgment. There is more honour to God in saving men than in destroying them.

And what provokes this wrath in God? Sin—sin only. Most especially the sins of his own people. 1. "No faith"—want of fidelity to vows. 2. "Frowardness"—persistence in sin (ver. 20). Those who have stood in nearest relations to him, who have enjoyed most favours, are those who will be most severely punished (Amos iii. 2). —J. O.

Vers. 28, 29.—*The true wisdom.* Consider—

I. IN WHAT WISDOM CONSISTS. 1. The choice of right ends. 2. Of right means to secure these ends. 3. In harmony with a just and proportioned view of all the circumstances of our situation. When essential circumstances are omitted in the calculation, when the horizon is unduly narrowed, when all-important factors of the situation are left wholly out of account,—it is vain to speak of wisdom. Absolutely, and as regards our standing as moral beings, wisdom embraces: 1. *The choice of a true end*, i.e. the choice, as our end in life, of that end for which we were created. 2. *The practical shaping of conduct with a view to that end*, and in the way best calculated to attain it. And this: 3. *In view of all the circumstances of the case*, i.e. with right apprehensions of God, of the issues of moral conduct, of eternity. What wisdom is more to be desired than this? What efforts ought to be put forth to attain it! What incalculable value ought to be set upon it!

II. SIN IS THE ABSOLUTE UNWISDOM. 1. *For the true end of life it substitutes a false one.* The end for which we were made was holiness—the service of God with all our powers of soul, body, and spirit. In this consists our life, our happiness, our well-being. In pursuit of this end, our nature works harmoniously with itself, and with the general constitution of the world. But sin substitutes for this an end which violates, disturbs, perverts the harmony of every sphere of our existence. It asserts a false independence of the creature. It bids us use our powers for self, and not for God. It holds up as an end a shadowy good which is never realized. It cheats with insincere promises. By perverting the nature, it gives to fleshly lusts a tyrannical predominance, and degrades the spirit to the position of a bondservant. For unity there is thus established anarchy—each lust, as its own master, seeking an independent gratification. Life in this way falls asunder—it has a proper end no longer—and the strife continues till a new equilibrium is established by one lust or passion usurping the mastery over the rest. 2. *For the true conduct of life it substitutes a course of conduct resting on false bases.* The false end yields its natural fruit in false principles of life. The sinner's whole career, whatever he may think of it himself, is one tissue of errors and illogicalities. If measured by the end he *ought* to set before him, it is seen to be a course leading him wildly and hopelessly astray. The more skilfully and assiduously he applies himself to *his* ends, only the more conspicuously does he convict himself of folly. 3. *Instead of taking all the factors of the case into account, it usually leaves God and eternity out of it.* This is that which most convincingly brands the sinner's course as folly. If God exist, and if he have the power to bless or blast our schemes, and if in the end we have to meet him as our Judge,—it surely cannot be wisdom to leave this fact unnoticed. So, if we are beings made for eternity, destined to exist for ever, he must be a fool who makes preparations for everything but for eternity. If, again, the issues of obedience and sin are on the one hand life, and on the other death, he must be insane who deliberately makes a preference of the latter. Even if the choice is not deliberately made, but the eyes are kept closed to the issues, this does not alter the unwisdom of the choice itself. We can see, therefore, how a man may be most wise as regards this world, and yet the veriest fool as regards the whole scope of his existence. He may be gifted, talented, energetic, a shrewd man of the world, sagacious in pursuit of earthly ends, yet totally blind to his eternal interests. He may be neglecting the "one thing needful," making no preparation for a hereafter, missing the end of his existence, treasuring up wrath and sorrow for himself at the end. "Thou fool!" was the stern word of Heaven to a man who, in earthly respects, was probably deemed very wise (Luke xii. 20). Men *are* fools who neglect the voice of religion.—J. O.

Ver. 31.—*The superiority of the believer's Rock.* Few men but feel that they need a rock of some kind. Only when their mountain stands very strong do they feel as if they were absolutely secure and independent (Obad. 3, 4). Even then their trust is in acquired power and riches, which is a "rock" to them, though their confidence often proves delusive (Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, Wolsey). When men have lost faith in religion, they frequently take refuge in the "rock" of philosophy. The "rock" of the heathen is their idols and the arts of the soothsayer. Men tend to make a "rock" of those superior to them in power and wisdom. The "rock" of nations is too often their military and naval defences, with arts of diplomacy, and alliances with stronger powers (Isa. xxx.). The believer's Rock, which is the best of all, is God.

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE BELIEVER'S ROCK EVINCED. 1. *From the nature of this Rock.* Grant that God *is*, a Being, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, wise in his counsel, omnipotent in his power, faithful in his promises, righteous in his actions, infinitely gracious and merciful to those who put their trust in him, a "strong Rock," "an House of defence" to save them (Ps. xxxii. 7), a "Hiding-place" to preserve them from trouble (Ps. xxxii. 7),—and the superiority of this Rock to every other needs no further demonstration. It is self-evidently impossible to have a surer or a better. What can man ask more than that the "eternal God" should be his "Refuge," and that underneath him should be the "everlasting arms"? (ch. xxxiii. 27). 2. *From the advantages derived from this Rock.* These are such as no other can pretend to give. The believer's life being hid with God (Col. iii. 3) and guaranteed by the life of Christ in heaven (John xiv. 19), and his inheritance lying beyond death (1 Pet. i. 4),

no hostility of man can reach either. No other "rock" can give the same security, the same peace, joy, shelter, strength, comfort, and refreshment, as the believer's. To which considerations add the following:—1. Many of these so-called "rocks" are *nonentities*. The idols of the heathen are of this description. So with the arts and charms of sorcery, prayers to the Virgin, etc. 2. The surest of these "rocks" are *not to be depended on*. "Wisdom is better than strength" (Eccles. ix. 16); but wisdom, strength, riches, rank, powerful friends, long-consolidated might,—all sometimes fail those who put their trust in them. 3. Not one of these "rocks" *can stand when God wills its overthrow*. God's help, on the other hand, is *real*, always *to be relied on*, and *invincible against opposition*.

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE BELIEVER'S ROCK CONFESSED. It is often confessed, even by the enemy. How often, *e.g.* have ungodly men expressed themselves envious of the religious trust and peace of the believer! How often have they admitted its superiority to anything possessed by themselves! How often, again, have they owned to their own "rocks" failing them in time of need! How often, even, when it came to the end, have they lamented that they had not sought the Rock of the believer! Philosophy is admitted, even by those who take refuge in it, to be but a sorry substitute for religion. Passages could be culled from current literature showing very distinctly this need of the believer's rock—the almost agonizing expression of a wish that belief were possible—the confession that in the surrender of Christian beliefs a large part of life's hopefulness and joy has gone for ever (see in Mallock's "Is Life worth Living?").—J. O.

Ver. 31.—*Our Rock.* Apply to the religion of the Bible. Proved to be superior to every other system: 1. In proofs of supernatural origin. 2. In moral and spiritual power. 3. In the privileges it offers. 4. In the prospects it holds out. Admissions and concessions on each of these points could be gathered from the writings of many of the most noted unbelievers.—J. O.

Vers. 32, 33.—*The vine of Sodom.* Emblem of fruit of sin. 1. Tempting. 2. Deceptive. 3. Ending in disappointment and disgust.—J. O.

Vers. 34—43.—*Retribution.* I. VENGEANCE A PREROGATIVE OF DEITY. As just Judge of the earth, God must avenge transgression. Vengeance is to be distinguished from personal vindictiveness. Of that God is incapable. But Scripture, supported by reason and conscience, attributes to him a holy and inflexible determination to punish sin—to visit on the wrong-doer the consequences of his transgression. The rule for individuals is, "Avenge not yourselves," etc.; but the reason for this is not that vengeance is unnecessary, but that God will avenge (Rom. xii. 18). Magistrates, however, bear from God a certain delegated power to punish public offences—to "avenge" evil (Rom. xiii. 4). He who "takes away vengeance from God, at the same time takes it from God's servant, the magistracy, which carries the sword of vengeance over evil-doers" (Hengstenberg). God has his own time, as well as his own way, of avenging sin, and it is not for man to anticipate this.

II. VENGEANCE ASSUREDLY IN STORE FOR GOD'S ENEMIES. However delayed by forbearance. Because judgment is not executed speedily, sinners take confidence (Eccles. viii. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 9, 10). But the sleepless eye of God is all the while upon them, and the stroke falls when they are least expecting it. Sooner or later, every transgression and disobedience will meet with its due recompense of reward, Note: 1. "Judgment begins at the house of God" (vers. 35, 36; 1 Pet. iv. 17). 2. It will ultimately extend to all who are God's enemies (vers. 41, 42). We are taught that the Messianic kingdom will be established on earth amidst mighty displays of judgment (Rev. xix. 11—21). There will follow the general judgment of quick and dead—"that day of wrath, that dreadful day"—which will complete the work. God's vengeance is: 1. *Assured.* "As I live," etc. (ver. 40). 2. *Terrible.* "My glittering sword;" "arrows drunk with blood," etc. 3. *No escape from it* (ver. 39).

III. JUDGMENTS EMPLOYED TO CONVINCE BACKSLIDERS OF THEIR SINS. They tend: 1. To break up false confidences (vers. 37, 38). 2. To create a feeling of the need of God's help (ver. 39). 3. To convince of the folly of past conduct. God compassionates

even while he punishes (ver. 36). He would fain, through judgment, break a way for mercy. Illustrate this use of judgments from Israel in time of the judges, or from case of Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—14). This one use of the present exile. May we hope that the day of God's "repenting himself" toward Israel is drawing near!

IV. THE RECOVERY OF ISRAEL THE INAUGURATION OF A TIME OF BLESSING TO THE WORLD. The nations are to share in the joy (ver. 43). God is to be merciful to his land and people. The latter-day glory includes the conversion of the Gentiles (Rom. xi.).—J. O.

Ver. 47.—*Your life.* The doing or not doing of God's will, the obeying or not obeying of God's Word, is a matter of life and death to us. This is the simple and solemn and uniform testimony of Scripture from its first page to its last. The gospel, with its revelation of "life and immortality," only heightens the solemnity of the alternative. Instead of bare "life," it is now "eternal life" which is proposed for our acceptance, and which is lost or forfeited by sin. If "life" is the promise, the counter-alternative is death, and "death" accordingly is denounced against the sinner in gospel, as in Law. "The wages of sin are death" (Rom. vi. 23). Eternity is a factor to be taken into account here, as well as in the case of "life." Death, indeed, is not non-existence, but it is the loss of all that makes existence a boon; the extinction in the soul of holiness, happiness, and love. Whatever the final state of the lost may be, whether one of active torment or not, it will be true death. The man loses his "soul"—his "life"—"himself" (Matt xvi. 26; Luke ix. 25). Oh that men were wise, that they understood these things, and acted on their choice as wise men should!—J. O.

Vers. 48—52.—*Moses' end* (see ch. xxxiv.).—J. O.

Vers. 1—14.—*The fatherhood of God.* In this first section of the Divine song, the predominating idea is God's fatherhood. It comes out in ver. 6 in express terms; it is implied in the care that is attributed to him for his children of Israel; it passes into the still tenderer idea of motherhood in the illustration of the eagle (ver. 11); and may fairly be taken as the idea dominating the whole. It has been thought that the fatherhood of God is almost altogether a New Testament idea; but we have it here expressly stated, and it underlies many portions of the Old Testament. This whole song is, in fact, a paternal expostulation with children that have been wayward in the wilderness, and will be more wayward still in the land of promise. We shall notice in order the ideas suggested by this section.

I. FERTILIZING DOCTRINE. Divine doctrine, even in its severest forms, has a gracious and fertilizing influence like rain or dew. It comes down upon the wilderness of human nature, and makes it a fruitful field. It comes down upon the tender herb of implanted graces, upon the grass of humble and useful piety, and makes all to grow more luxuriantly. Nothing is so important as "good doctrine."

II. THE ROCK-STABILITY OF GOD. This is the first inquiry. Can God be trusted as truly stable? The answer is that he is a Rock, and that upon his veracity and justice and helpfulness we can constantly rely. Moses and the Israelites had experienced this; as they wandered amid the rocky fastnesses of the desert, they had found him as firm and as reliable as the rocks. Up to this time, the figure had not been applied to God. The Israelites have, indeed, from the hard and flinty rock, had refreshing streams; the rock was to them a fountain of waters; and doubtless when here the figure is for the first time applied to God, they would find it delightful to associate refreshment and shelter with him. Then in course of time it became a favourite figure, as the Psalms in many passages show (cf. Ps. xxviii. 1; xxxi. 2, 3; xlii. 9; lxii. 2, 7; lxxviii. 20, 35; xcv. 1, etc.). And we rejoice to call our Redeemer "Rock of Ages," in the clefts of which, according to Toplady's idea, taken from Exod. xxxiii. 22, we can take shelter and feel safe.[1]

III. PATERNAL APPEAL. Although God is so worthy of trust, the Israelites have corrupted themselves; they are unwilling to have upon them the mark or spot of

[1] Cf. Gerok's 'Pilgerbrod,' p. 895; and his 'Evangelien-Predigten,' p. 720, for suggestive discourses on this text.

the children of God, but the mark of some other tribe;[1] and so as a *Father* he appeals to them because of their ingratitude. Has he not made them, bought them, and established them, and, in consequence, earned a right to different treatment from this? Fatherhood has rights by reason of service which no grateful child can overlook.

IV. PATERNAL FORESIGHT. He speaks next of the days of old, of the years of many generations, which the fathers and elders could testify about, during which time the Father was but evolving his glorious plan, separating and scattering the sons of Adam according to the interests and number of the children of Israel. At Babel and the subsequent migrations of men, "God so distributed the earth among the several peoples that were therein, as to reserve, or in his sovereign counsel to appoint, such a part for the Israelites, though they were then unborn, as might prove a commodious settlement and habitation for them."[2] Noble foresight, worthy of an everlasting and infinite Father.

V. PATERNAL INSTRUCTION. One element in fatherhood is a sense of possession in the children. The father rejoices that the children are his, and will not part readily with his portion. So with God. "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Out of this sense of property comes the improvement of the children by faithful instruction. Hence Israel were led into the wilderness, and their Father found them there, and led them about, instructing them, and keeping them as "the apple of the eye." It was the Father educating them through his own companionship, and leading them onwards in safety towards their home.

VI. PARENTAL DISCIPLINE. The song introduces (ver. 11) the figure of the eagle, and the motherly discipline to which she subjects her brood. "Naturalists tell us that when her young are old enough to fly, the eagle breaks her nest in pieces, in order to compel them to use their powers of flight; fluttering over them, that by imitation they may learn how to employ their wings, but, when unwilling to fly, spreading abroad her wings, she bears them upwards in the air, and then shaking them off, compels them to use their own exertions."[3] From this Mr. Hull deduces the truth that "the Divine discipline of life is designed to awaken man to the development of his own powers." We see thus the kindness of the parental discipline, and that it takes *motherhood* as well as *fatherhood* to illustrate the Divine relation (cf. Isa. xlix. 15).

VII. PARENTAL BLESSING. Having exercised such parental care over the people, the result was abundant temporal success and blessing. This is beautifully brought out as a "riding upon the high places of the earth." And then the whole panorama of agricultural prosperity is presented, "the increase of the fields" providing *bread*, the rocks affording shelter for the bees which extracted abundant *honey* from the flowers, the olives clinging to the flinty rocks and affording abundance of *oil*, while the kine in the fat pastures gave *butter*, and the sheep *milk*, and the lambs were choice food, and the rams of the breed of Bashan, while the finest wheat and the purest wine made the lot of Israel princely. It was a land of promise surely which supplied their wants in such a fashion. God's goodness was exceeding great.

The "fatherhood of God" had thus its grand exemplification in the history of Israel. A Father who was firm as the rocky fastnesses around them and as reliable; who provided for his children long before they were born; who instructed and disciplined them, and brought them eventually to a splendid inheritance,—might well look for their trust and obedience. The Lord shows a similar fatherly care still to all men, even those who do not return a filial spirit; and if, in his grace, they yield at length to his paternal appeals, then he comes and gives them a fellowship such as they never dreamed of. "He that loveth me," saith Jesus, "shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John xiv. 21).—R. M. E.

VERS. 15—18.—*The danger of worldly success.* Success, when granted, bids for men's trust. They begin accordingly to insinuate that the reliable Rock who begat them is not

[1] Cf. 'The Land and the Book,' p. 67.
[2] So Bochart, as quoted in Jennings' 'Jewish Antiquities,' p. 562.
[3] Hull's 'Sermons,' 3rd series, p. 133.

the source of all success, and that the rill may be tracked to some nearer source. Hence new gods, novelties of man's imagination, or demons from the waste, grateful for even a false faith, are worshipped; and the ever-living and true God forgotten. Apostasy and scepticism, we would repeat, are born of luxury and success. Men think, because they are rich, that they can do bravely without God.

I. IT IS WELL TO CONSIDER THE DANGER OF WORLDLY SUCCESS. Many a man was more religious when poor than after he became rich. Increase of riches needs increase of grace: and, if men are not watchful, riches only minister to backsliding. It is undesirable independence which proves independence of God. Better to trust God in the absence of wealth than to defy him or ignore him with it. Many a successful worldling would have had more success in a poor station, through increase of faith and of heart. The success was at the price of leanness being sent into his soul.

II. THOSE WHO WILL NOT SACRIFICE TO GOD ARE ALWAYS FOUND SACRIFICING TO THEIR FEARS. The credulity of unbelief is one of the most curious questions of the time. When men deny God his due reverence and ignore his existence, their fancy haunts them with new gods, and powers whom they must propitiate—the luck and chance that they advance to the throne. The man alone is free from vain fears who trusts in the living God; all others sooner or later prove adepts at new religions, and are devotees at fancy shrines.

III. THE DIVINE JEALOUSY IS JUSTLY PROVOKED BY SUCH FORGETFULNESS. Jealousy is the anger of ill-requited love. It is what has been called, as already observed, "love-pain," and is eminently worthy of him who is love itself. God cannot but feel he deserves man's love; he cannot but desire it; he longs for it more intensely than ever love-sick one among the children of men has longed; and when he sees the love he deserves made over to another, when he sees his life of love and death of love ignored, —is it not eminently reasonable that he should be jealous and have his holy anger stirred?

Herein lies the danger, then, of success. It may decoy the unguarded soul to mean fears and fancy shrines, and lead at length to the encountering of that jealousy which a God of love most justly entertains. Hence the prayer of souls should be that with success may come watchfulness; that with fatness may come faith; that out of goodness may come repentance. Then success may help and not hinder. Successful saints become a blessing to their kind, and make success a stewardship. "It takes a steady hand to carry a full cup;" so says the proverb. Blessed be God, amid many shaky hands, unequal to the task, there is a select few that carry their success in a cool, conscientious fashion!—R. M. E.

Vers. 19—47.—*Vengeance and recompense.* The reasonableness of the Divine jealousy being shown already, we can have little difficulty in recognizing the further reasonableness of the Divine vengeance. Paul's treatment of the question is concise and conclusive. "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man). God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" (Rom. iii. 5, 6). Vengeance is recognized, therefore, as belonging to God's justice, which shall be called into play as vengeance through the ingratitude and folly of many of mankind. Let us briefly indicate the course of the Divine vengeance as presented in the remainder of this song.

I. GOD PROPOSES TO MOVE HIS UNGRATEFUL PEOPLE BY INTRODUCING GENTILES TO THEIR PRIVILEGES. This is the first experiment of the holy jealousy, to see what effect the ingathering of the Gentiles will have. And to a Jewish mind there must be something striking and convincing in the history of Christianity. Surely the elevation and civilization of the heathen world must be due in large measure to that Divine favour which, as Jews, they despised and forfeited. Such a spectacle is calculated to lead them to earnest thought and deep contrition. Were their hearts not dull and gross, they would humble themselves before God, and acknowledge that they deserve other heirs to be put into their room.

II. THE ACTUALITIES OF THE DIVINE VENGEANCE HAVE BEEN TERRIBLE. The Lord represents his anger as burning to the lowest hell (שְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּית), reaching manifestly to that "under world," as Kahle would call it, where the spirits of the faithless are confined.[1]

[1] See his 'Eschatologie,' *ut supra*, pp. 37, 53.

But in the present life there is a foretaste given of the vengeance which embraces the life to come, which may be summed up, as given in these verses (vers. 23—25), in the terms *hunger, pestilence, wild beasts,* and *war.* The faithless nation experienced all these, as an earnest of the Divine vengeance which justly burns even to the lowest hell. The only limit to it is lest the enemies employed to execute part of the vengeance should say, "Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this" (vers. 26, 27). The Lord will modify and limit his vengeance, lest his instruments should regard it as their work and not his.

III. THE REGRET ABOUT POSSIBILITIES THROWN AWAY WILL FORM PART OF THE DIVINE VENGEANCE. Very pathetically is this put in this song (vers. 29—31). The Israelites, though in a vast minority sometimes, had been carried by their most faithful Father and God to victory, and this would have still characterized them had they remained faithful to him. They would have proved his "invincibles." And no effort of faithless souls can keep regret at bay. We see Milton very properly putting it into the mouth of the archangel when he says—

> "Farewell, happy fields,
> Where joy for ever dwells!"

and subsequently summons his associates from "the oblivious pool," where they are lying astonished. Unholy spirits may doubtless see the vanity of regret, but they cannot dismiss it. Indeed, it is one of the test struggles of the Christian life to put regret away. We need the rousing words of the poetess continually—

> "Rise! if the past detains you,
> Her sunshine and storms forget;
> No chains so unworthy to hold you
> As those of a vain regret.
> Sad or bright, she is lifeless ever;
> Cast her phantom arms away,
> Nor look back, save to learn the lesson
> Of a nobler strife to-day."

How deep a sorrow this regret must be to all who despise God and reject his love we cannot in this life tell.

IV. APPARENT PROSPERITY WILL PROVE REAL DISASTER. Just as the *osher* plant, which flourishes best near the site of Sodom and Gomorrha, presents apparently most luscious and attractive fruit, which yet prove but bags of air and ashes, so the apparent prosperity of the faithless souls proves emptiness and bitter disappointment at last. All the investments, so to speak, which seem so fortunate turn into splendid mistakes and miseries. Upon the whole life, opposed as it is to God, there broods a curse.

V. THE PROGRAMME OF VENGEANCE IS CAREFULLY PREPARED. This is the spirit of the remaining verses (vers. 35—43). God makes his calculations calmly and deliberately. The foot of his enemies shall slide in due time, and his work of vengeance, like all his other work, prove perfect. As God refuses to exercise "unprincipled mercy," so will he refuse to execute random wrath. The great Jonathan Edwards has a remarkable sermon on ver. 35, entitled 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,' which may be distasteful to some easy-going theologians, but is nevertheless weighty with doctrinal and convincing truth. The idea should surely be got rid of that there is any difference in *principle* between the Old Testament and the New. The prerogative of vengeance so powerfully asserted in this song of the Lord, put into the mouth of Moses, has not been renounced nor laid down for an instant. The Lord still claims it, as Rom. xii. 19; Heb. x. 30, and other passages show.

VI. THE POLICY OF THE LORD SHALL HAVE A SPLENDID CONSUMMATION. After the cycle is complete, Jews and Gentiles, as ver. 43 distinctly indicates, shall be found rejoicing in concert before the Lord, who has shown himself merciful to his land and his people. We need not in this Homily enter upon the discussion of the great difference between the Hebrew of ver. 43 and the LXX. It does not affect the truth we draw from the remarkable passage. However the individuals may suffer through the Divine vengeance, it will not be lost as a lesson upon the race. Jew and Gentile shall alike recognize its justice and the compensating mercy which always lay for men in the

tender hands of God. The vengeance is forced upon him—the judgment is his strange work; but he delighteth in mercy.

VII. MOSES SUMS UP THE LESSON OF THE SONG BY URGING OBEDIENCE UPON THE PEOPLE AS THEIR LIFE. And when we remember that God is the source of life; that spiritual life lies in his favour and fellowship; then it is clear that the Israelites had but one duty to discharge—to obey God and live. All the energy of Moses and all the urgency of God are devoted to secure this obedience. The remembrance of God's love, the recognition of his vengeance and deserved wrath, and the consummate wisdom manifested in the whole policy pursued, should move our hearts to love and obey. Let us accept of the mercy, and not force the Lord to judgment!—R. M. E.

Vers. 48—52.—*Death a judgment even to the most faithful servants of God.* After the solemn address to the people, God gives a personal address to Moses. It is about his approaching death. He is to see the land, but not to enter it, because he sanctified not the Lord at the waters of Meribah. It raises, therefore, the whole question of death as the portion even of the most faithful servants of God.

I. IT IS SURELY REMARKABLE THAT, WHEN SAVED THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST, WE DO NOT BECOME IMMORTAL. Salvation seizes on the spirit, it becomes life through the righteousness of Jesus, but the body is still dead (or mortal) because of sin (Rom. viii. 10). Why does salvation take our personality in instalments? save spirit first, and leave the body to the repairs of a resurrection? Can the procedure be vindicated? We think it can. For—

II. IF WE BECAME PHYSICALLY IMMORTAL THROUGH THE RECEPTION OF SALVATION, A MERCENARY ELEMENT WOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO OUR MOTIVES, AND MEN WOULD SEEK SALVATION TO ESCAPE THE PAIN OF DYING. Under the present arrangement, saint as well as sinner has to pass the dark portal. Dying is made the general lot of man, and, if salvation is desired, it is for spiritual purposes. Just as God does not promise immediate success to our efforts or our prayers, lest we should be tempted to live by sight and not by faith.

III. IT IS NOT DESIRABLE THAT, WITH PARDON, WE SHOULD ESCAPE ALL SUFFERING FOR OUR SIN. It is a wise arrangement on God's part, even when forgiving sinners, to take vengeance on our inventions (Ps. xcix. 8). For suppose that, in praying for pardon, we escaped all physical consequences of our sin, the result would be that pardon would be used as a great physical agent and factor, and the *physical* escape would be more thought upon than the spiritual. It is better, therefore, that things should take their course so far as the body is concerned, and that, meanwhile, the spirit should be the chief recipient of the benefit. God does not take the seeds of mortality, therefore, out of our bodies: he leaves them there as sin's own work; and he gives us the earnest of complete redemption in the resurrection and emancipation of our spirits.

IV. IT IS A SPLENDID TEST OF OUR FAITH IN GOD TO BE ASKED TO DIE. For up to the hour of death, we have found persons and things to lean upon in a measure; we have not as yet been left to lean on God alone. But when death comes, we are forced to lean on God only, if we are to have any support at all. God says, "Can you trust me, even when I take away your physical life?" "Though he slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in him." Death brings us all to this test, and happy are we if we reach the same assurance.

"The real is but the half of life; it needs
The ideal to make a perfect whole;
The sphere of sense is incomplete, and pleads
The closer union with the sphere of soul.

* * * * *

"Then let us, passing o'er life's fragile arch,
Regard it as a means, and not an end;
As but the path of faith on which we march
To where all glories of our being tend."

R. M. E.

Vers. 1—6.—*God's vicegerent as poet.* The true poet is God's messenger. He that sings not of truth and goodness is not a genuine poet; he is but a rhymester. As

the swan is said to sing sweetly only in the act of dying, so, on the eve of his departure, Moses sings his noblest strains.

I. OBSERVE THE POET'S AUDITORY. He summons heaven and earth to hear. We read in ancient story that when Orpheus made music with his lyre, the wild beasts listened, and the trees and rocks of Olympus followed him about. This may serve as a just reproof to some men, who, having ears, act as if they had them not. 1. *Heaven and earth may denote both angels and men.* For even "the principalities of heaven learn from the Church the manifold wisdom of God." 2. *Heaven and earth may denote all classes of the people, high and low.* Frequently in Scripture great men are represented as the stars of heaven. The man of ambition is said to lift his head to the stars. The righteous are to shine as the brightness of the firmament. 3. *Heaven and earth may denote the intelligent and the material creation.* On account of man's sin, "the whole creation groaneth;" and the effect of man's obedience will be felt beneficially on the material globe. It will increase its fertility, its beauty, its fragrance, its music. "Truth" shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look "down from heaven." "Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice."

II. THE POET'S BENEFICENT INFLUENCE. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain," etc. (ver. 2). This imagery teaches us: 1. *The silent, unobtrusive power of truth.* It finds it way, quietly and unobserved, to the roots of human judgment and feeling. 2. *It is refreshing.* What a draught of clear water is to a thirsty man, truth is to a healthy, active soul. 3. *It is fertilizing.* It nourishes all good affections, and strengthens every virtue. 4. *It is most suitable.* No fitness can be more manifest than dew for tender grass. Poetic truth is suited to every grade of human understanding.

III. THE POET'S LOFTY THEME. His theme is God; but God is only known as he reveals himself in his Name. 1. He descants upon his majesty, his supreme power, and the splendours of his state. 2. He touches upon his eternal stability. What the unchanging rock is amid the shifting sands, God is—unalterably the same. 3. He dwells upon the perfections of his character ("just and right is he"); upon the perfection of his works, which are incapable of any improvement; upon the perfection of his government ("all his ways are judgment"); and upon the perfection of his speech. He is "a God of truth." He alters nothing, retracts nothing.

IV. THE POET'S MORAL PURPOSE. To restore harmony between man and God. 1. He proclaims man's fallen state: "they have corrupted themselves." Human nature is not as it was when it came from the hands of God. Man holds this tremendous power of ruining his own nature. 2. The mark of sonship has disappeared. "Their spot is not the spot of his children." Childlike docility and submissiveness form the family lineament. 3. This depravity has spread like the virus of disease. The whole race is infected. "They are a perverse and crooked generation." 4. Such conduct is suicidal folly. It is most antagonistic to self-interest. No madman could have acted worse. 5. Such conduct is the basest ingratitude. "Do ye thus requite the Lord?" Consider his claims. Did he not create thee? Has he not been a Father to thee? Has he not redeemed thee? Tender expostulation with the conscience is the poet's mission. For this vocation he has been specially inspired by God. A heavenly spirit breathes through his every word. No higher honour can man attain on earth.—D.

Vers. 7—14.—*History's testimony for God.* A defective character often results from mental indolence. Men do not use their faculties. Did they consider, reflect, and ponder, they would be better men. To call into activity all our powers is an imperative and sacred duty. For this purpose God has given them. Whose am I? whence have I come? what is my business in life? what are my obligations to my Maker?—these are questions possessing transcendent interest, and are vital to our joy. Ask intelligently and thoroughly; then act upon the answers. God's careful provision for Israel had been long-continued, thoughtful, special. No less, probably greater, has been his considerate and far-seeing provision for us.

I. WE NOTE A SPECIAL HABITATION PREPARED BY GOD. 1. Our earth has for untold ages been undergoing preparation as a suitable dwelling-place for man. Rocks have been formed for man's use, treasures of coal and metals have been stored up for his advantage. The soil has been pulverized to receive his seed. A marvellous and painstaking preparation has been made. 2. Equally conspicuous is God's wisdom in

selecting special territory for special nations. Amidst all the hurly-burly of war, the unseen hand of God has "divided to the nations their inheritance." Oceans and rivers, mountains and deserts, have been God's walls of partition. 3. All these selections have been subordinate to Israel's welfare. All the lines of God's government met here. To Israel's good everything was to bend. 4. The reason of this is declared. "The *Lord's* portion is his people." Some location on earth was to be reserved for Jehovah. He too had chosen a dwelling-place, an inheritance. And his habitation was in the hearts of his people Israel. "For to that man will I look, and with him dwell, who is of an humble and contrite spirit." "Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."

II. SPECIAL TRAINING BY GOD. 1. Apart from God, earth would be a barren desert. Man's environment, where God is not, would be discordant, unsuitable, painful. The flowers and fruits of life are divinely provided. 2. Inscrutable are the methods of God's training. "He led him about." A masterly hand is in the matter, and we are very incompetent critics. Those marches and counter-marches in the wilderness were all needful to nourish robust courage and simple faith in the Hebrews. In God's arrangements no waste is permitted. 3. Tenderest kindness is here expressed. "He kept him as the apple of his eye." We count the eye among our most precious endowments. It is protected by the most clever contrivances. No part of the body is so delicate or so susceptible of pain. *So* God regards his chosen people. As a man guards from harm his eye, *so* God guards his own. 4. Consummate skill was expended to develop the best qualities of Israel. This is set forth by a piece of impressive imagery. As the eagle knows the perils of indolence, and is anxious to train her young brood to early self-exertion, she breaks up the nest, takes the eaglets on her strong pinions, bears them heavenward, shakes them free, then, as they sink, darts beneath them, bears them up again, and encourages them to seek the sun; so, by a thousand kind devices, God taught his people "to seek the things which are above." So precious an end is worthy of the largest expenditure of means.

III. DOMINION OVER NATURE AND OVER MAN ACCORDED BY GOD. In proportion as man has loyally served his God, man has gained earthly dominion. To Adam was accorded sovereignty over all living things in air, or earth, or sea; and of the second Adam we read, "Thou hast put all things under his feet." 1. Victory over enemies is secured. "He made him ride on the high places of the earth." Every mountain fortress was, one by one, possessed. To ride is significant of military conquest. The triumphs of Israel were swift, signal, and complete. 2. The peaceful conquest of nature followed. To the arts of industry, the earth yielded in sevenfold profusion. The olives on the rugged hills filled their presses with oil. Wild bees toiled early and late to lay up stores of honey. Their cattle, plentifully fed, yielded butter and milk in abundance. Under the curse of civil strife and petty feuds of the Canaanites, crops had been devastated, and flocks had been destroyed. Now, peace reigned in every valley, and the very trees blossomed with ruddy gladness. Hill and plain poured their unceasing tributes at the feet of lordly man. 3. The sole Author of this splendid inheritance was God. "The Lord alone did lead him." The deities of the Amorites (if they had any power at all) had bestowed on their votaries an inheritance of lust and war and ruin. In whatever respect Israel's inheritance was a contrast, it was due to the beneficence of Jehovah. He had blessed them with an ungrudging hand. 'Twas the indulgence of his native instinct to give and to make glad. No sane man among them could reach any other conclusion than that Jehovah was the royal Giver of all. And with one voice they should have made the clear welkin ring with hearty hallelujahs: "The Lord hath done great things for us." The gift was unique. It was conspicuously a deed of grace.—D.

Vers. 15—25.—*Sowing and reaping.* The connection between sin and suffering is natural, organic, and universal. Suffering, in some form, is the proper development of sin. Like the plants of nature, sin has its seed within itself.

I. WE HAVE A CASE OF AGGRAVATED SIN. 1. *It was a wanton abuse of special kindness.* The splendid gifts of providence, which ought to have bound them by golden ties of obligation to God, were erected into barriers to shut out God from them. An inner principle of selfish perverseness turned all food into poison. Instead of gratitude, there was scoffing; instead of loyalty there was insolence. So it often

happens that earthly wealth is an injury instead of a benefit. It detains a man's faith and delight on itself. He exalts his riches into a god. Entering a man's heart, as his professed friends, riches become his secret foes: they sap the foundations of his piety; they degrade and stultify the man. 2. *The flagrancy of sin is seen in the perversion of privilege.* The Hebrews had been chosen by God to a place of peculiar honour. They had been admitted to a nearer access to his friendship than any other nation. God had called them his sons and daughters. Nothing of good had God withheld from them. For these privileged persons to turn their backs on God, and act as traitors to their Lord, was sin of more than ordinary flagrancy. If such fall from their allegiance, how great must be their fall! 3. *The course of sin proceeds by perceptible stages.* Sin often begins by culpable *omissions*. There is first negative good, then positive offence. The people began their downward course by being "unmindful" of their Maker. Their sense of dependence on God declined. Then they quite forgot the God who had so often rescued them. The next stage was openly to forsake God. They avoided his presence, neglected his worship. Soon they "lightly esteemed" their Deliverer. If they thought of him at all, it was only to look down on him—yea, to despise him. Yet in a condition of atheism they could not long remain. Their nature demanded that they should worship somewhat. So they set up strange deities; they sacrificed unto demons. They provoked to jealousy, and to just indignation, the God of Israel. Beyond this it was impossible for human rebellion to proceed. 4. *Sin leads to a terrible alternative*, viz. the worship and service of devils. There is no middle place at which a man can halt. He either grows up into the image of God or into the image of Satan.

II. WE HAVE A CASE OF EQUITABLE PUNISHMENT. 1. *It was the reversal of former good.* He who aforetime had promised them prolific plenty now threatens to "consume the earth with her increase." Instead of the sunlight of his favour, he was about to "hide his face from them." The wheels of providence were to be reversed, and the effect would be to overthrow and to crush them. 2. *God's judgments are tardy.* He did not smite at once. His first strokes were comparatively light, and then he patiently waited what the effect might prove. "I will see what their end shall be." The long-suffering of God is an immeasurable store. He "is slow to anger." Attentively he listens, if so be he may catch some sigh of penitence. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." 3. *We may observe here the equity of God's procedure.* By making his punishments, in great measure, like the sins, the Hebrews would the readier detect their folly and guilt. They had forsaken God: therefore God will "hide his face from them." They had "lightly esteemed" God: therefore he will abhor them. They had "excited his jealousy," by choosing another object of worship: he will excite their jealousy by choosing another nation to fill their place. They had provoked his anger by their choice of vanities: he will provoke their anger by supplanting them with a "foolish nation." The emotions which exist in man have their correspondences in the nature of God. Thus, by stupendous condescension, God accommodates his messages to human understanding—employs a thousand comparisons by which to impress our hearts. 4. *God's agents to execute his behests are numerous and terrible.* A few only are mentioned here, but these may serve as samples of others. Material forces are pressed into service. The atmosphere will be a conveyer of pestilence. Fire is a well-known minister of God. Earthquake and volcano have often been commissioned to fulfil Jehovah's will. As a skilled warrior aims well his deadly arrows upon his foes, so God sends his lightnings abroad out of his quiver. Famine is decreed: "they shall be burnt with hunger." Sickness and fever shall follow: they shall be "devoured with burning heat." Pestiferous insects shall assail them, and wild beasts shall overrun the land. The sword of the invader shall fall with ruthless violence upon young and old—upon babe and veteran. They who escape from one peril shall fall under another. From the hand of God release is impossible.—D.

Vers. 26—29.—*The pleading of Divine wisdom.* The judicial anger of God is not an uncontrollable passion; it acts in harmony with infinite wisdom. The vast and varied interests of all God's creatures are tenderly considered in the act of judicial retribution. We have here—

I. GOD'S ESTIMATE OF HUMAN DESERT. Were guilty men alone to be considered, no

penalty would be too severe as the award for their high-handed offences. Every vestige of merit has disappeared. The consensus of all righteous beings requires unreserved condemnation. Nor can the condemned offender himself escape this conclusion. When his conscience awakes to ponder his guilt, he joins in his own condemnation; he confesses the justice of his sentence. If the demerit of the sinner were the only question to be solved, the answer would be at once forthcoming; the verdict would be complete destruction.

II. WE SEE GOD'S FORESIGHT EMBRACING WIDER INTERESTS. 1. *The advantage of other races is, by God, taken into the account.* What effect upon other nations will the condign punishment of Israel have? Will it make them self-confident, arrogant, defiant? The true king has at heart the well-being of all his subjects. 2. *The honour of God himself must be taken into account.* The public reputation of God is indissolubly bound up with the well-being of his intelligent creatures. His honour is dear to him; for his honour is nothing more than his native excellence illustrated and made known. 3. *How graciously the Most High accommodates his speech to suit the conceptions of men!* As a man may fear the wrath of his foes, so God (to bring his doings within the compass of the human understanding) speaks of himself as the subject of fear. In our present state, we cannot rise to the comprehension of God *as he is:* our knowledge of him is conditioned by our limitations of mind.

III. GOD'S GRIEF FOR HUMAN FOLLY. The tender affection of God in pleading with men to avoid sin is very impressive; but more impressive still are his exclamations of grief when the final step has been taken, and when, for many, recovery is impossible. Thus when Jesus looked down from Olivet upon the guilty metropolis, and knew that the die was cast, he nevertheless wept and said, "How often would I have gathered your children, as a hen her brood; but ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!" So too in the Psalms God thus speaks, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me! that Israel had walked in my ways!" The measure of God's love transcends all known limits; its forms are infinite in their variety! When every remedial measure has been tried in vain, love can only weep.—D.

Ver. 29.—*God's pathetic appeal to men.* Wisdom is far-seeing. Not content with estimating present experiences and fortunes, it embraces the remoter issues of our choice; it takes in all the possibilities of the future.

I. AS THERE HAS BEEN A BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT LIFE, SO THERE WILL COME AN END.

II. THE END OF PROBATIONARY LIFE DEMANDS OUR SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

III. THE HIGHEST WISDOM FORECASTS THE WHOLE REACH OF LIFE, BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE.—D.

Vers. 30—35.—*The devil's counterfeit coin.* It is not in the power of Satan to originate any new thing. Knowing that his power is restricted, the utmost he can do is to make spurious imitations of God's good things. His base purpose is to deceive man with spectral illusions. His nefarious design is to raise before the world's eye an empty mirage of a carnal paradise.

I. EVERY MAN CRAVES FOR SOME GROUND OF CONFIDENCE, EXTERNAL TO HIMSELF. To the men of the East, this external foundation of trust was best described as a rock. *What* the solid rock is amid the loose alluvial soil of Egypt, or amid the shifting sand of the desert, *that* God is designed to be unto every man. Complete independence is impossible to created man. He can never be self-contained nor self-nourished. Pure atheism has never been a permanent resting-place for the human heart. When the invisible God is forsaken, the human mind swings toward idolatry. The carnal mind finds delight in a ground of confidence that is visible and tangible. Some god we must have, if it be only the shadowy deity named Fate, or Law, or Chance.

II. COMPLETE CONTRAST EXISTS BETWEEN THE OBJECTS OF HUMAN TRUST. The only point of similarity is the *name.* The devil borrows this, so as the better to throw dust in the eyes of his followers. Our God is a Rock; the world also has its counterfeit rock. By the judgments and verdict of worldly men, *our* Rock differs *in toto* from theirs. Their rock, they acknowledge, is unstable and unreliable. They trust it simply because they know not a better. It is misnamed a rock. Their rock ofttimes deserts

them in the hour of greatest need. Ah! fortune, say they, is *fickle*. Very tyrannical and self-willed is fate. But our God is a Rock in very deed. He never forsakes his liege disciples. In the darkest hour he is nearest—the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Their misnamed rock encourages them to enter the battle-field, and then forsakes them. They are "sold to the enemy."

III. NOTWITHSTANDING THE CONTRAST IN THESE OBJECTS OF TRUST, THE FALSE IS A CLEVER IMITATION OF THE TRUE. All through life, we find that the false counterfeits the true. The thief puts on the pretence of honesty. The villain trains himself to use fair speech. The adulterer wears the garb of virtue. Beauty is the robe of God, but the devil fabricates meretricious tinsel. He, too, has his "promised land," but it is a fool's paradise. He has his vine, but his vine is the vine of Sodom, which generates drunkenness and unchastity. He also has his fields, but they are fields of Gomorrah. The fruits are pleasant to the eye, but they turn to ashes in the mouth. There is the appearance of grapes, but lo! the juice is gall—the clusters are bitterness itself. And not only is the experience disappointing, it is even disastrous and deadly. This pretended wine is only poison, it is a gilded pill. Cruel deceit has provided this counterfeit banquet. Beneath the glamour of a fair exterior, there is the "serpent's venom." Thus fares it with all who leave their God. They find out the bitter mistake at last. So sang Byron in his last days—

"The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone."

IV. SUCH HUMAN EXPERIENCES OF THE FALSE, GOD USES IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD. "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?" God knew well what the effects of an idolatrous course would be, what bitter vexation and disaster would come at last. But he foresaw that it was better for men that they should pass through this experience than that he should remove the possibility of it. He might have prevented, by exercise of power, the stratagems of the tempter. He might have curtailed Satan's freedom, and put on him chains of darkness from the first. But his infinite wisdom has decided otherwise. He foresees more glorious results from this method, so he patiently waits; he calmly watches the stages of the process. "Their foot," says he, "shall slide *in due time*." "The day of their calamity is at hand." *Now*, it is difficult to discern between a grain of living seed and a grain of dead sand; but put both into the furrowed field, and give them time, so when the day of harvest comes, the man who sowed the sand will be covered with shame, while he who sowed good seed will bear gladly his sheaves into the heavenly garner. Our business now is to discriminate between God's corn and the devil's chaff. "The day will declare it."—D.

Vers. 36—43.—*The final revelation of God's supremacy.* In this inspired song—an epitome of the Bible—Moses looks adown the long vista of history, and discerns what will be the outcome of the whole, viz. to establish on a safe basis the acknowledged supremacy of Jehovah. Truth shall eventually conquer, whatever be her present fortunes; and the supreme authority of Jehovah is a fundamental truth, which must in due time effectually shine forth.

I. HUMAN EXPERIENCE WILL ULTIMATELY CONFIRM THE VANITY AND FUTILITY OF IDOLATRY. Men will accept, at the close of a changeful and bitter experience, what they would not accept at the outset of their course, viz. that there is one God—invisible, supreme, eternal. In the conscious pride of self-will, men will sound all the possible problems of life. They will not at first accept, with the docility of a child-like nature, the *ipse dixit* even of God himself. But when all trust in self and in created power has proved a failure; when all power is gone, and we lie on the battle-field, wounded and helpless;—then we begin to give heed to the heavenly voice. Then the gentle message of God comes, with the charm of evening music, upon the ear—yea, as an anodyne and a balm upon the bleeding heart. In a mood of self-despair, we clutch the hope of the gospel, viz. God manifest to man. God invites us to earnest and profound inquiry. He asks us to give a mature deliverance touching the power and helpfulness of the God whom we have long trusted; and the final experience of men, in all lands and ages, is uniform. "The gods who have not created the heavens and the earth shall perish!"

II. HUMAN EXPERIENCE ATTESTS THE SUPREMACY AND TRIUMPH OF JEHOVAH. "*See* now, that *I*, even *I* am he, and there is no god with me." The eye of man can clearly discern the fact—the foundation-fact of all religion—so soon as the veil of prejudice and sin is removed. The revelation is clear enough, if only the organ of mental vision be in healthful vigour. Without question, God is the sole Arbiter of life and death. No other deity has ever assumed an act of creation. The powers of evil have flourished the wand of a necromancer, and have pretended to effect sudden changes in the conditions of nature; but not one has ever pretended to create a star or to produce a single human life. God is still left upon the throne, as sole and undisputed Monarch.

Eternal existence is another prerogative of Jehovah. Where are now the gods of the heathen? Who now worships Jupiter, or Dagon, or Isis, or Moloch? Their names are historic only. They had a passing popularity, but it has long since vanished. But with solemn form of adjuration, the Most High lifts his hand and swears, "I live for ever!" As in a court of justice men accept the testimony of a fellow-man, when that testimony is given under the sanction of a religious oath; so, in self-consistency, are we bound to accept the asseveration of the eternal God. In pity for his creatures, he also takes the form of oath, and since "he can swear by none greater, he swears by himself."

III. THE ROYAL SUPREMACY OF JEHOVAH IS A GROUND FOR HUMAN JOY. Every perfection of God is suitable material for grateful praise. His power is a security for good men. All our interests are safe, being under the protection of such a Friend. His holiness also affords distinct ground for gladness. Because he is holy, we can cherish a confident hope that we shall be holy too. Hence we "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." We rejoice to know that the sceptre of the universe is in the hands of a God who is absolutely and incorruptibly just. We know that "the right" will not long be trodden underfoot of the oppressor. We are assured that the malice and craft of Satan shall not triumph. We heartily rejoice that Jehovah is King of all the earth; for "all things must now work together for good to them that love him."

> "Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;
> The eternal years of God are hers;
> But Error, wounded, writhes with pain,
> And dies amid her worshippers."

Most of all, we rejoice in his mercy. "He will be merciful to his land and to his people." We are the very persons who need Divine mercy; for lack of that mercy we die. Not more urgently does the parched land need the liquid shower, than do we, who have so grossly sinned, need Jehovah's mercy. Yet not more sure is the need than the supply. That mercy is made amply secure to all who desire it. As certainly as light streams from the natural sun, so freely and copiously does mercy stream forth from Jehovah's heart. Therefore we do well to "rejoice and to be exceeding glad." For saith Jehovah, "I will pardon your unrighteousness, and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more." God's revelation closes with the theme of mercy.—D.

Vers. 44—47.—*Religion a reality.* The bulk of men treat religion as if it were a fancy or a myth. They deem it useful for the sick, the aged, and the dying. But for the healthful man and the active man of business it is voted a bore. Now, Moses puts religion in its right place when he declares it vital to human interests—vital, in the highest and largest sense. "It is your life."

I. THE OBJECTS ABOUT WHICH RELIGION TREATS ARE REAL, NOT SHADOWY. "It is not a vain thing." The eye of man cannot embrace God's universe. The material kingdoms are not all. God's creation extends above and beyond the reach of mortal sense. With respect to much that God has made, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived." Science deals with one class of objects, religion with another class. The subject-matter of religion is the most excellent, substantial, and enduring. It treats of God, heaven, eternity, the soul of man—its sins and sorrows, the way to holiness, the hope of everlasting life. These things come not under the cognizance of

our sensuous organs; they are more substantial than the granite rocks—more real than jewels.

II. THE TRUTHS CONCERNING RELIGION ARE AUTHENTIC, NOT ILLUSORY. They come to us supported by abundant evidence, both internal and external. They come with a better title to belief than any books of equal antiquity. If we reject Moses and Isaiah, we are bound, in self-consistency, to reject Thucydides and Herodotos, Bede and Gibbon. But to every Christian, the most conclusive evidence is experimental. He has the "witness in himself." The truth, admitted to his mind, has elevated his tastes, enlarged his views, purified his affections, ennobled and beautified his whole nature. As light suits the eye and music the ear, so the truth of Scripture exquisitely suits the needs and aspirations of the soul. It meets a real want.

III. THE HUMAN INTERESTS, WHICH RELIGION PROMOTES, ARE REAL AND PRECIOUS, NOT VAPID OR FANCIFUL. These interests are internal and external; they reach to the family and to the utmost limits of human society; they embrace the present and the unbounded future. Reconciliation with God, the removal of sin, the development of man's best nature, the heritage of inward tranquillity, the conquest of care, the extraction of blessing out of sorrow, a hope that conquers death,—these are among the advantages obtained by religion. It makes men better husbands, better masters, better servants, better citizens, nobler, truer, wiser. It imparts a meetness for the society and the service of heaven. It brings advantage to every relationship and circumstance of human life. "It is not a vain thing;" it is life and health and joy.—D.

Vers. 48–52.—"*Obedient unto death.*" In Moses, Faith had achieved one of her most signal triumphs. From early youth to latest manhood, he had acted and "endured as seeing him who is invisible." No earthly or visible honour had ever enchanted his vision. He had lived very simply "in his Great Taskmaster's eye." Therefore it was that he submitted to be deprived of the earthly Canaan without a murmur, "for he looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker was God." To him death was but a darksome passage to an enduring home.

I. THE GODLY MAN DIES AT GOD'S COMMAND. In this respect, Moses was a type of Christ, and has left us an example deserving our imitation. It should be enough for us to know that God requires it. It is no accident—no unforeseen event. Every circumstance touching the believer's death is wisely arranged by God. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Our Elder Brother has passed the dark valley before us, and his presence lights up the once gloomy way. "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." At the girdle of our Captain hang "the keys of death and of Hades." "He opens, and no man shuts." To the genuine disciple death is no terror. "It is my Father's voice I hear. I see his beckoning hand. I feel his sustaining arm." "Death is swallowed up in victory."

II. THE GODLY MAN'S DEATH IS PARTLY JUDICIAL, PARTLY MERCIFUL. To the full-grown and ripe Christian, earth has little attraction. Its joys pall upon the taste. We aspire after nobler and better things. "I would not live alway." A time comes in the good man's history when he wishes the probation to close, and the real life to begin. The heir longs for his majority and for the ancestral heritage. The believer dies because death is the most convenient portal by which he can enter heaven.

Yet judgment is mingled with the mercy. Moses was on the tiptoe of earthly expectancy—on the threshold of a great success, when God required him to relinquish all for heaven. To him it was revealed, in clearest form, that earlier sin required this late correction. For Israel's sake, for the world's sake, and for Moses' sake, his trespass must bear fruitage in loss and sorrow. In the very nature of things, it is impossible that men can sin without privation of some kind. We may flatter ourselves, at times, that God has winked at our folly, and that no ill consequence has ensued. But judge not prematurely. Possibly, in our last hours of life, the remembrance of that sin will rob us of our peace, will impose some serious loss. In the moral realm, "whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

III. THE GODLY MAN DEPARTS THIS LIFE FROM THE MOUNTAIN-PEAKS OF PERSONAL ATTAINMENT. There were solid reasons in the Divine mind (partly hidden and partly revealed) why Moses should die upon the mount. He might have viewed the magni-

ficent prospects, and then have descended to die. But mountains have often been selected by God as the scene of grand events. On the summit of a mountain we are inspired with a sense of awe. We take in the sense of the infinite. We are constrained to worship. Thence we are already half disposed to mount and soar to heaven. This is suggestive. When through much active energy of faith we have climbed the heights of practical holiness, we feel that the work of life is done. We have finished our course. There has been steady advancement thus far, and now, what next? We feel that the world is beneath our feet; and from this pinnacle of moral elevation we wait the revelation of the future, we prepare for the strange transition.

From such an elevation of faith, too, we clearly discern the scene of the Church's future conquests. The past is a light which irradiates the prospective triumphs of truth and holiness. "Much land remains to be possessed;" but the assurance of success is absolute. Already the foes of God are at our feet. "He must reign."

IV. THE GODLY MAN'S DEPARTURE IS NOT TO SOLITUDE, BUT TO SOCIETY. "Thou shalt be gathered unto thy people." Whatever thoughts, or hopes, or fears this language of God suggested to Moses' mind, it suggests to our minds one of the charms of heaven. We love to think of it as a home. Next to the ecstasy which God's presence shall inspire, is the rapture of reunion with departed friends. "In my Father's house are many mansions." No question need distress us touching mutual recognition. Moses and Elijah were recognized as such when they came down in glorified state, and conversed with Jesus on the mount. Not a faculty shall be wanting there which we possessed here. "Then shall we know, even as also we are known." If men from distant climes shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God," one main element of honour and of joy would be missed unless these illustrious patriarchs were known.—D.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MOSES' BLESSING.

Before ascending Mount Nebo, to take a view of the land he was not permitted to enter and then to die, Moses took farewell of the people he had so long guided and ruled, by pronouncing on them a blessing in their several tribes. This blessing was probably spoken on the same day as the song recorded in the preceding chapter, and to the same assembly. The one may be regarded as the counterpart of the other. In the song, Moses dwells chiefly on the calamities that were to befall the people because of their apostacy; in the blessing, he depicts the benefits that were to be enjoyed by them through the Divine favour. The tone of the one is sombre and minatory; the tone of the other is serene and cheering. The one presents the darker side, the other the brighter side, of Israel's fortunes. Both were fitting utterances for the occasion: the one the farewell warning, the other the farewell benediction, of him who had so long proved them and known their ways; who, whilst he desired their welfare, feared they might forfeit this by their folly and sin; and who sought, both by warning and by blessing, to encourage them to pursue that course by which alone prosperity and happiness could be secured.

The blessing consists of a series of benedictions on the several tribes (vers. 6—25), preceded by an introduction (vers. 1—5), and followed by a conclusion (vers. 26—29).

Vers. 1—5.—*Introduction.* The blessing opens with an allusion to the making of the covenant and the giving of the Law at Sinai, when the Lord revealed himself in glory and majesty as the King of Israel, in order at the outset to fix the minds of the people on the source whence alone blessing could come to them. God's love to Israel is celebrated, and the intention and end of his choice and elevation of Israel to be his people is declared.

Ver. 1.—**Moses the man of God.** This appellation is applied to Moses only here and in Josh. xiv. 6 and the heading of Ps. xc. The phrase, "man of God," indicates one favoured with Divine communications, and employed as God's messenger to men (cf. 1 Sam. ix. 6; 1 Kings xii. 22). In this heading, the author of the blessing is clearly

distinguished from the person by whom it was inserted in this place.

Ver. 2.—**And he said.** Here begin the words of Moses. He commences by depicting the majesty of Jehovah as he appeared to Israel when he came to make the covenant with them and give them his Law. **The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them,** etc. *Seir* is the mountain land of Edom to the east of Sinai. **Mount Paran** is probably the range of lofty hills which form the southern boundary of the promised land to the north of the desert of Et-Tih. These places are not mentioned as scenes of different manifestations of the Divine glory, but as indicating the extent to which the one manifestation given at Sinai reached. The light of the Divine glory that rested on Sinai was reflected also from the mountains of Seir and Paran (cf. Hab. iii. 3; Judg. v. 4). **He came with ten thousands of saints;** rather, *he came from ten thousands of holy ones;* literally, *out from myriads of holiness;* i.e. "from his celestial seat, where myriads of angels surround his throne" (Rosenmüller). The rendering "with," though that of the Targum, LXX., and Vulgate, cannot be retained; nor does Scripture represent God as attended by angels when he comes forth to manifest his glory to men. They are represented as surrounding his throne in heaven (1 Kings xxii. 19; Job i. 6; Dan. vii. 10), as his servants awaiting his behest, and his host that do his pleasure (Gen. xxviii. 12; xxxii. 2, 3; Ps. ciii. 21); and God is represented as dwelling in the midst of them (Ps. lxviii. 17). Hence he is represented here as coming forth from among them to manifest himself to his people. **A fiery law.** There is a various reading here; instead of אֵשׁ דָּת, fire of law, many codices have אשדת in one word, and this is supported by the Samaritan text and other authorities, and is accepted by most critics and interpreters. It is a fatal objection to the textual reading that דָּת is not a Semitic word, but one of Persian origin, brought by the Jews from Babylonia, and found only in the post-exilian books (Esth. i. 8, 19; ii. 8, 12; iii. 8, 14; iv. 11, 15; Ezra vii. 12, 21; viii. 36; Dan. ii. 9, 13, 15; vi. 5, 9, 13, 16); and in them as applied to the Law of God only by heathens. It is, therefore, altogether improbable that this word should be found in any Hebrew writing anterior to the Captivity. Besides, what is the sense of אֵשׁ דָּת, supposing דת to mean "law"? The words cannot be rendered, as in the Authorized Version, by "fiery law;" they can only be rendered by "a fire, a law," or "a fire of law," and what either of these may mean it is not easy to see. The ancient versions vary here very considerably: LXX., ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ: Vulgate, *In dextera ejus ignea lex;* Targum of Onkelos, "Written by his right hand, from the midst of the fire, a law gave he to us;" Syriac, "With myriads of his saints at his right hand. He gave to them, and also caused all peoples to love them." The best Hebrew manuscripts have אשדת as one word. The Masoretic note is, "The *Chatiph* is one word, and the *K'ri* two." The word אשדת is best explained as a compound of אֵשׁ, fire, and שְׁרָא, an Aramaic word signifying to throw or dart; the Syriac ܫܪܐ, or the Hebrew יָרָה, having the same signification, so that the meaning is "fire-dartings:" from his right hand went rays of fire like arrows shot forth (cf. Hab. iii. 4; Exod. xix. 16). **To them;** *i.e.* to the Israelites, to whom this manifestation was vouchsafed.

Ver. 3.—**Yea, he loved the people.** The proper rendering is, *he loveth peoples* (עַמִּים). This is generally understood of the tribes of Israel; but some would understand it of nations in general, on the ground that such is the proper meaning of the word, as in ch. xxxii. 8 and other places. A reference to nations at large, however, would seem incongruous here; and the use of the word in relation to Israel in such passages as Gen. xxviii. 3; Judg. v. 14; Isa. iii. 13; Hos. x. 14; Zech. xi. 10, justifies the taking it so here. **All his saints are in thy hand.** The people of Israel are here called God's saints, or holy ones, because they were chosen by and consecrated to him. It is not probable, as some suggest, that the angels are here intended. The change from the third person to the second is not uncommon in Hebrew poetry (cf. ch. xxxii. 15; Ps. xlix. 14, etc.). **They sat down at thy feet.** The verb rendered "sat down" here (תָּכּוּ) is found only in this passage, and is of uncertain meaning. Kimchi explains it as "they *united* or *assembled together to follow thy steps;*" Knobel makes it "*they wandered at thy feet,*" and understands it of Israel's following the lead of Jehovah in the wilderness, when the ark of the covenant preceded them in their march; Gesenius and Fürst, "*they lie down at thy feet.*" This last is accepted by Keil, and seems to have most in its favour. **Every one shall receive of thy words.** Some render here, *they rise up at thy words;* but though the verb נָשָׂא is sometimes used intransitively, it is properly an active verb, and there seems no reason why it should not be so regarded here: *every one receives* [the singular, יִשָּׂא, used distributively] *thy words.*

Ver. 4.—Moses here, identifying himself with the people, uses the third person, and includes himself among those to whom the

Law was given; cf. Ps. xx., xxi., where David not only speaks of himself in the third person, but addresses such prayers for himself as could only be offered by the people for their king (cf. also Judg. v. 12, 15; Hab. iii. 19). **Even the inheritance of the congregation.** The "even," which the translators of the Authorized Version have inserted here, were better omitted; the words are in apposition to "law." The Law which Moses communicated to Israel was to remain with them as the inheritance of the congregation. The Bishops' Bible and the Geneva Version have, more correctly, "for an inheritance of the congregation."

Ver. 5.—Some refer this to Moses, but Moses was never recognized as king in Israel: he "was faithful in all his house as a servant" (Heb. iii. 5); but Jehovah alone was King (Exod. xv. 18; Ps. xlvii. 6, 7). **Jeshurun** (cf. ch. xxxii. 5). The gathering together refers to the assembling of the people at Sinai, when Jehovah came forth as their King to give them his Law.

Vers. 6—25.—*Blessings on the tribes individually.* With these may be compared the blessing which Jacob pronounced on his sons as representing the tribes of which they were the heads. The two resemble each other in many points; the differences are such as naturally arose from the different relations of the speakers to the objects of their address, and the changes in the condition and prospects of the tribes which during the lapse of centuries had come to pass.

Ver. 6.—**And let not his men be few.** The negative, though not expressed in the Hebrew, is to be carried into this clause from the preceding. Though the rights of primogeniture had been withdrawn from Reuben, and Jacob had declared that he should not excel, Moses here assures the tribe of continuance, and even prosperity. Their number was not to be small; which was, perhaps, said to comfort them, in view of the fact that their numbers had greatly diminished in the course of their wanderings in the desert (comp. Numb. i. 21 with xxvi. 7). At no time, however, was this tribe numerous as compared with the others; nor was it ever distinguished either by the enterprise of its members or by the eminence of any of them in the councils of the nation or the management of affairs.

Ver. 7.—The blessing on Judah is in the form of prayer to Jehovah. As Jacob had promised to Judah supremacy over his brethren and success in war, so Moses here names him next after Reuben, whose pre-eminence he had assumed, and prays for him that, going forth at the head of the tribes, he might return in triumph, being helped of the Lord. **Let his hands be sufficient for him; rather,** *with his hands he contendeth for it* (to wit, *his people*). רַב here is not the adj. much, enough, but the part. of the verb רִיב, to contend, to strive; and יָדָיו is the accus. of instrument. The rendering in the Authorized Version is grammatically possible; but the meaning thereby brought out is not in keeping with the sentiment of the passage; for if Judah's hands, *i.e.* his own power and resources, were sufficient for him, what need had he of help from the Lord?

Vers. 8—11.—The blessing on Levi is also in the form of a prayer. In Jacob's blessing, Simeon is joined with Levi, but Moses passes him over altogether, probably because, as Jacob foretold, he was to be scattered among his brethren (Gen. xlix. 7), and so lose his tribal individuality. Simeon, however, is included in the general blessing pronounced on Israel; and as this tribe received a number of towns within the territory of Judah (Josh. xix. 2—9), it was probably regarded as included in the blessing on that tribe. **Thy Thummim and thy Urim;** *thy Right and thy Light* (cf. Exod. xxviii. 30). The high priest wore the breast-plate on which these were placed when he went in before the Lord; and this is here represented as the prerogative of the whole tribe. **Thy holy one;** *i.e.* Levi, the tribe-father, representing the whole tribe to which the blessing applies; hence in the following verses the verb passes into the plural. For "holy one," it would be better to read "pious" or "godly one;" literally, *the man thy pious one.* Some would render "the man thy favoured one," or "the man of thy friendship;" but this is wholly arbitrary, the word (חָסִיד) has no such meaning. To explain this more particularly, reference is made to the trials at **Massah** and **the waters of Meribah** (strife), when the people rebelled and murmured against Moses and Aaron, whereby the piety of these men was put to the test, and in them, the heads of the tribe of Levi, the whole tribe was proved. (On Massah, see Exod. xvii. 1—7; and on the waters of strife, see Numb. xx. 1—13.) In these trials, Levi had proved himself faithful and godly, having risen up in defence of the honour of Jehovah, and in support of his covenant, though in the latter case both Moses and Aaron stumbled. **Who said unto his father and to his mother,** etc. This refers to what is narrated in Exod. xxxii. 26—29, when the Levites drew their swords against their brethren at the command of Moses, to execute judgment without respect of person, because of the sin of the people in the matter of the golden calf (cf. also Numb. xxv. 8, and, for the principle here implicitly commended, see Matt. x. 37; xix. 29; Luke

xiv. 26). Because of their zealous devotion to the claims and service of the Lord, the dignity of the priesthood had been conferred on this tribe; and to them belonged the high office of being instructors of the people in Divine things, and of presenting the sacrifices of the people to the Lord. For those entrusted with such an office, nothing was more to be desired than that they should be blessed with power rightly to discharge the duties of their office, that their service should be accepted with favour, and that their enemies and haters should be foiled and rendered impotent; and for this Moses prays on their behalf.

Ver. 12.—Benjamin, the beloved of his father, is also the beloved of the Lord, and would be cared for and protected by him. **Shall dwell in safety by him**; *shall dwell securely upon him*, i.e. resting on him. **Shall cover him.** The word rendered "cover" (חָפַף) occurs only here; construed with עַל, upon, it conveys the idea of sheltering: he continually is sheltering him. **And he shall dwell between his shoulders.** "To be between the shoulders" is to be carried on the back (cf. 1 Sam. xvii. 6); and as a father might thus bear his child, so should Benjamin be borne of the Lord. There can be no doubt that Benjamin is the subject of this clause; to understand it of Jehovah dwelling on the shoulders of Benjamin, in the sense of having the temple, the place of his rest, within the territory of Benjamin, is too violent and far-fetched an interpretation to be admitted. In the change of subject in the three clauses of this verse, there is nothing strange, since such a change repeatedly occurs, and is found even in prose, as *e.g.* 2 Sam. xi. 13. "To dwell upon God, and between his shoulders, means as much as to lean upon him; the similitude being taken from fathers who carry their sons while yet small and tender" (Calvin).

Vers. 13–17.—The blessing on Joseph by Moses closely resembles that pronounced by Jacob on his favourite son; he solicits for him the utmost abundance of temporal blessing, and the riches of the Divine favour. There is this difference, however, between the two blessings, that in that of the patriarch it is the growth of the tribe in power and might that is chiefly contemplated; whilst in that of Moses it is the advance of the tribe in wealth, prosperity, and influence that is chiefly indicated. "Jacob described the growth of Joseph under the figure of a luxuriant branch of a fruit tree planted by the water; whilst Moses fixes his eye primarily upon the land of Joseph, and desires for him the richest productions" (Keil). **For the precious things of heaven, for the dew.** Several codices, for מִטַּל, "for dew," read מִטַּל, above—"the precious things of heaven above;" and this reading, some critics of eminence adopt. Probably, however, this is only a correction, to bring this passage into accordance with Gen. xlix. 25. The Targums and the Peshito combine both readings. Instead of "*for* the precious things," it is better to read "*with*," etc., and so throughout vers. 13—16. Literally, it is *from*, etc.; מִמֶּגֶד, the מ expressing the instrumental cause of the blessing, of which the Lord is the efficient cause. The noun מֶגֶד, literally, *excellency, preciousness*, occurs only here and in Cant. iv. 13, 16 and vii. 13, where it is rendered by "pleasant." The precious fruit of the heavens is the dew, which, with the waters stored up in the recesses of the earth, furthers the growth of the earth's produce, ripened by the influences of sun and moon. **And for the chief things of the ancient mountains**; literally, *and from the head of the mountains of old.* The precious things of the mountains and hills are the vines and olive trees with which the lower slopes are adorned, and the forests that crown the loftier. **The good will of him that dwelt in the bush.** The reference is to the appearance of Jehovah to Moses in the bush at Horeb (Exod. iii.), when he manifested himself as the Deliverer of Israel, whose good pleasure it was that they should be redeemed from bondage and favoured with blessing. **That was separated from his brethren**; separated in the sense of *consecrated*, or *distinguished* (נְזִיר, from נָזַר, to consecrate), from among his brethren. **His glory is like the firstling of his bullock**; rather, *the firstborn of his oxen, majesty is to him.* The singular, שׁוֹר, is here used collectively, as in ch. xv. 19. The oxen are Joseph's sons, all of whom were strong, but the firstborn excelled the rest, and was endowed with majesty. It is Ephraim that is referred to, whom Jacob raised to the position of the firstborn (Gen. xlviii. 8, etc.). **His horns are like the horns of unicorns**; literally, *and horns of a reëm are his horns.* The reëm is supposed to be the aurochs, an animal of the bovine species, allied to the buffalo, now extinct, but which the Assyrian bas-reliefs show to have been formerly hunted in that region (cf. Job xxxix. 9, etc.; Ps. xxii. 22; Rawlinson 'Anc. Mon.,' i. 284). By his strong power, Ephraim should thrust down nations, even the most distant. **And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim**; *and these are*, etc.; *i.e.* in such might will the myriads of Ephraim come forth. To Ephraim, as the chief, the myriads are assigned; to Manasseh only the thousands.

Vers. 18, 19.—Zebulun and Issachar, the two last sons of Leah, are taken together by Moses; and Zebulun, though the younger son, is placed first, in accordance with Gen.

xlix. 13. Success in enterprise, and felicity at home, are assured to both. "Although 'going out' (enterprise, labour) is attributed to Zebulun, and 'remaining in tents' (the comfortable enjoyment of life) to Issachar, in accordance with the delineation of their respective characters in the blessing of Jacob, this is to be attributed to the poetic parallelism of the clauses, and the whole is to be understood as applying to both in the sense suggested by Graf, 'Rejoice, Zebulun and Issachar, in your labour and your rest'" (Keil). **They shall call the people unto the mountain**; rather, *they shall call nations to the mountain*, i.e. the mountain of the Lord's inheritance (Exod. xv. 17), the place of his sanctuary. **Sacrifices of righteousness**; *i.e.* sacrifices offered according to God's Law, and in a manner and a spirit well pleasing to him (Ps. iv. 6; li. 21). **They shall suck of the abundance of the seas**, etc. The treasures of both sea and land should be theirs. The Targumist Jonathan Ben Uzziel explains this as referring especially to the obtaining of the rich purple dye from the shell of the oyster (*murex Syrius*), and the producing of mirrors and glass vases from the sand. The existence of vitreous sand on the coast of Zebulun is attested both by Strabo (lib. xvi. p. 757) and Pliny ('Nat. Hist.,' lib. xxxvi. c. 286).

Vers. 20, 21.—As in the blessing of Shem by Noah, God is praised for Shem's prosperity (Gen. ix. 26), so here God is praised for the enlargement of the warlike tribe of Gad (cf. Gen. xlix. 19). **He dwelleth as a lion**; rather, *as a lioness*. Though the noun לָבִיא has a masc. termination, usage shows that it was the female and not the male that was thereby designated (see *e.g.* Gen. xlix. 9; Numb. xxiv. 9, where it can hardly be a mere synonym; and Job iv. 11; xxxviii. 39, where the reference to the young of the animal accords better with the lioness than with the lion, Gesenius). Ver. 21 refers to Gad's obtaining an inheritance for himself from Moses beyond Jordan. **And he provided the first part for himself**; literally, *and he saw for himself* (i.e. chose) *the first*, i.e. either the most excellent part or the firstfruits of the conquest. **Because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated**; rather, *for there the portion of the leader was reserved*. The word rendered "lawgiver," or "leader" (מְחֹקֵק), signifies primarily one who ordains or appoints, and is used in both the above senses (cf. Exod. xxxiii. 22; Judg. v. 14); it is here applied to Gad, because that tribe displayed such promptitude and energy at the head of the tribes in the conquest of the land, that it might be regarded as their leader. An entirely different view of the passage has been taken by some, who by the *mechokek* understand Moses as the lawgiver, and his portion as the place of his grave, which was concealed, but was within the inheritance of Gad. But it is a fatal objection to this view that not only is the word rendered "portion" (חֶלְקַת) nowhere used of a grave, but the grave of Moses on Mount Nebo was in the territory of Reuben, not in that of Gad. Gesenius renders, "The portion of (assigned by) the lawgiver was preserved." But this does not tally with the immediately preceding statement, that Gad *chose* his portion for himself; at any rate, it could not be *because* of this that he chose it. Gad chose for himself a portion on the east of Jordan, and the portion he had chosen was sacredly kept for him, though he went with his brethren to the conquest of Canaan. **And he came with the heads of the people**; *i.e.* his place of marching was with the leaders; his place was at the head of the tribes (cf. Numb. xxxii. 17, 21, 32, and Josh. i. 14; iv. 12). **He executed the justice of the Lord**, etc.; *i.e.* he did what God required of him, obeying his commands, and thereby fulfilling all righteousness (cf. Matt. iii. 15; Phil. iii. 6). **With Israel**; in the fellowship of Israel.

Ver. 22.—Jacob compared Dan to a serpent that suddenly springs forth by the way, and bites the heels of a horse so that the rider falls backward. Moses here compares the tribe to a young lion that suddenly leaps from its lair in Bashan on the object of its attack. Both similitudes relate to the vigour and force which the tribe should display in conflict.

Ver. 23.—In Jacob's blessing, Naphtali appears invested with the attributes of freedom, gracefulness, and graciousness; here Moses assures that tribe of the Divine grace and blessing, and promises to it prosperity and felicity. **Possess thou the west and the south.** The word rendered "west" here (יָם) properly means sea, and came to signify "west" from the fact of the Mediterranean, or Great Sea, lying to the west of Palestine. The proper meaning of the word is to be retained here. As the territory of Naphtali lay in the north of Canaan, and was far from the sea, the blessing here pronounced upon him must be understood generally of prosperity and felicity. He was to possess riches as of the sea, and genial and fructifying warmth as of the south.

Vers. 24, 25.—Asher, the prosperous one, as his name implies, was to be rich, and honoured, and strong, and peaceful. **Blessed with children**; rather, *blessed among the sons*; i.e. either blessed more than the rest of the sons, or blessed by the sons who were to reap benefit from him. From what follows,

the latter explanation seems the one to be preferred. The preposition מִן is constantly used as indicating the source whence anything proceeds, or the agent by whom anything is done. **Let him be acceptable to his brethren**; "iis o terræ suæ proventibus res optimas suppeditaturus; cf. Gen. xlix. 20" (Rosenmüller). This tribe should find itself in so advantageous and luxurious a condition that the other tribes should have delight and pleasure in it" (Knobel). Others render, "favoured among his brethren;" favoured, that is, by the Lord more than his brethren (Keil). But the former seems preferable. **And let him dip his foot in oil.** This points to a land abounding in olives, and generally richly fertile, a fat land and yielding rich dainties, such as Jacob promised to Asher (Gen. xlix. 20). **Thy shoes** shall be **iron and brass.** The word rendered "shoes" (מִנְעָל) occurs only here. It is a derivative from נָעַל, to bolt or shut fast, and is to be taken in the sense of a fastness or fortress, a place securely closed: *iron and brass shall be thy fortress;* i.e. his dwelling should be strong and impregnable. The rendering "shoes" is from a supposed derivation of the word from נַעַל, a shoe. **As thy days,** so shall **thy strength** be; literally, *as thy days, thy rest;* i.e. as long as thou livest, so long shalt thou have rest and quiet. The noun rendered "strength" (דֶּבְא) in the Authorized Version, occurs only here, unless it be found in the proper name מֵידְבָא (*Medeba*), and has no cognate in Hebrew; but the Arabic supplies a root for it in دبا (*deba*), to rest. Fürst connects it with זָב, and the Targum with דְּוָא, to flow, and translates by "riches."

Vers. 26—29.—As Moses commenced by celebrating the glorious majesty of Jehovah when he appeared to establish his covenant with Israel, so he concludes with a reference to God as the eternal Refuge and the saving Help of his people.

Ver. 26.—**There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.** The points and accents direct that this should be read, *There is none like God, O Jeshurun;* and though all the ancient versions read as does the Authorized Version, the Masoretic punctuation is vindicated here by the following **thy help,** which shows that Israel is here addressed.

Ver. 27.—God is the Refuge or Dwelling-place of his people, their Protection amid the storms of life, and the unfailing Source of comfort and blessing to them in their pilgrimage state. Over them is his sheltering protection, and underneath them the support of his everlasting arms.

Ver. 28.—The clauses of this verse are parallel to each other; their symmetry will be seen if we render and arrange thus—

"And Israel dwelleth securely,
Alone, the fountain of Jacob,
On a land of corn and new wine;
His heavens also drop down dew."

The fountain of Jacob is parallel to **Israel.** Israel is so designated because they came forth from Jacob as waters from a copious source (Ibn Ezra; cf. Isa. xlviii. 1; Ps. lxviii. 26).

Ver. 29.—"This concluding verse comprehends the whole blessing. Israel is to be congratulated and praised because, through the true God, it has unparalleled protection, salvation, and triumph" (Herxheimer). **Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee;** literally, *shall feign unto thee;* i.e. shall pretend to be thy friends, in order to obtain favour with thee. The verb conveys the idea of fawning upon a person with a feigned humility and submissiveness (cf. Ps. xviii. 44; lxvi. 2; lxxxi. 15). **Thou shalt tread upon their high places;** *i.e.* shalt wholly subdue them and triumph over them (cf. ch. xxxii. 13); "arces eorum in montibus positas, loca eorum inaccessa victor calcabis, iis potieris; qua ipsa phrasi, Am. iv. 13, Mic. i. 3, superbe incedens victor describitur" (Rosenmüller).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—The general import of this paragraph is clear. Some of its phrases, however, are far from being so easy that we can be quite sure of their meaning. (For a discussion of the points in dispute, see the Exposition; also Keil, Lange, and a work far too little known, Barrett's 'Synopsis of Criticisms,' vol. i. pt. 2.) There is, however, quite enough that is sufficiently clear to furnish us with a topic for valuable pulpit teaching, albeit there may be, in this introductory paragraph and between each blessing, indications of an editor's hand. The whole paragraph has reference to God's august manifestation of himself at the delivery of the Law on Sinai. In it there are eight matters to be noted. 1. The new disclosure of God was as the rising of a bright light in the midst of the darkness (see Gesenius, *sub verb.* זָרַח (*zāh-ra'gh*), and *all* the uses of the verb in the

Old Testament). 2. The beams of the newly risen light flooded the region of Sinai, Mount Paran, and Mount Seir (ver. 2). 3. In the displays of his glory, Jehovah was attended by ten thousands of his holy ones (ver. 2). 4. From Jehovah thus attended there went forth a Law (ver. 2). 5. This Law thus given was the expression of Jehovah's love (ver. 3). 6. All the holy ones (English Version, "saints") thus surrounding Jehovah, were at his disposal, to serve the people of his choice, and reverently waited for his words of command (ver. 3). 7. The Law thus given in august majesty was the rich inheritance of the people (ver. 4). 8. On a people so honoured of God, the man of God is moved to utter a blessing, as his last act ere he quits the scene of toil for the realm of rest (ver. 1). The exposition and illustration of all this will furnish Christian preachers and teachers in every age with abundance of material for the understanding, heart, conscience, and life.

Ver. 6.—*The blessing of Reuben; or, life impoverished through ancestral sins.* For a blessing, there seems something unusually weak in that pronounced on Reuben. Continuance—a preservation from being blotted out of existence—is all that the man of God seems to hope or expect from him. The English reader may wonder to see that the word "not" is in italics, as not being in the Hebrew, but supplied by the translators. It is, however, wisely done in this case, as will be seen if the reader will put stress sufficient on the word "*not*" in the following rendering to carry the force of the negative on to the end of the sentence:—"Let Reuben live; and *not* die and his men be few;" *i.e.* if his men became a mere handful, the tribe would be virtually extinct; and Moses desires that this may not be the case; so that, according to English idiom, the insertion of the italic *not* is required to preserve the meaning of the original. The gist of the blessing then is, let not the tribe have such a paucity of men as to sink out of sight altogether. Bare continuance;—this is all that is prophesied concerning that tribe. This is, as far as we can follow its history, in strict correspondence with its after experience. There may be noted again and again a decrease in its numbers; cf. Numb. i. 21; xxvi. 7; 1 Chron. v. 18, from which it appears "that the tribe had decreased since the Exodus, and also that in later times its numbers, even when counted with the Gadites and the half of Manasseh, were fewer than that of the Reubenites alone at the census of Numb. i. They took possession of a large and fertile district east of Jordan. Occupied with their flocks and herds, they appear soon after the days of Joshua to have lost their early energy: they could not be roused to take part in the national rising against Jabin (Judg. v. 15, 16). They do not seem to have cared to complete the conquest of their own territory; and even the cities assigned them were wrested from them by the Moabites. While from this tribe no judge, prophet, or national hero arose" to redeem it from insignificance (see 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*, to which we are indebted for the above details). We are not at a loss to account for this. The gross wickedness of the head of this tribe left a stain upon its name which not generation after generation could wipe out, and "destroyed at once the prestige of birth, and the spirit of leadership" (J. L. Porter[1]). Hence our topic for homiletic treatment—a topic which no teacher who desires to declare the "whole counsel of God" can forbear to touch upon in due season. It is this—*Life impoverished through ancestral sins* (see Gen. XXXV. 22; xlix. 4).

I. THERE ARE CERTAIN SINS—SINS OF THE FLESH—TO WHICH MEN GENERALLY ARE LIABLE; WHICH TO SOME CONSTITUTIONS PRESENT THEMSELVES AS TEMPTATIONS SPECIALLY STRONG. In every one there is some weak point, at which seductive influences may easily enter: "Every one is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας) and enticed."

II. THERE ARE NO SINS WHICH WORK GREATER HAVOC IN A MAN THAN THOSE TO WHICH REUBEN GAVE WAY. The desperately wicked act recorded of him indicates with too much certainty a previously formed habit of self-indulgence, in which he had suffered the reins of self-control and self-respect to fall from his hands. The effect of such habits in a physiological point of view is disastrous. But more grievous still are their moral issues. They lower the man himself in his own eyes. They lower his view of mankind

[1] See Mr. Porter's valuable article on 'The Tribe of Reuben,' in Dr. Alexander's edition of Kitto's 'Bibl. Cyc.'

at large. They lead inevitably to the association of thought with what is lowest in human nature, rather than with what is highest and best. And, unless renounced, these sins will drag the whole man after them, and make of him a wreck and a ruin. Hence the terrific warning of our Saviour in Matt. v. 29. Nothing will sooner becloud and deaden the moral sense than indulgence in sensual sins.

III. THE EVIL EFFECT OF SUCH SINS STOPS NOT WITH THE MAN HIMSELF. With regard to those whose good opinion and respect are most worth having, it is impossible for them to look on one who indulges in such sins otherwise than with profoundest pity and shame, and even with disgust! They see that one who by his sex is meant to be the guardian of woman's purity, honour, and joy, is basely tampering with them all! Not even Jacob, though the tenderness of the old patriarch under such circumstances must have been at its height, could bring himself to pronounce a rich blessing even on his firstborn, whose life had been thus disfigured and disgraced. Reuben's whole family and tribe shared in the stigma of their father's sin; not as being guilty in like manner, but because the name of their sire could not henceforth be dissociated from the thought of base and treacherous lust.

IV. NOR DOES THE ILL EFFECT OF SUCH SINS EXPIRE WITH THE GENERATION IN WHICH THEY WERE COMMITTED. The foul odour of Reuben's crime rises up before Moses. 'Tis not named indeed. But he has no blessing for his tribe of any richness or depth. "May he not become so weak as to be lost sight of altogether!" Such is the gist of it. The descendants of Jacob's firstborn were long, long under the gloomy shadow cast on them by the sins of their sire! There is nothing in this record of the Word of God which does not frequently find its counterpart in the generations of men now. Many, many there are who inherit some physical ill, some mental weakness, or some moral incapacity or obliquity, through a constitutional taint from sins long gone by!

Learn—1. We know not whence, on the physical and moral side of our constitution, a mightier argument can be drawn for purity of life and manners, than from such a theme as that suggested by the text. If men have little care for themselves, let them at least guard against shading with sadness or marring with weakness the lives of those who may hereafter owe their existence to them. 2. Maybe some who may read these words may be disposed to say, "If I may possibly be the possessor of an enfeebled constitution on account of some sins which preceded me, then how can I or any one judge of my measure of responsibility before God as to how far it is affected thereby?" We reply: (1) No living man can gauge exactly another's responsibility, or even his own; *but God can.* He does, and he makes all allowances that equity requires. He who is most just is most kind. (2) God invites every man to come to him through his Son Jesus Christ, that sin, as guilt, may be forgiven; and that, as disease, it may be cured. (3) Wherever God's invitation is accepted, his grace will cancel guilt and cure corruption; thus imparting health and soundness for the life that now is, and promising the life to come. (4) To this each one may well be urged, not only on the ground of his individual well-being, but also on the ground that the streams of purifying grace, cleansing his nature, may do much to check the onward flow of the poison he inherits, and to help towards a sounder life in those who shall follow him.

Ver. 7.—*The blessing of Judah; or, help needed to fulfil destiny.* It cannot but suggest itself to the student to compare the blessing on Judah pronounced by Moses, with the renowned prophecy of Jacob concerning him and his tribe. That the patriarch's words declared the future pre-eminence of that tribe is well known; consequently, it could not be surprising to the other tribes to find precedence given to Judah in the order of encamping and of marching (cf. Numb. ii. 1—4; x. 14). This thought of Judah's *firstness* gives its hue to the words uttered respecting him. They take the form of a prayer, which is at once the holy benediction of the dying leader, the pious breathing of the saint, and the prophetic fore-glance of the seer. It could not be a matter of doubt, that being in the front would involve not only eminence in honour, but also precedence in weight of responsibility; and in order to sustain aright great responsibility, there is need for an unusual supply of Divine strength. This it is which forms the contents of the prayer. Jacob had said, "To him shall the gathering of the people be;" Moses prays, "Lord, fulfil that prediction, and (1) sustain him; so that he may be brought to his people; (2) give him all the strength he

requires to enable him to fulfil his high and holy destiny; 'let his hands be sufficient for him;' and (3) when the enemy would endeavour to overthrow him, let thine almighty aid be near; 'be thou a Help to him from his enemies.'" That this prophetic blessing and prayer is, in the highest meaning thereof, Messianic, seems to admit of no question. Its complete fulfilment will be realized in the ultimate triumph of him who is at once "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and yet "the Lamb that was slain." He will be brought "unto his people;" his hands have been and will be "sufficient for him;" and power no less than that of the eternal Father will ensure the defeat of the enemy and the enthronement of the Son, that "in all things he may become the pre-eminent One." For this believers have prayed *implicitly* over since the days of Moses; for this they have prayed *explicitly* ever since the day of Pentecost.

But there is another bearing of this blessing of Judah, perhaps less obvious, though not less real than the one already named; while it equally suggests a topic for pulpit teaching of no small interest and value, viz. *Divine help needed for man, that he may realize his true destiny.* The following line of thought may serve to press home this truth:—

I. The life of man has a noble destiny before it.

II. According to the greatness of destiny must be the measure of responsibility.

III. According to responsibility, so is the need of Divine help to give unity and directness to life. We need (1) strength: "let his hands be sufficient for him;" (2) protection: "be thou a help to him from his enemies."

IV. That such Divine help may be granted may well be made matter of earnest prayer: (1) of pastors for people; (2) of parents for children; (3) of friend for friend.

V. It is a great stimulus to prayer, when the one prayed for is known to pray for himself. Moses was not praying for a prayerless tribe. "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah."

VI. When prayer has great promises to fall back upon, we may be absolutely sure of its success. The prayer, "Bring him unto his people," was based on the promise, "To him shall the gathering of the people be." It is equivalent to, "Lord, fulfil thine own promise." The great Messianic promise was made through Judah, and through him and in him was it fulfilled.

Vers. 8—11.—*The blessing of Levi; or, entire devotion to God a necessary qualification for ministerial service.* Moses and Aaron were themselves of the tribe of Levi. Consequently, Moses is here speaking of his own tribe; he forecasts its future; he seems in a remarkable manner to revoke the harsh sentence of the patriarch Jacob upon it. Nor is this altogether unaccounted for. The tribe had manifested a genuine repentance by a remarkable zeal for God's honour on several occasions. It was the tribe, moreover, which God had selected from the rest, to minister in holy things; and these facts, blending themselves with a painful reminiscence of his own breakdown at Meribah, give the character to the blessing of Moses. The points therein which furnish a basis for historic and homiletic teaching are these: 1. Here is an office divinely appointed and assigned to a particular tribe—"thy holy one" (ver. 8). 2. Here is a history, in some sort chequered and sad, connected with the tribe (ver. 8)—"Massah," "Meribah" (Numb. xx. 1—13). There had been a grievous failure on Aaron's part too, as well as on that of Moses (Exod. xxxii., xxxiii.). Still, as a whole, the tribe had been marked by great zeal for God, great concern for his honour, and great devotion to his service (ver. 9; cf. Numb. viii. 14—26; xxv. 1—15; Exod. xxxii. 26—28). The honour of God was deemed by this tribe paramount to all personal and family considerations. 3. Here is a commission for the discharge of varied duties resting on the tribe (ver. 10)—teaching, incense, sacrifice (see ch. x. 8; Mal. ii. 4—7). The duties of the priesthood were more varied than is generally supposed (cf. Dean Stanley on the Jewish Church, vol. ii. lect. xxxvi.). Whatever a man could be or do to help his people in prayer, work, war, worship, knowledge, or life,—all this was charged upon the priest. 4. Here is a danger espied to which the tribe would be liable (ver. 11)—"them that rise against him;" "them that hate him." This hatred had already manifested itself in jealousy (Numb. xvi. 3, *et seq.*). It is very suggestive that we find one of the Reubenites, *a tribe which had lost its birthright*, concerned in that conspiracy.

There always has been and there will be jealousy and odium towards God's ministers, as "taking too much upon them." As Moses had found it out already, he knew by some experience what it was likely to be in the future. Hence: 5. Here is a prayer which takes its shape from a review of the varied facts named above (ver. 11), that a blessing might attend on their consecrated energies: "Bless, Lord, his strength;" that the work might be accepted in God's sight; and that the enemies and haters of the tribe, who rose up in jealousy against the office and those who filled it, might be put to utter shame![1]

Here is a mass of truth suggested of great interest and value.

I. There is a ministry appointed by God under the Christian economy.

II. To this office great honour now belongs.

III. Its faithful discharge makes varied demands on those who hold it.

IV. These demands cannot be rightly met without entire and unreserved consecration.

V. However faithful God's ministers may be, they will certainly meet with hatred and opposition.

VI. That their work may, in the midst of all difficulty, be divinely accepted and guarded, may well be made matter of earnest prayer.

Ver. 12.—*The blessing on Benjamin; or, safety in the sheltering care of Divine love.* Though not without difficulty in some points of detail, the general tenor of this blessing on Benjamin is tolerably clear. It is well known that Benjamin was the object of his father's special love. The expiring lawgiver seems to see in that a reflection of a tenderer and mightier, yea, a Divine love, which, as it had been manifest to the head of his tribe in time past, would also be manifest to the tribe itself in the ages yet to come. Benjamin had been and would be "the beloved of the Lord." The words, "he shall dwell between his shoulders," are variously interpreted (see the Exposition; also Keil, Calvin, Jameson, the 'Speaker's Commentary,' *et al. in loc.*). We prefer the simpler meaning accepted by Calvin, that the figure is that of a father carrying on his shoulders a young and feeble child (see ch. i. 31). During all the changes of Israel's history, a special lustre shone forth from this tribe. From hence its first king was chosen. On or by its territory was God's "foundation" in the holy mountains. And as far on as the time of the first century of the Christian era, Paul reckoned it as one of his points of native glorying that he was of the tribe of Benjamin (see Rom. xi. 1; Phil. iii. 5). Our topic for meditation is—*Safety in the sheltering care of Divine love, an inestimable blessing.*

I. THERE ARE THOSE WHOM GOD LOVES WITH A SPECIAL LOVE. They are, in a degree to which others are not, "the beloved of the Lord." No doubt there is a sense in which it is true that God loves all mankind. His love to our race is such that he has given us the noblest gift which even Heaven itself could bestow (John iii. 16; Rom. v. 8; Eph. ii. 4). This is a love of benevolence. But our Lord speaks of something further in John xiv. 21, 23; xvi. 27. And Paul the apostle, in describing the blessings of a justified life, speaks of the "love of God" being "shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost," *i.e.* a pervading sense of that love.

But who are they who are thus specially loved of God? They do not belong, as such, to any nation, tribe, or tongue. They may be found in all of them. Those who are "in Christ," pardoned, renewed, accepted, justified, sanctified,—these, these are "beloved of God, called to be saints."

II. THEY CAN REJOICE "ALL THE DAY LONG" IN THAT NEW RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS THE CREATION OF REDEEMING LOVE. In the figure used in the text, and in a not dissimilar verse in ch. i. 31, there is the underlying thought of a gracious fatherly relation. That is also disclosed in the gospel; and in both cases it has its reciprocal—that of "son" (see Rom. viii. 14—17). This is *not* that general relation to God indicated in Acts xvii. 28; *that* is common to man as man. *This* is peculiar to those who are born again. The former may be and is marred by sin. The latter will never be; it is made possible through a propitiation for sin by the blood of Christ,

[1] On the prayer of Moses concerning the Urim and the Thummim, see Hengstenberg's 'Egypt and the Books of Moses,' pp. 149—153.

and made actual through the destruction of sin by the power of the Holy Ghost (1 John iii. 9). Hence in the perpetuity of this relationship there is matter of constant joy (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

III. IN CONNECTION WITH THIS RELATION THERE IS A CORRESPONDING CARE ON THE PART OF JEHOVAH. The father carries the child "between his shoulders," not only because the child is too young or too weak to go alone—true enough though that may be—but because he feels that the child's safety is its father's care. And the parent would feel it a reproach to himself if the weal of the child were not the care of his heart. Now, we know how our Lord permits, yea, teaches us to look up from human tenderness to the Divine, as if the lower were but the reflection (and consequently the image) of the higher (Matt. vii. 9—11). And St. Peter directly teaches the positive truth, "he careth for you" (1 Pet. v. 7). And so does Peter's Lord, in Luke xii. 6, 7, 22—30; Matt. xxi. 32, 33. How much of loving care is indicated in John vi. 38—40; x. 1—29, words would fail to tell. The believer may meditate thereon to his heart's delight, but he will find no words adequately to express the glories revealed to his faith in the infinite care for him of God the Father and the Son.

IV. HENCE THE BELOVED OF THE LORD ARE IN PERPETUAL SAFETY. "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him"—"*upon* him" the word is: God bears him up; he rests safely on God. God is his "Shelterer" all the day long, without let or pause. The Old Testament saints felt this, or they could never have penned Psalms xxiii., xci., and cxxi. 1. They are safe *in* Divine love. None can wrest them thence. 2. They are safe *at* all hours. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." 3. They are safe *from* all plots, snares, and fiery darts. 4. They are safe *under* all circumstances of duty, care, trial, affliction, bereavement, death. They may be tossed about *on* the Rock, but never *from* it.

IN CONCLUSION. 1. Let the believer rejoice in the Lord; yea, let him shout aloud for joy (Ps. xxxiii. 1; Phil. iii. 1; iv. 1). 2. If any ask us this question—"If the believer is so safe, how is it that one like Paul can write as he does in 1 Cor. ix. 23—27?"—the answer is, This is one way in which God secures the safety of loyal souls, by giving them to see the danger they are in from themselves, that they may look ever to the Rock that is higher than they are. For: 3. No *such* security is ever enjoyed as to warrant any departure from duty's path, or any presuming on God's providence. To a temptation in this direction, even our dear Lord was exposed, and his followers must not expect to be free therefrom yet awhile (see Matt. iv. 5—7). 4. The great reason why God takes our cares on himself is that he may set us free for the one business of life, which is in loyalty and love to do the work of the day in the day, and to leave all else in his hands. Let us say—

> "I have no cares, O Blessed Will;
> My cares thou makest thine.
> I live in triumph, Lord, for thou
> Hast made thy triumphs mine!"

And sooner shall heaven and earth pass than one such beloved one of the Lord shall ever be put to shame.

Vers. 13—17.—*The blessing of Joseph; or, God's favour the mercy of mercies.* We may see here a reflection of Jacob's blessing, both as in Gen. xlviii. 19 and also Gen. xlix. 25, *et seq.* In Dean Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 226—250, there is much interesting information as to the correspondence between this prophecy of Moses on the one hand, and the extent of territory, the beauty and fertility of the district, the dignity, valour, and advance of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh on the other. (For an elucidation of each clause in this somewhat lengthened blessing, see the Exposition.) By way of "opening up," however, the theme of our Homily, we must call the readers' attention to the structure of the verses. We regard them as a blending at once of prophecy and prayer. Both the beginning and the close are prophetic. The beginning, from ver. 13 down to the word "thereof," in ver. 16; the ending in ver. 17. In the intervening clauses we regard (so Calvin, Keil, *et al.*) the word רִצוֹן (*rêtzōn*) as a nominative case. We read thus: "*And may the good will of him that dwelt in the bush come upon the head of Joseph,*" etc. It will be observed that in the

English Version the words "for" and "the blessing" are in italics, to show that they are added by the translators. And the fact that there is no "for" in the original at the commencement of this clause seems to show that it is not co-ordinate with the preceding ones, and so to mark a new starting-point; as if Moses had said, "He will have a noble territory, rich in all temporal wealth; his tribe will be an enterprising, hardy, and pushing one; may there be superadded to all, the favour of him who dwelt in the bush, to crown and glorify the whole." The reader will find the varied scriptural senses of the word here translated "good will," in the following passages, where it occurs:—Exod. xxviii. 38; Lev. xxiii. 11; Ps. v. 12; xix. 14; xxx. 5; Prov. xv. 8; Isa. xlix. 8; lx. 7; lxi. 2. If in addition to all that earth's varied wealth and tribal renown and conquest could yield, Joseph had the "favour" of the Lord, that would make him rich indeed. Whence our theme suggests itself—*God's favour the mercy of mercies.*

I. THE STORE OF MERCIES WHICH ARE THE TEMPORAL GIFTS OF GOD'S HAND IS BY NO MEANS SMALL. The land, with its wondrous capacities and its adaptation to this seed and to that; the dew that gently distils, or the vapour that exhales; the lakes that lie sleeping on the bosom of the hills; the variety of beauty, fragrance, and fruitfulness coming through the sunbeams; the produce of the several months, year by year; the wealth stored up in the mountains and hills; the varied productions of the soil;—all these are referred to in the text; and, in a few brief touches, what a conception they give us of the wealth with which God has enriched this globe, and of the series of constant adaptations with which it is made subservient to the use of man! So great are all these blessings which go to make up the enjoyments of life on its temporal side, that meditation thereon may well call up from the soul a grand song of praise such as we find in Ps. civ.

Nor can we in such an age as this, leave out the additional fact that, owing to the rapid communication between the people of one land and those of another, the productions of one country supply the wants of another; and thus the nations at large share the supplies sent them by a gracious God.

And be it remembered these supplies are not less from God because he uses means in sending them; it is rather a proof of his care for the culture and education of man, that he makes him the means of the cultivation and tillage of the soil. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

II. THERE IS A FAR GREATER MERCY THAN ANY OF THESE—one which we have called "the mercy of mercies." It is referred to in ver. 16, "The good will . . . may it come upon the head of Joseph." Favour, mercy, on Joseph's head, is a boon greater far than plenty on his land! There are three questions which we may appropriately ask concerning it.

1. *What is this "good will"?* It is not simply that benevolence to which our Saviour refers in Matt. v. 45. In this sense God's goodness extendeth to all. "His tender mercies are over all his works." *This* good will is something special. If the student will compare the several passages (those given *ut supra et al.*), in which the same word is used which is here translated "good will," he will see how much meaning it conveys. It includes: (1) acceptance in God's sight—forgiveness, access; (2) God's delight in the accepted one; (3) the constant possession of God's special love, which enriches the accepted one with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

2. *How can this good will be assured to its possessor?* (1) There is a word of promise which assures us that it is made over to the believer in Christ (John i. 12; Gal. iii. 26). (2) To him who believes, the Spirit is given, confirming to the soul its interest in Christ, and sealing it "to the day of redemption."

3. *Why is this the mercy of mercies?* (1) Because the possessor thereof can delight in God himself. He can realize that in God he has One who is infinitely more than all his gifts, and who will be his joy when all earth's joys have lost their power to charm. (2) Because all other mercies have new joy stamped upon them when they are enjoyed as coming from a reconciled God and Father. (3) Because we are then enabled to use other mercies aright. Surely that must be a crowning blessing which teaches the right use of every blessing. (4) The conscious enjoyment of God's favour and love gives, as nothing else can, strength for the duties of life. "The joy of the Lord

is your strength." (5) With such joy and strength life will be so sanctified as to be rich in influence for good. (6) God's favour and love will be a source of joy long after we have ceased to dwell below, yea, for ever and ever.

Oh, it is not—it is not merely having a wealthy land, or great estates, or splendid revenues, or military prowess, or pushing energy, that can make life a success. We may have all these, and yet life may be a miserable, an unredeemed and irredeemable failure. It may well be a matter for frequent wonder how parents who profess to aim at and to be living the higher life, do seek so earnestly to get the best situations in life for their children, yet never manifest half the same amount of anxiety that their loved ones may have "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" resting on their heads. And yet, without God's favour, what is life, what is wealth, what are earthly friends, but blessings that disappoint our hopes, and prove, perhaps, anything but blessings in the end?

FINALLY: THIS MOST NEEDFUL OF ALL BLESSINGS IS THE VERY ONE OF WHICH ALL WHO CRAVE IT SUPREMELY MAY MAKE MOST SURE. God may not give us much of this world's goods. He *will* give us himself. He waits to be gracious. He delights in loving-kindness. He will be the seeker's God for ever and ever; his Guide even unto death.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Trade and commerce subservient to evangelization.* There is room for considerable divergence of view with regard to some of the minutiæ of this passage, on which the reader will consult the Exposition, and may also refer with great advantage to Keil, Jameson, and Wordsworth, on the blessing of Issachar and Zebulun. The following points, however, stand out with a fair degree of clearness:—1. Zebulun and Issachar had the territory which corresponds to the Galilee of our Lord's time. 2. They had a fine piece of sea-board, which would enable them to open up traffic with other nations. 3. They had also a considerable space inland, reaching to the lake of Gennesaret. 4. With this double advantage, there would be scope for the development of foreign and home trade. 5. They, having the inestimable blessings of the knowledge of God, of a pure faith, and of a holy worship, would be in a far better position religiously than any of the nations with whom they would carry on intercourse for the purposes of trade. 6. They would be made rich by the treasures of wealth brought to them from afar. "They shall suck of the abundance of the seas," etc. 7. They would make their traffic with other peoples a reason for and an opportunity of inviting them to join them in the sacrifices of righteousness (see Gesenius, *sub verb.* זָבַח). As other nations enriched them in temporal things, they would enrich other peoples in spiritual things (see a fine suggestive note by Bishop Wordsworth, *in loc.*). This was fulfilled "when the apostles and evangelists of Galilee went forth to evangelize all nations in the ships of the Christian Church." The apostles, "men of Galilee," called all nations to the mountain of the Lord's house on the day of Pentecost. A greater fulfilment awaits this passage (see Isa. lx. 5, 6, 16; lxvi. 11, 12). Hence the Holy Ghost, by the law-giver, gives us here a great theme for homiletic teaching—*The development of commerce subservient to evangelization.*

I. The Church of God is here prospectively regarded as upon a "mountain" (ver. 19; see this figure carried out in Isa. ii. 2; Micah iv. 1).

II. From this mountain an invitation to the nations is to be sent forth; ver. 19, "They shall call," etc. (cf. Isa. ii. 3; Micah iv. 2; Zech. viii. 20—23; Isa. lv. 5).

III. There will be such national intercommunication as shall help to forward these world-wide invitations (Isa. lx. 3, 4; Dan. xii. 4; cf. Acts ii. 5—11).

IV. The time will come when the Church of God shall be enriched by the glad inflowing of a people's wealth; ver. 19, "For they shall suck," etc. (cf. Isa. lx. 9, *et seq.*; Micah iv. 13).

V. The nations at large shall then "offer sacrifices of righteousness" (ver. 19; cf. Mal. i. 11; Rom. xv. 16; Heb. xiii. 15, 16; 1 Pet. ii. 5).

Learn—1. With what interest may believers contemplate the commercial progress of the age, and the increased facility of communication between people and people! Man is seeking to bring about all this, to serve himself. God overrules all for the higher purposes of his race, and governs the world in the interests of the Church. 2. How great a shame is it when men from Christian lands, in carrying on traffic with

other nations, make such traffic a means of propagating corruption, lust, and crime! 3. Commerce may be "holiness unto the Lord," and will never reach its true splendour till such is the case (Zech. xiv. 20). Its stainless purity is of infinitely more moment than its extent or amount.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Gad; or, a place in the Church and the world for lionlike strength.* "The territory of Gad lay in the east of the Jordan . . . it included several cities remarkable in the history of the patriarchs and of the judges, as Mahanaim, Ramoth, Mizpeh, Succoth, and Peniel; but it was pre-eminently remarkable because it contained the grave of the great general and lawgiver, Moses—a fact which so decidedly invested the province with a character of holiness that, though situated on the east of the river, it was regarded as one of the most honoured parts of the promised land, from which the leaders of the people might legitimately arise" (Kalisch on Gen. xlix. 19).

The blessing of Moses, like that of Jacob, upon Gad, has a warlike ring about it. He is spoken of here as lionlike in courage and strength, and also as being charged with the execution of the justice of the Lord and his ordinances with Israel. "The clause, 'He came to the heads of the people,' expresses the thought that Gad joined the heads of the people to go at the head of the tribes of Israel (comp. Josh. i. 14; iv. 12, with Numb. xxxii. 17, 21, 32), to conquer Canaan with the whole nation, and root out the Canaanites" (Keil, *in loc.*). The character of this tribe is described with remarkable vividness in the Book of Chronicles. It was strong, hardy, fierce, warlike, magnificent in heroism, invaluable to friends, terrible to foes. Among them were "strong men of might, men of war for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, their faces the faces of lions, and like roes upon the mountain for swiftness:" "the least of them more than equal to a hundred, and the greatest to a thousand" (1 Chron. xii. 8, 14). And amid all the conflicts which were inevitable to the Hebrews with the nations round about, such lionlike courage and hardiness would be invaluable in leading them on to victory, and in helping them through great crises of their political and military history. And when such courage and valour are animated by the right spirit, and engaged on the side of righteousness, upon them an aged saint may well pronounce his blessing. It is indicative of the spirit which pervaded this tribe that such men as Jephthah, Barzillai, and (probably) Elijah were of it. Our theme for homiletic teaching is—*That the special qualities of courage and strength have a valuable place in carrying out God's work both in the Church and the world.*

I. THERE ARE NOT UNFREQUENTLY GREAT CRISES WHICH ARISE IN THE CHURCH OR IN THE WORLD. Work has to be done which requires no ordinary amount of independence and assurance; as *e.g.* when a way has to be opened up through new and untried districts; or a step has to be taken on which the weal or woe of ages may depend. Sometimes in the military career of a nation a giant foe has to be grappled with, or, in the progress of a Church, some heresy has to be attacked, and battles, harder than any on a nation's battle-field, have to be fought in the name of the Lord of hosts. Perchance some Ahab with his pride and covetousness, or some Herod or Felix rioting in lust and splendour, may have to be sternly addressed for righteousness' sake. Or there may come a time when the flood-gates of iniquity are burst open, and sin rushes forth in torrents, and the wicked ride high and triumph over the righteous, and the greater part of men are cowed before the storm-blast.

II. THE WORK OF GOD AT SUCH TIMES MAY BE STERN AND HARD. It may be that some special form of service is just then imperatively needed. "Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" The quiet souls, precious as they are, will seem to be at a discount then. There requires: 1. Leadership in the cause of the right. 2. Men who can venture all, to clear the way to an unknown region. 3. Men who can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. 4. Men who can fearlessly rebuke ill, and fear the face of neither man nor devil.

III. FOR THIS SPECIAL FORM OF SERVICE, ENTERPRISE, COURAGE, BRAVERY, AND THE STERNER VIRTUES ARE REQUIRED. Those who are naturally timid and retiring will probably be out of sight at such times. Their work, indeed, is not lost. Their sighs and cries and prayers do enter into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. But still there then is need of the shaggier spirits to come to the front. There was time when evil so overspread Israel, and persecution was so sore, that it seemed as if virtue would soon

become extinct unless God arose in his might. There were seven thousand souls hidden in obscurity. But one man, stern and strong, must be to the front. It was *Elijah* (cf. also John the Baptist).

IV. GOD IN MERCY, AS HE FORESEES THESE CRISES, PREPARES MEN FOR THEM. The Hebrews could not have dispensed with the men of Gad. Their *strength* was required as much as the sanctity of the Levites. Every virtue, every grace, has its own distinctive sphere of service. God gives some more of the kindlier graces, that they may be comforters; and others more of the hardier ones, that they may be awakeners. One is a Barnabas; another a Boanerges.

V. THEREFORE, WHATEVER OUR NATURAL GIFTS MAY BE, LET US BE SUPREMELY CONCERNED TO SANCTIFY THEM FOR GOD. Let no one regret that he cannot be anybody else. Rather, "as much as in him is," let him use his powers, whatever they may be, for his redeeming God. The meek, quiet, gentle, retiring souls have their work. The rougher, sterner ones have also theirs. "Each one in his place is best." Be it ours every day to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The blessing of Dan and Naphtali; the satisfaction which accrues from the enjoyment of the Divine favour.* The word rendered "favour" in this verse, is the same as the one translated "good will" in the blessing of Joseph. (For several instances in which that word is used, see the Homily on that passage.) We are not going beyond the significance attached to the word in the time of Moses, in thinking of it as conveying to us the meaning of that favour, grace, and mercy of God which is the portion of those who are accepted in his sight. And the Mosaic expression, "satisfied with favour," suggests to us this theme for meditation—*Acceptance with God a matter for devout satisfaction.*

I. THE BLESSING HERE PRONOUNCED ON DAN AND NAPHTALI SPEAKS OF TEMPORAL MERCIES OF NO MEAN VALUE. To Dan is promised the strength and leaping freedom of young life. Samson was a mighty hero in this tribe. The historical details are not sufficient to enable us to compare the history of the tribe with the blessing upon it. Nevertheless, in general, it is sufficiently obvious that an amplitude of power is a great boon, if, indeed it be attended with the greater one, of wisdom to use it aright. Naphtali, too, was to enjoy "the sunny south" (see Hebrew). To be permitted to know this earthly life on its sunny side is indeed a mercy; how it sweetens our existence when, enjoying the warm sunbeams, we are permitted to feel that life is a privilege. Let such as have the earthly gifts bestowed on Dan and Naphtali—strength and sunshine—not be slow to perceive or to acknowledge their indebtedness and responsibility to God.

II. YET GREAT AS THESE TEMPORAL MERCIES ARE, BY THEMSELVES THEY WILL NOT YIELD SATISFACTION TO THE HIGHER NATURE OF MAN, HOWEVER ABUNDANT THE DEGREE IN WHICH THEY MAY BE POSSESSED. It is true that this is not so much expressed in the text as implied in the form of it. The satisfaction of which Moses speaks arises from something else which neither might nor brightness can secure.

III. THERE IS A GREATER BOON, even "*favour*"—acceptance with God. This the Hebrews enjoyed who had made a covenant with God through sacrifice. (For the blessedness of this in its ripest Christian form, see Rom. v. 1—11). Earthly blessings are the gifts of God's hand. Spiritual blessings are the outflowings of his grace (Eph. i. 1—3; ii. 1—6).

IV. THIS GREATER BOON IT IS WHICH YIELDS ENTIRE SATISFACTION. With God's "favour," all who possess it are abundantly satisfied. It must be so. For in this blessed state of acceptance, we enjoy what the Apostle Paul speaks of as a *resurrection life.* We are in "a new creation," "all things are become new." (1) The intellect is satisfied. For so much comes into view to delight the soul (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). (2) The conscience is pacified. For the enjoyment of God's favour comes out of Christ's own reconciling work, and is attended with pardon and adoption. (3) The affections are satisfied. For Divine love is "shed abroad in the heart." Fellowship with God is

ever maintained. (4) A double joy is put into the use of earthly gifts. They are received as a Father's tokens of love. They mean so much more than they can to others. (5) The expectations are satisfied. In God's love they have an enduring treasury of wealth.

> ". . . when all earthly pleasures fail,—
> (And fail they always will to every soul of man),
> He sends his hopes on high; reaches his sickle forth,
> And reaps the clusters from the vines of God."

Verily such a one is "satisfied with favour, and filled with the blessing of the Lord."

Vers. 24, 25.—*Asher's blessing; strength as the day.* There are several features in this blessing to Asher. He is to have a numerous seed: to enjoy above his brethren the favour of the Lord; to be surrounded with plenty; to be guarded with bars of iron and brass; and to have strength according to the days. (The Hebrew word translated "days" is so rendered or explained by the Targum, Boothroyd, and Parkhurst. The LXX. render it *ἰσχυς*: the French version has it *ta force;* Gesenius renders it "rest." In this Homily we follow the LXX., and accept our translation, "strength.") However great the temporal blessings may be which are here promised to Asher, this last-named one is surely the greatest of all, yea, greater than any merely earthly blessings could possibly be. And perhaps there is no promise of God's Word which has more deeply touched the hearts of his people, or more frequently proved itself a balm in care, than this one. For that it was made to Asher first, need not shut off any child of God from taking the comfort of it. There is a distinct promise made to Joshua, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee;" but yet the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews bids the people whom he is addressing to make that promise their own. And so assuredly may the people of God in every age and land do with the promise before us. They have done so hitherto, and will do so till the end. Let us meditate on it now, presenting, as it does, this topic—*Strength promised for the day.*

I. WHAT DOES THE PROMISE INCLUDE? It suggests truths of which we are often reminded, viz.: That *we have to live by the day.* In one sense we can do no otherwise. We can never with certainty look over the rim of one day so as to see what will happen to-morrow. Then *each day has its own peculiar alternations and variations of light and shade.* One day all is smiling; the next, perchance, all is in gloom. Every hour, every place has "hues of its own fresh borrowed from the heart." Consequently, *each day brings its own demands with it.* And for each day we require new self-adaptedness. Moreover, *the strength of each day will not serve for the next.* Now, these are the facts which this promise is intended to meet. How does it meet them? 1. It assures us of strength *as varied* as the day. Whatever kind of strength is wanted, that kind of strength will be given—whether for work or war, pain or sickness, poverty or temptation, bereavement or death. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew [*i.e.* change] their strength." 2. It is a promise of strength *as sure as* the day. No day shall come without its due measure of might to enable us to meet its demands. He who hath taught his children to cry, "Give us day by day our daily bread," in teaching them so to pray reveals his purpose to fulfil the prayer he has taught. We shall never find a day when the Saviour's grace is a-wanting. 3. It pledges strength *as long as* the days shall last. So long as any demands are made upon us, so long will God's grace be sufficient to enable us to meet them. We need not look wistfully and anxiously ahead. Our Father cares. One whose words are more to us than thousands of gold and silver has said, "Take no thought for the morrow," etc. And an inspired writer has given us an impregnable argument, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, *how shall he not* with him also freely give us all things?" But let us inquire—

II. WHAT IT IS WHICH GIVES THIS PROMISE A SPECIAL VALUE? "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The words remind us of a picture drawn by Mrs. Stowe, in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' of a slave weary and worn with toiling in the sultry sun. One quotes the words, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" "Them's good words," is the reply, "*but who says 'em?*" Obviously all depends on that. So it is here. The words are said—by 1. One who knows what

our days will be. 2. One who orders our days. 3. One who measures our days. 4. One who loved us from everlasting days. 5. One whose love changes not with the days. 6. One who has infinite resources on which we can draw throughout the days. 7. One whose love as revealed in Christ is a pledge that he will be with us to the end of the days. Is anything wanting to heighten the value of a promise if it comes from such a Promiser?

III. OUGHT NOT SUCH A PROMISE TO HAVE GREAT POWER OVER US? Yea, verily. A triple power. 1. It should stimulate to holy obedience. 2. It should prepare us to look onward with holy calmness. "I will trust, and not be afraid." 3. It should embolden us to meet emergencies with a valiant heart. 4. It should lead us to look upward with a waiting, expectant eye.

Vers. 26—29.—*The glory of Israel's God, and the blessedness of God's Israel.* Ere Moses quite throws up his task, he gives us his view of Israel as a whole. He has had a word of blessing for tribe by tribe, and now he takes one last look at the whole nation, and viewing it in the light of that eternal world on which he is so soon to enter, his words are richer, riper, sweeter than any we yet have read. The name he gives to the people is very significant—"Jeshurun." The word is found but four times in the Scriptures, viz. in ch. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 26; Isa. xliv. 2. It seems to be a kind of diminutive from יָשָׁר, and in the passage before us it appears to be used as a term of admiration and endearment; some would think it equivalent to "a righteous little people" (see Gesenius). Anyway, the root-notion of the word is connected with righteousness. And the fundamental conception which Moses has of the nation is that it is a nation in covenant with Jehovah on the righteous basis of sacrifice, and that it is one, moreover, which has righteousness for the corner-stone of its constitution and polity. And he pronounces them blessed in two senses: they have a God who is infinitely greater than all gods; they have privileges which make them greater than all other peoples. Hence we have a double theme to meditate upon, from the evangelic standpoint.

I. NONE IS SO GLORIOUS AS ISRAEL'S GOD. It is one mark of Divine condescension that our God lets his people speak of him in language they can best understand; *e.g.* "None like unto the God of Jeshurun" is a phrase which would seem to imply that there may be some other gods, but none equal to the one God (cf. Micah vii. 18; 1 Sam. ii. 2), whereas in fact there is no other. Still, men of other nations worshipped other beings whom they deemed to be gods; and Israel's God, in his infinite condescension, suffers himself to be put in contrast from them, although he is God alone. 1. He is "the eternal God." The word rendered "eternal" here is one which refers to God's having existed from the eternal past. "From everlasting" he is God—he is Jehovah. He changes not. 2. He is one who "rideth above the heaven," etc.; he is over all. In the glory of his transcendent majesty, all things are under his feet. "He maketh the clouds his chariot; he walketh upon the wings of the wind." 3. He is one who bears up Israel and all things in his arms. "Underneath are the everlasting arms"—arms spread out, expanded with the intent of bearing all. "Everlasting arms," that will remain thus spread out and bearing all to eternity, without weariness, though they have borne the weight of all things from eternity. 4. He is one whose active energies are ever going before his people, to "thrust out" their enemies. Whatever would obstruct them shall be taken out of the way. 5. He himself is and will be the Dwelling-place in which his people can abide. "Thy Refuge" (see Ps. xc. 1; xci. 2, 9; Isa. iv. 6). It is not at all unlikely that the figure of God as a permanent Home to his people suggested itself to Moses by way of contrast, as the people had lived such a wandering life, and abode in tabernacles (so Keil).

Let these five features which mark Israel's God be put together. May we not well say, "Who is like to the God of Jeshurun?"

II. NONE CAN BE SO BLESSED AS GOD'S ISRAEL. This is seen whether we consider what God is to them, or what they have and are in, through, and from God. 1. *Their blessedness arises from what God is to them;* it is an incomparable blessedness. For: (1) Who else has an eternal God? (2) Who else has one so great in majesty? (3) Who else has one so strong to bear? (4) Who else has one so mighty to defend? (5) Who else has one in whom is such a home? Each of these five points, the correlatives of those under the first head, requires expansion. 2. *It arises also from*

what they have and are in and through God. (1) They have security. "Israel shall dwell in safety." (2) Plenty shall be theirs. "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine." "They that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing." (3) They shall have refreshment. "His heavens shall drop down dew." God will be "as the dew unto Israel." (4) Victory shall be theirs. (*a*) "Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee: *i.e.* they threatened to destroy, and they are proved false. (*b*) "Thou shalt tread upon their high places;" *i.e.* the high and fortified places in which they gloried shall be as ramparts over which you shall walk.

Who can desire to be more blessed than this? Yea, who can conceive of a greater blessedness? Is it not enough to set the heart a-longing? May not the remark be appropriately made in closing, that—

It behoves each one of us to make sure that we are of the Israel of God, so that we may know this blessedness is ours!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*A fiery Law.* The fieriness of the Law, significant: 1. Of the holiness from which the Law emanated. 2. Of the fiery sanctions by which it is guarded. 3. Of the threatening aspect which it wears to sinners. 4. Of the purifying effects which it exerts in the hearts and consciences of believers.—J. O.

Ver. 3.—*God's saints.* 1. Their *happiness*—loved of God. 2. Their *safety*—in God's hand. 3. Their *attitude*—sitting at God's feet—at the feet of God's Son (Luke x. 3, 9). (1) Willing to know God's will. (2) Seeking instruction in it. (3) Waiting on God for that instruction. (4) Their *duty*—to receive of God's words. The receiving to be of the practical kind of hiding God's words in the heart, and going on to put them in practice (Matt. xiii. 23).—J. O.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Reuben and Judah.* The tribe without a destiny and the tribe with one.

I. THE PRESERVATION AND INCREASE OF EVERY PART OF THE CHURCH IS OF INTEREST TO EVERY OTHER. Reuben's sins had incurred the forfeiture of privilege. His numbers were diminishing. It had been predicted of him that he would not excel (Gen. xlix. 4). But Moses desires that his tribe should not perish. He prays for its preservation and revival. Or, on another view, he prays that, though its numbers are few, it may not utterly die out. So ought we to pray for any part of the Church that seems in a dwindling condition.

II. THE STRENGTH OF THE STRONG IS STILL TO BE SOUGHT FROM GOD. Judah, though strong, with great promises behind and great hopes before, was yet to recognize that his help and sufficiency were of God. That there may be strength, there must be prayer, "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah," etc.—J. O.

Vers. 8—11.—*Levi.* The priestly tribe. Its curse (Gen. xlix. 7) turned into a blessing. Repentance and zeal cut off the entail of a curse, or so transform it that out of the very curse God evokes a blessing (cf. Exod. xxxii. 29; Ps. cvi. 31).

I. THE GROUND OF THE BLESSING. 1. Levi's *fidelity* (ver. 8). "Among the faithless, faithful only he." The zeal and constancy of the tribe on critical occasions had been remarkable. Learn how the wicked, returning to God and proving zealous in his service, may retrieve past forfeitures and win great honour. 2. Levi's *renunciation of earthly ties* (ver. 9). Christ also requires that no earthly tie be allowed to stand between his disciples and the allegiance they owe to him (Matt. x. 37).

II. THE BLESSING ITSELF. 1. Great privileges were conferred. (1) Levi *was to be the medium of God's revelations.* Urim and Thummim (ver. 8). This privilege of the tribe receives its highest fulfilment in Christ—God's "Holy One," by pre-eminence, and the Revealer of all his counsel to men. Note: The Urim and Thummim is attributed *to the whole tribe*, equally with burning incense and offering sacrifice (ver. 10), though

no one pretends that the prerogative of consulting through the oracle belonged to any other than the high priest. This shows the futility of the argument that in Deuteronomy all Levites must be held as priests because priestly functions are in ch. x. 8, etc., attributed to the tribe as such. (2) *They were to teach the Law to Israel* (ver. 10). This privilege now preserved by ministers of the gospel, and other teachers in the Christian Church. In Levi's fidelity and spirit of consecration we see the qualifications required for such work. (3) *They were to burn incense and offer sacrifice.* This privilege has its fulfilment in Christians in general, in whose personal consecration and offering of spiritual sacrifices, with the incense of prayers, the character of a "royal priesthood" is maintained (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). Their sacrifices are acceptable through the High Priest, Christ. 2. Great promises were given (ver. 10). His substance would be blessed, and special protection afforded him. God's servants have all an interest in these promises, especially those whose sacred calling deprives them of the ordinary means of livelihood.—J. O.

Vers. 12—17.—*Benjamin and Joseph.* The name given to one of these sons of Rachel (ver. 12) would apply to both—"Beloved of the Lord."

I. WHOM GOD CHOOSES TO PRESERVE NO FOE CAN INJURE. Benjamin would dwell in safety as between the shoulders of Jehovah (ver. 12). The Lord would cover him all the day long. This is true of every good man. No power can separate him from God's love. No enemy can reach him to harm him (Ps. cxxi.). Christ's sheep are in the Father's hand, whence no man can pluck them (John x. 29).

II. WHOM GOD CHOOSES TO BLESS ALL THINGS CONSPIRE TO POUR BLESSING UPON. (Vers. 13—16.) All things would "work together" for the good of Joseph—would combine to fill his lap with treasures. They would unite to benefit and enrich him. Precious things of heaven and of the deep, precious things of sun and moon, precious things of the hills, precious things of the earth, and with these "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush"—a better portion than all, would be multiplied to this favoured tribe. So all things in the spiritual respect work for the believer's good (Rom. viii. 28), even afflictions turning to his salvation through prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus (Phil. i. 19).

III. WHOM GOD CHOOSES TO HELP NO ADVERSARY CAN WITHSTAND. (Ver. 17.)—J. O.

Ver. 16.—*The good will of him that dwelt in the bush.* God chose a bush of the desert as the medium of his appearance to Moses (Exod. iii. 2), which, burning, was not consumed. A symbol: 1. Of *Divine condescension.* God stooping to dwell with men (1 Kings viii. 27), using humble and despised instruments (1 Cor. ii. 18—31; 2 Cor. iv. 7). The bush, "a neglected manifestation of God." 2. Of *indwelling presence.* A symbol of the Church, and of the individual believer, indwelt in by God. Inconspicuous and contemned, yet the seat of the Divine presence—a medium of the Divine manifestation. 3. Of *miraculous preservation.* 1. God's presence *is* a fire in the midst of his Church—flaming out upon the adversaries. 2. God's presence *preserves* the Church amidst fires of persecution and affliction.—J. O.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Zebulun and Issachar.* I. TWO FORMS OF THE BLESSING OF THE ALMIGHTY. 1. Commerce. 2. Agriculture (ver. 18). Note: 1. *Some are fitted for one kind of life, some for another.* Varieties of disposition and talent. Variety of situation, giving scope for innate gifts. Divine providence, as here in allotment of the tribes, fits the one to the other. 2. *God's blessing is needed in one kind of life as well as in another.* Neither in commerce nor in agriculture can that blessing be dispensed with. It may rest on us in both, both being legitimate lines of human activity. It is in both equally efficacious. 3. *Prosperity flowing to us from God's blessing is a just cause for rejoicing.* Unblessed prosperity is not to be rejoiced in, but prosperity with God's blessing attending it is riches indeed.

II. WEALTH DERIVED FROM GOD'S BLESSING IS TO BE SANCTIFIED TO HIS GLORY. (Ver. 19.) 1. *The nations are to be invited to share the blessing.* Note here: *Commercial* nations have peculiar opportunities for being *missionary* nations. Cosmopolitan in spirit. Come in contact with many nationalities. Usually possess the means. The preaching of Christ was largely in the region of Zebulun and Issachar,

with that of Naphtali, who "giveth goodly words" (Gen. xlix. 21). Application to ourselves, and duty of consecrating wealth to missionary enterprise. 2. *Sacrifices of righteousness are to be offered* in: (1) recognition of God's gift; (2) dedication of wealth to God's service; (3) personal surrender of the offerer to God.—J. O.

Vers. 20—25.—*Gad, Dan, Naphtali, Asher.* The blessings on these tribes are connected with—

I. PROWESS. (Vers. 20, 21.) The chivalrous heroic spirit, which, as well as in bloodier conflicts, finds scope for its exercise in the battles of the cross, has here its appropriate recognition. A first portion is reserved for it.

II. ACTIVITY. Dan's characteristic was agility. In Genesis, the dart of the serpent (xlix. 17); here, the leap of the lion's whelp (ver. 22). A counterpart in minds of bold, nimble, adventurous type; prompt in decision, subtle in thought, swift in action. Such minds, if to the wisdom of the serpent is added the dove's harmlessness (Matt. x. 16), are of immense service in Christian enterprises needing bold pioneers or swift and decided action.

III. CONTENTMENT. (Ver. 23.) Naphtali was less active than receptive. Did less, but received more. Possessed a region of great sweetness and beauty, and dwelt in it with unambitious satisfaction. Such dispositions are needed as a balance to the others.

IV. SKILL IN THE ARTS. (Vers. 24, 25.) Iron and brass. Asher appears to have wrought these metals, whether from mines in its own district or brought from a distance does not appear.

Lessons—1. Talents are diverse. 2. All have their place. 3. A community needs all. 4. The blessing of God rests on a faithful use of all. 5. All should co-operate.—J. O.

Vers. 26—29.—*Israel's happiness.* A noble climax! The round of blessing has been completed, and the dying lawgiver revels in the thought of the greatness and felicity thence resulting to favoured Israel. One by one the tribes have passed before his eye, and he has sketched in outline, not indeed their actual future, but what might have been, what would have been their future, had they remained faithful to their God. The picture is largely an ideal one, though in the after-history of the tribes, in the lots assigned to them in Canaan, in the types of character exhibited by them, in the variety of their callings and destinies—as in the ruins of a temple we may trace something of its original design—we discern the fulfilment of many features of the prophecy. Moses' blessing on the tribes is at once a wish, a prayer, and a prediction: a wish that certain blessings may be theirs; a prayer that the blessings may be given; and a prediction of what, conditionally on obedience, would actually be realized. Reading the blessings, we think, as in the parable, of servants entrusted with certain talents to be used in their Lord's service, but capable of making a bad as well as a good use of them (Matt. xxv. 14—31). The tribes, speaking generally, used theirs badly, and the blessings were not fulfilled. What applies to the blessing as a whole applies especially to this magnificent concluding passage. It is the ideal, not the actual Israel which stands here before the great lawgiver's eye, and the language applies to the actual, only in so far as it was also the ideal, people of Jehovah. Its full application is to the Church of Christ—the Church catholic and invisible.

I. THE BASIS OF ISRAEL'S HAPPINESS, viz. the relation which the tribes sustained to the eternal God. He was the God of Jeshurun—of the righteous people. He was a God bound to them by covenant. They had been saved by him. He was their changeless Dwelling-place, Defender, and Support. All power in heaven and earth was at their service, and engaged for their defence. They had nothing to fear with a Protector so almighty; they had everything to hope for from one so able to save and bless. Precisely similar is the relation of God in Christ to the Church of believers.

II. THE GREATNESS OF IT. 1. *Complete as regards its elements.* No element of good a-wanting. Rising from natural blessings, and safety and protection against enemies, they had also, in the favour of God and communion with him, every pledge of spiritual blessing. 2. *Permanent.* Enduring as the eternal God. 3. *Exalting and ennobling to the soul of its possessor.* Such a relation to God as Israel sustained should have wrought in the people, did in part work in them, a surpassing elevation of

consciousness; was fitted to raise thought and feeling to the pitch of sublimity; should have made of them a *great* nation, in the best sense of the words, a nation great in thought, aspiration, and endeavour—*heroically* great. A like elevation of spirit should characterize the people of Christ.—J. O.

Ver. 27.—*The eternal God a Refuge.* I. THE SUBLIMITY OF THIS PROMISE. Is there one who can open his mind sufficiently to take in anything like the grandeur of this thought? To think realizingly of God at all is to many a difficulty. It shows how little we do think of him; how habitually our minds are occupied with other objects; that when we wish to bring even his *existence* clearly before our minds, we find it difficult to do so. It is not a difficulty which would be felt if our relations with God were close and intimate, if our communion with him was habitual, if we were trying to live continually as in his presence and under his eye. "I believe in God the Father Almighty!" Is not that just what most of us do *not* do? Is there one who would not tremble far more in the presence of many of his fellow-mortals than he ever does at the thought of standing in the presence of his God? What sort of a belief is it which leaves us so destitute of all real apprehension of *what* God is, and even of a habitual realization of the feeling *that* he is? We think of him, but often how coldly, how distantly, how notionally, how unbelievingly! We speak of "revivals," but, sooth to say, we need a revival of living belief in the first article of the Creed. We need to have our eyes opened, thought set to work, faith made more real. If that were given, then should we know, as we had never known before, how wonderful, how sublime, how infinitely grand a thing it was to have this God as our Refuge, and to know that underneath us were these everlasting arms. If it is difficult to attain to a steady persuasion even of God's existence, vastly more difficult is it to frame a just conception of his *eternity*. Before worlds were, God existed; when they shall have waxed old and disappeared, he shall exist still. Time flows, but, like the rock in the midst of the stream, which, from its stable base, laughs at the flood whose impetuous course it overlooks; so, amidst the flow of ages, God *endures*, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Does it not, then, seem as something incredible that this eternal God should constitute himself a Home and Refuge for weak, sinning, mortals; should even stoop to press himself on such mortals as a Friend, Saviour, Protector, Support, Helper? If we see nothing strange in this, it is impossible that anything should seem strange to us; if we can believe this, we need not stumble at much else in revelation. For this is just the central truth the Bible has to tell. It tells of a God, infinite, everlasting, almighty, inflexibly righteous, unutterably pure, incomprehensibly great and wise and good; from whom men have indeed wandered in numberless paths of error; but who has revealed himself for the very purpose of bringing them back to himself, that they may be saved from death and may enjoy eternal life; who will by no means clear the guilty, but who waits to be gracious to every penitent sinner returning to his care; and who has provided all means for that return in the atonement of his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and in the grace of his Holy Spirit. That is the message the Bible has to bring, and it is nothing else than the almighty and eternal God offering himself, in his grace, as a Refuge for our otherwise defenceless souls; stretching out those everlasting arms of which the text speaks, to draw us to himself and save us from otherwise inevitable ruin. Say not, you do not need this refuge! The son of man is not yet born who does not need it, and who will not one day, whether he does so now or not, acknowledge that he needs it. And say not, you will delay in seeking it! for even could a day or a year be guaranteed in which to rethink the question now proposed, it is plainly folly in itself, and grievous dishonour done to God, that so vast and glorious an opportunity should stand for a single day unimproved; that God should sue to you, and you refuse his gracious invitations. Rather, "seek the Lord while he may be found," etc. (Isa. lv. 6).

II. THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THIS PROMISE. View it in three relations. In relation: 1. To *our temporal existence.* Having God as our Refuge does not indeed imply that we are to have a great abundance of this world's possessions, or be absolutely free from cares and sorrows. It does not secure that we are to be either the richest or the least tried of all around us. God knows how often it is otherwise. Some of the best of God's saints have been, like Paul, the worst off of humankind.

"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder," etc. (Heb. xi. 37). Was God therefore not the "Refuge" of those saints because they were so ill off in this life, or did the "everlasting arms" not sustain them? Or was it not in the midst of these "great fights of afflictions" that they first realized how true a Refuge God was to them? When Paul was at his work, "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of his countrymen, in perils of the heathen, in perils of the city, in perils of the wilderness, in perils of the sea, in perils of false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. xi. 24—28), had God in these circumstances falsified his promise, and failed to be a Refuge to him? The question needs only to be put to be its own answer. Yet it is certain that, even in outward things, God is a Refuge for his people, and that under his care they ordinarily enjoy both unusual blessing and a quite especial protection. Jesus teaches us to trust our Father in heaven, while of course using the means he gives us, for all our temporal necessities (Matt. vi. 25—34). He pledges himself that, so long as it is the Father's will that we should live in the world, we shall be protected from harm, and suitably provided for. This was David's confidence, expressed in many of the psalms, and it has been the confidence of all God's people. Experience verifies that the good man's dwelling is the "munitions of rocks;" his bread is given him, his water is sure (Isa. xxxiii. 16). 2. To *our spiritual existence.* God is the soul's (1) spiritual Saviour. Though our Lord and Judge, it is only in his bosom, in his forgiving grace, we can find refuge from our sins, from the unhappiness they cause us, and from the ruin they have brought upon us. The child that has offended his parent may seek the whole world through in vain for the rest he can find at once by coming back, confessing his sin, and being forgiven. God has devised means "that his banished be not expelled from him" (2 Sam. xiv. 14). The way is open. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help" (Hos. xiii. 9). (2) Unfailing Retreat in trouble. No matter what storms beat without, what blessings of an outward kind are given or withheld, what threatening forms the enmity of man may assume, the soul has in God a Retreat, a place of resort and Refuge, which never fails it. There it dwells in a region of love, breathes an atmosphere of peace, holds a communion with the Father of spirits, which only grows the sweeter the longer life lasts, and the more the outward cup is bitter to the taste. In this inward home of the spirit it renews its strength and drinks of living waters, has meat to eat which the world knows not of, finds satisfaction for its deepest needs (Hab. iii. 17, 18). (3) Unfailing Support. He upholds the soul. Has the believer trials to come through? He is upheld to bear them. Has he temptations to face? He is upheld to conquer in them. Has he work to do? He is upheld and strengthened to perform it. Has he enemies to fight? His courage is sustained, and he is made "more than conqueror." But for the upholding of the "everlasting arms," how many of God's saints would never have come through what they have experienced! 3. To *our eternal existence.* "The *eternal* God," etc. Heavenly and eternal existence are wrapped up in this promise. God does not make his eternity a refuge for beings of a day. There would be an utter disproportion between an everlasting dwelling-place and a creature of some three score years and ten. All eternal good is here implied, and this crowns the promise and carries it beyond all comprehension of its greatness. "Eye hath not seen," etc.—J. O.

Vers. 1—5.—*The King and his viceroy.* Moses, having received the direction about his death, proceeds next to formally bless the tribes. We have in these verses the introduction to the blessing. It brings under our notice the Great King himself, and the minor king, Moses, the viceroy. As the parting blessing of him whom God had made "king in Jeshurun," it has more weight and significance than anything which ever came out of the lips of kings. Even David's dying words are not so sublime as these of Moses (cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—7). Let us look first at the Great King, and then at his viceroy who reigned in Jeshurun.

I. THE ADVENT OF GOD. He is represented as rising at Sinai, as scattering rays from Seir, and as riding forth in sunlike majesty from Mount Paran. The idea is borrowed from the dawn. Just as, before the sun appears in splendour, the mountain-tops are tipped with gold, and then the dawn gathers into glory, and the sun at last steps forth in might, so the Lord made his proximity felt on the top of Sinai; there

was a still greater impression made at Seir, with the mercy of the brazen serpent; and last of all in Paran, in whose wilderness was Kadesh, the scene of chequered experience and yet abundant blessing, the sunlight having then fully come. God had come as the Light-giver. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5).

Next let us notice his *court*—"myriads [רִבְבוֹת, which may mean *a million*] of saints." This cannot refer to Israel, as some suggest, but to the holy ones accompanying the Lord from heaven. What a magnificent array! Only the holy can stand in his sight or constitute his train.

Next let us notice his *gift* to men—"from his right hand went a fiery Law for them." This fiery Law can only mean that *moral law* which penetrates unto the heart with its fiery heat.

And all was in *love* (ver. 3), for the God who is light and fire is also love. The saints are safe in his hand, and they gather round his feet.

II. THE VICEROY. He is called here "the man of God," and justly so. He was the man who recognized himself as God's property, as God's servant, as God's minister.

And this is why he was "king in Jeshurun." It is consecration to God's glory which secures the real kingship. No kingship is worth the name which consists not in holy influences; and every man is a "king of men" who reigns over them by the sovereignty of intelligent consecration.

In these respects Moses was a type of Jesus. Pilate could not understand his kingship through truth; but the world recognizes it. He was so devoted to the Father's glory, and so bent on the good of men, that increasing multitudes every year are owning his sway and accepting of the Law at his mouth. Fiery it is doubtless, fitted to kindle the coldest heart to rapture. As it dwells within us, it moulds to highest good the life.—R. M. E.

Vers. 6—25.—*Watchwords for the tribes.* The blessings authoritatively pronounced by these old worthies amounted to watchwords for their future development. They were divinely suggested ideas regarding their future courses. We shall look at the ideals thus presented in their order.

I. THE UNOSTENTATIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF REUBEN. Deposed from the primacy among the brethren, because of his self-indulgence, he is to content himself with pastoral progress amid the mountains of Moab. The blessing is a good one, quiet life and progress.

II. THE SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH SUFFERING OF JUDAH. In ver. 7 we have clearly the regal strain. It is the struggle and the victory and the reign. The brunt of battle is to fall on Judah, and the sovereignty in the end. That it refers to Messiah ultimately is, we think, quite reasonable. Indeed, Kennicott regards ver. 5 as referring to the Messiah and not to Moses, and consistently therewith he would have the words "bring *him* to his people" to refer to the king, Shiloh, of Judah's tribe. However this may be, we can discern in this watchword of Judah the key-note of the Saviour's suffering life.

III. THE SELF-DENIAL AND DEVOTEDNESS OF LEVI. The treasure of the oracle was to be with the Levites, and, in prosecuting the work of God, they were to show that they loved their Master more than even father or mother, sister or brother, sons or daughters. In prosecuting their ministerial work, they were to illustrate discipleship as a giving unto God the first place above the nearest and the dearest (cf. Luke xiv. 26). Moreover, in this holy work the sons of Levi shall need the Lord's blessing on their substance, since they lived by voluntary contributions, and the Lord's help against calamities. A special blessing is thus looked for in connection with special work, of a self-denying character. And the same is applicable to the ministry still.

IV. THE SHADOW OF GOD FOR BENJAMIN. This powerful tribe was to afford shelter to the central government and worship in the time of the monarchy. The Divine presence thus was specially to overshadow the descendants of Benjamin. As Joseph so tenderly overshadowed his brother, so will the central government and worship his seed.

V. THE SPLENDID SUCCESS AND PROWESS OF JOSEPH. All the fatness of the earth and the favour of God and the power to push successfully their way against all opposing forces are to belong to Ephraim and to Manasseh. From Joppa unto Carmel, on the sea

across to the pastures of Gilead, the two half-tribes were destined to hold sway, and to enjoy all the wealth this encircled. It was the magnificent central province of Samaria, with any amount of pasture-land beyond the Jordan.

VI. THE HIGHWAY OF ZEBULUN. Its outlets are to be peculiarly important, as we know they proved between the Great Sea and the sea of Tiberias. Through Zebulun the traffic passed from the great Eastern kingdoms. Their situation, mercantilely regarded, was superb.

VII. THE CONFIDENCE AND CONSOLIDATION OF ISSACHAR. Settled beside Zebulun, with a series of mountain fastnesses behind, and Esdraelon's plain down to the sands of the Mediterranean as their coast, the children of Issachar were to feel settled and secure in their tents. The mountain tracts will nurse the piety of the people, while the sea shall yield its abundance, and the sand become a source of treasure. No better home could be found for a trading, manufacturing people.

VIII. THE VANTAGE-GROUND OF GAD. This tribe is represented as hemmed in like a lion at bay, and thus compelled to take a prominent part in critical affairs. Lying between the mountains and the Jordan, it became the battle-ground of the monarchy, and at Ramoth-Gilead and Mahanaim important issues were decided. The watchword was vigilance, because of the vantage-ground.

IX. THE COURAGE OF DAN. He is represented as a lion's whelp, full of courage, though small in size. Leaping from Bashan, he made his lair northwards, but ever ready to shift to better quarters if he heard of them. He found a lair too at the sea, in the borders of Philistia.

X. EASY-GOING NAPHTALI. This tribe is represented as taking a south-west location after the northernmost Danites, and as rejoicing there in the manifold goodness of God.

XI. BLESSED BY NAME AND NATURE AS ASHER. This tribe is to be blessed, as the very name implies, in domestic relations, in fraternal relations, in the olive-yards yielding such magnificent oil, and in the iron and brass with which, instead of the ordinary wooden bars, they could protect themselves. To this tribe was given the oft-quoted promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." They were to have "strength proportioned to their work."

It does not appear why to Simeon no blessing is assigned; and yet it is noticeable that this tribe played but a small part in the drama of Israelitish history.—R. M. E.

Vers. 26—29.—*The incomparable Saviour.* In finishing the blessing of the people, Moses cannot refrain from bursting into a tribute of admiration for him who had brought them thus far. He speaks of God's incomparable excellency, and how happy Israel was in relying upon his power. We shall notice the two thoughts in this order as cause and effect.

I. THE INCOMPARABLE EXCELLENCY OF GOD. This is brought out in several particulars. And: 1. God is *incomparably excellent in himself.* He "rideth upon the heaven in his help, and in his excellency on the sky." The reference is believed to be to the Shechinah cloud, which passed in calm majesty along the upper heavens to indicate to Israel, or "Jeshurun," as Israel is here called, the way they should take. In no more beautiful way could God's essential sovereignty be brought out. He moves in calm majesty among the spheres, the Ruler because Maker of them all. No one can for a moment be compared with him. 2. God is *incomparably excellent as the Saviour of his people.* Israel experienced his help in the deliverance from Egypt, in the pilgrimage to Palestine, and they were about to experience still further favour in the success of the invasion. The language is most beautiful by which all this is conveyed. "The eternal God is thy Refuge;" to him who dwells in the *eternities* and who orders their processions, the difficulties of *time* must be as nothing. "Underneath are the everlasting arms," no weariness ever overtaking arms which are full of everlasting strength. "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." Now, in all this we have a figure of the salvation which God extends still to men. (1) He delivers us from the *bondage of sin*; (2) he *justifies* us freely from all things; (3) he *sanctifies* us by his Spirit; (4) he *protects* and delivers us from all our enemies.

II. THE CONSEQUENT HAPPINESS OF ISRAEL. What distinguishes Israel and renders them a happy people is the possession of such an incomparable Saviour. It is not in Israel themselves, but in their God, that the cause of their happiness dwells. And it

is well to remember this. 1. *Frames and feelings are no proper foundation for our spiritual confidence.* Anxious souls prolong their anxiety and postpone their peace by excessive introspection. Instead of occupying themselves with the incomparable excellency of their Saviour, they occupy themselves with the incomparable vileness of their own hearts. No peace and joy can come from within. 2. *The changeless Saviour is a true Foundation for our confidence and hope.* It is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," in whom we are asked to confide. He has every excellency which our necessities demand. He has the atonement and the sympathy and the intercessory powers we need to free us from deserved penalties and fit us for undeserved blessing. 3. *We stand in consequence as an expectant people awaiting our entrance to the land of promise.* For it is to be noticed that Israel were not only happy in their experience, but happy also in their hopes. They were about to enter the promised land. There they were to dwell safely alone, like the heavenly state where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." They are to have plenty of corn and wine, as the redeemed have in heaven, where they eat angels' food and drink the new wine of the kingdom. They are to dwell under the fertilizing dews of heaven, as the redeemed shall under the benedictions of God. In hope, then, Israel was happy: and we too may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—5.—*The Godlike act of blessing.* Moses is finely described as "the man of God." Among his contemporaries there was no man who bore so much of the Divine image. In character, in office, in deed, he was eminently Godlike. As his earthly life drew to a close, the real man came more fully into view. Death is a clever unveiler of a man—it strips off shams and masks, it discovers the reality. Like his great Antitype, Moses forgets himself in the crisis of death, and concerns himself about others. As his hours are few, he will crowd into them as many acts of blessing as he can. It is in the power of one man to bless many. This is Godlike.

I. BLESSING CAN COME TO MEN ONLY THROUGH THE CHANNELS OF LAW. It is useless to wish a man some good fortune, unless he is prepared to follow the lines along which good fortune comes. It is useless to wish a man health, while we know that he is wedded to the wine-cup. The only real blessing we can confer is to put men into connection with God's channels of blessing. The man who unveils to us the law of God respecting the expansion of steam, confers real blessing on the race. Similarly, the man who reveals to us the law, or method, through which God's favour flows to sinners, imparts solid blessing. Respecting blessing, God is the only primal Source, but men can be subordinate agents in distributing it. "Order is Heaven's first law;" and, in blessing others, we must observe God's order of procedure. Submission to law is an essential condition of blessing.

II. BLESSING TO MEN HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S SUBLIMEST MANIFESTATIONS. Desiring to bless the tribes, Moses at once reverted to Sinai, and to God's grand plan for blessing men. Heart and soul, Moses was a legislator. He saw the grandeur, the eternity, the utility of Law. The "ruling passion was strong in death." The splendid manifestation of God's majesty at Sinai again passed before the eye of memory. All those splendours of royal state were destined to illustrate the intrinsic majesty of Law. That magnificent retinue of consecrated ones illustrated the native glory of the Divine Law. That entire epiphany of God culminated in this significant act: "from his right hand went a fiery Law"—a Divine force to soften, melt, purify, and consume. Those honoured beings that found a place in the retinue of God received that exaltation and that office by virtue of submission to Law; "they sat down at thy feet." To reveal to men his Law is a Divine equivalent for largest blessing. God's Law is the outcome of his love. The spring and motive of this stately display of Law is deep and generous love. "Yea, he loved the people."

III. TO BLESS MEN, THROUGH THEIR OBSERVANCE OF LAW, IS THE AMBITION OF EVERY REAL KING. God is supreme Sovereign of all intelligent beings. The supreme Monarch manifests irrepressible desire to bless his subjects. Amidst impressive solemnities, he declares that blessing can only come through the channels of righteous Law. Moses, too, is a subordinate king—king in Jeshurun—God's vicegerent. Moses, too, desires to bless the people. His life had been spent in their interests. Even during the forty years he spent as a shepherd in Midian, he was undergoing preparation

for his great undertaking. But Moses likewise knew that the greatest blessing he could confer on Israel was love of God's Law. No wishes, or hopes, or aspirations, which he could cherish for them would be of any practical value apart from their dutiful obedience to God. Therefore, his legacy was counsel and prayer: "He commanded a Law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob." This is the richest heritage we can acquire on earth, viz. God's Law enshrined in the heart. Then are we living temples, the "habitation of God through the Spirit."—D.

Ver. 6.—*A prayer for the firstborn.* The personal character of Reuben had not been exemplary. His salient features were coarse. Moral qualities were entailed to posterity; and the tribe, generation after generation, occupied a low place in the history of the nation. Nothing noble seems ever to have been achieved by it.

I. PRIORITY OF PLACE DOES NOT ENSURE NOBLENESS OF CHARACTER. Reuben was, in Jacob's household, *first* in the order of time, but not first in native dignity. "Many that are first shall be last." The king has not always the most royal character in the empire. The palace does not always contain the noblest society. The most obscure may yet become the purest and the best. Moral rottenness has often been on the throne, and real royalty on the gibbet.

II. PRESENT LIFE DOES NOT SECURE CONTINUOUS LIFE. Human life is not self-created; it is sustained through every hour by a Divine hand; and whenever Divine wisdom sees best, that life is brought to a close. As life, with all its advantages, is a trust from God, which may be terminated any moment, we should use every moment well, in order to deserve its continuance. In proportion to the precariousness of life is the value of every moment increased. So, too, in the life beyond the grave, the same dependence on God remains. We hang on him for continued life. Christ is our life. Through eternity we live (if we live at all) by faith on the Son of God. Hourly the prayer ought to ascend, "Let me live, and not die."

III. PRESENT UNITS MAY BECOME FUTURE MYRIADS. At the time of Moses' dissolution, the number of Reuben seems to have been small. Possibly this may have been a penalty for Reuben's incest. In this case it would be an appeal to God's mercy to remove the curse. Beneath the benediction of God, "a little one soon becomes a thousand." Prolific increase is a sign of Divine approval. All the oak forests on the globe sprang from a single germ.—D.

Ver. 7.—*The royal house of Judah.* The name Judah signifies praise. Here Moses represents Judah as the praying tribe—in this respect inheriting the spirit of its great father, Jacob. Prayer and praise usually wed; they make a happy pair in the habitation of the heart, and the offspring is royal nobleness.

I. TRUE PRAYER PLEADS FOR AN APPOINTED DESTINY. What God has designed and destined for us—*this* is a proper object of prayer. For although God has designed some good for us, our prayer is the last link in the succession of causes which brings us into actual possession. "For all these things," saith God, "I will be inquired of . . . to do it for them." Prayer has respect to the will of God. The purpose and oath of God have prepared the blessing. The hand of faith is stretched forth to take it.

II. TRUE PRAYER IS SUPPORTED BY OTHERS' INTERCESSIONS. The prayer of a good man on our behalf is an inestimable boon. Here Moses prayed that Judah's petition might be heard. Example is contagious. When good men see us praying, they will pray with us, and for us too. If only combustible material be at hand, the fiery flame will spread. It is always an inspiration to us, if we remember that while we pray, Christ our Elder Brother is praying for us above.

III. TRUE PRAYER IS ALWAYS SECONDED BY PERSONAL ENDEAVOUR. "Let his hands be sufficient for him." What we can do to gain the blessing, God will not do for us. What we cannot do, God will, if we meekly ask him. Prayer without effort is hypocrisy. We are not sincere in our request. Labour without prayer is stark atheism. The boat of human progress must be rowed with two oars—prayer and effort. Unless both wings are in motion, the eagle cannot rise.

IV. TRUE PRAYER OBTAINS THE HELP OF GOD. It obtains help for every undertaking—husbandry, commerce, art, and war. Prayer always has prevailed—it always will. Prayer and painstaking can accomplish anything. Prayer secures for us the best help,

the presence of God himself. "Be thou a Help to him." This is an Ally worth having —an Ally who, by a breath, secures success. If the Lord be our Helper, we can wisely speak the challenge, "What can man do unto me?" God with me, God *in* me, inspiring every thought, and purpose, and desire and deed,—*this* makes a mean man royal indeed. Thus we may all obtain a place in the honoured tribe of Judah, and be "kings unto God."—D.

Vers. 8—11.—*The priestly tribe.* The abuse of the priestly office has brought the name of priest into contempt. Best things, when corrupt, become the worst. Sour milk and rotten grapes and stained snow are things most obnoxious. Yet a true priest is the noblest form of man—the greatest benefactor of his species. A pompous, bedizened, arrogant ecclesiastic, is not a true priest. God's priest is meek, self-forgetful, saintly, Christlike.

I. PURITY AND CONSECRATION ARE THE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD. Levi is here described as "thy holy one." This was God's ideal, though never fully realized except in Christ. If there was not perfect purity of character, there was the nascent germ within—the inner yearning and desire after holiness. Levi was the rude type, the rough outline of the perfect priest. *A further qualification was consecration.* This personal righteousness was to be practical. It was required to be actively devoted to the service of God. Regard for God was to dominate regard for earthly relatives. When called to God's service, the Levite was to regard his parents as if he had them not; he was to forget his brethren and his father's house; yea, he must love his children as though he loved them not. *God first;* every one else must find a subordinate place (ver. 9). Here we have the forecast of Christ's axiom, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." *Further, this character was a tested one.* To an office so responsible, God does not admit a novice. Mere innocence is not a qualification. There must be tried and tested character—character tried in the furnace of temptation. So with respect to this tribe of Levi; him "thou didst prove at Massah," with him "thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah."

II. PRIESTLY CONSECRATION IS A CONDITION FOR RECEIVING REVELATION FROM GOD. "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one." Although it is confessedly difficult to determine precisely what the Urim and the Thummim were, it is obvious that it was God's ancient method for revealing his will to Israel. In emergencies, whether personal or national, it was the practice to ask counsel of God by means of the Urim and Thummim. It is a necessity that there should be internal fitness in order to receive and transmit the will of God. Light can only circulate through a fitting medium. Music can only be transmitted by a specific conductor. As it is in the natural world, so in the spiritual, only the pure in heart can see God. His will is revealed only to the dutiful. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." On this account, God's priests have often been God's prophets; *e.g.* Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Samuel, and John the Baptist. Moses too belonged to the tribe of Levi.

III. PRIESTLY CONSECRATION INCLUDES SERVICE GODWARD AND MANWARD. (Ver. 10.) Every true priest is a mediator between God and men. He receives of God and imparts to men; he receives from men and presents unto God. The only perfect Mediator is the "Son of the Highest;" but, in a humbler sphere, earthly priests are also mediators. They receive God's Law from the fountain of his lips, and they convey it unto their brethren. Every real teacher is a real mediator. He delivers unto others that which he has first received. The priest has also a service to perform *Godward.* He brings human offerings before the Most High—the offerings of gratitude and praise. But men have sinned, and this sad fact must be recognized. They stand in urgent need of Divine mercy. Hence substantial proofs of penitence and confession are required. God has a proper and prescribed method for conveying his mercy. He will be approached in the way of sacrifice, and it is part of the priest's vocation to present "whole burnt sacrifice upon God's altar."

IV. COMPLETE CONSECRATION ENSURES COMPLETE SALVATION. Salvation is many-sided; it is negative and positive. It embraces deliverance from every evil, present and future; it embraces every good that can enrich and ennoble the man. Whi

we care wholly for God's interests, he will most completely care for ours. No external substance will bring us any real advantage unless God's blessing be upon it, ay, pervade it. The Levites were compelled by official duties to be often absent from their families and homesteads, which needed therefore special protection from God. "Bless, Lord, his substance." But more important yet was it for the whole nation that the offerings and intercessions of the priests might find acceptance with God, If anything upon their part should nullify the offices of religion, the effect would be unspeakably disastrous. Therefore, looking along the vista of the future in fervent anticipation, Moses prays, "Accept the work of his hands." It is as if he had said, "Let thy gracious plan for pardoning and saving men completely succeed!" And lastly, he prays for the priest's security against all foes. We may not here confine our thoughts to foreign adversaries. The true and faithful priest will always find enemies in proportion to his fidelity. His foes shall be those of his own household. They will assail his earnestness, suspect his motives, attack his reputation. But God shall undertake his servant's cause. He will, in his own way, so smite his foes, that they shall be completely silenced; "they shall not rise again."—D.

Ver. 12.—*God's fatherly interest in Benjamin.* The circumstance of Benjamin's birth has a melancholy interest. His birth was the occasion of Rachel's death. If we may argue back from the qualities of Rachel's children to the qualities of Rachel, she must have been a woman deserving high esteem. Rare excellences embellish the characters of her sons. To Joseph and to Benjamin were assigned territory in the very heart of Canaan. In the benediction of Moses we have—

I. AN ENDEARING NAME. A name given by God is pregnant with meaning. It is no empty compliment. If God regarded Benjamin as his "beloved," there was sufficient ground and reason for it. This tribe may not have been conspicuous for robust energy or for martial enterprise, but it was distinguished for its genuine piety and its devout attachment to the cause of God. If we cannot all be great, we can all be good. To be consistently and thoroughly pious is within the reach of all. Each of us can be knighted and ennobled with this title, "The beloved of the Lord." We have indicated here—

II. THE BEST SOCIETY. "He shall dwell in safety by him." This promise, in all likelihood, alludes to the position of Benjamin's inheritance. His portion in Canaan included the hill of Moriah, on which, in later days, the temple was erected. This was no insignificant honour—no mean token of Jehovah's favour. The successive generations of Benjamin would dwell in closest vicinity to the oracle of God, and would enjoy easy access to the public ordinances of worship. So long as man needs the aid and inspiration of external ordinances, so long will this vicinity to the temple be a real advantage. In our folly we may despise the privilege, but this foolish contempt no way derogates from its value. They who most prize the house of God most prize God himself. We have also—

III. COMPLETE PROTECTION PROMISED. "The Lord shall cover him all the day long." God was pleased, in a very remarkable manner, to disclose himself to the Hebrews by metaphors easily interpreted. In a climate where men suffered most from a scorching sun, a covert from the burning heat was most appreciated. Therefore God was to them just what they needed, "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The fervent heat was tempered with a cloud. From every evil thing God covers his saints —from the heat of trial, sorrow, care, excessive prosperity. He never fails as does a passing cloud. He covers his chosen "all the day long." We have promised likewise—

IV. UNERRING GUIDANCE. "He shall dwell between his shoulders." As the temple of God was to rest on Moriah, and the visible Shechinah be enshrined within, this would properly seem as a crown of glory on the head of Benjamin; or, what the head is to the human body, *that* God would be to this favoured tribe. The head informs, enlightens, directs the whole body; so, saith God, "I will guide thee with my eye." That man has reached the perfection of being when Christ dwells in him, as "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification," life. To be most godly is to be most manly.—D.

Vers. 13—17.—*Royal donations on Joseph.* It is instructive to observe with what loving ardour Moses speaks of Joseph. No sooner does he mention this name than his tongue, the ready servant of his heart, gives vent to a flood of eloquence. No good is too great to predict for Joseph. No benediction is too costly for him. The finest imagery that his fancy can invent is employed to foreshadow his greatness. The imagination of the dying saint fondly revels in the prospect of Joseph's prosperity and power. Touching Joseph, we have mentioned—

I. His faithful improvement of trial. The description of Rachel's firstborn is truly pathetic. He is pictured to us as he "that was separated from his brethren." In a sense he had always been separate. In youth, his temper and tastes and predilections were all superior to theirs. They were coarse, vulgar, cruel; he was refined, thoughtful, gentle—cast in a nobler mould. But the reference made by Moses to separation is, doubtless, to that violent and murderous separation, when by his brothers' hands he was sold as a bond-slave and carried into Egypt. How nobly he had borne that treatment is a matter of historic fact. How Joseph's behaviour in captivity had led to the development of Israel's fortunes could never be erased from Jewish memory. His affectionate treatment of his aged father, and his generous forgiveness of his brethren, marked him as "separate" from the common herd of men. This is a kind of separateness we may aspire to emulate. Here is a pattern man.

II. His foreseen prosperity. This forecast of prolific prosperity was founded on a double basis, viz. on the native resources of the district which was to be his favoured portion; and on the abiding benediction of Jehovah. Yet these two sources of prosperity were in reality one—one source flowing through many channels. His hills should laugh in fertility and gladness beneath the sunny smile of God. The vale of Shechem has always enjoyed a wide celebrity for its beauty and fruitfulness. Samaria was the paradise of Canaan. Its hills were covered with olives and vines and figs. Its valleys waved with golden corn. One natural source of abundance is its perennial fountains and flowing streams—the "deep that coucheth beneath." Here it was that Jacob made his first purchase of land, and here he digged the well which to this hour bears his name. To this verdant district Jacob's sons led their flocks when drought and barrenness covered the land. And in this district occurred the shameful deed when Joseph was imprisoned in the pit and then sold to Ishmaelites. By a generous retribution of God's sagacious providence, Joseph obtained his permanent portion in this very territory, and with all the energy of his soul Moses prayed, "Blessed of the Lord be his land."

III. His future power. A double portion of property and power fell to Joseph. By the dying bequest of his father Jacob, each of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, was to rank in the first degree, adopted by Jacob in the place and rank of his own. Yet the two sons were destined not to grow in the same proportion of power. While there were to be the "thousands of Manasseh," there were to be the "ten thousands of Ephraim." God "divideth to every one severally as he will." The glory of these young men was to be "their strength," and this would be fostered by the fatness of their land. Yet their strength was not pictured under the image of a lion or an eagle. It was to be rather the quiet, patient strength of the ox—the strength which endures, as did Joseph's in the land of Egypt. Horns are the bullock's natural weapons of defence, and these are significant emblems of power. But Joseph's horns were to be like those of the unicorn. His was to be royal authority and strength. Evidently Moses foresaw the day when the sovereignty of the Hebrews would be divided, and when Joseph should wield a sceptre in Israel. The royal emblazonry of Britain thus corresponds, in part, with the heraldry of ancient Samaria. "With the horns of unicorns" he was destined "to push the people together to the ends of the earth." His "horn God exalted unto honour." To this hour, a remnant of Joseph's power remains in Samaria. *There* still in the synagogue is enshrined the ancient Law, and *there* yet is observed the Paschal feast.—D.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Combined work and worship.* Some tie of affinity bound these two tribes in peculiar intimacy. We cannot find this cementing link in the fact that their lands lay in close contiguity; this fact was not unique. Other tribes bordered on their coasts, with whom no such intimate alliance prevailed. Neither were their secular

occupations alike. It was an affinity springing out of congenial character. The same tastes and purposes and aims were dominant in both. To their honour, it is handed down to distant posterity that they were zealous for the worship of God.

I. SECULAR PURSUITS SHOULD BE FOLLOWED IN A SPIRIT OF GLADNESS. The man of God leaves it as a charge upon these tribes to rejoice in their several avocations. The earthly callings of Zebulun and Issachar seem to have been quite distinct the one from the other. Zebulun's territory abutted on the sea-coast, and enjoyed the advantage of a small harbour under shelter of Mount Carmel. Hence the people had access to the sea; they had a fishery; they possessed opportunities for commerce. Though they had no maritime tastes (like the Phœnicians), yet the ships of other nations would visit their coast, and the merchandise of distant lands would find their way thither. "They shall suck of the abundance of the seas." Issachar was an agricultural tribe. The people dwelt in tents, and their possessions consisted in flocks and herds. But whatever their occupation, it ought to be an occasion for joy. It gave scope to the pleasant exercise of their powers. It furnished them with the means of family subsistence. It was a fine field for the discipline of their virtues, for the exercise of brotherly help and mutual kindness. It enabled them to trace in their daily walk the footsteps of Jehovah, and provided material for daily praise. Whatever our work be, it should be fulfilled with gladness. Happy is the man who sings at his work.

II. SECULAR PURSUITS ARE NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH DIVINE WORSHIP. "They shall call the people unto the mountain." Although their abodes were far away among the northern hills, they did not hold themselves free to abstain from public ordinances of worship. Yea, not only did they stir themselves up to this delightful duty, but they summoned the surrounding tribes also to keep the sacred festivals. In the absence of modern reminders of the seasons—in the absence of almanacks and clocks—these twin tribes noted the revolutions of sun and moon, became the timekeepers of the nation, and called the tribes to prayer and sacrifice. Probably their secular duties as fishermen and as shepherds furnished the opportunities for observing the phases of the moon. New moon or full was the signal in the heavens for the recurrence of the special festivals; *then* the silver trumpets would ring out the summons from hill to hill, and from hamlet to hamlet. If there be the disposition to worship God, facilities will be found or *made*.

III. SECULAR PURSUITS FURNISH THE MEANS FOR ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE. "They shall offer sacrifices of righteousness." Secular pursuits will never satisfy all the yearnings of the human heart. There is a hunger within which no material banquet can relieve. There is a thirst of soul which can be slaked only by the water of eternal life. To gratify all the cravings of the mind we must come to God. But he will be approached by means of sacrifice. This furnishes a test of our sincerity. This awakens a sense of our deepest need. This provides a channel for our highest joy. Whatever form our sacrifices may take—whether corn, or oil, or fruit—whether lambs or doves—whether contrition, praise, or gratitude—it must be a sacrifice of righteousness, or it cannot be accepted. As the act of devout obedience to Divine command, or as the outgoing of desire after holiness, or as the expression of righteous obligation, it will find acceptance on God's altar.

IV. SECULAR SUCCESS IS PROMOTED BY GENEROUS CONSECRATION OF SUBSTANCE TO GOD. "Them that honour me I will honour." God is the most generous of Masters, but he hates empty pretensions of loyalty. He will not accept words where deeds are possible. The honour is conferred, not on the God who receives, but on the man whose gift finds acceptance. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," is a lesson not easily learnt—an experience not common enough. This is not a firstfruit, but one of the latest fruits of Christian living. Yet without the favouring smile of Jehovah no secular pursuit can succeed. Men often sow a bushel and reap a peck. But when God is on our side, our seed multiplies a hundredfold: "a little one becomes a thousand;" "godliness is profitable unto all things." The only real insurance for successful enterprise is the benediction of God. The treasures remain in the land (ver. 19) until God teaches us how to draw them forth. The eye of faith is clearer-sighted than the eye of expediency.—D.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Gad's valour and chivalry commended.* Gad had been prematurely

hasty in seeking an allotment in Canaan. When the heads of this tribe perceived how suitable were the hills of Gilead for pasturing their extensive flocks, they clamoured at once for this possession, ere yet an inch of land had been gained on the west of Jordan. Moses yielded to their request, on condition only that they should go over Jordan armed with their brethren, and should fight in the front of battle. This they nobly did, and returned to their families and flocks only when Joshua released them from further service. We see—

I. A HASTY CHOICE OVERRULED FOR GOOD. There can be little doubt that selfishness was the originating motive for this choice. The well-being of other tribes was not, for the time, weighed. Yet it was a choice beset with perils. The district coveted lay on the borders of the wilderness, and was exposed to raid and depredation from foes. It is wiser always to look heavenward and to say, "Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us." Yet, though selfishness was for the hour dominant, other and better qualities dwelt in the tribe. As often happens, God allowed their choice, and then led them through severe discipline to enable them to enjoy it.

II. THEIR CHOICE WAS PURCHASED BY HARD AND PERILOUS WARFARE. "He came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel." To acquire this territory, Moses stated at once the simple condition, viz. that they should fight in the van of Israel's battalions. This condition they accepted, and bravely they acquitted themselves. The event taught them valuable lessons. It taught them that they were an integral part of a great commonwealth, and could not separate themselves, without injury, from it. It taught them to look, not only on their own welfare, but also to consult for the welfare of others. It taught them that rest and quiet possession were more valued after a hard-fought campaign than before.

III. THEIR CHIVALROUS CONDUCT DEVELOPED THEIR LATENT QUALITIES OF MARTIAL PROWESS. The greatest advantage resulting from their military encounters was the personal strength and heroism which were developed in themselves. They were better, braver, nobler men afterwards than ever before. Now, and not till now, they were qualified to protect their own hills and flocks. This advantage they had not foreseen, yet it was the best and most enduring. Now the men of Gad "dwelt like a lion" in fearless possession; now they were able, when assailed, "to tear the arm" of a foe, "with the crown of the head." This heroic quality reappeared, in brighter form, in the person of Elijah, and probably also in the forerunner of our Lord.

IV. THIS FEARLESS COURAGE OBTAINS A PRAYER FOR STEADY ENLARGEMENT. "Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad." It was a boon to the whole of Israel to have such a martial tribe occupying an outpost in the land. To enlarge and strengthen Gad was to strengthen their military defence, was to increase their own safety, was to perpetuate their own peace. So long as the lion-hearted tribe of Gad had a numerous generation, no foe could invade Israel from that side. The very reputation of Gad eastward kept the nations in salutary awe. The welfare of Gad was the welfare of all.—D.

Ver. 22.—*The blessing of strength.* From the tribe of Dan sprang Samson, whom we may regard as a typical child of Dan. In all probability the whole tribe was noted for strong men, and their pride was to cultivate and increase muscular strength. We have here promised—

I. YOUTHFUL STRENGTH. This is confessedly not the highest form of blessing; yet, in some conditions of civic society, it is essential to the preservation of independence, property, and life. The picture is that of a young lion.

II. DESTRUCTIVE STRENGTH. This has its place in God's kingdom. The destructive strength of Samson was an inestimable boon, when the Philistines threatened to overwhelm the land. We cannot otherwise regard the prodigious strength of Samson but as God's scourge for the chastisement of gross idolaters. Yet, what prodigies of good might such strength accomplish if directed into beneficent channels!

III. STRENGTH UNDER THE DIRECTION AND CONTROL OF SAGACITY. "He shall leap from Bashan." Strength is ofttimes wasted from want of prudence. The strength of Dan was reserved for suitable occasions. It displayed itself in forms surprising and unexpected. The close vicinity of the Philistines to one part of Dan's allotment necessitated this training of muscular strength. It is instructive to note what latent energies there reside in man, which come into view only when great occasions require.—D.

Ver. 23.—*Naphtali's goodly choice.* Naphtali's position was in the north of Canaan, and had its southern border adjacent to the sea of Galilee. A large proportion of our Lord's ministrations were bestowed on the inhabitants within this district. Obviously the heads of this tribe in Moses' day aspired after the best possessions.

I. WE OBSERVE HERE THE BEST HUMAN AMBITION. "Satisfied with favour." It is scarcely conjecture that imports into Moses' words the meaning, "the favour of God;" for in the next clause he mentions distinctly the "blessing of the Lord." No other favour can satisfy save the "favour of Jehovah." This is all-sufficient—an ocean, in which the soul of man can bathe itself with amplest delight. This phrase, "the favour, or grace, of God," includes everything which God can supply for human need. In it is embraced light, pardon, Divine friendship, purity, peace, strength, liberty, rest. A comprehensive prayer is *this*, "Oh, satisfy me early with thy mercy!"

II. WE NOTE THE BEST AMBITION SATISFIED. "Full with the blessing of the Lord." We often desire inferior good, and desire in vain. The love of God is too deep and wise to indulge our foolish requests. But when we ask for highest good, and desire it earnestly, we never fail to obtain. What man ever sued for grace and was sent empty away? No; God's chief complaint is that we come too seldom, and ask too little at his hands. Still he says to us, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." The possession and wise use of God's grace enlarges our capacity to receive. It is a cure for all murmuring and discontent.

III. WE SEE HOW, WITH THE HIGHEST BLESSING, GOD GIVES THE LOWER UNASKED. Naphtali desired to be satisfied with the Divine favour; and a voice was commissioned to say, "Possess thou the sea and the south." It is a recognized method of God's procedure that when men ask for spiritual riches, God grants both spiritual and temporal good. In Gibeah, God appeared to Solomon, and proposed to him, "Ask what I shall give thee;" and when Solomon craved to possess the gift of wisdom, his generous God assured him that not only should wisdom be his, but things he had not asked—even unprecedented riches and honour. To the same effect, our Lord affirmed, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other (needed) things shall be added unto you." He is "able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."—D.

Vers. 24, 25.—*The comprehensive benediction of Asher.* No one can read this series of poetical benedictions without cherishing the conviction that Moses "spake as moved by the Holy Ghost." The peculiar fitness of his aspirations for the future exigencies of the tribes, and his clear foresight of their distant fortunes, indicate unmistakably that a supernatural light suffused his understanding. This benediction of the dying prophet foretokens—

I. NUMERICAL INCREASE. By a natural law of God's providence, rapid increase of the people is a fruit of material prosperity. When scarcity of food is a permanent condition, infanticide prevails, or children perish for lack of nutritious food. This increase of children was, in former times, a distinct token of God's favour, and a frequent subject of promise. As the numbers of Israel increased, so would their strength to resist aggression. It was when Israel's numbers were diminished by intestine wars, that the Eastern potentates gained decisive triumphs. Occupying, as Asher did, the extreme north-west of Canaan, numerical increase was a source of defensive strength. To the Christian parent—to the Church, children are a blessing. "Happy they who have their quiver full" of these Divine arrows.

II. THERE IS SET FORTH SOCIAL REPUTATION AND GOOD WILL. "Let him be acceptable to his brethren." So long as the tribal relationship was maintained in strength, there was a constant danger of mutual jealousies and animosities. Occasionally this evil passion took fire and broke into open flame. From tribal suspicion and dislike Asher would be free. It is an honour and a joy to live in the esteem and good will of brethren. The outward reach of influence is enlarged. Life is felt to have nobler interests. The better part of human nature finds development.

III. THERE IS FORESHADOWED AGRICULTURAL PROSPERITY. Upon the northern hills of Palestine the olive tree flourishes, and authorities affirm that no agricultural produce is so abundant and so remunerative as that of the olive. It is hardy, will flourish in rocky soil, and attains venerable age. Its fruit is valuable, is utilized for domestic

purposes, and has always been a staple commodity of commerce. So prolific were the olives of Asher to become, that the people should have, not only the head, but the feet also, in the abundant oil; or the language may be designed as a bold figure, to indicate that so full should be the oil-vats at the base of every olive-clothed hill, that the very land should seem to be foot-deep in golden oil.

IV. THERE IS PREDICTED IMPREGNABLE DEFENCE. The poetical imagery here may be better translated, "Thy bars shall be iron and brass." It may be that these metals were found in veins among the hills, or rather iron and copper. It may that the gates of their cities were, in some cases, fashioned with these metals. Doors and gates of iron are still to be seen in the district of Bashan. But it is better to treat the language as elegant imagery, to indicate the matchless strength of Asher's fortresses. Over all her internal wealth there shall be a sure defence. The Chaldee paraphase reads, "Thou shalt be strong and bright, like iron and brass."

V. THERE IS PLEDGED INTERNAL STRENGTH PROPORTIONED TO NEED. "As thy days, thy strength." A precious promise this of universal application. Our days are under Divine inspection; our circumstances are under Divine control. It is better for the man every way that his strength should be increased than that the trial should be abated. The outcome is that the man emerges stronger, nobler, more highly developed. The supply is always adjusted to the particular need. God is the model of frugal economy. In his administration there is no waste. But there would be waste if the supply of strength daily given were in excess of the requirement. This would be a blot upon his wisdom. What should we say of the water company that sent daily into our houses ten times the quantity of water that is required? Or, what advantage would it be to us if the supply of light from the sun daily were a hundredfold in excess of this world's need? Our God is perfect wisdom, as well as infinite love. Strength shall be supplied, not in superabundant waste, but in exact proportion to our need. "As our days, our strength." The infant would be crushed with the strength of the full-grown man.—D.

Vers. 26—29.—*God, the crown of Israel's glory.* As soon as Moses touches upon this theme, language seems too poor to express the greatness of his thought—too cold to convey the glowing ardour of his love. Here all metaphors fail; all comparisons are vain. God is above all imagery, or metaphor, or illustration. As there is none like him, so nothing can fitly express his deeds towards his chosen. His conduct is, like himself, ineffable. As heaven is loftier than earth, so do God's thoughts and ways transcend human conception.

I. OBSERVE ISRAEL'S SOURCE OF GREATNESS. Without question, Israel's source of greatness is *God.* Inconceivable as it is to mortal minds, the eternal Sovereign of the universe has come into intimate alliance with his chosen people. He is not simply God—the abstract Deity—he is the "God of Jeshurun." His eternity is brought into human use—is available for human needs. In the eternal and unchangeable God we may dwell. He is our Refuge, our Dwelling-place, our Sanctuary. All the resources of his omnipotence are for us: beneath us "are the everlasting arms." But hath God arms? Hath he human members and organs? "He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" He that fashioned our arms and hands, hath he no instruments with which to support our sinking frame? Yea, "in him we live."

All the activities of his providential government are *for us.* "He rideth upon the heavens," like a king in his chariot, for our help. This is true, both for Israel collectively, and for every individual believer. In every decree that issues from his throne, he has *us* in view. All the machinery of his extended providence works with one design, viz. our advantage. He thinks, and plans, and executes, and overturns for one main end—the final redemption of his people. God and we are one.

II. ISRAEL'S SAFETY. "Thou shalt dwell in safety alone." From the foregoing premiss, this is a sound and certain conclusion. "If God be for us," who can assail us successfully? What can prevail against omnipotence? What can penetrate the thick bosses of Jehovah's shield? Fear in such a case is unreasonable disloyalty. This globe must be shivered into a thousand atoms, all the forces in God's universe must be rendered powerless and ineffective, the sceptre of Jehovah must be broken, before any danger can touch the elect of God. Safe, beyond the spectre of a fear, are those whom God defends.

III. ISRAEL'S ABUNDANCE. "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine." Jacob is represented as the fount or source of many people, all of whom shall find an abode in the land of corn and wine. Every want shall be met. In this "mountain, shall the Lord of hosts prepare a feast of fat things." In the paradise of God there flourishes on both sides of the stream, the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month. Here is a perennial supply and satisfying variety. And though this is expressed by material images, it sets forth substantial and eternal truth—the very truth of God. In the kingdom of God there is provided whatever can please the eye, delight the ear, regale the appetite, relieve a need, gratify a sense. For perpetually does the voice of the King ring out a hearty welcome, "Eat, O friends; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

IV. ISRAEL'S TRIUMPH. God's triumph is Israel's triumph also. God will not dissociate himself from his people. "His covenant is an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Yea, God's conquests are not separate and distinct from ours. He conquers through us—yea, by means of us. If we belong to the true Israel, God's foes are our foes, God's weapons are our weapons, God's interests are our interests. Our excellent Sword in this warfare is God; he himself is "the Shield of our help." The contest may be protracted, severe, wavering; success may seem to hang in suspense; but beyond the smoke and dust and uncertainty of battle, faith clearly sees the final triumph, and hears the immortal pean: "Thou shalt tread upon their high places."

V. ISRAEL'S TRANSCENDENT HAPPINESS. "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee?" Surely, their happiness is complete, and impossible of enlargement, who repose themselves in the very heart of God, and dwell perpetually in his love! The utmost capacity of human speech is impotent to express their deep and satisfying joy. It is a thing to be experienced, not expressed. Such joy hath no vocabulary, no tongue. It is "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." What the noonday sun is to a glowworm's spark, so is the joy of the righteous compared with the joys of earth. God's own joy is conveyed to godly hearts.—D

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DEATH, BURIAL, AND ENCOMIUM OF MOSES.

After blessing the people, Moses, in obedience to the Divine command, ascended Mount Nebo, the highest peak of the Pisgah range, and thence surveyed the whole land of Canaan, from north to south, and from east to west, as well as the district on the east of the Jordan, not included in Canaan proper.

Ver. 1.—**Unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah**; rather, *unto Mount Nebo, the summit of Pisgah.* **Gilead unto Dan.** Not Dan Laish, near the central source of the Jordan, which was not in Gilead, but another Dan in Northern Perea, the site of which has not yet been discovered (cf. Gen. xiv. 14).

Vers. 2—4.—**Unto the utmost sea**; rather, *the hinder sea*, viz. the Mediterranean (cf. ch. xi. 24). **The south**; the Negeb, the pasture-land in the south, towards the Arabian desert. **The plain of the valley of Jericho**; the extensive plain through which the Jordan flows, extending from Jericho to Zoar, at the south end of the Dead Sea. This wide prospect could not be surveyed by any ordinary power of vision; so that Moses must for the occasion have had his power of vision miraculously increased. There is no ground for supposing that he saw the scene in an ecstatic vision, and not with his bodily eyes.

Ver. 5.—**According to the word of the Lord**; literally, *at the mouth of the Lord.* The rabbins interpret this, "by a kiss of the Lord" ('Baba Bathra,' 17 a); *i.e.* as Maimonides explains it ('More Nevoch,' iii. 51), Moses "died in a moment of holiest joy in the knowledge and love of God." The phrase, however, simply means "by or according to the command of" (cf. Gen. xlv. 21; Exod. xvii. 1; Lev. xxiv. 12; Numb. iii. 16, etc.).

Ver. 6.—The valley in which God is supposed to have buried Moses was probably some depression on the Pisgah range, upon or close by Nebo. The rabbins say that Moses was buried by retiring into a cavern, where he died and where his body remained. It is probable that, like Enoch

and Elijah, he was transferred to the invisible world without seeing corruption. Hence his appearance along with Elijah in bodily form on the Mount of the Transfiguration; and hence also, perhaps, the tradition of the contest for the body of Moses between Michael and Satan (Jude 9). If the body of Moses was actually buried, the concealment of his grave so that no man knew of it may be justly regarded as "the first instance on record of the providential obliteration, so remarkably exemplified afterwards in the gospel history, of the 'holy places' of Palestine; the providential safeguard against their elevation to a sanctity which might endanger the real holiness of the history and religion which they served to commemorate" (Stanley). The reverence which the Jews paid to graves shows that there was no small danger of their coming under a superstitious regard to that of Moses had it been known.

Ver. 7.—Though Moses had reached the age of a hundred and twenty years, his eye had not become dim, nor were the juices of his body dried. **Natural force.** The word so rendered (לֵחָה) occurs only here; but it is doubtless the subst. connected with the adj. לַח moist, fresh (cf. Gen. xxx. 37; Numb. vi. 3), and properly means moisture, freshness. It is used here of the natural juices of the body.

Ver. 8.—The people mourned for Moses thirty days, as they did for Aaron (Numb. xx. 29).

Ver. 10.—(Cf. Exod. xxxiii. 11.) **Whom the Lord knew.** "For the Lord was revealed to him face to face" (Onkelos). The knowledge here referred to was not merely that cognizance which God as the Omniscient has of all men, but that special knowledge by which men, being known of God, are made to know him (cf. 1 Cor. viii. 3). The statement in this verse could only have been inserted some time after the death of Moses, and after the people had had manifestations of God's presence with them, both by communications from him through the prophets and by the successes which he had given them over their enemies. But it is not necessary to suppose that a long period during which a lengthened succession of prophets had arisen had elapsed. "Moses was the founder and mediator of the old covenant. As long as this covenant was to last, no prophet could arise in Israel like unto Moses. There is but One who is worthy of greater honour than Moses, namely, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, who is placed as a Son over all the house of God, in which Moses was found faithful as a servant (comp. Heb. iii. 2—6 with Numb. xii. 7), Jesus Christ, the Founder and Mediator of the new and everlasting covenant" (Keil).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The last journey.* (For other aspects of the death of Moses, see Homily on ch. xxxii. 48—52.) We have come at last to the closing scene. It is evidently recorded by other hands; for "Dan" (ver. 2) did not exist by that name till a much later period (see Judg. xviii. 1, 27—29). Vers. 10—12 indicate, moreover, a period later still; very possibly, it may have been as far on as the time of Ezra when those verses were added. And whoever will make use of the formula,—"early authorship, late editorship," as applicable to the Book of Deuteronomy, will have in his hands a key which will enable him to unlock many of the intricacies with which unbelieving writers seek to worry us. In all probability there was an ample supply of men in the later schools of the prophets who would be quite equal to editorial work; and most assuredly, Ezra would not be lacking in fitness for such service. It is altogether gratuitous and unnecessary to attempt to lower the value of the book in the eyes of others on account of the manifest touches of a later age. The revision of an ancient book, freeing it from archaisms, and, as we should say, "posting it up to date," would increase, not diminish its value.

By whomsoever written, this closing chapter is a fitting appendix to the words of the lawgiver himself. For homiletic use it is exceedingly suggestive.

I. MOSES HAS TO TAKE A REMARKABLE JOURNEY. (Vers. 1, 5.) He has to go up and die. In one sense this is true of us all. We are all on a pilgrimage, at the close of which, on its earthly side, there must be the act of dying. But in two respects there is a notable element in the journey of the aged lawgiver: in one of these it was unique. 1. His act of dying was, as much as his acts in life, one of conscious and intentional obedience to the will of God. He knew that he held his life absolutely at the disposal of another, and he would not, if he could, have prolonged it beyond its appointed time.

In this respect believers now are in full sympathy and accord with him. For them to live is Christ. Their supreme desire is that Christ may be magnified in their body, whether by life or by death. They desire to honour their Saviour in their dying as well as in their living work. "Whether" they "live" they "live unto the Lord; and whether" they "die" they "die unto the Lord; whether" they "live therefore or die," they "are the Lord's." 2. Moses, however, takes a journey, knowing just *when* and *where* he should die. It is not easy for us to enter into his feelings then. The time and place of our death are entirely unknown to us. How could we bear it if it were otherwise? Or if we could, how could our fondest ones on earth? We are often glad to throw ourselves anew on God, in thankfulness at the uncertainty which shrouds the future. We cheerfully say—

"Lord, it belongs not to our care
Whether we die or live."

But what a pall would seem to be thrown over the home, if it were disclosed when we should be called away! The holier and more beautiful the life, the more painful would the thought of parting with it be.

II. ERE HE DEPARTS, VISIONS OF GLORY ARE VOUCHSAFED. (Ver. 2.) "The Lord showed him all the land." The vision was in part physical, but that which faith beheld in the glorious future which was assured to the people of God, was by far the most precious part of the sight—incomparably so. Thus the Lord was merciful to Moses, in that, though his joy in death was checked by the sense of his own defect and failures, he would, on the other hand, be borne up by the thought that *God never had failed, and never would.* The future, from which he was cut off, would assuredly develop gloriously under the care and grace of Israel's covenant God. Even so, when God's heroes sink in death, they know that, though they die, God's Church will live on, and that the promised inheritance will yet be theirs. And many, many a believer has had a vision, in death, akin to that of Stephen, and, though appalled at his own shortcomings, has been borne up by a sight of Jesus, as "mighty to save," and as the Captain of salvation, who will bring the Church onward to the fulness of redemption.

III. WHEN THESE DEATH-SCENES ARE WITNESSED THE SOUL WILL BE ABSOLUTELY ALONE WITH GOD. Moses lay himself down to die, without any attendant by his side. However many there might have been around, between himself and God no one could possibly come. He must die alone; so must we. Alone must we pass through "death's iron gate," save as we can use the words in Ps. xxiii. 4. There is but One whose real presence can comfort us then.

IV. THE BODIES OF GOD'S SAINTS ARE NOT OVERLOOKED BY HIM. (Ver. 6.) "The Lord buried him," says the editor, "and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Some have assigned it as a reason for the concealment of the body of Moses, "that his tomb might not become the occasion of idolatry or superstition." Others, rejecting this as inconsistent with the known fact that in the eye of the Hebrews every dead body was unclean, have sought for a reason by comparing Jude 9 with Matt. xvii. They deem it not improbable that there might be some change in the body of Moses in death, which would account for his appearing in the Transfiguration scene with another, who was taken up to heaven without dying, and also for the mysterious conflict over the body, of which Jude informs us. This may have been, but we can go no further than the text takes us by the hand. It suffices to know that God cared for Moses' body as well as for him. The body of believers is now the temple of the Holy Ghost. Christ is "the Saviour of the body." The Spirit who dwells in us will quicken the mortal body at the resurrection.

V. THE WORK WHICH MOSES HAS DONE IS ONE WHICH WILL FIND NO PARALLEL TO IT. (Ver. 10.) (See next Homily.) Every worker for God has his own distinctive work, which only he can do.

VI. GOD HAS ALREADY RAISED UP ONE TO CARRY ON THE WORK OF MOSES, SO THAT IT WILL NOT FALL TO PIECES WHEN HE DIES. (Ver. 9.) Joshua is ready. So that there are no chasms in the service.

VII. THE INCOMPLETENESS OF MOSES' WORK IS NOT ONLY A HISTORICAL BUT A SYMBOLIC FACT. It is not a lawgiver alone who can lead the Church on to Canaan, but

a Joshua—Jesus, a Saviour. "The Law was given by Moses, but [the] grace and [the] truth came by Jesus Christ." Moses had propounded truth in his legislative precept and teachings. He had taught God's grace in the institutions of sacrifice, and in the ordinances of worship, prayer, and praise. But *the* truth he disclosed, *the* grace he declared, were brought in by another, long ages after, for whose work he was intended to prepare the way. "The Law was a child-guide until Christ." Happy are they whose life-work is in harmony with the plan of him who seeth the end from the beginning! Happy they, whether in more prominent or more obscure positions, who are in their Lord's own appointed way workers together with him!

Vers. 10—12.—*The distinctive greatness of Moses.* These closing verses do not touch upon the character of Moses, but upon his unique position as a prophet. "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses," etc. (ver. 10). This does not exactly ascribe inferiority, but rather dissimilarity to all who had followed, up to the date of this editorial postscript. "Nothing can have two beginnings;" and in this lies the one and sufficient reason why Moses could not be followed in the after ages by any one who took a like position with his own. Purposely avoiding any outline of the character of Moses, we propose to enumerate a few of those features in which the work of Moses was altogether unique, and ever must so remain.

I. MOSES WAS THE FIRST TO DISCLOSE THE GLORIOUS NATURE OF GOD AND HIS GRACIOUS RELATIONSHIPS TO OUR RACE, AS THE CORNER-STONE OF A GREAT COMMONWEALTH.

II. HE WAS THE FIRST TO PROCLAIM, BY HIS SACRIFICIAL INSTITUTES AND TEACHINGS, THE ONE PRINCIPLE THAT "WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD IS NO REMISSION." Sacrifice was adopted in other nations as a human expedient for appeasing Divine wrath; Moses declares it to be a Divine appointment for the acknowledgment of human sin and of the Divine holiness.

III. HE WAS THE FIRST TO PROCLAIM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES AND THE TRUE BASIS OF THE NOBLEST HUMAN ETHICS: "BE YE HOLY: FOR I AM HOLY."

IV. HE WAS THE FIRST TO REQUIRE OF A PEOPLE LOVE TO GOD AS THE SPRING OF ALL OBEDIENCE, AND TO ASSIGN AS THE REASON FOR THEIR LOVE THE CARE OF GOD TO THEM. (Ch. v. 6; vi. 5.)

V. HE WAS THE FIRST, YEA, THE ONLY ONE IN ALL HISTORY, TO DEMAND OF A TYRANT THE LIBERATION OF AN OPPRESSED PEOPLE, AND TO FORM THEM INTO A NEW COMMONWEALTH, WITH THE AVOWED AIM AND PURPOSE OF PLANTING IN THE WORLD A NEW RELIGIOUS FAITH AND LIFE. (Ch vii. 1—11; ix. 1—6.)

VI. HE WAS THE FIRST WHO MADE PROVISION FOR THE EDUCATION OF A WHOLE PEOPLE IN THE THINGS OF GOD; WITH VIRTUE AND PIETY FOR ITS LESSONS, AND THE HOME FOR ITS TRAINING-SCHOOL. (Ch. xxxi. 12, 13; vi. 1—9; x. 12—22; xi. 18—21.)

VII. HE WAS THE FIRST WHO AIMED AT EDUCATING A PEOPLE TO SELF-GOVERNMENT. They were to choose their own officers, judges, and magistrates, according to principles of righteousness. And (as we have shown *in loc.*) even the government of Jehovah was not forced upon them. Their consent was asked again and again; and their solemn, loud "Amen" was required, confirming the sentence of God as if it were their own. Thus from the first the people were made "workers together with God."

Others might follow on in all these respects, but no one else ever could be like Moses in *starting* all this new national life, thought, and virtue, in organized form. And yet how much more than one like Moses do we need for a world's regeneration and a Church's education! "If there had been a Law given which should have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law." But "what the Law could not do," God has done through our Lord Jesus Christ. Moses can give rules. Only the Lord the Spirit can give life. A Greater than Moses has come, and has created by his power a new commonwealth, whose πολίτευμα is in the heavens. In this "new Jerusalem, which cometh down from God out of heaven," lo! "all things are made new."

Ver. 10.—*"Face to face;" or, the secret of power.* "Whom the Lord knew face to face." Such is the remarkable expression used with regard to Moses. This certainly implies that there was in his case unwonted closeness of fellowship with God. There

are expressions not dissimilar in Num. xii. 7, 8, but yet we must make allowance for the prevalence of the vividness of Eastern imagery, and not press the literalness of the words too closely. In fact, we are guarded against that by the words in Exod. xxxiii. 20.

To what extent Moses saw any manifested form, it is not likely we shall ever in this state of being, be able to tell. It is the duty of thoughtful men to penetrate beneath the archaisms and Orientalisms of the ancient text, and to seize the permanent truth which underlies them. The thought which we here detect as that which is under the surface is this—that Moses had very close communion with God.

Every spirit which yearns after God may hold communion with God. And inasmuch as "every man's life is a plan of God," God may make that fellowship serve any purposes he has for the man to fulfil. By such communion there may be: (1) an inner life of devotion and an outer life of godliness to be nurtured and sustained; or there may be (2) a spur and a pressure applied to high and holy service in one specific direction,—this is the case where men are borne along to the fulfilment of a special mission; or there may be (3) some new truth or clearer light which God wills to impart to and through the soul so communing with him.

Now, there is a specific term for each of these three effects of communion with God. When it simply subserves the life of holiness which all may lead, we call it *religion;* when it is made tributary to a special form of service, we call it *inspiration;* when it is made the means of causing new truth to appear, we call it *revelation.*

The latter has been realized by those few—extremely few—of the human race by whom God has unfolded new truth. The medial one has been experienced by the more numerous souls who have been borne along as by a special outside force to the fulfilment of a great mission. The first-named is the common privilege of all God-fearing souls.

Moses was one of the very few who enjoyed the privilege of "seeing the Unseen One" for all three purposes; and the four following sentences will sum up his life:—

I. By the power of RELIGION he lived the life of the saint.

II. By that of INSPIRATION he discharged the functions of leader, administrator, and recorder.

III. By that of REVELATION he had the visions of the seer.

IV. COMMUNION WITH GOD was the secret of all: "face to face."

To those who understand communion with God, either of the three will be regarded as in the highest degree reasonable, intelligible, and credible. Those who do not know what it is to pour out the soul unto God, may indeed accept all three in a formal manner, but they can go no further. And if such formal believers should chance to be subject to the fierce storms of modern criticism, there is no telling but they may come to deny them all; yea, they may come to think that religion, inspiration, and revelation are swept clean away; and all because they understand nothing of man's highest privilege—*Communion with God!*

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The death and burial of Moses.* We have in this concluding chapter the remarkable account of the death and burial of Moses. He had, as we have seen, blessed the tribes; he had laid his hands on Joshua (ver. 9), and thus ordained him, so to speak, to the leadership; he had given his manuscripts to the priests to be deposited in the ark; and now all that remains for him to do is to take the course God indicated to the mountain-top, see the promised land, and die. It has suggested some noble sermons, to which we would at once refer before proceeding with a few observations suggested by the history.[1]

I. LET US NOTICE THE VIEW OF CANAAN AND OF LIFE FROM THE MOUNTAIN-TOP. It is evident, we think, that Moses went up the mountain without an escort. He was going up to hold high communion with God, as he had done on Sinai. Mountain-tops

[1] Cf. Bersier's 'Sermons,' tom. ii. p. 125, a very fine sermon on 'La Terre Promise;' Ker's 'Sermons,' p. 153, a sermon equally fine on 'The Burial of Moses: its Lessons and Suggestions;' and Hull's 'Sermons,' 3rd series, p. 119, a very suggestive though short discourse on 'The Death of Moses.'

are favourite places for communion with God in the case of busy men like Moses and our Saviour (cf. Luke ix. 28). It was a sublime solitude, filled with the presence of God. Sooner or later, God draws his servants upwards out of the bustle of life to have special communion with him and finish their course with joy.

Moses, moreover, had an undimmed eye at this time, and his natural force was in no wise abated. His outlook was consequently clear. The land of promise lay out before him in all its attractiveness, and he could have wished to cross the Jordan and see it, and the goodly mountain, Lebanon. But the view of it, clear and glorious, is all that in the present life he is to receive.

Now, it is sometimes insinuated that saintly, self-denying men, whose lives according to worldly notions have been incomplete and unsuccessful, are unable to form a proper judgment about their careers, and must regret them. But as a rule, God gives in life's last hours the "undimmed eye," and his servants are enabled to see life's relations clearly, and the land of promise under the sunset glow. They regret their incomplete lives as little as Moses did his from the mountain-top.

Jonathan Edwards notices, in his 'Notes on the Bible,' that "God ordered that Aaron and Moses should go up to the tops of mountains to die, to signify that the death of godly men is but an entrance into a heavenly state;" and Baumgarten has made a similar remark regarding the death of Aaron. "The circumstance that it was expressly fixed that Aaron should die upon a mountain, and so upon a place which through its very nature points to heaven, the seat of Jehovah, throws into the darkness of his death a ray (*Strahl*) of hope."[1] The mountain-tops to these great brothers were indeed the gate of heaven, whence clear views of life and of the hereafter were obtained.

II. THE CIRCUMSTANTIALS OF THE DEATH OF MOSES ARE UNIQUE IN THEIR SIMPLE MAJESTY. It has been said that the presence of Moses on the mount of Transfiguration must have suggested a contrast between his death on the top of Pisgah and our Lord's approaching death amid the mocking crowds at Jerusalem.[2] And what a contrast there is between the two departures! In the one case, the servant of God dies amid the solemn grandeur of the hills, with the sunset glow around him—dies, as some Jewish doctors say, "of the kiss of the Eternal;" in the other case, our Lord dies amid the ribaldry and scoffing of overcrowded Jerusalem. There may have been an element of sadness in Moses dying on the threshold of the promised land; but there was an element of glory in the death-bed among the mountains.

III. GOD IN HIS LOVE NOT ONLY TOOK CHARGE OF THE DYING BUT ALSO OF THE DEAD. He died with God; and God buried him. No wonder the poetess calls it "the grandest funeral that ever passed on earth."

> "And had he not high honour?—
> The hill-side for his pall;
> To lie in state, while angels wait
> With stars for tapers tall;
> And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,
> Over his bier to wave;
> And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
> To lay him in the grave!"

This disposal of the body, as well as of the departed spirit, was surely a significant act on the part of God. He took the matter as completely out of the hands of Israel, as in the Resurrection our Lord's body was taken out of the keeping of the Roman guard. Was it not to indicate that the body as well as the soul is to share in the redeeming care of God, and so far an earnest of the resurrection?

IV. THE PRIVACY OF THE TOMB IS ALSO INSTRUCTIVE. Manifestly all Israel *saw* was the retirement of Moses to the mount; for the rest, his death and his Divine burial, they were dependent upon *faith*—they believed him when he told them he was going away by death, and that they need make no preparations for him, as God would bury him. Had it not been for his prophetic notice, they might have concluded he was

[1] Quoted in Kahle's 'Eschatologie,' note p. 48.
[2] Cf. Godet sur 'L'Evangile de Saint Luc,' ch. ix. 30—32.

translated. It was a matter of *faith entirely*, and no searching could bring it within the range of sight. The privacy of the tomb compelled them to take the funeral and burial on trust. The mourning and weeping for a month arose really from faith; Moses was not—God took him; but they had only Moses' word for it that he was to die with God, and be buried by him.

And God's dealing with our dead must remain still a matter of faith to us, though of fruition unto them. We believe the very dust of the saints is dear to God, but we have to put their remains in a coffin, and deposit them amid common clay. We believe their spirits are in his safe keeping, but they send no messages and make no sign. If sense is the measure of our knowledge, then assuredly we may put Christian hope into the realm of beautiful dreams, of which there is as little sensible evidence as of Moses' tomb. But there are "foundations of faith" as strong as those of sense and sight.[1] In such assurance, we believe that God took charge of Moses, body and soul, and will take as real and as faithful charge of us.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—8.—*The calm sunset of an eventful day.* A man's death is in keeping with a man's life. You cannot have a tropical sunset in an arctic zone. It is vain to live the life of the voluptuous, and desire "the death of the righteous." Enoch's death corresponded with Enoch's life. The spirit of Elijah was characterized by heavenly fire: he ruled men with burning words of truth; it was, therefore, meet that he should depart as a king, "in a chariot of flame." Our Lord's whole life was a crucifixion—sublime self-sacrifice; it was fitting, then, that he should die upon a cross. Moses was transcendently great; in native grandeur he towered like a mountain above his brethren. To be in the society of God was his delight; hence there was a propriety that he should die alone, and upon the mount with God.

I. THE DEATH OF A GOOD MAN HAS MANY GRACIOUS MITIGATIONS. It is not unmingled sorrow. The evil in it is reduced to an infinitesimal point. It is a passing cloud, while the sun in its strength shines on the other side, and often penetrates the thin vapour. It is not the valley of humiliation, but the mount of communion. Visions denied to us before are vouchsafed to us now. God is nearer to us than ever yet; and though earthly friends cannot accompany us along the mystic path, strong angels are at our side to bear us on their wings to the glory-land.

> "The chamber where the good man meets his fate
> Is privileged above the common walks of life;
> Almost upon the very verge of heaven."

II. DEATH OFTEN REVEALS TO US WHAT WE MIGHT HAVE ATTAINED. In the hour of dissolution, Moses saw what he might have enjoyed if he had neglected no opportunity in the past. That faulty past is irrecoverable. We may obtain pardon the most ample and complete; but we cannot regain lost ground. Well for us if, on our death-beds, we have only one fault to bemoan; and yet one fault may entail immeasurable loss. When we stand face to face with death, we shall see the value of life as we have never seen it yet; we shall lament our negligences as we have never lamented them before. What illustrious characters we might have acquired! What conquests of good we might have won! What service for God we might have wrought! Alas! some well-meant purpose still remains immature!

III. DEATH TO A GOOD MAN IS NEEDFUL FOR FULL POSSESSION. The land which God had sworn to give to Abraham and his seed, Moses was permitted to see, and in part to possess. Yet, had he gone over Jordan and endured the fatigues of battle and dwelt in the land, his soul would not have been satisfied therewith. As his powers of soul matured and ripened, he would have desired a better inheritance than Canaan could yield. The old yearning would have come back again, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." The soul yearns for knowledge which earth does not permit. We long to pass the barriers of darkness and tread the plains of everlasting light. Impatiently the spirit beats against the bars of this fleshly cage, and longs to find her proper wings. We must pass through the dark gateway of death ere the soul can enter upon the full "inheritance of the saints."

[1] Cf. Professor Wace's 'The Foundations of Faith,' *passim*.

IV. THE DEATH OF A GOOD MAN IS IN PART THE PROCESS OF NATURAL LAW, IN PART THE PENALTY OF MORAL LAW. So far as man partakes of animal life, so far he is under the law which rules animal natures. In every animal species we discern the stages of birth, growth, maturity, decay, death. But man is endowed with regal powers, which give him, in some measure, dominion over his animal nature. Yet, as a fact, men die before their physical powers have decayed. In earlier ages of human history, human life reached to centuries, while now barely to four score years. Moses was called to die, but "his eye was not dim, nor had his natural force abated." In his case we are authoritatively informed that his premature decease was due to guilt. The moral conduct of men does operate, then, in modifying the laws of nature. There is an unseen law—a law of God—which interlaces the laws and forces of the visible world, just as the system of nerves interlaces and animates the muscles of human flesh. The time and the mode of the believer's death are not the outcome of natural law; they are fixed by the wisdom and the kindness of our personal God.

V. THE LIFELESS BODIES OF THE SAINTS ARE THE ESPECIAL CARE OF GOD. "God buried him in a valley in the land of Moab." There is a secrecy and a mystery about Moses' burial, which it would be profanity to attempt to penetrate. On a later page of Scripture we read that, respecting this body of Moses, Michael had a serious dispute with the devil. We feel bound to connect this mysterious disposal of Moses' lifeless body with the appearance of the same glorified body on the Mount of Transfiguration. But the point which concerns us at present is *this*; God has manifested in various ways his tender regard for the mortal remains of his servants. The elementary particles may dissolve, but the personal organization shall survive. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." Yet, by the conserving power of Deity, it is a body still, though fitted more completely in the future as a vehicle for perception, intercourse, motion, and free activity. We can be well content to entrust every interest we have in life with him "who counts the very hairs of our head."

VI. THE DEATH OF A GOOD MAN IS AN OCCASION FOR EXTENSIVE SORROW. "The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days." Although he had often severely censured them, exposed faithfully their faults, and denounced their vices, they knew they had lost a genuine friend. Never would they look upon their noble leader's face again. His fatherly interest in them could never be replaced. Not till he was gone did they learn what a fount of blessing he had been. Had this coming event been steadily kept before them, they would have treated him with more generous esteem, and would have rendered to his counsels a more loyal respect. Now they lash themselves with just remorse. A good man's departure leaves a great vacancy in the Church and in the social circle. Shall we be thus missed when death hath laid us low?

Yet the days of mourning even for a good man must cease. There are sterner duties in life demanding unceasing care, and our sorrow for the departed ought to qualify us for future service.—D.

Ver. 9.—*Posthumous influence.* Although dead, Moses still ruled. His spirit reappeared in his successor. The principles of Moses had been planted in the nature of Joshua: these had flourished and come to maturity. The memory of Moses was still a mighty power in Israel, and they "did," all through the days of Joshua, "as the Lord commanded Moses." The legislator had moulded and trained the warrior. Moses was promoted to higher honour, because Joshua was better qualified for this new work—the realization of Israel's destiny.

I. NOTE THE HIGH QUALIFICATION OF JOSHUA. He was "full of the spirit of wisdom." This is a rare gift. By nature he had been endowed with strength and fearless courage, so that he had been military lieutenant to Moses all through the desert. He was illustrious also for diligence and fidelity in a long career of service. Among the spies despatched to Canaan, he (in company with Caleb) had been "faithful among the faithless found." Now to courage and unbending loyalty there was added another endowment, and this in amplest measure: he was "filled with the spirit of wisdom." "To him that hath, it shall be given."

II. OBSERVE THE METHOD BY WHICH THIS WISDOM WAS ACQUIRED. "Moses had laid his hands upon him." We need not limit our thoughts to a solitary act, even though it might be a solemn and religious act. We may rather think of the plastic,

formative influence which Moses had exerted over the growing character of this young man. It is astonishing what immense power God has entrusted to our hands for fashioning and embellishing the spiritual nature of men. By a wise employment of spiritual energy, we can direct into right channels the lives of many; by implanting right principles into youth, and by awakening into vigorous activity the latent forces of character, we may elevate a city—we may influence the destinies of the world.

III. MARK THE BENEFICIAL EFFECT. "The children of Israel hearkened unto him." Moses influenced for good his servant Joshua. Joshua influenced for good the nation of Israel. The twelve tribes felt the force of Joshua's character, and yielded to the wisdom which he displayed. They were a different people as the consequence of Joshua's leadership. He touched, through Israel, the fortunes of the world. The high example of Joshua provoked the imitation of the tribes. His combined wisdom and energy led them on to triumph. By virtue of his superlative wisdom he became, in God's hands, a Saviour, and remains, in name and office, the type of the world's Redeemer.—D.

Vers. 10—12.—*Communion with God the secret of real power.* Leaving out of view our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no man who has left so deeply the impress of his character upon the world as the Jewish legislator. By no man have so many and such mighty works been achieved. By no man has such wise legislation been devised for the government of human society. By no man has a great national emancipation been so skilfully and successfully executed. At the time of our Lord, Moses still wielded a mighty sceptre among the Jewish nation; and from that day to this, the influence of Moses has been powerfully felt. The history of the Western world would have been very different from what it is, if Moses had found an early grave among the rushes of the Nile. The secret of it is—he was a "man of God."

I. COMMUNION WITH GOD IS THE HIGHEST ADVANTAGE MAN CAN ENJOY. The friendship of a wise and great man is an inestimable boon. To be in the society of a good man for an hour leaves a purifying and an elevating stimulus behind. We feel better and nobler for the contact. And if the friendly influence of a good man can find its way to intellect and conscience and feeling, how much more can the influence and energy of God! There is no doubt that God can find access to the nature he has made, and can enrich it with all good. The question is whether, considering our great demerit, Will he? This question also is completely answered by himself. He invites us to the closest friendship—welcomes us to fullest intimacy. The words of Jesus Christ suffice to allay all doubt, "If any man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make our abode with him." We may not have visions of God precisely after the form and fashion that Moses had: *these* were adapted to a particular state of human development; but we may have contact with God as close—communion as sweet and tender, as ever Moses enjoyed. "The fellowship of the Holy Ghost" is our special privilege. To us "the Spirit of truth" is given. And "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

II. COMMUNION WITH GOD PRODUCES REAL GREATNESS OF CHARACTER. As a result of the intimacy between God and Moses, we read, there "arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses." Intercourse with God purifies every feeling, elevates every aspiration, energizes every sterling principle, ennobles the whole man. The creative influence of the Almighty renews our innermost life. In the presence of God we become ashamed of our meanness and pride and folly. We see and feel how noble it is possible to become. We confess into his fatherly ear our sin: we resolve to do better in the future. The assurance of his sympathy and aid encourages us. We grow up into his image; we gradually find that this is our proper destiny—"to be conformed to the image of his Son."

III. COMMUNION WITH GOD GIVES US POWER OVER NATURE AND OVER MEN. It is admitted by scientists that the human will is the greatest force known, save the power of God. Now, fellowship with God strengthens that will. To his chosen friends, God conveys new power. On man was originally bestowed complete dominion over nature; and this prerogative is to be restored through the man Christ Jesus. Thus the prodigies wrought by Moses are declared to be signs—symbols of greater things yet

to be achieved. Our Lord has taught us that true faith can overturn the mountains. The possessor of faith is predicted to outstrip even Christ in mighty deeds.—D.

Vers. 1—4.—*Moses' vision.* The end of Moses, viewing the land to which he had so long and so painfully been leading the people, yet not permitted to enter it—dying on the threshold of the accomplishment of all his hopes, and leaving Canaan to be won by his subordinate minister, Joshua,—has often been likened to the common fate of the highest characters in history, "removed from this earthly scene before their work has been appreciated, and when it will be carried on, not by themselves, but by others." (See the development of the thought in Stanley's 'Jewish Church,' vol. i. p. 175, with the application to Lord Bacon by Macaulay.) Often, also, it has been likened to the visions of the "land beyond the flood" received through faith by dying Christians. They, however, see a land into which they are soon to enter; Moses looked on one from which he was debarred. This vision was—

I. A COMPENSATION FOR A GREAT LOSS. Not permitted to enter Canaan, Moses was yet permitted to see it. His eyes were strengthened to take in the vision of its goodliness from north to south, from east to west. How his spirit must have feasted on the widespread prospect! This compensation, we remember, was won from God by prayer (ch. iii. 23–39). We cannot always gain reversal of our punishment of loss; no, though we seek it carefully, with tears (Heb. xii. 17). But, while the losses remain, they may be sanctified to us, and, in answer to prayer, gracious compensations and mitigations granted.

II. A PERFECTING OF HOLY RESIGNATION. Then, no doubt, while looking on that good land, and feeling that he could not enter it, would Moses have his last struggle, and conquer his last lingering wish to have it otherwise than as God willed. We know how sore the struggle in his mind had been, how earnestly he had wrestled with God to have the sentence reversed (ch. iii. 23—29). But it was not to be, and Moses must learn to say, as the Greater than Moses said long after, "Not my will, but thine be done!" (Luke xxii. 42). Who doubts but that the sacrifice was made? that Moses was brought to the point of perfect aquiescence before he died? And that in truth was a greater compensation than the other. The achieving so great a spiritual victory was well worth the surrender of the land. That victory, too, would take the sting of the trial away. The worst part of a trial—nearly all that is bitter in it—is past, when we are brought to the point of embracing the Divine will in it.

III. A TRANSITION TO A HIGHER HOPE. Is it possible to think that Moses, in laying down his life on that mountain summit, believed that he was laying it down for ever? Could he believe, after all the relations of friendship which had subsisted between him and Jehovah, in view of that land of promise from which he was debarred, and at this very moment of his greatest spiritual triumph,—that his death ended all? that there was no hereafter? that there was no compensation beyond? We may rather believe that, in this very perfecting of his soul in its holy acquiescence in the Divine will, there would spring up in his mind a holier hope—a trust and assurance that all he now surrendered would be made up to him in some better form in heaven. What we part with on earth for Christ's sake are our ultimate gains.—J. O.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Moses' death and burial.* Lessons from it—

I. GOD WILL HAVE NO ONE, LIVING OR DEAD, TO STAND BETWEEN HIS CREATURES AND HIMSELF. "He dies apart, and is buried in secret, where his grave can be dishonoured by no pilgrimage, and where no false veneration can rear altars to his memory."

II. GOD WISHES MEN TO SEE SOMETHING MORE LEFT OF HIS SERVANTS THAN THE OUTWARD SHRINE. They had the life and words of Moses, which his shrine might have obscured. It was expedient that even Jesus should go away, that his spiritual presence and the spiritual significance of his work might be fully realized (John xvi. 7).

III. GOD TAKES THE HONOUR OF HIS SERVANTS INTO HIS OWN KEEPING.

IV. GOD WOULD TEACH MEN THAT HE HAS A RELATION TO HIS SERVANTS WHICH EXTENDS BEYOND DEATH. "Can the Maker put so disproportionate an estimate upon his own handiwork, as carefully to store up the casket and throw away the precious jewel which it held?"

V. GOD WOULD TEACH MEN THAT HIS REGARD IS NOT CONFINED TO ANY CHOSEN SOIL. "In a valley in the land of Moab." We have one more lesson from the New Testament—

VI. THAT THE SEEMING FAILURE IN A TRUE LIFE MAY AT LAST HAVE A COMPLETE COMPENSATION. Moses did at last, with Elias, tread the soil of Palestine, and there see "the King in his beauty" (Matt. xvii. 3). (Dr. John Ker.)—J. O.

Vers. 10—12.—*The greatness of Moses.* It was a greatness entirely unique. "There arose not a prophet," etc. (ver. 10). His greatness lay largely in character. As a man —in respect of qualities of character—Moses was one of the greatest men who have ever lived; perhaps, all things taken together, *the* greatest next to Christ. But so entirely is Moses the *man* lost in his relation to God as instrument of *his* will and work, that his greatness in the former respect is not in these verses even referred to. Moses is overshadowed by the God of Moses, whose power he wielded, and in whose Name alone he wrought. This greatness of Moses arose—

I. FROM THE RELATION OF PECULIAR INTIMACY HE HELD TO GOD. "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (ver. 10). In this greatness Moses stood alone till there arose that greater Prophet, whose advent he had predicted (ch. xviii. 18).

II. FROM THE GREATNESS OF HIS WORK. (Ver. 11.) He was sent to Egypt to deliver Israel. In this also a type of Christ.

III. IN THE POWER OF GOD PUT FORTH THROUGH HIM. (Vers. 11, 12.) True greatness therefore lies: (1) in power of near approach to God; (2) in great work done for God; and (3) in spiritual power exerted through God acting in and with us.—J. O.

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