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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NEW EDITION.

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NUMBERS.

Introduction
By REV. THOMAS WHITELAW, D.D.

Exposition and Homiletics
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Homilies by Various Authors:
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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON

THE AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHORSHIP

OF

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

BY

THE REV. THOMAS WHITELAW, M.A.

ITS AUTHENTICITY.

THE general question of the historic credibility of the narrative contained in the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures having already been considered in an Essay on the Authorship of the Pentateuch prefixed to the Genesis volume of the present series of Commentaries, attention needs now to be directed to such difficulties alone as are specifically associated with the Book of Numbers; and these it will be most convenient to investigate under the threefold subdivision of seeming chronological inaccuracies, so-called statistical errors, and alleged physical impossibilities.

a. SEEMING CHRONOLOGICAL INACCURACIES.

I. THE SECOND PASSOVER. On the ground that ch. ix. 1 appears to relate to a second celebration of the passover in the first month of the second year, while the census (ch. i. 1) was taken in the second month of the same year, Bleek declares it to be "most evidently conspicuous" that the unknown compiler of the history has here inadvertently perpetrated a grievous chronological blunder ('Introd.,' Vol. I. p. 249). It is, however, precarious to assert, in the absence of indication from the writer himself, that he clearly and deliberately designed, in every separate portion of his composition, to adhere strictly to the order of time. The circumstance "that the separate laws, as they were made known to Moses by Jehovah, and to the people by Moses, are interwoven in the history of the journeyings through the wilderness," while exceedingly valuable as a note of the historic credibility and Mosaic authorship of the entire narrative (*vide infra*, p. xx), does not justify the conclusion that Bleek desires it to carry—that "we should *certainly* expect that if Moses wrote the Pentateuch as it is now constructed, all the particulars would have been fitted together in a consecutive order and connection in accordance with the

actual sequence of events." Not to mention that Bleek does not deem it necessary to insist upon the application of this criterion in determining the authenticity and genuineness of the synoptical Gospels of Matthew and Luke (*vide* 'Introd. to N. T.,' Vol. I. p. 280), it is certain with regard to Numbers that the account of the princes' offerings at the dedication of the altar (ch. vii.) does not occupy the place to which it is chronologically entitled, while it is doubtful if the instructions relating to the construction of silver trumpets (ch. x. 1—10) should not be assigned to an earlier period than immediately before the march, and yet, according to Bleek, this latter paragraph bears "in the highest measure the stamp of exactness, distinctness, and historic fidelity," while, with reference to the former, even Ewald would admit that the writer had derived his information from antique Mosaic fragments ('History of Israel,' Vol. II. p. 18). But the question still remains whether in point of fact the narrative has at this particular stage suffered, even inadvertently, a chronological dislocation. If the writer's purpose had been simply to chronicle the interesting circumstance that the anniversary of the exodus had been kept in the wilderness by a second celebration of the passover, then it must be conceded that at least it wears this aspect. A closer scrutiny of the passage, however, leads to a somewhat different conclusion. The historian, it is seen, is engaged in recording the transactions that occurred preparatory to departing from Sinai, and has arrived at that point where only two remain to be noted, viz., the observance of a supplementary or, as it is sometimes designated, a little passover, and the construction of silver trumpets for signal-giving on the desert march. Accordingly, with reference to the first, instead of writing down in so many words that certain parties performed a special paschal celebration on the fourteenth day of the second month, he details the circumstances out of which the necessity for such celebration arose, and the authority they had received for its observance, leaving it to be inferred by his readers that the Divine prescription with regard to the matter was not neglected, just as, in connection with the silver trumpets, instead of stating that they were manufactured as God had enjoined, he contents himself with simply engrossing in his narrative the order he had received for their construction. Thus, instead of being an "evident inaccuracy," the section about the passover has been introduced into the history on a principle at once perfectly lucid and readily intelligible.

II. THE THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS' CHASM. It is immaterial whether, with Bleek, Ewald, Colenso, Kuenen, and others, we regard the first month spoken of in ch. xx. 1 as the first month of the third year, or, with Gerlach, Lange, Kurtz, Keil, 'Speaker's Commentary,' &c., consider it to be the first month of the fortieth year—immaterial, that is to say, so far as the present argument is concerned. In the former case, a gap occurs in the history of over thirty-seven years concerning which the writer preserves unbroken silence, while in the latter the chronological break is scarcely less, though the silence is not so absolute—the rebellion of Korah and his company occurring in the interval. In either case the difficulty is pretty much the same, viz., to understand how, on the hypothesis of the Book of Numbers having been composed as a connected historical work, so long a series of years should have been passed over, if not without the least, yet with so little, information. "It is impossible," writes Bleek, "to imagine how a contemporary historian could have skipped so long a period with such seeming unconsciousness;" "it is hardly conceivable that, circumstanced as they were, nothing should have happened to them which deserved to be recorded as much as many other events described in the Pentateuch;" and accordingly he adds, "It follows that this gap can only be

attributed to the want of completeness and accuracy of the history" (*vide* 'Introd. to the Old Test.,' Vol. I. p. 251). Bohlen, with much bolder ingenuity, blots the thirty-seven years out altogether, regarding the number forty of which the narrative speaks, especially when conjoined with the story of the whole generation perishing, as conclusive evidence of its mythical complexion. "The epico-traditional period of forty years was prescribed to the author of the Book of Numbers, and he does his best to fill it up with the few events which were at his command, even specifying the days and months when they occurred" ('Introd.,' Vol. I. p. 86; cf. Kuenen, 'The Religion of Israel,' Vol. I. p. 131). Ewald, with less audacity, ascribes it to an almost total obscuration of the national memory in the time of his Elohist concerning a dark period of their history which they were anxious to forget. "When the people were already established in Canaan, and looked back upon the long period of their wanderings in the desert after their exodus, undoubtedly the view became fixed among them that the time passed in the desert had been forty years—a round number, the adoption of which may be inferred from the Book of Origins. But when its author sought to assign to the several still remembered events of this long period their proper dates—their years, months, and days—we see at once how difficult it was even then to effect this in any historical sense." Accordingly, he explains that "all those events which could not belong to the close of the wanderings were placed in the first two years, and all the remainder in the last year of the forty," leaving the entire middle of these forty years "a completely blank space, of which nothing further is said than that the generation which came up from Egypt had to die in the desert for its backslidings, in order to make room for a better" ('History of Israel,' Vol. II. p. 186). And perhaps no better or more fascinating theory could be adopted for the solution of this singular phenomenon, if it were perfectly certain that the present narrative would resist every endeavour to regard it as contemporaneous history, and that on such an assumption the remarkable *lacuna* could not be reasonably accounted for. The hypothesis of Hävernick may indeed be dismissed as improbable and unsatisfactory, that "little transpired during that long space of time that was sufficiently remarkable and important to deserve mention, or of which even a remembrance was preserved" ('Introd. to Pent.,' § 27). Even the explanation offered by Kurtz scarcely commends itself as perfectly sufficient, that, "so far as the wanderings in the desert are concerned, nothing of a stationary (or retrograde) character was regarded as forming part of the history to be recorded, but only that which was *progressive*," and that "the thirty-seven years were not only stationary in their character,—years of detention, and therefore without a history,—but they were also years of dispersion" ('Hist. of Old Covenant,' Vol. III. p. 309). The true solution rather lies, we apprehend, in the direction of the thought hinted at by Gerlach, that "it is the manner of sacred history to relate only the events of most weight and consequence in the progress of the kingdom of God," or, as we should prefer to state it, to record events only in so far as they have a bearing on the kingdom of God, "and so it passes over in silence the long time which was spent in the wilderness by the generation destined to die there" ('Commentary on Numbers,' ch. xx.). So to speak, at Kadesh, in consequence of the people's unbelief and condemnation, the continuity of God's kingdom in Israel was interrupted, and was not again resumed till the old race, having perished for their sins, was supplanted by a new; and this view would seem to be countenanced by the remarkable coincidence, that almost immediately after the reassembling of the tribes at Kadesh, Miriam, probably the sole survivor of the doomed race, dies, and that soon after steps are taken, by the removal of

Aaron and the transference of his official garments to Eleazar his son, to complete the renovation of the congregation by giving them a new high priest in room of one who was rather a representative of the congregation that had disappeared. Hence, if this be the proper light in which to regard the relation subsisting between the old congregation and the new, it will supply an answer to the query why Moses did not write the story of these years of wandering—which was simply because the people were during that long interval no longer, *qud* people, the congregation of the Lord, though of course as individuals many of them may have found salvation; it will afford an explanation of why the rebellion of Korah and his associates was inserted in the narrative—which was not simply to fill an otherwise inconvenient gap, or because of its appallingly tragic character, but because Aaron, having not yet been placed under the ban of exclusion from Canaan, though the people were, might be said to belong to and represent God's kingdom on earth, so that an invasion of his high priestly functions by unauthorised persons like Korah and his companions had still a bearing on the history of the theocratic kingdom, though the ordinary annals of the dying people had none; and it will reply to Kurtz's difficulty, that "the history does not break off immediately after the rejection, but embraces several events, as well as several groups of laws, which belong to the period subsequent to the rejection"—the events being of the character just described, and the laws being either for the priests or the people *when they had come into the land of their habitations*, i. e. for the new theocratic congregation. Thus the thirty years' chasm does not invalidate, but rather marvellously authenticate, the history in which it occurs. It may be added that if the writing had been, as Bohlen styles it, "a popular inventive legend," it is scarcely likely, if we may judge from the apocryphal Gospels, that the writer would have left any gap which the spirit of romance could have filled.

III. THE FORTIETH YEAR. The number and importance of the transactions assigned to the brief interval of six months between Aaron's death, on "the first day of the fifth month" of the fortieth year of the wanderings (ch. xxxiii. 38), and the commencement of Moses' address, on the first day of the eleventh month (Deut. i. 3), render it impossible, according to Kuenen ('The Religion of Israel,' Vol. I. ch. ii. p. 131) and Colenso ('On the Pentateuch,' Part I. ch. xxii. pp. 144—146), to maintain the historic credibility of at least this portion of the narrative. But it is pertinent to observe in reply, (1) that it is not perfectly certain that all the incidents reported in chs. xxi.—xxxvi. took place in the comparatively short space referred to. The Aradite War, *e. g.*, though succeeding in the history the account of Aaron's death at Mount Hor (ch. xxi. 1—3), is by competent expositors (Kurtz, Keil, Lange, Gerlach, 'Speaker's Commentary'), and with much probability, believed to have occurred before that event, at the commencement of the march from Kadesh, or while the ambassadors were negotiating with the king of Edom for a passage through his dominions; and there is nothing in the narrative that absolutely enjoins us to hold that every single transaction of which these chapters speak was finished, and every word which they record uttered, before Moses began his exhortation on the first day of the eleventh month (cf. ch. xxvii. 12—14 with Deut. xxxii. 48, and ch. xxxv. 9—34 with Deut. iv. 41). But even if it were required to compress them all within the space of half a year, it might be remarked, (2) that many of those occurrences for which successive periods are somewhat arbitrarily demanded may easily enough have happened contemporaneously. For instance, the struggle with the king of Bashan, though, according to Deut. iii. 4, 5, not at all a trifling skirmish, but a serious engagement which

resulted in the capture of "threescore cities fenced with high walls, gates, and bars, beside unwalled towns a great many," and which, according to Colenso, must have occupied at least a month, might well have been undertaken and concluded during the absence of the king of Moab's messengers, whose double journey to the Babylonian town of Pethor, on the great river Euphrates, a distance of 350 miles, which began after the slaughter of the Amorites, and before the attack on the Bashanite monarch (ch. xxii. 2), could scarcely have been completed in less than six weeks; and since the expedition against Midian in which Balaam lost his life did not employ more than 12,000 men (ch. xxxi. 3, 4), it will be difficult to show why many of the transactions reported as having taken place before the end of the tenth month may not have occurred during the progress of that event. Yet, if even this hypothesis be discarded, and it be deemed imperative that all the several incidents comprised in the history should find a place in distinct chronological succession within the limits of the six months specified, it still is competent to maintain, (3) that until we can determine precisely the rapidity with which events moved in the closing months of Israel's pilgrimage, it will be impossible to assert with anything like dogmatic certitude that a young and vigorous people, trained in the wilderness, inspired by a great national hope, and led, as it were, by God himself, would not have been able to carry them through in the time appointed.

b. So-called Statistical Errors.

I. The number of the fighting men. It appears from the record that on three several occasions,—in the third month of the first year after the exodus for the purpose of raising a poll tax (Exod. xxx. 11 *sqq.*; cf. xxxvii. 25, 26), in the second month of the second year for the organisation of an army (ch. i. 3), and in the fortieth year, in the steppes of Moab, with a view to the prospective division of Canaan among the tribes (ch. xxvi. 4),—in accordance with Divine instructions, a formal registration of the male heads of the people from twenty years old and upward was effected, the result being that in each case the numbers were practically the same—603,550, 603,550, and 601,730; the Levites, who were reckoned separately, numbering 22,000 in the second census, and 23,000 in the third. In the correspondence between the third summation and the second, although not a single individual survived in the third that was numbered in the second except Caleb and Joshua, and although the tribe of Levi showed an increase of 300, it is unnecessary, with Bohlen, to detect an exemplification of the "inventive process," since it is almost certain that a fictitious writer would have either equated the two numbers precisely, or rendered the divergence between them more striking, and since it was clearly not impossible, considering the special mortality that is represented as having overtaken the old nation during the years of penal wandering, that the deaths should have been as many as the births, while, if we have regard to the Divine purpose of supplanting the adult congregation of unbelievers with a fresh population of desert-born warriors, inured to hardship and trained to confidence in God, there will appear a special fitness in arranging that the regenerated nation, in resuming, as it were, the interrupted thread of its history, should be of exactly the dimensions, or nearly so, of the community which had perished. The historic accuracy of the two lists, besides, receives authentication from the circumstance that, while the totals of both so nearly approximate, the difference being only 1820, considerable variations exist in the numbers of the individual tribes, as appears from the appended table, and that these can in no small degree be accounted for.

	At Sinai.	In the plains of Moab
Reuben	46,500	43,730
Simeon	59,300	22,200
Gad	45,650	40,500
Judah	74,600	76,500
Issachar	54,400	64,300
Zebulun	57,400	60,500
Ephraim	40,500	32,500
Manasseh	32,200	52,700
Benjamin	35,400	45,600
Dan	62,700	64,400
Asher	41,500	53,400
Naphtali	53,400	45,400
Total	603,550	601,730

Thus Judah shows an increase in the second computation of 1900, which was amply sufficient to enable him to retain the precedence of his brethren, in accordance with the prophetic benediction pronounced upon him by his venerable ancestor (Gen. xlix. 8—12). The increase of Issachar was 9900, of Zebulun 3100, of Manasseh 20,900, of Benjamin 10,200, of Dan 1700, and of Asher 11,900; but not even the largest of these indicates a proportion which can be said to be absolutely unparalleled; and, considering the highly favourable circumstances under which the new race grew up in comparison with the enervating bondage of Egypt, it can hardly be required to show that it was by no means impossible. The principal difficulty attaching to the census lists is not to account for the increase of certain tribes, but satisfactorily to explain the decrease in others. Thus the diminution of Reuben amounted to 2770, and it is commonly supposed that its cause must be sought in the destruction of the Korahite company, Dathan and Abiram being distinguished members of this particular tribe (ch. xxvi. 9, 10). The extraordinary fall of 37,100 which Simeon exhibited has with much probability been ascribed to the plague which had recently cut off 24,000 persons, most of whom, it has been conjectured, were Simeonites—Zimri, whose wickedness "in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian," provoked the *jus zelotarum* of Phinehas, having been "a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites" (ch. xxv. 14). Then the remarkable paucity of numbers in the tribe of Levi, in the one census 22,000, and in the other 23,000, has been explained by considering "that this tribe sustained two heavy strokes," it being expressly mentioned that the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, died childless (ch. iii. 4), and "the stress put upon the fact that the children of Korah were not destroyed with their father" (ch. xxvi. 11) pointing directly "to the implied antithesis that after all many Levites did perish in the conspiracy of Korah" (Lange 'on Numbers,' p. 11); while if the rate of increase, 1000 persons, or less than five per cent., was small when compared with that of the other tribes, it has been shown that "in the interval between Moses and David their rate of increase was still below that of other tribes" (Keil 'on Numbers,' p. 9), so that the peculiarity here adverted to was at least not exceptional in the history of Levi. Thus the difficulties connected with the second and the third enumerations of the people may be regarded as completely vanishing on a little close examination; and the same will suffice to dispose of the objection that the numbers in the first and second censuses should have been exactly the same, which, it is alleged, could hardly have been the case, even in round numbers, considering that

an interval of nine months had elapsed between them (Colenso 'on the Pent.,' Vol. I. ch. vii. p. 42). But without insisting on the fact that stationary communities, in respect of population, are by no means unknown in modern times, it may be legitimately urged either, (1) with Michaelis, Kurtz, and others, that there was no actual numbering at all on the occasion of the lifting of the poll tax, but that the real census was taken on making up the muster roll, the number yielded by it being employed without hesitation to indicate the amount raised by the tax, in consequence of the variation in the sum total being but trifling; or, (2) with Gerlach, Keil, 'Speaker's Commentary,' &c., that the second registration was not a fresh census in the strict sense of the term, but simply a classification of the results of the preceding enumeration by thousands, hundreds, and tens, in accordance with Jethro's suggestion; or, (3) with Lange, that the two censuses were really one, which, beginning with the view of lifting a tax and ending with the construction of an army, extended, like the census of David at a later period (2 Sam. xxiv. 8), over the entire space of nine months or a year.

II. The number of the congregation. Accepting then what seems to be indisputable, that the census of the adult males reached the round sum of 600,000, and estimating the proportion of those adult males or persons in the prime of life and capable of bearing arms, to the rest of the population, in accordance with the somewhat precarious standard of modern statistics, as that of one to four or five, it may be safely concluded that the entire body of the people, or "the whole congregation," numbered between two and three millions. But neologic criticism professes itself at a loss to understand how in the course of 215 years the seventy souls that came into Egypt (Gen. xlvi. 26, 27; Deut. x. 22) could have developed into so formidable a community; how in the Arabian peninsula, which at the present moment is a scene of barrenness and desolation, scarcely capable of sustaining a population of over 5000, so vast a multitude could have subsisted for a period of forty years, and how, if the Israelites had been so large a nation in the Mosaic age, they should either have been so long in conquering the land of Canaan as the Books of Joshua, Judges, and 1 Samuel represent them to have been, or have found it possible to live alongside of the Canaanites within so limited a territory.

1. Colenso ('Pent.,' Vol. I. ch. xvii.), following Bohlen, declares the increase of seventy souls into two and a half millions in the space of 215 years, the interval between the descent into Egypt and the exodus from Egypt, to be open to serious difficulties, if not impossible (cf. Kuenen, 'The Religion of Israel,' Vol. I. ch. ii. p. 163); and it may be frankly conceded that if his principles of computation are correct, his conclusion cannot possibly be set aside. If in the 215 years there were only four descents, if the rate of increase was no greater in Egypt than it had been previously, *i. e.* four or five sons to a family, and if none but pure Israelites were recognised as forming part of the congregation, then it need not surprise one to learn that, "instead of 600,000 warriors in the prime of life, there could not have been 5000," that "if the numbers of all the males in the four generations be added together (which supposes that they were all living at the time of the exodus), they would only amount to 6311," and that, even with the addition of the children of the fifth generation, "the sum total of males of all generations could not, according to these data, have exceeded 28,465, instead of being 1,000,000." But none of the above assumptions can be regarded as established certainties. The first indeed appears to receive support from Exod. vi. 16, 18, 20, which seems to style Moses the great-grandson of Levi. But as Levi was at least forty years of age at the descent into Egypt, and had three sons before that event, we may reckon that

Kohath was born in his father's thirty-eighth year, and was accordingly two years of age when he was deported from the land of Canaan. But Kohath in turn married, say at thirty years of age, and had a son named Amram, who is represented as having begotten Moses, say at the age of forty. Adding twenty-eight (30—2) and forty and eighty as the age of Moses at the exodus, we can only make 148 years instead of 215, showing that between Levi and Moses there were more descents than four, and that the Amram of ver. 20, who was Moses' father, was not the son of Kohath spoken of in ver. 18, but a remote descendant of that individual. The accuracy of this calculation is further strikingly confirmed by a reference to the number of the Kohathites in the time of Moses, of whom the fourth part, or 2150 (men and boys), were Amramites (ch. iii. 27, 28); from which it follows, since Moses had only two sons, that he must have been possessed of brothers and nephews to the number of 2147, which is simply inconceivable (cf. Keil 'on Ex.,' vi. 27; Kurtz, 'Hist. of O. C.,' Vol. II. p. 144). Hence, instead of four descents for the increase of Israel, we may reasonably reckon seven, and in some instances, like that of Joshua, eight or nine (1 Chron. vii. 20—27); and this, without demanding any higher rate of increase than attended Jacob's sons in the first generation, would abundantly satisfy all the requirements of the case. Of the seventy souls who went down into Egypt, assuming that only Jacob's grandsons, fifty-one in number, were capable of further out-population, and that each of these had only four sons (Colenso allows four and a half), their increase may be thus represented:—

At the end of 1st 30 years				...	...	...	204	males.
,,	,,	2nd ,,	,,	...	...	...	816	,,
,,	,,	3rd ,,	,,	...	...	...	3,264	,,
,,	,,	4th ,,	,,	...	...	...	13,056	,,
,,	,,	5th ,,	,,	...	...	...	52,224	,,
,,	,,	6th ,,	,,	...	...	...	208,896	,,
,,	,,	7th ,,	,,	...	...	...	835,584	,,

That is, the 208,896 fathers of the sixth descent had at the close of the next thirty years, or immediately before the exodus, 835,584 sons, to whom if we add 64,416 surviving fathers and grandfathers we shall bring the total up to 900,000 males, the number requisite, according to Colenso, to give 600,000 fighting men above twenty years of age. It is true that in this calculation we have excluded the operation of the law of mortality among families, but then to counterbalance this we might warrantably have claimed a higher rate of increase than that adopted, since it is certain God had promised that the blessing of fruitfulness should attend Jacob's descendants in Egypt, and since we know that Pharaoh must have observed something unusual in the rapid multiplication of the Hebrews to cause him to promulgate his truculent decree. Thus, without resorting to the (somewhat doubtful) hypothesis of Kurtz ('Hist. of O. C.,' Vol. II. p. 149), that Jacob and his sons were accompanied into Egypt by men-servants and maid-servants, whose offspring were included in the family of Israel, there need be no difficulty in believing that the entire congregation of Israelites proper numbered between two and three million souls.

2. Nor was it likely that the question of finding sustenance for themselves and for their flocks and herds occasioned them as much anxiety as it has since done to rationalistic critics. Colenso, again following in the wake of Knobel and Bohlen, has declared it an absolute impossibility that such a mass of human beings with their cattle could obtain support for such a length of time as forty years from the

scanty vegetation of the desert. But (1) the story does not represent the Israelites as having been maintained exclusively by the natural produce of the wilderness, but, on the contrary, expressly claims that they enjoyed for themselves (and we may rest assured also for their cattle, if such was necessary) a miraculous supply both of meat and of drink; and (2) there is good reason for believing that the Arabian peninsula was considerably more fertile than it is to-day, that, in fact, there were resources in the country of which they might have availed themselves in cases where no special miraculous provision was granted; while (3) there are indications in the narrative itself that the flocks and herds were scattered far and wide during the sojourn in the desert, and so were able the more easily to obtain pasture. The first of these considerations may be disregarded by rationalising critics, but, unless a disbelief in the miraculous is to be postulated as a preliminary to historical research, intelligent and unprejudiced Bible students will find it impossible to ignore the circumstance that the entire narrative belongs to the region of the supernatural, that the writer explicitly asserts the intervention of causes which were supramundane in effecting Israel's guidance through the great and terrible wilderness, and that, as the Hebrew Psalmist expresses it, "man did eat angel's food." At the same time, while observing that the desert pilgrims were at special times and places provided with miraculous supplies, they will hardly fail to notice that nowhere does the narrative affirm that these were their sole support, or convey the impression that the region through which they passed was an immense plain of sand, or a bleak and sterile tract of bare and calcined rock. The passage adduced by Colenso to prove that the inhospitable desert was incapable of affording sustenance to the two millions of Israelites who passed through it, with their two millions of sheep and oxen, rather makes for the opposite contention (ch. xx. 2), since it relates to the beginning of the fortieth year, thereby showing that during all the previous thirty-nine years at least neither the people nor the animals had perished, and since it applies not to the whole extent of the Arabian peninsula, but to the most barren and desolate region of it, styled "the desert of Sin," now called the Wady-el-Arabah, situated between the land of Edom and the wilderness of Paran. And indeed a sufficient refutation of the sweeping statements of Knobel, Bohlen, Colenso, Kuenen, and others may be found in the fact, which is incontrovertible, that at the very period when the Israelites passed through it, it was the seat of several numerous and powerful nomadic tribes, like the Amalekites, with whom they warred at Rephidim, the Midianites, whom they encountered at Shittim, and the Kenites, who inhabited some parts of the same wilderness, "having their nest in the rock." Then there are grounds for believing that the scene of Israel's wanderings is not precisely the same to-day as it then was. "There is no doubt that the vegetation of the wâdys has considerably decreased. . . . If this be so, the greater abundance of vegetation would, as is well known, have furnished a greater abundance of water, and this again would react on the vegetation, from which the means of subsistence would be procured" (Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 24, 25). Carl Ritter also thus sums up the circumstances which appear to him to warrant the inference that the Sinaitic peninsula was capable of providing sustenance for a more numerous population than it is presently able to maintain:—"There was, it is evident, in former times, a growth both of the larger sorts of trees and of smaller shrubs, of which we have no remnant; there was also a large number of plants which might contribute in part to the sustenance of Israel during the journey; there was a universally distributed agriculture, as we learn from the existence of mines, and from the oldest Egyptian habitations, as well as from the Christian

monuments which are everywhere found—cloisters, hermitages, walls, gardens, and fountains; and, lastly, there is an evident possibility that there was a much greater supply of water in the wâdys, more abundant rain-storms, and the possibility of economising the supplies thus gained by a use of the same appliances which were common elsewhere in countries similarly situated and conditioned" ('Geography of Palestine,' Vol. I. p. 380. Clark's 'For. Theol. Lib.'). And of course the ability of the Israelites to procure support for themselves and their flocks would be largely increased if it was not imperative, as is often arbitrarily asserted, that they should keep constantly together, but if, on the contrary, it was permissible to disperse themselves abroad among the more fertile localities. Nor need this have been impossible though considerable bodies of armed men should have been required to guard them from the attacks of hostile tribes, since the entire army was 600,000 strong, and could easily have spared a few detachments for such a purpose had that been necessary. Of this, however, there is no evidence; and if Moses fed the flocks of Jethro in the Sinaitic desert for forty years without the presence of a military guard, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that Moses' countrymen, especially when assisted by the mixed multitude (עֶרֶב, *plebs promiscua*, ἐπίμικτος λαός, a swarm of foreigners, though by a slight change in the punctuation it might be made to mean inhabitants of the desert, or wandering Arabs or Bedaween, who had joined themselves to Israel on the eve of the exodus), might be competent in the same region and for the same number of years to feed their own. But without enlarging further on this controverted problem, it may be satisfactory to note that the general accuracy of the views here propounded is recognised by Ewald, who thus writes:—"We cannot, therefore, fail to see that then the peninsula must have supported a far more numerous population than now; in a condition of great privation and trial certainly, of which indeed in all the traditions there is frequent complaint, but still so that a frugal and laborious people would not absolutely perish if only they made the trials themselves the sources of warning and strength. From the present number of the inhabitants of a country which has, moreover, been utterly neglected by the human hand, no certain conclusion respecting its earlier state can be drawn; and that peninsula is not the only country from whose present scanty population we should never have guessed the former density of human life. . . . . This only we can perceive, although the country has not yet been thoroughly explored in all directions by intelligent Europeans, that it is by no means one vast sandy plain, . . . but shows clear indications of having been formerly much more extensively cultivated. Moreover, we cannot exactly know how far the various tribes may have straggled out from Kadesh to procure subsistence; for it is clear that Kadesh was only the resting-place of Moses and the tabernacle, and the meeting-place of the community on appointed days ('History of Israel,' Vol. II. p. 197).

3. The third difficulty in connection with the size of the congregation may be disposed of in a few sentences. That 600,000 soldiers should not have found the conquest of Canaan so hard a matter as the Biblical narrative represents might seem an obvious conclusion, were it not that it rests upon two unwarrantable assumptions: (1) that the Canaanites were neither numerous nor powerful, whereas they were both, having thirty-one kings, and possessing many towns (Josh. xii. 7—24); and (2) that the warfare in which Israel engaged was one in which victory was determined by purely military considerations, whereas the siege of Jericho (*ibid.* vi. 2) and the defeat at Ai (*ibid.* vii. 4) were witnesses to the contrary. But, in truth, the ease or difficulty of the conquest of Canaan is largely a matter of opinion, and it is at least in this connection interesting to note

that Kuenen objects to the historic credibility of the conquest on the ground that it was much too easily accomplished ('The Religion of Israel,' Vol. I. ch. ii. p. 131). As to the possibility of finding room in Canaan for two millions more of people than it had previously contained, it is sufficient to reply, (1) that in order to make room for them a pretty considerable removal of the earlier inhabitants was effected by means of the sword, and (2) that it is doubtful if the remaining Canaanitish population, though increased by the influx of three millions of Israelites, would be as large as the five millions of inhabitants that were contained in Palestine in the flourishing period of the Israelitish kingdom.

III. THE NUMBER OF THE FIRST-BORN. Rationalising critics appear to be unanimous in pitching upon this as an insuperable obstacle to the historical validity of the Mosaic narrative. It will accordingly be desirable to state the difficulty in their own words. "According to ch. i. 46 and ii. 32, the number of all the male Israelites from twenty years old and upwards was, without the Levites, 603,550. If, however, the number of the first-born of the male sex, reckoned from one month old and upwards, amounted only to a little over 22,000 (according to ch. iii.), the number of them from twenty years old and upward could only be reckoned at from about 11,000 to 14,000, and in that the first-born of the Levites would also be comprehended, so that from the rest of the tribes they would only amount to from about 10,000 to 13,000. According to this the proportion of the first-born males to the whole of the male Israelites would only be as one to forty-five. But this is a proportion that we cannot well think could have really existed" (Bleek, 'Introd. to Pent.,' Vol. I. p. 315). "At one time the number of men able to bear arms above twenty years of age is said to amount to 603,550, exclusive of the Levites; soon afterwards, however, the number of the first-born males is set down at 22,273. A comparison of these two statements is sufficient to show the fictitious character of the whole census; for from it we may deduce that every mother, taking one with another, must have brought into the world no less than forty-two male children; or, in other words, that only one first-born child is to be allowed for every forty-two males" (Bohlen, 'Introd. to Pent.,' p. 113). The problem is stated in substantially equivalent terms by Vater 'on Numb. iii. 39,' Colenso 'on the Pent.,' Part I. ch. xiv., Kuenen in 'The Religion of Israel,' Vol. I. ch. ii. p. 172, and others; and as thus presented it has met with various replies. 1. Michaelis has endeavoured to resolve it by supposing that polygamy extensively prevailed among the Israelites, and that only the first-born of the fathers were counted ('Laws of Moses,' ii. § 94); but, as Keil properly observes, "polygamy never prevailed among the Israelites or any other people with anything like the universality which this would suppose," and, besides, the expression "פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם" (ch. iii. 12) distinctly points to the first-born on the mother's side, in which case, as Kurtz remarks, "the existence of polygamy would only serve to render the difficulty perfectly colossal." 2. Hävernick has so far modified the above opinion as to hold that the first-born on the sides of both parents were alone reckoned, but this is a purely arbitrary assumption, and tends rather to increase than remove the perplexity. 3. Baumgarten has suggested that only the first-born under six years of age were numbered, adducing in support of this view that all above that age had been redeemed by partaking of the passover in Egypt, but such a sentiment has no foundation in anything contained in Scripture. 4. Kurtz has advanced a number of considerations which in his judgment afford an adequate explanation of the otherwise inexplicable fact:—(1) the rarity of polygamy, which lessened the proportion of the first-born; but, on Kurtz's own theory that ch. iii. 12 points to the mother's first-born, the rarity

or prevalence of polygamy has properly speaking no bearing whatever on the question; (2) the fruitfulness of Hebrew mothers, to which unquestionably some degree of weight must be attached; and (3) the exclusion of first-born sons who were not also the first-born of their mothers, or who were themselves heads of families, which, though controverted by Colenso, appears to be a step in the right direction. Every one, however, of the above solutions proceeds upon the assumption that the law relating to the sanctification of the first-born was intended to have a retrospective force, but exactly in the denial of this *ex post facto* operation of the Divine enactment lies the true solution of this *quæstio vexata*, which is given by—5. Keil, after Vitringa, viz., that only the first-born were counted who had come into the world since the night of the exodus when the law was promulgated (Exod. xiii. 2), *i. e.* thirteen months before, so that, as has been aptly remarked, the real difficulty is not that the first-born were so few, but that they were so many; and yet the peculiar situation of Israel during those thirteen months abundantly provides the required explanation. "When the Israelites were groaning under the hard lash of the Egyptian task-masters, and then under the inhuman and cruel edict of Pharaoh, which commanded all the Hebrew boys to be put to death, the number of marriages no doubt diminished from year to year; but with the emancipation and the revival of the nation's hopes "there might very well," says Keil, "have been about 36,000 marriages contracted in a year, say from the time of the seventh plague, three months before the exodus, and about 37,600 children born by the second month of the second year after the exodus, 22,273 of them being boys."

c. Alleged Physical Impossibilities.

I. The duties of the priests. "The Book of Leviticus is chiefly occupied in giving directions to the priests for the proper discharge of the different duties of their office, and further directions are given in the Book of Numbers;" "and now let us ask, for all these multifarious duties, during the forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, . . . how many priests were there? The answer is very simple. There were only three, Aaron (till his death) and his two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar. . . . Yet how was it possible that these two or three men should have discharged all these duties for such a vast multitude?" ('Colenso on the Pent.,' Part I. ch. xx.) The reply, like the objection, is very simple. 1. The Levitical laws, though given in the desert, were not designed to come into full operation there. This was obviously the case with the important legislation delivered during the period of penal wandering (ch. xv. 2). The terms also in which the passover was instituted bear that it was meant for Canaan (Exod. xiii. 5). At the time of the erection of the tabernacle it was contemplated that a few months would see them in the land of their inheritance. Hence there is no sound reason for supposing that the multifarious duties recorded in the Books of Leviticus and Numbers (at that time not composed) were performed by the priests. 2. In point of fact the Levitical laws were not observed in the wilderness in all their completeness. As much as this is testified by Moses in Deut. xii. 8. But, it is alleged, with reference to the second passover, it is absolutely certain that no part of the original ceremony was omitted. The phrase, "according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it," precludes the idea of any departure from the statutory regulations; and how could three priests, it is asked, slaughter 150,000 lambs according to Colenso, 100,000 according to Kurtz, or even 50,000 according to Keil, and sprinkle their blood upon the altar in the short space of time allotted

for that work? Keil thinks it might have been done, quoting an instance from Josephus ('Wars,' VI. ix. 3) in which the blood of 256,500 paschal lambs was sprinkled upon the altar in the time of the Emperor Nero; but since this second passover was entirely exceptional, and was not directly contemplated in the enactments which had been made in view of the people's settlement in Canaan, and since the statute forbidding the killing of the paschal lambs at any other place than the tabernacle (Deut. xvi. 2) had not yet been published, nay, since the terms of this statute appear rather to imply that up to the time of its publication, the fortieth year, they had been in the habit of slaughtering them elsewhere, it would seem as if the inference of Kurtz were correct—that the lambs were killed by the heads of families themselves, and the blood sprinkled on the door-posts; that, in short, the second year's passover was observed not upon the model of the future celebrations in Palestine, but upon that of the past celebration in Egypt; so that, even with regard to this, no undue exaction of strength would be required from Aaron and his sons. But even should we hold that the Levitical system was in operation in the wilderness with anything approaching to completeness, it must be borne in mind (3) that the Levites had been assigned to the priests for assistants in matters relating to the tabernacle, and that they were not strangers forbidden to come nigh on pain of death, as Colenso alleges, on the strength of ch. iii. 10, 38, but, as ch. i. 51 shows, persons who by their very office were under obligation to minister unto the tabernacle (ch. i. 47).

II. THE ASSEMBLING OF THE CONGREGATION. The objection here alluded to only needs to be stated to discover its absurdity. Interpreting the narrative with the severest, and let it be also said the *simplest*, literality, it supposes that two millions and a half of people were required to assemble at the door of the tabernacle, which according to exact arithmetical calculation was eighteen feet wide, which would allow nine full-grown men to stand in front of it, which, with eighteen inches between each rank, would necessitate a line of nearly twenty miles to bring all the adult males precisely in front of it, and a line of sixty miles if the old men, women, and children were included! "It is surely inconceivable," writes Colenso, "that such an enormous congregation should have been summoned expressly by Jehovah to attend for the purpose of witnessing a ceremony taking place in a tent eighteen paces long and six wide, which could only have been seen by a few standing at the door" ('On the Pent.,' Part I. ch. iv.). To this it might be amply sufficient to reply that there is one thing even more inconceivable, viz., that a person of intelligence could have proposed such a difficulty; but for further satisfaction it may be added that the expressions, "the whole assembly" (Exod. xii. 6; Numb. x. 3, 4), and "all the congregation" (ch. xvi. 19, 25), do not necessarily signify every individual member of the community, but, in perfect consistency with historical accuracy, may mean a portion, representative or otherwise, of the whole. The foolishness of insisting in every instance on the universal sense of the terms "all" and "whole" is recognised by Colenso himself, who, writing of ch. x. 3, 4, admits that "no one would suppose that *every individual* would be able to attend such a summons (to the tabernacle door), or would be expected to do so," and who accordingly limits the expressions, "all the congregation," and "the whole assembly," first to *the adult males in the prime of life*, and eventually to "the great body of the 603,550 warriors," *i. e.*, we presume, the major part of them. But if "all" may import something less than the whole, it will be difficult to adduce a cogent argument to show that the "all" may not sometimes be represented by a part. And indeed in the Book of Numbers itself there are not wanting hints of the representative character of the

great congregational assembly, as when, in ch. i. 16, the princes of the tribes are designated "the renowned of the congregation," literally, the called men of the congregation, "because," adds Keil, "they were called to diets of the congregation, as representatives of the tribes, to regulate the affairs of the nation," an interpretation concurred in by the best authorities (cf. ch. xvi. 2).

III. THE MARCHING OF THE HOST. In the estimation of some the observance by two and a half millions of people of the marching orders prescribed for their journeyings seems a harder problem than even their subsistence in the wilderness. According to ch. ii., as subsequently modified by ch. x. 14—28, the camp of Judah, consisting of 186,400 soldiers, led the van. These were followed by the Gershonites and Merarites, 13,700 strong, accompanied by the tabernacle furniture on waggons. Next came the camp of Reuben, numbering 151,450 men of war. Behind these the Kohathites, 8600, kept the charge of the sanctuary. These were succeeded by the camp of Ephraim, containing 108,100 adult males; while the camp of Dan, with 157,600 warriors, brought up the rear. In each case the soldiers were accompanied by their families, so that, counting women and children, each of the four camps may be roughly estimated at half a million. Now, since the narrative does not permit us to think of anything but an orderly march, we must imagine, it is said, these four main divisions of half a million each falling into line and moving off the ground, not simultaneously, but in prearranged succession, so that, as the first camp would require at least four or five hours for its necessary evolutions, the day would practically be at an end before the last company had begun to move; after which we must further contemplate this long line of two and a half millions travelling, say ten or a dozen miles, and at the close of the day's journey re-forming, no matter where they halted, into a camp of exactly the dimensions of that from which in the morning they had broken up—all which, even with the help of a little miracle in the way of warding off sickness and imparting unusual vigour and intelligence to the people and their leaders, it is alleged is scarcely within the limits of physical possibility. And unquestionably, as thus represented, it must have been a problem for the Israelites to understand how they were to get away from the spot, since, if sixteen hours were demanded for the work of falling into line, it is doubtful if they could have been expected to do more for the day than fall out again and return to their square formations. But the manifest absurdity of this suffices to show that such a representation must be wholly incorrect; and indeed any interpretation of the marching orders which professes to exhibit their impracticability will be found as difficult to harmonise with the modern theory of a late authorship as with that of a Mosaic origin, since it is simply incredible that any writer possessed of intelligence would have inserted in his manuscript what by the supposition is so palpably impossible. The essential fallacy in the hypothesis is that each division waited before commencing its movements until those of its predecessor were completed, that the camp of Reuben, *e. g.*, remained perfectly stationary till the last line in Judah's company was started, nay, till the Gershonites and Merarites had taken up position in Judah's rear. But obviously all the four divisions might have simultaneously commenced their preparations, by falling into line as far as practicable on the ground; and the work of doing so, it must not be forgotten, would be largely facilitated by the principle adopted in their several encampments, the men being arranged "by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of their names," *i. e.* by hundreds and fifties and tens; so that, even granting four or five hours for the completion of the movements of Judah, it does not follow that more than three or

four hours additional would be required for similarly completing the movements of the other three divisions. Meantime Judah has been travelling, let us suppose, four hours at the rate of two or two and a half miles an hour, so that, after a journey of ten miles, he is ready for encampment, which consumes, we may conjecture, not more than four hours. Thus the entire day of Judah was divided into three equal portions of four hours each, the first of which was spent in breaking up and forming into line, the second in travelling, and the third in re-camping. As we have supposed the last line to be four hours later than Judah in starting, they would likewise be four hours later in arriving. And though darkness must have set in before the last travellers were quartered for the night, it is not likely that that would greatly impede their progress or interfere with their comfort, since, according to the story, Jehovah went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. Of course in the above calculations we do not pretend to show how the march actually was accomplished, but simply to demonstrate that assertions as to its impossibility are extremely rash, and not such as would be made by any modern general of intelligence and capacity. Besides, it should be noted that, though the ideal order and method of marching are depicted by the historian, it is not necessary to assume, what certainly the historian does not assert, that these were in every minute particular carried out on the first trial with the same faultless precision that might have been exhibited by a highly-disciplined modern army, or that they themselves would display at a later period when practice had made perfection. On the contrary, it may be reasonably supposed that, during the fortnight which intervened between the construction of the camp and the marching of the host, the various sections of the army, under their captains of hundreds and fifties and tens, would be subjected to a sort of preparatory drill in anticipation of the general advance, and that though, in consequence of the numerous hitches that might naturally be expected to occur in an initial experiment on so great a scale, the first day's marching would almost certainly prove a serious affair, occupying a great many hours, and leaving them only a few miles from Sinai; yet, as the days went by, and frequent repetition imparted facility to their movements, these imperfections would gradually disappear, and the actual method of marching more nearly approach the ideal. Then, if it further be borne in mind that the narrative does not affirm that the work of reconstructing the camp was undertaken every night, thus involving the tedious labour of deploying into line each successive morning, which would certainly have involved an unnecessary expenditure of time and energy that might have been otherwise profitably consumed in journeying, but that only then was the tabernacle set up when, as at Kibroth-Hattaavah, they had reached a station where the multitude could conveniently rest—when this circumstance in addition is remembered, it will be seen that, attended though it must have been with much painful labour, the marching of the host need not by any means have been an insuperable difficulty, and much less a physical impossibility.

IV. The victory over Midian. While dwelling largely and with much impressiveness upon the immoral aspects of this remarkable campaign, Colenso, after Bohlen, is particularly scandalised at the idea of 12,000 Israelites slaying *all* the male Midianites, capturing *all* their females and children, including 32,000 virgins, seizing *all* their cattle and flocks (72,000 oxen, 61,000 asses, 675,000 sheep), and *all* their goods, and burning *all* their cities and *all* their goodly castles, without the loss of a single man! (ch. xxxi. 49; 'On the Pentateuch,' Vol. I. ch. xxii.). De Wette regards this particular statement as proof conclusive of the mythical character of the narrative; but Tacitus ('Annals,' xiii. 39) records an instance in

which, at the capture of a Parthian castle, the Romans slaughtered all their foes without losing a single man, and Strabo (xvi. 1128) mentions a battle in which 1000 Arabs were slain by only two Romans (*vide* Rosenmüller on Numb. xxxi. 49), while Hävernick affirms that the life of Saladin contains almost in the same words a like statement respecting the issue of a battle ('Introd.,' p. 330). Hence the extraordinary preservation which Israel enjoyed on this occasion, though owing more to Divine interposition than to the operation of natural causes, such as the non-military character of the Midianites and the suddenness of the attack to which they were exposed, can scarcely be held, on any principles of sound reasoning, to afford colourable pretext for impeaching the correctness of the narrative.

ITS AUTHORSHIP.

The authorship of the Book of Numbers may be regarded as practically settled by the previous question of its historic credibility. If no valid argument can be adduced for impugning the veracity of its contents, the inference is irresistible that it can only have proceeded from the pen of Moses. Yet it is alleged that the Book of Numbers presents features which can only be explained by the modern theory of its being, like the rest of the Pentateuch, a late compilation.

1. The alternating use of the Divine names, which forms so prominent a characteristic of the Book of Genesis, and which largely disappears in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus, reasserts itself, it is maintained (De Wette, 'Kritik der Israelitischen Geschichte,' p. 362), in the Book of Numbers, in particular in the section relating to Balaam and his prophecies (chs. xxii.—xxiv.), in such a way as to suggest the idea of composite authorship. Without anticipating what may be advanced in the body of the work on this important subject, it may suffice in this place to notice that the peculiarity attaching to Balaam's use of the Divine names, no less than that belonging to the historian's employment of them, admits of a perfectly intelligible explanation on the theory of the Mosaic authorship. Whatever view we adopt as to the character of Balaam,—whether, with Philo, Josephus, Origen, Augustine, Lyra, À Lapide, and others, we regard him as having been "*prophetam non Dei, sed diaboli*," an Oriental wizard who claimed to possess the gift of prophecy, קֹסֵם, the Old Testament counterpart of Simon Magus in the primitive apostolic Church, or accept the view of Tertullian, Jerome, Deyling, Buddæus, &c., that he was a true prophet of God who fell through covetousness,—and whatever opinion we may entertain as to the source of his religious information,—whether, with Tholuck and Lange, we discover that in the primeval monotheism which still lingered in Mesopotamia, or, with Hengstenberg, find it in the report of God's dealings with Israel, which even then had penetrated as far east as the Euphrates, or, with Kurtz, Keil, and the 'Speaker's Commentary,' seek for it in both,—it seems apparent that Balaam professed to be a worshipper of Jehovah (ch. xxii. 8, 18); in which, as Kurtz correctly observes, the king of Midian could not fail to discern peculiarly welcome intelligence, for "if he succeeded in inducing *him* to curse the Israelites, their power, he thought, would be effectually broken" ('Hist. of O. C.,' Vol. III. p. 387). Hence it was specially fitting that he should use the term Jehovah as he does, whether conversing in plain prose with the Moabitish messengers, or pouring forth predictions in elevated strains of poetry, even though it should have been the case, as Keil suggests, that the Jehovah whom Balaam worshipped was "only Elohim, *i. e.* only a Divine Being, but not the God of Israel" Nor does it look a hard problem

to explain why in ch. xxii. 38 he should have discarded the favourite term Jehovah for the more general expression Elohim, since it was not at that moment his desire to emphasise the fact that Jehovah had declined to extend him the needful sanction to undertake the solicited mission, which indeed he had already done (ch. xxii. 13), but to repudiate the insinuation of the king of Moab that he had hesitated to comply with the invitation addressed to him simply through fear of not receiving a sufficient recompense, by representing that he had really been hindered, not through personal reluctance, but by Divine restraint, in which case, as Hengstenberg remarks, "even a member of the chosen people would have used Elohim." Then the mode in which the historian employs the terms is as little suggestive of a diverse authorship, but is possessed of a significance as remarkable and specific, as that in which they were employed by Balaam. In the first place, when recording the interview between Balaam and the elders, although the *Kosem* says Jehovah, he writes Elohim (ch. xxii. 9, 10, 12, 20). And even if we cannot unreservedly adopt the view of Hengstenberg, that the historian's design was "to determine Balaam's personal relation to God in opposition to his hypocritical pretensions" ('Authenticity and Genuineness of the Pentateuch,' Vol. I. p. 388), or believe with Baur that the writer meant to intimate "that the heathen seer did not stand at first in any connection whatever with the true God of Israel" ('Geschichte der alttestl. Weissagung,' i. p. 344), or affirm with Keil that it serves as an indication that "Balaam's original attitude towards Jehovah was a very imperfect one" ('Commentary on Numbers,' ch. xxii. 1), we may hold it as a perfectly adequate explanation that as yet there was no necessity to take the slightest cognisance of Balaam's relation to Jehovah, assumed or otherwise, but simply to draw attention to the fact that the Divine interposition solicited by Balaam was granted. At the same time we regard the preponderance of argument as lying on the side of Hengstenberg's interpretation of a contrast which, as he justly observes, is too remarkable and occurs too often to have been purely accidental, while we cannot attach a large degree of importance to the objection of Keil that such a view "sets up a chasm between Elohim and Jehovah, with which the fact that, according to ch. xxii. 22, the wrath of Elohim on account of Balaam's journey was manifested in the appearance of the angel of Jehovah is irreconcilable," since it rather seems to bridge over any such imaginary chasm by showing that the Elohim who was angered was not different from the Maleach Jehovah who accorded permission, but was in reality one and the self-same Being. And now if we inquire why from this point onward Jehovah is so frequently employed by the writer, it will be difficult to discover a more satisfactory reason than that supplied by Hengstenberg, that he designed "to point out how Jehovah, the God of Israel, overruled the whole transaction for his people's welfare, and how Balaam, who otherwise had no intercourse with him, was obliged, in this extraordinary juncture, to serve him as an instrument."

2. The narrative contains repetitions and variations which, in the estimation of the higher criticism, suggest a remodelling of the original documents by subsequent editorship, and a working up of different, and sometimes contradictory, accounts into the same writing. Bleek specifies as an example the account of the spies in chs. xiii. and xiv., in which he assigns ch. xiii. 1—xiv. 4, 10—25, 39—45 to the fundamental or Elohist writing, and the remainder (ch. xiv. 5—10, 26—38) to the revisionary labours of the Jehovist, the ground of this apportionment of the text being that ch. xiv. 10—25 declares that "of all the Israelites who had been witnesses of Jehovah's wonders in Egypt and the wilderness, and had so often

tempted him, not one should behold the promised land except Caleb," while ch. xiv. 26—38 affirms "that except Caleb and Joshua, all those previously numbered from twenty years old and upwards should perish in the wilderness, and that their children only, after a forty years' journeying through the wilderness, should arrive at the land of Canaan," the first statement agreeing with ch. xiii. 30, where Caleb quiets the people who were agitated through the report of the spies, and the second with ch. xiv. 6, where Joshua and Caleb do this ('Introd. to Old Testament,' Vol. I. § 119). The 'Speaker's Commentary' agrees with this opinion so far as to regard it as "likely that a later and independent, but not inconsistent, account has been interwoven with the earlier one," only it seems unable to determine which account was the original narrative, and which the interpolation; in the Introduction to Numbers, §§ 4, 7, saying, "The passages introducing the name of Joshua would seem to be the inserted ones," and in the exposition of ch. xiv. 24 assigning this distinction to those in which the name of Caleb only is mentioned. But there does not appear to be any urgent necessity for adopting the theory of combined accounts, either in the exaggerated form of Bleek or in the modified form of the 'Speaker's Commentary.' "The fact that Caleb only is mentioned in ch. xiii. 30, though, according to ch. xiv. 6, Joshua also stood by his side, may be explained on the simple ground that at first Caleb was the only one to speak and maintain the possibility of conquering Canaan" (Keil). Another instance commonly adduced in support of the idea of commingled documents is found in chs. xvi. and xvii., in which, according to Stähelin, De Wette, Bleek, and others of the rationalising school of criticism, the story belonging to the earliest narrative of the insurrection of Korah with his 250 Levites against the priestly power of Moses and Aaron has been mixed up with another tradition relating to the sedition of certain Reubenite princes against the civil authority of the law-giver in particular, ch. xvi. 12—15, 25—34 being additions of the supplementer. But the hypothesis that there were originally two distinct rebellions and that the accounts of these have been incorporated into one narrative, does not necessarily militate against the idea of the Mosaic authorship of the writing, since the original narrative may have been subsequently expanded by its first composer so as to include the two accounts in one. Indeed if we suppose, what is not at all unlikely to have been the case, that the spirit of mutiny was abroad in the congregation, there might easily have been more than one distinct centre of insubordination; and this hypothesis, that the Reubenite princes with their followers acted in confederation with the Levite Korah and his company (cf. Ewald, 'History of Israel,' Vol. II. p. 179), will be found to go far to explain the seeming dislocation of the narrative, in which a distinction appears to be kept up between the priestly and the princely rebels. Other specimens might be given of the so-called repetitions and contradictions that exist in Numbers, such as ch. xiii. 16 compared with ch. xi. 28, ch. xiv. 45 compared with ch. xxi. 3, and ch. xxi. 13 with ch. xxxiii. 45 ff.; but, besides admitting of easy refutation, none of them are of such importance as to call for extended notice.

3. Once more, in common with the other portions of the Pentateuch, the Book of Numbers is believed to exhibit traces of a later authorship than that of Moses, in such like passages, *e. g.*, as ch. xv. 32—36, which appears to intimate that at the time of its composition the children of Israel were no longer in the wilderness; ch. xx. 5, which suggests that they were then in Canaan; ch. xxi. 14, 15, 17, 18, 27—30, in which the writer alludes to certain archaic songs with which his readers were familiar; ch. xxiv. 7, which could not have been penned before the days of

the monarchy; and ch. xxiv. 17, 18, which clearly belongs to the time of David, when Idumea was conquered by Israel. But as the most of these have been examined in the Essay on the Authorship of the Pentateuch already referred to (*vide* 'Genesis,' Pulpit Commentary), it will be the less needful to subject them at present to separate consideration. It may suffice to remark that though unquestionably when thus brought together they appear to have a cumulative force of great value, yet the exact amount of importance to be attached to them depends upon whether they individually will bear the light of candid and impartial investigation, for if when separately taken they break down on examination, the nett result of even an infinite series of such examples will be *nil*, and it may with confidence be affirmed, as Keil and Hengstenberg have abundantly shown, that every one of the above so-called difficulties is capable of easy solution. Besides, to borrow an arrow from the quiver of an opponent, "he who relies upon the impression made by the whole, without interrogating the parts one by one, repudiates the first principles of all scientific research, and pays homage to superficiality" (Kuenen. 'The Religion of Israel,' vol. i. p. 11).

But now, on the other hand, the Book of Numbers possesses characteristics which point as unmistakably in the direction of a Mosaic authorship as the foregoing peculiarities are believed to speak in favour of a later origin.

1. The Book of Numbers contains several sections which in their existing shapes were either written by the hand of Moses or belong to the Mosaic age. Of these passages the following is the list prepared by Bleek ('Introduction to Old Testament,' Vol. I. § 118):—chs. i., ii., iii., iv.; vi. 22—27; x. 1—10; xix.; xxi. 14, 15, 17, 18, 27, 30; xxxiii. 1—49; with which in the main Ewald agrees, adding ch. x. 35, 36; xx. 14—22, as fragments "of the earliest accounts of the Mosaic times," at the same time guarding himself, with reference both to ch. xx. 14—22 and ch. xxxiii., by declining positively to affirm "that these catalogues were kept during the journey, or written down at once during its last year," though he admits that at a much later period they could not have been attempted ('History of Israel,' Vol. II. pp. 24, 26). *α.* The list of camping stations indeed distinctly claims to have been written by Moses (ch. xxxiii. 2), and though Bohlen ('Introduction to Genesis,' Vol. I. p. 88) professes to be able to detect in it everywhere traces of fiction, he may be said to stand alone in the possession of so remarkable a power of vision. The almost unanimous verdict of critical inquirers assigns this ancient catalogue of desert stations to Mosaic times for the simple reason that such a long series of names could not possibly have been retained in the memory for any lengthened period, and regards it as perfectly authentic because, as Ewald acknowledges, on examination it appears to be correct. *β.* With regard to the songs contained in ch. xxi., "it is so absolutely against all probability that they should be the production of a later age," writes Bleek, "that it has been acknowledged by De Wette that they are certainly derived from the Mosaic age;" and, again, "if we find here songs which bear indications of belonging to the Mosaic age, which, however, do not contain any reference at all to the circumstances of a later time, but are, on the contrary, full of features of individuality which are not otherwise intelligible, and are without meaning except in reference to circumstances in the time of Moses, it becomes highly probable that they were not only composed in the Mosaic age, but that they were then written down, and have come down to us from thence" ('Introduction to Old Testament,' Vol. I. § 79). *γ.* The legislation of ch. xix. bears upon the face of it that it was meant for a time when the people dwelt in camps

and tents (cf. vers. 3, 7, 9, 14), and could scarcely have been composed at a later period, when the circumstances of the people were so entirely altered as to render directions about camps and tents quite inapplicable. *b.* Similarly, the ordinance relating to the silver trumpets (ch. x. 1—10), and the instructions bearing on the census and the arrangement of the camp (chs. i.—iv.), so unmistakably discover their connection with the desert, that no intelligent critic ever dreams of disputing that at least they belong to that early era; while—*c.* That the high priestly benediction (ch. vi. 24—26) and the military order which was uttered at the marching and halting of the camp (ch. x. 35, 36) were also composed then seems impossible to deny, for, to use the words of Ewald, "in these antiquely simple but powerful and beautiful utterances there is nothing contrary to the age and spirit of Moses; the first poetically describes the peaceful, and the second the warlike, feelings of the community during that primeval age." If, therefore, these different portions of the present Book have descended from the age in which Moses lived, why should it be deemed imperative to search for another author to whom to ascribe their actual composition? And if it should appear, as on reflection it can hardly fail, that there is no such urgent necessity, may it not be regarded as creating at least presumptive evidence that the other sections of the Book have also proceeded from his pen?

2. The Book of Numbers bears evidence of having been composed in the desert by an eye-witness of, and participator in, the scenes and transactions he records. Here, of course, the argument will be more satisfactory if proof can be advanced from those parts of the Book whose Mosaic origin is commonly disputed; and to these alone, accordingly, attention will at present be directed. Now that the children of Israel were as yet sojourning in the Arabian peninsula, and had not settled in Canaan when this division of the Pentateuch was composed, may be inferred from the character of the legislation which it records, which always presupposes that the people "had not yet come into the land of their habitations," but were dwelling in camps and tents with the tabernacle in their midst (*vide* ch. v. 3. 4; vi. 10, 13; viii. 1; xv. 2; xviii. 2, 6, 21). It is on this principle that Bleek identifies the legislation in Leviticus as belonging to Mosaic times, and there can be no reason of a valid nature for refusing assent to the truth of this principle when applied in the same way to Numbers. Then, that the author must have been familiar with the desert is apparent from the accuracy of his geographical knowledge, which has not only in many of its details been verified by modern explorers, as, *e. g.*, Hebron (ch. xiii. 22) and Kadesh (*ibid.* ver. 26), but which strenuously resists all attempts at further identification except upon the hypothesis of its own correctness (cf. Lange 'on Numbers,' Introduction, p. 7); while the way in which the history and the legislation are commingled in the narrative—the history often affording the requisite basis for the legislation, and the legislation frequently springing naturally out of the circumstances described—renders it impossible that any but an actual participant in the events and transactions themselves could have written it (*vide* chs. v., ix., xxx., xxxvi.). "Evidently the alternations of historical and legislative portions reflect the order of actual transaction," and "this feature is exactly one which belongs to the work of a contemporary annalist" ('Speaker's Commentary,' Introduction to Numbers, § 4, (2)).

3. The Book of Numbers reveals an intimate acquaintance on the part of its author with Egyptian manners and customs, which at least harmonises with the idea that that author was Moses. (1) The trial by jealousy (ch. v. 11—35) may be compared with the tale of Setnau translated by Brugsch from a demotic manuscript

belonging probably to the third century B.C., but relating to the times of Rameses II., in which Ptah-nefer-Ka, having found the book which the god Thoth wrote with his own hand, copied it on a new piece of papyrus, dissolved it in water, and drank it, with the immediate result that "he knew all that it contained" (*vide* 'Records of the Past,' Vol. IV. p. 138). (2) The consecration of the Levites (ch. viii. 7) finds a counterpart in the ablutions of the Egyptian priests, who shaved their heads and bodies every third day, and spared no pains to promote the cleanliness of their persons, bathing twice a day and twice during the night, and performing a grand ceremony of purification preparatory to their periods of fasting, which sometimes lasted from seven to forty-two days, or even longer (*vide* Wilkinson's 'Ancient Egyptians,' Vol. I. p. 181). (3) The notion that contact with a dead body communicated uncleanness (ch. xix. 11) was not unknown to the Egyptians, who, according to Porphyry ('De Abst.,' ii. 50, quoted in 'Speaker's Commentary'), required their priests to shun graves, funerals, and funeral feasts. (4) The dainties referred to in ch. xi. 5, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlick, were such as abounded in ancient Egypt (cf. Herodotus, ii. 93, 125; Hengstenberg's 'Egypt and the Books of Moses,' ch. vii. pp. 208—214; Wilkinson's 'Ancient Egyptians,' Vol. II. pp. 23 *sqq.*). (5) The antiquarian statement in ch. xiii. 22 about the age of Hebron indicates an acquaintance with Egyptian history which was less likely to have been possessed by a foreigner than by one who was native born. Now, although it cannot be maintained that these allusions to Egypt and its history demonstrate with mathematical certainty that Moses was the author of Numbers, it is yet a fair and legitimate inference that they are much more easily explained on that hypothesis than any other.

4. It may be noted that the Book of Numbers is not destitute of incidental and undesigned traces of having been composed in Mosaic times. (1) The mention of Arnon as the territorial boundary between Moab and the Amorites (ch. xxi. 13), though cited by Bohlen ('Introduction,' Vol. I. p. 70) as a geographical anachronism under the mistaken impression that David first constituted the Arnon the northern limit of Moab, is in reality an indication that the Amorites had not then been dispossessed by the two tribes and a half, or, in other words, that the clause was written while the Israelitish army was still upon the south bank of the river. (2) The circumstance that in ch. xxxiv. a larger extent of territory was assigned to Israel than they ever permanently occupied indirectly confirms the Mosaic authorship, since, as has been well remarked in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' "a historian of later times would hardly have ascribed to his people, without explanation or qualification, districts which in fact they did not possess," whereas "a romancer of such times, drawing an imaginary frontier, would certainly not have left out of it the renowned city of Damascus, especially after carrying his border line almost round this district, and in view of the fact that the city and its territory were in the dominions of David and Solomon, and afterwards of Jeroboam II." (Introduction, § 4). (3) The want of correspondence between the settlements of the two tribes and a half, as described in ch. xxxii. 34—42, and as actually held by them at a later period (Josh. xiii. 15—33), also points to a contemporary author, since a late writer would almost certainly have made the two to harmonise by constructing both passages in accordance with existing fact.

Thus the Book of Numbers, when fairly and dispassionately interrogated, not only does not support the modern hypothesis of its being a late compilation from pre-existing documents, some of which had descended from primitive times, but the

majority of which were only the praiseworthy endeavours of subsequent ages to preserve the national traditions of the Beni-Israel from becoming extinct, but abundantly warrants the still popular belief, that while there is every probability that, like the rest of the Pentateuchal writings, it has been subjected to one or more revisions, and may even have suffered interpolation in unimportant passages, such as ch. xii. 3 (though this of course is not absolutely certain), yet in the main, and substantially as we still possess it, it proceeded as an original composition from the hand of Moses.

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Book of Numbers is a part of the Mosaic writings ordinarily called the Pentateuch. It would be more correct in a literary sense to say that it forms part of those records of the Beni-Israel which bring down the history of that peculiar people to the date of their victorious entry into their own land. The Book which follows is (on any theory as to its authorship) widely dissevered from the previous records in character and scope. The Book of Numbers forms the concluding fourth of a work of which the substantial unity and continuity cannot be reasonably questioned, and therefore very much which affects this Book is better treated of in an Introduction to the whole. The division, however, which separates Numbers from Leviticus is more marked than that which separates Leviticus from Exodus, or Exodus from Genesis. The narrative (which has been almost entirely suspended throughout the third Book) reappears in the fourth, and leads us on (with divers breaks and interruptions indeed) through the whole of that most important and distinctive period which we may call the fourth stage in the national life of the Beni-Israel. The first of these stages extends from the call of Abraham to the beginning of the sojourn in Egypt. The second includes the time of sojourning there. The third is the short but critical period of the exodus from Rameses to Mount Sinai, including the giving of the Law. The fourth reaches from Mount Sinai to the river Jordan, and coincides with the whole period of probation, preparation, failure, recovery. It will be noticed that our Book is the only one of the four which corresponds entirely to one of these stages; it has therefore more real distinctness of character than any of the other three.

A. ON THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK.

If we take the Book of Numbers as it stands, apart from any preconceived theories, and allow its contents to divide themselves into sections according to the actual character of their subject matter, we shall obtain, without any serious difference of opinion, the following result. Perhaps no book in the Bible falls more easily and naturally into its component parts.

SYNOPSIS OF NUMBERS.

Section I.—Preparations for the Great March.

	CHAP.	
1.	i. 1—46	The first census of Israel.
2.	i. 47—54	Special orders about the Levites.
3.	ii. 1—34	Camping order of the tribes.
4.	iii. 1—4	Notice of the priestly family.
5.	iii. 5—51	Dedication of the Levites in lieu of the firstborn their number, charge, and redemption.
6.	iv. 1—49	Duties of the Levites on the march.

Section II.—Repetitions of and Additions to the Levitical Legislation.

1.	v. 1—4	The exclusion of the unclean.
2.	v. 5—10	Laws of recompense and of offerings.
3.	v. 11—31	The trial of jealousy.
4.	vi. 1—21	The Nazirite vow.
5.	vi. 22—27	The formula of priestly benediction.

Section III.—Narrative of Events from the setting up of the Tabernacle to the Sentence of Exile at Kadesh.

1.	vii. 1—88	Offerings of the princes at the dedication.
2.	vii. 89	The voice in the sanctuary.
3.	viii. 1—4	The lamps lighted in the tabernacle.
4.	viii. 5—26	Consecration of the Levites.
5.	ix. 1—14	The second passover, and the supplemental passover.
6.	ix. 15—23	The cloud on the tabernacle.
7.	x. 1—10	The silver trumpets.
8.	x. 11—28	The start and order of march.
9.	x. 29—32	The invitation to Hobab.
10.	x. 33—36	The first journey.
11.	xi. 1—3	Sin and chastisement at Taberah.
12.	xi. 4—35	Sin and chastisement at Kibroth-hattaavah.
13.	xii. 1—16	Sedition of Miriam and Aaron.
14.	xiii. 1—33	Mission and report of the spies.
15.	xiv. 1—45	Rebellion and rejection of the people.

Section IV.—Fragments of Levitical Legislation.

1.	xv. 1—21	Law of offerings and first-fruits.
2.	xv. 22—31	Law of trespass offerings, and of presumptuous sins.
3.	xv. 32—36	Incident of the sabbath-breaker.
4.	xv. 37—41	Law of fringes.

Section V.—Narrative of the Revolt against the Aaronic Priesthood.

1.	xvi. 1—50	Rebellion of Korah and his confederates, and its suppression.
2.	xvii. 1—13	The rod of Aaron which budded.

Section VI.—Further Additions to the Law.

1.	xviii. 1—32	The charge and emoluments of priests and Levites.
2.	xix. 1—22	Law of the red heifer, and the pollution of death.

SECTION VII.—NARRATIVE OF EVENTS DURING THE LAST JOURNEY.

CHAP.		
1.	xx. 1—13	The water of strife.
2.	xx. 14—21	The insolence of Edom.
3.	xx. 22—29	The death of Aaron.
4.	xxi. 1—3	Episode of King Arad.
5.	xxi. 4—9	Episode of the brazen serpent.
6.	xxi. 10—32	Last marches and first victories.
7.	xxi. 33—xxii. 1	Conquest of Og.

SECTION VIII.—STORY OF BALAAM.

1.	xxii. 2—38	The coming of Balaam.
2.	xxii. 39—xxiv. 25 ...	The prophecies of Balaam.

SECTION IX.—NARRATIVE OF EVENTS IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB.

1.	xxv. 1—18	Sin and atonement at Shittim.
2.	xxvi. 1—65	Second census of Israel with a view to the allotment of the land.
3.	xxvii. 1—11	Suit of Zelophehad's daughters.
4.	xxvii. 12—23	Supersession of Moses by Joshua.

SECTION X.—RECAPITULATIONS OF AND ADDITIONS TO THE LAW.

1.	xxviii. 1—xxix. 40 ...	The annual routine of sacrifice.
2.	xxx. 1—16	Law of vows made by women.

SECTION XI.—NARRATIVE OF FURTHER EVENTS IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB.

1.	xxxi. 1—54	Extirpation of Midian.
2.	xxxii. 1—42	Settlement of the two and a half tribes.

SECTION XII.—THE ITINERARY.

	xxxiii. 1—49	List of marches from Rameses to Jordan.

SECTION XIII.—FINAL INSTRUCTIONS IN VIEW OF THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

1.	xxxiii. 50—56	The clearance of the holy land.
2.	xxxiv. 1—15	Boundaries of the holy land.
3.	xxxiv. 16—29	Allotment of the holy land.
4.	xxxv. 1—8	Reservation of cities for the Levites.
5.	xxxv. 9—34	The cities of refuge, and law of homicide.
6.	xxxvi. 1—13	Law of the marriage of heiresses.

Other divisions than these may of course be founded upon considerations of chronology, or upon the wish to group together the historical and legislative portions in certain combinations; but these considerations are obviously foreign to the Book itself. While a general sequence is evidently observed, dates are almost entirely absent; and while it is very natural to trace a close connection between the facts of the narrative and the matter of the legislation, such connection (in the absence of any statement to substantiate it) must remain always uncertain, and often very precarious.

The contents, therefore, of this Book fall naturally into thirteen sections of very various length, clearly marked at their edges by the change either of subject matter or of literary character. Thus, *e. g.*, no reader, however uneducated, could

avoid noticing the abrupt transition from ch. xiv. to ch. xv.; and thus again no reader who had any ear for literary style could fail to isolate in his own mind the story of Balaam from the narrative which precedes and follows it. Perhaps the only question which could be seriously raised on this subject is the propriety of treating the Itinerary as a separate section. The character, however, of the passage is so distinct, and it is so clearly separated from what follows by the formula of ch. xxxiii. 50, that there seems no alternative if we wish to follow the natural lines of division.

It will be seen that of the thirteen sections, eight are narrative, four are legislative, and one (the last) is of a mixed character.

B. On the Chronology of the Book.

The dates given in the Book itself are (excluding the date of the departure from Rameses, ch. xxxiii. 3) only four; but the reference to the setting up of the tabernacle is equivalent to a fifth. We have, therefore, the following as fixed points in the narrative.

1. The dedication of the tabernacle, with the offering of the princes (vii. 1, 2) and the descent of the sacred cloud (ix. 15) ... ... 1st day of Abib in year 2.
2. The second passover (ix. 5) ... ... 14th day of Abib in year 2.
3. The census at Sinai (i. 1) ... ... 1st day of Zif in year 2.
4. The supplemental passover (ix. 11) ... ... 14th day of Zif in year 2.
5. The start for Canaan (x. 11) ... ... 20th day of Zif in year 2.
6. The death of Aaron (xxxiii. 38) ... ... 1st day of Ab in year 40.

There is, however, a note of time in this Book which is more important than any date, for in ch. xiv. an exile of forty years is denounced against the Beni-Israel; and although it is not stated at what precise point the exile terminated, yet we may safely conclude that it was either at or very near the conclusion of this Book. If, therefore, we had no subsequent data to guide us, we should say that ch. i.—x. 10 covers a space of one month, twenty days; ch. x. 11—xiv. a space which may be variously estimated from two months to four months; ch. xv.—xx. 28 a space of very nearly thirty-eight years (of which the great bulk would coincide with chs. xv.—xix.); and the remainder a space of nearly two years. It is, however, stated in Deut. i. 3 that Moses began his last address to the people on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year, *i. e.* exactly six months after the death of Aaron, and only five months after the departure from Mount Hor. This does no doubt crowd the events of the last period into a strangely brief space of time, and shortens the time of wandering from forty to thirty-eight and a half years. The latter difficulty, although not to be lightly passed over, is yet fairly met by the assumption that the Divine mercy (which ever loves to take hold on any excuse for leniency) was moved to include the time of wandering already spent in the term of punishment inflicted at Kadesh. The former difficulty is more serious, for it implies a hurry which does not appear upon the face of the narrative. We may, however, remember that a generation which had grown up in the desert, hardened to exposure, and inured

to fatigue, would move with a swiftness and strike with a vigour altogether foreign to the nation which came out of Egypt. The actual distance traversed by the main bulk of the people (more than 200 miles) need not have occupied more than a month, and some of the operations recorded may have been carried on simultaneously. It will not, however, be forgotten that the difficulty arises from a comparison of two dates, neither of which is found in the main narrative of the Book of Numbers.

C. Of the Composition of the Book, and the Sequence of its Contents.

If we compare the table of contents with the table of dates, we shall see at once that the earlier portions of the narrative are out of chronological order, and we shall not find any sufficient reason assigned for this dislocation. On the contrary, closer examination will leave the greater certainty that ch. vii. and ch. viii. to ver. 4 (at least) connect themselves rather with Exod. xl. or Levit. ix. than with their present context. It appears, also, from the synopsis of the Book, that narrative alternates with legislation in such a way as cut it up into clearly marked sections. It is asserted that the legislative matter thus interspersed grows out of, and shows a natural connection with, the narrative. This is true in some cases, but in many more cases it is not true. *E. g.* it is at least plausible in the case of the law for the exclusion of the unclean which interrupts the narrative in ch. v. 1—4. But it is not even plausible with respect to the laws which follow to the end of ch. vi.; no ingenuity can show any special connection between the preparations for departure from Sinai and the trial of jealousy or the Nazirite vow. Again, it is possible to argue that the law which regulated the respective offices and emoluments of the priests and Levites finds its proper place after the record of Korah's rebellion; and also that the ordinance of the red heifer was historically connected with the sentence of death in the wilderness and the compulsory disuse of the ordinary routine of sacrifice. But it could hardly be seriously contended that the fragmentary enactments of ch. xv. or the regulations of ch. xxx. have the least apparent connection with their place in the record. It is not at all too much to say, with regard to the greater number of the laws in this Book, that their position is arbitrary as far as we can now see, and that the reasons assigned for their standing where they do are purely artificial. It does not follow that there were not actual reasons, unknown to us, why these laws should have been revealed at times corresponding to their position; nevertheless, the presumption which arises upon the face of the record is certainly this, that the legislative matter in this Book consists mainly of fragments of the Levitical legislation which have in some way become detached and have been interspersed through the narrative. One exception, however, is so obvious that it must be noted: the routine of sacrifice in chs. xxviii., xxix. is not a fragment, nor an isolated enactment; it is a recapitulation in a very complete form of the whole law so far as it applied to a distinct and important

department of Jewish worship. As such it accords with its assigned position on the threshold of the promised land; or it may even represent a later codification of the Mosaic legislation on the subject. Turning now to the narrative, we find that it is exceedingly uneven and intermittent in its character as a record. Three hundred and twenty-six verses are devoted to the arrangements and events of the fifty days which preceded the march from Sinai; one hundred and fifty-five more contain the story of the few months which ended with the defeat at Kadesh; to the next thirty-eight years belong only sixty-three verses, relating in detail a single episode without date or place; the rest of the narrative, consisting of three hundred and sixty-one verses, relates to the last period, of little more than eleven months according to the accepted chronology. Even in this last portion, which is comparatively full, it is evident by a reference to the Itinerary that no notice is taken of many places where the camp was halted, and where no doubt incidents of greater or less interest occurred. The Book, therefore, does not profess to be a continuous narrative, but only to record certain incidents—some briefly, some at considerable length—of the journeys from Sinai to Kadesh, and from Kadesh to Jordan, together with a single episode from the long years between. But the narrative, broken as it is in chain of incident, is further broken in literary character. The questions which arise out of the story of Balaam are discussed in their proper place; but it is impossible to believe (unless some very strong necessity can be shown for believing) that the section ch. xxii. 2—xxiv. has the same literary history as the rest of the Book. Inserted in the Book, and that in its proper place as to order of events, its distinctness is nevertheless evident, both from other considerations and especially from its rhetorical and dramatic character. It requires no knowledge of Hebrew, and no acquaintance with learned theories, to recognise in this section an epic (partly prose and partly verse) which may indeed have come from the same author as the narrative which surrounds it, but which must have had within that author's mind a wholly different origin and history. What is said of the story of Balaam may be said in a somewhat different sense of the archaic quotations in ch. xxi. Imbedded as these are in the story, they are on the face of them as plainly foreign as the erratics which the icebergs of a vanished age have left behind. But, more than this, the very presence of these quotations gives a peculiar character to the narrative in which they occur. It is hard to believe that the historian, *e. g.*, of the exodus would stoop to cull these snatches of old song, which are for the most part devoid of any religious import; it is hard not to think that they are due to popular memory, and were repeated by many a camp-fire before they got written down by some unknown hand.

Looking, therefore, at the Book of Numbers simply as one of the sacred books of the Jews, we find that it presents the following features. It narrates a variety of incidents at the beginning and ending of the desert wanderings between Sinai and Jordan, and carries on the story of Israel (with one remarkable break) from

the holy mount of consecration to the holy land of habitation. The narrative, however, incomplete as to matter, is also inconsecutive as to form; for it is interspersed with legislative matter which does not seem for the most part to have any special connection with its context, but would find its natural place among the laws of Leviticus. Moreover, while the main part of the narrative entirely harmonises in literary style and character with that of the previous books (at least from Gen. xi. 10 onwards), there are portions towards the end which bear internal evidence—the one less, the other more strongly—of a different origin. If we had no other data to go upon, we should probably come to the conclusion—1. That the materials used in compiling the Book were in the main from one hand, and that the same to which we owe both the previous history of the Beni-Israel and the Sinaitic legislation. 2. That the materials had existed in a somewhat fragmentary state, and had been arranged in their present order by some unknown hand. 3. That in one chapter at least some other material of a more popular kind had been drawn upon. 4. That in one case an entire section had been inserted, complete in itself, and of a character very distinct from the rest. These conclusions are, however, by no means so certain but that they may be set aside by sufficient arguments if such can be found.

D. On the Authorship of the Book.

It has been until lately assumed as a matter of course that the whole of this Book, together with the other four of the Pentateuch, was written by Moses. With regard to ch. xii. 3 alone, the obvious difficulty of ascribing such a statement to Moses himself has always led many to regard it as an interpolation by some later (sacred) writer. When we come to examine the evidence for the Mosaic authorship of the whole Book as it stands, it is astonishing how little it amounts to. There is not a single statement attached to the Book to show that it was written by Moses. There is indeed a statement in ch. xxxiii. 2 that "Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord;" but this, so far from proving that Moses wrote the Book, somewhat strongly militates against it. For the statement in question is found in a section which is obviously distinct, and which has more the appearance of an appendix to the narrative than of an integral part of it. Moreover, it does not even apply to the Itinerary as it stands, but only to the bare list of marches upon which it is founded; the observations appended to some of the names (*e. g.* to Elim and to Mount Hor) are much more like the work of a later writer copying from the list left by Moses. If we found in an anonymous work a list of names inserted towards the end with the statement that the names had been written down by such and such a person (whose authority would be unquestioned), we should not certainly quote that statement in order to prove that that person wrote all the rest of the book. Supposing the statement to be true (and there seems no alternative between accepting it as true within the knowledge of the

writer and rejecting it as a wilful falsehood), it simply assures us that Moses kept a written record of the marches, and that the Itinerary in question is based on that record. Turning to the external testimony as to authorship, we come to the evidence afforded by the opinion of the later Jews. No one doubts that they ascribed the whole Pentateuch to Moses, and comparatively few doubt that their tradition was substantially correct. But it is one thing to believe that an opinion handed down from an uninquiring age as to the authorship of a book was substantially correct, and quite another thing to believe that it was formally correct. That the Law was of Mosaic origin and authority may have been perfectly true for all practical religious purposes; that the Law was written down verbatim as it stands by the hand of Moses may have been the very natural, but at the same time inaccurate, form in which a true belief presented itself to minds wholly innocent of literary criticism. To set the tradition of the later Jews against the strong internal evidence of the writings themselves is to exalt tradition (and that at its weakest point) at the expense of Scripture. It may be very true that if the Law was not really of Mosaic origin, the saints and prophets of old time were grievously deceived; it may be quite false that any particular opinion current amongst them as to the precise character of the Mosaic authorship has any claim upon our acceptance. That "the Law was given by Moses" is a thing so constantly affirmed in the Scriptures that it can hardly be denied without overthrowing their authority; that Moses wrote every word of Numbers as it stands is a literary opinion which naturally commended itself to an age of literary ignorance, but which every ensuing age is at liberty to revise or reject.

It is, however, argued that our Lord himself has testified to the truth of the ordinary Jewish tradition by using the name "Moses" as tantamount to the Mosaic books. This argument has more special reference to Deuteronomy, but the whole Pentateuch is included within its scope. It is answered—and the answer is apparently incontrovertible—that our Lord merely used the common language of the Jews, without meaning to guarantee the precise accuracy of the ideas on which that language was based. As a fact, the Pentateuch was known as "Moses," just as the Psalms were known as "David." No one, perhaps, would now contend that Ps. xcv. must of necessity be ascribed to David himself because it is cited as "David" in Heb. iv. 7; and few would maintain the like of Ps. cx., even though our Lord certainly assumed that "David" spake therein (Matt. xxii. 45). Both these psalms may have been David's own, and yet we need not feel ourselves tied up to that conclusion because the ordinary language and opinion of the Jews concerning them is followed in the New Testament. The common sense of the matter seems to be, that unless our Lord's judgment had been directly challenged on the subject, he could not have done otherwise than use the common terminology of the day. To do otherwise had been the part, not of a prophet, but of a pedant, which he assuredly never was. We may be sure that he always spake to people in their own language, and accepted their

current ideas, unless those ideas involved some practical religious error. He took occasion, *e. g.*, to say that Moses did *not* give the manna from heaven (John vi. 32), and did *not* institute circumcision (*ibid.* vii. 22), for these exaggerations in the popular estimate of Moses were both false in themselves and might be known to be false; but to open up a literary controversy which would have been unintelligible and unpractical for that and many succeeding generations was wholly foreign to that Son of man who was in the truest sense the child of his own age and of his own people. To take an instructive instance from the region of physical science: it has actually been made a reproach against the sacred writers that they speak (as we do) of the sun rising and setting, whereas in truth it is the movements of the earth which cause the appearances in question. It does not occur to such critics to ask themselves how the sacred writers could have used in that age scientific language which even we cannot use in common conversation. That our Lord spake of the sun rising and setting, and not of the earth revolving on its axis from west to east, is a thing for which we have perhaps as much reason to be thankful as those who heard him. Similarly, that our Lord spake of Moses without hesitation or qualification as the author of the Pentateuch is a matter not of surprise, but of thankfulness to us all, however much modern investigation may have modified our conception of the Mosaic authorship. What could possibly be more alien from the revealed character of that adorable Son of man than a display either of scientific or of literary knowledge, foreign to the age, which had no bearing upon true religion or the saving of the world from sin?

External testimony, therefore, only seems to force upon us the conclusion that the substance of "the Law" (in some general sense) is of Mosaic origin; but it does not oblige us to believe that Moses wrote down either the legislative or narrative portions of our Book with his own hand. We are therefore left to internal evidence for the determination of all such questions. Now it must be at once conceded that internal evidence is extremely difficult to weigh, especially in writers so remote from our own age and our own literary canons. But a few points come out strongly from the study of the Book.

1. As already shown, its very form and character point to the probability of its having been compiled from documents previously existing, and put together for the most part very inartificially. Scarcely a trace appears of any attempt to soften down the abrupt transitions, to explain the obscurities, or to bridge over the gaps with which the Book abounds; its multiplicity of beginnings and endings is left to speak for itself.

2. The great bulk of the Book bears strong evidence to the truth of the ordinary belief that it was written by a contemporary, and that contemporary none other than Moses himself. If we look at the narrative, the curiously minute touches here and the equally curious obscurities there point alike to a writer who had lived through it all; a later writer would have had no motive

for inserting many of the details, and would have had strong motives for explaining many things which now arouse, without gratifying, our curiosity. The antiquarian information incidentally given about Hebron and Zoan (ch. xiii. 22) seems thoroughly incompatible with a later age than that of Moses, and points to one who had had access to the public archives of Egypt; and the list of cheap delicacies in ch. xi. 5 is evidence of the same sort. The boundaries assigned to the promised land are indeed too obscure to be made the basis of much argument, but the one plain fact about them—that they exclude the trans-Jordanic territory—seems inconsistent with any subsequent period of Jewish national feeling. Until towards the close of the monarchy the regions of Gilead and Bashan were a part, and an integral part, of the land of Israel; Jordan could only have been made the eastern frontier at a time when the self-willed choice of the two and a half tribes had not yet obliterated (so to speak) the original boundary of the promised possession. Moreover, the obvious want of coincidence between the settlements recorded in ch. xxxii. 34—38 and those afterwards held by these tribes tells strongly in favour of the contemporary origin of this record. If, on the other hand, we look at the legislation included in this Book, we have not indeed the same assurances, but we have the fact that very much of it is on the face of it designed for a wilderness life, and required to be adapted to the times of settled habitation: the camp and the tabernacle are constantly assumed, and directions given (as *e. g.* in ch. xix. 3, 4, 9) which could only be replaced by some equivalent ritual after the temple was set up. It is of course possible (though very improbable) that some later writer might have imagined himself to be living with the people in the wilderness, and have written accordingly; but it is eminently unlikely that he would have succeeded in doing so without betraying himself many times. The religious fictions of a much later and more literary age, such as the Book of Judith, continually blunder, and if the Book of Tobit escapes the charge, it is because it restricts itself to domestic scenes. Against this strong internal evidence—all the stronger because it is difficult to reduce it to definite statement—there is really nothing to be set. The theory, which once seemed so plausible, that the use of the two Divine names, Jehovah and Elohim, pointed to a plurality of authors whose various contributions might be distinguished, has happily been long enough in the hands of its advocates to have reduced itself to absurdity. If there be any one left who is disposed to pursue this *ignis fatuus* of Old Testament criticism, it is not possible for soberness and common sense to follow him—he must chase his phantoms until he be weary, for he will always find some one more foolish than himself to give him a reason why "Jehovah" should stand here and "Elohim" there. The argument from the use of the word *nabi* (prophet—ch. xi. 29; xii. 6) seems to be founded on a misunderstanding of 1 Sam. ix. 9, and the few other exceptions which have been taken refer to passages which may well be interpolations. The conclusion, therefore, is strongly warranted that the bulk of the material contained in this Book is from the hand of a contemporary,

and if so, from the hand of Moses himself, since no one else can even be suggested.

3. There is every reason to believe, and no necessity to deny, that interpolations were made either by the original compiler or by some later reviser. Instances will be found in ch. xii. 3; xiv. 25, and in ch. xv. 32—36. In the last case it may be reasonably contended that the incident is narrated in order to illustrate the sternness of the law against the presumptuous sinner, but the words "when the children of Israel were in the wilderness" seem to show conclusively that the illustration was interpolated by some one living in the land of Canaan. No one perhaps would have doubted this except under the strangely mistaken idea that it is an article of the Christian faith that Moses wrote every word of the Pentateuch. In chs. xiii., xiv., and xvi. there are signs not so much of interpolation, but of a revision of the narrative which has disturbed its sequence, and in the latter case has made it very obscure in parts. These phenomena would be accounted for if we could suppose that one who had himself been an actor in these scenes (such as Joshua) had altered and revised, not very skilfully, the record left behind by Moses. We have, however, no evidence to substantiate such a supposition. In ch. xxi. 1—3 we have an apparent example neither of interpolation nor of revision, but of accidental dislocation. The notice of King Arad and his defeat is evidently very ancient, but it is generally agreed that it is out of place where it stands; nevertheless, the displacement would seem to be older than the present form of the Itinerary, for the passing allusion in ch. xxxiii. 40 refers to the same event in the same geographical connection. The repetition of the genealogy of Aaron in ch. xxvi. 58—61 has all the appearance of an interpolation. The character of ch. xxxiii. 1—49 has been already discussed.

4. There remain two important passages on which objections have been founded against the Mosaic authorship of the Book. The one is the narrative of the march round Moab in ch. xxi., with its quotations of ancient songs and sayings. The objection indeed that no "book of the wars of the Lord" could have been then in existence is arbitrary, for we have no means of proving a negative of this kind. That written records were very rare in that age is really no reason for denying that Moses (who had received the highest education of the most civilised country in the then world) was able to write down memorials of his own time, or to make a collection of popular songs. But that Moses should have quoted from one of those songs, which could only just have been added to the collection, seems very unlikely; and this fact, together with the different character of the narrative in this part, may incline us to believe that the compiler here added to the (perhaps meagre) record left by Moses by drawing upon some of that popular lore, partly oral, partly written, which happened to illustrate his text. The other passage is the long and striking episode of Balaam, which has been already spoken of. There is no difficulty in supposing that this came from the hand of Moses, if we look upon it as an epic poem based upon

facts, although it is a matter of conjecture how he became acquainted with the facts. The possible explanation is suggested in the notes, and it is clear in any case that no subsequent Jewish writer would be in a better position than Moses himself in this respect, while to regard it as a mere effort of the imagination creates a host of difficulties greater than those it solves.

This part of the subject may be summed up by saying, that while the external evidence as to authorship is indecisive, and only obliges us to believe that "the Law" was given by Moses, the internal evidence is strong that the Book of Numbers, like the preceding books, is substantially from the hand of Moses. The objections urged against this conclusion are either in themselves captious and untenable, or are merely valid against particular passages. As to these, it may be fearlessly allowed that there are some interpolations by a later hand, that portions have been revised, that the various sections would seem to have existed separately, and to have been put together with little art, that some other material may have been worked into the narrative, and that some of the legislation may perhaps be rather a later codification of Mosaic ordinances than the original ordinances themselves.

E. On the Truth of the Book.

It may perhaps seem that in surrendering the traditional opinion that in all this Book we have the *ipsissima verba* written down by Moses, we have given up its veracity. Such an inference, however, would be quite arbitrary. Nothing turns upon the question whether Moses wrote a single word of Numbers, unless it be the list of marches, of which as much is expressly stated. There is no reason for asserting that Moses was inspired to write true history, and that Joshua, *e. g.*, was not. The Books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth are received as true, although we do not know who wrote them, and the Book of Judges at any rate is apparently compiled from fragmentary records. Even in the New Testament we do not know who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews; and we do know that there are passages in the Gospel of St. Mark (ch. xvi. 9—20) and in the Gospel of St. John (ch. viii. 1—11) which were not written by the evangelists to whom they have been traditionally assigned. The credibility of these writings (considered apart from the fact of their inspiration) turns mainly upon the question to whose authority the statements contained in them can be traced, and in a very minor degree to whose hand the present arrangement of them is due. As to the first, we have every reason to believe that the materials of the Book are substantially from Moses himself, whose knowledge and veracity are alike beyond suspicion. As to the second, we have only to acknowledge the same ignorance as in the case of the greater part of the Old Testament and of some part of the New Testament. It is, of course, open to any one to doubt or to deny the truth of these records, but in order to show reason for doing so he must not be content with pointing out some difference of style here, or some trace of a

later hand there, but he must bring forward some clear instance of error, some undeniable self-contradiction, or some statement which is fairly incredible. The mere existence of a record so ancient and revered, and the unmistakable tone of simplicity and straightforwardness which characterises it, give it a *primâ facie* claim upon our acceptance until good cause can be shown to the contrary. If the early records of other nations are largely fabulous and incredible, no presumption passes over from them to a record which on the face of it presents such utterly different features. It remains to examine candidly the only objection of a serious nature (apart from the question of miracles, which it is useless to consider here) which has been brought against the substantial truth of this Book. It is urged that the figures set down as representing the numbers of Israel at the two censuses are incredible, because inconsistent, not only with the possibilities of life in the wilderness, but also with the directions given by Moses himself. This is in truth a very serious objection, and there is much to be said for it. It is quite true that a population of some 2,000,000 people, including a full proportion of women and children (for the males of that generation would be rather under than over the average), would under any ordinary circumstances seem unmanageable in a wild and difficult country. It is quite true (and this is much more to the point) that the narrative as a whole leaves a distinct impression upon the mind of a very much smaller total than the one given. It is sufficient to refer for proof to such passages as ch. x. 3—7, where the whole nation is supposed to be within hearing of the silver trumpet, and able to distinguish its calls; ch. xiv., where the whole nation is represented as joining in the uproar, and therefore as included in the sentence; ch. xvi., where a similar scene is described in connection with the revolt of Korah; ch. xx. 11, where the whole thirsty multitude is represented as drinking (together with their cattle) of the one stream from the smitten rock; ch. xxi. 9, where the brazen serpent on a standard may be seen, apparently, from every part of the camp. Each one of these instances, indeed, if taken by itself, may be shown to be far from conclusive; but there is such a thing as cumulative evidence—the evidence which arises from a number of small and inconclusive testimonies all pointing the same way. Now it can hardly be denied that all these incidents raise in the mind a strong impression, which the entire narrative tends to confirm, that the numbers of Israel were much more moderate than those given. The difficulty, however, comes to a head in connection with the marching orders issued by Moses directly after the first census, and to that point we may confine our attention.

According to ch. ii. (as slightly modified afterwards—see on ch. x. 17) the eastern camps of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, containing more than 600,000 people, were to march first, and then the tabernacle was taken down and carried on waggons by the Gershonites and Merarites. After them marched the southern camps of Reuben, Gad, and Simeon, more than 500,000 strong; and behind

them the Kohathites bore the sacred furniture; the other Levites were to put up the tabernacle against the Kohathites arrived. The remaining camps of the west and of the north followed with some 900,000 souls.

If we try to picture to ourselves a day's march between Sinai and Kadesh (for the marching orders were doubtless suspended then, and may never have been issued again), we have to think of 600,000 people at the first signal of departure striking their tents, forming into columns under their natural leaders, and setting forth in the direction taken by the cloudy pillar. We are not at liberty to suppose that they straggled far and wide over the face of the land, because it is evident that an orderly march is intended under the guidance of a single moving object. It is difficult to believe that a multitude so vast and so mixed could have moved off the ground in less than four or five hours at least, even if this was possible; but this was only one division out of four, and these were separated by some little interval, so that it would be already dark before the last division could possibly have fallen into the line of march. Now if we turn our eyes from the beginning to the end of the day's march, we see the journey arrested by the cloudy pillar; we see the first division of 600,000 souls turning to the right in order to take up camping ground towards the east; when these are out of the way we see the Levites arriving and setting up the tabernacle beside the cloudy pillar; then another division of half a million people come up and spread themselves on the south of the tabernacle across the onward track; behind the last of these come the Kohathites with the sacred furniture, and, passing through the midst of the southern camps, rejoin at last their brethren in order to place the holy things in the tabernacle; then follows a third division, some 360,000 strong, who march off to the left; and last of all the fourth division, which contains more than another half-million, has to make a circuit entirely round the eastern or western camps in order to take up its own quarters on the north. Undoubtedly the question forces itself on every one who permits himself to think about it, whether such orders and such numbers are compatible with one another. Even if we allow for the providential absence of all sickness and all death, it appears very doubtful whether the thing was within the limits of physical possibility. Again, we have to ask ourselves whether Moses would have separated the tabernacle from its sacred furniture on the march by half a million of people, who must (under any circumstances) have been many hours in getting out of the way. It may be said, and with some truth, that we scarcely know what may be done by vast multitudes animated by one spirit, habituated to rigid discipline, and (in this case) aided by many peculiar and indeed miraculous circumstances. Still there are physical limits of time and space which no energy and no discipline can overpass, and which no conceivable exercise of Divine power can set aside. It may be granted that 2,000,000 of Israelites might have wandered for years in the peninsula under the given conditions, and yet it may be denied that they could follow the marching orders

issued at Sinai. Without attempting to solve this question, two considerations may be pointed out which affect its character. 1. No simple alteration of the text will set the figures in accord with the apparent requirements of the narrative. The total of 600,000 adult males is repeated again and again, from Exod. xii. 37 onwards; it is made up of a number of smaller totals, which are also given; and it is to some extent checked by comparison with the number of the "first-born" (whatever that may mean) and the number of Levites. 2. If the numbers recorded were given up as untrustworthy, it is certain that nothing else in the Book would be directly affected. The numbers stand quite apart, at least in this sense, that they have no value and no interest whatever of any moral or spiritual kind. Arithmetic enters into history, but it does not enter into religion. The same things have, from the point of view of religion, precisely the same value and the same meaning when done or suffered by one thousand which they would have had if done or suffered by ten thousand. If, then, any earnest student of Holy Writ should find himself unable to accept, as historically trustworthy, the numbers given in this Book, he is not therefore driven to discard the Book itself, fraught as it is with so many a message to his own soul. Rather than do this—rather than cast away, as if it had no existence, all that mass of positive, albeit indirect and often subtle, evidence which goes to substantiate the truth of the record—he would do well to put aside the question of mere numbers as one which, however perplexing, cannot be looked upon as vital. He may even hold that in some way the numbers may have been corrupted, and he may think it possible that the Divine providence which watches over the sacred writings has suffered them to be corrupted because mere numbers are of no moral or spiritual import. He may feel encouraged in this opinion by the apparently undeniable fact that the Holy Spirit who inspired St. Paul did not prevent him from misquoting a number out of this very Book (1 Cor. x. 8); for he cannot fail to perceive that the misquotation (supposing it to be one) does not make the slightest possible difference to those holy and important lessons which the Apostle was drawing from these records. It is not by any means affirmed by the present writer that the numbers in question *are* unhistoric; nor would he deny that their accuracy is maintained by far greater scholars and theologians than himself; he would only submit to the reader that the whole question, with all its attendant difficulties, may be calmly considered and argued on its own merits without involving anything which is really vital in our faith as concerning the word of God. We should surely have learnt little from the perplexities and victories of faith in the last forty years if we were not prepared for the possibility of admitting many modifications into our conception of inspiration without any fear lest inspiration should become to us less real, less full, less precious than it is.

The introduction to a single book is not the place to discuss the character of that inspiration which it shares with the other "God-inspired Scriptures." The

present writer may, however, be excused if he points out once for all that the testimony of our Lord and of the Apostle Paul is clear and emphatic to the typical and prophetical character of the incidents here narrated. Such a reference as that in John iii. 14 and such a statement as that in 1 Cor. x. 4—11 cannot be explained away. Here then is the heart and kernel of the inspiration of the Book as recognised by our Lord, by his apostles, and by all his devout followers. They who live (or die) before us in these pages are τύποι ἡμῶν, types or patterns of ourselves; their outward history was the foreshadow of our spiritual history, and its records were written for our behoof. Having this clue, and holding this as of faith, we shall not greatly err. The questions which arise may perplex, but may not shake us. And if a wider acquaintance with scientific criticism tend at first to unsettle our faith, yet, on the other hand, a wider acquaintance with experimental religion tends every day to strengthen our faith, by testifying to the marvellous and profound correspondence which exists between the sacred records of that long-vanished past and the ever-recurring problems and vicissitudes of Christian life.

Literature on Numbers.

A vast number of Commentaries may be consulted on the Book of Numbers, but as a rule they deal with it only as a portion of the Pentateuch. It is indeed so inseparably united to the Books which precede it that no scholar would make it the subject of a separate work.

It is therefore to works on the Pentateuch that the student must be referred, and amongst these the Commentary of Keil and Delitzsch (translated for Clark's Foreign Theological Library) may perhaps be mentioned as the most useful and available for careful interpretation and explanation of the text. The 'Speaker's Commentary,' and the smaller works which have followed in its wake, must be pronounced very inferior in thoroughness and general usefulness to the equally accessible standard German Commentaries. Ewald, Kurtz, and Hengstenberg, in their several works, have treated of the incidents and ordinances recorded in Numbers with considerable fulness from very varying standpoints; the last-named has also a lengthy monograph on the history of Balaam. For the homiletical treatment of the Book there is nothing so suggestive within a moderate compass as what may be found in the Bishop of Lincoln's Commentary.

It must be frankly acknowledged that the student who wishes to form an intelligent opinion on the many difficult questions which arise out of this portion of the sacred narrative will *not* find all these questions honestly faced or satisfactorily answered in any one of the existing Commentaries. He will, however, by combining what appears best in each, have before him the materials by means of which he may either form his judgment, or suspend it until in God's good time a clearer light shall shine.

THE

BOOK OF NUMBERS.

The Census of Sinai (ch. i.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

The census Divinely commanded (vers. 1—16). Ver. 1.—**In the tabernacle of the congregation**—where the Lord spake with Moses "face to face" (Exod. xxxiii. 11), and where all the laws of Leviticus had been given (Levit. i. 1). **On the first day of the second month, in the second year.** On the first day of Zif (or Ijar); a year and a fortnight since the exodus, ten months and a half since their arrival at Sinai, and a month since the tabernacle had been set up.

Ver. 2.—**Take ye the sum of all the congregation.** The census here ordered had clearly been anticipated, as far as the numbers were concerned, by the results of the half-shekel poll-tax for the service of the sanctuary levied some time before on all adult males on pain of Divine displeasure (Exod. xxx. 11, *sq.*). Since all who were liable had paid that tax (Exod. xxxviii. 25, 26), it would only have been requisite to make slight corrections for death or coming of age during the interval. The totals, however, in the two cases being exactly the same, it is evident that no such corrections were made, and that the round numbers already obtained were accepted as sufficiently accurate for all practical purposes. **After their families.** This was to be a registration as well as a census. No doubt the lists and pedigrees collected at this time laid the foundation of that exact and careful genealogical lore which played so important a part both in the religious and in the secular history of the Jews down to the final dispersion. Every Jew had not only his national, but also (and often even more) his tribal and family, associations, traditions, and sympathies. Unity, but *not* uniformity, —unity in all deepest interests and highest purposes, combined with great variety of character, of tradition, and even of tendency —was the ideal of the life of Israel. **The number of their names.** It is impossible to help thinking of the parallel expression in Acts i. 15, of the similarity in position of the two peoples, of the contrast between their numbers and apparent chances of success, of the more striking contrast between their actual achievements.

Ver. 3.—**By their armies.** Every citizen was a soldier. The military monarchies of mediæval or of modern days, with their universal obligation to service in the ranks, have (so far) but followed the example of ancient Israel.

Ver. 4.—**A man of every tribe.** The former census, which was for religious purposes only, was made with the assistance of the Levites. This, which was rather for political and military purposes, was supervised by the lay heads of the people.

Ver. 5.—**These are the names of the men.** The tribes are here mentioned (through their princes) very nearly in the order of their subsequent encampment—south, east, west, and north. Gad alone is displaced, in order that he may be classed with the other sons of the handmaids *after* the sons of the free women.

Ver. 7.—**Nahshon**—the brother-in-law of Aaron (Exod. vi. 23), and ancestor of David and of Jesus Christ (Matt. i. 4).

Ver. 10. — **Elishama** — grandfather of Joshua (1 Chron. vii. 26). All the rest are unnamed elsewhere.

Ver. 16.—**Heads of thousands.** Septuagint, *chiliarchs;* but the word is used for families (see Judges vi. 15), and, like all such words, it rapidly lost its numerical significance.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16.—*The numbering of God's people.* We have here, spiritually, the Church of God militant here on earth, "drawn up unto eternal life" (Acts xiii. 48), numbered and counted and ordered by the Great Captain of the Lord's host; man by man, soul by soul, to be his valiant soldiers and servants in the march and the conflict, and the manifold trials and temptations of this probation. Consider, therefore—

I. That this numbering of all his soldiers by name was MADE AT THE EXPRESS AND PARTICULAR COMMAND OF GOD, as it were for the Divine information; herein contrasting with that other numbering so sorely avenged under David, because made to feed his own pride. Even so the Lord is exceeding careful of the number of his own; one of the two sacred mottoes stamped upon his Church is, "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. ii. 19); "The Good Shepherd calleth his own sheep by name" (John x. 3); and every one of them is expressed by name in his book (Rev. iii. 5). We are "numbered" in the census of a great nation; every one of us is something stronger, holds his head somewhat higher, for the thought that he is numbered amongst the thirty millions of a great country, the ninety millions of a greater people. Are we also "numbered" among the innumerable and ever-victorious hosts of the Lord? Are we included in his census? If so, are we mindful of the condition? (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4). Are we tremblingly hopeful of the promise? (Rev. iii. 5).

II. That it was IN THE SECOND YEAR that they were thus numbered "by their armies:" first came the great deliverance unto Sinai, the mount of God; then came the teaching of the moral law; then came the instructions of outward religion; then —and not till then—the command to number into the ranks. Even so the soldiers of the cross are not called at once to arms; the deliverance came first of course, the decease, "the exodus" (Luke ix. 31) which he accomplished at Jerusalem; after that came to each the inculcation of the immutable laws of moral conduct; after that the ordinances of public and private worship; and *then* only, after such training, with such aids, is each believer numbered unto active service, and called, as it were, by name to approve himself as a trusty soldier of Jesus Christ.

III. That only those were "numbered," and entered, as it were, on the roll-call of the Lord, WHO WERE "ABLE TO GO FORTH TO WAR in Israel;" all the others, the women and the children, &c., remained unspecified and unnoted. Even so *all* the Lord's people whose names are written in the Book of Life must be combatants. They need not indeed be men, but they must "quit" themselves "like men" (1 Cor. xvi. 13). They may be weak women, or even tender children, for such have shown themselves (and do show) to the full as valiant for Christ as any men. But they *must* be combatants, for that is the one condition on which we are received into that "multitude which no man can number" (but the Lord can), and the promise is "to him that overcometh," and to none other.

IV. That of these names in ver. 16, renowned amongst men and chosen of God to honour and dignity, ALL BUT TWO ARE TOTALLY UNKNOWN TO US, and those two only through their descendants. So in the Church, those that are the greatest with God are often the obscurest in the annals of men. As "Antipas" was expressly called (by a singular honour), "my faithful martyr" by Christ; yet is there no knowledge of him, not even a legend concerning him, in the Church.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—A HOMILY FOR THE CENSUS DAY. *The numbering of the people.* I. A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE CENSUS which is being taken to-day in every town, every hamlet, every remote habitation of the United Kingdom, from the English Channel to the seas that surge round the Shetland Islands. There are still some people—not many, let us hope—who have a scruple about filling up the census papers. They are haunted with an apprehension that there is something wrong, something dangerous, about the busi-

ness. "Did not King David transgress in numbering the people? Did he not by so doing bring God's wrath upon his kingdom? Would that which brought guilt and sorrow on David be right or safe for us?" What are we to say to these scrupulous persons? I have not time to go into the questions that have been raised about the real nature of David's sin. One thing is plain: the evil lay not in the taking of a census, but in the intention of that particular census. David was a man of war. In his hands the kingdom was in danger of becoming a despotic and military monarchy, such as the nations of the world have had occasion to know too well. And there can be little doubt that the census he projected was meant to subserve the ends of such a monarchy. It was meant to be just such an instrument of oppression in Israel as William the Conqueror's *Domesday Book* was in England. The design of the compilation seems to have been, in both cases, very much the same. Anyhow, it is certain that the simple numbering of the people was not forbidden by the law of God. On the contrary, the Bible is dead against such a barbarous and hazardous style of national administration as is inevitable when the national governors are in the dark regarding the statistics of the people. The Israelites dealt largely in statistics; to a surprising degree they anticipated the practice of the nineteenth century in this matter. At all the great turning-points in their history a census was taken. This Book of NUMBERS owes its name to the fact that it records two census-takings, one at the beginning, the other at the close, of the forty years' sojourn in the wilderness. So long as the Bible has a Book of Numbers in it, intelligent Bible readers will see in it an admonition to fill up their census papers with exactness and for conscience sake.

II. MEDITATIONS PROPER TO THE CENSUS DAY. The filling up of a census paper is, in itself, a piece of secular business. Yet I do not envy the man who can perform it without being visited with a touch of holy feeling. The setting down of the names of one's household brings up many tragic memories. The setting down one's own age, after a lapse of ten years—surely it summons us to count our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. It is not often observed that *the law of Moses prescribed a religious service for the occasion of a census-taking* (Exod. xxx. 11—16). This the children of Israel are to perform, "that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them." A measure may be right in itself, and yet may be apt to become to us an occasion of sin. When a nation is reckoning up the number of its sons, it will be apt to harbour proud confidence in their valour; and proud confidence in man God will not bear. When Nebuchadnezzar begins to say, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of my kingdom? "God's humbling stroke is near. On the census day the Israelites were to bring "every man a 'ransom for his soul.'" The act was as much as to say, "I am not worthy to be registered among the living in Israel, the holy nation, the kingdom of priests. I am a sinful man, O Lord; but I believe that there is forgiveness with thee. Forgive me, therefore, O Lord · reject me not. Remember me with the favour thou bearest unto thy people, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance." The ransom money required from every Israelite on the census day was a poll-tax of half a shekel. The rich paid no more, the poor paid no less. The law of Moses did not often impose this sort of tax; for with a show of equality, it is the most unequal of taxes. Ordinarily the law invited princes to bring princely gifts, while it suffered the poor man's pair of turtle-doves to come up with acceptance on the altar. The poll-tax of the census day was altogether exceptional. Nor is it difficult to understand why the exception should have been made on this one occasion. It was very significant. Religion does not abrogate all social inequalities; but the non-recognition of these in the atonement-money admonishes us that the inequalities which find place among men in regard to wealth, station, intellectual gifts, are as nothing in comparison with their essential equality as creatures made in the image of God. It admonishes us also that all who have obtained an inheritance among God's people are on one level with regard to their right to be there. "There is no difference; for all have sinned, and all are justified freely." Yet another reflection. *The Lord keeps an exact register of his people.* There is a Book of Life in which are inscribed the names of all whom he has chosen, and caused to approach unto him, that they may dwell in his house. How true this is, the whole Scripture bears witness (see Exod. xxxii. 32; Isa. iv. 3; Ezek. xiii 9; Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Heb. xii. 23; Rev. xiii. 8). We

commonly think of this as a book which is shut and sealed. No man on earth can take it into his hand and read out the names inscribed in it. The Lord only knoweth them that are his; we may not sit in judgment on one another's state before God. All this is true. Yet the truth has another side: if the seventy are to rejoice because their names are written in heaven, it must be possible for them to ascertain the fact. A man may ascertain his own acceptance with God. Not only so. If the Apostle was confident regarding certain of the early Christians that their names were in the Book of Life, we also may, without prying into God's secrets, attain to a similar persuasion respecting such of our brethren as bear Christ's image, and abound in his work. Who bear Christ's image, and abound in his work—I use these words advisedly; they express the evidence which avails to prove that a given name is in the Book of Life. The census-table compiled by Moses contained only the names of such as were, by birth or adoption, the sons of Jacob. The Book of Life contains only the names of those whom God has "predestinated to the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ." To make sure that I am a son—that God has brought me home to himself by his Word and Spirit—this is the only way of making sure that my name has a place in the Lamb's Book of Life.—B.

Vers. 1—3.—*God commands a census.* I. THE PLACE AND TIME OF THE COMMAND. God spoke to Moses *in the wilderness of Sinai.* Many wildernesses, though uncultivated, were fertile and well watered, but the wilderness of Sinai was a desolate place. Moses calls it "the great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water;" and, again, "a desert land, a waste howling wilderness" (see Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine'). Very different from the riches of Egypt left behind, and the riches of Canaan lying before. But though a wilderness, the *tabernacle of the congregation* was there, made by God's appointment and direction, even down to its minutest arrangements and furniture. As long as the tabernacle in their midst was honoured, the people could dwell safely even in the wilderness.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE NUMBERING. *To ascertain the strength of the people for war.* Canaan, towards which they were advancing, was in the possession of enemies, who appreciated all its riches, and would not relinquish them without a severe struggle. At the time of the census the Israelites had not brought on themselves the penalty of the forty years' wandering. The census was meant to be one preparation for immediate conquest, as the mission of the spies was another. There was everything to give them courage and strength of mind when they remembered that there were more than 600,000 fighting men amongst them. And as they counted up their resources for war, so we may be sure Christ would ever have his militant Church on earth to do the same. The tone of the New Testament is not less warlike than of the Old, our Canaanites being principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

III. THE METHOD OF THE NUMBERING. The method was determined by the purpose. Note, first, *the exclusions. The women and the children were left out.* In counting the Levites the children were not left out. Every male from a month old was numbered, for theirs was a constant service, and even the youngest was looked on as in training for it. But when war is imminent we can only count on such as can be ready at once, those from twenty years old and upward. The Church of Christ still divisible in the same way—those who can fight, and those who cannot; the men who are strong, because of the solid food they take, and the babes who are still hanging on milk and spoon meat. *The Levites also were left out.* A numerical loss may yet be a real gain. The Israelites were strong in their 600,000 only as long as they served God, according to his statutes and commandments. For the Levites to go to battle meant that all would go to neglect and disorder in the tabernacle. God obeyed and honoured is God on our side, and who then can be against us? The man who keeps his fifty-two sabbaths every year for God has not lost them, and the weekly contribution set aside for God's cause is not wasted. Secondly, *the order* observed in the numbering. By each tribe and family the result would be more speedily and correctly arrived at. Nature, even under the curse of sin, has its order, and will help us, if we are observant of it, to do the work of grace in an orderly way. Though there is a

limit at the one end of life, there is none mentioned *at the other*. A man is never too old to fight for God, directing and inspiring the stronger arm of younger men. There is room for a Nestor as well as an Achilles, and Venice loved to keep the fame of

"Blind old Dandolo,
Th' octogenarian chief, Byzantium's conquering foe."

Thirdly, with all the information gained, there was much unknown. Those fit for fight by age could be counted up; but what of disposition? who could sift out the Korahs, Dathans, and Abirams, and the people whose hearts lingered after the flesh-pots of Egypt?—Y.

Vers. 5—16.—*The men of renown who managed the census.* I. THEY ARE MERE NAMES TO US. Were we asked who Eliab was, we should say the eldest, envious, angry brother of David, not the census-taker for Zebulun; or Gamaliel, he who stood up in the council, not the census-taker for Manasseh. High as they may have been once, their position in human history is little better than oblivion.

"The long, proud tale of swelling fame
Dried to a brief and barren name."

II. Yet though mere names now, they WERE ONCE WELL KNOWN. Every child of Zebulun would be taught to look up to Eliab.

III. Though mere names to us, THEY DID A USEFUL WORK IN THEIR TIME. It would be no small satisfaction to them, if they looked at the thing rightly, to consider that they had been able to undertake for Moses such an important work as making sure of the fighting strength of each tribe.

IV. There was doubtless some appreciation of their services AT THE TIME, both by Moses and the sober-minded of the people.

V. But in any case GOD HAS MARKED WHAT THEY DID. He has the record of all the faithful and the holy who have only their names in human history, and the far greater part of them not even that.—Y.

Ver. 3.—"*From twenty years old and upward.*" By this census all the young men of Israel were urged to the consideration of a possible claim upon them. It is to the young men that a country looks when her integrity and liberties are in danger. Young men are wanted still to take a brave and intelligent part in the strife of the Church militant. "I have written unto you young men because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." So Paul to Timothy: "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." God's people have to deal with the Canaanites, Amorites, and all the rest of the hostile nations. Many iniquities are in possession of the earth. Old men, who have struggled against them and done something to diminish them, ask who will take up the sword and shield and go forth against the mighty. The word comes to us. "You are fit to fight. Will you fight?" Young men dazzled with the visions of military glory, here is a campaign where not men are slaughtered, but the evils that ruin men. Our Lord, the Captain of our salvation, will richly equip us with weapons mighty for the pulling down of strongholds, the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE CENSUS TAKEN (vers. 17—46). Ver. 17.—**These men.** Designated by direct command of God; yet probably the same, or some of the same, selected by Moses for obvious personal and social reasons a short time before (Exod. xviii. 25).

Ver. 18.—**On the first day of the second month.** The natural meaning is that the census was completed in one day. If so, the "census papers," the pedigrees and family lists, must have been ready beforehand. Notice had in fact been given more than a month before, and the lists made up, when the poll-tax was paid.

Ver. 19.—**As the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them.** The usual note of absolute obedience to the Divine instructions; but it serves to express the fundamental difference between this numbering and David's.

Ver. 21.—**Forty and six thousand and five hundred.** All the numbers (save of Gad

only) are in unbroken hundreds. It might have been so arranged by miracle; but such an overruling would have no assignable object, and therefore it is far better to fall back on the obvious and natural explanation that the totals were approximate. If they were simply the poll-tax figures unaltered, it would be natural to suppose that the offerings were made up in fifty-shekel lots, and the offerers divided as nearly as possible into hundreds. For military purposes a certain number of supernumeraries would be convenient. In the one excepted case of Gad a half-hundred appears for some unexplained cause.

Ver. 24.—**Gad.** He is here ranked immediately after Reuben and Simeon, because he was placed with them in the encampment (see above, ver. 5).

Ver. 26.—**Judah.** The immense and disproportionate increase of Judah is no doubt a difficulty in itself; but it is quite in keeping with the character assigned to him in prophecy and the part played by him in history.

Ver. 32.—**Of the children of Joseph.** Both are numbered as separate tribes, but Ephraim already takes precedence, not as being larger, which is not considered in this list, but according to prophecy (Gen. xlviii. 5, 14).

Ver. 38.—**Of the children of Dan.** The enormous numerical increase in this tribe is the more remarkable because it is clearly intimated that Dan had but one son, Hushim or Shuham (Gen. xlvi. 23; Numb. xxvi. 42). It may, of course, be said that he had other sons not enumerated, but such an assumption is arbitrary and improbable in the face of the family genealogies in ch. xxvi. If he had any other sons, they did not leave any families behind them. But if the sojourning of the Israelites in Egypt was 430 years, according to the plain statement of Exod. xii. 40, even this increase is quite within possible, and even probable, limits, considering the peculiar circumstances and the known fecundity of the race. For if Hushim, who came into Egypt with his grandfather, had only three sons born to him within the next twenty-five years, and if his descendants doubled themselves every quarter of a century, which is not an uncommon rate of increase under certain circumstances, then his numbers would have fully reached 200,000 by the time of the exodus. Perhaps the most puzzling feature about the increase is the great inequality with which it was spread over the various tribes, a fact of which we cannot even suggest any explanation.

Ver. 46.—**Six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.** See Exod. xxxviii. 26. As the adult male Levites numbered about 10,000, this represents an increase of 13,000 since the exodus. Some thousands had died through the Divine displeasure, but, on the other hand, the natural mortality may have ceased. It was evidently in the purpose of God that *all* who crossed the Red Sea should also enter their promised land.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 17—46.—*God's army.* We have here, spiritually, the army of the living God numbered and arrayed unto the march and the victory. Consider, therefore—

That it would appear, as far as we can gather from the increase in numbers, that none had died since the exodus, save through disobedience and idolatry. Even so, none can perish or be lost from the vast army which has come through the Red Sea of the blood of Christ, save through their own disobedience, through departing in their heart from the living God, and making them other gods. The armies of God do not and cannot decrease by death, by violence, or accident: such things have no dominion over them; only sin can separate from the society of the elect, from the communion of saints.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 44—46.—*The two numberings in the wilderness.* The Bible abounds in statistics. The historical books, in particular, bristle with genealogies and census-tables. "Numbers" gets its name from the circumstance that it contains the tabulated results of two distinct numberings. The statistical chapters are commonly passed over in the consecutive reading of the Scripture, in the family, and in the Church. The wine of the kingdom does not flow from them freely; all the rather ought care to be taken to read and expound them occasionally. All Scripture is profitable; and the statistical chapters, hard and barren as they look, are no exception.

I. For one thing, these chapters serve admirably to ANCHOR THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE ON THE FIRM GROUND OF HISTORY. The Lord Jesus was not a mythical character, not a mere play of glorious colour on a bank of unsubstantial vapour. He was the son of a daughter of David's house. His genealogy is extant; and a long chain of family registers, imbedded in the historical books of the Old Testament, afford the means of verifying it. The sacred writers are never afraid to descend from the region of moral and religious disquisition into the region of exact numbers, which can be sifted and weighed in the light of our modern statistical science. The importance of all this can hardly be exaggerated, especially for an age like the present, which so confidently calls in question the historical verity of the Scriptures. To come to these census chapters in Numbers. The critics laugh at the idea that a nation of two millions and more were led out of Egypt by Moses and sojourned in the wilderness for forty years. Objections formidable enough are brought forward; but the objectors have to face the fact that the history, besides giving the round numbers, explain how they were made up. What is more; the details are found, on examination by men expert in statistics, to have such an air of reality that the ablest commentator (Knobel) of the Critical School, can think of no more feasible explanation than to suggest that some Levite must have laid his hands on the report of some real census, taken in a later age, and inserted it here in the Pentateuch. How writings so dishonestly compiled should have reached the high moral elevation of the Pentateuch, the critic has omitted to explain. He is certainly right in taking the chapters in Numbers for veritable census-tables.

II. NOR IS IT ONLY IN THIS GENERAL VIEW OF THEM THAT THESE STATISTICAL CHAPTERS ARE INSTRUCTIVE. The facts recorded (like all the authentic facts of God's providential government of men) are very suggestive. 1. Observe how unequally the several tribes have *multiplied*. Compare Judah and his 74,600 with Benjamin and his 35,400. All family histories and national histories are full of similar inequalities. There are great nations (France, Spain) in which the population is stationary or receding; others, similarly situated, in which there is steady increase (Germany, Russia). In the course of two or three centuries, facts like these must powerfully affect the history of the world. What hopes with regard to the future are excited by observing that, as a rule, it is the Protestant nations that are multiplying, and replenishing the earth, and subduing it! 2. How the blessing delivered by Jacob bears fruit after he has gone; in Gen. xlix. two sons—Judah and Joseph—are honoured above the rest. (*a*) To *Judah* is assigned the primacy of honour and power forfeited by Reuben, the firstborn (vers. 8—12). How the fulfilment of this comes to light in the census at Sinai! His tribe outnumbers all the others save one; his tents occupy the place of honour in the camp, being pitched towards the rising of the sun; his standard (the lion of the tribe of Judah) leads the van in the march; in the captain of his host, Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, we recognise the ancestor of our Lord. (*b*) *Joseph*, the best-beloved of the twelve, was to be a fruitful vine, a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. His two sons were to become each a several tribe, "as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine" (Gen. xlviii. 5, 6; xlix. 22—26). This also is exactly accomplished; not only are Ephraim and Manasseh reckoned as two tribes, but each takes rank with the other tribes in respect both to honour and numbers. Contemplating these facts in the light of Jacob's blessing, we can perceive a moral purpose in them; Joseph and Judah were the two who excelled in godliness and magnanimity. The faithful God keepeth covenant to a thousand generations (comp. Ps. ciii. 17). 3. How a family, which at one time promised well, may catch a blight and fade away. Mark the story of Simeon; at Sinai he was one of the most populous of the tribes; thirty-eight years later he is much the smallest. From nearly 60,000 he has shrivelled into about 22,000 (comp. 1 Chron. iv. 27). This downward course went on after the conquest. Simeon's allotted inheritance was next to that of the tribe of Judah; and ere many generations passed he seems to have been absorbed by his more energetic and prosperous brother. The statistics of the Bible, being the digested statement of facts in the Divine government of families and nations, are mines where those who choose to dig find much silver. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."—B.

EXPOSITION.

THE LEVITES (vers. 47—54). Ver. 47.—**Not numbered among them.** They *were* numbered (ch. iii. 39), but not among the rest; their census was taken separately, and on a different basis.

Ver. 48.—**Had spoken.** Rather, "spake," and so Septuagint. This was the formal command to separate, although it had been anticipated to a considerable extent. The Levites had been marked out from the others (1) as the tribesmen of Moses and Aaron, (2) as the champions of Jehovah in the matter of the golden calf (Exod. xxxii. 26, *sq.*); they had been already employed, or at least designated, for religious services; and the peculiarity of their future position in Israel had been recognised in the Divine legislation (Levit. xxv. 32, *sq.*), and in their not being called upon to contribute to the capitation for the sanctuary. In a word, this ordinance, like so many others, did little more than give a formal and direct sanction to a state of things which had already come into play, partly through natural causes, partly through providential directions.

Ver. 51.—**The stranger.** The word appears to mean here any unauthorised person (see ch. xvi. 40). This is the first intimation given of the extreme and awful sanctity of the tabernacle, as the tent of the Divine Presence. It is, however, quite of a piece with the anxious warnings against intrusion upon the holy mount at the time of the giving of the law (Exod. xix. 21, *sq.*). The great necessity for Israel was that he should understand and believe that *the Lord* before whom he had trembled at Sinai was really in the midst of him in all his travail and his danger. This could only be impressed upon his dull mind and hard heart by surrounding the presence chamber of Jehovah with awful sanctities and terrors. At a subsequent period, when the religious reverence here thrown around the tabernacle had been transferred to, or rather concentrated upon, the ark alone, Uzzah was actually smitten for breaking this law (1 Chron. xiii. 10). The tumult raised against St. Paul (Acts xxi. 27, *sq.*) was justified by a supposed violation of the same.

Ver. 53.—**That there be no wrath upon the congregation**—that no man, not being a Levite, intrude himself through ignorance or presumption upon the sacredness of the tabernacle, and so bring death upon himself, and displeasure upon the people. **The Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle.** Out of this command grew the Levitical guard of the temple, which afterwards played a considerable part in the history of Israel (2 Kings xi.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 47—54.—*The servants of God.* We have here, spiritually, the multitude of those who are specially devoted to the service and ministry of God, whoever they may be, and whatever their labour for the body of Christ: that these have their own duties and charges, and therewith their own immunities and liberties. Or we may take it rather of all the people of God, *so far as* they rise to the higher religious life, dying unto the world, and living unto Christ. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE LEVITES WERE NOT NUMBERED WITH THE REST, FOR THE ORDINARY PURPOSES OF THE LIFE IN THE WILDERNESS. Those that are devoted to the service of God, or addicted to the ministry of the saints, are to be mixed up as little as possible in the entanglements of business, of politics, of society, and of all the transitory things which make up the life of the world.

II. That they were NOT NUMBERED among the other tribes, not in order that they might be idle, or have less to do, but THAT THEY MIGHT THE BETTER DO THEIR OWN WORK which the Lord assigned them. Even so, no one is marked off, or set apart, that he may live on others, or look down on others, or enjoy more ease or more consideration than others; but only that he may be the more free to do the work which the Lord hath appointed him.

III. THAT THE SUM OF THEIR LABOUR AND CHARGE WAS TO ATTEND UPON THE TABERNACLE—to be in waiting upon the Divine presence in the midst of Israel. So they who would give themselves to the work of Christ must set this before them as the great object of it all: that he be glorified, and his spiritual presence be cherished in the midst of his people. As in one sense, the true way to serve God is to serve his people, so in another the true way to serve the people is to help them to serve God. Nor is *their* work of least real value, who, having none opportunity of

benefiting their fellows directly, do yet assist by their practice and example to keep alive reverence and devotion amidst a careless world.

IV. THAT THE ENCAMPING OF THE LEVITES WAS TO BE CLOSE ROUND ABOUT THE TABERNACLE. So those that are especially called to the service of God must have their dwelling very near him: they can only do more for him, on condition of living nearer to him. It is their one real privilege—if they know it—that, having their duties about holy things, and being free from many distractions common to others, they have opportunity of keeping closer to the holy one.

V. THAT NO "STRANGER" MIGHT COME NIGH UNTO THE TABERNACLE ON PAIN OF DEATH. So can no profane person intrude upon Divine things except at deadly spiritual peril. That nearness to God which is life to the humble and meek is death to the presumptuous soul; that familiarity with holy things which is a source of growth in grace to the holy is hardening and destruction to the unholy. No "stranger" to the atoning love can venture upon the presence of the All-holy and live: every one that knows not God, and has not his love abiding in him, is a "stranger" in this sense.

VI. THAT VERY MUCH OF THE LEVITES' WORK WAS LABORIOUS, TIRESOME, OR TRIVIAL, YET IT WAS ALL UNDER THE SAME AWFUL SANCTIONS, and invested with the same holy character. So, if any will be really devoted to the work of Christ, he must do that which falls to his lot, however humble outwardly, or apparently unspiritual; for the work is all one, and all *of* one, if only it be done *for* that one.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 47—54.—*The appointment of the Levites to be the sacred tribe.* This is the first of a series of passages in which the law regarding the Levites is delivered. These all occur in Numbers, excepting a very few which are found in Deuteronomy; and they must be read together if you would get a connected and complete view of the statutes relating to the sacred tribe. Read together, the several texts will be found to dovetail one into another. The first is quite general, merely intimating that the Levites were to be numbered and marshalled as a host by themselves, being wholly dedicated to the service of the sanctuary. The second, entitled "The generations" of the Levites, their Family Book, gives particulars regarding their divisions and several offices (chs. iii., iv.). The third describes how they were set apart to office by a solemn purification (ch. viii. 5). Subsequent passages contain (fourthly) the tragic story of Korah and his company (ch. xvi.), and (fifthly) the provision made for the Levites' honourable maintenance (chs. xviii., xxxv.). One who reads this series of passages with care will make a discovery of some value regarding the structure of these books of the Pentateuch. Because the several laws relating to one subject are not set down in one place, as they would be in our books, and are not arranged according to our ideas of order, it is confidently affirmed that they are set down without any order, and indeed that the Mosaic law is a somewhat random collection of documents diverse in date and character. This is certainly an error. The beautiful order discoverable in the ordinances regarding the Levites will be found to prevail in the ordinances—scattered as they may seem—on many other subjects.

I. This, being the earliest notice of the Levites as a separate and sacred tribe, invites us to review THE STORY OF THEIR CALLING. The first step was taken when the Lord, ordaining in Israel a hereditary priesthood, nominated "Aaron the Levite" and his sons. Still, though Aaron the Levite was called, nothing was said regarding the rest of the tribe. But it was plain that one man and his two sons (the whole number of the Aaronites after the death of Nadab and Abihu) could not execute the priests' office for a great nation. Helpers they must have. Who more fit than their brethren of their own tribe? They were much the smallest of the tribes, so that their maintenance would not be too burdensome; and they had already distinguished themselves by their zeal for the Lord to such a degree as amounted to a virtual consecration to his service (see Exod. xxxii. 29). Accordingly, when the order was given to number and marshall the congregation, an exception was made in relation to the Levites. They were numbered by themselves, as a separated and sacred tribe. Recall the fact just noticed, that the Levites were fitted for their office before

they were called to it. Their fitness was made manifest before a word was spoken regarding the honourable office in which it was to be exercised. The whole history of the Church is full of similar facts. When some great exigency arises calling for the services of men possessing special qualities of character or attainment, it is generally found that the Head of the Church has anticipated the occasion by raising up the men required. See for an illustrious example, Gal. i. 15, 16.

II. THE WORK APPOINTED TO THE LEVITES. It was "to keep the charge of the tabernacle" (ver. 53). They carried it; guarded it; did all the work of it except offering sacrifice, burning incense, and blessing the people. In a word, they, under the hand and oversight of the priests, attended to the "outward business of the house of God" (Neh. xi. 16). One cannot read this account of the Levites' work without being touched with a sense of the superiority of the Christian Church and its services over the tabernacle and the Levitical ministrations. To thoughtful and spiritually-minded men the Levitical ministrations must have been an intolerable burden. Barnabas the Levite would, without doubt, say Amen when he heard Peter's description of them as "a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10). It is right to remember that, as time passed, the yoke was much mitigated. If the Pentateuch gives no express commandment to the Levites except about the external business of the tabernacle, that simply confirms the antiquity of the Pentateuch. By King David they were invited to higher service as *singers* and even as *psalmists*. Jehoshaphat employed them largely as public teachers of the law throughout the cities of Judah (2 Chron. xvii. 8, 9). Moreover, the Levitical services as prescribed by Moses, although burdensome and unprofitable when compared with those of the New Testament Church, had a great purpose to serve both in prefiguring the truth to be afterwards revealed, and as an educational institute by which the people of God were prepared for the better time. It is a good thing to have a charge to keep in connection with Christ's Church, in any capacity, however humble. Better be a Levite to keep the door of the house of God than live without God in a palace.—B.

Vers. 45—50.—"*Differences of administrations*" *in the service of God.* The different departments of service appointed to the host of Israel and to the Levites remind us of similar diversities in national and Church life at present. I. THE SERVICE OF THE SWORD. II. THE SUPERIOR SERVICE OF THE SANCTUARY.

I. 1. The apparent strength of the Israelites was according to the number of its soldiers. So with a nation and its bread-winners, or with a Church and its active workers. The "mixed multitude" (representing hangers-on, idlers, grumblers; ch. xi. 4), not reckoned or "mustered": only true Israelites can be relied on. 2. Their aggregation by tribes illustrates the value of natural affinities in Christian work (vers. 18, 20, 22, &c.). This truth may be applied—(1) To Christian nationalities, whether of a European or Asiatic type: *e. g.* Chinese Churches should not be cast in English moulds. (2) To Christian denominations, which may work best as separate, yet allied denominations, each having its own methods and rallying round the standard of some special truth. We are reminded also of—3. The value of noble Church traditions. "The house of their fathers" had a special honour in the eyes of every patriotic Israelite. So with British Christians: *e. g.* attachment of Episcopalians to the Church of the Protestant martyrs, and of other Christians to the Churches of Puritan, Covenanting, Nonconforming, or Methodist ancestors (Ps. xxii. 4, 5; xxxiv. 4).

II. The Levites were not mustered as soldiers, but were active in another department of service. The ark and its ministries were symbols of the source of the nation's strength. Their valuable services are described as a "warfare" (ch. iv. 23, marg.). Just as in a nation, it is not the hand-workers only that are a source of strength and wealth, but thinkers, writers, lecturers, preachers also, so in a Church the least prominent may not be the least useful (Cf. 1 Cor. xii. 12—28). The Levites pitched nearest the tabernacle (vers. 52, 53), "that there be no wrath," &c. Simeons and Annas in the temple, invalids "dwelling in the secret place of the Most High," may not be "numbered" among the workers of the Church, but may have power with God and prevail as intercessors for their brethren.—P.

Ver. 52.—*Our position in the Church.* "And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts."

I. UNITY WITHOUT UNIFORMITY. Reading the history of the Israelites, we are made to feel they were assuredly one nation, and yet just as assuredly twelve tribes. Everything was done to keep each tribe separate and yet all the tribes together. So, ever and anon, some new regulation came out to manifest afresh the unity, yet diversity, of Israel. Every man traced his genealogy back to a son of Jacob, and this itself showed him to be of the seed of Abraham. Jacob had a blessing for each of his children separately, a blessing meant to rest upon each tribe down through all its increase and vicissitudes. So here each tribe was numbered as well as the sum of the congregation. Each tribe had its place in resting and in marching; whether honourable or not was scarcely the question, seeing it was by express appointment of Jehovah. And as if to emphasise this separation, it was provided for in Canaan as well as in the wilderness.

II. THE TYPICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS WITH RESPECT TO THE CHURCH. *There are diversities in the Church.* There is *one* Saviour and *one* gospel; but there were twelve apostles, each directly chosen of the Saviour. Consider the epistles: the individuality of the writers is as clear as their inspiration. So there is one Church, but many sects; and one might almost say God has ordered there should be many sects. There is probably no sect in evangelical Christendom but what, if it were possible to interrogate its founders, they would say, "We could do no other." God has honoured all the sects in turn. Princes in Israel and captains in the war against sin have sprung from all of them. We see in part and we prophesy in part; and we do not all see the same parts, and thus our prophecies differ. Must be faithful, each of us, to what we see of truth, keeping clear of all that is censorious with respect to those who, though they differ, are still our brethren. Diversity must belong to the imperfections of mankind. Imperfections in the regenerate even more manifest than in the unregenerate. *In all the diversity there is unity.* Tribe does not infringe on tribe; each man has his own camp, his own standard. But with all these separating regulations, there was a central power to unite. The tribes lay eastward, southward, westward, northward; but eastward, &c. of what? *The tabernacle.* Immediately around it were Aaron and the Levites in special charge, but the whole of Israel was also around it. So in all our diversities we are related to Christ. We cannot separate from one another as long as each is true to him. In all our divisions, even in our sometimes acrimonious disputings, it remains true—one Lord, one faith, one baptism. A family none the less a family though there be many differences among its members. The spirit of Christ is one that first of all produces *life*, and then leads us into *all the truth.* As all the tribes compose one nation, so all the sects one Church. We have all one God and Father, and the features of our celestial parentage will be revealed in each, however much there may be for a time to obscure. *This diversity as well as unity may extend to the heavenly state.* It may belong to heaven as well as earth. Diversity may belong to the perfection of the believer as well as his imperfection. The highest perfection may be that of harmony. This diversity is significantly hinted at in Rev. vii., where twelve thousand are sealed from each tribe. The twelve foundations in the New Jerusalem had each of them its own order of precious stones. Cherish both variety and unity as essential elements in the kingdom of God.—Y.

Ver. 54.—*Remarkable obedience.* "And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they." We have here *a remarkable obedience*—very remarkable, as being found in a book marked with records of murmuring, disobedience, and rebellion. Whence the possibility of such a statement here?

I. THE OBEDIENCE WAS IN AN OUTWARD THING. If inward disposition had been demanded as well as outward action, we should hardly have heard such complete obedience spoken of. It is easier to make a pilgrimage to Rome or Jerusalem than to live for one hour in complete surrender to God.

II. THE OBEDIENCE WAS MADE AS EASY AS POSSIBLE. Jehovah told them not only the thing to be done, but the way in which to do it Besides, something of the same kind had been done a little while before.

III. THERE WERE CERTAIN ENDS TO BE ATTAINED WHICH MADE THE WORK ATTRACTIVE. A certain carnal satisfaction in counting up the full warlike strength of the nation; also a sense of rivalry between tribe and tribe to see which was most numerous. Some commands of God, so far as the *letter* is concerned, may jump with our own inclination. It is further to be noticed that this remarkable obedience did not prevent an early and extensive disobedience in other ways. A command to number the people was not a sufficient test of obedience. Recollect one who said to Christ with respect to the commandments, "All these have I kept from my youth." He little knew a searching test was close at hand. It is possible to render outward service, and that in many ways, and for a long time, with an unchanged heart. The spirit that underlies every ordinance of God may be repugnant to our natural disposition (Matt. vii. 21—23). The practical warning is, that we should labour to make the outward things the fruit and manifestation of the inward. "These things ought ye to have done,"—the numbering, &c.,—"and not left the other undone"—the loving of the Lord with all the heart and soul and might.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

THE ENCAMPING OF THE TRIBES (ch. ii.).

Ver. 1.—**The Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron.** Probably when they had finished the census, and brought the results into the tabernacle.

Ver. 2.—**Shall pitch by his own standard.** We are not told how they had pitched hitherto; the tribal and family order now enforced was the natural order, but in the absence of precise directions would sometimes be departed from. **With the ensign.** Rather, "ensigns" (*othoth* in the plural). Each tribe, it would seem (see ver. 31), had its standard (*degel*), and each family in the tribe its ensign (*oth*). **Far off.** Rather, "over against," *i. e.* facing the tabernacle, with a certain space (perhaps 2000 cubits, Josh. iii. 4) between.

Ver. 3.—**On the east.** The van, the post of honour. The general direction indeed of their march was northwards, not eastwards; but nothing can obliterate the natural pre-eminence given to the east by the sunrise, the scattering of light upon the earth, the daily symbol of the day-spring from on high. **The standard of the camp of Judah.** Judah led the way not because he was the greatest in number, for the order of the tribes was not determined by this consideration, but because of his place in prophecy, and as the ancestor of the Messiah (Gen. xlix. 10). According to Aben Ezra and other Jewish expositors, the device upon the standard of Judah was a young lion, and this agrees with Rev. v. 5. The same authorities assign to Reuben a man, to Ephraim an ox (cf. Deut. xxxiii. 17), to Dan an eagle. If it were so, we should find in these banners the origin of the forms of the living creatures in the visions of Ezekiel and St. John (Ezek. i. 26; x. 1; Rev. iv. 4—6), unless, indeed, the devices on the standards were themselves taken from the symbolic forms of the cherubim in the tabernacle, and these in their turn borrowed from the religious art of Egypt. But the tradition of the Jews is too fluctuating to carry any weight. The Targum of Palestine assigns to Judah the lion, but to Reuben a stag, to Ephraim a young man, and to Dan a basilisk serpent.

Ver. 5.—**Next unto him.** Whether the leading tribe occupied the centre or one extreme of its own side of the encampment is a matter of mere speculation.

Ver. 9.—**These shall first set forth.** No order to set forth had been given, but the necessity of doing so was understood, and is here anticipated, as in ch. i. 51.

Ver. 14.—**Reuel.** Probably an error of transcription for Deuel, which actually appears here in many MSS. The Septuagint, however, has Raguel (see ch. i. 14; vii. 42, &c.). The error is utterly unimportant, except as proving the possibility of errors in the sacred text.

Ver. 17.—**Then the tabernacle . . shall set forward.** Thus it was provided that, whether at rest or on the march, the Divine habitation should be exactly in the midst of Israel.

Ver. 24.—**All that were numbered of the camp of Ephraim.** All the descendants of Rachel, forming at this time the smallest of the four divisions, although destined to become very numerous. Their association in the camp was continued in the promised land, for the greater part of their territory was coterminous. Subsequently, however, the great division of the kingdom separated Benjamin for ever from his brethren. **In the third rank.** Immediately behind the tabernacle. This position is clearly alluded to in Ps. lxxx. 1, 2.

Ver. 25.—**The standard of . . Dan.** In the light of its subsequent history, it is remarkable that this tribe should at this time have been so prominent and so honoured. Dan is, so to speak, the Judas among the

twelve. In history he ends by melting away into the heathen among whom he intruded himself. In the sacred writings he ends by being omitted altogether; he has no part in the new Jerusalem—perhaps on account of the idolatry connected with his name (see Judges xviii.; Rev. vii.).

Ver. 34.—**So they pitched.** The Targum of Palestine (which embodies the traditional learning of the Palestinian Jews of the 17th century) says that the camp covered a space of twelve square miles. Modern writers, starting from some measurements of the Roman camps given by Polybius, compute the necessary space at three or three and a half miles square. This would require the strictest discipline and economy of space, and makes no provision for cattle; but supposing that the women and children were closely packed, it might suffice. It is, however, evident that there would be very few places in the wilderness, if any, where more than three square miles of fairly level ground could be found. In the plains of Moab the desired room might perhaps have been found, but scarcely anywhere in the wilderness of Paran. We must conclude, therefore, that this order of encampment was an ideal order, beautiful indeed by reason of its faultless regularity and equality, but only to be attained in practice as circumstances should permit, more or less. Indeed, that the foursquare symmetry of the camp had an ideal meaning and significance more really, because more permanently, important than its actual realisation at the time, is evident from its recurrence again and again in the Apocalyptic writings (see Ezek. xlviii. 20, and especially Rev. xxi. 16). It is impossible to help seeing that the description of the heavenly Zion is that of a city, but of a city modelled upon the pattern of the camp in the wilderness. Here is one of those cases in which the spiritual significance of an order is of such importance that it matters comparatively little whether it *could* be literally carried out or not.

HOMILETICS.

Ch. ii.—*The camp of the Saints.* We have here, spiritually, the Church of God in its order and its beauty and its balanced proportion of parts; resting inwardly upon, and ranged outwardly around, the abiding presence of the Almighty, and thus prepared either to abide in harmony and safety, or to set forward without confusion and without fear. Consider, therefore, on a broad view of this chapter—

I. THAT THE ONE AND ONLY CENTRE OF THE WHOLE CAMP, of all its symmetry and all its order, WAS THE TABERNACLE OF GOD. About this were arranged in the inner lines of encampment the priests and Levites, in the outer lines the rest of Israel; the tent of the Presence was, as it were, the jewel of priceless worth, of which the camps of Levi formed the inner case, the other camps the outer casket. Even so the whole Church of God, in its broadest extent, is centred upon and drawn up about the spiritual presence of God in Christ, according to that which is written: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." Whether for rest or for progress, for safety or success, all depends exclusively upon, all can be measured only with reference to, that Presence in the midst of her. She is herself, in the truest sense, the living shrine, the spiritual casket, which encloses and enfolds this Divine jewel. About this Presence—"over against" it, full in view of it, looking straight towards it, albeit separated yet by an uncrossed interval—all the tribes of God are drawn up, all of them near, all equally near, save that those are nearest who are specially devoted to the waiting upon that Presence.

II. That as the glory and beauty of the encampment depended as to its internal symmetry upon the presence of God in the midst of it, SO IT DEPENDED AS TO ITS OUTWARD PERFECTION UPON THE ORDERLY ARRANGEMENT AND HARMONY OF ITS PARTS. Every tribe and every family had its place, knew its place, kept its place, mutually supporting and supported by all the others. Even so God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, in all the Churches of the saints. Conflicting aims, rivalries, counter-workings, cannot be in the Divine ideal. Towards them that are without, in the face of the difficulties and hostilities of the Church's earthly pilgrimage, an absolute discipline, a perfect oneness of purpose, a universal walking by the same rule and minding the same thing, is an essential part of the truth as it is in Jesus (John xvii. 21, 22; 1 Cor. i. 10; Phil. ii. 2; iii. 16).

III. That this perfect order and discipline was not attained by ignoring or effacing the natural divisions and distinctions of the people, and by making of each individual

an isolated unit before God; but, on the contrary, BY RECOGNISING AND UTILISING HUMAN DIVISIONS. "Every man shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house." Even so within the common life of the Church of Christ there is room and use for many strong and lasting divergencies of Christian character and cast of thought due to national or social or educational distinctions. Variety embraced in unity is the law of the Spirit. There is a true sense in which all Christian truth and virtue are the proper heritage of each Christian soul, which each ought to possess; but there is also a true sense in which the Christian virtues, and even the complemental truths of the Christian faith, are rather distributed among the various portions of the Church than equally spread over all, or perfectly combined in any one. If we would have a true conception of the *full* beauty and power of Christianity, we must embrace in one view all the ages of faith, we must have respect unto east and west and north and south alike. If our own sympathies are chiefly with one or other, there will be the more reason to give heed that we do not overlook the excellence most remote from our own. Dan and Simeon, whatever might be said or feared of them, had their place in the camp of God as well as Judah and Ephraim.

Consider, again, on a closer inspection of the camp—1. That it lay foursquare in twelve great divisions, with the tabernacle in the centre. And this arrangement is clearly of spiritual import, because it is carefully preserved in the prophetic visions of Ezekiel and St. John. The heavenly city, which is the camp of the saints, lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth (Rev. xx. 9; xxi. 16). And this seems to denote the absolute and unbroken equality, and the equal development in every direction, of the heavenly state, wherein it contrasts so strongly with the strange inequality and the one-sided character of all earthly good. The Church should lie foursquare because she should show an equal front, and have attained a like extension *in every direction*, in whatsoever way regarded. And notice here that the superior perfection of the gospel is shown herein, that the holy city not only lieth as a perfect square, but standeth as a perfect cube,—"the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (Rev. xxi. 16),—an impossibility bordering on the grotesque, in order to emphasise the entire absence of *anything* one-sided, unequal, or imperfect. Again, the holy city, like the camp of Israel, is laid out with careful respect unto the number twelve, because this is the full and perfect number of the tribes, and intimates that the Church is of all, and for all, who can in any wise be reckoned as the people of God. 2. That the foursquare arrangement of the camp was ideal, and could only be approximately realised in the wilderness through the evil necessity of things: the camps could not be pitched across rugged mountains or precipitous ravines, such as constantly lay in their way. Even so the ideal picture of the Church drawn in the New Testament has never been adequately realised, nor perhaps can be, amidst the confusions and contradictions of time. Her harmony and symmetry are grievously marred for want of room, and through the impracticable nature of men and circumstances. Nevertheless, the Divine ideal lives before her eyes and within her heart, and it is the unchanging hope of every faithful soul to behold it realised, sooner or later, in the good providence of God. In the mean time, when outward regularity was impossible, the one thing for each tribe to do was to pitch as near to the tabernacle, on its own side, as possible. Even so the practical wisdom and duty of every Church is to abide as near to God as it can according to the truth and order it has received; the nearer to God, the closer to one another. 3. That, among the tribes, Judah held the van, and his standard led the way, on which was borne aloft "the lion of the tribe of Judah." Even so Christ—concerning whom "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda" (Heb. vii. 14)—must always go before us in the way, and all the hosts of light must follow after him. 4. That Dan at this time was very large in numbers, and held an honourable place, and was a standard-bearer; yet afterwards he dwindled, and left the place given him by Providence, and sought another for himself, and fell into idolatry, and was struck out at last from the list of the Israel of God. Even so it happens that some particular Church or some individual at one time shall stand high, and be a leader, and hold a place of command, yet afterwards shall swerve from the right way, and fall into some idolatry, and be cast out as evil at the last. But it is not necessary to seek to discover wickedness in the first estate because it is in the last: as in Dan it is not possible to find any cause of wrath while he walked

with the others in the wilderness; and even Judas must have been sincere at first, and was not discerned from the other eleven. 5. That at this time the children of Leah were all together, and that this union was apparently made sure for ever by their dwelling side by side in Canaan. Yet when the great division came, Ephraim and Manasseh went one way, Benjamin the other. Even so it often happens that those who have grown up together as brethren in the common enjoyment of spiritual blessings and practice of religious duties, are thereafter widely separated by some great sifting, and take opposite sides on some fundamental question.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ch. ii.—*The muster at Sinai.* The children of Israel in the wilderness were a divinely-framed figure or parable of the Church of Christ. Devout readers of the story of the long march from Egypt to Canaan have always been haunted with such an irrepressible feeling of this figurative and spiritual intention, that traces of it are apparent in the familiar speech of all the Christian nations. Christians everywhere speak of redemption from bondage, the wilderness of this world, the wilderness journey, the heavenly manna, the "Rock of ages cleft for me," the land of promise, Pisgah views of the better land, the dark Jordan, the promised inheritance. The muster at Sinai is a chapter in the long parable; a chapter as replete as any with instruction regarding the Church of God.

I. THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY. The enumeration at Sinai was not an ordinary census. It took note only of such as were fit to bear arms. These opening chapters of Numbers are a muster-roll. The Church in this world is the Church militant. Christ is a Man of war (Ps. xlv. 3—5). Every true follower of Christ is called to be a soldier, and to fight a good fight. There is no place in Christ's host either for neutrals or non-combatants (Matt. xii. 30).

II. THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY ON THE MARCH. 1. Not settled in permanent quarters. The wilderness was not a place to build cities in or to plant vineyards. As little is the world a continuing city to Christ's saints. Compare "this tabernacle," 2 Cor. v. 1; 2 Pet. i. 14. We are passing travellers here. 2. Marching to an appointed place. In some sense all men—believers and unbelievers alike—are on the march. Compare the Anglo-Saxon prince's comparison of human life to the flight of the bird out of the dark night, through the lighted hall, and out by the opposite door into the darkness again. God's people are not only passers-by, but "strangers" here, who have in view a country beyond. Their back is toward Egypt, their face toward Canaan, and they are on the move from the one to the other.

"We nightly pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

III. THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS. Not a mob, but a marshalled host. Observe the order prescribed in this chapter for the encampment and for the march. This idea of the Church has often been abused to the support of ecclesiastical systems for which there is no warrant in the New Testament. The sort of organised unity proper to the Hebrew Church cannot be transferred to the Church Catholic. Still the idea is true and valuable. God is a God of order, and not of confusion. We believe in the communion of saints. Christians are not to fight every one for his own hand, or march every one by himself. It is a good and pleasant thing for brethren to come together and keep together.

IV. THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY OF WHICH GOD KEEPS A PERFECT ROLL. A good general would like to know, and Christ does know, every one of his men by name, and they are written in his book. When a soul is born again—born in Zion—the Lord registers the fact (Ps. lxxxvii. 6); and he continually remembers the person's name. "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

V. THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY WHICH HAS THE LORD FOR ITS EVER-PRESENT LEADER AND COMMANDER. The ark of the covenant led the van on the march, and rested in the midst of the congregation when it encamped. "Go ye into all the world; . . . and, lo, I am with you alway."—B.

Vers. 1, 2.—*God's tabernacle in the midst of Israel's tents.* I. AS THE SOURCE OF ORDER. Israel formed an armed encampment, not a mob. The place of each tribe was assigned by God, and thus was not a matter of caprice or partiality on the part of Moses (ver. 34). They were grouped according to their tribes and families. A post in the rearguard was as honourable as one in the van, because a matter of Divine appointment. Yet all "afar off," as a sign of the reverence due to their God. Apply this truth to the tribes, *i. e.* the visible Churches and denominations of the Israel of God. This may be illustrated from apostolic days, or from modern Church history. Each has a position, historical, geographical, social, assigned by the providence of God. Each tribe had some peculiarities (cf. Gen. xlix.), as each section of the Church has. And as there were, no doubt, reasons for the position allotted to every family, so the God of "order" and "peace" (1 Cor. xiv.) designed that every Church should fill its appointed place ("by its own standard," &c.), and, as part of the militant host, stand in orderly relations to himself and to the brotherhood. The same truth extends to individuals, the bounds of their habitation and the sphere of their service having been fixed by God.

II. AS A CENTRE OF ATTRACTION. The doors of the tents probably faced the tabernacle. It was a centre of attraction—1. For guidance, through the high priest, and Moses, and the symbolic cloud (cf. Ps. xxv. 4, 5, 9, 15). 2. For pardon, through sacrifice. And God himself is the only hope of a sinful Church (Jer. xiv. 7—9; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19). 3. For purity, through the restraining and elevating influence of a holy God ever present in their midst (cf. Deut. xxiii. 14 with 2 Cor. vi. 16—vii. 1).

III. AS A PLEDGE OF SAFETY, both when encamped (ver. 2) or on the march (ver. 17). So "God is in the midst" "of the tabernacles of the Most High," the homes of his people (cf. Deut. iv. 7, and Rom. viii. 31). He is in our midst as "a lion" to terrify our foes (Hos. xi. 10; see Acts v. 17—42), as a fire to enlighten and to protect (Isa. iv. 5), as "a man of war" to fight for us (Isa. xlix. 25, 26; Numb. xxiii. 21). This presence of God in our midst should inspire (1) confidence (Deut. xxxiii. 29), (2) reverence (Ps. lxxxix. 7), (3) joy (Ps. cxviii. 15), and should prepare us for the fulfilment of the promise in Rev. xxi. 3—7.—P.

Ch. ii.—*The discipline of God's army.* As the first chapter discovers the *size* of God's army, so the second discovers the *discipline* of it. Number is nothing without order and discipline. A handful of cavalry can scatter a mob. Discipline also *prevents rivalries.* If those about our Lord, in spite of all his teaching, asked, "Who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" then we may be sure there were many ambitious souls asking in the wilderness, "Who shall be greatest in Israel?" The discipline set before us in this chapter was particularly related to *the tabernacle.* In this connection the discipline may be regarded as intended to secure three things.

I. REVERENCE FOR THE SANCTUARY. They were to pitch the camp far off about the tabernacle. There was plenty of a superstitious and idolatrous spirit among the Israelites, but the reverence was wanting that comes from intelligent appreciation. But for a special injunction to the contrary, they would very likely have crowded round the tabernacle, as feeling nothing peculiar about the ark. This lesson of reverence had to be sharply taught again and again, *e. g.* to the Philistines and the men of Bethshemesh (1 Sam. v. and vi.), and to Uzzah (2 Sam. vi.). The fear of God is not only the beginning of wisdom, but also of security and spiritual conquests. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The Israelites carried about with them something as awful as the mount that burned with fire. So in the Church of Christ there should be a deep habitual reverence for the Almighty. The death of Ananias and Sapphira is a lesson for all ages as to the danger of forgetting that God is strict to mark iniquity. Confidence is necessary, but in our boldest approaches there must be the deepest humility. If we waged our spiritual warfare with real reverence for the great Trinity above, there would be more success.

II. DEFENCE OF THE SANCTUARY. It was in the midst, alike in resting and in marching. Travellers in savage countries circle themselves with fire at night, to keep off the wild beasts. So the circling tribes were to be a defence to the tabernacle. The company of Judah marched in front, and Dan brought up the rear. Judah went from honour to honour among the tribes, until the honour culminated in the inn at

Bethlehem. Reuben, though the eldest, was not put first. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." He could do something, leaning on Judah; not last, yet not competent to be first. But exactly all the reasons why the tribes were arranged *thus, and not otherwise*, we cannot tell. Jehovah had the sovereign disposal of the matter; not therefore arbitrary, or without cause. A commander does not give reasons for his strategy, though some of them may be afterwards discoverable. God has given his people to defend the sanctuary still, to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints; against the paganism of the old world, and all sorts of corruption in Christendom itself; against the pride of science transgressing its borders. We have to fight for an *open* Bible, free to every one caring to read it; a *full* Bible, its truths not minimised or attenuated to suit the fancies of men; a *pure* Bible, interpreted in its own light, and not confused with the distortions of later traditions. The Scriptures are our tabernacle, and we must defend them as something solemnly put in our charge.

III. PROTECTION FROM THE SANCTUARY. That which we defend protects us. Peter, before the Council, asserted and acted his right to preach the gospel. "We must obey God rather than men." Defending what was committed to his charge, he also was defended when God delivered him from Herod's prison. The unfaithful are the insecure. When we are searching the Bible to defend it against the attacks of its enemies, we are multiplying comforts and defences for our own souls. How many looking for arguments have also found balm and security! The Lord would have Israel to understand that it was not because they were 600,000, but because he was their Leader, they were strong. Let our protection come from God. Protections of human device are like the experiments in modern naval construction. A defence may be announced perfect, but some new weapon will make it worthless. The shield of faith alone will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Compare 1 Cor. xiv. with this chapter, as showing the need both for order and discipline.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

THE NUMBERS AND DUTIES OF THE LEVITES; THEIR SUBSTITUTION FOR THE FIRST-BORN (ch. iii.). Ver. 1.—**These . . are the generations of Aaron and Moses.** The word "generations" (*toledoth*) is used here in a peculiar and, so to speak, technical sense, with reference to what follows, as in Gen. ii. 4; vi. 9. It marks a new departure, looking *down*, not *up*, the course of history. Moses and Aaron were a beginning in themselves as the chosen heads of the chosen tribe: Moses having the higher office, but one entirely personal to himself; Aaron being the first of a long and eminent line of priests. The actual genealogy, therefore, is that of Aaron, and he is placed first. **In the day.** Apparently the day mentioned in ch. i. 1; or it may be more general, as in Gen. ii. 4.

Ver. 3.—**Whom he consecrated.** The "he" is impersonal; the Septuagint has, "whose hands *they* filled."

Ver. 4.—**They had no children.** If they had left sons, these would have succeeded to their office, and to the headship of the priestly line. **In the sight of Aaron.** In his lifetime (cf. Gen. xi. 28). Septuagint, "with Aaron." In the time of David the descendants of Eleazar were divided into sixteen courses, the descendants of Ithamar into eight (2 Chron. xxiv. 3).

Ver. 6.—**Bring the tribe of Levi near.** Not by any outward act of presentation, but by assigning to them solemnly the duties following. The expression is often used of servants coming to receive orders from their masters.

Ver. 7.—**They shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation.** Septuagint, "shall keep his watches, and the watches of the children of Israel." The Levites were to be the servants of Aaron on the one side, and of the whole congregation on the other, in the performance of their religious duties. The complicated ceremonial now prescribed and set in use could not possibly be carried out by priests or people without the assistance of a large number of persons trained and devoted to the work. Compare St. Paul's words to the Corinthians (2 Cor. iv. 5), "Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Ver. 8.—**Instruments.** Vessels and furniture. Septuagint, σκεύη. Vulgate, *vasa*.

Ver. 9. **They are wholly given unto him.** The word *nethunim* (wholly given) is emphatic here, and in ch. viii. 16. As the whole house of Israel at large, so especially (for a reason which will presently appear) the tribe of Levi belonged absolutely to God;

and he, as absolutely, made them over to Aaron and the priests for the service of his sanctuary. Cf. Eph. iv. 11, "*gave* some apostles," &c. The Levites, as gifts from God (*nethunim*) to their brethren the priests, must be distinguished from the *nethinim* or serfs of foreign extraction given by the congregation to the Levites to do their most menial work for them (Josh. ix. 27).

Ver. 10.—**The stranger that cometh nigh.** This constantly recurring formula has not always quite the same meaning: in ch. i. 51 it signified any one not of the tribe of Levi; here it includes even the Levite who was not also a priest. The separation of the Levites for the ministry of the tabernacle was not to infringe in the least upon the exclusive rights of Aaron and his sons.

Ver. 12.—**I have taken the Levites.** The actual separation of Levi had been already anticipated (see ch. i. 47, 53), but the meaning and purpose of that separation is now formally declared. No reason, however, is assigned for the choice of this particular tribe. It is almost always assumed that their zeal in the matter of the golden calf was the ground of the preference shown to them now. But it may be doubted whether there was any "preference" in the matter at all. To Aaron and his seed an undoubted and important preference was shown, but the functions and position of the Levites were not such as to give them any pre-eminence, or to secure them any substantial advantage. They were tied down to the performance of routine duties, which demanded no intelligence, and gave scope for no ambitions. The one obvious reason why Levi was selected is to be found in the fact that he was by far the smallest in numbers among the tribes, being less than half the next smallest, Manasseh, and almost exactly balancing the first-born. A larger tribe could not have been spared, and would not have been needed, for the purpose in question. If any more recondite motive must be sought for the Divine selection, it must be found in the prophecy of Gen. xlix. 7. Levi as well as Simeon, though in a different way, was doomed never to raise his head as a united and powerful tribe among his brethren.

Ver. 13.—**Because all the first-born are mine** (see Exod. xiii. 2, and below on ver. 43). That the powers of heaven had a special claim upon the firstling of man or beast was probably one of the oldest religious ideas in the world, which it would be difficult to trace to any origin but in some primeval revelation. It branched out into many superstitions, of which the cruel cultus of Moloch was the worst. Among the tribes which preserved the patriarchal faith, it retained more or less of its primitive meaning in the assignment of sacrificial duties to the eldest son. According to the Targums, the "young men of the children of Israel" sent by Moses to offer sacrifices before the consecration of Aaron (Exod. xxiv. 5) were first-born. Whatever ancient and latent claims, however, God may have had upon the first-born of Israel, they are here superseded by a special and recent claim founded upon their miraculous preservation when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain. All the first-born in that day became "anathema," devoted to God, for evil or for good, for death or for life. He, to whom belongs the whole harvest of human souls, came and claimed his first-fruits from the fields of Egypt. He took unto himself by death the first-born of the Egyptians; he left for himself in life the first-born of the Israelites. For the convenience, however, of the people, and for the better and more regular discharge of the ministry, he was content to take the single small tribe of Levi in lieu of the first-born of all.

Ver. 12.—**Instead of all the first-born.** The Septuagint inserts here, "they shall be their ransom."

Ver. 13.—**Mine shall they be: I am the Lord.** Rather, "mine shall they be, mine, the Lord's."

Ver. 15.—**From a month old.** The first-born were to be redeemed "from a month old" (ch. xviii. 16).

Ver. 17.—**These were the sons of Levi.** These genealogical notices are inserted here in order to give completeness to the account of the Levites in the day of their dedication.

Ver. 23.—**Shall pitch.** These directions as to the position and duties of the Levitical families retain the form in which they were originally given. The way in which they are mixed up with direct narrative affords a striking proof of the inartificial character of these sacred writings. **Behind the tabernacle westward.** The tabernacle opened or looked eastward towards the sunrise.

Ver. 25.—**The charge of the sons of Gershon.** See ch. iv. 24—26.

Ver. 28.—**Eight thousand and six hundred.** The four families of the Kohathites, of which that of Amram was one, must have contained about 18,000 souls. Moses and Aaron were sons of Amram, and they seem to have had but two sons apiece at this time. If, therefore, the family of the Amramites was at all equal in numbers to the other three, they must have had more than 4000 brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces. It is urged in reply that Amram lived 137 years, and may have had many other children, and that the variations in the comparative rates of increase are so great and so unaccountable that it is useless to speculate upon them. There is, however, a more serious difficulty connected with the genealogy of Moses and

Aaron, as given here and elsewhere. If they were the great-grandchildren of Levi on their father's side, and his grandchildren on their mother's side, it is impossible to maintain the obvious meaning of Exod. xii. 40. Either the genealogy must be lengthened, or the time must be very much shortened for the sojourning in Egypt. The known and undoubted habit of the sacred writers to omit names in their genealogies, even in those which seem most precise, lessens the difficulty of the first alternative, whereas every consideration of numbers, including those in this passage, increases the difficulty of the second. To endeavour to avoid either alternative, and to force the apparent statements of Scripture into accord by assuming a multiplicity of unrecorded and improbable miracles at every turn (as, *e. g.*, that Jochebed, the mother of Moses, was restored to youth and beauty at an extreme old age), is to expose the holy writings to contempt. It is much more reverent to believe, either that the genealogies are very imperfect, or that the numbers in the text have been very considerably altered. Every consideration of particular examples, still more the general impression left by the whole narrative, favours the former as against the latter alternative.

Ver. 30.—**Elizaphan the son of Uzziel**—of the youngest branch. This may have aroused the jealousy of Korah, who represented an elder branch.

Ver. 32.—**Eleazar.** The priests were themselves Kohathites, and therefore their chief is here mentioned as having the oversight over the other overseers—*ipsos custodes custodiens.*

Ver. 38.—**Before the tabernacle toward the east, . . . Moses, and Aaron and his sons.** The most central and honourable place in the camp, and the most convenient for constant and direct access to the sanctuary. Moses held a wholly personal and exceptional position as king in Jeshurun (Deut. xxxiii. 5); Aaron was hereditary high priest. Between them they represented the union of royal and sacerdotal authority, which had many partial continuations in Jewish history, but was fully realised in Christ.

Ver. 39.—**Twenty and two thousand.** It is obvious that there is a discrepancy between this total and its three component numbers, which make 22,300. It is so obvious that it must have been innocent; no one deliberately falsifying or forging would have left so palpable a discrepancy on the face of the narrative. It may, therefore, have arisen from an error in transcription (the alteration of a single letter would suffice); or it may be due to the fact that, for some reason not stated, 300 were struck off the Levitical total for the purpose of this census. Such a reason was found by the Hebrew expositors, and has been accepted by some moderns, in the fact that the Levites were taken and counted instead of the first-born, and that, therefore, their own first-born would have to be excluded. There is nothing to be said against this explanation, except that no trace of it appears in a narrative otherwise very full and minute. The first-born of the Levites *may* have been just 300 (although the number is singularly small), and they *may* have been considered ineligible for the purpose of redeeming other first-born; but if so, why did not the sacred writer say so, instead of silently reducing the total of "all that were numbered of the Levites"?

Ver. 43.—**Twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen.** These were the first-born of the twelve tribes; but who were included under the designation "first-born" is a matter of grave dispute. The smallness of their number (not much above one per cent. of the whole population) has given rise to several conflicting theories, all of which seem to be artificial, arbitrary, and therefore unsatisfactory. It is urged by some that the expression "every male that openeth the womb" must be strictly pressed, and that there would be no "first-born" in those families (which form a considerable majority) in which either a girl was born first, or the eldest, being a boy, had died. It is further urged that only those first-born would be counted who were not themselves fathers of families. These considerations will indeed reduce the probable numbers very largely, but not to the required amount. Others, again, give an entirely different turn to the difficulty by urging that as the command in Exod. xiii. 1 was prospective only, so at this time only the first-born since the exodus were counted. This makes it necessary to assume an altogether unprecedented birth-rate during that short period. One other explanation strives to satisfy the arithmetical conditions of the problem by assuming that the whole of the Divine legislation in this matter was in reality directed against the worship of Moloch, and was designed to prevent the offering of first-born to him by redeeming them unto himself. As the rites of Moloch only demanded young children of tender age, only such were counted in this census. It may, indeed, be very probably concluded that their heavenly Father *did* claim these first-born, partly in order to save them from Moloch, because the people would thereafter be exposed to the fascination of that horrid superstition; but there is no proof whatever that they were acquainted with it at this time. These cruel rites, together with many other heathen abominations, are forbidden in Levit. xviii. 21 and Deut. xviii. 10, in view of the entry into Canaan, where they were practised. The prophet Amos, when

he reproaches them with having "carried the tabernacle of" their "Moloch" even in the wilderness (Amos v. 26), absolves them by implication from any darker superstition; and the highly rhetorical passage Ezek. xx. 26 seems to refer to the consequences of disobedience at a later date, and can hardly be pressed against the entire silence of the Pentateuch. Anyhow it does not seem possible, on the strength of a supposed intention on the part of God of which no trace appears in the text, to impose a narrow and arbitrary limit upon the plain command to number "all the first-born, from a month old and upward." If we turn from these speculations to the reason and ground of the matter as stated by God himself, it will appear much more simple. It was distinctly on the ground of their preservation from the destroying angel in Egypt that the first-born of Israel were claimed as God's *peculium* now (see ver. 13). The command in Exod. xiii. 1 was no doubt prospective, but the sanctification of the first-born was based upon the deliverance itself; and this command was intended not to limit that sanctification for the present, but to continue it for the future. Now if we turn to Exod. xii. 29, 30, and ask who the first-born were whom the destroying angel cut off, we see plainly enough that they included the eldest son, being a child, in every house; that every family lost one, and only one. On the one hand, Pharaoh himself was in all probability a first-born, but he was not in any personal danger, because he ranked and suffered as a father, not as a son. On the other hand, the majority of families in which the first-born was a daughter, or had died, did not therefore escape: "there was not a house where there was not one dead." Taking this as the only sure ground to go upon, we may conclude with some confidence that the first-born now claimed by God included all the eldest sons in the families of Israel who were not themselves the heads of houses. These were the destroyed in Egypt —these the redeemed in Israel. How they came to be so few in proportion is a matter in itself of extremely slight importance, and dependant, perhaps, upon causes of which no record was left.

Ver. 47. — **Five shekels apiece.** This amount had already been fixed (Levit. xxvii. 6, if indeed this chapter does not belong to a later period) as the commutation value of a male child under five years old who had been vowed unto the Lord. If the redeeming of the first-born by the Levites began with the eldest, those that were left over would all be within this age. **A shekel.** See Exod. xxx. 13.

Ver. 51.—**Gave the money . . . unto Aaron.** The Levites were given to Aaron in lieu of the first-born. As, however, their number fell somewhat short, the redemption money taken for the remainder was due to Aaron as compensation, and was doubtless applied to the support of the tabernacle worship.

HOMILETICS.

Ch. iii.—*The servants of God, and the Church of the First-born.* We may see in this chapter, spiritually, the obligation of the whole people to be the bond-servants of Jesus Christ, and the dedication, as their representatives in the outward and visible service of God, of such as are separated unto the Holy Spirit at his call. For the whole Church of Jesus Christ is the general assembly and Church of the first-born, and they are all wholly his by right of redemption, and are all priests unto God; nevertheless, for convenience, and almost of necessity, their outward ministry and service in holy things is discharged by such as God's choice and their own aptness have marked out therefor.

Consider, therefore, WITH RESPECT TO THE LEVITES—

I. THAT THEY WERE "WHOLLY GIVEN" UNTO AARON, THE HIGH PRIEST. EVEN SO THEY THAT ARE DEVOTED UNTO SACRED MINISTRIES ARE "WHOLLY GIVEN" UNTO JESUS CHRIST, the great High Priest, and are placed at his disposal, that he may use their labours according to his will; and this is the one simple consideration which must govern their life, unless they be rebellious.

II. That they were given unto Aaron "TO KEEP HIS CHARGE, AND THE CHARGE OF THE WHOLE CONGREGATION;" *i. e.* TO ASSIST HIM AND TO ASSIST THEM IN THE DISCHARGE OF THEIR SEVERAL OFFICES AND DUTIES, so that they might be rendered aright to the well-pleasing of God. Even so it is in the deepest sense true (if rightly considered) that every one who has some special call is a partner partly in the work of Christ, partly in the duty of the Church; he helps to carry on the one or to discharge the other (or both). The atonement indeed was made by Aaron—as by Christ—himself, alone; but the outward and subordinate matters of his office he discharged by means of the Levites, and he could not otherwise have discharged them. Even so does Christ outwardly and visibly fulfil his manifold office upon

earth by the mouths and by the hands of his servants. Thus, if any preach the word, he is doing the work of Christ our Prophet; if any minister to the sick, of Christ our Healer; if any feed his lambs, of Christ our Good Shepherd; if any rule over men for their good, of Christ our King. Even if any suffer in the spirit of Christ, he is filling up the yet unfilled measures of the afflictions of Christ (Col. i. 24), because it is appointed unto Christ to suffer, as once in himself, so now in his earthly members, until the cup be wholly drained (cf. Rev. i. 9; xiv. 12). So, on the other hand, every one that is devoted to some ministry is discharging the duty of all to all, and through all to God. The body of Christ, which is the Church, owes unto all her members spiritual and temporal care and tendance; unto God ceaseless worship, prayer, and praise. But as the natural body discharges many of its functions through separate members or organs, so does the body of Christ through individuals set apart thereunto.

Consider, again, WITH RESPECT TO THE FIRST-BORN—

I. THAT GOD CLAIMED, AS OF RIGHT, THE SERVICES OF ALL THE FIRST-BORN BECAUSE OF THEIR PRESERVATION THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE (PASSOVER) LAMB IN EGYPT. Even so all who belong to "the general assembly and Church of the first-born," which are enrolled not in the lists of Aaron on earth, but in the book of God in heaven (Heb. xii. 23), *i. e.* all Christian people, so far as they understand their high calling, are claimed as his, and wholly his, by God; and this because he redeemed them by the precious blood of Christ (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Rom. xiv. 8; 1 Pet. i. 19, &c.). And notice that this "hallowing" of the first-born was a kind of death. All the first-born throughout the land of Egypt were "anathema"—a thing devoted. God had claimed them. If then these are saved from the destroyer by the death of the substituted lamb, they are still regarded as dead unto the old, the ordinary, life of men who are *sui juris*, as living only for God, and unto God. And this is precisely and unequivocally the position of all redeemed souls. Christ did not die that they should not die, but that their death should take a happy and blessed form, instead of one dark and terrible (2 Cor. v. 15; Col. iii. 3, &c.). Every soul, elect, first-born, redeemed, is hallowed and dedicated and marked as dead unto sin and self, alive only unto God.

II. THAT THE FIRST-BORN WERE NUMBERED BY NAME, EVEN TO THE LAST INDIVIDUAL; which does not seem to have been the case even with the Levites. Even so there is no one of his redeemed, first-born, that does not come into separate remembrance before God, because a soul hallowed by the precious blood is of priceless worth.

III. THAT THE ODD NUMBER of the first-born over and above those redeemed by the Levites HAD TO BE REDEEMED WITH A PRICE; for they were his, and he could by no means renounce his rights over any. Even so all the assembly of the first-born are the Lord's, and he cannot forego his claims over any one of them, neither can any one of them say, "It does not matter about *me*—*I* shall not signify—*I* need not be counted." The services of *all* are due to Christ, and God will have this acknowledged without any exception.

Consider, again, as incidentally appearing—1. That the whole matter begins with the genealogy of Aaron and Moses—the priest and the Ruler in Israel. Even so all questions of religion and devotion, however seemingly simple or entirely practical, do really begin with and from the "generations" of him who is both Priest and Ruler in Israel, of him who came forth out of Bethlehem, whose goings forth are from everlasting (Micah v. 2). And so do the Gospels begin with the human genealogy (Matthew, Luke), or the Divine (John), of the Anointed, or with the briefest summary of both (Mark—"the Son of God"). 2. That Nadab and Abihu, priests of the line of Aaron, who offered strange fire, had no children. Even so the solitary priesthood of Christ is ministered visibly in the Church, and there are that attempt to minister it presumptuously and falsely, as though it were their own; but these are spiritually barren, and leave no children in the faith, because the blessing and power of God is not with their ministry, and because human ambitions are "strange" to the gospel of love. 3. That Moses and Aaron camped on the east of the tabernacle, as the place at once most central and most near the Divine presence. Even so our King and Priest doth so abide as that he may ever appear in the presence of God for us (Heb. ix. 24), and yet may ever be in the midst of his Church (Matt. xxviii. 20; Rev. ii. 1).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ch. iii.—*The families of Levi get their several commissions.* The third and fourth chapters of Numbers form a section by themselves, and of this section the opening verse is the descriptive title: THE GENERATIONS OF AARON AND MOSES. According to the idiom of the Bible, this means that the two chapters which follow constitute the Book of the Families of Levi (compare the titles of the several sections of Genesis, viz., ch. ii. 4; v. 1; vi. 9; x. 1; xi. 27, &c.; also Matt. i. 1). The design of the book is to note the principal divisions of the tribe and allot to each its place and duties. Observe how the names of Aaron and Moses stand where we should have expected to find Levi's. The patriarch's fame has been quite eclipsed by that of his illustrious descendants, insomuch that here the tribe takes its title from them rather than from him. The book of the Levites is entitled the Book of Aaron and Moses.

I. IN THIS FAMILY BOOK THE PRE-EMINENCE IS GIVEN TO AARON. The name of Moses is inscribed in the title, but his family is otherwise of no note. The noble self-denial of Moses in this matter has been much commended, and with reason. He was superior to the ambition which seeks to build up a family at whatever cost to the nation. There is some reason to think that his sons were unworthy. Their mother was a Midianite, and seems to have had little sympathy with her husband's faith. It was otherwise with Aaron. His wife was a daughter of Amminadab, the prince of Judah and ancestor of our Lord (Exod. vi. 23). Her name was Elisheba ("a worshipper of God"); and as the name became a favourite one among the daughters of the priestly house (Luke i. 5), it may be presumed that she was worthy of the name, the first of all the saintly Elisabeths. The sons of Aaron and Elisabeth, being the heirs of the priesthood, took precedence of the other families of Levi, and occupied the place of honour in the camp. They, with Moses, pitched their tents in front of the tabernacle, towards the east (ver. 38). Note in passing how, at this early date, the two families which were to be pre-eminent for fifteen hundred years in respect of force of character, variety of services, and public honours are already marked out by the hand of God. On the march the prince of Judah leads the van (ch. i. 7; ii. 3, 9); in the encampment Aaron and his sons occupy the place of honour. In the family book of Levi the sons of Aaron and Elisabeth take precedence of all their brethren. Yet not so as to give any foothold in Israel to that sacerdotal pride which made the Brahmins of India and the priests of Egypt a sacred caste, and taught the people to bow before them as demigods. If Aaron and Elisabeth ever read this family register, their hearts did not swell with pride. The first sentences recall the tragedy of their house. Aaron's two eldest sons, with the oil of their consecration yet fresh upon them, sinned presumptuously, were smitten, and their names perished from Israel. Not even in the house of the godliest pair is grace hereditary. Aaron, the saint of God, and his saintly Elisabeth mourn over sons whom God has cut off in their sin. God will endure no rival in his house. His most honoured servants must be content to be only his servants, and the servants of all men for his sake. The Bible tolerates no hero worship. It tells the truth about the best of men, lovingly indeed, but without extenuation. In our family registers we are not bound by the same rule. We do not occupy the throne of judgment, and may bury domestic tragedies out of sight. But God is Judge, and his book, as it cannot err in its judgments, must speak without reserve, although the effect should be to "stain the pride of all glory" (Isa. xxiii. 9).

II. THE GREATER PART OF THIS FAMILY BOOK IS OCCUPIED WITH THE CENSUS OF THE LEVITICAL CLANS AND THE ALLOTMENT TO EACH OF ITS PLACE AND DUTIES. The particulars falling under this head do not call for special notice here. They concur with those related in the earlier chapters of this book in showing that the march of the tribes was performed with the most perfect order. Never was any great multitude more unlike a mob than the congregation in the wilderness. Moses in Egypt had shown himself a man "mighty in deeds" (Acts vii. 22). The tradition which makes him to have led victorious armies in his youth is probably true. Certainly the order laid down in Numbers for the march and the camp, for the nation in general

and for the Levites in particular, shows everywhere the hand of the general accustomed to handle great bodies of men.—Care is taken to put on record *the reason for the separation of the Levites* to the service of the tabernacle. By primitive custom a certain sanctity was attributed to the first-born. The act of God in passing over the first-born of Israel in Egypt established an additional claim upon the first-born thenceforward (cf. Exod. xiii., also ch. xxii. 29, &c.). To have required the personal service of the eldest son of every house would have been inconvenient. Better let the tribe of Levi be substituted, and let them minister to Aaron their brother; an arrangement facilitated by the circumstance that the Levites were nearly the same in number as the first-born. (The equation is not without its difficulties. But there is great doubt as to who exactly were meant by the "first-born." Till that is settled it is too soon to charge the narrative with error.) It was needful to state very distinctly the reason for the separation of a whole tribe to sacred service. The tribe thus separated had to be supported by their brethren, besides being disabled for doing their share of military and other public service. The Israelites would be unlike the rest of mankind if they did not, by and by, grudge such a great expenditure. They are to be reminded that the separation of the Levites was in liquidation of a prior claim, and took place by way of accommodation to their convenience. When money or service is asked for religious or charitable objects there are sure to be grumblers, and it is very expedient to fortify the demand with a clear statement of the reasons.—B.

Ver. 4.—"*Strange fire.*" There are various kinds of "fire" used in the service of God which, if not as hateful in his sight as that offered by Nadab and Abihu, are "strange." There is a fire which is appropriate and acceptable, because kindled by God; all others are "strange fire, which he commanded not" (Levit. x. 1). *E. g.*—

I. ILLEGITIMATE ZEAL, as seen in every kind of persecution (see Luke ix. 51—56). Yet a writer on the origin of the Inquisition quotes the passage in justification of the burning of heretics: "Lo! fire the punishment of heretics, for the Samaritans were the heretics of those times" (Prescott's 'Ferdinand and Isabella,' i. 319, *n.*). See Gal. iv. 18. But let the zeal run in the path marked out for it by Christ towards enemies (Matt. v. 44), backsliders (Gal. vi. 1), or heretics (James v. 19, 20).

II. UNAUTHORISED SERVICES; whether offered by unauthorised persons, as Korah, who yet had the true fire (ch. xvi. 17, 18), or Saul (1 Sam. xiii. 9—14), or Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi.); or by God's servants, but in ways alien to his mind (Illus., Uzzah, 1 Chron. xiii. 9, 10; xv. 13). Such are the "voluntary humility" and "neglecting of the body" condemned in Col. ii. 18—23, and all similar austerities. The fire God approves must be presented by accepted worshippers in an appointed way.

III. SUPERSTITIOUS DEVOTIONS. These may be presented through Christ "the way," and yet marred by ignorant fears of God, or unworthy fancies, or errors intertwined with God's truth in the many ways known to ancient or modern superstition (1 John iv. 18; v. 13—15).

IV. ARTIFICIAL EMOTION. We need never dread the emotion caused by God's own truth, used in legitimate ways. Truth is like solid fuel that ought to keep up a glowing heat, whether of alarm (Acts ii. 37; xxiv. 25) or of joy (Acts ii. 41). But emotion excited apart from the communication of appropriate truth may be disastrous; or at best like a blaze of straw, soon leaving only blackness and ashes. All such "strange fire" tends to the injury, or even the destruction, of the offerers (John iv. 24). To worship God in truth we must ourselves be "accepted in the beloved," enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and must present spiritual sacrifices kindled by his own celestial fire of love.—P.

Ver. 4.—*A mortal sin.* "And Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord," &c.

I. WHO THEY WERE THAT COMMITTED THIS SIN. Sons of Aaron; elder sons, in whom, therefore, a greater sense of thoughtfulness and responsibility might have been expected. They had also been duly anointed and consecrated. They could hardly plead ignorance and inexperience in the things of God. They had nothing else to do than attend to the tabernacle. They knew, or ought to have considered, that Jehovah had laid down instructions, even to the minutest points, as to what the priests were to do. It is a warning then to all who stand among peculiar privileges and enjoy greater light, *e. g.*, those who live in a household where there is piety

at the head, and a continual regard in all things for the will of God (Matt. xi. 20—24).

II. THE SIN THEY COMMITTED. They offered strange fire before the Lord. The fire to be used was the holy fire ever burning upon the altar (Levit. vi. 13). To offer incense was to symbolise thanksgiving and supplication, and this, of all things, requires to be done in most careful conformity with Divine appointments. All offerings to God, to be worth anything, must be voluntary; yet even a voluntary offering may be an abomination before him when it is a random and reckless exercise of our own freedom. The highest of human actions is to do God's will with all our will, as seeing clearly that it is the right thing to do.

III. THE TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCE. It was truly a *mortal* sin, a sin which on the very commission of it was followed by death, like the taking of some swift-working poison. It was as dangerous for a careless priest to take up the tabernacle services as for a man to take naked lights about a powder magazine. The fire of the Lord was a hidden thing, yet in a moment its full energy might be revealed, either to bless or destroy (cf. Levit. ix. 24 with Levit. x. 2). But though the sin was a mortal sin, it was not in itself worse than other offences against which sentence is not executed speedily. All sin is mortal, though the deadly result be spread over long periods. This sin was punished promptly and terribly, as were some other sins in Israel, not because they were worse, but because the people, and particularly the Levites, needed a lesson in the most impressive way in which it could be given. The fire of the Lord went out against the *priests* here, but soon after it went out against the *people* (ch. xi. 1). "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Lessons:—A worthy office may have an unworthy occupant. There are a Nadab and Abihu here; there were a Hophni and Phinehas afterwards, and a Judas among the apostles. Anointing, consecration, imposition of hands may have official value, but God only can give the faculty of true inward service. We may bring strange fire before God when we bring zeal not according to knowledge. There may be great fire and intensity and activity with nothing of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. Consider the lamentations of Paul over his persecuting days. There is here another instance of the letter killing. In the Old Testament punishment predominated over reward, because disobedience predominated over obedience.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUTIES OF THE LEVITES (ch. iv.). Ver. 2.—**Take the sum of the sons of Kohath.** The Levites having been separated from the other tribes, the Kohathites are now to be separated from amongst the other Levites for the most honourable and sacred duties. To them the preference was given presumably because the priests were Kohathites.

Ver. 3.—**From thirty years old and upward.** The age at which they became liable for service was shortly after reduced to twenty-five (ch. viii. 24), and at a later period to twenty (1 Chron. xxiii. 27). In the wilderness a larger number of the men might be required to attend to their own camps, and their own families; but the explanation may probably be found in the unusually large proportion who were at this time between the ages of thirty and fifty. The Septuagint has altered thirty into twenty-five to make it agree with ch. viii. 24. Thirty years became among the Jews the perfect age at which a man attained to full maturity, and entered upon all his rights and duties (cf. Luke iii. 23). **Into the host.** Not the military ranks, but the *militia sacra* of the Lord. **To do the work.** Literally, "to war the warfare."

Ver. 4.—**About the most holy things.** Rather, "the most holy things:" *they* were the service of the Kohathites. So the Septuagint.

Ver. 5.—**The covering veil.** The curtain which hung before the holy of holies, afterwards known as "the veil of the temple" (Luke xxiii. 45).

Ver. 6.—**The covering of badgers' skins.** Probably of sea-cow skins (*tachash*), but see Exod. xxv. 5. The Targum of Palestine, and the Septuagint, both render it "a covering of hyacinthine skin." The later Jews would have no knowledge of the marine animals common on the shores of the Red Sea. **A cloth wholly of blue.** This was the distinctive outer, and therefore visible, covering of the *most* sacred thing, the ark.

Ver. 7.—**The dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal.** Rather, "the plates, the bowls, the wine pitchers, and the chalices for pouring out," *i. e.* the drink offerings. The two first seem

to have been used in the meat offering, the two last in the drink offering.

Ver. 8.—**Shall put in the staves thereof.** This formula is repeated alike with reference to the ark, the table, and the two altars. It would therefore be natural to suppose that the staves had all been taken out while the various coverings were put on. On the other hand, it is expressly directed in Exod. xxv. 15 that the staves of the ark shall "not be taken from it." Two explanations are possible. Either the former command does not contemplate the necessity of wrapping up the ark, and only applies to all times when it was at rest, or in movement; or else the latter direction only means, in the case of the ark, that the staves should be adjusted for the purpose of bearing.

Ver. 9.—**Snuff-dishes.** Some render this word "extinguishers," but it could hardly bear that meaning, since it also signifies censers in ch. xvi. 6, and fire-pans in Exod. xxvii. 3. They were evidently shallow metal pans available for many different purposes.

Ver. 10.—**Upon a bar**—*i. e.* a bearing-frame. Ἐπ' *ἀναφορίων*, Septuagint; "upon a rest," Targum of Palestine.

Ver. 12.—**All the instruments of ministry.** These do not seem to be, at any rate exclusively, the vessels pertaining to the golden altar. They are not packed up with it, but separately, in a blue cloth and a skin covering of their own. Probably they include all the vessels and utensils used inside the tabernacle which have not been previously mentioned.

Ver. 13.—**Take away the ashes.** This is omitted by the Septuagint. The Hebrew word for "ashes" is of somewhat doubtful meaning, being only used here and in Exod. xxvii. 3; Ps. xx. 3 (see margin). Being connected with the word "fat," it may perhaps mean the grease or dripping from the burnt offerings. The Targum of Palestine renders it "cinders." As the altar was hollow, and was filled with earth or stones when used, there would be no need to cleanse it from ashes; if this be the meaning of the word, the command would rather have been to collect the living embers before the altar was removed, in order to keep alive the sacred fire. That this fire was never allowed to go out may be looked upon as certain.

Ver. 15.—**These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath.** One thing which the Kohathites almost certainly had to carry is omitted here, possibly because it was carried without any cover at all, and was not regarded as of equal sanctity with the rest. Anyhow, the omission is very remarkable, and may have been accidental. It is supplied by the Septuagint and the Samaritan text in the following addition to ver. 14: "And they shall take a purple cloth, and cover the laver and its foot, and they shall put it into a hyacinthine cover of skin, and put it on bars." The burdens of the Kohathites were six, not counting the laver and its foot: (1) the ark; (2) the table of shewbread; (3) the candelabrum; (4) the golden altar; (5) "instruments of ministry;" (6) the frame of the brazen altar.

Ver. 16.—**To the office of Eleazar, . . . oversight.** Septuagint, *ἐπίσκοπος* Ἐλεάζαρ . . . *ἡ ἐπισκοπή*. On him was laid the oversight of and the responsibility for all the material appliances of Divine worship, and in especial it devolved upon him to see to the oil, the incense, and the chrism, and the materials for the daily meat offering. No doubt it is intended, although not precisely expressed, that the Kohathites were specially under his orders.

Ver. 18.—**Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites.** The word tribe (*shebet*) is used in an unusual way here, not in the sense of *tribus*, but of *stirps*. Perhaps as Levi was himself a microcosm of all Israel, so his families ranked as tribes; and no doubt they remained more distinct than the families of any other tribe. The meaning of the command is plainly this, "Take care that the Kohathites are not cut off through any negligence or want of consideration on your part;" and the form of the command, "cut ye not off," conveyed most emphatically the warning, that if any mischief befell the Kohathites which the priests could have prevented, they would be responsible for it in the sight of God. No doubt, as a fact, the Kohathites would take their cue from the conduct of the priests: if *they* were irreverent and careless, the Levites would be the same, and would sooner or later presume, and, presuming, would die.

Ver. 19.—**Thus do unto them,** *i. e.* exactly as commanded in vers. 5—15.

Ver. 20.—**They shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered.** This translation is disputed. The word rendered "are covered" is the Piel infinitive from *bala*, to swallow, and so to destroy. It may signify the extreme rapidity with which the most holy things were hidden from sight and removed from touch, so as to become, as it were, non-existent for the time. So the Syriac, Arabic, Samaritan, and the Targums of Onkelos and Palestine. On the other hand, it may be a proverbial expression, "in a swallow, at a gulp," *i. e.* "for an instant," as in Job vii. 19. And so the Septuagint, *ἐξάπινα*, and most modern scholars. Whichever way, however, we take it, the phrase, "they shall not go in to see," seems to limit the prohibition under pain of death to the deliberate act of entering the tabernacle out of curiosity during the process of packing up the holy things. The case of the men of

Bethshemesh, therefore (1 Sam. vi. 19), does not fall within the letter of this law, although it does within its spirit. The command, thus limited, is no doubt an addition to the previous command not to touch, but it is altogether in keeping with it. If it was the will of God to hedge about these sacred symbols of his presence and his worship with an awful sanctity, it is obvious that he was as much bound to defend them against the irreverent prying of the eye as against the irreverent touch of the hand; and the prying here prohibited would have been distinctly wilful and inexcusable.

Ver. 25.—**They shall bear the curtains**, &c. For these four coverings, of tapestry, of goats' hair, of rams' skins, and of sea-cow skin respectively, see Exod. xxvi. In addition to these, the Gershonites carried all the hangings belonging to the tabernacle and to the outer court, with the single exception of the "veil" which was wrapped round the ark.

Ver. 26.—**And their cords, and all the instruments of their service.** Taking this verse in connection with ver. 37, we must understand the word "their" as applying to the things mentioned in the previous verse. The Merarites carried the cords, &c. of the hangings of the court.

Ver. 28.—**Under the hand of Ithamar**, as also were the Merarites. He had been already engaged in overseeing the construction of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxviii. 21).

Ver. 31.—**This is the charge of their burden**, viz., all the solid parts of the fabric of the tabernacle and its court; by far the heaviest burden, and so allotted to the largest number.

Ver. 32.—**By name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden.** This injunction only occurs here. The Septuagint has "number them by name, and all the articles borne by them." Perhaps the solid parts of the fabric were numbered for convenience of setting up, and, therefore, were assigned each to its own bearer.

Ver. 48.—**Those that were numbered of them were eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore.** The census of each family is described in the same form of words with much particularity. No doubt it was carried out with extreme solicitude, as made for a purpose especially sacred and important. The results are remarkable in more ways than one. The following table presents the numbers in each family above one month, and between the ages of thirty and fifty.

Kohath,	8600	2750	per cent.	32
Gershon,	7500	2630	,, ,,	35
Merari,	6200	3200	,, ,,	51
	22,300	8580	,, ,	38

The first conclusion which naturally arises from these figures is, that after all the numbering must have been made by tens, and not by individuals. As it was impossible that 3000 persons could be employed in carrying the various portions of the tabernacle, it may be that each group of ten undertook a unit of responsibility. The second consideration is, that the average of men between thirty and fifty in all Levi is higher than modern statistics show (it is said to be twenty-five per cent. now in the whole population), although not very materially. The third is, that this average is very unequally distributed, rising to a most remarkable proportion in the case of Merari. It is quite clear that something must have disturbed the relative numbers as between the Merarites and the other families. It has been suggested that the small number of male Levites generally, and the small number of male Kohathites, between thirty and fifty especially, may have been caused by heavy losses incurred in carrying out the Divine sentence upon the worshippers of the golden calf (Exod. xxxii.). But—1. The slow increase of Levi continued to be very observable down to the time of David; while the other tribes grew from 600,000 to 1,300,000, he only increased to 38,000 (1 Chron. xxiii. 3). 2. The average of males over thirty is already higher among the Kohathites than might have been expected; it is the largeness of the number, not the smallness, which needs to be explained. 3. It is Merari, and not Kohath, that is markedly distinguished from the other two: there is little difference between Kohath and Gershon. It is evident that something must have happened to the tribe of Levi, and in especial to the family of Merari, to reduce very greatly the number of births within the last thirty years. We do not know what the causes were, or why they should have pressed much more heavily on one tribe, or one family, than on another; but it is easy to see that many such causes may have acted, and acted unequally, under the cruel tyranny of Pharaoh. The children may have been systematically slaughtered, or marriages may have largely ceased, while Moses was in the land of Midian. If this were generally the case, it would much diminish the estimated total of the nation, and still more the estimated difficulties of the march.

Ver. 49.—**Thus were they numbered of him.** Literally, "and his mustering." It may have the meaning given to it in the A. V. (and so the Septuagint and Targums), or it may be translated "mustered things," *i. e.* things assigned to him in the mustering, and read with the previous words, "Every one to his service, and to his burden, and his mustered things."

HOMILETICS.

Ch. iv.—*Duties of the Church militant.* In this chapter we have, spiritually, certain duties of the Church on the way to heaven in respect of faith and worship, and the spirit in which matters of religion ought to be conducted. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE DIVINE RULE IN THE CARE OF THE SANCTUARY WAS ONE OF DISTRIBUTION. Each family within the tribe, each group within the family, perhaps each individual in the group, had his own allotted "burden." Kohath did not interfere with Merari, nor did Merari come into collision with Gershon. Even so, in all religious and ecclesiastical labours, distribution is the rule of the gospel, the Holy Spirit dividing to each severally as he will (1 Cor. xii. *passim;* Eph. iv. 11—13). And note that this distribution was not made according to any superiority that we know of, but rather the reverse. Levi himself was by far the smallest of the twelve tribes, and Merari was by far the largest (for the purpose in hand) of the three families. Even so under the gospel no rules of human pre-eminence restrict the Divine distribution of gifts and offices; rather, the first shall be last, and the last first.

II. THAT THE WHOLE FABRIC OF THE TABERNACLE HAD TO BE CONTINUALLY TAKEN TO PIECES AND RECONSTRUCTED, as the host moved on in its appointed path. Even so, in the onward progress of the Church of Christ, the outward form and frame of religion has to be constantly built up afresh with ceaseless labour. For each succeeding century, for each new generation that comes up, for each new nation added to the Church, the fabric of its faith and worship has to be built up from the beginning. If not, religion, like the tabernacle, would be left far behind, the empty monument of a forsaken faith.

III. THAT, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS CONSTITUENT PARTS, THOUGH PERPETUALLY BEING RECONSTRUCTED, YET REMAINED IDENTICALLY THE SAME. Nothing lost, nothing added. Even so the elements of our faith and worship must remain unchangeably the same from age to age; nothing really old cast away, nothing really new introduced. "The faith once (for all) delivered to the saints." Worship primitive and apostolic. However fresh the putting together, the substance eternally the same.

IV. THAT WHILE THE WHOLE FABRIC WAS TO BE CARRIED WITH GREAT CARE AND REVERENCE, YET THE MOST SOLICITOUS CARE AND THE MOST PROFOUND REVERENCE WERE RESERVED FOR THOSE HOLY THINGS WHICH THE FABRIC ENSHRINED. Even so all that is any part of our religion, claiming any Divine authority, is to be handed down and carried on with care and with respect; but it is the few central facts and truths of revelation upon which the loving veneration and extreme solicitude of Christian teachers and people must be concentrated.

V. THAT AMONGST THESE THE ARK WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST, having three coverings, and being distinguished outwardly also by its blue cloth. Even so it is the incarnation of God in Christ—the doctrine of Emmanuel, God with us—which is before all other things precious and holy, to be guarded with the most reverent and jealous care, to be distinguished openly with the most evident honour. And note (1) that as the mercy-seat, resting on the ark, and forming its lid, was carried whithersoever the ark went, and shared in all its honour, so the doctrine of propitiation and of God reconciled to men, resting as it does essentially upon the doctrine of Emmanuel—God with us—is carried ever with it, and honoured with it. And note (2) that as blue is the colour of heaven, so the blue outer covering of the ark (alone) may signify that the greatest effort of the Church's teachers should be so to present the doctrine of God in Christ before men that it may appear clad in heavenly love and beauty.

VI. THAT THE SHEW-BREAD WAS NOT ALLOWED TO FAIL FROM ITS TABLE EVEN DURING THE JOURNEY, but was carefully placed upon it and so carried, and thus answered to its name of "continual bread." Even so it is certain that the "living Bread which came down from heaven" must be with the Church as her "continual Bread" in all her marches. But it is more commonly considered that the shew-bread in its twelve loaves represents the whole people of God, in all its sections, as always present to the

eye of God, and always remembered before him for good; in which case this would emphasise the truth that we must without any intermission be had in merciful remembrance before God, lest we die. And note (1) that as the shew-bread on the table was covered with a cloth of scarlet, which is the colour of atoning blood, this may signify that it is as covered by and, so to speak, seen through the precious blood of Christ that the Church in all her travail is remembered before God for good. And note (2) that as the ark and the table were more honoured in their coverings than the rest, though the ark most of all, this may intimate that the two doctrines of chiefest honour in the faith are those of Christ and of his Church, *i. e.* of God in Christ, and Christ in us; God present with us through Christ, and we present before God through Christ (John xvii. 20—23, 26).

VII. THAT THE SONS OF KOHATH WERE TO CARRY THOSE HOLY THINGS, BUT NEITHER TO TOUCH THEM NOR TO GO IN TO SEE THEM FOR AN INSTANT, LEST THEY SHOULD DIE. Even so the holy mysteries of the gospel are ever to be borne onwards, but neither to be handled with irreverent carelessness nor pried into with irreverent curiosity, else they become the savour of death rather than of life. It is indeed true that in Christ "the veil is taken away," and that now the gospel is openly declared to all nations; but it is also true, as to its central doctrines, that wilful irreverence and idle curiosity are visited with severer punishments, because purely spiritual, now than then. It is not possible that any one be saved by faith if he handle the faith with rude familiarity, as having nothing sacred for him, or with cold curiosity, as a matter of mere intellectual interest (cf. Matt. xxi. 44; Luke ii. 34; 2 Cor. ii. 16. Cf. also 1 Cor. xi. 29, 30).

VIII. THAT THE PRIESTS WERE CHARGED NOT TO "CUT OFF" THE KOHATHITES, *i. e.* NOT TO CAUSE THEIR DEATH BY GIVING THEM EXAMPLE OR OPPORTUNITY OF IRREVERENCE IN THEIR NECESSARY WORK ABOUT THE SACRED THINGS WHICH WOULD BE FATAL TO THEM. Even so an enormous responsibility is laid upon all who are set over others in the Lord, especially with respect to those who are necessarily brought into outward contact with religion. Those who, being *custodes* of sacred treasures, set an example of irreverence to those associated with them, or give them the impression of secret unbelief in what they preach or minister (an impression how quickly caught!), will be held responsible for any souls that may perish thereby. How miserably true that, "the nearer the Church, the further from God;" that none are so hardened as those whose outward duties are concerned with the maintenance of public worship; that no families are so notoriously irreligious as those of Church dignitaries and other ministers of God! And this due not more to the subtle danger arising from familiarity with the forms of religion, than to the subtler danger arising from the irreverent and careless conduct and temper of the ministers of religion. How often do such, by their behaviour at home, or when off duty, leave an impression of unbelief or of indifference, which they do not really feel, upon their families, dependants, subordinates! How awful the responsibility of such an one! He has "cut off" souls which were most nearly in his charge from amongst the people of God. The poison-breath of his (it may be, heedless) irreverence has blighted their eternal future. And this holds true, in its measure, of fathers, masters, all who lead the religion of others. And note that as Aaron and his sons could only escape responsibility for any catastrophe among the Kohathites by doing exactly as the Lord commanded in the matter (see ver. 19), even so we can only escape responsibility for the loss of other souls by following *exactly* the Divine precepts; if *we* allow ourselves to deviate from them at all, others through our example will deviate from them more: we *are* our brothers' keepers to the uttermost reach of our example.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*None may bear the vessels of the Lord but Levites at their best.* From the giving of the law till the building of Solomon's temple, a space of about 500 years, the Lord at no time "dwelt in any house, but walked in a tent and in a tabernacle" (2 Sam. vii. 6). The sanctuary was a moving tent, and one principal part of the business of the Levites, the most honourable function assigned to them, was the carriage of it from place to place. Moses, who regulated so exactly

tne order of all the tribes, both for the march and the encampment, did not omit to appoint to every division of the Levites its duty in relation to the tabernacle and its holy furniture—what each was to carry, and in what order they were to pitch their tents. In this chapter of detailed regulations, special interest attaches to the law laid down regarding THE LEVITES' PERIOD OF SERVICE in carrying the tabernacle. It was from thirty years old till fifty (vers. 3, 23, 30). This must be taken along with chap. viii. 24, where the age for entering on service is fixed at twenty-five. The explanation of the seeming discrepancy, no doubt, is that the first five years were a kind of apprenticeship. Certain other sorts of work about the tabernacle the Levites might do between twenty-five and thirty, and these they might continue to do, so far as their strength served, long after fifty; but except between thirty and fifty they might not bear the tabernacle and its vessels. When David gave to the ark a permanent abode at Jerusalem, and the service of the Levites was readjusted accordingly, the age for entering on duty was lowered to twenty, and at that point it thereafter stood (see 1 Chron. xxiii. 27; Ezra iii. 8). The principle underlying the law was still the same. The service of God, especially in its most sacred parts, requires and deserves the best of our years, our strength, our affections. His soul desires the first ripe fruit. There are three errors men are apt to fall into in this matter of service; I refer more especially to official service. 1. *Some enter on it too young.* No hard and fast line can be drawn for all men and every service. One kind of service demands greater maturity than another, and one man ripens earlier than another. But the rule here prescribed to the Levites is a good one for the average of cases. To speak only of the Christian ministry: few men under twenty-five are ripe for it, and places of special trust would require a man of thirty. Undue haste is neither reverent nor safe. The first sermon of our blessed Lord was not preached till "he began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke iii. 23); a touching and most suggestive example. 2. *Some delay entering till they are too old.* This is most frequently seen in unofficial service. Many men, not destitute of piety, think it incumbent on them to give their prime so entirely to "business" that they have no time for anything else. Church work, home mission work, charity services, participation in these they look forward to as the employment of their leisure, after they shall have retired from business. That, at the best, is giving to the Lord not the first-fruits, but the gleanings. It will be found that, as a rule, it is not these tardy labourers whom God honours to be most useful. He honours those rather (thank God, they are many, and increasing in number) who consecrate to him a fair proportion of their strength when they are at their prime. 3. *Some do not know when it is time for them to resign.* The Levites' period of active service, whether it began at thirty, or twenty-five, or twenty, always ended at fifty. Not that the law thrust them out of the sanctuary when their term expired; that would have been cruelty to men who loved the service. They might still frequent the sanctuary, and perform occasional offices (see ch. viii. 26). But after fifty they ceased to be on the regular staff. Here too the rule has to be applied to the Christian Church with discrimination. For services which are characteristically mental and spiritual, a man's prime certainly does not cease at fifty. Nevertheless, the principle at the root of the rule is of undying validity and importance. The Levites' maintenance did not cease at fifty; and any Church system which does not make such provision as enables its ministers to retire when their strength fails is unscriptural and defective. On the other part, it is the duty and will be the wisdom of the Church's servants to seek retirement when they are no longer able to minister to the Lord with fresh vigour.—B.

Vers. 17—20.—*The Lord is to be served with fear.* "LEST THEY DIE:" that note of warning is often heard in the law. If any man or woman touched the flaming mount, it was death (Exod. xix. 12). It was death if the high priest entered into the holiest on any day but one, or on that day if he omitted to shroud the mercy-seat in a cloud of fragrant incense (Levit. xvi. 3—13). It was death if any son of Aaron transgressed the ritual, were it only by officiating in any other than the appointed garments (Exod. xxviii. 43). In the same strain, this law in Numbers makes it death for any common Levite to touch, or gaze upon, the holy things till the priest has packed them up in their thick wrappings (vers. 19, 20; cf. ch. i. 51; iii. 10). The examplo

first of Nadab and Abihu, and afterwards of Korah and his company, showed that these threats were spoken in earnest. We cannot marvel that, after hearing and seeing all this, the people were smitten with terror, and cried out to Moses, "We perish, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die. Shall we be consumed with dying?" (Numb. xvii. 13).

I. THIS FEATURE OF THE LAW WILL HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND THE DEPRECIATORY TERMS IN WHICH IT IS SO OFTEN MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, especially by the Apostle Paul. The law was "the ministration of death and of condemnation" (2 Cor. iii. 7, 9); it "worketh wrath" (Rom. iv. 15); it breathed a "spirit of bondage" and fear (Rom. viii. 15); it "gendered to bondage" (Gal. iv. 24); it was "an intolerable yoke" (Acts xv. 10). Not that the whole contents of the Pentateuch fell under this description. Much of promise was spoken in presence of the mountain of the law. But let the law be taken by itself, and let the gospel verities foreshadowed by its ritual be shut out from view, and does it not answer to the disparaging descriptions? It was full of wrath, condemnation, fear. No doubt there was an element of grace even in the covenant of Sinai. It was a benefit done to Israel when the Lord delivered to them the commandments, pitched his tabernacle among them, and suffered them to draw near under the conditions of the ritual. Nevertheless, the conditions were hard and terrible; we may well thank God for abolishing them. They are utterly abolished. The veil is rent from top to bottom; the yoke is broken; we have received the spirit of adoption, not the spirit of bondage again to fear; we have boldness to enter into the holiest.

II. NOTHING THAT HAS BEEN SAID IMPLIES THAT THE LEVITICAL LAW WAS REALLY UNWORTHY OF THE WISDOM OR THE GRACE OF GOD. For the time then present it was the best thing that could be. Certain truths of primary importance men were everywhere forgetting: among others, the holy majesty of God; that communion with God is to the soul of man the very breath of life; that man is a sinner for whom there is no remission, no access, without atonement. These lessons the law was meant and fitted to teach. These lessons it did teach, burning them into the conscience of the nation. The law was not the gospel, but it led forward to the gospel. A service beyond all price.

III. NOR HAS THE BENEFICENT OFFICE OF THE LAW CEASED WITH THE ADVENT OF THE BETTER TIME. Men are ready to abuse the grace of God, to give harbour to licentiousness on pretext of Christian liberty. If you doubt it, search well your own heart. What is the remedy? It is found sometimes in the rod of God's afflicting providence, sometimes in the searching discipline of the law. For the law, although in its letter abrogated, abides for ever in its substance. We are not bound—we are not at liberty—to slay sin offerings or burn incense. But we are bound to ruminate on the law of sacrifice and intercession. The Levitical ritual belongs in this sense to us as much as it ever belonged to the Jews. It admonishes us of the reverence due to God. A certain filial boldness he will welcome, but presumptuous trifling with his majesty and holiness he will not suffer. If we would be accepted, we must worship God with reverence and godly fear, for our God is still a consuming fire (Heb. xii. 29).—B.

Vers. 15—20.—*The perils of distinguished service.* The sons of Kohath had the most honourable of the duties assigned to the Levites, in being permitted to carry the sacred vessels of the tabernacle. But they were thus exposed to temptations and perils from which their less favoured bretbren were exempt. To touch or even to see the holy things was death. Similar temptations, to those intrusted with distinguished service in God's Church, may arise from—

I. CURIOSITY. Illustrate from the sin of the men of Bethshemesh (1 Sam. vi.). Men brought by their duties into close contact with Divine mysteries may yield to the curiosity of unauthorised speculations to which ignorant and grovelling minds are not exposed (cf. Col. ii. 18). Illustrate from speculations on the Trinity, the incarnation, or the profitless inquiries of some of the schoolmen as to angels, &c. Caution applicable to theological speculations of to-day (Deut. xxix. 29).

II. THOUGHTLESSNESS. A thoughtless disregard of God's strict injunctions, by either a priest (vers. 18, 19) or a Kohathite, might have been fatal. So now those

who have perpetually to deal with Divine things are in danger of irreverence from thoughtlessness. *E. g.* Christian ministers, who have to be constantly praying and preaching, as part of their service for God. Christians who have a reputation for saintliness above their brethren need special reverence, lest they should handle Divine things in a familiar, unauthorised manner. Apply to some habits of modern public worship tending to sad irreverence.

III. DISTRUST. Illustrate from the sin of Uzzah (2 Sam. vi. 6, 7). We are thus warned against using illegitimate means in support of the cause of God which *we* think to be in danger. Carnal methods must not be resorted to for the defence of spiritual truths. Some of the most devoted servants of Christ have profaned the ark of God, when they thought it in danger, by touching and propping it by supports God has never sanctioned. *E. g.* persecutions on behalf of *the truth of God*. Caution to those who now rely on worldly alliances and statesmanship on behalf of God's Church. From such perils we may be preserved by the spirit of (1) profound humility, at the privilege of being allowed to come so near and to deal with the mysteries of God (Eph. iii. 8; Heb. xii. 28, 29); (2) reverential obedience to every item of the instructions God has given us (1 Chron. xv. 12, 13; Ps. cxix. 128); (3) fearless trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has guarded his Church hitherto, is saving us, and who will protect his people and his truth by his own power to the end (2 Tim. iv. 18).—P.

Ch. iv.—*The Levites and the regulation of their duties.* One tribe has been set apart in lieu of the first-born of all Israel, and to this tribe is entrusted the service of the tabernacle. The nature and distribution of that service are now placed before us. Note—

I. THE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF INHERITANCE. As the *tribes* had their appointed place around the tabernacle, so the *three great natural divisions* of the tribe of Levi had their appointed place in it. So in the service of the Church of Christ there must ever be something corresponding to this natural division in Levi. The great Head has given some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. There are always some Christians rather than others who may be taken as spiritual children of certain in the spiritual generation before them, those on whom the prophet's mantle may fall, as did that of Elijah on Elisha.

II. THE LIMITATIONS OF SERVICE. *No Levite could do the work of an anointed priest.* The Kohathites were to bear the things of the holy place, but they were not to see them or prepare them for removal. There was a gulf of difference between Aaron and the noblest of the Kohathites, though they belonged to the same tribe. So between Christ and even the best of his people. There is so much to link us to our Lord, so much to reveal him as walking about on the same level, that we cannot be too careful to remember the differences between our services, humble even the most honourable of them, and that glorious peculiar service where Christ is Priest and Atonement in one. *The limitations of age.* None under thirty, none over fifty. At twenty a man may have strength and courage for fighting (ch. i. 3), but ten years more must pass over his head before he is judged to have the sobriety and sedateness needed for tabernacle service. Then at fifty he retires. God has consideration for failing strength. The burdens of the tabernacle must be carried, therefore God provides that the bearers shall be strong. There were constantly fresh and, we may suppose, often eager accessions at the younger limit of the service. Jesus was about thirty when he entered on his public life (Luke iii. 23), and the Baptist would be about the same. Let these limitations of God be considered by all whom they concern. There are duties of manhood which youth has not the experience, nor age the strength, to perform.

III. THE SECURING OF PERSONAL SERVICE (vers. 19, 49). Only certain persons were fit to do the work, but all who were fit had some work to do. In the Church of Christ fitness for anything, clearly seen, distinctly felt, has in it the nature of a command. We need not fear that there will ever be too many persons engaged in the service of the true tabernacle. There were between eight and nine thousand at this first appointment, but the Lord's promise runs (Jer. xxxiii. 22), "As the

host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured, so I will multiply the Levites that minister unto me." We are all Levites now.

IV. THE WORK WAS ALL NECESSARY WORK. No doubt a certain honour attached to the Kohathites, but great risk went with it; and after all, the honour was more in the eyes of men than of God. All that is needful to be done for him is honourable. The least peg or cord was not to be left behind, any more than the ark itself. There should be a spirit of humble joy and gratitude in us that we are counted worthy to do anything for God. All are needed to make up the perfection of service. To the *complete* body the little finger is as needful as the complex and powerful brain. For the circulation of the blood the capillaries are as needful as the great arteries and veins. God calls for no superfluous work from us. He has no mere ornaments in the Church. If a thing is not of use, it is no ornament, however it be decorated.

Application: — Find your work and burden. Every one has his own burden (φορτίον) to bear. No one else then can carry your burden than you. Seek your place. Take the lowest one, then assuredly you will come in time to the right one. The lowest place in the tabernacle service is better than the highest among the ungodly (Ps. lxxxiv. 10).—Y.

INTERIOR SANCTITIES OF ISRAEL (CHS. V., VI.).

Ch. v 1—4: REMOVAL OF THE UNCLEAN. Vers. 5—10: RESTITUTION OF TRESPASS. Vers. 11—31: JEALOUSY PURGED.

Ch. vi. 1—21: NAZIRITES DEDICATED. Vers. 22—27: BLESSING OF THE PEOPLE.

Whether these portions of the Divine legislation are connected with the surrounding narrative (1) by an order of time, as having been given at this point, or (2) by a harmony of subject, as completing on its inward side the perfection of the camp, or whether (3) their insertion here was in a sense accidental, and not now to be accounted for, must remain uncertain. Against (1) it must be observed that there is a decided break in the order of time at the beginning of ch. vii.; against (2) that a large part of the Levitical enactments might have been added here with an equal propriety.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

THE UNCLEAN TO BE REMOVED (vers. 1—4). Ver. 2.—**Every leper.** The law of the leper had been given in great detail in Levit. xiii. and xiv., and it had been already ordered that he should be put out of the camp (Levit. xiii. 46, and cf. xiv. 3). **Every one that hath an issue.** These defilements are treated of in Levit. xv.; where, however, it is not expressly ordered that those so polluted should be put out of the camp. **Whosoever is defiled by the dead.** The fact of being thus defiled is recognised in Levit. xi. 24; xxi. 1, but the formal regulations concerning it are not given until ch. xix. 21. Probably the popular opinion and practice was sufficiently definite to explain the present command.

Ver. 3.—**That they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell.** Cleanliness, decency, and the anxious removal even of unwitting pollutions were things due to God himself, and part of the awful reverence to be paid to his presence in the midst of Israel. It is of course easy to depreciate the value of such outward cleanness, as compared with inward; but when we consider the frightful prevalence of filthiness in Christian countries (1) of person and dress, (2) of talk, (3) of habit in respect of things not so much sinful as uncleanly, we may indeed acknowledge the heavenly wisdom of these regulations, and the incalculable value of the tone of mind engendered by them. With the Jews "cleanliness" was not "next to godliness," it was part of godliness.

Ver. 4.—**So did the children of Israel.** It is difficult to form any estimate of the numbers thus separated; if we may judge at all from the prevalence of such defilements (especially those under the second head) now, it must have seriously aggravated both the labour and the difficulty of the march. Here was a trial of their faith.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The necessity of putting away sin.* In this section we have, spiritually, the necessary sentence of banishment upon those defiled with sin, and the duty of separating them. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT NO LEPER MIGHT STAY IN THE CAMP OF ISRAEL; HE MUST BE "WITHOUT." Even so it is the necessary fate of the sinner, who is the true leper,—a fate which God himself, as we may reverently believe, cannot alter,—that he must be for ever separated from the company of all pure and holy beings (Heb. xii. 14; Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 15). Until he is healed he may be *with*, but not *of*, the people of God; numbered with them indeed, and following the earthly fortunes of the Church, as the lepers in the wilderness; but really separated from them, and this the more profoundly because of the outward proximity. If a sinner could go to heaven as a sinner, even there he would be a banished man, beholding the joy of the saints from outside with a sense of difference, of farness, which would itself be hell.

II. THAT NO ONE UNCLEAN THROUGH ANY ISSUE MIGHT STAY IN THE CAMP OF ISRAEL. And this was more severe, because it was a much more common and much less dreadful case than leprosy, being in most cases neither very apparent nor very permanent; yet this also entailed banishment while it lasted. Even so all habits of sin, however little shocking to the natural mind, exclude the sinner until he be healed from the true fellowship of the saints. They are indeed "natural" enough to the fallen soul, as these issues are natural to our present body of humiliation, but they are not therefore harmless. One sinful habit, however common amongst men, would disqualify and unfit the soul for the companionship of heaven, and so would entail an inward and real exile even there. A habit of lying is one of the commonest outcomes of human life as it is; but "whatsoever . . maketh a lie" must be "without."

III. THAT NO ONE EVEN WHO HAD TOUCHED A DEAD BODY MIGHT STAY IN THE CAMP OF ISRAEL. The defilement of death passed over with the taint of it upon all that came in contact with the dead. Even so that contact, to which we are daily and hourly exposed, with those dead in trespasses and sins is enough to unfit us for fellowship with pure and holy beings. If only the taint, the subtle contagion, the imperceptible communication of spiritual death pass upon us, as it almost must in daily intercourse with the world, it separates *pro tanto* from the communion of saints. It must be purged by the daily prayer of repentance and supply of grace ere we can be at home and at one with the really holy. And note that these three forms of uncleanness—(1) leprosy, which was rare and dreadful; (2) issues, which are common and little noticed; (3) the taint of death, which was imperceptible save to God—represent in a descending scale the three forms of sin which separate from God and his saints, viz. (1) open and notorious wickedness; (2) sinful habits such as spring out of ordinary life, and are little regarded; (3) the subtle taint of spiritual death caught by careless contact with the evil world.

IV. THAT IT WAS THE DUTY OF ISRAEL—a duty to be discharged at cost of much inconvenience; a duty in which all must help, not sparing their own—TO PUT AWAY ALL WHO WERE KNOWN TO BE POLLUTED FROM THE CAMPS. Even so it is the *duty* of the Churches of Christ to separate open sinners from their communion, not only lest others be defiled, but lest God be offended (Matt. xviii. 17; 1 Cor. v. 2, 11, 13; 2 Thess. iii. 6). And note that many unclean may have remained in the camp, whose uncleanness was not suspected, or could not be proved; but if so, they alone were responsible. Even so there be very many evil men in the Church who cannot now be separated; but if the *principle* be zealously vindicated, the Church shall not suffer (Matt. xiii. 47, 49; 1 Cor. xi. 19; 2 Tim. ii. 20).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The expulsion and restoration of the unclean.* The host has now been marshalled. The several tribes have taken the places allotted to them in relation to the tabernacle and to one another. They are about to set forth on the march from the wilderness of Sinai. Before the signal is given, certain final instructions

for the regulation of the camp have yet to be delivered, and this about the removal of unclean persons is one of them. The general intention of it is intimated in the terms employed. The host is to be so ordered, both in the camp and on the march, as to make it a living picture of the Church, and the Church's relation to God. It is to be made manifest that he dwells and walks among the covenant people (Levit. xxvi. 11, 12), that he is of pure eyes, and cannot suffer evil to dwell with him. Accordingly, there must in no wise abide in the camp any man or woman that is unclean. Persons afflicted with uncleanness must be removed, and live outside of the sacred precinct. Such is the law here laid down.

I. IN ATTRIBUTING TO THIS LAW A RELIGIOUS INTENTION, I DO NOT FORGET THAT A LOWER AND MORE PROSAIC INTERPRETATION HAS SOMETIMES BEEN PUT ON IT. There are commentators who remind one of the man with the muck-rake in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' They have no eye except for what is earthly. To them the removal of the unclean is simply a sanitary measure. I freely admit that there was a sanitary intention. The sequestering of lepers, the early and "extramural" burial of the dead—these are valuable sanitary provisions, and it is plain that this law would lead to them. But I need not wait to prove that the law looks higher, and that its paramount intention is moral and spiritual.

II. Passing on, therefore, to the RELIGIOUS INTENTION of this law, observe who exactly are excluded by it from the camp. They are of three sorts, viz., lepers, persons affected with issues of various kinds, and persons who had come in contact with the dead. This does not by any means exhaust the catalogue of defilements noted in the Levitical law. But these were the gravest. Only these three disabled from residence in the camp. My reason for calling attention to this point you will understand when I mention that these three uncleannesses, so prominent in the law of Moses, received the same kind of prominence in the gracious ministry of Christ. Read the story of the leper (Mark i. 41); of the woman with the issue of blood (Mark v. 27—30); of the raising of Jairus' daughter and the widow's son at Nain (Mark v. 41 and Luke vii. 14). In no one of these passages is the Levitical law named. Much the greater number of those who read or hear them fail to perceive that in Christ's mode of performing the miracles there was any reference to what the law had said about the defiling quality of the evils on which his gracious power was put forth. That there truly was a reference surely needs no proof. No Jew ever forgot what the penalty would be if he suffered himself to be in contact with a dead body, with a leper, with a person having an issue of blood. Certainly our Lord did not forget. Nor would it be doing justice to the truth to say that our Lord touched as he did, *notwithstanding* the defilement thereby contracted, and its troublesome consequences. He, of set purpose, sought occasion to put himself in contact with every one of the three causes of defilement noted in the law. Keeping this in mind, let us ask the meaning of the law. 1. *The general intention.* It was to be a memorial of the truth that our nature is deeply infected with sin, and that sin disables all in whom it is found for enjoying the fellowship of God here and hereafter. In this Levitical statute, I admit, the lesson is not taught explicitly. There was nothing morally wrong in any one of the three sources of defilement named. The teaching is by symbol—a kind of object lesson—and not the less impressive on that account. 2. *The meaning of the several symbols.* (1) Defilement by the dead. Why is this? Because death is the wages of sin (Gen. ii. 17; iii. 19). Compare the representation of death which pervades Ps. xc.—'the prayer of Moses." (2) Defilement by leprosy. A touching symbol. It admonishes us that sin, besides being blameworthy and deserving of death, is a vile thing, to be loathed and recoiled from, as men loathe and recoil from a leper; contagious also, and apt to spread. (3) Of the third symbol I need say only this, that it reminds us that sin is an hereditary evil (Ps. li. 5). 3. *The relation of this law to Christ and his work.* That it has a relation has been already pointed out. The relation may be conceived of thus:—The law is the dark ground on which the redemptive work of Christ unfolds the brightness of its grace. Christ did not keep aloof from the evils which afflict our fallen nature, and which perpetually remind us how deep our fall has been. He took occasion to put himself in contact with them. He touched the leprous man. Not that leprosy was sweet to him; it was to him as loathsome as to any man in Palestine that day. Nevertheless, he touched the leprous man, and the leprosy fled before

the power of that touch. Leprosy, wasting issues, death—these are the memorials and tokens of the sin that is the fatal heritage of our fallen race; and one who would know our need of redemption cannot do better than meditate on them as they are set forth in the Levitical law. Leprosy, wasting issues, death—these evils our blessed Lord went up to in his ministry; he touched them, and their flight the instant that they felt his touch gave, and continues still to give, assurance to men that he is indeed the Saviour. He can forgive sin; he can make us clean; he is the resurrection and the life.—B.

Vers. 1—4.—*The public exclusion of the unclean.* This law, like many others, in part a sanitary law; but also educational in spiritual truth, and typical of eternal realities. Two truths taught:—

I. THE HOLINESS OF GOD. This lesson, so hard to the Israelites, was impressed on them in many ways, *e. g.*, sacred men ministering in sacred places, on sacred days, &c. This holy God dwelt in the midst of their tents, and walked among them (Levit. xxvi. 11, 12). The God of life and purity was utterly alien from death and impurity. Defilement, whether wilful or unavoidable, could not be tolerated in his presence. If the polluted are retained, God withdraws. Sin is "the abominable thing" which God hates. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Jer. xliv. 4; Hab. i. 13).

II. THE EXCOMMUNICATING POWER OF SIN. The consequences to the excluded Hebrews, though limited, were by no means light. They had to suffer loss of privileges, ceremonial and spiritual, and a sense of humiliation from the notoriety of their position. For the time they were out of communion with God and his people. Thus sin has an isolating power. Apart from an act of ecclesiastical excommunication or Divine judgment, its tendency is to separate us from the people of God through want of sympathy. We cease to enjoy their privileges even if not debarred from them. We lose self-respect when sin is exposed, if not before. We are out of communion with God, into whose presence we cannot truly come with sin indulged in our hearts (Ps. lxvi. 18; Ezek. xiv. 3). God's salvation is *from* sin, not *in* sin. No wonder, therefore, that the impure are sentenced—(1) to excommunication from the Church on earth (1 Cor. v. 9—13, &c.), (2) to exclusion from the Church in heaven (Rev. xxi. 27).—P.

Vers. 1—4.—*Things that defile.* The book up to this point is occupied with the counting and discipline of the people, both those for war and those for tabernacle service. Now the *cleansing* of the camp is to be attended to.

I. THE CLASSES WHO WERE DECLARED UNCLEAN. Certainly we must not be too curious in our inquiries here, or we may soon pass the verge of what is edifying. But there are some points of note with regard to all three classes. *The leper.* Why should he be declared unclean? Perhaps as suffering from a more manifest disease than others, maybe a peculiarly offensive one, and one of the most difficult to cure. These are conjectures which give a little light, but the great reason for ceremonial uncleanness in the case of human beings, as in the case of lower animals, is to be found in Jehovah's positive injunction. Leprosy was thus to be one of the great types in the body of the defiling effect of sin upon the soul. It is clear that in the course of ages the idea got fixed in the Israelite mind that the cure of leprosy was to be considered as a cleansing. Jesus commanded his apostles to *heal* the sick, *cleanse* the lepers. The leper was not a common victim, but singled out to impress the fact that the ultimate cause which produces disease is a strange and polluting thing; no necessary element in human nature, though now it be actually present in us all. *The person with an issue.* Thus uncleanness is connected with *birth* as well as with *death*. Whenever a child is born, a being is brought into the world, which certainly will add something to the evil in it, though possibly it may add much to the good. The saintliest of believers has had in him the possibilities of the worst of unbelievers. Human nature is truly the creation of God, fearfully and wonderfully made; but there is also the fact of birth from sinful human parents to be remembered. This is a great mystery, to be delicately handled; but the uncleanness here indicated may be taken as intended to remind parents how one generation transmits not only nature, but sinful nature, to another. *The person defiled by the dead.* There is great

significance in being made unclean by the dead. Of all things in the world that manifest the effects of sin, this is the greatest—death. By sin came death. All lesser results lead up to this. A dead body, in one sense as sacred a thing as there is in the world, is yet also one of the most unclean. As long as there is life there is something to protest against the reign of sin, and resist it; but life being gone, sin riots and revels in the corruption of what was once fair and strong. The coffin and the gravestone hide, but they only hide. It was one of our Lord's most terrible words to the Pharisees to compare them to whited sepulchres.

II. THE LINE OF SEPARATION. There are large details in Leviticus respecting all these instances of uncleanness (chs. xii.—xv.). The line of separation was clearly marked, sternly enforced. To go out of the camp meant much personal inconvenience, perhaps pain—suffering added on to existing suffering. Imagine the mother tending her sick child, waiting its expiring breath, closing its eyes, composing its body, then compelled to go without the camp. This typical ceremonial uncleanness indicates the sharp *separation between good and bad men.* The word of God accords in all its references to this. There are two classes, and only two—the clean and the unclean, the sheep and the goats, the wheat and tares, the children of God and the children of wrath. It also indicates the *extent to which discipline can be carried in the Church of Christ on earth.* There are some offences so plain that the guilty may at once be cut off from outward communion. But there may be others quite as unworthy who yet do and must escape, because their life makes no crying scandal. Many a professed and long-continued adherent to the true Church is, nevertheless, as worldly, hard, and selfish as any of the ungodly. God reckons all such outside the camp. He alone has the knowledge and authority to reckon. Learn then the danger of all spiritual uncleanness. That so much was declared typically unclean, shows that spiritual uncleanness is a very great danger. The boundary between the Church and the world cannot be too strictly kept. Since we are all advancing to death, it is proof of the power of sin in our nature. We are *all* unclean with the worst of uncleanness. It only waits for us to feel all the evil, and the way is clear to the remedy (1 John i. 7—10).—Y.

EXPOSITION.

RESTITUTION TO BE MADE FOR TRESPASSES (vers. 5—10). Ver. 6.—**Shall commit any sin that men commit.** Literally, "[one] of all the transgressions of men," *i. e.* the wrongs current amongst men. **To do a trespass against the Lord.** This qualifies the former expression, and restricts its reference to the sins mentioned in Levit. vi. 2, 3, 5, viz., wrongs done to the property of another. Such wrongs, perhaps because they were considered legitimate as long as they were not found out, were taken up by the Lord himself as involving a trespass against his own righteousness.

Ver. 8.—**If the man have no kinsman.** No *goel*, or personal representative. This supposes that the wronged man himself is dead, and it is an addition to the law of restitution as given in Levit. vi., an addition clearly necessary to its completeness. The wrong-doer must in no case be the gainer by his own wrong, and if the trespass could not be "recompensed" to man, it must be "recompensed" to the Lord, who was as it were joint-plaintiff in the cause. **To the priest.** On the general principle that the priest was the visible representative of the invisible majesty.

Ver. 9.—**Every offering.** Hebrew, *terumah*, heave offering (Exod. xxix. 28). Septuagint, ἀπαρχή. Those offerings, or portions of offerings, which were not consumed on the altar, but "presented" at the altar. Having been offered, they were the property of the Lord, and were given by him to the priests.

Ver. 10.—**Every man's hallowed things.** Dedicatory offerings, such as first-fruits, not exactly of the nature of sacrifices. **His,** *i. e.* the priest's. **Whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his.** A general principle, including and confirming the previous rules; subject, of course, to the other and greater principle, that whatever the Lord claimed for himself by fire must first be consumed. These directions concerning the rights of the priests to offerings are very often repeated in various connections. There was probably a strong tendency amongst the people to cheat the priests of their dues, or to represent their claims as exorbitant. It is in the spirit of covetousness which underlies all such conduct that we are to find the connection between these two verses and the rest of the paragraph.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 5—10.—*No fraud permitted by God.* We have here, as part of the moral law of God which changeth not, the duty of making confession of, and satisfaction for, any wrong done to another, and the duty of not withholding what is rightly theirs from the ministers of God. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT EVERY WRONG DONE TO ANOTHER IN RESPECT OF HIS PROPERTY WAS ASSUMED BY THE LORD AS A TRESPASS AGAINST HIMSELF. So now every wrong or fraud, and all cheating or sharp dealing, practised by one of us against another, is not merely an offence against man,—such as may be excused by the necessity of the times, or the custom of business, or the universal prevalence of such practices,—but is an outrage against the righteousness of God which he will never overlook. To such a man God himself is "the adversary" (Matt. v. 25); and if he be not repaid, then will he himself "repay" that man (Isa. lix. 18; Rom. xii. 19). He that hath cheated his neighbour of a penny hath gained unto himself an eternal and immeasurable loss, except he repent, confess, restore (Exod. xxxiv. 7; Isa. lxi. 8).

II. THAT EVERY ONE WHO HAD DONE SUCH WRONG MUST (1) CONFESS, (2) MAKE RESTITUTION. So now there is no true repentance for, and no real forgiveness of, such wrongs—from the least even to the greatest—unless they are (1) humbly acknowleged, (2) liberally made good (Luke xix. 8). Those wrongs (alas, how many!) which are never found out, which are not acknowledged through false shame, and not made good through covetousness, are like bullets lodged in the body, which will not cease to cause misery, disease, and death.

III. THAT IF THE WRONGED MAN WAS DEAD, AND HAD LEFT NO REPRESENTATIVE, THE TRESPASS MUST STILL BE RECOMPENSED TO THE LORD BY BEING PAID TO THE PRIEST. So now it is a certain maxim of Christian morality (as of law) that no man be a gainer by his own wrong. If he cannot repay to the person wronged, directly or indirectly, he is bound to make recompense to God by devoting it to some pious purpose. If a man has made a fortune by fraud, his repentance is vain unless he make over the whole of it to the good of his neighbours. This will not cleanse his conscience,—only the one Sacrifice can do that,—but without it his conscience cannot be cleansed.

IV. THAT GOD DID CAREFULLY INSIST THAT HIS PRIESTS SHOULD RECEIVE THEIR PORTION, and SHOULD NOT BE OVER-REACHED. Even so is the law of Christ (1 Cor. ix. 7—14; Gal. vi. 6; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 5—10.—*Conscience money.* This precept is a continuation of the one laid down in the preceding verses, and, like it, admonishes the people regarding the purity which ought to prevail in a camp honoured with the presence of the Holy One. Since the Lord dwells in the midst of the camp, there must not abide in it anything that defileth—any leper, any one having an issue, any one who has been in contact with the dead. Nor is it bodily defilement only that entails this disability. The man "that doeth hurt to his neighbour" is unclean in God's sight. Fraud is as defiling as leprosy. Even if it is such as the criminal law cannot reach, God's eye sees it, and is offended with it; and the wrong-doer must regard himself as excluded from the camp till he has made restitution to his wronged neighbour, and brought a sacrifice of atonement to the Lord.

I. Keeping in view the scope of the law as I have described it, you will without difficulty master the particulars laid down, especially if you read along with it the law in Levit. vi. 1—7. It is essential to observe that this injunction is not a part of the criminal code. It is not laid down for the guidance of the judges, but for the guidance of a man's own conscience. The restitution enjoined is similar to that known among ourselves as CONSCIENCE MONEY. Take an example. A man finds a pruning-hook by the highway-side, evidently left there by mistake. He takes it home. "An excellent pruning-hook; the very thing I was in need of. I need not make a noise about the lucky find; I will keep it to myself." A few days after, the loser turns

up, and makes inquiries about his hook. But the finder denies all knowledge of it, and it remains in his possession. Among us the criminal law would have something to say to this dishonest finder. The meshes of the Hebrew criminal code seem to have been wide enough to let him go. But the holy law of God speaks to his conscience. 1. He is to confess his fault. Even in matters belonging to the criminal law, the Jews laid great stress on confession. It was a maxim among them, that if a man brought an offering for his offence, but omitted to confess the evil he had done, his offering would not avail for atonement (cf. 1 John i. 9). 2. He is to make restitution to the person wronged. In the instance supposed the pruning-hook must be restored, or its equivalent in money, with one-fifth part added. This, let me observe in passing, shows that the trespass contemplated is not a trespass such as fell within the scope of the criminal law; for the restitution enjoined in the criminal law was much ampler. A thief restored double; a sheep-stealer fourfold; a cattle-lifter fivefold (Exod. xxii. 1—4). Mild penalties certainly, but more severe than the restitution enjoined here. 3. A ram is to be brought to the Lord as a trespass offering for atonement. 4. If the person who was wronged is dead, the restitution is to be made to the next heir,—the kinsman, or *goel* (ver. 8),—whom failing, it is to be made to the Lord in the person of the priest. In connection with this, the people are admonished that all gifts solemnly dedicated to the priest fall under the same rule as conscience money paid by way of compensation for fraud. Omission to pay them will defile the camp.

II. WHAT DOES THIS STATUTE OF CONSCIENCE MONEY TEACH US? 1. When a man does wrong to his neighbour he sins against God, and must crave God's pardon for the wrong. There have been religious systems—the old Greek and Roman paganism, for example—which completely disconnected religion from morality. A tendency in the same direction, who that knows himself has not caught a glimpse of in his own heart? Against that fatal divorce the whole word of God is a protest and warning. Read Psalm xv. 2. When a man does wrong to his neighbour he must make compensation to his neighbour. It will not do simply to confess the wrong to God, and beg his pardon. That is only one half of what the case demands. Satisfaction must be made to the person wronged. In many cases the civil magistrate will see to this. In many other cases the wrong-doing is of a kind which his sword cannot reach—fraudulent bankruptcies often elude the law. In all cases alike, God commands the person who has wronged his neighbour to repay him with increase. 3. The wrong-doer who omits to repay as required is admonished that he is an unclean person, whose presence defiles God's sanctuary. In God's sight the camp is defiled by the presence of a man who defrauds as much as by a leper. If you would see how deeply this aspect of the precept before us impressed itself on consciences in Israel, read Psalm xv., a psalm fitted surely to suggest alarm to those amongst us who in business habitually violate the golden rule, and yet claim a place in God's sanctuary. 4. In the complications of modern life it will happen far more frequently than in ancient Israel that satisfaction for fraud cannot be made directly to the parties defrauded. In this case the money is to be devoted to charitable and pious uses. To be sure, ill-gotten wealth is a very undesirable source of income for either Church or charity. I much doubt whether God honours it to do much good. But if the fraudulent person is truly penitent, and has done his best to make compensation to his victims, he may hope to escape the defilement and curse that cleave to dishonest gains by bestowing them where they may possibly do some good.—B.

Vers. 5—8.—*Confession and restitution.* These trespasses are explained and illustrated in Levit. vi. 1—7. In both passages provision is made for confession, restitution, interest, and atonement—in Leviticus the atonement being spoken of more fully than here. Notice that three parties are provided for in the directions given.

I. THE WRONG-DOER. The wrong-doer has done injury to himself as well as another. In one sense the injury is even greater. What we suffer from others, grievous and irritating as it may be at the time, need not be an abiding ill; but the injury we inflict on others is great spiritual danger to ourselves. Hence the man *truly* confessing the wrong he had done was proving himself in a better state of mind, no longer the victim of selfishness, and glorying in his shame, but showing an awakened

conscience, and a repentance needing not to be repented of. Consider the benefit David got (Ps. li.). Confession, restitution, and atonement cleanse the bosom of a great deal of "perilous stuff." Restitution, though a loss in possessions, is a gain in peace. Reparation of a wrong done to a fellow-man is to be valued for the injured person's sake; but it is a great deal more that the wrong-doer for his own sake has been brought right with God.

II. THE PERSON WRONGED. He is provided for as far as he can be provided for. To make reparation in all respects is indeed impossible. A wrong-doer, with all his efforts, cannot put things exactly as they were before. Still he must do what he can. Hence the provision to add a fifth over the principal. Doubtless a truly repentant trespasser would not stop even at that to show his sincerity in reparation. Zaccheus restored fourfold. Surely there are some injured persons to whom it would be a greater joy and a greater benefit to see their enemies altogether altered than if they had never been hurt by them at all. One great good, as concerned the person wronged, was that confession and restitution would do much to allay, and perhaps obliterate, the sense of injustice. "It is not what a man outwardly has or wants that constitutes the happiness or misery of him. It is the feeling of injustice that is insupportable to all men. The brutalest black African cannot bear that he should be used unjustly" (Carlyle). Again, injured persons themselves may be injurers. A sense of wrong suffered is not always effectual in hindering the sufferer from wronging others. So the confession and repentance of one might lead to the confession and repentance of another. Who knows the *total effect* produced on the persons to whom Zaccheus made his fourfold restitution?

III. JEHOVAH HIMSELF. Acknowledgment and restitution were not enough without *atonement*. To injure a fellow-man is to rebel against the government of God, robbing him of some possible service from the person injured. The wrong-doer, from prickings of conscience, or mere uneasiness of mind, may make some reparation to his fellow-man, whom he can see; but if he thinks he has then done all, he may find, from continued uneasiness, that something is yet unaccomplished. It is the greatest blot on sinful men, not that they are unjust to one another, but that they have come short of the glory of God. That glory must be restored, and God take the place of self, if human relations are to come right. There is no scheme of teaching or example that, acting on natural lines, will ever make men perfectly just to one another. Things must be put right with God, for of him, and through him, and to him are all things. Let no one, therefore, make confession and restitution here look large, and atonement be pushed into the corner as an unimportant detail. Just as the confession and restitution point forward to the pure and vigorous ethics of Jesus, so the slain animals point forward to him who takes away the sin of the world.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE TRIAL OF JEALOUSY (vers. 11—31).

Ver. 12.—**If any man's wife . . . commit a trespass against him.** The adultery of the wife is here regarded only from a social point of view; the injury to the husband, the destruction of his peace of mind, even by the bare suspicion, and the consequent troubling of Israel, is the thing dwelt upon. The punishment of adultery as a sin had been already prescribed (Levit. xx. 10).

Ver. 13.—**If it be hid.** Or, "if he be hid." This verse is explanatory of the former. **Taken with the manner.** The latter words are not in the Hebrew. It means no doubt "taken in the act" (cf. John viii. 4) *Αὐτὴ μὴ ᾖ συνειλημμένη*, Septuagint.

Ver. 14.—**And she be not defiled.** As far as the mischief here dealt with was concerned, it was almost equally great whether the woman was guilty or not.

Ver. 15.—**He shall bring her offering for her.** קָרְבָּנָהּ, "her offering;" עָלֶיהָ, "on her account." It was to be a meat offering—not connected on this occasion with any other sacrifice—of the fruits of the earth, symbolising the fruits of her guilty, or at least careless and suspicious, conduct. As of barley meal, not of fine wheat flour, it indicated her present low and vile estate (deserved or undeserved); as without incense or oil, it disclaimed for itself the sanctifying influences of God's grace and of prayer. Thus every detail of the offering, while it did not condemn the woman (for one found guilty could not have made any offering at all), yet represented her questionable repute and unquestionable dishonour, for even the unjust suspicion

of the husband is a dishonour to the wife. **Barley meal.** In the days of Elisha half the price of fine flour (2 Kings vii. 1), and only eaten by the poor (Ezek. iv. 12; John vi. 9). **An offering of jealousy.** Literally, "of jealousies." קִנְאֹת, an intensive plural. **An offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance.** *Θυσία μνημοσύνου*, Septuagint. An offering to bring the woman into judicial remembrance before the Lord, in order that her sin (if any) might be remembered with him, and be declared.

Ver. 16.—**Before the Lord.** Either at the brazen altar or at the door of the tabernacle.

Ver. 17.—**Holy water.** Probably from the laver which stood near the altar (Exod. xxx. 18). The expression is nowhere else used. The Septuagint has *ὕδωρ καθαρὸν ζῶν*, pure running water. **In an earthen vessel.** Cheap and coarse, like the offering. **Of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle.** This is the only place where the floor of the tabernacle is mentioned. As no directions were given concerning it, it was probably the bare earth cleared and stamped. The cedar floor of the temple was overlaid with gold (1 Kings vi. 16, 30). This use of the dust has been held to signify the fact (*a*) that man was made of dust, and must return to dust (Gen. iii. 19); or (*b*) that dust is the serpent's meat, *i. e.* that shame and disgust are the inevitable fruit of sin (Gen. iii. 14; Isa. lxv. 25). Of these, (*a*) is not appropriate to the matter in question, since mortality is common to all, and (*b*) is far too recondite to have been intended here. It is very unlikely that the spiritual meaning of Gen. iii. 14 was known to any of the Jews. A much simpler and more intelligible explanation is to be found in the obvious fact that the dust of the tabernacle was the only thing which belonged to the tabernacle, and which was, so to speak, impregnated with the awful holiness of him that dwelt therein, that could be mixed with water and drunk. For a similar reason the "sin" of the people, the golden calf, was ground to powder, and the people made to drink it (Exod. xxxii. 20). The idea conveyed to the dullest apprehension certainly was that with the holy dust Divine "virtue" had passed into the water—virtue which would give it supernatural efficacy to slay the guilty and to leave the guiltless unharmed.

Ver. 18.—**Uncover the woman's head.** In token that she had forfeited her glory by breaking, or seeming to have broken, her allegiance to her husband (1 Cor. xi. 5—10); perhaps also with some reference to the truth that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of him" with whom she had to do (Heb. iv. 13). **Put the offering of memorial in her hands.** That she herself might present, as it were, the fruits of her life before God, and challenge investigation of them. **Bitter water.** It was not literally bitter, but it was so fraught with conviction and judgment as to bring bitter suffering on the guilty.

Ver. 19.—**If no man.** The oath presupposed her innocence. **With another instead of thy husband.** Hebrew, "under thy husband," *i. e.* as a wife subject to a husband (Ezek. xxiii. 5; Hos. iv. 12). *Ὑπανδρος οὖσα*, Septuagint. It was only as a *femme couverte* that she could commit *this* sin.

Ver. 21.—**Then the priest shall . . say unto the woman.** These words are parenthetical, just as in Matt. ix. 6. The latter part of the oath is called "an oath of cursing," because it contained the imprecations on the guilty. **To rot.** Hebrew, "to fall." *Τὸν μηρόν σου διαπεπτωκότα*, Septuagint. **To swell.** The Hebrew *zabeh* is not of quite certain meaning, but probably this.

Ver. 22.—**Into thy bowels.** Cf. Ps. cix. 18. *Εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν σου*, Septuagint. It has been thought that these symptoms belonged to some known disease, such as dropsy (Josephus, 'Ant.,' iii. 11, 6), or ovarian dropsy. But it is clear that the whole matter was outside the range of the known and of the natural. An innocent woman may suffer from dropsy, or any form of it; but this was a wholly peculiar infliction by direct visitation of God. The principle which underlay the infliction was, however, clear: *δι' ὧν γὰρ ἡ ἁμαρτία, διὰ τούτων ἡ τιμωρία*—the organs of sin are the seat of the plague. **Amen, amen.** Doubled here, as in the Gospel of John. The woman was to accept (if she dared) the awful ordeal and appeal to God by this response; if she dared not, she pronounced herself guilty.

Ver. 23.—**In a book.** On a roll. **Blot them out with the bitter water.** Rather, "wash them off into the bitter water," in order to transfer the venom of the curses to the water. *Ἐξαλείψει . . . εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ*, Septuagint. The writing on the scroll was to be washed off in the vessel of water. Of course the only actual consequence was that the ink was mixed with the water, but in the imagination of the people, and to the frightened conscience of a guilty woman, the curses were also held in solution in the water of trial. The direction was founded on a world-wide superstition, still prevalent in Africa, and indeed amongst most semi-barbarous peoples. In the 'Romance of Setnan,' translated by Brugsch. Bey, the scene of which is laid in the time of Rameses the Great, a magical formula written on a papyrus leaf is dissolved in water, and drunk with the effect of imparting all its secrets to him that drinks it. So in the present day, by a similar superstition, do sick Mahomedans swallow texts of

the Koran; and so in the middle ages the canonised Archbishop Edmund Rich (1240) on his death-bed washed a crucifix in water and drank it, saying, "Ye shall drink water from the wells of salvation."

Ver. 24.—**He shall cause the woman to drink.** This is said by anticipation, because she did not really drink it until after the offering (ver. 26).

Ver. 25.—**Offer it upon the altar.** According to the law of the *minchah* (Levit. ii.), only an handful was burnt as a "memorial" (Hebrew, *azkārāh*), the rest being "presented," and then laid at the side of the altar to be subsequently eaten by the priests. All this was done before the actual ordeal by drinking the water, in order that the woman might in the most solemn and complete way possible be brought face to face with the holiness of God. She stood before him as one of his own, yet as one suspected and abashed, courting the worst if guilty, claiming complete acquittal if innocent.

Ver. 27.—**Shall enter into her, and become bitter.** Rather, "as bitter," or "as bitterness," *i. e.* as producing bitter sufferings. **Shall be a curse,** *i. e.* shall be used as an example in the imprecations of the people.

Ver. 28.—**And shall conceive seed.** As a sign of the Divine favour; to a Jewish woman the surest and most regarded (1 Sam. ii. 5; Ps. cxxvii. 3; Luke i. 58).

Ver. 29.—**This is the law of jealousies.** A law prescribed by God, and yet in substance borrowed from half civilised heathens; a practice closely akin to yet prevalent superstitions, and yet receiving not only the toleration of Moses, but the direct sanction of God; an ordeal which emphatically claimed to be infallibly operative through supernatural agencies, yet amongst other nations obviously lending itself to collusion and fraud, as does the trial by red water practised by the tribes of West Africa. In order to justify heavenly wisdom herein, we must frankly admit, to begin with—(1) That it was founded upon the superstitious notion that immaterial virtue can be imparted to physical elements. The holiness of the gathered dust and the awfulness of the written curses were both supposed to be held in solution by the water of jealousy. The record does not *say* as much, but the whole ordeal proceeds on this supposition, which would undoubtedly be the popular one. (2) That it was only fitted for a very rude and comparatively barbarous state of society. The Talmud states that the use of it ceased forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem (if so, during our Lord's earthly lifetime); but it may be held certain that it ceased long before—indeed there is no recorded instance of its use. It was essentially an ordeal, although one Divinely regulated, and as such would have been morally impossible and highly undesirable in any age but one of blind and uninquiring faith. And we find the justification of it exactly in the fact that it was given to a generation which believed much and knew little; which had a profound belief in magic, and no knowledge of natural philosophy. It was ever the wisdom of God, as revealed in the sacred volume, to take men as they were, and to utilise the superstitious notions which could not at once be destroyed, or the imperfect moral ideas which could not at once be reformed, by making them work for righteousness and peace. It is, above all, the wisdom of God not to destroy the imperfect, but to regulate it and restrain its abuses, and so impress it into his service, until he has educated his people for something higher. Everybody knows the extreme violence of jealousy amongst an uncivilised people, and the widespread misery and crime to which it leads. It may safely be affirmed that *any* ordeal which should leave no place for jealousy, because no room for uncertainty, would be a blessing to a people rude enough and ignorant enough to believe in it. Ordeals are established in a certain stage of civilisation because they are wanted, and are on the whole useful, as long as they remain in harmony with popular ideas. They are, however, always liable to two dangers. (1) They occasionally fail, and are known to have failed, and so fall into disrepute. (2) They always lend themselves readily to collusion or priestcraft. The trial of jealousy being adopted, as it was, into a system really Divine, and being based upon the knowledge and power of God himself, secured all the benefits of an ordeal and escaped all its dangers. It is probable enough that the awful side of it was never really called into play. No guilty woman would dare to challenge so directly a visitation so dreadful, as long as she retained any faith or any superstition. Before the time came when any Jewish woman had discarded both, the increasing facilities of divorce had provided another and easier escape from matrimonial troubles.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 11—31.—*The sin of adultery.* We have here, in the letter, a piece of legislation altogether obsolete, because adapted to an age and to ideas utterly foreign to our own; yet, in the spirit, we have, as part of the moral law of God which changeth not, the unspeakable abhorrence in which the sin of adultery is held with

him, and the great displeasure with which he regards the mere suspicion of it. For this ordeal was not merely or primarily to punish guilt or to restore domestic peace but to remove sin and passion from before the eyes of God. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT GOD RESERVED HIS MOST AWFUL VISITATION OF OLD TIMES FOR SUCH ADULTERY AS HAD SUCCESSFULLY ESCAPED HUMAN OBSERVATION. So there is no sin which more surely destroys a nation or a class by kindling the wrath of God against it than adultery. So the Jews in the time of the later prophets (Jer. v. 8; Hos. iv. 2), and in the time of our Lord (John viii. 7; the Talmud, as above); so the upper classes in France before the Revolution; so perhaps our own to-day.

II. THAT GOD DID NOT APPOINT DIVORCE AS A REMEDY AGAINST CONJUGAL UNFAITHFULNESS. For it is no remedy against the sin, but only against some of its painful consequences. The glosses and traditions of the Jewish lawyers made divorce easy and common, because they no longer believed in the righteousness of God or in the hatefulness of sin, as sin.

III. That nothing is more abhorrent from the will of God concerning us THAN THAT FIERCE JEALOUSY AND CRUEL SUSPICION SHOULD INVADE FAMILIES, and poison the purest source of human happiness. Both, therefore, sin greatly—the wife who gives the least ground for suspicion by levity or carelessness of conduct, the husband who nurses a spirit of jealousy, and does not try to bring it to the test of facts.

IV. That the sin of adultery was PUNISHED UNDER THE LAW WITH MISERABLE DEATH, WHEREAS CHRIST REFUSED TO AWARD ANY SECULAR PUNISHMENT TO IT (John viii. 11). And this is (1) because of the greater mercifulness of the gospel, calling men to repentance (Rom. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9); but also (2) because of the greater severity of the moral law now revealed, threatening eternal death to all adulterers (Gal. v. 19, 21; Heb. xiii. 4).

V. THAT THIS SPECIAL AND AWFUL PROVISION WAS MADE ONLY AGAINST THE SIN OF THE WIFE, because it is from *her* sin that jealousy and its consequent crimes do as a fact arise in rude communities. But under the more perfect law of Christ there is no difference made between the same sin in men and women, but rather the sin of the man is denounced because it is more lightly accounted by the world (Matt. v. 28; 1 Thess. iv. 6, "in *the* matter").

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 11—31.—*The trial of jealousy.* Just previously, regulations are laid down with respect to offences in general. Here is an offence which needed to be dealt with in a special way, as being one where restitution was impossible. The offence also destroyed a relation of peculiar sacredness and importance, and the discovery of guilt was difficult, perhaps impossible of attainment, by ordinary lines of proof.

I. THE HUSBAND'S POSITION IS RECOGNISED. The spirit of jealousy is not condemned as in itself an evil passion. In it he might be angry and sin not. The spirit of jealousy could not be too much excited or too amply satisfied, if only the facts corresponded to his feelings. No mention is made of a similar ordeal for the husband to pass through if a spirit of jealousy were awakened in the wife, and so it may seem that more severity was meted out to the woman than the man. But the offence of an unfaithful husband, equally great of course as a sin, might not be equally dangerous as a crime. The principles of human law which compel men to graduate crime and punishment had to be remembered in the theocracy. An examination of the Mosaic laws against sexual impurity shows that they provided stringently for both sexes. The adulterer was punishable with death. A guilty wife in the discovery of her guilt dragged down her paramour (Levit. xx. 10).

II. THE WIFE'S POSITION IS RECOGNISED. To punish her more severely for a lapse of conjugal fidelity was really to honour her, showing that in one respect more was expected from her. It became every Israelite to walk circumspectly; it peculiarly became the Israelite matron. May we not say that the spirit of jealousy, though it might often be manifested on insufficient grounds, was nevertheless in itself a provision of God, through nature? The reputation of a wife is a very delicate thing, and was meant so to be. The tenth commandment specifies, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." Hence we may infer there was some temptation to men

to commit this sin, and wives needed to be specially on their guard. The ordeal to which God called them, hard as it might seem, had a most honourable side. Let it not be said that Mosaic legislation showed the Oriental depreciation of woman. God was caring for her even then, but she had to partake of the severity of the law, even as, long after, represented by the woman taken in adultery, she shared in the clemency and tenderness of the gospel.

III. THE UNERRING DISCOVERY OF GUILT. God took the matter away out of the obscurities of circumstantial evidence. The very nature of the offence made it difficult for a suspicious husband to get beyond presumption. "The eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight" (Job xxiv. 15). But God called the accused wife among the solemnities of the tabernacle, and concealment and evasion thenceforth became impossible. Notice how the ordeal was painless in itself. There was no walking on burning ploughshares nor demand on physical endurance. It was independent also of anything like chance, as if the casting of a lot had been held to settle the matter. The bitter water was drunk, and God, who brings all secret things into judgment, showed the indubitable proof in the swollen body and the rotted thigh. Proof, sentence, and punishment were all in one.

IV. THE DISCOVERY, EQUALLY UNERRING, OF INNOCENCE. One wonders what the history of this ordeal was in practice; how often used, and with what results. We know not what terrible tragedies it may have prevented, what credulous Othello it may have restored to his peace of mind, what Desdemona it may have vindicated, and what Iago it may have overthrown in his villanous plots. "God shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Ps. xxxvii. 6). There will be a final clearing of all the innocent, however many have been condemned at a human bar. The whole matter assumes its most significant aspect when we note how the apostasy of God's people is figured by gross and shameful breaches of the marriage vow (Ezek. xvi.). The doom of the adulterous wife foreshadows the doom of the backsliding believer.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VOW OF THE NAZIRITE (vers. 1—21). *Note.*—The Hebrew *Nazir* has been written Nazarite in English under the mistaken impression that there is some connection between Nazir and Nazarene (Matt. ii. 23). A very little reflection will show that "the Nazarene" not only was no Nazir, but that he even took pains to let it be seen that he was not. John the Baptist was the Nazir of the New Testament, and in all outward things the contrast was strongly marked between them (Luke vii. 14, 33, 34; John ii. 2).

Ver. 2.—**Either man or woman.** It was not a little remarkable that women could be Nazirites, because, generally speaking, the religious condition of women under the law was so markedly inferior and so little considered. But this is altogether consistent with the true view of the Nazirite vow, viz., that it was an exceptional thing, outside the narrow pale of the law, giving scope and allowance to the free movements of the Spirit in individuals. In this too it stood on the same plane as the prophetic office, for which room was left in the religious system of Moses, and which was designed to correct and supplement in its spiritual freedom the artificial routine of that system. As the prophetic office might be exercised by women, so the Nazirite vow might be taken by women. In either case we find a tribute to and a recognition of the Divine liberty of the Holy Ghost, and an anticipation of the time when the spirit of self-devotion should be poured out without distinction upon men and women. **Shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord.** Rather, "shall make a solemn vow, a Nazirite vow, to live consecrated unto the Lord." The two words translated "separate" are not the same. The first (from *pala*, to sever, to consecrate, to distinguish as exceptional) is of somewhat doubtful use here. In Judges xiii. 19 it appears to be used as an intensitive, "did wonderously," and the Septuagint has here *μεγάλως εὐξηται εὐχήν*. The other word (from נזר, to separate) is used in a general sense in Gen. xlix. 26; Deut. xxxiii. 16, or with the addition, "unto the Lord," as in Judges xiii. 5. It had, however, acquired a technical sense before this, as appears from Levit. xxv. 5, 11, where the undressed vines are called "Nazirites" as recalling the

shorn locks of those who had taken the vow. It is evident indeed, from the way in which the Nazirite vow is here spoken of, that it had been, perhaps long, familiar among the people. All that this commandment did was to recognise the practice, to regulate it minutely, and to adopt it into the religious code of Israel. Whence the custom was derived is wholly uncertain, for although the separate elements existed in many different quarters, yet the peculiar combination of them which made the law of the Nazirite is entirely peculiar. Vows of abstinence have, of course, been common among all religions. Mingled with much of superstition, self-will, and pride, they have sprung in the main from noble impulses and yearnings after a higher life, prompted by the Holy Spirit of God; and it may be said with some confidence, that in spite of all reproaches (deserved or undeserved), such voluntary vows of abstinence have done more than anything else to save religion from becoming an unreal profession. Hair offerings, on the other hand, springing from a simple and natural sentiment, have been common enough amongst the heathen. Compare the sacred lock of Achilles ('Iliad,' xxiii. 142, *sqq.*), and the various use of the tonsure in pursuance of vows among the ancient Egyptians (Herod., ii. 65) and amongst modern Mahomedans and Christians. The physical fact on which all these hair offerings rest is that the hair is the only portion of oneself which can be conveniently detached and presented.

Ver. 3.—**Strong drink.** Hebrew, *shekār*; σίκερα (Levit. x. 9; Luke i. 15). Any intoxicating drink, other than wine, including the beer of the Egyptians. **Vinegar.** Hebrew, *chamets*. It seems to have been freely used by the poorer people (Ruth ii. 14), and was, perhaps, a thin, sour wine ("vile potet acetum," Horat.). **Liquor of grapes.** A drink made by soaking grape-skins in water.

Ver. 4.—**From the kernels even to the husk,** or skin. Of grape-skins it is said that cakes were made which were considered a delicacy (Hos. iii. 1, mistranslated "flagons of wine"), but this is doubtful. The Septuagint has οἶνον ἀπὸ στεμφύλων ἕως γιγάρτου, "wine of grape-skins (the liquor of grapes mentioned before) even to the kernel." The expression is best understood as including anything and everything, however unlikely to be used, connected with the grape. It is clear that the abstinence of the Nazirite extended beyond what might possibly intoxicate to what was simply pleasant to the taste, like raisins, or refreshing, like *chamets*. The vine represented, by an easy parable, the tree of carnal delights, which yields to the appetite of men such a variety of satisfactions. So among the Romans the Flamen Dialis might not even touch a vine.

Ver. 5.—**There shall no razor come upon his head.** The meaning of this law is best understood from the case of Samson, whose strength was in his hair, and departed from him when his hair was cut. No doubt that strength was a more or less supernatural gift, and it went and came with his hair according to some supernatural law; but it is clear that the connection was not merely arbitrary, but was founded on some generally received idea. To the Jew, differing in this from the shaven Egyptian and the short-haired Greek, the hair represented the virile powers of the adult, growing with its growth, and failing again with its decay. To use a simple analogy from nature, the uncropped locks of the Nazirite were like the mane of the male lion, a symbol of the fulness of his proper strength and life (cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 25, 26, and, for the disgrace of baldness, 2 Kings ii. 23). In later ages Western and Greek feeling on the subject prevailed over Eastern and Jewish, and a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" was able to argue that "even nature itself" teaches us "that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him" (1 Cor. xi. 14). No doubt "nature itself" taught the Greek of Corinth that lesson; but no doubt also "nature itself" taught the Jew of Palestine exactly the opposite lesson; and the Apostle himself did not quite discard the earlier sentiment, for he too made a Nazirite vow, and suffered his hair to grow while it lasted (Acts xxi. 24). The meaning, therefore, of the law was that the whole fulness of the man's vitality was to be dedicated without any diminution to the Lord, as typified by the free growth of his hair. It has been conjectured that it was allowed to the Nazirite to "poll" (κείρασθαι) his hair during his vow, although not to "shave" it (ξυρᾶσθαι); and in this way the statement is explained that St. Paul "polled his head" (κειράμενος τὴν κεφαλήν, Acts xviii. 18, compared with xxi. 24) in Cenchræa, because he had a vow. It is, however, quite evident that any permission to cut the hair is inconsistent with the whole intention of the commandment; for if a man might "poll his head" when he pleased, he would not be distinguished from other men. If it was allowed in the Apostle's time, it is only another instance of the way in which the commandments of God were made of none effect by the traditions of men.

Ver. 7.—**He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother.** The same injunction had been given to the priests (Levit. xxi. 12)—"for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him." A similar reason restrained the Nazirite. **Because the consecration of his God is upon his head,** *i. e.* because he wears the unshorn locks which are the outward sign of his separation unto God. The hair of the Nazirite was to him

just what the diadem on the mitre was to the high priest, what the sacred chrism was to the sons of Aaron. Both of these are called by the word *nezer* (Exod. xxix. 6; Levit. xxi. 12), from the same root as *nazir*. It was thought by some of the Jewish doctors that in these three particulars—the untouched growth of the hair, the abstinence from the fruit of the vine (cf. Gen. ix. 20), and the seclusion from the dead—the separated life of the Nazirite reproduced the unfallen life of man in paradise. This may have had some foundation in fact, but the true explanation of the three rules is rather to be found in the spiritual truth they teach in a simple and forcible way. He who has a holy ambition to please God must (1) devote to God the whole forces of his being, undiminished by any wont and use of the world; (2) abstain not only from pleasures which are actually dangerous, but from such as have any savour of moral evil about them; (3) subordinate his most sacred private feelings to the great purpose of his life.

Ver. 9. **If any man die very suddenly by him.** עָלָיו, in his presence, or neighbourhood, so that, having hastened to his assistance, he found himself in contact with a corpse. This case is mentioned particularly, because it was the only one in which simple humanity or mere accident would be likely to infringe upon the vow. **In the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day.** This appears to be an anticipation of the law given below (ch. xix. 11); but that law may have only sanctioned the existing custom. **Shall he shave it.** Because "the consecration of his God upon his head" was desecrated by the pollution of death, it must, therefore, be made away with and begun over again.

Ver. 10.—**Two turtles, or two young pigeons.** The same offerings had been prescribed for those defiled by divers uncleannesses in Levit. xv. (cf. Levit. xii. 8).

Ver. 11.—**For that he sinned by the dead.** This is one of the cases in which the law seemed to teach plainly that an outward, accidental, and involuntary defilement was sin, and had need to be atoned for. The opposite principle was declared by our Lord (Mark vii. 18—23). The Septuagint has here the strange reading *περὶ ὧν ἥμαρτε περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς*. **Shall hallow his head.** By dedicating again to God the free growth of his hair.

Ver. 12.—**For a trespass offering.** Rather, "for a guilt offering." Hebrew, *asham* (see Levit. v.). The *asham* always implied guilt, even though it might be purely legal, and it was to be offered in this case in acknowledgment of the offence involved in the involuntary breach of vow. In the education of conscience, on anything lower than the "perfect law of liberty," it was only possible to secure thoroughness and consistency at the cost of introducing much that was arbitrary and destined to pass away. Something similar must always be tolerated in the moral education of children. **The days that were before shall be lost.** Literally, "shall fall." Septuagint, *ἄλογοι ἔσονται*, "shall not be counted."

Ver. 13.—**When the days of his separation are fulfilled.** The original law contemplated only a vow for a certain period, longer or shorter. All the Nazirites, however, of whom we read in Scripture were lifelong Nazirites: Samson (Judges xiii. 5), Samuel (1 Sam. i. 11), John the Baptist (Luke i. 15). In all these cases, however, the vow was made for them before their birth. Hegesippus (in Euseb. ii. 23) tells us that James, the Lord's brother, was a Nazirite: "He did not drink wine nor strong drink, and no razor came on his head."

Ver. 14.—**He shall offer his offering.** This offering included all the four ordinary sacrifices—the sin offering, the burnt offering, the peace offering, and the meat offering. For the meaning of these see Levit. iv., i., iii., ii.

Ver. 15.—**A basket of unleavened bread . . . anointed with oil.** Required for every sacrifice of thanksgiving, as this was (Levit. vii. 12). **And their meat offering, and their drink offerings,** *i. e.* the gifts of meal, oil, and wine which belonged to burnt offerings and peace offerings (see below, ch. xv. 3, *sqq.*).

Ver. 18.—**Shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and shall put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.** It is not said, nor intended, that the hair was offered to God as a sacrifice. If so, it would have been burnt with the burnt offering which represented the self-dedication of the worshipper. It had been holy to the Lord, growing uncut all the days of the vow. The vow was now at an end; the last solemn act of sacrifice, the peace offering, which completed all, and typified that fearless and thankful communion with God which is the end of all religion, was now going on; it was fitting that the hair which must now be shorn, but could not be disposed of in any ordinary way, should be burnt upon the altar of God. **In the fire,** *i. e.* on the brazen altar. In later days it seems to have been done in a room assigned to the Nazirites in the court of the women: another deviation from the original law.

Ver. 19.—**The sodden shoulder,** or boiled shoulder; the left. The right, or heave shoulder, was already the priest's, according to the general rule (Levit. vii. 32). That the other shoulder was also "waved" and accepted by God as his portion, to be consumed in his name by the priest, was a further token of the

gracious acceptance of the self-dedication of the Nazirite, and of the fulness of eucharistic communion into which he had entered with his God.

Ver. 20.—**Shall wave them.** By putting his hands under the hands of the Nazirite. On the symbolism of this see Levit. vii. **Drink wine.** Perhaps at the sacrificial feast.

Ver. 21.—**This is the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed, and of his offering.** "And of" are not in the text. We should probably read, "This is the law of the Nazirite who hath vowed his offering unto the Lord in accordance with his consecration," *i. e.* these are the offerings which, as a Nazirite, he is bound to make. **Beside that his hand shall get.** Literally, "grasp." If he can afford or can procure anything more as a free-will offering, he may well do so. In later days it became customary for richer people to defray for their poorer brethren the cost of their sacrifices (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xix. 6, 1; and cf. Acts xxi. 24).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—21.—*Individual consecration to God.* In this section we have, spiritually, the consecration of the individual life to God as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice (Rom. xii. 1). This consecration was the ideal for all Israel (Exod. xix. 6); but inasmuch as the people at large could not attain unto it fully, a tribe and a family were in varying degree "separated" unto the Lord. In order, however, that individuals might not be hindered from obeying the call to self-dedication as the Spirit moved them, the vow of the Nazirite was allowed, encouraged, and regulated. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT ANY INDIVIDUAL IN ISRAEL WHO WAS OF AGE TO TAKE A VOW MIGHT BECOME A NAZIRITE, WHETHER MAN OR WOMAN, WHETHER OF THE PRIESTHOOD OR OF THE PEOPLE. John the Baptist was a priest; Samuel a Levite; Samson of the tribe of Dan. Even so it is the fundamental character of the gospel that every individual Christian, without any distinction of male or female, clerical or lay, is free to obey the call of the Spirit to an individual consecration of self to God. All are indeed called to "die unto sin, and rise again unto righteousness;" unto all it is said, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3); but yet it is palpably true that individuals here and there are specially moved by the Spirit to realise this their consecration, to translate into practical life their professed detachment from the world and attachment unto God. And this action of the Spirit is perfectly free; none can say beforehand *who* may be moved to dedicate himself or herself to a life of entire self-sacrifice and of unlimited obedience.

II. THAT THE CHILD OF ISRAEL SO CALLED INWARDLY BY THE SPIRIT WAS PERMITTED AND ENCOURAGED TO TAKE A VOW. Yet this vow limited as to obligations and as to time, so as it should not become a snare. And it appears that a Christian apostle took a vow of the sort (Acts xviii. 18). Even so it would seem that religious vows are not now in themselves unlawful or displeasing, provided they be really free, and that there be provision for being discharged from them. And note that almost all the Nazirites of Scripture appear to have been lifelong Nazirites, we know not why. Probably it is the tendency of all vows to become perpetual, because there seems something arbitrary and incomplete in any self-devotion or self-denial which ends before life itself ends. Nevertheless, it is plain that the Divine command contemplated only vows for a specific time.

III. THAT THE FIRST OBLIGATION OF THE NAZIRITE WAS TO ABSTAIN FROM EVERYTHING PRODUCED BY, OR MADE FROM, THE VINE, HOWEVER HARMLESS. Even so, if any man will dedicate himself, according to his Christian liberty and the impulse of the Spirit, to the nearer following of Christ, he must renounce all the excitements of this world, all those stimulants of pleasure, gain, or ambition which intoxicate the mind and distract it from the service of God; and not only that which is plainly evil and confessedly dangerous, but also that which has any savour of evil, any suspicion of danger, about it. The wisdom of him who would at any cost please God is not to walk as near the border line of things unlawful or unwise as possible, but rather to give them a clear berth, so as through no mischance he may be entangled therein; and this because of human weakness, whereby (1) we glide so easily from pleasures or cares lawful to the like unlawful, and (2) we find it so much easier to take a simple and decided line, even against ourselves, than a wavering and uncertain one

(Luke ix. 24; x. 42; xviii. 22; xxi. 34; 1 Cor. vi. 12; ix. 25, 27; 2 Tim. ii. 4; and cf. Matt. xix. 12; 1 Cor. vii. 32).

IV. THAT THE SECOND OBLIGATION OF THE NAZIRITE WAS TO DEDICATE THE FREE, UNTOUCHED GROWTH OF HIS HAIR TO THE LORD. Even so the servant of God must dedicate to him the whole forces of his nature, unrestrained and undiminished by any conventionalities of the world, by those customs and fashions of society which cramp and limit on every side the possibilities of usefulness and of power which are in man. The true servant of Christ, neither acknowledging the principles nor guided by the maxims of the world, must be content to be singular, to be wondered at, to be regarded as extreme (cf. Luke vii. 33; 2 Cor. xi., xii.; Gal. vi. 14; Phil. iii. 8). "Let your *moderation*" (Greek, τὸ ἐπιεικὲς, "forbearance") "be known unto all men" is a text much more often misquoted in the devil's service than quoted in Christ's.

V. THAT THE THIRD OBLIGATION OF THE NAZIRITE WAS NOT TO COME INTO CONTACT WITH DEATH, EVEN FOR HIS NEAREST RELATIONS. Even so the servant of God must cross his nearest earthly affections, and do violence to his most natural feelings, rather than expose himself to the contagion of spiritual death. Where this danger really exists may indeed be known only to God and to him; but where he knows it to exist he is bound to avoid it at any cost of affection or of appearance, so as he make it not a cloak for escaping duty (Matt. x. 35—37; Luke xiv. 26, 33; ix. 60—62; and cf. Matt. v. 29, 30; 1 Cor. v. 11; 2 Cor. vi. 14). Few have strength and vigour of soul to mix with impunity in the society of those spiritually dead; wisdom and loyalty alike demand that we avoid them except we can really do them good.

VI. THAT THE CASE OF THE NAZIRITE BEING UNAVOIDABLY DEFILED WITH DEATH WAS PROVIDED FOR, AND PROVISION MADE FOR HIS BEGINNING AFRESH. Even so God knows that in the confusions and mixtures of life it is hard indeed to escape altogether from the subtle contagion of spiritual deadness, which will often seize upon a soul most unexpectedly from unavoidable contact with others. No profession and no earnestness of self-devotion is a safeguard against this danger. But if it come to pass that the soul be thus defiled, and deadness come over it, all is not therefore lost, nor is its consecration at an end. It must offer the sacrifice of a contrite heart, and begin again with penitence and patience, not counting that which is behind, nor dwelling on its loss, but reaching forth after those things which lie before it (Ps. xxxvii. 24; Micah vii. 8; Phil. iii. 13, 14).

VII. THAT WHEN THE SELF-DEVOTION OF THE NAZIRITE WAS PERFECTED, IT STILL NEEDED TO BE COMMENDED UNTO GOD THROUGH THE FOURFOLD SACRIFICES OF THE LEVITICAL LAW. Even so our highest service and greatest self-denial is not acceptable to God except it be offered through and with the prevailing sacrifice of Christ. And inasmuch as one of these sacrifices was a sin offering, so is there need that the best of our best things should be purged from the sin which clings to them by the atoning death of Christ.

VIII. THAT THE HAIR, THE SYMBOL OF SEPARATION, WAS AT LAST TO BE PUT IN THE ALTAR FIRE UNDER THE PEACE OFFERING. Even so the good will, the earnest desire, the single purpose with which we have been enabled to serve God, is to be brought at last—when its work on earth is done—and simply laid upon the altar of the love of God, and of our thankful communion with him in peace through Christ; and this not as being anything worthy in itself, but only as being part of our gratitude to God.

IX. THAT ON THIS OCCASION, AND THIS ALONE, THE SECOND SHOULDER WAS ACCEPTED BY GOD AS HIS OWN PORTION FROM THE PEACE OFFERING. Even so it is undeniable that a more devoted life does infallibly lead to a greater acceptance with God and to a fuller communion in peace and thankfulness with him.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—21.—*Separated to the service of God* (the law of the Nazarite). This passage, barren and unpromising as it looks, is nevertheless invested with an undying interest by the circumstance that three of the most famous men in the sacred history belonged to the order whose rule is here prescribed. *Samson*, with all his faults, was a heroic character, and he was a Nazarite from his mother's womb. *Samuel*,

his contemporary, was a hero of a purer and higher type, the earliest of the great prophets after Moses, and he too was a Nazarite, by his mother's consecration, before he was born. As Samuel was the first, *John the Baptist* was the last, of the old prophets, and he likewise was a Nazarite from his birth.

I. WHAT, THEN, WAS A NAZARITE? The term (more correctly written *Nazir*, or *Nazirite*) is a Hebrew one, and signifies *separated*, or *set apart*. In Israel there were three orders of men who may be said to have been separated to God's service. 1. The *priests*. Their office was hereditary. The separation attached to Aaron's house. The work to which they were separated was to offer sacrifice, to burn incense, and to bless the people. 2. The *prophets*. Their office was not hereditary. The true prophet was such by a Divine call addressed to him individually. His work was purely spiritual. He delivered to the people the word of the Lord. 3. The *Nazarites* proper. Their separation was neither hereditary, like the priests', nor necessarily by special Divine call, like the prophets'. It was by their own act, or that of their parents, and was sometimes spontaneous, sometimes by a more or less stringent Divine direction. Any free man or woman—any man or woman not under some prior obligation incompatible with it—could separate himself or herself by the Nazarite's vow. The separation might be either for a limited period or for life.

II. Regarding THE DUTIES PERTAINING TO THE ORDER, nothing is here laid down It is simply implied that the Nazarite was to show an example of pre-eminent devotedness to God. To judge by the lives of Samuel and John the Baptist, the Nazarite's devotedness was to be manifested in the best of all ways, namely, by a life of active labour in diffusing the knowledge and fear of the Lord. However, the law did not prescribe this. It simply put around the Nazarite's separation the hedge of legal recognition and ceremonial regulation. How the garden thus protected was to be filled—what flowers and fragrant herbs and fruit it was to yield—was left to be determined by the motions of God's free Spirit in the individual Nazarite's heart. Anyhow, the practical working of this kind of separation in Israel came to be such that it was looked upon as a sure sign that piety was flourishing when the Nazarites abounded (see Amos ii. 11, 12).

III. Turning to THE LAW AS LAID DOWN HERE IN NUMBERS, it is to be observed that the Nazarite's separation was to be expressed in three ways. 1. By entire abstinence not only from wine and strong drink, but from all the produce of the vine (vers. 3, 4). John Baptist came neither eating nor drinking. 2. By absolutely refusing to defile themselves for the dead (vers. 7—12). The rule was as absolute on this head for the Nazarite as for the high priest. Not even for father or mother, for wife or child, might he contract defilement. If by any chance he should come in contact with a dead body, the law demanded a sin offering for atonement and a burnt offering in token of renewed dedication, and his term of separation had to begin anew. 3. By letting the hair of the head grow unshorn (ver. 5; cf. 1 Cor. xi. 10, *marg.*). Every child remembers the seven locks of Samson's head. When the period of separation was expired, the head was shaved and certain prescribed offerings were presented, besides any free-will offering the person might choose to bring (vers. 13—21). As these last offerings were costly, it was not uncommon for wealthy persons to come forward and bear the Nazarites' charges (Acts xxi. 24).

IV. WHAT CONCERN HAVE WE WITH THIS LAW OF THE NAZARITE? Is any corresponding vow of separation to be in use under the New Testament? The Church of Rome, I need hardly say, founds on the Nazarite's vow an argument for her religious orders, so called—orders of men and women who are bound by oath to lifelong poverty, celibacy, and obedience. But there is no real correspondence between the two institutions. Not one of the three vows of the religious orders was included in the vow of the Nazarite. He could hold property; he was generally married; he submitted his conscience to no man's authority. No warrant can be extracted from this law for ensnaring consciences with the threefold vow. Yet it by no means follows that this Old Testament vow has no lesson for us. It furnishes a valuable analogy. The Apostle Paul evidently felt this, for he liked to think of himself as a man "separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom. i. 1), and to think of this separation as having taken place (like Samuel's and John Baptist's) before he was born (Gal. i. 15). This does not refer merely to his being separated to preach the word, for

that was common to him with all ministers of the gospel; nor does it refer simply to his apostolate. It refers but to his special work as the great missionary apostle. There is room and need in the Christian Church not only for men separated by the authority and call of the Church to official service, but for men also who are moved to separate themselves to free and unofficial service. Robert Haldane of Airthrey was not an ordained minister, never held a pastoral charge, never administered the sacraments, yet he devoted his whole time and wealth to the cause of Christ. Selling Airthrey Castle, he purchased a mansion-house where he could live at less expense, and he thenceforward lived for the diffusion of true religion at home and abroad. Blessed be God, Mr. Haldane was not singular in this sort of separation. It answers exactly, under the Christian and spiritual dispensation, to the separation of the Nazarite under the law. Without doubt men and women separated thus to God will have a great part to play in the victorious progress of the kingdom of Christ. It should be the constant prayer of the Church that Christ would, of her young men, raise up not only prophets (he is doing that), but Nazarites also.—B.

Vers. 1—8.—*The temporary vow of the Nazarite symbolical of the lifelong vow of the Christian.* Though the Israelites had a priesthood, they were themselves "a kingdom of priests." Individual responsibility toward God was pressed upon their consciences in many ways; *e. g.* Deut. xxvi. 1—14, &c. And private persons might aspire to the honour of an especial priestly consecration. Since temporary vows were acceptable to God under the old covenant, they may be under the new covenant, if taken for a limited time and for Christian ends; *e. g.* celibacy or abstinence (cf. Acts xviii. 18; xxi. 6). But a higher form of vow is that of entire consecration *for life*, that we may be daily led by the Spirit of God, and live the life of faith on the Son of God. Our Nazarite state is to be lifelong. None can disallow the Christian's vow to Christ (cf. ch. xxx. 1—5 with Matt. x. 37). The consecration which we avow must be marked by three facts, of which we see symbols in this chapter—I. SELF-DENIAL (vers. 3, 4); II. VISIBLE PROFESSION (ver. 5); III. PERSONAL PURITY (vers. 6—8).

I. The priests had, when "on duty," to exercise the self-denial required of the Nazarite (Levit. x. 9). The kind of self-denial demanded is a significant testimony in favour of total abstinence (see Milton's words in 'Samson Agonistes:' "Oh, madness, to think use of strongest wines," &c.). Self-denial, in a wider sense, at any rate, always required of us, because we are always "on duty" (Matt. x. 38; Luke ix. 23; John xii. 25).

II. The Nazarites' locks marked their separation. Our consecration must be marked not by tonsures or cowls, but by verbal avowals (Rom. x. 9, 10) and good works (Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 14—16), which shall excel those of men who make no profession to the supernatural life of the disciples of Christ (cf. Matt. v. 47, 48).

III. We are "called to be *saints*," personally pure and separated from the world and its dead works (John xvii. 11—19; 2 Cor. vi. 17). Christ's claims on us are paramount (Luke ix. 59, 60) and perpetual (Rev. ii. 10). We cannot violate our pledges and go on as though our relations to Christ were unchanged, but must renew our vows (ver. 12; Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13). When the period of the vow ended, the restraints were removed, but the honour remained. So will it be with us at death (John xii. 26, &c.).—P.

Ver. 2.—THE NAZARITE'S VOW. "When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite," &c. Here we meet with the Nazarite's vow as something already in existence, and needing to be regulated. The fact that such regulations were necessary points to a class of persons, not perhaps very large, but likely to be permanent in Israel, who felt it laid upon them to be separate for a while from the common track of their neighbours. There are several instances of vows recorded in Scripture. A person might vow that if a certain wish were granted, a certain thing would be done in return; *e. g.* Hannah, Jephthah. Here we are on different ground. There is nothing like a bargaining with the Almighty. The Nazarite's vow is of a higher kind, and demands special consideration. It does not rise among such natural feelings as are common to all human breasts The

motive shows a class of men to whom the common level of their neighbours' thoughts concerning religion was quite insufficient.

I. Consider THE STATE FROM WHICH THE NAZARITE SEPARATED HIMSELF. The name signified the state—separation. The average of religious feeling and activity in the minds of the Israelites must have been very low. Jehovah for his purposes had constrained them into a special relation to him, but as for them, they had not with all their hearts chosen him in return. They were groaning over Egypt lost, and the perils, trials, and discomforts of the wilderness. They did not delight in the law of the Lord. They learned how to go through the routine of outward ceremonies, but that perfect law which converts the soul, rejoices the heart, and enlightens the eyes was foreign to all their sympathies.

II. Hence THE SEPARATION OF THOSE WHO SOUGHT A HOLIER AND SPIRITUAL LIFE. Some, at all events, out of the multitude at Sinai must have been impressed with its solemn circumstances, and with the claims which Jehovah made for himself in the first four commandments of the Decalogue. What contented their neighbours in the way of compliance with God's wishes fell far short of contenting them. Others had to be dragged. The wish of a Nazarite was, "I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart." Such were the true successors of Enoch, who walked with God, and Noah, who preached righteousness. Such men, in the ruling wish of their spirits, are set before us in the Psalms of David, where he expresses the heights and depths of personal religion as it was possible in the old dispensation. We may well believe there were thousands who could adopt and sing such, as the language of their experience. It was from men of the Nazarite spirit that prophets could be taken, burning with zeal for the Lord of hosts, and for justice and compassion among men. Note the connection of prophets and Nazarites, Amos ii. 11, 12.

III. THE NAZARITE THUS BECOMES A TYPE OF WHAT SHOULD EVER BE SOUGHT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. It is easy enough to get into a routine, the omission of which would offend the conscience, yet the observance of which does nothing to bring the life nearer to God. We must not measure ourselves by the attainments and opinions of nominal adherents to the Church of Christ. It is no business of ours to judge them, but what satisfies them should not satisfy us. We must try to find out for ourselves in a satisfactory way what God would have us be and do, not falling in easily with what the crowd may profess to be his will. "What do ye more than others?" Avoid that fatal question which so completely, yet so unconsciously, reveals the unspirituality of the person who asks it—"Where's the harm?" (Rom. xii. 1, 2; Phil. iii. 12—15).—Y.

Vers. 3—21.—*The regulations for observance of the Nazarite's vow.* As a vow of separation, it was to be observed in as significant a way as possible. It was not only a separation in heart and sympathy, but it had its *signs*, which plainly indicated the separation to others. These regulations were also helpful to the Nazarite himself as remembrancers. We may conclude that not only the details of them, but the very substance, was of God's appointment. Thus security was taken that all should be in harmony with the great body of the law, and also give the greatest chance of profit to the Nazarite himself, and the greatest chance of instruction to the people.

I. REGULATIONS DURING THE CONTINUANCE OF THE VOW. 1. *Abstinence from the fruit of the vine.* It was to be a *rigorous* abstinence. This we may take to signify a protest in the most comprehensive way against all seeking of mere pleasure and comfort. The grape was the symbol of sensual delights. The spies brought back grapes of Eshcol more than any other produce to testify the riches of Canaan: this shows how much the Israelites thought of the fruit. There was, of course, no peculiar merit and advantage in abstaining from the grape itself. The abstinence was simply a sign indicating a desire to rise above the common pleasures of men. The Nazarites were not ascetics. They did not refrain from a good creature of God by way of penance. But in the grape there was the possibility of wine and strong drink, and the wine and strong drink were the testimony of the worldly soul that he loved to gratify his sensual nature, and cared not that his body should be so disciplined and restrained as to be the effectual minister of God. The appropriate joys of human life are not to be found among the powers that link us to the lower creation.

We are to look for them in communion with God and following Christ. Our joy is in the Holy Ghost. "Is any merry, let him sing Psalms." 2. *The unshorn head.* The Nazarite was not his own. Not even the least thing about his person was at his own disposal. He was not allowed to cast away even a thing so easily and painlessly separated as the hair, seemingly of so little consequence, and so quickly growing again. It was just because the hair seemed so little a thing that leaving it unshorn was so fit for a sign (Matt. v. 36; x. 30). So when we become Christ's we become his altogether. We must be faithful in that which is least. *All* of life is for him, though there are many things that, hastily considered, look as little important as the short light hairs clipped from the head. The unshorn head also *made a manifest difference in the sight of men.* Abstaining from the vine was only known at the social board; the unshorn head revealed the Nazarite to every one he met. It was an unostentatious challenge and rebuke to the more easy-going multitude. God had accepted the Nazarite, and stamped his acceptance by this simple, impressive regulation. 3. *The avoidance of the dead.* Death was uncleanness (ch. v. 2). The Nazarite as a consecrated one dare not touch the dead. "Separated for God, in whose presence death and corruption can have no place, the Nazarite must ever be found in the habitations and society of the living." Not even dead kindred may the Nazarite—man or woman—touch. What a striking reminder in ver. 7 of the requirements of Christ! (Luke xviii. 29, 30). He that would please God and rise to higher attainments in Divine things must subordinate all human kinship to higher claims. Christ divides the family against itself, and makes a man's foes those of his own household. The nearest kindred may be an obstacle to the regenerate, as still dead in trespasses and sins. "Let the dead bury their dead." A Nazarite in the observance of his vow was ever on the watch against all occasion of uncleanness, for the very least defilement compelled a fresh start from the beginning.

II. REGULATIONS FOR THE RETURN TO ORDINARY LIFE. This was to be done in a public, deliberate, and sacred way. Precisely ordained offerings had to be made before the Nazarite again put razor to his head or wine to his lips. These offerings doubtless had relation both to the period just expired and the freer life to be presently resumed. There was thanksgiving for the vow successfully observed, atonement for the sin that nevertheless had mingled in it, and something to express his purposes for the future. The freer life was still to find him a Nazarite in heart. To be nearer God for a time and then go away to a distance, to taste the pleasures of holiness for a season and then go back to pollution, such conduct would have made the vow a mockery and abomination. We must all be Nazarite in spirit, opposed to the world as resolutely as was the Baptist, but not, like him, fleeing to the wilderness. Our guide and example is Jesus himself, the holiest of all Nazarites, who kept himself unspotted even at the table of the glutton and wine-bibber. His prayer for us is not that we should be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE PRIESTLY BENEDICTION (vers. 22—27). Ver. 22. —**The Lord spake unto Moses.** It is a matter of mere conjecture at what point of time this command was given. As it concerned the priests and their daily ministration, it would be natural to suppose that it was given at the time when the tabernacle service was set up, *i.e.* at the precise point fixed by the first verse of the following chapter. That the command was given to Moses, and to Moses alone, and that *after* the consecration of Aaron to the high priesthood, serves to bring out into clear relief the relative position of the two. Aaron and his sons alone, as the "official" representatives of the Lord, could bless in his name and put his name upon the people; but the formula of blessing was delivered to Aaron himself through Moses, as the "personal" representative of the Lord, the mediator of the old covenant. Ὁ *νόμος . . διαταγεὶς . . ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου* (Gal. iii. 19). Our Lord is both the Moses (Acts iii. 22) and the Aaron (Heb. vi. 20) — ὁ *μεσίτης* and ὁ *ἀρχιερεὺς* — of this dispensation.

Ver. 23.—**On this wise ye shall bless.** In Levit. ix. 22 it is recorded that Aaron blessed the people, first by himself from the brazen altar of sacrifice, and afterwards in conjunction with Moses, when they came out of the tabernacle; and that he might so bless the people is mentioned as one object of his consecration (Deut. xxi. 5; and cf. 1 Chron. xxiii. 13). Blessing in or with the

name of the Supreme Being was an important part of all primitive religion, as appears from the case of Melchizedec and Abraham, of Isaac and his sons, of Jacob and Pharaoh. And this act of blessing was far from being a mere expression of good will, or from being a simple prayer; for "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the greater" (Heb. vii. 7), *i. e.* the blessing must be given by one who stands nearer to God to one who stands less near. The name of God could not be used in blessing save by one who had some right to such use of it, whether as prophet, as priest, or as patriarch. For that name in which the blessing was given was not inoperative, but was mighty with untold spiritual efficacy where rightly used as the name of blessing. To Aaron and to his sons was now confided this use of the Divine name, that all Israel might know and might hear in their appointed words the voice of God himself. **Saying unto them.** The benediction here appointed consists of three clauses, each complete in itself, and each consisting of two members, the second of which seems to present the application and result in experience of the grace besought in the first. Both, therefore, in its form and its contents this benediction is one of the most profound and most fruitful of the Divine oracles; and this indeed we might have expected, because (if we may venture to say so) God is never so entirely and absolutely himself as in blessing.

Vers. 24—26.—**The Lord, . . the Lord, . . the Lord.** Are we to see in this threefold use of the Divine name a shadowing forth of the Holy Trinity? It is obvious that it cannot be proved, and that it would not even have suggested any such idea to the priest who gave, or to the people who received, the benediction. To them the threefold form merely added beauty and fulness to the blessing (cf. Eccles. iv. 12). But that is not the question. The real question is whether the Old Testament was written for our sakes (1 Cor. ix. 10; x. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16), and whether the God of the Jews was indeed the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (John v. 17; viii. 54). If so, it is not possible for us to avoid seeing in this benediction a declaration of the threefold Being of God, and it is not possible to avoid believing that he meant us to see such a declaration, veiled indeed from the eyes of the Jew, but clear enough to the Christian. For a somewhat similar case compare Isa. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8.

Ver. 25.—**The Lord make his face shine upon thee.** The "face" of God is his personality as turned towards man, or else turned away from him. His face hidden or turned away is despair and death (Deut. xxxi. 17, 18; Job xiii. 24); his face turned against man is destruction and death (Levit. xvii. 10; Ps. xxxiv. 16); his face turned upon man in love and mercy is life and salvation (Ps. xxvii. 1; xliv. 3). It is to the soul of man what the blessed sun of heaven is to his body. **And be gracious unto thee.** Ἐλεήσαι σε, Septuagint. Be kind and beneficent to thee: the effect in and on the soul of the clear shining upon it of the face of God.

Ver. 26.—**The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee.** Ἐπάραι . . τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σέ, Septuagint. This clause seems to repeat the last in a somewhat stronger form, as implying more personal and individual attention from the Lord. His face shines upon all that love him, as the sun shines wherever no clouds intervene; but his face is lifted up to that soul for which he has a more special regard. נָשָׂא פָּנִים אֶל seems to mean the same thing as נָשָׂא עֵינַיִם or שִׂים (Gen. xliii. 29, ἀναβλέψας . . τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ; xliv. 21). To lift up the eyes or the face upon any one is to look upon that one with peculiar and tender interest. **And give thee peace** (*shalom*). This peace, being the perfect fruit in experience of the grace which comes from God, forms the climax and conclusion of the benediction.

Ver. 27.—**They shall put my name upon the children of Israel.** The "name" of God is uniformly treated in Scripture as something very different from a mere arrangement of letters or an arbitrary vocal sound. All nations have had names for the Supreme Being, but there was nothing sacred about them, except from association. *The* name of God was not of man, nor from man, but of his own direct revelation (Exod. vi. 3), and was therefore of an unspeakable sanctity (Exod. xx. 7; xxxiii. 19). Like the "word" of God, it cannot be dissociated from God himself. It is in some sense an extension outwards, into the sphere of the created and sensible, of the ineffable virtues of the Godhead itself. It stands in a real, though unassignable, relation to infinite goodness and power, and therefore it comes fraught with untold blessing (or perchance cursing) to those on whom it lights. Hence, to put the name of God—the covenant name—upon the people had a real meaning. No one could do it except by his express direction; and when it was so done there was an invisible reality answering to the audible form; with the name pronounced in blessing came the blessing itself, came the special providence and presence of God, to abide upon such at least as were worthy of it. It is a fact, the significance of which cannot be denied, that *the name* which was commanded to be put upon the people was lost, and irrecoverably lost, by the later Jews. Out of an exagger-

ated dread of possible profanation, they first disobeyed the command by substituting Adonai for that name outside the sanctuary; and finally, after the death of Simeon the Just, the priests ceased to pronounce that name at all, and therefore lost the tradition by which the pronunciation was fixed. Our method of spelling and pronouncing the name as Jehovah is merely conventional, and almost certainly incorrect. It would seem to be the more devout opinion that the name itself, as revealed by God and uttered by many generations of priests, was forfeited (like Paradise), was withdrawn, and ought not to be inquired after. **And I will bless them.** Here is the precise truth of all effectual benediction: *they* shall put my name; . . . *I* will bless. The outward form was ministered by the priests, the inward reality was of God and from God alone. It is observable that the form of blessing is expressed in the singular; either (1) because all Israel was regarded as one, even as the first-born son of God (Exod. iv. 22, 23; Hos. xi. 1), or (2) because all real blessing must in truth be individual—a nation can only be blessed in its several members.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 22—27.—*The Blessing of God Almighty.* In this benediction we have spiritually the love of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, as imparted unto us in the kingdom of heaven, into which we are called, that we may inherit a blessing (2 Cor. xiii. 14; 1 Pet. iii. 9). Consider, therefore—

I. THAT ALL BLESSING IN THE NAME WAS GIVEN BY AARON AND HIS SONS ONLY, because they were the chosen representatives of God. Even so, all blessing in the Triune Name is given by Christ alone, the High Priest of our profession, and the only channel of blessing. All ministerial blessing is only the continuation made audible in times and places of that blessing which our Lord was pronouncing when he left the world (Luke xxiv. 50, 51), which blessing, as it was never finished upon earth, so it was taken up with him, and became eternal in the heavens, and is still the benediction wherewith his servants are blessed.

II. THAT TO BLESS THE PEOPLE, AS IT WAS THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGE, SO IT WAS THE BOUNDEN DUTY, OF THE PRIESTS, and that in which their office towards the people was, as it were, summed up (Deut. xxi. 5). Even so Jesus Christ was "sent to bless us" (Acts iii. 26), and "Benedictus benedicat" is the simplest and surest of all Christian prayers; and it is the object and the office of such as are called in any wise to minister the priestly authority of Christ to bring home his benediction to the souls of men.

III. THAT THE FIRST CLAUSE OF THE BLESSING INTIMATES THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER, THROUGH WHICH WE ARE PRESERVED. For it is of his blessing that the whole world, and the race of men, and we ourselves have been kept from the destroyer, and held in life and plenty (Gen. i. 28; ix. 1; Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 28). And it is of his blessing that we have escaped the destruction which threatened our souls (Gen. ii. 17); and that because he had a favour unto us (Deut. vii. 8; x. 15), and because he had predestinated us in love (Ephes. i. 4, 5, ἐν ἀγάπῃ προορίσας ἡμᾶς), and because he is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter iii. 9).

IV. THAT THE SECOND CLAUSE INTIMATES THE LOVE OF GOD THE SON WHEREBY WE HAVE OBTAINED, AND DO OBTAIN, GRACE. For in the Incarnation of the Son the face of God is made to shine upon us, and that clearly and brightly, as the natural sun being risen shines upon the earth which lay in darkness or in twilight (Mal. iv. 2; Luke i. 78; John i. 14, 17; xiv. 9; 2 Cor. iii. 18; iv. 4, 6; Heb. i. 3). Thus Moses not being permitted to see the face of God, but only his back parts (Exod. xxxiii. 23), signified, that before the Incarnation the revelation of God in grace and truth could not be made.

V. THAT THE THIRD CLAUSE INTIMATES THE LOVE OF GOD THE HOLY GHOST, WHEREBY WE OBTAIN PEACE THROUGH THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT. For the loving regard of God—his tender gaze upon the soul which he loves—is the coming forth of the Holy Spirit to abide upon and within that soul, bringing with him the life of the Incarnate Son (John xvi. 14, 15; 1 John v. 11), and the love of the Eternal Father (Rom. v. 5), and uniting us to both (1 John i. 3). And this life (Gal. ii. 20) and this love (Jude 21) are peace (Gal. v. 22; Rom. viii. 6; 1 John iv. 18); and

peace is the ripened fruit and accomplished purpose of the gospel (Luke ii. 14; John xx. 19; Ephes. ii. 15).

VI. THAT THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WERE TO BEAR THE COVENANT NAME OF GOD, whereby he was revealed to them alone. Even so is the holy and awful and Triune Name of our God called down upon us (Matt. xxviii. 19, *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*; James ii. 7, *τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς*), and we bear it as a most potent talisman to shield us from all harm, as a most precious jewel to be our secret joy and pride (Rev. ii. 7); cf. Ps. xci. 14; ix. 10, &c.). Note, that the name of the Holy Trinity is often apparently interchanged with the name of Jesus (Acts ii. 38; xix. 5), because in "Jesus" is the whole fulness of the Godhead (Col. ii. 9), and "Jesus" is the name under which the Divine Being is personally made known unto us, as under that now forgotten name to the Jews (Acts iii. 16; iv. 10). And note again, that amongst Israel, as amongst ourselves now, the sacred Name is put upon the people of God, yet so as it may pass away from them like the thin air, and leave no trace of sanctity behind: whereas in "him that overcometh" the Name shall be *written*, and that indelibly, because by Christ himself (Rev. iii. 12).

VII. THAT THE JEWS LOST THE HOLY NAME BECAUSE THEY USED IT NOT ARIGHT, FEARING TO MAKE IT KNOWN. Of that Name which wrought so many miracles (Isa. xxx. 27) nothing remains but four letters without any certain meaning, or any possible use. But the Name in which we trust can never be lost, because it is preached unto every creature under heaven (Acts xvii. 3; Phil. ii. 10), and its sweetness is everywhere diffused (Cant. i. 3). And so it is with all which that name means to us,—we keep it *for* ourselves exactly in proportion as we do not keep it *to* ourselves.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 22—27.—*The benediction.* So far as I have observed, the *blessing of the people* has less consideration bestowed upon it than any other of the stated ordinances of Divine service. It is seldom made the subject of discourse from the pulpit; divines seldom treat of it in their books; there is reason to fear that it seldom gets its due place in the minds and hearts of the people. The Benediction occurs in Scripture in several forms. Of these, two are in most frequent use in our Churches: the "Apostolic benediction" in 2 Cor. xiii. 14, and the "Aaronic benediction" in the text. Properly these are not two benedictions, but only two forms of one and the same. The benefits expressed are, in substance, the same. The principal difference is that the thrice-holy Name, and the benefits of God's salvation, are declared more plainly and articulately in the later than they could well be in the earlier form. There is nothing expressed in the apostolic benediction which was not implied in the Aaronic. "What mean ye by this service?" When our children ask this question, what are we to reply?

I. IT IS A PROCLAMATION OF THE NAME OF GOD. In blessing the people Aaron was to "put the name of the Lord upon the children of Israel" (ver. 27), thus constituting them his witnesses. Compare Micah iv. 5. This design is plain in the case of the apostolic form. Every time that form is used in the Church, it is as much as to say, Let all men know that the Name called upon in this place is the name of the Father Almighty, and of Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The older form fulfilled the same purpose for the older time. There lurked in it a suggestion of the Trinity, to be brought to light in due time; and for the time then present, it loudly proclaimed at once the Unity and the personality of God—a proclamation sorely needing to be repeated in our time also. There is a philosophy walking abroad, which invites us to substitute for the living God, whose name is Love, an impersonal "tendency that makes for righteousness." It is the old Pagan substitution of nature for God. In opposition to it and to all similar error, the Aaronic benediction is a standing witness, that the God in whom all things live and move and subsist, is the LORD, a personal God, who can think upon us, and be gracious to us.

II. A DECLARATION OF THE BENEFITS GOD HAS LAID UP FOR THEM THAT SEEK HIM. If you would understand its true intention, you must bear in mind that the benediction is not spoken to men indiscriminately. It is for the Israel of God; for those on whom Christ's name is called, and who walk in his name. It is a solemn and authoritative declaration of the relation which subsists between him and

them; and of the benefits flowing therefrom. 1. "*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee*," q. d. The Lord is the keeper of Israel. He will care for thee. He will keep thy land and thine house; he will preserve thy going out and coming in, and will guard thy life; he will keep thy soul. He will deliver thy soul from death, thy feet from falling, thine eyes from tears. Compare Ps. cxxi., where the Church, opening its heart and drinking in the benediction, turns it into a song, "Jehovah Shomer." 2. "*The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee*;" q. d. There is grace in God's heart for thee. He has given proof of this times without number. To many a man stained with sin and utterly cast down, he has said, Live; has taken him by the hand, and brought him near, and made him glad with his loving countenance. The best commentary on this, also, is to be found in the Psalms. A glance at the references in the margin will show that the benediction—and especially this particular member of it—was welcomed in many hearts in Israel, and was responded to with peculiar ardour. From it the Church borrows the refrain of the eighteenth psalm (vers. 3, 7, 19). Peculiar interest attaches to the form which the Church's response takes in Psalm lxvii.: "God . . . bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations: "*q. d.* Not for our own sakes alone do we beseech thee to make us glad with thy face, but that we, being sanctified and gladdened, may bear thy name to the nations who know thee not. 3. "*The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*" Take this member and the foregoing, and what do they amount to but this, "Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 3, &c. &c.). There is a look of God which fills with dismay, and makes men call to the mountains to hide them from his presence. But there is a look of God which fills the soul with peace. The Lord can, with a glance of his eye, say to the soul, "I am thy salvation:" he can so lift up his countenance upon us as to give us rest.

III. A CALLING DOWN OF GOD'S BLESSING ON THOSE WHO SEEK HIM. A Benediction is a Beatitude. It is also a Prayer. But it is more than either or both of these. To speak of the latter only, every benediction is a prayer, but every prayer is not a benediction. Into a benediction there enters an element of authority not found in every prayer. Joseph's sons may very well have prayed for Jacob; but we cannot fancy the lads putting their hands on the head of the venerable patriarch and blessing him. "Without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. vii. 7). The case of Jacob may remind us, that it was not the priests only who blessed the congregation. Moses did it; David and Solomon did it; any aged saint may bless his younger brethren. So, also, the minister of the gospel, when the Lord calls him to preside in public worship, may bless the people in the name of the Lord, in the assured hope that the Lord will indeed bless them, and keep them, and give them his grace and peace.—B.

Vers. 22—27.—*The priestly blessing.* I. CERTAIN NOTEWORTHY POINTS IN REGARD TO THIS BLESSING. 1. One of the special duties of the priests was to be the medium of blessing (Deut. xxi. 5). The priests had much to do with slaughter and sacrifice; here we have a pleasant view of one of their higher functions. Yet to enter heartily into this duty required an elevation of character which the mechanical duties of the altar did not call for. Every servant of God who is faithful in that which is least may find opportunities for higher spiritual services (Matt. xiii. 12; xxv. 29). 2 The triple repetition of the name Jehovah was supposed by the Jews themselves to contain some mystery. At any rate it suggested that as there was in God an infinity of holiness that no one term could express (Isa. vi. 3), so God has for his people a fulness of blessing beyond what any single utterance of his favour would have suggested (cf. Exod. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 6, 7; Isa. lxiii. 7; Eph. ii. 4—10). To us the mystery is further revealed by the doctrine of the Trinity. For it is to be noted that in the New Testament that doctrine is always presented in some practical aspect, often in connection with privileges conferred by the triune "God of our salvation" (*e. g.* John xiv. 16, 17; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; Eph. ii. 18, &c.). 3. The Divine blessing, though uttered on the nation, was designed for each individual. The "thee" brings the blessing home to each house and heart. God, who has bless-

ings full enough for the whole world, has an appropriate benediction for the neediest of his children (Ps. xl. 17). The sunlight is for the sake of the tiniest insect and seedling as well as for the whole human race; and God's blessing is for the sick child in the cottage as much as for "the holy Church throughout all the world" (Ps. xxv. 10; Rom. viii. 28). 4. This priestly benediction supplied or suggested the substance of many prayers and benedictions in later days. Echoes of it are heard repeatedly in the Book of Psalms (*e. g.* Ps. iv. 6; xxix. 11; xxxi. 16; lxvii. 1; lxxx. 3; cxxi.; cxxxiv.). As God's mercies are from everlasting to everlasting, and are "new every morning," so God's words of benediction are like germs of beauty and fruitfulness, reproducing themselves from generation to generation in new and precious forms. "The form of sound words" may be a valuable heritage in the Church of God.

II. THE PARTICULARS OF THE BLESSING. Each clause of the triple blessing contains a promise from God. Combining these, we find that the blessing includes these three favours: protection (ver. 24), pardon (ver. 25), peace (ver. 26). 1. *Protection.* "The blessing of God," says Calvin, "is the goodness of God in action, by which a supply of all good pours down to us from his favour, as from its only fountain." We can confidently commend ourselves, and all who are the "blessed of the Lord," to his keeping, both in regard to spiritual preservation (1 Thess. v. 23, 24) and temporal deliverances (Ps. xci. 11; Isa. xxvii. 3). Because our High Priest has offered the prayer (John xvii. 11), we may utter the doxology (2 Tim. iv. 18; Jude 24, 25). 2. *Pardon* (ver. 25). The face of the Lord represents the aspect which God bears towards man, whether of sunshine and favour (Ps. xxi. 6; xxxiv. 15; cxix. 135; Dan. ix. 17) or cloud and wrath (Exod. xiv. 24; Ps. xxxiv. 16; Levit. xvii. 10; xx. 3). The shining of God's countenance is an assurance that God will be gracious; its shining upon "thee" a pledge that we have received the grace and pardon we need (Ps. xxxi. 16; lxxx. 3). The little child feels the difference between the shining and the averted face of the mother, and the Christian cries, Ps. cxliii. 3, 7. If God grants us to hear "the joyful sound" of forgiveness, we "walk all day long in the light of his countenance." 3. *Peace* (ver. 26). The lifting up of God's countenance may suggest his active intervention to secure to us the blessing of peace. Illustrate, sun rising on the world, "with healing in its wings." Such looks from God will compensate for earthly privations (Ps. iv. 6, 7), and the expectation of them may sustain us in the night of trouble (Ps. xlii. 5). The Christian's peace is "the peace of God," "my peace," communicated by Divine power to the soul (John xiv. 27; xv. 11; Phil. iv. 6, 7). These prayers of blessing remind us that all the relations of life may be thus sanctified, and our warmest wishes breathed forth in the form of prayers: *e. g.* pastor for flock (Eph. vi. 23, 24; 2 Thess. iii. 16); Christian for fellow-worshipper (Ps. cxviii. 26; cxxxiv. 3); master for servants (Ruth ii. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 18, 20); friend for correspondent (2 Tim. iv. 22). But our words of blessing avail not unless God adds his "Amen," as he promises in ver. 27. Our benediction, whether of men or God, is only in words; God's blessing is in deeds. His blessing when pledged cannot be reversed (Gen. xxii. 15—18; Numb. xxiii. 19, 20). Spiritual blessings are part of the new covenant, which by faith we may enjoy for ourselves and invoke on others (Eph. i. 1—3, 15—19).—P.

Vers. 22—26.—*The benediction through the priests.* A beautiful and touching benediction, and more beautiful for the place in which we come upon it. It is found in the midst of stern commandments and restrictions, minute specifications of duty, dreadful punishments for disobedience and rebellion. How clearly it thus shows that all Jehovah was requiring and doing was for the people's good. Note—

I. THE VERBAL CHANNEL OF THIS BENEDICTION. Spoken through *Aaron and his sons.* It became an office of the priest as much as were any of the sacrifices. He was not only the way from men to God, but very tenderly from God to men. It was not a blessing to each tribe to be pronounced by its head, nor for each household to be spoken by the father, though doubtless in many families it was repeated, explained, and impressed. Aaron was the great *official* mediator between God and the people. Doubtless this benediction was to form a part in all solemn approaches of the priest to the people. It would come to them when in the discharge of sacred

duties, at times of holy festival and Divine forgiveness. Others might utter idle, powerless good wishes, sinking with oft petition into mere politeness. The priest's words official, solemn, spoken from the tabernacle. Thus they expressed the permanent good will of God, in spite of all negligence and forgetfulness towards him. *We have a better Aaron*, seeing perfection was not by the Levitical priesthood. The life and work of Jesus give one long and various utterance of this benediction. He the Minister of the sanctuary and true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. God's good will to the *true Israel* is expressed in no doubtful, grudging way in Jesus. All that Aaron said to the people in respect of temporal blessings, Jesus says to the spiritual seed of Abraham in respect of spiritual blessings.

II. THE ELEMENTS OF THE BENEDICTION. 1. *As to the attitude of God.* (1) *He blesses*, which we may take to mean an expression of his favourable disposition, in the most general sense of the term. "Let it be an understood thing, O Israel, that God favours you." In the eyes not only of Israelites, but of other nations, it was a serious thing to be under the favour or frown of Deity. Favour meant the best of good, frown the worst of evil. Balak thought all his ends would be served if he could get Balaam *only to curse the Israelites*. Thus there would come on them in some mysterious but certain way an irresistible blight. (2) *He makes his face to shine.* The sun may and does bless even when not shining, but shining it speaks for itself. The Lord is *a sun as well as a shield*, a sight that is sweet, and a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold. The face of Jesus shone as the sun upon the mount of transfiguration. (3) *He lifts up his countenance.* What expressiveness there is in the face! The language of men's tongues was confounded at Babel, but the language of the countenance all Babel's confusion could not touch. The language of the face needs no interpreter. When we see the face of a fellow-man shining, and his countenance lifted on us, then we know he will help us if he can. Just so sure were the Israelites to be of God's interest in them. No intermediate voice was needed to maintain the reality of his good will. And we are to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And he who has seen Jesus knows all the grace in those features, how his countenance is ever lifted on the unstable, wandering children of men. 2. *As to the communications which God makes.* (1) *He keeps* his people. *Security* the first of blessings to those who have much to lose. The rich man had increase of goods, and built bigger barns, but the barns could not keep him against death. Perhaps it is worthy of note that in Matt. vi. is the warning to keep our treasures *in heaven*. Not until we come to Matt. xiii. is the pearl of great price set before us. Insecurity was the mark of Eden. God's face shone, his countenance was lifted up on Adam and Eve, but he warned them there was danger in the midst of all their blessings. Perfect security belongs to the New Jerusalem. He who crept into Eden can never be found where entereth nothing that defileth or maketh a lie. (2) *He is gracious to them.* He *heaps* on them tokens of his favour, just as one friend heaps presents on another. If we see one person enjoying a great number of gifts from another, we judge that he is regarded with special interest. There are gifts to the evil and the good, the common attendants of nature, but there are special gifts for God's own people. Saved from Egypt, they might have been turned loose in the wilderness, but instead they were guided through into the promised land. (3) *He gives peace.* His lifted countenance and benignant eye speak reconciliation so soon as the atonement is offered and the fruits meet for repentance brought forth. If his people are at peace with him, in hearty and diligent obedience, what matter all other foes?

God's benediction then, thus considered, appears suitable to man's needs, and perfectly definite. Our trust and expectation should agree with what is a benediction to us through Christ, as much as it was to the Israelites through Aaron.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OFFERINGS OF THE PRINCES (ch. vii.). Ver. 1.—**On the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle.** This expression, "on the day" (Hebrew, בְּיוֹם; Septuagint, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ), has given rise to considerable difficulty. Strictly speaking it should mean the first day of the first month of the second year (Exod. xl. 17); and so the Targum of Palestine, "It was on the day which begins the month Nisan." It is, however, quite clear from the narrative itself, as well as from its position, that the offerings were not actually made until after the taking of the census and the distribution of their respective duties to the Levitical families, *i. e.* until the eve of the departure from Sinai. Moreover, since the same phrase, בְּיוֹם, occurs in ver. 10, it is certain that it cannot apply to the actual presentation of the offerings, which was spread over twelve days (ver. 11). The majority, therefore, of the commentators would read בְּיוֹם here as in Gen. ii. 4, "at the time." It is, however, impossible to admit that there is any similarity whatever between the two passages. In Gen. ii. 4 the context itself, as well as the subject matter, oblige us to understand the phrase in the looser sense; but in a plain historical account such as the present the obligation is all the other way. Either the date here given is a mistake (which, on any supposition, is most improbable), or it must be referred to the intention and inception of the princely offerings, the actual presentation being made at the time indicated in the narrative, *i. e.* in the first half of the second month. **And had anointed it.** From Levit. viii. 10, as compared with Exod. xl. 35, it would rather appear that Moses did not anoint the tabernacle on the day it was set up, but on some subsequent day. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that the tabernacle and the holy things were anointed through seven successive days: the statement in Levit. viii. 33—35 refers only to the consecration of the priests. Since the anointing of the tabernacle was connected with the setting of it up, as the last act of one ceremonial, and was only unavoidably postponed, there is nothing remarkable in the two things being spoken of as if they had taken place on one and the same day.

Ver. 2.—**The princes of Israel.** These are the same men, and are called by the same titles, as those Divinely nominated in ch. i. 4, *sq.* No doubt they were the heads of the nations according to some established rules of precedence before the exodus. **And were over them that were numbered.** Hebrew, "stood over." The most natural reference is to the fact of their presiding over the census, and so the Septuagint, οὗτοι οἱ παρεστηκότες ἐπὶ τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς. But it may mean simply that they were the leaders of the numbered hosts, and offered as their natural representatives.

Ver. 3.—**They brought their offering before the Lord,** *i. e.* probably to the entrance of the tabernacle. **Six covered wagons.** עָגְלֹת צָב. The meaning of the qualifying word צָב is extremely doubtful. The Targums render it as the A. V. On the other hand, Gesenius and De Wette render it "litters," as the similar word צָבִים in Isa. lxvi. 20 (where the Septuagint has ἐν λαμπήναις ἡμιόνων). The reading of the Septuagint, ἁμάξας λαμπηνίκας, is equally doubtful. Λαμπήνη, itself probably a foreign word, is explained by the Scholiasts as ἅμαξα βασιλική, or as ἅρμα σκιπαστόν; and Aquila has here ἅμαξαι σκεπασταί, and the Vulgate *plaustra tecta*. But Euseb. Emis. understands it as meaning "two-wheeled vehicles." It is a matter of little importance, but the nature of the country itself and the small number of oxen to each carriage point to the probability that they had no wheels, and were carried by the oxen, one in front, and one behind, by means of shafts, as is still the case in parts of India.

Ver. 4.—**The Lord spake unto Moses.** The Targum of Palestine here inserts the statement that Moses was not willing to receive them. He may very well have doubted whether God would sanction their use, as it had not been commanded; and it may be that some delay, perhaps of several days, occurred before he was able to accept them and to assign them to their future uses. In this, or some similar way, must be explained the apparent discrepancy of time.

Ver. 5.—**Take it of them.** It was the first absolutely voluntary offering made for the service of God, and as such altogether acceptable. Former "free-will offerings" had been at the least invited—this had not.

Ver. 8.—**Four wagons . . . he gave unto the sons of Merari.** The heavy portions of the fabric, which were intrusted to the Merarites, especially required this means of transport.

Ver. 9.—**Upon their shoulders.** For which purpose poles or bearing-frames had been provided, as implying more honour and care than the use of carriages. The death of Uzzah seems to have been the melancholy consequence of neglecting this rule (2 Sam. vi. 3, 7, as compared with 1 Chron. xv. 13).

Ver. 10.—**For dedicating of the altar.** The altar was "dedicated" in the sense of being consecrated, by the anointing with the sacred oil and with the blood of the appointed sacrifices (Levit. viii. 10, 15). But it could still be "dedicated" in another sense by the sacrificial gifts, freely offered for the purpose, of the people. No rules appear to have been made as to dedications, but there is an allusion in Deut. xx. 5 to the dedication of houses, which may have been accompanied with religious rites, and we know that as a fact the temple was dedicated by Solomon (2 Chron. vii. 5), and re-dedicated by the Maccabees (1 Macc. iv. 54, *sq.*), and the wall of Jerusalem was dedicated by Nehemiah (Neh. xii. 27, *sq.*). The Septuagint has here εἰς τὸν ἐγκαινισμὸν, as in 1 Macc. iv. 56, and cf. John x. 22. **Offered their offering before the altar.** This assuredly points to an offering made in common, and made at one time, viz., on the day when the altar was anointed. It may be that the twelve princes all came for the purpose of making their offerings on that day, the day they would naturally choose for the purpose; but on account of the great number of other sacrifices, and the fewness of the priests, *their* offerings were postponed by the Divine command, and were actually received later. Thus in will and in meaning the offerings were made "on the day" of the consecration, but were publicly and solemnly received at some subsequent time.

Ver. 11.—**The Lord said unto Moses.** Doubtless in answer to his inquiry (see ver. 89), at the time when the princes desired to make their offerings. **Each prince on his day.** For more convenience and solemnity, that the sacrifices might not be hurried over, and that none might feel neglected.

Ver. 12.—**Nahshon.** The same appointed to act with Moses in the census, and to be captain of the children of Judah (ch. i. 7; ii. 3). The names of the other princes are to be found in the same passages, and their order in presenting is their order for the march. This seems to show that their offerings were actually made after the arrangement of the camps had been settled.

Ver. 13.—**His offering was.** And exactly the same was the offering of each of the rest. This was right and good, because it showed an equal zeal and thankfulness and forwardness to give unto the Lord, and it took away all occasion for jealousy or boasting. **One silver charger,** or dish. Hebrew, *kearah*, a deep vessel (Exod. xxv. 9). Septuagint, τρυβλίον (cf. Matt. xxvi. 23). **An hundred and thirty shekels**—weighing about as much as 325 shillings. **One silver bowl.** Hebrew, *mizrak*, from *zārak*, to scatter; a bowl for pouring; translated bason Exod. xxvii. 3. Septuagint, φιάλη (cf. Rev. v. 8; xv. 7). **After the shekel of the sanctuary.** According to the standard weight kept in the tabernacle (see Exod. xxx. 13). It seems to have weighed about as much as half-a-crown. **Full of fine flour mingled with oil.** This was for a present meat offering to accompany the animal sacrifices, and also to intimate the future use of the vessels—the larger as a measure for the fine flour, the smaller as a measure for the oil.

Ver. 14.—**One spoon,** or small cup, with a handle. Hebrew, *kaph*, as in Exod. xxv. 29. Septuagint, θυίσκη. **Of ten shekels of gold**—weighing about as much as eleven and a half sovrans, but the value of the precious metals was much greater then. **Full of incense.** Both for a present incense offering, and as intimating the use of the cups.

Ver. 15.—**One young bullock, one ram, one lamb.** One of each kind that might be offered for a burnt offering (Levit. i. 2).

Ver. 16.—**One kid of the goats.** Literally, "one shaggy one." Hebrew, *sa'eer*. Septuagint, χίμαρον (see on Levit. iv. 23). It is noticeable that while the burnt offerings and peace offerings were multiplied, the sin offering remained a single victim.

Ver. 17.—**For a sacrifice of peace offerings.** See Levit. iii. 1, 6, 12. These were the most multiplied, as befitted an occasion of joy and of thankful communion with the God of Israel.

Ver. 23.—**This was the offering of Nethaneel the son of Zuar.** His offering, and that of all the rest, is described in exactly the same words and phrases, with the single minute exception, that in ver. 19 we have, "he offered for his offering," instead of "his offering was." Even the small peculiarity of omitting the word *shekels* from the statement of the weight of the silver chargers and the golden spoons appears throughout (cf. Gen. xx. 16). No doubt the record was copied or enlarged from some document written at the time, and its studied sameness reflects the careful and equal solemnity with which the offerings of the several princes were received.

Ver. 48.—**On the seventh day.** This did not necessarily fall on the sabbath; but if the days of offering were consecutive, one of them must have done so, and the order of offering was the same as on other days.

Ver. 84.—**This was the dedication of the altar.** The sacrificial gifts for present sacrifice, and for the use of the altar, were its dedication.

Ver. 85.—**Two thousand and four hundred shekels.** In weight equal to about £300 of our money.

Ver. 86.—**An hundred and twenty shekels.** About £138. These values were not very great, nor was the number of the animals very large, as compared with the lavish, and

perhaps extravagant, profusion displayed at the dedication of the temple and altar by Solomon; but we may believe they were at least as acceptable. The verb substantive should be removed from these verses (86—88), which simply continue the totals of the offerings which formed the dedication.

Ver. 89.—**And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation.** Rather, "the tent of meeting." Hebrew, *ohel moëd*, where God had promised to *meet* with him (Exod. xxv. 22). **To speak with him,** *i. e.* with God, as implied in the word "meeting." **He heard the voice of one speaking unto him.** Rather, "he heard the voice conversing with him," making itself audible to him. מְדַבֵּר, part. Hithpael, as in Ezek. ii. 2. Here is a distinct statement of the supernatural fact that God spake to Moses with an audible human voice, and (no doubt) in the Hebrew language, from out the empty darkness behind the veil. In the fact, indeed, of God so speaking audibly there was nothing new (see Gen. iii. 8; xvii. 1, &c.), nor in the fact of his so speaking to Moses (see Exod. iii. 4 and xxxiii. 9); but this records the fulfilment of that promise which was part of God's covenant with Israel, that he would at all times converse with Moses as their mediator from above the mercy-seat (see on Exod. xxv. 20—22, and cf. Deut. v. 23—28). **And he spake unto him,** *i. e.* God spake unto Moses: the voice made itself audible, and by the voice God himself spake unto him. It is quite obvious that this statement more properly belongs to an earlier period, viz., to that immediately succeeding the consecration of the tabernacle. On the day it was set up Moses was not able to enter it (Exod. xl. 35), but no doubt he did so very soon afterwards, and received from the mouth of the Lord, speaking in the holiest, all the commandments and ordinances recorded in Leviticus and in the beginning of this book. Perhaps the first communication made to him in this way concerned the offerings of the princes when first brought near (vers. 4, 11), and for that reason the statement may have been appended to the record of those offerings.

HOMILETICS.

Ch. vii.—*Acceptable offerings.* In this chapter we have, spiritually, the free-will offering, acceptable unto God, of what they have and what they are, by his people. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE OFFERINGS WERE CONNECTED IN TIME WITH THE DAY OF CONSECRATION, BUT WERE ACTUALLY PRESENTED LATER. Even so all Christian offerings, whether of ourselves or of our substance, date from the day when the altar of the cross was consecrated, and the mercy-seat sprinkled with the precious blood; it is from that day they draw their inward inspiration and their meaning, but they are outwardly dispersed through many days (2 Cor. v. 14).

II. THAT THE COMMON OFFERING OF THE PRINCES WAS FOR THE EASIER ONWARD MOVEMENT OF THE SANCTUARY, the pattern, centre, and microcosm of the Church. Even so all the faithful are bound to give common help to further the onward progress of the Church in her ceaseless extension and her journey towards her consummation.

III. THAT ALL THE SEVERAL OFFERINGS OF THE PRINCES WERE RECEIVED WITH LIKE FAVOUR AND SOLEMNITY: that of Dan as much as that of Judah. Even so all equal offering or sacrifice on the part of Christian Churches or individuals is equally acceptable with God, and comes into the same remembrance with him. Only this equality is not now a material equality (as then), but is proportioned to advantages and opportunities (Mark xii. 43; Luke xii. 48; 2 Cor. viii. 12).

IV. THAT THE OFFERINGS WERE IN EACH CASE MINUTELY RECORDED, having evidently been entered in some roll kept in the sanctuary. Even so there is nothing, however trivial, done for God or given to him which shall ever be forgotten (Mal. iii. 16; Matt. x. 42; xxv. 40; Heb. vi. 10; xiii. 16).

V. THAT WHILE THE BURNT OFFERINGS AND (STILL MORE) THE PEACE OFFERINGS WERE MULTIPLIED, THE SIN OFFERING REMAINED (IN EACH CASE) BUT ONE. Even so it is open to all good people to multiply their self-oblations and their offerings of thankfulness and praise, but there is for each (and can be) but the one offering for sin, even he who was in himself the Lamb of God, and yet in respect of the sin which he assumed, and the curse he endured, was as it were "the shaggy one of the goats." Note that this word, *sa'eer*, is translated "devil" (Levit. xvii. 7; 2 Chron. xi. 15), and "satyr" in Isa. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 14, being a most manifest type of Christ.

VI. THAT GOD SPAKE UNTO MOSES ACCORDING TO HIS PROMISE, FROM ABOVE THE MERCY-SEAT (*ἄνωθεν τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου*). Even so the Divine intercourse with man in Christ rests upon the incarnation and the atonement, of which the ark and the mercy-seat were the types. But note that whereas these holy things were but figures, God hath now spoken unto us plainly by his Son, whom he set forth as the propitiation through faith (*ὃν προέθετο ἱλαστήριον διὰ τῆς πίστεως*). And note that then the voice spake out of the darkness behind the veil, but in Christ the veil is taken away, and heaven laid open, and God himself revealed and declared (Matt. xxvii. 51; John i. 18; 2 Cor. iii. 14; Heb. ix. 8).

VII. THAT WHENEVER (AS IT WOULD SEEM) MOSES WENT IN TO SPEAK UNTO GOD, HE HEARD THE DIVINE VOICE SPEAKING TO HIM. Even so as often as we go to God in Christ, having somewhat really to say to him, we shall not fail also to hear the Divine voice speaking unto us in answer.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ch. vii.—*The princes and their princely offering.* Here is perhaps the longest chapter in all the Bible. What is it occupied with? It is, in effect, a List of Subscribers. Certain costly articles were wanted to complete the furnishing of the tabernacle. Twelve men of chief note in their respective tribes came forward, of their own accord, and offered to provide the articles. The offer was accepted; and in this chapter of God's word the Holy Spirit has inscribed, one by one, the names of the donors, together with an inventory of the articles which each of them brought. Some people affect to despise the piety which expresses itself in costly gifts to the Church of Christ, and deem Lists of Subscribers an exhibition of ostentatious vulgarity. But in this chapter there is the best of warrants for these despised features of our modern Christianity.

I. Observe the OCCASION of the gifts here commemorated. The Lord's tabernacle has been constructed, furnished, anointed, and (what is best of all) occupied by the King whose pavilion it was intended for. Yes; and the construction and furniture of this royal tent have been effected by the voluntary gifts of a willing people. The tabernacle and its furniture are completed according to the pattern shown to Moses on the mount. No necessary part is wanting. Still there is room for some supplementary gifts. Take two examples. 1. When the tabernacle was first dedicated there would no doubt be a golden spoon for Aaron's use when he burned incense at the golden altar. One such spoon was all that was strictly necessary. But it would occasionally happen that there would be more than one call to burn incense about the same time, and it was evidently unbecoming that in the palace of the King any worshipper should have to wait till the golden spoon was available. Hence the gift of the twelve golden spoons now presented by the princes. 2. The Levites have been appointed to bear the tabernacle and its furniture. They are able to do it; but not without difficulty, especially during the sojourn in the wilderness, where it is to be emphatically a moving tent. There was room, therefore, for a present of carriages and draught oxen. There are Christian congregations to whom this chapter teaches a much-needed lesson. The roll of their membership includes men of substance, yet they suffer the sanctuary to wear an aspect of threadbare penury and its services to be hunger-bitten. This ought not so to be.

II. THE INVENTORY OF THE GIFTS. 1. Some were for the tabernacle in its wandering state. Six waggons were provided,—they seem to have been small covered chariots,—and a yoke of oxen was attached to each. These waggons were distributed among the Levitical families according to the nature and amount of the burdens which had been assigned them respectively. 2. Others were for the *handselling* of the tabernacle service. These consisted partly of gold and silver utensils for the stated service; partly of offerings to be presently consumed. The offerings included all the principal kinds in use under the law. There were burnt offerings, sin offerings, peace offerings. The first sort and the last were much the most numerous. It was a time when the congregation might well rejoice before the Lord—freely devoting themselves to him, and expatiating on the blessedness of communion with him. A

time of spontaneous bountifulness in God's service is always a time of gladness. Yet even at such times we are not to forget that we are sinners. The sin offering may not be prominent in this chapter of gifts, yet it has a place in every one of the twelve lists of offerings. What has been said about the nature of the gifts will explain the circumstance that the presenting of them was spread over twelve days. The peace offerings far exceeded in number all the rest. While the sin offering in each case consisted of a solitary kid, and the burnt offering consisted of only three animals, a bullock, a ram, and a lamb, the animals included in the peace offering were no fewer than seventeen. Now the specialty of the peace offering was this, that the person who presented it thereafter feasted upon it with his friends before the Lord. It was a becoming arrangement, therefore, that the disposal of this offering should be spread over several days.

III. A word or two about THE MEN by whom the gifts were brought. They were the hereditary princes of the tribes—the princes of the congregation who had taken charge of the census. This deserves to be noted, for it explains a certain feature of the present gifts in which they differ from almost all other gifts recorded in Scripture. The rule laid down in the Bible for all ordinary cases is that every man is to give according as God hath prospered him. Here, on the contrary, the gifts of the princes are identical in number and value—doubtless by prior concert. There would be richer and poorer among the princes, yet they all give alike. It was not so at the erection of the tabernacle. On that occasion there was the utmost diversity: the mite of the poor widow was made as welcome as the rich man's ingot of gold. Although a man could bring no more than a handful of goat's hair, he was not denied the honour of having a share in the work. There are times for both sorts of giving. When a place of worship, where rich and poor are to meet together, is to be built, it would be wrong to exclude any from the subscription list, however poor. When a college of sacred learning is to be built or endowed, it may be the fittest plan to limit the subscription list to twelve or twenty "princes of the congregation" who are able to contribute every man his thousand or his five thousand pounds. It is a good omen for a nation when its "nobles put their necks to the work of the Lord." And it is good for the nobles themselves when they have the heart to do this. They who are honourable should show themselves serviceable. *Noblesse oblige.* When the nobles forget their duty in this respect, God will not long maintain their nobility.

IV. Does any hearer complain that we have been doing him wrong in preaching to-day from this chapter of the law—barren and secular (as he thinks)—instead of conducting him into the green pastures of the gospel? Let such a hearer remember how Christ sat over against the treasury and marked what every one cast into it. That scene in the gospel and this chapter in the law—is not the scope of them the very same?—B.

Vers. 1—88.—*The free-will offering of the princes.* The completion of the tabernacle was celebrated by offerings of the princes, as representatives of the tribes. Lessons may be derived from two points noted, viz.—I. THEIR SPONTANEITY. II. THEIR UNIFORMITY.

I. 1. The princes had already given offerings towards the erection of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxv. 27, 28), and now they bring further offerings for its conveyance (ver. 3) and for its complete furnishing (vers. 10—17). The power and will to give are a "grace" bestowed (2 Cor. viii. 7), and the more we give the more of the grace of giving we may enjoy (Matt. xiii. 12). 2. If regarded simply as a duty, it was right that the princes should take the lead, as now it is a duty for men in authority and men of wealth, pastors and officers in Christ's Church, to be "zealous for good works." 3. But the chief excellence of these and similar gifts was the "willing mind" (2 Cor. viii. 12). Under the law of Moses much was left to spontaneity (cf. Exod. xxxv. 5; Levit. i. 3, &c.), how much more under the law of Christ (Matt. x. 8; 2 Cor. ix. 7). The absence of willinghood may change the fine gold into base metal in the sight of God.

II. 1. The uniformity of the gifts might possibly have been the result of fashion; Nahshon, of the tribe of Judah, setting the fashion, and the other princes following it. The "fashion" of generous giving may well be set and followed, that the

illiberal may be shamed out of their mean devices. But, 2. The uniformity here was probably the result of previous arrangement, and the sign of an honourable emulation. This God approves (Heb. x. 24), and St. Paul seeks to employ (2 Cor. viii. 1—7; ix. 1—5). With this object public benefactions (subscription-lists, &c.) are acceptable to God if the spirit of the precept (Matt. vi. 3, 4) is not violated. The details here published for posterity remind us that every particular of our gifts and services is recorded before God. *E. g.* a coin and its value, absolute and relative (Mark xii. 41—44). A jewel, a family heirloom, and how much it *cost* to give it up (2 Sam. xxiv. 15). 3. The uniformity was a sign that each tribe had an equal share in the altar and its blessings; even as different families, races, and individuals, have in the world-wide redemption of Christ (Rom. x. 11—13).—P.

Ver. 16.—*The universality of the sin offering.* The sin offering was one of the expiatory sacrifices of the law. We meet with it so often and under such varied circumstances that it bears a striking testimony (1) to the universality of sin, and (2) to the need of an absolute, world-wide, everlasting atonement. Classifying the references to the sin offering, we find various illustrations of this truth, fruitful of application to our need of the great offering for sin at all times, and under the manifold circumstances of private and public life. The sin offering was required, and presented—1. From one end of the year to the other, on every return of the new moon (ch. xxviii. 15). 2. On feasts as well as fasts; at the feasts of Pentecost, trumpets, and tabernacles (Levit. xxiii. 19; ch. xxix. 5, 16), as well as on the day of atonement (Levit. xvi.). 3. In connection with voluntary dedication, whether of gifts (ch. vii. 16), or of personal consecration, as of the Nazarite (ch. vi. 14). 4. At the consecration to sacred offices, as *e. g.* Aaron (Exod. xxix. 14), or the Levites (ch. viii. 5—12). 5. At the consecration of sacred things, *e. g.* the altar of incense (Exod. xxx. 10). A sin offering was presented every year for the sanctuary (Levit. xvi. 15, 16). 6. For sins of all classes of men; *e. g.* a priest, the whole congregation, a ruler, "one of the common people" (Levit. iv.). In these offerings there were gradations, according to position and privilege, or according to means (Levit. v. 6, 7). 7. For purification from unavoidable defilement, whether of leprosy (Levit. xiv. 22) or childbirth (Levit. xii. 6—8). 8. These offerings were for sins of omission or of ignorance, but not for presumptuous sins (Levit. v.; ch. xv. 22—31; Heb. x. 26, 27).—P.

Ver. 89.—*Intercourse with God.* The position of this verse, after vers. 1—88, is significant. But the words refer not to a single occasion, but to a continued privilege. The promise (Exod. xxv. 17—22) is now fulfilled, and Moses, as mediator, enjoys exceptional privileges even beyond the high priest, his brother (cf. Levit. xvi. 2 with text, and ch. xii. 6—8). We are reminded of a truth respecting all times of intercourse with God in prayer. When we speak to God, we ought to expect God to speak to us.

I. THE SOUL INQUIRING. Our privilege (Heb. x. 19—22) greater than that of Moses. Every place may be as "a tabernacle" (Gen. xxviii. 17; John iv. 23). Yet good to have some special place, consecrated by hallowed associations (Illus. 2 Sam. vii. 18; Dan. vi. 10; Matt. vi. 6; Acts i. 13). Then we go to "speak with" God, words which imply holy boldness and confidence. As Moses brought to God the burdens of his office and his own temptations and sins, so may we (cf. Ps. xxvii. 5; lxxiii. 16, 17; lxxvii. 1; Heb. iv. 16; James iv. 8).

II. GOD RESPONDING. "Then," &c.—perhaps sometimes even before Moses began to speak. So at times Isa. lxv. 24 fulfilled. See Esther v. 3. If we hear no voice from God at the first moment of approaching him, we ought not to be satisfied unless, while we are speaking to God, God speaks to us (Ps. xxviii. 1; xxxv. 3; cxliii. 7, 8). The response we desire and receive will be from the same spot as Moses' answer "from off the mercy-seat." To sinners, God in nature keeps silence: God on the throne of judgment is "a consuming fire;" God on the mercy-seat is "God in Christ," &c. (2 Cor. v. 19). Such manifestations and voices of God are earnests of further answers, if not immediate, yet certain (*e. g.* Matt. vii. 7; xxvi. 38 -44; Acts x. 3—6; 2 Cor. xii. 8—10).—P.

Vers. 1—9.—*The waggons for the Levites.* This chapter describes two sets of gifts, one of waggons to help the Levites in transporting the tabernacle, the other for the dedication at the anointing of the altar. The first gift, when we look into it, is seen to be peculiarly beautiful and significant.

I. IT WAS VOLUNTARY. Jehovah had made no provision that these wagons should be got. The Levites had the bearing of the tabernacle assigned them, and there was nothing to show but they must use their own backs and hands for the purpose. What was essential had been pointed out. But this did not prevent voluntary additions where such did not contradict commands already given. There were men enough—at least, so it would seem—among the Gershonites and Merarites to have borne the heavy furniture. *God had not laid on them a work beyond their skill and strength.* We may conclude, therefore, that the gift of the waggons was an act of pure good will from these princes to the Levites. It was a fresh bond in the unity of the nation.

II. IT WAS SUITABLE. Many gifts of good will are mere ornaments. Sometimes they are white elephants. It is a great deal when a gift shows both a loving heart and a sound judgment. These wagons and oxen were just the thing to help. Probably there had been careful estimates, so as to secure a sufficient number. These waggons were well used (see ch. xxxiii.).

III. IT WAS A UNITED GIFT. Something to express the interest of all Israel in the Levites. The whole nation, in an indirect yet real way, had its part in the service of the tabernacle. It is a good thing to have many joined in a good work. It is better to have a hundred people interested in a hundred good institutions to the extent of a pound a piece, than one man in one institution to the extent of a hundred pounds. God sends down his clouds in the wide-scattering, tiny drops of rain.

IV. IT WAS DULY PROPORTIONATE. Each tribe had its share in the gift and its share in the credit. It was such a kind of gift that each tribe might reasonably give an equal share. It was the gift of all and the gift of each. The niggardliness of the individual should not be hidden away in the munificence of the community.

V. IT WAS ACCEPTED OF GOD. A contrast with the way in which he treated the rashness and presumption of Nadab and Abihu. God is glad to have us lighten burdens and help one another, when it does not lead to a mean shirking of personal duties. It was right for these princes to take care that the strength of the bearers of burdens should not be decayed (Neh. iv. 10). We see moreover a certain honour put upon the lower creation; it was an honour to be used for sacrifice, an honour to bear the tabernacle furniture.

VI. When accepted, THE GIFT WAS PROPORTIONED BY GOD. The *princes* gave, but *God* arranged. It was not fit that brute beasts should carry the vessels of the sanctuary, therefore the Kohathites could not avail themselves of the waggons. The Merarites, we may presume, had more to bear than the Gershonites, and they had more in the way of help. If even among these minute specifications of God's commands to Moses there was this room for voluntary gifts, how much more under the gospel. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, a great deal more liberty in giving than most believers avail themselves of.—Y.

Ver. 13.—*The shekel of the sanctuary.* Mentioned several times in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Was there a different standard for the sanctuary from that used in ordinary trade? or was the sanctuary shekel the standard to which all were supposed to conform? The very uncertainty teaches a lesson. One cannot err in being on the right side and taking the sanctuary shekel as a standard. The mention of this weight may be taken to illustrate the following line of thought. *The fixed standard of God as contrasted with the fluctuating standards of men.* We should have a fixed standard—

I. IN DEALING WITH GOD. His claims are first. He took the first born and the first fruit. The great exactness that was required in all offerings as to quality and quantity. These sacrifices, perfect after their fashion, were only valuable as symbolising the entire consecration and genuine penitence of those who brought them. *Worship* must be according to the shekel of the sanctuary. We must have a full sense of the reality of his existence, and adequate conceptions of all that belongs to

his glory and sovereignty over creation. Also correct notions of *ourselves as worshippers*. Not with the humility of sinless angels who veil their faces, but as the polluted children of men, with their hands on their mouths, and their mouths in the dust. Our praise must be especially for his love, wisdom, and power in our redemption. *Our expectations from God* must be according to the shekel of the sanctuary. We must not lust for the comforts of Egypt. We must have expectations that correspond with the greatness of our redemption. Our Father in heaven treats us to an exhibition of the good and perfect gifts—be ours the desire for them. To look for temporal comforts is to look for trifles, things not promised, things that come without prayer and seeking, if we would only look for such things as God would have us seek. *Ask* for God's Spirit—you are then supplicating according to the shekel of the sanctuary. *Seek* for the kingdom of God and his righteousness—you are then seeking according to the shekel of the sanctuary. The sanctuary measure of expectation is in the Lord's prayer. *The daily conduct of life* must be according to the shekel of the sanctuary. Everything in which our voluntary powers are concerned should be done as for God. The world is hard to please, but even when it is pleased, it is with a low standard. We are careful when the eyes of men are upon us, for that means *reputation*; let us be careful also when no human eye can see, for that means *character*. Each daily presentation of the living sacrifice should make that sacrifice holier, more acceptable to God.

II. IN DEALING WITH MEN. The Israelites were to do no unrighteousness in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. They were not to have divers weights and measures, great and small. Solomon tells us all the weights of the bag are the Lord's work. Amos spoke of the wickedness of the people who waited for the Sabbath to be gone that they might sell their corn, making the ephah small and the shekel great. The Almighty is just as particular about our work as our worship. Trade customs are no excuse in his sight. The eye that never misses anything or mistakes anything is on the weights and measures of all dishonest traffickers. God is just as angry when a man defrauds his neighbour as when he breaks the Sabbath. How many have been hindered in their religion, lost their peace of mind, and finally backslidden from the ways of God, because all was not right in their daily business. *Remember also all the other relations.* Commercial relations only a small part of human intercourse. Husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours, rulers and subjects, debtor and creditor, rich and poor, well and sick, young and old, believer and unbeliever: the shekel of the sanctuary has its place in all such intercourse. We need then to live in continual watchfulness and prayer, to have everything agreeable to this standard. One set of principles we should have, and one only, got from the teaching and example of our Divine Master. We must deal with one another as God has dealt with us, he who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to redeem it. The actions of the Almighty himself are weighed according to the shekel of the sanctuary.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS (vers. 1—4). Ver. 1.—**The Lord spake unto Moses.** It does not appear when. The attempt of modern commentators to find a real connection between this section and the offering of the princes or the consecration of the Levites is simply futile. Such connection may be imagined, but the same ingenuity would obviously be equally successful if this section had been inserted in any other place from Exod. xxxvii. to the end of this book. The more probable explanation will be given below.

Ver. 2.—**When thou lightest the lamps.** The command to light the lamps had been given generally ("they shall light the lamps thereof") in Exod. xxv. 37, and the care of them had been specially confided to Aaron and his sons ("from evening to morning") in Exod. xxvii. 21. The actual lighting of the lamps for the first time by Moses is recorded in Exod. xl. 25. In the face of these passages it is incredible that the lamps had not been regularly lighted by Aaron for more than a month before the offering of the princes. **The seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.** It is somewhat uncertain what this expression, here

repeated from Exod. xxv. 37, means. The Targums give no explanation of it; the Septuagint merely renders verbally, κατὰ πρόσωπον τῆς λυχνίας φωτιοῦσιν; the Jewish expositors seem to have thought that the light was to be thrown inward towards the central shaft; most modern commentators, with more probability, understand it to mean that the lamps were to be so placed as to throw their light across the tabernacle towards the north side.

Ver. 4.—**And this work of the candlestick.** For the meaning of the details here given see Exod. xxv. 31, *sq.* **According unto the pattern which the Lord had shewed Moses,**—viz., in the mount (see Exod. xxv. 40)—**so he made the candlestick.** This has been recorded in Exod. xxxvii. 17. The repetition of the statement in this place seems to be conclusive that these verses are out of their historical position, and that their insertion here is due to some fact connected with the original records with which we are not acquainted. It may be simply this, that these verses originally followed verse 89 of the previous chapter, and followed it still when it was inserted, for reasons already suggested, after the narrative of the offerings of the princes. Why, or how, such an admission should discredit the sacred narrative or imperil the truth of its inspiration it would be hard to say. The only thing really likely to imperil the sacred narrative is to persistently deny the obvious literary conclusions which arise from an honest consideration of the text.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The sacred lamps.* In this section we have, spiritually, the Divine concern that the light of revelation should be made to shine out and to illumine the whole Church of God by the ministers of his word. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE REPETITION HERE OF WHAT HAD BEEN SUFFICIENTLY DECLARED BEFORE SHOWS THE DIVINE CONCERN ON THE SUBJECT. Even so there is nothing which more concerns God than that the light of his revelation in Christ should be made to shine abroad strong and clear (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15; 1 Cor. ix. 16; 2 Cor. iv. 4—7).

II. THAT THE LAMPS WERE TO BE SO ARRANGED AS THAT THEIR LIGHT SHOULD BE THROWN RIGHT ACROSS THE HOLY PLACE, AND FALL UPON THE TABLE WITH ITS LOAVES. Even so the light of the gospel—without which the Church were in total darkness, as the holy place without the candelabrum—is to be so shed abroad as that it illumine the whole breadth of the Church, and fall especially upon the faithful, represented by the loaves of remembrance (John viii. 12; Acts xiii. 47; Eph. v. 14; 2 Pet. i. 19).

III. THAT AARON DID SO, AS COMMANDED, AND THE LAMPS DID SO SHINE. Even so the light of revelation has never ceased to shine out in the Church, and to illumine the faithful—even if not always very brightly—amidst all the changes of time, and the commotions of the world.

IV. THAT IT IS REPEATED HERE (AS IF VERY IMPORTANT) THAT THE CANDELABRUM WAS WHOLLY OF BEATEN WORK, AND WAS MADE AFTER THE PATTERN IN THE MOUNT. As made of beaten work, it was of human art and much labour; as made after the pattern in the Mount, it was Divine in conception, and that even in detail. Exactly so is the Divine revelation which is the light of the Church on earth: in its outward presentation to the senses and the understanding of men it is beholden to human labour and elaboration; but in its essence, its "idea," it is Divine, proceeding from the mind of God.

V. THAT IT IS SPECIALLY RECORDED THAT IT WAS ALL OF GOLD FROM THE CENTRAL SHAFT TO THE ORNAMENTAL FLOWERS. Even so the revelation of God, which giveth light (Ps. cxix. 105), is altogether pure and precious from the main stem of sacred history even to the lightest flowers of sacred poetry.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The lamps of the sanctuary.* This passage is to be considered in connection with Rev. i. 9—20. Moses had revelations in Sinai even as John had in Patmos. Matt. v. 14—16 will serve for a link to connect the two passages.

I. THERE WAS A TIME TO LIGHT THE LAMPS. "When thou lightest the lamps." *Dressing* them was morning work: they were then ready for Aaron to light "at even"

(Exod. xxx. 7, 8). The light was symbolic only when it was clearly useful. By day no light was needed, but it was fitting that at night the holy place of him who is light and in whom is no darkness at all, should be well illuminated. Seven is said to be a number of perfection; if we take it so seven lamps would denote perfect illumination. Similarly the Churches of Christ are to be as lamps in a darkened world, that by their light the things of God may be discerned. The words to the seven Churches are thus words to every Church, admonishing it to tend and replenish the lamp that has been lighted at even.

II. THE LAMPS WERE TO BE LIGHTED OVER AGAINST THE CANDLESTICK. This, taken together with the reference in ver. 4 to the construction of the candlestick, seems to indicate that the candlestick with its richness and beauty was to be revealed by the lamps. Bezaleel and Aholiab had been specially endowed to make this and like elaborate work (Exod. xxxv. 30—35; xxxvii. 17—24). If the Churches then are as the lamps, we may take the candlestick to signify the doctrines, the promises, the duties, the revelations to be found in the word of God. Law and gospel are intermingled by prophet and apostle in a splendour and richness of which Bezaleel's work was a feeble type. The candlestick supports the lamps, which in turn reveal the candlestick. The truths of God's word are in charge of his Churches. They rest upon that word, and their lives, conspicuous for abiding purity and brightness, must recommend the word. The lamps must reveal that the candlestick holds them, and it must be made obvious that the candlestick is for this purpose.

III. IT WAS AARON WHO LIGHTED THESE LAMPS, and so it is from Christ the true Aaron that every Church gets its light. We cannot recommend God's word by anything save the holy, beautiful, benign life which his Son, by the Spirit, can create within us. Then, and only then, will our light so shine that men will glorify our Father who is in heaven.

IV. THE LAMPS REVEALED THE GLORY OF AARON'S OWN VESTURE—those holy garments which were for glory and beauty. Read carefully Exod. xxviii., and then consider that Aaron arrayed in all these splendours was the type of the true Intercessor afterwards to come. That is an unworthy Church which does not reveal much of Christ; which does not, by the shining of its life, attract attention more and more to the glories of his person. We cannot glorify our Father in heaven, unless by glorifying the Son whom he has sent.

Lessons:—1. That which is useful may also be beautiful, and in its use its beauty will be revealed. 2. The candlestick was something permanent, made of gold, and not needing renewal. We have no occasion for a new, an altered, or an increased gospel; all required of us is to show it forth, by daily replenishings from the beaten oil of the sanctuary.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE HALLOWING OF THE LEVITES (vers. 5—23). Ver. 5.—**The Lord spake unto Moses.** At some time subsequent to the command given in ch. iii. 6—13, and no doubt before the passover.

Ver. 6.—**And cleanse them.** Before they actually entered upon their new duties they were to be solemnly hallowed. This hallowing, however, is not called קִדֵּשׁ, as is that of the priests (Exod. xxix. 1), but טָהֵר, cleansing. There was in their case no ceremonial washing, no vesting in sacred garments, no anointing with holy oil, or sprinkling with the blood of sacrifices. The Levites, in fact, remained simply representatives of the congregation, whereas the priests were representatives also of Christ.

Ver. 7.—**Sprinkle water of purifying upon them.** Rather, "water of sin," so called because it had to do with the removal of sin, just as "water of separation" (ch. xix. 9, 13) was that which delivered from the legal state of separation. It is not likely to have been prepared in the same manner as this latter (ch. xix. 9), both because of the great difference between the two cases, and because the ordinance of the red heifer belonged to a later period. Nor is it likely to have resembled that used for cleansing the leper, or the water of jealousy. But it is rash to conclude that, because we do not read any special directions for its preparation, it must, therefore, have been nothing but water from the laver which stood in the outer court. *That* water appears, indeed, to be called "holy water" in ch. v. 17, which is intelligible enough; but no probable reason

can be shown why it should be called "sin water;" it would seem as reasonable to call the water which our Lord turned into wine "sin water," because it stood there "for the purifying of the Jews." It is better to say that we do not know, because it is not recorded, how this water was prepared, or how it corresponded to its name. The Levites who were to be sprinkled would seem to have included all the males, some twenty thousand in number; because it was *all* the males, and not only those between thirty and fifty, who were to be dedicated in place of the first-born. In any case it was, of course, impossible that Moses could have sprinkled them individually (see below on ver. 11). **Let them shave all their flesh.** Literally, "let them cause the razor to pass over their whole body." Some distinguish between עָבַר תַּעַר here and גָּלָה in Levit. xiv. 8, 9, as though the latter meant a much more complete shaving off of the hair than the former; but this difference is doubtful; the fact that the whole body as well as the head was to be shaved implies that it was more than a mere cutting short of the hair. **Let them wash their clothes.** This was constantly enjoined on all the faithful as a preparation for any special religious service (see on Exod. xix. 10). **And so make themselves clean.** The shaving and washing had, no doubt, a symbolic significance, but their primary object was simply and obviously personal cleanliness; it is the hair and the clothes that chiefly harbour impurities, especially in a hot climate.

Ver. 8.—**Another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering.** The ordinary sin offering was a shaggy one of the goats (see on ch. vii. 16); but a bullock had been prescribed for the sin of the high priest, and for the sin of the congregation, in certain circumstances, and the analogy is followed here. It might seem as if the larger animal were meant to distinguish aggregate or collective guilt (see on Levit. iv. 3); but the scape-goat offered for the sin of the whole people makes against such a supposition.

Ver. 10.—**Before the Lord.** As in ch. v. 16, either near the brazen altar, or more probably before the entrance of the tabernacle. **And the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites.** Presumably by means of their representatives, probably the tribe princes. This laying on of hands signified that the obligation to assist personally in the service of the sanctuary was transferred from the whole congregation to the Levites.

Ver. 11.—**And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering.** Rather, "Aaron shall wave" them "for a wave offering" (Hebrew, *nuph;* see Exod. xxix. 24); and so in vers. 13, 15, and 21. This injunction seems conclusive that the whole ceremonial was to be symbolically performed, for the Levites could not possibly be waved in any literal sense. Some have supposed that they were marched up and down before the altar, forgetting that the court would scarcely afford standing room for 1000 people, while the Levites between thirty and fifty numbered more than 8000. It is certain that the Levites could only be brought before the Lord, could only be waved (howsoever that was done), could only lay their hands upon the bullocks, by representation. If we suppose, *e. g.*, that a hundred men of position and command among them entered the court as representatives of the tribe, then we can understand how the ceremonial here commanded might have been effectively carried out. **That they may execute the service of the Lord.** Literally, "that they may be to execute the service of the Lord." Their being waved made them over in a figure to the Lord to be wholly his, and to live only for his service, and at his command. But just as wave offerings were assigned by Divine permission to the use of the priests, so were the Levites given to Aaron and his sons for ever.

Ver. 12.—**Shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks.** In token that they constituted these victims the ritual representatives and embodiments, the one of their sin, to be consumed and done away as by fire, the other of their life and strength, to be wholly offered unto God and accepted as by fire.

Ver. 13.—**And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron.** This is not an additional command, but repeats in a slightly different form the previous orders. A similar repetition occurs in ver. 15 *b*.

Ver. 16.—**For they are wholly given unto me.** See ch. iii. 5—13, the substance of which is emphatically repeated here.

Ver. 19 *b*.—**To make an atonement for the children of Israel.** This is a remarkable expression, and throws light upon the nature of atonement. It is usually confined to purely sacerdotal ministrations, but it clearly has a somewhat different scope here. The idea that the Levites "made an atonement" by assisting the priests in the subordinate details of sacrifice hardly needs refutation: as well might the Gibeonites be said to "make an atonement" because they supplied the altar fire with wood. The real parallel to this is to be found in the case of Phinehas, of whom God testified that "he hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel," and "made an atonement for the children of Israel" (ch. xxv. 11, 13). It is evident that Phinehas turned away the wrath of God not by offering any sacrifices, but by making the sin which aroused that wrath to cease: he made an atonement for the people by discharging for them that holy and bounden

duty (of putting away sin) which the rest of them failed to perform. Similarly the Levites made an atonement not by offering sacrifice (which they could no more do than the children of Judah), but by rendering unto God those personal duties of attendance and service in his courts which *all* the people ought to have rendered had they only been fit. **That there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary.** See ch. i. 53. The children of Israel were in this strait. As "an holy nation," they were all bound, and their first-born as redeemed from the destroyer were specially bound, to render certain religious duties to God. But if they had attempted to render them they would have erred through ignorance and foolishness, and so have incurred Divine wrath and punishment, when they came nigh unto the sanctuary. From this strait the substitution of the Levites delivered them.

Ver. 21.—**Were purified**, or "purified themselves." It refers not to the ceremonial sprinkling, but to the personal preparation prescribed.

Ver. 22.—**In the tabernacle of the congregation.** This can only mean that they went in after the holy things had been packed up in order to take the fabric to pieces; no one but the priests went into the tabernacle for any other purpose, or at any other time.

Ver. 24.—**From twenty and five years old and upward.** A short time before the minimum age had been fixed at thirty (ch. iv. 3). That direction, however, concerned the transport of the tabernacle and its belongings; this was a permanent regulation designed for the ordinary labours of the sanctuary at a time when the Levites would be scattered throughout their cities, and could only serve by courses. For the latter purpose many more would be required; and indeed they were found insufficient as it was in the latter days of David, when the wealth and devotion of the kingdom were fast increasing (see on 1 Chron. xxiii. 24—27). **To wait upon the service.** Literally, "to war the warfare;" the idea of the *militia sacra* is kept up.

Ver. 26.—**Shall minister . . . to keep the charge, and shall do no service.** The word "charge" (Hebrew, *mishmereth*) seems to signify the care of the furniture and belongings of the tabernacle, while "service" means the laborious work of transport, or of preparing sacrifice. The duties of the Levite over fifty were in fact honorary, given to him probably for his own sake, that he might have some place and post in the house of God. This careful provision for those who should attain the age of fifty shows that the commandment was designed for the promised land rather than for the wilderness.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 5—23.—*The dedication of the Levites.* In this section we have the due preparation of those who are specially devoted to the service of God. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT BEFORE THEY COULD SERVE THEY MUST BE CLEANSED. Even so all that would do God service, or be useful to others in religious concerns, must first themselves be cleansed; because all that is human is unclean (Job xv. 14), and nothing that is unclean can do God service, for he requireth holiness in his servants (Prov. xx. 9; Ps. v. 5; Isa. lii. 11; Hab. i. 13; Matt. v. 48; xxii. 12).

II. THAT THIS CLEANSING WAS TWOFOLD, PARTLY WROUGHT UPON THEM, PARTLY WROUGHT BY THEM. Even so the cleansing which prepares for the service of God, and for his nearer presence, is twofold; partly it is done for us by the Mediator, partly by us through our own efforts (Ps. li. 7; 2 Cor. vii. 1).

III. THAT THE CLEANSING A PARTE DEI WAS BY SPRINKLING OF SIN WATER, THE EXACT NATURE OF WHICH IS DISPUTED. Even so every one that would belong to the kingdom of God must receive that washing of water and of the Holy Spirit, which is in its nature mysterious, and in definition controverted (Ezek. xxxvi. 25; John iii. 5; Acts xxii. 16; Heb. x. 22).

IV. THAT THE CLEANSING A PARTE SUA WAS BY SEDULOUSLY GETTING RID OF ANY POSSIBLE IMPURITY WHICH MIGHT ADHERE FROM WITHOUT. Even so he who would truly serve God must be not only careful, but conscious, and according to the ordinary standard extreme, to detach and remove from himself all those impurities of common life which so easily cling to us; to reform those private, social, and domestic habits, which sit as closely to us as our clothes, which seem as much a part of us as our hair, and which, as it were, absorb and retain the inherent sinfulness of our nature (1 John iii. 3; 2 Pet. iii. 14; James i. 21; iv. 8).

V. THAT FOR THE LEVITES WERE OFFERED FIRST A SIN OFFERING, AND A BURNT

OFFERING, FOR AN ATONEMENT. Even so no service, however able and laborious, is acceptable unto God except it have been sanctified through the sacrifice and self-sacrifice of Christ (Heb. x. 10).

VI. THAT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL LAID THEIR HANDS UPON THE LEVITES WHEN THEY WERE DEVOTED. Even so whatever labour be undertaken for the body of Christ, should receive recognition and sympathy from all members of the body, for all are concerned (1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16; Acts xiii. 3; xiv. 26; 1 Cor. xii. 26).

VII. THAT THE LEVITES WERE "WAVED." Even so all who would labour in holy things must present themselves as a living sacrifice to God, to be wholly his and no longer *suæ potestatis*. Those who do religious work, *because* they like it themselves, "have their reward;" but where the Pharisees had it, in this world only (Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 20; Gal. ii. 20).

VIII. THAT ONLY AFTER THEIR CLEANSING AND WAVING COULD THEY ENTER IN TO WAR THE WARFARE OF THE TABERNACLE. Even so, none can do real service to God unless they are wholly converted and have given themselves to him (Luke xxii. 32 *b.*; Acts viii. 21; James i. 8; and cf. Judges vii. 4, 7).

IX. THAT AFTER THE FIFTIETH YEAR THEY WERE RELEASED FROM DOING SERVICE, BUT WERE STILL PERMITTED TO KEEP THE CHARGE. Even so it is part of the goodness of God that no one should be held to do laborious work in the Church when he is old; but also part of his goodness that he should still keep such charge as is fitted to his years.

Note, *that the Levites are said to have made an atonement for the children of Israel.*—1. By taking upon themselves, in their separated but representative character, those religious obligations of the congregation (especially of the first-born) which they dared not attempt. 2. By performing such obligations rightly, which those could not have done. There is none of us that can do this, because we cannot even do our own duty, far less another's (Ps. xlix. 7; Luke xvii. 10; Gal. vi. 5). Wherefore this applies only unto Christ, by whom we have received the atonement (Rom. v. 11), and throws an important light upon that atonement. Consider, therefore—1. Christ hath "made atonement" for us, as having undertaken for us those duties of a human life and ministry wholly and perfectly devoted and consecrated to the Father, which we for our unworthiness durst not even have attempted (Luke ii. 49; John iv. 34; vi. 38; Heb. x. 5—9; ix. 14). 2. Christ hath "made atonement" for us, as having lived that perfect life, and rendered that perfect ministry, which we never could have lived or rendered, and therefore never could have pleased God, nor satisfied his just and necessary requirements (Matt. iii. 17; xii. 18; xvii. 5; John xvii. 4; xix. 30; James iii. 2). 3. Christ hath "made atonement" for us, as having thus pleased God, as man, and as our separated and accepted representative, "the Son of man"—"the second man." 4. Christ hath saved us thereby from the sorrow which even in heaven itself (could we have got there) our want of will and want of power to serve God acceptably would have brought upon us (Ephes. i. 6), having appeared in our behalf in the presence of God with the offering of a perfect human life.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 14.—*The separation of the Levites; or an ordination service in the wilderness.* "Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine." There was a threefold reason why the Levites were separated from the rest of the nation and wholly dedicated to the Lord's service. In the first place, they were to stand instead of the first-born, whom the Lord had specially claimed for himself (vers. 16—18). It was judged expedient that to the service of the sanctuary one whole tribe should be dedicated, rather than individuals out of all the tribes. Secondly, the due serving of the tabernacle being much too burdensome for the single family of Aaron, their brethren of the tribe of Levi were appointed to help them. But there was a third and deeper reason. All the chosen people are the Lord's, and he claims their service. But all cannot, in person, serve him in the way of keeping the charge of the sanctuary. Some of them must be separated to this ministry. Official service is necessary under the gospel. Much more was it necessary

under the law. Hence the separation of the Levites. When the time came for the Levites to enter on duty, they were set apart in a service, not so solemn indeed as the service on the occasion of Aaron's consecration, nevertheless highly impressive, and fitted to suggest many a lesson worthy to be laid to heart by us on similar occasions.

I. Let us begin by taking A GENERAL VIEW OF THIS ORDINATION SERVICE. The outstanding features were these. It took place at the door of the tabernacle and in presence of the whole congregation. The Levites being marched in, the congregation put their hands on them, *q. d.*: "We are thine, O Lord. Thou hast redeemed us and brought us out for thyself, to be to thee a kingdom and priests. With respect to the charge of this thy sanctuary, thou hast made choice of these our brethren to minister to thee in our stead. We freely give them up to thee, and renounce all the rightful claim we should otherwise have had upon their service in peace and war." This done, Aaron "offered" the Levites to the Lord as a "wave offering." Finally, Aaron in turn accepted the Levites as the Lord's gift to him, to aid him in the tabernacle. Who can fail to see the significance of all this? Besides suggesting (1) how fit it is that men who are entering on a life of official service in the Church should be solemnly set apart to their office and charge, it plainly teaches (2) that ordination to sacred office should take place in the face of the congregation. It ought not to be performed in a corner. The people are vitally interested, and have a right to be present. This is the rule, I believe, in all evangelical Churches. (3) When a man has been set apart to sacred service, at the instance of his brethren and in their presence, a relation is formed between him and them which involves reciprocal obligation. He is to lay out his strength in their service; and they are to charge themselves with his maintenance while he does so. The people of Israel having laid their hands on the Levites, were thenceforward to communicate with them in all good things (see Deut. xii. 19; xiv. 27). When Dr. Carey consented to go down into the pit of heathendom, it was only fair and just that the brethren at whose instance he went should "hold the rope," as he stipulated that they should.

II. BESIDES THESE MORE CATHOLIC AND SPIRITUAL SERVICES, THE LEVITES' ORDINATION WAS ACCOMPANIED WITH OTHERS PURELY CEREMONIAL. These were of three kinds. 1. *Lustral* (ver. 7). First, Aaron sprinkled the Levites with water of purifying—either that described ch. xix., or, more likely, spring-water, such as was used in the laver. Then the Levites, on their part, shaved off their hair and washed their clothes, *q. d.*: "Lord, we are not meet for thy house and service. Holiness becometh thine house. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil. And we are unclean. But thou canst make us clean. As thou hast sprinkled our persons with clean water, so do thou remove all filthiness from our hearts. And we, for our parts, are resolved by thy grace to put away the evils of our past lives and to follow after holiness henceforward." 2. *Expiatory* (vers. 8, 12). The Levites were to bring a sin offering for atonement; laying their hands upon it with confession of sin (see Levit. iv.). They were thus reminded of their guilt as well as impurity, and were encouraged to believe that there is forgiveness with God, on the ground of which they might hope to be accepted in their persons and service. 3. *Dedicatory.* The sin offering was to be followed by a burnt offering to signify that the Levites presented their whole persons to the Lord, a living sacrifice, to be employed in his service all their days. Blessed be God, we are rid of these burdensome and carnal rites. Care must be taken not to let anything like them creep again into the sanctuary. But the ideas they set forth—the great realities of purification, and pardon, and dedication—ought to be often present to our minds and hearts in the house of God.—B.

Vers. 12, and 19.—*An offering to God, needing for itself an atonement.* The tribe of Levi was set apart for God's service in the tabernacle in place of all the firstborn. Before they could enter on that service they needed a special call and consecration, including atoning sacrifices (vers. 5—12). Thus we are reminded of the obvious truth that, without a sacrifice for us, we can never ourselves be acceptable sacrifices to God. Illustrate from the position of Rom. xii. 1 in the Epistle, coming after the exposition of the mercies of God, including the atonement of Christ (Rom. iii.). But in ver. 19 the services of the Levites (or the Levites themselves) are said to be an atonement. The Levites were regarded as a vicarious offering to God (vers.

10, 11). In the wider sense of the word atonement, they are said to make (or to be) an atonement. ("The priests made an atonement by sacrifice; the Levites by attendance."—M. Henry.) Yet even this vicarious offering needs to be atoned for (ver. 12). Hence the lesson, that every human *saint* (separated to God, ver. 14), *service*, or *sacrifice* needs an atonement. This is needed for—1. All God's chosen servants, "a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." (Illustrate from 1 John i. 7—10; ii. 1, 2, and from John xiii. 10.) 2. All God's selected ministers (pastors, missionaries, &c.). Illustrate from Tertullian's request to his brethren: "Ye have sought, and ye have found; ye have knocked, and it is opened to you. Thus much I ask, that when you seek again, you remember me, Tertullian, a sinner;" or from W. Carey the missionary's selected epitaph—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall."

3. All the most sacred services of the most saintly men. Their prayers need to be prayed for; their tears to be washed from impurity; their gifts of gold to be refined from the dross of earthly motives. Though all Christians are priests unto God, their most solemn priestly acts need the blood of Christ to cleanse them from all sin.—P.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PASSOVER AT SINAI (vers. 1—14). Ver. 1.—**In the first month of the second year.** Before the census, and all the other events recorded in this book, except in part the offerings of the princes (see ch. vii. 1). There was, however, an obvious reason for mentioning together the two passovers, the second of which immediately preceded the departure from Sinai.

Ver. 2.—**Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season.** Septuagint, *ποιείτωσαν τὸ πάσχα*. Cf. Matt. xxvi. 18, *ποιῶ τὸ πάσχα*, and Luke xxii. 19, *τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν*. They may have been in doubt as to whether they were to keep it in the wilderness, and indeed they do not seem to have attempted to keep it again until they reached the promised land (see on Josh. v. 5, 6). The passover had indeed been made an "ordinance for ever," but only when they were come to the land which the Lord should give them (Exod. xii. 24, 25; xiii. 5). Apart, therefore, from express command, it would have been doubtful whether the feast should not at least be postponed. Inasmuch, however, as they had been detained at Sinai by Divine direction (albeit partly in consequence of their own idolatry, but for which they might already have been "at home"), it pleased God that they should not lack the blessing and support of the passover at its proper season.

Ver. 3.—**At even.** See on Exod. xii. 6. **According to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof.** This must be understood only of the essential rites and ceremonies of the passover, as mentioned below (vers. 11, 12). It is singular that no mention is made of the considerable departure which circumstances necessitated from the original institution. It was not possible, *e. g.*, to strike the blood of the lamb upon the lintel and the side-posts of the doors, because in the wilderness they had no doors. In after ages this rite (which was of the essence of the institution) was represented by the sprinkling of the blood of the lambs on the altar (2 Chron. xxx. 16), but no command is on record which expressly authorised the change. In Levit. xvii. 3—6 there is indeed a general direction, applying apparently to all domestic animals slain for food, that they be brought to the tabernacle to be slain, and that the priest sprinkle the blood upon the altar; and in Deut. xvi. 5—7 there is an order that in future times the passover was only to be slain at the place which the Lord should choose. The actual practice in later ages seems to have been founded partly upon the command in Deuteronomy, which restricted the killing of the passover to Jerusalem (not, however, to the temple), and partly on the command in Leviticus, which really applied (at any rate in the letter) to the time of wandering only. As the celebration of the paschal feast had apparently been neglected from the time of Joshua until that of the later kings (Josh. v. 10; 2 Kings xxiii. 22), they were no doubt guided in the observance of it by the analogy of other sacrifices in the absence of express commands. It would, however, be an obvious source of error to assume that the practice of the age of Josiah or Hezekiah was the practice of the earliest passovers; so far as these necessarily differed from the original institution, it is absolutely uncertain how

the difficulty was solved. Nothing perhaps better illustrates the mingled rigidity and elasticity of the Divine ordinances than the observance of the passover, in which so much of changed detail was united with so real and so unvarying a uniformity.

Ver. 5.—**And they kept the passover.** It is a question which inevitably arises here, how they obtained a sufficient number of lambs for the requirement of so many people, and how they were slain sacrificially within the appointed time. The first difficulty does not seem serious when we consider, (1) that kids were available as well as lambs (see on Exod. xii. 3); (2) that the desert tribes would have abundance of lambs and kids for sale at this season, and that the Israelites certainly had money; (3) that in view of their speedy departure they would be disposed to kill off the young of their own flocks. The second difficulty is more serious, and would be insurmountable if we had to believe that the ritual of this passover was the same which afterwards prevailed. Josephus tells us ('Bell. Jud.,' vi. 9, 3) that in his day 256,000 lambs were slain and their blood sprinkled upon the altar within the three hours "between the evenings." At that time, according to the same authority, a lamb was shared by ten, and often by as many as twenty people. The number of males who would partake of the paschal meal in the wilderness may be set down as not more than 800,000. If the women partook of it at all (which is very doubtful; cf. Exod. xii. 44, 48), they would doubtless content themselves with the scraps left by the men. Allowing twenty souls to each lamb, the number required would be not more than 40,000. It is obvious at once that the three priests could not possibly kill 40,000 lambs in three hours, much less sprinkle their blood upon the altar; indeed the same may be said for 10,000, or even 5000, especially as they could not have acquired the extreme dexterity and despatch which long practice taught to the later priests. Nor is it satisfactory to reply that the priests did the work "out of the hand of the Levites" (2 Chron. xxx. 16), (1) because this passover took place before the Levites were formally separated for the service of God and of the priests (see ch. viii. 22); (2) because the smallness of the space about the altar would not allow of many people assisting; (3) because the actual slaying and sprinkling, which was restricted to the priests (being distinctively sacrificial in nature), are the very things which we find impossible in the time. There are but two alternative conclusions, from one or other of which there is no honest escape: either (*a*) the numbers of the people are greatly exaggerated, or (*b*) the ritual of after days was not observed on this occasion. As to (*a*), see what is said on the whole question of numbers in the Introduction. As to (*b*), it must be borne in mind that no direction whatever had been given, as far as we know, either that the lambs must be slain by the priests only, or that their blood must be poured upon the altar. If the Jews were left to follow the original institution as nearly as possible, they would have killed the lambs themselves, and sprinkled the blood around the doors of their tents. It is true that according to the Levitical ritual, now recently put into use, all other animals slain in sacrifice (or indeed for food) must be slain at the tabernacle by the priest, and the blood sprinkled on the altar; and it is true that this general rule was afterwards held especially binding in the case of the passover. But there is nothing to show that it was held binding then: the passover had been ordained before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood and law of sacrifice; and it might very well have been considered that it retained its primal character unaffected by subsequent legislation, and that the priesthood of the people (in other rites transferred to Aaron and his sons) was recalled and revived in the case of this special rite. If this was the case both at this passover and at that under Joshua, it is easy enough to understand why the later practice was so entirely different; the neglect or disuse of centuries obliterated the tradition of the passover, and when it was revived by the later kings, they naturally followed the analogy of all other sacrifices, and the apparently express command of Levit. xvii. 3—6. They could not indeed obey this command in their daily life, but they could and did obey it in the striking and typical case of the paschal feast.

Ver. 6.—**There were certain men.** It has been supposed by many that these men must have been Mishael and Elizaphan, who had recently (cf. Exod. xl. 17; Levit. ix. 1; x. 4) been defiled by burying their cousins Nadab and Abihu. This, however, is based upon the assumption that the totals given in Exod. xxxviii. 26 and in ch. i. 46 are really independent, and that therefore no one belonging to any other tribe than that of Levi had died in the interval. As that assumption is untenable (see above on ch. i. 46), so this "coincidence" falls to the ground. We know indeed that Mishael and Elizaphan were defiled at this time, and we do not know that any one else was; but, on the other hand, the words "the dead body of a man" seem to point to a single corpse only. **Dead body.** Hebrew, *nephesh*, as in ch. v. 2; vi. 11, and other places. It is inexplicable how this word, which properly means "soul," should have come to be used of a corpse; perhaps it is an additional testimony to the complete absence from Jewish teaching of

any doctrine of an immortal spirit. The Septuagint uses ψύχη here.

Ver. 7.—**Wherefore are we kept back?** The direction to remove from the camp all that were defiled by the dead (ch. v. 2) had not apparently been given at this time, nor was there any express command that such should not partake of the passover, for Levit. vii. 20 may probably refer only to such uncleannesses as are mentioned in Levit. xv. 3; but that men were in fact considered as defiled by contact with the dead is clear from Levit. xxi. 1. The men, therefore, had reason for asking why they were excommunicated, and Moses for referring the matter to the Divine decision.

Ver. 10.—**If any man of you or of your posterity.** The particular case of these men is made the occasion for a general provision for all succeeding times. **Shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey.** It is somewhat strange that these two cases only were provided for: a man otherwise unclean (as, *e. g.*, in the case described Levit. xv. 13), even if actually recovered, was unable to take advantage of the little passover. Probably the real reason of it is to be found in this, that both the far journey and the burial of the dead would presumably be works of charity. **Afar off.** This word, רְחֹקָה, is one of ten in the Pentateuch distinguished in the Hebrew Bibles with *puncta extraordinaria*, for some unknown and probably trifling reasons. The Rabbins ruled that it meant a distance of fifteen miles or more from the temple at sunrise of the fourteenth of Abib.

Ver. 11.—**The fourteenth day of the second month.** The interval gave ample time to return from any ordinary journey, or to be purified from pollution of death. It was in the spirit of this command, though not in the letter of it, that Hezekiah acted (2 Chron. xxx. 2). And possibly it was in the spirit of this command that our Lord acted when he ate the passover by anticipation with his disciples twenty-four hours before the proper time—at which time he was himself to be the Lamb slain. **With unleavened bread and bitter herbs.** These and the following directions are expressly added for fear lest any should think that the little passover might be celebrated with less solemnity and with less carefulness than the great passover.

Ver. 12.—**According to all the ordinances of the passover.** The later Jews held that this passover need only be kept for one day, and that leaven need not be put away from the house. But this was a clear departure from the original rule, for it was evidently intended that it should be in all respects a true passover, and in this case six clear days were allowed for the keeping of it (see on ch. x. 11).

Ver. 13.—**But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey.** This threat was added no doubt in order to prevent men from taking advantage of the permission to keep a supplemental passover in order to suit their own convenience or interest. Only two reasons could absolve a man from the absolute necessity of keeping the passover at the due season, and these reasons must be *bonâ fide*, and not pretended. **Because he brought not the offering of the Lord.** In the original institution the paschal lamb did not appear distinctly in the character of an offering made to God, although undoubtedly it was such. It was rather the eating of the lamb that was insisted upon, as placing the partaker in communion with the God and Church of Israel, and so in a state of salvation. But after the law of sacrifices had been elaborated, then the paschal lamb, though prior to them all, naturally took its place amongst them as the greatest of them all, and as uniting in itself the special beauties of all.

Ver. 14.—**Ye shall have one ordinance.** This is repeated from Exod. xii. 49 as a further warning not to tamper more than absolute necessity required with the unity, either in time or in circumstance, of the great national rite.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The paschal feast.* In the keeping of the passover we have, under the law, what the celebrating of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is under the gospel; for it was the nature and use of *that* to show the Lord's death until he came the first time, as of *this* to show the Lord's death until he come the second time. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT IT WAS THE WILL OF GOD, SPECIALLY DECLARED, THAT ALL ISRAEL SHOULD BE PARTAKERS THEREOF ERE THEY LEFT THE HOLY MOUNT OF CONSECRATION AND PLUNGED INTO THE DESERT OF WANDERINGS. Even so it is the will of God that all his people, when they have been taught of him, should be partakers of "that one bread," and thereby be brought into closer union with one another and with him for the journey of life (John vi. 56; Acts ii. 42; 1 Cor. x. 17).

II. THAT THE ISRAELITES KEPT THAT PASSOVER UNDER DIFFICULTIES, LITTLE DREAMING THAT IT WAS TO BE THEIR LAST; for only Caleb and Joshua survived to take part

in the next. How often have faithful people made special effort to join in keeping the Christian passover, and it has proved to be their last! (Luke xxii. 15; 1 Cor. v. 7).

III. THAT THE PASSOVER WAS KEPT "ACCORDING TO ALL THE RITES OF IT," AND YET THERE WERE SOME RITES AND CEREMONIES WHICH MUST OF NECESSITY HAVE BEEN ALTERED; but this did not mar the Divinely-ordered uniformity. Even so there be things in the Christian passover which have been altered, yet if the alteration have not been wilfully nor needlessly made, it leaves the religious identity of the rite untouched.

IV. THAT THE PASSOVER WAS EATEN IN THE WILDERNESS, AS IN EGYPT BEFORE, AND IN CANAAN AFTERWARDS (Josh. v. 10), ON THE EVE OF GREAT JOURNEYS AND BATTLES. Even so is the Christian made partaker of heavenly food that he may be stronger and braver for the journey and the conflict of life (cf. 1 Kings xix. 7).

V. THAT ONE DEFILED BY THE DEAD COULD NOT JOIN IN THE PASSOVER. So he that hath suffered in soul by contact with the spiritually dead cannot be partaker of the Lord's Table until he be recovered from that contagion (cf. 1 Cor. x. 21; xi. 27—30).

VI. THAT THE UNCLEAN, AND THEY THAT WERE AFAR OFF, WERE NEVERTHELESS ADMITTED TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE PASSOVER AS SOON AS THEY WERE CLEANSED AND RETURNED. Even so none need be banished from the communion of the body of Christ because he is unclean, for time is given him to be cleansed; nor because he is afar off, for time is given him to return (Mark i. 41; Luke xv. 20; James iv. 8); only the cleansing and the returning must be in due time, and not too late (Matt. xxv. 10 *b.*; Luke xiii. 25; 2 Cor. vi. 2).

VII. THAT TWO REASONS ONLY, AND THEY OF UNAVOIDABLE NECESSITY, WOULD ABSOLVE ANY ONE FROM THE DUTY OF KEEPING THE PASSOVER WITH ALL THE PEOPLE. Even so no light excuses, but only (1) compulsory absence or (2) unworthiness to approach, will avail any one who wilfully neglects the invitation of Christ to his feast (Luke xiv. 24; xxii. 19 *b.*; 1 Cor. xi. 25 *b.*).

VIII. THAT IT WAS AGAIN AND AGAIN DECLARED THAT THERE SHOULD BE "ONE ORDINANCE" ONLY FOR ALL FROM ALL QUARTERS AS CONCERNED THE PASSOVER, for it was the ordinance of unity. Even so the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is above all things the sacrament of unity (1 Cor. x. 17), and therefore the manner of it is especially declared (1 Cor. xi. 23, and the three Gospels).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 6—14.—*A communicant in Israel, disabled by some mischance from eating the passover on the right day, may eat it a month after.* The law here laid down is supplementary to the law of the passover set forth at large in Exod. xii. The supplement, beside being of some interest in itself, is specially important on account of certain general principles relative to God's worship which come into view in it.

I. THE OCCASION WHICH LED TO THIS SUPPLEMENTARY DIRECTION. From Exod. xii. 25 and xiii. 5 it may be inferred that the passover was not intended to be statedly observed till the tribes should have received their inheritance in Canaan; and the inference is confirmed by the circumstance that there seems to have been no celebration of the passover during the thirty-eight years between the departure from Sinai and the crossing of the Jordan. For reasons not difficult to understand, the first anniversary of the night of deliverance, since it found the people still encamped at Sinai, was commanded to be observed. Hence the charge vers. 1—5. This, since it was, in some sense, the first of all the regular passovers, was ordained to be kept with great solemnity. All the greater was the chagrin felt by certain men of Israel who, on account of a mischance which had befallen them, were disabled from taking part in the general solemnity. A relative or neighbour had died on the eve of the feast. They had not shirked the duty of laying out and burying the dead. Thus they were ceremonially unclean, and might not eat the passover. It seemed hard to be debarred from the joyous rite, especially since no blame attached to themselves in the matter. Was there no remedy? They brought the matter before Moses and Aaron; Moses brought it before the Lord, with the result to be presently described.

II. THE LAW FOR THOSE DISABLED IN PROVIDENCE FROM EATING THE PASSOVER IN THE

APPOINTED SEASON (vers. 10, 11). 1. The person disabled by uncleanness at the full moon of the first month might keep the feast at the full moon of the second. This was not a perfect remedy. The passover was a national solemnity. It was a witness to the religious unity of the tribes. It was designed at once to express and to foster the communion of the whole people in the faith and worship of the God of Abraham. These very attractive aspects of the ordinance failed to come into view when the passover was observed only by a few individuals, and on another than the appointed day. However, there were other and more private aspects of the ordinance to which this did not apply, so that the permission to keep the passover in the second month was a valuable concession. 2. The concession was extended not only to persons defiled by the dead, but to all who might be defiled from any cause beyond their own control. For example, if a man happened unavoidably to be on a distant journey on the fourteenth day of the first month, he might keep the passover at the next full moon. 3. The concession was expressly extended to the foreigner as well as to the born Israelite. It ought never to be forgotten that, although the passover was so emphatically a national feast, provision was carefully made, from the first, for the admission of foreigners to it (Exod. xii. 48, 49). Let the foreigner accept circumcision, "he and all his," and he is entitled to sit down at the paschal table, as a communicant in the Hebrew Church, just as if he had been born in the land. The Old Testament Church was not a missionary Church. It was not enjoined to preach to the Gentiles and compel them to come in. But if a Gentile desired to come in, he was to be made welcome. The law before us, besides presupposing the right of the proselyte to be admitted, emphatically declares the parity of right which was to be accorded him on his admission. 4. Care was to be taken not to abuse the concession. Liberty is one thing; license is another and very different thing; yet history and daily experience bear witness that the two are apt to be confounded. Many, when they hear liberty proclaimed, think that license is to reign. See how carefully this is guarded against in the present instance. In two ways:—(1) Wilful neglect to observe the passover in its appointed season was still to be deemed presumptuous sin (ver. 13)—a warning which the habitual neglecters of the Lord's Supper would do well to lay to heart. We, as evangelical Protestants, believe that participation in the Lord's Supper is not the indispensable means of communion in the body and blood of the Lord; nevertheless, we hold that no man can habitually withdraw himself from the Lord's Supper without sin and loss. (2) The supplementary passover was not, because supplementary, to be a passover of maimed rites (vers. 11, 12). It was to be observed with all the rites ordained for the great festival of the first month. With this law compare the history of Hezekiah's passover in 2 Chron. xxx.

III. THE PRINCIPLE WHICH LIES AT THE ROOT OF THIS LAW is this, namely, that rigid exactness in points of external order ought to be waived when adherence to it would hinder the edification of souls. The same principle was laid down by our Lord in reference to the observance of the day of rest when he said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." The principle must, of course, be used with discretion. It was dutiful and expedient that the passover should be observed, not by every man when he pleased, but on the anniversary of the exodus, and by the whole congregation at once. Nevertheless, this good rule was not to defraud of the passover those disabled from keeping it on the right day. If this principle was so carefully recognised under the comparatively servile dispensation, much more ought it to prevail under the dispensation of evangelical liberty. Points of external order are not to be despised, especially when they are such as have express warrant of Holy Scripture. The wilful contempt of them may amount to presumptuous sin. Nevertheless, the edification of souls must ever be treated as the paramount consideration to which all else must yield.—*B.*

Vers. 1—14.—*The letter and the spirit of the law of the passover.* We learn from this narrative certain lessons which may illustrate the relation of the letter to the spirit of Divine precepts on other subjects beside the passover.

I. THE LETTER OF THE LAW WAS STRINGENT. The observance of the feast was binding, even under inconvenient circumstances (ver. 5), at fixed times (ver. 3), and with prescribed rites (ver. 3). No trifling allowed (ver. 13). Neglect of any one

law may be fatal (James ii. 10). Yet this stringent law could be modified. It was flexible, because God was a paternal King, and not a despotic martinet. But God alone could modify the law (ver. 8), or condone for its literal non-observance (*e. g.* 2 Chron. xxx. 15—20). Provision was made for disabilities arising from (1) uncleanness, contracted unavoidably, or in the path of duty (cf. Ps. ciii. 14); or (2) absence from home, for such journeys were not prohibited because the passover was near. To meet such cases—

II. THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW WAS BENEFICENT. Neglect was not sanctioned; *it never is.* Great care needed lest, while claiming liberty to set aside the letter of the law in favour of the spirit, we neglect the spirit also (apply, *e. g.*, to the sanctification of the Lord's day). But God provided a substitute for the literal observance (vers. 9—12).

Learn—1. The laws of Christ are not "grievous," but may not be trifled with. A difficulty in the way of observing some law may arise from *circumstances*, or *character.* Illustrate, the Lord's Supper. In the early history of some of the Polynesian missions, where no bread or "fruit of the vine" was to be had, the service was not neglected on account of these circumstances, but bread fruit and water, or other beverage, was used. If the hindrance to our observance should arise from any "uncleanness," we need not wait for a lengthened process of purification, but may apply to our cleansing High Priest at once (John xiii. 1—10). 2. Precepts that are called "positive" must not be neglected because moral precepts are observed. Illustrate from Matt. v. 23, 24 (cf. Matt. xxiii. 23; Deut. iv. 2; Ps. cxix. 128). Christ having redeemed us unto God by his blood, his law extends to every department of our life.—P.

Ver. 14.—*The beneficent aspect of the law of Moses towards foreigners.* Judaism, according to the "law given by Moses," was not the exclusive and repulsive system that many have imagined. The gate into Judaism, through circumcision, &c., may seem strait to us; but a thorough separation from the corrupt heathen world was a necessity and a blessing, just as the utter renunciation of Hinduism by breaking caste is now. Laws relating to strangers occupy no inconsiderable place in the legislation of Moses. These laws have a most beneficent aspect, which may suggest lessons regarding our duties as Christians towards aliens, whether of blood or creed. We find precepts recognising for the strangers—

I. EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW. This is taught in our text and in several other passages (Exod. xii. 49; Levit. xxiv. 22; Numb. xv. 15, 16, 29). This is especially noticeable in regard to the laws of the sabbath (Exod. xx. 10; xxiii. 12; Deut. v. 14), and of the cities of refuge (Numb. xxxv. 15). Hence the Israelites were repeatedly warned against oppressing the stranger (Exod. xxii. 21; xxiii. 9), though he might be a hired servant, at the mercy of his employer (Deut. xxiv. 14, 15), or an Egyptian (Deut. xxiii. 7). In administering these laws strict impartiality is demanded of the judges (Deut. i. 16; xxiv. 17). Such equality is recognised under the laws of Christian England, but needs to be most carefully guarded. *E. g.* in our treatment of coolies or other coloured people in our colonies, foreign sailors in our ports, &c. Oppression of strangers one great crime before the fall of the Jewish monarchy (Ezek. xxii. 7, 29). Ill-treatment of non-Christian races outside its borders one of England's national crimes (Chinese opium traffic; some of our colonial wars, &c.).

II. A CLAIM ON BENEVOLENCE. Strangers were not only guarded from oppression, but commended to the love of the Israelites. See precepts in Levit. xix. 33, 34; Deut. x. 18, 19; Levit. xxv. 35, blossoming into the beautiful flower, "Thou shalt love *thy neighbour* as thyself," which our Lord plucks from its hiding-place in Leviticus and exhibits and enforces on the whole world. Hence follow the precepts requiring that gleanings be left for the strangers (Levit. xix. 10; xxiii. 22), and that they should be allowed to share "in every good thing" God bestowed on Israel (Deut. xiv. 29; xvi. 11, 14; xxvi. 11). God be praised for all the philanthropic agencies of England on behalf of foreigners. Let us see that our personal beneficence is not limited by race or creed (Isa. lviii. 6—11, &c.).

III. INVITATIONS TO NATIONAL AND PERSONAL BLESSINGS. Gentiles were welcomed to all privileges of Judaism through conformity to its laws. They could enter into

the covenant (Deut. xxix. 10—13), offer sacrifices (Levit. **xxii. 18**), and keep the passover (Exod. xii. 43—49; Numb. ix. 14). And it was required that they be instructed in the law of God (Deut. xxxi. 10—13, read in the light of Josh. viii. 33—35). Having all these privileges, they were liable to the same punishments as the Israelites (Levit. xvii. 8, 12, 15; xxiv. 16, &c.). We need not wonder that the adhesion and conversion of strangers was anticipated (1 Kings viii. 41—43; Isa. lvi. 3, &c.). Apply to the missionary work of the Church, which can speak to strangers of "a better covenant," "Christ our passover," "grace and truth by Jesus Christ."—P.

Vers. 1—5.—*A needed reminder.* When Jehovah ordered Moses to prepare the Israelites against the visit in which he smote the firstborn, he also said the day was to be kept as a feast through all their generations by an ordinance for ever. And now it was nearly twelve months since the great deliverance by which in haste and pressure Israel departed out of Egypt. The instructions (Exod. xii.) are plain enough; but God deemed it needful, as the anniversary time drew near, to give his people a special reminder. *Why was it needed?* 1. *Because much had happened in the interval.* At the time, many of the Israelites would say, "Surely we shall never forget this wonderful and terrible night!" But since then there had been the crossing of the Red Sea, and all the impressive dealings of God with his people at Sinai. One event retreats as another comes on. Men march forward into the future, and great events are soon lost to view, even as great mountains are upon a journey. 2. *Because the trials of the wilderness made many long for the comforts of Egypt.* They soon forgot the hardships of bondage. Less than two months was enough to make them wish they had died in Egypt, by the flesh-pots, where they had bread to the full (Exod. xvi.). What then of forgetting might not happen in twelve months? Thus, by all the details of the memorial celebration, God would have them bring back to mind distinctly the extraordinary mercy of that night in which they left Egypt. 3. *Because an emphatic reminder helped to distinguish the passover from other great events.* The smiting of the firstborn was the decisive blow to Pharaoh. It liberated the Israelites from their thraldom. All previous chastisements led up to it, and the wonders of the Red Sea were the inevitable sequence. Above all, there was the great typical import of the passover. Christ our passover is slain for us (1 Cor. v. 7). What the passover was to the Israelites, the atoning death of Jesus is to us, an event which there is a solemn obligation on us to recollect and commemorate in a peculiar way. 4. *Because there was need of preparation and care in the celebration.* It was on the fourteenth day of the month at even that it was to be kept. It was in the first month of the second year that the Lord spoke to Moses. Hence we may suppose that he saw no signs of preparation, nothing to indicate that the people were being stirred by the thought of the glorious deliverance. This admonition of the Lord to Moses may be applied to such as, admitting the permanent obligation of the Lord's Supper, yet are negligent and irregular in practising the obligation. If the passover and the sprinkled blood of the lamb demanded a yearly memorial from Israel, even more does the sprinkled blood of Christ demand a regular commemoration. He seems to have provided for our naturally forgetful ways in saying, "Do this in remembrance of me."—Y.

Vers. 6—13.—*A difficulty removed.* I. THE DIFFICULTY STATED. Certain men, ceremonially unclean, could not partake of the passover (ch. v. 1—4). One ceremonial observance, therefore, might clash with another. No one could with certainty be clean at the passover time. Hence we see how all ceremonial is purely subordinate to higher considerations. If one ceremonial obligation could interfere with another, how clear that the claims of justice, mercy, and necessity, rise above ceremony altogether (Matt. xii. 1—8; xv. 1—6). The very existence of such a difficulty showed that rites and ceremonies were only for a time. The distinction of clean and unclean is gone now. There is no more uncleanness in the leper, in the mother with her new-born offspring, in the attendant on the dead. We have to guard against a deeper than ceremonial uncleanness. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (Matt. xv. 18—20; 1 Cor. xi. 28; 2 Cor. vii. 1).

II. HOW THE DIFFICULTY WAS REMOVED. Moses is consulted, and he *consults God*. The example of Moses in this matter needs our study and imitation. God will leave none of his servants in doubt if they only truly seek to him, and lean not to their own understanding. In God's answer notice—1. *His appreciation of the difficulty.* Ceremonial uncleanness was a very serious thing, as being the type of the unclean heart. To keep these men back from the passover was not the act of ecclesiastical martinets, God himself being witness. 2. *The duty that cannot be done to-day may be done to-morrow.* We should take care that what has to be deferred is only deferred. Just because the passover was too sacred to be touched by unclean hands, it was too sacred to be passed over altogether. 3. *The removal of one difficulty gives an opportunity for removing another.* Ceremonial observances were regulated with regard to the claims of ordinary life. "If a man be in a journey afar off." He did not say that every man was bound to be home that day, at whatever cost. God makes allowance for the urgency of a man's private affairs. 4. *God's consideration for these real difficulties made the observance all the more important where such difficulties did not exist.* God listens to reasons; he will see them, even when they are not expressed; but mere excuses, in which men's lips are so fruitful, he cannot tolerate. If we are prevented from joining the assembly for worship, or approaching the Lord's table, let us be quite sure that our reason is sound, based in conscience and not in self-will, not a mere pretext for indolence and unspirituality. Where the heart is right towards God, and an obedient spirit towards all his commandments, he will take every difficulty away.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE SIGNALS OF GOD (vers. 15—23). Ver. 15.—**On the day that the tabernacle was reared up.** Here we are sent back again to *the* great day of Israel's sojourn at Sinai, when God took visible possession of his dwelling in the midst of them (Exod. xl. 34). Everything after that was but preparatory to the approaching departure, and therefore is narrated not in any order of time, but either as it referred back to the first day of the first month, or forward to the twentieth day of the second month. **The cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony.** The testimony was the decalogue written on the two tables of stone, and enshrined within the ark, the moral law which lay at the heart of Judaism. The tent of the testimony was the holy of holies in which the ark dwelt (see on ch. x. 11; xviii. 2). The exact meaning of the words מִשְׁכַּן לְאֹהֶל הָעֵדֻת is disputed, or rather the significance of the לְ with which the phrase "tent of the testimony" is appended to the word "tabernacle" (dwelling). Some take it as equivalent in construction to the genitive, "the dwelling of the tent of the testimony;" in which case it would simply mean that the cloud covered the whole tabernacle, the *mishcan* which enveloped and enclosed the *ohel*, which again enshrined the ark and the testimony. Others take לְ here in the sense of "at" or "towards," and read, "covered the dwelling, towards the tent of the testimony," *i. e.* over that part of it in which the testimony was kept. Apart from the strict grammatical question, the comparison of other passages cited (especially Exod. xl. 34) seems in favour of the first interpretation, and so apparently the Septuagint and the Targums.

Ver. 16.—**So it was alway.** This supernatural phenomenon was not transitory, like the glory-cloud *within* the tabernacle (Exod. xl. 35; cf. 1 Kings viii. 10), but permanent, as long at least as the Israelites were in the wilderness.

Ver. 17.—**When the cloud was taken up.** This verse and the following to the end of the chapter are an amplification of Exod. xl. 36—38 (cf. Exod. xiii. 21, 22; Neh. ix. 12; Ps. lxxviii. 14). It would appear from Exod. xiii. 21 that there was nothing new in the fact of the cloudy fiery pillar directing the movements of the host, but only in the fact of its resting on the tabernacle when in repose. **In the place where the cloud abode,** or "came down." שָׁכַן. As the tabernacle was taken all to pieces, and its portions widely separated on the march, the cloud could not rest upon it as a signal for halting. We must probably picture to ourselves the cloud rising to some considerable height when it was "taken up," so as to be visible for a great distance, and as settling down again over the spot where the tabernacle was to be set up. In this way the signals given by the cloud would be immediately perceived by a vast multitude.

Ver. 19.—**Tarried long.** Hebrew, אָרַךְ, "to prolong," *i. c.* the resting. The Septuagint has ἐφέλκηται . . ἡμέρας πλείους.

Ver. 20.—**And so it was.** Rather, "did it happen that," יֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר, hypothetical clause introducing several other cases which actually occurred, and by which their perfect obedience was proved.

Ver. 21.—**From even unto the morning.** Allowing but a single night's rest.

Ver. 22.—**Or a year.** Rather, "days" (*yamin*): an undefined period (Gen. iv. 3; xl. 4), often equivalent to a year (Levit. xxv. 29). It is not known whether or on what occasion the Israelites actually remained in camp for a year. But it is evident that this passage must have been written after the wanderings were over, because it is a kind of retrospect of the whole period as regards one important feature of it. It may of course have been added here by the hand of Moses on the eve of entry upon the promised land; or it may have been added by a later hand, perhaps that of Ezra when he revised these books (see the Introduction).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 15—23.—*Divine guidance.* In this section we have, spiritually, the Divine guidance of the faithful through the wilderness of this life. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE THEOPHANY, OR DIVINE APPEARANCE UPON THE TABERNACLE, WAS AS A CLOUD BY DAY AND AS FIRE BY NIGHT. Even so is the Lord unto his people both shelter and illumination,—shade that they faint not, light that they wander not astray (Ps. xxvii. 1; xxxvi. 9; cxxi. 5; Isa. xxv. 4; Matt. xi. 29; John viii. 12).

II. THAT THE CLOUD WAS UPON THE TABERNACLE OF WITNESS, WITHOUT, AND YET IN A MANNER CONNECTED WITH THE "TESTIMONY" ENGRAVEN UPON THE TABLES OF STONE. Even so the comfort and illumination of the faithful, albeit not of themselves but of God, are yet vitally connected with the law of holiness which is enshrined in their hearts (John xiv. 15, 23; Heb. xii. 14).

III. THAT THIS THEOPHANY WAS THE INFALLIBLE GUIDE TO THEIR MOVEMENTS, WHETHER TO REST OR TO ADVANCE. Even so the Lord himself, even God made manifest in Christ, is our only guide along the way to heaven (Ps. xlviii. 14; Luke i. 79; John xxi. 22 *b.*; 1 Thess. iii. 11).

IV. THAT THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE CLOUD WAS APPARENTLY ARBITRARY, SOMETIMES LINGERING LONG AS THOUGH IT HAD FORGOTTEN HOW TO MOVE, SOMETIMES HASTENING ON WITHOUT REST. Even so the Divine guidance, whether of the Church or of the individual, is often unintelligible and sometimes apparently perverse: how unequal are the advances of the Church, or of the soul, towards perfection (John xiii. 7): what need of (1) patience, and (2) preparedness (Luke ix. 59, *sq.*; xii. 36; xxi. 19; Eph. vi. 15; Rev. xiii. 10 *b.*).

V. THAT THE PEOPLE WERE STRICTLY OBEDIENT IN THIS, THAT THEY JOURNEYED NOT EXCEPT BY THE DIRECTION OF THE CLOUD, BECAUSE THEY FEARED TO BE WITHOUT IT. Even so the faithful will follow him that leadeth them as obediently as they can, because away from him and his guidance they would neither be able to endure, nor to progress (John vi. 68; x. 4; xiii. 37; xiv. 6).

VI. THAT WHEN ONCE, AND ONLY ONCE, THEY PRESUMED TO GO ON WHEN THE CLOUD BID THEM NOT, THEY MET DISASTROUS DEFEAT (ch. xiv. 44, 45). Even so if any will presume to go beyond the command and permission of his Lord (even in zeal) he will be overthrown of Satan (cf. Luke xxii. 55 *b. sq.*; 1 Cor. vii. 5 *b.*).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 15—23.—*The guiding pillar of cloud and flame.* This pillar served more purposes than one; but without doubt the purpose noted here by Moses himself was that principally intended. It was the signal by which the Lord guided the march of the tribes (Neh. ix. 12, 19; Ps. lxxviii. 14). Some such signal was absolutely necessary. To direct the march of a nation through the wilderness was no easy matter. When Alexander the Great led his army across the wide levels of Babylonia he caused a grating filled with a blazing fire to be borne aloft on a long pole, that its smoke might guide the march by day, and its fire by night. A similar device is constantly made use of by the caravans which make the pilgrimage to Mecca. The march of the tribes from Egypt had the Lord himself for its Guide, and the cloud

of his presence showed the way. No feature of the long march has more deeply impressed itself on the imagination of the Church than this guiding pillar. It has been instinctively accepted as a sign in which we too may claim an interest. For are not we also, as truly as the Church in the wilderness, making the journey from the land of bondage to the promised rest? Is not our life a wilderness journey; a march along a path we never trod before? The forty years' wanderings being thus a parable of our life on earth, may we not warrantably see in the pillar of the cloud a token of certain happy conditions of the journey which it is the business of faith to apprehend?

I. Observe that the children of Israel had THEIR ROUTE DETERMINED FOR THEM. It was the hand of God which chalked out the strangely circuitous line of their march; which measured the several stages; which fixed upon the halting-places; and determined the length of the stay at each. "At the commandment of the Lord they rested, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed." No doubt there still remained large scope for the exercise of judgment on the part of leaders so familiar with the desert as Moses and Hobab. There were a thousand details to care for. But the general fact remains, and is noted with extreme care in the history, that—so far as regards the line of march and the successive stages—the ordering of the journey from first to last was by the Lord. It would not be difficult to prove that our route also is determined for us. God has determined our appointed times, and the bounds of our habitation (Acts xvii. 26). The mapping out of our lives is his doing. This, I say, is capable of proof. Yet I should imagine that, to such as have been reasonably careful to observe their own course, no formal array of evidence will be needed. They know how often their own plans and those of friends have been upset, and the whole circumstances of their lives arranged quite otherwise than they ever contemplated, and yet with a most wise and considerate regard for their good. What then? (1) Do not forget to give God the glory. Acknowledge his overruling hand (Ps. cvii. 43). Many forget to do this; and accordingly they learn nothing of his mind, even when his providence speaks most plainly. A thing dishonouring to God and entailing great loss to them. (2) Thankfully commit your way to him for the time to come.

II. The Lord not only determined the route of the tribes but gave them A VISIBLE SIGN of his guidance. Here, it may be supposed, the parallel fails, and we must resign ourselves to a more uncertain and precarious guidance than the tribes enjoyed. But it is not so. For the guiding pillar in the wilderness was meant for the comfort of the Church in all times. Remember the principle laid down by the apostle in 1 Cor. x. 11. The moving cloud was an "ensample" or type which did not cease to speak when it disappeared from view as the tribes entered the land. To faith it continues still to attest the Lord's presence and guiding wisdom. The Divine guidance was not more patent in the desert to the *sight* of the tribes than it is this day to the *faith* of the Church. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." *Patent to faith!* That saying lays bare the difficulty of which we complain. A visible guide—every one can appreciate that. An invisible guide, discerned only by the mind, or rather by faith alone—that is too shadowy, intangible, precarious. So men are apt to judge. But without reason. Arduous our faith certainly is. But precarious, barren, impotent to sustain and comfort, it certainly is not. God's presence visible to the eye availed to guide and cheer the tribes in the wilderness; but God's presence seen by faith has availed much more to guide and cheer the Church of Christ these nineteen centuries. To walk by faith is the achievement of the Church's maturity. To walk by sight belonged to the Church's childhood. And we can trace all through the Scripture a gradual weaning of the Church from the one, and a gradual training of it to the other. In the wilderness the Church's weakness was comforted with the pillar of cloud and fire towering high in the sight of the whole camp: during the time of the first temple the cloud was seen only within the holy place: during the period of the second temple it was quite withdrawn. Yet Ezra and his company made the journey as safely as Moses and the tribes; and the glory of the latter house was greater than of the former. "He hath said, I will never leave thee; so that we may boldly say, I will not fear."—B.

Ver. 23.—*God's ceaseless providence a motive to prompt obedience.* God's presence with Israel was perpetual (Exod. iii. 12; xiii. 17—18). The sign of it in the cloud was given as soon, and was continued as long, as it was needed (Exod. xiii. 21, 22; xl. 38). God's active, providential presence was—I. A SOURCE OF SAFETY; II. A GROUND OF FAITH; and therefore, III. A MOTIVE TO OBEDIENCE.

I. The cloud (1) led them the safest way (Exod. xiii. 17). (2) Ensured protection from foes when near at hand (Exod. xiv. 19, 20, 24). (3) Gave light on the camp in moonless nights (Neh. ix. 19). (4) Was a pledge of safety to sinners, as it rested on the mercy-seat (Levit. xvi. 2). This visible cloud a symbol of protection by an invisible God (Isa. iv. 5). Illustrations, *bird* and young (Ruth ii. 12; Ps. xvii. 8; xci. 4). *Father* carrying his child by day (Deut. i. 31), and watching by him at night (Ps. cxxi). There is safety for sinners not away from God but in God (Ps. cxliii. 2, 9).

II. God showed himself in the cloud for the very purpose of guiding. He took the responsibility out of the hands of the people and Moses that they might have the privilege of trusting (Exod. xxxiii. 9—17; Deut. i. 33). Such a guiding presence we may enjoy by the aid of God's *written counsels, providential acts, and inward monitions* (Ps. xxv. 4, 5, 9, 14). See how these three are combined in the narrative (Acts viii. 26—35).

III. Ver. 23 is very emphatic. They obeyed even if at times the journey was very arduous (Numb. xxi. 4), or the halt very tedious (ver. 22), or the start was sudden, as when a midnight alarm of the trumpets was a sign that the cloud had begun to move (ver. 21). Hence we learn (1) not to take for granted that any place is our rest (Job xxix. 18; Micah ii. 10). (2) To be willing to go to the wilderness with God, rather than to stay in the choicest paradise without God. (3) To be willing to endure, at God's bidding, protracted toil or enforced inactivity. (4) To be ready at any time to strike our tent and go home. Thus waiting on God and waiting for God, we are safely led, and have the rest of trustful obedience (Ps. v. 11, 12; xlviii. 14; lxxxiv. 11, 12).—P.

Vers. 15—23.—*The cloud upon the tabernacle.* There is a fuller account of the rearing of the tabernacle and the descent of the cloud upon it in Exod. xl. Note—

I. THE CONNECTION OF THIS CLOUD WITH PAST EXPERIENCES. It is spoken of as "the cloud"—something, therefore, already known. It was known as associated with the glorious doings of Jehovah in the midst of the people. A remembrancer of the perilous march, with the Red Sea before and the Egyptians behind, when he who made his presence known by the pillar of cloud so gloriously delivered his people and overwhelmed their enemies (Exod. xiv. 19). A remembrancer of the provided manna, when, after God had promised it, the people looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud (Exod. xvi. 10). A remembrancer, again, of the solemn waiting upon Jehovah's will at Sinai (Exod. xix. 9; xxiv. 15—18). Compare with these experiences under the law the great and abiding experience under the gospel. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). He who afterwards tabernacled in the flesh, made his glory to rest on the tabernacle in the wilderness. When Jesus came, God showed his favour resting not only on the Israelites, but on all mankind.

II. THE CONNECTION OF THIS CLOUD WITH OBEYED COMMANDMENTS. The cloud that had hitherto rested on Sinai now came down on the tabernacle. This showed Jehovah's approval of the tabernacle. All had been fashioned according to the pattern in the mount. The tabernacle and the holy place, themselves made of perishable materials, were nevertheless typically perfect. They were not inspired by the invention of men, but by the revelation of God. God will give indubitable signs of approval when we are doing things according to his will. This tabernacle and its contents were the types of the truths, duties, and privileges of the gospel, and only as we receive the truths, practise the duties, and employ the privileges, shall we have the glory of God resting upon us. Until that time we come short of the glory of God. We may talk as we like about the glorious achievements of human thought, making our little clouds and fires about the earth, and calling them immortal and

imperishable, but God will approve no man until his life is ordered in all things by the requirements of the gospel.

III. THE CLOUD SO APPEARING WAS A PROOF OF GOD'S FAVOUR, VISIBLE TO ALL AND APPRECIABLE BY THEM. All Israel could see the tabernacle and the cloud. God had told his people they were not to make any graven image, or likeness of any created thing, but they found the first and second commandments very hard to obey. They hankered after something they could see. The idolatries of Egypt had infected them, and even within sight of Sinai they made a golden calf, for which gross transgression the Lord terribly plagued them. Nevertheless, though there is no material or shape on earth fit to indicate Jehovah, he will minister to human weakness, remembering that we are dust, and he gives the glory-cloud for all to see. What a help to faith! What a warning to unbelief! What mercy amid severity! So God, whom no man hath seen or can see, becomes God manifest in the flesh. He who has seen the Son has seen the Father.

IV. THE CLOUD SO APPEARING, VARIED IN ITS APPEARANCE, ACCORDING TO HUMAN NECESSITY. There was a cloud by day, and the appearance of fire by night. We need not suppose any change in the cloud itself as day slipt into night, and night back again into day. As darkness fell upon the scene the fiery element in the cloud became more noticeable and valuable. So there is encouragement for wandering and bewildered souls. The darker life becomes, and the more perplexing our path, the more manifest becomes the presence of God. During the days of a man's content with natural possessions and resources, when the sunshine of nature is falling on his life, then the cloud of God's providence appears, but let the night of spiritual distress, the great difficulties of sin, and death, and eternity darken the soul, then the bright, conspicuous fires of grace at once appear.

V. THE CLOUD BY ITS MOVEMENTS BECAME AN INFALLIBLE GUIDE. Thus Jehovah showed that he, the invisible one, was the leader of the people. The resting and the moving cloud meant the resting and the moving people. It was ever with them to point the way. God's goodness does not pass away as the morning cloud and the early dew. The cloud said plainly, "Follow me." So Jesus says, "Follow me," reiterating, emphasizing, and illustrating the command. If we are ever to reach the rest that remaineth for the people of God, it must be by acting towards Jesus as the Israelites did towards the cloud in the wilderness (Deut. xxxii. 10—12; 2 Chron. v. 13; Ps. xliii. 3; Isa. iv. 5; xlix. 10).—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

THE SILVER TRUMPETS (vers. 1—10). Ver. 1.—**And the Lord spake.** The command to make the silver trumpets is introduced here, because one principal use of them was connected with the order of march. It does not necessarily follow that the command was actually given exactly at this time, or that all the different directions for use formed part of one communication. They may have been gathered together for convenience' sake. See the Introduction on this subject. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that this use of trumpets has been anticipated in Levit. xxv. 9, or elsewhere, for the "trumpets" there mentioned were altogether different in shape, as in material.

Ver. 2.—**Make thee two trumpets.** Hebrew, *khatsotserah*. From the testimony of Josephus, from the representation on the arch of Titus, and from a comparison of ancient Egyptian trumpets, it is clear that these trumpets were straight, long, and narrow, with an expanded mouth. The *shophār*, or trumpet of the Jubilee, on the other hand, was a buccina or cornet, either made of a ram's horn, or shaped like one. **Of a whole piece.** Rather, "of beaten work." Hebrew, *mikshah* (see on Exod. xxv. 18). Septuagint, ἐλατὰς ποιήσεις αὐτάς. Probably they were made of a single plate of silver beaten out into the required shape, which was very simple.

Ver. 3.—**When they shall blow with them,** *i. e.* with both of them. **All the assembly,** *i. e.* by their natural or customary representatives.

Ver. 5.—**When ye blow an alarm.** Hebrew, תְּרוּעָה. This seems to signify a continuous peal, easily distinguished, wherever audible, from the blowing in short, sharp tones (Hebrew, תְּקִעַ) mentioned below, ver. 7. The peal of alarm was to be blown—לְמַסָּעֵיהֶם—"for their breaking up"—for that purpose,

and no other. **The camps.** Only those on the east (Judah, with Issachar and Zebulun) and on the south (Reuben, with Simeon and Gad) are here mentioned. It may be that the silver trumpets themselves were carried with the sacred utensils after the southern camps, and that some other means were employed to start the remaining tribes; or it may be that the omission is due to some accidental circumstance. The Septuagint inserts in ver. 6, "And ye shall sound a third alarm, and the camps which are pitched westwards shall move; and ye shall sound a fourth alarm, and the camps which are pitched northwards shall move." No doubt this was the actual order of starting, however the signal was given.

Ver. 8.—**The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow.** It was natural that they should be made responsible for the custody and use of these trumpets, not because their sound represented the voice of God, but because they were used for religious purposes, and could only be safely kept in the sanctuary. **An ordinance for ever.** The accustomed formula for some sacred institution which was to have a permanent character and an eternal meaning (cf. Exod. xii. 24). The truth of these words cannot be exhausted by an actual use of 1500 years, followed by complete disuse for 1800 years. The "ordinance" of the silver trumpets must be perpetuated "for ever" in the gospel, or else the Divine word has failed.

Ver. 9.—**If ye go to war.** בּוֹא מִלְחָמָה, "come into war," or "be engaged," denoting actual hostilities. **In your land.** The practical use of the trumpets ceased with the years of wandering; the ceremonial use was continued as long as the people dwelt in "their land;" the spiritual use remains an "ordinance for ever," as long as the Church is militant here on earth. That the use of the two silver trumpets was ceremonial, and not practical, after the conquest of Canaan is evident from the purpose and effect ascribed to that use. Whether in war or in worship, that purpose was *not* to convoke the people, nor to give signals to the host, *but* to put God in mind of his promises, and to invoke his covenanted grace. Indeed, *two* trumpets, as here prescribed, could not be otherwise than ceremonially used after the nation was spread abroad over the whole face of Canaan; and there is no direction to make more than two such trumpets. The use of trumpets in subsequent times is indeed often mentioned both in war and in holy festivities, and it was undoubtedly founded upon this Divine ordinance; but it was not in literal compliance with it, for the obvious reason that many trumpets were used instead of two only (see 1 Chron. xv. 24; 2 Chron. v. 12; Neh. xii. 35). In these passages (and probably in 2 Chron. xiii. 12) we have abundant evidence of one of those expansions and adaptations of the Mosaic ritual which were so freely made under the house of David. Ch. xxxi. 6, and (perhaps) 1 Chron. xvi. 6, and Ps. lxxxi. 3 may be quoted as pointing to the strict fulfilment of the law as it stands.

Ver. 10.—**In the day of your gladness.** Any day of national thanksgiving, celebrated with religious services, as the feast of the dedication (John x. 22) or of Purim (Esther ix. 19, *sqq.*). **In your solemn days.** מוֹעֲדִים. The feasts appointed to be observed by the law (see chs. xxviii. and xxix.). **In the beginnings of your months.** New moon days (Ps. lxxxi. 3). Only the first day of the seventh month was properly a feast (Levit. xxiii. 24), but all were distinguished by special sacrifices (ch. xxviii. 11).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The sacred trumpets.* Spiritually we have in the two silver trumpets *the gospel in its twofold use*—(1) as preached to men, (2) as pleaded before God; for that which is preached to men must also be pleaded by and for men. The substance of our faith is also the substance of our intercession. *Lex credendi, lex orandi.* "Our Father, . . . through Jesus Christ our Lord," is the norm at once of every true sermon, and of every right prayer. The death of Christ, *preached*, is the voice of God to start the faithful on their way to heaven; the death of Christ, *shown*, is the voice of the faithful to put God in mind of his sure mercies, to bring themselves into remembrance before him. Consider, therefore—

I. That THE SACRED TRUMPET MUST BE OF ONE WHOLE PIECE OF SILVER, NEITHER ALLOYED WITH BASER METAL, NOR MADE UP OF FRAGMENTS. The gospel which we preach or plead must be the whole faith, and the pure faith once delivered to the saints, neither alloyed with human inventions nor pieced together out of fragments and remnants of the Divine revelation. Human art and labour has no further place than in bringing the gospel—as the trumpet—into such a shape as that it can be effectually used, without adding aught to it, or diminishing aught from it.

II. That the PRIMARY USE OF THE SACRED TRUMPET was—(1) for summoning the people into the more immediate presence of God; (2) for ordering their march towards Canaan. The gospel is preached, on the one hand, to call men from their cares, and pleasures, and earthly ties, in order to present themselves for pardon and for blessing before him who is their covenanted God and King; on the other hand, to instruct men in an orderly Christian walk, seeking the kingdom, not as isolated individuals, but as members of one body, soldiers in one army, units in one vast and organised whole.

III. THAT A PLAIN DISTINCTION OF SOUND WAS TO BE MADE IN CALLING THE ASSEMBLY, AND IN ORDERING THE MARCH. The persuasions of the gospel, by which we call men to draw nigh unto God, must needs differ in sound and in tone from the precepts of the gospel by which we seek to direct their onward march; but both are equally sacred, and equally necessary to be observed.

IV. THAT THE SUBSEQUENT USE OF THE SACRED TRUMPETS WAS TO INVOKE, WITH HOLY AND CONSECRATED SOUND, THE DIVINE AID AGAINST THE FOE, THE DIVINE ACCEPTANCE UPON THE SACRED FEAST OR OFFERING: IN DANGER OR IN WORSHIP TO BRING HIS OWN INTO REMEMBRANCE WITH THEIR GOD. The facts of the gospel which we preach, and whereby we "persuade men," the same do we plead; and thereby we "persuade God." All true prayer and intercession of the faithful for aid against spiritual enemies, for acceptance of spiritual sacrifices, is not only *founded upon* the gospel; it *is* the gospel, pleaded (whether in holy words or in holy rites) before high heaven; it is "the Lord's death" shown "until he come;" it is the sacred trumpet sounded in the ears of God prevailingly according to his command.

V. THAT THE USE OF THE TRUMPETS FOR THOSE PURPOSES WAS TO BE "AN ORDINANCE FOR EVER." The calling of men to draw nigh unto God; the ordering of their onward walk; the cry to heaven for promised aid against our unseen foes; the pleading of the finished work of Christ wherein we trust, will never cease until there shall be no more time. Neither can the Church at large, nor can any faithful soul, dare to despise or to ignore any of these uses of the gospel trumpet; for they are of Divine and perpetual appointment.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The silver trumpets.* The blowing of the silver trumpets by Aaron and his sons has generally been taken to denote the preaching of the gospel. But the interpretation is a mistaken one, and arises from confounding the trumpet of jubilee (Levit. xxv. 9; Luke iv. 16) with the silver trumpet. Although bearing the same name in the English Bible, these are quite different instruments, and are called by different Hebrew names. The former is the *shophar* or cornet, which, as its name implies, was of horn, or at least horn-shaped; whereas the latter, the *chatsotser*, was a long straight tube of silver with a bell-shaped mouth. The true intention of the silver trumpets is distinctly enough indicated in the law before us. They were to be to the children of Israel for a memorial before their God (ver. 10); the promise was that when the trumpets were blown, the people should be remembered before the Lord their God, and he would save them from their enemies (ver. 9). In other words, the blowing of the silver trumpets was a figure of PRAYER (cf. Acts x. 4). An exceedingly striking and suggestive figure it is.

I. IT PRESENTS CERTAIN ASPECTS OF PRAYER WHICH CAN HARDLY BE TOO MUCH REMEMBERED. For one thing, it admonishes us that *prayer ought to be an effectual fervent exercise* (James v. 16). A trumpet-tone is the opposite of a timid whisper. There is a clear determinate ring in the call of a silver trumpet. This is not meant to suggest that there ought to be loud and vehement speaking in prayer. But it does mean that we are to throw heart into our prayers and put forth our strength. The spirit of adoption *cries*, Abba Father (see 2 Chron. xiii. 14). When we call on God we ought to stir ourselves up to take hold of him (Isa. lxiv. 7.) Moreover, the silver trumpet emits *a ringing, joyous sound.* In almost every instance in which the blowing of these trumpets is mentioned in Scripture, it is suggestive of gladness, hope, exultation. And ought not a note of gladness, hope, exultation to pervade our prayers? When we pray we are to use a certain holy boldness; we are

to draw near; we are to speak in full assurance of faith. This, I confess, may be pressed too far. There was nothing of the trumpet-tone in the publican's prayer. There may be acceptable prayer in a sigh, in a cry of anguish, in the groaning of a prisoner. But it is not the will of God that his children's ordinary intercourse with him should be of that sort. They are to call on him with a gladsome confidence that he is able and ready to help them. And many of them do this. There are Christian people whose prayers are always rising into the ringing tones of the silver trumpet. I have spoken first of the general design or spiritual intention of this ordinance of the silver trumpets.

Let us now note THE PARTICULARS:—1. It belonged to the *priest's* office (ver. 8). It is not to be confounded with the Levitical service of song, instituted long after by David. 2. It served a variety of *secular* uses. Public assemblies were convened by the sounding of the trumpets, as they are convened among us by the ringing of bells (vers. 2, 3, 7). And they were the bugles by which military signals were given (vers. 4—6). That it was the priests who blew the trumpets on all such occasions reminds us that Israel was, in a special sense, "an holy nation;" and may also carry forward our minds to the time when "holiness to the Lord" will be written on the life of all Christian nations in all their relations. 3. The blowing of the silver trumpets found place chiefly in the service of the sanctuary. The particulars are noted in ver. 10, and are of uncommon interest for the Christian reader. (1) The trumpets were to be blown *over the sacrifices*. How this was done appears from the example related in 2 Chron. xxix. 26—28. The intention was as much as to say, "O thou that dwellest in the heavens, give ear to us when we cry; remember all our offerings and accept our burnt sacrifice. Grant us the wish of our heart, and fulfil all our counsel." (2) The sacrifices particularly named as to be thus signalised are *the burnt offering and the peace offering*. Not the sin offering. The omission can hardly have been accidental. When I have fallen into some notable sin, I am to humble myself before God with shame. The cry of the publican is what befits me, rather than trumpet-toned exultation. The sin offering is most acceptably presented without blowing of trumpets. As for the burnt offering, which denotes dedication; and the peace offering, which speaks of communion with God and of our communion with each other in the Lord; these are most acceptable when they are attended with gladness and thankful exultation in God. (3) The blowing of the silver trumpets was especially *to abound at the great solemnities*. That is to say, at the new moons, at the three great festivals, the "solemn days" of the Jewish year, and on all days of special gladness (cf. 2 Chron. v. 12; vii. 6; Ezra iii. 10; Neh. xii. 35). (4) Above all other solemn days, the first day of the seventh month was to be thus distinguished. The seventh month was that in which the Feast of Tabernacles happened—at the full moon, in the end of September or beginning of October, after the Lord had crowned the year with his goodness. The new moon of this month was the Feast of the Blowing of Trumpets (cf. Levit. xxiii. 24); and fitly ushered in the Feast of Ingathering, the most joyous of all the festivals of the year.—B.

Vers. 1—10.—*The use of the trumpets.* There is a manifest connection between the cloud and the trumpets. At Sinai there was "a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud" (Exod. xix. 16). This seems to have been a miraculous sound, but Jehovah now orders Moses to have two silver trumpets made for permanent use. Thus trumpets as well as cloud were remembrancers of Sinai. God uses sound along with light to signify his will to his people; he appeals not only to their eyes, but also to their ears. Though the cloud was there they were not ever watching it. The longer it rested, the less conscious of its presence they became. Therefore God added the sound of the trumpets, a sudden, startling sound, to stop each one in his work, or raise him out of his sleep.

I. GOD TAKES SUFFICIENT MEANS TO CONVEY TO MEN ALL THAT IT IS NEEDFUL FOR THEM TO KNOW. Exactly where they would next pass, and how long stay there, and how long be in the wilderness, the Israelites knew not; but when the hour came for them to move, it was of the first importance that none should be in ignorance or doubt. So with regard to the practical matters of the gospel; we may take it as perfectly certain that difficulties with regard to salvation and Christian duty are in

us, not in *God*. Men have eyes, yet see not; ears, yet hear not. They clamour for more light, more evidence, more signs. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." And now they have also Christ and the apostles to listen to. All the great appeals and proclamations of the gospel have the trumpet sound in them; only men are so drenched and stupefied with the opiates of sin that the sound is as if it were not.

II. GOD COULD USE THE ONE AGENT TO INDICATE MANY REQUIREMENTS. There were always the same two trumpets, but sounded in different ways for different purposes. There was one sound for the princes, and another for the people. The trumpet called them to the march, and in later days, when the marching was over, it called them to the battle. It had to do with great religious occasions, and times of special gladness, *e. g.* the jubilee year (Levit. xxv. 9). So there is one Spirit and diversity of operations. There is the Spirit calling the attention of men by signs and wonders; there is the same Spirit breathing through the men who wrote book after book of the Scriptures. And now these Scriptures lie like a silent silver trumpet, till the same Spirit, breathing through them, makes them to teach, console, promise, warn, according to the need of the individual who listens. The trumpet of God gives no uncertain sound (1 Cor. xiv. 8). Paul trusted it with the most complete confidence in his missionary work (Acts xvi. 6—10). There is a trumpet sound telling us not only to do something for God, but exactly what to do. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

III. THE TRUMPET WAS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS. It was not a daily sound. It indicated fresh departures, and was associated with great celebrations. Between the soundings there were intervals for the quiet practice of every day duties. It is good thus to have the ordinary and the extraordinary mingled in our life. It is an ill thing both for individuals and communities to be settled too long in the same circumstances. Too much change is bad, but too much rest is worse. Times of quiet, plodding toil scarcely noticed, faithfulness in little things day after day—then the trumpet sounds and there is change and strife. But though the trumpet is there for special occasions, God has voices for every day to all who have the listening ear. (2 Chron. v. 12—14; Isa. xviii. 3; xxvii. 13; lviii. 1; Jer. iv. 5; vi. 1; xlii. 14; li. 27; Ezek. xxxiii. 1—6; Hosea viii. 1; Joel ii. 1; Amos iii. 6; Zeph. i. 16; Zech. ix. 14; Rev. i. 10.)—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE ORDER OF MARCH FROM SINAI (vers. 11—28). Ver. 11.—**On the twentieth day of the second month.** This answered approximately to our May 6th, when the spring verdure would still be on the land, but the heat of the day would already have become intense. We may well suppose that the departure would have taken place a month earlier, had it not been necessary to wait for the due celebration of the second or supplemental passover (ch. ix. 11). As this march was, next to the actual exodus, *the* great trial of Israel's faith and obedience, it was most important that none should commence it otherwise than in full communion with their God and with one another. **The cloud was taken up.** For the first time since the tabernacle had been reared up (Exod. xl. 34). This being the Divine signal for departure, the silver trumpets would immediately announce the fact to all the hosts.

Ver. 12.—**Took their journeys.** Literally, "marched according to their journeys" (לְמַסְּעֵיהֶם). Septuagint, ἐξῆραν σὺν ἀποσκευαῖς αὐτῶν, set forward with their baggage. **And the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.** Taken by itself this would seem to apply to the first resting of the cloud and the first halt of the host after breaking up from "the wilderness of Sinai." It appears, however, from ch. xii. 16 that "the wilderness of Paran" was only reached after leaving Hazeroth at the end of three days' journey from Sinai, nor would a shorter space of time suffice to carry the host across the mountain barrier of the Jebel et-Tih, which forms the clearly-marked southern limit of the desert plateau of Paran (see next note). Some critics have arbitrarily extended the limits of "the wilderness of Paran" so as to include the sandy waste between Sinai and the Jebel et-Tih, and therefore the very first halting-place of Israel. This, however, is unnecessary as well as arbitrary; for (1) vers. 12, 13 are evidently in the nature of a summary, and the same subject is confessedly taken up again in ver. 33, *sq.*; and (2) the departure from Sinai is expressly said to have been for a "three days' journey" (ver. 33), which must mean that the march, although actually divided into three stages, was regarded as a single journey, because it brought

them to their immediate destination in the wilderness of Paran. Here then is a plain reason for the statement in this verse: the cloud *did* indeed rest twice between the two wildernesses, but only so as to allow of a night's repose, not so as to break the continuity of the march. "*The wilderness of Paran.*" Septuagint, ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τοῦ φαράν. This geographical expression is nowhere exactly defined in Holy Scripture, and the name itself has disappeared; for in spite of the resemblance in sound (a resemblance here, as in so many cases, wholly delusive), it seems to have no connection whatever with the Wady Feiran, the fertile valley at the base of Serbal, or with the town which once shared the name. All the allusions, however, in the Old Testament to Paran point to a district so clearly marked out, so deeply stamped with its own characteristics, by nature, that no mistake is possible. This district is now called et-Tih, *i. e.* the wandering, and is still remembered in the traditions of the Arabs as the scene of the wanderings of the people of God. Little known, and never thoroughly explored, its main features are nevertheless unmistakable, and its boundaries sharply defined. Measuring about 150 miles in either direction, its southern frontier (now called the Jebel et-Tih) is divided by the broad sandy waste of er-Ramleh from the Sinaitic mountains and the Sinaitic peninsula properly so called; its northern mountain mass looks across the deep fissure of the Wady Murreh (or desert of Zin), some ten or fifteen miles broad, into er-Rachmah, the mountain of the Amorite, the southern extension of the plateau of Judah; on the east it falls abruptly down to the narrow beach of the Elanitic Gulf, and to the Arabah; on the west alone it sinks slowly into the sandy desert of Shur, which separates it from the Mediterranean and from Egypt. Et-Tih is itself divided into nearly equal halves by the Wady el Arish (or "river of Egypt"), which, rising on the northern slopes of the Jebel et-Tih, and running northwards through the whole plateau, turns off to the west and is lost in the desert of Shur. That the western half of the plateau went also under the name of Paran is evident from the history of Ishmael (see especially Gen. xxi. 21; xxv. 18), but it was through the eastern portion alone that the wanderings of the Israelites, so far as we can trace them, lay. This "wilderness of Paran" is indeed "a great and terrible wilderness" (Deut. i. 9), lacking for the most part the precipitous grandeur of the granite mountains of Sinai, but lacking also their fertile valleys and numerous streams. A bare limestone or sandstone plateau, crossed by low ranges of hills, seamed with innumerable dry water-courses, and interspersed with large patches of sand and gravel, is what now meets the eye of the traveller in this forsaken land. It is true that a good deal of rain falls at times, and that when it does fall vegetation appears with surprising rapidity and abundance; it is true also that the district has been persistently denuded of trees and shrubs for the sake of fuel. But whatever mitigations may have then existed, it is clear from the Bible itself that the country was then, as now, emphatically frightful (cf. Deut. i. 19; viii. 15; xxxii. 10; Jer. ii. 6). Something may be set, no doubt, to the account of rhetoric, and much may be allowed for variety of seasons. Even in Australia the very same district will appear at one time like the desolation of a thousand years, and in the very next year it will blossom as the rose. But at certain seasons at any rate et-Tih was (as it is) a "howling" wilderness, where the dreadful silence of a lifeless land was only broken by the nightly howling of unclean beasts who tracked the footsteps of the living in order to devour the carcases of the dead. Perhaps so bad a country has never been attempted by any army in modern days, even by the Russian troops in Central Asia.

Amongst the many Wadys which drain the uncertain rain-fall of the eastern half of et-Tih (and at the same time testify to a greater rain-fall in bygone ages), the most important is the Wady el Terafeh, which, also rising on the northern slopes of Jebel et-Tih, runs northwards and north-westwards, and finally opens into the Arabah. Towards its northern limit et-Tih changes its character for the worse. Here it rises into a precipitous quadrilateral of mountains, about forty miles square, not very lofty, but exceedingly steep and rugged, composed in great measure of dazzling masses of bare chalk or limestone, which glow as in a furnace beneath the summer sun. This mountain mass, now called the Azâzimat, or mountain country of the Azâzimeh, rising steeply from the rest of the plateau to the southward, is almost completely detached by deep depressions from the surrounding districts; at the north-west corner alone it is united by a short range of mountains with er-Rachmah, and so with the highlands of Southern Palestine. From this corner the Wady Murreh descends broad and deep towards the east, forking at the eastern extremity towards the Arabah on the south-east, and towards the Dead Sea on the north-east. The interior of this inaccessible country has yet to be really explored, and it is the scanty nature of our present knowledge concerning it which, more than anything else, prevents us from following with any certainty the march of the Israelites as recorded in this book.

Ver. 13. — **And they first took their**

journey. The meaning of this is somewhat doubtful. The Septuagint has ἐξῆραν πρῶτοι, the foremost set out; the Vulgate, *profecti sunt per turmas suas.* Perhaps it means, "they journeyed in the order of precedence" assigned to them by their marching orders in ch. ii.

Ver. 14.—**According to their armies.** In each camp, and under each of the four standards, there were three tribal hosts, each an army in itself.

Ver. 17.—**And the tabernacle was taken down.** That is, the fabric of it; the boards, curtains, and other heavy portions which were packed upon the six waggons provided for the purpose (ch. vii. 5—9). **And the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward.** Between the first and second divisions of the host. In ch. ii. it had been directed in general terms that "the tabernacle" should set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the host, between the second and third divisions. At that time the duties of the several Levitical families had not been specified, and the orders for the taking down and transport of the tabernacle and its furniture had not been given in detail. It would be historically an error, and theologically a superstition, to imagine that Divine commands such as these had no elasticity, and left no room for adaptation, under the teaching of experience, or for the sake of obvious convenience. Whether the present modification was directly commanded by God himself, or whether it was made on the authority of Moses, does not here appear. There can be no question that subsequent theocratic rulers of Israel claimed and used a large liberty in modifying the Divinely-originated ritual and order. Compare the case of the passover, the arrangements of Solomon's temple as corresponding with those of the tabernacle, and even the use of the silver trumpets. The Septuagint has the future tense here, καθελοῦσι τὴν σκηνήν κ. τ. λ., as if to mark it as a fresh command.

Ver. 21.—**The sanctuary.** Rather, "the holy things." הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, equivalent to the קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים of ch. iv. 4. Septuagint, τὰ ἅγια. The sacred furniture mentioned in ch. iii. 31 (but cf. ver. 33). **The other did set up the tabernacle.** Literally, "they set up," but no doubt it means the Gershonites and Merarites, whose business it was.

Ver. 25.—**The rereward of all the camps.** Literally, "the collector," or "the gatherer, of all the camps." The word is applied by Isaiah to God himself (Isa. lii. 12; lviii. 8) as to him that "gathereth the outcasts of Israel." Dan may have been the collector of all the camps simply in the sense that his host closed in all the others from behind, and in pitching completed the full number. Under any ordinary circumstances, however (see next note) the work of the rear-guard in collecting stragglers and in taking charge of such as had fainted by the way must have been arduous and important in the extreme.

Ver. 28.—**Thus were the journeyings.** Rather, "these were the journeyings," the marchings of the various hosts of which the nation was composed. The question may here be asked, which is considered more at large in the Introduction, how it was possible for a nation of more than two million souls, containing the usual proportion of aged people, women, and children, to march as here represented, in compact columns closely following one another, without straggling, without confusion, without incalculable suffering and loss of life. That the line of march was intended to be compact and unbroken is plain (amongst other things) from the directions given about the tabernacle. The fabric was sent on in advance with the evident intent that it should be reared up and ready to receive the holy things by the time they arrived. Yet between the fabric and the furniture there marched more than half a million of people (the camp of Reuben), all of whom had to reach the camping ground and turn off to the right before the Kohathites could rejoin their brethren. Now discipline and drill will do wonders in the way of ordering and expediting the movements even of vast multitudes, if they are thoroughly under control; the family organisation also of the tribes, and the long leisure which they had enjoyed at Sinai, gave every opportunity of perfecting the necessary discipline. But it is clear that no discipline could make such an arrangement as the one above mentioned feasible under the ordinary circumstances of human life. It would be absolutely necessary to eliminate all the casualties and all the sicknesses which would naturally clog and hinder the march of such a multitude, in order that it might be compressed within the required limits of time and space. Have we any ground for supposing that these casualties and sicknesses *were* eliminated? In answering this question we must clearly distinguish between the journey from Sinai to Kadesh, on the borders of Palestine, *which was a journey of only eleven days* (Deut. i. 2), and the subsequent wanderings of the people of Israel. It is the eleven days' journey only with which we are concerned, because it was for this journey only that provision was made and orders were given by the God of Israel. During the subsequent years of wandering and of excommunication, there can be no doubt that the marching orders fell into abeyance as entirely as the sacrificial system and the rite of circumcision itself. During these years the various camps may have scattered themselves abroad, marched,

and halted very much as the circumstances of the day demanded. But that this was not and could not be the case during the short journey which *should* have landed them in Canaan is obvious from the whole tone, as well as from the particular details, of the commandments considered above. It is further to be borne in mind that the Divine promise and undertaking at the exodus was, impliedly if not explicitly, to bring the whole people, one and all, small and great, safely to their promised home. When the Psalmist asserts (Ps. cv. 37) that "there was not one feeble person among their tribes," he does not go beyond what is plainly intimated in the narrative. If of their cattle "not an hoof" must be left behind, lest the absolute character of the deliverance be marred, how much more necessary was it that not a soul be abandoned to Egyptian vengeance? And how could all depart unless all were providentially saved from sickness and infirmity? But the same necessity (the necessity of his own goodness) held good when the exodus was accomplished. God could not bring any individual in Israel out of Egypt only to perish in the wilderness, unless it were through his own default. He who had brought them *out* with so lavish a display of miraculous power was (we may say with reverence) bound also to bring them *in;* else they had been actual losers by obedience, and his word had not been kept to them. Under a covenant and a dispensation which assuredly did not look one hand's breadth beyond the present life, it must have seemed to be of the essence of the promise which they believed that not one of them should die or have to be left behind. And as the death or loss of one of God's people would have vitiated the temporal promise to *them*, so also it would have vitiated the eternal promise to *us*. For they were ensamples of us, and confessedly what was done for them was done at least as much for our sakes as for theirs. Now the promise of God is manifest unto every one that is included within his new covenant, viz., to bring him safely at last unto the heavenly Canaan, and that in spite of every danger, if only he do not draw back. The whole analogy, therefore, and the typical meaning of the exodus would be overthrown if any single Israelite who had crossed the Red Sea failed to enter into rest, save as the consequence of his own sin. We conclude, therefore, with some confidence that the ordinary incidents of mortality were providentially excluded from the present march, as from the previous interval; that none fell sick, none became helpless, none died a natural death. We know that the great difficulty of a sufficient supply of food was miraculously met; we know that in numberless respects the passage from Egypt to Canaan was hedged about with supernatural aids. Is there any difficulty in supposing that he who gave them bread to eat and water to drink, who led them by a cloudy and a fiery pillar, could also give them health and strength to "walk and not be weary"? Is it unreasonable to imagine that he who spake in his tender pity of the flight from Judæa to Pella, "Woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days," miraculously restrained for that season the natural increase of his people?

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 11—28.—*The journey home.* Spiritually, we have in this section *the Divinely-appointed order of the Church of God*, the ideal method of her journeying, towards the eternal rest. All the time which the children of Israel spent beneath the holy mount was to prepare them for a speedy and triumphant march by the shortest way into Canaan. All which we have learnt of the law of Christ, and in his school, is to fit us to make our way right onwards through the difficulties of this troublesome world to the home beyond; and this is the practical test of all we have acquired. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE IMMEDIATE MARCH OF ISRAEL WAS OUT OF THE "WILDERNESS OF SINAI" INTO THE "WILDERNESS OF PARAN," FROM ONE DESERT TO ANOTHER. Even so is the onward course of the Church, or of the faithful soul, in this world. The only change is from one set of difficulties and hardships to another, from an unrest of one kind to an unrest of another kind. After the green level of Egypt, Sinai was awful, but Paran was worse. To the natural mind the difficulties which surround the beginning of a Christian life are terrible, but those which beset its middle course are mostly harder, because drearier, even if less striking. The young always think that when the special temptations of youth are past it will be an easy and simple matter to walk uprightly. In truth the whole of this life is a desert-journey, and we only remove from the awful precipices of Sinai to encounter the rugged and barren expanse of Paran. The hope which cheers and sustains lies beyond (Matt. x. 22; James i. 12).

II. THAT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AS SOON AS THE CLOUD REMOVED, COULD NOT

STAY WHERE THEY WERE, BUT MUST SET FORTH THROUGH THE RUGGED WILDERNESS OF PARAN, IF THEY WERE EVER TO REACH CANAAN. Even so the Church cannot attain her rest by studying divinity or perfecting the definitions of morality or the appliances of worship; it must walk in faith and righteousness amidst the endless contradictions of time. Even Mary cannot always sit at the Master's feet; the hour will come when he will be taken away, and when she must follow in the hard way of practical goodness and self-denial, if she would see him again.

III. THAT THE MARCHING ORDERS GIVEN BY GOD TO ISRAEL SEEM ON THE FACE OF THEM TO BE INCONSISTENT WITH THE ENORMOUS NUMBER OF THE PEOPLE ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE EXTREME DIFFICULTY OF THE COUNTRY ON THE OTHER; there seems no room left for any physical incapacity, or for the least human failure. And these orders were in fact more or less departed from before long. The Divine ideal of the Christian life, whether as lived by the Church at large or by the individual soul, as drawn out in the New Testament, seems to be too high and too perfect to be possible in the face of the contradictions of the world and the perversities of human nature. It is apparently true that the infinite complications of modern life, and the infinite variety of human dispositions, have made the lofty purity and the unbroken unity of the gospel plan a thing practically unattainable in the Church.

IV. That the appointed ORDER OF MARCH WAS NOT IN FACT OBSERVED IN ITS ENTIRETY EXCEPT AT THE VERY FIRST, because sin and rebellion altered the face of things and made it impossible. The holy picture of the Christian community, drawn in Scripture, was only realised in the earliest days, and was soon made obsolete in many points by sin and unbelief.

V. That in spite of all apparent difficulties THE MARCH TO CANAAN WOULD HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT A CHECK, without a loss, IF ONLY THE PEOPLE HAD OBEYED THE DIVINE COMMANDS, and relied upon the supernatural aid extended to them. Had Christians remained faithful, and responded to the heavenly graces promised to them, the Church would have gone on as it began, in spite of all difficulties; the whole earth had been evangelised, the number of the elect accomplished, and the heavenly rest attained long (it may be) ere this.

VI. THAT THE GREAT SECRET, HUMANLY SPEAKING, OF THE ONWARD PROGRESS OF THE HOST WAS ORDER, in that every single person had his place and his work, and knew it. Without order carefully maintained that multitude had become an unmanageable mob, which could not have moved a mile or lived a day. Humanly speaking, *order*, discipline, due subordination, allotted division of labour, is the secret of the Church's success; and the absence—still more the contempt—of such order, is the obvious cause of the Church's failure.

VII. THAT THE GREAT SECRET, DIVINELY SPEAKING, OF ISRAEL'S SAFETY AND PROGRESS WAS THE FACT THAT THE LORD HIMSELF WAS IN THEIR MIDST when they rested, at their head when they marched, by the ark and by the cloud. In the deepest and truest sense the secret of our safety and of our victory is the supernatural presence of God with the Church and in the soul, by his incarnate Word and by his Spirit. *There* is at once the real bond of union, and the real source of strength. It may also be noted—1. That, as soon as their time of preparation was fulfilled, the cloud led Israel into the wilderness of Paran, to be tried by the manifold temptations of that way. Even so, when the preparation of Jesus for his work was finished, he was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Israel, called out of Egypt, was a type of Christ (Matt. ii. 15), and the cloud was the symbol of the Divine Spirit. 2. That the fabric of the tabernacle was sent on in order to be set up in readiness to receive the ark and sacred vessels when they arrived. It is not always an idle nor a useless thing to set up the external formalities of religion in advance of the true spirit of worship, in faithful expectation that this too will come, and with it the promised blessing of God.

EXPOSITION.

THE INVITATION TO HOBAB (vers. 29—32). Ver. 29.—**Hobab, the son of Raguel** (or rather Reuel, of which Raguel is simply the Septuagint and Vulgate variation), **Moses' father-in-law.** It is not quite certain who this "Hobab" was. The name occurs only here and in Judges iv. 11. The older opinion, followed by the A. V., identified Hobab with Jethro, and Jethro with Reuel the "priest of Midian," and father of Zipporah, Moses' wife. It is, of course, no real objection to this opinion that Hobab is here called the "son of Reuel;" for the name may quite well have been an hereditary one, like Abimelech and so many others. Nor need the multiplicity of names given to one individual astonish us, for it is of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, and not infrequent in the New. The father-in-law of Moses was a priest, holding (probably by right of birth) the patriarchal dignity of tribal priest, as Job did on a smaller, and Melchizedec on a larger, scale. He may very well, therefore, have had one or more "official" names in addition to his personal name. If this is accepted, then it may serve as one instance amongst many to remind us how extremely careless the inspired writers are about *names*—"careless" not in the sense of not caring whether they are right or wrong, but in the sense of not betraying and not feeling the least anxiety to avoid the appearance and suspicion of inaccuracy. Even in the lists of the twelve apostles we are forced to believe that "Judas the brother of James" is the same person as "Lebbæus" and "Thaddæus;" and it is a matter of endless discussion whether or no "Bartholomew" was the same as "Nathanael." On the face of it Scripture proclaims that it uses no arts, that it takes no pains to preserve an appearance of accuracy—that appearance which is so easily simulated for the purposes of falsehood. Holy Scripture may therefore fairly claim to be read without that captiousness, without that demand for minute carefulness and obvious consistency, which we rightly apply to one of our own histories. The modern historian avowedly tells his story as a witness does in the presence of a hostile counsel; the sacred historian tells his as a man does to the children round his knee. Surely such an obvious fact should disarm a good deal of the petty criticism which carps at the sacred narrative.

Many, however, will think that the balance of probability is against the older opinion. It is certain that the word translated "father-in-law" has no such definiteness either in the Hebrew or in the Septuagint. It means simply a "marriage relation," and is even used by Zipporah of Moses himself (Exod. iv. 25, 26—Hebrew. The Septuagint avoids the word). It is just as likely to mean "brother-in-law" when applied to Hobab. As Moses was already eighty years old when Jethro is first mentioned (Exod. iii. 1), it may seem probable that his father-in-law was by that time dead, and succeeded in his priestly office by his eldest son. In that case Hobab would be a younger son of Reuel, and as such free to leave the home of his ancestors and to join himself to his sister's people.

Ver. 31.—**Forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.** It is an obvious conclusion, from the reasons here urged by Moses, that the many and wonderful promises of Divine guidance and Divine direction did *not* supersede in his eyes the use of all available human aids. It is not indeed easy to say *where* any room was left for the good offices and experience of Hobab; the cloud of the Divine Presence *seemed* to control absolutely the journeying and encamping of the people; yet if we really knew in detail the actual ordering of that wondrous march, we should doubtless find that the heavenly guidance did but give unity and certainty to all the wisdom, caution, and endeavour of its earthly leaders. Indeed if we recall to mind that the host is calculated at more than two millions of people, it is quite evident that even during the march to Kadesh (and much more in the long wanderings which followed) it must have been extremely difficult to keep the various divisions together. In the broken and difficult country which they were to traverse, which had been familiar to Hobab from his youth, there would be scope enough for all his ability as a guide. And it would seem that it was just this prospect of being really useful to the people of Israel that prevailed with Hobab. He must indeed have felt assured that a wonderful future awaited a nation whose past and present were, even within his own knowledge, so wonderful. But that alone could not move him to leave his own land and his own kindred, a thing so unspeakably repugnant to the feelings and traditions of his age and country. Doubtless to the child of the desert, whose life was a never-ending struggle with the dangers and vicissitudes of the wilderness, the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey, watered with the rain of heaven, seemed like the garden of Eden. Yet the offer of an heritage within that land moved him

not so much, it would appear, as the claim upon his own good offices in helping the chosen people to reach their own abode. The Septuagint translation, or rather paraphrase, of this verse is, "Leave us not, forasmuch as thou wast with us in the wilderness, and thou shalt be an elder among us." This seems, on the one hand, to identify Hobab with Jethro; on the other, to imply that he was shortly afterwards one of the seventy elders upon whom the spirit came. This, however, is not likely. Hobab does indeed seem to have gone with the people, but his descendants were not incorporated into Israel; they were with them, but not of them.

Ver. 32.—**If thou go with us.** From Judges i. 16 we learn that the sons of Hobab joined themselves to the sons of Judah, and dwelt amongst them on the southern border of the land. Here is an "undesigned coincidence," albeit a slight one. Judah led the way on the march from Sinai to Canaan, and Hobab's duties as guide and scout would bring him more into contact with that tribe than with any other.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 29—32.—*The friendly invitation.* Spiritually, we have here the voice of the saints calling to the wavering and undecided to cast in their lot with them, and to be partakers with them in those good things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Thereupon we have the voice of the wavering and undecided urging the ties and affections of this world as supreme. Then again the voice of the saints holding up the prospect at once of greater usefulness and of higher reward in the service of God. Finally (in the subsequent history), we have the assurance that these persuasions prevailed, and that these promises were made good. Consider—

I. THAT THE INVITATION WAS ADDRESSED TO HOBAB. This Hobab was—1. A child of the desert, a "Kenite," whose *home* was in the wild country outside the promised land: a country which had a certain wild freedom and a precarious abundance, but withal full of dangers, of drought, and of the shadow of death. 2. A child of a patriarchal family; his father, "the priest of Midian," and a worshipper of the true God according to tradition. 3. A child of Reuel, "Moses' father-in-law," and therefore connected by family ties with Israel, and moreover an eye-witness to some extent of the power and mercy of the God of Israel. Hobab is the *child of this world*, whose *home* is amidst the precarious beauties and fading hopes of *time;* who has a knowledge of God by tradition, and a knowledge of religion by observation, yet of both rather as belonging to others than to himself.

II. THAT THE INVITATION CAME FROM THE ISRAEL OF GOD. "Come with *us.*" From a people redeemed and separated, and sanctified, a "holy nation, a royal priesthood," whom God had chosen to be the peculiar instruments of his glory, the peculiar recipients of his bounty. The Israel of God are *we* who are indeed in this world, but not of it, having our true and certain home beyond the reach of chance and change. Note, that countless *individuals* amongst the tribes of Israel never reached that land, and never tried to—but the people, *as a people*, reached it; even so, countless numbers of professing Christians will never get to heaven, and do not try to, but the Church of God, *as a Church*, will attain to eternal life. Therefore, "come with *us.*"

III. THAT THE INVITATION WAS TO GO WITH THEM, *i. e.*, 1. To be partner and partaker in their pilgrimage, their toils, and trials; 2. To be partner and partaker in their promised home to which *they* were journeying, in the blessings unto which *they* were called. As God "would have all men to be saved," so is it the chiefest desire of our hearts that all around us (and especially those connected with us) should share our blessings and our hopes, should be partakers with us (if need be) of that "light affliction" which worketh an "eternal weight of glory" (cf. Rom. ix. 3 and x. 2).

IV. THAT THE INDUCEMENT WAS, "WE WILL DO THEE GOOD." Not of their own ability, or of their own abundance, but by communicating unto him the good things which God should bestow on them. We may fearlessly say to the child of this world, "*we* will do thee good." Christianity is not individualism, but we are called "in one body," and spiritual blessings flow chiefly in one way or another through human channels. As a fact men find peace, support, sympathy, consolation here—heaven hereafter—*in* the society of the faithful, not *out* of it (cf. Mark x. 30).

V. THAT THE HINDRANCE TO HIS GOING WAS THE PRIOR CLAIM OF AN EARTHLY HOME AND KINDRED. "To mine own land, and to my kindred." His own land, although not half so good as the promised land, was familiar and accustomed. So were his relations, although they could not do half so much for him as Moses and the elders of Israel. Even so *the* great hindrance to a really religious walk are to be found in the habits of life which are so familiar, and in the associates who have so much influence. Many find an insuperable difficulty in breaking with the evil or vain traditions of their home, their education, their "set" or class: they *would* go—but the bondage of custom is too strong for them (cf. Luke ix. 59—62; xiv. 25, 26).

VI. THAT THE FURTHER AND (AS IT SEEMS) THE PREVAILING INDUCEMENT WITH HIM TO GO WAS THE HELP HE MIGHT AFFORD, THE GOOD HE MIGHT DO. Perhaps it was after all as much for Hobab's sake as for the people's, that Moses suggested to him of how much use he might be; but no doubt his training and qualifications did fit him for this service, and he felt that it was so. Even so there is a nobler, and often more potent, incentive to a religious life than even the glory which is to come. The prospect of being really useful to others, of making the utmost of all their gifts and acquirements—and *that* in the service of the Most High—is the great ambition which we ought to set before the eyes of men. A worldly life is a wasted life; a religious life is (or at least may be, and ought to be) a life of unselfish activity; and this, of all prospects and attractions, has the strongest charm for each nobler soul (cf. Matt. iv. 19; Luke xix. 31, 34; Acts ix. 16; xxvi. 16—18). Consider, also—

VII. THAT HOBAB'S WORK AND SERVICE ON THE MARCH WERE NOT SUPERFLUOUS IF RENDERED, NOR YET ESSENTIAL IF DENIED. The supernatural guidance vouchsafed to Israel left plenty of room for his human skill and experience; but if Israel had been deprived of them, no doubt the supernatural guidance would somehow have sufficed. Even so there is room in the work of salvation of souls for all human effort and wisdom, however Divine a matter it appears; and yet if any man withhold his co-operation the work shall not therefore be really injured (cf. 1 Cor. i. 27, 28; iii. 7, 9).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 29—32.—*Hobab invited; or, the Church's call to them that are without.* This incident carries one back in thought to the day, one and forty years ago, when Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, arrived at the well in Midian, and there met with the daughter of Jethro. At the expiry of forty years the call of the Lord constrained Moses to forsake Midian, that he might be the leader of Israel; but it did not finally sever him from all connection with the house of his Midianite father-in-law. When Israel, on the march from Egypt, arrived at the border of the wilderness of Sinai, Jethro came out to meet him, and to welcome him. This done, he returned to his own house and sheep-walks. But his son Hobab stayed behind, and witnessed the giving of the law. When the march was about to be resumed, Hobab proposed to bid farewell to his sister and Moses. But Moses would not hear of it. Reminding Hobab of the inheritance awaiting Israel in the land of the Canaanites, he, in his own name, and in the name of the whole people, invited him to join himself to their company, and share in all the goodness which the Lord was about to do to them in fulfilment of his promise. This invitation, addressed by Moses and the congregation to one who did not belong to the seed of Jacob, is of no small interest historically. And its practical interest is still greater; for it exhibits a bright example of a desire which ought always to find place in the hearts of the faithful—the desire to allure into their fellowship "them that are without," whether these are the heathen abroad, or the careless and vicious at home. Viewing the text in this light, it presents three topics which claim consideration.

I. THE CHURCH'S PROFESSION OF FAITH AND HOPE. "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. . . . The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." On the lips of Moses and the congregation this was really a profession and utterance of faith. From the day that God called Abraham, he and his seed were taught to expect Canaan as their inheritance; and it was faith's business to embrace the promise and look for its accomplishment. In the faith of this

promise Abraham and Isaac and Jacob lived and died. In the faith of it Joseph, when he died, gave commandment concerning his bones. In the faith of it Moses forsook Pharaoh's house. In the faith of it he refused to cast in his lot with Jethro's Midianites, and called the son born to him in Midian Gershom, "a stranger there." In the faith of the same promise Israel was now resuming the march towards Canaan. It is no idle fancy which sees in all this a parable of the Christian faith and the Christian profession. We also look for an inheritance and rest. "We believe that we shall be saved." We have been begotten to a living hope by the resurrection of Christ. As truly as the tribes in the wilderness, we (unless wo have believed in vain) have turned our backs upon Egypt, and have set our faces towards the better country. We are journeying. We are strangers and pilgrims. I admit that among professing Christians there are many who have no real hope of the kind described; many, also, whose hope is anything but bright and strong. Nevertheless, the world is certainly mistaken when it persuades itself that the Christian hope is an empty boast. There are tens of thousands whose lives are sustained and controlled by it continually.

II. THE CHURCH'S INVITATION TO THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT. "Come thou with us." The words remind us of a truth too often forgotten, namely, that even under the Old Testament the Church was by no means the exclusive body which some take it to have been. It had an open door and a welcome for all who desired to enter. In point of fact, a considerable proportion of those who constituted the Hebrew commonwealth at any given time were of Gentile descent. Moses did not act without warrant when he invited Hobab to come in—he and all his. At the same time it is to be remembered that the gospel Church is not to be contented with simply maintaining the attitude of the Old Testament Church towards them that are without. We are not only to keep an open door and make applicants welcome, we are to go forth and compel them to come in. Christ's Church is a missionary Church. A religious society which neglects this function—which refuses to obey the command to go and preach the gospel to every creature—lacks one of the notes of the Christian Church. We are to charge ourselves with the duty of sending the gospel to the far-off heathen. As for the careless and ungodly who are our neighbours, we are not only to send to them the word, but ought personally to invite them to come with us.

III. THE ARGUMENTS WITH WHICH THE INVITATION IS FORTIFIED. I refer especially to those urged by Moses and the congregation here. 1. It will be well for Hobab and his house if he will come (ver. 32). No doubt the man who follows Christ must be prepared to take up the cross—must be ready to suffer reproach, to encounter tribulation, to take in hand self-denying work. These things are not pleasant to flesh and blood. Yet after all, Wisdom's ways are the ways of pleasantness. Compared with the devil's yoke, the yoke of Christ is easy. Godliness has the promise of both worlds. Those who have given Christ's service a fair trial would not for the world change masters. 2. Hobab is to come, for the Lord hath need of him (vers. 30, 31). It seems that Moses' brother-in-law feared he might be an intruder and a burden. No such thing. A son of the desert would be of manifold service to the congregation in the desert. There is great wisdom in this argument. It is a great mistake to suppose that people seriously inquiring after salvation will attach themselves most readily to the Church which will give them nothing to do. The nobler sort will be attracted rather by the prospect of being serviceable. To sum up—the argument which will carry the greatest weight with unbelievers and despisers of God is that which utters itself in the Church's profession of its own faith and hope. A Church whose faith is weak and whose hope is dim will be found to have little power to rouse the careless and draw them into its fellowship. Men are most likely to be gained to Christ and the way of salvation by the Church whose members manifest by their words and lives the presence in their hearts of a bright and living hope of eternal life.—B.

Vers. 29—32.—*Moses and Hobab.* I. THE WONDERFUL CHANGES GOD MAKES IN HUMAN LIFE. What men do themselves, the history of self-made men, is often very astonishing, yet nothing to the history of God-made men. For forty years Moses had been a shepherd in this wilderness; as we may conjecture, an oft companion with Hobab in these very scenes. Suddenly he goes away to Egypt to visit his brethren,

and in the course of a few months returns to the wilderness with over 600,000 fighting men, beside women and children. So in the Scriptures we find many other wonderful God-made changes in human life. Joseph leaving his brethren a slave—his brethren finding him again prime minister to Pharaoh. The lad David brought from the recluse pastoral scene to stand before armies and slay the dreaded foe of Israel. Jesus visiting Nazareth to be a wonderment and stumbling-block to those who had known him from infancy. Saul among the persecutors when he left Jerusalem—among the persecuted when he returns.

II. THESE WONDERFUL CHANGES MAY BE EXHIBITED SO AS TO MAKE OTHERS THE SUBJECTS OF THEM. Hobab had probably been much with Moses, for old acquaintance' sake, while the people of God were round about Sinai. The recollections of the past were comparatively fresh, and Moses had a natural interest in a kinsman. But now the time has come to move, and what must Hobab do? The necessities of God's kingdom bring a separation sooner or later in all friendship, unless both parties are in the kingdom. It is the critical moment of Hobab's life, and he must decide at once. Not but what he might change his mind, and follow afterwards, only the chances were that it was now or never. Thus Hobab is the illustration of all who are asked and pressed to join the people of God. To such persons every narration of God's experienced grace to others brings a cordial invitation in the very telling of it. It is our own fault if we be mere spectators of the cloud, hearers of the trumpet. God had made most gracious provision for the stranger to come into Israel. No word could be more cordial and pressing than that of Moses here. It was not hatred of outsiders as outsiders, but as abominably wicked, that brought God's vengeance on them.

III. THESE WONDERFUL CHANGES MAY BE EXHIBITED WITHOUT PRODUCING SYMPATHY AND APPRECIATION. The reply of Hobab illustrates the natural man in his want of sympathy with spiritual struggles. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." How many there have been of such spectators in every age, those who have seen some old companion suddenly borne away, come under the influence of new powers, and turn what is called fanatic and enthusiast! The old ties are all broken, or, if any remain, there is no substance in them. Believer and unbeliever may continue to meet in the commerce of the world, but in closer relations they can meet no longer. When Pitt was told of the great religious change that had passed over Wilberforce, he suggested to his friend that he was out of spirits, and that company and conversation would be the best way of dissipating his impressions. Hobab was quite contented with his sheep in the desert. He did not want to be circumcised, and held in with such rigorous restrictions. Doubtless he had a warm place in his heart for Moses, but he could not say as Buxton once signed himself in a letter to J. J. Gurney, "Yours, in the threefold cord of taste, affection, and *religion*."—Y.

Ver. 29.—*A right feeling and a Christian invitation.* I. THE FEELING WHICH SHOULD BE IN ALL CHRISTIAN HEARTS. "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you." Thus our view of the future should be regulated as a future not of our achieving, but of God's giving. The end is definite and assured, however devious and tedious the way may be. The end is one not to be reached immediately; the place which God will give us must be at a secure distance from spiritual Egypt, with its bondage and tyranny. The feeling which we entertain with respect to this place must be a confident one, and expressed in a manner corresponding. The feeling thus entertained and expressed must have all our actions in harmony with it. Our closest connections with earth should be as nothing more than the pegs of the Israelite tents, here to-day and gone to-morrow (John xiv. 1—3; xvii. 24; 2 Cor. v. 1—9; Heb. iv. 11; xi. 13—16; xii. 27; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4).

II. THE INVITATION WHICH SHOULD COME FROM ALL CHRISTIAN LIPS. "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." Addressed to those who may think they have a true home among things seen and temporal, but who are as really without a home as is the Christian. If Christians are sure they are going onward to the true home chosen, secured, and enriched by God, what is more Christ-like than that they should ask their Hobab-neighbours to join their well-protected, well-provisioned caravan?

If even now sweet influences from the rest that remaineth for the people of God possess our souls, these should be used to win others from the illusions of this passing scene. What a blessed occupation to be drawing human spirits into that sphere of the unseen and eternal which alone gives them a fitting service here, and a true rest and reward hereafter! The invitation must be a loving and constraining one. To promise good to others, we must feel and show that we have got good ourselves. The invitation can only come when we ourselves feel that we are in the right way to the desired end.

III. THE REASON BY WHICH THE INVITATION IS ENFORCED. "The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Concerning *Israel.* Concerning other nations he had spoken ill for their idolatries and abominations. Sodom was a witness to his consuming wrath, and his hand had been laid heavily on Egypt. But concerning Israel he had spoken good in a large and loving way (Exod. iii. 6—8; vi. 6—8; xxiii. 20—33). The stranger then must cease to be a stranger, and enter by circumcision of the heart into the spiritual Israel. The force of the invitations does not depend on our sanguine anticipations. Others are as well able to consider what the Lord has spoken as we are. His word is the guarantee. If even the Jewish nation, the typical Israel, has still to have prophecies fulfilled, how much more its antitype, the spiritual Israel, those who are Jews inwardly! Consider for yourselves then all the good that God has spoken concerning Israel.—Y

Ver. 31.—*A fresh appeal.* Moses has failed in appealing to Hobab by a regard for his own best interests, but he has a second arrow in his quiver. He will touch Hobab's sense of friendship, his manliness, anything that was chivalrous in him; he will put him on his honour to render just the one service he was able to render. Note—

I. THE SERVICES WHICH THE WORLD CAN RENDER TO THE CHURCH. We may fairly assume, considering Judges i. 16, that Hobab went with Moses after all (Matt. xxi. 29). He will help Moses the man, when he cares nothing for Moses the prophet of God. There may be a certain sense of duty even when there is none of sin and spiritual need, a certain power to help, even though the highest power be utterly lacking. The peculiar strength of the Church is in God; when it does spiritual work with spiritual instruments; but the world may also be tributary in its own way. The wealth of the world is not a spiritual thing, but it has been helpful to the Church. Men of the world have neither the Christ-like love nor the self-denial to initiate enterprises, which, nevertheless, they will generously support. In person they will do nothing; in purse they will do much. The printer who cares nothing for Christ, who to-day prints the scoffs and quibbles of an atheist, or some frivolous fiction, may to-morrow print a Bible, or a precious biography of some departed saint. Places of worship have been built by men who had no religion in them. Fishers' boats ferried Jesus across the lake of Galilee; trading ships took Paul on his missionary journey; and soldiers of Cæsar conveyed him to Rome, where for so long a time he had panted to preach the gospel.

II. THE HOLD WHICH THE CHURCH KEEPS ON THE WORLD. Hobab said very bluntly he would not go with Moses; but he had not thought of all the considerations that might be brought to bear upon him. The grasp of Moses was firmer than he thought. Let no worldly man despise what he deems the dreams and delusions of the Christian. They may have a greater power on him in the end than at present he has any conception of. Human friendships and old associations are part of the bait with which Christ furnishes his fishers of men. Those who will not read the Scriptures for salvation, and who laugh at the schemes of doctrine drawn from them, yet find in the same Scriptures too much of poetry and interest to be slightingly passed by. What a strange thing, too, to hear men, even in all their vehement denials of the supernatural, extolling Jesus of Nazareth, admiring his spirit, and recommending his ethics. However they try, they cannot get away from him. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." We must not despair of unbelievers, even after many refusals (Luke xiii. 6—9). In connection with Moses and Hobab, a reference to Tennyson's 'In Memoriam,' lxiii., "Dost thou look back on what hath been?" &c., may be found homiletically helpful.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE ACTUAL DEPARTURE FROM SINAI (vers. 33—36). Ver. 33.—**And they departed.** These words mark the moment of actual departure, which has been anticipated in the general statement of ver. 12. It was one of the supreme moments in the life of Israel—one of those beginnings or "departures" which lead to untold gain or loss; it was, in fact, although they knew it not, the commencement of a march which for almost all of them should know no end except within a hasty grave. No doubt, during the months spent at Sinai, every preparation had been made for the onward journey; but none the less it was a stupendous enterprise to march that vast host, so largely composed of women and children, so little inured to such fatigue, and so impatient of such discipline, for three consecutive days into a wilderness. **Three days' journey.** This expression is apparently a general one, and not to be strictly pressed (cf. Gen. xxx. 36; Exod. iii. 18; xv. 22). At the same time it implies (1) that the host twice halted for the night during the journey, and (2) that the whole journey was regarded as one and in some sense as complete in itself. The *terminus ad quem* of this three days' journey is given us in ver. 12; it was to take them across the intervening belt of sand, and to land them fairly within the "wilderness of Paran." During this journey no doubt the march would be pushed on as steadily as possible, but it is not likely that it would cover so much as thirty miles. A modern army, unencumbered with non-combatants, does not make more than ten miles a day over difficult country, nor can cattle be driven faster than that. Even to accomplish that rate, and to keep the whole multitude together, as the narrative implies, required supernatural aid and strength. For the direction of the march see notes on ch. xiii. **The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them.** It is obvious that what is apparently affirmed here is apparently at variance with ch. ii. 17 and ver. 21 of this chapter, which speak of the "holy things"—of which the ark was the most holy—as carried by the Kohathites in the very midst of the long line of march. Three opinions have been held on the subject. 1. That the ark was really carried with the other "holy things," and only "went before" metaphorically, as a general may be said to lead his troops, although he may not be actually in front of them; to which it is obvious to reply that if the ark did not actually precede the host, there was no possible way in which it could direct their movements; the cloud alone would be the visible expression of the Divine guidance. 2. That the "holy things" generally were ordered to be carried in the midst of the host by the Kohathites, but that God reserved the place of the ark itself to his own immediate disposition. A general does not include himself in his own marching orders, however minute; and the ark was the outward symbol of God's own personal presence and guidance. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that the first intimation of the position of the ark on the march should be given at the moment when the march actually commenced. 3. That the usual place for the ark was no doubt with the sanctuary, as implied in the orders, but that *on this special occasion* the ark went to the front in consequence of some Divine intimation, just as it did at the crossing of Jordan and at the taking of Jericho. Certainly there is much reason in this view, considering how momentous and formidable was their first assay at marching from their temporary home towards that unknown land beyond the northern horizon. If the deep waters of Jordan might fright them, or the walls of Jericho defy them, well might they shrink from plunging into the broken, stony, and intractable country into which the ark and the cloud now led them. We shall probably think that either habitually or at least occasionally the ark *did* go before, and that the feet of them that bare it were supernaturally directed, either by the movements of the cloud, or by some more secret intimation, towards the destined place of rest. It is allowed by all that the cloud preceded and directed the march, and it would be strange indeed if these twin symbols of the Divine presence had been so far separated from one another; for the accustomed place of the cloud was above the tabernacle, *i. e.* above the ark, yet outside of the tabernacle, so as to be visible to all.

Ver. 34.—**The cloud of the Lord was upon them by day.** It would seem as if the cloud, which was luminous by night, dense and dark by day, spread itself upwards and backwards from over the ark, overshadowing the host as it followed—a refreshment at any rate to those who were near, perhaps to all, and a guiding beacon to those who were afar. To what extent the people at large were able to enjoy this shade amidst the burning heats of the desert we cannot possibly tell, but there is no doubt that it dwelt in the memory of the nation, and gave meaning to such expressions as the "shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. xci. 1), and "the shadow of a cloud" (Isa. xxv. 4, 5).

Ver. 35.—**When the ark set forward.** These words, taken in connection with the words "when it rested," in the following verse, confirm the belief that at this time

(at any rate) the ark went before the host; for if it had remained in the midst, it would not have stirred until half the tribes had moved off, nor would it have halted until half the camp was pitched, whereas it is evident that its setting forward and standing still were the decisive moments of the day. They had, as it were, a sacramental character; they were visible signs, corresponding to invisible realities, as the movements of the hands on the dial correspond to the action of the machinery within. When the ark and the cloud set forward, it was the Almighty God going on before to victory; when the ark and the cloud rested, it was the all-merciful God returning to protect and cherish his own. This is clearly recognised in the morning and evening prayer of Moses. The typical and spiritual character of that setting forward and that resting could not well have been lost upon any religious mind—that God going before us is the certain and abiding pledge of final victory, that God returning to us is the only hope of present safety. **Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered.** The sixty-eighth Psalm, which we have learnt to associate with the wonders of Pentecost and the triumphs of the Church on earth, seems to be an expansion of Moses' morning prayer.

Ver. 36.—**Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands** (literally, myriad thousands; see ch. i. 16) **of Israel.** רִבְבוֹת being construed with the accusative is of somewhat doubtful interpretation. It may be as in the beautiful and familiar rendering of the A. V., than which nothing could be more obviously in harmony with the circumstances, and the feelings which gave rise to the prayer. Or it may be necessary to translate it by a transitive verb, and then it will be either, with many moderns, "*Restore*, O Lord, the myriad thousands of Israel," *i. e.* to their promised home; or, with the Septuagint, "*Convert*, O Lord (ἐπίστρεψε, Κύριε), the thousand myriads of Israel." If the ordinary reading be (as it appears) grammatically defensible, it is unquestionably to be preferred. Only Moses, as he looked upon that huge multitude covering the earth far and wide, could rightly feel how unutterably awful their position would be if on any day the cloud *were* to rise and melt into the evening sky instead of poising itself above the sanctuary of Israel. The Septuagint transposes ver. 34 from its proper place to the end of the chapter, apparently in order to keep together the verses which speak of the movements of the ark. Many Hebrew MSS. mark vers. 35, 36 with inverted nuns, ׆, but the explanations given are fanciful, and the meaning uncertain.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 33—36.—*The heavenward march.* Spiritually, we have here the journey of the Church of God, or of the faithful soul, towards heaven under the guidance of the Saviour. For the ark, whereon rested the Shechinah, and in which was carried the law, is the type of Jesus, in whom dwelt the whole fulness of the Godhead bodily (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 18; iv. 6 *b.*; Col. ii. 9), and in whom as manifested to us is found the new law of love and liberty (Ps. xl. 8; cf. Mark xii. 30, 31; Rom. vii. 6; Jas. i. 25; 1 Pet. ii. 21 *b.*). Therefore we have here Jesus going before his own, (1) to guide them in the daily path, (2) to lead them to their rest when the journey is over (cf. John x. 4; xiv. 2). In the cloud, again, we have (it may be) the refreshment of the Holy Spirit ("another Comforter"), when we face the burden and heat of life. Lastly, we have the devout prayers of the faithful for the help of God in their spiritual warfare, for the presence of God with their souls. Consider, therefore, on vers. 33, 34—

I. THAT THE HOUR OF DEPARTURE FROM HOREB, SO LONG DELAYED, AND THE PLUNGE INTO THE STONY DESERT, SO OFTEN ANTICIPATED, CAME AT LAST. Many may have thought it would never really arrive, but it did; and in a few hours the mount, which had been the scene of such wondrous events, was hidden for ever from their eyes. Even so we cannot abide on the heights of contemplation (with Moses), or in the plains of instruction (with the people). There is a time to receive marching orders; there is a much longer and more trying time to march accordingly amidst hard trials and difficult undertakings—and this time will surely come to each and all (Matt. x. 38; Acts xiv. 22 *b.*; 2 Tim. ii. 12; iii. 12).

II. THAT THE ISRAELITES WERE NOT REQUIRED TO FIND THEIR OWN WAY, OR TRUST TO HUMAN GUIDANCE: THE ARK WENT BEFORE THEM. They only had to follow as best they might. Even so Jesus goes before his own; once for all, by his death, resurrection, and ascension; daily, by his example and encouragement. As he has gone before us all into heaven to prepare a "rest" for the people of God, so he goes before each weary soul in life and death to find out resting-places and places of refreshment for it (Ps. xxiii. 4; John viii. 12; xii. 26; xiv. 2, 6).

III. THAT THE ISRAELITES WERE IN PART SHIELDED FROM THE FIERCE AND FATAL HEATS OF THE DESERT MARCH BY THE CLOUD WHICH OVERSHADOWED THEM FROM ABOVE THE ARK. For that luminous cloud which rested permanently over the ark was spread over the following host when on the march. St. Paul says that the Jews were "baptized unto Moses *in the cloud* and in the sea" (1 Cor. x. 2), whence it appears that as the passage of the sea represented in a figure the baptism of water which separates outwardly unto Christ (the Moses of the better covenant), so did the overhanging cloud with its moist coolness represent the baptism of the Spirit, which is an abiding refreshment to the faithful while (but only while) they follow Christ. And thus the old hymn, *Veni Sanctus Spiritus*—

Thou of Comforters the best;
Thou the soul's most welcome guest;
Sweet refreshment here below;

In our labour rest most sweet,
Grateful coolness in the heat,
Solace in the midst of woe.

Even so, therefore, the overshadowing presence (cf. Luke i. 35) of the Holy Ghost is the blessed solace, comfort, and refreshment of the faithful in fiery trials, fierce temptations, and weary disappointments; and this overshadowing Presence reaches us only from and through the glorified humanity of Jesus (our Ark), and only while we walk in faith and patience (cf. John vii. 39; xvi. 7; Rom. viii. 14; 1 John ii. 20; 1 Pet. iv. 14). Note, that the unrecorded sufferings and vexations of such a host on such a march must have been beyond description; but this much appears, that the nearer they kept to the ark the more they were sheltered by the cloud: if any staid in camp, he had *no* shade. The more closely we follow Jesus, the more comfort of the Spirit shall we have amidst the unavoidable sorrows and sufferings of life. And note, that there are in the Old Testament very few symbols of the Holy Spirit, whereas there are an endless number of types of Christ—and this, no doubt, in accordance with the deep saying of John vii. 39 (*οὔπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα ἅγιον*). When, therefore, we find one which is recognised in the New Testament, it is the more precious. Consider, again, on vers. 35, 36—

I. THAT EVERY DAY OF THE MARCH HAD FOR MOSES ITS TWO SUPREME MOMENTS, OF SETTING OUT AND OF SETTLING DOWN, AND EACH HAD ITS OWN DANGERS AND ANXIETIES. Even so every day in a Christian's life has its morning and evening, its opening and closing; its going forth to work, to business, to converse with the outer world, to manifold encounter with the strange, the unexpected, the difficult, perhaps the terrible; its coming in to rest, to ease, to unguarded relaxation, to the little circle where self is paramount, where the individual is all important. These two points are the critical points in the Christian's daily life.

II. THAT MOSES MADE HIS MORNING PRAYER FOR DIVINE DEFENCE AND AID AGAINST THE FOE. He knew that many enemies were hovering round (like the Amalekites) who might attack them at any time, even when least expected, and might find them, humanly speaking, an easy prey. He prayed that *God* would undertake their cause, and put to flight their foes. Even so the faithful soul, looking forward to the active hours of the day, knows from sad experience that spiritual foes will dog its path to assail it by temptation and overthrow it by sin when least prepared. Therefore, before it ventures forth, it beseeches God to be its succour and defence against all the craft and subtlety of its foes.

III. THAT MOSES MADE HIS EVENING PRAYER FOR THE CONTINUANCE OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN THEIR MIDST. He knew that the people were helpless, and moreover stiff-necked and hard-hearted, and that mischief would breed in the camp as readily as it might meet them on the march, and that they must perish miserably if left to themselves. He prayed that God would stay with them, and be their worship, and remain the centre of their life *ab intra*, as well as their defence *ab extra*. Even so the Christian's evening prayer is, "Abide with us." The faithful soul, when it ceases from outward cares and is most thrown upon itself, feels most how lost would be its state without the abiding Presence and grace of God; and then it beseeches him—whom it has more or less offended—to return to it, because without him it were

empty, desolate, and destroyed. Note, that if we read with some, "Restore the many thousands of Israel," *i. e.* to their promised land, then it is the voice of the faithful, recognising at each pause in life that we are still strangers and wanderers here, and beseeching God to bring us to our true and only rest (cf. 2 Cor. v. 4; Phil. iii. 11; Rev. vi. 10, 11). And cf. the ancient prayer, "Beseeching thee shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom, that *we with all those* that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and joy in thy eternal and everlasting glory." Or, if we read with the Septuagint, "convert the many thousands of Israel," then it is the voice of the faithful in the intervals of labour supplicating God for all who in any wise belong to the Israel of God, that the grace of a true and entire conversion—which is the one thing needful—may be granted unto them (cf. Luke xxii. 32 *b.*; 2 Cor. xiii. 9 *b.*; 1 Thess. iii. 10 *b.*).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 35, 36.—*The prayers at the moving and resting of the ark.* Here are two petitions—one as the cloud rose to point the way, the other as it settled down again to indicate the time for rest. The morning and the evening prayer cannot be the same; there is one set of needs to be supplied during the day, and another during the night.

THE FIRST PETITION. It was fixed on the one thing needed, as the Israelites journeyed on into unknown territory. Moses needed not to pray for *guidance.* They were being guided, and had nothing to do but follow. Behind the ark and the cloud there was the evident duty of *obedience*, but what was there in front? Moses could make some guess from what he had already experienced. Before the Israelites had been three months out of Egypt, they were met by Amalek at Rephidim, blocking the way to Sinai. Moses, therefore, recognises the great likelihood of *more enemies in front*, now they have left Sinai. The great bulk of his followers doubtless thought more of the present than the future, and both present and future they wanted to be like the past in Egypt, full of good things for their sinful cravings. But Moses, with a different spirit, felt there were enemies in the way. Getting into Canaan meant not only journeying but fighting. It is a serious defect in us that we do not think enough of the spiritual enemies in front. There are examples to warn: Peter overrating natural courage; Demas, overcome by the allurements of the present age. Notice that, *in its own way*, the New Testament is every whit as warlike in its spirit as the old (Matt. x. 34; Rom. vii. 23; 2 Cor. vii. 5; 2 Cor. x. 3—5; Eph. vi. 10—17; 1 Tim. i. 18; Heb. iv. 12; Rev. i. 16: indeed the Revelation is full of spiritual war and conquest). These enemies in front are considered also as *God's enemies.* "*Thine* enemies." As men attack one another through their property, so God's enemies attack him through his people. God in the blessedness and security of his own nature is unassailable, but in the workings of his manifold creation the powers of evil may attack him, maintaining a long and bitter struggle ('Paradise Lost,' B. ii. 310—370). Do not think of these powers as aiming simply at our destruction. This is but a means to an end. There is a far sublimer and more encouraging view, that they are aiming to destroy the government of God. We never find out the purpose of a battle by looking at the conflicts of the private soldiers and inferior officers. We must come to the supreme authorities. It is they who inspire and direct everything. So there may be a struggle going on in the universe of which we, with our little horizon, can form but a feeble conception. Lastly, it is prayed that these enemies should be *decisively dealt with.* It is an awful thing to think of, but we must not shut our eyes to plain and solemn facts, that as we look backwards from this point to the beginning of the Scriptures, we find the Almighty, in three instances, acting against the iniquity of the world in a most decisive and comprehensive way. The deluge was a scattering, so was the destruction of Sodom, so was the overwhelming of Pharaoh and his hosts, which last great punitive act of God, Moses had seen with his own eyes, and celebrated with his own lips. There is enough to assure his people that he will make a final scattering in his own time.

THE SECOND PETITION. 1. It *was a welcome to the conqueror.* God was doing something for his people in conquest every day. We may be sure there was no day in all these long forty years but something was done to undermine the huge and threatening powers that opposed advancing Israel. As the huge tree is slowly hollowed and eaten away, leaving a mere shell to come down at last with a crash, so the strongholds of iniquity are effectually sapped, little by little. Jericho seemed to fall as in a day before the trumpet blasts of Israel; in reality it had been nodding to its fall for years. So we may be constantly welcoming Jesus as the Captain of our salvation (Exod. xv. 2; Luke iv. 14, 15; Acts xiv. 26—28). 2. *It indicated the use to be made of the victory.* The enemies of God were scattered and dispossessed in order that his own people may come in and exercise a faithful stewardship for him. His victories open up regions which could not otherwise be attained. *E. g.* the risen Saviour, having triumphed over sin, death, and the grave, returned to his disciples in Galilee, telling them that all power was given to him in heaven and on earth, and thence he drew this consequence in the way of duty for them, that they were to go and disciple all nations, etc. (Matt. xxviii. 18—20). If the *risen Lord* be indeed with *us*, then, because he is risen, we, having still our fight with sin and death to accomplish, are nevertheless assured of ultimate victory.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PLACE OF BURNING (vers. 1—3). Ver. 1.—**And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord.** There is no "when" in the original. It is literally, "And the people were as complainers evil in the ears of the Lord." This may be paraphrased as in the A. V.; or it may be rendered as in the Septuagint, ἦν ὁ λαὸς γογγύζων πονηρὰ ἐναντι κυρίου (cf. 1 Cor. x. 10), where πονηρά means the wicked things they uttered in their discontent; or the "evil" may mean the hardships they complained of. The Targums understand it in the same way as the Septuagint, and this seems to agree best with the context. As to the time and place of this complaining, the narrative seems to limit it within the three days' march from the wilderness of Sinai; but it is not possible to fix it more precisely. It is sufficient that the very first incident in the great journey thought worthy of record was this sin and its punishment, and the natural conclusion is that it came to pass very shortly after the departure. As to the reason of the complaining, although it is not stated, and although there does not seem to have been any special cause of distress, we can hardly be mistaken about it. The fatigue and anxiety of the march, after a year's comparative idleness, the frightful nature of the country into which they were marching, and the unknown terrors of the way which lay before them, these were quite enough to shake their nerves and upset their minds. Such things could only be borne and faced in a spirit of faith and trustful dependence upon God and their appointed leaders, and that spirit they knew nothing of. Slavery, even when its outward pressure is past and gone like a bad dream, leaves behind it above all things an incurable suspicion of, and a rooted disbelief in, others, which shows itself outwardly by blank ingratitude and persistent complaint of bad treatment. This is the well-known mental attitude of liberated slaves even towards their benefactors and liberators; and in the case of Israel this temper extended to the King of Israel himself, whom they held responsible for all the privations and terrors of an apparently needless journey through a hideous waste. The Targum of Palestine says here, "There were wicked men of the people who, being discontent, devised and imagined evil before the Lord." The complaining, however, seems to have been general throughout the host, as the Psalmist more truly acknowledges (Ps. lxxviii. 17—22). **And the fire of the Lord burnt among them.** The "fire of the Lord" may mean one of three things. 1. Lightning, as apparently in Job i. 16; for lightning to the unscientific is the fiery bolt, even as thunder is the angry voice, of God (cf. 1 Sam. xii. 18, 19). 2. A miraculous outburst of flame from the Presence in the tabernacle, such as slew Nadab and Abihu (Levit. x. 2), and afterwards the 250 men who offered incense (ch. xvi. 35). 3. A miraculous descent of fire from heaven, as apparently in 2 Kings i. 10—12 (cf. Rev. xiii. 13). Of these the second seems to be excluded by the fact that the conflagration was in the outskirts of the camp furthest removed from the tabernacle. If we suppose the fire to have been natural, we may further suppose that it set alight to the dry bushes and shrubs which abound in parts of the desert, and which blaze with great fury when the flame is driven by the wind. It is, however, at least as likely that a wholly supernatural visitation of God is

here intended. What is most important to notice is this, that the punishment in this case followed hard and sore upon the sin, whereas before they came to Sinai the Lord had passed over similar murmurings without any chastisement (Exod. xv. 24; xvi. 2). The reason of this difference was twofold. In the first place, they had now had abundant opportunity to become acquainted with the power and goodness of the Lord, and had solemnly entered into covenant with him, and he had taken up his abode among them; wherefore their responsibilities grew with their privileges, their dangers kept pace with their advantages. In the second place, they had while at Sinai committed an act of national apostasy (Exod. xxxii.), the punishment of which, although suspended (ver. 14), was only suspended (ver. 34), and was always capable of being revived; Israel was plainly warned that he was under sentence, and that any disobedience would awake the terrors of the Lord against him. **And consumed . . . in the uttermost parts of the camp.** Probably setting fire to the outer line of tents, or some pitched outside the line, and consuming the people that were in them. The Targum of Palestine affirms that it "destroyed some of the wicked in the outskirts of the house of Dan, with whom was a graven image;" but this attempt to shift the responsibility, and to alter the character of the sin, is clearly worthless, and only suggested by occurrences wholly unconnected with the present (see Judges xviii.).

Ver. 2.—**And the people cried unto Moses.** Fear brought them to their senses, and they knew that their only hope was in their mediator, who had already saved them by his intercession from a worse destruction (Exod. xxxii. 30—34). **The fire was quenched.** Rather, "went out." As its beginning was supernatural, or at least was so ordered as to appear so, its end also was due to the Divine intervention, not to human efforts.

Ver. 3.—**And he called the name of the place Taberah.** Or Tabeérah (תַּבְעֵרָה). This name does not occur in the list of stations in ch. xxxiii., which mentions nothing between Sinai and Kibroth-Hattaavah. It would seem probable, however, that the conflagration occurred while Israel was encamped, or else there could hardly have been a burning "in the end of the camp." We may therefore suppose either that Tabeérah was some spot in the immediate neighbourhood of Sinai whither the people gathered for their first long march; or that it was one of the halting-places on the "three days' journey" not mentioned in the list, because that journey was considered as all one; or that it was the same place afterwards called Kibroth-Hattaavah. There is nothing in the narrative to decide a question which is in itself unimportant. It is necessary to remember that where the ancient and local names derived from marked natural features were not available, such names as Tabeérah given to the halting-places of so vast a host must have had a very loose significance.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Wrath awaked and wrath appeased.* In this short passage we have, in a microcosm, the whole sad history of the Church. For the history of the Church, as it is glorious on the side of God and his faithfulness, so it is sad indeed on the side of man and his unfaithfulness. Here we may see trial followed at once by failure, temptation by sin; failure and sin followed by fiery wrath. Yet wrath is never without mercy, for the fire is quenched by the voice of the mediator. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE VERY FIRST INCIDENT RECORDED BETWEEN SINAI AND CANAAN WAS SIN. There was no gradual descent; it broke out all at once. So it was in the beginning—immediately after the creation, the fall; and so it was in the second beginning of the race (Gen. ix. 21). Even so it is still: the first actual fact which meets us in the history of a soul on its way to heaven is some sin or failure on its part. It is the one thing which more than any other determines the character of *practical* religion, as distinguished from *theoretical* (James iii. 2; 1 John i. 8).

II. THAT THE ROOT OF THIS EVIL PLANT WAS TO BE FOUND IN THE NATURE OF THE PEOPLE, MADE CROOKED BY GENERATIONS OF SERVITUDE, AND NOT RADICALLY ALTERED BY THE DISCIPLINE OF A YEAR. Even so human nature, terribly corrupt as it is, is the nature of the elect too: it is indeed sanctified and improved by the operations of grace, but not superseded; it remains human nature still, and as such is sure to assert itself. Therefore "regeneration," which signifies the renewal of this nature, is indeed bestowed in time (John iii. 5; Titus iii. 5), but is also reserved for eternity (Matt. xix. 28), in testimony that it is only partial here. One of the saddest, the most obvious, and yet most unlooked-for and perplexing of facts about regenerate

humanity is the persistence within it of evil, whether proper to the age, the race, the family, or the individual (Rom. vii. 18—25).

III. THAT THE FRUIT OF THIS EVIL PLANT WAS THUS SUDDENLY RIPENED BY THE OUTWARD HARDSHIPS AND TRIALS OF THE MARCH. Encamped at comparative ease about Sinai, the tendency to sin lay dormant, the root seemed dead: a few days, a few hours perhaps, of scorching heat and unaccustomed toil, and the poison fruit was already matured, the whole camp was in rebellion against God. Even so there are evil dispositions latent in many (if not in all) of us which need but a little stress of circumstance to bring them into active play, to ripen them into open sin, and that with startling quickness, unless restrained by grace. The sudden falls of good men are only sudden because we do not see the strength of evil in them which is waiting its opportunity. Hence the absolute necessity of trial and conflict to test the worth of our religion (Matt. x. 22; 2 Tim. ii. 12; James i. 12; Rev. i. 9; ii. 11, &c.; vii. 14).

IV. THAT THE FORM WHICH THEIR REBELLION TOOK WAS THAT OF COMPLAINING—there being indeed nothing that they could *do* under the circumstances. Even so the fruit of sinful feelings and desires is quite as often discontent as anything more active, because the more active forms of sin are so often out of our reach. An evil heart is the source of all sins, and the evil heart almost always shows itself in a state of inward discontent which finds vent in outward complaints. Hence the "unthankful" are next door to the "unholy" (2 Tim. iii. 2), and all one with the "evil" (Luke vi. 35). A discontented heart is a hot-bed of every kind of sin (cf. Mark xiv. 10; John xii. 4—6).

V. THAT THE ANGER OF THE LORD WAS MORE HOT AGAINST THEM, AND THEIR PUNISHMENT MORE SEVERE, THAN BEFORE THEY CAME TO SINAI. For they had received the law, and entered into the covenant, and had the worship and presence of God in the midst of them. Even so the more light and grace we have, the more awful will it be to sin against that light, in despite of that grace. So the sin of the Jew was worse than that of the heathen; of the Christian than of the Jew; of the Christian in an enlightened age than of the Christian in a dark age. What must be the wrath of God against the sins of an age and people such as this! (Luke xii. 47, 48; John ix. 41; Rom. ii. 12; Heb. ii. 2, 3; x. 26—31).

VI. THAT THE PEOPLE IN THEIR FEAR CRIED TO MOSES. They dared not cry to God, by reason of their unworthiness, but they knew that if Moses prayed for them he would be heard, because he was their mediator (Gal. iii. 19, 20). Even so we, in our sin and our distress, are neither able nor worthy to pray to God save through the mediation of Jesus Christ. All prayer must be addressed, consciously or unconsciously, through him. Even the prayer of the heathen, who knows no mediator, will be heard *because* the Son of man receives his prayer and offers his own intercession with it. How presumptuous is it in Christian people to join in prayers which are *not* offered in the name, or through the mediation, of the one Mediator! (John xiv. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. xii. 24, and cf. Rev. viii. 3). And note, that the Lord's Prayer may be objected to this doctrine of mediation. But it is to be noted—(1) that it was modelled on the synagogue prayers before the atonement; (2) that as a Christian prayer, it is the prayer of Christ in us, in which we share by virtue of our sonship in him (John xx. 17; 1 John iii. 1).

VII. THAT THE PEOPLE CRIED TO MOSES ONLY. They did not resort to Aaron or to Miriam, because they were relations of Moses, or to Joshua, because he was an eminent servant of Moses, and had great influence with him; for Moses only was their mediator. Even so Christian people must not "cry" to any but the one Mediator, if the fire of God's anger against sin is to be quenched. It is one thing to ask the prayers of a fellow-suppliant; it is another and very different thing to address oneself to God under the protection, and through the mediation, of some favourite of Heaven (Heb. viii. 6; ix. 15; cf. Acts viii. 22—24).

VIII. THAT WHEN MOSES PRAYED, THE FIRE WENT OUT. No doubt in answer to the prayer. Even so the intercession of Christ quenches the flames of the Divine anger against sin. Not that the anger and the mercy of God are rival powers striving against one another: in eternity they act in perfect harmony; nevertheless, in the sphere of time and space they display themselves separately, and in apparent

antagonism. It pleased God that his anger against sin and rebellion should be visibly kindled by the complaints of the people; that his mercy should be moved by the prayer of Moses. Thus was signified the eternal purpose of God to show mercy and forgiveness to all men through the atonement of Christ (Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25; ix. 24; 1 John ii. 1; cf. Luke xxiii. 34).

And consider again—1. *That the very next place after Sinai was Taberah—a burning.* Even so it is but one short journey without a break for sinful man from the revelation of the moral law to the fires of hell. The law is holy and good; but sinful man cannot keep it, nor can God suffer it to be broken. Wherefore by the law came death; after the law, condemnation; behind the commandment, fiery wrath against the transgressors thereof. Thus also the moral law of Christ without his atonement (as some would have it) would only be worse condemnation—a Taberah without a Moses (Rom. iii. 20; v. 20 *a.*; vii. 7—13; viii. 1—4). 2. *That Israel would have got no further than Taberah had they not had a mediator.* Even so burnings had been our everlasting portion, except Christ had delivered us (Isa. xxxiii. 14; Mark ix. 44, &c.; 1 Thess. i. 10).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*A summary view of sin and its remedy.* I. A CHAIN OF MORAL SEQUENCES, containing the following links:—1. The people's sin. The complaints probably various, as may be illustrated from other narratives. 2. Their sin noticed. "The Lord heard it," as he hears every idle word, and reads every sinful thought (see outline on ch. xii. 2). 3. This notice awakens God's anger. By the necessity of his nature, "God is angry with the wicked every day." 4. His anger flamed forth in visible judgments. "The fire of the Lord burned among them," for "our God is a consuming fire," either to purge us from our sins, or to destroy us in our sins. 5. These judgments are fatal, "and consumed them" (Ps. lxxvi. 7). For another chain of sequences cf. James i. 14, 15.

II. A CHAIN OF REMEDIAL BLESSINGS. 1. God's mercy tempers judgment. The fire only destroys "those in the utmost part of the camp" (Ps. ciii. 8—10). 2. The judgments inflicted humble the people, and lead them to appeal to Moses. Such judgments are blessings. Servants of God sought for by sinners, or even despisers, in the day of trouble (cf. Isa. lx. 14). 3. Moses, when appealed to, himself appeals to God. We disclaim all power as saviours, but look and point to the one Saviour (Ps. lx. 11; Acts iii. 12). 4. God appealed to in acceptable intercession, turns from the fierceness of his wrath (Ps. xcix. 6). And the High Priest of sinners, by a more costly mediation and a prevailing intercession, still interposes for sinners who "come unto God by him" (Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25).—P.

Vers. 1—9.—*Murmuring, lusting, and loathing.* We have here a very painful self-revelation. Through prophets and apostles, and especially through his Son, God has said many humiliating things of the children of men, but nothing more humiliating than by their own actions they have written down against themselves. Note—

I. A SPIRIT UNAFFECTED BY CHASTISEMENT. The people run away from pain, but do not cease from lust. They forget the blow of Jehovah almost before the wound is healed. Nor let us wonder at their stupidity, for this fire of God was only a more rapid and more manifest form of that fire of Divine chastisement which comes in some form to us all. We treat all pain as the Israelites did. As they cried to Moses, so we cry to our fellow-men, and make no mention of our sin against God. We never stop to think of the fire of God as having his anger in it, or a check upon us in our selfish career (Ps. lxxviii.; Isa. i. 2—6; ix. 13; Jer. vii. 23—28).

II. A SPIRIT UNCHANGED BY BENEFITS. So far as any word or action here shows, they might have utterly forgotten everything God had done for them. They do recollect the manna, but only to grumble at it and despise it. God had indeed abounded toward them in grace and power, wisdom and prudence, yet not one of all his doings is remembered to his glory. What then of our state of mind in regard of

the wonderful manifestations of God in Christ Jesus? We, even more than the Israelites, are the objects of God's gracious interposition. It seemed of no use to remind them of God the Deliverer and Provider. And so now, although Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, although he has conquered sin and death for all mankind, yet mankind is far more concerned about matters a long way less important. The truth was, the Israelites had not yet been delivered, in the highest sense of the word. The body was free, but the spirit was in bondage. Egypt had still a strong hold upon their hearts. Their experience there must have been a strange mixture of oppression and pampering. Compelled to make bricks without straw, and yet they had flesh to eat.

III. A SPIRIT THAT SOON FORGOT PAST GRIEVANCES. It was not so long ago that they had been sighing and crying by reason of their bondage (Exod. ii. 23). Then their lives were bitter, and all the flesh they got could not sweeten them. These past grievances were immeasurably greater than anything they had to complain of now. *Then* there was really no comfort in life at all—oppression and injustice gave wormwood flavour to everything; *now* they are but *minus some old comforts*. They have plenty to eat, and that of special miraculous food, by which God said to them at every meal, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." It was well for them even in the wilderness troubles that they were not as Egypt; for though Egypt might have flesh to eat, it was surely eaten amid many groans and sighs. The ten plagues and the destruction of Pharaoh and his army were a very serious set-off against the most savoury of creature comforts.

IV. A SPIRIT UTTERLY INSENSIBLE TO THE GLORIOUS VOCATION WHEREWITH GOD HAD CALLED THEM (Eph. iv. 1). What a difference is here revealed between Moses and the people! As Moses talks with Hobab, and lifts his prayer to God, all is expectancy, ardour, and exultation. No complaints of the manna, no hankerings after Egypt, come from that noble soul. But as for the people, Paul exactly describes them in Phil. iii. 18. Their end was destruction, their God was their belly, their glory was in their shame, they minded earthly things. Even though the ark rested on the many thousands of Israel, they are blind to the glory and profit coming from the presence of it. They will go anywhere if only they can get the lost delicacies of Egypt. Such a table as Milton represents the tempter spreading out before Jesus would just have been to their taste ('Paradise Regained,' ii. 337—365). Their cry is not that of natural hunger, but the passionate screaming of a pampered child. Plain living and high thinking, the Nazarite vow and the Nazarite aspiration, manna for the body and true bread of heaven for the spirit—with these things they had no sympathy.

Practical truths:—1. Let every pain that comes to us have its proper effect in the way of discipline. Thus that which otherwise will be loss is turned to substantial gain. 2. In the midst of the greatest privileges we may be near to the most subtle temptations. Where God is nearest, there Satan also may be most active. 3. We need a great work of God to bring us to a due appreciation of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It takes a great deal to make us see that godliness is profitable, having the promise of the life *that now is*.

> "Trouble is grudgingly and hardly brook'd,
> While life's sublimest joys are overlook'd."

4. Let the estimate of our wants and the provision for them be left to God. For us to live is Christ, and the highest occupation of life to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness; then all other needed things will be added unto us. Never fear but God will give food convenient for us. *N. B.* John vi. gives a most instructive New Testament parallel to this passage.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

KIBROTH HATTAAVAH (vers. 4—35). Ver. 4. — **The mixed multitude.** Hebrew, *hasaphsuph*, the gathered; the riff-raff, or rabble, which had followed the fortunes of Israel out of Egypt, where they had probably been strangers and slaves themselves. What the nature and the number and the fate of this rabble were is a matter of mere conjecture

and of some perplexity. There does not seem any room for them in the regulations laid down for Israel, nor are they mentioned in any other place except at Exod. xii. 38. In Levit. xxiv. 10 we read of the son of an Israelitish woman by an Egyptian father, and this might lead us to conjecture that a great part of the "mixed multitude" was the offspring of such left-handed alliances. These half-breeds, according to the general rule in such cases, would follow their mothers; they would be regarded with contempt by the Jews of pure blood, and would accompany the march as hangers-on of the various tribes with which they were connected. As to their fate, it may be probably concluded, from the reason of things and from the absence of any further notice of them, that they found their way back to the slavery and the indulgences of Egypt; they were bound by no such strong restraints and animated by no such national feelings as the true people of the Lord. **And the children of Israel also wept again.** This expression, again (Hebrew, שׁוּב, used adverbially), would seem to point to some former weeping, and this is generally found in the "murmuring" of which they had been guilty in the desert of Sin (Exod. xvi. 2, 3). This, however, is unsatisfactory for several reasons: first, because that occurrence was too remote, having been more than a year ago; second, because there is no mention of any "weeping" at that time; third, because the matter of complaint on the two occasions was really quite different: *then* they murmured faithlessly at the blank starvation which apparently stared them in the face; *now* they weep greedily at the absence of remembered luxuries. It is therefore much more likely that the expression has regard to the "complaining" which had just taken place at Taberah. It was indeed wonderful that the punishment then inflicted did not check the sin; wonderful that it burst out again in an aggravated form almost immediately. But such was the obstinacy of this people, that Divine vengeance, which only perhaps affected a few, and only lasted for a brief space, was not sufficient to silence their wicked clamour. **Who shall give us flesh to eat?** בָּשָׂר—Septuagint, κρέα—means flesh-meat generally. They had flocks and herds it is true, but they were no doubt carefully preserved, and the increase of them would little more than suffice for sacrifice; no one would dream of slaughtering them for ordinary eating.

Ver. 5.—**We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely,** *i. e.* gratis. No doubt this was an exaggeration on the part of the murmurers, but it is attested by classical writers that fish swarmed in the Nile waters, and cost next to nothing (Diod. Sic., i. 36, 52; Herod., ii. 93; Strabo, xvii. p. 829). **Cucumbers.** קִשֻּׁאִים. Cucumbers of peculiar softness and flavour are spoken of by Egyptian travellers as *fructus in Egypto omnium vulgatissimus.* **Melons.** אַבַּטִּחִים. Water-melons, still called *battich*, grow in Egypt, as in all hot, moist lands, like weeds, and are as much the luxury of the poorest as of the richest. **Leeks.** חָצִיר. This word usually means grass (as in Ps. civ. 14), and may do so here, for the modern Egyptians eat a kind of field-clover freely. The Septuagint, however, translates it by τὰ πράσα, leeks or chives, which agrees better with the context. Pliny (Nat. Hist. 19, 33) speaks of it as "*laudatissimus porrus in Egypto.*" **Onions.** בְּצָלִים. **Garlic.** שׁוּמִים. These are mentioned in the well-known passage of Herodotus (ii. 125) as forming the staple food of the workmen at the pyramids; these still form a large part of the diet of the labouring classes in Egypt, as in other Mediterranean countries. If we look at these different articles of food together, so naturally and inartificially mentioned in this verse, we find a strong argument for the genuineness of the narrative. They are exactly the luxuries which an Egyptian labourer of that day would have cried out for, if deprived of them; they are *not* the luxuries which a Jew of Palestine would covet, or would even think of. The very words here used for the cucumber, the melon, and the garlic were probably Egyptian, for they may still be recognised in the common names of those vegetables in Egypt.

Ver. 6.—**Our soul is dried away.** This exaggerated statement expressed their craving for the juicy and savoury food of which they had been thinking, and which was obviously unattainable in the wilderness. There is a physical craving in man for variety of diet, and especially for such condiments and flavours as he has been used to all his life, which makes the lack of them a real hardship. It is not necessary to condemn the Israelites for feeling very keenly the loss of their accustomed food, which is notoriously the one thing which the poorest classes are least able to bear; it is only necessary to condemn them for making this one loss of more account than all their gain. **There is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.** Rather, "we have nothing (אֵין כֹּל) except that our eye (falls) upon this manna." These graphic words speak of the longing looks which turned in every direction after the accustomed dainties, only to fall with disgust upon the inevitable manna. It was very ungrateful of them to speak disparagingly of the manna, which was good and wholesome food, and sufficient to keep them in health and strength; but it is useless to

deny that manna only for people who had been accustomed to a rich and varied diet must have been exceedingly trying both to the palate and the stomach (cf. ch. xxi. 5).

Ver. 7.—**The manna was as coriander seed.** On the name and the nature of the manna see Exod. xvi. 31. It is commonly supposed that the brief description here inserted was intended to show the unreasonableness of the popular complaints. There is no trace whatever of any such purpose. So far as the description conveys fresh information, it was simply suggested by the occurrence of the word "manna," according to the artless style of the narrative. If any moral purpose must be assigned to this digression, it would rather be to suggest that the people had some real temptation to complain. It is often forgotten that, although the manna was supernatural, at least as to the amount and regularity of its supply, yet as an article of food it contained no supernatural elements. If we had to live upon nothing but cakes flavoured with honey or with olive oil, it is certain that we should soon find them pall upon our appetite. To the eye of the Psalmist the manna appeared as angels' food (Ps. lxxviii. 25); but then the Psalmist had not lived on manna every day for a year. We have to remember, in this as in many other cases, that the Israelites would not be "our ensamples" (*τύποι ἡμῶν*, 1 Cor. x. 6) if they had not succumbed to real temptations. **As the colour of bdellium.** See on Gen. ii. 12. As no one knows anything at all about bdellium, this adds nothing to our knowledge of the manna. The Septuagint has here *εἶδος κρυστάλλου*, "the appearance of ice," or perhaps "of hoar-frost." As it translates bdellium in Gen. ii. 12 by *ἄνθραξ* (carbuncle), it is probable that the comparison to ice here is due to some tradition about the manna. Taking this passage in connection with Exod. xvi. 31, we may reasonably conjecture that it was of an opalescent white, the same colour probably which is mentioned in connection with manna in Rev. ii. 17.

Ver. 8.—**And the people . . . ground it in mills.** This information as to the preparation of the manna is new. It may be supposed that at first the people ate it in its natural state, but that afterwards they found out how to prepare it in different ways for the sake of variety. Small handmills and mortars for the preparation of grain they would have brought with them from their Egyptian homes. **As the taste of fresh oil.** In Exod. xvi. 31 it is said to have tasted like wafers made with honey. Nothing is more impossible adequately to describe than a fresh taste. It is sufficient to note that the two things suggested by the taste of the manna, honey and oil, present the greatest possible contrast to the heavy or savoury food which they remembered in Egypt.

Ver. 9.—**And when the dew fell, . . . the manna fell upon it.** We know from Exod. xvi. 14 that when the dew evaporated in the morning it left a deposit of manna upon the ground; we learn here that the manna fell upon the dew during the night. Now the dew is deposited in the cool of the night beneath a clear sky, when radiation of heat goes on uninterruptedly from the earth's surface; it is clear, therefore, that the manna was let fall in some way beyond human experience from the upper air. What possible physical connection there could be between the dew and the manna we cannot tell. To the untaught mind, however, the dew seemed to come more directly than any other gift of nature from the clear sky which underlay the throne of God; and thus the Jew was led to look upon the manna too as coming to him day by day direct from the storehouse of heaven (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 23, 24; cv. 40).

Ver. 10.—**Throughout their families.** Every family weeping by itself. Such was the contagion of evil, that every family was infected. Compare Zech. xii. 12 for a description of a weeping similar in character, although very different in its cause. **Every man in the door of his tent.** So that his wailing might be heard by all. So public and obtrusive a demonstration of grief must of course have been pre-arranged. They doubtless acted thus under the impression that if they made themselves sufficiently troublesome and disagreeable they would get all they wanted; in this, as in much else, they behaved exactly like ill-trained children. **Moses also was displeased.** The word "also" clearly compares and unites his displeasure with that of God. The murmuring indeed of the people was directed against God, and against Moses as his minister. The invisible King and his visible viceroy could not be separated in the regard of the people, and their concerted exhibition of misery was intended primarily for the eye of the latter. It was, therefore, no wonder that such conduct roused the wrath of Moses, who had no right to be angry, as well as the wrath of God, who had every right to be angry. Moses sinned because he failed to restrain his temper within the exact limits of what befits the creature, and to distinguish carefully between a righteous indignation for God and an angry impatience with men. But he sinned under very sore provocation.

Ver. 11.—**Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant?** These passionate complaints were clearly wrong, because exaggerated. God had *not* thrown upon Moses the responsibility of getting the people safely into Canaan, or of providing flesh for them; and apart from these exaggerations, it was a selfish and

cowardly thing thus to dwell upon his own grievance, and to leave out of sight the grave dishonour done to God, and the awful danger incurred by the people. It was the more blameworthy in Moses because upon a former occasion he had taken upon him, with almost perilous boldness, to remonstrate with God, and to protest against the vengeance he threatened to inflict (Exod. xxxii. 11—13). In a word, Moses forgot himself and his duty as mediator, and in his indignation at the sin of the people committed the same sin himself. It is a strong note of genuineness that so grave (and yet so natural) a fault should be recorded with such obvious simplicity. Compare the cases of Elijah (1 Kings xix.) and of Jonah (ch. iv.).

Ver. 12.—**Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father.** Probably he meant to say that this was the part and the duty of God himself as the Creator and Father of Israel. Compare the reading, which is perhaps the correct one, in Acts xiii. 18: Τεσσαρακονταετῆ χρόνον ἐτροφοφόρησεν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ.

Ver. 14.—**I am not able to bear all this people alone.** This complaint, while reasonable in itself, shows how unreasonable the rest of his words were. However many he might have had to share his responsibilities, he could not have provided flesh for the people, nor enabled them to live one day in the wilderness; this had never been laid upon him.

Ver. 15.—**Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand,** or "quite." Hebrew, הָרֹג, inf. abs. **And let me not see my wretchedness.** Let me not live to see the total failure of my hopes and efforts.

Ver. 16.—**And the Lord said unto Moses.** The Divine dignity and goodness of this answer, if not an absolutely conclusive testimony, are at least a very strong one, to the genuineness of this record. Of what god, except the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, was it ever witnessed, or could it have been ever imagined, that he should answer the passionate injustice of his servant with such forbearance and kindness? The one thing in Moses' prayer which was reasonable he allowed at once; the rest he passed over without answer or reproof, as though it had never been uttered. **Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel.** That the number seventy has a symbolic significance in Scripture will hardly be denied (cf. Exod. i. 5; Dan. ix. 2, 24; Luke x. 1), although it is probably futile to affix any precise meaning to it. Perhaps the leading idea of seventy is fulness, as that of twelve is symmetry (see on Exod. xv. 27). The later Jews believed that there were seventy nations in the world. There is no reason, except a reckless desire to confound the sacred narrative, to identify this appointment with that narrated in Exod. xviii. 21, *sq.* and Deut. i. 9, *sq.* The circumstances and the purposes appear quite distinct: those were appointed to assist Moses in purely secular matters, to share his burden as a judge; these to assist him in religious matters, to support him as a mediator; those used the ordinary gifts of wisdom, discretion, and personal authority; these the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. It is more reasonable to suppose that these seventy were the same men that went up into Mount Sinai with Moses, and saw the God of Israel, and ate of the consecrated meal of the covenant, about a year before. Unless there was some decisive reason against it, an elder who had been chosen for that high religious privilege could hardly fail to be chosen on this occasion also; an interview with God himself, so mysteriously and awfully significant, must surely have left an ineffaceable stamp of sanctity on any soul at all worthy of it. It would be natural to suppose that while the present selection was made *de novo*, the individuals selected were personally the same. Compare note on ch. i. 5, and for "the elders of Israel" see on Exod. iii. 16. **Whom thou knowest to be elders of the people, and officers over them.** On the officers (Hebrew, *shoterim*), an ancient order in the national organisation of Israel, continued from the days of bondage, see Exod. v. 6. The Targ. Pal. paraphrases the word *shoterim* by "who were set over them in Mizraim." The Septuagint has here πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν, words so familiar to the reader of the Greek Gospels. The later Jews traced back their Sanhedrim, or grand council of seventy, to this appointment, and found their elders and scribes in this verse. There was, however, no further historical connection between the two bodies than this—that when the monarchy failed and prophecy died out, the ecclesiastical leaders of the Jews modelled their institutions upon, and adapted their titles to, this Divinely-ordered original.

Ver. 17.—**I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them.** The Holy Spirit is one and indivisible. But in the language of Scripture "the Spirit" often stands for the *charismata*, or gifts of the Spirit, and in this sense is freely spoken of as belonging to this or that man. So the "spirit of Elijah" (2 Kings ii. 9, 15), which was transferred to Elisha, as it were, by bequest. It was *not*, therefore, the personal indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost in Moses which God caused him to share with the seventy elders, for that can in no case be a matter of transfer or of arrangement, but simply those *charismata* or extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which Moses had hitherto enjoyed alone as the prophet of Israel. It is

strange that in the face of the clear teaching of St. Paul in 1 Cor. xii., xiii., and in view of such cases as those of Saul (1 Sam. x. 10; xix. 23) and David (1 Sam. xvi. 13), any difficulty should have been felt about this passage. **They shall bear the burden of the people with thee.** It does not appear how they were to do this, nor is there any record of their work. Their gifts, however, were spiritual, and we may probably assume that their usefulness lay in producing and maintaining a proper religious tone among the people. The real difficulty which stood in the way of Moses was not one of outward organisation or of government, for that had been amply provided for; it lay in the bad tone which prevailed among the people, and threatened to destroy at any moment the very foundations of their national hope and safety. We may see in these seventy not indeed a Sanhedrim to exercise authority and discipline, but the first commencement of that prophetic order which afterwards played so large a part in the religious history of Israel and of the early Christian Church—an order designed from the first to supplement by the freedom and originality of their ministry the more formal and unvarying offices of the priesthood. If this was the nature of their usefulness, it is not surprising that they are never mentioned again; and it is observable that a similar obscurity hangs over the activity of the prophets of the New Testament, who yet formed a most important part of the gospel *régime* (cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 29—32; Eph. ii. 20).

Ver. 18.—**Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow.** By certain ablutions, and by avoidance of legal pollution (see Exod. xix. 10, 14, 15). The people were to prepare themselves as for some revelation of God's holiness and majesty. In truth it was for a revelation of his wrath, and of the bitter consequences of sin. There is about the words, as interpreted by the result, a depth of very terrible meaning; it was as though a traitor, unknowing of his doom, were bidden to a grand ceremonial on the morrow, which ceremonial should be his own execution. **For it was well with us in Egypt.** These false and wicked words, in which the base ingratitude of the people reached its highest pitch, are repeated to them in the message of God with a quiet sternness which gave no sign to their callous ears of the wrath they had aroused.

Ver. 20.—**But even a whole month.** There is some little difficulty about these words, because the Israelites do not seem to have made a long stay at Kibroth-Hattaavah, and the miraculous supply does not seem to have followed them. The words are words of stern irony and displeasure, and need not be literally pressed: it was enough that animal food *was* given them in quantity sufficient to have gorged the whole nation for a month, if they had cared to go on eating it (see below on ver. 33).

Ver. 21.—**And Moses said.** Moses had not recovered from the impatient and despairing temper into which the ill-behaviour of the people had betrayed him. He could not really have doubted the Divine power to do this, after what he had seen in the desert of Sin (Exod. xvi. 13), but he spoke petulantly, and indeed insolently, out of the misery which was yet in his heart.

Ver. 22.—**Shall the flocks and herds be slain?** Which they had brought out of Egypt with them (see on Exod. xii. 32), and which no doubt were carefully husbanded, partly in order to supply them with milk and other produce, partly in order to maintain the sacrifices of the law. **All the fish of the sea.** A wild expression from which nothing can be fairly argued as to the present position of the camp.

Ver. 23.—**Is the Lord's hand waxed short?** So that it cannot reach far enough to fulfil his purposes. This simple and expressive figure of speech is adopted by Isaiah (ch. l. 2; lix. 1).

Ver. 24.—**Moses went out,** *i. e.* out of the tabernacle. It is not stated that he went into the tabernacle to bring his complaint before the Lord, but the narrative obviously implies that he did (see on ch. vii. 89).

Ver. 25.—**The Lord came down in a cloud,** *i. e.* in the cloud which was the symbol of his perpetual presence with them. At other times this cloud dwelt (יִשְׁכֹּן) above the tabernacle, soaring steadily above it in the clear air; but on certain occasions, for greater impressiveness, the cloud came down and filled the tabernacle, or at any rate the entrance of it, while Moses stood without (cf. ch. xii. 5 and Exod. xxxiii. 9; xl. 35). **Took of the spirit which was upon him.** Not certainly in anger, or by way of diminishing the fulness of the spirit which was in Moses, but in order that the seventy might participate, and be known to participate, in a gift originally and specially given to Moses. The whole intention of the ceremonial was to declare in the most unmistakable way that the gifts of the seventy were to be exercised only in union with and in subordination to the mediator of Israel. The Targums are substantially correct in their paraphrase: "The Lord *made enlargement* of the spirit that was upon him, and imparted to the seventy men, the elders." Theodoret very happily observes on this passage, "Just as a man who kindles a thousand flames from one does not lessen the first in communicating light to the others, so God did not diminish the grace imparted

to Moses by the fact that he communicated of it to the seventy." **They prophesied.** The phenomenon here mentioned for the first time was no doubt an ecstatic utterance, not exactly beyond the control, but certainly beyond the origination, of those who prophesied. It must not be confounded with that state of calm, spiritual exaltation in which such men as Isaac and Jacob spake concerning things to come (Heb. xi. 20; cf. Gen. xxvii. 29; xlix. 28). The Hebrew יִתְנַבְּאוּ means literally "were caused to pour forth," and the fundamental idea is that those affected became for the time being vents for the audible utterance of thoughts and expressions which were not theirs, but the Holy Ghost's. Compare the thought in Job xxxii. 18—20, and the case of Saul and his messengers, as above. As to the matter of these prophesyings, we may probably conclude that they were of the same nature as the ecstatic utterances of the tongues on the day of Pentecost and afterwards; not "prophecy" in the ordinary sense, but inspired glorification of God, and declaration of his wonderful works (Acts ii. 4, 11). **And did not cease.** Rather, "did not add," or "repeat." יָסָפוּ לֹא. Septuagint, *καὶ οὐκ ἔτι προσέθεντο.* The ecstatic utterance did not continue or reappear. The New Testament history no doubt supplies us with the explanation of this. The supernatural sign thus accorded was of little use in itself, and was of much danger, because it attracted to its exhibition an attention which was rather due to more inward and spiritual things. As a sign it was sufficient that it should be once unmistakably manifested before all the people. (cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 22; xiii. 8). The permanent *charisma* of the Holy Spirit which the seventy received and retained from this time forth was no doubt the *ἀντιλήψις* or *κυβερνήσις* of 1 Cor. xii. 28; the gift of "help" or "governance," not in temporal matters, but in the religious education and direction of the people.

Ver. 26.—**There remained two of the men in the camp.** No reason is here given why they did not accompany the rest to the tabernacle; but as they did not thereby forfeit the gift designed for them, it is certain that some necessity or duty detained them. **They were of them that were written.** This incidental notice shows how usual the practice of writing was, at any rate with Moses, who was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii. 22). **And they prophesied in the camp.** As a sign that they too had received the *charisma* from the Lord. Seeing that it was the work of the Holy Spirit, there was of course nothing really more wonderful in their case than in the case of the others, but no doubt it seemed so. That men in the camp, and away from the visible centre and scene of Divine manifestations, should be accessible to the heavenly afflatus was a vast astonishment to an ignorant people. We may compare the surprise felt by the Jewish Christians when the sign of tongues was shown among the Gentiles (Acts x. 45, 46).

Ver. 27.—**And there ran a young man.** Literally, "the young man,"—הַנַּעַר; *ὁ νεανίσκος*, Septuagint,—by which some understand the young men of the camp collectively, but this is doubtful in grammar and unsatisfactory in sense. If this book was compiled from previous records, of which there are many apparent traces, we may suppose that the name of this young man was there given, but here for some reason omitted.

Ver. 28.—**Joshua the son of Nun.** See on Exod. xvii. 9. As before, he is called Joshua by anticipation. **One of his young men.** This implies that there were others who to some extent shared his duties towards Moses; but that Joshua stood in a peculiar relation to his master is evident from Exod. xxiv. 13 and xxxii. 17, as well as from this passage itself. **My lord Moses, forbid them.** Probably he did not know that they had been enrolled, and he was naturally jealous for the honour of Moses—a jealousy which was not at all unnecessary, as the events of the next chapter proved. The prophesying of Eldad and Medad in the camp might well seem like the setting up of an independent authority, not in harmony with that of Moses.

Ver. 29.—**Enviest thou for my sake?** In this answer speaks for once the meekest of men." It was his sad fate that his position as representative of God obliged him to see repressed with terrible visitations any rebellion against his sole and absolute authority. But he was devoid of personal ambition at all times, and at this time weary and disgusted with the responsibility of ruling such a people. How much more for the glory of God, and for his own peace, would it be if not only these, but all the people, shared the gifts of the Spirit! Mark ix. 38, 39 presents a partial, but still a striking, parallel.

Ver. 30.—**Moses gat him into the camp.** Although the tabernacle stood in the midst of the camp, yet it was practically separated from the tents of the other tribes by an open space and by the encampments of the Levites. There is, therefore, no ground for inferring from this and similar expressions that the record really belongs to a time when the tabernacle was pitched outside the camp.

Ver. 31.—**A wind from the Lord.** A wind Divinely sent for this purpose. In Ps. lxxviii. 26 it is said to have been a wind from the east and south, *i. e.* a wind blowing up the Red Sea and across the Gulf of

Akabah. **And brought quails from the sea.** On the "quails" (Hebrew, *salvim*—probably the common quail) see Exod. xvi. 13. The Septuagint has in both places ἡ ὀρτυγομήτρα, "the quail-mother," the sense of which is uncertain. These birds, which migrate in spring in vast numbers, came from the sea, but it does not follow that the camp was near the sea. They may have been following up the Gulf of Akabah, and been swept far inland by the violence of the gale. **Let them fall by the camp.** Rather, "threw them down on the camp." יַטֵּשׁ עַל הַמַּחֲנֶה. Septuagint, ἐπέβαλεν ἐπὶ τὴν παρεμβολήν. Either the sudden cessation of the gale, or a violent eddying of the wind, threw the exhausted birds in myriads upon the camp (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 21, 28). **Two cubits high upon the face of the earth.** The word "high" is not in the original, but it probably gives the true meaning. The Septuagint, ὡσεὶ δίπηχυ ἀπο τῆς γῆς, is somewhat uncertain. The Targums assert that the quails "flew upon the face of the ground, at a height of two cubits;" and this is followed by the Vulgate (*"volabant in aere duobus cubitis altitudine super terram"*) and by many commentators. This idea, however, although suggested by the actual habits of the bird, and adopted in order to avoid the obvious difficulty of the statement, is inconsistent with the expressions used here and in Ps. lxxviii. If the birds were "thrown" upon the camp, or "rained" upon it like sand, they could not have been flying steadily forward a few feet above the ground. It is certainly impossible to take the statement literally, for such a mass of birds would have been perfectly unmanageable; but if we suppose that they were drifted by the wind into heaps, which in places reached the height of two cubits, that will satisfy the exigencies of the text: anything like a uniform depth would be the last thing to be expected under the circumstances.

Ver. 32.—**And the people stood up . . . next day.** A statement which shows us how greedy the people were, and how inordinately eager to supply themselves with an abundance of animal food. They were so afraid of losing any of the birds that they stayed up all night in order to collect them; probably they only ceased gathering and began to eat when the available supply was spent. **Ten homers.** It is difficult to calculate the capacity of the homer, especially as it may have varied from age to age. If it contained ten ephahs, as seems to be implied in Ezek. xlv. 11, and if the estimate of the Rabbinists (which is less than that of Josephus) be correct that the ephah held nearly four and a half gallons of liquid measure, then half a million of men must have collected more quails apiece than would have filled a 450 gallon tun. No doubt the total number was something enormous, and far above anything that could have been supplied by natural agencies. The gift of quails, like that of manna, was one of the gifts of nature proper to that region Divinely multiplied and extended, so as to show forth in the most striking way the boundless power and beneficence of God. **They spread them all abroad.** In order to dry them in the sun, as the Egyptians used to do with fish (Herod., ii. 77), and as the South Americans do with beef. Flesh thus cured does not need salt, which the Israelites would not have in sufficient quantities.

Ver. 33.—**And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed.** If this were taken in the most literal sense, it would mean that no one of the people had time to swallow a single morsel of the coveted food ere he was stricken down by the Divine visitation. We can scarcely imagine, however, that such was the case in every single instance. It would indeed appear as if they had with one consent postponed the enjoyment of eating the quails until they had gathered as huge a quantity for future use as possible; as if in defiance and contempt of the Divine warning that their greed would turn to satiety and loathing (see vers. 19 and 32). If this were so, then the feast to which they so eagerly looked forward would begin throughout the camps on the second night, and the visitation of God might well have had the sudden and simultaneous character attributed to it here and in Ps. lxxviii. 30, 31. At any rate the statement of the text positively excludes the idea that they went on eating quails for a whole month, according to the promise (or threat) of ver. 20. There was flesh enough to have secured the literal fulfilment of that promise by gorging them for a whole month; but it is evident that the Divine wrath anticipated any such tardy revenges, and smote its victims in the very moment of their keenest gratification. **The Lord smote the people with a very great plague.** Both ancients and moderns state that the flesh of quails is unwholesome (cf. Pliny, x. 23), but this appears to have no very valid foundation. Unquestionably quails eaten for a month by people unused to a flesh diet would produce many and fatal sicknesses; but there is no room for any such natural results here. Whatever form the plague may have taken, it was as clearly supernatural in its suddenness and intensity as the supply of quails itself. We do not know anything as to who were smitten, or how many; the Psalmist tells us that they were "the fattest" and "the chosen" in Israel, and we may naturally suppose that those who had been foremost in the lusting

and the murmuring were foremost in the ruin which followed.

Ver. 34.—**Kibroth-Hattaavah.** The graves of greediness. Septuagint, *Μνήματα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας*. This name, like Tabeérah, was given to the place by the Israelites themselves in connection with their own history; the name, therefore, like the sad memory it enshrined, lived only in the sacred record. It is utterly uncertain where it lay, except that it was apparently the terminus of a three days' journey from Sinai, and in the desert of Paran. How long they stayed at Kibroth-Hattaavah is also quite uncertain. If the plague followed hard upon the coming of the quails, a few days would suffice for all the events recorded in this chapter, and we may well believe that the people would be only too glad to receive the signal of departure as soon as they had buried their unhappy brethren.

Ver. 35.—**And abode at Hazeroth.** Or, "were in Hazeroth." Septuagint, *ἐγένετο ὁ λαὸς ἐν Ἀσηρώθ*. Hazeroth, from חָצַר, to shut in, means "enclosures;" so named perhaps from some ancient stone enclosures erected by wandering tribes for their herds and flocks. It has been identified with Ain el Hadhera, a fountain eighteen hours north-east of Sinai, but on no satisfactory grounds beyond a partial resemblance of name. Assuming that the march lay in a northerly direction through the desert of Paran, the Israelites would naturally follow the road which leads across the southern mountain barrier of et Tih, and on by the Wady es-Zulakeh into the desert plateau. On this road there is a large fountain, with pasturage, at a place called el Ain, and another somewhat further at Bir ed-Themmed. One or other of these was probably the site of Hazeroth (cf. Stanley, 'Sinai,' p. 84). It is, however, entirely a matter of conjecture, and of little real interest. The progress of Israel which is of unfading importance to us is a moral and religious, and not a geographical, progress.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 4—35.—*The sin of concupiscence, and its punishment.* We have in this section a Divine commentary, in dark and terrible characters, on the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." And we know that the record was given to us "to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted" (1 Cor. x. 6). We have also, intermingled with the dark record of sin and wrath, a beautiful picture of the long-suffering of God with the errors and impatience of his servant, and of the unfettered energy of his free Spirit. In all these things they were *τύποι ἡμῶν*, our examples. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT ALL THIS SIN AND MISERY BEGAN WITH "LUST," *i. e.* UNHALLOWED AND UNRESTRAINED DESIRE, which is indeed the inner source of all iniquity, because it is the will of the creature setting itself upon that which the Creator has forbidden or denied; hence it is the simplest and readiest way in which the creature can rebel against the Creator, for it is always possible, and indeed easy, to lust, and there is no one who is not tempted to it. Thus Eve lusted for the forbidden fruit, and brought death into the world. Even so St. James says, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and is enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." And our Saviour, that all evil proceeds out of the heart, which is the seat of the emotions and desires. If, therefore, our desires were held in subjection to the will and word of God, there would be no sin in us; but as long as concupiscence is in us, it will assuredly draw us into evil (cf. Rom. vii. 7, 8, 11; Eph. ii. 3; 1 John ii. 16).

II. THAT THE FIRST EXPRESSION (AT ANY RATE) OF THIS UNHALLOWED DESIRE CAME FROM THE MIXED MULTITUDE—the aliens, or half-breeds, who had come with them, not from faith in God, but from inferior motives. Even so the low moral tone and the frequent enormities chargeable upon Christians are due in the first instance to those who are only nominally Christian, who have been attracted into the fellowship either by accident of birth or by worldly and unspiritual motives. It is the fate of every great and successful movement to carry away with it *many* who have (inwardly) no sympathy with it and no part in it. So it was with Israel, so with the Church of Christ, so with any religious revival. Here is the great danger of an established and fashionable Christianity; it numbers a multitude of nominal adherents, whose motives and desires are wholly unchastened, and who are always ready to set the worst example, and to encourage the most pernicious practices. Compare the "false brethren," 2 Cor. xi. 26.

III. THAT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE CARRIED AWAY WITH IT, IN SPITE OF THE WARNING THEY HAD SO RECENTLY RECEIVED AT TABEÉRAH. No doubt it spread the more rapidly because, (1) it fell in with their own secret feelings, (2) it was recommended by considerations of friendship and relationship, (3) the voice of prudence is scarcely ever a match for the promptings of desire. Even so it is the most striking feature of sin in feeling or in act that it becomes an epidemic which only a very sound and vigorous spiritual state can resist. Compare the case of Judas and the other apostles (Matt. xxvi. 8, 9; John xii. 4, 5); compare St. Peter and the Judaisers (Gal. ii. 12, 13); compare the Corinthians (1 Cor. v. 1, 2, 6, 11); and the sins which each generation of Christians has committed or does commit in common—such as lying, duelling, swindling. There is no sin against which more fearful warnings and examples lie than that of covetousness; yet there is none of which Christians are more generally guilty under stress of bad example and the low moral tone and degraded traditions of society, of trade, of business, &c. The warnings of the New Testament, though always fresh in the hearing and clear in the remembrance of Christian people, are absolutely ineffective as against the common promptings of evil desire.

IV. THAT WHAT THEY EVILLY DESIRED WAS NOT EVIL IN ITSELF. There was no harm in eating flesh, nor were any of the cheap luxuries they coveted objectionable in themselves. Even so we ever excuse ourselves for wanting, because what we want is not *forbidden*, but only *denied*. There is no harm (absolutely) in being rich, therefore we take no shame at covetousness. There is no harm (absolutely) in the pleasures of the flesh, therefore we are ready to excuse any indulgence in them. Christian morality is a law of liberty, unbound by formal rules, therefore we boldly strain that liberty to our immediate advantage, and fancy that the absence of prohibition is tantamount to actual allowance on the part of God.

V. THAT WHAT THEY DESIRED WAS WRONG, BECAUSE, (1) IT WAS SUPERFLUOUS, (2) BELONGED TO THE DAYS OF BONDAGE, (3) HAD BEEN WITHHELD BY GOD, WHO ALONE COULD GIVE IT. (1) Inasmuch as the food they had given them was nutritious, wholesome, and abundant for the short journey which lay before them. (2) Inasmuch as the savoury and luscious things they wept for were peculiarly Egyptian, and went hand in hand (as they do still) with cruel oppression and degradation: it was the food of slavery. (3) Inasmuch as such things were clearly not to be expected in a wilderness such as God was leading them through. Even so sinful greed among Christians is known by the same three tokens. (1) It is a craving for superfluities. What God has given us (however little compared with our desires) is enough; for it will suffice, if well used, to bring us to our home in health and strength (Philip. iv. 11; 1 Tim. vi. 6—8; Heb. xiii. 5). More than we have must be more than enough, for God is pledged to give us *that* (Matt. vi. 33, 34; Luke xii. 32; Rom. viii. 32). (2) It is a craving for things essentially connected with the bondage of sin and worldliness, from which we are escaped. Such luxuries as wealth, rank, or fashion can afford are (without being in themselves evil) so closely connected with evil that every earnest Christian must dread rather than covet them (Matt. vi. 19, 21, 31, 32 *a.*; Luke vi. 24; xvi. 19, 25; James v. 1). (3) It is an open contempt of God's appointment, who *hath not* given us any inheritance here, and *hath* told us to expect tribulation, and to love poverty and reproach, because it is good for us (Luke vi. 20, 22; John xvi. 33; Acts xiv. 22; Rom. viii. 24; 2 Cor. iv. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 9; Heb. xiii. 14; James ii. 5).

VI. THAT THE UNRESTRAINED WEEPING OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE DAINTIES THEY COULD NOT HAVE WAS EXCEEDING HATEFUL IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. It did indeed make no account of all his mercies, but rather reproached him for bringing them out of Egypt and setting them free. It was as good as saying they wished he had never troubled himself about them. Even so the greed of Christians is an open reproach against him that loved them and gave himself for them, as though he had done nothing to earn their trust and gratitude, and had rather treated them unkindly. He who passionately desires earthly gains, or bitterly laments earthly losses, flings contempt upon the gifts of Heaven and reproach upon his God and Saviour. Wherefore it speaks of "the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth" (Ps. x. 3; cf. Luke xii. 15; Eph. v. 3; Col. iii. 5; James iv. 3, 4).

VII. THAT THE LORD, IN ORDER TO PUNISH THE PEOPLE, GAVE THEM AN ABUNDANCE

OF WHAT THEY ASKED FOR. Even so God punishes our greed by letting us have as much as we want of the coveted thing. The covetous person is punished by ample wealth, the slothful by abundance of ease, the proud by success and flattery, the vain by large admiration, the sensual by unstinted gratification. Thus the man punishes himself, the Lord providing him with the means of destruction. Whether we like it or not, this *is* the law of Providence; and to us it is the justice of God. Compare the case of Pharaoh (Rom. ix. 17, 18); of the rich fool (Luke xii. 16); of Herod (Acts xii. 22).

VIII. THAT THE PEOPLE IN THEIR GREED LABOURED DAY AND NIGHT TO ACCUMULATE PRODIGIOUS QUANTITIES OF FOOD WHICH THEY NEVER ATE. Even so do vain men labour and toil to lay up treasures upon earth, never resting as long as anything remains to be got—treasures which after all they shall never enjoy, and shall perhaps eternally regret (Matt. xix. 24; Luke xii. 21; xvi. 25; James v. 2; Rev. iii. 17).

IX. THAT THE PEOPLE, APART FROM ANY SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION, WOULD HAVE SICKENED OF THE QUANTITY OF ANIMAL FOOD THEY THOUGHT TO EAT, AND FOUND IT "LOATHSOME." Even so self-indulgence soon reaches its natural limits, even when left to itself, and provokes a natural reaction of disgust. If this world were all, moderation, self-restraint, and contentment with a little would still make a happier life than luxury and dissipation. The "roses and raptures of vice" which are sung by many poets, ancient and modern, do not only fade very quickly, but leave a very evil smell behind them.

X. THAT THE JUSTICE OF GOD LEFT NOT THE ISRAELITES TO THE SLOW REVENGE OF NATURAL SATIETY; hardly had they tasted the flesh ere the plague began among them. Even so greed has its natural reaction of misery, even in the life of this world, but it has its Divine punishment in the soul. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their *soul*," says the Psalmist (Ps. cvi. 15), revealing the spiritual truth which lay hid in this history. There is a balance Divinely held between the bodily life and that of the soul, so that if the first is full and fat and well-liking, the second is empty and lean and ill-favoured. No man can cater greedily for his body without impoverishing his soul; no man can gratify eagerly his carnal appetites without incurring spiritual disease (Luke vi. 24—26).

XI. THAT ONE OF THE EARLIEST STATIONS ON THE WAY TO CANAAN WAS "THE GRAVES OF GREED," AND THAT THE NEXT WAS "ENCLOSURES." Even so in the heavenward journey of the Church we soon come (alas, how soon!) to the graves of greed, to the dishonourable sepulchres of such as perished through love of money or of pleasure. Behold the graves of Ananias, of Sapphira, of those who "slept" at Corinth (1 Cor. xi. 30), of "that woman Jezebel" (Rev. ii. 20), of Demas. And after this we come to "enclosures"—long series of outward restrictions and regulations, some apostolic and some later, which mark a stage in the Church's journey, and testify to her efforts to maintain her moral purity (cf. 1 Cor. v. 9, 11; xi. 34 *b.*; 1 Tim. v. 9). And what is true of the Church is true of many an individual member. As memory retraces the onward path, how soon come the "graves of greed," the sad memorials of passions sinfully indulged and sharply revenged! and after that the "enclosures"—the restraints and restrictions by which liberty was perforce abridged in order that sin and folly might be fenced out.

Consider, again, *with respect to the manna*—

I. THAT THE PEOPLE WERE REALLY TEMPTED TO WEARY OF THE SAMENESS AND INSIPIDITY OF THE MANNA, their staple food. To a palate accustomed to the pungent condiments and varied delicacies of Egypt, it was a great trial to have nothing but manna for a year; no doubt it failed to satisfy the appetite, and cloyed upon the taste, in spite of its wholesome and nutritious qualities. Even so it is a real trial to one who has known the excitements of sin and the dissipations of the world to satisfy himself with the spiritual joys and interests of religion, and we ought to recognise the fact that it is a real trial. In many who have been recovered from a life of indulgence the craving for excitement is at times almost intolerable. Nature itself, even when not depraved by long habit, longs for excitement and change, and wearies of the calm monotony of faith, hope, and charity. Even the "sweetness" of the bread of life, which is at first as "honey" and as "fresh oil" to the starved and

sickly soul, palls upon it after a while, and the old longings reassert themselves. How many tire of "angels' food" who took to it eagerly enough at first! (cf. 1 Tim. v. 11—13, 15; Rev. ii. 4).

II. THAT THE MANNA WAS IN FORM AS "CORIANDER SEED," WHICH WE KNOW; IN COLOUR AS "BDELLIUM," WHICH WE DO NOT KNOW. Even so there is about the true bread of heaven a mixture of the known and the unknown, of that which can be expressed, and of that which passes human understanding. The coriander seed is of common use, but the bdellium is of paradise (Gen. ii. 12). And so may we all know the beauty of Christ in part, but in part we shall never know until we see him as he is (cf. Rev. ii. 17, "hidden manna;" iii. 12, "my new name;" xix. 12).

III. THAT THE PEOPLE HABITUALLY PREPARED THE MANNA FOR EATING IN VARIOUS WAYS, as experience and their own preference guided them. Even so the manna of souls, although it does not need, yet it does not reject, the use of human means and art in order to present it acceptably to the spiritual needs of men. God has nowhere said that all men, of whatsoever habit of mind, must receive the word and sacrament of Christ in the simplest and barest form, or not at all; it is only needful that Christ, however received, be the sole and substantial sustenance of the soul (John vi. 50, 58; 1 Cor. iii. 11; Gal. i. 9; Philip. i. 18).

Consider, again, *with respect to Moses and the seventy*—

I. THAT THE SIN OF THE PEOPLE LED TO A DIFFERENT SIN IN MOSES. He would never have murmured at hardships, or have lusted; but he lost his temper, and spake unadvisedly with his lips. Even so sin constantly leads to sin, even where it has no direct influence, and other people's faults are often not less dangerous temptations to us because we abhor them. Thus a frivolous wife may make a soured husband; an unprincipled father a hard and stern child; a worldly clergyman a sarcastic and incredulous congregation (cf. Matt. xxiv. 12; Luke xviii. 11; Rom. ii. 22 *b*.).

II. THAT THE TEMPTATION UNDER WHICH MOSES FELL WAS A PECULIARLY INSIDIOUS ONE. His passionate anger with the people and disgust with his position as their leader might seem only a noble indignation against wrong. Even so many are tempted to feel nothing but scorn at "baptized heathenism," and impatience with the moral failures of the age, without due consideration either of the wise and loving purposes of God or of their own duties (Ps. xxxvii. 8; Jonah iv. 9; Eph. iv. 26, 27; James i. 19, 20).

III. THAT IN HIS SORROW AND RESENTMENT BY REASON OF THE WICKED HE WAS GUILTY OF GRAVE INJUSTICE AND INSOLENCE AGAINST GOD. Even so we, if we are carried away by indignation against un-Christlike Christians, are in danger of sinning against God, who has borne with them, and bears with them still, and who has made us responsible *not* for their perfection, but only for our own, and has not given to any a greater burden than he is able to bear (Luke ix. 55, 56; 2 Cor. ii. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 21, 25, 26; 2 Pet. iii. 15).

IV. THAT MOSES ALSO ERRED BY FORMING FAR TOO HIGH AN ESTIMATE OF HIS OWN OFFICIAL IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY, as though he had been the real father of his people, whereas "one was their Father, which was in heaven." Even so it is very easy and natural for us, if we are in earnest, to exaggerate the importance of our work, and to mistake the nature of our responsibility in the Church. It is only God who by his one Spirit does all good work in the Church, and he will take care that it is done to his own mind; we are but instruments, who have no responsibility, save that of being "meet for the Master's use" (1 Cor. iii. 5; iv. 2; xii. 4—6).

V. THAT GOD WAS EXCEEDING MERCIFUL TO THE SIN OF MOSES, because it was of human infirmity, and because it was the petulant outbreak of a mind and heart overcharged with grief and failure. Even so did our Lord bear with his apostles, and will bear with all the errors and outbreaks of an honest heart (Ps. ciii. 13, 14; Luke xxii. 31—34, 61; John xx. 27).

VI. THAT GOD ALLOWED THE ONE COMPLAINT OF MOSES WHICH WAS REASONABLE, AND FOUNDED THE PROPHETIC ORDER TO ASSIST IN THE RELIGIOUS DIRECTION OF THE PEOPLE. Even so out of complaints and difficulties have arisen many permanent gifts of the Spirit to the Church, for in this as in other ways man's extremity is God's opportunity. Thus out of the murmuring of the Grecians arose the diaconate (Acts

vi. 1, 6); out of the troubles at Corinth the better regulation of the Agape and the Eucharist (1 Cor. xi. 17—34).

VII. THAT IT WAS THE SPIRIT WHICH RESTED UPON MOSES WHICH WAS COMMUNICATED TO THE SEVENTY, inasmuch as their prophetic office was to be held and exercised in unity with, and subordination to, the mediator of Israel. Even so it is the Spirit of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy—the Spirit of Christ and from Christ which must rest upon every Christian teacher. The anointing which qualifies to speak Divine mysteries must be from him who was anointed the one Mediator and the only Prophet (John i. 16, 33; xvi. 13, 14, &c.).

VIII. THAT THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT SHOWED ITSELF IN THE SEVENTY BY ECSTATIC UTTERANCE—A THING NEVER RECORDED OF MOSES HIMSELF. Even so the first evidence of the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ upon the disciples was that they spake with tongues, which our Lord had never done; for all such manifestations are for a sign, and are no evidence of any superior greatness or holiness in the person so endowed. How often are mere "gifts" mistaken for intrinsic worth, and "the disciple" really esteemed "above his master," because he is *not* "as his master"! (John xiv. 12 *b.*; 1 Cor. xiii.).

IX. THAT THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT WAS INDEPENDENT OF OUTWARD ACCIDENTS, THOUGH NOT OF OUTWARD ORDER. The designation of the seventy was left to Moses, and Eldad and Medad were among the number selected; they were prevented from attending at the tabernacle, but they received the same gift as the others. Even so the gifts of the Spirit are not independent of ecclesiastical order, nor are they bestowed at random; but they are not restrained by anything unavoidable or accidental. It is the purpose of God which is operative, not the ceremonial, however authoritative. The Spirit of God is a free Spirit, even where he elects to act through certain channels (cf. Acts i. 26; xiii. 2; 1 Cor. xii. 11; 2 Cor. iii. 17).

X. THAT THE JEALOUSY OF JOSHUA FOR HIS MASTER WAS RIGHT IN PRINCIPLE, ALTHOUGH WRONG IN THE PARTICULAR APPLICATION. It was impossible for him always to distinguish between a right and a wrong jealousy for the authority and supremacy of Moses. Even so jealousy for the sole pre-eminence of Christ is deeply rooted in all true Christian hearts, but it constantly shows itself in the most mistaken forms. The most opposite bigotries derive their strength from this principle in ignorant or prejudiced minds, and indeed the very best and wisest may often err in this matter. Good people do, as a fact, constantly denounce this or that as an interference with the prerogatives of Christ, when it is in truth only a carrying out of his work in his name. Since, however, the *principle* is right, we must bear with the wrong application of it; we must not be angry even with intolerance if it spring from genuine loyalty to the one Lord and only Mediator, Christ (cf. Mark ix. 38—40; 1 Cor. xii. 3 with Gal. v. 12; 2 John 10, 11; Jude 19).

XI. THAT MOSES DESIRED NOTHING SO LITTLE AS A MONOPOLY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS. If he ever had been personally ambitious, a larger knowledge of his people and experience of his work had quite delivered him from it. Even so every true Christian teacher and leader, howsoever he may feel bound to magnify his office, will greatly long for the time when "all will be taught of God," and when all distinctions will be for ever abolished, save such as depend on personal nearness to God. How hateful is the idea that the flock should be kept in darkness in order that the shepherds may have a monopoly of influence! How happy were the pastor's charge if all were "spiritual"! (Jer. xxxi. 34; John vi. 45; 1 Cor. xiv. 5; iv. 8 *b.*; 1 Pet. v. 3; 1 John ii. 20, 27).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 16, 17, 24, 25.—*The seventy elders, and how they were fitted for their high office.* The murmuring of the people so soon after setting out on the march from Horeb reminded Moses again, very painfully, what a heavy burden had been laid upon him in the leadership of so great a multitude of people newly escaped from slavery. He complained to the Lord. His complaint was graciously heard. He was directed to gather around him a company of seventy elders, who might aid him with their counsel, and share his burden.

I. Regarding THE STATUS AND FUNCTIONS OF THIS COMPANY OF SEVENTY there have been many debates. Some have identified them with the Sanhedrim or Council of Seventy whom we meet with so often in the Gospels and the Acts. Passing by these questions, let us note the facts recorded in the text itself. What was wanted was not the appointment of ordinary rulers or judges. Every tribe had already a prince, a body of elders and officers, and rulers of tens and fifties and hundreds and thousands, who judged between man and man. What was wanted was a council to aid Moses with their advice and assistance in the administration of the national affairs. (Compare the Governors and Council in a British dependency.)

II. THE MANNER OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SEVENTY IS CAREFULLY DESCRIBED. 1. No one was appointed who was not *in public office already*. "Gather unto me seventy men, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them;" *i. e.* they were not to be raw, inexperienced, untried men. Only those were eligible who had given proof of ability and faithfulness in the public service, either as elders or as officers (*i. e.* writers or scriveners—this is the literal meaning of the Hebrew *shoterim*. The reference is to professional scribes, the assessors of non-professional magistrates, such as the Hebrew elders were). This rule was a good one. No man should be raised at one bound to high office, either in Church or State. 2. They were *nominated by Moses*. In this respect the procedure was exceptional. There was far less of centralisation in the government of Israel than a modern and Western reader of the Bible is apt to think. To be sure, there were no representative bodies such as we are familiar with. Nevertheless, the government was truly popular. Even in Egypt the people were ruled, in the first instance, by their own elders—the heads of families and tribes; and this primitive system was continued in a more perfect form in Palestine. But although local government could be best administered by local magistrates, it was otherwise with the supreme and central government with which Moses was charged. A council such as he required could only be had by freely calling forth men of outstanding ability and approved wisdom. 3. They were *invested with office in the face of the congregation, and before the Lord*. In the face of the congregation, to remind them that they were to act for the public good, and not in pursuance of any private interest. Before the Lord, to remind them that "there is no power but of God;" their authority is from God, and is to be used as they shall answer to him. 4. They were *endowed from above with new gifts* to qualify them for their new office. When Moses gathered them before the tabernacle, "the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders." This has been interpreted to mean that there was abstracted from Moses some part of the spirit by which he had hitherto been sustained. But that is certainly a perverse misinterpretation. Twenty lamps may be lighted from one lamp without diminishing its brightness (cf. 2 Kings ii. 9). God sendeth no man to warfare at his own charges. When he calls any man to public service, whether in Church or State, the man so called may, without doubting, ask and expect the wisdom, strength, courage which the service requires (James i. 5—8).

III. The most picturesque feature in the narrative is that which remains yet to be noticed—THE STRIKING SIGN BY WHICH NOTIFICATION WAS GIVEN THAT THE SEVENTY ELDERS HAD TRULY BEEN CALLED BY GOD AND WOULD BE COUNTENANCED BY HIM. "When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, and added no more" (such is the rendering now preferred by all the best translators). "They prophesied," that is, they spoke as men who were for the time lifted above themselves—as men under the influence of an irresistible power external to themselves. We may presume that what they did say would be of such a kind as to make it plain that the power acting upon them was Divine and heavenly. This prophesying was intended to signalise the inward gifts with which the newly-appointed elders were now being endowed. This is plain from the parallel case related in 1 Sam. x. The Lord in appointing Saul to be king over Israel promised to "be with him;" to "give him another heart," so that he should "be turned into another man." With the kingly office he was to get from the Lord the kingly mind. In token of this, the Spirit came upon him, and he prophesied (cf. Acts ii. 3, 4; x. 44—47). The impulse was only a transient one. "They prophesied, and added no more." The miracle, having served its purpose,

ceased; but the spiritual endowment of which it was the token remained. This prophesying, if you consider it well, will be seen to be more than a token. Besides notifying the Lord's approval of the elders, and assuring them of help, it suggested much instruction regarding the principles which should regulate their administration. The tongues of fire and the rapturous speaking with tongues on the day of Pentecost, we know what that miracle meant. It admonished the disciples that the warfare of Christ's kingdom is to be accomplished not with the sword, but with the tongue; not with violence and bloodshed, but by the earnest and living manifestation of the truth. It was a lesson of the same kind which the Lord suggested by the miracle wrought on the seventy elders in front of the tabernacle. They were admonished that in their administration of affairs they ought to make use rather of wise and persuasive speech than of brute force. And is not this a lesson for us also? The time is not come yet—perhaps will never come in the present state—for rulers to lay aside the sword altogether. Violent men, if they will not listen to reason, must be restrained with violence. Nevertheless, even for civil rulers, the employment of force is the less honourable function of their office. Better to restrain and guide and govern men with wise, firm, persuasive words than with the sword.—B.

Vers. 26—30.—*Eldad and Medad; or, irregular prophesying.* This narrative brings up a subject which is at once of great practical importance and of great delicacy, on which men have been apt to run to extremes on the one side or the other. It will be our wisdom, therefore, to begin by weighing carefully the facts as they are set forth in the sacred narrative.

I. THE FACTS are, shortly, these:—Moses having complained that the leadership of the nation was a burden greater than he could bear, the Lord gave direction that a Council of Seventy should be associated with him in it. This was done. From among the acting elders and officers of the congregation Moses called out seventy and they were solemnly set apart to the new office, before the Lord and the congregation. This consecration-service (as it may be called) did not pass without a palpable token of the Divine approval, a palpable token that appropriate gifts would be forthcoming to the new rulers as they had been to Moses. When the Seventy were being set apart, the Spirit fell upon them, and they prophesied. While this was going on at the tent of meeting, a young man came running with the tidings that two men were prophesying in the camp. On inquiry it turned out that these were two of the seventy whom Moses had nominated for the council. For some reason or other they had not come forward with the rest to the tent of meeting. Notwithstanding of this, the Spirit had come on them in the camp exactly as he had come on their brethren, and they were prophesying. Clearly there was in this a breach of due order. Eldad and Medad ought to have presented themselves along with the rest. They were chargeable with an irregularity. Accordingly, Joshua, who is already the trusted "minister of Moses," suggests that they should be silenced. "My lord Moses, forbid them." But Moses is of another mind. Is it certain that Eldad and Medad are prophesying? If so, the hand of the Lord, we may presume, is in the matter. Spiritual gifts are not such cheap and common things that we can afford to throw them away. Possibly enough these prophets in the camp have failed to make due acknowledgment of me as the Divinely-appointed leader of the congregation. But let no man look with an evil eye on them for my sake. Would that the Spirit were put on all the people! I should rejoice to see my light outshone in such a general brightness!

II. WHAT HAVE THESE FACTS TO SAY TO US? What lesson do they teach? 1. At first sight it might seem as if they taught us to make light of office, solemn ordination to office, official service, and to attach importance only to the possession and exercise of gifts. But that certainly is not intended. The new council was not to consist of men simply obeying an internal call. No one was admissible without prior experience in office, and without election by Moses. And it was by Divine command that the sixty-eight were solemnly set apart before the Lord and the congregation. I need not prove that in the State it is the will of God that there should be magistrates, laws, and strict enforcement of the laws. In the Church there is, no doubt, a difference; for the Church has no coercive power. Its weapons are the truth and the tongue of

fire, not the sword. Nevertheless, order is quite as necessary in the Church as in the State. "In all churches of the saints God is the author of peace, not of confusion," and all things are to be "done decently and in order" (1 Cor. xiv. 33—40). 2. The narrative admonishes us that office and order and official service, necessary as they may be, are not everything. They are not everything, even in the State, much less are they everything in the Church. The salvation and edification of souls will not go forward unless there is a continual ministration of the Spirit in gifts and in grace. That is a general lesson the facts teach. More particularly they admonish us that *we need not be surprised if it should occasionally happen that men who are walking irregularly give evidence of having been richly endowed with spiritual gifts.* I will not discuss the question, How such a thing can be; how the God of order can, without contradicting himself, bestow his valuable gifts on men who do not quite conform to the good order of his house. For the fact is plain. Whether we can account for it or no, the fact is indubitable. Has not Christ raised up men like Pascal within the Romish communion? Yet every Protestant believes that the Church of Rome has grievously erred both in respect to Church order, and in the weightiest points of faith and holiness. Do not suppose that these and similar facts are to be accounted for by alleging that Christendom has for a long while fallen away into anarchy. For facts of the same kind found place in connection with the personal ministry of Christ himself. The Twelve were Christ's apostles, and it was the duty of all disciples to follow with them. Did, therefore, Christ withhold his gifts from all save those in the apostles' company? On the contrary, there was found an individual now and then who, though he followed not with the apostles, nevertheless both spoke in Christ's name, and spoke to such good purpose that devils were cast forth (cf. Mark ix. 38—40). 3. What, then, is the conclusion to which we are led? "Quench not the Spirit: despise not prophesying." I do not say that it was the duty of Moses, or is our duty in similar circumstances, to go forth to Eldad and Medad, and identify ourselves with them in their work. That will depend on circumstances. Sometimes one cannot take part with the irregular prophets without concurring in what would for us be sin. Christ's command was not, Go and join yourselves to the man who is casting out devils in my name, irregularly. But it was, Forbid him not. Is a man really prophesying? Is he casting out devils? Is he setting forth the truth and doing good? Then do not forbid him. Bring him, if you can, to a fuller knowledge of the truth, and to more regular courses, but do not look on him with jealous eyes, or try to put him down. If Christ is preached, whether it be in pretence or in truth, I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice (Phil. i. 14—28).—B.

Vers. 4—15; 31—35.—*The complainers, and how God made answer to their complaints.* This eleventh of Numbers is a chapter of complainings. First, at Taberah, vague murmurings are heard throughout the camp. Then at Kibroth-hattaavah, a stage further on, the vague murmurings take shape in bitter complaint because of the fare to which the congregation was now confined. Manna! nothing but manna! While the people were harping on this grievance Moses also lifted up his voice in complaint. "Why has the Lord dealt so hardly with him as to lay on him the burden of so great a company? Better kill him out of hand, and not let him see his wretchedness!" Consider this scene at Kibroth-hattaavah. It is not pleasant to look at, especially when one becomes aware that it is a glass in which are to be seen passages in one's own history which one would gladly forget. Scenes not pleasant may nevertheless be profitable.

I. THE COMPLAININGS OF THE PEOPLE. 1. Where the sin began. It was among "the mixed multitude." A great crowd of foreigners who had been neighbours to the Israelites in Egypt, came forth with them at the Exodus, moved some by one motive and some by another (Exod. xii. 38). It is instructive to observe that these were the first to break out into rebellious murmurs; equally instructive to observe that the evil generated amongst them spread from them into the body of the people. Every community has its mixed multitude, its pariahs, its residuum. To the existence of this class men have been too willing to shut their eyes. I know no better sign of the present age than its wide-spread desire to take note of these masses, and if possible bring them to God. Were there no higher motive, self-preservation

might well plead with men to labour in this work. When destitution and filth are suffered to generate typhus among the poor, the deadly infection will make its way into the palaces of the rich. So when sin is suffered to become rampant in one class the other classes will not long escape the contagion. 2. The matter of complaint was little to the credit of the complainers. So long as the congregation lay encamped in Horeb, the fare would be occasionally diversified with herbs and the like. In the wilderness of Paran there is only the manna. Certainly no just ground of complaint. The daily miracle ought rather to have moved to daily thanksgiving. But even of manna the people wearied. They craved greater variety. 3. How the complaint is answered (vers. 18—21, 31—33). The people demand flesh, and flesh is given them beyond their utmost thought. They get their desire, but not God's blessing with it. So it becomes to them a curse in the end. Such a plague followed the "shower of flesh" that the place has ever since borne the ghastly name of Kibroth-hattaavah, the graves of lust. It is an admonition to us not to give way to impatience on account of real or imagined hardships in our lot; above all, not to let our impatience hurry us into rebellious demands for a change. Many a time such demands are granted to the confusion of those who made them. Before leaving this story of the people's sin at Kibroth-hattaavah, let me caution you against supposing that it is a mere parable, a late fiction, not the history of a real transaction. It is at present the fashion in some quarters to get rid of the miracles of the Exodus and of the forty years in the wilderness, by denying the historical truth of the Pentateuch, and interpreting it as at best an allegory or parable. But the Spirit of God has been careful to leave on the narrative indubitable marks of historical verity to confound such interpretations. For example, in this narrative (1) observe the terms in which the people utter their complaint. "We remember the fish, . . cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic." Egypt all over! These are precisely the articles of food which were distinctively Egyptian. No one writing in Judah or Ephraim would ever have thought of putting such a bill of fare into the mouths of the complainers. (2) Observe the nature of the miracle by which the people were fed. A shower of quails. This is as characteristic of the Sinaitic peninsula as the bill of fare was of Egypt. It was spring when the congregation arrived at Kibroth-hattaavah; at this season the quails "are annually in the habit of crossing the desert in countless myriads, flying very low, and often in the morning so utterly exhausted by their night's flight that they are slaughtered by the thousand" (Tristram). This chapter is history, not fable.

II. MOSES, TOO, WAS A COMPLAINER AT KIBROTH-HATTAAVAH (read vers. 11—15). His words are sufficiently bitter and impatient. There is in them no little sin; yet they are not resented as the people's were. Moses is not taken at his word and smitten with a plague. On the contrary, the Lord comforts him with cheering words, and grants him a council of elders to alleviate the burden. This is the more worthy of notice, because it is by no means singular (see 1 Kings xix. 4). Do you ask, What can be the reason of this? Why deal so gently with the complaints of Moses and Elijah, when the complaints of the congregation are so sharply punished? The difference can be explained. Observe where and to whom Moses expressed the grief and weariness of his heart. It was not to the Egyptians from whom they had come out; nor was it to the congregation of Israel. It was in the ear of God himself; he complains not *of* the Lord, but *to* the Lord—two very different sorts of complaint. A dutiful son may remonstrate with his father when the two are alone, but he will not cry out against his father to strangers. When the child of God has a complaint to make, it is to God he carries it. And complaints carried to God, even although there should be much impatience and unbelief at the root of them, will be listened to very graciously. The Lord, so great is his condescending love, would rather that we should pour out the griefs—even the unreasonable griefs—of our hearts, than that we should let them rankle in our bosoms.—B.

Ver. 10.—*The disastrous consequences of the sin of discontent.* Discontent springs from distrust. *Dis*trust is a root-sin from which different kindred evils spring, such as *dis*content, *dis*satisfaction, *dis*gust, *dis*obedience, and other *dis*agreeable states of mind. But "those that know thy name," &c. (Ps. ix. 10; Lam. iii. 24). From these

strange cairns in the wilderness,[1] "the graves of lust," we hear a voice (1 Cor. x. 6). I. THE DISCONTENT OF THE ISRAELITES. II. ITS DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES.

I. 1. Its disgraceful origin: "the mixed multitude," "hangers-on," "riff-raff." The chosen people of God listened and sympathised with them rather than with Moses and God. Apply to worldlings grumbling about weather, homes, situations, incomes, &c. (Prov. i. 10; Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. vi. 14). 2. The gross ingratitude of it. They were dissatisfied with the manna, which was wholesome, abundant, and adapted to various uses (vers. 7—9), as though Hindoos should quarrel with their rice or the English with their wheat (1 Tim. vi. 8). They recollect certain casual sensual advantages of past bondage, but forget its cruelties and degradation (vers. 4—6). Why not remember the whips and fetters and infanticide? They think of suppers more than sufferings, of full stomachs rather than of famished souls. Let Christians beware of hankering after the indulgences of their old life (Prov. xxiii. 3; 1 John ii. 15). And they complain of temporary deprivations, though hastening to a home of permanent and abundant good. They were passing through "that great and terrible wilderness" (Paran) because it was the direct route to the promised land (Deut. i. 19; cf. 1 Pet. i. 13; ii. 11). 3. The aggravations of it. For they had seen God's power already (Exod. xvi. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20). And have not we? (cf. Ps. xxii. 4, 5, 9, 10). And they overlooked recent chastisement (ver. 1). God forbid that Isa. xxvi. 11 should be true of us, lest Prov. xxix. 1 should be also.

II. The disastrous results of their sin. 1. They angered Jehovah. Discontent in the guests of his bounty dishonours their generous host, as though Reuben had complained because Joseph gave more to Benjamin (Gen. xliii. 34). 2. They grieved Moses, and even infected him with their own desponding spirit (vers. 11—15; see sketch below). Note how sin may become epidemic, spreading from the mixed multitude to the Israelites, and thence to Moses, like a disease introduced by foreign sailors spreading to our homes and palaces. Beware of carrying infection (Illustration, Asaph, Ps. lxxiii. 11—15). 3. They got what they desired, but are ruined thereby. Moses' prayer for help is answered in mercy (vers. 16, 17); theirs for flesh, in judgment (vers. 18—20). They probably added gluttony to lust, and perished in the sight of plenty and at the moment of gratification (cf. Job xx. 22, 23; Ps. lxxviii. 30, 31).

Learn—1. Prayers of discontent may bring answers of destruction. *E. g.* Rachel demanding children, and the Israelites a king. Greater wealth but worse health (Eccles. vi. 1, 2); worldly prosperity, but leanness of soul (Ps. cvi. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 9; James iv. 4). 2. The blessedness of a contented trust (Philip. iv. 11—13; Heb. xiii. 5).—P.

Vers. 11—15.—*The sin of despondency in a servant of God.* Moses is infected by the people's sin of discontent, though in the milder form of despondency. The signs and effects of it are as follows:—

I. MOSES FORGETS THAT THE BURDENS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THE AFFLICTIONS THEY BRING WITH THEM, INSTEAD OF BEING A SIGN THAT HE HAS "NOT FOUND FAVOUR" IN GOD'S SIGHT, ARE A PROOF OF THE HONOUR PUT UPON HIM. Illustration: a diplomatist or a general (*e. g.* Sir Garnet Wolseley) selected out of all the Queen's servants for some arduous enterprise. Christian wife honoured by God with the responsibilities and burdens of motherhood.

II. HE FORGETS THAT OUR DUTIES ARE NOT LIMITED BY OUR NATURAL RELATIONSHIPS (ver. 12). We are all "members of one another" (Rom. xiv. 7; Philip. ii. 4). All are in danger of a selfish disregard of those afar off (savage Caffres, idolatrous Hindoos), or even of those at our doors, not our own kindred, respecting whose spiritual welfare we may be selfishly indifferent or despondent.

III. HE SPEAKS AS THOUGH THE BURDEN WAS THROWN ENTIRELY ON HIMSELF. The questions in vers. 12, 13 are very unworthy of him. The cold fog of despondency chills him and obscures the light of God's presence which was promised to him (Exod. xxxiii. 14).

IV. HIS DESPONDENCY LEADS TO UNWORTHY REFLECTIONS ON GOD AND EXAGGERATED STATEMENTS ABOUT HIMSELF (vers. 13, 14). A smaller burden would have

[1] 'Our Work in Palestine,' pp. 284-6.

been too great for him "alone;" a heavier not too great with God (cf. John xv. 5; Philip. iv. 13).

V. IT PROMPTS HIM TO A SINFUL PRAYER (ver. 15). Imagine that the prayer had been answered, and Moses had died on the spot; what a humiliating end! (cf. 1 Kings xix. 4).

Let us learn the lesson Ps. lvi. 3, and thus climb to the level of a still higher experience: "I will trust, and not be afraid" (Isa. xii. 2; xxvi. 3).—P.

Ver. 17.—*The communication of a spiritual endowment.* The endowment of the elders for official duties was—1. A Divine gift imparted by God himself (1 Cor. xii. 4—6; James i. 17). 2. Yet mediate, through Moses, who was the first to enjoy it, but was thankful to share it with men in sympathy with himself (cf. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22; iv. 6, 7). 3. A means of relief to Moses and of blessing to the people. The communication did not impoverish Moses, but enriched him. He was like a lamp from which seventy other lamps were lit. The communication of the gift, like mercy, was twice blessed—to him that gives and him that takes. It relieved Moses and enriched the elders, yet not for their own advantage, but as a means of discharging their new and solemn trust. All "gifts," however received, are to be looked on as talents and trusts. The law of the stewardship is found in Rom. xii. 3—8; 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

Learn—1. The value of every spiritual gift. Men should not envy the possessor of it, but thank God for him, since the gift is communicable. If there had been no inspired Moses, there would have been no inspired elders. An Elisha is the heir of an Elijah (2 Kings ii. 9, 10); a Timothy is the son of a Paul (2 Tim. i. 2, 6). 2. The privilege of being the medium of communicating a spiritual gift (Rom. i. 11; Phil. i. 6). 3. The importance of "coveting the best gifts" which God can bestow, without human intervention, through his beloved Son.—P.

Vers. 26—29.—*Largeness of heart.* The brevity of the narrative prevents us forming an adverse judgment of the conduct of Eldad and Medad, for we do not know their motive for remaining in the camp. It may have been ignorance of the call, or shrinking through timidity from a duty which, nevertheless, God would not allow them to escape. But the narrative is not too brief to enable us to see in Moses' words a fine illustration of largeness of heart. Note—

I. JOSHUA'S APPEAL. His love of order may have been offended. He feared lest the unity of the camp under the leadership of Moses should be disturbed. He was anxious for the honour of his master, and desired that political and ecclesiastical discipline should be not only really, but ostensibly, in his hands. The call of the seventy elders with prophetic powers was a new departure in the history of the theocracy, and now the prophesying of Eldad and Medad, apart, threatened still further apparently to derogate from the honours of Moses. Thus now narrow minds or small hearts may be fearful of that which is novel, and envious of those who take a course independent of established authorities and Church traditions, even though they "seem to have the Spirit of God." They may forbid, or at least "despise, prophesyings" which are not according to rule.

II. MOSES' REPLY. The only question with Moses is one not of place or method, but of reality. Are the prophesyings and the spirit "of God"? Largeness of heart cannot exempt us from this duty (1 Thess. v. 21; 1 John iv. 1—3). Moses could not recognise the falsehoods uttered in the tabernacle of Korah, though he rejoiced in the prophesyings of Eldad. Spurious charity is traitorous to truth; true charity can only rejoice "in the truth" (1 Cor. xiii. 6). The lesson taught us is illustrated by various incidents in the New Testament. A large-hearted Christian will not be offended—1. If those who are clearly working in the name of Christ, and with the seal of his approval, do not follow with him (Mark ix. 38—40). 2. If their success seems to imperil the prosperity of his party or denomination (John iii. 26, &c.). 3. He will rejoice in the work, though unofficial and obscure men have originated it (Acts xi. 19—24). 4. He will not "envy," but delight, in the proclamation of the gospel, even if the motives of the preachers are marred by "envy and strife" (Philip. i. 15—18). Large-heartedness will "covet earnestly the best gifts" for others, whatever the consequences may be to ourselves.—P.

Ver. 4.—*The mixed multitude.* I. How came it there? It left Egypt with them (Exod. xii. 38). It had been accumulating, one knows not how long, and in how many ways. Egypt had not been a very comfortable place even for the Egyptians just before the exodus. Ten plagues in swift succession and increasing severity would make many outside Israel to desire another abode. The tyranny of Pharaoh may have been grievous to many of his own people. Many would join departing Israel uninvited; many also may have been asked by well-wishers and acquaintances, "Come with us, and we will do you good" (ch. x. 29). *So now there is a mixed multitude in the Church of Christ.* It cannot be kept out. The supreme relation among men is no doubt that of union in Christ, spiritual brotherhood, fellowship ever becoming more intimate and precious; but the relations that arise out of nature, all domestic and social bonds in short, must also exert their influence during the earthly course of the Church. Who can tell what effect natural feelings have had in modifying, sometimes even in obscuring, the full force of Divine truth? How hard it was to keep the first generation of Hebrew Christians from mixing the bondage of Judaism with the liberty which is in Christ! Nor must we forget that in *every individual Christian* there is something of the spirit of the mixed multitude, the old man not yet dead, and struggling to keep his hold, even while the new man is growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Whatever precaution and strictness the Church may observe, it cannot keep the spirit of the world out.

II. The danger from its presence. The mixed multitude began to lust, therein acting according to its nature. There was no covenant with it, no promise to it, no assurance of Canaan. It had no lot in the tabernacle, and what share it got of the manna was to be regarded as one in later days regarded the Saviour's boon to her: "The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Hence it was free to think without let or hindrance on the much-loved delicacies of Egypt. Just so there is a mixed multitude in and about the Church of Christ, which, with the spirit of the world dominant in its heart, soon makes the ways of the world to appear in its life. From many temptations you can escape by running away from the scene of them; but what must you do if temptations beset you in the very paths of religion themselves? This is the peculiar danger from the mixed multitude. When Jesus foils the third temptation in the wilderness, Satan departs from him for a season; but what shall he do when Peter, the chosen, daily companion, in the impulse of his carnal heart, would turn him from the cross? We know what Jesus did, but none the less was he exposed to the spirit of the mixed multitude then. Or what shall Paul do, intrepid enough against avowed enemies, when his friends at Cæsarea assail him in a way to break his heart (Acts xxi. 12, 13). There is a subtle, unconscious, unintended way in which the prophecy may be carried out that a man's foes shall be they of his own household. The mixed multitude may have been dangerous most of all in this, that it did not mean to be dangerous at all.

III. How to guard against the danger. There is but one way, and that to live more and more in pursuit of heavenly objects. The mixed multitude *will not alter in the objects of its love;* when any of its number cease to do so, it is because they have passed over to join the true Israel. The change then must be in us—more of ardour and aspiration. Note Paul's counsel to Timothy: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow (διώκε) righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. ii. 22). The fleeing is not a *mere fleeing;* it is a *pursuing;* a fleeing because it is a pursuing. Many temptations will pant in vain after the ardour and simplicity in Christ Jesus of such a man as Paul (2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 14—17; Eph. iv. 17—24; Phil. i. 21—23; iii. 7—14). And even the subtlest temptations of the mixed multitude are turned gently aside, as by Jesus himself, when his mother and brethren desired to speak with him (Matt. xii. 46—50). We must not only say, but feel it, that the Father's business is the main thing. From the very depths of our hearts must rise the cry, almost a groaning that cannot be uttered, "*Thy will* be done on earth, as it is in heaven." *Thy will*, not the wishes of corrupted human affections, however strong and entangling the affections may be (1 Cor. v. 9, 10; vii. 10—16).—Y.

Vers. 10—15.—*The expostulation of Moses.* Jehovah and his servant Moses are very differently affected by this universal complaint of the Israelites. "The anger of the Lord was kindled greatly;" how it was expressed, we see later on. At present we have to consider the displeasure of Moses. God was made angry by the unbelief and ingratitude of the people, but Moses is chiefly concerned because of the great straits into which he himself is being brought. Hence his expostulation.

I. IT CONTAINS A CLEAR RECOGNITION OF DUTY. Duty may be perfectly clear, even when there is much perplexity as to how it is to be performed. Moses had no manner of doubt that God had put him in his present position. Intolerable was the burden and keen the pain, but they had not come through any ambition of his own, and this in itself made a great deal of difference. If Moses had led the Israelites into the wilderness for his own purposes, he could not have spoken in the way he did. From the intolerable burden there were two ways of escape, flight and death—death did suggest itself, but flight never. Moses even in his very complaining is nobler than Jonah running away. As we see him thus suffering this great pressure for the sins of the people, we cannot help thinking of Jesus in the garden, praying that, if possible, the cup might pass from him. So Paul tells us that, in addition to things from without, the care (*μέριμνα*) *of all the Churches* came upon him (2 Cor. xi. 28). It may be our duty, in the name of God, and at his clear command, to attempt what the world, following out its own order of thinking, calls impossible.

II. IT INDICATES A TOO FAVOURABLE ESTIMATE OF HUMAN NATURE, AS HAVING BEEN ENTERTAINED BY MOSES. He must have thought better of his followers and fellow-countrymen than they deserved. Not that he who had seen so much of them could possibly be blind to their faults; but we may well suppose that he expected too great a change from the influences of the sojourn near Sinai. He gave them credit, probably, for something of his own feeling, full of expectation and of joy in the abiding favour and protection of God. And now, when the reality appears in all its hideousness, there is a corresponding reaction. Unregenerate human nature must always be regarded with very moderate expectations. At its best it is a reed easily broken. How much higher than Moses is Jesus! He knew what was in man (Matt. vii. 13, 14; xiii. 13—15; xviii. 21—22; xxvi. 31—35; Mark xiv. 18—20). And what light he gave to his apostles on this subject, *e. g.* to Paul, who saw and declared so distinctly the weakness of law to do anything save expose and condemn. It is not possible for us to make too much allowance for the corruption and degradation of human nature through sin. Only thus shall we appreciate the change to be effected before men are what God would have them to be.

III. THE REACTION FROM THIS TOO FAVOURABLE ESTIMATE SHOWS ITSELF IN THE DESPAIRING LANGUAGE OF MOSES. He goes from one extreme to the other. Having thought too well of Israel he now speaks of them below the truth. They are but sucking children. The many thousands of Israel have been thrown like helpless infants on his hands. We see presently that seventy men out of this very multitude are found fit to assist him, but in his confusion and despair he cannot stop to think of anything but death. He saw only the cloud and not the silver lining. Life henceforth meant nothing but wretchedness, and God's greatest boon would be to take it away. He wanted to be in that refuge which Job sought after his calamities, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest (Job iii. the whole chapter). It is worth while again contrasting Moses under the law with the apostles under the gospel. When Moses feels the heavily-pressing burden, he loses his presence of mind and begins to talk of death. When the apostles have the murmurers coming to them, they at once in a calm and orderly way prepare to get assistance (Acts vi. 1—6).—Y.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The answer of God.* 1. *He does not openly and directly reprove the reckless language of his servant.* Both Moses and the people had sinned, but with such a difference that while God visits the people with immediate and condign punishment he stretches forth his hand to Moses, even as Jesus did to Peter sinking in the sea. God treated Moses here very much as he treated the complaining Elijah (1 Kings xix.). Moses was just the sort of man who might be trusted to rebuke himself, and bitterly repent all the unjust and unbelieving thoughts, which, upon

this sudden temptation, had come into his mind. 2. *The first word of God tends to bring Moses to a calmer mind.* It sets before him something practical and not very difficult. Left to himself, he knows not how to begin dealing with this anarchy, especially with his own mind in such a distressed state. But it was a task quite within his reach, to pick out from a limited and probably well-known circle, seventy elders, official and experienced men. As he went through this work, he would be brought to feel, and not without a sense of shame, that he had been overtaken by panic. He has talked about sucking children: he now learns that there are at least seventy elders upon whose experience and influence he can lean. We soon find out, if we only listen to God, that temporal troubles are never so bad as they seem. 3. *The way in which this help was made as effectual as possible.* As God had given a certain spirit to Moses, so he would give it also to these seventy assistant elders. This was a reminder that he had not afflicted his servant and frowned upon him, as he so recklessly said (ver. 11). We often murmur and complain against Providence for neglecting us, when the real neglect is with ourselves in making a bad use of gifts bestowed. God never tells his people to do things beyond natural strength, without first assuring a sufficiency of power for the thing commanded. "I can do all things, through Christ who inwardly strengthens me," said Paul. There is further encouragement in God's promise here, as being an illustration of how the spirit is given without measure. There was not a certain limited manifestation to Moses, so that if others shared the spirit with him, he must have less. Neither his power nor his honour were one whit diminished. The question always is, What is the need of men in the sight of God? Then, according to that need, and never coming short of it, are the communications of his Holy Spirit. Moses, instead of being poorer, was really richer, for the spirit was working in a mind to which a precious experience had been added. 4. In the sight of these directions we are reminded how *Moses spoke out of a comparative inexperience of the burden.* Moses said there was nothing left for him but to die. The history tells us, that so far from dying, he had yet in him nearly forty years of honourable mediatorship between God and men. His proper word was, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord" (Ps. cxviii. 17). It is marvellous to think what some men have gone through in the way of difficulties, losses, and trials. Even the natural man has greater strength in the hour of trouble than at first he is conscious of—a great deal of trouble, when it is once fairly over, comes in the course of time to look a very small thing—and if we have God's strength, then we shall not merely endure tribulation, but glory in it. From these words of Moses and the practical gentle reply of God, learn one great lesson—how easy it is to exaggerate our difficulties and underrate our resources.—Y.

Vers. 18—20; 31—35.—*Self-will surfeited and punished.* I. GOD'S TREATMENT OF SELF-WILL. This is always to be well considered where instances of it are found in the Scriptures, because one of the great ends of God's dealings with us is to establish his holy, wise, and righteous will in place of our low, jealous, ignorant self-will. The way of parents dealing with children is to curb and restrain them at once; but children grow to be men, and what then? We cannot deal effectually with one another, for self-will is in all of us, and so far as temporal circumstances are concerned, it not unfrequently gets much of its own way. When we come to the discipline of the whole man, God only can effectually deal with self-will. He might curb him in at once, but such would not be discipline fit for a man. It might break the spirit, but it would do nothing to enlighten and change; we see here that God's treatment is to let people walk awhile in their own way. Self-will breaks out in complaints against the manna: self-will then shall have its desire, and what satisfaction it can get from the flesh for which it craves. Its mouth waters at the thought of the fish of Egypt; it shall have quails, which we may presume were an even greater delicacy. So when, in later years, Israel, in envy of surrounding nations, clamoured for a king, forgetting that the King of kings was theirs, God gave them their wish. The bulk of men will only learn by experience. The prodigal son must know the end of riotous living for himself. It is better to take God's word at the beginning and not sow to the flesh; but men shall have the opportunity if they choose. So God causes his wind to blow and the quails come, an exceeding great multitude (Ps. lxviii. 23—29).

II. GOD'S TEST OF SELF-CONTROL. He gives the quails, not for one day's luxury, but to be the food of a month. As nothing is said to the contrary, we must presume the manna was still continued. Indeed we can easily see the reason for its continuance. God in giving the quails, adds an express and solemn warning. They are to be taken with all their consequences. Sweet at first, they shall turn to objects of bitter loathing. They were given, not in complacency, but in anger, hence they had in them the efficacy of a test. Surely the whole of Israel was not rebellious and murmuring. There must have been men of the Nazarite spirit even then, and the question for them is: "Shall we go out after our wont and gather the manna (Exod. xvi.), or shall we, like the rest, gratify our appetites with these delicious quails?" Who can doubt that God was watching his own faithful ones, the Israelites indeed in whom there was no guile? There are doubtless many things in the world, the chief use of which is to test the disposition of man to obey God (Gen. ii. 16, 17). These quails were given, but there was no obligation to eat them. Every Israelite was free to refuse. A timely repentance, and another wind would have blown away the quails as rapidly as they came. There was a lesson if the people would learn it, from the submissive birds to the rebellious human beings.

III. GOD'S PENALTY FOR SELF-INDULGENCE. There is a seeming contradiction between vers. 19, 20, and ver. 33, but it is only seeming. God hastened his judgment and thereby really showed his mercy. As David chose the brief pestilence, and to fall into the hand of the Lord (2 Sam. xxiv.), so here God comes with an immediate and sweeping visitation. Besides, it is possible the people neglected the command to sanctify themselves, and thus further provoked the anger already stirred up; when people get lust into their hearts all sense of law is apt to vanish. It was well the people should see clearly the close connection between disobedience and retribution. Thus did God show, even in these quails, the spirit of a good and perfect gift. Nothing in creation is a blessing in itself; God must make it so, and he can easily in his anger turn it to a curse. God, in making the effect of eating the quails so conspicuous and sudden, still further illustrated by contrast the glory of the manna, for this manna was a beautiful type of the true bread that cometh from heaven. The people had never gathered the manna with such greed and application as they had gathered the quails. When a man breaks the law he is at once guilty, and the punishment, if it be deferred, is so as a matter of expediency, not of right. The lapse of time only makes the connection between sin and punishment less obvious, not at all less certain (Ps. cvi. 15; Gal. vi. 7—9).—Y.

Vers. 21—23.—*Deeper in unbelief.* I. MOSES IN HIS REPLY SHOWS AN IMPERFECT APPRECIATION OF WHAT GOD HAD SAID. 1. *As to God's purpose.* He had spoken in holy anger, promising flesh, but threatening retribution along with it. The threat is quite as emphatic as the promise, but somehow Moses does not heed. At Sinai, when the people made the golden calf, he was so oppressed with the sense of their great sin, and so solicitous for their pardon, as to beg if the pardon were not granted that he might himself be blotted out of God's book. Where was this anxiety now? His great concern is, not how God may be propitiated and the people spared, but how the people may be propitiated and he himself spared. Contrast Moses here with Christ at all times. Think of the Son's never-failing remembrance of the Father's glory. The Son saw and appreciated all things the Father showed him; hence the confidence with which we look to Christ for a revelation of all God's purposes concerning us, so far as it is right for us to know them. Jesus could ever go out and declare in fitting words and with proper emphasis all the will of God, for he had a perfect appreciation of that will himself. But how was Moses to go out and speak properly to the people when he himself had only half-heard, as it were, what God had said to him? Doubtless he repeated the message of God in the very same words; but one fears that while he made it quite clear to the people they should have flesh, he made it not quite so clear that God was sending it in anger. Let us ever get to the spirit of God's messages to us; never content till their fulness of meaning has passed into our heart, so that something like the fulness of service may pass out of it again. 2. *As to God's power.* History repeats itself. Unbelief, natural ignorance of God, slowness of heart to take in what he has spoken,—these

repeat themselves in their manner of receiving God's promises. Moses talks here as the disciples did at the feeding of the five thousand (Matt. xiv. 15). And yet, after all his wonderful experiences, there should not have been the slightest difficulty in receiving what God had said. Of all possible convictions, this should have rested on solid ground—that what God had promised he assuredly had power to perform. Is not this one of the great differences between God and men? Men promise and forget, or fall short; God is always better than his promises, for they have to be spoken in defective human words, while they are fulfilled in complete Divine actions.

II. THE CAUSE OF THIS IMPERFECT APPRECIATION. Can we not detect, and especially in the light of his subsequent language, something like doubt, something like leaning upon creature supports instead of God, in the invitation which he gave to Hobab? If this be so, we wonder little at his language of bitter complaint and despair (vers. 11—15); and we wonder less that he so soon showed himself out of sympathy with the Divine purposes. The eye of faith had become dim; self-preservation, escape from an intolerable burden, occupied his thoughts. Was it astonishing that, unbelief having found a temporary lodgment in the heart of the leader, the followers should have failed to take in *all* the purport of God's message? Learn from this how carefully spirituality of mind needs to be guarded. We must not be seduced into leaning upon men *instead of trusting in God*. Men may solace and encourage us as companions; they are never to take the place of Providence. So neither are we to be terrified and paralysed by sudden and stupendous revelations of human wickedness. In the midst of them all we hear the one voice speaking, "Be still, and know that I am God."—Y.

Vers. 26—29.—*Foolish advice wisely rejected.* God fulfils his promise, and gives to these seventy men a spirit which doubtless brings them into more active sympathy with Moses, and takes away the carnal and selfish views which had prevailed in their minds. The difference between their present and former state was probably much like that between the state of the apostles after and before the day of Pentecost. They had a perspicacity, a power, a courage, a zeal, which did not belong to them before. As they prophesied, may we not suppose that Moses heard from them expressions quite new to his ears as coming from Israelite lips? And to make the occasion more memorable and significant, two of the seventy, who for some unexplained reason remained in the camp, nevertheless prophesied, as did those in the tabernacle. The intelligence was very quickly brought to Moses. Some of the Israelites would be greatly shocked by such an irregular proceeding, though perhaps they had seen nothing very censurable in the general cry of the people for flesh. Punctiliousness in ceremony and etiquette is often joined with laxity in things of moment (Matt. xxiii. 23). The reception of the news is followed by—

I. THE FOOLISH ADVICE OF JOSHUA. Foolish, *although given by a devoted friend.* Joshua would probably have died for Moses, but he could not, therefore, give him good counsel. Attachment itself has not unfrequently a blinding effect on the judgment. A stranger might advise more wisely. It is the *right* of friendship to offer advice, but it is often the *height* of friendship, the very bloom and delicacy of it, to refrain. We find similar instances (Matt. xvi. 21—23; Acts xxi. 12, 13). Foolish, because *evidently given without consideration.* The circumstances were quite novel to Joshua. The grounds on which he dashed out his advice were mere matters of hearsay. *There was enough to have made him cautious.* Eldad and Medad were among the chosen ones; those present had been gifted with the spirit; what more likely then upon consideration, what more worthy of reverent acceptance, than that the absentees should have been similarly visited? Advice, when it is given with full knowledge of circumstances and full consideration of them, may be indeed precious, the very salvation and security of a perplexed mind. Otherwise, the greater the ignorance the greater the mischief. Advice should mostly come in response to a request for it. Foolish, because *it concerned the status of Moses rather than the glory of God.* Much of the advice of friendship is vitiated, through shutting out all save personal considerations. One friend advises another as a counsel does his client, not that justice may be done, but that his client may gain his end. Joshua was considering how the reputation and influence of "his lord Moses" would be affected,

Foolish because it was given *to a man who was in no doubt.* Moses was rejoicing in escape from a heavy burden, and the visitation upon Eldad and Medad was the very thing still further to comfort him. The folly of the advice is crowned, as we observe *that it recommended an impossibility.* "Forbid them." Forbid what? That they should prophesy! As well forbid the branches not to sway with a strong wind as forbid men to prophesy when the Spirit comes upon them. Even Balaam could not help uttering the Lord's prophecies and blessing Israel from the very mouth that would fain, in its greed of filthy lucre, have uttered a curse.

II. THIS FOOLISH ADVICE WISELY REJECTED. 1. As to the *substance* of the rejection. Possibly if Moses had been a different kind of man, he might have said to himself, "There is something in what Joshua says." But he was not one of the *aut Cæsar aut nullus* order. Joshua, in his impetuous word, was concerned for his master's honour; the master himself was concerned about his grievous burden. Not even Joshua understood the bitter experiences through which Moses had lately passed. "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets!" Our measure before God does not depend on our standing among men. Moses would not have been one whit less esteemed in heaven if every other Israelite had been as spiritually-minded as himself. Joshua had been speaking to a man who, like Christian, had been toiling on with a weary weight on his back. He has just got rid of it, and "Forbid them" really meant, "Take the burden up again." 2. As to the *spirit* of the rejection. Moses shows here the meekness and gentleness with which he is so emphatically credited in the next chapter. Advice, when it cannot be taken, even when it is most foolish and meddlesome, should be pushed gently away; and if the spirit in which it has been given is evidently kind and generous, let the refusal be mingled with gratefulness. Joshua loved Moses, and Moses loved Joshua. "Enviest thou for my sake?" Thus Moses recognises the devotion and *bona fides* of his friend.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEDITION AND PUNISHMENT OF MIRIAM (ch. xii.). Ver. 1.—**And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses.** While the people were encamped at Hazeroth (see ver. 16), and therefore probably very soon after the events of the last chapter. That Miriam's was the moving spirit in the matter is sufficiently evident, (1) because her name stands first; (2) because the verb "spake" is in the feminine (וַתְּדַבֵּר, "and she said"); (3) because the ground of annoyance was a peculiarly feminine one, a *mésalliance;* (4) because Miriam alone was punished; (5) because Aaron never seems to have taken the lead in anything. He appears uniformly as a man of weak and pliable character, who was singularly open to influence from others, for good or for evil. Superior to his brother in certain gifts, he was as inferior to him in force of character as could well be. On the present occasion there can be little question that Aaron simply allowed himself to be drawn by his sister into an opposition with which he had little personal sympathy; a general discontent at the manifest inferiority of his position inclined him to take up her quarrel, and to echo her complaints. **Because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.** Hebrew, a Cushite woman. The descendants of Cush were distributed both in Africa (the Ethiopians proper) and in Asia (the southern Arabians, Babylonians, Ninevites, &c.). See Gen. x. Some have thought that this Ethiopian woman was none other than the Midianite Zipporah, who might have been called a Cushite in some loose sense by Miriam. The historian, however, would not have repeated in his own name a statement so inaccurate; nor is it at all likely that that marriage would have become a matter of contention after so many years. The natural supposition undoubtedly is that Moses (whether after the death of Zipporah, or during her lifetime, we cannot tell) had taken to himself a second wife of Hamite origin. Where he found her it is useless to conjecture; she may possibly have been one of the "mixed multitude" that went up out of Egypt. It is equally useless to attribute any moral or religious character to this marriage, of which Holy Scripture takes no direct notice, and which was evidently regarded by Moses as a matter of purely private concern to himself. In general we may say that the rulers of Israel attached neither political, social, nor religious significance to their marriages; and that neither law nor custom imposed any restraint upon their choice, so long as they did not ally themselves with the daughters of Canaan (see Exod. xxxiv. 16). It would be altogether beside the mark to suppose that Moses

deliberately married a Cushite woman in order to set forth the essential fellowship between Jew and Gentile. It is true that such marriages as those of Joseph, of Salmon, of Solomon, and others undeniably became invested with spiritual importance and evangelical significance, in view of the growing narrowness of Jewish feeling, and of the coming in of a wider dispensation; but such significance was wholly latent at the time. If, however, the choice of Moses is inexplicable, the opposition of Miriam is intelligible enough. She was a prophetess (Exod. xv. 20), and strongly imbued with those national and patriotic feelings which are never far removed from exclusiveness and pride of race. She had—to use modern words—led the Te Deum of the nation after the stupendous overthrow of the Egyptians. And now her brother, who stood at the head of the nation, had brought into his tent a Cushite woman, one of the dark-skinned race which seemed even lower in the religious scale than the Egyptians themselves. Such an alliance might easily seem to Miriam nothing better than an act of apostasy which would justify any possible opposition.

Ver. 2.—**And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?** This is evidently not the "speaking against Moses" mentioned in the previous verse, for that is distinctly said to have been on the score of Moses' marriage. This is their justification of themselves for daring to dispute his judgment and arraign his proceedings; a thing which clearly required justification. Moses himself, or more likely others for him, had remonstrated with them on the language they were using. They retorted that Moses had no monopoly of Divine communications; Aaron also received the revelation of God by Urim and Thummim, and Miriam was a prophetess. They were acknowledged in a general sense as sharing with him the leadership of Israel (see Micah vi. 4); upon this they meant to found a claim to co-ordinate authority. They would have had perhaps all matters settled in a family council in which they should have had an equal voice. It was hard for them both to forget that Moses was only their younger brother: for Miriam that she had saved his life as an infant; for Aaron that he had been as prominent as Moses in the original commission from God to the people. **And the Lord heard it.** In one sense he hears everything; in another sense there are many things which he does not choose to hear, because he does not wish to take judicial notice of them. Thus he had not "heard" the passionate complaints of Moses himself a short time before, because his will was then to pardon, not to punish (cf. Isa. xlii. 19; Mal. iii. 16).

Ver. 3.—**Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.** For the Hebrew עָנָו the Septuagint has πραΰς here; the Vulgate, *mitis*. The Targum Palestine has "bowed down in his mind," *i. e.* overwhelmed ("plagued," Luther). The ordinary version is undoubtedly right; the object of the parenthesis was either to explain that there was no real ground for the hostility of Miriam and Aaron, or to show that the direct interference of the Lord himself was necessary for the protection of his servant. The verse bears a difficulty on its very face, because it speaks of Moses in terms which could hardly have been used by Moses of himself. Nor is this difficulty in the least degree diminished by the explanations which are offered by those who are determined to maintain at any cost the Mosaic authorship of every word in the Pentateuch. It is no doubt true to some extent that when a great and good man is writing of himself (and especially when he writes under the influence of the Holy Spirit), he can speak of himself with the same calm and simple truthfulness with which he would speak of any other. It is sufficient, however, to refer to the example of St. Paul to show that neither any height of spiritual privilege and authority, nor any intensity of Divine inspiration, obliterates the natural virtue of modesty, or allows a really humble man to praise himself without pain and shrinking. It is also to be observed that while St. Paul forces himself to speak of his privileges, distinctions, and sufferings, all of which were outward to himself, Moses would here be claiming for himself the possession of an inward virtue in greater measure than any other living soul. Surely it is not too much to say that if he did possess it in such measure, he could not possibly have been conscious that he did; only One was thus conscious of his own ineffable superiority, and this very consciousness is one of the strongest arguments for believing that he was infinitely more than a mere man, howsoever good and exalted. There is but one theory that will make it morally possible for Moses to have written this verse, viz., that in writing he was a mere instrument, and not morally responsible for what he did write. Such a theory will find few upholders. But, further, it is necessary to prove not only that Moses might have made this statement, but also that he might have made it in this form. Granted that it was necessary to the narrative to point out that he was very meek; it was *not* necessary to assert that he was absolutely the meekest man living. And if it was unnecessary, it was also unnatural. No good man would go out of his way to compare himself to his own advantage with all men upon the face of the earth.

The whole form of the sentence, indeed, as well as its position, proclaim it so clearly to be an addition by some later hand, that the question may be left to the common sense and knowledge of human nature of every reader; for the broad outlines of human character, morality, and virtue are the same in every age, and are not displaced by any accident of position, or even of inspiration. A slight examination of passages from other sacred writers, which are sometimes adduced as analogous, will serve to show how profound is the difference between what holy men *could* say of themselves and what they *could not* (cf. Dan. i. 19, 20; v. 11, 12; ix. 23; x. 11). On the question of the inspiration of this verse, supposing it to be an interpolation, and as to the probable author of it, see the Preface. As to the fact of Moses' meekness, we have no reason to doubt it, but we may legitimately look upon the form in which it is stated as one of those conventional hyperboles which are not uncommon even in the sacred writings (cf. Gen. vii. 19; John xxi. 25). And we cannot avoid perceiving that Moses' meekness was far from being perfect, and was marred by sinful impatience and passion on more than one recorded occasion.

Ver. 4.—**The Lord spake suddenly.** How he spake we cannot tell, but the word "suddenly" (Septuagint, *παραχρῆμα*) points to something unexpected and unusual. The voice seems to have come to the three in their tents before there was any thought in their minds of such an intervention. **Come out ye three,** *i. e.* out of the camp—probably the camp of Moses and Aaron, on the east of the tabernacle court (see ch. iii. 38).

Ver. 5.—**The Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud.** The cloud which had been soaring above the tabernacle descended upon it (see ch. xi. 25 and xii. 10). **And stood in the door of the tabernacle.** It would seem most natural to understand by these words the entrance to the holy place itself, and this would manifestly accord best with the movements of the cloud, as here described; for the cloud seems to have sunk down upon the sacred tent in token that the Lord was in some special sense present within it. On the other hand, the phrase must certainly be understood to mean the entrance of the court, or sacred enclosure, in Levit. viii. 3, 31, 33, and probably in other places. As it is hardly possible that the phrase can have had both meanings, the latter must be preferred. **And they both came forth.** Not out of the sanctuary, into which Miriam could not have entered, but out of the enclosure. The wrath which lay upon them both, and the punishment which was about to be inflicted upon one, were sufficient reasons for calling them out of the holy ground.

Ver. 6.—**If there be a prophet among you I the Lord will make myself known.** More probably "the Lord" belongs to the first clause: "If there be to you a prophet of the Lord, I will make myself known." So the Septuagint, *ἐὰν γένηται προφήτης ὑμῶν Κυρίῳ, . . . γνωσθήσομαι.* **In a vision.** *Ἐν ὁράματι.* An internal vision, in which the eyes (even if open) saw nothing, but the effects of vision were produced upon the sensorium by other and supernatural means (see, *e. g.*, Amos vii. 7, 8; Acts x. 11). **Speak unto him in a dream.** Rather, speak "in him"—בּ. The voice that spake to the prophet was an internal voice, causing no vibration of the outer air, but affecting only the inner and hidden seat of consciousness. It is not necessary to restrict the prophetic dream to the time of sleep; a waking state, resembling what we call day-dream, in which the external senses are quiescent, and the imagination is freed from its usual restraints, was perhaps the more usual mental condition at the time. Indeed the Divine communications made to Joseph (Matt. i. 20; ii. 13) and to the Magi (*ibid.* ch. ii. 12) are almost the only ones we read of as made during actual sleep, unless we include the case of Pilate's wife (*ibid.* ch. xxvii. 19); and none of these were prophets in the ordinary sense. Compare, however, Acts ii. 17 *b*.

Ver. 7.—**My servant Moses is not so.** No words could more clearly and sharply draw the distinction between Moses and the whole *laudabilis numerus* of the prophets. It is strange that, in the face of a statement so general and so emphatic, it should have been doubted whether it applied to such prophets as Isaiah or Daniel. It was exactly in "visions" and in "dreams," *i. e.* under the peculiar psychological conditions so-called, that these greatest of prophets received their revelations from heaven. The exceeding richness and wonder of some of these revelations did not alter the mode in which they were received, nor raise them out of the ordinary conditions of the *gradus propheticus*. As prophets of future things they were much greater than Moses, and their writings may be to us far more precious; but that does not concern the present question, which turns exclusively upon the relation between the Divine Giver and the human receiver of the revelation. If words mean anything, the assertion here is that Moses stood on an altogether different footing from the "prophet of the Lord" in respect of the communications which he received from the Lord. It is this essential superiority of position on the part of Moses which alone gives force and meaning to the important declarations of Deut. xviii. 15; John i. 21 *b*.; vi. 14; vii. 40, &c. Moses had *no* successor in his relations with God until that Son of man came, who was "in heaven" all the

time he walked and spake on earth. **Who is faithful in all mine house.** נֶאֱמָן with ב means to be proved, or attested, and so established (cf. 1 Sam. iii. 20; xxii. 14). The Septuagint gives the true sense, *ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου πιστός*, and so it is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. iii. 2). The "house" of God, as the adjective "whole" shows, is not the tabernacle, but the house of Israel; the word "house" standing for household, family, nation, as so often in the sacred writings (see Gen. xlvi. 27; Levit. x. 6; Heb. iii. 6).

Ver. 8.—**Mouth to mouth.** Equivalent to face to face in Exod. xxxiii. 11. What the exact facts of the case were it is not possible to know, scarcely to imagine; but the words seem to imply a familiar speaking with an audible voice on the part of God, as distinguished from the internal voice, inaudible to the ear, with which he spake "in" the prophets. To assert that the revelations accorded to Moses were only subjective modifications of his own consciousness is to evacuate these strong words of any meaning whatever. **Apparently.** מַרְאָה (Septuagint *ἐν εἴδει*) is an accusative in apposition to what goes before by way (apparently) of further definition. It is the same word translated "vision" in ver. 6; but its meaning here must be determined by the expression "in riddles," which stands in antithesis to it. It was confessedly the case with most prophetic utterances that the language in which they were couched was quite as much intended to conceal as to express their full meaning; but to Moses God spake without any such concealments. **The similitude of the Lord shall he behold.** תְּמוּנַת יְהוָה. Not the essential nature of God, which no man can see, but a form (wholly unknown and unimaginable to us) in which it pleased him to veil his glory. The Septuagint has *τὴν δόξαν Κυρίου εἶδε*, referring, apparently, to the vision promised in Exod. xxxiii. 22; and the Targum Palestine speaks here of the vision of the burning bush. The motive for this alteration is no doubt to be sought in a profound jealousy for the great truth declared in such texts as Deut. iv. 15; Isa. xl. 18, and afterwards in John i. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 16. But the statement in the text is a general one, and can only mean that Moses habitually in his intercourse with God had before his eyes some visible manifestation of the invisible God, which helped to make that intercourse at once more awfully real and more intensely blessed. Such manifestation to the sense of sight must be distinguished both from the visionary (or subjective) sight of God in human figure accorded to Ezekiel (ch. i. 26), to Isaiah (ch. vi. 1), to St. John (Rev. iv. 2, 3), and perhaps to others, and also from such theophanies in angel guise as are recorded in Gen xxxii. 30; Judges xiii. 22, and elsewhere. On the other hand, the seventy elders seem to have seen the "Temunah" of the Lord upon that one occasion when they were called up into Mount Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 10, 11). **Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?** No doubt it was the double fact of their relationship to Moses after the flesh, and of their sharing with him in certain spiritual gifts and prerogatives, which made them oblivious of the great distinction which lifted him above their rivalry, and should have lifted him above their contradiction. That contradiction, however, served to bring out in the clearest way the singular and unapproached position of the mediator of Israel; and it serves still to enable us to estimate aright the peculiar dignity of his legislation and his writings. The substance of prophetic teaching may be of deeper interest and of wider import than "the law," but this latter will still rank higher in the scale of inspiration, as having been more directly communicated from on high. Thus "the law" (as the Jews rightly taught) remained the body of Divine revelation until "that Prophet" came who was "like unto" Moses in the fact that he enjoyed constant, open, and direct communication with the Godhead.

Ver. 9.—**And he departed.** As a judge departs from his judgment-seat after trying and convicting evil-doers.

Ver. 10.—**The cloud departed from off the tabernacle.** During this awful interview the cloud of the Presence had rested on the tabernacle, as if it were the Divine chariot waiting for the King of Israel while he tarried within (cf. Ps. civ. 3; Isa. xix. 1; Rev. xi. 12). Now that his work is done he ascends his chariot again, and soars aloft above the host. **Miriam became leprous.** The Hebrews had become familiar with this terrible disease in Egypt. The Levitical legislation had made it more terrible by affixing to it the penalty of religious and social excommunication, and the stigma, as it were, of the Divine displeasure. Before this legislation Moses himself had been made partially and temporarily leprous, and that solely for a sign, and without any sense of punishment (Exod. iv. 6). In Miriam's case, however, as in all subsequent cases, the plague of leprosy was endued with moral as well as physical horror (cf. 2 Kings v. 27). **As snow.** This expression points to the perfect development of the disease, as contrasted with its earlier and less conspicuous stages. **Aaron looked upon Miriam.** If we ask why Aaron himself was not punished, the answer appears to be the same here as in the case of the golden calf. 1. He was not the leader in mischief, but only led into it through weakness. 2. He was, like many weak men,

of an affectionate disposition (cf. Levit. x. 19), and suffered his own punishment in witnessing that of others. 3. He was God's high priest, and the office would have shared in the disgrace of the man.

Ver. 11.—**Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee.** Septuagint, *δέομαι, Κύριε.* In thus addressing his brother Aaron acknowledged his superior position, and tacitly abandoned all pretension to equality. **Lay not the sin upon us.** Aaron speaks to Moses almost as if he were praying to God, so completely does he recognise in his brother the representative of God (in a far higher sense than himself), who had power to bind and loose in the name and power of God. What Aaron really prays for is that the sin, which he frankly confesses, may not be imputed to them. The Levitical law had taught them to look upon sin as a burden, which in the nature of things the sinner must carry, but which by the goodness of God might be got rid of, or transferred to some one else (cf. Levit. iv. 4; xvi. 21; John i. 29).

Ver. 12.—**As one dead.** Rather, "as the dead thing," *i.e.* the still-born child, in which death and decay have anticipated life. Such was the frightful effect of leprosy in its last stages.

Ver. 13.—**Moses cried unto the Lord.** A much harder and prouder man than Moses was must needs have been melted into pity at the sight of his sister, and the terrible suggestion of Aaron. **Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.** The "now" has no place here, unless it be merely to add force to the exclamation. Moses, although directly appealed to himself, can only appeal to God.

Ver. 14.—**The Lord said unto Moses.** Presumably in the tabernacle, whither Moses would have returned to supplicate God. **If her father had but spit in her face.** The "but" is superfluous, and obscures the sense; the act mentioned is referred to not as something trifling, but as something in its way very serious. The Septuagint renders it correctly *εἰ ὁ πατὴρ . . . πτύων ἐνέπτυσεν.* The Targums have, "if her father had corrected her." Probably they used this euphemism from a sense of a certain want of dignity and propriety in the orignal expression, considered as coming from the mouth of God. The act in question was, however, not uncommon in itself, and in significance clearly marked (see Deut. xxv. 9). It was the distinctive note of public disgrace inflicted by one who had a right to inflict it. In the case of a father, it meant that he was thoroughly ashamed of his child, and judged it best (which would be only in extreme cases) to put his child to shame before all the world. So public a disgrace would certainly be felt in patriarchal times as a most severe calamity, and entailed by ordinary custom (as we learn here) retirement and mourning for seven days at least. How much more, when her heavenly Father had been driven to inflict a public disgrace upon her for perverse behaviour, should the shame and the sorrow not be lightly put away, but patiently endured for a decent period! (cf. Heb. xii. 9).

Ver. 15.—**Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days.** It does not say that Miriam was healed forthwith of her leprosy, but the presumption is to that effect. Not the punishment itself, but the shame of it, was to last according to the answer of God. Her case, therefore, would not fall under the law of ch. v. 2, or of Levit. xiii. 46, but would be analogous to that treated of in Levit. xiv. No doubt she had to submit to all the rites there prescribed, humiliating as they must have been to the prophetess and the sister of the law-giver; and these rites involved exclusion from her tent for a period of seven days (Levit. xiv. 8). By God's command exclusion from her tent was made exclusion from the camp.

Ver. 16.—**In the wilderness of Paran.** It is somewhat strange that this note of place should be used a second time without explanation (see ch. x. 12, 33). Probably it is intended to mark the fact that they were still within the limits of Paran, although on the very verge of their promised land. In the list of stations given in ch. xxxiii. it is said (ver. 18), "They departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah." This is with some probability identified with the Wady Redemât, which opens from the mountain mass of the Azazimât into the singular plain of Kudes, or Kadesh, the scene of the decisive events which followed.

HOMILETICS.

Ch. xii.—*The contradiction of sinners.* We have in this chapter, spiritually, the contradiction of the Jews against their brother after the flesh; morally, the sin and punishment of jealousy and envy in high places. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT AS MOSES IS THE TYPE OF HIM WHO WAS THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT, WHO WAS MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART; SO AARON AND MIRIAM, WHEN ARRAYED AGAINST MOSES, REPRESENT THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD AT THE TIME OF OUR LORD, AND THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE, IN THEIR CARNAL PRIDE AND EXCLUSIVENESS.

Nor is this typical character arbitrary or unreal, for we may clearly see in them the same tendencies which afterwards ripened into utter blasphemy and Deicide.

II. THAT THE OFFENCE OF MOSES IN THE EYES OF MIRIAM WAS HIS HAVING ALLIED HIMSELF WITH A GENTILE WIFE OF A DESPISED RACE. Even so the crime of our Lord, in the sight of a narrow and bigoted Judaism, was that he went about to present unto himself a Gentile Church, of the dregs of the nations, to be his spouse (cf. Cant. i. 4—6; Luke xv. 28; Acts xxii. 21, 22; Eph. v. 25—32).

III. THAT MIRIAM AND AARON JUSTIFIED THEIR OPPOSITION TO MOSES BY DWELLING UPON THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY. Even so the synagogue and priesthood of the Jews magnified themselves against the Lord's Christ and their own Messiah, on the ground that they themselves were commissioned of God (cf. John vii. 48; viii. 33; ix. 28, 29).

IV. THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO BE OBLIVIOUS OF HIS TRUE GREATNESS, BECAUSE HE WAS THEIR BROTHER, AND THEIR YOUNGER BROTHER. Even so Christ was despised by the Jews because he was (as it were) one of themselves, and because they seemed to be familiar with his antecedents and training (cf. Matt. xiii. 55—57; Luke iv. 22, 28; John vi. 42).

V. THAT MOSES DISPLAYED A MEEKNESS WHICH SEEMED MORE THAN HUMAN. Even so our Lord endured the contradiction of sinners with a meekness which *was* more than human (cf. Isa. xlii. 19; liii. 7; Matt. xi. 29; Heb. xii. 3; Jas. v. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 23).

VI. THAT GOD INTERVENED TO ADVANCE HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT TO BE ABOVE ALL PROPHETS, AND TO BE MUCH NEARER TO HIMSELF THAN MIRIAM AND AARON. Even so did God vindicate his holy servant Jesus against all the blasphemy of the Jews, and give him a name which is above every name (cf. Acts ii. 22—24, 32; iv. 10, 27, 30; Rom. i. 4; Phil. ii. 9; Heb. iii. 1—3).

VII. THAT GOD INTERFERED TO PUNISH MIRIAM WITH LEPROSY FOR HER PRIDE AND RANCOUR. Even so the synagogue of the Jews became the synagogue of Satan, and they themselves are in exile, political and religious, until they shall cry for mercy to their Brother, the one Mediator (Rom. xi. 25; 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16; Rev. ii. 9; iii. 9).

Consider again—

I. THAT THE SECRET CAUSE OF ALL THIS DISTURBANCE WAS PROBABLY MIRIAM'S JEALOUSY OF HER BROTHER'S WIFE. It is likely she hoped to have exercised a growing influence over him herself. Even so history and experience testify that personal jealousies and envies are at the root of very many of the disorders in churches and congregations (cf. 2 Cor. xii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 1 *b*.).

II. THAT A COINCIDENT CAUSE WAS A SECRET DISSATISFACTION ON THE PART OF AARON AT THE INFERIORITY OF HIS OWN POSITION AND INFLUENCE AS COMPARED WITH HIS BROTHER'S. Even so ambition and lust of power have betrayed many a highly-gifted and perhaps really religious soul into making claims, and taking up a position derogatory to Christ, and inconsistent with his sole pre-eminence (cf. Col. ii. 19).

III. THAT THEY EXCUSED THEIR SEDITION UNDER THE PLEA (WHICH WAS TRUE IN ITSELF) THAT THEY TOO ENJOYED DIVINE FAVOURS AND PRIVILEGES. How often do men speak and act as if the fact of being spiritual (Gal. vi. 1), or of being called to some ministry, authorised them to ignore all distinctions, refuse all control, and give the rein to their own enmities and evil feelings.

IV. THAT MOSES TURNED A DEAF EAR TO THEIR INVECTIVES, BUT ALL THE MORE GOD TURNED A LISTENING EAR. MOSES WOULD NOT TAKE UP HIS OWN QUARREL, THEREFORE GOD TOOK IT UP FOR HIM, AND GREATLY MAGNIFIED HIM. Even so they that will avenge themselves must be content with the results of their own efforts, and they that will fight their own battles must take their chance of victory; but they that will not avenge themselves, God will vindicate, and that gloriously. The meek shall inherit the earth, because at the present they are dispossessed of the earth (cf. Ps. lxxvi 9; Isa. xi. 4; Matt. v. 5; Rom. xii. 19; Heb. x. 30).

V. THAT THE PUNISHMENT OF MIRIAM WAS THE MOST TERRIBLE OF DISEASES—A LIVING DEATH. A jealous spirit, stirring up dissensions, reckless of the souls for which Christ died, incurs awful guilt, and is in danger of hell-fire (cf. Matt. xviii. 7—9; 1 Tim. vi. 4; James iv. 5).

VI. THAT AARON CRIED HUMBLY TO THE BROTHER WHOM HE HAD SPOKEN AGAINST,

AND THAT BROTHER INTERCEDED FOR THEM, AND THUS AARON'S FAITH SAVED HIMSELF AND HIS SISTER. Even so the Lord Jesus is ever ready to intercede for his enemies; much more for those whom he loves as brethren, when they cry to him, even if they have treated him ill (cf. Luke xxiii. 34; Rom. v. 8, 9; Heb. ii. 11, 12, and of the synagogue itself (Rom. xi. 26, 28; 2 Cor. iii. 16).

VII. THAT MIRIAM'S FAULT, ALTHOUGH FORGIVEN, WAS NOT TO BE LIGHTLY FORGOTTEN BY HERSELF OR THE PEOPLE; SHE WAS TO BE ASHAMED FOR SEVEN DAYS. Even so it is not according to the will of God, nor for the edification of the Church, nor for the good of the sinner, that a sin which is also a scandal should be straightway smoothed over and forgotten, because it is acknowledged and forgiven. There is a natural impatience to be rid of the disagreeable consequences of sin in this life, which is purely selfish on the part of every one concerned, and is dishonouring to God. Shame is a holy discipline for those who have done wrong, and they should not be hastily removed from its sanctifying influences (cf. Ezek. xxxix. 26; 2 Cor. ii. 6; vii. 9—11).

VIII. THAT MIRIAM, PROPHETESS AS SHE WAS, AND SISTER OF THE LAWGIVER, HAD TO PASS THROUGH THE ORDINARY CEREMONIAL FOR THE CLEANSING OF LEPERS—A CEREMONIAL DESIGNED TO SET FORTH THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST. Even so there is one only way to restoration for all sinners, however highly placed or gifted, and that through the sprinkling of the precious blood (cf. Levit. xiv. 2; Acts iv. 12; Rom. iii. 22, 23).

IX. THAT GOD WOULD NOT GIVE THE SIGNAL FOR DEPARTURE UNTIL MIRIAM WAS RESTORED. Even so God, who will have all men to be saved, waiteth long and delayeth the entry of the Church into her rest, lest any who will come in should be shut out (cf. Luke xviii. 7 *b.*; 2 Pet. iii. 9, 15; Rev. vii. 3).

Consider also—THAT THE OPPOSITION OF HIS OWN ONLY LED TO THE SUPREME AND SOLITARY GREATNESS OF MOSES BEING MADE FAR MORE CLEAR THAN EVER, AND BEING PLACED BEYOND CAVIL OR MISTAKE. Even so the persecution of our Lord by the Jews only led to his being declared the Son of God with power; and still more, the efforts of heretics to deny or to explain away his Divine glory, have only led to that glory being much more clearly defined, and much more devoutly believed than ever.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The sedition of Miriam and Aaron.* Here is another sedition in Israel. What is worse, the sedition does not, at this time, originate among the mixed multitude, the pariahs of the camp. The authors of it are the two leading personages in the congregation, after Moses himself. Nor are they strangers to him, such as might be deemed his natural rivals; they are his own kindred, his sister and brother.

I. THE STORY OF THE SEDITION was, in brief, this:—Moses was not the only member of the family of Amram whom the Lord had endowed with eminent gifts. Aaron, his elder brother, was a leading man among the Israelites before Moses received his call at Horeb. Miriam also was a woman of high and various gifts, both natural and gracious. She was a prophetess—the earliest recorded example of a woman endowed with the gift of prophecy—and she excelled also in song (Exod. xv. 20; Micah vi. 4). The eminent gifts of these two were not passed over. They found such recognition and scope, that next to Moses, Aaron and Miriam were the two most honoured and influential individuals in the camp. But they were not content with this. Moses was set in yet higher place, and this roused their jealousy. They could not bear to see another, one brought up in the same family, a younger brother too, elevated above them. Miriam could not brook the thought of being subject to the younger brother whose infancy she had tended, and whose ark of bulrushes she had been set to watch when their mother committed him to the unfeeling bosom of the Nile. "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" Envy is a root tenacious of life in the human heart. When some one whom you have known familiarly as your junior or inferior is raised above you in office or wealth, in gifts or grace, watch and pray, else you will be very apt to fall into Miriam's sin. I say *Miriam's* sin, for it is plain that the sedition originated with her. Not only is her name put first, but in the Hebrew the beginning of

the narrative runs thus: "Then she spake, even Miriam and Aaron, against Moses." When there is envy in the heart, it will soon find occasion to break out. Very characteristically, the occasion in this instance was some misunderstanding about Moses' wife. She was not of the daughters of Israel. Miriam affected to despise her as an unclean person, and persuaded Aaron to do the same. It was an instance of a thing not rare in history, a family quarrel, a fit of ill-feeling between two sisters-in-law, stirring up envy and strife between persons in high office, and troubling the community. There was something very petty in the conduct of Miriam and Aaron, but it was not, therefore, a trifling offence. When they were giving vent to their envy "the Lord heard."

II. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE SEDITION. It does not appear that Moses made any complaint; he was the meekest of men, humble and patient. All the rather does the Highest take the defence of his servant in hand. "Suddenly," *i. e.* in sharp displeasure, Miriam and the two brothers were commanded to present themselves before the Lord, at the entrance of the tabernacle. Whereupon,—1. *The Lord pronounced a warm eulogy upon Moses.* Observe the terms in which he is described, for there is much more in them than is perceived at first. "My servant Moses,"—"servant in all mine house,"—"faithful in all mine house." (1) Moses was "the servant of the Lord," "the man of God," in a sense more ample than any other individual who ever lived excepting only Christ himself; and one can perceive a tone of singular love in the way in which the title is here used: "my servant Moses." (2) The commission of Moses extended to every part of the Lord's house, and in every department of his service he showed fidelity. As a prophet, he was more extensively employed and more faithful than Miriam; as a priest, he was more honourable and faithful than Aaron; and he was, moreover, king in Jeshurun, the valiant and faithful leader and commander of the people. These were facts, and Moses might well have appealed to them in vindication of himself against the complainers. But he did better to leave the matter in the Lord's own hand (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6). 2. Besides vindicating Moses and rebuking his detractors, *the Lord put a mark of his displeasure on Miriam.* The ringleader in the sedition, she bears the brunt of the punishment. She has affected to abhor her sister-in-law as unclean; she is herself smitten with leprosy, a disease loathsome in itself, and which entailed ceremonial defilement in the highest degree. This done, the cloud of the Divine presence rose as suddenly as it had come down. Miriam and Aaron stood before the tabernacle utterly confounded, till Aaron was fain to humble himself before his brother, saying:—We have done foolishly, we have sinned; forgive us, and do not let the sad affair go further; have pity on poor Miriam especially; see how pitiable a sight she is. "Like the dead thing of which the flesh is half consumed when it cometh out of its mother's womb." Moses was not the man to resist so touching an appeal. Miriam was healed; but she was shut out from the camp as an unclean person for the space of a week, as the law prescribed. The lesson lies on the surface. Do not give harbour to envy because of the welfare or honour of your neighbour, rather "rejoice with them that do rejoice." It is not always easy to rejoice when some one younger, or of humbler birth than ourselves, is exalted above us. Nor is the difficulty lessened when the person exalted is of our own kindred. Nevertheless envy must be cast forth. The author of all gifts and honours is God. To envy the receivers is to rebel against him and provoke his displeasure. And God's ordinary method in punishing envious pride is to inflict some peculiarly ignominious stroke. When Miriam swells with pride she is smitten with leprosy.—B.

VERS. 6—8.—*The singular honour of Moses.* The best commentary on these verses is supplied by the comparison instituted between Moses and our blessed Lord in the Epistle to the Hebrews (iii. 1—6). The Hebrews are reminded that of all the servants whom the Lord raised up to minister in the ancient Church, there was not one who approached Moses, in respect either to the greatness and variety of the services performed by him, or the greatness of the honours bestowed upon him. Moses was set over all God's house, and in this eminent station he was conspicuously faithful. In these respects Moses was the most perfect figure of Christ. Christ's priesthood was foreshadowed by Melchisedec, his royalty by David and Solomon, his prophetical office by Samuel and the goodly company of prophets who followed him. But in

Moses all the three offices were foreshadowed at once. Of these two men, Moses and Christ, and of no other since the world began, could it be affirmed that they were "faithful in all the Lord's house." No doubt there was disparity as well as a resemblance. Both were servants. But Moses was a servant in a house which belonged to another, in a household of which he was only a member, whereas Christ is such a servant as is also a son, and serves in a household of which he is the Maker and Heir. This is true. Nevertheless it is profitable to forget occasionally the disparity of the two great mediators, and to fix attention on the resemblance between them, the points in which the honour of Christ the Great Prophet was prefigured by the singular honour of Moses. Hence the interest and value of this text in Numbers.

I. AS A FOIL TO BRING OUT THE SINGULAR HONOUR OF MOSES, THE LORD PUTS ALONGSIDE OF IT THE HONOUR BESTOWED ON OTHER PROPHETS. "Consider the prophets that have been or yet are among you. How has my will been made known to them?" Two ways are specified. 1. "*In a vision.*" There was a memorable example of this in the case of Abraham (Gen. xv.). Visions continued to be the vehicles of revelation during the whole course of the Old Testament history. Isaiah (vi., xiii., &c.), Jeremiah (i., &c.), Ezekiel and Daniel (everywhere). Peter's vision at Joppa is a familiar example of the same kind under the New Testament. 2. "*In a dream.*" This was a lower way of revelation. The stories of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar remind us that the dreams (I do not say the interpretations of them) were not seldom vouchsafed to men who were strangers to God. We shall see immediately that these ways of making himself known to men through the prophets, were inferior to the ways in which the Lord was wont to reveal himself through Moses. But let us not so fix our attention on the points of difference as to lose sight of or forget the bright and glorious feature which they have in common. "I, the Lord, do make myself known in a vision, and do speak in a dream." For reasons we can only guess at, the Lord was pleased to suffer the nations to walk in their own ways. But in Israel he revealed himself. At sundry times and in divers manners he was pleased to speak to the fathers by the prophets. The Scriptures of the Old Testament are oracular. In them we inherit the most precious part of the patrimony of the ancient Church. For this was the chief advantage which the Jews had above the Gentiles, that "unto them were committed the oracles of God." It is our own fault if, in reading the Old Testament, we fail to hear everywhere the voice of God.

II. OVER AGAINST THE HONOUR VOUCHSAFED TO ALL THE PROPHETS, THE LORD SETS FORTH THE SINGULAR HONOUR OF MOSES. It is denoted by the loving title by which the Lord here and elsewhere names him: "My servant Moses." "Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (vers. 7, 8; cf. Josh. i. 2; also Deut. xxxiv. 5). The word here translated "servant" is a word of honourable import; and in the singular and emphatic way in which it is applied by the Lord to Moses, it is applied by him to no other till we come to Christ himself (see Isa. lii. 13; liii. 11, &c.). The singular honour of Moses is indicated, moreover, by this, that he was called and enabled to do faithful service "in all God's house." Aaron served as a priest, Miriam as a prophetess, Joshua as a commander, each being intrusted with one department of service; Moses was employed in all. More particularly, Moses was singularly honoured in regard to the manner of the Divine communications granted to him. With him the Lord spoke "mouth to mouth," even apparently, *i. e.* visibly, and not in dark speeches, and he beheld the similitude of the Lord. 1. When prophets received communications in dreams and visions they were very much in a passive state, simply beholding and hearing, often unable to make out the meaning of what they saw and heard. Moses, on the contrary, was admitted as it were into the audience chamber, and the Lord spoke to him as a man speaks with his friend (cf. ch. vii. 89). 2. A few of the prophets, specially honoured, had visions of the Divine glory (Isa. vi., &c.). But in this respect Moses was honoured above all the rest (Exod. xxxiii., xxxiv.). In these respects he prefigured the great Prophet, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, knows the Father even as the Father knows him, and has fully declared him. It has seemed to some learned men a thing unlikely, a thing incredible, that the vast body of doctrine and law and divinely-inspired history contained in the last four books of the Pentateuch should have been delivered to the Church within one age, and chiefly by one man. But the thing will not seem strange

to one who believes and duly considers the singular honour of Moses as described in this text, especially if it is read in connection with the similar testimony borne elsewhere to Christ. Moses, and the Prophet like unto Moses, stand by themselves in the history of Divine revelation in this respect, that each served "in all God's house;" each was commissioned to introduce the Church into a new dispensation, to deliver to the Church a system of doctrine and institutions. In harmony with this is the patent fact that, as at the bringing in of the gospel dispensation the stream of Holy Scripture expands into the four gospels, even so at the bringing in of the ancient dispensation the stream of Holy Scripture originated in the Books of the Law.—B.

Vers. 1—16.—*God the vindicator of his calumniated servants.* The serpent's trail was found in Eden, and "a devil" among the apostles. No wonder then at this narrative of strife in a godly family. We notice—

I. AN UNJUST INSINUATION. Neither Moses' marriage nor his conduct to his relatives (ver. 3) had given fair cause of provocation. If his wife had done so, the charge Aaron and Miriam brought against the man who chose her was utterly irrelevant (ver. 2). "The wife of Moses is mentioned, his superiority is shot at" (Bp. Hall). No wonder if the most conscientious and cautious are calumniated since false charges were brought against Moses, Job, Jeremiah, and Jesus Christ. The assault was aggravated because—1. It came from his nearest kindred (Ps. lv. 12—14; Jer. xii. 6). Miriam apparently began it, perhaps through a misunderstanding between the sisters-in-law, and drew Aaron into the plot (1 Tim. ii. 14). 2. Because it was in the form of an unjust insinuation that Moses claimed exclusive prophetic gifts (ver. 2; cf. Exod. xv. 20; Micah vi. 4).

II. A TRIUMPHANT VINDICATION. Moses apparently had taken no notice of the charge; perhaps acting on Agricola's rule, "*omnia scire, non omnia exsequi*" (cf. Ps xxxviii. 12—15; John viii. 50). But the Lord heard it and interposed. 1. The three are summoned before an impartial judge, but with what different feelings. 2. The calumniated servant of God is distinguisbed by special honours (vers. 6—8). 3. The murmurers are rebuked, and a humiliating punishment is inflicted on the chief offender. The punishment of Aaron, the accomplice, only less severe (through sympathy with his sister) than that of Miriam (Job xii. 16). 4. They are indebted for deliverance to the intercession of the man they have wronged. Illustration, Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii. 6; Job's friends, Job xlii. 7—10). Thus God will vindicate all his calumniated servants (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6). Protection (Ps. xxxi. 20); peace (Prov. xvi. 7); honour (Isa. lx. 14; Rev. iii. 9); and final reward (Ps. xci. 14—16; and Rom. viii. 31). Such are the privileges of the faithful but maligned servants of God.—P.

Ver. 2.—*The Lord listening.* "And the Lord heard it." Compare with this the words, "And the Lord hearkened and heard" (Mal. iii. 16). We are thus reminded that God listens not only to take note of our sinful words, but to record every loving, faithful word, spoken of him or for him. What a proof of the omnipotence of God! Wonderful that he should attend to every prayer addressed to him. Still more so that he should listen to every word spoken not to him but to others. But at the same moment he can hear the brooks murmuring over their rocky beds, the trees clapping their hands, the floods lifting up their voice, the birds singing in the branches, the young lions roaring for their prey, and every sound of joy or cry of pain, every hymn of praise or word of falsehood issuing from human lips (Ps. cxxxix. 3, 4, 6). Without speaking of direct prayers we may seek illustrations of the truth that God listens to everything we say to one another, records it, passes his judgment on it, and lays it up in store as one of the materials of his future verdict on our lives. We may regard this truth—

I. AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT. As illustrations—1. Turn to the scene described in Mal. iii. 16. A few godly persons are trying to keep alive the flame of piety in a godless age (vers. 13—15). Apply to social means of grace for mutual edification. 2. See that Christian man on a lonely walk, courteously conversing with a stranger, and seeking to recommend Christ to him. The stranger may go away to pray or to scoff, but that is not all. God hears and records the words as one of the good

deeds done in the body (2 Cor. v. 10). 3. A godly mother in the midst of daily duties, not only praying but soliloquising, as in Ps. lxii. 1, 2, 5—7. Whether or not she may say Ps. v. 1, God does "give ear," and the words are "acceptable" (Ps. xix. 14). 4. Sufferers lamenting; *e. g.* Hagar (Gen. xvi. 11); Ishmael (Gen. xxi. 17); Israel in Egypt (Exod. ii. 24); mourners in Zion (Isa. xxx. 19).

II. As A WARNING. The truth has its shady as well as its sunny side. We may apply to—1. The swearer's prayer, not intended for the ear of God, but reaching it. 2. Calumnies and backbitings, *e. g.* against Moses (vers. 1, 2), or other servants of God (cf. Zeph. ii. 8); perhaps disliked because their lives are a rebuke to others (cf. Ps. xciv. 4, 7, 8, 9; John xv. 18). 3. Impure words. The youth would be ashamed all day if his mother accidentally heard. But God heard. 4. Solitary words of repining or rebellion. Spoken in haste, they are soon regretted, and you say, "Well, at any rate nobody heard them." Stop and think again (ch. xi. 1; Ps. cxxxix. 7). The ear of God, like his eye, is in every place." Therefore Matt. xii. 37. This truth leads us by a single step to the heart of the gospel (Acts xx. 21). And if we say Ps. xvii. 3, God will hear that too, and give us strength to serve him with "righteous lips" and "joyful lips" (Ps. xix. 14).—P.

Vers. 1, 2.—*A hideous manifestation of pride.* Amid much obscurity we discern that family jealousies were the occasion of this outbreak. Some occasion certainly would have arisen, so we need not trouble ourselves whether this Cushite wife was Zipporah or a wife lately taken. There is room for much conjecture, and real need for none. Out of the heart cometh pride. Pride was in Miriam's heart; it must come out sooner or later. We specify Miriam, as she was evidently the principal transgressor. Aaron simply and easily followed where she led. Let us fix our attention on the hideous revelation of her pride.

I. It was A PRIDE THAT OVERWHELMED NATURAL AFFECTION. To whom in all Israel might Moses have more confidently looked for sympathy than his own sister? Especially if it were she who stood afar off, and watched the ark of bulrushes (Exod. ii. 4). It was an unworthy thing of a sister to hinder one on whom God had laid such great and anxious duties. But when self-esteem is once hurt, the wound soon inflames beyond all control; and even those on whom we are most dependent, and to whom we owe the most, are made to feel the grievous irritation of our spirits.

II. It was A PRIDE THAT MADE MIRIAM FORGET THE OBLIGATIONS OF HER OWN HONOURABLE OFFICE. She was a prophetess, even as Moses was a prophet. She does, indeed, in one sense recollect her office. "Hath the Lord not spoken also by us?" True; and this was the very reason why she should have been specially careful of what she said, even when the Lord was not speaking by her. *A prophet's tongue* should be doubly guarded at all times. Those who speak for God ought never to say anything out of their own thoughts incongruous with the Divine message. If Miriam and Aaron had ever been obliged to deal with Moses as once Paul had to deal with Peter, and withstand him to the face because he was to be blamed, then the prophet element in them would have been more glorious than ever. But here Miriam stoops from her high rank to give effect to a mean personal grudge.

III. It was PRIDE THAT PUT ON A PRETENCE OF BEING BADLY TREATED. It is very easy for the proud to persuade themselves that they have been badly treated. They are so much in their own thoughts that it becomes easy for them to believe that they are much in the thoughts of other people; and from this they can soon advance to the suspicion that there may be elaborate designs against them. Men will go step by step to great villainies, justifying themselves all the way. The scribes who sat in Moses' seat no doubt made their conspiracy against Jesus look very laudable to their own eyes. Miriam does not speak here with the arrogance of a straightforward, brutal, "I wish it, and it must be so." The iniquity of her heart sought to veil itself in a plausible plea for justice.

IV. It was the WORST OF ALL PRIDE, SPIRITUAL PRIDE. Pride of birth, of beauty, of wealth, of learning, all these are bad, often ridiculous; but spiritual pride is such a contradiction, such an amazing example of blindness, that we may well give it a pre-eminence among the evil fruits of the corrupt heart. It is the chief of all pride, most dangerous to the subject of it, and most insulting to God. Contrast Miriam

with Mary, the mother of Jesus: the one all chafed and swelling within, who thinks the people should attend her as much as her brother; the other having the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, humbly submissive to Gabriel's word, nothing doubting, yet prostrate in amazement that she should have been chosen as the mother of Messiah, sending forth her *Magnificat* like a lark soaring from its humble bed, singing its song, and straightway returning to the earth again. Or contrast her with Paul, saying, because he truly felt, that he was less than the least of all saints, an earthen vessel, the chief of sinners. Amid our greatest privileges we are still in the greatest danger if without a sense, habitually cherished, of our natural unworthiness. The more God sees fit to make of us, the more we should wonder that he is able to make so much out of so little.—Y.

Ver. 3.—*A distinguished example of meekness.* This quality of meekness, for which Moses is here so much praised, is not without its signs earlier in the narrative of his connection with the Israelites; and as we look back in the light of this express declaration, the quality is very easily seen. Such a declaration was evidently needed here, and we may trace its insertion by some hand soon after as much to the control of inspiration as we trace the original narrative. The meekness of Moses is not only a foil to the pride of Miriam, but evidently had something to do with exciting her pride. She would not have gone so far with a different sort of man. She knew intuitively how far she could go with him, and that it was a very long way indeed. Therefore, to bring out all the significance of the occasion, it was needful to make special mention of the meekness of Moses. Notice *the emphatic way in which it is set forth.* "Meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." We talk of Moses as the meekest of men and Solomon as the wisest of men to indicate that the one was very meek indeed and the other very wise. Let us look then in the life and character of Moses to see how that eminent virtue was shown which ought also to be in all of us.

I. The meekness included A CONSCIOUSNESS OF NATURAL UNFITNESS FOR THE WORK TO WHICH GOD HAD CALLED HIM. A consciousness we may well believe to have been profound, abiding, and oftentimes oppressive. God meant it to be so. We know not what Moses was physically. He was a goodly child (Exod. ii. 2), but a mother's partiality may have had something to do with this judgment. In after years that may have been true of Moses which Paul pathetically observes was the opinion of some concerning himself—that in bodily presence he was weak and in speech contemptible. It may have been a wonder to many, as well as to himself, that God had chosen *him.* In that memorable interview with God at Horeb (Exod. iii.), the first word of Moses is, "Here am I;" but the second, "Who am I, ... that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" There was no jumping at eminence, no vainglorious grasping at the chance of fame. He had to be constrained along the path of God's appointment, not because of a disobedient spirit, but because of a low estimate of himself. He abounded in patriotism and sympathy for his oppressed brethren, but the work of deliverance seemed one for stronger hands than his. Perhaps there is nothing in the natural man more precious in the sight of God for the possibilities that come out of it than this consciousness of weakness. The work to be done is so great, and the man who is called to do it, even when he has stretched himself to his fullest extent, looks so small.

II. THIS SENSE OF WEAKNESS WOULD APPEAR IN ALL HIS INTERCOURSE WITH MEN. He was exposed continually to the risk of insult and reproach. The people vented their spleen and carnal irritation upon him, yet he did not make their words a matter of personal insult, as some leaders would undoubtedly have done. He felt only too keenly his own insufficiency, and how far short he fell of the high requirements of God. Although the particular hard things which men said about him might not be just, yet he felt that many hard things might justly be said, and so there was no inclination to fume and fret and stand upon his dignity when fault-finders began to speak. Even when Miriam joins the traducing herd he seems to bear it in silence. The dying Cæsar said, "*Et tu, Brute;*" but Moses, in this hour of his loneliness, when even his kindred forsake him, does not say, "And thou, Miriam." Each succeeding revelation of God made him humbler in his own spirit, and seemed to increase the

distance between his created and corrupted life and the glory of the great I AM. If God were so gracious, forgiving, and bountiful to him (ch. xi.), why should not he be long-suffering and meekly tolerant with Miriam? (Matt. xviii. 23—35). We shall not blow ourselves out and strut before men if we only constantly recollect how defiled we are in the sight of God.

III. This meekness is especially to be noticed because of ITS CONNECTION WITH CERTAIN OTHER QUALITIES WHICH GOD LOVES. The more conscious Moses became of his natural weakness, the more God esteemed him. If meekness springs from the sense of weakness, yet it grows and becomes useful in association with the strength of God. Though Moses was meek, he was not a pliable man. Though meek, he none the less went right onward in the way of God's appointment. This meekness of his went along with *obedience to God.* He quietly listened to all his enemies said in the way of invective and slander, and still went on his way, with eye and ear and heart open to the will of God. He was like a tree, which, though it may bend and yield a little to the howling blast, yet keeps its hold firm on the soil. There was also a *never-failing sense of right.* Moses was one of those men—would that there were more of them in the world!—who had a deep feeling of sympathy with the weak and the oppressed. Meek as he was by nature, he slew the Egyptian who smote his Hebrew brother. There was also *courage* along with the meekness—courage of the highest sort, moral courage, daring to be laughed at, and to stand alone. These are the brave men who can do this, planting alone, if need be, the standard of some great cause; meek and humble, but dauntless in their meekness, confiding in him whose righteousness is like the great mountains. Look at the bravery of meek women for Christ. Then there was *persistency.* Is not this great part of the secret of the fulfilling of that beatitude, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth?" The violent, the unjust, the greedy, may grasp the earth for a time, but it is the meek, the gentle, never irritating, yet never withdrawing, persistent, generation after generation, in the practice and application of spiritual truth, it is they who in the fulness of time will truly inherit the earth.—Y.

Vers. 4—15.—*The humbling of the proud and the exaltation of the meek. The humbling was evidently by the action of God himself.* The Lord heard Miriam and Aaron in the words of their pride, and even though Moses might bear these words in the silent composure of his magnanimity and meekness, it nevertheless became God to justify his servant, as God alone could effectually and signally justify. God notes all unjust and slanderous doings with respect to his people. He hears, even though the reviled ones themselves be ignorant. God then proceeds by one course of action to produce a double result—to humble Miriam and Aaron, Miriam in particular, and to exalt Moses. In what he did, notice that with all his anger and severity he yet *mingled much consideration for the transgressors.* We need not suppose that their words had been spoken to any considerable audience. More likely they were confined to the limits of the domestic circle. And so the Lord spake suddenly to the three persons concerned. Probably none but themselves knew why they were summoned. There was no reason for exposing a family quarrel to the gossip of the whole camp. The *sin* of Miriam need not be published abroad, though it was necessary, in order to teach her a lesson, that it should be condignly punished. So they were called to the door of the tabernacle, and there God addressed them from the pillar of cloud, with all its solemn associations. This word *suddenly* also suggests that when God does not visit *immediately* the iniquity of the transgressor upon him, it is from considerations of what we may call Divine expediency. He can come at once or later, but, at whatever time, he certainly will come. Consider now—

I. THE HUMBLING OF THE PROUD. This was done in two ways. 1. *By the plain distinction which God made between them and Moses.* It was perfectly true that, as they claimed, God had spoken by them, but he calls attention to the fact that it was his custom to speak to prophets by vision and by dream. There was no mouth to mouth conversation, no beholding of the similitude of the Lord. God can use all sorts of agencies for his communications to men. It needs not even a Miriam; he can speak warning from the mouth of an ass. But Moses was more than a prophet; prophet was only the part of which steward and general visible representative of

God, was the whole. What a humbling hour for this proud woman to find that Jehovah himself had taken up the cause of her despised brother! It is probable that Moses himself had mentioned little of the details of his experiences of God; they were not things to talk much about; perhaps he could not have found the fit audience, even though few. Upon Miriam it would come like a thunderbolt to know how God esteemed the man whom she had allowed herself to scorn. So God will ever abase the proud by glorifying his own pious children whom they despise. Satan despises Job, says he is a mere lip worshipper, a man whose professions will not bear trial; he gets him down into the dust of bereavement, poverty, and disease; but in the end he has to see him a holier man, a more trustful and prosperous one than before. Miriam meant the downfall of Moses; she only helped to establish him more firmly on the rock. 2. *By the personal visitation on Miriam.* She became a leper. As her pride was hideous in the manifestation of it, so her punishment was hideous—a leprosy, loathsome and frightful beyond the common. We might expect this. A malignant outbreak in her bodily life corresponded with the malignity of the defilement in her spirit. As to Aaron, we may presume that his sacred office, and to some extent the fact that he was a tool, secured him from leprosy, but the visitation on his sister was punishment in itself. He felt the wind of the blow which struck her down. Proud souls, take warning by Miriam; you will at last become abhorrent to yourselves. Remember Herod (Acts xii. 21—23).

II. THE EXALTATION OF THE MEEK. This is a more inward and spiritual thing, and therefore not conspicuous in the same way as the humbling. It is something to be appreciated by spiritual discernment rather than natural. Besides, the full exaltation of the meek is not yet come. The resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus himself were arranged very quietly. But we cannot help noticing that from this sharp and trying scene Moses emerges with his character shining more beautifully than ever. He does nothing to forfeit the reputation with which he was credited, and everything to increase it. He acted like a man who had beheld the similitude of the Lord. Notice particularly the way in which he joins in with Aaron, interceding for his afflicted sister. This is the true exaltation: to be better and better in oneself, shining more because there is more light within to cast its mild radiance, as God would have it cast, alike upon the evil and the good, the just and the unjust (Ps. xxv. 9; lix. 12; Prov. xiii. 10; xvi. 18; xxix. 23; Dan. iv. 37; Matt. xxiii. 12; Gal. vi. 1—5; 2 Tim. ii. 24—26; 1 Pet. iii. 4; v. 6).—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTERS XIII., XIV.

THE REBELLION AT KADESH (chs. xiii., xiv.). Ver. 2.—**Send thou men, that they may search the land.** If this account of the mission of the spies be compared with that given in Deut. i. 20—25, it may be seen in a striking instance how entirely different a colour may be put upon the same circumstances by two inspired narratives. No one indeed will affirm that the two records are contradictory, or even inconsistent, and yet they leave an entirely different impression upon the mind; and no doubt were intended to. It is important to note that the Divine inspiration did not in the least prevent two sacred authors (cf. 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 with 1 Chron. xxi. 1), or even the same author at different times, from placing on record very distinct and even strongly contrasted aspects of the same facts, according to the point of view from which he was led to regard them. In Deut. i. Moses reminds the people that on their arrival at Kadesh he had bidden them go up and take possession; that *they* had then proposed to send men before them to examine the land; that the proposal had pleased him so well that he had adopted it and acted upon it. It is unquestionably strange that facts so material should have been omitted in the historical Book of Numbers. It is, however, to be considered—1. That there is no contradiction between the two accounts. We may be certain from many a recorded example that Moses would not have acted on the popular suggestion without referring the matter to the Lord, and that it would be the Divine command (when given) which would really weigh with him. 2. That the recital in Deuteronomy is distinctly *ad populum*, and that therefore their part in the whole transaction is as strongly emphasised as is consistent with the truth of the facts. 3. That the narrative of Numbers is fragmentary, and does not profess to give a full account of matters, especially in such par-

ticulars as do not directly concern the Divine government and guidance of Israel. It is not, therefore, a serious difficulty that the record only begins here at the point when God adopted as his own what had been the demand of the people. If we ask why he so adopted it, the probable answer is that he knew what secret disaffection prompted it, and to what open rebellion it would lead. It was better that such disaffection should be allowed to ripen into rebellion before they entered their promised land. Miserable as the desert wandering might be, it was yet a discipline which prepared the nation for better things; whereas the invasion of Canaan without strong faith, courage, and self-restraint (such as they showed under Joshua) could but have ended in national disaster and destruction. **Of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man.** This was not part of the original proposition (Deut. i. 22), but was agreeable to the general practice in matters of national concern, and was no doubt commanded in order that the whole people might share in the interest and responsibility of this survey. **Every one a ruler among them.** This does not mean that they were to be the tribe princes (as the names show), for they would not be suitable in respect of age, nor could they be spared for this service. They were "heads of the children of Israel" (ver. 3), *i. e.* men of position and repute, but also no doubt comparatively young and active, as befitted a toilsome and hazardous excursion.

Ver. 4.—**These were their names.** None of these names occur elsewhere, except those of Caleb and Joshua. The order of the tribes is the same as in ch. i., except that Zebulun is separated from the other sons of Leah, and placed after Benjamin, while the two sons of Joseph are separated from one another. In ver. 11 "the tribe of Joseph" is explained to be "the tribe of Manasseh;" elsewhere it is either common to both, or confined to Ephraim (see Rev. vii. 8, and cf. Ezek. xxxvii. 16). No spy was sent for the tribe of Levi, because it was now understood to have no territorial claims upon the land of promise, and to stand altogether by itself in relation to the national hopes and duties.

Ver. 6.—**Caleb the son of Jephunneh.** In ch. xxxii. 12 he is called "the Kenezite" (הַקְּנִזִּי), which appears in Gen. xv. 19 as the name of one of the ancient races inhabiting the promised land. It is possible that Jephunneh may have been connected by descent or otherwise with this race; it is more likely that the similarity of name was accidental. The younger son of Jephunneh, the father of Othniel, was a Kenaz (קְנַז), and so was Caleb's grandson (see on Josh. xv. 17; 1 Chron. iv. 13, 15). Kenaz was also an Edomitish name.

Ver. 16.—**Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.** The change was from הוֹשֵׁעַ (Hoshea, help or salvation) to יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Jehoshua—the same name with the first syllable of the sacred name prefixed, and one of the vowel points modified). It was afterwards contracted into יֵשׁוּעַ (Jeshua; cf. Neh. viii. 17), and has come to us in its current form through the Vulgate. The Septuagint has here ἐπωνόμασε . . τὸν Αὐσὴ . . Ἰησοῦν, and so the name appears in the New Testament. It is an obvious difficulty that Joshua has already been called by his new name at Exod. xvii. 9, and in every other place where he has been mentioned. In fact he is only once elsewhere called Hoshea, and that in a place (Deut. xxxii. 44) where we should certainly not have expected it. There are two ways of explaining the difficulty, such as it is. We may suppose that the change of name was really made at this time, as the narrative seems (on the face of it) to assert; and then the previous mentions of Joshua by his subsequent and more familiar name will be cases of that anticipation which is so common in Scripture (cf., *e. g.*, Matt. ix. 9 with Mark ii. 14). Or we may suppose, what is perhaps more in harmony with the course of Joshua's life, that the change had been already made at the time of the victory over Amalek. In that case the Vav consec. in וַיִּקְרָא (and . . called) must be referred to the order of thought, not of time, and a sufficient reason must be shown for the interpolation of the statement in this particular place. Such a reason may fairly be found in the probable fact that the names of the spies were copied out of the tribal registers, and that Joshua still appeared under his original name in those registers. As to the significance of the change, it is not easy to estimate it aright. On the one hand, the sacred syllable entered into so many of the Jewish names that it could not have seemed a very marked change; on the other hand, the fact that our Saviour received the same name because he was our Saviour throws a halo of glory about it which we cannot ignore. In the Divine providence Hoshea became Joshua because he was destined to be the temporal saviour of his people, and to lead them into their promised rest.

Ver. 17.—**Get you up this way southward.** Rather, "get you up there (זֶה) in the Negeb." The Negeb, meaning literally "the dryness," was the south-western district of Canaan, which bordered upon the desert, and partook more or less of its character. Except where springs existed, and irrigation could be carried out, it was unfit for settled habitation. See Josh. xv. 19; Judges i. 15, where the same word is used. **Go up into the mountain.** From the

Negeb they were to make their way into the mountain or hill country which formed the back-bone of Southern Palestine, from the Wady Murreh on the south to the plain of Esdraelon on the north. In after ages it formed the permanent centre of the Jewish race and Jewish power. Cf. Judges i. 9 where the three natural divisions of Southern Palestine are mentioned together: הָהָר (ἡ ὀρεινή), the mountain; הַנֶּגֶב (ὁ Νότος), the steppe; הַשְּׁפֵלָה (ἡ πεδινή), the maritime plain.

Ver. 18.—**Whether they be strong or weak, few or many.** It would appear that Moses was guilty of some indiscretion at least in giving these directions. Whether the people were strong or weak, many or few, should have been nothing to the Israelites. It was God that gave them the land; they had only to take possession boldly.

Ver. 20.—**And what the land is.** It is impossible to suppose that Moses needed himself to be informed on such particulars as are here mentioned. The intercourse between Egypt and Palestine was comparatively easy and frequent (see on Gen. l. 7), and no educated Hebrew could have failed to make himself acquainted with the main features of his fathers' home. We may see in these instructions a confirmation of the statement in Deut. i., that it was at the desire of the people, and for *their* satisfaction, that the spies were sent. **The time of the first-ripe grapes.** The end of July: the regular vintage is a month or more later.

Ver. 21. — **From the wilderness of Zin.** The extreme southern boundary of the promised land (ch. xxxiv. 3, 4; Josh. xv. i. 3). There seems to be but one marked natural feature which could have been chosen for that purpose—the broad sandy depression called the Wady Murreh, which divides the mountain mass of the Azazimeh from the Rakhmah plateau, the southern extremity of the highlands of Judah. The plain of Kudes communicates with it at its upper or western end, and may be counted a part of it. **Unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath.** Septuagint, ἕως Ροὸβ εἰσπορευομένων Αἰμάθ. Hamath, now Hamah, was in Greek times Epiphaneia, on the Orontes, outside the limits of Jewish rule. The southern entrance to it lay between the ranges of Libanus and Antilibanus (see note on ch. xxxiv. 8). The Rehob here mentioned is not likely to have been either of the Rehobs in the territory of Asher (Josh. xix. 28—30), but the Beth-rehob further to the east, and near to where Dan-Laish was afterwards built (Judges xviii. 28). It lies on the route to Hamath, and was at one time a place of some importance in the possession of the Syrians (2 Sam. x. 6).

Ver. 22.—**And came unto Hebron.** This and the following details of their journey are appended to the general statement of ver. 21 in that inartificial style of narrative still common in the East. **On the name Hebron,** and the perplexities which it causes, see on Gen. xiii. 18; xxiii. 2. **Where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were.** יְלִידֵי הָעֲנָק, "Anak's progeny." Septuagint, γενεαὶ Ἐνάχ (as in ver. 28 and Josh. xv. 14 *b.*), means simply "descendants of Anak." The Beni-Anak (Beni-Anakim in Deut. i. 28; Anakim in Deut. ii. 10, &c.) were a tribe whose remote and perhaps legendary ancestor was Anak son of Arba (see on Josh. xiv. 15). These three chiefs of the Beni-Anak are said to have been expelled from Hebron fifty years later by Caleb (Josh. xv. 14; Judges i. 20). The gigantic size which the Anakim shared with the Emim and Rephaim, other remnants of the aboriginal inhabitants, may have been accompanied by remarkable longevity; or they may have been quite young at the time of this visit; or, finally, they may not have been individuals at all, but families or clans. **Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.** Hebron was in existence at the time of Abraham. Zoan was Tanis, near the mouth of the eastern branch of the Nile (see on Ps. lxxviii. 12, 43). If it be true that the Pharaoh of the exodus had his royal residence at Zoan, Moses may have had access to the archives of the city, or he may have learnt the date of its foundation from the priests who gave him his Egyptian education. That there was any real connection between the two places is extremely problematical, nor is it possible to give any reason for the abrupt insertion here of a fragment of history so minute and in itself so unimportant. There is, however, no one but Moses to whom the statement can with any sort of likelihood be traced; a later writer could have had no authority for making the statement, and no possible reason for inventing it.

Ver. 23.—**The brook of Eshcol.** Rather, "the valley of Eshcol," for it is not a land of brooks. Probably between Hebron and Jerusalem, where the grapes are still exceptionally fine, and the clusters of great size. **They bare it between two on a staff.** Not on account of its weight, but simply in order not to spoil it. Common sense dictates the like precaution still in like cases.

Ver. 24.—**The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster.** It is very probable that it was already known as the valley of Eshcol, from the friend of Abraham, who bore that name and lived in that neighbourhood (Gen. xiv. 13, 24). If so it is an admirable instance of the loose way in which etymologies are treated in the Old

Testament: what the place really received was not a new name, but a new signification to the old name; but this appeared all one in the eyes of the sacred writer.

Ver. 25.—**They returned . . after forty days.** This is a period of time which constantly recurs in the sacred books (see on Exod. xxiv. 18). It points to the fact that their work was completely done, and the land thoroughly explored.

Ver. 26.—**To Kadesh** (see note at the end of ch. xiv.).

Ver. 27.—**It floweth with milk and honey.** According to the promise of God in his first message of deliverance to the people (see on Exod. iii. 8).

Ver. 28.—**Nevertheless.** אֲפָם כִּי. "Only that." Septuagint, ἀλλ' ἢ ὅτι. **The people be strong.** Moses himself had directed their attention to this point, and now they dwell on it to the exclusion of everything else.

Ver. 29.—**The Amalekites.** These descendants of Esau (see on Gen. xxxvi. 12) formed wild roving bands, which (like the Bedouins of the present day) infested rather than inhabited the whole country between Judæa and Egypt, including the Negeb. They are not numbered among the inhabitants of Canaan proper. **The Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.** It is not easy to say in what sense the word "Canaanites" is used here. At one time it is the name of one tribe amongst many, all descended from Canaan, the son of Ham, which dwelt in the land of promise; at another time it is apparently synonymous with "Amorites," or rather includes both them and the allied tribes (cf. *e. g.* Judges i. 9). It is possible, though far from certain, that "Canaanites" in this place may mean "Phœnicians," since Sidon was the first-born of Canaan (Gen. x. 15), and the northern portion of the maritime plain was certainly in their possession, and probably the upper part of the Ghor, or coast of Jordan. It would appear that the Philistines had not at this time made themselves masters of the plain, although they dwelt in some parts of it (see on Exod. xiii. 17).

Ver. 30. **Caleb stilled the people.** That Caleb alone is named here, whereas Joshua is elsewhere joined with him in the matter (as in ch. xiv. 6, 30), has been considered strange; but it is not difficult to supply a probable explanation. Joshua was the special companion and minister of Moses, his *alter ego* in those things wherein he was employed: for that reason he may very well have given place to Caleb as a more impartial witness, and one more likely to be listened to in the present temper of the people; for it is evident from Deut. i. that that temper had already declared itself for evil (see on ch. xiv. 24).

Ver 31.—**For they are stronger than we.** In point of numbers the enormous superiority of the Israelites over any combination likely to oppose them must have been evident to the most cowardly. But the existence of numerous walled and fortified towns was (apart from Divine aid) an almost insuperable obstacle to a people wholly ignorant of artillery or of siege operations; and the presence of giants was exceedingly terrifying in an age when battles were a series of personal encounters (cf. 1 Sam. xvii. 11, 24).

Ver. 32.—**A land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof.** This cannot mean that the people died of starvation, pestilence, or other natural causes, which would have been contrary to facts and to their own report. It must mean that the population was continually changing through internecine wars, and the incursions of fresh tribes from the surrounding wastes. The history of Palestine from first to last testifies to the constant presence of this danger. The remarkable variation in the lists of tribes inhabiting Canaan may be thus accounted for. **All the people . . are men of great stature,** מִדּוֹת אַנְשֵׁי "men of measures." Septuagint, ἄνδρες ὑπερμήκεις. The "all" is an exaggeration very natural to men who had to justify the counsels of cowardice.

Ver. 33.—**The giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants,** עֲנָק מִן־הַנְּפִלִים אֶת־הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי. The Nephilim, Beni-Anak, of the Nephilim. The Septuagint has only τοὺς γίγαντας. The Nephilim are, without doubt, the primæval tyrants mentioned under that name in Gen. vi. 4. The renown of these sons of violence had come down from those dim ages, and the exaggerated fears of the spies saw them revived in the gigantic forms of the Beni-Anak. There is no certainty that the Nephilim had been giants, and no likelihood whatever that the Beni-Anak had any real connection with them. **As grasshoppers.** We have no means of judging of the actual size of these men, unless the height assigned to Goliath (six cubits and a span) be allowed to them. Probably men of this stature were quite exceptional even among the Anakim. The report of the spies was thoroughly false in effect, although founded on isolated facts.

Ch. xiv. 1.—**And the people wept that night.** As the spies repeated their dismal tidings, each to the leading men of his own tribe, and as the report was spread swiftly through the tents (cf. Deut. i. 27) with ever-increasing exaggerations, the lamentation became universal.

Ver. 2.—**Murmured against Moses and against Aaron;** whom they probably suspected and accused of seeking their own

personal ends. Here we may see the true reason why Joshua had not been put forward to advocate an immediate advance. The Septuagint has διεγόγγυζον (cf. 1 Cor. x. 10). **Would God we had died.** לוּ־מַתְנוּ. Septuagint, ὄφελον ἀπεθάνομεν. The A. V. is unnecessarily strong.

Ver. 3.—**Wherefore hath the Lord brought us.** Rather, "wherefore doth the Lord bring us." מֵבִיא. Septuagint, εἰσάγει. They were not actually in the land yet, but only on the threshold.

Ver. 4.—**Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.** Although this was only proposed in the wildness of their distress, yet it was a height of rebellion to which they had never risen before. They had lamented that they had not died in Egypt, and they had wished themselves back in Egypt, but they had never proposed to take any overt steps towards returning thither. Nothing less than an entire and deliberate revolt was involved in the wish to elect a captain for themselves, for the angel of the covenant was the Captain of the Lord's host (Josh. v. 14, 15). The proposal to depose him, and to choose another in his place, marked the extremity of the despair, the unbelief, and the ingratitude of the people.

Ver. 5.—**Moses and Aaron fell on their faces.** After making ineffectual efforts to reason with the people, or rather with their leaders (Deut. i. 29—31). It was not, however, in this case an attitude of intercession, but the instinctive action of those who await in silent horror a catastrophe which they see to be inevitable; it testified to all who saw it that they were overwhelmed with shame and sorrow in view of the awful sin of the people, and of the terrible punishment which must follow.

Ver. 6.—**And Joshua.** In a last hopeless effort to bring the people to a better mind, or at least to deliver their own souls, there was no reason why Joshua should hold back any more. **Rent their clothes.** Another token of grief and horror practised from patriarchal times (cf. Gen. xxxvii. 29, 34; Job i. 20).

Ver. 8.—**If the Lord delight in us.** An expression used by Moses himself (Deut. x. 15). It did indeed place the whole matter in the only right light; all the doubt that could possibly exist was the doubt implied in that "if."

Ver. 9.—**They are bread for us.** "They are our food," *i. e.* we shall easily devour them (cf. ch. xxiv. 8; Ps. xiv. 4). Perhaps it has the further significance that their enemies would be an absolute advantage to them, because they would (however unwillingly) supply them with the necessaries of life. So apparently the Septuagint: μὴ φοβηθῆτε τὸν λαὸν τῆς γῆς, ὅτι κατάβρωμα ὑμῖν ἐστιν. **Their defence is departed from them.** Literally, "their shadow," that which shielded them for a while from the fierce blast of Divine wrath. This "shadow" was not positively the Divine protection (as in Ps. xci. 1, and elsewhere), but negatively that Providence which left them a space wherein to walk in their own ways (cf. τὸ κατέχον of 2 Thess. ii. 6).

Ver. 10.—**Bade stone them with stones.** Angry people cannot endure the counsels of calm reason, and perhaps the hostility which they felt against Moses they were very ready to vent upon his "minister." **The glory of the Lord appeared . . before all the children of Israel.** At the moment when they were about to proceed to violence, the Divine glory filled the tabernacle, and flashed forth with a brilliancy which compelled their awe-struck attention.

Ver. 11.—**And the Lord said unto Moses,** who had, as we may suppose, risen and drawn nigh when the glory of the Lord appeared.

Ver. 12.—**And will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.** By electing Moses, in the place of Jacob, to be the founder and ancestor of the chosen race, God would still have made good his promises to Abraham, and would only have vindicated for himself the same freedom of choice which he had used in the case of Ishmael and of Esau. We cannot, however, regard this offer as embodying a deliberate intention, for we know that God did not really mean to cast off Israel; nor can we regard it as expressing the anger of the moment, for it is not of God to be hasty. We must understand it distinctly as intended to try the loyalty and charity of Moses, and to give him an opportunity of rising to the loftiest height of magnanimity, unselfishness, and courage. Moses would unquestionably have been less noble than he was if he had listened to the offer; it is therefore certain that the offer was only made in order that it might be refused (cf. Exod. xxxii. 10).

Ver. 13.—**And Moses said unto the Lord.** The words which follow are so confused, and the construction so dislocated, that they afford the strongest evidence that we have here the *ipsissima verba* of the mediator, disordered as they were in the moment of utterance by passionate earnestness and an agonising fear. Had Moses been ever so eloquent, a facility of speech at such a moment would have been alike unnatural and unlovely. What we can see in the words is this: that Moses had no thought for himself, and that it never occurred to him to entertain the tempting offer made to him by God; that he knew God too well, and (if we may say so) cared for God too much, to let him so compromise his honour

among the nations, and so thwart his own purposes, without making one effort (however audacious) to turn his wrath aside. We can see that it is (as in Exod. xxxii. 11, 12, only much more boldly and abruptly) the thought of what the heathen would say which he wishes to thrust upon the Almighty; but we cannot be sure of the right translation of the words. The most literal rendering would seem to be, "Both the Egyptians have heard (וְשָׁמְעוּ) that thou broughtest out this people from among them with thy might, and they have told it (וְאָמְרוּ) to the inhabitants of this land; they have heard (שָׁמְעוּ, repeated) that thou, Lord, art amongst this people," &c. The Septuagint, however, translates the first verb by a future (*καὶ ἀκούσεται Αἴγυπτος*), and, as this gives a much clearer sense, it is followed by the Targum Palestine and most of the versions.

Ver. 16.—**Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land.** Moral or religious difficulties could not be comprehended by those heathen nations as standing in the way of God's purposes. Physical hindrances were the only ones they could understand; and they would certainly infer that if he slew the Israelites in the wilderness, it could only be in order to cover his own defeat and failure before the rival deities of Palestine.

Ver. 17.—**And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great.** Here the argument of Moses rises to a higher level; he ventures to put God in mind of what he had himself declared to Moses in the fullest revelation which he had ever made of his own unchangeable character, viz., that of all Divine prerogatives, the most Divine was that of forgiving sins and showing mercy. **According as thou hast spoken.** See on Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. The words are not quoted exactly as there given, but are substantially the same.

Ver. 19.—**From Egypt until now.** From the first passion of despair in Egypt itself (Exod. xiv. 11, 12), through the murmurings in the wilderness of Sin, and the apostasy of Mount Sinai, to the last rebellion at Kibroth-Hattaavah.

Ver. 20.—**I have pardoned.** Whatever necessary exceptions and qualifications might remain to be afterwards declared, the great fact that he forgave the nation, and that the nation should not die, is announced without delay and without reservation (cf. 2 Sam. xii. 13). **According to thy word.** Such power had God been pleased to give unto man, that at the intercession of the mediator a whole nation is delivered from imminent death and destruction.

Ver. 21.—**As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.** Rather, "as truly as I live, and the glory of the Lord shall fill all the earth." Both clauses are dependent on וְאוּלָם, and the second is but the necessary correlative of the first.

Ver. 22.—**Because all those men.** The particle כִּי is not to be rendered "because;" it simply introduces the substance of the oath: "As I live, .. all those men .. shall not see." So the Septuagint. **And have tempted me now these ten times.** It is not in the least necessary to press this expression, borrowed from the vague usage of men, literally. It is the language of indignation, meaning that the full measure of provocation had been received (cf. Gen. xxxi. 7; Job xix. 3). The recorded instances of national "temptations" cannot be made to reach the number ten.

Ver. 23.—**Surely they shall not see.** אִם־יִרְאוּ, "if they shall see," according to the usual Hebrew idiom. Cf. Ps. cvii. 11 (Septuagint), Heb. iv. 3, *ὡς ὤμοσα .. εἰ εἰσελεύσονται.*

Ver. 24.—**My servant Caleb.** Caleb alone is mentioned here, as if he were the only exception to the sentence just passed upon the generation which came out of Egypt. Taken in connection with ch. xiii. 30, and in contrast with ch. xiv. 6, 30, 38, it has been supposed to point to the interweaving here of two narratives, from the one of which the name of Joshua was intentionally omitted (see the Introduction). The fact, however, is that Joshua is not the only, nor the most remarkable, exception to the general sentence which is not specified here. Moses and Aaron themselves were undoubtedly not included in that sentence at this time, although they afterwards came under the severity of it (see on Deut. i. 37). Eleazar, the priest, was one of those who entered with Joshua (Josh. xiv. 1), and it is vain to argue that he might have been under twenty at the time of the numbering (cf. ch. iv. 16). There is, indeed, every reason to believe that the whole tribe of Levi were excepted from the punishment, because they were not compromised in the guilt. They had no representative among the spies, nor were they called upon to go up and fight; moreover, they had been steadily loyal to Moses since the matter of the golden calf. But if the exception of the Levites was taken for granted, and passed without mention, much more might the exception of Joshua. He did not stand by any means in the same position as Caleb and the other spies; he was the "minister" and lieutenant of Moses, whose fortunes were obviously bound up, not with those of his tribe, but with those of his master. If Moses had accepted the Divine offer to make him the head of a new chosen race, no doubt Joshua would have been given to him. His subsequent

separation as leader, not of Ephraim, but of Israel, was already anticipated in the singularity, at least, of his position. Caleb, on the other hand, was merely a chieftain of the tribe of Judah, with nothing to distinguish him from the mass of the people but his own good conduct. There is, therefore, nothing perplexing in the fact that Caleb alone is mentioned in this place, and nothing to warrant the assumption of a double narrative. **Another spirit.** The spirit which possessed and prompted Caleb was no doubt the Holy Spirit, just as the spirit which moved the rebellion was an evil spirit (Eph. ii. 2); but how far any such personality is here attributed to the "spirit" is hard to determine. **Hath followed me fully.** Literally, "fulfilled to walk behind me." Caleb treasured up this testimony with natural pride (cf. Josh. xiv. 8). **And his seed shall possess it,** *i. e.* a portion of it and in it. No mention is made here of any special heritage, nor is it clear from Josh. xiv. 6—13 that Caleb received any definite promise of Hebron. He spoke indeed of a promise made him, probably at this time, by Moses; but that promise was a very general one. He asked for "this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day;" but he may only have referred to the Divine command first to explore and then to occupy "the mountain," as the nearest portion of the promised land.

Ver. 25.—**Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.** This parenthesis bears on the face of it several difficulties, both as to the meaning of the statement and as to its position in the text. 1. It has been stated just before (ch. xiii. 29) that the "Canaanites" dwelt by the sea, and in the Ghor, and it has been proposed by some to understand under this name the Phœnicians, because "Sidon" was the first-born of Canaan, and because they are known to have occupied the coast. But if "Canaanite" means "Phœnician" in ch. xiii. 29, it is difficult to maintain that it is here equivalent to "Amorite." Again, if "Canaanite" be taken in this vaguer sense, yet it is clear that the Amorites dwelt in "the mountain" (cf. *e. g.* ver. 45 with Deut. i. 44), and not in the lowlands. This has been got over by supposing that עֵמֶק may mean an upland vale, or plateau, such as that to which the Israelites presently ascended. It is, however, a straining of the word to assign such a meaning to it. It is rightly translated by the Septuagint ἐν τῇ κοιλάδι. And even if one looking down from above might call an upland plain by this name, yet certainly one looking up from below would not. If the word stands rightly in this place, עֵמֶק must mean "in the Wady Murreh," the broad sandy strait which bounded the "mountain of the Amorite" on the south. If so, we must conclude that not only the roving Amalekites, but also the Canaanites, or Amorites, had established themselves in some parts of the Wady. 2. It is scarcely credible that an observation of this sort, which would seem unusual and abrupt in any speech, should have formed a part of God's message to Moses. It has no apparent connection with the context. It does not (as often alleged) afford a reason for the command which follows; it was not at all because enemies were already in possession before them that the Israelites had to turn their backs upon the promised land, but because God had withdrawn for the time his promised aid. If the "valley" be the Rakhmah plateau, they had always known that hostile tribes held it, and that they would have to conquer them. That the words are an interpolation, as the A. V. represents them, seems as certain as internal evidence can make it; but by whom made, and with what intent, is a question which will probably never be answered. It may be worth while to hazard a conjecture that the interpolated words are really connected with what goes before, viz., the promise of inheritance to Caleb. Now that promise was fulfilled in the gift of Hebron to Caleb and his seed (Josh. xiv. 14). But we have express mention in Gen. xxxvii. 14 of the "vale of Hebron," and the same word, עֵמֶק, is used in the Hebrew. Is it not possible that this parenthesis was originally the gloss of one who had a special interest in the heritage of Caleb, and wished to note that at the time it was given to him "the vale" was occupied by two hostile peoples? **Into the wilderness,** *i. e.* the Sinaitic peninsula, as distinguished from Palestine on the one hand, and from Egypt on the other. **By the way of the Red Sea,** *i. e.* towards the Red Sea; here apparently the Elanitic Gulf (cf. ch. xi. 31).

Ver. 26.—**And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron.** This communication is clearly by way of continuation and amplification of the sentence briefly pronounced above. It is markedly distinguished from the latter, as being (1) spoken to Aaron as well as to Moses; (2) addressed through them to the people at large. The one was the Divine answer to the effectual pleading of the mediator; the other the Divine reply to the rebellious cries of the people. The two are blended together in the narrative of Deut. i.

Ver. 27.—**How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me?** Literally, "How long this evil congregation, that they murmur against me." Septuagint, ἕως τίνος τὴν συναγωγὴν ἣν

πονηρὰν ταύτην; The verb is supplied from the sense.

Ver. 29.—**All that were numbered of you, . . from twenty years old** (cf. ch. i. 18, 19, 47). All that had been enrolled as the soldiers of the Lord, to fight his battles and their own, but had refused, and had incurred the guilt of mutiny.

Ver. 30.—**Sware.** Literally, "lifted up my hand" (see on Gen. xiv. 22). **And Joshua the son of Nun.** The exception in favour of his "minister," Joshua, had been taken for granted in the brief answer of God to Moses; in the fuller announcement of his purposes to the congregation it was natural that he too should be mentioned by name.

Ver. 33.—**Your children shall wander.** Literally, "shall pasture." רֹעִים. Septuagint, ἔσονται νεμόμενοι. It was not altogether a threat, for it implied that the Lord would be their Shepherd and would provide for their wants in their wanderings. **Forty years.** This period was made up by counting in the year and a half since the exodus. It was one of those many cases in which the word of God was fulfilled in the meaning and substance of it, but not in the letter. The delay which had already occurred was itself practically due to the same spirit of mutiny which had grown to a head at Kadesh; it was therefore strictly equitable to count it as part of the punishment inflicted (see on Deut. ii. 14). **And bear your whoredoms.** "Whoredom" had been already used (Exod. xxxiv. 16) as a synonym for idolatry in its aspect of spiritual unfaithfulness, and there is no reason to depart from that well-marked meaning here. That the Jews were guilty of idolatry in the wilderness is distinctly asserted (cf. Acts vii. 42, 43); and these idolatrous practices, carried on no doubt in secret, must have been a sore trial to the generation which grew up amidst them (cf. Josh. xxiv. 14, 23).

Ver. 34.—**After the number of the days, . . each day for a year.** It is said, and truly, that the connection between the two periods was arbitrary, and that the apparent correspondence lay only upon the surface. Exactly for this reason it was the better fitted to fix itself in the mind of a nation incapable of following a deeper and more spiritual analogy of guilt and punishment. It served the purpose which God had in view, viz., to make them feel that the quantity as well as the quality of their punishment was entirely due to themselves; and it needed no other justification. If God assigns reasons at all, he assigns such as can be understood by those to whom he speaks. **Ye shall know my breach of promise.** תְּנוּאָתִי. The noun only occurs elsewhere in Job xxxiii. 10, but the verb is found in ch. xxxii. 7 in the sense of "discouraging," or "turning away" (Septuagint, ἵνατί διαστρέφετε). Here it must mean "my withdrawal," or "my turning aside, from you." They should know by sad experience that "with the froward" God will "show" himself "froward" (Ps. xviii. 26).

Ver. 37.—**Died by the plague before the Lord.** Septuagint, ἐν τῇ πληγῇ. "Plague" has here its older signification of "stroke," or visitation of God. We are not told what death they died, but it was sudden and exceptional enough to mark it as the direct consequence of their sinful conduct.

Ver. 40.—**Early in the morning.** Wishing to anticipate the retrograde movement commanded by God (ver. 25). **Into the top of the mountain.** What summit is here spoken of as the object of their enterprise is quite uncertain. Probably it was some ridge not far distant which seemed to them from below to be the height of land, but was itself commanded by loftier heights beyond. **For we have sinned.** The prospect of being taken at their own word, and being excluded from the land which lay so near, brought home to them a sense of their folly; but their repentance merely consisted in a frantic effort to avoid the punishment which their sin had incurred.

Ver. 41.—**And Moses said,** *i. e.* had said, before they left the camp (cf. ver. 44, and Deut. i. 42).

Ver. 44.—**They presumed to go up.** This gives the sense very well: they were deaf to all persuasion or command to stay. Septuagint, διαβιασάμενοι, ἀνέβησαν. Thus they added to an evil distrust in the power of God an almost more evil trust in their own power. It does not seem correct to say that "unbelief" was the real cause of both errors—unbelief, firstly in God's promises, and secondly in his threats. It was rather one of those many cases in which men seek to atone for a fault on one side by rushing into as great a fault on the other side. They spoke brave words about the "place which the Lord hath promised," as though it were indeed obedience and trust which spurred them on, instead of presumption and selfishness. **The ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.** The plainest possible token that the Lord was not with them. With Moses remained no doubt all the Levites, and the silver trumpets, and Joshua, and perhaps the bulk of the people.

Ver. 45.—**The Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites.** See on Deut. i. 44. They came down from the summit of the mountain country, and drove the Israelites off the saddle, or lower level, to which they had ascended. **Discomfited them.** Septuagint, κατέκοψαν αὐτούς, "cut them up." **Unto**

Hormah. This mention of Hormah is extremely perplexing, especially when we find from Deut. i. 44 that it was "in Seir" (בְּשֵׂעִיר), which is the ordinary name for the territory of the Edomites. The name Hormah meets us again in ch. xxi. 3 (see the notes there), as having been bestowed by the Israelites upon the place where they destroyed the people of King Arad. If this be the same Hormah, it must be so named here by anticipation. It is, however, quite possible that it is another place altogether. Again, if the Seir of Deut. i. 44 be the country usually so called, we must suppose that the Edomites had at this time occupied a part of the Azazimeh, contiguous to the Wady Murreh, and westwards of the Arabah. We should then represent the Israelites to ourselves as being driven off the mountain, and across the Wady Murreh, and cut down in the mountains beyond, as far as a place called Hormah, perhaps from this very slaughter. Others have found Hormah (or Zephath, Judges i. 17) and Seir among the multitudinous names of past or present habitation in the south of Palestine; the perplexing resemblances of which, coupled with the vagueness of the sacred narrative, lead to the rise of as many different theories as there are commentators. It must, however, be erroneous to represent this hasty incursion of the Israelites, without their leaders, and without their daily food from heaven, as a campaign in which they advanced for a considerable distance, and were only partially expelled at last. It is clear from this passage, and still more from the parallel passage in Deut. i., that the expedition was swiftly and ignominiously repelled and avenged. Compare the expression, "chased you as bees do."

NOTE TO CHAPTERS XIII., XIV. ON THE POSITION OF KADESH AND THE ROUTE TAKEN BY THE ISRAELITES.

The old name of Kadesh was En-mishpat (Gen. xiv. 7), or the "Well of Judgment." Its later and more familiar name was equivalent to "the sanctuary" or "holy place" (compare the Arabic name for Jerusalem, "El Kuds"). It is possible that it received this name from the long sojourn of the tabernacle in its neighbourhood (Deut. i. 46); but it is more likely that it possessed some character of sanctity from ancient times, a character which would very well harmonise with the fact that justice was administered there. It is evident that in order to obtain any clear and connected idea of the history of Israel between the departure from Sinai and the encampment upon the plains of Moab, it is above all necessary to fix approximately the position of this place, which for one generation was the most important place in the whole world. It was no doubt from the neighbourhood of Kadesh that the spies were sent, and it was certainly to Kadesh that they returned from searching the land (ch. xiii. 26). From Kadesh the first disastrous attempt was made to invade the country, and from thence again the final journey began which led the nation round the coasts of Edom to the plains of Moab. Thus Kadesh was of all places, next to Mount Sinai, the one associated with the most momentous events of those momentous years, marking at once the terminus of their first journey (which should have been their last), the beginning of their tedious wanderings, and the starting point of their final march. So far, however, from there being any certainty or agreement as to the site of Kadesh, we find two sites proposed widely separated from one another, each maintained and each assailed by powerful arguments, which divide between them the suffrages of geographers and commentators; and besides these there are others less powerfully supported.

The view adopted in the notes to this book is that of the travellers Rowland and Williams, and of the great majority of the German commentators: it is fully stated and minutely argued in Kurtz's 'History of the Old Covenant' (vol. iii. in Clark's 'Foreign Theol. Lib.'). According to these authorities Kadesh is to be recognised in the plain and fountain of Kudes, just within the north-west corner of the mountains

of the Azazimeh (see note on ch. x. 12). This desert plain, some ten miles by six in extent, is screened from ordinary observation by the outer mountain walls of the Azazimat, which shut it off on the west from the desert road from Sinai to Hebron, on the north from the Wady Murreh. At the north-east of the plain is a bold and bare rock, a promontory of the northern mountain rampart, from the foot of which issues a copious spring, which begins by falling in cascades into the bed of a torrent, and ends by losing itself in the sands. Amongst the Wadys which open into the plain is one which bears the name of Redemat (see note on ch. xii. 16). It is uncertain whether there is any easy communication between this plain and the Wady Murreh, but there are several passes on the western side which lead by a slight circuit to the southern table-lands of Palestine.

The view adopted by the majority of English commentators is that of the traveller Robinson. According to these authorities Kadesh must be sought in the Arabah, the broad depression which runs northward from the head of the Elanitic Gulf until it meets the Ghor below the Dead Sea. By most of those who hold this view the site of Kadesh is placed at Ain-el-Weibeh, ten miles to the north of Mount Hor, and opposite the opening (from the east) of the Wady el Ghuweir, which affords the only easy passage through Edom to the north-west. Others, however, prefer Ain Hash, a few miles further north. The local peculiarities of either place are such as to satisfy the requirements of the narrative, although they would not by themselves have recalled the scenes with which Kadesh is associated.

Of other theories none perhaps need to be considered here, because none can reasonably enter into competition with the two already mentioned; they avoid none of the difficulties with which these are beset, while they incur others of their own. If, indeed, Rabbinical tradition (followed in this case by Jerome) were worth anything, it would decide the question in favour of Petra, the Aramaic name of which (Rekem) uniformly takes the place of Kadesh in the Syriac and Chaldee, and in the Talmud. Kadesh-Barnea in the Targums is Rekem-Geiah. Petra itself (of which the ancient name apparently was Selah (2 Kings xiv. 7), the very word used in ch. xx. 10, 11) stands in a gorge famous for its giant cliffs, still called the Wady Musa, concerning which the local tradition is that it was cleft by the rod of Moses. But apart from these resemblances of name, which are so fallacious, and these legends, which are so worthless, there is absolutely nothing to connect Kadesh with Petra; on the contrary, the position of Petra, far away from Palestine, on the skirts of Mount Hor, and in the heart of Edom, distinguish it sharply from the Kadesh of the Bible story. The two can only be identified on the supposition that the sacred narrative, as it stands, is mistaken and misleading.

In examining briefly the arguments by which the western and eastern sites respectively are maintained and assailed, it will be better to dismiss the evidence (such as it is) afforded by modern nomenclature, which is always open to grave suspicion, and is at best of very variable value. The Wady Retemât, *e. g.*, is so named from the broom plant, which is very plentiful in the peninsula, and may have lent a similar name to many another place.

In favour of the western site, that of the so-called plain of Kudes, we have the following arguments in addition to the marked natural features which suggested the identification. 1. Previous mentions of Kadesh would certainly dispose us (in the absence of any indication that there was more than one place of that name) to look for it to the south of Palestine, and rather to the south-west than to the south-east. In Gen. xiv. 7 it is mentioned in connection with the "country of the Amalekites," which was apparently between Canaan and Egypt. In the same region we

may place with more confidence the well of Hagar (Gen. xvi. 14), which is placed between "Kadesh and Bered." It is difficult to think that this Kadesh could possibly have been in the Arabah. Gerar, again, which was certainly near to Beersheba, is placed (Gen. xx. 1) "between Kadesh and Shur." These notices are indeed indefinite, but they certainly point to the western rather than to the eastern site. 2. Subsequent mentions of Kadesh point in the same direction. In ch. xxxiv. 4, 5 and Josh. xv. 3, 4 the southern frontier of Judah, which was also that of Canaan, is traced from the scorpion cliffs at the head of the Ghor to the Mediterranean (see note on the first passage). On this frontier Kadesh occurs in such a way that we should look for it not at one extremity, but somewhere about the middle of the line. The same is still more clearly the case in Ezek. xlvii. 19, where only three points are given on the southern frontier, of which Kadesh is the middle one. It is, again, very difficult to imagine that this Kadesh could have been in the Arabah. 3. It is a weaker argument, but still of some moment, that Kadesh is pointedly said to have been in the "wilderness of Paran" (ch. xii. 16; xiii. 3), and also to have been in or near the wilderness of Zin (ch. xiii. 21; xx. 1). But the eastern site of Kadesh far up the Arabah does not seem to answer to this double description nearly as well as the western. The plain of Kudes is strictly within the limits of that southern desert now called et-Tih, and yet it is quite close to the Wady Murreh, which with its sandy expansions towards the east may well have been the wilderness of Zin (see note on ch. xiii. 21).

In favour of the eastern site, the only argument of real weight is founded upon the repeated statement that Kadesh was close upon the territory of Edom. In ch. xx. 16, *e.g.*, it is spoken of to the king of Edom as "a city in the uttermost of thy borders." But the only position in which the children of Israel would be at once on the borders of Canaan and on the borders of Edom as commonly understood, would be in the neighbourhood of Ain el-Weibeh, with the pass of es-Safâh on their left, and the Wady Ghuweir on their right, as they looked northwards. With this agrees the statement that they came to Kadesh "by the way of Mount Seir" (Deut. i. 2), and the fact that there is no station mentioned between Kadesh and Mount Hor (ch. xxxiii. 37), although the western site is seventy miles from that mountain.

The necessity indeed of placing Kadesh on the border of Edom must be conclusive in favour of the eastern site, if the common assumption is correct that the name and territory of Edom were bounded westwards by the Arabah. It is, however, contended, with some show of reason, that the kings of Edom had extended their authority at this time over the country of the Azazimeh as far as the plain of Kudes. There is, at any rate, nothing improbable in this, because this great mountain fastness is almost as sharply severed from Canaan as from Mount Seir, properly so called; and in fact it never appears to have been in possession of the Canaanites. When, however, the southern boundary line is traced in detail (ch. xxxiv. 3, 4; Josh. xv. 1, 2, 21), it is said to have extended עַל-יְדֵי, "on the sides," or אֶל-גְּבוּל, "to the borders," of Edom, and this expression can hardly be satisfied by the single point of contact at the south-east corner of Judah, especially when we consider the long list of cities which were on or near this border (Josh. xv. 21—32). Again, when the extreme southern and northern points of Joshua's conquest are mentioned (Josh. xi. 17; xii. 7), the former is "the bald mountain which goeth up Seir"—a natural feature which we look for in vain (for it cannot possibly be the low line of the scorpion cliffs), unless it be the northern rampart of the Azazimat. We have seen that the Hormah to which the Israelites were repelled on their first invasion is placed (Deut. i. 44) "in Seir," which

can hardly be Mount Seir in its ordinary restricted sense. If the name Seir has to be sought anywhere outside of Edom proper, it would seem more natural to find it in the northern part of the wilderness of Paran, where it is said to be still common, than anywhere else. And if this extension of Edom can be established, there appears to be no further objection of any moment to the western site. Mount Hor would still be on the coast or edge of the land of Edom, because it would be the meeting-point of the two boundaries, the one striking westwards across the Arabah, the other southwards down the Arabah. The absence of any name between Kadesh and Hor is not conclusive, because the people certainly made journeys of several days without any regular halt (see note on ch. x. 33).

Upon the whole the question may fairly be stated thus:—

1. The general tenor of the narrative would lead us to suppose that the host of Israel had marched from Sinai through the midst of the desert of Paran, by the route which led most directly to the extreme south of Palestine; and if they did this, they must have passed near to Rowland's Kadesh.

2. The natural features of this site, its position with regard to the desert of et-Tih and the Wady Murreh, its distance from Sinai (Deut. i. 2), and its proximity to the Negeb and the plateau of Rakhmah, seem to harmonise better with all that we read about Kadesh than the corresponding characteristics of the rival site.

3. The general effect of the various mentions of Kadesh, both before and after, is undeniably, though not decidedly, in favour of the western site.

4. The minor arguments which are urged on one side or the other may be allowed to balance one another, for it is certain that neither is free from difficulty.

5. The difficulty with respect to Edom is a very serious one, and with many will be decisive against Rowland's Kadesh.

6. What must turn the scale one way or the other is the independent evidence that the border of Edom extended at this time across the Arabah, and included the north-east portion of the desert of Paran, viz., the mountain mass which fronted the southern edge of Canaan. There is *some* evidence that this was the case, and it cannot be met by the simple assertion that the territory of Edom consisted only of Mount Seir, and that Mount Seir lay wholly to the east of the Arabah.

It is to be expected that travel and research in these regions now so inaccessible, and, after all said and written, so little known, will before long bring fresh and more decisive evidence to light. In the mean time that view is consistently maintained in these notes which, if it had apparently the greatest difficulty to surmount, yet receives the greatest amount of positive support from the general and incidental testimony of the Scripture record. One lesson emerges clearly from the obscurity involving this question, which appears to us so important to the understanding of God's holy word: the geography of the Bible must be of very small importance indeed as compared with its moral and religious teachings. These are not affected by any ignorance of localities and routes. The rebellion of Kadesh has exactly the same moral for us (Heb. iii. 19; iv. 11) whether Kadesh was in the Azazimat or the Arabah; and the very uncertainty in which its site is involved may be designed to remind us that it is very easy to exaggerate the value of these outward details to the neglect of those inward teachings which alone are in the highest sense important.

HOMILETICS.

Chs. xiii., xiv.—*The revolt of Israel.* In these two chapters we have, as the writer to the Hebrews teaches us, a Divinely-recorded "example of unbelief" (Heb. iv. 11)—of that ἀπειθεία which we cannot satisfactorily translate, because it is a *disbelief* which prompts and produces, and so appears in practice as, *disobedience;* of that ἀπειθεία which is to the Christian's life exactly what the "evil heart of unbelief" (ἀπιστίας) is to the Christian's faith. The fall of Israel is "written," and fully written, "for our admonition," because the like temper and the like behaviour leads in us to the like misery and loss. Spiritually, therefore, we see the Israel of God—1. *Brought very nigh to the promised rest, almost within sight, and actually within taste.* 2. *Refusing to enter that rest through disbelief.* 3. *Sentenced to exile from the rest they would not enter.* 4. *Attempting (vainly) to enter that rest in their own unbidden and unblessed ways.* And subordinately to this great and striking lesson, we have other lessons and examples both of good and evil.

I. CONSIDER, THEREFORE, IN RESPECT OF THIS ὑποδείγμα ἀπειθείας—

1. *That the place where Israel now lay was "in the wilderness of Paran," "that great and terrible wilderness;" but it was also "in the wilderness of Zin," which was the southern frontier of Canaan; and therefore (wherever Kadesh may have been) the desert journey lay behind him, and his rest was close before him: only one steep climb and he would begin to enter into the land of promise.* Even so are we placed to-day. God has brought us with a mighty hand within reach of home; has led us by a way we knew not of; has given us a law and a worship; has fed us with heavenly food; has separated us (outwardly at least) from a perishing world. Rest lies before us: rest in this world from sin and self (Heb. iv. 10); in the next from sorrow and sadness too (Rev. xiv. 13). It is not far away, not out of reach; it only needs a little patient effort to make that rest our own.

2. *That it pleased God not only to tell the people about the land of promise, but to let them see its goodness, as it were, for themselves through the report of their own brethren, representative men whom he suffered to view the land.* Even so it is the good pleasure of God that, concerning the happiness of a holy life, we should have not only his promise, but the testimony of men also, even of our brethren. Yea, concerning the glories of the world to come, how great they are, we have the report of men to whom it hath been given to "go up thither," to see what "eye hath not seen," to hear "what ear hath not heard," even "unspeakable things" which could only be set forth to us in types and figures (2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, compared with Rom. viii. 18; Rev. iv. 1; xxi. 10, &c.).

3. *That the people at Kadesh not only heard the report of Canaan, but tasted of the fruits of it which the spies brought back; and they might know by these fruits how much pleasanter a land it was than Egypt itself, even apart from its slavery.* Even so it is given to us in Christ not only to hear by report, but to taste also of the good things of the world to come (Heb. vi. 4, 5). It is a fact of experience that we may partake to some extent, here and now, of delights which no more spring from the conditions of unregenerate human nature than those fruits could have grown in the desert of Paran—delights which are as superior to the luxuries of sin as the grapes of Eshcol to the pungent dainties of Egypt. Nothing can rob us of the consciousness that we have tasted them, and it is this which makes heaven so real to us, as Canaan to them.

4. *That none of the spies concealed from them the fact that the land which invited them had its grave difficulties, as well as its great attractions: milk and honey and fruit, and all good things, but many strong foes to be conquered first.* Even so it is not concealed by any that great obstacles and sore conflicts stand between the longing soul and the promised rest. If any represented the entry into the inheritance of the saints as an easy thing and unopposed, he would but contradict the Master himself (Mark viii. 34, 35; Luke xiii. 24; Rev. ii. 26, &c.) and his inspired servants (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27; Heb. iv. 1; James i. 3, 12; 2 Pet. i. 10, 11; 2 John 8; Jude 20, 21).

5. *That the obstacles which confronted Israel in the gigantic size and fortified cities of their foes were truly formidable, and to the military science of that day insuper-*

able. Even so the powers of evil which bar our upward way are indeed mighty, and that for two especial reasons: (1) as wielded and swayed by beings of superhuman origin and power (Eph. vi. 12); (2) as having entrenched themselves in the ancient and (as it were) invincible habits, customs, and tendencies of the human race (cf. 2 Cor. x. 4, 5). And note that while the former ground of hopelessness becomes less and less potent as faith shrinks within her deepest channels, so the second becomes more and more alarming. Those evil principles which nineteen centuries of Christianity have failed to expel from Christian society are indeed formidable hindrances.

6. *That the faithless among the spies led the people astray in two ways:* (1) *by exaggerating the real difficulties which existed, and* (2) *by ignoring the Divine aid they would have in overcoming them.* When they *did* enter they found no Nephilim, nor do their foes seem to have been as a rule superior in size to themselves. And God had brought them through far greater perils, and made them victors over far more formidable foes (cf. Exod. xiv. 15 *b.*, 31). Even so the counsels of the natural man are doubly false: (1) as exaggerating the real difficulty of leading a life of holiness and attaining unto rest, raising up creatures of the imagination, and magnifying existing obstacles, to excuse cowardice and sloth; (2) as putting out of sight the fact that when God calls us to a certain thing he pledges himself to give us the strength we need (Exod. iii. 12; Deut. xxxiii. 25; 1 Cor. x. 13). The natural man would ever persuade us that heaven and peace are not attainable in the way which God points out as *the* way; that it is not possible in this or that position to lead a holy life, or to give up this or that sin, or to attain a real mastery over self—which is mere unbelief (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Phil. iv. 13; cf. 2 Kings vi. 16, 17).

7. *That the faithful among the spies (in whom was "another spirit") gave counsel, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it."* And herein were three points: (1) to "go up," because the ascent, whether from the Arabah or the Wady Murreh, was necessarily steep; (2) to go up "at once," because delay would strengthen the hands of their enemies, and could only weaken theirs, as offending the Lord; (3) to go up at once, because the victory was assured to them if they did, with the help of God. Even so is the voice of the Spirit, and of all who are led by the Spirit, however full an acquaintance they may have with the dangers and difficulties of the spiritual life—(1) to go up, because it *is* an ascent, and must involve toil and fatigue (Acts xiv. 22); (2) to set out "at once," because any delay *may* be fatal (Heb. iii. 13; James iv. 13, 14), and *must* add to the difficulty; (3) to proceed with holy confidence, because, although we have to "overcome," and that by dint of doing and suffering, yet it is God who fighteth and God who getteth the victory in us (Rom. viii. 37; Philip. ii. 13; Col. i. 27).

8. *That the crisis of Israel's fate was come when they had to choose between these persuasions.* God had brought them to the very verge of Canaan, but they could not enter unless their will united itself to his will, unless they chose to go on in his name and strength. Their future was at that hour in their own hands, and they wrecked it because they did not trust God, because their faith was too weak to pass into obedience in the face of serious discouragement. Even so are our eternal fortunes placed (in a certain true sense) in our own hands. Holiness and heaven are set before us, brought within our reach in Christ; the "rest which remaineth" is ours, to be entered on now, to-day; and God calls upon us to enter, and encourages us by the voice and experience of those who have made trial of it. And it may be we will not go on; it is too hard—too much to encounter; too difficult—too many obstacles in the way. It may be we find the prospect so much less easy and encouraging than we had fancied. We will not make the effort, or undertake the risk, looking to Divine grace for success; and therefore we too cannot enter in because of unbelief. We must bear the evil consequences; we have ruined ourselves; we have shut ourselves out from happiness and heaven. And note that as this crisis (although in some sense often anticipated) only happened once to Israel in the wilderness, so does the true crisis in his spiritual fortunes happen only once (as far as we can see) in the lives of many men. There is a set time when they are called, in some unmistakable way, to make a bold and decisive advance in the spiritual life, which will leave them really masters of themselves, and so at rest. If, then, they shrink from taking it because it is hard, or because (as they say) they are not worthy or prepared for it

they forfeit the rest prepared for them, and doom themselves to a fruitless wandering in dry places.

9. *That the first fruit of that refusal to advance was mourning, the second murmuring, the third flat rebellion.* Even so when we, being called, shrink from going on unto perfection, the first consequence is that unhappiness which is both a symptom of disaffection to God and a part of it; the second is a complaining spirit, as though we had been ill-treated, and a readiness to put the blame on others, perhaps our best friends; the third is a desperate intention to throw off the yoke of religion altogether, and to return to the old licence of sin from which we had escaped.

10. *That the proposal to return to Egypt was as infeasible as it was wicked.* Had it been possible to get there, it is certain that even the poor luxuries of their former slavery would never have been given back to them. Even so the faint-hearted and faithless Christian can yet never be as the heathen, or even as the ungodly, again: for one thing, he knows enough of true happiness and freedom to find the yoke of open sin intolerable; for another, the pleasures of sin are departed for him: he may sin, and recklessly, but it will not have the zest it once had, when it was in a manner natural to him. The ungodly *do* enjoy the pleasures of sin, such as they are; the half-converted who draw back are of all men most miserable: they will not have Canaan, and they cannot have Egypt, and there is nothing for them but the wilderness (cf. Heb. x. 38, 39, in the true version).

11. *That the punishment which God inflicted upon the rebels was perpetual exile from the land which they would not enter.* Thus he simply took them at their own word (ch. xiv. 28); for though they had imagined the alternative of return to Egypt, that was impossible. Even so the sentence which Christ passes upon them that *will not* come to him is simply, "Depart from me" (Matt. xxv. 41). If men will not labour to enter into rest (Heb. iv. 11), there is no alternative before them but perpetual *unrest*, lasting as long as they last; and this is itself "the fire prepared for the devil and his angels," for this is the natural state of evil spirits apart from artificial and temporary disguises (Matt. xii. 43; cf. Isa. lvii. 20, 21).

And note that the ἀνύδροι τόποι and the ἀνάπαυσις of Matt. xii. 43 exactly correspond to the wilderness of Paran on the one hand, and to Canaan on the other (cf. Matt. xi. 29).

And note again, with regard to the punishment inflicted—1. That all who were numbered (and none other) were counted worthy of punishment, as having been enrolled for the military service of the Lord, but having mutinied. So will our sentence (if we incur it) be one passed not on aliens, or enemies, but on servants who have betrayed their trust, on soldiers who have disobeyed their orders and turned their backs upon their Captain (1 Cor. vii. 22; Col. iii. 24; 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4). 2. That only the adult generation, who were strong and able, were excluded; their little ones, whom they counted so helpless, and of whom they said they would be a prey, inherited the land. Even so in the kingdom of his grace the wise and prudent are left out, and the proud are scattered in the imagination of their hearts, whilst unto babes mysteries are revealed (cf. Matt. xviii. 3; xix. 14; 1 Cor. i. 26—28; 2 Cor. xii. 10). 3. That the years of exile were reckoned in exact accordance with the days of searching. So must there be a perfect correspondence between sin and its punishment—a correspondence which is not merely on the surface (as in their case), but lies deep down in the nature of man, so that sin works out its own revenges both in kind and in measure (cf. Luke xii. 47).

II. CONSIDER AGAIN, IN RESPECT OF THE VAIN ATTEMPT TO CONQUER CANAAN FOR THEMSELVES—

1. *That the people added to their former sin an opposite sin—despairing first, and presuming after.* Even so do many think to atone for the unbelief and sloth and disobedience of the past by a presumptuous reliance upon their own strength of character and of will for the future. So when one is compelled to acknowledge his irreligion and sin, he sets up to mend his life himself, saying, "*I* will," and "*I* have made up my mind," and "*I* am determined," being governed as much by self-will in running the way of God's commandments as before in refusing to run.

2. *That they sought to justify their attempt by a hasty acknowledgment of their*

sin, and by a presumptuous appropriation of God's promises, as though the land was theirs whenever and however they chose to take it. Even so do many put aside all genuine repentance and self-humiliation for their grievous sins, when those sins are brought home to them, speaking and acting as if a bare acknowledgment of sin (which cannot be avoided) replaced them at once in the favour of God, and gave them a sure title to all the blessings of the covenant.

3. *That they went against their foes without Moses, and without the ark*, as if they could do *without* Divine help to-day what yesterday they had despaired of doing *with* that help. Even so when men have discovered the folly of their sins by sharp experience, they will set to work to lead a good life and to overcome temptations without the means of grace, without the presence and aid of Jesus, without any ground of confidence that he is with them in their strife.

4. *That the result was speedy and disastrous defeat at the hands of their enemies.* Even so have all men fared who have tried to achieve holiness and heaven without the Divine aid carefully sought and constantly had (Heb. iv. 16; xii. 28).

III. CONSIDER AGAIN, WITH RESPECT TO THE SPIES AND THE LAND OF PROMISE—

1. *That the proposal to search the land did not at first proceed from God, but probably from a secret disaffection on the part of the people; nevertheless, he made it his own.* Even so there are many things in the Church of God which have their first origin in human defection from the obedience of faith, which yet, as not being wrong in themselves, God has adopted and made a part of that order of things which is our practical probation. A great part of Christian civilisation, *e. g.*, had its real origin in pride, ambition, or covetousness; nevertheless, it is certain that God has adopted it, and we could not go back from it without flying in the face of providence.

2. *That the change whereby Hoshea (help) became Jehoshua (God's help) was either made or declared at this time.* Even so when it is any question of finding the way to heaven, or making any report concerning it, no "help" is of any avail which is not clearly and avowedly "God's help" (Acts xxvi. 22).

3. *That the instructions given by Moses seem to have erred by directing attention too much to possible difficulties.* Even so it is a frequent error, and a natural one, in rulers of the Church that they direct attention too much to matters of worldly policy and to outward difficulties, and thereby encourage a spirit of cowardice and discouragement which they do not themselves share.

4. *That Hebron was older than Zoan.* Most likely they thought that Zoan, the residence of Pharaoh, was the oldest place in the world, but, as a fact, Hebron was seven years (a perfect number) older still. Even so we think and speak naturally of the present order of things as though it always had been, as though all the prestige of antiquity at any rate were on its side. In truth the country to which we go is infinitely older, having been prepared for us "before the foundation of the world."

5. *That the valley of Eshcol had a new meaning given to its name because of the famous cluster which they bare thence.* Even so many an old name in the Bible becomes instinct with new meaning through its association with the joys of the world to come (cf. Paradise, Zion, &c.); and so many a scene in our individual lives, being connected with some spiritual happiness.

6. *That the spies confirmed all that God had said of the land.* Even so those who have had visions of heaven, and those too among ourselves who have tasted of its sweetness and its gifts in a heavenly life on earth, must needs testify that all which God hath said of its blessedness is most true, and not exaggerated.

7. *That Caleb differed from the rest of the spies, and was the only reliable counsellor, in that he had "another spirit," and "fulfilled to walk after" the Lord.* Even so the faithful Christian, whom it is safe to follow, is known among the many faithless—(1) as being led by another spirit from that which sways the disaffected and disobedient (Rom. viii. 15; Eph. ii. 2); (2) as having not merely promised, or begun, or set out, but "fulfilled" to follow Christ in the way he went (1 Cor. xi. 1; Eph. v. 1; 1 Thess. i. 6).

8. *That the other spies died by the hand of God, as having turned their brethren away from Canaan.* Even so it is a fearful sin, and one that will be fearfully

avenged, to discourage the wavering, and to provide those that are disaffected with arguments and reasons against a religious life.

9. *That Joshua and Caleb lived on, sharing the present punishment, but not destroyed by it, because cheered with certain hope.* Even so in an evil age, amidst an unspiritual people, the faithful few must live sadly, but they live. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and they shall stand in their lot at the end of days (Jer. xlv. 5; Dan. xii. 13; Mal. iii. 16, 17; 2 Tim. ii. 19). And note, that the spies were specially directed to see "whether there be wood" in the holy land, or not; *i. e.* trees (Septuagint, δένδρα), which did not grow in the wilderness. It is especially told us that in the holy city there grows the tree of life (Rev. ii. 7)—yea, many trees of life, such as we vainly seek here (Ezek. xlvii. 12; Rev. xxii. 2). And note again, that in the bunch of grapes borne upon a staff the ancient commentators saw an image of Christ crucified. "Christus est botrus qui pependit in ligno" ('St. Aug. c. Faust.,' xii. 42). The two that bear are the two peoples, Jew and Gentile; they who go before see not what they carry; they who come after carry the same, and see what they carry.

IV. CONSIDER AGAIN, IN RESPECT TO THE LAST FRUITLESS APPEAL OF JOSHUA AND CALEB (ch. xiv. 6—9), that they urged very truly—

1. *That the land was exceeding good.* Even so is the land set before us, whether it be the life of holiness and devotion here, or the life of perfection beyond; it floweth with milk and honey, because all that is most wholesome and pleasant is to be had freely without money and without price.

2. *That the Lord would bring them in, if he delighted in them*—and there could be no doubt of that, after what he had done. Even so, if the Lord delight in us, as he has said and proved abundantly, he can surely give us victory and give us possessions, for his Spirit is able to sustain our weakness, and all things are his (Rom. viii. 26, 31, 37; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22).

3. *That the one thing which could harm them was rebellion.* Even so the only thing which a Christian has to fear, the only thing which can keep him far from rest, out of heaven, is disaffection towards God. If he does not believe God's word; if he shrinks from really putting it to the test; if he will not in an actual case go forth in faith of his promised aid to overcome a temptation, to live down an evil habit, to practise a recognised virtue, then he sins through unbelief, and forfeits grace (Luke xii. 5; Heb. iv. 2; x. 23—26, 35, 36; Rev. ii. 5, 16; iii. 16).

4. *That their foes were not in fact formidable, but rather an advantage,* as providing them with sustenance. Even so there is nothing in temptation or in trial, apart from unfaithfulness in us, which need seriously stand in our way. Our enemies, natural or supernatural, are powerless against him in us. And when met as they should be, they are our greatest helps to holiness and heaven, for neither can be attained except by "overcoming." No one does so much for us as he who persecutes us, for he makes ours the eighth and highest beatitude, which we cannot have otherwise. No one helps us so fast to heaven as the devil himself, resisted, withstood, trampled down (Matt. v. 11, 12; Rom. viii. 28; 1 Pet. i. 7; iv. 13; James i. 2—4, 12).

5. *That fear was unreasonable, since the Lord was with them,* viz., in his ark and cloudy pillar. Even so our watchword is "Emmanuel," the Lord with us in the incarnation of the eternal Son. and in his perpetual presence with all and each of us, and in his assurance of our Father's love, and in his entire adoption of our interests as his own (Matt. xxviii. 20, *b.*; Luke xii. 32; John xiv. 1, 2; Heb. xiii. 6; Rev. vi. 2).

V. CONSIDER AGAIN, WITH RESPECT TO THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES AND THE ANSWER OF GOD—

1. *That the sin of the people and the wrath they incurred brought out the noblest trait in Moses' character.* In his perfect unselfishness, and in his ardour of intercession, he reached the true ideal of a mediator. Even so the fall and condemnation of the human race were the conditions (and necessary conditions, as far as we can see) of the manifestation of redeeming love and power in Christ. And as Israel is (in the long run) more ennobled by the heroism of Moses than it is disgraced by the cowardice of the people, so did humanity rise more in the righteousness of Christ than it fell in the vileness of Adam and the rest (Rom. v. 15, 17, 20).

2. *That God did not desire the sin of the people, but he so dealt with their sin as to bring out the singular goodness of his servant.* Even so it was not of God that man should fall into condemnation, but it was overruled by him for unspeakable good in the self-sacrifice of his dear Son (Rom. v. 8; Gal. ii. 20 *b.*; 1 John iv. 9, 10).

3. *That the offer made to Moses by God was intended to be refused, for it was a temptation to advance himself at the expense of the people.* Even so our Lord was "driven" into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted with the offer of all the kingdoms of the world (Matt. iv. 9; Mark i. 12, 13); and the temptation was often repeated (John vi. 15).

4. *That one element in the nobleness of Moses' character was his unconsciousness of his own unselfishness.* He did not even decline the tempting proposal, he only ignored it, as though it had never been made. And on subsequent occasions, while he often referred to his fault and punishment, he never alluded to his self-sacrifice (cf. Deut. i. 37, 38). Even so the true beauty of a Christian character is its simplicity, candour, and absence of self-conceit, such as we admire (and our Lord too) in children (Matt. xviii. 1—4; 1 Cor. xiii. 4 *b.*).

5. *That the effectual intercession of Moses was based on two arguments: that God would not destroy his own work begun; that God would not belie his own character revealed.* Even so is all-prevailing Christian prayer based upon the same foundations: we plead with God his own work begun in us or others (Phil. i. 6, 20; cf. Job x. 3; Ps. cxxxviii. 8); we plead with him his eternal love and mercy declared in Christ, and extended to sinners in days past. And note that the work which God hath wrought for us is on an infinitely greater scale, and of infinitely greater moment and renown, than the exodus of Israel. The character also and mercy of God, which was revealed to Moses in a *name*, is manifested to us in the person of his Son.

6. *That God was very ready to pardon at the intercession of Moses, although his wrath was hot;* and this partly because Moses showed a courage, a love, and an indifference to self which pleased God, but chiefly because as mediator he represented *the Mediator* who was to come (Ps. cvi. 23). Even so our Lord himself was heard for his devoutness (Heb. v. 7), his holiness (*ibid.* vii. 26), and his absolute self-sacrifice (*ibid.* ix. 14); and by virtue alike of what he was, and what he did, is the only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. ix. 15).

7. *That God alone "pardoned," yet he pardoned "according to the word" of his servant Moses.* Even so in the highest sense "who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark ii. 7). Nevertheless, "God had given such power (*i. e.* authority) unto men," that the Divine pardon was bestowed on penitent sinners "according to the word" of Jesus (Matt. ix. 2, 6), and through him of his apostles (Matt. xviii. 18; John xx. 21—23; 2 Cor. ii. 10; cf. 2 Sam. xii. 13). Again, forgiveness of sin is no arbitrary thing, but bestowed only upon repentance and faith; and *yet* it is bestowed "according to the word" of the humblest Christian (1 John v. 16; James v. 16 *b.*).

8. *That God's pardon did not cancel the temporal consequences of sin.* Israel, as Israel, was spared for a glorious future; but the rebels as individuals were self-doomed to exile and destruction. Even so the pardoning love of God, although it saves the sinner, yet it does not abolish the natural consequence of his sin. Just as God's pardon to Israel allowed the young and innocent to grow up, while the old and stubborn died off, so in the renewed man the grace of God so quickens and strengthens the good that it gathers strength and courage while the evil dies slowly out. Nevertheless, the consequences of sin remain in body and mind, and even in soul. David never recovered his fall, either in outward fortunes (2 Sam. xii. 10) or in character (cf. 1 Kings i. 2; ii. 6, 9, &c.), or probably in peace of mind. Many Christians sin lightly, trusting always to repent and be forgiven, not knowing that every sin leaves some evil behind it.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ch. xiii.—*The spies.* The tribes have at length reached the border of the promised land. Leaving the wilderness of Sinai, they have travelled northwards till they have reached Kadesh-barnea, a place situated in the Arabah, the long valley reaching from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah, and which may be said to be

a prolongation of the Jordan valley southwards to the Red Sea. From Kadesh the people can see, rising before them towards the north-west, the steep ascent which leads into the hill country, the destined inheritance of the tribe of Judah. The march from Egypt, including the twelve months' sojourn in Horeb, has occupied only sixteen months; yet the tribes already stand on the threshold of the promised rest, and Moses is in high hopes that within a few weeks they will have taken possession of the long-expected inheritance. In this chapter we see the first appearance of the cloud which soon shrouded in darkness the fair prospect. Instead of going resolutely forward with the shining pillar of the Divine presence for their guide, the people desired to have the land "reported upon" by chosen men of their own company. These spies brought back a report which put the congregation in fear, and they refused to enter in. Observe—

I. WHERE THIS PROPOSAL TO SEND FORWARD SPIES ORIGINATED. Thirty-eight years later, Moses laid the blame of it on the people (Deut. i. 22). He adds, however, that "the saying pleased him well," and that it was agreed to without difficulty, so that the statement in the text which represents *the Lord* as directing the spies to be sent is quite consistent with the one in Deuteronomy. There was nothing in itself sinful in the people's proposal, and it received the Divine approval. Nevertheless, it was in the circumstances a doubtful project. It betrayed a lurking distrust of the Lord's promise and leadership. They wanted to see for themselves before committing themselves further. Prudence is without doubt a virtue. Before beginning to build our tower we are to count the cost (Luke xiv. 28). There are times when this needs to be earnestly preached. Men are apt to make great ventures for the world, rushing forward blindly enough. But let these same men be asked to venture much for God, they will be sufficiently cautious. They will sit down and count the cost; they will have the land diligently searched before invading it. Men do well to be prudent, provided only that they do not leave God's promise out of their calculations. Where God's command and promise are clearly given, the greatest boldness is the truest wisdom. When Paul received the command to pass over to Macedonia, and plant the Church of Christ in Europe, he did not send over Timothy and Luke to search out the land and see whether they and Silas and he were equal to the work. Had he done that, he never would have taken ship for Europe. Where God's command is clear, our wisdom is to venture upon great things for God, and to expect great things from God.

II. HOW THE PROPOSAL WAS CARRIED OUT. Twelve men were chosen, one for every tribe. These men, climbing the steep ascent from Kadesh, travelled through the thirsty south country (the *Negeb*) as far as to Hebron. From Hebron they went up by the brook Eshcol into the hill country, "the mountain of the Amorites," the long ridge midway between Jordan and the sea, which extends from the south country till it is lost among the roots of Lebanon. Every step in the journey opened up scenes of beauty and varied fruitfulness which must have delighted eyes accustomed only to the monotony of the Nile valley. It was a land flowing with milk and honey. The proof of its fertility they brought back with them. The cluster from Eshcol declared that the land was one worth fighting for. A trait this which has fixed itself for ever in the imagination of the Church. For are not these Eshcol grapes a figure of those foretastes of the Better Country which the Lord grants his people here in the wilderness? No doubt there was much to be said that was less promising. The country was exceedingly populous. The inhabitants belonged to many races, and everywhere there appeared tokens of highly-advanced civilisation. There had been great progress since Jacob went down to Egypt. There was much, therefore, to impress the spies with a sense of extreme difficulty in the task lying before the congregation. But the spies saw something which ought to have armed them against fear. They saw Hebron and that cave hard by which contained the bones of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebekah, of Jacob and Leah; the cave where the progenitors of Israel were buried, in the sure and steadfast hope that the land would yet be the inheritance of their seed. They being dead were still speaking, and their testimony might well have put unbelief to shame.

III. THE TENOR AND EFFECT OF THE SPIES' REPORT. On one point the spies were unanimous. The land was good. Beyond that there was disagreement. 1. The *majority* kept harping on the difficulties they had discovered—the walled cities,

the giants, the multitudes of people. They added, moreover, this, That the land ate up the inhabitants—a statement which probably refers to the circumstance (a remarkable one it is) that Palestine had been the meeting-place and battle-ground of many nations, where one nation had exterminated another. 2. The *minority* did not call in question the facts on which their brethren harped. But they set them in another light. Read ch. xiv. 7—9. And this suggests THE LESSON the story of the spies is fitted to teach. When God makes the way of duty plain, we must beware how we suffer our minds to dwell on the difficulties to be encountered. To do so will be apt simply to weaken our hands. "The fearful and unbelieving" have no portion in the heavenly city, but are shut out. Faith laughs at impossibilities, for it knows that in the Lord's strength it can do all things.—B.

Vers. 1—20.—*The mission of the spies.* I. THE ORIGIN OF THE MISSION. We know from Deut. i. 22 that this commandment of God followed on a resolution of the people. It was their wish that spies should go forth and tell them something of the way beforehand. And even Moses fell in with them. It would seem an easier thing to be meek than to take no thought for the morrow. Even Moses the servant of God must be taking up to-morrow's burdens before the time. How much better it would have been patiently and trustfully to wait upon the cloud and the trumpets! (ch. ix. 15—23; x. 1—10). But since the people's hearts are so, God sends the spies. The unfitness of Israel for immediate entrance into the promised land was showing itself more and more, and God sent these searchers, that in their searching both they and the people they represented might also be searched. May we not as it were detect a tone of rebuke and remonstrance in the words, "which I will give unto the children of Israel"? The Israelites by demanding this mission were trying to guard themselves on a side that really needed no defence, while leaving themselves more and more exposed to all the perils of an unbelieving mind.

II. THE MEN WHO WERE SENT. Whether by choice of Moses or the people we are not told, but probably there was much careful consultation on the matter, *according to human wisdom.* Doubtless they seemed the best men for the purpose; chosen for physical endurance, quickness of eye, tact in emergencies, and good judgment of the land and people. Yet some very important requisites were evidently not considered. Out of the twelve, only two were men of faith in God and deep convictions as to the destiny of Israel. A great deal depends on the sort of men we send in any enterprise for God. Believing and devout spirits can see prospects others cannot see, because they have resources which others have not. Perhaps in the whole nation there were not twelve men to be found of the right stamp in every particular, and even if they had been found, they might have failed in commanding popular confidence. We can easily imagine that Caleb and Joshua had not a very comfortable time with their colleagues, and that it was not a very easy matter to agree upon a report. But such as they were, they went forth. The people had come to depend on twelve limited minds like their own, each with its own way of looking at things, instead of on him who had already done such great things—the unchangeable One, the ample Providence, the sure Defence.

III. THE INFORMATION REQUIRED. Moses gives them their instructions (vers. 17—20), and they come from a man who is acting rather in accordance with the wishes of the people than in strict harmony with previous revelations from God. Had not God said to Moses, or ever the chains of Egypt were loosed, that he would bring his people into the land of the Canaanites, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land promised in solemn covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when as yet they were strangers in it? (Exod. iii. 17; vi. 3, 4). It was the people who, in their unbelief and carnal anxiety, wanted something in the way of human testimony. Let them, therefore, indicate such details of inquiry as in their opinion were necessary. They were like a suspicious buyer, who, not content with the word of the person from whom he makes his purchase, though he be a man of tried integrity, hunts round for all sorts of independent testimony, even from those who may have very doubtful capacity as witnesses. "A land flowing with milk and honey, is it? See then if it be such a good land. See if the people appreciate its fertility by their

cultivation of it. Observe the climate and the people themselves, if they be a strong, stalwart race, and numerous. Do they live peacefully among themselves, or in strongholds?" There was not a sentence in these instructions but threw some doubt on the wisdom, power, and faithfulness of Jehovah. When God sends out people to do such work as delights his heart, it is in a very different spirit; as he sent out the single stripling, unaccustomed to war, against the giant; as Jesus sent out the twelve on their gospel mission, encumbered with as few material resources as possible. The land to be searched was the land in which their honoured progenitors had lived; but there is no word to say, "Tell us of Bethel, and of the plain of Mamre, and the cave of Machpelah in Hebron." And to crown all, the result shows that they took all this trouble and waited these forty days for useless information. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.—Y.

Vers. 21—29.—*The search and the report.* I. THE SEARCH. The land passed over is indicated in a somewhat indefinite way. Contrast it with the definiteness of the tribal boundaries in Joshua (chs. xiii.—xix.). These were forty days of speculative and dangerous wandering, with no guiding cloud, though doubtless God protected them even when they felt not the protection; if for nothing else, for the sake of the faithful two who would yet serve his purposes and confirm his word. Forty days too of waiting in the wilderness of Paran—days, one may imagine, of much conjecture, full of apprehension to some, while by others many airy castles would be built, how soon to tremble at the first breath of God's approaching anger! Forty days was not much time to see even so small a land, geographically speaking, as Canaan. We know by our own land the ludicrous mistakes of travellers passing through it, and their sometimes serious mistakes; how they exalt exceptions into rules, and the eccentricities of the individual into the character and habits of the race. Live in a land, and then you shall report on it with the authority of experience. We have heard the story of the traveller who visited a Carthusian monastery in Italy. He admired the situation, and said to one of the monks, "What a fine residence!" "*Transeuntibus*," was the sad, satiric reply. If we wish to know the fatness, the beauty, and the safety of the land in which God's people dwell, we must have something more than forty days of superficial rambling. It is not Saul, with eyesight lost, and waiting at Damascus, crushed in spirit, for Ananias, who shall tell us how Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; but rather such a one as Paul the aged, thirty years later, sounding from the fulness of his experience, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. i. 12).

II. THE REPORT. After forty days they came back, bearing on a staff between two of them the cluster of grapes—bearing it thus, as some think, because of its weight; as others, that the fruit might keep its shapeliness and bloom. And, indeed, along with the pomegranates and figs, which were doubtless choice samples, this fruit was God's own beautiful testimony. Human messengers might differ and deceive, but these sweet silent messengers seemed to intimate that God had been making ready the land for his own people. So much for what the spies *brought in their hands*. But as to the *verbal report*, what a meagre thing it is! As to the quality of the land, they content themselves with saying, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey." Yes. God had said this very thing to Moses long before: it was the highest poetry of promise to speak thus; it was meant to excite large anticipations of something fertile and beautiful; but men who had been over the land for a personal inspection might have said something more prosaic and exact. Then as to the strong people, the walled towns, and the giants, God had indicated these very things as being in the future of his people, when he caused the fighting men to be numbered not long before. The report was meagre, we may well believe, because not otherwise could it have been unanimous. As long as they kept to certain bare facts, and did not proceed to advise, the spies could agree, and yet it very speedily appeared how hollow their agreement was. Caleb and Joshua had to strike out their own path, no longer wasting time in trying to sustain vain compromises.—Y.

Vers. 30—33.—*Conflicting counsels.* The report has been received, such as it is, and the next question comes: What shall be done? "Caleb stilled the people

before Moses." This intimates the excitement and turbulence of their feeling. The chances are that a good deal of disparagement of Canaan had come to their ears, losing nothing as it passed from one tongue to another. Notice the *temporary effacement*, as it were, of Moses. It is Caleb who here takes the lead. Moses is nothing save as the mouth-piece of God, and the time is not quite ripe for God to speak. But Caleb, who, here as afterwards, shows himself a courageous man, prompt and ready, has formed his opinion, and at once expresses it; to be immediately followed by opinions just as decided in the opposite direction. We need not here so much to consider who was right and who wrong; God himself brings all out presently into the clearest of light. The great matter to be noticed is that the people were now exposed to conflicting counsels.

I. THESE CONFLICTING COUNSELS WERE THE CONSEQUENCE OF BACKSLIDING FROM GOD. The people had turned away from their true Guide, and the consequence of being in a wrong path very soon appears. God is *one*, and in his infinite wisdom and power can make all things work together for good to them that love him, and are called according to his purpose. But men are *many* and *diverse*, and if those who are called according to his purpose fall from the obedience which shows their love, how shall *they* make things work together for good? To God the scheme of human affairs is as a machine, complicated and intricate indeed, but well under control, and producing large results. To men it is, more or less, a maze of motions. They understand it a little in parts, but are hopelessly divided as to the meaning and service of the whole.

II. THE PREPONDERANCE IN THESE CONFLICTING COUNSELS WAS AGAINST THE COURSE WHICH GOD HAD ALREADY LAID OUT. God had promised the land, kept it before the people, and brought them to the very verge; yet ten out of twelve men—responsible men in the tribes, men who had journeyed through the land for forty days—declared that it was beyond the strength of Israel to obtain. What a satire on *vox populi vox Dei!* What a humbling revelation of the motives that work most powerfully in unregenerate human nature! How easy it is to exaggerate difficulties when one's heart is not in a work; to see, not everything that is to be seen, but only what the eye wants to see, and to see in a particular way! It is a part of spiritual prudence to reckon that, whatever strength there may be in mere numbers, in brute force and material appliances, they cannot be counted on in advancing the kingdom of God. With all these resources heaped up around them, craven spirits will still cry out that there is a lion in the way.

III. IT IS EVERYTHING TO RECOLLECT THAT THERE WERE CONFLICTING COUNSELS. Cowardice, carnality, and backsliding did not altogether get their own way. Things were had enough, but after all Caleb and Joshua counted for a great deal on the other side. We must not only count men, but weigh them. There are times when it is no credit to men, when it says but little for their piety or their humanity, that they are found among majorities. It is the glory of God's cause on earth that it never loses its hold on at least a few. There is always a Caleb to fling to the wind considerations of base expediency.—Y.

Ch. xiv.—*They could not enter in because of unbelief.* Less than two years have passed since the congregation marched out of Egypt, yet already they stand at the threshold of the land of promise. Turning their gaze northward and westward from Kadesh, they see the hills which form the outworks of the famous and goodly mountain which is to be their inheritance. A crowd of joyous thoughts fill the hearts of Moses and the faithful at the sight. "Those hills belong to the land for which Abraham left his native country, and was content to be a sojourner all his days. They enclose the sepulchre in which the bones of the patriarchs were laid, in the sure hope that the land should yet be the inheritance of their seed. The promise has tarried long; it is now at the door. Ere the clusters of Eshcol shall have again ripened under the southern sun, the Canaanites will have been dispossessed, and we shall have been settled in their place." So Moses and the godly in Israel fondly thought. But they were doomed to disappointment. For thirty-eight years more the Canaanites were to dwell undisturbed. Moses and all the grown-up people were to die in the wilderness. How this came about the present chapter relates. The

people refused to enter the land. The Lord took them at their word, and declared that they should not enter.

I. We see in this A SIGNAL INSTANCE OF A SORT OF FAILURE THAT IS NOT UNCOMMON.

> "There is a tide in the affairs of men
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

This is a principle of God's government. He will open to men—to communities or individuals—a door leading straight to success. If they fail to discern their opportunity, or to take prompt advantage of it, the door is closed, and they are either shut out altogether, or enter after long delay and heavy toils. We must take the current when it serves. The Apostle Paul, himself an eminent example of the resolute promptitude he enjoins, used to say, "Redeem the time" (Eph. v. 16; Col. iv. 5), *i. e.* seize the occasion while it serves; lay hold on the opportunity. To know when to go forward is no small part of Christian wisdom; to go forward resolutely when the hour has come is no small part of Christian virtue.

II. More particularly, there is here A SIGNAL EXAMPLE OF UNBELIEF AND ITS WOEFUL FRUIT. In this instance the failure was not due merely to blindness or slackness; it sprang from disbelief of God's promise. "They could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. iii. 19). This is the Lord's account of the matter at the time. "How long will it be ere this people *believe* me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?" (ver. 11). *Q. d.*, "Not only did I promise the land to their fathers, but to themselves I have showed great signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Horeb, on the long march. After all this they might have believed my word; they might have trusted in me that, after having brought them so far, I would not now forsake them or fail to subdue the Canaanites before them. They do not believe my word; they do not trust me; hence their refusal to go forward." It is remarkable how exactly this fatal example of unbelief at the beginning of the Old Testament dispensation was repeated at its close. Read Heb. iii. 7—iv. 3. Among the many parallels with which history abounds, it would not be easy to find a parallel so close or instructive. When Christ came and the Spirit was given, the first offer of inheritance in the gospel Church was made to the Jews. The gospel was preached, "beginning at Jerusalem." The offer was not altogether fruitless. Thousands of Jews believed and thereupon entered into God's rest within the bosom of the Christian society. But, like Joshua and Caleb, they were in the minority. The great body of the people rejected Christ, and could not enter in because of unbelief. What was the consequence? They were taken at their word. The doom was spoken: "They shall not enter into my rest." We believe, indeed, that the doom is not final. As the children of the unbelieving generation which fell in the wilderness entered Canaan under Joshua, so the Jews are one day to be saved. Still the doom has been a terrible one. For more than 1800 years the Jews have been pining in the wilderness. There is another view of the matter which comes home to every one to whom the gospel of the grace of God has been preached. Here is the lesson deduced in Ps. xcv. from the chapter in hand. "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart." I can imagine that there may be amongst us some to whose hearts God has been speaking. He has taken you by the hand, has taught you something of the burden and foulness of sin, has made you sensible that worldly prosperity cannot give rest and satisfaction to the soul, has stirred in you desires after a worthier portion, has set before you Christ and his salvation. If this be so, do not let the matter remain undecided. Delays are dangerous. They provoke God's spirit. God has set before you an open door. It will not remain open for ever; it may not remain open long. When men will not hear Christ's invitation, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," he does not go on repeating it for ever. He closes the door and says, "They shall not enter into my rest."—B.

Vers. 1—20.—*Moses standing in the breach, or the power of intercessory prayer.* The PRAYERS of the Bible open up a field of singularly interesting and instructive study. One thing particularly remarkable in them is that such a large proportion are intercessory. The earliest prayer of any length recorded in Scripture is that of

Abraham in Gen. xviii. It is an intercession for Sodom. It would seem that, while prayer of every kind is made welcome in heaven, a peculiarly gracious welcome is prepared for the prayers in which the petitioner forgets himself for the time, in the ardour of his desire for the good of others. It is in connection with the command to "pray one for another" that the assurance is given, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James v. 16). And one can perceive that the intercessory prayers of the Bible saints have been recorded in Scripture by the Holy Spirit with a peculiarly affectionate care. In this highest kind of prayer Moses excelled. During his long leadership of the people, dangers from without and murmurings from amongst the people themselves gave frequent occasion for deprecating God's wrath and invoking his help; and Moses never failed to rise to such occasions. His intercessions are amongst the most instructive of any on record.

I. THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENT PRAYER. The people have at length reached the threshold of the promised land; but beyond the threshold they will not advance. Disbelieving the promise, they first insisted on sending spies; and then, when the spies returned, they would hear only the bad report. They even proposed to stone Moses, choose a new leader, and go back to Egypt. They would not listen to Joshua and Caleb, and were only restrained by a threatening appearance of the Lord in the cloud above the tabernacle. So greatly was the wrath of God kindled, that he threatened to consume the congregation utterly, and raise up a more faithful people in their stead. "I will smite them; I will disinherit them; I will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." Moses may have been—I believe he was—unprepared for the incredible perversity of the present outbreak of rebellion; but he was not unprepared for the threatening which it provoked. A similar outbreak had been followed with the same threatening at Sinai. And Moses did not fail to remember how, on that occasion, the threatened destruction had been averted by his intercession (Exod. xxxii. 7—14). So, now also, he with reverent boldness "stood before the Lord in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them" (Ps. cvi. 23).

II. THE PRAYER. It is summed up in one word, "*Pardon!*" (ver. 19). "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people." Forgive, yet this once, their perverse disobedience; revoke the sentence pronounced against them; fulfil thy promise by granting them the land.——I need not say more about this petition. The remarkable thing in the prayer is not what Moses asks, but THE ARGUMENT WITH WHICH HE ENFORCES HIS REQUEST. First, *he pleads that the honour of God's great name is at stake.* The Lord had been pleased to put his name on the children of Israel. He had chosen them to be his special possession, making them the depositaries of his oracles and ordinances, and the witnesses for his truth. All this was now become matter of notoriety. In the mind of the nations round about the name of the Lord was identified with the seed of Abraham. Vers. 13—16, *q. d.*, "If the tribes perish here, the Egyptians will hear of it, and what will they think? The signs wrought in their sight, both in Egypt and at the Red Sea, have taught them that thou, the God of Jacob, art the Most High, and that thou hast chosen Israel for thy people; and the report of thy doings in Horeb, and by the way, have deepened the impression made by the Egyptian signs. Let not this salutary impression be effaced by discomfiture now. Let not Egypt from behind, and the Canaanites in front, shout in derision of thy great name."—I much fear that this argument does not usually find the place of prominence in our prayers that it finds here in Moses' prayer. The interest of God's name—his truth and cause—in the earth does not lie so near our hearts. Yet it certainly ought. "Hallowed be thy name" should get the place of honour in our prayers. More particularly, we ought to guard against everything which would bring reproach on true religion in the view of the outside world. Christians are to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." There are still Egyptians and Canaanites watching to hear, and eager to spread, any report regarding the professed people of Christ which they think can be made use of to the disparagement of Divine truth and the Christian cause. Secondly, *Moses pleads the Lord's promise.* Along with vers. 17, 18 read Exod. xxxiv. 5—7. The reference cannot be mistaken. *Q. d.*, "Didst not thou show me thy glory in Horeb, and was not thy glory this, viz., that thou hast mercy? Didst not thou declare to me that thy name is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity

and transgression? Into this name I will now run. In this name I take refuge. Remember thy word on which thou hast caused me to hope. Let thy name be now manifested in forgiving this people."——There is no encouragement in prayer to be compared with that which is got from the study of God's promises. "He hath said —therefore we may boldly say" (Heb. xiii. 5, 6). What God has promised to give, we may ask without wavering. Thirdly, *Moses pleads former mercies* (ver. 19). Next to the promise of God, the remembrance of former instances of kindness received in answer to prayer ministers encouragement to pray still, and not faint.—Such then was the prayer of Moses at Kadesh-barnea—the prayer which turned away the fatal sword of God's wrath from Israel. I am much inclined to think that instances of like success in prayer are not so rare as many suppose; that, on the contrary, if an inspired historian were to write the annals of our families, churches, communities, it would be found that not seldom public judgments have been turned aside by the intervention of the Lord's hidden ones—his Noahs and Daniels and Jobs. When all secret things are brought to light, these intercessors will not fail to obtain recognition and reward.—B.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The sin and shame of apostasy.* The sin of the Israelites at this time is almost incredible. Their rash words (ver. 3) prompt to reckless resolutions (ver. 4), which, if not actually carried out, are laid to their charge (Neh. ix. 17). Their crime includes the following sins:—1. *Criminal forgetfulness*, as though the bondage of Egypt were better than warfare under "Jehovah Nissi" (Exod. xvii. 15). 2. *Gross ingratitude.* They imply that God has spared them and cared for them thus far in order to destroy them at last. 3. *Shameful distrust*, notwithstanding all the promises God has given, and the "signs" of his faithfulness he has shown (ver. 11). 4. *Obstinate disobedience*—a stubborn disregard of the word and will of their God. 5. *Utter madness.* In returning to Egypt they must part company with Moses their leader and Aaron their priest. They must abandon the ark and the altar. They could not expect the manna to feed them or the cloud to guide them. And if they ever reached Egypt, what a reception would meet them there! All these sins are seen in a still more glaring form in the shameful crime of apostasy from Christ. Such a "drawing" back to perdition implies a previous coming near to Christ, and an enjoyment of blessings analogous to the covenanted blessings of ancient Israel (Exod. xix. 3—6; xxiv. 4—8). In apostasy we see—1. Criminal forgetfulness of the bondage of evil habits, the burden of an uneasy conscience, the yearnings of unsatisfied desire, and all the other evils from which we looked to Christ to deliver us. How can it be "better to return" to these? 2. Gross ingratitude to God for all the blessings enjoyed during the Christian pilgrimage so far; as though such a God could fail or forsake us, and not "perfect that which concerneth us," as all his previous blessings are a pledge that he will do (Ps. cxxxviii. 8; Rom. viii. 32). 3. Shameful distrust. "An evil heart of unbelief" is generally the primary cause of departing from God (Heb. iii. 12). Distrust makes us weak against temptations even of the grossest kind. We may lose courage amid foes or temptations which, but for shameful want of confidence in God, would have little power to alarm and divert us from the path of duty (cf. Ps. xxvii. 1—3; cxviii. 6—12, and, in contrast, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1). 4. Obstinate disobedience. For we are "under law to Christ;" and "*his will* is our sanctification," our perseverance, our conflict and victory till we reach the heavenly Canaan (1 Thess. iv. 3; 1 Tim. vi. 11—14; Heb. iii. 14; vi. 12). 5. Utter madness; for to "draw back" is to forfeit the fellowship of Christ's Church, the tokens of his favour, his promises, his consolations, and the good-will of God. To succeed is perdition (Heb. x. 26—39).—P.

Vers. 8, 9.—*With God on our side we are in the majority.* Caleb and Joshua here describe—

I. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH WE MAY EXPECT GOD TO BE WITH US. 1. The unmerited good pleasure of God. "If the Lord delight in us." This is repeatedly mentioned as the origin of God's favour to the Israelites (Deut. iv. 37; vii. 7, 8, &c.) and to Christians (Eph. i. 3—6; 2 Tim. i. 9, &c.). Only provided that this good pleasure is not forfeited by obstinate disobedience or distrust. So that the second condition is—2. Obedience. "Only rebel not," &c. That generation sinned away

the favour of God, though it could not annul his faithfulness. 3. Confidence in God. "Neither fear ye the people." To fear them was to distrust God (Isa. viii. 13, 14; Heb. xiii. 6, &c.).

II. THE CERTAIN SUCCESS OF THOSE WHO ENJOY THE HELP OF GOD. Caleb and Joshua express their confidence in various ways; *e. g.* in ch. xiii. 30 ("*veni, vidi, vici*"); ver. 8, "he will bring us in;" ver. 9, "bread for us," &c. The Canaanites dwelt in fortresses, but God, their strength, was departed from them. Israel dwelt in tents, but Prov. xviii. 10. Such confidence we may have, when opposed by foes, human or diabolical, however numerous or powerful. With God on our side we are in the majority (Illus. Exod. xiv. 13; 2 Kings vi. 16; 2 Chron. xiv. 11; xx. 12; xxxii. 7, 8; Ps. xlvi. 11; Rom. viii. 31, &c.). A good illustration may be found in a letter of the Prince of Orange after the fall of Haarlem, in which he says, "Before ever I took up the cause of the oppressed Christians in these provinces I had entered into a close alliance with the King of kings," &c. (Motley's 'Rise of the Dutch Republic,' Pt. III. ch. ix.).—P.

Vers. 11—19.—*Skilful intercession.* The crowning act of unbelief on the part of the Israelites at Kadesh brings God into their midst in righteous anger. He remonstrates (ver. 11) and threatens (ver. 12). God's foreknowledge of Moses' prayer did not prevent this apparently absolute threat. This need be no difficulty to us, unless we hold opinions about God which would make the government of free, moral beings by promises and threats impossible. For illustrations of Divine words or acts contingent on human actions see 2 Kings xx. 1—11; Luke xxiv. 28, 29; Acts xxvii. 22—24, 31. Moses stands in the breach, and skilfully urges two motives, suggested by—I. HIS ZEAL FOR THE HONOUR OF GOD. II. HIS FAITH IN THE MERCY OF GOD.

I. (vers. 13—16). The Egyptians would soon "make comedies out of the Church's tragedies." Our best pleas are founded on the prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." *E. g.* 1. In pleading for a highly-favoured but guilty nation. After all God has done for Britain and by it, may we not feel as though it would be a dishonour on the Christian name and a reflection on the Christian's God if we were altogether cast off. Our plea is Jer. x. 24, and our hope is Jer. xxx. 11. 2. In pleading for a fallen Christian. 3. Or for ourselves (Ps. lxxix. 9; Jer. xiv. 7, &c.). God feels the power of this motive (Deut. xxxii. 27; Ezek. xx. 9, 14). God is not, like some men, indifferent to his own reputation (Isa. xlviii. 11).

II. Note how skilfully Moses uses God's own declaration of his name in Exod. xxxiv. He appeals (1) to the *pure mercy* of God; (2) to the *past mercies* of God (Ps. xxv. 6, 7; li. 1; Isa. lv. 7, 8).—P.

Vers. 22, 23.—*A priceless privilege offered, refused, lost.* The lessons from the narrative of chs. xiii. and xiv. may be summed up as follows. We see here a priceless privilege—

I. OFFERED. It is Canaan, "the glory of all lands," the gift of the God of their fathers, who redeemed them from Egypt that he might bring them to a land of liberty and rest. The first report of the spies (ch. xiii. 27—29) is true in itself, but its style suggests faithless fears which infect the congregation (ch. xiii. 30). The exaggerated or false reports that are now given (ch. xiii. 31—33) increase the panic, but God's offer is still before them (2 Tim. ii. 12).

II. REFUSED. The shades of evening were gathering when the report of the spies was delivered. (Sketch the spread of the panic during the night, ch. xiv. 1.) In the morning the murmurings take a definite form (vers. 2—4). The cogent reasonings of Caleb and Joshua are in vain (vers. 6—9). They threaten to depose Moses, and to stone the faithful witnesses, and they deliberately reject the offer of God. Thus are sinners wont to believe lies and distrust true witnesses; to assent to fallacies and resist the soundest arguments; to neglect or persecute their best friends, and distrust and rebel against their Redeemer, God.

III. LOST. God interposes to protect his servants and sentence the rebels. Moses' intercession saves them from immediate destruction, but not from irremediable loss. There are limits to the power of intercessory prayer (Jer. xv. 1; 1 John v. 16). A new panic, another night of weeping (ver. 39). On the morrow a reaction, a revul-

sion of feeling, but not a repentance of heart (cf. 1 Sam. xv. 30). What was impossible yesterday is practicable to-day (ver. 40). But they go without the prayer of Moses (ch. x. 35) or the presence of God (ver. 44). The mountain pass is impregnable. It is too late. The offer is lost to that generation. Their opportunity has been sinned away. Defeat and death await them (Isa. xlii. 24, 25). These truths applicable—1. To the offer of spiritual conquests to the Church. The Church of Christ often on the borders of a land promised to our conquests. Unbelief suggests fears, our enemies' strength, our own weakness, &c. Gradually faith in our own power may depart, because faitb in God is lost. While others are useful we may be ciphers in the Church. Special excitement, or the pricks of conscience, may incite us to make spasmodic efforts; but the faculty for Christian service may be well-nigh extirpated by disuse (Matt. xxv. 29). 2. To the offer of a present salvation to the sinner. Christian Calebs bring a good report of God's promised land of rest; but indecision or unbelief may forfeit it (Heb. iii. 19).—P.

Ver. 28.—*Fatal answers to faithless prayers.* The faithless prayer was heard by God when the people murmured (ver. 2). Now the answer comes to their own destruction. Apply to—1. Reckless transgressors, who brave the consequences of their sins. Illustration—Jews (Matt. xxvii. 25), who, however, soon, dreaded the answer (Acts v. 28; cf. Prov. i. 31). 2. The discontented. *E. g.* Rachel (Gen. xxx. 1; xxxv. 19); Hebrews lusting for flesh (ch. xi. 18—20), or desiring a king (1 Sam. viii. 6—22; Hosea xiii. 11; cf. Prov. xii. 13). 3. Profane swearers imprecating damnation and receiving it (Ps. lix. 12; lxiv. 8; Matt. xii. 36). 4. Distrustful servants of God, who, in haste, may proffer requests which, if granted, would leave a stain on their memories, if not actually fatal to their reputation. *E. g.* Moses (ch. xi. 15); Elijah (1 Kings xix. 4); Jonah (iv. 3). What thanks are due to God that in his mercy he does not always answer our prayers, implied or expressed! And how much we need the teaching and the spirit of Christ, that we may pray thoughtfully and trustfully, and that he may not have to say to us, "Ye know not what ye ask" (Mark x. 35—40).—P.

Vers. 1—3.—*A repentance to be repented of.* I. AS WE CONSIDER HOW IT WAS CAUSED. 1. *By the fears of an all-devouring selfishness.* Selfishness swallowed up every other consideration. Their vexation was caused not by the stirrings of a guilty conscience, but by suffering and fleshly loss. All they wanted was the suffering taken away. There was not the slightest sign of shame and penitence and return to God with fruits meet for repentance. Self-will was as strong in this night of weeping as it had been in the day when they proposed to send the spies (Deut. i. 22). 2. *By a false report.* How many are terrified by representations of religion as far from the truth as what the spies said of Canaan! Even where there is nothing malevolent or base in purpose, the difficulties of religion may be set forth as if it were all the valley of the shadow of death from end to end, and heaven a mere peradventure at the last. These Israelites were given over to strong delusion that they should believe a lie. Selfishness was the source of all their weeping, and a false report brought it forth. Such views of religion, got upon such representations, will have to be changed, or there can be no real return to God, no real achievement of the rest of his people.

II. AS WE CONSIDER HOW IT WAS EXPRESSED. 1. *In unjust complaints of their leaders.* Moses and Aaron were neither of them faultless, far from it, but their faults were such as God marked, and not rebellious men. These faults the people had no notion of, nor would it have mattered if they had. A Moses less faithful to God, more indulgent to their whims and caprices, would have suited them better. They blamed Moses when they should have praised him, and it was his highest glory that there was nothing about him they could praise. 2. *In frenzied references to themselves.* They speak as men with all judgment, self-control, and self-respect clean gone out of them. They were not in a state of mind to form a right estimate of anything whatever. "The mind must retain its full strength when engaged on such a work as repentance." 3. *Their rash reproaches against God.* There was but one thing they said of him that was true. He had indeed brought them into this land.

Certain it is that they could never have found their way so far themselves. But their present strait was none of his bringing. It had come through unbelief, cowardice, and lying. Men have low, miserable views of what is good for themselves, and the end is blasphemous language with respect to the all-loving, all-wise God above. He knew far better than they how to protect their wives and children.

III. AS WE CONSIDER HOW THE FOLLY OF IT WAS EXPOSED. Everything went contrary to their anticipations. The men who brought up the evil report died by the plague before the Lord. This was in itself a clear intimation of their wickedness in misleading the people. Caleb and Joshua stood out, vindicated both as wise counsellors and speakers of the truth. Canaan was all they had represented it to be, but this thankless, rebellious generation should have no personal experience of it. They were indeed to die in the wilderness, gradually dropping off for forty years, and the children whose impending fate they deplored, themselves entered the land of which their fathers had shown themselves unworthy. Forty years! Who can tell how many during that time may have sought carefully, with tears, and in due time found, a place of true repentance and godly sorrow? Not able to enter the earthly Canaan, any more than Moses, Aaron, or Miriam, they may still have found their part in the heavenly one.—Y.

Ver. 4.—*A vain proposition.* Very briefly and comprehensively put, with an appearance of decision and unanimity, but nevertheless utterly vain with respect to both matters mentioned in it.

I. THE MAKING OF A CAPTAIN. They could call a man a captain, but that would not make him one. The power of election may be a great privilege, but it is greater negatively than positively. No election can make a fool into a wise man, or a coward into a hero, any more than it can make the moon give the light of the sun, or thorns to produce grapes. Election may give a man opportunity only to show decisively that he is not able to use it. On the other hand, no election can give the most capable of men the power to do impossibilities. *Captains are not made in this way at all.* The true captain is he who, having been faithful in that which is least, finds his way on by natural attraction to that which is greater. He is not so much elected as recognised. There is much significance from this point of view in Christ's words: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The Israelites had rejected the word of the Lord and the leader he had chosen, and what wisdom was there in them to find a better leader for themselves? Even as God, for his own purposes, chooses men after his own heart, such as his penetrating, unerring eye sees can be trained and fashioned in the right way, so men make choice after their hearts only to show their folly and ignorance, and that oftentimes right speedily. The true election is to elect ourselves to follow the good, the true, the noble, and the wise, and only them so far as they are plainly following Christ (Heb. xii. 1—4).

II. THE RETURN TO EGYPT. The land they had been through and knew was even less accessible than the unvisited land of which they had such exaggerated fears. Where should they get provision without God to give them manna? and would not Egypt be even more hostile than Canaan? By this time the name Israel had become connected in the Egyptian mind with disaster of every sort. What sort of men then were these to talk of the welfare of wife and children when they proposed a step which would bring them into the direst destitution? Even while they spoke God was sustaining them and their families with bread from heaven. It was even from his manna that these rebels were made strong against him. Proud-hearted, vain, conceited man will propose the most silly ventures rather than submit to God. He is the last refuge, in more senses than one, of the perplexed. Anywhere, into any absurdity and refuge of lies, rather than give up the darling lusts of the heart, and face the necessities of true repentance. Every man is trying to return to Egypt who, having been disappointed in one earth-born hope, straightway proceeds to indulge another. It is poor work, when we find ourselves checked by difficulties in living a better life, to give up in despair. To make the future as the past is impossible; it must either be better or worse. God helps the man who steadily and strenuously keeps his face towards Canaan.—Y.

Ver. 5.—*A mute appeal.* I. THERE COMES A TIME WHEN ALL EXPOSTULATION WITH MEN IS VAIN, at all events the expostulation of certain people. Moses felt no word he could say would be of the slightest use. In vain you throw the pearls of truth and soberness before the swinish multitude, and it is the humbling testimony of history that only too often men get so embruted in their prejudices and passions as to be for all purposes of rational action little better than swine. Caleb and Joshua spoke, only to be threatened with stones. Moses and Aaron make no attempt to speak, but fall on their faces before all the assembly. What the seventy elders were about all this time we know not. When even Moses has to be silent it is little wonder their presence should count for nothing. We need to recollect this madness and perversity of men, this ease and rapidity with which human passion mounts to the violence of a hurricane. The reasonableness of human nature is far too frequently glorified. There was a time when Paul's converts in Galatia would have plucked out their eyes, and given them to him; yet as years pass on, and they listen to another gospel, which is not another, he has to mourn that he seems to have become their enemy because he tells them the truth (Gal. iv. 15, 16).

II. But when we can do nothing for men directly, WE MUST NOT, therefore, WAIT IN COMPLETE INACTION. Moses was obliged to be silent in words; not even to God does he seem to have spoken; but he fell to the ground in mute and humble appeal. There, prostrate before the tabernacle, were Moses and Aaron, the leader and the priest, brethren according to the flesh, united now by deep affliction, if a little while ago they were separated by envy. Nor was the lowly attitude simply an appeal to God; it might have effect on some *of the better sort among the multitude*, finding a way to the heart by the eye, which for the time was not open by the ear. Neither was the appeal simply *for the sake of Moses and Aaron.* The people had treated them badly, but this was a small matter compared with their treatment of God. How often we fume over injustice to ourselves, utterly forgetting the great world's huge and light-hearted negligence of him who made and redeemed it. Consider Martha, complaining so bitterly of Mary, while she herself was refusing the true hospitality to Jesus. A man with the mind of Christ Jesus in him will be always more affected by slights upon the Saviour than upon himself.

III. There is always then this one thing we can do in the turmoil of human affairs: we CAN RECOGNISE WITH DEEP HUMILITY THE AWFUL PRESENCE OF GOD. As we are driven into a sense of utter helplessness, let us think of him from whom, and by whom, and to whom are all things. It is only when we are humbled before him, and recollect his love and power in Christ, that we can be calm in the presence of the awful problems of human existence. How much better off was Moses in his extremity than the Israelites in theirs! They rejected Moses and the tabernacle to speak vain words about returning to Egypt; he, shut out as it were from service to them, found his sure refuge in prostration before God (Ps. xlvi. 1—3).—Y.

Vers. 6—10.—*Speaking out: a last appeal.* Moses is *silent* from necessity, his power with men in abeyance, and he waiting humbly upon God. Joshua and Caleb, who were not only men of a different spirit, but also very imperfectly acquainted with Moses' peculiar burden, *spoke out.* As it was well for Moses and Aaron to be silent, it was also well for Caleb and Joshua to speak out. Moses and Aaron were for the time separated, forsaken, and as it were condemned; but Caleb and Joshua are still in the multitude—Caleb indeed partly declared, and only waiting further opportunity to speak his mind fully on the subject. Now Joshua and he take their stand without any hesitation or chance of being mistaken. They had something to say which Moses could not say, for they had been through the land. Thus, when God's servant is compelled to be silent, friends arise to say what is right and just. Consider—

I. THE MANNER OF THE SPEAKERS. "They rent their clothes." This was the symbol of hearts rent with grief and astonishment because of impending disaster. To the Israelites their only hope appeared in retracing their steps. To Caleb and Joshua this was the summary and utter extinction of a great opportunity. The multitude looked on Canaan as worse than the grave, a scene of vain struggles and harassing privations. Caleb and Joshua looked on the multitude as threatening the

unutterable folly of drawing back from certain and inestimable blessings when they lay within their reach. Therefore they accompanied their speech with an action that indicated the distress and laceration of their hearts. Truth may do such things naturally in the very vehemence and consistency of its onset. We do not read that the spies who brought up a slander on the land rent their clothes while they were telling their story. Hypocrisy must always be careful in its histrionics not to overdo the thing.

II. THE MATTER OF THEIR SPEECH. *They give the testimony of experience.* They had passed through the land to search it. Although they were only two against ten who told a different story, yet, strong in the consciousness of sincerity and competency, they declared what they had seen with their eyes, looked upon, and handled. Though their testimony would not have been enough for some purposes, yet it was quite enough to throw as a check in the way of revolted Israel. *They emphatically assert the goodness of the land.* It was a land to be desired, corresponding to all the promises made and the hopes cherished, worth all the struggling and self-denial that might be needed in order to attain it. *They show a devout recognition of Jehovah.* This alone might make their word, though only two, outweigh the exaggerations of the other ten. The recognition shows itself in two ways. 1. They avow the necessity of his favour. "If the Lord delight in us;" that means, surely, "If we believe in the Lord." That which delights the Lord is to see men walking by faith, and not by sight, stepping forward into the darkness upon his clear command. Caleb and Joshua felt sure, from what they had seen of the fatness and beauty of Canaan, that God wished to delight in his people, if only they would allow it. 2. They avow the necessity of submission to God. Unbelief is not only separation, it is rebellion. This was the real danger of Israel—rebellion against God's appointments and restrictions. By their present conduct they were strengthening the nations of Canaan with more than all their walled cities, giants, and strong men could give them. *They show that the Canaanites are really very weak.* There is nothing more fallacious than outside show and casual inspection. The spies had brought some fruit, and doubtless tasted much more; but how could they report adequately on defences which they could not examine in any accurate way? They did not know how all these people were undermined and enervated by their wickedness. The very wealth of the land became a curse and corrupting influence to the idolaters who dwelt in it. Wicked nations in the midst of all their boasting and revelry are preparing their own destruction.

III. THE RESULTS OF THEIR SPEECH. 1. *The exasperation of the people reaches its highest pitch.* "All the congregation bade stone them with stones." This was the punishment which God had appointed for serious transgressions (Levit. xx. 2, 27; xxiv. 14; Numb. xv. 35; Deut. xiii. 10, &c.). And now the people adopt it, numbering Caleb and Joshua with transgressors against their sovereign will. If we speak the truth, all of it, and at the time when it should be spoken, we must be ready for the consequences. The two faithful witnesses would certainly have been stoned, as Zechariah long after (2 Chron. xxiv. 21), but—2. *God himself interfered.* "The glory of the Lord appeared," &c. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the rebels were reduced to impotence. One can imagine the uplifted stone dropped, as if it had turned to a blazing coal. Israel may still be sullen and rebellious in *heart*, but its *hand* is in the power of God. He can rescue his servants from the power of their enemies, if that be most expedient. Caleb and Joshua still had much work to do. Or, as happened to Stephen, he can turn the unchecked fury of men into the agent of a quick and glorious dismission from the toils and perils of earthly service. In God's house the more manifest the faithfulness of the servant, the more manifest also the faithfulness of the Master.—Y.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The Lord breaks silence.* It was time now for the people to be silent. They had talked and acted enough of folly. The Lord asks certain questions, and follows them with certain propositions. We can hardly call them determinations, but rather suggestions of action, such as may be further modified, if modifying considerations can be introduced.

Ver. 11.—*God implies that it is useless to wait any longer.* It is not a question of whether he is long-suffering, but whether the long-suffering will answer any good

end. He had been engaged, as it were, in a solemn experiment with the liberated Israelites, and the experiment was now complete. No further knowledge could be gained, and no change in the direction of trust and obedience could be hoped for, from longer waiting. To wait, therefore, was only to waste time and simulate long-suffering. It must be plain to every one who will consider carefully, that the Israelites had shown by their conduct the great distance that the calamity of human nature's fall has placed between men and God. God knows the distance; it is we who deny it or trifle with it. This experiment with *one generation* was not for the information of God himself, but to instruct and impress *all generations*. Israel, unconsciously, was helping to lay a foundation in history for the great doctrine of regeneration. "Except a man be born *again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). Here is a generation, *not born again*, but taken in *the ordinary course of nature*. Nothing is done to alter *them*, but a complete change is made in their circumstances. Liberated from the thraldom of oppressors, they are brought under authority of the law of God, holy and just and good. That law follows them into every hour of life. And the result of all proves that a man cannot by such strength and disposition as nature gives him inherit the kingdom of God. This generation was not fit even for the earthly Canaan. That land was no place for carnal minds to indulge their own inclinations. The people were not fit, and the unfitness is now perfectly clear. As they lift up the stones against Caleb and Joshua the experiment is complete. Hence we see the language of God here is in perfect consistency with *all the Scripture that emphasises the fact of his long-suffering*. It still remains a duty of man, as it is an undoubted and gracious disposition of God, to forgive unto seventy times seven. Recollect, further, that God was dealing *with these Israelites as a whole*. What his relation was to each as a man, and not simply as an Israelite, is hardly to be considered here. The great lesson of Jehovah's questionings in this verse may be stated in the words of Jesus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Ver. 12.—*God makes three propositions.* 1. *As to the fate of the unbelieving nation.* "I will smite them with the pestilence." If Israel is to perish, it shall not be at the hands of some other nation, which may thus glorify and exalt itself. The occasion is one on which, if a blow is to be struck, it must be a *manifestly supernatural one*, even as in the Deluge or the destruction of Sodom. The destruction, too, shall be sudden. The people shall not be left to wander and droop and die in the wilderness. The disease which comes from sin and works out death shall have its energy concentrated in one swift tremendous blow. 2. *As to the aspect in which this visitation is to be regarded.* "I will disinherit them." God looked on Israel as the legitimate and responsible heir to Canaan. It was considered as Abraham's land, by a solemn covenant, even when he was a stranger in it (Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 14—17; xv. 7, 18—21; xvii. 8). The aspect of Canaan as an inheritance was still further confirmed in Isaac as the child of promise, and Jacob as acquirer of the birthright. But in spite of all this, Israel obstinately refused to make ready for the great inheritance. The heirs to high rank and great possessions in this world are watched with great solicitude. Hereafter they will not only have great means for indulgence, but great opportunities for good and evil. And sometimes a parent, with deep pain of heart, will feel compelled to disinherit an unworthy son. This word "disinherit," rightly considered, puts a tone of inexpressible sadness into this verse. Recollect that tone as well as words, manner as well as matter, has to be considered in listening to any judicial sentence of God. A sceptic talking with Dr. Channing reproached Jesus Christ for what he called his angry denunciations in Matt. xi. 20—24. In answer, Channing opened the New Testament, and read the passages referred to aloud. As soon as he had finished, his hearer said, "Oh, if that was the tone in which he spoke, it alters the case." 3. *As to the future of Moses.* "I will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they." Here is the suggestion of another experiment. Abraham was an eminent believer. Against all his shortcomings and infirmities in other respects, and they are very plain, his faith stands out in relief, conspicuous, almost colossal, one may say, in its manifestations. Nevertheless, his descendants turned out utter unbelievers. Take away from them for a single moment the light of things seen and temporal, and they become frantic and rebellious as a child left

alone in the dark. And now God seems to suggest that *possibly the seed of Moses may prove of a better sort.* Thus we have in the propositions of this verse what we may call alternative suggestions. They show what things might, conceivably, and not unjustly, have happened at this critical turning-point.—Y.

Vers. 13—19.—*Moses' view of the position.* God has presented some of the considerations which needed to be presented; Moses now presents others; and all taken together produce the decision actually arrived at. What God had said it was not for Moses to say, and so what Moses said it was not for God to say; nevertheless, all needed to be said.

I. NOTE THE CHARACTER IN WHICH MOSES CHIEFLY APPEARS. His first words indicate a concern for the reputation of Jehovah among the nations, and it would be wrong to suppose that this was not a matter of real concern, but it is evident the chief thought in his mind was how to secure mercy for rebellious Israel. *He is the intercessor.* All considerations he can appropriately urge are urged with the ingenuity of one who feels the calamity of others as his own. He is consistent here with past appearances on similar occasions.

II. NOTE THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH HE URGES. 1. *He makes no attempt to extenuate the wickedness of the people.* He can say nothing by way of excuse. He does not plead as Abraham concerning Sodom, on the chance of a righteous remnant being found in the multitude. He does not distinctly plead for another trial, like the dresser in the vineyard (Luke xiii. 8, 9). The sin was fresh, patent, monstrous, coming as the climax of so much that had gone before. He does not attempt to make the sin of the people look less than the sin of the spies, but leaves all in its enormity. So we may say it is better for us not to go excusing self, when too often excuse but adds to existing sin. Our danger is to under-estimate our sin, to think of our sorrows and trials rather than our disobedience and ingratitude. God knows what may be said for us. At all times, and in all our transgressions, *he* remembers that we are dust. Let us rather aim to get a due sense of how much, how very much, needs to be done in us to make us holy and perfect. 2. *He makes God's reputation among surrounding nations a matter of great concern.* In God's government of the world, the consideration of his *real glory* is ever to be kept in view, and this of course is not dependent on what any man may think. Nevertheless, what men may think and say is by no means to be neglected. Whatever is done, some will criticise and jeer. Strange things have been said, and are said still, concerning the God revealed in the history of Israel. A monster of hideous attributes is conjured up and represented as the Deity of the Hebrews. Now as among men it is a consideration that their good should not be evil spoken of, if they can possibly arrange it otherwise, so, reverently be it said, a similar consideration may be present to God when he reveals himself in human affairs. What he said here asserted that there was *no need for further probation of these Israelites.* What Moses now suggests is that there was *no need to cut them down at once*, and good reason to do otherwise, so as to stop the mouth of Egypt and the nations of Canaan. 3. *One more act of mercy would be consistent with God's character.* God had said, upon the making of the two tables to replace the former two (Exod. xxxiv.), that though he could not treat iniquity as a trifle, and must ever stamp on it signs of the serious way in which he regarded it, yet he was a God merciful and gracious, and disposed to pardon. Moses now humbly reminds God of these words, and pleads an application of them to the present transgression. He does not seem to have meant much by the word *pardon;* it was simply that God might turn away the pestilence. Indeed, for anything more it was not in the power of Moses to ask. A full pardon, a full reconciliation to God, these demand, as a pre-requisite, full repentance. And so far Israel had made no sign. Perhaps the people were dumb and stupefied with terror. Other people may ask pardon for us in a certain sense, but such pardon as will be complete can only come from the cry of awakened, enlightened, and truly penitent souls.—Y.

Vers. 20—23.—*The ultimate decision.* I. THE EXTENT OF THE BOON WHICH GOD GRANTED. "I have pardoned according to thy word." God gave all that Moses

asked, and all that in the light of his former words (vers. 11, 12), he could give. But what did it come to? Nominally, it might be called a pardon; in reality it came to no more than a reprieve. It did not put Israel where it was before. It was a boon, so far as it is a boon to a man condemned to die when he is told that his sentence is commuted to penal servitude for life. To him trembling under the shadow of the scaffold it may seem an inestimable mercy. So here Israel may have counted it the same to have been delivered from the pestilence. So a man will esteem recovery from a critical illness or the near chance of sudden death. Yet what has such a boon come to? Death and the demands of eternity are only put off a little into the future. We have not escaped them; we are pressed on towards them; every day of life narrows the distance, and at any moment the distance may be swept altogether away.

II. GOD SECURES THAT HE SHALL BE GLORIFIED IN THE BESTOWING OF THE BOON. "All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." As much as to assure Moses that he need not be in the least apprehensive. The nations of Canaan should have no cause for exultation, nothing to enable them to glorify their gods against Jehovah. They should have one pretext the less, if only one. There would be no chance to sneer at the swift destruction of Israel, as if it had come from one of the passionate and revengeful deities of Paganism. Still, if there was one pretext the less, there was only one. The removal of one pretext only opens up to the prejudiced and carnal mind the vision of another. The world will always have something to say against God, whithersoever the ways of his providence or his grace may tend. And so it is good for us to take the assurance he gave to Moses. All the earth, in a wider sense than Moses understood, shall be filled with the glory of God; for not only the kingdom and the power are his, but also and emphatically the glory. There will come a day when the most ingenious and admired criticism of men on the ways of God will be shrivelled into everlasting oblivion before the full blaze of that glory.

III. HE SECURES IN PARTICULAR THAT HE SHALL BE GLORIFIED IN ISRAEL. What Israel might think of him now it was spared was a matter of more immediate importance than what the nations might think. There was to be no opportunity for them to say, "This is a God who threatens, and yet when the pinch comes, the terrible blow is withdrawn." The people were to behold both his goodness and his severity. He magnifies their sin before the eyes of Moses, and there was the more need to do so when he was sparing the transgressors. The mere lapse of time neither diminishes the impression made by sin on God himself, nor the destructive power of it on the transgressor. Repented and forsaken sins are blotted out, but a recurrence of them, and that in a more flagrant way, brings them back, and illustrates what an inveterate and ingrained thing sin has become. When Whately was principal of St. Alban's Hall, he would sometimes say after some escapade of an undergraduate, "I pardon this as a first offence, and I do not wish to remember it. I will not unless you force me to do so. But recollect that if you commit a second, I must remember the first." So God had to call up everything from the beginning of his wonders in Egypt: on the one hand, all his glory and miracles, and impressive commands and promises; on the other hand, their persistent indifference, disobedience, and unbelief. Let them therefore understand, that even though they be spared, they cannot see Canaan. This is all the Lord says at present, but it is enough to secure that he shall be glorified in Israel.

IV. The great practical lesson to us is, that WE SHOULD BE VERY OBSERVANT OF THE SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE WITH US, AND PROMPTLY OBEDIENT TO THE GOD WHO IS REVEALED IN THEM. Of how many it may truly be said, that they travel through life unobservant of God's wonderful works to them, and tempting him many times! What a terrible thought, that as the fate of this generation was fixed, though some of them lived well-nigh forty years after, so the fate of many may be fixed even before they die—probation ended, though earthly existence may continue; dead even while they live! While still in vigorous health of body, and active in all worldly concerns, the last faint trace of spiritual sensibility may have passed away. Doing perhaps what they reckon to be good, and what is good in a certain way, they nevertheless miss the great end of life, because faith in the Son and in the Father who sent him has never been allowed to enter their minds (Rom. ii., xi. 20—22).—

Ver. 24.—*The promise to Caleb.* God grants the prayer of Moses for the people, and makes clear how small a boon it is by notifying at the same time their necessary exclusion from Canaan. The smallness of the boon compared with the greatness of the loss is still further shown when he goes on to make the promise to Caleb. Consider—

I. HOW CLEAR SUCH A PROMISE MAKES THE REASON WHY GOD'S PROMISES SEEM SO OFTEN UNFULFILLED. Men do not supply the conditions requisite for their fulfilment. The same claims, promises, and warnings were laid before others as before Caleb; but when they were rebellious he was obedient, and the end of it is indicated here. The law of sowing and reaping, of cause and effect, is at work. Let Christians consider how many promises given for the guidance and comfort of present life are yet unfulfilled in their experience. The power and disposition of God are toward us, as toward the Israelites, but the rebellious hearts are many and the Calebs few (Eph. i. 19).

II. A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATION OF SPECIAL PROVIDENCE. As we read on and learn that Caleb was to spend forty years in the wilderness before the fulfilment of the promise, then we discern how constantly he must have been under the eye of God, how surely provided for and protected. He had known much of danger already: something as a spy and something as a faithful witness, and the lifting of stones against him was perhaps but an earnest of further perils from his own countrymen. And yet, although his wanderings were to be long and dangerous, God, speaking with that assurance which becomes God only, promises Caleb an entrance into the land at last. Who can tell what hearts this very promise made more hostile, and what special interpositions may have been required to protect him?

III. THE REASONS FOR GOD'S GRACIOUS TREATMENT OF CALEB. "He was a man of another spirit." Of another spirit as to *his recollections of the past.* The others thought much of the past, but it was in a selfish and grovelling spirit. They hankered after the creature comforts and delicacies of Egypt, and continually bemoaned the simpler life of the wilderness. The ten misleading spies very likely took thoughts of Egypt into their inspection of Canaan, comparing it not with God's promises, but with what they recollected of the land they had left. On the other hand, Caleb's thoughts would run much on the bondage and oppression in Egypt. Humbly and devoutly observant of each wonderful work of God as it was being performed, he would have it more deeply impressed on his mind; and every time the thought returned there would be something of the power of a first impression. There would be the recollection also of God's forbearance and long-suffering with him in his own imperfect services. Of another spirit, consequently, as to *his conduct in the present.* To one who had learned to look on the past as he did, the present would appear in all its glory immeasurably better than the past. Hence, what made others mourn made him rejoice; while others were rebelling and hatching conspiracies, he was doing all he could to sustain Moses. May we not conjecture that he went on the search expedition not so much because he deemed it needful, as in order that one at least might bring back a faithful testimony? So let it be said of us that wherever the spirit of the world is manifested in greed, passion, false representation, or any other evil thing, we by our conduct in present circumstances, as they rise fresh and often unexpected day by day, show indeed another spirit. It is only by having the right spirit alive and strong within us that we shall be equal to the claims ever coming on Christ's servants. Of another spirit as to *his expectations in the future.* Every man who lives so that his present is better than his past has a growing assurance that the future will be better than the present. He who lives in the constant appreciation and enjoyment of fulfilled promises will consider the future as having in it the promises yet to be fulfilled. It would doubtless be a keen personal disappointment to Caleb when he found the people determined to retreat. He had known something of the future in the present when he visited the promised land, and joy would fill his thoughts at the prospect of speedy possession. A man of such a spirit as Caleb gives God the opportunity of accomplishing all his word. "He hath followed me fully." As fully, that is, as was possible for a sinful man in earthly conditions. God does not expect the service of glorified spirits during the life we live in the flesh. But wherever he finds diligence, caution, the spirit that

says, "This one thing I do;" wherever he finds the loving heart, the giving hand, the bridled tongue, he is not slow to give approval. When the heart is fully set towards him, without division and without compulsion, he recognises such a state in the most emphatic language. Hence, in spite of great blots faithfully recorded, Abraham is called the friend of God (James ii. 23), and David the man after his own heart (1 Sam. xiii. 14). So Caleb is described as having followed God fully; not that he was a faultless man, but there was that in him which in due time would make all the outward the full and beautiful expression of the inward. God sees the fruit within the seed, and speaks accordingly. Compare Caleb with the unbelieving multitude, and the words will not appear one whit too strong. Note in conclusion that Caleb was now required *to exercise the high quality of patience.* He himself deserved immediate entrance, but he must wait while the unbelieving generation died away, and those who at present were only striplings and infants rose to take their place. He had to be patient, but his patience was the patience of hope. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. iii. 26). Caleb had a spirit within him which could find the best things of Canaan even in the waste wilderness ('Paradise Regained,' i. 7).—Y.

Vers. 26—35.—*God's decision repeated as a message.* What God has already said to Moses by way of answer to his intercession is now amplified in a solemn message to the people. The punitive aspect of the decision is made to appear still more distinctly. Cf. vers. 11 and 27. In the first he asks how long the people mean to pursue their unbelieving conduct; in the second, how long shall he bear with them. The time has come for God himself to decide, and make his decision known in the clearest manner.

I. THIS GENERATION WAS NOT ALLOWED TO GO ITS OWN WAY. It was not to die at once, neither was it to enter the land; and perhaps some may then have anticipated dismissal altogether, like a disbanded army, that each might be free to take his own path. In reality, all was to go on as before, save that the promise was taken away. They were to continue in the wilderness, and die there. No relaxation is intimated as to the service of the tabernacle and the duties of the camp. We do not escape God's constraints because our hearts have rejected him. He spared Israel, but he did not let it go back to Egypt. Men may congratulate themselves on being free from the restrictions of a godly life, and talk wildly of those who shut themselves up in the service of Christ, yet they know very well that they are themselves under restraint. Anything like license and recklessness brings suffering on them very quickly. God takes care even now that if men will not serve him, neither shall they please themselves. The fruits of evil-doing sometimes ripen with wonderful rapidity.

II. IT WAS NOT LEFT TO ITS OWN RESOURCES. It is not expressly said that the manna would be continued, but doubtless all was continued that was not formally revoked. This doomed generation, which could neither go its own way, nor entirely in God's way, nevertheless had something to do for God which could be done by the ordinary provisions of nature. A generation mostly born in the wilderness had to be brought up to manhood. The lot was, therefore, to some extent mitigated by the continuance of family life, with all its affections, occupations, and enjoyments. In the course of time, as the first bitterness of their doom passed away, parents might even find a certain pleasure in the thought that their children would enjoy the land from which by their own folly they had been excluded.

III. NO ROOM WAS LEFT FOR A MORE HOPEFUL PROSPECT WITH RESPECT TO THEMSELVES. They had said in their haste, "Would God we had died in this wilderness!" (ver. 2). And now through their own folly what they hastily wished has become a necessity. All who had been numbered (ch. i.) are to die, as not being fit to fight the Lord's battles. No less than four times does the Lord refer to this doom, with variety of expression, which only makes more certain the identity of meaning. Are any of them saying that this very doom is a change of purpose, and therefore they may hope that in a short time God will gladden their ears with the words, "Arise, enter, and possess"? He closes the door against such a hope by giving the long term of forty years to exhaust the doomed generation. This stretch of time would

bring even the youngest of them to be a man of sixty, and thus, though the wearing away might be very gradual, yet it would be none the less certain. The rule is made more express and rigorous by the very exceptions in Caleb and Joshua.

IV. THOUGH THEY THEMSELVES WERE DOOMED, CLEAR INDICATION IS GIVEN TO THEM THAT GOD'S PURPOSES WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED. Forty years, and they would be gone! and what then? Why they themselves would be the instruments, and that to a large extent unconsciously, of fulfilling the very purpose which once they seemed to have imperilled. Their little ones God would bring into the land. "Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey." Men are fearful when they ought to be bold, and bold when they ought to be fearful. Israel was alarmed for its tender offspring, but not afraid to rebel against God, and treat his servants with contempt. And now God says that in the exercise of his providence and the carrying out of his extensive plans, these very children, these infants, helpless on the mother's breast, shall enter and conquer where their fathers were afraid to go. Another generation would arise, not knowing Egypt except at second hand, and which could not very well lust after things it had never tasted. The delay in accomplishing God's purposes was more apparent than real. The loss was chiefly a loss to the disobedient themselves. God can take the most adverse things, the most determined outbreaks of the wicked, and work them in with his own purposes.

V. AN ILLUSTRATION IS FURNISHED OF THE TRUTH THAT CHILDREN HAVE TO BEAR THE SINS OF THE PARENTS (ver. 33). A dreadful name, and only too frequent in his after-dealings with Israel, does the Lord give to these sins—"whoredoms" he calls them. The generations of men are so interwoven that the blow which falls on the parent cannot be entirely averted from the child. Not only was the punished generation unfit for entrance, but its children had to wait in consequence. The children born on this very day of sentence would be well on in manhood when they entered the land. Sinners should well consider how their sin includes others in its consequences. The Israelites thought they were doing a good thing for their little ones when they rebelled; but the real result was the detention of them forty years in the wilderness. If the fathers had been believing, they could have entered at once, and brought up their children in the land flowing with milk and honey. As it was, they had to nourish them in the wilderness, and on the manna they so much despised.

VI. THERE IS SOMETHING THROUGH ALL THESE FORTY YEARS TO REMIND THEM OF THEIR SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT. As the unbelievers died off one by one, and as each succeeding year began, and whenever Caleb and Joshua appeared, there was something to remind of God's chastising hand.—Y.

Vers. 39—45.—*A confession contradicted in action.* The way of Israel seems now closed up. The way to Egypt is closed, and also the way to the promised land, where of late was fixed up the clear intimation, "This is the way, walk ye in it." There is now but one way open—to wander in this wilderness for forty years till all the rebels have passed away. The full measure of their doom is now before them, and as it appears in all its naked severity, it fills them with grief and consternation. Everything corroborates the word of Moses. The ten spies who brought up the slanderous report are lying plague-stricken corpses, while Caleb and Joshua stand among the living confessed by God himself as faithful and true witnesses. Nevertheless, in the midst of this utter collapse the people were not unprovided for as to their course of action (ver. 25). God had told Moses the direction into which to take them. But they cannot learn even so much obedience as this without being taught it in a terrible lesson.

I. WE HAVE A CONFESSION CONTRADICTED EVEN WHILE IT WAS BEING MADE. The confession is, "We have sinned." It is very easy to say this, and to say it meaning something by it, but in a great multitude of cases it is said with very little understanding of what sin really is. Pharaoh said at last, when he had been visited with seven plagues, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Exod. ix. 27); but as soon as the rain, hail, and thunders ceased at the intercession of Moses, he sinned yet more and hardened his heart. So with the Israelites here; it was not sin they felt, but suffering. If they had truly felt sin,

they would have submitted at once to the decision of God and his direction for their present need (ver. 25). A mind filled with the sense of sin is filled also with the sense of God's authority. It is so impressed with its own sin and God's righteousness, that its first thought is how to end the dreadful alienation from God by reason of wicked works. It will at once attempt to bring disobedience to an end by prompt obedience in the nearest duties. But here the confession of sin is not even put first. They are occupied with self, its aims and disappointments, even while professing themselves humbled before God. What a proof that God judged them truly when he said that any further trial of their obedience was useless! They had forgotten that wisdom has to do with times and seasons. What was obedience yesterday may be disobedience to-day. They tried to open a door closed by him who shuts so that none can open. They said "We have sinned" in the same breath with the most audacious purpose of sin they could form. Learn from them how hard it is to have, not simply an adequate sense of sin, but a sense of sin at all. It is a dreadful thing to sin, and yet persistently deny it through failing to feel it (1 John i. 8, 10); it is also a dreadful thing to confess sin while the felt trouble is not sin, but mere fleshly vexation and pain. Read carefully Dan. ix. for a becoming confession of sin really felt.

II. A CONFESSION STILL FURTHER CONTRADICTED IN ACTION, EVEN AFTER THE CONTRADICTION HAS BEEN POINTED OUT. We have seen how the resolution to advance into Canaan made the confession of sin worthless. How worthless it was is made more evident by the *action* of the people. Notice that Moses takes not the slightest heed of their confession of sin, but aims direct at their wild resolution. What can be more urgent and more strongly fortified with reasons than his dissuasive words? He puts in the front, as the most proper thing to be put, that they are about to transgress the commandment of the Lord. Fresh from one transgression, and with its penalty pronounced, they yet rushed headlong into another. They are foolish enough to suppose that by an energetic effort they can release themselves from the penalty. Such a rebellious purpose must assuredly be frustrated. By so much as the *presence* of God would have been felt if they had gone onward at the right time, by just as much would his *absence* be felt now. As formerly they would have had a force far above nature against their enemies, now they have a force far below. But all that Moses can say is in vain. All their notion of sin was that they had not advanced into Canaan. They had such poor thoughts of God as to think that they could wipe the sin out by advancing with all energy now, forgetting that the sin lay in unbelief and disobedience. If by any chance they had got into Canaan, they would not have found it a promised land. God could and would have made it just as hard and unattractive as the wilderness they had left.

III. THE CONTRADICTION IS STILL FURTHER AGGRAVATED BY BREAKING AWAY FROM MOSES AND THE ARK. One can imagine that in their impetuosity all tribal order and discipline was lost. Possibly they had some commander; there may have been just enough cohesion to agree so far. But though a crowd may choose a commander, a commander cannot at will make a crowd into an army. The peculiarity of Israel was that its army was fixed and disciplined by Jehovah himself, and to break away from the ark, where his honour dwelt, was openly to despise it, as if it were nothing but common furniture. There was not only a rebellion of the people against its governor, but a mutiny of the army against its commander. Does it not almost seem as if a host of demons had gone into these men, carrying them headlong to destruction, even as they carried the swine down the steep place? Only a little while before, no argument, no appeal would have dragged them an inch against the Amalekites and the Canaanites, and now there is nothing can keep them back. Surely this crowns the illustrations of Israel's perversity, and makes it very wonderful that out of them, as concerning the flesh, the Christ should have sprung.

IV. THEIR DISCOMFITURE CAME AS A CERTAIN CONSEQUENCE. The enemy, we may conjecture, had been preparing for some time. Probably, as the Israelites sent spies into Canaan, so the Canaanites may have had spies in the wilderness. And so as Israel in this battle was at its very weakest, Canaan may have been at its strongest. Yet Israel would appear strong, advancing with furious onset, and bent on cancelling these dreadful forty years. Hence the enemy would exult in a great victory gained

by their own powers, being ignorant that they owed it rather to the disobedience of Israel. The world is not strong in itself, as against those who truly confide in God, but its strength is enough and to spare when God's people fight against it with fleshly weapons. The best allies of God's enemies are oftentimes found among his professed friends.—Y.

PRELIMINARY NOTE TO CHAPTERS XV.—XIX.

A great break in the story of Israel occurs here. Perhaps in the whole history of the theocracy, from Abraham downwards, there is no such entire submergence of the chosen people to be noted. After the rebellion at Kadesh they disappear from view, and they only reappear at Kadesh again after an interval of thirty-eight years. Only one occurrence of any historical moment can be assigned to this period (ch. xvi.), and that is recorded without note of time or place, because its ecclesiastical interest gave it an abiding value for all time. The sacred history of Israel in the wilderness may be compared to one of the streams of that wilderness. From its source it runs, if circumstances be favourable, full and free for a certain distance, and even spreads itself abroad upon the more level ground; here, however, it meets a thirstier soil and more scorching heat; it loses itself suddenly and entirely. If its course be followed with doubt and difficulty, a few small water-holes may be discovered, and perhaps in some exceptionally shaded and sheltered spot a permanent pool; only at the furthest end of the dried-up wady, near the great sea, the stream re-forms itself and flows on without interruption to its goal. The void in the record which thus divides in two the story of the exodus is explained readily and satisfactorily by the one fact that during all these years the history of Israel was actually in abeyance. For that history is the history of a theocracy, and in the higher sense it is the history of God's dealings with his own people, as he leads them on "from strength to strength," until "every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Thus all the Old Testament from Gen. xii. (in which the history properly so called commences) to the end of Joshua has for its goal the entry into and conquest of the promised land; and thence again to 1 Kings x. and 2 Chron. ix. it leads up to the firm and full establishment of the temple and of the Lord's anointed in the place which he had chosen. But during the thirty-eight years this advance was absolutely suspended; the generation that excommunicated itself at Kadesh had thenceforth no part and no heritage in Israel; their lives were spared indeed at the time, but they had to die out and another generation had to take their place before the history of the theocracy could be resumed. Instead, therefore, of the blank causing perplexity or suspicion, it most strikingly corresponds with and confirms the whole tenor and purport of the Pentateuch, and the Old Testament in general. It was at Kadesh that the onward march of Israel, as Israel, was summarily suspended; it was from Kadesh that that march began once more after thirty-eight years; and the sacred narrative conforms itself with the utmost simplicity and naturalness to this fact.

The condition of the nation during this period of submergence is a matter of considerable interest. In endeavouring to picture it to ourselves, we are left to a few scattered statements, to some probable conclusions, and for the rest to mere conjecture. The most important of these statements are as follows:—

1. Deut. viii. 2—6; xxix. 5, 6. God did not wholly abandon them to themselves. He supplied them every day with manna, and also (no doubt) with water.

when there was no natural supply (see on 1 Cor. x. 4). He provided them also with raiment and shoes, so that they had the "food and clothing" which are the actual necessaries of life.

2. Josh. v. 4—8. It may seem strange that no children were circumcised between Egypt and Canaan, considering the extreme importance assigned to the rite (see on Exod. iv. 24—26). If any children were born before the first arrival at Kadesh (see note on ch. x. 28), it is probable that their circumcision was postponed in view of a speedy settlement in the land of promise. After that time the general neglect of religious ordinances and the extreme uncertainty of their movements (ch. ix. 22) would sufficiently account for the general disuse of the rite. It is only reasonable to conclude that the passover also was omitted during all this period. Even if the material elements for its celebration could have been provided, it is hardly possible that the men who came out of Egypt only to die in that wilderness could have brought themselves to renew the memory, so bitter to them, of that great but fruitless deliverance. And with the passover we may probably conclude that the whole sacrificial system fell into abeyance, save so far as it might be maintained by the zeal of the Levites alone (see below on ch. xix.).

3. Ezek. xx. 10—26. This is a strong indictment against Israel in the wilderness, and all the more because the children are reproached in the same strain as the fathers. It is apparently to the former that the difficult verses 25 and 26 refer exclusively. If so, we have two facts of grave moment made known to us through the prophet. 1. That the Lord, by way of punishment, gave them statutes and judgment which were not good. 2. That they systematically offered their first-born to Moloch. It is only necessary here to point out that these statements occur in the course of an impassioned invective, and must therefore be taken as the extreme expression of one side only of a state of things which may have had other aspects.

4. Amos v. 25, 26; Acts vii. 42, 43. This again is a strong indictment. It is indeed contended that Amos v. 26 should be read in the present tense, and that St. Stephen was misled by an error of the Septuagint. This, however, introduces a much greater difficulty; and even apart from the quotation in the Acts, the ordinary reading is the more natural and probable (see note on ch. xiv. 33).

While, therefore, the general impression left upon us by these passages is dark indeed, it is hopeless to look for anything definite or precise as to the moral and religious condition of the people at this time. A similar obscurity hangs over their movements and proceedings. We have nothing to guide us except the probabilities of the case, and a list of stations which really tells us nothing. It is only reasonable to suppose that the marching orders issued at Sinai fell *ipso facto* into abeyance when the short, swift, decisive march for which they were designed came to an abrupt conclusion. We have no authority for supposing that the host held together during these years of wandering which had no aim but waste of time, and no end but death. The presumption is that they scattered themselves far and wide over the wilderness (itself of no great extent), just as present convenience dictated. Disease, and death, and all those other incidents revived in full force which make the simultaneous march in close array of two million people an impossibility. No doubt the head-quarters of the host and nation, Moses and Aaron, and the Levites generally, remained with the ark, and formed, wherever they might be, the visible and representative centre of the national life and worship. It is of the movements of this permanent centre, which contained in itself all that was really distinctive and abiding in Israel, that Moses speaks in ch. xxxiii., and elsewhere; and no doubt these movements were made in implicit obedience to the signals of God, given by the cloudy

pillar (ch. ix. 21, 22). It is quite possible that while the ark removed from time to time, some portion of the people remained stationary at Kadesh, until the "whole congregation" (see on ch. xx. 1) was reassembled there once more. If this were the case, the peculiar phraseology of Deut. i. 46 as compared with the following verse may be satisfactorily explained.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV.

VARIOUS LAWS OF SACRIFICE (vers. 1—31).

Ver. 1.—**The Lord spake unto Moses.** It must have been during the years of wandering, but within those limits it is impossible even to conjecture the probable date. There is no external evidence, and the internal evidence is wholly indecisive. Neither can it be reasonably maintained that these regulations were designed to revive the hope and sustain the faith of the rising generation. Incidentally they may have had some effect in that way, but it is evident that the primary object of their promulgation was simply to supply certain defects and omissions in the Levitical legislation. Why that legislation should have had the fragmentary and unfinished character which it so evidently bears, requiring to be supplemented, here by an isolated commandment, and there by oral tradition, is an interesting and difficult question; but there can be no doubt as to the fact, and it is superfluous to look any further for the reason of the enactments here following.

Ver. 2.—**When ye be come into the land.** The same formula is used in Levit. xxiii. 10 concerning the wave-sheaf. It is only remarkable here because it tacitly assumes—(1) that the burnt offerings and sacrifices mentioned would not be offered any more in the wilderness; (2) that the nation to which it was spoken would surely enter into Canaan at last.

Ver. 3.—**A burnt offering, or a sacrifice,** *i. e.* a whole burnt offering, or a slain offering. There should be a comma after the word "sacrifice." **In performing a vow, or in a free-will offering, or in your solemn feasts.** The burnt offering, or slain offering, might be offered in either of these three ways, in addition to the more ordinary sacrifices which do not come into question here.

Ver. 4.—**A meat offering.** See on Levit. ii. The command to add the meat offering in every such case had not been given before, but it had apparently been the practice (see Levit. xxiii. 18) in accordance with the law of the daily sacrifice given in Exod. xxix. 40, 41.

Ver. 5.—**A drink offering.** This is nowhere separately treated of in Leviticus, but it is mentioned along with the meat offering in the passages just referred to. Libations are amongst the simplest and most universal of offerings to the unseen powers. **For one lamb.** כֶּבֶשׂ, lamb or kid.

Ver. 6.—**Or for a ram.** The meat and drink offerings were to be proportionate in amount to the size of the victim.

Ver. 8.—**Peace offerings.** The sacrifices made of free-will, or made on solemn feast-days, would commonly be peace offerings (see on Levit. vii.).

Ver. 9.—**Then shall he bring.** The rapid interchange of the second and third persons in these verses is awkward and perplexing. No doubt it is due to some sufficiently simple cause in the inditing of the original record, but we are not in a position even to guess at its nature. Meanwhile the broken construction remains as a witness to the faithfulness with which the record has been handed down.

Ver. 12.—**According to the number.** The strict proportion of the meat and drink offerings was to be carried out with respect to the numbers, as well as the individual value, of the sacrifices.

Ver. 13.—**All that are born of the country.** בְּכל־הָאֶזְרָח, all the native born. Septuagint, *πᾶς ὁ αὐτόχθων*. The phrase is used no doubt from the point of view of a resident in Canaan; but it was only to such residents that these ordinances applied. **These things.** The regulations just mentioned.

Ver. 14.—**A stranger.** Septuagint, *προσήλυτος*.

Ver. 15.—**One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation,** &c. Rather, "As for the congregation (הַקָּהָל, construed absolutely), one law for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth, an eternal ordinance for your generations; as with you so shall it be with the stranger before the Lord."

Ver. 17.—**And the Lord spake unto Moses.** Whether on the same or on some other occasion we cannot tell. The two enactments have the same supplemental and (humanly speaking) trivial character.

Ver. 19.—**When ye eat of the bread of the land.** A thing which the younger Israelites, few of whom had ever tasted bread, must have eagerly looked forward to (see on Josh. v. 11, 12). **An heave offering.** See on Exod. xxix. 27; Levit. vii. 14. The dedication of first-fruits had been ordered in general terms in Exod. xxii. 29; xxiii. 19.

Ver. 20.—**A cake of the first of your dough.** עֲרִסֹת, only used here and in the two passages which refer to this enactment (Neh. x. 37; Ezek. xliv. 30). It probably means whole meal coarsely ground, the first preparation of the new corn available for baking and eating. Septuagint has ἀπαρχὴ φυράματος, an expression used by St. Paul in Rom. xi. 16. **As . . the heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall ye heave it,** *i. e.* the offering of bread from the home was to be made in addition to the offering of ears or grains from the threshing-floor, and in the same manner. No doubt this latter offering was a very ancient (Gen. iv. 3) and general one, but it is not clearly described in the Law (see, however, Levit. ii. 14; xxiii. 10). All these heave offerings were the perquisite of the priest.

Ver. 22.—**And if ye have erred.** The absence of the usual formula, "and the Lord spake unto Moses," is singular, because what follows has reference not to the enactment just made, but to the whole Law. Perhaps it is a part of the thoroughly unscientific and inartificial character of the Mosaic legislation that a principle of extreme importance and wide application is appended to an insignificant matter of ceremonial. Provision is here made for the forgiveness of sins due to ignorance and oversight—a provision which was sorely needed, considering the great complexity of the Law, and the bad training they had for the accurate observance of it (Deut. xii. 8). A similar provision had been made in Levit. iv. The two, however, differ, inasmuch as *that* contemplates sins of commission, while *this* contemplates sins of omission.

Ver. 23.—**From the day that the Lord commanded, . . and henceforward among your generations.** Or, "thenceforward according to your generations." These words are obscure, because they point apparently to a much larger lapse of time since the first giving of the Law than had really occurred. It may be that they include the possibility of fresh revelations of the Divine will in the time to come.

Ver. 24.—**If ought be committed.** Rather, "if it be committed," *i. e.* the non-observance of "all these commandments." It cannot, however, be necessary to suppose that a falling away from the whole body of the Mosaic legislation is here intended; such an apostasy could not happen by oversight, and if it did, the remedy provided would seem much too slight for the occasion. The analogy of the provision which follows (ver. 27), and of the parallel provisions in Levit. iv. 2, 13, points clearly to the neglect of any one of the Divine commandments. **One young bullock for a burnt offering.** In the case of a sin of commission done ignorantly, the bullock was treated as a sin offering (Levit. iv. 14, 20), for in that case the expiation of guilt incurred is the prominent point in the atonement; in this case it is the necessity of a fresh self-dedication to the Lord. **According to the manner.** כְּמִשְׁפָּטָם, according to the ordinance given above. **One kid of the goats for a sin offering.** This was no doubt offered first, because expiation must precede self-oblation, but the bullock is mentioned first as forming the principal part of the sacrifice. The kid was probably treated according to the regulations of Levit. iv. 14, *sq.*

Ver. 26.—**Seeing all the people were in ignorance.** Literally, "because (*sc.* it happened) to the whole nation in ignorance." As the stranger was counted as of the nation for religious purposes, he shared both in its sin and in its forgiveness. There is no record of this atonement ever having been made, although there was abundant occasion for it; it may well be that it was intended only to stand on record against the Jews, and to point them to the one true expiation for their national as well as for their particular transgressions.

Ver. 27.—**And if any soul sin through ignorance.** No doubt by way of omission, as in the preceding case, and thus this regulation will be distinguished from that in Levit. iv. 27. In either case the ritual is apparently intended to be the same, although not so fully described here. In ver. 29 the benefit of the ordinance is extended to strangers; this was natural in a law which directly contemplates the residence of Israel in their permanent home.

Ver. 30.—**The soul that doeth . . presumptuously.** Literally, "with a high hand," *i. e.* defiantly. A similar phrase is used of God himself (Exod. xiii. 9). **The same reproacheth the Lord.** מְגַדֵּף, revileth. Septuagint, παροξύνει. In Ezek. xx. 27 it is translated "blasphemeth." Perhaps "affronteth" would be better. He that deliberately broke the commandment of the Lord avowed himself his open enemy, and, as it were, challenged him to single combat. **Cut off.** See Gen. xvii. 14.

Ver. 31.—**His iniquity . . upon him.** עֲוֹנָהּ בָּהּ, "its crime upon it," *i. e.* the sin of that soul must come upon it in punishment.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—31.—*Ordinances of sacrifice.* The laws given in this section were to be "an ordinance for ever," but they have long ago come to an end as far as the literal observance of them is concerned; it is certain, therefore, that they have an abiding spiritual fulfilment in the law of Christ. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE TWO FIRST OF THOSE LAWS WERE DESIGNED FOR THE ISRAELITES WHEN THEY CAME INTO THE LAND OF THEIR HABITATION; they do not contemplate the period of wandering in the desert which was then going on. Even so a great part of the law of Christ is designed for that state of holy "joy and peace in believing," for that "rest" which is intended to be our habitation even now, and into which we do enter (Heb. iv. 3 *a.*), albeit imperfectly and uncertainly. Many of the counsels of our Lord and his apostles are manifestly out of all harmony with the ordinary lives of ordinary Christians, because they pertain to a state of detachment and self-conquest which we, through perversity or half-heartedness, have not attained (Matt. v. 29, 39, 40, 48; vi. 34; xvi. 25; xvii. 20; xix. 12, 21; xx. 26, 27; Luke vi. 35; xii. 33; Rom. xiv. 21; 1 Cor. v. 11; vi. 4, 7; vii. 29—31; Philip. ii. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 8, &c.). These are indeed addressed to all Christians ("speak unto the children of Israel"), not to a select few; but they are addressed to them on the assumption that they have striven after and attained the higher life of the Spirit ("when ye be come," &c.). And this is the real answer to the mocking or uneasy spirit which reproaches the gospel of Christ with being visionary, and with having failed to realise itself in the actual life of Christendom. It is quite true that, as far as the present is concerned, the mind of Christ is not fulfilled in the great majority even of decent-living Christians, because they have not attained to rest, but are wandering still in the deserts of a divided allegiance, one half to God, the other to the world and self (1 Cor. ii. 14; iii. 3; Heb. xii. 5).

II. THAT THE VERY GIVING OF THESE LAWS INVOLVED THE ASSURANCE THAT THOSE WHO WERE TO KEEP THEM SHOULD ENTER THE HOLY LAND ("which I give you"). Even so the very fact that so much of the mind of Christ as yet unfulfilled in us has been plainly revealed in the gospel is a pledge to us that God has yet much to do for us and in us, and that he will do it (2 Cor. xiii. 9; Philip. i. 6, 9, 10). If it be true that the majority even of earnest Christian people never attain a thorough mastery over self, or an entire conformity to the will of God in this life, then it is certain that this will be wrought in them in the world of spirits beyond our ken; for only this conformity willingly pursued and embraced is our rest (cf. Matt. xi. 28, 29; Heb. iv. 10).

III. THAT IT WAS ORDAINED THAT A MEAT AND DRINK OFFERING SHOULD ALWAYS ACCOMPANY THE VOLUNTARY PRESENTATION OF BURNT OR SLAIN OFFERINGS. Now the burnt and slain offerings represented Christ in his atonement (1) as having in our name and stead offered himself in entire self-oblation to the Father (Heb. ix. 14; x. 9, 10), (2) as being the means of access to and communion with God to them that are justified (John vi. 57; Eph. ii. 14 *a.*, 18); moreover, the voluntary presentation of these sacrifices out of the ordinary routine signified a more personal and earnest pleading of that one Sacrifice by the faithful, as distinguished from that which is more formal and, as it were, obligatory. Again, the meat and drink offering represented the oblation of human labour and care co-operating with Divine grace, for the flour and the oil and the wine were all prepared from the gifts of nature with more or less of industry and skill. Even so, therefore, is it a part of the higher law of Christ, which many do not seem to attain unto, that the earnest pleading of, and reliance upon, and joy in the atonement of Christ shall be always accompanied with the offering of personal service, of good work done for Christ. This cannot truly take the place of the other, any more than the meat offering could supersede or precede the sacrifice; but yet the other is for ever incomplete without it. The most lively faith and devout worship is not acceptable when unaccompanied by the willing tribute of good works (Titus iii. 8, 14; James ii. 17, 26; 2 Pet. i. 8).

IV. THAT THIS MEAT AND DRINK OFFERING WAS ALWAYS AND IN EVERY WAY TO BE PROPORTIONATE TO THE BURNT AND SLAIN OFFERINGS PRESENTED. Even so the

tribute of our industry and zeal dedicated to God should bear a full proportion to our faith and joy in the atonement of Christ, and should still increase with the increase of these. Nothing is more painful than the entire disproportion often visible between a man's earnest and lively desire to appropriate by faith and devotion the merits of Christ's sacrifice, and the grudging reluctance with which he offers to God of his own time, means, and labour (Matt. vii. 21; xxv. 44, 45, compared with James ii. 16; 2 Cor. ix. 6; Heb. xiii. 16).

V. THAT IN THIS RESPECT THERE WAS TO BE ONE RULE FOR ALL, WHETHER NATIVE BORN OR STRANGER. Even so in the Church of Christ there is but one law of faith and works. There is indeed no "stranger" where all are brethren, but this very fact means among other things that there is no one having part and lot in the atonement of Christ who is relieved by any personal circumstances from the duty of helping together with the rest in the tribute of good works (Rev. xx. 12).

VI. THAT THE FIRST-FRUITS OF BREAD WERE TO BE OFFERED, AS WELL AS OF CORN, *i. e.* of food as prepared by human labour, as of food in its natural state (fruits of the earth). Even so everything which belongs to our life is to be sanctified by dedication to God, however much human art and labour have conspired to make it what it is. It is not only that which seems to come direct from the bountiful lap of nature which is to be thus acknowledged, but that also which through any process of industry has been adapted to our actual wants. The art and ingenuity and contrivance of man have gone wildly astray, and led to fearful abuses, just because they have not been dedicated to God and to pious uses (cf. Luke xi. 41; Rom. xi. 16; Rev. xxi. 24 *b*.).

VII. THAT PROPER SACRIFICES WERE APPOINTED, WITH PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS, FOR THE BREACH OF ANY OF THE COMMANDMENTS BY WAY OF OMISSION, such omission not being presumptuous. Even so it is certain under the gospel—1. That sins of omission are still sins, albeit done through neglect, or carelessness, or in ignorance. In nothing is Christian morality more lax than on this point. The double law of Christian charity requires an instructed and attentive mind, if it is to be fulfilled; the carelessness, therefore, of Christians as to how they discharge their positive duties towards God and man is distinctly sinful. 2. That such sins will find forgiveness. The far-reaching nature of our obligations as laid down in the New Testament, and the unending consequences of our most heedless acts and words, might well terrify us if it were not so (Matt. xii. 37; xviii. 6; xxv. 27, 45; James iii. 2; Rev. iii. 2).

VIII. THAT THE WHOLE DIVINE LEGISLATION WAS INCLUDED IN THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE LANGUAGE. Even so there is nothing discretionary, nothing permissive, about the laws of Christian morality. None may be overlooked or ignored from first to last without incurring guilt (Matt. v. 18, 19; James ii. 10; Rom. ii. 22 *b*.).

IX. THAT THE SACRIFICE FOR SINS OF OMISSION WAS A SIN OFFERING, BUT ALSO, AND MORE ESPECIALLY, A BURNT OFFERING. Even so sins of neglect of duty, of supineness and indifference, demand indeed to be expiated by the one offering made for sin, but also to be repaired by a fresh and entire self-dedication to the will and service of God. To acknowledge our past neglects without an earnest effort to fulfil our duty in future is a feeble and imperfect thing (Heb. xii. 12, 13; 1 Pet. i. 13; Rev. ii. 5). Note, that the law recognised the distinction between the guilt of the nation and the guilt of the individual, and both had their expiations. It is difficult to say whether there is now any "national" guilt, for Christianity does not recognise nations as such; modern nations correspond to the *tribes* of Israel, if to anything. But there is of course "collective" guilt, of which each must discharge himself by an individual repentance. The atonement for an individual sin of omission was the same as for one of commission.

X. THAT NO PROVISION WAS MADE UNDER THE LAW FOR THE PARDON OF A WILFUL SIN AGAINST GOD—A SIN OF DEFIANCE. Thus the law brought no satisfaction to the tender conscience, but rather conviction of sin, and longing for a better covenant. Herein is at once contrast and likeness: contrast, in that the gospel hath forgiveness for all sin and wickedness (Mark iii. 28; Acts xiii. 39; Rom. viii. 1; 1 John ii. 1); likeness, in that a marked distinction is made between sins against the light and other sins (Mark iii. 29; Luke xxiii. 34; John xix. 11; 1 Tim. i. 13; Heb. vi. 4;

x. 26; 1 John v. 16 *b*.). It is certain that (*e. g.*) one deliberate lie spoken deliberately, and of malice aforethought, may do more lasting injury to a soul, as far as we can judge, than a whole life of reckless, thoughtless, heedless vice. Compare the case of the Pharisees (Mark iii. 30) with that of the harlots (Luke vii. 37) and publicans (*ibid.* xix. 2), and that of Ananias and Sapphira with that of the sinful Corinthian.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 22—31.—*Presumptuous sins and sins of ignorance.* Some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others; more heinous in their own nature, or by reason of aggravating circumstances. The distinction is familiar to all. Murder is a sin more heinous in the sight of God and man than petty theft. Armed rebellion against just authority is a greater sin than heedless omission to pay due honour and courtesy to a superior in office. Yet old and familiar as the distinction is, it is one in connexion with which men have often fallen into mischievous error. Hence the value of texts like this in Numbers, which throw light upon it.

I. Observe HOW THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN GREATER AND LESSER SINS IS HERE STATED. 1. Some sins are described as *sins of ignorance.* The reference is to faults that are due to error or inadvertence. We all know, to our cost, how liable we are to these. Never a day passes but we omit duty and commit faults, either because we knew no better, or because we were "off our guard" and stumbled before we were aware. These are sins of infirmity, such as cleave to the best of men in the present life. 2. Other sins are *done presumptuously.* (Literally, "with a high hand.") The matter is one about which there is no dubiety; the person knows well what is right and what is wrong; knowing this, he deliberately and purposely does the wrong. He offends against light, conviction, conscience. This is presumptuous sin. I have said that the distinction between greater and lesser sins is old and familiar. Turning to any Roman Catholic book of devotion, you will find tables in which are enumerated respectively the "mortal sins" and the "venial sins." That is one way of describing the two classes. I very much prefer the terms employed here in God's word. And the superior wisdom of God is to be seen not only in the fitter terms employed, but also in the absence of any attempt, here or elsewhere in the Bible, to give a tabular enumeration of the sins belonging to either class. For one thing, a correct distribution is impossible. The same act which, in ordinary circumstances, one might deem trivial, may in other circumstances be a most heinous crime; whereas what seems a heinous crime may be found to have been committed in circumstances so extenuating, that you hesitate to pronounce it a crime at all. Besides, the distribution, if it were possible to be made, could only do mischief. It is not good for men to be trying to find out how near they may go to the line which separates sins of infirmity from presumptuous sins, without actually passing over. The Bible refuses to give help in that sort of study. It indicates the quality which aggravates offences, so that we may learn to fear it and keep as far off from it as we can.

II. Observe THE LAW WHICH IS LAID DOWN WITH REFERENCE TO THE TWO KINDS OF SIN. 1. When the party—whether it be the congregation or an individual Israelite—who has sinned inadvertently becomes aware of the sin, *a sin-offering is to be presented with the accustomed rites, and the sin will be forgiven* (vers. 24, 25, 27, 28). The point to be noted here is, that however much the sin may have been due to mere ignorance or inadvertence, the law demanded satisfaction; that is to say, Transgression of God's law is transgression still, though done through mere heedlessness or error. Ignorance and heedlessness may extenuate, but they do not justify; nor do they exempt from suffering the consequences of evil doing. Nor ought this to be deemed strange or harsh. The same principle prevails in human governments. A transgressor does not escape the penalties annexed to his acts because he did not know they were forbidden, or because he acted recklessly. It is a mischievous abuse of the distinction between sins, if occasion is taken from it to make light of any sin. Remember that all sin is, in its own nature, mortal. Paul persecuted "ignorantly and in unbelief;" yet, for having persecuted, he reckoned himself the chief of sinners. 2. *As for the presumptuous transgressor, the law holde out to him*

no hope (vers. 30, 31). The reference, no doubt, is, in the first instance, to deliberate violations of the Mosaic constitution—the refusal to accept circumcision, or celebrate the Passover, or observe the Sabbatic rest. For such offences no sacrifice was provided. The person forfeited his place in the covenant society. But this part of the law, like the former part, has an ultimate reference to offences considered as strictly moral. It suggests lessons regarding all deliberate and presumptuous sins. It is a most striking and significant fact, that for such sins the law of Moses provided no sacrifice. What are we to make of this? (1) It may remind us that there is such a thing as "a sin unto death," and for which "there remaineth no more sacrifice" (Heb. x. 26, 27; 1 John v. 16). We believe, indeed, that no penitent, however heinous his sin, will be turned away from God's door unforgiven; but there are dark admonitory texts of Scripture, of which this in Numbers is one, which distinctly warn us that God's mercy will not be trifled with; that there is a point to which, if men go, in resisting the testimony of God's word and Spirit in their consciences, the Spirit will withdraw and give them over to hardness and impenitence. (2) But there is a brighter side of the matter. "By Christ all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 39). David's great crime was a "presumptuous sin." The law prescribed no sacrifice for it. The law could suggest to him no hope. What then? He remembered the name of the Lord which was enshrined in the Pentateuch side by side with the law (Exod. xxxiv. 6). He confessed and was forgiven.—In Ps. xix. there occur a remarkable succession of meditations and prayers which, to all appearance, were suggested originally by this law in Numbers, and which mry be taken as expressing the thoughts and exercises to which the study of it gave birth in the soul of David. At all events, they so perfectly indicate the practical use to be made of the law that they cannot be too earnestly commended to your consideration. "*Who can understand his errors?* (Who can make sure that he has noted, or can remember and confess his sins in this kind?) *Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*" "*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*"—B.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The impartiality of God.* The treatment of foreigners among the Jews one sign of the impartiality of God. For—1. They were all "of one blood" (Acts xvii. 26). 2. The Israelites were "strangers and sojourners with God" in his own land (Levit. xxv. 23), as we all are upon earth (1 Chron. xxix. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 11). 3. All are involved in sin. The guilt of the favoured Israelites was greater than that of heathen strangers (Rom. ii. 6—12). 4. All are included in the one salvation (Rom. iii. 21—30). For further illustrations see outline on ch. ix. 14.—P.

Vers. 30, 31.—*Presumptuous sins.* I. THE GUILT OF PRESUMPTUOUS SINS. The transgressor sinneth "with a high hand" (Heb.). It is not easy exactly to define sins of presumption or deliberate disobedience, for which there was no expiation by sacrifice. Some crimes involved capital punishment (Levit. xx. 1, 2, 10; Exod. xxi. 14; Deut. xvii. 12), or were followed by fatal judgments by God (Levit. xvii. 10; xx. 4—6). The impossibillity of drawing up a complete schedule of wilful, presumptuous sins suggests a caution. For their heinous guilt is described by the term "reproacheth the Lord," *i. e.* blasphemes God in word or act. A presumptuous sinner reproaches God in four ways. He acts as though (1) his commands were harsh; (2) his authority was of no account; (3) his favour was to be little prized; (4) his threats were to be still less feared (Deut. xxix. 19, 20). Such guilt is aggravated under the law of the gospel, inasmuch as God's commands, authority, favour, and threats are invested with greater weight and sanctity through the revelation of his will and his love in Jesus Christ (Heb. ii. 1—3).

II. THE DANGER OF PRESUMPTUOUS SINS. 1. Under the law there was no sacrifice to expiate for such sins, but fatal punishment at the hand of man or of God himself. 2. Under the gospel a sacrifice even for wilful sin is provided. But as "*the* condemnation" is for unbelief, the neglect of the Saviour and his sacrifice is the most terrible, though a most common presumptuous sin, for which "there remaineth no more sacrifice" (Heb. x. 26—29). There is a sin "unto death," which "shall not

be forgiven," &c. (Matt. xii. 32; 1 John v. 16). 3. The difficulty of exactly deciding, either under the law or the gospel, what sins are beyond the power of expiation, and expose us to be "cut off," adds to their danger. All sins are like poisons, fatal if remedies are not applied. But if some are *certainly* fatal, and we know not which, what need for faith in the Physician, and prayer that we may be kept from all sins so as to be guarded from presumptuous sins among them (Ps. xix. 12—14).—P.

Vers. 1—16.—*God giving laws for the distant future.* I. HE TREATS THE FUTURE AS THE PRESENT. The people had been very near to a land of habitations, and to a time when the requirements of this passage would have been close upon them. That time is now moved int› a distant future; but it is equally certain to come, and the requirements are equally practical. The land of promise was Israel's inheritance, and to become its possession, even though Amalekite and Canaanite had just been victorious. God can speak of things that are not as if they were. And after so much gloom as the previous chapter presents, such a rebellious, unmanageable spirit and ominous outlook, there was need of something bright, such as we find in the state of things which these ordinances of offering imply.

II. HE POINTS TO A FUTURE FULL OF SATISFACTION TO THE PEOPLE. It will be approved by them as according with his prediction to Moses: "a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey." They shall have cause for all manner of voluntary offerings over and above the necessary offerings for sin. Fulfilled desires would lead to the fulfilment of vows. The very mention of these sacrifices as possible indicated that Israel would be rich in flocks and herds, in corn and wine and oil. There would be reason for much gratitude in the heart, and consequent gifts of thanksgiving. And thus, in spite of all that may be a cause of despondency in the Christian's present outlook, there will yet be cause of thanksgiving to him. We must not judge the future from our present humiliation and almost vanished hopes, but from the greatness of God's power and purposes. He sees the rich, bright future of his people even when they do not.

III. HE COUNTS ON THE EXISTENCE OF A THANKFUL SPIRIT. There would be abundant cause for such a spirit, and so it was right to provide for any effects that might appear. In spite of all present murmuring and ingratitude, in spite of all sullen compliance with the compulsion to turn back into the wilderness, there would surely some day be a thankful spirit, a devout recognition of God in the midst of prosperity. Thus we may take it that there is something of prophecy, something of reasonable expectation, as well as of appointed duty in the commands here given. Just as the regulations for the Nazarite (ch. vi.) indicated an expectation that there would be much of the feeling leading men to the Nazarite vow, so here there is an expectation of much in the way of free-will offerings.

IV. These free-will offerings must be joined with offerings from the corn, the oil, and the wine TO MAKE ALL INTO ONE COMPLETE AND ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE. The desire to do something acceptable to God needs to be directed by a knowledge of what is acceptable. The thankful soul will ever be glad to learn his will. No offering to him is worth anything unless it be a cheerful one; but the most cheerful gifts may be nullified for the want of other needed qualities. Hence there should ever be a careful pondering of God's will in all our offerings to him, so that they may be good and perfect according to the measure of human ability. When most of all we are free agents, then most of all should we look to be directed by necessary commandments from on high.

V. THE PROVISION FOR STRANGERS. The land of promise was to be attractive and beneficent to them as well as to Israel. They also would share in its advantages, and be stirred to a corresponding acknowledgment. Thus ever and anon does God raise his warning against all disposition to exclusiveness. He had the case of the stranger and proselyte ever before him. A word of hope this for Hobab, whose heart may have been cast down within him, when he saw how contemptuously Moses had been treated of late.—Y.

Vers. 17—21.—*An offering from the dough: domestic religion.* I. A DAILY OFFERING, or if not daily, so frequent as to be practically daily. God has spoken so far of

free-will offerings, but here is one connected with such a frequent and necessary act as the eating of bread. There are occasions for free-will offerings when evident mercies and peculiar gains prompt to something special in the way of acknowledgment; but men are only too prone to forget the common and daily mercies which in reality are greatest of all. Where we abound in forgetting, God most abounds in reminding. The time of eating bread was an appointed opportunity for acknowledging his daily goodness. The manna was so evidently miraculous, that very little was needed to remind Israel how entirely it was produced without their intervention. It was not the sort of food they would have cultivated. They took it, not that they liked it, but it was the only thing to be got. But bread is a thing on which man spends much care. It goes through so many processes before it reaches his mouth that he easily exaggerates his share in the production of it. Sowing and reaping, grinding and baking, help to hide the good hand of God behind them. Hence the giving of the first from every piece of dough was a deliberate and frequent recognition of dependence on God for the bread in Canaan, as much as for the manna in the wilderness.

II. A DOMESTIC OFFERING. Thus religion was brought into the house to sanctify a common homely duty. There was something to excite the curiosity of children. It was an opportunity of explaining to them, from whose loving-kindness came their daily bread; teaching them lessons of dependence and gratitude in the seed-time and the harvest, by the mill and the oven. Contrast with this the melancholy picture by Jeremiah of the children gathering the wood, the fathers kindling the fire, and the women kneading dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven (Deut. xxviii. 5; Neh. x. 37; Ps. civ. 14, 15; Jer. vii. 18; Ezek. xliv. 30; Haggai i. 9).—Y.

Vers. 22—29.—*God shows himself strict and yet considerate.* I. THE SERIOUSNESS OF GOD'S EXPECTATIONS. God gave to Israel many and elaborate commandments, in the mode of obeying which he left nothing to personal discretion. Hence the work of obedience was often a difficult and always a careful one, and sometimes the people might be tempted to say, "Surely this minute and unvarying compliance in outward things cannot be seriously intended." But everything God commands has a reason, even though we see it not. God hides reasons in order that the obedience of faith may be complete. An Israelite quite conceivably might say, "Surely I am not expected to remember all these commandments in all their details." The answer is, that though the commandments might not all be remembered, yet every one of them was important. And so we find that God made it a dangerous, even a deadly thing, knowingly and wilfully to disobey them. He has high aims with respect to his people, far higher than they can at present appreciate, and this is the surest way of getting great results. He may seem to be imposing intolerable burdens, but he is really leading us onward in strength and capacity until we shall be able to bear the burdens. Hence the large demands which Christ also makes on his disciples. He came to *fulfil* the law. His people are not only to do more than others, but much more, and in many ways. Whatever be provided for in the way of pardon and expiation, the standard must not be lowered in the least. God has constituted man to reach great attainments, and he will enable him to reach them, if only the proper means be taken.

II. HIS REMEMBRANCE OF HUMAN INFIRMITY. It is no real contradiction, to them who will consider, that God meant his commandments to be kept, yet knew they would be oftentimes broken. As he was serious in giving the commandments, he wished the people to be serious in trying to keep them, and serious also in asking why they were not able to keep them. He provided for the commandments being broken. While serious in expectations, he was also considerate and encouraging. He who knows what his people will one day be able to do, knows full well how little they can do at present. He is really more considerate of feeble men than they are of each other. The parable of the servant forgiven of his master, yet refusing to forgive his fellow-servant, finds its application only too often in the difference between God's tender treatment of man, and man's harsh treatment of his fellow-man. God makes allowance for the difficulty of turning away from inveterate habits. He makes allowance for what we know by daily experience is a great infirmity of men,

sheer forgetfulness. He considers how many suffer from defective instruction, bad example, and early orphanhood. He can say far more for us than with our utmost skill we can plead for ourselves. He knows all the difficulties we have in getting at the knowledge and practice of his truth. What comfort could we possibly have in the midst of all our differing sects, confessions, and ceremonies, did we not think of God looking kindly and patiently on the sins of ignorance, and remembering that we know only in part? It was Paul's great comfort to feel that the cruelties of his persecuting days had been committed ignorantly and in unbelief.

III. HIS STRICT REQUIREMENT OF EXPIATION. They were not allowed to say, "We knew it not; therefore it will not be required from us." Evil done in ignorance does not cease to be evil because done in ignorance. Whatever is commanded ought to be done, and if omitted there is loss somewhere in God's universe because of the omission. We must not plead ignorance of the commandment, for the reason of that ignorance lies with man, and not with God. It may not lie with the particular transgressor, but still it lies with man, and therefore the transgression must be confessed and atoned for; and when we humble ourselves in confession of sin committed and service omitted, there is need that we should dwell with much self-examination and seeking for light on the things that have been left undone through ignorance. What we have done that we ought not to have done is much more discoverable than what ought to have been done, yet has been left undone. Many conscientious, earnest, and enlightened Christians have been transgressors through ignorance. Prayer for the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven must be accompanied by an incessant seeking for the knowledge of his will. Assuredly we suffer by our ignorance in this matter, even though, in a certain sense and to a certain extent, this ignorance cannot be helped. This provision here made for atonement, this prophecy, as it were, that many transgressions unconsciously committed would be discovered in due time, is a reminder to us how much we may still have to discover of God's will concerning us. Much as we may know, and much as we may do, there may be large fields of obedience where we have not taken a single step. The great essentials, of course, if we be Christians at all, we cannot be ignorant of, but it is quite possible to know them, yet be ignorant of other things God would also have us know. We are not to look for the laws of life in Scripture only; God has put there such things as are not to be found in nature and the dealings of his common providence. We must look for his will in every place where intimations of it are to be found, and be quick in discovering what has been revealed to others. Mark these words of Joseph Sturge:—"It seems to be the will of him who is infinite in wisdom that light upon great subjects should first arise, and be gradually spread through the faithfulness of individuals in acting up to their own convictions."—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE SABBATH-BREAKER (vers. 32—36). Ver. 32. — **And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness.** It is maintained by some that these words were intended to mark the contrast between the previous laws, which were only to be observed when the people came into their own land, and the law of the sabbath, which was strictly enforced during the period of wandering. There is no doubt that such a distinction existed in fact, but there is no reason to find the intentional assertion of it in this expression. The simpler and more natural, and therefore more probable, explanation is, that the incident was recorded after the people had left the wilderness. At the same time, there is nothing unreasonable in ascribing the narrative to Moses himself if we suppose him to have written it at the end of his life, when the people were encamped in the steppes of Moab. It seems probable that the record of the incident was inserted here as an example of a "presumptuous" sin, and of its punishment. **A man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day.** This was clearly presumptuous, because the prohibition to do any work for oneself on the sabbath had been made so clear, and was so constantly forced upon their attention by the failure of the manna on that day, that ignorance could not possibly be pleaded here.

Ver. 33.—**Unto all the congregation,** *i. e.* unto the council of elders, who were the congregation by representation (see on Exod. xviii. 25, 26).

Ver. 34. — **They put him in ward** (cf.

Levit. xxiv. 12), **because it was not declared what should be done to him.** This is perplexing, because the punishment of death had been decreed in Exod. xxxi. 14, 15, and xxxv. 2. It seems an evasion to say that although death had been decreed, the mode of death had not been fixed; for (1) it was clearly part of the Divine answer that the offence was really capital (see ver. 35 *a.*), and (2) it was understood that in such cases death was to be inflicted by stoning (see Levit. xx. 2; xxiv. 14; Josh. vii. 25; in the last case the command was to burn the delinquents with fire, yet it was rightly taken for granted that they were to be stoned to death first). There are only two explanations which are satisfactory because they are honest. 1. The incident may possibly have occurred between the first institution of the sabbath (Exod. xvi. 23, 29) and the decree of death to those that broke it. There is nothing in the record as it stands here to contradict such an assumption. 2. It is more likely that it occurred after the departure from Sinai, and that the hesitation in dealing with the criminal was due not to any real uncertainty as to the law, but to unwillingness to inflict so extreme and so (apparently) disproportioned a punishment for such an offence without a further appeal. If it be said that such unwillingness to carry out a plain command would have been sinful, it is sufficient to answer that Moses and Aaron and the elders were human beings, and must have shrunk from visiting with a cruel death the trivial breach of a purely arbitrary commandment.

Ver. 35.—**Without the camp.** That it might not be defiled (cf. Acts vii. 58, and Heb. xiii. 12).

Ver. 36.—**And he died.** He was killed not for what he did, but for doing it presumptuously, in deliberate defiance of what he knew to be the will of God. If the covenant relation was to be maintained between God and Israel, the observance of the sabbath, which was an integral part of that covenant, must be enforced, and he who wilfully violated it must be cut off; and this consideration was of exceptional force in this case, as the first which had occurred, and as the one, therefore, which would govern all the rest (cf. Acts v. 5, 10). On the punishment of stoning see Levit. xx. 2; xxiv. 14; Acts vii. 58.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 32 — 36. — *The Sabbath of God.* We have here a record which is both valuable in itself as revealing the mind of God, and also valuable indirectly as revealing the mind of man. The perversity of human nature, and the extreme subtleness of superstition, are remarkably exemplified in the popular treatment of this record. It has indeed made a deep impression upon men, but that impression has been almost wholly false, and has simply led to superstition. The story of the man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath appears in every Christian age, and every Christian land; but in all cases it is the act itself which is regarded as being so awful and so fearfully avenged. Yet even under the law the act itself was lawful in the priests, as our Lord points out (Matt. xii. 5), for the temple fire was supplied with wood; and under the gospel the law of the Sabbath, so far as it was outward and arbitrary, was totally repealed: it passed away like a shadow, leaving us face to face with the substance, the reality which it had obscured—viz., the eternal rest from sin and self which belongs to the kingdom of heaven (Rom. xiv. 5; Gal. iv. 10; Col. ii. 16; Heb. iv. 9, 10). We keep indeed the Lord's day because as a fact it has been kept from the first, and no one has a right to ignore the universal custom of Christians; but our Sabbath is a spiritual one, for it is that ceasing from our own works by virtue of unselfishness and self-devotion which, as it is the secret of "rest" in this life, so it will be the essence of "rest" in the life to come. It follows that the popular use of this story to enforce the outward observance of a legal Sabbath is simply and purely superstitious, and directly antagonistic to its true teaching. Consider therefore—

I. THAT WHILE ALMOST ALL OTHER ORDINANCES, EVEN CIRCUMCISION AND THE PASSOVER, FELL INTO DISUSE, THE SABBATH REMAINED FIXED, INVIOLABLE, AND ETERNAL. Even so while all outward things may change, while even sacraments themselves might fail, the true Sabbath of the soul can never alter, never cease to be observed and sought. To cease from our own works by a true unselfishness; to live for others by an active love; to find our rest in contemplating good and rejoicing in it; *that* is to rest from our labours *as God did from his*, and that is the law of the holy Sabbath which can never be altered. As long as God is God, and man is man, God can

only set to us, and we can only set to ourselves, this law as the law of all laws to be observed for ever.

II. THAT THE VIOLATION OF THE SABBATH-LAW WAS NOT PARDONABLE. The sentence of death was confirmed, on special appeal, by God himself. Even so whatever directly violates the law of rest, and so destroys that rest, is fatal and deadly to the soul. For as this rest is the end of all religion, and is to be heaven itself, that which directly militates against it (and that is in the deepest sense selfishness) has never forgiveness, can never be overlooked or suffered to continue.

III. THAT THE ESSENCE OF THE MAN'S CRIME WAS NOT THAT HE GATHERED STICKS ON THE SABBATH, BUT THAT HE GATHERED THEM FOR HIMSELF. For the priests were guiltless, cleaving wood for the altar on the Sabbath; and though the Jews to this day will not make a fire on the Sabbath even to save a man's life, yet it is certain that our Lord would have commended it, and that from an Old Testament point of view (Mark ii. 26, 27; iii. 4). Even so the essence of all sin, and the cause of all wrath, is selfishness. Selfishness is the real and only Sabbath-breaker, because it alone disturbs that Divine rest which stands in conformity to the will of God (see on Gal. ii. 20; Col. iii. 3; 1 John iii. 21, 22, &c.).

IV. THAT THE DOOM OF THE SABBATH-BREAKER WAS STONING—A PUNISHMENT INFLICTED BY ALL, AND EXPRESSIVE OF UNIVERSAL CONDEMNATION. Even so the true punishment of sin is that it arrays against us both God and all good and holy beings. A selfish person would find neither sympathy nor allowance in heaven: his soul would fall, crushed beneath the weight of silent disapproval and unintended reproach. And so the only way to war against a sin of selfishness upon earth is to enlist the sympathies of all good people against it.

V. THAT THE END OF THE SABBATH-BREAKER WAS DEATH, ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY EXECUTED. Even so spiritual death is the certain end of selfishness. Amidst the uncertainties of time indeed that death appears to be postponed; selfishness is quite consistent with some amount of religion. But the sentence of death against it is plain and irrevocable, and it will surely be carried out (Matt. x. 38, 39; xvi. 25; Luke xii. 21; Rom. viii. 6; Phil. ii. 4, 5, 21).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 30—36.—*The doom of the presumptuous illustrated by that of the Sabbath-breaker.* Disobedience to the commands of God is ranged under two classes. First, that which has just been considered, disobedience through ignorance; secondly, disobedience from presumption, a bold, conscious, reckless defiance of God and following out of the promptings of self. God indicates that such conduct must be met in a corresponding way. "That soul shall be cut off from among his people, ... utterly cut off." Notice that while God supposed the case of the whole people sinning ignorantly, he does not make a similar supposition with regard to presumptuous sin. Unanimity in an open and deliberate defiance of God seems to be impossible. It is only too possible, however, that single men should be guilty in this matter, and an illustration of presumptuous sin, from actual life, immediately follows. The people were to be left without excuse for saying that they were in any doubt as to this dangerous sin. Where death was the punishment, the offence could not be too clearly indicated. Let us consider then the doom of the presumptuous sinner, as illustrated by that of the Sabbath-breaker.

I. THE COMMANDMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE SABBATH HAD BEEN PUT IN PECULIAR PROMINENCE. It stands among those ten solemn announcements of God's will, with respect to which we may say that all other commandments existed for them. Surely to sin against any of these was to sin presumptuously. It is reckoned the business of all men to know all the laws under which they live—ignorance is not allowed for a plea,—but with respect to the ten commandments, special means had been taken to impress them on the minds and memories of the people. Even before the fourth commandment had been formally announced, the double provision of manna on the sixth day had helped to give a peculiar significance to the seventh. So it may be said, if we are disobedient in respect of those requirements mentioned repeatedly and held out prominently by Christ and his apostles, we are sinning presumptuously.

Who can deny that continued unbelief in the face of pressing requirements for faith is a presumptuous sin? Who can deny that where love and unselfish service are kept back from God and men there is presumptuous sin? Such sins persisted in, against all light, instruction, warning, and appeal, will end in a cutting off from the people, a terrible exclusion from all those gracious rewards which come to the faithful and obedient. Presumptuous sins strike at the very foundation of the throne of God.

II. THERE WAS EVERYTHING TO CALL THE ATTENTION OF THIS TRANSGRESSOR IN THE FACT THAT OTHERS WERE KEEPING THE SABBATH. None could come into the Israelite camp and mistake the Sabbath for some other day, just as none could enter an English town on the day of rest and mistake it for a working day. When the man went out gathering sticks, there was something fresh at every step he took to remind him that he was transgressing a commandment of God; a dozen steps from his own door was enough for this. He went into sin with his eyes open and his selfish will determined to disobey God. Thus also there is presumptuous sin in despising those requirements of Christ which are not only plainly and repeatedly stated by him and his apostles, but carried out, from a sincere heart, in the daily practice of many who rejoice to call themselves his servants. Every Christian who by his life and the results of it shows that in his judgment certain requirements of Christ are all important, becomes thereby a witness to convict others of presumptuous sin. To act on the principle that faith in Christ is not absolutely necessary to salvation, righteousness, and eternal life, is to run counter to the life and emphatic confession of many in all generations of the Christian era. Every life in which Christ is manifested ruling and guiding is a fresh repetition of his great requirements, a fresh evidence of presumptuous sin on the part of those who neglect these requirements.

III. THE SIN APPEARS ALL THE GREATER FROM THE ACT ITSELF BEING SO TRIFLING. The first thought of many on reading the narrative may be, "What severity for such a little offence!" But the more it is looked at the greater the offence appears. There would have been more to say for the man if the temptation had come from some great thing. If a fortune or a kingdom had been in question, then there would have been some plausibly sufficient motive for a great transgression; but to break such a commandment, to run counter to the conduct of the whole camp for a handful of sticks, does it not show how proud-hearted the man was, how utterly careless of all and any of God's regulations? Such a man would have turned to idolatry and profanity on the one hand, or to theft and even murder on the other, at very slight provocation. It was a little thing for Esau to crave a mess of pottage, but it deservedly lost him his birthright when he valued it so little. Thus have men sinned against their Saviour for the paltriest trifles. Peter moves our sympathy when he denies Jesus, for life is dear when closely threatened, and we consider ourselves lest we also be tempted; but when Judas sells his master, and such a master, for thirty pieces of silver, how abominable the act appears! Yet men are constantly turning from Jesus on considerations as paltry and sordid. They will not be religious, because such continual carefulness is required in little things. This man sinned a great and daring sin against God; he was dragged in shame before the whole congregation, and then stoned outside the camp. And what had he by way of set-off? A few sticks. If it was a little thing to do, it was just as little a thing to be left undone. Small as it was, it showed the state of the man's heart, that corroding and hopeless leprosy within, which left no other course but to cut him off from the people.

IV. THUS WE ARRIVE AT THE FULL MEASURE OF THE MAN'S INSULT TO THE MAJESTY OF GOD. We see in what way he reproaches the Lord and despises his word. If this man had gone before Moses, when with the tables in his hands he came fresh from Sinai, and if he had heaped contumely on the messenger, and spat upon the tables, he could not have done more then to show contempt than he did by the gathering of those few sticks on the day which God had claimed for his own. Human governments, with all their imperfections, look upon deliberate defiance of their authority as a thing to be punished severely; what, then, must be done where there is a deliberate defiance of the authority of God? A terrible doom awaits those who despise and ridicule God's ordinances of right and wrong. Though it may not be swift and sudden, it will assuredly be certain and complete. Those who mourn

their inability to keep the law of God are separated in his sight from those who contemn that law, far as the east is from the west. Be it ours to feel with David, "rivers of waters run down my eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Ps. cxix. 136), and not as the fool who says in his heart, There is no God (Ps. liii. 1; xix. 12—14).—Y.

Vers. 32—36.—*The law of the Sabbath: a solemn vindication.* I. THIS DOOM OF DEATH SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SABBATH IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. 1. *There was need of something special to call attention to this point.* Those commandments which concerned himself directly he had to fence in a special way. Commandments against filial impiety, murder, adultery, theft, false witness, covetousness, these concerned man *directly*, and through him they concerned God; man, therefore, might be trusted to help in vindicating these commands. But those against polytheism, idolatry, profanity, and Sabbath-breaking concerned God directly and man only indirectly. Man, therefore, might not perceive the hurt, even though it was real and most serious. Thus it became needful for God to deal in a specially stern and impressive way with the Sabbath-breaker. His people must be made to perceive and bear in mind that he meant the seventh day to be a holy day. It was as much sacrilege to spend it in common occupations as it was to defile the ark in the holy place. 2. *There was need to arrest the attention of such as kept the Sabbath in a negative rather than a positive way.* God gave the Sabbath, not for idleness, but for that most valuable of all rest which is gained in quiet, undisturbed communion with God, and meditation on all his wonderful works. Those who employed the Sabbath in solemn and devout approaches to the God of the covenant were delivered from temptation to break the Sabbath. Filled with the fulness of God, there would be no room for base, transgressing thoughts. But no commandment could bring the unwilling heart to God. It might do something to keep the work of the common day away from the hands; it could do nothing to keep the thoughts of the common day out of the heart. The heart was to be sought; it could not be forced, being in its nature beyond force. Many, therefore, would keep the day *negatively*, in utter idleness, and this idleness itself tended to disobedience. The doing of little things would seem practically the same as doing nothing. So men had to be taught, by terrible examples, not to trifle with holy things. If a man thoughtlessly touches things dangerous to physical life, his thoughtlessness will not deliver him from fatal consequences. If a man sports with poisons, or moves carelessly among machinery, he is very likely to lose his life; so men who trifled with the Sabbath were in great peril. Safety, progress, approval, blessedness, were for those who obeyed from the heart. But those who through heedlessness of the heart disobeyed with the hand had no right to complain when death outside the camp awaited them.

II. THIS SOLEMN VINDICATION HAS AN IMPORTANT BEARING ON THE CHRISTIAN DAY OF REST. This is not the place to take up even a fragment of the interminable discussion on the obligation of the Sabbath. But is not the very fact of such a discussion evidence that the lapse of the obligation is by no means a thing clearly and easily to be seen? 1. *This solemn vindication hints to us that it is a prudent thing to be on the safe side.* Thus we may both escape great dangers and secure great blessings. To spend the day of rest just as we please is a claim, not of conscience, but of self-will. It cannot be pretended that ceasing from work one day in seven is a *hurt* to one's self or to the world. Practically, all Christians confess the need of a day of rest. If God so blessed one day in seven to those who knew him as he might be known in the obscurities and distances of the Jewish economy, is it not reasonable to expect that in the fuller light and nearer approach of God in Christ Jesus, a seventh day of rest, rightly used, may be the means of the greatest blessing. We are now under the perfect law of liberty; and because it is a law of liberty it is all the more a law to the liberated soul. We use not our liberty for an occasion to the flesh; we ought to use it for an occasion to the Spirit. God blessed and hallowed the seventh day, because in it he rested from his work of creation. What a propriety then in keeping the first day of the week, as that in which the Christian's Master rested from temptation, toil, and his victorious struggle with death and Hades! 2. *This solemn vindication should make us considerate of all who are called*

by the ugly name of Sabbatarian. No doubt with regard to the Sabbath there has been much of bigotry, ignorance, and of melancholy misinterpretations of the Scripture; but the weak brother who reads this narrative of the Sabbath-breaker's doom may well be excused if to stronger minds he seems ridiculously precise. Christ will deal with us as severely as his Father dealt with the Sabbath-breaker if we make one of his little ones to offend. It is necessary above all things to be safe. We must not confound the scrupulosity of the weak with the scrupulosity of the Pharisee. That, indeed, is always abominable—attending to little external things, and neglecting the weightier matters of the law. God's service, after all, whether on week day or Sunday, consists in the things we do rather than in those we refrain from doing. God, we may be sure, will take care that the day of rest is not narrowed out of harmony with the liberty of the gospel. As there were matters of necessity provided for under the law, so there is like provision under the gospel. A man of right spirit will not misinterpret the necessities. Jeremiah Horrocks, the young clergyman who first observed the transit of Venus, is said to have made his discovery on the Lord's Day, without allowing it in the least to interfere with his duties in the church. One of the most important principles of his steam-engine flashed into the mind of Watt as he was walking along Glasgow Green one Sunday morning. And it was one Sunday morning that Carey, entering his pulpit in India, received the new regulation prohibiting suttee. He at once sent for his pundit, and completed the translation into Bengalee before night.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE LAW OF TASSELS (vers. 37 — 41). Ver. 38.—**Bid them that they make them fringes.** צִיצִת, probably tassels. It seems to signify something flower-like and bright, like the blooms on a shrub; the word צִיץ is applied to the shining plate of gold upon Aaron's head-band (Exod. xxviii. 36). In Jer. xlviii. 9 it seems to mean a wing, and in Ezek. viii. 3 צִיצִת is a lock of hair. The exact meaning must be gathered from the context, and on the whole that suggests a tassel rather than a fringe. The word גְּדִלִים, used in the parallel passage Deut. xxii. 12, seems to have this meaning. The Septuagint renders it by κράσπεδα, which is adopted in the Gospels (see on Matt. xxiii. 5). **In the borders of their garments.** Literally, "on the wings," ἐπὶ τὰ πτερύγια. The outer garment (בֶּגֶד here, כְּסוּת in Deut. xxii. 12) was worn like a plaid, so folded that the four corners were dependent, and on each of these corners was to be hung a tassel. It was also used as a coverlet by the poor (Exod. xxii. 27). **That they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue.** Rather, "that they put a string (or thread) of hyacinth-blue upon the tassel of the wing." Septuagint, κλῶσμα ὑακίνθινον. This may have been a blue string with which to fasten the tassel to the corner of the garment, as if it were the stalk on which this flower grew; or it may have been a prominent blue thread in the tassel itself. The later Jews seem to have understood it in this sense, and concerned themselves greatly with the symbolical arrangements of the blue and other threads, and the method in which they were knotted together, so as to set forth the whole law with all its several commandments. The later Jews, however, have always contrived, with all their minute observance, to break the plain letter of the law: thus the modern *tālith* is an under, and not an upper, garment.

Ver. 39.—**That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments.** It was indeed a minute and apparently trivial distinction, and yet such an one as would most surely strike the eye, and through the eye the mind. It was like the facings on a uniform which recall the fame and exploits of a famous regiment. The tasseled Hebrew was a marked man in other eyes, and in his own; he could not pass himself off as one of the heathen; he was perpetually reminded of the special relation in which he stood to the Lord, whose livery (so to speak)—or, to use another simile, whose colours—he wore. No doubt the sky-blue string or thread which was so prominent was meant to remind him of heaven, and of the God of heaven. **And that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring.** The office of the tassels was to promote a recollected spirit. As it was, their fickle minds were always ready to stray away towards any heathen follies which their restless eyes might light upon. The trivial but striking peculiarity of their dress should recall them to the thought that they were a peculiar people, holy to the Lord.

Ver. 41.—**I am the Lord your God.** This intensely solemn formula, here twice repeated,

may serve to show how intimately the smallest observances of the Law were connected with the profoundest and most comforting of spiritual truths, if only observed in faith and true obedience. The whole of religion, theoretical and practical, lay in those words, and that whole was hung upon a tassel. It is further to be noted that this precept was given during the years of exile, and probably given as one which they *could* keep, and which would be helpful to them, at a time when almost all other distinctive observances were suspended.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 37—41.—*A distinguishing mark of the faithful.* In the ordinance of the tassels we have at once the height and depth of the old dispensation—the most trivial of outward observances married to the deepest truths and greatest blessings of true religion. Spiritually we are to see here the distinctive marks of the faithful Christian which separate between him and the children of this world. Consider therefore—

I. THAT THE TASSELS WERE DESIGNED TO BE UNMISTAKEABLE MARKS OF DISTINCTION AND SEPARATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ALL OTHER PEOPLES; and that at a time when many other distinctions had fallen into abeyance. Even so it is exceeding necessary that the faithful disciple (who is the true Israelite) should not only be different, but be obviously different, from others; and this especially in an age when the old distinctions between the Church and the world are so greatly broken down. Nothing can be more abhorrent to God than a crypto-Christianity, which is ashamed of itself and endeavours to efface all visible distinctions between itself and the irreligion of the world. Christians were to be emphatically "a peculiar people," and if they seem "peculiar" to those who are not governed by Christian motives and principles, so much the better. It does not follow that they are right because they are unlike others, but at any rate they would not be right if they were like them (Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. vi. 14—18; Titus ii. 14; Heb. vii. 26; James iv. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 9).

II. THAT THE DISTINCTION HERE COMMANDED WAS TRIVIAL IN ITSELF, AND IN AFTER AGES TURNED TO SUPERSTITION AND ARROGANCE (Matt. xxiii. 5). Even so all external distinctions, however harmless and even venerable by association, have an unalterable tendency to substitute themselves for the inward differences which they symbolize. Consider the reproach which has overtaken the very name of "Christian"—a name so full of significance, warning, and encouragement—among heathens and Mahometans. And how little effect the high-sounding names of Christian bodies have had upon their lives, save indeed in fostering arrogance and self-righteousness. No external distinction is of any value unless it has a real correspondence to something inward and spiritual (Rom. ii. 29; xiv. 17; 1 Cor. viii. 8; Gal. vi. 15).

III. THAT THE TASSELS WERE INTENDED TO PRODUCE AND TO FOSTER A HABIT OF RECOLLECTEDNESS, ESPECIALLY AMONG STRANGERS. The tasseled Hebrew was perpetually reminded that he shared in privileges, responsibilities, and dangers which the nations knew nothing of. Even so the faithful Christian has no greater or more necessary safeguard than a habit of recollectedness, and he is bound to cultivate it carefully by prayer and self-discipline. In the midst of innumerable entanglements, confusions, and perplexities, he has continually to call to mind whose he is and whom he serves. Mixing, conversing, dealing in every way with those whose aims, motives, and principles are avowedly worldly and selfish, he has to check himself at every turn by this recollection; and only thus can he escape from sin (Philip. ii. 15, 16; 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; Titus ii. 8).

IV. THAT THE HYACINTHINE BLUE OF THE STRING, OR THREAD, WAS MEANT TO REMIND THE ISRAELITE OF HEAVEN, AND THE GOD OF HEAVEN (cf. the "jacinth" of Rev. ix. 17). Even so there must be in the faithful soul a perpetual remembrance of heaven as at once his home and goal; for it is this remembrance only mingling with all other thoughts which will keep him from the subtle greed and from the base attractions of earth (Philip. iii. 20; Heb. xii. 1, 2; 1 Pet. ii. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13). And note that this spirit of recollectedness in these two particulars, viz., whose we are, and whither we are bound, is the true and destinctive adornment of all faithful Christians, no matter in what diversity of outward circumstance they may be arrayed. And this, without the least ostentation or self-consciousness, will at once make them

known to one another (cf. Mal. iii. 16), and mark them out for an instinctive wonder and admiration in the eyes of all who are seeking after God.

V. THAT THE ONE GREAT AND BLESSED TRUTH WHICH GAVE REALITY AND MEANING TO THIS DISTINCTION WAS, "I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD." Even so whatever may distinguish the faithful Christian from others has no other foundation than this, that God is *his* God—his in Christ, his in a sense which is beyond words or thought. It is not the fact that he is more righteous than others which any distinctive conduct or observance is meant to proclaim; but simply that God has been more merciful to him, and has drawn him closer to himself in Christ (1 Cor. iii. 21—23; 1 John i. 3; 2 Pet. i. 4).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 37—41.—*The use and abuse of memorials.* This law is one of the many illustrations of the minute particulars prescribed by the laws of Moses. We find other illustrations in precepts respecting ploughing (Deut. xxii. 10), sowing (Deut. xxii. 9), reaping (Levit. xxiii. 22), threshing (Deut. xxv. 4), killing (Levit. xvii. 13), cooking (Exod. xxiii. 19), clothing (Deut. xxii. 11), &c. All these laws had certain moral or spiritual significations. The precept respecting the fringes teaches us—

I. THE VALUE OF MEMORIALS. 1. To remind us of spiritual truths. The peculiarity of the Jew's dress was a witness to him that he belonged to "a peculiar people" (Deut. xiv. 2) separated unto God. Possibly the blue colour (cf. Exod. xxviii. 31) was intended to remind him that he belonged to a kingdom of priests. 2. Such memorials are needed because of our treacherous memories, which, like sieves, may let pure water run away, but retain the sediment and rubbish. 3. And they are valuable for the sake of others. The Jews taught that even a blind man must wear the fringe, because others could see it. Strangers may be impressed by our memorial services, even if we are blind to their significance. Our children and their descendants may learn by them. Illustrations—Passover (Exod. xii. 24—27); altar and stones on Ebal and Gerizim (Deut. xxvii. 1—8; Josh. viii. 30—35). The Lord's Supper, by which we "show Christ's death till he come."

II. THE DANGER OF THEIR ABUSE. 1. Because of our inveterate tendency to exaggerate the importance of what is external. Hence fringes were "enlarged" (Matt. xxiii. 5) and phylacteries were invented (Deut. vi. 6—9). The simple supper of the Lord has been developed into the pompous ceremonies of the mass. 2. And thus to stop at the symbol and thereby prevent it. Illustrations—The serpent of brass idolised (2 Kings xviii. 4); the ark treated as a charm (1 Sam. iv. 3). 3. And by so doing to "come short" of the promise of salvation which is "in Christ Jesus," who is "the way, and the truth, and the life." Nevertheless, God does not take away symbolic memorials from us, but throws on us the responsibility of using "as not abusing" them.—P.

Vers. 37—40.—*The fringes: ever-present reminders.* I. A NEED TO BE PROVIDED FOR. These numerous and all-important commandments must, if such a thing is possible, be kept continually before the minds of the people. God has already provided for the need, in fact, by appointing an atonement for sins of ignorance. These would be very largely sins of forgetfulness, and so, as prevention is better than cure, it was desirable to guard against forgetfulness. Sins of ignorance, when committed, may be atoned for, but it is better, if such a thing can be, not to commit them at all. Hence God, knowing the natural forgetfulness of the human heart, and how many cares, pleasures, novelties, and objects of interest there are to draw it away from the consideration of his will, recognises a need to be provided for in a special way. The will of God, moreover, needed to be *constantly remembered.* It bears on all our conscious life, and through that in many unknown ways on the unconscious life beneath. There was no action of an Israelite's life but could be done in God's way or in his own. A moment's incaution, and he might step into some great transgression. The law through Moses was a thing of details, and to neglect the least detail was to impair the whole. Evidently *this need has still to be provided for.* The law through Christ for our life is also one needing to be constantly

remembered. There is no moment when it does not stand before us in all its spirituality, and its searching for inward conformity. Nor can we pretend that our hearts are any better, any more in sympathy with God, than those in Israel of old. The human heart under Christ needs to be provided for just as much as under Moses. Thus we may be sure that if God saw the need then, he sees it equally now.

II. GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE NEED. *He provided something that should always be before the eye.* Fringes or tassels on the garments were ever-present remembrancers. Many times a day the wearer could not but cast his eye on this addition to his garment, and he was at once to recollect that it was something not added by his own fancy, but that he might ask himself the question, "Am I at this moment doing the will of God?" Nor on his own garment only was the fringe of use; every time his eye rested on the garments of others, similarly adorned, he was reminded to treat them in a just, godly, and brotherly fashion, as being also Israelites, holy and privileged as himself (Gal. vi. 10). And may we not say that we have reminders, so various, numerous, and increasing, as to the claims of God upon us, that they amount to something like a fringe on our garments? There may be nothing of distinct Divine appointment in many of these reminders, but if they are such as naturally turn our attention to holy things, then the presence of them adds very much to our responsibility. Every Bible that we see; every passage of Scripture set in other writing; every church spire rising to the sky, or even the humblest building given to religious uses; every known minister of religion, or indeed any one known to be a Christian; every grave-yard and burial procession—these and many such have all in them something of the fringes. We cannot afford to despise any helps towards knowledge and obedience. *He provided the same memorial for all.* He did not count it sufficient there should be any memorial the individual might choose. There was to be no room for individual caprice. The memorial was a fringe, and it was always blue. Thus, while there are many things which *may be used* to remind us of God's will, there are some *especially designed for this end.* Those who accept the permanent obligation of the Lord's Supper are brought, on every observance of it, face to face with him whom only too easily we forget. "Do this in remembrance of me." But since all do not accept this obligation, and those who do meet in different ways and with varying frequency, we can hardly find here that which is to correspond in the gospel with the fringes in the law. Is there any one settled and definite thing which Christ gives us now the same for us all? May we not answer from John xvi. 13: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all (the) truth"? Where Moses gave commandments, Christ gave promises, which are only commandments in another form. We have now to do not with a body of positive precepts, to be understood and obeyed in our natural strength, but with a living and life-giving *Spirit*, and the more we have the life of that Spirit in us, the more we shall be preserved from errors in doctrine, and from omissions, exaggerations, and defects in duty. We are not now called to manufacture lifeless and merely typical observances according to a pattern. Obedience now is to be a growth; and if there is heavenly, pure, and energetic life in us, then we shall not be lacking in strength, beauty, and fruitfulness. *What signification, if any, may there be in the colour?* Perhaps it is not fanciful to suppose that it may have been chosen as having correspondence with the tint of the sky—something to help in turning the thoughts of the people away from earth to him who dwells on high. Tennyson reminds us ('In Memoriam,' li.) of

> "The sinless years
> That breathed beneath the Syrian blue."

III. THE LIMITED USE OF GOD'S PROVISION. It was as good a monitor as could be given in the circumstances, always moving about with the person who had to remember. But remembrance, even supposing it exact and opportune, would only reveal more and more the inevitable weakness in action. What could the fringes help in the doing? Could they turn men from seeking after their own hearts and their own eyes? By the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. iii. 20). Hence the better their knowledge of the law in its requirements, and the more exact their remembrance, the more painful and depressing would be the consciousness of their own

sin. The holier they became in outward compliances, the more would they feel their pollution and their separation of heart from God. If any one ever knew the value of the fringes, we should judge it to have been David, yet read Ps. cxix., and notice how he there gathers up his earnest longings for conformity with God's law, and not unfrequently seems to tread the verge of despair. We must have more than mere admonitions, however frequent and earnest, if we are to do God's will and be in truth holy before him. Hence we come back to that work of the Spirit of Christ, putting within us new life, and that love which is the best of all monitors. The fringe above all fringes, the riband made of heaven's own blue, is to have love in the heart. Love never forgets. It has its object ever in its thoughts—first in the morning, last at night, and flitting even through dreams. Fringes may recall words and outward ceremonies, but love discovers fresh applications and larger meanings. Love does with the mere words of commandment as the chemist does with material things, ever discovering in them new combinations, properties, and powers (John xiv. 23—26).—Y.

Ver. 41.—*God recalls a great deed and the purpose of it.* I. GOD RECALLS A GREAT DEED. "I brought you out of the land of Egypt." 1. *It was deliverance from a bitter bondage.* The Israelites had been making light of it of late, but in Egypt it was grievous indeed (Exod. i. 13, 14; ii. 23; iii. 7; vi. 9). So God, by the work of his incarnate Son, delivered the world from a bitter bondage. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the whole world." The act of Divine power by which Jesus rose from the grave did not sweep away all difficulties and make life henceforth a path of roses. But it is a great deal to stand on this side, historically, of the sepulchre from which the stone was rolled away. The generations before the resurrection of Jesus were, as we may say, in Egypt, waiting deliverance. The world since that event stands, as it were, delivered. He who brought life and immortality to light destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. ii. 14, 15). 2. *It was a deliverance worked out entirely by God.* "*I* brought you out, &c." There was no struggle against Pharaoh on the part of the people. We do not see the prisoner within conspiring with the deliverer outside. The bondage was so bitter, the subjection so complete, that the people were not moved to conspiracy and insurrection. We read constantly in history of servile and subject races winning their way to freedom through the bloody struggles of many generations, but these Israelites before Pharaoh were like oxen broken to the plough. They groaned, but they submitted. And in this Egyptian sort of bondage the world was fast before Christ came to deliver. Men groaned under the burdens of life; they were filled with the fruits of sin; they yielded at last to the grasp of death. All was accepted as a mysterious necessity; men did not protest and struggle against calamity and death. The deliverance is from Jesus, and in it we have no hand. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). A delivered world was even incredulous as to its deliverance. It could not believe that as by one man came sin and death, so by one also had come conquest over sin, death, and the devil. Thomas, the very disciple, doubts, and before long Paul has to write 1 Cor. xv. Jesus may say to the world for which he died and rose again, "*I* brought you out of spiritual Egypt." 3. *While the deliverance was being worked out, the Israelites were scarcely conscious of what was being done.* They saw the plagues, but only as wonders, stupendous physical calamities. They felt the grasp of Pharaoh alternately tightening and relaxing, but little did they comprehend of that great, significant struggle going on between Jehovah and Pharaoh. They waited, as the prize of victory waits on the athletes while they contend; it knows nothing of the energy and endurance it has evoked. And so it was and is in Christ's redeeming work. It is wonderful to notice how unconscious the world was of that great work which was transacted between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, between the cradle of Jesus and his opened grave. The world looked upon him, and to a large extent it still looks, in any light but the right one. Let us know him first then, and fully in all that the work means, as Deliverer from spiritual Egypt.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THIS GREAT DEED. "I brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God." It is one thing for Israel to be brought out of Egypt; quite another for it to understand why it has been brought out. And so we find the people complaining of the wilderness quite as much as they had done of Egypt. Their expectations pointed in a direction opposite to God's purpose, and never could the wilderness become a better place than Egypt until they did appreciate God's purpose and make it their own. God did not bring them out as one might bring a man out of prison, and then say, "Go where you like." They were brought out of a bitter bondage to enter upon a reasonable service, otherwise the wilderness would prove only an exchange of suffering, not a release from it. In like manner we need to ask how the world may be made better by the redeeming work of Christ. The difference between the state of the world before the death of Christ and since does not look as great from certain points of view as one might expect. A countless host of those for whom he died and rose again nevertheless goes about in a bewilderment and unbelief equal to that of the Israelites in the wilderness. Christ died for us and rose again, that we, rising with him, might live not to ourselves, but to him (Rom. vi. 4, 10—13, indeed the whole chapter; xii. 1; xiv. 7—9; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23; x. 31; 2 Cor. v. 15—18; x. 5; Eph. ii. 10; Philip. i. 20, 21; Col. iii. 1—3). Deliverance from Egypt is not equivalent to entrance into the promised land. The wilderness is a critical place for us, and all depends on what heed we take to this purpose of God. We must receive the gospel *in its integrity*. If the full purpose of God becomes our full purpose, then all will be right. Christ died for us, not that we might just escape the penalty and power of sin, as something painful to ourselves, and know the luxury of a washed conscience; not that we might just pass into a perfect blessedness beyond the tomb; but that, becoming pure and blessed, we might engage in the service of God and set forth his glory. We must be pleased with what pleases him. The work of Christ brings us that highest of all joy, to serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind.—Y.

VINDICATION OF THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (CHS XVI., XVII.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GAINSAYING OF KORAH (vers. 1—40).

Ver. 1.—**Now Korah . . took men.** קָרַח וַיִּקַּח. The word "took" stands alone at the head of the sentence in the singular number. This does not by itself confine its reference to Korah, because it may be taken as repeated after each of the other names; at the same time, the construction suggests that in its original form Korah alone was mentioned, and that the other names were afterwards added in order to include them in the same statement. The ellipsis after "took" (if it be one) may be filled up by "men," as in the A. V. and in most versions, or by "counsel," as in the Jerusalem Targum. The Septuagint has in place of וַיִּקַּח ἐλάλησε, representing apparently a different reading. Some commentators regard it as an anacoluthon for "took two hundred and fifty men, . . and rose up with them;" others, again, treat the "took" as a pleonasm, as in 2 Sam. xviii. 18 and elsewhere; but the change of number from וַיִּקַּח to וַיָּקוּמוּ makes it difficult. It seems best to say that the construction is broken and cannot be satisfactorily explained. Indeed there can be no question that the whole narrative, like the construction of the opening verses, is very confused, and leaves on the mind the impression that it has been altered, not very skilfully, from its original form. The two parts of the tragedy, that concerning the company of Korah, and that concerning the Reubenites, although mingled in the narrative, do not adjust themselves in the mind, and the general effect is obscure. It is sufficient to point out here that no one can certainly tell what became of the ringleader himself, who was obviously the head and front of the whole business. Some are strenuously of opinion that he was swallowed up alive, others as strenuously that he was consumed with fire; but the simple fact is that his death is not recorded in this chapter at all, although he is assumed to have perished. The obscurity which hangs over this passage cannot be traced to any certain cause; the discrepancies and contradictions which have been discovered in it are due to mistake or misrepresentation; nor can any evil motive be plausibly assigned for the interpolation (if it be such) of that part of the story which concerns the Reubenites. If, for some reason unknown to us, an original narrative of Korah's rebellion was enlarged so as to include the simultaneous mutiny of the Reuben-

ites and their fate; and if, further, that enlargement was so unskilfully made as to leave considerable confusion in the narrative, wherein does that affect either its truth or its inspiration? The supernatural influence which watched over the production of the sacred narrative certainly did not interfere with any of those natural causes which affected its composition, its style, its clearness or obscurity. **Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi.** On the genealogy of the Levites see Exod. vi. 16—22, and above on ch. iii. 17—19. It is generally supposed that some generations are passed over in these genealogies. Korah belonged to the same Kohathite sub-tribe as Moses and Aaron, and was related to them by some sort of cousinship; his father (or ancestor) Izhar was the younger brother of Amram and the elder brother of Uzziel, whose descendant Elizaphan had been made chief of the Kohathites. **Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab.** Eliab himself was apparently the only son of Pallu, the second son of Reuben (ch. xxvi. 5, 8). If the word "son" is to be literally understood in all these cases, then Korah, Dathan, and Abiram would all be great-great-grandsons of Jacob himself. **On, the son of Peleth.** It is one of the strange obscurities of this narrative that On, who appears here as a ringleader, is never mentioned again either in this chapter or elsewhere. **Sons of Reuben.** Reubenites. The encampment of their tribe was on the south side of the tabernacle in the outer line (ch. ii. 10), while that of the Kohathites was on the same side in the inner line. Thus they were to some extent neighbours; but see below on ver. 24.

Ver. 2.—**And they rose up before Moses.** It is suggested that the Reubenites were aggrieved because their father had been deprived of his birthright in favour of Judah, and that Korah was aggrieved because the Uzzielites had been preferred in the person of Elizaphan to the Izharites (ch. iii. 30). These accusations have nothing whatever in the narrative to support them, and are suspicious because they are so easy and so sure to be made in such cases. In all ecclesiastical history the true reformer, as well as the heretic and the demagogue, has always been charged with being actuated by motives of disappointed ambition. Without these gratuitous suppositions there was quite enough to excite the anger and opposition of such discontented and insubordinate minds as are to be found in every community. **With certain of the children of Israel.** These were gathered from the tribes at large, as implied in the statement that Zelophehad a Manassite was not amongst them (ch. xxvii. 3). **Famous in the congregation.** Literally, "called men of the congregation." Septuagint, σύγκλητοι βουλῆς, representatives of the host in the great council (cf. ch. i. 16; xxvi. 9).

Ver. 3.—**They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.** They had risen up before Moses, *i. e.* made a tumult in his presence, because they regarded him (and rightly) as the actual ruler of Israel in religious as well as in secular matters. At the same time, the attack of Korah and his company (with whom alone the narrative is really concerned here) was directed especially against the ecclesiastical rule which Moses exercised through his brother Aaron. **Ye take too much upon you.** רַב־לָכֶם, "much for you," probably in the sense of "enough for you" (cf. the use of רַב in Gen. xlv. 28), *i. e.* you have enjoyed power long enough; so the Targum Palestine. It may, however, be taken with the following נָּשִׂא as meaning, "let it suffice you that all the congregation," &c.; and so the Septuagint, ἐχέτω ὑμῖν ὅτι, κ. τ. λ. The Targum of Onkelos renders it in the same sense as the A. V. **All the congregation are holy, every one of them.** This was perfectly true, in a sense. There was a sanctity which pertained to Israel as a nation, in which all its members shared as distinguished from the nations around (Exod. xix. 6; Levit. xx. 26); there was a priesthood which was inherent in all the sons of Israel, older and more indelible than that which was conferred on Aaron's line—a priesthood which, apart from special restrictions, or in exceptional circumstances, might and did assert itself in priestly acts (Exod. xxiv. 5, and compare the cases of Samuel, Elijah, and others who offered sacrifice during the failure of the appointed priesthood). If Moses had taken the power to himself, or if he had (as they doubtless supposed) restricted active priestly functions to Aaron because he was his brother, and wholly under his influence, their contention would have been quite right. They erred, as most violent men do, not because they asserted what was false, but because they took for granted that the truth which they asserted was really inconsistent with the claims which they assailed. The congregation were all holy; the sons of Israel were all priests; that was true—but it was also true that by Divine command Israel could only exercise his corporate priesthood outwardly through the one family which God had set apart for that purpose. The same God who has lodged in the body certain faculties and powers for the benefit of the body, has decreed that those faculties and powers can only be exercised through certain determinate organs, the very specialisation of which is both condition and result of a high organisation. **The congregation of the Lord.** There are two words for congregation in this

verse: קָהָל here, and עֵדָה before. The former seems to be used in the more solemn sense, but they are for the most part indistinguishable, and certainly cannot be assigned to different authors.

Ver. 5.—**He spake unto Korah.** That Korah was the mainspring of the conspiracy is evident (cf. ver. 22; ch. xxvii. 3; Jude 11 *b*.). It may well be that his position as a prominent Levite and a relation of Moses gave him great influence with men of other tribes, and earned him a great name for disinterestedness and liberality in advocating the rights of all Israel, and in denouncing the exclusive claims and privileges by which he himself (as a Levite) was benefited. It is often assumed that Korah was secretly aiming at the high-priesthood, but of this, again, there is not a shadow of proof; his error was great enough, and his punishment sore enough, without casting upon him these unfounded accusations. It would be more in accordance with human nature if we supposed that Korah was in his way sincere; that he had really convinced himself, by dint of trying to convince others, that Moses and Aaron were usurpers; that he began his agitation without thought of advantage of himself; that, having gained a considerable following and much popular applause, the pride of leadership and the excitement of conflict led him on to the last extremity. **The Lord will show who are his.** אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ, the meaning of which is defined by the following words, "whom he hath chosen." Moses refers the matter to the direct decision of the Lord; as that decision had originated the separate position of Aaron, that should also vindicate it.

Ver. 6.—**Take you censers.** מַחְתּוֹת. Septuagint, πυρεῖα. Translated "fire-pans" in Exod. xxvii. 3. From the number required, they must have been either household utensils used for carrying fire, or else they must have been made in some simple fashion for the occasion. The offering of incense was proposed by Moses as a test because it was a typically priestly function, to which the gravest importance was attached (Levit. x. 1; xvi. 12, 13), and because it was so very simply executed.

Ver. 7.—**Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.** רַב־לָכֶם, as in ver. 3. The exact meaning of this *tu quoque* is not apparent. Perhaps he would say that if he and Aaron were usurpers, the whole tribe of Levi were usurpers too.

Ver. 8.—**Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi.** No son of Levi is mentioned in the narrative except Korah, and this address itself passes into the second person singular (vers. 10, 11), as though Korah alone were personally guilty. It is possible enough that behind him was a considerable body of public opinion among the Levites more or less decidedly supporting him; but there is no need to impute any general disloyalty to them.

Ver. 9.—**Seemeth it a small thing to you.** Rather, "is it too little for you." מִכֶּם הַמְעַט.

Ver. 11.—**For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together.** It does not follow that Korah was seeking an exclusive dignity for himself, or for his tribe. His "company" apparently included representative men from all the tribes, or at least from many (see on ver. 2). They were seeking the priesthood because they affirmed it to be the common possession of all Israelites. **Against the Lord.** It was in *his* name that they appeared, and to some extent no doubt sincerely; but since they appeared to dispute an ordinance actually and historically made by God himself, it was indeed against him that they were gathered. **And what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?** The construction is broken, as so often when we have the *ipsissima verba* of Moses, whose meekness did not enable him to speak calmly under provocation. The sentence runs, "For which cause thou and all thy company who are gathered against the Lord,—and Aaron, who is he, that ye murmur against him?" It was easy to represent the position of Aaron in an invidious light, as though they were assailing some personal sacerdotal pretensions; but in truth he was only a poor servant of God doing what he was bid.

Ver. 12.—**And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram.** The part really taken by these men in the agitation is very obscure. They were not of the two hundred and fifty, nor were they with them when they gathered together against Moses and Aaron—perhaps because they took no interest in ecclesiastical matters, and only resented the secular domination of Moses. Neither can we tell why Moses sent for them at this juncture, unless he suspected them of being in league with Korah (see below on ver. 24). **We will not come up,** *i. e.* to the tabernacle, as being spiritually the culminating point of the camp.

Ver. 13.—**Is it a small thing.** Rather, "is it too little," as in ver. 9. **A land that floweth with milk and honey.** A description applying by right to the land of promise (Exod. iii. 8; ch. xiii. 27), which they in their studied insolence applied to Egypt. **Except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us.** Literally, "that (כִּי) thou altogether lord it over us." The expression is strengthened in the original by the re-

duplication of the verb in the inf. abs., גַּם־הִשְׁתָּרֵר.

Ver. 14.—**Moreover thou hast not brought us.** According to the promises (they meant to say) by which he had induced them to leave their comfortable homes in Egypt (Exod. iv. 30, 31). **Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?** *i. e.* wilt thou blind them to the utter failure of thy plans and promises? wilt thou throw dust in their eyes?

Ver. 15.—**And Moses was very wroth.** The bitter taunts of the Reubenites had just enough semblance of truth in them to make them very hard to bear, and especially the imputation of low personal ambition; but it is impossible to say that Moses did not err through anger. **Respect not thou their offering.** Cf. Gen. iv. 4. It is not quite clear what offering Moses meant, since they do not seem to have wished to offer incense. Probably it was equivalent to saying, Do not thou accept them when they approach thee; for such approach was always by sacrifice (cf. Ps. cix. 7). **I have not taken one ass from them.** Cf. 1 Sam. xii. 3. The ass was the least valuable of the ordinary live stock of those days (cf. Exod. xx. 17). The Septuagint has here *οὐκ ἐπιθύμημα οὐδενὸς αὐτῶν εἴληφα*, which is apparently an intentional paraphrase with a reference to the tenth commandment (*οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις, κ. τ. λ.*). **Neither have I hurt one of them.** As absolute ruler he might have made himself very burdensome to all, and very terrible to his personal enemies. Compare Samuel's description of the Eastern autocrat (1 Sam. viii. 11—17).

Ver. 16.—**And Moses said unto Korah.** After the interchange of messages with the Reubenites, Moses repeats his injunctions to Korah to be ready on the morrow to put his claims to the test, adding that Aaron too should be there, that the Lord might judge between them.

Ver. 18.—**Stood in the door of the tabernacle,** *i. e.* at the door of the court, so that they were visible from the space outside.

Ver. 19.—**And Korah gathered all the congregation against them.** It does not follow that the whole congregation was actively or deliberately on Korah's side. But a movement ostensibly in behalf of the many as against the few is sure to enlist a general, if not a deep, sympathy; nor is it to be supposed that Moses and Aaron could escape a large amount of unpopularity under the grievous circumstances of the time. The thoughtless multitude would have hailed their downfall with real though short-lived satisfaction. **The glory of the Lord appeared.** As before (ch. xiv. 10), filling the tabernacle probably, and flashing out before the eyes of all.

Ver. 21.—**That I may consume them in a moment.** Literally, "and I will consume them." The same thing must be said of this as of ch. xiv. 11, 12.

Ver. 22.—**O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh.** אֵל אֱלֹהֵי הָרוּחֹת לְכָל־בָּשָׂר. The *ruach* is the spirit of life which the Creator has imparted unto perishable flesh, and made it live. In some sense it belongs to beasts as well as to men (Eccles. iii. 19, 21); but in the common use of the word men only are thought of, as having received it by a special communication of a higher order (Gen. ii. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 45). Moses, therefore, really appeals to God, as the Author and Giver of that imperishable life-principle which is lodged in the mortal flesh of all men, not to destroy the works of his own hands, the creatures made in his own image. Here we have in its germ that idea of the universal fatherhood of God which remained undeveloped in Jewish thought until Judaism itself expanded into Christianity (cf. Isa. lxiii. 16; lxiv. 8, 9; Acts xvii. 26, 29). **Shall one man sin.** Rather, "the one man (הָאִישׁ) hath sinned," *i. e.* Korah, who had misled all the rest.

Ver. 23.—**The Lord spake unto Moses.** No direct answer was apparently vouchsafed to the remonstrance of Moses and Aaron, but it was tacitly allowed.

Ver. 24.—**Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.** The word "tabernacle" (*mishcan*) is the same word which is so translated in ver. 9, but not the same which is used in vers. 18, 19; it properly signifies "dwelling-place." It is certainly the natural conclusion, from the use of this expression here and in ver. 27, that this *mishcan* was something different from the "tents" (אֹהָלֵי) mentioned in vers. 26, 27, and was some habitation common to the three rebels (see below on ver. 31). The Septuagint, in order to avoid the difficulty, omits the names of Dathan and Abiram, and has only *ἀπὸ τῆς συναγωγῆς Κορέ*.

Ver. 26.—**Touch nothing of theirs.** Because they, and all that belonged to them, were *anathema*, devoted to destruction. Compare the case of Achan (Josh. vii. 1).

Ver. 27.—**And Dathan and Abiram . . stood in the door of their tents.** To see what Moses would do. Nothing is said of Korah.

Ver. 28.—**For I have not done them of mine own mind.** Literally, "that not of my heart." כִּי־לֹא מִלִּבִּי. Septuagint, *ὅτι οὐκ ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ*.

Ver. 29.—**If they be visited after the visitation of all men.** פָּקֹד is of somewhat doubtful meaning; it seems to answer to the

ἐπίσκεψις and ἐπισκοπή of the Septuagint, and to our "oversight," or "visitation" (German, *heimsuchung*. Thus it may mean practically the providence of God for good, *i. e.* in the way of protection, or for evil, *i. e.* in the way of judgment. In either sense providence showed itself in no ordinary form towards these men.

Ver. 30.—**Make a new thing.** "Create a creation." בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא. **Into the pit.** Rather, "into Sheol." שְׁאוֹלָה. Septuagint, εἰς ᾅδου. Sheol is not "the pit," but Hades, the place of departed spirits (Gen. xxxvii. 35; xlii. 38), which is regarded, according to the general instinct of mankind, as being "under the earth" (cf. Philip. ii. 10 *b.*; Rev. v. 13). They were to go down "quick" into Sheol, because they were still alive at the moment that they were lost to sight for ever.

Ver. 31.—**The ground clave asunder that was under them.** As it sometimes does during an earthquake. In this case, however, the event was predicted, and wholly supernatural. The sequence of the narrative would lead us to suppose that the earth opened beneath the tents of Dathan and Abiram in the camp of Reuben. It is difficult to think of the gulf as extending so far as to involve the tent of Korah in the Kohathite lines in the same destruction, while there is nothing to suggest the idea that the earth opened in more than one place. It is true that the camps of the Reubenites and of the Kohathites were more or less contiguous; but when it is remembered that there were 46,500 adult males in the former, and 8600 males in the latter, and that a broad space must have been left between the two lines of encampment, it is obviously improbable that Korah's tent was in a practical sense "near" to those of Dathan and Abiram, unless indeed he had purposely removed it in order to be under the protection of his Reubenite partisans. It is very observable that not a word is said here as to the fate of Korah himself. It is implied in ver. 40 that he had perished, and it is apparently asserted in ch. xxvi. 10 that he was swallowed up with Dathan and Abiram (see the note there). On the other hand, Deut. xi. 6; Ps. cvi. 17 speak of the engulfing of the other two without any mention of Korah himself sharing their fate; and while "all the men that appertained unto Korah" perished, his own sons did not (ch. xxvi. 11). On these grounds it is held by most commentators that Korah died by fire among those who offered incense (ver. 35). This, however, is untenable, because "the two hundred and fifty men who offered incense" are distinctly mentioned as having been his partisans (ver. 2), and are always counted exclusive of Korah himself. On the whole, while it is certain that the narrative is very obscure, and the question very doubtful, it seems most agreeable to all the testimonies of Holy Scripture to conclude—1. That Korah had left his own place, and had some sort of dwelling (*mishcan*) either in common with Dathan and Abiram, or hard by their tents. 2. That the earth opened and swallowed up the *mishcan* of Korah, and the tents of Dathan and Abiram. 3. That Korah's men (see next verse) and their property were swallowed up with his *mishcan*, and (as far as we can tell) Korah himself also. If this be correct, then the much disputed heading of the chapter in the A. V. will be right after all.

Ver. 32.—**And their houses,** *i. e.* their families, as in ch. xviii. 13. **And all the men that appertained unto Korah.** Literally, "all the men who to Korah." Whether it means his dependants, or his special partisans, is uncertain. Perhaps some had clung to his fortunes in blind confidence when the rest gat up from his *mishcan*.

Ver. 34.—**At the cry of them.** לְקֹלָם, "at the noise of them;" at the mingled sound of their shrieks and of the natural convulsion amidst which they disappeared.

Ver. 35.—**There came out a fire from the Lord.** The fire probably flashed out from the sanctuary with the destructive force of lightning. **The two hundred and fifty men.** These had remained swinging their censers before the gate of the tabernacle while Moses and (presumably) Korah himself had gone to the camp of Reuben.

Ver. 37.—**Speak unto Eleazar.** This is the first time that any special duty is assigned to Eleazar, who was destined to succeed to the high-priesthood. We may suppose that he was sent instead of his father because the duty of gathering up the censers could hardly have been carried out without incurring legal defilement by contact with the dead. **Out of the burning.** Or, "out of the burnt." Septuagint, ἐκ μέσου τῶν κατακεκαυμένων. From amongst the charred and smouldering corpses. **Scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed.** The censers had been made holy even by that sacrilegious dedication, and must never revert to any common uses; for the same reason the live coals which still remained in them were to be emptied out in a separate place.

Ver. 38.—**These sinners against their own souls.** בְּנַפְשֹׁתָם, "against their own lives." The thought is not that they had ruined their souls, but that they had forfeited their lives. The Pentateuch does not contemplate any consequences of sin beyond physical death. The same phrase occurs in Prov. xx. 2. **For a covering of the altar.** The altar

of burnt incense. The censers were no doubt brazen pans, and when beaten out would form plates which could be affixed to the boards of which the frame of the altar was composed.

Ver. 40.—**That he be not as Korah.** כְּקֹרַח וְלַאֲדָתוֹ. That he do not meet with the same fate as Korah.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—40.—*The true and only Priesthood.* It is quite clear that the homiletic application of this passage turns upon a question which is strongly controverted—a question which it is alike impossible (save at the cost of honesty and truth) to shirk, or to take for granted one way or the other. That the rebellion of Korah was directed under specious pretences against a divinely-ordained priesthood vested in one man and his successors is of course undenied, but is of little interest or value apart from its application to our own times and circumstances. The practical question which immediately arises, and arises only to be disputed, is this, What priesthood now corresponds to that assailed in Aaron? It may no doubt be said that there is nothing which now answers to it, nothing of which *that* was a shadow and a type; that Judaism was a sacerdotal religion, but that Christianity is not. If that were true then Korah was after all right; his only error was that he held opinions in advance of his age. But apart from that, such a position simply robs both the incident and record of any value for ourselves, and is point-blank opposed to the Apostolic teaching in such places as 1 Cor. x. 11, and Jude 11. In the latter the "gainsaying of Korah" is specified as one of those typical acts of wickedness in which a virulent form of moral evil active in the days of the apostle had been anticipated both as to sin and punishment; the bad men of whom he speaks (vers. 4, 8, 10) had already met their doom in a figure when Korah and his company perished. It is clear that Holy Scripture recognises, both generally and specifically, a teaching value for Christian times in this record. The most useful and honest plan will therefore be to set forth the elements of the question impartially, and to leave them to the consideration of the reader. Some points will come out with sufficient clearness to command general (if not universal) assent; and others will at least be cleared of misleading arguments and false associations.

I. The first position which we can take up with authority and certainty is the positive position that THE PRIESTHOOD OF AARON AND HIS SONS WAS THE OLD TESTAMENT TYPE AND SHADOW OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST CONFERRED UPON HIM IN HIS HUMAN NATURE AS THE SON OF MAN. This is argued and proved with many illustrations by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (see especially ch. v. 4, 5; vii. 11—28; viii. 1—4; x. 11—14, 21). The elaborate comparison of the two priesthoods, the old and the new, which was also infinitely older,—and especially the assertion that the Levitical priests were many only because death deposed them from office (ch. vii. 23), whilst Christ abideth for ever,—forbid us to regard any other priesthood than that of our Lord as the Christian analogue of the Jewish priesthood. As far as the type went Aaron lived on in all his priestly race, just as he had lived before in his chosen ancestor Abraham (Heb. vii. 10): there was but one Jewish high-priest, and unto him corresponds in the kingdom of heaven Jesus and Jesus alone. Herein all will be substantially agreed who loyally accept the testimony of Scripture, and herein (if it be clearly and devoutly held) is the real heart of the matter, and the sufficient safeguard against superstition.

II. The second position which we can take up on purely Scriptural grounds, and which is not fairly assailable, is the negative position THAT NO ARGUMENT AGAINST MINISTERIAL OR SACERDOTAL ASSUMPTIONS OR CLAIMS IS VALID WHICH IS BASED UPON THE HOLINESS AND PRIESTLY CHARACTER OF ALL THE FAITHFUL. It is perfectly clear that Korah and his company had both Scripture and fact on their side when they said that all the congregation were holy and all were priests. They erred in taking for granted that the priesthood of all Israelites was really inconsistent with the special priesthood of Aaron. As things were, it is certain that the universal priesthood of Israel could best express itself, best translate itself into worship, through the ministerial acts of Aaron and his sons. A spiritually-minded Jew, who recognised

most deeply his own priestly calling in Israel, would most devoutly give thanks for the separation of the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron, because he would feel that no one benefited so much by that separation as himself; far from standing between him and the God of Israel, it enabled him to draw nigh to God in a multitude of ways otherwise impossible. He would indeed be able to argue from the histories of Gideon, of Samuel, of Elijah, and of others of the chosen race, that the priesthood of the ordinary Israelite, although usually dormant as to outward sacerdotal functions, was always capable of being called into play by Divine permission under stress of circumstances, and he would be prepared to understand the significance of such a passage as Rev. vii. 5—8, in which Levi takes his place again (and not at all a foremost place) among the tribes, the Holy Ghost thus signifying that in the world to come all such distinctions will be merged for ever in the common priesthood of the saved. But in the mean time there was nothing antagonistic, either in doctrine or in practice, between the truth which Korah asserted and that other truth which Korah assailed: the priesthood of the many was helped, not hindered, by the special priesthood of the few. It is therefore impossible honestly to use such texts as 1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 6, against the doctrine of a special Christian priesthood, because they only assert of Christians what the texts relied upon by Korah asserted of the Jews.

III. Abandoning the false line of argument just mentioned, we may yet so far develop the first position taken up as to maintain with confidence, THAT NO PRIESTHOOD CAN HAVE ANY EXISTENCE IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST OTHER THAN THAT OF OUR LORD HIMSELF. This is made evident, not only by the exclusive way in which his priesthood is dwelt upon in the New Testament, but (what concerns us more in this place) by the whole analogy of the Old. Aaron alone had the priesthood, and the extreme malediction of God lighted upon all, even of the separated tribe, who dared to meddle with it; but Aaron was certainly the type of Christ Himself. Any priesthood which should claim to have any independent existence, even if it professed to draw its authority from Divine appointment, would be *ipso facto* in direct antagonism to the solitary prerogative of Jesus Christ. Hence it follows that the upholders, not the impugners, of such a priesthood would be "in the gainsaying of Korah." It follows also that there can be no direct analogy drawn between those who rose up against Moses and Aaron, and those who rise up against any earthly ministry; it will be shown that a true resemblance *may* be traced under certain conditions.

IV. Admitting these principles, which ought not to be controverted, we may bring the question to a practical issue as follows:—While there cannot be set over us any other priesthood than the only, immutable, and incommunicable priesthood of the Messiah, yet there is nothing in Holy Scripture to negative *à priori* the idea THAT OUR LORD (being withdrawn from sight and sense) MAY CHOOSE TO PERFORM PRIESTLY FUNCTIONS UPON EARTH VISIBLY AND AUDIBLY BY THE HAND AND MOUTH OF CHOSEN MEN; nor is there anything to negative *à priori* the further contention that those men were and are set apart in some special and exclusive way. Whether this be so is a matter of fact which must be decided upon the testimony, fairly and conscientiously weighed, of Scripture and of history. It depends upon the two historical questions. 1. Whether our Lord constituted the apostles his representatives for any priestly functions. 2. Whether the apostles transmitted such representation to others after them. In any case our Lord is the only priest, or rather has the only priesthood, although upon one view of the case he will execute some offices of his priesthood by means of visible human agents, in whom and through whom he himself speaks and acts. Without, therefore, entering upon any argument, we can safely conclude as to the Christian application of this passage. 1. That it must be directly referred to the everlasting priesthood of Christ, and to assaults upon it, or infringements of it. 2. That it may be in a secondary sense referred to a visible Christian priesthood, and to assaults upon it, on the supposition that such priesthood is in fact and in truth only the priesthood of Christ ministered in time and space by his appointment.

In point of fact there are many obvious and many subtle resemblances between the gainsaying of Korah and the popular contention against a Christian priesthood, or even against any Christian ministry, which no thoughtful student of Scripture can overlook. In the homiletics, however, which follow these are left to speak

for themselves, and the deeper line of application will be followed. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT KORAH ON ONE SIDE, DATHAN AND ABIRAM ON THE OTHER, HAD HARDLY ANYTHING IN COMMON EXCEPT DISLIKE TO THE RULE OF MOSES, THE MEDIATOR OF ISRAEL AND KING IN JESHURUN (Deut. xxxiii. 5). *His* dislike was ecclesiastical, *theirs* was political; but this common dislike made them allies, and gave them a "tabernacle" in common (ver. 27). Even so amongst the many who say, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 14), there are to be found the most various dispositions, and the most distinct causes of complaint. As in the days of his earthly ministry (Mark iii. 6; xiv. 64, "all"), so now the opposition to him and to his sole governance is made up of the most heterogeneous, and at other times dissociate, elements.

II. THAT KORAH WAS HIMSELF A LEVITE OF SOME DISTINCTION, AND WAS THE SOUL OF THE CONSPIRACY. Even so it is hardly possible to find in history any grave assault upon the work or doctrine of Christ which has not been inspired by some one whose ecclesiastical position has given him both aptness and influence for this evil.

III. THAT KORAH REPRESENTED MOSES AND AARON IN AN INVIDIOUS LIGHT, AS MEN WHO KEPT THE PEOPLE IN SPIRITUAL SUBJECTION, AND DENIED TO THEM THEIR COMMON RIGHTS AS CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. Even so the constant clamour of unbelief is that Christianity is a system devised in the interests of tyranny and obscurantism in order to keep men in moral slavery, and to rob them of their freedom of thought, and to fetter their freedom of action.

IV. THAT KORAH ASSERTED TRUE FACTS AND APPEALED TO TRUE PRINCIPLES IN OPPOSITION TO WHAT HAD BEEN DIVINELY APPOINTED, AND WAS TO BE DIVINELY VINDICATED. Even so do men continually bring against the Truth himself facts which are undeniable, and principles which must be admitted. Herein is the real danger when war upon the Truth is waged with half-truths plausibly paraded as whole, with truths on one side confidently assumed to be fatal to the complemental truths on the other side. The liberty, *e.g.*, of private judgment is arrayed against the authority of inspiration; the universal fatherhood of God against any distinction of the children of God, or necessity for the mediation of Christ; the fact that we are all members of one body against any mutual subordination or distribution of functions amongst those members.

V. THAT KORAH WAS PROBABLY SINCERE IN SO FAR AS HE HAD PERSUADED HIMSELF THAT HE WAS RIGHT, otherwise he would hardly have ventured upon the fatal test. Even so the leaders of opposition to Christ are commonly sincere; only vulgar intolerance brands them off-hand with hypocrisy or self-seeking. And this is their power, for men are led by personal regard and trust much more than by any ability to judge between rival systems. The only way to meet the sincerity and zeal of error is by showing a more transparent sincerity and a more ardent zeal on the side of truth (2 Cor. vi. 3—10; 1 Tim. iv. 12—16; Titus ii. 10).

VI. THAT WHEN MOSES HEARD THE INDICTMENT AGAINST HIMSELF AND AARON HE COULD BUT REFER IT TO THE DECISION OF THE LORD. The people were either actively or passively on the side of Korah, and argument had been unavailing. Even so when Christianity at large, or any system which we believe to be an integral part of Christianity, is assailed with popular and plausible arguments, there is really nothing to be done but to refer it to the arbitrament of God himself. Arguments convince only those that are convinced; clamours only intensify prejudice; mutual accusations only repel—Moses himself effected nothing by the angry words into which he was betrayed. And the arbitrament of God is unequivocally declared by our Lord to be the practical outcome of our religion in our lives (Matt. vii. 15, 20; John xiii. 35). That the test is not capable of easy or of immediate application, that it has to be applied broadly, and with many allowances for disturbing causes, is true; but yet it is the test, and the only test, to which our Lord calls us. It is the test out of which Aaron, with all the weight of popular opinion against him, will ultimately come triumphant; in which Korah, with all his sincerity and plausibility, will come to nothing. And note that while religious questions must be referred to the arbitrament of God, and that arbitrament is not always distinct or immediate in this world, there is a further decision which will be absolutely certain and conclusive. "Even to-

morrow the Lord will show who are his," "for the day shall declare it" (1 Cor. iii. 13), and "it shall be revealed by fire," as it was with Korah's company. Woe unto them who cannot abide, whether personally or as to their work, the test of fire. Our God is still, as then, a consuming fire (Heb. xii. 29), and that fire burns and will burn against all falsity of teaching, as well as all unholiness of living (1 Cor. iii. 15; Heb. xii. 14). And note again that "even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him;" for although the election be not arbitrary, yet it *is* the election of grace, and not the personal worth or aptitude or desire, that does place any, or will place any hereafter, near unto God (cf. Mark iii. 13; x. 40; John xv. 16; Rom. viii. 28).

VII. THAT THE AMBITION OF KORAH WAS THE MORE TO BE BLAMED BECAUSE HE WAS HIMSELF A LEVITE, AND INTRUSTED WITH A SPECIAL MINISTRY IN HOLY THINGS. Even so is ambition or envy especially evil in a Christian man, forasmuch as he has an "unction" and an office in the body of Christ to which he cannot with all his zeal do justice, and which if faithfully used will bring him the highest possible reward (cf. Luke xxii. 26; 1 Cor. xii. 16, 22; 1 Pet. ii. 5; 1 John ii. 20, 27; Rev. iii. 21; vii. 14, *sq.*).

VIII. THAT THE PARTICULAR OFFENCE OF KORAH AND HIS COMPANY WAS THEIR DARING TO OFFER INCENSE, WHICH AARON ALONE MIGHT DO. The incense seems to have signified not simply "prayer," but rather the intercessory and prevailing prayer of the great High Priest and Mediator. Thus the "much incense" in Rev. viii. 3, 4, which is undoubtedly the intercession of Christ, is added *to* and rises *with* the prayers of all saints. Thus then the special sin reprobated in Korah is any interference with the mediatorial office of Christ, whether by endeavouring to draw near to God through other mediators, or without any mediator at all (cf. John xiv. 6; Gal. i. 8; 1 John ii. 1).

IX. THAT THE COMPANY OF KORAH (WHATEVER BECAME OF HIMSELF) DIED BY FIRE, THE ELEMENT IN WHICH THEY SINNED. Even so he that presumptuously meddles with holy things, not being holy himself, shall perish by that very nearness which he rashly courted. The hand that is really and entirely *wet* can be plunged into molten metal without injury, and so he who is covered with the robe of righteousness may be a ministering servant of the consuming Fire, and live; but how great is the risk if the call be not clear (cf. Mark ix. 49 *a.*).

X. THAT THESE MEN WERE "SINNERS AGAINST THEIR OWN LIVES" IN TRUTH, ALTHOUGH THEY ONLY SEEMED TO BE VINDICATING THEIR JUST RIGHTS AGAINST USURPERS. Even so is every one that seeks his supposed rights not in the spirit of meekness and of personal self-abnegation, but in a spirit of pride, contradiction, and vain-glory. To contend for oneself—albeit sometimes necessary—is of all things most dangerous, lest even in gaining our cause we lose our souls (cf. Matt. xxiii. 12; 1 Cor. xiii. 5; Philip. ii. 5—7).

XI. THAT THEIR CENSERS WERE HALLOWED EVEN BY AN UNLAWFUL RELIGIOUS USE. Even so there is a kind of sanctity which attaches to every religious effort, however much it may be stained with pride or vitiated by error, and whatever ill results it may lead to, if it be made with sincerity. No such effort can be ignored as though it had not been made, nor cast out as wholly evil because not rightly made. Nothing which is done in the sacred name of religion (saving sheer hypocrisy) ought to be despised or neglected.

XII. THAT THE RESCUED CENSERS BECAME AN ADDITIONAL STRENGTH AND ORNAMENT TO THE ALTAR, AND A WARNING TO ALL GENERATIONS. Even so all assaults upon the faith and discipline of Christ are over-ruled for good, at the same time adding strength to some weak or neglected side of religion, and furnishing a warning against the mistakes and faults which misled their authors (cf. 1 Cor. xi. 19).

Consider again, *with respect to the Reubenites*—

I. THAT THEY WERE ANGRY WITH MOSES FOR WHAT WAS DUE TO THEIR OWN FAULT AND THE FAULT OF THE CONGREGATION. If they had not disobeyed they would have been in their own land by this time. Even so men are angry and impatient with the rule of Christ because it has not brought them peace or happiness, whereas this is wholly due to their own unfaithfulness. And so again men assail Christianity for

not having reformed the world and abolished all evils, whereas they themselves will not submit to the easy yoke and light burden of Christ.

II. THAT THEY FALSELY AND WICKEDLY SPAKE OF EGYPT IN TERMS ONLY APPLICABLE TO CANAAN. Even so do the enemies of Christ speak of a state of nature, and of the life of the natural man, unvexed by fear of hell or hope of heaven, as if *that* had been true happiness and peace, whereas they know that it is sheer misery and slavery (Rom. i. 28—32; vi. 20, 21; Eph. ii. 2, 3).

III. THAT THEY CHARGED MOSES WITH AMBITION AND SELF-SEEKING, AND WITH THROWING DUST IN THE EYES OF THE PEOPLE. Even so is Christianity commonly accounted (or at least described) by its open and more vulgar enemies as mere obscurantism intended to keep the people in darkness, and to make them an easy prey to designing men for power and profit (cf. 2 Cor. xi. 12, 20; xii. 16, &c.).

IV. THAT DATHAN AND ABIRAM, BEING OBDURATE, WERE SWALLOWED UP BY THE EARTH, because it was with their earthly lot that they were angry, and with their earthly ruler that they contended. Even so they that are of the earth earthy shall perish with the perishing world; it is their punishment that they are "swallowed up" in gross material cares or pleasures, and have no lot nor part in the upper air of spiritual life (1 Cor. xv. 48; Phil. iii. 19, and compare the use of "the earth" in the Apoc., as in ch. vii. 1; viii. 13).

Consider again, *with respect to the congregation at large*—

I. THAT THEY WERE IMPLICATED IN THE SIN, AND MIGHT HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THE PUNISHMENT, OF THESE MEN. Even so the pride and discontent which is active in a few is latent in the many, and brings danger and damage to the whole Church of Christ. The conventional restraints of Christianity prevent for the most part any open outbreak; nevertheless, it may be said almost of the mass of nominally Christian people that they have "a revolting and a rebellious heart" (cf. 1 Cor. v. 6; 2 Tim. ii. 17; Heb. xii. 15).

II. THAT THEY WERE SAVED BECAUSE THEY GAT UP FROM THE TABERNACLE OF THESE MEN ON EVERY SIDE, AND TOUCHED NOTHING THAT BELONGED TO THEM. Even so our safety is to separate ourselves wholly from the fellowship or influence (in religious things) of such as oppose themselves to the paramount and absolute claims of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King (Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. x. 22; 2 Cor. vi. 14—17; Jude 22, 23).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Korah's rebellion.* 1. *The ringleader and his policy.* Of all the seditious movements which embittered the heart of Moses and wrought trouble in Israel during the forty years' wanderings, the rebellion of Korah was by far the most formidable. The anxious tone of the narrative betrays a consciousness of this, and it is confirmed by the facts narrated. The other seditions were either confined to a few individuals, like the sedition of Miriam and Aaron, or, like the disturbances at Marah, and Kibroth-hataavah, and Kadesh, they were the confused movements of a crowd without definite aims, without leaders, without organisation. In this sedition of Korah there is not only a general ferment of rebellious feeling, but there is an organised conspiracy, with a resolute and able man at its head—a man who knows exactly what he would be at, and is consummately skilful in turning to account all the floating elements of discontent that exist in the congregation.

I. Let us begin by taking careful note of THE RINGLEADER. Korah was, like Moses and Aaron, of the tribe of Levi and family of Kohath. He was therefore a far-off cousin of the men against whom he rebelled. That Korah was the soul of the sedition is too plain to need proof. (Compare "the company of Korah," vers. 6, 16, 32; xxvi. 9, &c.; "the gainsaying of Korah," Jude 11). His design is not difficult to fathom. He is a man of honourable rank. But being an ambitious man, he cannot rest so long as there is in the camp any one greater than himself. He looks with envious eye on his cousins Moses and Aaron. Moses, under God, is supreme in peace and war. As for Aaron, not only has he been invested with the exclusive right to offer sacrifice and burn incense before the Lord, but his family have been set apart to form a priestly

caste in Israel. These honours did not come to the brothers by birthright, but by the special gift and appointment of the Lord. It would seem that Korah was of the elder branch of the family. He resolves to cast down both brothers from their high place. Thus far his intention is open and avowed. We need not hesitate to add that he means to vault into their place; but about this part of his intention he holds his peace for the present. So much for the man.

II. HIS POLICY. 1. *He begins by announcing a doctrine or principle.* As much as anything else in the sedition, this enables us to take the measure of Korah's genius for leadership. Movements which repose merely on brute force rarely achieve abiding results. Blood and iron are not all-sufficient. A true leader of men spares no pains to get hold of men's minds. He likes to give his followers a good watchword or rallying cry. When a nation gets thoroughly possessed with a great and sound principle, when some high and far-reaching doctrine seizes its heart, it is almost invincible. It is characteristic of Korah that he so far appreciates the importance of a great doctrine to rally round, that he casts about for some truth which may be made a handle of for his purpose. In the great oracle which was the first to be uttered at Sinai he thinks he sees what will serve admirably. "Ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). Accordingly, he raises the cry of Equality and Fraternity! Moses and Aaron have engrossed to themselves privileges which are the inalienable right of every Israelite. They have taken too much upon them, and must be stripped of their usurped honours. A cry of this sort has often been raised, in all sincerity, by men of excitable temperament. But Korah was no enthusiast. The principle that all Israelites are kings and priests, if it had been really inconsistent (as he pretended to think) with the rule of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron, would have been equally inconsistent with the rule which he coveted for himself. Still there can be little doubt that the cry Korah raised would gain him many supporters. 2. *He organises a band of conspirators.* By one means or another he succeeds in gathering around him no fewer than 250 accomplices. Nor were these obscure men. They all belonged to the ruling class. They are entitled (1) "princes of the assembly," *i. e.* chiefs of the congregation, natural leaders in their several tribes; (2) "famous in the congregation," more correctly, "men summoned in the assembly," *i. e.* members of the national council; (3) "men of renown," *i. e.* not nameless persons, but men of note among the people. Their names are not given, nor the tribes to which they belonged. Korah would take care to have all the tribes represented; but probably the Levites and Reubenites would be most numerous. It was a formidable conspiracy. 3. He diligently *enlists into his company all the malcontents* of the congregation. An example is seen in the Reubenites. They had a grievance. Reuben was the first-born, and as such had certain rights of priority, according to immemorial custom. These rights have been ignored, or transferred to Judah and Ephraim. The Reubenites are Korah's neighbours in the camp. He has inflamed their discontents, and held out flattering hopes. So Dathan, Abiram, and their people join him in open revolt (vers. 12—14). 4. Korah does not confine his attentions to the two hundred and fifty leaders and their pronounced followers. *The whole camp is pervaded with his emissaries.* Things are in such a train that when the two hundred and fifty confront Moses and Aaron at the door of the tabernacle, Korah is able to "gather all the congregation" at the same time. He hopes to overawe Moses by this demonstration of popular sympathy.

We see here:—1. An example of fine abilities abused. What an admirable helper in the kingdom of God Korah might have been! He might have been a second Joshua. Instead of that, he leads the wretched life of a conspirator, comes to a bad end, and leaves behind him an infamous name. The lust of power—the determination to be the greatest, has been the ruin of many a richly-gifted man. 2. An admonition to leaders in Church and State. There are leaders, not a few, who are such not of their own choice, but by the call of their brethren and by the clear appointment of Divine providence. It is natural and reasonable for them to expect the loyal support of the people. Certainly they are entitled to expect that they shall not be reviled and resisted, as if they had been ambitious and selfish usurpers. The example of Moses admonishes them not to be surprised if such reasonable expectations should be disappointed. A good conscience is an excellent

companion under bitter reproach and opposition, but it will not always ward them off. Never was leader less ambitious, less selfish, than Moses; yet he could hardly have been treated worse if he had been another Korah.—B.

Vers. 4—35.—*Korah's rebellion.* 2. *How the rebellion was encountered and put down.* Moses was the meekest of men. There were circumstances of aggravation in the rebellion of Korah which would have exhausted the meekness of most men, but they failed to break down that of Moses. The much-enduring patience of the servant of the Lord never shone out more brightly than in the way in which he encountered the sedition of his bold, unscrupulous kinsman.

I. HE CARRIED THE CAUSE BY APPEAL TO THE MOST HIGH. A proposal to this effect was made—1. To Korah and the two hundred and fifty chiefs of the conspiracy; vers. 5—7: *q. d.* "You challenge the legitimacy of my government and of Aaron's priesthood. You insinuate that we climbed so high by treading on the rights of our brethren. I might plead in reply that Aaron and I did not grasp at our present honours; they were thrust on us by the Lord. But let us refer the matter to the Lord's decision. Let him show who are his, who are holy, whom he hath chosen to draw near to him in his sanctuary. Take censers and present yourselves before the Lord to-morrow; I and Aaron will come likewise. Let the Lord answer by fire." Such is the proposal. To Moses the result is not doubtful. Yet his heart yearns over the misguided men. This comes out—(1) In his putting off the trial till next day. After a night's reflection they may perhaps repent: (2) In his remonstrance with those of the two hundred and fifty who were Levites (vers. 8—10). Their participation in the rebellion was peculiarly inexcusable. 2. To the Reubenites. Moses sent for them also; but they were not so bold as the two hundred and fifty, and refused to come. They sent back, instead, an insolent and reproachful reply (vers. 13, 14). Nevertheless, in their case also Moses refers the decision to the Lord (ver. 15): *q. d.* "They accuse me of playing the prince and tyrant over them, whereas I have never exacted from them an ordinary governor's dues. So far from defrauding them, I have not taken from them so much as an ass. The Lord judge between them and me, and respect not their offering."

II. THE APPEAL WAS HEARD AND JUDGMENT WAS PRONOUNCED. 1. We are not told how the two hundred and fifty passed the night. Some of them must have had misgivings. They could not fail to remember the tragic death of Nadab and Abihu when they drew near to the Lord with strange fire. But Korah suffered no flinching. He mustered them on the morrow. His emissaries too had been busy in the camp, for when the two hundred and fifty took their places they were surrounded with a vast congregation of eager and sympathizing spectators. This gathering it was hoped would at once confirm the resolution of the conspirators and overawe Moses and Aaron. Moses, on his part, having referred the matter to the Lord, left it in his hand; with what result need hardly be told. First the pillar of fire appeared in a way that struck dismay; and then, after a while, fire came forth and consumed Korah and his two hundred and fifty—"those sinners against their own souls." 2. The fate of the Reubenites presented features of a still more tragic interest (vers. 23—34). It was resolved that they should be made a signal example of Divine vengeance. But, in the first place, the congregation were charged to separate themselves from them (cf. Rev. xviii. 4). This might well have awakened fear, and led to repentance. But they were infatuated in their error. Instead of repenting and craving mercy, "they came out and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children." Oh these last words! What a harrowing scene they bring before the mind! Was it not enough that Dathan and Abiram and their sons should perish? Why should the women and unconscious children die? The sight is a harrowing one, but it is one that meets us every day. When a blaspheming wretch passes us on the road with his like-minded wife, and a string of little children at their heels, is not that Abiram over again, with his wife and little children? A sight not to be contemplated without fear and pity.—Read the terms in which Moses referred the decision in this case to the Lord, and the awful judgment that ensued, vers. 28—34. . . . One can hardly help commiserating the Reubenites more than the Levites, for the Levites, one would think, must have

sinned against the clearer light. Yet the facts seem to show that the Reubenites were the more aggravated sinners, or at least that their families took part more entirely in their sin. This at least is certain, that while the families of the Reubenite rebels perished with them, the family of Korah survived. Centuries after this, the sons of Korah flourished in Judah, and did honourable service as psalmists (titles of Psalms xlii.—xlix., and lxxxiv.—lxxxviii.)

The story of Korah is an admonition to nations, and especially to churches, to "look diligently lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble them, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. xii. 15). When a society provokes God's displeasure, he does not need to send against it some external foe; there are other and more humiliating forms of chastisement at his disposal. He may suffer some root of bitterness to spring up from within; he may suffer some one of its own children to be its scourge. A Korah will work more mischief in Israel than the Egyptians and the Amalekites put together can effect.—B.

Vers. 19—22, 41—50.—*Korah's rebellion.* 3. *How the congregation abetted the rebels, and were only saved through the intercession of Moses and Aaron.* Bold and crafty as Korah was, he could not have done so much mischief if elements of mischief had not been everywhere rife in the camp. Many things conspire to show that his policy was to inflame and turn to bad account discontents previously existing among the people. The existence of these discontents is not inexplicable. A crowd of bondmen are not to be transferred into a nation of reasonable free men all at once. Moreover, the circumstances of the congregation at Kadesh Barnea were not fitted to make the task of Moses an easy one. After having reached the threshold of Canaan, the people had been turned back and condemned to pass the rest of their days in the wilderness. To be sure they had no one but themselves to blame; but this did not mend the matter. The consciousness that the ditch into which a man has fallen is a ditch of his own digging does not always move a man to take his fall meekly. Penitent hearts may be silent under God's chastisement; but impenitent hearts blaspheme him the more for what they suffer. We need not marvel, therefore, that there were many in the congregation, besides his active coadjutors, who were ready to lend their countenance to Korah in his rebellion.

I. THE SYMPATHY OF THE PEOPLE WITH KORAH showed itself in various ways. 1. They did not rise and vindicate the government of Moses, as they ought to have done. 2. In the crisis of the rebellion they gathered together in front of the tabernacle to encourage Korah and his two hundred and fifty with their countenance. Probably enough they did this with light hearts. Individuals moving with a crowd are apt to lose the sense of personal responsibility. But we shall have to answer to God for what we do, none the less because many others are doing it along with us. In the case in hand the general countenance given to the rebels was so deeply resented by God that it had almost proved fatal to the whole nation. To swell with our voice the shouts of a popular assembly may seem a trifle; but if the shouts are directed against the maintainers of truth and righteousness, we cannot take part without sin and danger. 3. When the rebels died for their sin, the people charged Moses and Aaron with their blood (ver. 41). A fresh example of perversity which again had almost proved fatal to the whole nation.

II. It is a relief to turn from the perverse ungodliness of the people to THE MEEKNESS AND UNSELFISH ZEAL OF MOSES AND AARON. When the Reubenite rebels and the 250 conspirators perished, Moses did not utter a word in deprecation of their terrible doom. A signal example had become necessary. But when the whole people was threatened, he fell on his face and pleaded for it. This he did twice, he and Aaron. 1. When the people abetted Korah and his company before the tabernacle (ver. 22). Twice before Moses had been tempted to desert his office of intercessor, and to separate his fortunes from those of his brethren (cf. Exod. xxxii. 10—13; Numb. xiv. 12). On this third occasion, as on the two former, he refuses to do so. On the contrary, he intercedes with the energy of a man pleading for his own life. When sin abounds and judgments threaten, may the Lord always raise up among us intercessors like Moses and Aaron! 2. When the people charged him with the death of the rebels (ver. 41). This time his intercession took a new form. While the people

were murmuring the plague was breaking out in the camp. How shall it be stayed? Let Aaron show himself a true priest by making atonement for the people. There is no time for presenting a sin offering. Let him instead fill his censer with coals from the altar of sacrifice, and run in between the living and the dead, burning incense. It was a palpable token and demonstration of the Divine authority of the priesthood which the rebels had affected to condemn, that whereas the two hundred and fifty had by their incense-burning brought on themselves death, Aaron by his incense-burning warded off death, and that not only from himself but from the whole congregation.

General lessons:—1. The greatest storm of trial will not overthrow the man who makes God his strength. Moses begins, carries on, finishes his conflict against Korah with prayer (vers. 4, 22, 45). Hence his unfailing meekness. 2. General demonstrations of sympathy with men who are the champions of error and unrighteousness bring guilt on the community, are displeasing to God, and may be expected to bring down his chastisements. 3. Moses, in his meek endurance of obloquy and his successful intercession for those who assailed him with it, is the figure of our blessed Lord. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. He prayed, "Father, forgive them." And thousands of them were forgiven. Christ's priesthood which men despise, how often is it glorified in their salvation! 4. The best answer that a Church or a ministry can give to men by whom their legitimacy is challenged or derided, is to bestir themselves like Aaron, standing between the dead and the living, and turning back the tide of destruction.—B.

Vers. 1—35.—*Envy and its bitter fruits.* I. A CONSPIRACY OF SLANDEROUS REBELS. 1. They begin by blowing up the flame of envy in one another's hearts. The vicinity of the Reubenites to the Kohathites in the camp gave opportunities for this. "Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour," is a Jewish saying perhaps derived from this incident. 2. Their sin the more serious because they were "men of renown." Influential sinners particularly dangerous. 3. Korah's sin especially grievous (1) because of his kinship to Moses, but chiefly (2) because of the honour already bestowed on him and his brethren (vers. 9, 10). Note the insatiableness of sin. 4. Their conduct condemns their motives also as bad. They envied the power or privileges, perhaps even the provision, made for the priests, as being somewhat better than that of the Levites. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." 5. They bring a false charge against Moses (ver. 3), which recoils on themselves (ver. 7). God had "lifted up" Moses; they were seeking to lift up themselves. 6. They will not avail themselves of "space for repentance" till the morrow, when God will decide. They will not "sleep over it" with any advantage to themselves. 7. They are unmoved by the reminder that their murmuring is really against God (ver. 11). 8. They meet the friendly interposition of Moses by a fresh conspiracy of grievous falsehoods: of ambition (ver. 13), deception (ver. 14: "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?"), and responsibility for the evils they had brought on them by their own sins (vers. 13, 14: "to kill us;" "thou hast not brought us," &c.). 9. They persist in the most audacious defiance of God till the very last. Sketch Korah and his company with their censers at the door of the tabernacle, while Dathan, Abiram, and their kindred are recklessly waiting the issue at the doors of their tents, in spite of the warning of ver. 26. This last act of sin one element also of their punishment.

II. A FEARFUL RETRIBUTION FROM AN ANGRY GOD. 1. The infatuation of the rebels one part of the judgment. The madness of hardened sinners their own guilt, but God's punishment (cf. Exod. iv. 21; 1 Kings xxii. 19—23; Acts xxviii. 23—27). 2. New, strange sins call for a new, "strange work" of judgment (vers. 31—33; Prov. xxix. 1). 3. Those who unbidden handled sacred fire in their censers perished by the fire of God. Learn hence the guilt and peril of murmuring against the appointments of God in regard to the methods of his government, or the means of acceptable approach to him through our Divine High Priest. Teachers and rulers in God's Church are to be honoured and followed (1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 17), and Christ is to be recognised as "the head of all principality and power" (Col. ii. 10), and the one and only medium of acceptance with God (Ps. ii. 12; John v. 22, 23; xiv. 6).—P.

Ver. 22.—"*The God of the spirits of all flesh.*" This name of God reminds us of some of the relations in which God stands to us his creatures, who are immortal spirits in mortal flesh. We select three, and speak of him—

I. As Proprietor. "He *formeth* the spirit of man within him" (Zech. xii. 1). The verb used is applied to a potter or a smith, and reminds us that God has modelled the human spirit, with its varied powers, according to his own ideal (Ps. xxxiii. 15). Since he formed man in his own image, he is "the Father of spirits" in a sense in which he is not the Father of animals. Thus he is our Proprietor, who can say, "All souls are mine," who feels a deep interest in "the work of his own hands" (Ps. cxxxviii. 8), and who will use, according to his judgment, the spirits he has formed and variously endowed. See Moses' use of this truth in Numb. xxvii. 15—17.

II. As Heart-Searcher. Sin has broken into the natural relation of God to his creatures. He has to deal with them as sinners with various degrees of criminality. Hence need of discrimination which only the Creator and Searcher of hearts possesses. This truth used by Abraham (Gen. xviii. 23—33) and by Moses and Aaron (ver. 22). It is only the Heart-Searcher who can righteously adjust (1) the direct punishment of sin, which falls only on the guilty (Ezek. xviii. 1—32), and (2) the indirect consequences, which may fall on the innocent (Exod. xxxiv. 7), as on Dathan's children (vers. 27, 32). In this narrative we see (1) conditional preservation (ver. 24), (2) diverse judgments (vers. 32, 35, 49), (3) bereavements and dishonour to the survivors (ch. xxvii. 3). Faith in "God, the God of the spirits of all flesh," may keep us calm in the midst of judgments (Isa. lvii. 16).

III. As the Saviour. If God were not a Saviour there would soon be no "spirits of flesh" to be the God of (Mal. iii. 6). But God's salvation is for all flesh (2 Cor. v. 19; 1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 John ii. 2). If God is our Saviour, then we may delight in his proprietorship of us (Ps. cxix. 94; cxvi. 12; Isa. xliii. 1). And we can cheerfully accept any discipline which our Heart-Searcher sends (Heb. xii. 5—10); for "the God of my life" is also "the God of my salvation."—P.

Vers. 31—33.—*The destructiveness of sin.* Some things are very much dreaded because so destructive. *E. g.* locusts, war, pestilence. But there is nothing so destructive as sin. As "no man liveth," so no man sinneth, "to himself." Of Korah, as of Achan or of other transgressors, it may be said, "That man perished not alone in his iniquity" (Josh. xxii. 20). The destructive effects of sin are twofold—I. Personal, II. Social.

I. Personal: on the sinner himself, as in the case of Korah the Kohathite, honoured as one of the ministers of God's ark. Illustration—Infection, taken unawares, may not be suspected by friends, hardly by the victim; but its effects (fever, eruption, &c.) will be seen by and by. Sin cannot always be kept secret (Isa. lix. 12; James i. 15). "*Evil* shall slay the wicked." If the consequences are not as fatal as in Korah's case, moral destruction is going on. As Alpine granite may be reduced by frost and damp to a kind of mould, so sin—some sins especially—seems to break up the moral nature and reduce it to ruins. From the personal consequences of sin *the destroyer* we can only be delivered by Christ *the Saviour* (Titus ii. 14).

II. Social: on others. In the case of Korah and his conspirators, sin was fatal to their families. So perhaps in the case of Achan (Josh. vii. 24—26; xxii. 20); if not, how terrible for them to see the husband, the father, killed, and to know that he had caused the loss of thirty-six men at Ai! "Curses, like chickens, always come home to roost." We cannot sin with impunity to our family any more than Adam did. Sin propagates sin. It involves others, directly or indirectly, in its fatal consequences. Illustration—King Saul, and the catastrophe to both family and nation at Gilboa. Unrighteous statesmen. Men of high social position who are immoral or infidel. Each sinner a centre of contagion (Eccles. ix. 18). The fate of the children of Korah's company a warning to sinful parents. The children of the godless may be expected to become the parents of godless children, and thus the evil may be perpetuated from generation to generation. Mournful epitaph for a sinner's grave: "That man perished not alone in his iniquity." "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. v. 20, 21; viii. 2, 3).—P.

Vers. 1—3.—*The rebellion of Korah. The conspirators and their pretext.* Here is now the sin of Miriam and Aaron (ch. xii.) on a larger scale. Aaron, who had been inveigled into troubling Moses, is now joined with Moses in suffering from the pride and envy of others.

I. THE CONSPIRATORS. They were men of positi and influence. We come upon a different kind of grievance from that of the ignorant multitude. Korah and his band may have been comparatively free from lusting after the delicacies of Egypt. Different men, different temptations. Korah was a Kohathite, joined therefore in the honourable office of bearing the ark and the sanctuary furniture (Numb. iv. 1—20). The others belonged to the tribe of Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob, and with them were 250 of the leaders in the nation. A conspiracy of men of this sort was not so easily dealt with as an outbreak of the whole people. Korah was probably a man of deep, deliberate designs, able to bide his time, and watching as he had opportunity, to draw first one and then another into his schemes. Here was a set of men seeking great things for themselves (Jer. xlv. 5). They had got as far as they could get in the orderly and appointed way, but they wanted to be higher, and somehow or other Moses and Aaron blocked the way. These two men were a long way above the rest, and seemingly in an altogether different order of service, and thus the rebellious, envious spirit of Korah was excited. He was a man of the sort who would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven.

II. THE PRETEXT OF ATTACK. Conspirators against rightful authority like to have a pretext of something fair and just. Thus Miriam: "Hath the Lord not spoken also by us?" And thus Korah: "All the congregation are holy, every one of them." There was something in Korah's office to furnish temptation to an envious mind. As he was engaged in the service of the tabernacle he saw Aaron going where he dare not go, touching things which he dare not touch. He heard Moses coming forward with a message professedly from God, but it was a message from the invisible. No one saw this God with whom Moses professed to hold intercourse, and doubtless Korah concluded that the messages were presumptuous inventions of Moses himself. He considered the honours and privileges only of the leader and priest; he made no allowance for the burdens. Being a self-seeking, self-aggrandising man, he could see no higher feeling in others. He wanted to be at the top of the tree himself, and seeing Moses and Aaron there, he made sure they had got there by audacity and determination, and not by any appointment from God at all. "All the congregation are holy." This was a true statement, but an insufficient reason for attack. Thus the plea of all men being equal is put forth against those who hold high rank and great power. The outward eminence only is seen; the burdens of state, the ceaseless care, are all unknown. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Thus jealously Paul and Timothy were dealt with in the Church at Corinth, when they wished, not to have dominion over the faith of their brethren, but to be helpers of their joy (2 Cor. i. 24). Little did the schismatics dream of the Apostle's trials, crowned with the thorniest of all, the care (*μέριμνα*) of all the Churches (2 Cor. xi. 23—28). Moses would have rejoiced to take Korah's place, or even the lowest place in the camp, if God had not put him where he was. But of all this inner life of Moses, Korah knew and cared nothing. In his eyes Moses was a self-exalted man, to be immediately and irretrievably abased. "Do we not all wear the fringes, and look each of us on his own riband of blue? Did you not tell us yourself that these were to remind us of our holiness towards God. Why then should you have an access to God and consequent honour which are denied to us?" Thus these leaders of the people had yet to learn, as only bitter lessons would teach them, that they were under a theocracy. There was no room for a democracy, either real or pretended, in Israel. Nor is the Church of Christ now a democracy, though it is the fashion sometimes to speak of the democratic spirit in it. It does indeed make light of human distinctions, traditions, fashions, and prejudices, but only to put in place of them the authority of Christ. He has appointed his Church humbly and faithfully to execute his will. Professing Christians may indeed choose Church officials, but the real call and choice and guidance are of the Master himself.—Y.

Vers. 4—11.—*The reply of Moses to Korah.* I. KORAH'S QUESTION IS ONE FOR GOD TO ANSWER. It brings an accusation to which Moses had no answer in any

language or conduct of his own. He was in a humbler way like Jesus before his enemies. When Jesus spoke of his relation to the Father, his complete dependence on the Father's will, and obedience to it, and of himself as the sole revealer of the Father, these enemies sneered and threatened; and no reply was effectual except that in which the Father glorified the Son by raising him from the dead. And even this was denied by those so enamoured of lies that it was impossible for them to receive the truth. Moses here could but wait an answer in some effectual and crushing way out of the great Invisible. Thus we have the impressive sight of a man who knows he is falsely accused and can wait serenely for the justifying word. If he had been guilty of self-seeking, as Korah was, and with the stain of it on his conscience, he could never have appealed in this way. It was not an empty call upon God, a mere rhetorical device. The challenge to Korah and his band is definite, and expresses a sure confidence in God as vindicator of his servants. "An honest cause fears not a trial, fears not a second trial, fears not a speedy trial." An innocent person needs do nothing in rashness, nor will he seek causes of evasion and delay. Let there be time for decent preparation, and on the morrow a decisive answer shall be given.

II. THE QUESTION SHALL BE ADDRESSED TO GOD IN THE MOST EXPLICIT WAY. By a solemn act he shall be questioned, and by a solemn act he shall answer. Let the people be effectually tested as to this holiness of which Korah makes so much. If even he and his band are holy before God as Aaron is, then let them attempt a part of Aaron's office (Exod. xxx. 1—9). If God accepts the service from them as from Aaron, then all that Korah says may be taken as true, and Aaron may retreat into obscurity and shame as a detected impostor. Moses was ready for the one test that should be complete. It is always open to us, if we do not believe statements made on authority, to try them for ourselves. If we do not believe that arsenic is poisonous, it is quite open to us to make the experiment on our own life. It may be a foolish experiment, but it is certainly a possible one. There was no fortified wall round the sanctuary. God did not put a guard of soldiers to keep defilers back. He himself was guard of his sanctuary. His own Divine energy resided in the holy things to avenge them against any polluted touch. Thus when men repudiate gospel truth and say, "Who is Christ, or who Paul, that we should be tied to square our future and control our hopes by their requirements?" God takes in hand the clearing of his Son and servants from all reproaches. There is nothing to prevent a man *trying* to please God apart from him who is appointed the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth; but God in his own due time will make the trial manifest as ending in disastrous, ignominious failure. The more distinct and emphatic the challenge, the more distinct and emphatic shall the answer be.

III. MOSES SUGGESTS CERTAIN CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY LEAD TO A TIMELY RETREAT. Moses doubtless had a prophet's premonitions of the terrible doom into which this proud band was advancing; therefore he mentions things which Korah had neglected sufficiently to consider, and which would show him that God had been honouring him as well as Moses and Aaron. Korah belonged to a tribe specially separated to the service of God. If we complain of those who stand in a higher rank than ourselves, then those who are lower may complain of us in turn. All had been by God's appointment. The tribe of Levi had no more right to complain against Moses and Aaron than any other tribe had to complain against Levi. The God who arranged one body and many members arranged the whole body of Israel, so that every part should contribute in harmony to the whole, and receive good in return. The service of Korah was just as needful in its way as that of Moses and Aaron. Korah was clamouring for the priesthood: who then was to do Korah's work if he stepped into Aaron's shoes? Thus Moses made an appeal to whatever generous and public spirit was in him to think more seriously on the good of the whole. God could not allow any one to imperil the integrity of Israel. They were in a dangerous position, this band of rebels, yet they knew it not. It was the Lord they were gathered against, and not Moses and Aaron, and just in proportion to the greatness of their ignorance was the greatness of their peril. They had talked indeed as if it was the Lord's cause they were thinking of, but their real object, which seemed easily in

their grasp, was to trample down Moses and Aaron and take their place. "What is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?" An earthen vessel is a very common, cheap, fragile thing. If it is nothing more than an earthen vessel, then you may in a moment, unhindered, dash it to pieces. But if God, to show the excellency of his power, has put his treasure in an earthen vessel, then it were safer for you to conspire against the best founded of human governments than to touch that earthen vessel with so much as your little finger.—Y.

Vers. 12—15.—*Dathan, Abiram, and Moses.* Dathan and Abiram seem to have been absent from the interview, as if to show their particular and utter contempt for Moses. It was a sort of crime against the new authority to have any dealings with him, to treat him with any civility. But Moses does not treat them as they treat him. It is good to stoop to rebels even, and show them a way of being reconciled—a way all in vain, however, so far as these two were concerned. What contempt they had silently shown by their absence is now made clear in unmistakable words. A free vent is found for all the rage and scorn pent up in their hearts, and one can see a sort of sidelong rebuke to Korah for condescending to make any terms with such a deceiver.

I. THEIR CHARGE AGAINST MOSES. Notice how *all their complaints end with him.* There is no word concerning Jehovah. Korah, at any rate, made a pretence of thinking of God's glory, as if Moses were not merely injuring the people, but robbing God of their service. Dathan and Abiram talk like utter atheists, as if the promises were of Moses, and not of God, and as if the non-fulfilment came from the inability or malice of Moses, and not from the righteous indignation of God. God had said that he brought them out of Egypt to be their God. Dathan and Abiram leave God altogether out of the question. It is Moses who has brought them out of a land that might be counted one of milk and honey, as compared with the wilderness. That assertion of Jehovah's appointment, favour, and protection which Moses so rejoicingly made was to them nothing but the lying of tyrannous statecraft. Men who are themselves without perceptions of the Eternal, whose thoughts are wholly within the sphere of time and sense, are fond of speaking concerning such as walk in the light of the Eternal as if they must be either fools or knaves. It is possible that Dathan and Abiram had been so blinded by the god of this world as to have persuaded themselves they were the champions of a righteous cause. *The savage and heartless aims which they attribute to him.* How easy it is when one's heart is so inclined, to distort into hideousness the lineaments of the most noble characters! Vindictive minds are like those spherical mirrors which alter the shape of everything presented to them. Thus did Dathan and Abiram make it out that Moses had drawn them from comparative comfort and security, to trifle with them and knock them about hither and thither at his own caprice. How differently the same things look according to the point from which we view them! How we should be on our guard against the representations of wicked, self-seeking men! how slow to credit or even to consider any slander upon God's servants! They charge him, moreover, with drawing them into the wilderness by *specious promises*, made only to be broken, as if, finding he could not keep these promises, he had cunningly thrown the fault on a pretended deity behind. Men will look anywhere for the reasons of disappointment save in their own headstrong and self-regarding lives. *The infallible discernment which they claim for themselves.* "Do you think people have only eyes for what you would have them see?" What is harder than to get the Dathans and Abirams of the world out of the supercilious egotism in which they are entrenched? It is bad enough to have eyes and yet see not, to fail in discerning the great realities of the unseen and eternal, but it is even worse to see all sorts of horrors and iniquities that have no existence. There is a sort of people in the world who suspect everybody, and the better any one seems, the more for that very reason are they doubtful. Thus Jesus is held for a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, one casting out demons by the prince of the demons; Paul is a pattern of duplicity; there is no real integrity among men, no real purity among women. The defiled minds of such pull down every other person, without hesitation, to their own level. There is no arguing with the man who believes that every face is nothing but a mask.

II. MOSES' INDIGNANT PROTEST. He does not address the slanderers, for where would have been the use? He makes a direct appeal to God: "Respect not their offering." Probably they were going to set up some sort of altar in their own tents, since they refused to come to the tabernacle; only to find out, as Cain did before, and many have done since, that will-worship (Col. ii. 23) has no acceptance with God. Even if their offering had been made by the strictest ceremonial rules, what would have been its chance of acceptance with him to whom lying lips are an abomination? "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" (Ps. xv.). There is a claim here not only for the vindication of Aaron as the appointed priest, but of Moses also as the appointed leader, the faithful messenger, the pure channel of the pure commandments and promises of God. The man who would teach the people righteousness must be clear of the faintest suspicion that robbery or oppression clings to his own garments. He must be far different from those rulers of after days whom Isaiah denounces (Isa. i. 10—15, 23). "Moses got more in his estate when he kept Jethro's flock than since he came to be king in Jeshurun."—Y.

Vers. 16—35.—*The destruction of Korah and his company.* I. THE APPLICATION OF THE TEST. 1. *Moses and Aaron put themselves on a perfect outward equality with the rest.* They humbled themselves that they might be exalted. Aaron, already chosen of the Lord, stands with his censer and incense in the midst of the company of rebels, as if he were but a candidate waiting for approval. Such is not the way of the dignitaries of the world. Their pomp and honour is mostly a mere convention; strip them of their titles and gauds, and you would scarcely notice them in the street. But Aaron was the priest of God wherever he went, and howsoever he was surrounded. Therefore, without fear or shame, he could take the lowest place, sure that he would presently be addressed, "Come up hither." So Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, reduced to the level of criminals, crucified instead of Barabbas. Christians have often had to stand among the ranks of evil-doers, but in due time they have gone out from them, because they were not of them (1 Pet. ii. 19—23). 2. *Korah shows unquailing audacity to the last*, i. e. up to the appearing of the glory. The more the servants of God humbled themselves, the higher and more confident were his enemies in their pride. Korah was at his very highest before he fell. Aaron, whom he had so often seen going where he was forbidden, stands now on a level with the ordinary Levite; nay, more, he is as low as the other tribes. The congregation too has gathered round Korah in sympathy and expectation, for doubtless he has promised them such things as they love. And even as God had allowed rebellious Israel to go on even to the lifting of stones against Caleb and Joshua (ch. xiv. 10), so here he allows the pride of Korah to swell to its fullest extent. And hence God's people should ever gain confidence in the times when he seems to be inactive. We are not to be discouraged because the wicked go on from strength to strength. The Jews rejected Christ; they consulted to slay him; they seized him; they put him through an examination in their own court; they handed him to Pilate; he was mocked, scourged, crucified; yet God did not intervene. And who now does not see that all this time he was in process of answering the prayer, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee"? (John xvii. 1). Korah, rising, was lifting Moses and Aaron with him. He fell; they remained. 3. *The first expression of Divine wrath.* A general destruction is threatened, without mitigation or delay. And if we only consider, we shall see how fitting it was that the first word should be a menace of complete and terrible destruction. The holiness of God is a great reality, keenly sensitive to any sin. How much then was it outraged by such a daring attempt as that of Korah and his company! And the whole congregation had shown a sad alacrity in their support. Why, even we ourselves, when we hear of some great crime in which many are engaged, do not stop to make distinctions between principals and accomplices. We feel that our first word must be one of utter abhorrence and condemnation with respect to all who had part in such great wickedness. It is only because we are so little sensitive to the evil of sin, that we find difficulty in understanding the menace of ver. 21. 4. *Moses and Aaron promptly intercede.* God has already shown what a distance separates them from the rest of the people. Now they proceed to show it themselves. It was the hour of exaltation and triumph

but, like truly humble and holy men, they were occupied with intense pity for the great multitude suddenly exposed to the full wrath of God. Was there any in that great multitude who would thus have thought of *them?* Their position towards God and men comes out in something like its completeness. If Moses had much on behalf of God to say to men, so he had much on behalf of men to say to God. And Jesus is put before us as the great High Priest. If the sinful Aaron could be touched with a feeling of the infirmities of his brethren, not less is the same true of the sinless Jesus. Amid the threatening penalties of sin, and with the growing consciousness of our own helplessness, we can look to him for intercessory services, even those which he came to earth specially to render. His Father, who is God of the spirits of all flesh, sent him not to destroy men's lives, but to save them (Luke ix. 56).

II. THE AWFUL PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCE. 1. *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are devoted to destruction.* The intercession of Moses and Aaron, earnest and prevailing as it is, has a limit in the request and the result. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. *There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it*" (1 John v. 16). The people are first of all included in menace with the three chief rebels that presently they may be separated from them. Leaders and followers are both guilty, but there are degrees in wickedness as in holiness. It is perhaps of great significance, if only we will consider that God in this manifestation of his wrath came not only with three separate punishments, but three different modes of punishment. He seems to shadow forth something of degrees of punishment in the eternal world. If the blind lead the blind, *both* shall fall into the pit; but surely the woe of a deeper fall is to those presumptuous blind who drag others with them. Here were those who would not admit that Moses and Aaron had been Divinely separated for a peculiar service, and now in their towering pride they are separated for a peculiar doom. If they had not climbed so high they would not have fallen so far. 2. As we see the people falling away from Korah, we notice *what a feeble bond unites the wicked.* Only a few minutes ago the people were pressing admiringly on him as he bearded Moses in the very door of the tabernacle; now they flee from him and the other two as if they infected the air with death. The bond that looks so firm is but a rope of sand. It will not hold when anything appears that looks like a peril to individual selfishness. We may be reminded indeed of "honour among thieves," but this at the most can only mean that wicked men may act together till the last, not that they may be trusted to do it. There is no such coherency possible amongst the wicked as amongst the good. They have no entirely common purpose; each has his own advantage to seek, and so one may easily thwart all the rest. The Jews in the hour of their triumph over Jesus are chagrined by the inscription which obstinate Pilate puts on the cross. 3. Notice *the reference to the elders* in ver. 25. They had been appointed, seventy of them, to help Moses in the burden which had become so grievous (ch. xi.). Where then had they been all this time? Men with the Spirit of God upon them should surely have sided boldly with Moses, even before the glory appeared. Perhaps indeed they were on his side; and we must not infer too much from silence, else Caleb and Joshua would appear in a dubious light. But this much at all events may be said, that even though they were select and judicious men, and God took of the spirit that was upon Moses and put it upon them, all this was insufficient to help Moses in his extremest needs. We may take their appointment rather as an expression of regard and sympathy, something fitted to teach the elders themselves to be full of consideration and attention towards Moses. The great crowning needs of life cannot be met by human help, even when sanctified; we must still, like Moses, fall on our faces before God. Not until God has appeared, vindicated his servant, and scattered the unfriendly crowd, do we hear that the elders of Israel followed him. 4. *The carrying out of the judgment on Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.* Moses announces that the mode of their death was to have great evidential value with respect to himself. Those who had been foremost as accusers and slanderers shall now be chief witnesses on his side, speaking more loudly for him in their death than ever they had spoken against him in their life. It had been

their charge against Moses that he had assumed undue authority; therefore, to show how much he was in the secrets of the Divine government, he announces, not only that God himself would take in hand the execution of a righteous sentence, but would execute it in a way hitherto unheard of. And this very way Moses proceeds to indicate. What a point of faith he here reaches! what a perfect community of thought with God! for scarcely has he spoken when that happens which he said would happen, and in exactly the same way. Death and burial are included in the same act. No one was made unclean by these three men or any of their belongings.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE PLAGUE BEGUN AND AVERTED (vers. 41—50). Ver. 41.—**Ye have killed the people of the Lord.** They had in truth forfeited their own lives, and Moses and Aaron had no more part in their death than St. Peter had in the death of Ananias and Sapphira. But it was easy to represent the matter as a personal conflict between two parties, in which the one had triumphed by destroying the other. In speaking of Korah and his company as the "people of the Lord," they meant to say that their lives were as sacred as the lives of Moses and Aaron, and the crime of taking them as great; they did not know, or did not heed, that their own immunity was due to the intercession of those whom they thus charged with sacrilegious murder.

Ver. 42.—**The cloud covered it.** Not soaring above it, as usual, but lying close down upon it, to signify that the presence of the Lord had passed in some special sense into the tabernacle (see on ch. xii. 5, 10).

Ver. 45.—**Get you up.** הֵרֹמּוּ, from רוּם. The command is substantially the same as that in ver. 21. Since it was not obeyed, we must conclude (as before) that it was not intended to be obeyed. **They fell on their faces.** In horror and dismay. No doubt they would have interceded (as in ver. 22), but that Moses perceived through some Divine intimation that wrath had gone forth, and that some more prevailing form of mediation than mere words must be sought.

Ver. 46.—**Take a censer.** Rather, "the censer," *i. e.* the proper censer of the high priest, which he used upon the great day of atonement (Levit. xvi. 12), and which is said in Heb. ix. 4 to have been of gold, and to have been kept in the most holy place. It is not, however, mentioned amongst the sacred furniture in the Levitical books. **And go quickly.** הוֹלֵךְ. Rather, "take it quickly." **And make an atonement for them.** There was no precedent for making an incense offering after this fashion, but it was on the analogy of the rite performed within the tabernacle on the day of atonement (Levit. xvi.). Whether Moses received any intimation that the wrath might be thus averted, or whether it was the daring thought of a devoted heart when all else failed, it is impossible to say. As it had no precedent, so it never seems to have been repeated; nor is the name or idea of atonement anywhere else connected with the offering of incense apart from the shedding of blood.

Ver. 48.—**And he stood between the dead and the living.** If this is to be understood literally, as seems most consistent with the character of the narrative, then the plague must have been strictly local in its character, striking down its victims in one quarter before passing on to another; only thus could it be arrested by the actual interposition of Aaron with the smoking censer. **And the plague was stayed.** Thus was given to the people the most striking and public proof of the saving efficacy of that mediatorial and intercessory office which they had been ready to invade and to reject. Thus also was it shown that what in profane hands was a savour of death unto death, became when rightly and lawfully used a savour of life unto life.

Ver. 49.—**Fourteen thousand and seven hundred.** A very large number to have died in the course of a few minutes, as the narrative seems to imply. The plague was undoubtedly of a supernatural character, and cannot be considered as a pestilence or other natural visitation. **Beside them that died about the matter of Korah.** These were (1) the two hundred and fifty men who offered incense, (2) Dathan and Abiram, and their families, (3) probably Korah himself, (4) possibly some other partisans of Korah (see on ver. 32), making in all about 300 souls. Thus we get the round number of 15,000 as the total of those that perished on this occasion.

Ver. 50.—**And the plague was stayed.** Not only temporarily, while Aaron stood between the dead and the living, but finally and effectually.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 41—50.—*The priestly atonement.* We see in this section the priesthood of the anointed at once exercised and vindicated in the fullest and highest sense by shielding from wrath and death those who were appointed to die on account of sin. The spiritual meaning so far and so plainly eclipses the literal that we might well suppose the passage to have been written in the light of the finished work of Christ; as it is, we cannot possibly refuse to read the "mind of the Spirit" testifying before of the atonement and intercession of our High Priest. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT WRATH HAD GONE FORTH AGAINST ALL ISRAEL BECAUSE OF THEIR ACTIVE OR PASSIVE PARTICIPATION IN REBELLION AGAINST THE WILL AND ORDINANCE OF GOD. Even so had wrath gone forth against all mankind, for that all were compromised (albeit not all to the same degree, or by the same deliberate choice) in sin and rebellion (Rom. v. 12, 14; xi. 32; Eph. ii. 3).

II. THAT MOSES DID NOT EVEN ATTEMPT TO PRAY AT THIS TIME FOR ISRAEL, BECAUSE THE SENTENCE WAS GONE FORTH, AND EVEN HIS PRAYER HAD BEEN UNAVAILING. Even so, however much the intercessions of righteous men may have been heard in other and lesser matters (James v. 16 *b*.), yet could not any human means avail to turn aside from us the sentence of death which follows upon sin (Gen. ii. 17; Ps. xlix. 7, 8; Rom. vi. 23; vii. 24). And note that as far as we can see, even the incarnate Son had not saved us as Lawgiver and Ruler except his intercessions had been based upon his meritorious cross and passion. Moses must give place to Aaron here.

III. THAT THE PLAGUE ADVANCED ALL THE WHILE WITH FRIGHTFUL CELERITY. Even so sin and death made havoc of an evil world ere Christ came forth to stay the plague (Rom. i.; iii.; v.). And still, where it is not stayed, its progress is as rapid and as irresistible as ever. Thousands are daily swept away to destruction.

IV. THAT THE FERVENT, SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE OF MOSES FOR HIS PEOPLE (WHO HAD OPPOSED AND REJECTED HIM) DEVISED THIS NEW REMEDY, UNKNOWN BEFORE. Even so it was the infinite, self-abasing love of the eternal Son which devised the means of our salvation, albeit we had rebelled against him and cast off his dominion (Ps. ii. 2, 3, 12; Luke xix. 14; John iii. 16; Acts iii. 26; Rom. v. 8; 1 John iv. 10).

V. THAT THIS REMEDY WAS FOUND IN AN INCENSE OFFERING (1) MADE BY AARON, (2) IN THE CENSER, (3) AMONG THE DYING PEOPLE. Even so the one Divine deliverance from eternal death is (1) in the high priestly intercession of Christ, (2) offered in the golden censer of his infinite merits, (3) offered "in the midst of the congregation," *i. e.* in our nature, wherein he lived and died, and in which he ever liveth to make intercession (Luke xxiii. 34; John xvii. 19, 20; Rom. v. 9, 10; Heb. ii. 12—17; vii. 24, 25; Rev. viii. 3, 4).

VI. THAT THE INCENSE WAS TO BE LIGHTED WITH FIRE FROM OFF THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING, otherwise it had been as ineffectual for good as the offering of Nadab and Abihu (Levit. x. 1). Even so the intercessions of Christ whereby we live are not only offered as of his infinite merits, but as based upon his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice. It is fire from the altar of the cross which kindles and makes to ascend in fragrance his "much incense" before the throne. From another point of view it is the burning love which prompted and inspired his death which inspires and kindles his unceasing intercession for us.

VII. THAT AARON RAN INTO THE CAMP TO MAKE AN ATONEMENT FOR THE PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF ANY DANGER TO HIMSELF. Even so our Lord hasted in his great zeal to expose himself to all danger in our midst in order to work out our salvation (Ps. xl. 10; Mark x. 32; Luke xii. 50).

VIII. THAT AARON STOOD BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING—all on one side of him (as it should seem) dead, all on the other side alive, through his intervention. Even so our High Priest stands, and stands alone, between us and death. Nothing separates us from the eternally lost but the saving efficacy of his intercession; had he not appeared upon the scene we too had perished. Moreover, he stands between the living and the dead in this sense, that all souls are divided by him and his cross into two lots, the living who accept, the dead who reject him. Thus he hung between

the penitent and impenitent robbers, and thus he will place the goats and the sheep on the one side of him and on the other.

IX. THAT THE PLAGUE WAS STAYED BY AARON'S INTERPOSITION OF HIMSELF BETWEEN IT AND ITS VICTIMS. Even so Christ has averted death from us, and taken away its sting, by placing himself between it and us, by interposing between the wrath of Heaven and our souls (Rom. vii. 25; viii. 1). And so long as we are sheltered behind his atonement and intercession we are absolutely safe.

X. THAT AARON, AFTER MAKING AN ATONEMENT, RETURNED TO THE MOST HOLY PLACE WITH HIS CENSER (cf. Heb. ix. 4). Even so our Lord, after making atonement for us upon the cross, and breaking the empire of sin and death, returned to that heaven from which he came, leaving us free from the power of death.

XI. THAT THIS WAS THE GLORIOUS VINDICATION OF AARON'S PRIESTLY OFFICE, IN THAT IT BROUGHT LIFE AND DELIVERANCE TO THE VERY MEN WHO HAD DESPISED AND SLANDERED IT. How much better and more effectual than if a thousand Korahs had been slain by reason of it! Even so the true vindication of the priesthood of Christ, in whatsoever sense or by whomsoever assailed, is its marvellous and ever-living efficacy for the healing of sinners, and for their salvation from spiritual death. Those that are ready to strive against it to the uttermost to-day will know themselves beholden to it for life and liberty to-morrow. Whatever belongs to the priesthood of Christ must here, and here only, find its defence and confirmation, not in smiting down them that oppose themselves (which is of the law only), but in saving them from the fatal consequences of their own sin and blindness (which is of the gospel alone). Cf. Luke ix. 55, 56; John xii. 47; 2 Cor. x. 8; xiii. 10; Gal. i. 23; 1 Tim. ii. 4.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 41—50.—*The priesthood still further honoured and established.* I. THE PEOPLE REMAIN UNCHANGED IN HEART. They had been terrified for the moment, and fled to what they thought a safe distance, but by the morrow all their audacity has returned. It would seem as if men soon become accustomed to even the most terrible visitations of God; and the more they see of his doings, the less able they are to understand them. There was a time when such destruction as they had gazed on would have taught them caution for more than a day, but now a day is quite sufficient to make them bolder than ever. The evidential value which Moses had pointed out in vers. 28—30 is quite lost upon them. Perverse minds disregard the clearest evidence. It may be a good thing for some purposes to multiply evidences of Christianity, but if the whole earth were filled with books written on the subject, many would remain unconvinced. The conduct of these people, so quickly murmuring again, may seem scarcely credible as we read it, yet are they in reality worse than unbelievers now? If we also read of these things that happened to Israel of old, and are not in the least impressed by them, then what are we different in our folly and audacity? The lapse of more than three thousand years has not made God less jealous of his ordinances, less able and determined to punish those who slight them. Fearful things are spoken of those who crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. Instead of marvelling at Israel, we shall do well to see in it, as in a mirror, the perversity, blindness, and frivolity of the natural man everywhere. As Israel was, so are we, until and unless God puts within us a new and different life.

II. A STILL FURTHER RECOGNITION OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE. One is not astonished to read that simultaneously with the gathering of the murmuring people, the glory of the Lord appeared again. Hitherto there has been some little interval, some time as it were for repentance, but now along with this high pitch of audacity, it is fitting that the revelation of the glory should be prompt, and prompt also the vindication of what God had but lately done. Once again he warns Moses and Aaron out of the way of death. And now what can Moses do, for his pleas are exhausted? The people have gone on sinning, until at last the ingenuity of his pitying heart has nothing left to say. In this extremity he turns where all must turn at last, namely, to the atonement for sin which God has solemnly appointed. Probably in the first institution of the priestly office he did not comprehend all the power and blessing it

could confer. He was now to know, and Israel with him, that atonement for sin, made through the appointed officer, had a most certain effect in destroying some, at least, of the consequences of sin. The atonement made under the law sets forth that more efficacious and searching atonement lying at the foundation of the gospel, but it was not, therefore, a mere form. It could not indeed cleanse the conscience or change the life, but it was effectual to keep back the plague that brought physical death. In the light of the honour which God here puts upon his priest, and the real effect produced by this offering for sin, how clearly we see the real effect that must come from the work of Jesus! If Aaron, the feeble, sinful type, could do so much, how much more we are bound to expect from Jesus, the sinless, perfect antitype!

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AARON'S POSITION. He stood between the dead and the living. *What a quickly destructive power sin has!* The language indicates that Moses and Aaron were full of alacrity. Not a moment was lost in interposing the atoning service, but even so more than fourteen thousand of the people had already perished. The connection between sin and death is very close, and in such a visitation as this the closeness is made very clear. It may seem constantly contradicted, that in the day men eat of the forbidden fruit they shall surely die, but the contradiction is in appearance only. In the sinful act death is begun, and if God so chooses, its full power may be very quickly manifested. Thus when Aaron went in he found death had been before him, and he had to stand between the dead and the living. It was from the dead that the plague passed greedily on to the living, like the licking fire from the black ruins where it has done its work to the things still unconsumed. But the moment Aaron enters, the atonement begins to work. The very fact that so many had perished, and so rapidly, glorifies the efficacy of his intervention. Sin is then at once in check. It was a noble position for the priest to occupy, and we should think of it as occupied by Jesus. He indeed stands between the dead and the living. As we gaze upon those wrecked and ruined ones, fast settled in despair, and beyond any succour that we can discern, Christ stands between us and them to give assurance that with him there is power to deliver us from such a fate. It is his great and glorious power to deliver us from death by giving to us a new and higher life, and giving it more abundantly, that mortality may be *swallowed up* of life (2 Cor. v. 4).—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVII.

AARON'S ROD THAT BUDDED (vers. 1—13). Ver. 1.—**And the Lord spake.** Presumably upon the same day, since the design was to prevent any recurrence of the sin and punishment described above.

Ver. 2.—**Take of every one of them a rod.** Literally, "take of them a rod, a rod," *i. e.* a rod apiece, in the way immediately particularised. מַטֶּה (Septuagint, *ῥάβδον*) is used for the staff of Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 18) and for the rod of Moses (Exod. iv. 2). It is also used in the sense of "tribe" (ch. i. 4, 16). Each tribe was but a branch, or rod, out of the stock of Israel, and, therefore, was most naturally represented by the rod cut from the tree. The words used for sceptre in Gen. xlix. 10, and in Ps. xlv. 7, and for rod in Isa. xi. 1, and elsewhere are different, but the same imagery underlies the use of all of them. **Of all their princes . . . twelve rods.** These princes must be those named in ch. ii. and vii. Since among these are to be found the tribe princes of Ephraim and Manasseh, standing upon a perfect equality with the rest, it is evident that the twelve rods were exclusive of that of Aaron. The joining together of Ephraim and Manasseh in Deut. xxvii. 12 was a very different thing, because it could not raise any question as between the two.

Ver. 3.—**Thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi.** There was no tribe prince of Levi, and it is not probable that either of the three chiefs of the sub-tribes (ch. iii. 24, 30, 35) was called upon to bring a rod. This rod was, therefore, provided by Moses himself, and inscribed by him with the name of Aaron, who stood by Divine appointment (so recently and fearfully attested) above all his brethren. For the significance of the act cf. Ezek. xxxvii. 16—28. **For one rod . . for the head of the house of their fathers.** For Levi, therefore, there must be, not three rods inscribed with the names of the chiefs, but one only bearing the name of Aaron, as their common superior.

Ver. 4.—**The tabernacle of the congregation.** "The tent of meeting." See on Exod. xxx. 26. **Before the testimony,** *i. e.*

in front of the ark containing the two tables of the law (Exod. xxv. 21).

Ver. 5.—**Whom I shall choose.** For the special duty and service of the priesthood (cf. ch. xvi. 5). **I will make to cease.** מַשְׁלִי הַשְׁכֹּתִי. I will cause to sink so that they shall not rise again.

Ver. 6.—**And the rod of Aaron was among the rods.** As there was no prince from whom this rod could have come, and as there were twelve rods without it, this must mean that Moses did not keep Aaron's rod separate (which might have caused suspicion), but let it be seen amongst the others.

Ver. 7.—**Before the Lord,** *i. e.* in front of the ark. **In the tabernacle of witness.** "In the tent of the testimony." בְּאֹהֶל הָעֵדֻת.

Ver. 8.—**Was budded:** or "sprouted." פָּרַח. **And yielded almonds.** Rather, "matured almonds." This particular rod had been cut from an almond tree, and it would seem probable that it had on it shoots and flowers and fruit at once, so that the various stages of its natural growth were all exemplified together. The almond has its Hebrew name שָׁקֵד, "awake," from the well-known fact of its being the first of all trees to awake from the winter sleep of nature, and to herald the vernal resurrection with its conspicuous show of snow-white blossoms, which even anticipate the leaves (cf. Eccles. xii. 5). Thus the "rod of an almond-tree" (מַקֵּל שָׁקֵד) was shown to the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. i. 11) as the evident symbol of the vigilant haste with which the purposes of God were to be developed and matured. It is possible that all the tribe princes had official "rods" of the almond-tree to denote their watchful alacrity in duty, and that these were the rods which they brought to Moses. In any case the flowering and fruiting of Aaron's rod, while it was an unquestionable miracle (for if not a miracle, it could only have been a disgraceful imposture), was a σημεῖον in the true sense, *i. e.* a miracle which was also a parable. Aaron's rod could no more blossom and fruit by nature than any of the others, since it also had been severed from the living tree; and so in Aaron himself was no more power or goodness than in the rest of Israel. But as the rod germinated and matured its fruit by the power of God, supernaturally starting and accelerating the natural forces of vegetable life, even so in Aaron the grace of God was quick and fruitful to put forth, not the signs only and promise of spiritual gifts and energies, but the ripened fruits as well.

Ver. 9.—**And took every man his rod.** So that they saw for themselves that their rods remained dry and barren as they were by nature, while Aaron's had been made to live.

Ver. 10.—**Before the testimony.** By comparison with ver. 7 this should mean before the ark in which the "testimony" lay. In Heb. ix. 4, however, the rod is said to have been in the ark, although before Solomon's time it had disappeared (1 Kings viii. 9). We may suppose that after it had been inspected by the princes it was deposited for safer preservation and easier conveyance inside the sacred chest. **To be kept for a token against the rebels.** Rather, "against the rebellious," literally, "children of rebellion" (cf. Eph. ii. 2, 3). It could only serve as a token as long as it retained the evidences of having sprouted and fruited, either miraculously in a fresh state, or naturally in a withered state. As a fact, however, it does not appear that the lesson ever needed to be learnt again, and therefore we may suppose that the rod was left first to shrivel with age, and then to be lost through some accident.

Ver. 12.—**And the children of Israel spake unto Moses.** It is a mistake to unite these verses specially with the following chapter, for they clearly belong to the story of Korah's rebellion, although not particularly connected with the miracle of the rod. These are the last wailings of the great storm which had raged against Moses and Aaron, which had roared so loudly and angrily at its height, which was now sobbing itself out in the petulant despair of defeated and disheartened men, cowed indeed, but not convinced, fearful to offend, yet not loving to obey.

Ver. 13.—**Shall we be consumed with dying!** It was a natural question, considering all that had happened; and indeed it could only be answered in the affirmative, for their sentence was, "In this wilderness they shall be consumed" (ch. xiv. 35). But it was not in human nature that they should calmly accept their fate.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The sign of the true Priesthood.* In this chapter we have the testimony of God to the priesthood of his Anointed in a σημεῖον, a teaching miracle, setting forth the inner and hidden truths upon which the exclusive claims of that priesthood rest. The application, according to what has been set forth above, is governed by the saying, "*Aaronis virga refloruit in Christo.*" Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE "ROD" WAS THE NATURAL SYMBOL OF EACH UNIT IN THE BODY

CORPORATE OF ISRAEL, and was therefore synonymous with "tribe;" for each tribe collectively, as represented by its prince, was one of the twelve branches which grew out of the one parent stem of Israel. Even so our Lord has said, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches;" and this holds good whether we regard the individual Christian as a unit in that collective whole which is Christ (1 Cor. xii. 12), or the particular Church as a unit in that same whole which is the body of Christ (1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. i. 22, 23).

II. THAT THE ALMOND ROD HAD A SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR AARON, inasmuch as its name and character spake of vigilance and the attribute of preventing others both in promise and in performance. Even so it is the fitting emblem of the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and the Branch which grew out of his roots; for that Branch was "beautiful and glorious" (Isa. iv. 2) when all the other trees in the garden of God (Ezek. xxxi. 9) stood dry and leafless, and there was no sign of any life stirring nor promise of any fruit coming. Then was he "awake," and showed the pure beauty of a perfect life before the eyes of men (Luke ii. 52; iii. 22). Even more in his resurrection was the almond rod his natural symbol; for then indeed he had been cut off from the stock of Israel, from the natural stem out of which he grew, and had been laid in the dust of death, and had seemed to be withered and lifeless; but on the third day he "awoke" early (Ps. cviii. 2), and became the first-fruits of them that slept, anticipating all expectation, and putting forth the glorious blossom of life and immortality (Cant. ii. 10—13).

III. THAT THE VISIBLE CONFIRMATION OF AARON'S PRIESTHOOD IN THE TYPE WAS THE BLOSSOMING AND FRUITING OF HIS ROD. Even so our Lord is commended unto us beyond all cavil as the High Priest of our profession in that his priesthood is ever adorned with the buds of hope, the blossoms of beauty, the ripened fruits of holy deeds, such as always and everywhere grow out of that priesthood as ministered among us, and testify to its enduring vitality and energy, whereas no such results follow any other guide and redeemer of souls. And note that what is true of the priesthood of Christ must be true, in a secondary sense, of all ministries of grace claiming rightly to be such. "By their fruits ye shall know them," or by their absence of fruit. If they really live and blossom into purity and beauty, and ripen the fruits of holy and devoted deeds, then are they attested by God to be ministries of grace indeed, standing in vital relation to the only priesthood of Christ. Moreover, since only Aaron's rod can blossom, it is certain that every true grace and beauty not of earth which is found in Christian souls and lives must be due to the fruitful energy of "Christ in us" through the Spirit.

IV. THAT THE CONTINUED VITALITY AND FRUITFULNESS OF THE ROD WAS NOT NATURAL, BUT WAS SIMPLY DUE TO GOD'S POWER FOLLOWING HIS ELECTION. Even so whatever energy for good is found in any Christian ministry, whatever grace in any means of grace, is assuredly not of nature, for there is no inherent power in any man or in any outward thing to communicate spiritual life or blessing. It is only the Divine grace, following the Divine choice of the agents and instruments of redeeming love, which can make them or their ministry of any real effect; it is not they who can produce any change for the better, but only the mighty power of God working in them and through them.

V. THAT THE BUDS, THE BLOSSOMS, AND THE FRUIT WOULD SEEM TO HAVE BEEN ON THE ROD ALL AT ONCE. Even so in the history and course of Christianity there was no slow progression towards the perfection of Christian character and action. The ripened fruits of holy living were put forth at once side by side with the promise of better things in some, and with the beauty of early piety in others. And so it is, wherever the powers of the world to come are at work, there may always be discerned, apparently from the first, the three stages of growth in Christ. What the energy of the Spirit seems to ripen at once in some happy souls seems to take him many years to bring to maturity in others, even if maturity be ever reached in this world. Nevertheless, the bud and the blossom are as impossible to mere nature as the fruit itself.

VI. THAT THE ROD WHICH BUDDED WAS LAID UP FOR A TOKEN AGAINST THE REBELLIOUS. Even so if men oppose themselves we have no other sign but this. Pilate asked our Lord, "What hast thou done?" and if he had but sought the answer which so many

could have given him, he had not condemned the Lord of glory. "By their fruits ye shall know them," for thereby shall they be judged at the last day. Our good works then are the credentials of our creed and of our priesthood. The "doctrine" is (and must be) but a dry rod which savours only of rule and domination in the eyes of a natural man unless it be "adorned" with these fair blossoms, this substantial fruit.

VII. THAT THE OBJECT OF THE MIRACLE WAS ESPECIALLY TO CONVINCE THE PEOPLE FOR THEIR GOOD, LEST THEY SHOULD RUSH AGAIN UPON DESTRUCTION (ver. 10 *b*). Even so it is the will of God that the witness of good works and piety come abroad, and not that men "keep their religion to themselves," and within their own doors, in order that prejudice may be dispelled and souls attracted to their own salvation (Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 12).

VIII. THAT THE SINFUL PEOPLE CHARGED UPON THE LAW OF GOD THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR OWN SIN, AND DESPAIRED WHEN THEY COULD NO LONGER REBEL. Even so do men complain bitterly of their misfortunes when they reap the fruits of their own wilful sin, and are filled with an amazed despair when they find that a man must really reap as he has sown.

IX. THAT THE TABERNACLE AND PRIESTHOOD, WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN A SAFETY AND DELIGHT, DID IN TRUTH BECOME A DANGER AND A FEAR, BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WERE CARNAL. Even so the very nearness of God to us in Christ and in his Church, which is the glory of the gospel (2 Cor. vi. 16), is fraught with fearful dangers to them that walk unworthy of the heavenly calling (Matt. xxi. 44; 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 8.—*The budding of Aaron's rod.* The budding, blossoming, and fruit-bearing of the dry staff of office laid by Aaron in the tabernacle, significant—

I. AS A MIRACLE. It was an unmistakable sign of God's interposition (such a natural impossibility the occasion of an oath among the heathen: Homer's 'Iliad,' i. 233, and Virgil's 'Æneid,' xv. 206), as every miracle is,—on behalf of his servant Aaron, "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God,"—and in condemnation of "the rebels." Even if regarded as an arbitrary sign, it was none the less sufficient. God required that the miracles of Moses *per se* should be accepted both by the sympathetic Israelites and the reluctant Pharaoh (Exod. iv. 1—8). So too did our Lord (John xiv. 11; xv. 24). This miracle permanent so long as the rod existed. And all miracles, though transitory, of permanent value as proofs of the interposition of God (Exod. iii. 14).

II. AS A SYMBOL. 1. "The almond tree, as that which most quickly brings forth blossoms and beautiful fruit, is an emblem of the mighty power of the word of God, which is ever fresh and unfailing in its fulfilment" (Jer. i. 11, 12). 2. A sign of the permanent vitality of God's appointed priesthood as "an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations" (Exod. xl. 15). 3. A type of the miraculous attestation of the unchangeable priesthood of Christ. God, who "fulfils himself in many ways," about, hereafter, to replace the priesthood of Aaron by a Priest chosen by himself, after the order of Melchizedeo. This priesthood attested by a resurrection (Acts xiii. 33; Heb. v. 9, 10), of which the resurrection of this dead tree was a type. And now that the risen Christ is in the holiest place, in the presence of God, his resurrection and reign in glory are signs to all murmurers of his appointment as the one High Priest and King, who "shall send forth the rod of his strength," and reign till all enemies are placed beneath his feet.—P.

Ver. 10.—*The two brethren and their rods.* I. The rod of Moses, a shepherd's staff, a commonplace instrument, changed by God's power into "the rod of God" (Exod. iv. 17), "the rod of his strength." (1) For the conviction of Moses himself (*ibid.* iv. 1—5); (2) for the punishment of the rebellious (*ibid.* vii. 20, &c.); (3) for the deliverance of God's servants from imminent danger (*ibid.* xiv. 16, 26); (4) for the supply of their most urgent wants (*ibid.* xvii. 5, 6); (5) for the conquest of their foes (*ibid.* xvii. 9—12). Thus God makes the weakest commonest

things of the world "mighty through God" (1 Cor. i. 27; 2 Cor. x. 4). The rod of the lowly Jesus is "a rod of strength," or "of iron" (Ps. ii. 9; cx. 2; Isa. xi. 4).

II. The rod of Aaron, a tribal sceptre, a symbol of power, as the shepherd's staff was not. This symbol of authority used for remedial and spiritual purposes. (1) For the confutation of presumptuous upstarts; (2) for the preservation of the tempted from further sin and consequent destruction (ver. 10); (3) for a type of the fruitfulness of every institution ordained and sustained by God. See further under ver. 8. Thus God makes his mightiest power the means of attaining spiritual ends for the welfare even of sinners. "Christ the power of God" is "the power of God unto salvation." The "Prince" is also the "Saviour" (Acts v. 31).—P.

Vers. 1—9.—*Aaron's rod that budded.* The priesthood of Aaron, as a solemn reality, and no mere arrogant pretence, had already been amply shown. It had been shown, however, in a way which left behind terrible associations. Those who impugned it had died by a sudden and fearful death. And though the priesthood appears differently when it becomes the means of staying death from the living, yet even this was not sufficient to glorify it before the eyes of the people. These illustrations of its validity had arisen from the urgent pressure of circumstances. If the people had not sinned against God by despising his ordinance, that ordinance would not have been manifested in such awful power. It becomes God now to glorify the priesthood by a new and independent testimony, the way of which had been prepared by the judgments they had lately seen and suffered.

I. AARON IS EQUALISED WITH THE REST. He had been equalised before in voluntary humility (ch. xvi. 16, 17). Now the thing is specially commanded. Aaron is taken as a simple member of the tribe of Levi, and Levi itself is considered as but one of the tribes of Israel. Thus to any one disposed to complain of Aaron exalting himself, God, as it were, gave for answer: "Aaron does not exalt himself; he is nothing more than any of you. Let there be a rod for each of the tribes, and nothing to make his better than the rest. It shall then be made manifest that whatever his power, his holiness, his honour, they do not come from anything inherent in himself as a simple Israelite." And so in a certain sense Jesus was equalised with men (Philip. ii. 6—8). He grew to manhood among the poor and lowly. He had been so like the rest of the simple Nazarenes in outward form, so unpretending, so little fitted to excite attention and wonderment, that his brethren did not believe in him. There was everything in him but sin to show his community with men. He became in all things like his brethren; and one of the results of this full, demonstrative humanity is to make clear how highly God exalted him (Philip. ii. 9—11)

II. The objects taken to represent the tribes ONCE HAD LIFE IN THEM. They were not stones of the wilderness which God was about to turn into living, fruitful branches. The work was one of restoration, not of creation altogether fresh and original. But for sin, all these Israelites, Aaron included, would have been like branches, full of beautiful and fruitful life rejoicing in God's presence, instead of being, as they were, dead to him, alive to sin. These rods, were significant *for their past as well as their future.* The Israelites used these rods doubtless for some purpose to which dead wood could be put, and thinking nothing of the life that had once been in them. Dead wood is useful, but the state and service are low as compared with those of the living tree. So Israel was now in an utterly humiliated state, quite ignorant and careless as to the glory and joy of man's first unfallen days. These tribes were now as dead rods, but if all had gone according to the original purpose, they would have been as living, fruitful branches. It is part of the priestly office of Christ to bring back that which is lost, and to swallow up in a new and glorious creation the ruin that has befallen the old one.

III. Hence the CAPACITY OF RESTORATION is indicated to the people. Ask an Israelite if a rod, a dead, sapless, long-separated branch, shall live again, he will reply, "No." In one sense he is right, for such a thing is outside of his experience; in another sense he is wrong, as not knowing the power of God. Aaron's rod alone lived, but it is plain that the same power which revived it could have acted on the rest with a like result. When Jesus was raised from the dead, this was an indication that all dead orces might come back to life. "Because I live, ye shall live also"

(John xiv. 19). The very descent of Aaron to an equality with the rest implied a possibility that they might ascend to an equality with him. The risen Saviour in the glory of his heavenly life is the first-born among many brethren. Aaron became different from the rest in order that by his difference he might draw the rest nearer to God. The rod budded for the benefit of the rods that remained dead.

IV. THERE IS AN ANTICIPATION OF THE SLOWER PROCESSES OF NATURE. Not only is dead wood restored to life, but the life rushes forward into fruit. In the Lord's hand the work of all seasons can be done in a night. Buds, blossoms, and fruit at the same time! What a fulness of life this indicates! By thus combining in one example three stages of plant life, God shows the power of the priest's office. There was not only promise, but performance. It would have been a work of God to show just peeping buds; but *the* work of God here is to show life in its fulness. It was the clamour of the people that nothing more than empty promise had been got out of Moses. They had lately learned that Aaron's office was full of worth by his protecting atonement as against the plague. Now in this budding, blossoming, fruit-bearing rod they see both promise and performance. He who makes the rod bud is thereby promising; he who makes it blossom is drawing onward in increased hope; but he who also makes it yield fruit shows that he can perform as well as promise. So may we think of Jesus. Consider the multitudes for whom and in whom his priestly work is being done. They are in different stages. With some the bud, with some the blossom, with some the ripened, fragrant fruit. It needed that all stages should be shown in the life of the typifying rod.

V. THE USUAL AIDS OF NATURE, THE AIDS COMMONLY COUNTED NECESSARY, ARE DISPENSED WITH. There is no planting of the rods in the soil, no exposure to the sunshine and the rain. God, who usually works through many combined ministries, and shows man the blessed fellow-worker with himself, finds it fitting here, for his glory, and for the full manifestation of the truth, to set all customary ministries on one side. If *usually* there are all these aids, it is because of what is fitting, not of what is indispensably needed. Nothing is needed but to lay the rods in the tabernacle, before the testimony. Thus we see *how far from any human choice, contrivance, or control* was the budding of this rod. The result was from God's secret power, and that alone. Thereby he invested Aaron and the ark and every priestly function with fresh importance. Henceforth we look upon Aaron not only as one who keeps back death from the living, but who has to do with the giving back of life to the dead. When this rod was formerly on the tree it did not live after this glorious fashion. There was life, but not in such exaltation and abundance. This rod was known henceforth not after its first life, but its second. So now we know Christ not after the flesh, but after the spirit; not according to those first works, in curing the sick, assuaging temporal sorrows, or even bringing back Lazarus to continue awhile longer his mortal life, but according to those second works by which he, the chosen and only mediatorial channel of them, saves, sanctifies, and perfects those who come to God through him. If this marvellous rod so glorified Aaron, and stopped the murmurings of the people, should it not have some effect, rightly and repeatedly considered, in glorifying Jesus, and bringing us closer to him in humble acceptance and faith. The murmuring of the Israelites was a great evil, but our neglect of that gracious Intercessor whom God has appointed is not one whit better.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVIII.

STATUS AND REVENUES OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES (vers. 1—32). Ver. 1.—**The Lord spake unto Aaron.** This clear and comprehensive instruction as to the position and support of the sons of Aaron on the one hand, and of the Levites on the other, may very naturally have been given in connection with the events just narrated. There is, however, no direct reference to those events, and it is quite possible that the only connection was one of subject-matter in the mind of the writer. That the regulations which follow were addressed to Aaron directly is a thing unusual, and indeed unexampled. The ever-recurring statement elsewhere is, "the Lord spake unto Moses," varied occasionally by "the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron" (as in ch. ii. 1; iv. 1; xix. 1); but

even where the communication refers to things wholly and peculiarly within the province of Aaron, it is usually made to Moses, and only through him to his brother (see *e. g.* ch. viii. 1—3). This change in the form of the message may point to a later date, *i. e.* to a time subsequent to the gainsaying of Korah, when the separate position of Aaron as the head of a priestly caste was more fully recognised than before, and he himself somewhat less under the shadow of his greater brother. **Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary.** Aaron's father's house, according to the analogy of ch. xvii. 2, 3, 6, was the sub-tribe of the Kohathites, and these had charge (to the exclusion of the other Levites) of the sanctuary, or rather sacred things (הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, as in ch. x. 21. Septuagint, *τῶν ἁγίων*). See on ch. iv. 15. This mention of the Kohathites in connection with the sanctuary is an incidental proof that these instructions were given in view of the wanderings in the wilderness, for after the settlement in Canaan no Levites (as such) came into contact with the sacred furniture. It is not easy to define exactly the meaning of "shall bear the iniquity (תִּשְׂאוּ אֶת־עֲוֹן) of the sanctuary." The general sense of the phrase is, "to be responsible for the iniquity," *i. e.* for anything which caused displeasure in the eyes of God, "in connection with the sacred things and the service of them;" hence it meant either to be responsible for such iniquity, as being held accountable for it, and having to endure the penalty, or as being permitted and enabled to take such accountability on oneself, and so discharge it from others. This double sense is exactly reflected in the Greek word *αἴρειν*, as applied to our Lord (John i. 29). The priests, therefore (and the Kohathites, so far as they had anything to do with the sanctuary), were responsible for all the unholiness attaching or accruing to it, not only by reason of all offences committed by themselves, but by reason of that imperfection which clung to them at the best, and made them unworthy to handle the things of God. In a further and deeper sense they might be said to be vicariously responsible for all the iniquity of all Israel, so far as the taint of it affected the very sanctuary (see on Exod. xxviii. 38; Levit. xvi. 16). **The iniquity of your priesthood.** The responsibility not only for all sinful acts of omission and commission in Divine service (such as those of Nadab and Abihu, and of Korah), but for all the inevitable failure of personal holiness on the part of those who ministered unto the Lord. This responsibility was emphatically recognised and provided for in the rites of the great day of atonement.

Ver. 2.—**Thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi.** The Levites generally, as distinguished from the Kohathites in particular (see on ch. iii.). **That they may be joined unto thee.** יִלָּוּ, a play upon the name Levi (see on Gen. xxix. 34). **But thou and thy sons with thee shall minister before the tabernacle of witness.** The Hebrew has only וְאַתָּה וּבָנֶיךָ אִתָּךְ, which may be rendered, "And thou and thy sons with thee (shall be)," &c., or more naturally read with what goes before, "that they may minister unto thee; both thee and thy sons with thee," &c. The Septuagint and the Targums appear to favour the former rendering, but it is not evident what distinction could be drawn between priests and Levites as to the mere fact of being before the tabernacle.

Ver. 3.—**They shall keep thy charge,** &c. See on ch. iii. 7, 8. **That neither they, nor ye also, die.** This warning does not seem to refer to the danger of the Kohathites seeing the sacred things (ch. iv. 15), but of the other Levites coming near them; the further warning, "nor ye also," is added because if the carelessness or profanity of the priest led to sacrilege and death in the case of the Levite, it would be laid to his charge (cf. ch. iv. 18).

Ver. 4.—**A stranger.** זָר, *i. e.* one not a Levite, as in ch. i. 51.

Ver. 5.—**That there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.** As there had been in the case of Korah and his company, and of the many thousands who had fallen in consequence.

Ver. 6.—**I have taken your brethren the Levites.** See on ch. iii. 9; viii. 19.

Ver. 7.—**Shall keep your priests' office for everything of the altar, and within the vail.** That the Levites were made over to Aaron and his sons to relieve them of a great part of the mere routine and drudgery of their service was to be with them an additional and powerful motive for doing their priestly work so reverently and watchfully as to leave no excuse for sacrilegious intrusion. The altar (of burnt offering) and "that within the vail" (cf. Heb. vi. 19) were the two points between which the exclusive duties of the priesthood lay, including the service of the holy place. **A service of gift.** A service which was not to be regarded as a burden, or a misfortune, or as a natural heritage and accident of birth, but to be received and cherished as a favour accorded to them by the goodness of God.

Ver. 8.—**And the Lord spake unto Aaron.** The charge and responsibility of the priests having been declared, the provision for their maintenance is now to be set forth. **The charge.** מִשְׁמֶרֶת, as in ver. 5, &c.; but

here it means "the keeping" for their own use (cf. Exod. xii. 6). **Mine heave offerings.** תְּרוּמָתִי. The possessive pronoun marks the fact that these did not belong to the priest in the first instance, although they naturally came to be looked on as his perquisites (cf. 1 Sam. ii. 16), but were a gift to him from the Lord out of what the people had dedicated. The word *terumoth* must here be understood in its widest sense, as including everything which the Israelites dedicated or "lifted" of all their possessions, so far as these were not destroyed in the act of offering. **Of all the hallowed things.** The genitive of identity: "consisting of all the hallowed things." **By reason of the anointing.** Rather, "for a portion," לְמָשְׁחָה (see on Levit. vii. 35). The Septuagint has εἰς γέρας, "as an honour,' or *peculium*.

Ver. 9.—**Reserved from fire,** *i. e.* from the sacrificial altar. **Every oblation of theirs.** As specified in the following clauses. The burnt offering is not mentioned because it was wholly consumed, and only the skin fell to the priest. The sin offerings for the priest or for the congregation were also wholly consumed (Levit. iv. 12, 21), but the sin offerings of private individuals, although in no case partaken of by the offerers, were available for the priests (Levit. vi. 26), and this was the ordinary case.

Ver. 10.—**In the most holy place thou shalt eat it.** בְּקֹדֶשׁ הַקָּדָשִׁים. Septuagint, ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ τῶν ἁγίων. This expression is somewhat perplexing, because it stands commonly for the holy of holies (Exod. xxvi. 33). As it cannot possibly have that meaning here, two interpretations have been proposed. 1. That it means the court of the tabernacle, called "the holy place" in Levit. vi. 16, 26; vii. 6, and there specified as the only place in which the meat offerings, the sin offerings, and trespass offerings might be eaten. There is no reason why this court should not be called "most holy," as well as "holy," if it was "holy" with respect to the camp, or the holy city, it was "most holy" with respect to all without the camp, or without the gate. 2. That the expression does not mean "in the most holy place," but "amongst the most holy things," as it does in ch. iv. 4, and above in ver. 9. A distinction is clearly intended between the "most holy things," which only the priests and their sons might eat, and the "holy things," of which the rest of their families might partake also. It is difficult to decide between these renderings, although there can be no doubt that the "most holy" things were actually to be consumed within the tabernacle precincts.

Ver. 11.—**And this is thine.** Here begins a second list of holy gifts which might be eaten at home by all members of the priestly families who were clean; they included (1) all wave offerings, especially the wave breast and heave shoulder of the peace offerings; (2) all first-fruits of every kind; (3) all that was devoted; (4) all the firstborn, or their substitutes. The first and third must have been very variable in amount, but the second and fourth, if honestly rendered, must have brought in a vast amount both of produce and of revenue. **With all the wave offerings.** Rather, "in all the wave offerings," as in ver. 8.

Ver. 12.—**All the best.** Literally, "all the fat" (cf. Gen. xlv. 18).

Ver. 14.—**Everything devoted.** כָּל־חֵרֶם. Septuagint, πᾶν ἀνατεθεματισμένον, all deodands, or things vowed (see on Levit. xxvii. 28).

Ver. 16.—**From a month old.** Literally, "from the monthly child," as soon as they reach the age of one month. **According to thine estimation.** See on Levit. v. 15; xxvii. 2—7. It would seem that the priest was to make the valuation for the people, since each first-born or firstling was separately claimed by God, and had to be separately redeemed; but at the same time, to prevent extortion, the sum which the priest might assess was fixed by God. **For the money of five shekels.** About seventeen shillings of our money (see ch. iii. 47). It is extremely difficult to estimate the number of first-born, but it is evident that in any case a large income must have accrued to the priests in this way. No value is here set upon the firstlings of unclean beasts; in the most usual case, that of the ass, the rule had been laid down in Exod. xiii. 13; and in other cases it was apparently left to the discretion of the priests, subject to the right of the owner, if he saw fit, to destroy the animal rather than pay for it (see Levit. xxvii. 27).

Ver. 17.—**But the firstling of a cow,** &c. Only those things which were not available for sacrifice could be redeemed; the rest must be offered to him that claimed them. The first-born of men belonged partially to both classes: on the one hand, they could not be sacrificed, and therefore were redeemed with money; on the other hand, they could be dedicated (being clean), and therefore had been exchanged for the Levites.

Ver. 18.—**The flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine.** This is on the face of it inconsistent with the direction given in Deut. xv. 19, 20, that the flesh of the firstlings should be eaten by the offerers in the holy place (cf. also Deut. xii. 17, 18). Two explanations have been proposed. 1. That the firstlings were given to the priest in the same sense as the peace offerings, *i. e.* only as regarded the breast and shoulder, while

the rest went to the offerer. This, however, does obvious violence to the language, and is not supported by the Septuagint. 2. That as the priest was bound to consume the firstlings with his family, and could not sell them, he would be certainly disposed to invite the offerer to join him in the sacred meal. This may have been usually the case, but it was entirely within the option of the the priest, and could scarcely be made the basis of a direct command, like that of Deut. xv. 19, still less of an indirect assumption, like that of Deut. xii. 17, 18, that the firstlings stood upon the same footing as free-will offerings and heave offerings. It is easier to suppose that the law was actually modified in this, as in some other particulars.

Ver. 19.—**All the heave offerings of the holy things.** Those, viz., enumerated from ver. 9. **It is a covenant of salt for ever.** Septuagint, *διαθήκη ἁλὸς αἰωνίου* (cf. 2 Chron. xiii. 5). Salt was the natural emblem of that which is incorruptible; wherefore a binding alliance was (and still is) made by eating bread and salt together, and salt was always added to the sacrifices of the Lord (Levit. ii. 13; Mark ix. 49).

Ver. 20.—**Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land.** The priests had of necessity homes wherein to live when not on duty, but they had no territory of their own in the same sense as Jews of other tribes. **I am thy part and thine inheritance.** Septuagint, *ἐγὼ μερίς σου καὶ κληρονομία σου.* This is not to be explained away, as if it meant only that they were to live "of the altar." Just as the priests (and in a lesser sense all the Levites) were the special possession of the Lord, so the Lord was the special possession of the priests; and inasmuch as all the whole earth belonged to him, the portion of the priests was, potentially in all cases, actually for those who were capable of realising it, infinitely more desirable than any other portion. The spiritual meaning of the promise was so clearly felt that it was constantly claimed by the devout in Israel, irrespective of their ecclesiastical status (cf. Ps. xvi. 5; Lam. iii. 24, &c.).

Ver. 21.—**All the tenth.** The tithe of all fruits and flocks had been already claimed absolutely by the Lord (Levit. xxvii. 30, 32). It is probable indeed that the giving of tithes had been more or less a matter of obligation from time immemorial. Abraham had paid them on one memorable occasion (Gen. xiv. 20), and Jacob had vowed them on another (Gen. xxviii. 22). From this time forth, however, the tithes were formally assigned to the maintenance of the Levites, in return for their service.

Ver. 22.—**Lest they bear sin, and die.** לָשֵׂאת חֵטְא לָמוּת. Septuagint, *λαβεῖν ἁμαρτίαν θανατηφόρον.* In the sense of incurring sin, and the consequent wrath and death.

Ver. 23.—**And they shall bear (יִשְׂאוּ) their iniquity.** The Levites were to take the responsibility of the general iniquity so far as approach to the tabernacle was concerned. **They have no inheritance.** Like the priests, they had homes and cities, and they had pasturages attached to these cities, but no separate territory.

Ver. 24.—**As an heave offering.** This means nothing more than an "offering" apparently. It is not to be supposed that any ritual was observed in the giving of tithes.

Ver. 25.—**And the Lord spake unto Moses.** This part of the instruction alone is addressed to Moses, probably because it determined a question as between priests and Levites to the advantage of the former, and therefore would not have come well from Aaron.

Ver. 26.—**Ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe.** Thus the principle of giving a tenth part of all to God was carried out consistently throughout the whole of his people.

Ver. 28.—**Ye shall give thereof the Lord's heave offering to Aaron the priest.** The Levites tithed the people, the priests tithed the Levites. At this time the other Israelites were nearly fifty times as numerous as the Levites, and therefore they would have been exceptionally well provided for. It must be remembered, however, that the Levites would naturally increase faster than the rest, not being exposed to the same dangers; and still more that tithes are never paid at all fully or generally, even when of strict legal obligation. A glance along the history of Israel after the conquest will satisfy us that at no time could the people at large be trusted to pay their tithes, unless it were during the ascendancy of the Maccabees, and afterwards under the influence of the Pharisees (cf. Mal. iii. 9, 10). The Levites, indeed, appear in the history of Israel as the reverse of an opulent or influential class. It was no doubt much easier for the sons of Aaron to obtain their tithes from the Levites; and as these were very numerous in proportion, and the tithes themselves were only a part of their revenues, the priests should have been, and in later times certainly were, sufficiently rich. If they were devout they no doubt spent much on the service of the altar and of the sanctuary.

Ver. 30.—**Thou shalt say unto them,** *i. e.* to the Levites. When they had dedicated their tithe of the best part, the rest was theirs exactly as if they had grown it and gathered it themselves.

Ver. 32.—**Ye shall bear no sin.** עָלָיו

לֹא תָשֻׁאוּ. They would not incur any guilty responsibility by enjoying it as and where they pleased. **Neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die.** This seems to be the true translation, and it conveyed a final warning. See Levit. xxii. 2 for one very obvious way in which the Levites might pollute "holy things."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—32.—*Responsibilities and privileges of God's servants.* We have in this chapter, spiritually, the status of those who are ἱερεῖς τῷ Θεῷ and δοῦλοι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, as being the inheritance of the Lord, and (in this world) "having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Much that has been considered under the head of chs. iii., iv., and viii. is applicable here. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY WEIGHED UPON PRIEST AND LEVITE IN RESPECT OF THE SANCTUARY, OF WHICH THEY HAD THE CHARGE AND THE HANDLING. Whatever pollution came upon it was chargeable upon them in the double sense, (1) that if due to them, they should suffer for it; (2) that whether due to them or not, they should be bound to purge it by atonement. Even so all the faithful in Christ Jesus are deeply responsible for all the shame, reproach, and disparagement which comes upon that temple which is themselves (Eph. ii. 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; Heb. iii. 6), and that in the following senses:—1. So far as such evils may be due to their own sin or carelessness (Matt. xviii. 6, 7; Rom. xiv. 15, 16; 1 Cor. x. 32; 2 Cor. vi. 3; 1 Thess. v. 22). 2. So far as the evil can be undone or counteracted by their own piety and zeal (Matt. v. 16; Philip. ii. 15, 16; 1 Pet. ii. 12). 3. If this cannot be, then at least to this extent, that they bear it on their heart in sorrow and in prayer (Ezek. ix. 4; Dan. ix. 20; 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26; 2 Cor. xi. 29). Nothing is worse than the complacency with which Christians regard the scandals of religion, although such are often due in part to themselves, or might in part be cured by their own efforts, or should at least be a cause of inward grief and humiliation to them as members of Christ.

II. THAT A SIMILAR RESPONSIBILITY ATTACHED TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN RESPECT TO ALL FAULTS AND IMPERFECTIONS ATTENDING ITS EXERCISE. Even so it is no light or trivial thing to have received an unction from the Holy One, making us, in any sense of the words, priests unto God. There are no vain titles in the kingdom of heaven to gratify man's love of distinction; whatever we have is a dispensation committed unto us (1 Cor. ix. 17); any ministry ill discharged, made a scandal or offence, is ruin to the soul (1 Cor. iv. 2; Col. iv. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 16; Rev. iii. 2, 15, 16).

III. THAT THEY WERE UNDER SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO WATCH THEIR WATCH AND OBSERVE THE DUTIES OF THEIR OFFICE ABOUT THE SANCTUARY AND THE ALTAR, lest wrath should come upon the people. Even so the custodians of Divine truth are under special obligation to guard most carefully and reverently the two doctrines of Jesus in heaven ("that within the vail," Heb. vi. 19, 20) and of Jesus upon the cross (*ibid.* ix. 14), lest, either being tampered with, damage should accrue to the souls of men.

IV. THAT THE OFFICE OF THE PRIESTS WAS "A SERVICE OF GIFT." Even so every office in the Church of God is a service, for there is no such thing as a sinecure in the kingdom of heaven; and it is a service of gift, because it is not a matter of earthly honour, or of pay, or of human choice, or even of personal aptness, but of free grace and gift on the part of God—a trust conferred, a bounty bestowed.

V. THAT THE PRIESTS "WERE PARTAKERS WITH THE ALTAR." Even so hath the Lord ordained, &c. (1 Cor. ix. 13, 14).

Consider again, *with respect to the Levites*—

I. THAT THEY WERE GIVEN TO AARON TO "WATCH HIS WATCH" AND "THE WATCH OF ALL THE TABERNACLE." Even so are all the kindred of Christ given unto him to be his soldiers and servants to keep his watches, and to be the guardians of his spiritual house until he come again (Mark xiii. 35—37; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; Eph. v. 15; Rev. xvi. 15).

II. THAT WHILE EVER WATCHFUL AND ON THE ALERT, THEY MUST NOT INTRUDE UPON THE SACRED THINGS OF THE SANCTUARY, OR THE ALTAR, ON PAIN OF DEATH. Even so it is fatal presumption and loss of spiritual life when men leave their practical duties to "intrude" by vain speculation into "those things which they have not seen" in the heavenly state; or when they pry curiously into the unrevealed mysteries of the cross, "which things the angels desire to look into," yet forbear, because it is not given them to understand (Col. ii. 18; 1 Pet. i. 12).

Consider again, *with respect to Aaron and the people at large*—

I. THAT EVERY OBLATION OR OFFERING OF THEIRS WAS GIVEN TO AARON. Even so everything which the piety or gratitude of man freely offers to God has been made over to Christ, as the High Priest of our profession, by an indefeasible title (Matt. xi. 27 *a.*; xxviii. 18 *b.*; 1 Cor. iii. 23).

II. THAT THE FIRST AND BEST (THE FAT) OF EVERYTHING WAS TO BE GIVEN TO GOD AND TO AARON. Even so ought every faithful person to dedicate the first and best of all he has (or is) to the Lord and his Christ. It is a fearful thing to put him off with the odds and ends of our time, the gleanings of our mind and thought, the stray coins of our wealth.

III. THAT EVERYTHING UNDER A BAN—A VOW, OR CURSE—WAS GIVEN TO AARON. Even so does every soul devoted to destruction, every soul under the curse, belong to Christ, because he was made a curse for us, and devoted himself to death and wrath for our redemption; wherefore all souls are his, being given unto him of the Father for his portion.

IV. THAT ALL THE PEOPLE WERE TO PAY TITHES TO THE LEVITES, AND THE LEVITES THEMSELVES TO AARON, and thus the principle was doubly maintained that a tenth part of all was due to God for the support of religion. Aaron did not pay tithes, because he was the figure of Christ himself. Even so all good Christian people are bound, not of necessity to give an exact and literal tenth, but certainly no less than that, unless they think that their obligation to God is less than that of the Jews. This may be enforced by the following considerations:—1. We are as much beholden for all we have to the mere bounty of Providence as the Jews. 2. We are in at least as much danger of covetousness as they. 3. We are much more in the practice of luxury and superfluity than they. 4. We are more distinctly called to a voluntary choice of (comparative) poverty than they (Matt. xiii. 22; xix. 23; 1 Tim. vi. 6—10). 5. There is more need of abundant offerings now than then, because we have all the world to evangelise, instead of a single temple with its services to maintain. 6. Our giving should be more ample, just because it is left to the holy impulse of faith and love. God has refrained from demanding a tenth in order that we might freely give —more (Mal. iii. 10; Matt. xxvi. 13; Acts ii. 45; xx. 35; Philem. 19, &c.).

V. THAT THE LEVITES, HAVING "HEAVED FROM THE BEST" OF ALL THEY RECEIVED, WERE THEN TO ENJOY THE REMAINDER WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE. Even so the servants of Christ, when they have dedicated (and only when) the best of all they have—time, money, talents, opportunities, influence—to the direct service of Christ, may enjoy the good things which fall to them with singleness and gladness of heart (Luke xi. 41; Acts ii. 46; 1 Tim. vi. 18; and cf. 1 Kings xvii. 13 *sq.*).

Consider again, *with respect to priests and Levites*—

THAT THEY HAD NO INHERITANCE AMONGST THE TRIBES, BUT THE LORD WAS THEIR PORTION AND THEIR INHERITANCE. Even so hath the Lord given unto us no inheritance in this world, because he himself is ours, as we are his. We do indeed have (most of us) many things richly to enjoy, but these are not our own, as the world counts its good things its own, but are only lent for an uncertain season (Luke xvi. 11, 12—what we have here is "another man's," as distinguished from "our own"); and that we have anything at all is only of indulgence, not of right, nor of promise (Matt. xix. 21; Luke xii. 33; John xvi. 33; Acts xiv. 22 *b.*; James ii. 5); and, further, whatever we have we hold only on condition of giving it up at once, without complaint or astonishment, if called thereunto (Luke xiv. 26; Heb. x. 34; James i. 10; Rev. iii. 17; xii. 11). Nevertheless, we are not poor, though having nothing; but rich beyond compare, having the Pearl of great price, and the Treasure

(albeit "hid" for the present, Col. ii. 3), and the bright and morning Star (2 Pet. i. 19 *b.*), and in him all things indeed (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22; 2 Cor. iv. 18; Rev. iii. 20; cf. Gen. xv. 1 *b.*; Ps. xvi. 5; lxxiii. 26, &c.).

Consider again, *with respect to sacrifice*—

THAT CERTAIN THINGS MOST HOLY MIGHT BE CONSUMED ONLY WITHIN THE SACRED PRECINCTS BY THE PRIESTS THEMSELVES; OTHERS HOLY, BUT NOT SO HOLY, AT HOME BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY. Even so there are things pertaining to the one sacrifice for sin with which none may intermeddle but the priest himself of the sacrifice; others which may be shared in common amongst all members of the family of Christ. Or, in another sense, there are aspects of the atonement which can only be made our own in a religious solitude and retirement, and which are profaned by being brought abroad; others, again, which befit the common and social life of Christian people, always providing that no "uncleanness," *i. e.* no unrepented sin, hinder them from having part or lot therein.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The responsibility of authority.* Recent assaults on the priesthood give occasion for a reaffirmation of its prerogatives. Lest this should tend unduly to elate the family of Aaron, the same Divine oracle which confirms to them their distinguished privileges insists on their grave responsibilities.

I. THE DISTINGUISHED PRIVILEGES OF THE PRIESTS. 1. The priest's office is described as "a service of gift," conferred by God himself (Heb. v. 4). 2. It was confined to the family of Aaron (ver. 2). 3. It had special duties into which not even the priests' kindred, the Levites, might intrude (ver. 3; ch. iv. 4—15). 4. The priests had authority over the Levites as their ministers (ver. 2), and over the people in a variety of ways: teachers (Levit. x. 11); mediators of blessing (ch. vi. 22—26; Deut. xxi. 5); judges (Deut. xvii. 8—13); sanitary officers (Levit. xiii., xiv.). 5. Provision was made for their daily wants, that they might "attend upon the Lord" without distraction (vers. 8—15). 6. They were thus, as mediators, the means of averting wrath from the nation (ver. 5)

II. THEIR GRAVE RESPONSIBILITIES. Lest Aaron's "pride" should "bud" (Ezek. vii. 10), even as his rod had, and the priests should be exalted above measure through the abundance of their privileges, they are reminded of some of their responsibilities. 1. The priests and their father's house (the Levites or Kohathites) had to "bear the iniquity of the sanctuary" (cf. Exod. xxviii. 38). Some errors might be atoned for, but they were responsible for any profanation of the tabernacle. 2. The priests alone had to "bear the iniquity of their priesthood." An annual atonement provided (Levit. xvi. 6), but not for such wilful transgressions as Nadab's, or for gross neglect (*e. g.* Levit. xxii. 9). 3. They had a responsibility in regard to the Levites, not to allow them to intrude into the priest's office, "that neither they *nor ye also* die" (ver. 3). 4. The neglect of these duties might be fatal to others as well as to themselves (vers. 3, 5).

These two truths admit of various applications. 1. *To Christian rulers*, to statesmen called to the duty of governing a country on Christian principles, but incurring tremendous responsibility thereby. Illustrate from the history of Jeroboam (cf. Jer. xlv. 5; Luke xii. 48). 2. *To Christian teachers* (1 Tim. iii. 1, yet James iii. 1). The burden of responsibility quite enough to account for the "*Nolo Episcopari*." Yet where God calls to the honour he will give strength and grace for the burden.—P.

Ver. 20.—*God, the best inheritance.* The tribe of Levi was left out in the division of the land. Some of its members might have wished to be landowners rather than Levites. Yet their loss was a special privilege, for they were selected that they might "come nigh to God," and serve in his tabernacle. God who called them did not forget them. They received houses, gardens, pasture lands (ch. xxxv. 1—8), and tithes (ver. 21), and were commended to the care and sympathy of the nation (Deut. xii. 12, 14, 27—29). Just so, under the gospel, those called to give up their lives to the service of God, though they may not have even manses or glebes, are

provided for by God through the law of Christ (1 Cor. ix. 13, 14), and are commended to the care of his people (Gal. vi. 6; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13). Let no young Christians who hear God's call to be pastors, evangelists, or missionaries hesitate to obey it. They may have many trials and heart-aches, but they know God's word: "Them that honour me I will honour." Their experience may be that of the Apostle's (Luke xxii. 35), for their Master's promise stands good (Matt. xix. 29). But the privilege of the Levites may be enjoyed by all God's servants who can say with David, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance."

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S INHERITANCE. Wisdom is needed in choosing an earthly inheritance or investing our "portion" of this world's goods. It may be invested in a freehold, embarked in a business venture, spent on one's own education, or squandered in riotous living. Much more is wisdom needed in regard to the soul's inheritance. Other portions allure some: modern idolatries, worldly wealth or ease (Ps. xvii. 14; Isa. lvii. 6). But the Christian, like a loyal Levite, prefers God without the land to the land without God. He has committed his soul entirely to God. He has no second spiritual portion to fall back upon if this should fail him. Of this he has no fear. He has accepted God's offer to be his God and his portion, and he can say 2 Tim. i. 12.

II. THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES OF HAVING SUCH AN INHERITANCE. The grave responsibilities of the Levites have their parallel in the entire consecration needed from every Christian (Ps. cxix. 57; Titus ii. 14). But we need not shrink from our responsibilities when we remember our privileges. The two things most needed in our inheritance are *safety* and *sufficiency*. 1. *Safety*. If God is our portion, he himself is our security (Deut. xxxiii. 27). When he invited us to take him as our portion, it was because he took us as his inheritance (Deut. xxxii. 9; Isa. xliii. 1; 1 Cor. iii. 23).

> "Be thou my God, and the whole world is mine.
> Whilst thou art Sovereign, I'm secure;
> I shall be rich till thou art poor;
> For all I hope and all I fear, heaven, earth, and hell, are thine."

2. *Sufficiency*. So was it with the Levites (ver. 21, &c.), David (Ps. xvi. 6), Jacob (cf. Gen. xxviii. 21; xlviii. 15, 16), and so is it with all Christians. In God they have sufficiency for both spiritual wants (John i. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22; James iv. 6) and temporal also (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12; Matt. vi. 33; Phil. iv. 19).

We can thus recommend God as the best portion for all. 1. A good portion for the young, who, like those born heirs to an estate, are entitled to this inheritance if they will claim it. 2. A good marriage portion. Illustration—Ruth, who brought Boaz an excellent portion (Ruth i. 16, 17; ii. 11, 12). 3. A good inheritance in troublous times when banks and companies are failing. None of these vicissitudes in our inheritance (Deut. xxxii. 31). 4. A good inheritance in reserve (Lam. iii. 24). That hope cannot be disappointed; the heirs of God know that "still there's more to follow" (Ps. xxxi. 19). 5. A good inheritance on a dying bed. Then all earthly inheritance daily drop in value to the proprietor, and at last "flesh and heart fail." But the Christian can say Ps. lxxiii. 26. Because God has been the "portion of his inheritance" he can add Ps. xvi. 8, 9, 11.—P.

Ver. 1.—*The iniquity of the sanctuary and priesthood.* It is full of significance that this provision for the iniquity of the sanctuary and priesthood stands first among the regulations of this chapter. Though God had separated Aaron, and in recent transactions exalted and glorified him, he had not thereby made it an easy or certain thing to serve in this office of priest as in all respects one was required to serve. God had called Israel to be his own people, and honoured them, but they were very perverse in all their ways. It is therefore far from wonderful that Aaron and the Levites, being of the same flesh and blood as rebellious Israel, should have fallen short in the holy service to which they were appointed. That rebellious spirit Korah, who was a Kohathite, shows how much iniquity could attach to the sanctuary; and the iniquity of the priesthood is amply shown in Aaron's conduct when he made the golden calf, and joined Miriam in her envious outbreak against Moses.

But even apart from such capital instances of transgression, we may be sure there was continual iniquity both in sanctuary and priesthood—things done too often in a formal, listless way, priest and Levite alike conscious that the heart was not always in the work. It was necessary to provide also for imperfections in the offerings. The animals without blemish were only relatively so, not blemished so far as the contributors knew, the very pick, doubtless, of the flocks and herds. There was sincerity of purpose, but there could not be completeness of knowledge. Hence we are led to consider—

I. THE INEVITABLE SHORTCOMINGS IN OUR HOLIEST SERVICES. Considering how much we fall short even in our relations to men, how deficient in equity, benevolence, and gratitude, we may well feel that the iniquity of our religion must be a very large and serious matter indeed. In relation to God, how ignorant is the understanding, how dull the conscience, how languid are the affections! What formality and pre-occupation in the worship! how apt we are to turn it as far as we can into mere selfish pleasure, from music or eloquence! And when in the mercy of God we become more sensitive to his claims, more spiritually-minded, better able to estimate rightly this present evil world, then also we shall see our shortcomings in a clearer light. Faults that are not noticeable in the dim light of this world's ethics become not only manifest, but hideous and humiliating, when the light that lighteth every man coming into the world shines upon them. The holier we become, the bumbler we become; the nearer we draw to God, the more conscious we are of the difference between him and us. We neither repent nor believe as we ought. Praise, prayer, meditation, good works, gospel efforts, all are seen to be not only imperfect, but lamentably so.

II. THE PECULIAR DANGERS WHICH BESET THOSE ENGAGED IN SPECIAL SERVICE. The Levites, however reverently they might at first bear the ark and the holy vessels, would gradually and insensibly contract a sort of indifference. The burdens would become like other burdens, thoughtlessly and mechanically borne. It is no easy matter for such as have to exhibit God's truth to an indifferent world to keep above indifference themselves. All the more reason, therefore, that they should be on their guard. There must needs be iniquity both in priesthood and sanctuary, but woe either to Aaron or his sons, or any Kohathite who presumed on this as an excuse for relaxing from the strictest attention. Though we cannot attain entire perfection, we are bound to labour on, getting more and more out of mediocrity and formality. Remember the humility, caution, and self-distrust with which Paul invariably speaks of his own attainments, ever magnifying the grace of God, ever confessing his need of Divine support, and the instant failure and danger which come from its withdrawal. Formality in any special work which God may require from his people, say, the exposition and enforcement of his truth, is ruinous. Christian work can never come to appear impossible, but it must never cease to appear difficult. It must always require attention, concentration, self-denial, and patience. It was a saying of J. J. Gurney, "The ministry of the gospel is the only thing I know which practice never makes easy."

III. THE DIFFUSIVE, PENETRATIVE POWER OF SIN. It is not so much as assumed that iniquity of the sanctuary and priesthood could be guarded against. However much was done in this direction, something would be left undone, needing to be provided for in the way of atonement. Sin is working in us and against us even when we are not conscious of it. It is a vain thing to make out that there is not much after all of sin in us, that it is a stage of weakness, ignorance, and imperfection out of which we shall naturally grow.—Y.

Vers. 2—7.—*Aaron and his helpers.* I. AARON HAD MANY HELPERS. No less than a whole tribe of Israel, 22,000 in number (ch. iii. 39). And if it be said, "What work could be found about the tabernacle for so many?" the answer is given in the portioning out of the work among the three great divisions of the tribe. The Levites were not around Aaron like the embellishments of a court, merely to impress the vulgar mind. They were there for work—real, necessary, honourable, beneficial work. A great deal of it might seem humble, but it could not be done without. So notice how Jesus gathered helpers around himself. It was one of the

earliest things he did. He gave them also great power, such as to heal diseases, raise dead persons, and cast out demons; that thus they might authenticate the gracious and momentous message with which he had intrusted them. And in the course of ages how the helpers have increased in numbers and in variety of service! Doubtless when Israel settled in Canaan, and the Levites became distributed over the land, it was found that they were not at all too numerous for the religious requirements of the people. Christ is the centre and the guide of an immense amount of spiritual industry; nevertheless, the cry goes out that many more hearts and hands might be engaged helping the Divine Saviour of men (John iv. 35—38). It will be a long time before the Church has occasion to complain, with respect to labourers together with God, that the supply exceeds the demand. The householder had work to be done in his vineyard even at the eleventh hour.

II. THESE HELPERS MUST BE DULY QUALIFIED. They must all be of the tribe of Levi. Levi was taken in place of the first-born of Israel, and when the first-born were numbered it was found that they somewhat exceeded the number of qualified persons among the Levites. But God did not make up the deficiency by taking from other tribes; he kept the tabernacle service within the limits of Levi, and provided for a ransom instead (ch. iii. 39—51). The service was thus to be a matter of inheritance. Aaron and his sons had their portion—Kohathite, Gershonite, Merarite, each had his own field of work, and was not to transgress it. Strangers were cautioned against putting unauthorised hands on the tabernacle. It was as real a violation of the sanctuary for a common Israelite to touch even a peg of the tabernacle as to intrude within the veil itself. So we should ever look with great jealousy and carefulness on the qualifications for serving Jesus. There have been great hindrances, occasions for blasphemy, because unclean hands have not only meddled with holy things, but kept them long in charge. The service of Jesus should go down by spiritual inheritance. We take care in affairs of this world that there shall be due apprenticeship and preparation, ascertained fitness, the tools intrusted to those who can handle them, and surely there is equal if not greater need in the supremely important affairs of Christ's kingdom. Spiritual things should ever be in charge of those who have spiritual discernment.

III. THOSE QUALIFIED WERE THEREBY PLACED UNDER OBLIGATION TO SERVE. As the service was confined to Levi, so every Levite, not otherwise disqualified, had to take part in it. There was nothing else for a Levite to do than serve God in connection with the sanctuary. He had no land; he was a substitute for others in holy service, and therefore they had to provide him with the necessaries of life. Thus his way in life was made clear; there was no need to consult personal inclination, and no room for reasonable doubt. And so, generally speaking, what service God expects from us we may be sure he will signify in the clearest manner. If we allow personal inclination to be the great prompter and decider, there is very little we shall do. Many there are whose personal inclinations lead them into some sort of connection with the Church of Christ, and keep them there, yet they never enter into anything like real service. They have a name to serve, yet are only idly busy. Personal inclination is a very small factor in Christian service, at least at the beginning, else Christ would not have been so urgent in his demands for self-denial. Not much, of course, can be done without love; but duty, the sense of what we ought to do, is to be the great power at the beginning. Those who have had the five talents from God may have to appear in his presence to be judged, conscious that not only have the talents been lost to him, but used so selfishly as rather to have gained five talents besides in worldly possessions, influence, and reputation. It is a monstrous sin to use God's property for the low, injurious aims of self. "Power," said John Foster, "to its very last particle, is duty."

IV. THOUGH THEY WERE HELPERS OF AARON, THEY COULD NOT BE HIS SUBSTITUTES. When the priest dies, it is not some experienced and sagacious Levite who can take his place; the priesthood is to be kept in the priest's own family. The hand cannot supply the place of the head. Take away the priest, and the head is gone. Aaron, if it had been necessary, could have stooped to do the humblest Levitical service, but not even the highest of the Kohathites could enter within the veil. And thus must the helpers of Christ ever look on him as separated by his nature and person to a

work which no other human being can do. He did indeed himself take up the work of the Baptist at one time, preaching repentance (Matt. iv. 17), and he also at times became his own apostle in proclaiming the gospel; but to his own peculiar work neither Baptist nor apostle could rise. Whatever responsibility be laid on us, we are only helpers at best. Let no admiration we feel for the achievements of the men famous in Church history allow us to forget that their work has been really Christian and beneficial just in proportion as they made themselves secondary and subordinate to Christ. We do not sufficiently appreciate the service of any Christian, unless as we trace in it the sustaining and guiding power of Christ himself. In the Church one generation goeth and another cometh, but Christ abideth for ever.—Y.

Vers. 8—20.—*The provision for the priests.* Already, upon different occasions, something has been said as to parts of certain offerings being reserved for Aaron and his sons (Exod. xxix. 28, 31—33; Levit. ii. 3, 10; vi. 16—18, 26, 29, &c.), and now in this passage the whole question of how the priests were to be provided for is taken up and answered. It was a fitting occasion, seeing that priestly duties had just been laid down, so exacting and exclusive in their demands. When a man is called away from the ordinary business of life, where he is as it were naturally provided for by the fruits of his industry, it must always be an anxious question as to how he shall be supported. If the priests, along with the holding of their priestly office, had been able to farm or trade there would have been no need to point out a special means of support. But since the priest was to be wholly given to tabernacle service, it was right not only to assure him beforehand of the necessaries of life, but to point out to him something of the way in which they were to be provided.

I. THE SUPPORT OF THE PRIESTS WAS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE FAITHFUL DISCHARGE OF THEIR OFFICE. They were provided for in the very act of carrying out their priestly duties. Forsaking the appointed service of God at his altar, they found themselves forsaken of his providence. He might have continued for them some miraculous provision by manna or otherwise, if such a course had seemed fitting; but he rather arranged it that in faithful waiting upon the altar their support should come from day to day. Faithfulness was required of them, first of all, in keeping the people instructed and reminded as to all the offerings required. An omitted offering might mean an impoverished priest. Faithfulness also was required in being continually at the altar. It was the appointed place for the people to give and for the priest to receive. There was no call for him to go on mendicant expeditions round the land, or lean upon the suggestions of his own prudence in order to make sure of daily bread. When he went to the altar it was as to a table provided by the Lord himself. So when God manifestly calls any of us to special service, our very faithfulness in the service will bring a sufficient supply for all our need. If we leave the path of duty we leave the path of Providence.

II. THIS MODE OF PROVISION TENDED TO BIND PRIESTS AND PEOPLE CLOSER TOGETHER. The priest, while in some respects separated from the people by an impassable barrier, was in others united by an indissoluble bond. Standing before them as an anointed one, with awful and peculiar powers, treading unharmed where the first footstep of a common Israelite would have wrought instant death, he nevertheless appeared at the same time dependent for his bodily sustenance on the regular offerings of the people. Thus the priest was manifested as one of themselves. There was everything in this remarkable mingling of relations to keep the people from presumption and the priest from pride. Their dependence on him was not more manifest than his dependence on them. Thus, also, we observe in many and touching ways how dependent our Saviour was on those whom he came to save. He threw himself, as no one ever before or since, on the hospitality of the world, manifesting that there were real needs of his humanity which he looked even to sinful men to supply. And may we not well suppose that even in his glory Jesus is not only a giver to men, but a receiver from them? May it not be that by our fidelity and diligence in respect of the living sacrifice we are ministering a very real satisfaction to the glorified Jesus?

III. As this provision required faithfulness in the discharge of duty, so also it required FAITH IN GOD. If he had said he would provide manna or some direct

miraculous gift, such an intimation would have been easier to receive than the one actually made. That which has to come to us indirectly, gives occasion for a greater trial of faith than what has to come directly. The food of these priests was to flow through a circuitous and, to judge by late experience, not very promising channel. Had not these very people, whose offerings were to support the priests, only lately shown their contempt for Aaron and unbelief as to the reality of his office? How then should they be the channels of God's providence? Thus the opportunity for faith comes in. Looking towards man, all is unlikely; looking through man to God, all appears certain and regular. God will make his own channels, in places we think unlikely, for those who put their trust in him. He knew that, stubborn and unsympathetic as the people now were, yet the day would come when their offerings might be looked for with a reasonable confidence. We are very poor judges by ourselves of what is likely or unlikely. The Divine arrangements, perplexing as they may appear on the surface, have in all cases a basis of knowledge and power which it is our wisdom humbly and gratefully to accept.

IV. This provision EVIDENTLY GUARDED AGAINST ANYTHING LIKE EXTORTION. The people themselves knew exactly how the priests were to be provided for. And this was no small matter, seeing that in course of time the holy priesthood became in the hands of arrogant and grasping men an occasion for priestcraft. Priests learned only too soon the power of an *ipse dixit* over superstitious and timid minds. But God does not allow the authority of an *ipse dixit* to any but himself. The priest was bound by a written and definite commandment which lay open to the perception of every one who had to do with him. All these offerings, of which he had a certain part, were to be presented in any case. They were not presented in order that he might be provided for, but, being presented, they gave occasion sufficiently to provide for him. The people were to feel that he was being supported by a reasonable service.

V. THERE WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO GIVE IN A RIGHT SPIRIT. If any one had a grudging and fault-finding disposition there was certainly opportunity for him to exercise it. He could say, not without plausibility in the ears of like-minded men, that the priests were managing things very cleverly, so as to be provided for at the public expense. Misrepresentation is not a very difficult thing to achieve if certain considerations, and these alone, are brought into view. God's appointments for the support of the priesthood were a standing trial of the people's views with respect to it. Misrepresentations cannot be escaped, but woe to those who, without troubling fully and honestly to understand the thing of which they speak, are the authors of misrepresentations. The priesthood itself was a Divine, a necessary, and a beneficial institution, and every devout Israelite would count it a joy to support it, even though particular holders of the office might be very unworthy men. We must honour and support every Divine appointment, and that all the more if the persons appointed show themselves insensible to the duties laid upon them.—Y.

Ver. 19.—*A covenant of salt.* God has defined the provisions for the priesthood, and indicated in what certainty and sufficiency they would come. He also indicates the *permanency* of the supply. The things given would be given to Aaron and to his sons and daughters with him by a statute for ever. Everything was done to make and keep the priesthood separate, and prevent those who had it from being tempted into the ordinary business of life, by fear lest they should lack sufficient support. And still further to emphasise the solemnity of the pledge, God adds this peculiar and suggestive expression: "It is a covenant of salt for ever." Dr. Thomson, in 'The Land and the Book,' tells us that it is a habit still common among the Bedawin, and probably coming from the remotest times, for host and guest to eat together. This is said to be *bread and salt* between them, and constitutes a pledge of protection, support, and fidelity even to death. Thus we may understand God saying to Aaron, and through him to the long succession of priests, "There is bread and salt between us." But we must also go back and consider Levit. ii. 13. All the meat offerings presented to God were to be seasoned with salt. When presented, a part was burnt,—as it were, eaten by God himself,—and the remainder he returns to the priest for his own use. Thus there are mutual pledges of fidelity. God is the

guest of the priest, and the priest in turn the guest of God. In this way God lifted a social custom to a holy use. We cannot but notice in the second chapter of Leviticus that while some things are mentioned as constituents of the meat offering, viz., oil and frankincense, and others as excluded, viz., leaven and honey, a special emphasis is laid on the presence of salt. A special significance was to be indicated by that presence, and it agrees with this that when Ezra was going up from Babylon, furnished by Artaxerxes with all he might require for sacrifice, the salt is given without prescribing how much (ch. vii. 22). We must, however, look further back than social customs even, to find the reason why salt was present in this covenant. Social customs, could they be traced back, rise, some of them at least, out of religious ordinances. Why was *salt* chosen as the symbol? It is something to notice that salt gives flavour to that which is insipid. God's gifts may easily pall and become worthless if his presence is not associated with them; with the sense of that presence they cannot but be grateful. But the chief service of salt is to preserve that which is dead from decay. Salt will not bring back life, but it will hinder putrefaction. Under the old covenant God did not give life, though he was preparing to give it; but at the same time he did much to preserve the world, dead in trespasses and sins, from corpse decay, while he made ready in the fulness of time to bring back the dead to life. Thus the covenant with men through types and shadows was emphatically *a covenant of salt*. And the same may he said of the new covenant through the great reality in Christ Jesus. There is an element of salt in this covenant also. "Ye are the salt of the earth," said Christ to his disciples in the great and honourable burden of service which he laid on them. Indeed, what we call the old and the new covenant are really but shapes of that great covenant between God and man made in the very constitution of things. God, creating man in his own image, and planting within him certain powers and aspirations, is thereby recording the Divine articles in the covenant; and man also, by the manifestations of his nature, by his recognition of conscience, even by his idolatries and superstitions, and gropings after God, testifies to his part in the covenant. And in this covenant all true disciples are as the salt, the solemn, continuous pledge from God to the world that he does not look on it as beyond recovery. Be it the part of all disciples then to keep the savour of the salt that is in them. "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. iv. 5, 6). It rests with us to honour God's covenant of salt and make it more and more efficacious.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ASHES OF AN HEIFER SPRINKLING THE UNCLEAN (vers. 1—22). Ver. 1.—**And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron.** On the addition of the second name see on ch. xviii. 1. There is no note of time in connection with this chapter, but internal evidence points strongly to the supposition that it belongs to the early days of wandering after the ban. It belongs to a period when death had resumed his normal, and more than his normal, power over the children of Israel; when, having been for a short time expelled (except in a limited number of cases—see above on ch. x. 28), he had come back with frightful rigour to reign over a doomed generation. It belongs also, as it would seem, to a time when the daily, monthly, and even annual routine of sacrifice and purgation was suspended through poverty, distress, and disfavour with God. It tells of the mercy and condescension which did not leave even the rebellious and excommunicate without some simple remedy, some easily-obtainable solace, for the one religious distress which must of necessity press upon them daily and hourly, not only as Israelites, but as children of the East, sharing the ordinary superstitions of the age. Through the valley of the shadow of death they were doomed at Kadesh to walk, while their fellows fell beside them one by one, until the reek and taint of death passed upon the whole congregation. Almost all nations have had, as is well known, an instinctive horror of death, which has everywhere demanded separation and purification on the part of those who have come in contact with it (Bähr, 'Symbolik,' ii. p. 466 *sq.*). And this religious horror had not been combated, but, on the contrary, fostered and deepened by the Mosaic legislation. The law everywhere encouraged the idea that sin and death were essentially connected, and that

disease and death spread their infection in the spiritual as well as in the natural order of things. Life and death were the two opposite poles under the law, as under the gospel; but the eye of faith was fixed upon natural life and natural death, and was not trained to look beyond. It could never have occurred to a Jew to say, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori.*" To die, however nobly, was not only to be cut off from God oneself, but to become a curse and a danger and a cause of religious defilement to those around. There is, therefore, a beautiful consistency between this enactment and the circumstances of the time on the one hand, between this enactment and the revealed character of God on the other hand. Although they were his covenant people no more, since they were under sentence of death, yet, like others, and more than others, they had religious horrors and religious fears—not very spiritual, perhaps, but very real to them; these horrors and fears cried to him piteously for relief, and that relief he was careful to give. They must die, but they need not suffer daily torment of death; they must not worship him in the splendid and perfect order of his appointed ritual, but they should at least have the rites which should make life tolerable to them. It appears to be a mistake to connect this ordinance especially with the plague which occurred after the rebellion of Korah. It was not an exceptional calamity, the effects of which might indeed be widespread, but would be soon over, which the people had to dread exceedingly; it was the daily mortality always going on in every camp under all circumstances. If only the elder generation died off in the wilderness, this alone would yield nearly 100 victims every day, and by each of these a considerable number of the survivors must have been defiled. Thus, in the absence of special provision, one of two things must have happened: either the unhappy people would have grown callous and indifferent to the awful presence of death; or, more probably, a dark cloud of religious horror and depression would have permanently enveloped them.

Ver. 2.—**This is the ordinance of the law.** חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה. Law-statute: an unusual combination only found elsewhere in ch. xxxi. 21, which also concerns legal purifications. **A red heifer.** This offering was obviously intended, apart from its symbolic significance, to be studiedly simple and cheap. In contradiction to the many and costly and ever-repeated sacrifices of the Sinaitic legislation, this was a single individual, a female, and of the most common description: red is the most ordinary colour of cattle, and a young heifer is of less value than any other beast of its kind. The ingenuity indeed of the Jews heaped around the choice of this animal a multitude of precise requirements, and supplemented the prescribed ritual with many ceremonies, some of which are incorporated by the Targums with the sacred text; but even so they could not destroy the remarkable contrast between the simplicity of this offering and the elaborate complexity of those ordained at Sinai. Only six red heifers are said to have been needed during the whole of Jewish history, so far-reaching and so long-enduring were the uses and advantages of a single immolation. It is evident that this ordinance had for its distinguishing character oneness as opposed to multiplicity, simplicity contrasted with elaborateness. **Without spot, wherein is no blemish.** See on Levit. iv. 3. However little, comparatively speaking, the victim might cost them, it must yet be perfect of its kind. The later Jews held that three white hairs together on any part of the body made it unfit for the purpose. On the sex and colour of the offering see below. **Upon which never came yoke.** Cf. Deut. xxi. 3; 1 Sam. vi. 7. The imposition of the yoke, according to the common sentiment of all nations, was a species of degradation, and therefore inconsistent with the ideal of what was fit to be offered in this case. That the matter was wholly one of sentiment is nothing to the point: God doth not care for oxen of any kind, but he doth care that man should give him what is, whether in fact or in fancy, the best of its sort.

Ver. 3.—**Unto Eleazar the priest.** Possibly in order that Aaron himself might not be associated with death, even in this indirect way (see ver. 6). In after times, however, it was usually the high priest who officiated on this occasion, and therefore it is quite as likely that Eleazar was designated because he was already beginning to take the place of his father in his especial duties. **Without the camp.** The bodies of those animals which were offered for the sin of the congregation were always burnt outside the camp, the law thus testifying that sin and death had no proper place within the city of God. In this case, however, the whole sacrifice was performed outside the camp, and was only brought into relation with the national sanctuary by the sprinkling of the blood in that direction. Various symbolic reasons have been assigned to this fact, but none are satisfactory except the following:—1. It served to intensify the conviction, which the whole of this ordinance was intended to bring home to the minds of men, that death was an awful thing, and that everything connected with it was wholly foreign to the presence and habitation of the living God. 2. It served to mark with more emphasis the contrast between this one offering, which

was perhaps almost the only one they had in the wilderness, and those which ought to have been offered continually according to the Levitical ordinances. The red heifer stood quite outside the number of ordinary victims as demanded by the law, and therefore it was not slain at any hallowed altar, nor, necessarily, by any hallowed hand. 3. It served to prefigure in a wonderful and indeed startling way the sacrifice of Christ outside the gate. In later days the heifer was conducted upon a double tier of arches over the ravine of Kedron to the opposite slope of Olivet. **That he may bring her forth, . . and one shall slay her.** The nominative to both these verbs is alike unexpressed. Septuagint, *καὶ ἐξάξουσιν . . καὶ σφάξουσιν.* In the practice of later ages the high priest led her out, and another priest killed her in his presence, but it was not so commanded.

Ver. 4.—**And Eleazar . . shall . . sprinkle of her blood directly before** (אֶל־נֹכַח פָּנֶי) **the tabernacle.** By this act the death of the heifer became a sacrificial offering. The sprinkling in the direction of the sanctuary intimated that the offering was made to him that dwelt therein, and the "seven times" was the ordinary number of perfect performance (Levit. iv. 17, &c.).

Ver. 5.—**One shall burn the heifer.** See on Exod. xxix. 14. **And her blood.** In all other cases the blood was poured away beside the altar, because in the blood was the life, and the life was given to God in exchange for the life of the offerer. This great truth, which underlay all animal sacrifices, was represented in this case by the sprinkling towards the sanctuary. The rest of the blood was burnt with the carcase, either because outside the holy precincts there was no consecrated earth to receive the blood, or in order that the virtue of the blood might in a figure pass into the ashes and add to their efficacy.

Ver. 6.—**Cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop.** See on Levit. xiv. 4—6 for the significance of these things. The antiseptic and medicinal qualities of the cedar (*Juniperus oxycedrus*) and hyssop (probably *Capparis spinosa*) make their use readily intelligible; the symbolism of the "scarlet" is much more obscure.

Ver. 7.—**The priest shall be unclean until the even,** *i. e.* the priest who superintended the sacrifice, and dipped his finger in the blood. Every one of these details was devised in order to express the intensely infectious character of death in its moral aspect. The very ashes, which were so widely potent for cleansing (ver. 10), and the cleansing water itself (ver. 19), made every one that touched them, even for the purifying of another, himself unclean. At the same time the ashes, while, as it were, so redolent of death that they must be kept outside the camp, were most holy, and were to be laid up by a clean man in a clean place (ver. 9). These contradictions find their true explanation only when we consider them as foreshadowing the mysteries of the atonement.

Ver. 9.—**For a water of separation,** *i. e.* a water which should remedy the state of legal separation due to the defilement of death, just as in ch. viii. the water of purification from sin is called the water of sin.

Ver. 10.—**It shall be unto the children of Israel . . a statute for ever.** This may refer only to the former part of the verse, according to the analogy of ver. 21, or it may refer to the whole ordinance of the red heifer.

Ver. 11.—**Shall be unclean seven days.** The fact of defilement by contact with the dead had been mentioned before (Levit. xxi. 1; Numb. v. 2; vi. 6; ix. 6), and had no doubt been recognised as a religious pollution from ancient times; but the exact period of consequent uncleanness is here definitely fixed.

Ver. 12.—**With it.** בּוֹ. *I. e.*, as the sense clearly demands, with the water of separation.

Ver. 13.—**Defileth the tabernacle of the Lord.** On the bearing of this remarkable announcement see Levit. xv. 31. The uncleanness of death was not simply a personal matter, it involved, if not duly purged, the whole congregation, and reached even to God himself, for its defilement spread to the sanctuary. **Cut off from Israel,** *i. e.* excommunicate on earth, and liable to the direct visitation of Heaven (cf. Gen. xvii. 14).

Ver. 14.—**This is the law.** הַתּוֹרָה. By this law the extent of the infection is rigidly defined, as its duration by the last. **In a tent.** This fixes the date of the law as given in the wilderness, but it leaves in some uncertainty the rule as to settled habitations. The Septuagint, however, has here *ἐν οἰκίᾳ*, and therefore it would appear that the law was transferred without modification from the tent to the house. In the case of large houses with many inhabitants, some relaxation of the strictness must have been found necessary.

Ver. 15.—**Which hath no covering bound upon it.** So the Septuagint (*ὅσα οὐχὶ δεσμὸν καταδίδεται ἐπ' αὐτῷ*), and this is the sense. In the Hebrew פָּתִיל, a string, stands in opposition to עָצִיד, a covering. If the vessel was open, its contents were polluted by the odour of death.

Ver. 16.—**One that is slain with a sword.** This would apply especially, it would seem, to the field of battle; but the law must

certainly have been relaxed in the case of soldiers. **Or a bone of a man, or a grave.** Thus the defilement was extended to the mouldering remains of humanity, and even to the tombs (*μνήματα*. Cf. Luke xi. 44) which held them.

Ver. 17.—**Running water.** Septuagint, *ὕδωρ ζῶν* (cf. Levit. xiv. 5; John iv. 10).

Ver. 18.—**Shall take hyssop.** See Exod. xii. 22, and cf. Ps. li. 7.

Ver. 19.—**On the third day, and on the seventh day.** The twice-repeated application of holy water marked the clinging nature of the pollution to be removed; so also the repetition of the threat in the following verse marked the heinousness of the neglect to seek its removal.

Ver. 21.—**It shall be a perpetual statute.** This formula usually emphasises something of solemn importance. In this case, as apparently above in ver. 10, the regulations thus enforced might seem of trifling moment. But the whole design of this ordinance, down to its minutest detail, was to stamp upon physical death a far-reaching power of defiling and separating from God, which extended even to the very means Divinely appointed as a remedy. The Jew, whose religious feelings were modelled upon this law, must have felt himself entangled in the meshes of a net so widely cast about him that he could hardly quite escape it by extreme caution and multiplied observances; he might indeed exclaim, unless habit hardened him to it, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—22.—*The remedy of death.* We have in this chapter, spiritually, death, and the remedy for death. Death is treated of not as the mere physical change which is the end of life, nor as the social and domestic loss which breaks so many hearts and causes so many tears to flow, but as the inseparable companion and, as it were, *alter ego* of sin, whose dark shadow does not merely blight, but pollutes, which shuts out not so much the light of life as the light of God. It is death, not as he is to the *dead*, but as he is to the *living*, and to them in their religious life. It is true that according to the letter it is physical death only which is spoken of, and the ceremonial uncleanness which ensued upon contact with it. It is true also that this uncleanness, so minutely regulated, and so held in abhorrence, was a matter of superstition. The last relics of religious feeling (or, upon another view, its first dawnings) in the lowest savages take the form of a superstitious dread of the lifeless remains of the departed and of their resting-place. There is in truth nothing in the touch of the dead which can infect or contaminate the living, or affect in the least their moral and spiritual condition. Nevertheless, most of the nations (and especially the Egyptians) elaborated the primitive superstition of their forefathers into a code of religious sentiment and observance which took a firm hold of the popular mind. It pleased God to adopt this primitive and widespread superstition (as in so many other cases) into his own Divine legislation, and to make it a vehicle of deep and important spiritual truths, and an instrument for preparing the national mind and conscience for the glorious revelation of life and incorruption through Christ. Only in the light of the gospel can the treatment of death in this chapter be edifying or indeed intelligible, for otherwise it were only the imposition of a ceremonial yoke, extremely burdensome in itself, and grounded upon a painful superstition. But it is sufficient to point out that death is only treated of in connection with its remedy, even as eternal death is only clearly revealed in that gospel which tells us of everlasting life. In this remedy for death we have one of the most remarkable types of the atonement, and of its application to the cleansing of individual souls, to be found in the Old Testament. The very exceptional character of the ordinance, and its isolation from the body of the Mosaic legislation; the singular and apparently contradictory character of its details, as well as the great importance assigned to it both in the ordinance itself and in the practice of the Jews; would have led us to look for some eminent and distinctive foreshadowings of the one Sacrifice once offered. The New Testament confirms this natural expectation, not indeed dwelling upon details, but ranking "the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean" side by side with "the blood of bulls and of goats," as typifying the more prevailing expiation made by Christ. We have, therefore, in this ordinance Christ himself in the oneness of his election and sacrifice; Christ in the perfectness, freedom, and gentleness of his untainted life; Christ in many circumstances of his rejection and death; Christ in

the enduring effects of his expiation to do away the contagion and terror of spiritual death; in a word, we have him who by dying overcame death, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In drawing out this great type we may consider—1. The circumstances under which the ordinance was given. 2. The choice of the victim. 3. The manner of sacrifice. 4. The application of its cleansing virtue.

I. As to the circumstances of time and place. Consider—1. *That the ordinance of the red heifer was given not at Sinai, but in the wilderness of Paran*, the region of exile, of wandering; the land of the shadow of death, which was but the ante-chamber of the tomb and of eternal darkness to that generation. The whole Levitical system had been given in the wilderness, but in the wilderness as a land of liberty to serve God, and as the threshold of the promised land of life flowing with milk and honey. Even so Christ was given to us when we lay in darkness and the shadow of death, living in a world whose prince was Satan, wherein was no rest, and wherefrom was no escape, save into the gloomier land beyond the grave. 2. *That it was given at a time when Israel lay under condemnation for rebellion, and under sentence of death;* when death, who had been restrained for a season, was let loose upon them with multiplied terrors to prey upon them until they were consumed, filling the minds of them that lived with horror and despair. Even so Christ was given unto a dying race, lying under the wrath of God for sin, and in perpetual bondage through certain fear of coming death. Death was the universal tyrant whose terror sickened the boldest heart and saddened the uneasy mirth of the gayest. 3. *That it was given at a time when the routine of sacrifices and holy rites was abandoned*, partly as out of their power to maintain, partly as useless for such as were alienated from God and appointed to die. How should men eat the passover who had but escaped from Egypt to perish miserably in a howling wilderness? Even so Christ was given to a race which had little belief and less comfort in its religious rites, Jewish or Gentile; which knew itself alienated from God, excluded from heaven; which had tried all outward and formal rites, and found that they could not deliver from the fear of death. Even the Divinely-given, religious system of Moses had not a word to say about the life to come, could not whisper one syllable of comfort to the dying soul.

II. As to the choice of victim. Consider—1. *That the victim was (so far as could possibly be) one, and one only;* in striking contrast to the multiplicity and constant repetition (with its consequent difficulty and expense) of the ordinary sacrifices of the law. One red heifer availed for centuries. Only six are said to have been required during the whole of Jewish history; for the smallest quantity of the ashes availed to impart the cleansing virtue to the holy water. Had it indeed been possible to preserve the ashes from unavoidable waste, no second red heifer would ever have needed to be offered. Even so the sacrifice of Christ is one, and only one, as opposed to all the offerings of the law; and this because the availing power of it and the cleansing virtue of his atonement endure for ever, without the slightest loss of efficacy or possibility of being exhausted. 2. *That the victim was a heifer, not a male animal, as in almost all other cases.* Even so we may believe with reverence that there was a distinctly feminine side to the character of Christ, a tenderness and gentleness which might have been counted weakness had it not been united with so much masculine force of command and energy of will. And this was necessary to the perfect Man; for whereas Eve was taken from out of Adam after his creation, this points to the subtraction from the ideal man of some elements of his nature, so that man and woman only represent between them a complete humanity. As, therefore, we ever find in the greatest men some strongly-marked feminine traits of character, so we may believe that in Christ, who was the second Adam, and (in a special sense) the seed of the woman, this feminine side of the perfect ideal was fully restored. 3. *That the victim was red.* Even so our Lord, as touching his bodily nature, was of that common earth, which is red, from which Adam took his name. Moreover, he was red in the blood of his passion, as the prophet testifies (Isa. lxiii. 1, 2; Rev. xix. 13). 4. *That it was without blemish.* A matter about which the Jews took incredible pains, three hairs together of any but the one colour being held fatal to the choice. Even so our Lord, even by the testimony of Jews

and heathens, was without fault and irreproachable (John vii. 46; xviii. 23; xix. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 22). 5. *That no yoke had ever come upon it.* The innocent freedom of its young life had never been harshly bent to the purposes and plans of others. Even so our Lord was never under any yoke of constraint, nor was any other will ever imposed upon him. It is true that he made himself obedient to his Father in all things, to his earthly parents within their proper sphere, and to his enemies in his appointed sufferings; but all this was purely voluntary, and it was of the essence of his perfect sacrifice that no constraint of any sort was ever put upon him. It was his own will which accepted the will of others, as shaping for him his life and destiny.

III. AS TO THE MANNER OF SACRIFICE. Consider—1. *That the red heifer was led outside the camp (or city) of God to die in an unhallowed place*—a thing absolutely singular, even among sacrifices for sin. Even so our Lord, by whose death we are restored to life, suffered without the gate (Heb. xiii. 12); partly because he was despised and rejected, but partly because he was an *anathema*, made a curse for us, concentrating upon himself all our sin and death; partly also because he died not for that nation only (whose home and heritage was the holy city), but for the whole wide world beyond. 2. *That the heifer was delivered to the chief priest, and by him led forth to die, but slain by other hands before his face.* Even so our Lord was delivered unto Caiaphas and the Jewish priesthood, and by them was he brought unto his death; but he was crucified by alien hands, not theirs,—God so over-ruling it (John xviii. 31),—yet in their presence, and with their sanction and desire. 3. *That the death of the heifer was not in appearance sacrificial, but became so when its blood was sprinkled towards the sanctuary by the finger of the priest.* Even so the death of Christ upon the cross was not made an atoning sacrifice by its outward incidents, or even by its extreme injustice, or by the hatred of the Truth which prompted it; for then it had been only a murder, or a martyrdom, and not equal to many others in the cruelty shown or the suffering patiently endured; but it became a true propitiatory sacrifice by virtue of the deliberate will and purpose of Christ, whereby he (being Priest as well as Victim) offered his sufferings and death in holy submission and with devout gladness to the Father. As the priest sprinkled of the blood with his own finger towards the sanctuary, and made it a sacrifice, so Christ, by his will to suffer for us and to be our atonement with God, imparted an intention or direction to his death which made it in the deepest sense a sacrifice (Luke xii. 50; John xvii. 19; Heb. ix. 14; x. 8—10). 4. *That the heifer was wholly consumed with fire*, as was the case with all sin offerings for the sins of many, as a thing wholly due unto God. Even so Christ was wholly given up by himself unto that God who is a consuming fire, a fire of wrath against sin, a fire of love towards the sinner. In this flame of Divine zeal against sin, of Divine zeal for souls, was Christ wholly consumed, nothing in him remaining indifferent, nothing escaping the agony and the cross (cf. John ii. 17). 5. *That, contrary to the universal rule, the blood of the heifer was not poured away, but was burnt with the carcase*, and so was represented in the ashes. Even so "the precious blood" of Christ which he shed for our redemption did not pass away; the cleansing virtue of it and the abiding strength of it remain for ever in the means and ministries of grace which we owe to his atoning death. 6. *That cedar, hyssop, and scarlet were mingled in the burning.* Even so there are for ever mingled in the passion of Christ, never to be lost sight of if we would view it aright, these three elements: fragrance and incorruption, cleansing efficacy, martial and royal grandeur. If we omit any of these we do wrong to the full glory of the cross; for these three belong to him, as the Prophet, the fragrance of whose holy teachings has filled the world; as the Priest, who only can purge us with hyssop that we may be clean; as the King, who never reigned more gloriously than on the tree (see Cant. iii. 11; Matt. xxvii. 28; Col. ii. 15). 7. *That the priest himself and the man that slew the heifer became unclean*, contrary to the usual rule. Even so the Jewish priesthood and the heathen soldiery who slew our Lord, albeit he died for them as well as for others, yet incurred a fearful guilt thereby (Acts ii. 23).

IV. AS TO THE APPLICATION OF THE EXPIATION. Consider—1. *That the ashes were, so far as could be presented to the senses, the indestructible residue of the entire victim*, including its blood, after the sacrifice was completed. Even so the whole merits of

Christ—the entire value and efficacy of his self-sacrifice, of his life given for us, of all that he was, and did, and suffered—remain ever, and abide with us, and are available for our cleansing. 2. *That the ashes of the heifer were laid up, but not by the priest, or by any one concerned in its death, without the camp in a clean place.* Even so the merits of Christ and the efficacy of his sacrifice are preserved for ever; yet not in the Jerusalem below, nor by any agency of them that slew him; but he himself (see 4.) hath laid them up for the use of all nations in the Church which is "clean," as governed and sanctified by his Holy Spirit. 3. *That the ashes of the heifer when mixed with "living water" were made a purification for sin unto Israel to deliver them from the bondage of death.* Even so the merits of Christ and the virtue of his atonement are available for all, through the operation of the Holy Spirit (John iv. 10; vii. 38), to purify from all sin, and to set free from the power of death. 4. *That when any unclean person was to be purged, it must be done by "a clean person,"* not by any one having need of cleansing himself. Even so the cleansing efficacy of Christ's atonement must be applied to the sinful soul only by one that is clean, and not by any one under like condemnation with himself. And this "clean person" can only be Christ himself, who only is holy, harmless, and undefiled (Job xiv. 4; xv. 14; Rom. iii. 23; Gal. iii. 22); wherefore the sprinkling of purification from sin and death can only be effected by Christ himself. 5. *That the clean person did not apply the water for purification with his finger, as when the priest sprinkled the blood, but by means of hyssop, a lowly herb used as an aspergillum* (cf. Exod. xii. 22; 1 Kings iv. 33; Ps. li. 7). Even so it hath pleased the Lord to apply the cleansing virtue of his blood and passion to souls unclean not directly and personally, as he offered his sacrifice of himself to the Father, but through lowly means and ministries of grace, by means of which he himself is pleased to work (cf. John iv. 1, 2; xiii. 20; xx. 21—23; 1 Cor. x. 16; 2 Cor. ii. 10; iv. 7; Gal. iii. 27). 6. *That the unclean person was to be sprinkled on the third day and on the seventh day* ere he was wholly cleansed from the savour of death. Even so must the cleansing virtue of the atonement come unto us in the twofold power, (1) of the resurrection, wherein we rise from the death of sin unto the active life of righteousness; (2) of the holy sabbath, wherein we rest from our own works by renouncing self and living for God and for our neighbour. The cleansing which has not this double moral aspect is not perfect—the savour of death is not taken away. Nor is the order inverted because the third day (of resurrection) comes before the seventh (of rest); for as a fact the activities of the new life in Christ do precede in the soul the cessation of the old life, which is the spiritual sabbath.

CONSIDER, FURTHER, WITH RESPECT TO THE INFECTION OF DEATH—1. *That the Jews were taught most emphatically and most minutely to regard death as a foul and horrible thing, the slightest contact with which alienated from God and banished from his worship.* Even so are we taught that death is the shadow of sin (Rom. v. 12) and the wages of sin (*ibid.* vi. 23), and the active enemy of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 26; Rev. vi. 8; xx. 14), and that the death of Christ was an awful mystery connected with his being made "sin" and "a curse" for us (Matt. xxvii. 46, and the Passion Psalms *passim*). Yet in the law the horror is concentrated upon physical death, whereas in the gospel it is removed from this and attached to the second death, of the soul (Matt. x. 28; Mark v. 39, 41; 1 Thess. iv. 14; Rev. ii. 11; xx. 6). 2. *That whoso came into contact, even indirectly, with the dead, or even entered a tent where any corpse lay, was unclean a whole seven days.* Far from being able to give any of his own life to the deceased, he himself was infected with his death. Even so are we powerless of ourselves to do good to the spiritually dead beside us, but rather are certain to catch from them the contagion of their death. None can live (naturally) among those that are dead in trespasses and sins without to some extent becoming like them. 3. *That this rule applied as much to the Levitical priests as to any other;* nay, the very high priest who superintended the sacrifice, and the man who applied the holy water, became themselves unclean. Even so there is none of us, whatever his office may be, or howsoever he may be occupied about religious things, that does not contract defilement from the dead world and the dead works which are around him. Our Lord alone could utterly disregard the infection of death, because in his inherent holiness he was proof against its infection. 4. *That there*

was no cleansing for those defiled with death but by means of the sprinkling of the ashes. Even so there is no deliverance from the sentence and savour of death which hath passed upon us but through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. 5. *That if any was not purified in the appointed way, he did not simply forego a great benefit to himself, he incurred the wrath of God as one that wantonly defiled his sanctuary.* Even so that Christian who will not seek cleansing for his uncleanness and the hallowing of the precious blood does not only sin against his own soul, remaining in alienation from his God; he grieves the Spirit of God, and provokes him to anger, as one that despises his goodness, and mars by his state and example the sanctity of God's living temple, which is the Church (Matt. xxii. 11—13; John xiii. 8, 10, 11; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; Eph. ii. 20—22; Heb. x. 29).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10, 17—19.—*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.* This law respecting the purification of one who has contracted uncleanness by contact with the dead must have been familiar to every Israelite. Death with impartial foot visits every house. No one can long remain a stranger to it. There is evidence, moreover, that this law did not fail to impress devout hearts, deepening in them the feeling of impurity before God and unfitness for his presence, and at the same time awakening the hope that there is in the grace of God a remedy for uncleanness. Hence David's prayer, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." The law gives direction regarding—

I. THE PURIFYING ELEMENT. 1. It was water, *pure spring water* (ver. 17). A most natural symbol, much used in the Levitical lustrations, and which is still in use in the Christian Church. At the door of the sanctuary there is still a laver. In the sacrament of baptism Christ says to every candidate for admission into his house, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." 2. In the present instance *the ashes of a sin offering were mingled with the water.* A heifer was procured at the expense of the congregation,—red, unblemished, on which never yoke had come,—and it was slain as a sacrifice. The red heifer was a true sin offering. It is so named in vers. 9, 17 (Hebrew). But in several respects it differed remarkably from all the other sin offerings. Although the priest was to see it slain, and with his own finger sprinkled its blood toward the holy place, he was forbidden to slay it himself; it was slain not at the altar, but outside the camp, and the carcase was wholly consumed without being either flayed, or cleaned, or divided, or laid out in order. Besides, every one who took part in the sacrificial act was thereby rendered unclean; for which reason Eleazar, not Aaron, was to do the priest's part—the high priest might not defile himself for any cause. The ashes of this singular offering were carefully preserved to be used to communicate purifying virtue to the water required for lustration from time to time. None of these details is without meaning, if we could only get at it. The points of chief importance are these:—(1) The sin offering prefigured Christ in his offering himself without spot to God (Heb. ix. 14). The singular rule which forbade the slaying of the red heifer within the precinct of the camp, who does not see in it a prophecy of the fact that the Just One suffered the reproachful death of a malefactor without the gate of Jerusalem? (Heb. xiii. 12, 13). (2) Without prior expiation there could be no purification, and, conversely, expiation being made, the way was open for purification. So when Christ had once offered himself without spot to God, provision was thereby made for purging our consciences. There is a cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ. The man who believes in Christ is not only pardoned, but is so purified in his conscience that he no longer shrinks in shame from the eye of God, but draws near with holy confidence.

II. THE PURIFYING RITE (vers. 17—19). Nothing could be more simple. A few particles of the ashes of the sin offering were put into a vessel of spring water; this was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop on the unclean person on the third day and again on the seventh, an act which any clean person could perform in any town; by this act the uncleanness was removed. A simple rite, but not, therefore, optional. Wilful neglect was a presumptuous sin.

General lessons:—1. There is something in sin which unfits for the society of God.

One of the chief lessons of the ceremonial law. When the grace of God touches the heart, one of its first effects is to open the heart to feel this. "Lord, I am vile." As habits of personal cleanliness make a man loathe himself when he has been touched with filth, so the grace of God makes a man loathe himself for sin. 2. There is provision in Christ for making men clean. His blood purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 3. Of this provision we must not omit to avail ourselves. Wilful neglect of the blood of sprinkling is presumptuous sin.—B.

Ver. 11.—*Defilement by contact with the dead.* The law of Moses was a yoke which neither the fathers of the nation nor their descendants were able to bear. It would be difficult to name any part of the law in regard to which Peter's saying was more applicable than it is to the regulations here laid down regarding defilement by the dead. They must have been not only irksome in a high degree, but trying to some of the purest and most tender of the natural affections.

I. For WHAT ARE THE PROVISIONS OF THE LAW? 1. Contact with a dead body rendered the person unclean, and so disabled him from enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary. Many an Israelite would, like Jacob, desire that a beloved son should be with him when he died, to hear his last words and put his hand upon his eyes. Many a Joseph would covet the honour of paying this last tribute of filial affection. Yet the son who closed his father's eyes found himself branded by the law as unclean, so that if it happened to be the passover time, he could not keep the feast. The same unwelcome disability befell any one who, walking in the field, came upon a dead body and did his duty by it as a good citizen. When a company of neighbours assembled to comfort some Martha or Mary whose brother had died, and to bear the mortal remains to the burial-place, this act of neighbourly kindness rendered every one of them unclean. Our Lord, when he entered the chamber of death in Jairus' house, and when he touched the bier at the gate of Nain, thereby took upon himself legal defilement and its consequences. Not only so; if a man happened to touch a grave or a human bone, he contracted defilement, and would have been chargeable with presumptuous sin, as a defiler of the sanctuary, if he had ventured thereafter to set foot within the house of the Lord. 2. The defilement consequent on contact with the dead was defilement of the graver sort. Many forms of defilement only disabled till sunset, and were removed by simply washing the person with water. Defilement by the dead lasted a whole week, and could be removed only by the sprinkling of the water of purification on the third and the seventh days: an irksome rule. 3. Hence all specially devoted persons in Israel were forbidden to pay the last offices of kindness to deceased friends. A priest might not defile himself for any except his nearest blood relations: his father, or mother, or brother, or unmarried sister. As for the high priest, he was forbidden to defile himself even for these. And the same stringent prohibition applied to the Nazarite also.

II. WHAT WAS THE REASON OF THIS REMARKABLE LAW? AND WHAT DOES IT TEACH US? 1. According to some it was simply a sanitary regulation. The suggestion is not to be wholly set aside. So long as this law was in force extramural interment must have been the rule. No city in Israel contained a crowded burial-ground, diffusing pestilence within its walls, nor was any synagogue made a place of interment. Much less did the Israelites ever revert to the Egyptian custom of giving a place within their houses to the embalmed bodies of deceased friends. In these respects the provisions of the Mosaic law anticipated by 3000 years the teaching of our modern sanitary science. However, this intention of the law was certainly not the principal one. 2. Another view of it is suggested by Heb. ix. 14: "The blood of Christ shall *purge your conscience from dead works* to serve the living God." Dead works are works which have in them no breath of spiritual life. Transgressions of God's law are dead works; so also are "duties" not animated with a loving regard for the glory of God. Such works are dead, and, being dead, defile the conscience, so that it needs to be purified by the blood of Christ. 3. But the chief reason of the law is, without doubt, to be sought in the principle that *death is the wages of sin.* This principle, taught so plainly in Rom. v. and 1 Cor. xv., was not unknown to the Old Testament Church. It is taught in the story of the Fall, and is implied in Ps. xc., "the prayer of Moses." The habit of making light of death—as if it were no

evil at all, but rather the welcome riddance of the soul from a burdensome and unfit companion—was not learned from the word of God. The Bible teaches us to regard the body as the fitting dwelling-place of the soul, and necessary to the completeness of our nature. That separation of body and soul which takes place in death, it teaches us to regard as penal. Death, accordingly, is the awful effect and memorial of sin, and contact with the dead causes defilement. Blessed be God, the gospel invites us to look on a brighter scene. If the law admonished men that the wages of sin is death, the gospel bears witness that God in Christ offers to us a gift of eternal life. To say this is not to disparage the law. Bright objects show best on a dark ground. The gospel is appreciated rightly by those only who have laid to heart the teachings of the law. Still it is not the dark ground that we are invited to gaze upon so much as the bright object to whose beauty it serves for a foil. The relation between the law we have been considering and the grace of Christ is strikingly seen in the story of the raising of Jairus's daughter, and of the widow's son at Nain. In both instances Christ was careful to touch the dead body; and in both instances the effect immediately wrought proclaimed the intention of the act. From the dead there went out no real defiling influence on the Lord. On the contrary, from him there went forth power to raise the dead. In Christ grace reigns through righteousness unto life; he is the Conqueror of death.—B.

Vers. 1—22.—*The water of purification, and its lessons.* The extreme difficulty of applying the details of this chapter to the spiritual truths of which they were a shadow forbids us attempting more than a general application of the narrative.

I. GREAT CARE WAS NEEDED IN PROVIDING THIS SIN OFFERING (for so it is called in vers. 9, 17). There were precepts as to the victim's sex, age, colour, freedom from blemish, and from compulsory labour. There were further minute requirements as to the method of killing and burning. The animal, first killed as a sacrifice, was to be utterly consumed. No ordinary pure water, but water impregnated with ashes, might serve as a medium of purification. These typical facts are applicable to the means of purification provided in the gospel. Christ was no ordinary sacrifice, but "without blemish," "separate from sinners," voluntary (John x. 18), appointed to death in a particular manner (*ibid.* xii. 32, 33); a complete sacrifice, vicarious, for all the congregation (1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 John ii. 2), in order that God might thus provide the means of complete purification (Heb. ix. 13, 14).

II. DEFILEMENT WAS INCURRED IN THE PURIFYING PROCESS. This was shown in various ways. The heifer was not killed before the altar, but outside the camp. The high priest was to have nothing to do with it, nor was even Eleazar to kill it himself. The blood was not brought into the tabernacle, but sprinkled at a distance, in the direction of it. The priest that sprinkled the blood and burnt the cedar wood was defiled. The man that burned the carcase was defiled. The man, ceremonially clean, who collected the ashes became unclean. Even the "clean" man who sprinkled the unclean with the purifying water became himself unclean. Thus God seeks by type and symbol, "line upon line," to impress on us the truth that sin is "exceeding sinful." And we are reminded that even our sinless Priest and Sacrifice needed to be "made sin" for us in order that we might be cleansed from all unrighteousness and made "the righteousness of God in him."

III. THE PURIFICATION PROVIDED WAS IN PERPETUAL DEMAND. "Deaths oft" compelled frequent contact with the dead. A corpse, even a bone or a grave, was sufficient to cause defilement. As death is the penalty of sin, in this way too God taught the defiling effect of sin, and therefore the need of perpetual purifications (Heb. x. 1, 2). These are still needed even by Christians who have been justified and have exercised "repentance from dead works" (John xiii. 10; Heb. vi. 1).

Thus we learn—1. The fearfully polluting character of sin. Its contagion spreads to all who are susceptible. It exerts its baneful effects on that part of the creation incapable of guilt (Rom. viii. 20—22), and even on the sinless Son of God when he comes into contact with it as a Saviour (Isa. liii. 5, 6; 1 Pet. ii. 24, &c.). 2. The mysterious method of purification. Some of these ceremonies are "hard to be understood," and we have some difficulty in knowing exactly how to apply them to the truths respecting spiritual purification in the gospel. Just so in "the mystery of

godliness" itself there are "secret things which belong unto the Lord our God." But we may be satisfied because the way of salvation is "the gospel *of God*," the Lamb slain is "the Lamb *of God*," the atonement is *God's* atonement. In the purification of our consciences "from dead works" we have the best proof of "the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. i. 8, 9; vi. 19) being "the power of God," &c. (Rom. i. 16). 3. Our entire dependence on this purification. The thoughtless touching of a dead man's bone defiled, and the man who neglected the water of purifying was "cut off." So with sinners, who should not dare to plead forgetfulness (Ps. xix. 12), but who may be cleansed from every sin. But without this cleansing they too will be "cut off" (1 John i. 7—10).—P.

Vers. 1—22.—*Defilement from the dead.* In the laws given to the Israelites there is much said concerning uncleanness. The ceremonial difference between the unclean and the clean sets forth the real difference between the sinful and the sinless. This difference was therefore as important in its way, and as much requiring attention, as that between the holy and the profane. In the Book of Leviticus a large section (chs. xi.—xv.) is exclusively occupied with regulations on the subject, pointing out how uncleanness was caused, and how to be removed—oftentimes very easily caused, but never easy, and often very tedious, to remove. It was a charge brought against the priests long after (Ezek. xxii. 26) that they showed no difference between the unclean and the clean. Already in this Book of Numbers one kind of defilement, that contracted by contact with the dead, has been referred to thrice (ch. v. 2; vi. 6—12; ix. 6—8). In the second of these instances the defilement came as a hindrance to the Nazarite in fulfilling his vow, and the manner of his cleansing was carefully indicated. Here in ch. xix. we come to a very elaborate provision for defilement by the dead in general. The immediate occasion of this provision may have been the sudden and simultaneous death of nearly 15,000 of the people, by which many were of necessity defiled, and placed in great difficulties as to their extrication from defilement. But whatever the occasion, the contents of this chapter show very impressively and suggestively the way in which God looks on death.

I. We gather from this chapter HOW UTTERLY OBNOXIOUS DEATH IS TO GOD. The person who has come in contact with it, however lightly or casually,—it may have been unconsciously,—is thereby unclean. Unlike the leper, he may feel no difference in himself, but he is unclean. Notice further why death is so obnoxious to God. It is the great and crowning consequence of sin in this world. Sin not only spoils life while it lasts, but brings it to a melancholy, painful, and in most cases premature end. Consider how much of human life, that might be so glorifying to God, so useful to man, and so happy in the experience of it, is nipped in the earliest bud. Doubtless God sees in death abominations of which we have hardly any sense at all. It is obnoxious to us as interfering with our plans, robbing us of our joys, and taking away the only thing that nature gives us, temporal life. We look at death too much as a cause. God would have us well to understand that its great power as a cause comes from what it is as an effect. In one sense we may say the uncleanness of leprosy was less offensive than that of death, for the power of sin was less evident in a disease of the living person than when life was altogether gone. Every instance of death is a fresh defiance, and apparently a successful one, of the ever-living God. Death seems to wait on every new-born child, saying, "Thou art mine."

II. WE SHOULD SO CORRECT OUR THOUGHTS THAT DEATH MAY BECOME OBNOXIOUS TO US IN THE SAME WAY AS IT IS TO GOD. Do not be contented to talk of death as coming through disease, accident, or old age. Behind all instruments look for the wielding hand of sin. Ask yourself if egress from this world would not be a very different sort of thing if man had continued unfallen. To a sinless nature, how gentle, painless, glorious, and exultant might be the process of exchanging the service of earth for the service of a still higher state! Death in its pain and gloom and disturbing consequences to survivors is something quite foreign to the original constitution of human nature. Only by learning to look on death as God by his own example would have us look, shall we find the true remedy against it, both in its actual power and in the terrors which the anticipation of it so often inspires.

III. OCCASION IS GIVEN FOR MUCH HUMILITY AND SELF-ABHORRENCE AS WE CONSIDER THE HOLD WHICH SIN HAS ON OUR MORTAL BODIES. The agonising appeal of sin-burdened humanity is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Every consideration should be welcomed which will make us feel more deeply and abidingly the dreadful power of sin, the impossibility of getting rid of all its consequences until we are passed out of the present life. Does not a fair consideration of this ceremonial uncleanness for the dead body go far to settle the oft-debated point as to the possibility of complete holiness in this world? How can there be complete holiness when this supreme effect of sin, temporal death, remains undestroyed? What a thought for a devout Israelite, a man of the spirit of the Psalmist, that, solicitous as he might be all through life to keep in the way of God's commandments, nevertheless, when life had left the body, he would inevitably be the means of defilement to others!

IV. THERE IS POINTED OUT TO US THE TRUE MODE OF TRIUMPH OVER DEATH. Death can be conquered only in one way, by conquering sin. He who destroys the *power of sin* in a human life destroys the *power of death*. The raising of Lazarus was not so much a triumph over death as a humiliation of him who has the power of death, an intimation that the secret of his power was known and vulnerable. Lazarus was raised, but died again in the course of mortal nature, and only as he believed in Jesus to the attainment of eternal life did he gain the real triumph over death. If then by any means our life here is becoming more and more free from sin, more abundant in holy service, then in the same proportion the hellish glory of death is dimmed. The physical circumstances of death are not the chief thing to be considered, but what sort of future lies beyond. If it is to be a continuance, improvement, and perfecting of the spiritual life of Christ's people here, then where is the triumph of death? To have been transformed by the renewing of our minds, and to have found our chief occupation and delight in the affairs of the kingdom of heaven, may not indeed take away the terrors of death, but they do effectually destroy its power.

V. The very fact of death being so obnoxious to God SHOULD FILL US WITH HOPE FOR ITS REMOVAL. Is it not a great deal to know that what is peculiarly dreaded by us is peculiarly hateful to him? Is there not a sort of assurance that God's wisdom and power will be steadily directed to the removal of what is so hateful?—Y.

We have now to notice the way in which this defilement was removed—by sprinkling over the defiled person running water mingled with the ashes, prepared in a peculiar way, of a slain heifer.

I. THE PREPARATION WAS VERY ELABORATE. It needed great care in its details, and was, therefore, very easily spoiled. There has been much discussion, with little agreement, over the significance of many of the details, the truth being that there is not sufficient information for us to discern reasons which may have been clear enough to those who had to obey the command, though even to them the purpose of many details was doubtless utterly obscure, and even intentionally so. What room is there for faith if we are to know the why and wherefore at every step? One thing is certain, that if any detail had been neglected, the whole symbolic action would have failed. The water would be sprinkled in vain. God would intimate in no doubtful way that the defiled person remained defiled still. So when we turn from the shadow to the substance, from the cleansing of the death-defiled body to that of the death-defiled person to whom the body belonged, we find Christ complying in the strictest manner with the minutest matters of detail; and doing so, this indicated his equal compliance inwardly with every requirement of the law of God considered as having to do with the spirit. Thrice we know did God intimate his satisfaction with his Son, as one who in all things was carrying out his purposes—twice in express terms (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5), and the third time implying the same thing not less significantly (John xii. 28). Then also we are called to notice how many prophecies as to matters of detail, such as places, circumstances, &c., had to be fulfilled. As in the preparing of the heifer the *commands* of God had to be accomplished, so in the preparing of Jesus for his great cleansing work the *prophecies* of God had to be accomplished.

II. THE DEVOTED ANIMAL WAS IN A TYPICAL SENSE VERY PECULIAR. There is the selection of one kind of animal, one sex in that kind, one colour, all absence of blemish, and complete freedom from the yoke. May we not say that to find all these marks in one animal was indication of some special provision from on high? "It must be a red heifer, because of the rarity of the colour, that it might be the more remarkable. The Jews say, if but two hairs were black or white, it was unlawful." Whether this were so or not, we have in this remarkable typical animal a suggestion of him who in his person, works, claims, and influence is totally unlike any one else who has ever taken part in human affairs. As the heifer was without spot or blemish, so far as human eye could discern, so Jesus was faultless in the presence of God's glory. And just as the combination in the heifer of all that God required was a great help to the people in believing in the cleansing efficacy of the ashes, so we, regarding Jesus in all the peculiarities which centre and unite in him, may well apply ourselves with fresh confidence and gratitude to the blood that cleanseth from all sin.

III. THE ASHES WERE RESERVED FOR PERMANENT USE (ver. 9). It is of course an exaggeration to say that the ashes of this first heifer served for the cleansings of a thousand years, but doubtless they served a long time, thus sufficiently indicating the cleansing power that flows from him who died once for all. We stand in the succession to many generations who have applied themselves to the one fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Where the earliest believers stood, submitting the impurity of their hearts to Jesus, we also stand, and the evident result to *them*, as seen in the record of their experience, may well give joy and assurance to *us*.

IV. Only, WE MUST MAKE LIKE CLOSENESS AND FIDELITY OF APPLICATION. Consider what was required from these death-defiled ones. For seven days they were unclean, and on the third day as well as the seventh they were to be sprinkled. To prepare the sprinkling agent was no light or easy matter, so that its virtue might be sure. But even when prepared it required repeated applications. Thus to be cleansed from sin requires a searching process, indicated in the New Testament by the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. There must be a discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and a rigorous, uncompromising dealing with them. Let none apply himself to the cleansing which Christ provides unless he is ready for a thorough examination of his nature, a disclosure of many deep-seated abominations, and a tearing away from his life of much that he has cherished and for a time may sadly miss.

V. THERE IS NO CLEANSING EXCEPT IN STRICT OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S APPOINTMENT. The defiled one could not invent a purification of his own, nor could he go on as if defilement were a harmless, evanescent trifle. He might indeed say, "What the worse am I for touching the dead?" judging by his own present feelings and ignorance of consequences. Nor might any immediate obvious difference appear between the defiled and the cleansed; nevertheless, there was a difference which God himself would make very plain and bitter in the event of persevering disobedience. So between the conscious and confessing sinner who, humbly believing, is being washed in the blood of Christ, and the careless, defiant sinner who neglects it as a mere imagination, there may seem little or nothing of difference. But the difference is that between heaven and hell, and God will make it clear in due time.

Note the connection of the following passage with the whole chapter:—"If the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 13, 14).—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST MARCH: FROM KADESH TO HOR (vers. 1—29). Ver. 1.—**Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation.** The latter words are emphatic here and in ver. 22, and seem intended to mark the period of reassembly after the dispersion of nearly thirty-eight years. Probably a portion of the tribes had visited Kadesh many times during those years, and perhaps it had never been wholly abandoned. **Into**

the desert of **Zin**, *i. e.*, if the western site be maintained for Kadesh, the Wady Murreh. See the note on Kadesh. **In the first month.** In the month Abib (Nisan), the vernal month, when there was "much grass" (cf. John vi. 10) in places at other seasons desert, and when travelling was most easy. From comparison of ch. xiv. 33; xxxiii. 38 and the sequence of the narrative, it appears to have been the first month of the fortieth, and last, year of wandering. Then it was that they reassembled in the same neighbourhood from whence they had dispersed so long before (see the note before ch. xv.). **And the people abode** (יֵשֶׁב. Septuagint, *κατέμεινεν*) **in Kadesh.** From the date given in ch. xxxiii. 38 it would seem that they remained three or four months in Kadesh on this occasion. This delay may have been occasioned partly by the mourning for Miriam (cf. ver. 29), and partly by the necessity of awaiting answers from Edom and from Moab (see on ver. 14). **And Miriam died there, and was buried.** Nothing could be more brief and formal than this mention of the death of one who had played a considerable part in Israel, and had perhaps wished to play a more considerable part. It can scarcely, however, be doubted that her death in the unlovely wilderness was a punishment like the death of her brothers. There is no reason whatever to suppose that she had any part in the rebellion of Kadesh, or that the sentence of death there pronounced included her; she was indeed at this time advanced in years, but that would not in itself account for the fact that she died in exile; it is, no doubt, to the arrogance and rebellion recorded in ch. xii. that we must look for the true explanation of her untimely end.

Ver. 2.—**There was no water.** There was a large natural spring at Kadesh, and during the time of their previous sojourn there no complaint of this sort seems to have arisen. At this time, however, the bulk of the encampment may have lain in a different direction (cf. ver. 1 with ch. xiii. 26), or the supply may have failed from temporary causes. In either case a total absence of water need not be imagined, but only an insufficient supply.

Ver. 3. — **And the people chode with Moses.** As their fathers had done in similar circumstances, as recorded in Exod. xvii. **Would God that we had died.** See on ch. xiv. 2. **When our brethren died before the Lord.** This is difficult, because the visitations of God at Kibroth-hattaavah (ch. xi. 34) and at Kadesh (ch. xiv. 37) had overtaken not their brethren, but their fathers, some thirty-eight years before. On the other hand, the daily mortality which had carried off their brethren is clearly excluded by the phrase, "before the Lord." It may be that the rebellion of Korah happened towards the end of the period of wandering, and that the reference is to the plague which followed it; or it may be that the formula of complaint had become stereotyped, as those of children often do, and was employed from time to time without variation and without definite reference. The latter supposition is strongly supported by the character of the words which follow.

Ver. 4. — **Why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness?** These words are almost exactly repeated from Exod. xvii. 3. They, and those which follow, are no doubt out of place if considered as expressing the feelings of the great bulk of the people, who had no knowledge of Egypt, and had grown up in the wilderness. But on such occasions it is always the few who put words into the mouths of the many, and the ringleaders in this gainsaying would naturally be the survivors of the elder generation, whose disposition was exactly the same as ever, and who had always shown a remarkable want of originality in their complaints.

Ver. 5.—**No place of seed.** Septuagint, *τόπος οὗ οὐ σπείρεται.* A place where there is no sowing, and therefore no harvest.

Ver. 6.—**They fell upon their faces.** See note on ch. xiv. 5.

Ver. 8.—**Take the rod.** The *ῥάβδος*, or staff of office, with which Moses and Aaron had worked wonders before Pharaoh (Exod. vii. 9 *sq.*), and with which Moses had smitten the rock in Rephidim (Exod. xvii. 6). This rod had not been mentioned, nor perhaps used, since then; but we might certainly have supposed that the instrument of so many miracles would be reverently laid up in the tabernacle "before the Lord," and this we find from the next verse to have been the case. **Gather thou the assembly together,** *i. e.* by their representatives. **Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes.** The word used for the rock in this narrative is הַסֶּלַע instead of צוּר, as in Exod. xvii. It does not seem that any certain distinction of meaning can be drawn between the words, which are obviously interchanged in Judges vi. 20, 21, and are both translated *πέτρα* by the Septuagint; but the careful use of different terms in the two narratives serves to distinguish them, just as the use of *κοφίνους* and *σπυρίδας* by St. Mark (vi. 43; viii. 8, 19, 20) helps to distinguish the two miracles of feeding the multitude.

Ver. 10.—**Hear now, ye rebels.** הַמֹּרִים. Septuagint, *οἱ ἀπειθεῖς.* The verb is used in a similar sense of Moses and Aaron themselves in ver. 24. It has been suggested that this was the word really used by our Lord in Matt. v. 22, and translated *μωρός.* This,

however, is extremely precarious, and is indeed to accuse the Evangelist of a blunder, for there is no real correspondence between the words. **Must we fetch you water.** Septuagint, *μὴ . . ἐξάξομεν ὑμῖν ὕδωρ.* And this is no doubt the sense. It has been rendered by some "Can we fetch you water," on the supposition that Moses really doubted the possibility of such a miracle, but this seems to be an entire mistake (see next note).

Ver. 12.—**Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel.** It is very important, and at the same time very difficult, to understand what the precise sin of Moses and Aaron was upon this occasion. That it was very serious is manifest from the punishment which is entailed. Aaron, indeed, does not appear in the narrative, save in his usual subordinate position as associated with his brother by the Divine mandate. It has been said that he might have checked the unadvised words of Moses, but that is wholly beside the mark. Aaron had obviously no control whatever over his far more able and energetic brother, and therefore could have no responsibility in that respect. We can only suppose that he inwardly assented to the language and conduct with which he was outwardly associated, and therefore shared the guilt. A less degree of sin was (so to speak) necessary in his cause, because he had on former occasions so greatly dishonoured his office; and the anger of God against the sin of his ministers, although laid to sleep, is ever ready to awake upon the recurrence of a similar provocation. We may therefore dismiss him, and consider only the case of Moses. It is impossible to suppose that Moses actually doubted the power of God to supply the present need, for he held in his hand the very rod with which he had struck the rock in Rephidim, nor is there anything in his words or acts upon this occasion to imply any such disbelief. The language of ch. xi. 21, 22 may be cited on the other side, but that was spoken in passion, and spoken to God, and cannot be held as expressing an actual failure of faith. Nor do subsequent references point to unbelief as having been the sin of Moses (cf. ch. xxvii. 14; Deut. xxxii. 51; Ps. cvi. 33). Rather, they point to disobedience and indiscretion; to such disloyal conduct and language as produced a bad impression upon the people, and did not place the Divine character before them in its true light. We must understand, therefore, that the want of belief with which Moses stood charged was not a want of faith in the power of God, but a want of obedience to the will of God, bearing in mind that the two faults of disbelief and disobedience are but two sides of one inward fact, and are perpetually confounded in the language of Scripture (compare the use of *ἀπειθεῖν* in the New Testament). What then was the disobedience of Moses? Here, again, the more obvious answer is insufficient. It is true that Moses struck the rock twice instead of (or perhaps in addition to) speaking to it; but God had bid him take the rod, and he might naturally think he was meant to use it as before; moreover, the people could not have known anything of the exact terms of the command, and would have thought no more of his striking the rock at Kadesh than at Rephidim; but it was the fact of the bad impression made upon the people which was the ground of the Divine rebuke. We come back, therefore, to the simple conclusion expressed by the Psalmist (Ps. cvi. 32, 33), that Moses lost his temper, and in the irritation of the moment spoke and acted in such a way and in such a spirit as to dishonour his Master and to impair the good effect of the Divine beneficence. It is quite likely that the repeated striking of the rock was one sign of the anger to which Moses gave way, but we could hardly have attached any serious character to the act if it had stood alone. It is in the words of Moses, words in which he associated Aaron with himself, that we must find the explanation of the displeasure he incurred. That he called the people "rebels" was unseemly, not because it was untrue, or because it was an uncalled-for term of reproach, but because he himself was at that very moment a rebel, and disloyal in heart to his Master (cf. ver. 24). That he should say, "Must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" showed how completely he was carried away. It is true that God had said to him, "Thou shalt bring forth to them water," and, "Thou shalt give the congregation . . drink" (compare this with Exod. xvii. 6), and it is probable that his own words were more or less consciously dictated by this remembrance; but he knew very well that the Divine mandate afforded him no real justification; that he and Aaron were the merest instruments in the hand of God; that it was peculiarly necessary to keep this fact before the minds of the people; nevertheless, his vexation and anger betrayed him into putting himself—a mere man, and a man too in a very bad temper—into the place of God before the eyes of the whole congregation. Moses had fallen at least once before (see on ch. xi. 11—15) into a similar error, one so natural to an angry mind; but this was the first time that he had made his error public, and thereby dishonoured the Master whom it was his special duty to uphold and glorify. This was the sin, and if the punishment seem disproportionate, it must be remembered that the heinousness of a sin depends quite as much on the position of the sinner as upon its intrinsic enormity. **Ye shall not bring this**

congregation into the land. That they should die in the wilderness was implied in this sentence, but was not strictly a part of the sentence itself. Moses, indeed, although he did not enter the land of promise in its narrower sense, yet he died within the inheritance of Israel. Since they had behaved unworthily of their high office as leaders of the people, therefore that office should be taken from them before the glorious end.

Ver. 13.—**This is the water of Meribah,** or "water of strife." Septuagint, ὕδωρ ἀντιλογίας. The word "Meribah" appears, however, to form part of a proper name in Deut. xxxii. 51. A similar use of the word is recorded in Exod. xvii. 7. That the same name was more or less definitely attached to these two scenes is only another way of saying that there was a strong similarity between the two sets of associations. At the same time the differences are so marked in the narratives that they leave very distinct impressions upon the mind. **And he was sanctified in them,** *i. e.* he revealed there his holiness and power, and put to silence their evil murmurings against him. He was sanctified in them all the more abundantly because Moses and Aaron failed to sanctify him in the eyes of the people; but what they failed to do he brought to pass without their agency.

Ver. 14.—**And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom.** On the kings of Edom see on Gen. xxxvi. 31. It would seem probable from Exod. xv. 15 that the government was at that time (forty years before the present date) still in the hands of "dukes," and that the change had but recently taken place. It is stated in Judges xi. 17 that Moses sent messengers at this time with a like request to the king of Moab. We are not indeed obliged to suppose that Jephthah, living 300 years after, stated the facts correctly; but there is no particular reason to doubt it in this case. That no mention of it is made here would be sufficiently explained by the fact that the refusal of Edom made the answer of Moab of no practical moment. That Moses asked a passage through the territory of Edom implies that he had renounced the idea of invading Canaan from the south. This was not on account of any insuperable difficulties presented by the character of the country or of its inhabitants, for such did not exist; nor on account of any supposed presence of Egyptian troops in the south of Palestine; but simply on account of the fact that Israel had deliberately refused to take the straight road into their land, and were therefore condemned to follow a long and circuitous route ere they reached it on an altogether different side. The dangers and difficulties of the road they actually traversed were, humanly speaking, far greater than any they would have encountered in any other direction; but this was part of their necessary discipline. **Thy brother Israel.** This phrase recalled the history of Esau and Jacob, and of the brotherly kindness which the former had shown to the latter at a time when he had him in his power (Gen. xxxiii.). **Thou knowest all the travel that hath befallen us.** Moses assumed that Edom would take a fraternal interest in the fortunes of Israel. The parallel was singularly close between the position of Jacob when he met with Esau, and the present position of Israel; we may well suppose that Moses intended to make this felt without directly asserting it.

Ver. 16.—**And sent an angel.** It is probable that Moses purposely used an expression which might be understood in various senses, because he could not explain to the king of Edom the true relation of the Lord to his people. At the same time it was in the deepest sense true (cf. Exod. xiv. 19; xxxii. 34), because it was the uncreated angel of the covenant, which was from God, and yet was God (cf. Gen. xxxii. 30; Josh. v. 15; vi. 2; Acts vii. 35), who was the real captain of the Lord's host. **In Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border.** See note on Kadesh. It is clear that Kadesh itself was outside the territory of the king of Edom, although it lay close to the frontier.

Ver. 17.—**Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country.** Moses desired to march through Seir eastwards and north-eastwards, so as to reach the country beyond Jordan. If the northern portion of the wilderness of Paran was at this time held by the king of Edom, it would be through this region that Israel would first seek to make their way from Kadesh to the Arabah; thence the broad and easy pass of the Wady Ghuweir would lead them through Mount Seir (properly so called) to the plains of Moab. **Through the fields, or through the vineyards.** These words attest the change for the worse in the condition of these regions. Even in the Wady Ghuweir, although springs and pasturage are abundant, fields and vineyards hardly exist. **Neither will we drink,** *i. e.*, as appears from ver. 19, without obtaining leave and making payment. **By the king's highway.** בְּדֶרֶךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ. The state road used for military purposes.

Ver. 18.—**And Edom said, . . Thou shalt not pass by me.** This was the first of a series of hostile acts, prompted by vindictive jealousy, which brought down the wrath of God upon Edom (compare the prophecy of Obadiah). See, however, on Deut. ii. 29.

Ver. 19.—**And the children of Israel said,** *i. e.*, probably, the messengers sent by Moses. **By the highway.** בַּמְסִלָּה. The Septuagint

translates παρὰ τὸ ὄρος, but no doubt the word means a "high road" in the original sense of a raised causeway (cf. Isa. lvii. 14). Such a road is still called Derb es Sultan—Emperor-road. **I will only, without doing anything else, go through on my feet.** Ratner, "It is nothing:" (רַק אֵין דָּבָר. Septuagint, ἀλλὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα οὐδέν ἐστι·) "I will go through on my feet." They meant, "We do not ask for anything of value, only leave to pass through."

Ver. 22.—**And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation** (see note on ver. 1), **journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto Mount Hor.** If the narrative follows the order of time, we must suppose that the Edomites at once blocked the passes near to Kadesh, and thus compelled the Israelites to journey southwards for some distance until they were clear of the Azazimât; they would then turn eastwards again and make their way across the plateau of Paran to the Arabah at a point opposite Mount Hor. It is supposed by many, although it finds no support in the narrative itself, that the armed resistance offered by Edom is out of chronological order in ver. 20, and only occurred in fact when the Israelites had reached the neighbourhood of Mount Hor, and were preparing to ascend the Wady Ghuweir. On the name of Mount Hor (הָהָר הֹר) see on ch. xxxiv. 7, 8. There can be no doubt that tradition is right in identifying it with the Jebel Harun (mount of Aaron), a lofty and precipitous mountain rising between the Arabah and the site of Petra. On one of its two summits the tomb of Aaron is still shown, and although this is itself worthless as evidence, yet the character and position of the mountain are altogether in agreement with the legend.

Ver. 23.—**By the coast of the land of Edom.** Mount Hor was on the eastern side of the Arabah, which at this point certainly formed the frontier of Edom; but it was no doubt untenanted, owing to its bare and precipitous character, and therefore was not reckoned as the property of Edom. We may suppose that at this time the encampment stretched along the Arabah in front of the mountain (see on ch. xxxiii. 30; Deut. x. 6).

Ver. 24.—**Aaron shall be gathered unto his people.** On this expression see at Gen. xxv. 8.

Ver. 25.—**Bring them up unto Mount Hor.** It can scarcely be doubted that the object of this command was to produce a deeper effect upon the people. The whole multitude would be able to see the high priest, whose form had been so familiar to them as long as they could remember anything, slowly ascending the bare sides of the mountain; and they knew that he went up to die. The whole multitude would be able to see another and a younger man descending by the same path in the same priestly robes, and they knew that Aaron was dead, and that Eleazar was high priest in his room. Death is often most striking when least expected, but there are occasions (and this was one) when it gains in effect by being invested in a certain simple ceremonial.

Ver. 28.—**Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son.** This was done in token that the office was transferred; it was done out of sight, and far above, in token that the priesthood was perpetual, although the priest was mortal. **Aaron died there.** In this case, as in that of Miriam (ver. 1), and of Moses himself (Deut. xxxiv. 5), no details are given. God drew as it were a veil over a departure hence which could but be very sad, because it was in a special sense the wages of sin. We may perhaps conclude that Aaron died alone, and was buried, as Moses was, by God; otherwise Moses and Eleazar would have been unclean under the law of ch. xix. 11 (cf. also Levit. xxi. 11).

Ver. 29.—**They mourned for Aaron thirty days.** The Egyptians prolonged their mourning for seventy days (Gen. l. 3), but thirty days seems to have been the longest period allowed among the Israelites (cf. Deut. xxxiv. 8).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—29.—*Sorrows and trials of the way.* We have in this chapter, spiritually, the final departure of the Church of God upon its last journey towards the promised land; and we have certain sad incidents of moral failure, of disappointment, and of death which marked the commencement of that journey.

I. CONSIDER, THEREFORE, WITH RESPECT TO THE POSITION OF ISRAEL—1. *That he was once more at Kadesh, not one step nearer home than he had been thirty-eight years before.* Because he had rebelled then his life had run to waste ever since, and been lost like the fountain of Kadesh in the sands, and only now, after such a lapse of time, and after so much suffering, did he find himself in a position to recommence the march then suspended. Even so it is with Churches which have reached a certain point, and then have rebelled against the voice of God. Their history runs to waste; they

exist, but hardly live; there is indeed a movement in them, but it has no definite aim, it leads no whither; they do but return upon themselves. Only after a long time (if God have mercy upon them) do they find themselves once more in a position to start afresh, and not one step further forward than all those years, or centuries, ago. Even so it is with individuals who will not go resolutely on when they are called. They are spent and wasted in movement to and fro which is not progress. After many years perhaps—perhaps after a whole lifetime—of wandering in dry places they find themselves once more at the very point to which they had attained, not one step nearer heaven than so long ago. 2. *That although Israel was once more at Kadesh, yet he was in a far worse position than on the former occasion. Then* he might have marched straight into Canaan, *now* he must reach it by a long and circuitous route. Even so with Churches and with individuals which have done despite to the Spirit of grace. By God's mercy their aimless wanderings may be ended, and they may take up the broken thread of spiritual progress; but they cannot take up the opportunities and possibilities which once were theirs. If their position be the same, *they* are not the same; the effects of past faithlessness remain; a far more weary course awaits them ere they attain to rest than if they had obeyed from the beginning. 3. *That Miriam died in Kadesh, and went not with them on the last march.* She was a "prophetess," and uttered inspired words of praise and thanksgiving (as Deborah, Hannah, and Mary), and was especially associated with the glorious triumph of the exodus (Exod. xv. 20—22). Even so the soul which has greatly erred and lost itself, and is at last recovered and sets its face Zionward, may not look to be cheered with songs of gladness and of triumph on its way, but must do without them. And note that Miriam, Aaron, Moses all died this year, a little before the entrance into Canaan under Joshua. The Fathers see in this a figure of the passing away of propbecy, the priesthood, and the law, and their giving place to Jesus. "Videtur mihi in Mariâ (Miriam) Prophetia mortua; in Moyse et Aaron Legi et Sacerdotio Judæorum finis impositus, quod nec ipsi ad terram repromissionis transcendere valeant nec credentem populum de solitudine hujus mundi educere, nisi solus Jesus Deus Salvator."

II. WITH RESPECT TO THE WATERS OF STRIFE (see at Exod. xvii.). Consider—1. *That it was in Kadesh that this temptation befell the people, where they had apparently not experienced any want of water before.* Even so it often happens that great religious trials and deprivations are permitted to overtake us when and where we are least prepared to face them, and perhaps at the very moment when we hope to begin a new life and make a decided advance. 2. *That of all gifts which were necessary to their life, water was the one the absence of which was most terrible.* Conceive the suffering and terror of the multitude! Even so it is the water from the Rock of Ages, the grace of Christ, upon which we daily and hourly depend in this evil world; and there are moments when that grace threatens to fail us, and spiritual death stares us in the face (cf. 1 Cor. x. 4; xii. 13). 3. *That they should have trusted him who had followed them as a spiritual Rock, giving them both water and shade in a thirsty land; but their temper and their very words were the same as forty years before.* Even so do we fail again and again under trial, as if all experience went for nothing, and as if fallen human nature were never going to be really altered in us for the better. Nothing is more striking than the way in which a man's behaviour under temptation repeats itself in spite of all that he has learnt. 4. *That the Lord did not show any displeasure with them, but gave them water at once,* knowing their sore necessity. Even so patient and long-suffering is he with us, however unreasonable and impatient we are, for he knoweth our feebleness, and our great need, and that we must die without his grace. 5. *That the Lord was angry (and declared it) with Moses because he spoke and acted impatiently and unworthily;* for what he overlooked again and again in the ignorant and unstable people, that he could not pass over in the wise and powerful leader, who was to them the visible representative and mouthpiece of the invisible God. Even so the Lord will pass over a thousand errors and faults in the poor and ignorant and miserable more easily than one in him that has known him, and that has a ministry from him, and that stands to others in the place of leader and guide. It is a fearful thing by word or act to dishonour God or his gospel in the eyes of those who look up to us, and

who will more or less consciously take their ideas of religion from our practice of it. 6. *That Moses erred because he lost his temper, and regarded the sinful murmuring of the people only as a trial and vexation to himself.* He had in fact nothing to complain of, for he was only an instrument in God's hand, and it was against God that they were sinning. Even so we, if we are angry when men do wrongly and foolishly, are sure to err greatly; for anger can only see the bad conduct of others as an offence to itself, and so resent it, thereby placing self in the room of God, and presuming to judge and to condemn in his stead. 7. *That Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips in calling the people "rebels," because he was himself a rebel in heart.* He was indeed, considering his position and advantages, more disloyal to his Master at that moment than even they were. Even so when we sit in judgment on others, and call them by hard names, it often happens that we are in truth more unfaithful to our calling than even they. *Their* unfaithfulness may be of a kind to arouse our disgust and disdain, but *ours* may be in truth more heinous in the eyes of God. 8. *That he spake yet more unadvisedly in saying, "Must we fetch you water?"* as though it were their power and goodness to which the supply of water was due. Even so it is a sore evil when the stewards of the manifold grace of God magnify themselves even in hasty words, and speak as if they were the authors instead of the mere dispensers of the gifts of God, and lead men to look to them instead of through them, and pass (as it were) the free grace and goodness of God through the discoloured medium of their own selfish tempers. 9. *That he erred also through wilfulness, in that he smote the rock twice instead of speaking to it*—an error trifling in itself, but betraying the irritation under which he acted, and suggesting that the copious supply was in some way due to his energy. Even so men often err greatly and do harm by acts in themselves inconsiderable which are prompted by impatience and self-will, as though the necessary supply of Divine grace and the blessings of the gospel were really dependent upon their efforts. If we are stewards of the grace of God at all, we have to act (1) with careful obedience towards him, (2) with quiet patience towards his people, knowing that the result lies altogether with him. 10. *That Moses was probably tempted to speak and act as he did because God had said to him, "Thou shalt bring forth to them water,"* &c. Even so we find our temptation to a self-asserting temper which dishonours God in the fact that God has really made the interests of religion (humanly speaking) dependent upon his servants' efforts. It is our trial to remember this as far as labour and earnestness are concerned, to forget it (or rather to remember the complemental truth) as far as personal feelings are concerned. 11. *That God did not withhold the stream because Moses acted wrongly.* Even so the blessings of the word and sacraments are not withheld from the souls of men because there is error and even disobedience in those that minister them. 12. *That God punished Moses and Aaron with personal exclusion from the promised land because they had failed to sanctify him in the eyes of the people;* i. e. they had, as far as in them lay, obscured the revelation of the Divine power and goodness, and impaired the good effect of it upon the people. Even so God will certainly lay sin to the charge of all who, being in any way his representatives to others, have in anything dimmed the lustre of his beauty or distorted the features of his perfection in their eyes. Thus have all, even Moses, sinned and come short of the glory of God, so that none have wholly pleased him except Christ (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5; 2 Pet. i. 17); nor can any look for an entrance into rest save in Christ. 13. *That the Lord was sanctified in the children of Israel at Meribah, albeit his appointed servants failed to sanctify him.* Their sentence was perhaps the most effective possible revelation of his exceeding holiness. Even so the Lord will make his glory to be known and felt through his servants if they be faithful, but without them if they be faithless. He will be sanctified in us to our great reward in the one case, to our shame and sorrow in the other.

III. CONSIDER FURTHER, WITH RESPECT TO THE ERROR OF MOSES—1. *That he was now very old, in his hundred and twentieth year.* An irritable and hasty temper is the special temptation of old age. 2. *That he had shown the same temper on at least one previous occasion* (ch. xi.), *and had then been betrayed into the use of unseemly and untrue language,* which ought to have been a warning to him. There is nothing which people have more need to watch very carefully than their temper, for there is

nothing that grows upon a man more certainly than bad temper. 3. *That God had been very forbearing with him on that occasion, but on this was very strict;* the reason no doubt being that then Moses uttered his unreasonable and passionate complaints only in the ear of God, whereas now his angry insolence was vented upon the people. If we address ourselves directly to God he will receive graciously even the outpourings of a disordered and embittered mind, and we shall find relief; if we reserve our angry temper for our neighbours—much more for those committed to our keeping—God will be sore displeased at us for *their* sakes. Art thou angry? Go and complain to God (cf. Ps. lxxvii. 3, P. B. V.).

IV. CONSIDER, WITH RESPECT TO THE CONDUCT OF EDOM—1. *That Israel had reason to expect no friendly treatment from Edom, because of the bad conduct of Jacob towards Esau,* which had left an angry and jealous spirit in the minds of his descendants against Israel. The quarrels and injuries of individuals bear evil fruit in years to come, and in after generations, and that especially among brethren, whether in blood or in religion. 2. *That, nevertheless, Israel addressed Edom as his brother, and bespoke his friendly sympathy and help.* We are bound to treat others as our brethren, and to approach them as such, and to bespeak their sympathy in our religious interests, until we are actually repulsed. 3. *That Israel did not claim any right, as the chosen people of God, to be served by Edom, or to take anything of him without payment,* but only asked the ordinary courtesy due to a friendly people. In addressing ourselves to others in matters of this world we must be careful to ask and to expect only what is strictly fair and reasonable from their point of view, and not to claim any exceptional regard or deference because we are more highly-favoured than they. 4. *That when Israel found himself rudely denied and opposed, he did not attempt to avenge himself, but turned away from Edom.* If we meet with opposition and hostility where we looked for help and sympathy, it is useless to complain, and wicked to bear malice; the only thing is to turn away from such, and leave them to God and to themselves. 5. *That the hostile conduct of Edom was not forgotten of God, but in due time (not being amended) was punished.* It is a great sin, out of personal (or collective) jealousy and dislike, to cast obstacles in the path of others, or to refuse them such friendly assistance as they seek of us.

V. CONSIDER, WITH RESPECT TO THE DEATH OF AARON—1. *That it testified to the infirmity of human nature at its greatest.* Aaron had been invested with a sacred character, and to that generation (which had not known his origin) must have seemed an awful being, almost more than man; yet he died, and was not. 2. *That it testified to the inherent imperfection of the Levitical priesthood, in that Aaron could not continue by reason of death,* so that the continuance of the office depended upon natural succession, which must some day fail—and has failed. 3. *That it testified to the exceeding sinfulness of sin.* For one little sin, and one to which he was merely accessory, the high priest must die without even beholding the land so long sought, and now so nearly found. 4. *That the demise of Aaron in that lonely mountain, in a foreign land, testified to the mysterious and typical character of his office.* The anointed of the Lord, although, as being man and sinful, he must die, yet not as other men die, but in a vast far solitude alone with God. 5. *That the transfer of the priestly robes from Aaron to Eleazar testified that the priesthood was abiding, and would abide until it vested in One who should live for ever.* Therefore was it effected out of sight of the people, and far above them, in order that no gap or interval might be perceptible to them. 6. *That the mourning for Aaron during thirty days testified that, with all his faults, he was yet honoured as a great leader in Israel;* and perhaps this too, that Aaron as a man was not so swallowed up in Aaron as a priest but that his personal loss was duly felt and lamented.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 12.—*The sin of Moses.* There must have been something in this sin of Moses at the crag in Kadesh very unworthy of his high place, and very displeasing to God. The sharpness of the Lord's reprimand and the severity of the punishment make this sufficiently clear. By Moses himself the punishment was felt to be severe.

And no marvel. For eighty long years he had waited and laboured for the fulfilment of the promise. During the last thirty-seven of these he had been cheering himself with the hope that he, along with Joshua and Caleb, and the men of the younger generation, would be suffered to take possession of the land. This lay so near his heart that, after learning that he was not to set foot within the promised rest, he laboured hard to get the sentence reversed (Deut. iii. 25).

I. WHAT THEN WAS MOSES' SIN? Two circumstances are obvious on the face of the story. 1. Moses, being directed *to speak to* the rock that it might give forth its water, *smote it* instead with the rod of God which was in his hand; and this he did not once only, but twice. 2. He spoke to the people, not with meekness and calm authority, but in heat and bitterness. "Ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Thus he "spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps. cvi. 33). It is not difficult to understand how Moses should have so far forgotten himself on this occasion. Let the facts be weighed. The servant of the Lord is now 120 years old. The generation which sinned thirty-seven years ago, and was condemned to die in the wilderness, is nearly all gone. Moses is mortified to find that the new generation is infected with a touch of the same impatient unbelief which wrought in their fathers so much mischief. No sooner are they at a loss for water than they rise against Moses with rebellious murmurings. For once he loses command of himself. On all former occasions of the kind his *meekness* was unshaken; he either held his peace, or prayed for the rebels, or at most called on the Lord to be his Witness and Judge. Now he breaks out into bitter chidings. At the root of this there was a secret failure of faith. "Ye believed me not,"—did not thoroughly rely on my faithfulness and power,—"to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel" (ver. 12). His former meekness had been the fruit of faith. He had been thoroughly persuaded that the Lord who was with him could accomplish all he had promised, and therefore he faced every difficulty with calm and patient resolution. Now a touch of unbelief bred in him hastiness and bitterness of spirit.

II. LESSONS. 1. The failings of good men may be culpable in God's sight and displeasing to him out of all proportion to the degree of blameworthiness they present to our eye. So far is it from being true (as many seem to think) that believers' sins are no sins at all, and need give no concern, that, on the contrary, the Lord dislikes the stain of sin most when it is seen in his dear children. The case of Moses is not singular. Sins which the Lord overlooks in other men he will occasionally put some mark of special displeasure upon, when they are committed by one who is eminent for holiness and honourable service. It is, no doubt, a just instinct which leads all right-thinking people to be blind to the failings of good men who have been signally useful in their day. But if the good men become indulgent to their own faults they are likely to be rudely awakened to a sense of their error. The better a man is, his sins may be the more dishonouring to God. A spot hardly visible on the coat of a labouring man, may be glaringly offensive on the shining raiment of a throned king. 2. The sins we are least inclined to may nevertheless be the sins which will bring us to the bitterest grief. Every man has his weak side. There are sins to which our natural disposition or the circumstances of our up-bringing lay us peculiarly open; and it is without doubt a good rule to be specially on our guard in relation to these sins. Yet the rule must not be applied too rigidly. When Dumbarton Rock was taken, it was not by assailing the fortifications thrown up to protect its one weak side, but by scaling it at a point where the precipitous height seemed to render defence or guard unnecessary. Job was the most patient of men, yet he sinned through impatience. Peter was courageous, yet he fell through cowardice. Moses was the meekest of men, yet he fell through bitterness of spirit. We have need to guard well not our weak points only, but the points also at which we deem ourselves to be strong.—B.

Vers. 23—29.—*The death of Aaron.* The fortieth year of the Wanderings, remarkable in so many other respects, was remarkable also for this, that it witnessed the removal of the three great children of Amram, who had been the leaders of the nation from the time that the Lord began to plague the Egyptians till the day that the host removed from the camping-ground at Kadesh. Of the three, Miriam, seemingly the

eldest, was the first to be removed. She died, and was buried at Kadesh, in the beginning of the year. Aaron, the elder of the brothers, followed in the fifth month. Lastly, Moses died at the end of the year. The surpassing fame of Moses has thrown that of Miriam and Aaron into the shade. Nevertheless, they were eminent both for sanctity and public usefulness. It was not the least of the Lord's benefits that they, as well as Moses, were spared to the people during so many years.

I. THE TERMS IN WHICH THE DEATH OF AARON IS FORETOLD (ver. 23). Moses is the first to hear of the coming event; and there is something of wrath, or at least of displeasure, against both him and Aaron in the way in which it is announced: "Ye shall not enter the land, because ye rebelled against my word at Meribah." But the displeasure is only, as it were, a passing frown. There is in the words much more of loving kindness and tender mercy. Not only is the saintly high priest forewarned of his approaching departure, but this is done in terms at once most kindly in tone and strongly suggestive of hope regarding the future life. "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people." Christian readers have always, as by a kind of instinct, taken this to mean that Aaron, upon his departure from this world, was to pass into the company of those who were his relatives in the truest and tenderest kindred—the patriarchs who had died in faith before him, the congregation of the righteous beyond the grave. The interpretation is distasteful to certain critics, who have persuaded themselves that in the Mosaic age the views and hopes of the best of men were bounded by the grave. It is easy to cite texts which seem to countenance that low estimate of the views which God had opened up to the early saints of the patriarchal and Mosaic times. But after all it is no better than a paradox, as hard to reconcile with historical fact as with the instinctive perceptions of devout readers of God's word. It is a familiar fact that the Egyptians, among whom Moses and Aaron were brought up, not only believed that men survive the dissolution of the body, but occupied their minds exceedingly about the other world. In the absence of clear and explicit statements to the contrary, we must suppose that Moses and Aaron knew at least as much as the Egyptians, and looked for a continued conscious existence after death. But we are not left to surmise. What can this "gathered unto his people" mean? It cannot mean "buried in the sepulchre where the ashes of his kindred lie," for in that sense neither Aaron nor Moses was ever gathered to his people. Each was buried in a solitary grave. Nor can it mean merely "gathered to the mighty congregation of the dead" (although that also would imply continued existence after death), for the phrase is used in Scripture regarding none but the righteous (Gen. xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 33, &c.). What then do we gather from this intimation? 1. There is, beyond the grave, a congregation of the righteous, where those who die in faith shall enjoy the congenial society of their own people—men and women like-minded with themselves. Surely a most comfortable thought! A great change has no doubt taken place in the view presented to faith of the future life ever since our blessed Lord rose and ascended. The ancient conception of the heavenly life has been thrown into the shade by the conception of it as being "for ever with the Lord." Yet the ancient conception has lost nothing either of its truth or of its power to comfort. A new source of comfort has now been added, but the old one has not been superseded. We who believe in Christ look forward not only to "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," but to "our gathering together unto him" (2 Thess. ii. 1). 2. Into the congregation of the righteous God is careful to gather his people when they die. They are not driven away into darkness—dismissed like Judas to their own place. They are gathered; they are taken home: *with care*, that none be lost; *with loving kindness* also, that they may not fear.

II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF AARON'S DEPARTURE. 1. He was divested of his office and robes before he died, and they were transferred to Eleazar in his sight. The priest was to die, but the priesthood was to live. The priesthood was entailed in Aaron's house, but the entail had not yet been confirmed by long transmission. To prevent any attempt to alter the succession, the transference took place while Aaron was yet alive. Probably there was an eye also to Aaron's comfort. It would be a satisfaction to him to see his son invested with office before he died. 2. Aaron's death and burial took place on Mount Hor. This was, in the first instance, designed for publicity. Eleazar was to be high priest to the congregation. It was due to them

that his investiture should take place in their sight (cf. ch. xxvii. 22). Ordination to a public office ought to take place in public. This particular mountain was chosen because from it Aaron's eye might descry the southern outskirts of the land of promise. Moses and Aaron were forbidden to enter it; but to each there was vouchsafed a distant prospect of it before he died.

REFLECTION. In this life good and evil are inextricably conjoined. Within the same town, in the same street, in the same congregation, in the same family, there are to be found believers and unbelievers, just and unjust, children of God and children of the wicked one. But hereafter there will come a great severance—lamentable separations, joyous reunions. The haters of God will be taken from among the just, and be dismissed to their own place. The lovers of God will be gathered to their own people, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom. This being so, it behoves me to ask myself the question, Who are my people? What is the people whose likeness I bear, whose company is to me congenial, whose tastes I share?—B.

Ver. 12. — *The great sin of disobedience even under palliating circumstances.* There are various ways in which we may show that sin is "exceeding sinful:" *e.g.* the character of God; the precepts of his ceremonial and moral law; the words and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not the least impressive proof of God's estimate of sin is God's chastisement of his sinning children. Confining ourselves to the conduct of Moses, we note—

I. THE NATURE OF MOSES' SIN. It is described in ver. 12, but is not easy to analyse. 1. Its root appears to have been a temporary failure of faith, indicated by the words "must we," or, "shall we bring you water," &c. In spite of the promise (ver. 8), he expresses uncertainty as to whether such rebels will be gratified. Unbelief is infectious, and needs a robust faith to resist it. Like a powerful electric current, only a strong non-conductor can arrest its course. Apply to Christians fearing they must fail in their labours because of unbelief in others (cf. Matt. xvii. 17, 20). This distrust led to further faults, such as—2. Haste of temper. Words, acts, and manner indicated this. May it not have been that because of his distrust, at the first blow, the water did not flow forth? Or was it that both blows were given in great haste? "He that believeth shall not make haste." 3. Disregard of instructions in striking when merely told to speak (cf. Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32; Prov. xxx. 5, 6). 4. The appearance, at least, of assuming too much honour to himself and Aaron, and thus failing to "sanctify" God before the people (Ps. cvi. 33). Distrustful or disobedient thoughts, when shut up, like rebels, within the citadel of the heart, do mischief enough and give a world of trouble; but if they sally forth in the form of words they may cause public injury and lead to consequences some of which may be irreparable. Combining the resolution of Ps. xxxix. 1 with the prayer of Ps. cxli. 3, we may be safe. Yet in considering Moses' sin we may see—

II. THE PALLIATIONS OF IT. 1. Great provocations from the rebels, who, after all the lessons of the past, inherited and perpetuated their fathers' sins (cf. Exod. xvi. 3; xvii. 3; Numb. xi. 5). 2. His first public offence. He was "very meek" (ch. xii. 3), and he needed to be. Now for the first time his meekness failed him. 3. His sin was very brief—a temporary failure of faith, causing a passing gust of anger, yet soon over; he was not "greatly moved" (Ps. lxii. 2). 4. It led to no public evil consequences appreciable by the congregation. But though we may see in our own sins or the sins of others many circumstances that seem to palliate the offence, we must not expect to escape chastisement if we reflect on—

III. MOSES' PUNISHMENT. Moses had one cherished desire of his life, that, having led the people through the wilderness, he might conduct them into the promised land. Illustrate this from the scene graphically suggested to our imagination in Deut. iii. 23—27. True, the punishment was only for this life, and, like many other of God's fatherly chastisements, was overruled for his child's good in sparing him from future conflicts (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 32). But still it was a punishment, reminding us of the great sin of disobedience even under palliating circumstances. And the penalty may be more serious. Illustrate from the case of the disobedient prophet deceived at Bethel (1 Kings xiii.); or from some case we may have known of a life

blighted through one sin of haste or disobedience in word or act. The favour of God brings with it great privileges, but imposes on us grave responsibilities (cf. Amos iii. 2; Luke xii. 47; 1 Pet. iv. 17). What need for the confession and the prayer, Ps. xix. 12—14!—P.

Ver. 28.—*The death of Aaron:—"Mercy and judgment."* This chapter begins with the death of Miriam and ends with Aaron's decease. No chapter of any length in the history even of a godly family without death in it. In every believer's death there is a blending of judgment and mercy. In this case we see—

I. JUDGMENT. Aaron's death was—1. A chastisement (ver. 24; Rom. v. 12; viii. 10). 2. A deprivation (ver. 26). His garments were taken off because his priesthood was taken away. So with the most sacred and honourable office of the Christian (Heb. vii. 23; 2 Pet. i. 13—15). 3. A severance. The aged Moses loses the last companion of his early days. 4. A grief to many (ver. 29).

II. MERCY; indicated in Aaron's death by such facts as these. It was, 1. A calm departure, not a sudden judgment. He was not "cut off from," but "gathered unto, his people." 2. A release from the toils of life in the wilderness and the contradiction of sinners. 3. A gentle dismission from the responsibilities of office. 4. A transference of his duties and honours to a beloved son. He saw the robes and the office of the priesthood intrusted to Eleazar. 5. A promotion to the higher service of a sinless world; from the mount of communion to the heavenly Mount Zion.—P.

Ver. 1.—*The abiding in Kadesh and the death of Miriam.* 1. *The abiding in Kadesh.* This was a return to the district occupied at the time when God pronounced the doom of wandering for forty years on the people (ch. xiii. 26). We know also that the return took place as this long period was drawing to a close. There had been, so to speak, a profitless and melancholy wandering in a circle. We have but little information concerning this period, and what we have seems to have been given for the purpose of showing how rigorously God carried out the sentence. Ch. xxxiii. tells us of the various halting-places, as if to impress us with the fact that Israel had not been allowed to go out of the wilderness. We are told of the rebellion of Korah and the giving of certain laws, but there is nothing to indicate progress. Probably, as has been suggested, there was more or less of dispersion during the forty years. God was waiting for an obstacle to be taken out of the way. In the Scriptures we do not find anything recorded unless as it bears on the advancement of the kingdom of God. Much of what the world calls history is after all mere trifling, and it is our wisdom and profit to notice not only what God has revealed, but also what he has concealed. This generation of the Israelites was thus a type of the many profitless lives that are lived in every generation. After a period of wandering and toil they come back to where they started from. There is nothing to show for all the years of weary work. Sadder still, there are many who come to be looked on as obstacles; their life stands in the way of human improvement and advance, and little or nothing can be done till they go. The return to Kadesh was like some great sign that a long and rigorous winter is drawing to its close. 2. *The death of Miriam.* There is a certain fitness in following up the regulations of ch. xix. with a record of death and burial. Death had dogged these Israelites all through their wanderings. There was perhaps no halting-place but what might have had this sentence joined with it: "Such a one died there and was buried there." Why then is the death of Miriam singled out for special mention? In the first place, she was a person of distinction by her office as prophetess, particularly as she was not only a prophetess, but sister to the two chief men in Israel. Then, being so, it is very noticeable that none of the three, so eminent in their life, were allowed to enter the promised land. There is mystery in their calling, mystery in the services they are called to render, and mystery in the seeming thwarting of all their hopes. One feels the hand of God is in all this. Man proposes, and reckons with something like certainty, but God disposes in a very different fashion. Miriam had sinned a great sin (ch. xii.), but was it not a long while ago? She has lived on through all these wanderings, having seen many younger than herself falling on every hand. May she not then hope to live a little longer, and see the promised land before she dies? Perhaps such thoughts were in the aged woman's

mind, perhaps many a time she had wept bitterly over her pride and envy in the past; but God's determinations cannot be set aside, and even when the earthly Canaan is again coming in sight, that sight is not for her. There was no way for Miriam, any more than the rest of us, to escape that suffering and loss *in this world* which so often come from wrong-doing. As to her possible part in the better country, there is necessary silence here. It is Christ who brought life and immortality to light. The great thing to be noticed is that Miriam died in Kadesh, was buried there, and consequently failed of entrance into the earthly Canaan.—Y.

VERS. 2—13.—*The gift of water at Meribah.* I. THE COMPLAINT OF THE PEOPLE. 1. It was occasioned by *a pressing and reasonable want.* "There was no water for the congregation." The people were often discontented without cause, but here was a real strait. Experience shows that many so-called necessities, instead of being necessities, are even injurious. Life might be made more simple and frugal with no loss, but rather increase, of the highest joys of life. But if we are to live here at all there are some things necessary. The bread and the water must be sure. 2. *There was no apparent supply for the want.* We may presume that for the most part Israel had found water, even in the wilderness, without much difficulty. Unobserved and unappreciated, God may have opened up many fountains before the Israelites approached. Hence when they came to Kadesh and found the rocks dry, they hastily judged there was no water. We are very dependent on customary outward signs. 3. *Past experience of similar circumstances should have led to calm faith and expectation.* God had made sweet for them the bitter waters of Marah, and directly after brought them to Elim with its ample supply (Exod. xv. 23—27). And when they came to Rephidim, and found no water, Moses by command of God smote the rock in Horeb (Exod. xvii.). But then the rising generation had not been sufficiently instructed in these things, and impressed with the goodness of God. How should unbelieving and forgetting fathers make believing and mindful children? If we would only base our expectations on what God has done in the past, we should look in vain for occasion of fear and doubt. After Jesus had fed one multitude, the disciples had yet to ask with respect to another, "Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?" (Matt. xv. 33). Consider also Matt. xvi. 5—10. We continually, and in the most perverse way, confine our views of what is possible within the limitations of our own natural powers. To God the wilderness is as the fruitful field, and the fruitful field as the wilderness. He can make the earth whatever pleases him (Ps. cvii. 33—39). 4. *The complaints of the people were not confined to the urgent need.* They do not approach Moses with a simple, humble plea for water. They had not considered why they had been brought to *Kadesh,* and that in the plans of God they were bound to come again into that district, whether water was there or not. First of all they utter *an impious, hasty wish,* though if it had been taken seriously they would have complained bitterly. Men are apt to say they wish they were dead when really their circumstances are more endurable than those of many who have learned, like the apostle, in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content. A discontented heart makes a reckless tongue. The expression was used thoughtlessly enough, just as many take God's name in vain, hardly conscious of what they are saying. Next they advance to *an unjust reproach.* Forty years of Divine chastisements, sharp and severe, had taught them nothing. They could see nothing more than that Moses and Aaron were leading the people about at their own will. How easy it is through our ignorance of the unseen God to attribute to the men whom we do see a power immensely beyond their resources. The people came back to Kadesh as they left it, blind, ungrateful, inconsiderate as ever. Moses and Aaron, sorrowing for their dead sister, have once again to listen to accusations which long ago had been answered by God himself. The reproach is mingled with *vain regrets, still surviving all these years of chastisement.* There could not now be many survivors of the generation that had come out of Egypt, yet, doubtless, all the while Egypt had been so often mentioned as to have deeply infected the minds of the younger generation. Garrulous old people, who might so easily have inspired their children by telling them of God's dealings with Pharaoh in Egypt and at the Red Sea, and of all his goodness in the wilderness, were rather poisoning

and prejudicing their hearts with recollections of carnal comforts and delicacies which seemed hopelessly lost. Instead of pointing out that the wilderness with all its hardships was a place of Divine manifestations, they could only see that it was no place of seeds, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates. *The mention of water*, coming in at the last, seems almost an after-thought, as much as to say, "Even if we had water, there would none the less be ground for great complaints."

II. GOD'S ANSWER TO THE COMPLAINT. 1. The people speak against Moses and Aaron, who thereupon make their usual resort to God. Beforetime when his glory appeared in response to their appeal it was the herald of destruction (ch. xiv. 10; xvi. 19, 42); but now there is no threatening of destruction. Even in the midst of their murmuring and ingratitude *God recognises their real need.* Thus as we consider the work of God in Christ Jesus we find a similar recognition. Men came to Jesus with all sorts of selfish complaints; but while they found in him a pitying listener, there was no disposition to deal with them according to their complaints. God did not give to Israel at Kadesh, figs, vines, and pomegranates, but he gave water speedily and abundantly. It is made a charge against the Divine providence and government, and sometimes a ground for denying the reality of such things, that men are so unequally supplied with temporal possessions. But all this falls to the ground if only we notice how prompt, how effectual, God is in meeting real necessities. *It is he who is to judge of these.* There is no absolute necessity even for the bread that perisheth, but there is need, whether here or elsewhere, to be free from sin, to have that spiritual food, that bread and water of eternal life, which Jesus himself has spoken of so largely and attractively in the Gospel of John. Thus while the Jews went on wickedly complaining against Christ, showing more and more their ignorance and selfishness, he, on the other hand, went on in the midst of all, revealing, expounding, setting forth in the clear light of his matchless teaching the supreme want of men and his own adequate supply for it. We must cease clamouring for the figs, vines, and pomegranates, and be more athirst for that water of which if one drink he shall never thirst again. God will not supply everything we think to be wants. But let a man come to himself and discern his real needs, and God, like the father to the prodigal son, will run to meet him with an ample supply. 2. *God makes the supply from an unlikely source.* Moses was to speak to the rock before their eyes, the one nearest them at the time. There was no searching about among the hills if haply some natural reservoir might be found which a touch could open in all its fulness to the panting crowd. There was water in the rock before them, requiring nothing more than the word of God through his servant Moses. We must consider what happened as if Moses had completely carried out his instructions. Thus in many things connected with our salvation we are directed to unlikely places and unlikely methods. Who expects the King of the Jews to be born in Bethlehem? Why not in Jerusalem? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Shall one look for the food of a multitude among five loaves and two small fishes? Shall one look for an apostle of the Gentiles in Paul, the fierce and persecuting Jew? God makes a messenger out of the child Samuel, and a champion out of the stripling David. God delights in finding everything he needs where we can find little or nothing. We may be nearest help when to our natural judgment we may seem farthest from it. 3. There is thus *a warning against all hasty judgments.* We who are so utterly weak, so constantly in need of help, should be very slow to say, "Neither is there any water to drink." Let us bear in mind how ignorant we are of the Scriptures and the power of God. God will not leave his own true children unsupplied with any needful thing. He will choose the right time, and way, and form. It is the besetting sin of far too many minds to form conclusions not only when there is lack of sufficient information, but when there is no need of present conclusion at all. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart." Do not say in haste and ignorance that there is no strength to be got anywhere.—Y.

Vers. 10—12.—*The sin of Moses and Aaron.* It was the sin of men who had been specially chosen, long occupied, often approved, and greatly honoured as servants of God. If *they*, being what they were, fell so easily, how important it is for *us*

earnestly to consider the sin by which they fell! It is another proof of the hold which sin has on our nature, and of the need that we should walk warily, and look for snares at every step. Consider—

I. HOW THE SIN WAS COMMITTED. 1. *It was a sin of inattention.* If there was anything which Moses and Aaron should have learned after forty years of service, it was that God's commandments required constant attention and exact obedience. They had a long experience of One who gave details as well as general instructions. Moreover, it was not the first time Moses had been charged to bring water from the rock. At Rephidim God said to him, "Thou shalt smite the rock" (Exod. xvii. 6). At Kadesh he says, "Speak to the rock." The very difference should have been enough to bring the command distinctly before him. Notice then what serious results simple inattention may bring; we know that thousands of lives have been lost by it. Furthermore, how many have failed in the attainment of salvation and spiritual blessedness through nothing more than lack of attention! They have not run greedily in the way of sin, but simply gone through a decent, reputable life, neglecting the way of salvation. In the things of God attention is required as a regular habit, not only that we may escape loss, but secure real advantage. The more attention there is, the more advantage there will be. 2. *It was the inattention of men whose very experience had made them habitually careful.* Whatever Moses and Aaron may have been by nature, they had been trained to faithfulness in little things. It has not perhaps been sufficiently noticed how diligent and exact Moses must have been in his apprehension of all that God revealed to him. When we think how easy misunderstandings are, how easy it is to get wrong impressions and be confused among details, then we feel how very carefully Moses must have listened. Aaron also in his priestly service was a man of detail. 3. *Hence there must have been some extraordinary disturbing cause to throw them out of their usual carefulness.* What this was we can hardly make out with certainty. In the murmuring and repining of the people there was nothing new either as to spirit or language. Moses had listened to the same sort of attack before, and through it all kept his meekness and feeling of personal unworthiness. But as the last straw breaks the camel's back, so even the patience of Moses became at last exhausted. The weight of years and cares united were telling on him. He was now Moses the aged, and though we are assured that when he died his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated, yet we must not so take these words as to free him from every infirmity of age. It was a very hard thing for a man after forty years of service, through all which he had kept the consciousness of a heart true to God and to Israel, to have the people still meet him with the old ingratitude and the old slanders. Thus it was that he went into the presence of God with a mind preoccupied, thinking a great deal more about the rebellious spirit of the people than about the glory of his Master. There is no safety but in keeping God *first in our thoughts.* We must be like the house founded on the rock, *never* disconnected from it. The nature of the foundation may seem to matter little in calm weather, but the foundation and our connection with it are everything when the tempest comes. Let a believer wear the *whole* armour of God, and he is invincible, but let him lay it aside for a single moment, and the waiting, watching enemy may inflict a painful, serious, humiliating wound, even if it be not a mortal one.

II. IN WHAT THE SIN CONSISTED. 1. *In a want of faith.* "Because ye believed me not." God says nothing about inattention or irritation, but goes at once to the root of the matter. Moses had failed in faith; not altogether, of course, for the very fact that he took the rod and approached the rock shows some faith and some spirit of obedience; but still faith must have been lacking, and to a very serious extent. It has been suggested that, seeing the spirit of the people, Moses was after all in doubt whether another long term of wanderings might not be in store for them. The one clear thing is that God ascribes the sin with its serious consequences to unbelief. Outwardly nothing appears but inattention and irritation; inwardly there is an unbelieving heart. Perhaps even Moses himself may have been startled to hear such a charge, and utterly unconscious that his faith was seriously imperilled. Had he been charged with inattention, irritation, want of strict obedience, these were only too plain; but want of faith! Nothing but the clear word of God could make that

credible. The lesson to us is that an impaired faith may be the cause of many of our spiritual troubles. We, worse than Moses, may be habitually inattentive and irritable, and afflicted with the sad consciousness that the habits are becoming more and more fixed. To treat them by direct effort is only to mitigate the symptoms of a deep disease, but to get into a truly believing state of mind, to have faith, and to have it more abundantly, will soon weaken and ultimately destroy these harassing spiritual infirmities. 2. *In a consequent failure to sanctify God in the eyes of the people.* The unbelief of Moses was not only a loss to him personally, but those who were out of the way already it led still further out of the way. All eyes were looking to Moses; his fall was not that of some obscure man. Furthermore, he made God's action appear stern and wrathful just at the very time when it was intended to be specially gracious. For forty years the people had been under God's displeasure. Now the gloomy cloud was breaking, the time for entrance into Canaan drawing near, and at the very place where God had once appeared in wrath he evidently intends now to appear in grace and mercy. But the conduct of Moses and Aaron spoils all this beautiful revelation. It was a strange reversal of what had hitherto happened. We no longer see God threatening wrath, and Moses offering ingenious pleas for mercy, but God is now gracious, overlooking a time of ignorance, and Moses, whom one would have expected to see radiant with benignity and satisfaction, goes to the very extreme of denunciation. The grace of the benefit was utterly spoiled. It seemed as if God threw down a supply for the people's need, as a churlish hand might fling a loaf at a beggar. We must labour to live as Christ would have us live, so that men may glorify God in us, and find no occasion to blaspheme; following in the footsteps of him who was able to say, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John xvii. 4).

III. THE WAY IN WHICH THE SIN WAS PUNISHED. Those who fail to sanctify God before the people, and make his glory to appear, must in turn bear humiliation before the people. This was not a private intimation to Moses and Aaron, so that only they knew the reason why they were to die before entrance on the promised land. The publication of the doom was needed. Moses himself at the beginning of Deuteronomy (ch. i. 37) seems to make some allusion to this doom upon him: "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither;" though certainly there is some difficulty arising from the blending of these words with the general doom on the Israelites forty years before. Anyway it is plain that the people knew Moses was to die with the doomed generation. His death happening as it did was a kind of blotting out of all that seemed harsh in the giving of the water. It was an impressive reminder to all future generations of what God had meant to be done. We must not exaggerate this penalty beyond its proper extent and purpose. To the people it would seem very great, and to Moses also at that time it would seem great. But, at the worst, it was only a temporal deprivation. Moses lost the earthly Canaan, but the better land he did not lose. Who was it that appeared in glory to Jesus on the mount? This very Moses, with whom God for a time dealt so sternly. The greatest of temporal losses, the one that now brings most pain, and seems as if it never could be made up, will look a very little thing from among the attainments of eternity. What shall it hurt a man if he lose the whole world and gain a place in the inheritance of the saints in light? Learn, lastly, that none can humiliate us or bring us into loss but ourselves. It may not be our own fault if we are ridiculed; it is always our own fault if we are ridiculous. Moses had suffered many things from the people in the way of scorn and threatening, but through all these things he moves with unimpaired hopes and possessions. It is his own unbelief that brings this bitter disappointment. One traitor within the gates is more dangerous than all the army outside.—Y.

Vers. 14—21.—*The claim of kinship rejected.* I. THE CLAIM. 1. It is the claim of *a kinsman*, even a brother. The message is not from Moses, but "thy brother Israel," who was also a twin-brother. The long intervening space of years seems to fade away, and with it the hosts of the Israelites and Edomites. Jacob and Esau stand before us, as on the morning of reconciliation, after the wrestling at Peniel

(Gen. xxxiii.). The descendants had passed through very different experiences, and were now in very different positions; but Moses felt that this common ancestry constituted a claim which he might reasonably plead. So wherever the believer travels, though he cannot put in the claim of grace upon the unbeliever, he may put in the claim of nature. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," said the Jew Paul to the Gentiles of Athens. The changes of grace transform the ties of nature, but do not destroy them. Believers must always do their best to keep hold of unbelievers by virtue of their common humanity. Israel must remind Edom of brotherhood, not only that Israel may profit by the tie, but may also have the chance of profiting Edom (1 Cor. vii. 12—16). 2. It is the claim *of a kinsman in need.* We are not told exactly how the request came to be made. God commanded the people to pass through the coasts of Edom (Deut. ii. 4), and the presumption is that Moses discovered on approach that the way through Edom would be the most direct and convenient to the land of Canaan. One gets the impression that the people were now allowed to make their way to Canaan with what speed they could, as if to make contrast with the penal delay which God had so long and sternly imposed. If Edom had been willing, Israel might have got to Jordan all the sooner. And so the Church of Christ, in its onward rush, has had to plead with the world, its brother, for toleration and free passage, freedom to speak and act according to conviction. Our chief resort, and always our last one, is to God himself, but there are some ways in which the world can help. Paul counted it part of his advantage, as an apostle, that he could plead for justice, protection, and free course as a Roman before Roman tribunals. 3. It is the claim of *a kinsman who had been through very peculiar experiences.* The great need of Israel was that it wanted to get home again. The plea is the plea of an exile, who has been in a strange land for a long time, and amid cruel oppressors. Further, the experiences had been peculiar not only in respect of the cruelty of men, but also of *the goodness of God.* He had sent an angel to deliver and guide. More indication Moses could not give, because it would not have been understood. So peculiar had these experiences been that Edom *had heard something of them.* The presumption is that all through the past Edom had known something of Israel's history, and Israel something of Edom's. The histories of the Church and the world intermingle. The world cannot but know such experiences of the Church as are perceptible to the eye of sense. "This thing was not done in a corner," said Paul to the incredulous Festus. The course of the Church has been one of sufferings, marvels and mysteries, interpositions and favours of God, which are not to be concealed in any appeals which are to be made to the world. "He hath not dealt so with any nation" (Ps. cxlvii. 20). "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Ps. xxxiii. 12). 4. *It asks comparatively little, and promises much in return.* The request throws great light on Moses' own character, and shows clearly how far he was from reckless ambition. It was an honest request, founded in truth, and Moses made it as one quite reasonable and safe for Edom to grant. The people of God have but little to ask the world for themselves, if it will but let them go through quietly and peaceably. They want none of this world's goods and pleasures, and are ready to assure it that these will remain untouched. There is nothing in the shape of a holy city, a new Jerusalem, among this world's possessions. It is a grand assurance to give, that no one in the world will be the worse for the true Christians who pass through it. Moses might even have said, "Let us through, and a blessing will rest upon you." Wherever the Christian goes, he not simply refrains from evil, but does positive good. "Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world."

II. THE REJECTION OF THE CLAIM. 1. *It was rejected without giving reasons.* There is no answer but that of the "much people" and the drawn sword. This in general has been the method by which the world has met the Church when pleading for toleration, liberty of conscience, liberty to serve God according to his will. The world in its pride will not stoop to understand or calmly consider what the Church may feel it needful to ask. It gets its brute force ready at once, whether in coarser or more refined forms, for those who have different purposes and sympathies (Acts iv. 3, 17, 18; v. 18, 40; vii. 57, 58; ix. 1, 2; xiv. 5, 19, &c.). 2. *Though no reasons*

were given, yet Edom had them, strong and potent, in its heart. It is not always easy or decent to avow reasons for action; beside which, Edom felt that promptitude in action was required. Moses had sent a message which called up all the past, not only what he wished called up, but many things he would rather not have brought to mind. The name of Esau's brother was Jacob as well as Israel, and both names were connected with disturbing recollections to the Edomites. "Thou knowest," said Moses. But his way of presenting the facts, and that alone, could not be confidingly accepted by Edom. A great deal of ugly and disquieting news must have filtered through with respect to this great host of fighting men. The great difficulty Moses had in keeping them in order was probably not unknown to surrounding peoples. Thus the Edomites would feel in their hearts that the pledges of Moses were but as broken reeds to rely on. How could he be responsible for the orderliness and honesty of such a host, a host with such a suspicious history? The world has ever had its instinctive fears of the Church. It hears of certain promises and prophecies, and interprets these against its own present security. Herod, trembling for his throne, slays the infants of Bethlehem to make sure of it. The world, loving its own and thinking there is nothing like it, ignorantly supposes that its possessions must stand esteemed by the Church in the same way. Edom, in its suspicious spirit, looked on Israel much as the Jews in Thessalonica on Paul and Silas: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." The Church says, "I am thy friend, O world, thy brother; I will not harm thee;" but the world thinks it well to be on the safe side, and give no chance of harm, if it can prevent it. 3. *The refusal of Edom emphasises the peculiar destiny of Israel.* Moses said that Israel wanted nothing of all Edom's treasures. Its treasures were elsewhere, and it pressed onward to possess them. Nevertheless, the treasures of Edom would not have been without temptation, and Edom, unconsciously, spares Israel a trial of its steadfastness. The true people of God have reason to be thankful even for the intolerance of the world. The delays and toils of circuitous roads, where mountains and hills are not yet brought low, nor the crooked made straight, and the rough ways smooth, may have more advantages than in the midst of present discomforts we dream of. The temporal prosperity of its members has not been the boon to the Church that many think. The great boon is to have God continually impressing on our minds that this is not our home. "I gave our brethren a solemn caution not to love the world, neither the things of the world. This will be their grand danger. As they are industrious and frugal, they must needs increase in goods. This appears already in London, Bristol, and most other trading towns. Those who are in business have increased in substance seven-fold, some of them twenty, yea, a hundred-fold. What need then have these of the strongest warnings, lest they be entangled therein and perish!" ('Wesley's Journal,' iii. 139).—Y.

Vers. 22—29.—*The death of Aaron.* The chapter, beginning with the death of the sister, closes with the death of the brother, and Moses, in the midst of many official anxieties, is further smitten with great personal bereavement. But not a word of his feeling appears. This is a history of the children of Israel, and the death of Aaron is recorded here not because of Aaron the man, but because of Aaron the priest. The whole solemn event, peculiarly dignified in the transaction of it, is peculiarly dignified also in the record of it. He who had been specially holy to God during his life passes away in circumstances accordant with the dignity and holiness of his office.

I. HIS DEATH, NEVERTHELESS, IS A PENAL ONE. All the holiness of the office cannot obliterate, it cannot even condone, the sin of the man. Great as his privileges had been, and great as the power shown when he stood successfully between the living and the dead, the difference between him and his brethren was only in *office*, not in *nature*. The people were to be impressed with the fact that the priest was not only a great chosen mediator, but a sinful brother. He died, not in the seclusion and privacy of a tent, but upon the mountain, in sight of all the congregation. His part in the sin of Meribah, subordinate as that part seemed, could not be passed over. The sin of omission is as serious as the sin of commission. God had spoken the command in the ears of both the brothers, and what Moses failed to

recollect or attend to, Aaron should have supplied from his own knowledge. Thus holy, faithful, and honourable as his life might rightly be called, his sin at the hour of death is brought right into the foreground. We justly magnify the lives of God's servants, and point with satisfaction to the serenity and expectancy that mark their closing days, and often their closing hour itself, but never let us forget what sin has had to do in bringing them where they are. It is because of Christ that his people die peacefully, but it is because of sin that they have to die at all. He surely dies the calmest who, forgetting his own good works, casts himself, more conscious than ever of his sin, on the mercy of God and the redeeming work of Christ.

II. THOUGH PENAL, IT WAS TRANQUIL; we may even say it was hopeful. A great deal—more than we can fathom—may be hidden in that expression, "gathered unto his people." If Aaron did not receive the promise, it was because he could not be made perfect without us (Heb. xi. 39, 40). The man who presumptuously neglected the passover was to be cut off from among his people (ch. ix. 13; xv. 30); Korah and his companions perished from among the congregation; but Aaron was gathered to his people. Doubtless he went up in repentance, faith, obedience, and deep humility to face the great mystery. Though he had sinned at Meribah, disobedience to God and self-seeking were not the chosen and beloved principles in his life. It is a dreadful thing to die in sin, but to the repentant sinner, showing his repentance in sufficient and appropriate fruits, and steadfastly believing in Christ, how can death be dreadful? Many who have lived in long bondage to the fear of death have been wonderfully relieved and calmed as the dreaded hour drew nigh.

"Many shapes
Of Death, and many are the ways that lead
To his grim cave, all dismal; yet to sense
More terrible at th' entrance than within."

III. THE CONTINUITY OF HOLY SERVICE IS PROVIDED FOR. Among the kingdoms of this world the cry is, "The king is dead—long live the king." The departing king keeps his authority and pomp to the last breath. But here while Aaron is still alive, before death can stain those rich and holy garments with its hated touch, they are taken from the father and assumed by the son. Consider this transfer of office thus made, in the light of ch. xix. It was not on Aaron's part a spontaneous abdication,—that he could not make,—but a further significant hint how abominable death is to God. It is not the priest who dies, but the sinful man. There in the sight of all the people it was signified that though they had lost the man, never for a moment had they lost the priest. There was nothing Aaron had done which Eleazar could not do as well. Aaron personally does not seem to have been a very remarkable man; if anything, wanting in individuality, and easily led. Do not let us look with apprehension when those who seem to be pillars are giving way. The word of Jesus should reassure our doubts, and make us utterly ashamed of them. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."—Y.

THE LAST MARCH: FROM MOUNT HOR TO JORDAN (CH. XXI.—XXII. 1).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXI.

EPISODE OF THE KING OF ARAD (vers. 1—3). Ver. 1.—**And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell.** Rather, "And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, which dwelt in the Negeb, heard tell." It is possible that Arad was the name of the king (it occurs as the name of a man, 1 Chron. viii. 15), but it was almost certainly the name of his place. The "king of Arad" is mentioned in Josh. xii. 14, and "the Negeb of Arad" in Judges i. 16. From the context of these passages it is evident that it was situated in the southernmost district of what was afterwards the territory of Judah. According to Eusebius, it stood twenty Roman miles to the south of Hebron, and its site has been found by modern travellers at Tel-Arad, a low hill in this direction. On the Negeb see note on ch. xiii. 17. **By the way of the spies.** דֶּרֶךְ הָאֲתָרִים. Septuagint, ὁδὸν Ἀθαρείν. The translation is very uncertain; *atharim* may be a proper name, as the Septuagint seems to suppose, or it may be an unusual

plural formed from תוּר, equivalent to מְתָרִים, "spies," as the Chaldee, Samaritan, and most of the versions take it; or it may be simply the plural from אָתָר, a place, used with some local meaning which made it practically a proper name. If the rendering of the A. V. be correct, "the way of the spies" must have been the route by which they ascended to Hebron through the Negeb (ch. xiii. 17, 22), and the king of Arad must have anticipated an invasion in that direction, and sought to forestall it. **And took some of them prisoners.** This would seem to show that he fell upon them unawares, and cut off some detached parties. Nothing is said of any disobedience on the part of Israel to account for defeat in battle.

Ver. 2.—**And Israel vowed a vow.** On these vows, and on things "devoted" or "banned" (חֵרֶם—*ἀνάθεμα*), see on Levit. xxvii. 28, and on the moral character of such wholesale slaughters see on ch. xxxi. If it was right to destroy the Canaanites at all, no fault can be found with the vow; it merely did for that military proceeding what national feeling and discipline does for the far more bloody exigencies of modern warfare, removing it from the sphere of private hatred, revenge, and cupidity, and placing it upon a higher level. The patriot soldier of these days feels himself to be a mere instrument in the hands of the rulers of his people to maintain their rights or avenge their wrongs. The Israelite could not have this feeling, which was foreign to his time and place in history, but he could feel that he was a mere instrument in the hands of God to perform *his* will upon *his* enemies. In either case a most important advantage is secured; the soldier does not slay in order to gratify his own hatred, or in order to satisfy his own cupidity. It is quite true that such vows as are here mentioned would certainly in a more advanced stage of civilisation be abused to throw a cloak of religion over frightful enormities; but it does not in the least follow that they were not permitted and even encouraged by God in an age to which they were natural, and under circumstances in which they were beneficial.

Ver. 3.—**They utterly destroyed them and their cities.** Rather, "they banned (וַיַּחֲרֵם—*ἀνεθεμάτισεν*) them and their cities." No doubt the banning implies here their utter destruction, because it is not the vow before the battle, but the carrying of it out after the victory, which is here spoken of. **And he called the name of the place Hormah.** Rather, "the name of the place was called (impersonal use of the transitive) Charmah." חָרְמָה. Septuagint, *Ἀνάθεμα*. It is not very clear what place received this name at this time. It does not appear to have been Arad itself, as would have seemed most natural, because Arad and Hormah are mentioned side by side in Josh. xii. 14. It is identified with Zephath in Judges i. 17. It may have been the place where the victory was won which gave all the cities of Arad to destruction. Whether it was the Hormah mentioned in ch. xiv. 45 is very doubtful (see note there). The nomenclature of the Jews, especially as to places, and most especially as to places with which their own connection was passing or broken, was vague and confused in the extreme, and nothing can be more unsatisfactory than arguments which turn upon the shifting names of places long ago perished and forgotten. It must be added that the three verses which narrate the chastisement of this Canaanite chieftain have caused immense embarrassment to commentators. If the incident is narrated in its proper order of time, it must have happened during the stay of the Israelites under Mount Hor, when they had finally left the neighbourhood of the Negeb, and were separated from the king of Arad by many days' march, and by a most impracticable country. It is therefore generally supposed that the narrative is out of place, and that it really belongs to the time when Israel was gathered together for the second time at Kadesh, and when his reappearance there in force might well have given rise to the report that he was about to invade Canaan from that side. This is unsatisfactory, because no plausible reason can be assigned for the insertion of the notice where it stands, both here and in ch. xxxiii. 40. To say that Moses wished to bring it into juxtaposition with the victories recorded in the latter part of the chapter, from which it is separated by the incident of the fiery serpents, and the brief record of many journeys, is to confess that no explanation can be invented which has the least show of reason. If the narrative be displaced, the displacement must simply be due to accident or interpolation. Again, it would seem quite inconsistent with the position and plans of Israel since the rebellion of Kadesh that any invasion and conquest, even temporary, of any part of Canaan should be made at this time, and that especially if the attack was not made until Israel was lying in the Arabah on his way round the land of Edom. It is therefore supposed by some that the vow only was made at this time, and the ban suspended over the place, and that it was only carried out as part of the general conquest under Joshua; that, in fact, the fulfilment of the vow is narrated in Josh. xii. 14; Judges i. 16, 17. This, however, throws the narrative as it stands into confusion and discredit, for the ban and the destruction become a mockery and an unreality if nothing more was done to

the towns of the king of Arad than was done at the same time to the towns of all his neighbours. It would be more reverent to reject the story as an error or a falsehood than to empty it of the meaning which it was obviously intended to convey. We are certainly meant to understand that the vow was there and then accepted by God, and was there and then carried into effect by Israel; the towns of Arad were depopulated and destroyed as far as lay in their power, although they may have been immediately reoccupied. There are only two theories which are worth considering. 1. The narrative *may* really be displaced, for what cause we do not know. If so, it would be more satisfactory to refer it, not to the time of the second encampment at Kadesh, but to the time of the first, during the absence of the spies in Canaan. It is probable that their entry was known, as was the case with Joshua's spies (Josh. ii. 2); and nothing could be more likely than that the king of Arad, suspecting what would follow, should attempt to anticipate invasion by attack. If it were so it might help to account for the rash confidence shown by the people afterwards (ch. xiv. 40), for the mention of Hormah (ch. xiv. 45), and for the reappearance of kings of Hormah and of Arad in the days of Joshua. 2. The narrative *may* after all be in place. That the Israelites lay for thirty days under Mount Hor is certain, and they may have been longer. During this period they could not get pasture for their cattle on the side of Edom, and they may have wandered far and wide in search of it. It may have been but a comparatively small band which approached the Negeb near enough to be attacked, and which, by the help of God, was enabled to defeat the king of Arad, and to lay waste his towns. It had certainly been no great feat for all Israel to overthrow a border chieftain who could not possibly have brought 5000 men into the field.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Victory won, and followed up.* In this brief narrative of three verses we have by anticipation almost the whole spiritual teaching of the Book of Joshua; we have, namely, the struggle and the victory of the soldier of Christ over his spiritual foes, and the consequent duty which he has to perform. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE FEAR AND THE ANGER OF THE CANAANITE WERE KINDLED BY THE NEWS THAT ISRAEL WAS COMING BY THE WAY OF THE SPIES, *i. e.* were following in the steps of those that had gone before into the land of promise. Even so the rage of Satan and of all evil spirits is stirred against us because he knows that we follow in the way which leads to heaven, and because it is his ardent desire to keep us out, if he can and while he can. If the Canaanite had perceived that Israel had rebelled and turned his back on the land of promise, he would never have troubled to come forth and attack him. Satan makes no direct assault on those whom he sees to be walking contrary to God and to rest.

II. THAT HE ATTACKED ISRAEL SUDDENLY AND UNEXPECTEDLY, AND WITH SOME SUCCESS. Most likely they were scattered abroad in search of pasture when he fell upon them, and made them prisoners. Even so the assaults of our spiritual foes are secretly prepared and suddenly delivered at moments when we are off our guard, and many a one falls a victim, at least for a while. The enemy goeth about indeed as a roaring lion, but the lion does not roar at the moment that he springs upon his prey, nor does Satan give any signal of his worst temptations.

III. THAT HE MADE SOME OF THEM PRISONERS, which seems to have been his object—perhaps that they might serve as hostages. Even so the enemy of souls desires to make prisoners who may not only be held in miserable bondage themselves, but may give him control and influence over their brethren.

IV. THAT ISRAEL DID NOT ATTEMPT TO MEET THE CANAANITES AS ORDINARY FOES, BUT VOWED TO TREAT THEM AS GOD'S ENEMIES, AND TO EXTERMINATE THEM ACCORDINGLY. Even so the right way and the only way to overcome the temptations and sins, the evil habits, passions, and tempers, which assail us (and often too successfully) on the way to heaven, is to regard them as God's enemies, as hateful to him, and to smite them accordingly without remorse, weariness, or thought of self. Many are vexed and annoyed with follies and tempers which get the better of them, and they contend against them on the ground of that vexation, wishing to get the mastery over them, and yet not caring to go to extremities against them. But the faithful soul will solemnly resolve, as before God and for *his* sake, to make an utter end at any cost of the sins which have prevailed against them, and so dishonoured him.

V. THAT GOD ACCEPTED THAT VOW AND GAVE THEM THE VICTORY OVER THE CANAANITES. Even so if we regard and face our spiritual enemies in the true light, as God's enemies, to be relentlessly exterminated, God will give us strength and power to have victory and to triumph over them, and it may be to set our captive brethren free also (2 Tim. ii. 26).

VI. THAT THE ISRAELITES PROCEEDED TO FULFIL THEIR VOW, although, as all the spoil was *anathema*, they had nothing to gain themselves but labour and loss of time. Even so will the good soldier of Christ not cease his most earnest efforts until he has quite destroyed (so far as may be in this life) the evil habits and evil tempers over which God has given him victory. The majority of Christian people are too lazy and selfish to do this; they will strive to overcome a known sin or bad habit; but when it has been (as they think) overcome they have not sufficient zeal to pursue it into its last lurking-places and exterminate it. As long as it does not actively trouble them they are content, and so the remnants remain to the dishonour of God and to their own future loss and danger. How few Christians radically get rid even of a single fault!

VII. THAT THE PLACE WAS CALLED HORMAH—ANATHEMA: a perpetual reminder that the enemies of God are under a ban, and should be exterminated; a sacred *delenda est Carthago*. Even so it is ever impressed upon the soldier of Christ that there can be no truce between him and sin, or even between him and selfish indifference. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema"—a Hormah, a thing devoted, a being with whom no compromise can be made and no amity knit until that indifference of his which is so hateful to God be abolished for ever.

EXPOSITION.

THE FIERY SERPENTS (vers. 4—9). Ver. 4.—**They journeyed from Mount Hor.** It appears from comparison of ch. xxxiii. 38 and ch. xx. 29 that their departure was not earlier than the beginning of the sixth month of the fortieth year. This season would be one of the hottest and most trying for marching. **By the way of the Red Sea,** *i. e.* down the Arabah, towards Ezion-geber, at the head of the Elanitic Gulf. Septuagint, *ὁδὸν ἐπὶ θάλασσαν ἐρυθρᾶν*. Not far from this place they would reach the end of the Edomitish territory, and turn eastwards and northwards up the Wady el Ithm towards the steppes of Moab. **Discouraged.** Literally, "shortened" or "straitened," as in Exod. vi. 9. Septuagint, *ὠλιγοψύχησεν ὁ λαός*. **Because of the way.** The Arabah is a stony, sandy, almost barren plain shut in by mountain walls on either side, and subject to sand-storms. It was not only, however, merely the heat and drought and ruggedness of the route which depressed them, but the fact that they were marching directly away from Canaan, and knew not how they were ever to reach it.

Ver. 5.—**There is no bread, neither is there any water.** The one of these statements was no doubt as much and as little true as the other. There was no ordinary supply of either; but as they had bread given to them from heaven, so they had water from the rock, otherwise they could not possibly have existed. **Our soul loatheth this light bread.** קְלֹקֵל, a stronger form than קַל, from קָלַל. Septuagint, *διακένῳ*. They meant to say, as their fathers had (ch. xi. 6), that it was unsavoury and unsubstantial in comparison with the heavy and succulent diet of Egypt (see note on ch. xx. 3).

Ver. 6.—**Fiery serpents.** נְחָשִׁים שְׂרָפִים. *Nachash* is the ordinary word for serpent. The word *saraph*, which seems to mean "burning one," stands (by itself) for a serpent in ver. 8, and also in Isa. xiv. 29; xxx. 6. In Isa. vi. 2, 6 it stands for one of the symbolic beings (seraphim) of the prophet's vision. The only idea common to the two meanings (otherwise so distinct) must be that of brilliance and metallic lustre. It is commonly assumed that the "fiery" serpents were so called because of the burning pain and inflammation caused by the bite, after the analogy of the *πρηστῆρες* and *καύσωνες* of Dioscorus and Ælian. But is hardly possible that Isaiah should have used the same word in such wholly dissimilar senses, and it is clear from comparison with Ezekiel's vision of the cherubim (Ezek. i. 7) that the *saraph* of Isa. vi. 2 was so called from the burnished lustre of his appearance. Even our Lord himself is described in the Apocalypse as having in the highest degree this appearance of glowing brass (Rev. i. 15; ii. 18). It is further clear that the *saraph* was so named from his colour, not his venom, because when Moses was ordered to make a *saraph* he made a serpent of brass (or rather copper), with the evident intent of imitating as closely as possible the appearance of the venomous

reptile. We may conclude then with some confidence that these serpents were of a fiery red colour, resembling in this respect certain very deadly snakes in Australia, which are known as "copper snakes." Travellers speak of some such pests as still abounding in the region of the Arabah, but it is quite uncertain whether the fiery serpents of that special visitation can be identified with any existing species.

Ver. 7.—**Pray unto the Lord.** This is the first and only (recorded) occasion on which the people directly asked for the intercession of Moses (cf., however, ch. xi. 2), although Pharaoh had done so several times, and never in vain.

Ver. 8.—**Make thee a fiery serpent.** A *saraph*. The Septuagint, not understanding the meaning of *saraph*, has simply ὄφιν (cf. John iii. 14). **Set it upon a pole.** נֵס. Septuagint, σήμειον. Vulgate, *signum*. The same word is better translated "ensign" in such passages as Isa. xi. 10; "banner" in such as Ps. lx. 4; "standard" in such as Jer. li. 27. The "pole" may have been the tallest and most conspicuous of those military standards which were planted (probably on some elevation) as rallying points for the various camps; or it may have been one loftier still, made for the occasion.

Ver. 9.—**When he beheld the serpent** (נְחָשׁ in all three places of this verse) **of brass, he lived.** The record is brief and simple in the extreme, and tells nothing but the bare facts. The author of the Book of Wisdom understood the true bearing of those facts when he called the brazen serpent a σύμβολον σωτηρίας (ch. xvi. 6), and when he wrote ὁ ἐπιστραφεὶς οὐ διὰ τὸ θεωρούμενον (the thing he looked at) ἐσώζετο, ἀλλὰ διὰ σὲ τὸν πάντων σωτῆρα. At an earlier day Hezekiah had estimated the σύμβολον σωτηρίας at its true value, as being in itself worthless, and under certain circumstances mischievous (see on 2 Kings xviii. 4).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 4—9.—*Sin and the Saviour.* The type of the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness is the only one which our Lord directly claims for himself as a type of his own crucifixion. No one can doubt that many other types, hardly less wonderful and instructive, exist; but this one will always have a certain pre-eminence of regard, because our Lord in his own words applied it to himself. Spiritually, therefore, we have in this passage Christ lifted up upon the cross in the likeness of sinful flesh in order to save from the deadly virus of sin and from eternal death all those who will raise the eye of faith to him. There is much else, but all subordinate to this. Taking the type as a whole, we may divide it under the four heads of discouragement, complaint, destruction, salvation.

I. THE DISCOURAGEMENT WHICH GAVE RISE TO COMPLAINING, AND SO LED TO THE RAVAGES OF SIN. Consider—1. *That the Israelites were discouraged, or straitened in soul, because of the way,* and this was the beginning of all that suffering and death. Even so are we often and often discouraged because of the way to heaven, the way of life by which it pleases God to lead us, and which seems so hard, so weary, so interminable, so unendurable at times. It is "because of the way" that all our distresses and discouragements arise. The "end" is well enough; who would not seek it? but the way is weary indeed! 2. *That this discouragement was not only because of the hardships of the road, although they were great, but especially because it did not seem to be leading them to Canaan at all*—rather away from it. Even so we are, many of us, discouraged grievously, not only because the way in which we walk is so hard and painful, and demands so much self-denial, but especially because we seem to make no progress in it; we do not feel that we are any nearer to the promised rest; the cross is as heavy as ever, but the crown does not show any more bright; rather we seem to be getting further and ever further from that repose of mind and soul to which we had looked forward. 3. *That their discouragement because of the way was aggravated by the fact that the evil was due to the unkindness of their brother Edom,* who forced them to march round by the Arabah. Even so very many of our discouragements and difficulties arise from the unkindness, the opposition, even the hostility in religious matters, of those who are most nearly related to or most closely connected with us. Often they seem to hold the passes through which lies our way to rest, and they deliberately block them against us.

II. THE COMPLAINING IN WHICH THEIR DISCOURAGEMENT FOUND VENT. Consider—1. *That they complained of Moses and of God instead of reproaching themselves, as*

they should have done. Even so when we are suffering, as we must expect sometimes to suffer, from religious depression and discouragement we are in great danger of murmuring against God and of complaining of our lot. If it were, as it ought to be,

"our *chief* complaint
That our love is weak and faint,"

we should soon cease to have cause to complain. 2. *That they spoke contemptuously of the manna.* Even so are we tempted at times of weariness to think slightingly and ungratefully of the spiritual food which God has provided for us, as though it not only palled upon us by reason of sameness, but failed to satisfy us by reason of its unsubstantial character. We demand something more coarse, more exciting.

III. THE DESTRUCTION IN WHICH THEIR SINFUL MURMURING INVOLVED THEM. Consider—1. *That fiery serpents came among them.* Even so it is when men lose heart and faith, and complain of their lot (*i. e.* of God's providence), and contemn their religious privileges, that they are especially in danger of falling a prey to deadly sins which war against the soul. A heart discouraged and an angry mind are Satan's grand opportunities, for they mean God alienated and his grace forfeited. 2. *That the serpents bit them, and their bite was fatal,* for much people died. Even so do sins—not mere sin in the abstract, but definite and particular sins—fasten upon unhappy souls and instil a poison into them which works death; for the life of the soul is union with God, and this union is broken up by the action of sin upon the soul, so that it *must* die if the poison be not cast out. And many do die, as we see.

IV. THE SALVATION WHICH GOD PROVIDED. Consider—1. *That the perishing people cried to Moses to pray for them,* for he was their mediator. Even so the cries of men yearning to be delivered from their sins, and from the death which follows sin, have always reached the Father through the intercession of the one Mediator, even though they knew him not. 2. *That a "saraph" was ordained to heal the deadly bites of the "seraphim."* Even so our Lord was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, —of that sinful flesh in which the deadly poison of sin existed,—and took that very form which in every other case was full of sin (Rom. viii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 22—24). 3. *That Moses made the serpent of brass in order to resemble the fiery serpents in appearance.* Even so our Lord was so thoroughly human, and in the eyes of men so like to sinners, that he was freely suspected, loudly accused, and finally condemned as a sinner. 4. *That the brazen serpent, however much a saraph in form and colour, had no poison in it.* Even so our Lord, though truly and perfectly human, was without sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth. 5. *That the brazen serpent was lifted up upon a standard;* no doubt in order that all eyes might be drawn to the "symbol of salvation." Even so our Lord was lifted up upon the cross, which is an ensign unto the nations, the standard of the Lord's host, and the sign (*signum*—σήμειον) of the Son of man; and he was lifted up to draw all men unto him by the startling character and persuasive attraction of that elevation. 6. *That whoever looked at the brazen serpent was healed of the bite of the serpent.* Even so every one that beholdeth Christ crucified with the eye of faith is healed of the deadly wound inflicted upon him by the old serpent, and "hath everlasting life." Moreover, as they died of the bite of some particular serpent, and were healed of *that* bite, so do we suffer from the effects of some particular sin or sins, and from these —their power and poison—we must be and may be healed. Christ is evidently set forth before us crucified that we may be saved from our besetting sin, whatever it may be; and it is to that end that we must look to him. 7. *That everybody within sight of the standard might have been healed, but only those who looked were healed.* Even so there is in the cross of Christ healing full and free for all sinners to whom the knowledge of the cross may come, but as a fact only those are healed who fix upon the Saviour the gaze of faith. 8. *That it was not the "symbol of salvation," but the power and goodness of God acting through it, which saved the people.* Even so it is not anything formal or material in the sacrifice of Calvary, neither is it any definitions or dogmas about that sacrifice, but it is the saving grace of God in Christ and in him crucified, which delivers from the terror and virus of sin. Notice further—(1) *That it does not say that those who beheld the serpent were relieved of all*

pain and suffering from their bites, only that they "lived." Even so those who are saved through faith in Christ crucified are not therefore saved from the sad and bitter consequences of their sins in this world, but the promise is they shall "not perish, but have everlasting life." (2) *That it does not say that the serpents were taken away,* as it does in the case of the plagues of Egypt. They may have continued to infest the camp as long as they travelled through that region, and the brazen serpent may have been daily lifted up. Even so the Divine remedy appointed for sin has not taken away sin out of the world. Sins will beset us still and war against our souls, and as long as we journey through this wilderness we shall need to look for healing to the cross (1 John i. 10; ii. 1).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4.—*The discouragements of the way.* The circumstances of the Israelites suggest some of the discouragements of Christian pilgrims. These may arise from—

I. THE DIRECTION OF THE WAY. It led away from Canaan; it was apparently a retreat. Our circumstances may seem to be drawing us further and further from God and heaven; but if we are in God's way it must lead right at last. Illustrate from Exod. xiii. 17, 18, and cf. Ps. xxv. 4, 5, 10.

II. THE LENGTH OF THE WAY. It might have been shorter, through Edom instead of round it; but it would have been a way of war, on which God's blessing would not have rested. The length avoided loss. Our short cuts may be perilous; *e. g.* David (1 Sam. xxvii. 1), Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 26—30).

III. THE ROUGHNESS OF THE WAY. Among rocky mountain defiles and treacherous foes. Portions of our pilgrimage are among the green pastures of peace; but others over hills of difficulty, intricate paths, and rugged mountain passes, and amidst powers of darkness that tempt us to despair. Illustrate Jeremiah in his trying and unpopular mission (Jer. xii. 5, 6; xv. 10—21).

IV. THE COMPANIONSHIPS OF THE WAY. Some of our comrades are complainers, and may infect us; others laggards, and tempt us to sloth; others apostates, who turn back and bring an evil report of the way beyond us (like Bunyan's Timorous and Mistrust). But God may be our companion to the end of the way (Ps. xlviii. 14; lxxiii. 24).

V. THE PROVISIONS OF THE WAY (ver. 5). This a discouragement of their own seeking, and most culpable. Applicable to those who are dissatisfied with the truth provided as spiritual food for the pilgrimage (its quality, or quantity, or the means of imparting it, as though God must be expected to satisfy every intellectual whim). Applicable also to those who distrust the providence and promises of God in regard to temporal supplies. Our only safe course is to "walk in" (Col. ii. 6) Christ, "the Way."—P.

Vers. 6—9.—*The brazen serpent as a type of Christ.* If this narrative was a bare record of facts, it would supply precious lessons respecting sin and salvation; but being one of the typical histories, applied by the Saviour to himself, it has in itself "no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory which excelleth." It was a type, not through the discernment of men, but by the preordination of God. Among the analogies the following may be suggested, from which such truths may be selected as will best further the object for which the subject is used in the pulpit. 1. The origin of the evil in the camp and in the world was the same sin. 2. The fiery serpents apt "ministers" (2 Cor. xi. 15) of "the old serpent," and so sufferings and death the natural work of Satan, who "was a murderer from the beginning," and who hath "the power of death" (Rom. vi. 23; Heb. ii. 14). 3. The devil could have no power to injure "except it were given him from above." "The Lord sent the serpents" (cf. Isa. xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6; 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20). 4. The helplessness of the sufferers the same. A new life needed in each case. But neither herbs, nor cordials, nor caustics, nor charms could expel the poison from the blood. And neither reformation, nor tears, nor services, nor ceremonies can avert the consequences of sin. 5. The remedy of Divine appointment. "*God* sent forth

his Son" (Rom. viii. 32; Gal. iv. 4, 5; cf. Wisdom xvi. 6, 7, 12). 6. In both cases a resemblance between the destroyer and the deliverer. The brazen serpent a deliverer in the likeness of the destroyer; Christ a Saviour in the likeness of the sinner (Rom. viii. 3). But the serpent was without venom, and Christ without sin. 7. Deliverance was provided not by words, but by deeds. The Son of man, like the serpent, lifted up. 8. In both cases a declaration of God's plan follows its appointment. Moses proclaimed to the camp the heaven-sent remedy, and "we preach Christ crucified." 9. An appropriation of God's offer required: "when he looketh," "whosoever believeth." Salvation limited to those who trust. 10. No obvious connection between the means and the result. The serpent and the cross "foolishness" to the scoffer. 11. Saving faith impossible without "godly sorrow working repentance" (cf. ver. 7; Acts xx. 21; 1 John i. 9). 12. The offer of salvation made to all, and the effect of faith alike in all. Cf. ver. 9 and the world-embracing "whosoever."—P.

Vers. 4, 5.—*A hard bit of the road.* "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."

I. THE ACTUAL REASON FOR DISCOURAGEMENT. Discouragement and trouble of mind because of the difficulties of life is of course very common, but a great deal depends on where the difficulties come from. Here we are plainly told the discouragement arose *because of the way.* 1. *It appears to have been a bad bit of the road in itself.* None of the way over which the Israelites had travelled since they left Egypt could be called easy. They had begun with a strange experience, marching through the depths of the sea, and ever since they had wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. For forty years they had been accustomed to wilderness life, but the district through which they were now passing is, by the description of travellers, desolate and repellent in an extraordinary degree. So the course of the Christian, all the way through, is subject to external difficulties and hardships, and the more faithful he is, the more these may abound, and at certain stages they may be so increased and intensified as to become well nigh intolerable. Discouraged by different things at different times, there may come a time to us, as to Israel, when we shall be especially discouraged *because of the way.* 2. *It came as a sort of rebuff after God had given them special encouragement.* For forty years they had been under chastisement, a doomed, dying, hopeless generation, but recently God had brought them back to Kadesh, and made the dry, forbidding rock to pour forth plenteously for the thirst of man and beast. Man is easily lifted up by anything that satisfies his senses, and gives him a visible support, and when it subsides he is correspondingly depressed. The desolate district through which the people passed probably looked all the worse because of the hopes which had been excited in them at Meribah. 3. *It was particularly vexatious because they had been turned out of a more direct way.* They were *compassing* the land of Edom, because brother Edom, of whom Israel expected kinder things, had closed the way *through* his land with a drawn sword. Even though the road had been pleasanter in itself, the very fact that it was circuitous was enough to cause some annoyance.

II. THIS ACTUAL REASON WAS NOT SUFFICIENT. It was natural enough, to some extent excusable, but not a reason worthy of the people of God. 1. *It pointed to purely external difficulties.* It was by no fault of Israel that it found itself in this cheerless and starving place. Canaan was not a land easy to get into, and the Israelites had been shut up to this road, difficult as it was. We dishonour God greatly when we are discouraged by difficulties rising entirely outside of ourselves. The less of help and comfort we can discern with the eyes of sense, the more we should discern those unfailing comforts and resources which come through a childlike dependence upon God. The Israelites wanted a Habakkuk among them to say, "Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." 2. *There was a negligent and ungrateful omission to consider reasons for encouragement.* Even if the way was hard, it was a mercy there was a way at all. The way through Edom, direct and easy as it looked,

might have proved both tedious and perilous in the end. God knows the way of the righteous, even when the righteous himself scarcely knows it. Bad as the way was, it is called the way of the Red Sea, and the very sight of those memorable waters should have brought to mind, and kept in mind, an unparalleled instance of God's guiding and delivering power. 3. *The discouragement because of the way prevented other and weightier reasons for discouragement from being felt.* The state of the heart within should have caused far more depression and anxiety than the state of the world without. We know the people themselves were in a bad state of heart, for the words of murmuring prove it. Whatever hopes the gushing waters of Meribah had raised were carnal, and found no sympathy with God. There are two states of heart on which we may be sure he looks with approval. (1) When his people, in spite of the way, surrounded by poverty, sickness, and all the circumstances of a cold, unsympathetic world, are nevertheless courageous, trustful, grateful, cheerful. (2) When his people, with everything in their circumstances pleasant and attractive, are nevertheless utterly cast down because of the proofs they daily get of the power of inbred sin. To trust *God*, in spite of the badness of the way, and to distrust and abhor *self*, in spite of the comforts of the way—be it our care to attain and preserve these states of mind as long as they are needed.

Robert Hall has a sermon on ver. 4.—Y.

Vers. 6—9.—*Destruction and salvation through the serpent.* Each time the people break into open sin there is something new in the treatment of them. Now God gives the fruition of their desires; they are surfeited with quails, and perish with the delicate morsels in their mouths (ch. xi.). Again he makes as if at one sudden, comprehensive blow he would sweep away the whole nation (ch. xiv. 12). Yet again we read of the fifteen thousand who perished in different ways at the gainsaying of Korah (ch. xvi.). Then there is a complete change of treatment, and though the people murmured bitterly at Meribah, God is gracious to *them*, and visits *Moses* and *Aaron* in wrath. Thus we advance to consider this present outbreak of sin, which is treated in a novel and very peculiar way, and one very profitable indeed to consider.

I. DESTRUCTION THROUGH THE SERPENT. 1. It was *through* the serpent. *The Lord* sent the fiery serpents. It is said that the district abounds in serpents which would be well described by the word *fiery*. But the Israelites were not allowed to consider the serpents as one of the perils of the district, into which they had fallen by some kind of chance. *The Lord sent the serpents.* Because the people ceased to trust in him, he delivered them to one of the dangers of the way (Deut. xxxii. 24; Job xxvi. 13; Jer. viii. 17; Amos ix. 3). 2. *The serpent rather than another mode of destruction was chosen.* God in his wrath does not take the first weapon that comes to hand. If destruction, simply and only destruction, had been in view, doubtless there were other deadly creatures in the wilderness which might have served the purpose. But it is not enough for the people to die; the *way* in which they die is also significant. Their thoughts are turned back to the very beginning and fountain of human troubles, to Eden before it was lost, and to the serpent who led our first parents into the ways of sin and death. As the serpent had to do with bringing sin into the world, so he is shown as having to do with the punishment of it. 3. *The destruction is represented as being in many cases complete.* "Much people of Israel died." Probably some of the few aged still surviving and doomed to die in the wilderness (ch. xiv. 29) perished thus, confirmed in their rebellious spirit beyond remedy. Many of those bitten by a serpent toss awhile in pain, looking vaguely for a remedy, but, being ignorant of the original cause of their suffering, and not understanding that *God* has sent the serpent, they do not find the remedy, and then they die. 4. *But in other cases the destruction is incomplete.* The bite of the serpent, with its effects, sets before us that gnawing consciousness of misery which comes to so many, and which no art of man can conjure away. *Why were some bitten and others not?* He who can answer that question can answer another—why some can go through life light-hearted, never having the weight of a wasted life on their consciences, never made miserable by anything save physical pain or disappointed selfishness, and happy at once if the pain and disappointment cease;

while others so soon have the serpent poisoning their consciousness and filling them with a deep sense of the failure, sadness, and misery of natural human life. There are some who seem to have triple armour against the serpent-bite. Of the bitten ones, many had been no worse in their unbelief than some who remained unbitten. It is part of the mystery of life that it is not the worst man who is obviously in all cases the suffering one. Then of those who were bitten, *some went on to death, others sought if there might be some means of deliverance.* Many would give themselves up to fatalism and despair. Many do so still. The question for the miserable in conscience is, "Will you go on allowing the misery of the serpent-bite to eat out all that is salvable in you, or will you do as some of Israel wisely and promptly did in their sore distress, namely, turn to God? Only he who sent the serpents can take the venom of their bite away.

II. SALVATION THROUGH THE SERPENT. 1. *The cry for salvation contained in ver.* 7. There is a show of repentance here, but *we must not make too much of it.* The people had talked in the same humble fashion before, saying they had sinned, yet soon showing that they did not understand what sin was (ch. xiv. 40); though perhaps the expression in ver. 5 should be particularly noted—"the people spake against God." Hitherto their wrath had been vented on the visible Moses and Aaron. It is something that even in their murmurings they at last seem distinctly to recognise God as having a hand in the disposition of their course. And so now they put in the confession, "We have spoken against the Lord." This may have had more to do with the peculiar way in which God treated them than at first appears. Whether their repentance is good for anything will be seen if they bring forth such fruit of repentance as they will presently have the opportunity of manifesting. Note also *the connection of the healing with the request of the people.* If they had gone on in silent endurance they might all in course of time have died. Their confession of sin told the truth, whether they felt all that truth or not. The serpent-bite was connected *with their sin.* Observe also their approach to God *through a mediator*, one whose services they had often proved, yet often slighted, in the past. They come to Moses for a greater service than they have yet any conception of. Thus we are encouraged to make Jesus the Mediator of spiritual salvation and blessing, by considering how often, while upon earth, he was the Mediator of salvation and blessing in earthly things. The God who is infinite in power and unfailing in love, and who gave through Jesus the *lesser blessings to some*, waits also to give through Jesus the *greater blessings to all.* 2. As the destruction was *through* the serpent, so the salvation also. *God* sent the fiery serpents, and also the serpent of brass. There was nothing in it to save if Moses had made it as Aaron made the golden calf. It had not the efficacy of some natural balm. A bit of brass it was to begin with, and to a bit of brass in the course of ages it returned (2 Kings xviii. 4). So Jesus expressly tells us that in all his gradual approach to the cross he was carrying out his Father's will. All the process by which he was prepared to be lifted up was a process appointed by the Father. It was his meat and drink, that which really and truly sustained him, and entered as it were into his very existence, to do his Father's will and finish his work. When the brazen serpent was finished, fixed and lifted on the pole, this act found its antitype in that hour when Jesus said, "It is finished." All was finished then according to the pattern which God himself had indicated in the wilderness. 3. As destruction was through *a serpent*, salvation also was through *a serpent.* "He was made sin for us who knew no sin." Jesus was lifted on the cross amid the execration and contempt of well-nigh all Jerusalem. In its esteem he was worse than Barabbas. To judge by the way the people spoke and acted, the consummation of all villainies was gathered up in him. It was a great insult, and so considered in the first days of the gospel, to proclaim him of all persons as Saviour of men. And so when Moses lifted up the brazen serpent it may have been received indignantly by some. "Do you wish to mock us with the sight of our tormentor?" When we look at Jesus in his saving relation to us, we are brought closer than ever to our own sins, and indeed to the sin of the whole world. We see him, the sinless One, under a curse, as having died on the tree, manifestly under a curse, groaning forth as the Father's face passes into the shade, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Forsaken of God, the holy One, forsaken of unfaithful and terror-

stricken servants, hated by the world, we may well say that the semblance of the serpent sets him forth. 4. And yet it was *the semblance* only. By the way men treated him, he appeared to be judged as a destroyer and deceiver, but we know that in himself he was harmless. 5. *There is the prominence of the saving object.* The serpent was set upon a pole. We may suppose that it was as central and prominent an object as the tabernacle itself. It was to be placed where all could see, for there were many in the camp, and the bitten ones were everywhere around. And what Moses did for the brazen serpent, God himself, in the marvellous arrangements of the gospel, has done for *the crucified Jesus.* It is not apostles, evangelists, theologians who have pushed forward the doctrine of the cross; Jesus himself put it in the forefront in that very discourse which contains the deepest things of God concerning our salvation (John iii. 14). No one saw him rise from the dead; thousands saw him, or had the opportunity of seeing him, on the cross. We can no more keep the cross in obscurity than we can keep the sun from rising. 6. *The pure element of faith is brought in.* Contrast the mode of God's treatment here with that employed when Aaron with his smoking censer stood between the living and the dead (ch. xvi. 47). On that occasion nothing was asked from the people. Aaron with his censer was the means of sparing even the unconscious. The mercy then was the mercy of *sparing;* now through the serpent it is the mercy of *saving.* The serpent was of no use to those who did not look. A man may long be spared in unbelief, but in unbelief he cannot possibly be saved. It is a great advance from sparing to saving. Thus the faith required was put in sharp contrast with past unbelief, which had been so sadly conspicuous and ruinous, gaining its last triumph a little while before in the fall of Moses and Aaron (ch. xx. 12). The people were shut up to pure faith. If once in their great pain and peril they began to doubt how a brazen image of a serpent should save, then they were lost. If there had been anything in the image itself to save, there would have been no room for faith to work. If one serpent-bitten person had been healed without looking, that would have proved faith no necessity. But only those who looked were healed; all who looked were healed; and those who refused to look perished. Thus Jesus early began inviting a needy world to look to him with a spirit full of faith and expectation, and the more he seemed to a critical world incapable and presumptuous, the more he asked for faith. "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i. 21). 7. *The salvation depends on the disposition of the person to be saved.* Man fell with his eyes open and in spite of a solemn commandment and warning. And every man must be saved with his eyes open, turning himself intelligently, wholly, and gratefully towards the Saviour. There is everything to help the sinner if he will only turn. Some there might be in Israel who seemed too far gone even to turn their eyes, but doubtless God recognised the genuine turning of the heart. Though the eyes of sense beheld not the serpent, the eyes of the heart beheld, and this was enough for healing. It was very helpful to be assured that there was one mode of healing, and only one, for only one was needed. It is only while we are cleaving to our sins that we find distraction and perplexity. There was distraction, anxiety, and fear in abundance as long as the Israelite lived in momentary terror of the fatal bite; but with the lifted serpent there came not only healing, but composure. God in sending his Son has not distracted us by a complication of possible modes of salvation.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE END OF JOURNEYS, THE BEGINNING OF VICTORIES (ver. 10—ch. xxii. 1). Ver. 10.—**The children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Oboth.** In the list of ch. xxxiii. there occur two other stations, Zalmonah and Phunon, between Mount Hor and Oboth. Phunon may be the Pinon of Gen. xxxvi. 41, but it is a mere conjecture. All we can conclude with any certainty is that the Israelites passed round the southern end of the mountains of Edom by the Wady el Ithm, and then marched northwards along the eastern border of Edom by the route now followed between Mekka and Damascus. On this side the mountains are far less precipitous and defensible than on

the other, and this circumstance must have abated the insolence of the Edomites. Moreover, they must now have seen enough of Israel to know that, while immensely formidable in number and discipline, he had no hostile designs against them. It is therefore not surprising to find from Deut. ii. 6 that on this side the mountaineers supplied Israel with bread and water, just as they supply the pilgrim caravans at the present day. That they exacted payment for what they supplied was perfectly reasonable: no one could expect a poor people to feed a nation of two million souls, however nearly related, for nothing. Oboth has been identified with the modern halting-place of el-Ahsa, on the pilgrim route above mentioned, on the ground of supposed similarity in the meaning of the names; but the true rendering of Oboth is doubtful (see on Levit. xix. 31), and, apart from that, any such similarity of meaning is too vague and slight a ground for any argument to be built upon.

Ver. 11.—**And pitched at Ije-abarim.** Ije (עִיֵּי), or Ijm (עִיִּים), as it is called in ch. xxxiii. 45, signifies "heaps" or "ruins." Abarim is a word of somewhat doubtful meaning, best rendered "ridges" or "ranges." It was apparently applied to the whole of Peræa in later times (cf. Jer. xxii. 20, "passages"), but in the Pentateuch is confined elsewhere to the ranges facing Jericho. These "ruinous heaps of the ranges" lay to the east of Moab, along the desert side of which Israel was now marching, still going northwards: they cannot be identified.

Ver. 12.—**Pitched in the valley of Zared.** Rather, "in the brook of Zered." נַחַל זָרֶד. Perhaps the upper part of the Wady Kerek, which flows westwards into the Salt Sea (see on Deut. ii. 13).

Ver. 13.—**Pitched on the other side of Arnon.** The Arnon was without doubt the stream or torrent now known as the Wady Môjeb, which breaks its way down to the Salt Sea through a precipitous ravine. It must have been in the upper part of its course, in the desert uplands, that the Israelites crossed it; and this both because the passage lower down is extremely difficult, and also because they were keeping well to the eastward of Moabitish territory up to this point. It is not certain which side of the stream is intended by "the other side," because the force of these expressions depends as often upon the point of view of the writer as of the reader. It would appear from Deut. ii. 26 that Israel remained at this spot until the embassage to Sihon had returned. **That cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites,** *i. e.* the Arnon, or perhaps one of its confluents which comes down from the north-east. **For Arnon is the border of Moab.** It was at that time the boundary (see on ver. 26).

Ver. 14.—**Wherefore,** *i. e.* because the Amorites had wrested from Moab all to the north of Arnon. **In the book of the wars of the Lord.** Nothing is known of this book but what appears here. If it should seem strange that a book of this description should be already in existence, we must remember that amongst the multitude of Israel there must in the nature of things have been some "poets" in the then acceptation of the word. Some songs there must have been, and those songs would be mainly inspired by the excitement and triumph of the final marches. The first flush of a new national life achieving its first victories over the national foe always finds expression in songs and odes. It is abundantly evident from the foregoing narrative that writing of some sort was in common use at least among the leaders of Israel (see on ch. xi. 26), and they would not have thought it beneath them to collect these spontaneous effusions of a nation just awaking to the poetry of its own existence. The archaic character of the fragments preserved in this chapter, which makes them sound so foreign to our ears, is a strong testimony to their genuineness. It is hardly credible that any one of a later generation should have cared either to compose or to quote snatches of song which, like dried flowers, have lost everything but scientific value in being detached from the soil which gave them birth. **What he did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon.** Rather, "Vaheb in whirlwind, and the brooks of Arnon." The strophe as cited here has neither nominative nor verb, and the sense can only be conjecturally restored. וָהֵב is almost certainly a proper name, although of an unknown place. סוּפָה is also considered by many as the name of a locality "in Suphah;" it occurs, however, in Nahum i. 3 in the sense given above, and indeed it is not at all a rare word in Job, Proverbs, and the Prophets; it seems best, therefore, to give it the same meaning here.

Ver. 15.—**And at the stream of the brooks.** Rather, "and the pouring (וְאַשֻּׁר) of the brooks," *i. e.* the slope of the watershed. **Ar.** עָר is an archaic form of עִיר, a city. The same place is called Ar Moab in ver. 28. It was situate on the Arnon somewhat lower down than where the Israelites crossed its "brooks." The peculiarity of the site, "in the midst of the river" (Josh. xiii. 9, cf. Deut. ii. 36), and extensive ruins, have enabled travellers to identify the spot on which it stood at the junction of the Môjeb (Arnon) and Lejum (Nahaliel, ver. 19). It is uncertain whether the Greeks gave the name of Areopolis, as Jerome asserts, to Ar,

but in later times it was Rabbah, a town many miles further south in the heart of Moab which bore this name. Ar was at this period the boundary town of Moab, and as such was respected by the Israelites (Deut. ii. 9, 29).

Ver. 16.—**And from thence . . . to Beer.** A well; so named, no doubt, from the circumstance here recorded. That they were told to dig for water instead of receiving it from the rock showed the end to be at hand, and the transition shortly to be made from miraculous to natural supplies.

Ver. 17.—**Then Israel sang this song.** This song of the well may be taken from the same collection of odes, but more probably is quoted from memory. It is remarkable for the spirit of joyousness which breathes in it, so different from the complaining, desponding tone of the past.

Ver. 18.—**By the direction of the lawgiver.** בְּמְחֹקֵק. Literally, "by the lawgiver," or, as some prefer, "with the sceptre." The meaning of *michokek* is disputed (see on Gen. xlix. 10), but in either case the meaning must be practically as in the A. V. It speaks of the alacrity with which the leaders of Israel, Moses himself amongst them, began the work even with the insignia of their office. **And from the wilderness . . . to Mattanah.** Beer was still in the desert country eastward of the cultivated belt: from thence they crossed, still on the north of Arnon, and probably leaving it somewhat to the south, into a more settled country.

Ver. 19.—**And from Mattanah to Nahaliel.** The latter name, which means "the brook of God," seems to be still retained by the Encheileh, one of the northern affluents of the Wady Môjeb. **From Nahaliel to Bamoth.** Bamoth simply means "heights" or "high places," and was therefore a frequent name. This Bamoth may be the same as the Bamoth-Baal of ch. xxii. 41; Josh. xiii. 17, but it is uncertain. A Beth-Bamoth is mentioned on the Moabite stone.

Ver. 20.—**And from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah.** The original runs simply thus: "And from Bamoth—the valley which in the field—Moab—the top—Pisgah." It may therefore be read, "And from the heights to the valley that is in the field of Moab, viz., the top of Pisgah." The "field" of Moab (Septuagint, ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ) was no doubt the open, treeless expanse north of Arnon, drained by the Wady Waleh, which had formerly belonged to Moab. Pisgah ("the ridge") was a part of the Abarim ranges west of Heshbon, from the summit of which the first view is gained of the valley of Jordan and the hills of Palestine (cf. ch. xxxiii. 47; Deut. iii. 27; xxxiv. 1). **Which looketh toward Jeshimon.** Jeshimon, or "the waste," seems to mean here that desert plain on the north-east side of the Salt Sea now called the Ghor el Belka, which included in its barren desolation the southernmost portion of the Jordan valley.

Ver. 21.—**And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon.** The narrative here returns to the point of time when the Israelites first reached the Upper Arnon, the boundary stream of the kingdom of Sihon (see on ver. 13, and cf. Deut. ii. 24—37). The list of stations in the preceding verses may probably have been copied out of some official record; it may be considered as marking the movements of the tabernacle with Eleazar and the Levites and the mass of the non-combatant population. In the mean time the armies of Israel were engaged in victorious enterprises which took them far afield. **King of the Amorites.** The Amorites were not akin to the Hebrews, as the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites were, who all claimed descent from Terah. They were of the Canaanitish stock (Gen. x. 16), and indeed the name Amorite often appears as synonymous with Canaanite in its larger sense (Deut. i. 7, 19, 27, &c.). If at one time they are mentioned side by side with five or six other tribes of the same stock (Exod. xxxiv. 11), yet at another they seem to be so much the representative race that "the Amorite" stands for the inhabitants of Canaan in general whom Israel was commissioned to oust on account of his iniquity (Gen. xv. 16). It is not, therefore, possible to draw any certain distinction between the Amorites of Sihon's kingdom and the mass of the Canaanites on the other side Jordan. Both Sihon and his people appear as intruders in this region having come down perhaps from the northern parts of Palestine, and having but recently (it would seem) wrested from the king of Moab all his territory north of Arnon. It was the fact of the Amorites being found here which led to the conquest and settlement of the trans-Jordanic territory. That territory was not apparently included in the original gift (compare ch. xxxiv. 2—12 with Gen. x. 19 and xv. 19—21), but since the Amorite had possessed himself of it, it must pass with all the rest of his habitation to the chosen people.

Ver. 22.—**Let me pass through thy land.** Cf. ch. xx. 17. Israel was not commanded to spare the Amorites, indeed he was under orders to smite them (Deut. ii. 24), but that did not prevent his approaching them in the first instance with words of peace. If Sihon had hearkened, no doubt Israel would have passed directly on to Jordan, and he would at least have been spared for the present.

Ver. 23.—**And he came to Jahaz, or** Jahzah, a place of which we know nothing.

Ver. 24.—**And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword.** This was the first time that generation had seen war, if we except the uncertain episode of the king of Arad, and they could have had no weapons but such as their fathers had brought out of Egypt. It was, therefore, a critical moment in their history when they met the forces of Sihon, confident from their recent victory over Moab. We may suppose that Joshua was their military leader now, as before and after. **From Arnon unto Jabbok.** The Jabbok, which formed the boundary of Sihon on the north towards the kingdom of Og, and on the east towards the Ammonites, is the modern Zerka: it runs in a large curve north-east, north-west, and west, until it falls into Jordan, forty-five miles north of the mouth of the Arnon. **Even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.** This is perhaps intended to explain rather why the Amorites had not extended their conquests any further, than why the Israelites made no attempt to cross the border of Ammon; they had another and more sufficient reason (see Deut. ii. 19). Rabbah of Ammon, which stood upon the right (here the eastern) bank of the Upper Jabbok, was an extremely strong place which effectually protected the country behind it, even until the reign of David (see on 2 Sam. xi., xii.).

Ver. 25.—**And Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites.** The territory overrun at this time was about fifty miles north and south, by nearly thirty east and west. It was not permanently occupied until a somewhat later period (ch. xxxii. 33); but we may suppose that the flocks and herds, with sufficient forces to guard them, spread themselves at once over the broad pasture lands. **Heshbon, and all the villages thereof.** Literally, "the daughters thereof." By a similar figure we speak of a "mother city." Heshbon occupied a central position in the kingdom of Sihon, half way between Arnon and Jabbok, and about eighteen miles eastward of the point where Jordan falls into the Salt Lake; it stood on a table-land nearly 3000 feet above the sea, and had been made his city (*i. e.* his capital) by Sihon at the time of his victories over Moab.

Ver. 26.—**All his land.** This is qualified by what follows: "even unto Arnon" (cf. Judges xi. 13—19).

Ver. 27.—**They that speak in proverbs.** הַמֹּשְׁלִים. Septuagint, *οἱ αἰνιγματισταί*. A class of persons well marked among the Hebrews, as perhaps in all ancient countries. It was their gift, and almost their profession, to express in the sententious, antistrophic poetry of the age such thoughts or such facts as took hold of men's minds. At a time when there was little difference between poetry and rhetoric, and when the distinction was hardly drawn between the inventive faculty of man, and the Divine afflatus, it is not surprising to find the word *mashal* applied to the rhapsody of Balaam (ch. xxiii. 7), to the "taunting song" of Isaiah (xiv. 4), to the "riddle" of Ezekiel (xvii. 2), as well as to the collection of earthly and heavenly wisdom in the Book of Proverbs. That which follows is a taunting song, most like to the one cited from Isaiah, the archaic character of which is marked by its strongly antithetic form and abrupt transitions, as well as by the peculiarity of some of the words. **Come to Heshbon.** This may be ironically addressed to the Amorites, lately so victorious, now so overthrown; or, possibly, it may be intended to express the jubilation of the Amorites themselves in the day of their pride.

Ver. 28.—**There is a fire gone out of Heshbon.** This must refer to the war-fire which the Amorites kindled from Heshbon when they made it the capital of the new kingdom. Ar Moab and the (northern) heights of Arnon were the furthest points to which their victory extended.

Ver. 29.—**O people of Chemosh.** עַם־כְּמוֹשׁ. Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites (1 Kings xi. 7; Jer. xlviii. 7), and also to some extent of the Ammonites (Judges xi. 24). It is generally agreed that the name is derived from the root כבשׁ, to subdue, and thus will have substantially the same meaning as Milcom, Molech, and Baal; indeed it appears probable that there was a strong family likeness among the idolatries of Palestine, and that the various names represented different attributes of one supreme being rather than different divinities. Thus Baal and Ashtaroth (Judg. ii. 13) represented for the Zidonians the masculine and feminine elements respectively in the Divine energy. Baal himself was plural (Baalim, 1 Kings xviii. 18) in form, and either male or female (ἡ βάαλ in Hosea ii. 8; Rom. xi. 4). In the inscription on the Moabite stone a god "Ashtar-Chemosh" is mentioned, and thus Chemosh is identified with the male deity of Phœnicia (Ashtar being the masculine form of Ashtoreth), while, on the other hand, it was almost certainly the same divinity who was worshipped under another name, and with other rites, as Baal-Peor (see on ch. xxv. 3). On the coins of Areopolis Chemosh appears as a god of war armed, with fire-torches by his side. Human sacrifices were offered to him (2 Kings iii. 26, 27), as to Baal and to Moloch. **He hath given his sons,** *i. e.* Chemosh, who could not save his own votaries, nor the children of his people.

Ver. 30.—**We have shot at them.** וְנִיָּרֵם. A poetical word of somewhat doubtful meaning. It is generally supposed to be a verbal form (first person plural imperf. Kal), from יָרָה, with an unusual suffix (cf. יִלְבָּשֵׁם for יִלְבָּשָׁם in Exod. xxix. 30). יָרָה has the primary meaning "to shoot at," the secondary, "to overthrow," as in Exod. xv. 4. Others, however, derive the word from אָרָה, a root supposed to mean "burn." **Even unto Dibon.** See on ch. xxxii. 34. The site of Nophah, perhaps the Nobah of Judges viii. 11, is unknown. **Which reacheth unto Medeba.** The reading is uncertain here as well as the meaning. The received text has אֲשֶׁר עַד־מֵידְבָא, which gives no meaning, but the circle over the *resh* marks it as suspicious. The Septuagint (πῦρ ἐπὶ Μωάβ) and the Samaritan evidently read אֵשׁ, and this has been generally followed: "we have wasted oven unto Nophah,—with fire unto Medeba." Medeba, of which the ruins are still known by the same name, lay five or six miles south-south-east of Heshbon. It was a fortress in the time of David (1 Chron. xix. 7) and of Omri, as appears from the Moabite stone.

Ver. 32.—**Jaazer.** Perhaps the present es-Szîr, some way to the north of Heshbon (see on Jer. xlviii. 32). This victory completed the conquest of Sihon's kingdom.

Ver. 33.—**They turned and went up by the way of Bashan.** The brevity of the narrative does not allow us to know who went upon this expedition, or why they went. It may have been only the detachment which had reconnoitred and taken Jaazer, and they may have found themselves threatened by the forces of Og, and so led on to further conquests beyond the Jabbok. **Og the king of Bashan.** Og was himself of the aboriginal giant race which had left so many remnants, or at least so many memories, in these regions (see on Deut. ii. 10—12, 20—23; Josh. xii. 4; xiii. 12); but he is classed with Sihon as a king of the Amorites (Josh. ii. 10) because his people were chiefly at least of that race. Bashan itself comprised the plain now known as Jaulan and Haulan beyond the Jarmuk (now Mandhur), the largest affluent of the Jordan, which joins it a few miles below the lake of Tiberias. The kingdom of Og, however, extended over the northern and larger part of Gilead, a much more fertile territory than Bashan proper (see on Deut. iii. 1—17). **At Edrei.** Probably the modern Edhra'ah, or Der'a, situate on a branch of the Jarmuk, some twenty-four miles from Bozrah. The ancient city lies buried beneath the modern village, and was built, like the other cities of Bashan, in the most massive style of architecture. The cities of Og were so strong that the Israelites could not have dispossessed him by any might of their own if he had abode behind his walls. Either confidence in his warlike prowess or some more mysterious cause (see on Josh. xxiv. 12) impelled him to leave his fortifications, and give battle to the Israelites to his own utter defeat.

Ver. 34.—**Fear him not.** He might well have been formidable, not only on account of his size (cf. Deut. i. 28; iii. 11; 1 Sam. xvii. 11), but from the formidable nature of those walled cities which are still a wonder to all that see them.

Ver. 35.—**So they smote him.** Acting under the direct commands of God, they exterminated the Amorites of the northern as they had of the southern kingdom.

Ch. xxii. 1.—**And the children of Israel set forward.** Not necessarily after the defeats of Sihon and Og; it is quite as likely that this last journey was made while the armies were away on their northern conquests. **And pitched in the plains of Moab.** The Arboth Moab, or steppes of Moab, were those portions of the Jordan valley which had belonged to Moab perhaps as far north as the Jabbok. In this sultry depression, below the level of the sea, there are tracts of fertile and well-watered land amidst prevailing barrenness (see on ch. xxxiii. 49). **On this side Jordan by Jericho.** Rather, "beyond the Jordan of Jericho," לְיַרְדֵּן יְרֵחוֹ מִעֵבֶר. On the phrase, "beyond the Jordan" ("Perœa"), which is used indifferently of both sides, the one by a conventional, the other by a natural, use, see on Deut. i. 1. The Jordan of Jericho is the river in that part of its course where it flows past the district of Jericho.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 10—ch. xxii. 1.—*Progress and triumph.* In this passage, which has a very distinctive character, we have, spiritually, the rapid progress of the soul towards rest, and the first great triumphs given to it over its spiritual foes, after that, by the power of the cross through faith in him that was lifted up, the soul has been delivered from the deadly venom of the sins which did beset it. There is a time when the soul hangs between death and life; there is a time when, this crisis past, it speeds onward with unexpected ease and victory towards its goal in the full

assurance (πληροφορία, as under full sail) of faith. Consider, therefore, with respect to *these last journeys*—

I. THAT AFTER THE LIFTING UP OF THE BRAZEN SERPENT THE PROGRESS OF ISRAEL WAS SURPRISINGLY RAPID AND UNINTERRUPTED; most markedly so if compared with the tedious turnings and returnings of the time before. This journey from Mount Hor to Pisgah occupied at most five months, as compared with the thirty-nine and a half years wasted theretofore. Even so it is with the progress of the soul towards the heavenly rest. Until Christ has been lifted up, and the poison of sin overcome through the stedfast gaze of faith in him, there can be no real progress, only a drifting to and fro in the wilderness. But after that, no matter how difficult the road, or how many the foes, the soul goes forward swift and unhindered to the haven where it would be.

II. THAT AFTER THE BRAZEN SERPENT WE HEAR OF NO MORE COMPLAININGS OR REBELLIONS, BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, WE CATCH THE ECHOES OF A GLAD ALACRITY AND OF A CHEERFUL COURAGE. Even so the soul that has not mastered the lesson nor known the healing of the cross is always unhappy, sure to complain, and ready to despair; but when this is past it is of another spirit, joyful through hope, patient through faith, obedient through love.

III. THAT AS THE JOURNEY DREW TO AN END ISRAEL WAS ENCOURAGED TO USE HIS OWN EFFORTS TO SUPPLY HIS NEEDS. He bought bread and water of the Edomites, and dug for water at Beer, and probably helped himself to some extent to the provisions of the conquered Amorites. Even so the soul which is trained by grace for glory is encouraged more and more to co-operate with grace and to "work out its own salvation" not because it can do without supernatural grace, but because God is pleased to give his grace according to its efforts.

IV. THAT THE FIRST SONG OF ISRAEL AFTER THE TRIUMPH OF THE EXODUS, FORTY YEARS BEFORE, WAS OVER THE DIGGING OF A WELL, by which God was to give them water. Even so our work of faith, and that labour which looks for blessing from God, is the only condition of gladness and of spiritual songs. And note that this labour was shared by all, the very nobles beginning the work with their staves of office. Thus it is labour in a good cause which unites us all, and it is the union of all that promotes a glad alacrity.

Consider again, with respect to *these first victories*—

I. THAT THE CONQUESTS BEYOND JORDAN WERE NOT PART, SO TO SPEAK, OF GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN FOR ISRAEL. If Moab had been still in possession to the south of Jabbok, and Ammon to the north, then Israel would have passed straight through and over Jordan; it was the fact of Sihon having extruded the Moabites which led to these conquests of Israel. Even so it is often the case that the triumphs of Christian principle and Christian faith are forced upon us, as it were, by the action, and the evil action, of others, under the providence of God. The soul that would pass quietly on its way to heaven is driven to victories of faith great and lasting by the unexpected obstacles in its way.

II. THAT EVEN SIHON WAS APPROACHED WITH WORDS OF PEACE, IF HE WOULD HAVE HAD PEACE. Even so it becomes us to live peaceably with all men, even with the profane and accursed, if it be possible. He that forces on a conflict with evil men or evil passion, even if that conflict be indeed inevitable, may thereby forfeit the grace of God. Courtesy and forbearance before the encounter are the best pledges for courage and success in the encounter.

III. THAT SIHON, ALTHOUGH CONQUEROR OF MOAB, AND MUCH MORE FORMIDABLE THAN THE CANAANITES WHOM ISRAEL HAD FEARED AT KADESH, FELL EASILY BECAUSE ISRAEL FOUGHT IN FAITH. There is no adversary that can really offer any effectual opposition to our onward march if assailed in the strength of Christ with a cheerful courage.

IV. THAT OG THE KING OF BASHAN WAS MUCH MORE FORMIDABLE EVEN THAN SIHON, YET HE SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN YET MORE EASILY, judging from the brief notice of the conquest. Even so when once we have overcome a difficulty or conquered an evil habit in the strength of faith, other conquests open out before us readily and naturally which we should not have dared to contemplate before. It is most true in religion that "nothing succeeds like success."

V. THAT THE EASY OVERTHROW OF SIHON AND OG WAS PROVIDENTIALLY ORDERED BY GOD FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGING AND ANIMATING ISRAEL FOR THE GREAT WORK OF CONQUEST IN CANAAN PROPER (see Ps. CXXXVI. 17—22). Even so to the faithful soul that fears the great strife against sin, God is often pleased to give some anticipatory victories of singular moment in order to inspire it with a dauntless confidence in him.

VI. THAT WHEN ISRAEL REACHED CANAAN PROPER HE WAS ALREADY POSSESSED OF A LARGE AND VALUABLE TERRITORY, which God had enabled him to win by his own sword. Even so when the soul shall reach its heavenly rest it will not only enter into its reward, but it will, as it were, take a part of its reward with it, gained already on this side the river. Thus it is said of the dead that "their works do follow them;" and thus the apostles were bidden to bring of the fish which they had caught to add to that heavenly meal (John xxi. 9, 10). What we have achieved by the grace of God here will be part of our reward there.

Consider once more, with respect to the *well of Beer*—

I. THAT A WELL WAS A PERPETUAL SOURCE OF COMFORT AND CENTRE OF BLESSING; hence so many of the events of Scripture are connected with wells. Even so in the gospel there are wells of salvation (Isa. xii. 3), from which a man may draw with joy; nor only so, but he shall have a well of life in himself which shall never fail (John iv. 14; vii. 38).

II. THAT TO THIS WELL MOSES WAS TO GATHER THE PEOPLE; GOD WAS TO GIVE THEM WATER. Even so in the Church of God it is the part of human leaders to gather the people together, to direct their search, to combine their efforts; but it is the part of God, and of God only, to give the spiritual blessing and refreshment. So too, in another sense, Moses in the Pentateuch gathers the people to a well, a well full of Divine consolation and knowledge, and God will give them water if they seek in faith.

III. THAT ISRAEL SANG OVER THE WELL, OR RATHER OVER THE PLACE WHERE GOD PROMISED THEM WATER. Even so it is ours to sing and make melody in our hearts, and to encourage ourselves and others with spiritual songs, while we seek and labour for the sure mercies of God.

IV. THAT THE PRINCES AND NOBLES DIGGED THE WELL. Even so that God only gives spiritual blessings does not dispense with, but, on the contrary, requires and encourages, earnest effort on our part. In a settled and ordinary religious state the fountains of salvation must not be expected to gush in a moment from the rock, but must be dug for in wells. So too they that are most eminent in the Church of God must be foremost in labour for this purpose.

V. THAT THEY DUG BY THE DIRECTION OF THE LAWGIVER. If they had dug where fancy or even their own experience guided them, they had not found water. Even so when we seek the supply of grace and of the Spirit of God we must seek it by the direction of the one Lawgiver (Matt. vii. 29; James iv. 12), in implicit obedience to him.

VI. THAT THE NOBLES AND PRINCES DUG THE WELL WITH THEIR STAVES, the insignia of their office. Even so in the Church of God, if men will labour for the common good, it must be according to the station which God hath given them. If they have received authority, they must use authority; if they bear a commission, they must not be ashamed of it. It may be easier to act merely as one of the throng; it does not follow it is right.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 10—35.—*A period of unbroken progress.* The lifted serpent and the spirit of faith excited among the people produce not only the immediate and direct effect of healing; certain other encouraging effects are not obscurely indicated in the remainder of the chapter. The events recorded must have extended over some considerable time, and they took the Israelites into very trying circumstances, but there is not a word of failure, murmuring, or Divine displeasure. The narrative is

all the other way, and in this surely there must be some typical significance. Looking to the lifted serpent made a great difference. All things had become new; there was alacrity, success, gladness, hitherto lacking—a spirit and conduct altogether different. So Paul, speaking of those who are justified by faith, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, goes on to indicate for them a course of satisfaction and triumph, which is in things spiritual what the course of Israel, as recorded in the remainder of this chapter, was in things typical and temporal (Rom. v.).

I. THEY ADVANCE UP TO A CERTAIN POINT WITHOUT HINDRANCE OF ANY SORT. We hear nothing more of this difficult and depressing way which had troubled them so much. Nothing is spoken of as arresting their progress till they come to the top of Pisgah. God takes them right onward to the place where afterward he showed Moses the promised land, and the hindrance which comes there is *from outside themselves*. It is not the lusting and murmuring of the people that come in the way, nor is it a craven fear of the enemy, nor the ambition and envy of a Korah. It is the enemy himself who comes in the way, and of course he must be expected, and may be amply prepared for.

II. DURING THE ADVANCE THERE WAS MUCH SATISFACTION AND JOY. It was a *negative* blessing, and much to be thankful for, to have no murmurings and discords. It was a *positive* blessing, and even more to be thankful for, to take part in such a scene as that at Beer. How different from Marah, Rephidim, and Meribah, where God's mercy came amid complainings! from Meribah especially, where the mercy was accompanied with judgments on the leaders of the people. Here, unsolicited, God gives water; he makes the princes and nobles of the people his fellow-workers; and, above all, the voices so long used in murmuring now sounded forth the sweet song of praise. The Lord indeed put a new song in their mouth. There had been a sad want of music before. There had been loud rejoicings indeed at the Red Sea, but that was a long while ago. It was something new for the people to sing as they did here. Where there is saving faith in the heart, joy surely follows, and praise springs to the lip.

III. ISRAEL MAKES A COMPLETE CONQUEST OF THE FIRST ENEMY HE MEETS. Israel did not want Sihon to be an enemy. He offered to go through his land, as through Edom, a harmless and speedy traveller. If the world will block the way of the Church, it must suffer the inevitable consequence. Sihon, emboldened doubtless by the knowledge of Israel's turning away from Edom, presumed that he would prove an easy prey. But Sihon neither knew why Israel turned away nor how strong Israel now was. The people were no longer discouraged because of the way, though they were contending not against the adversities of nature, but against the united forces of Sihon struggling for the very existence of their land.

IV. THERE IS AN OCCUPATION OF THE ENEMY'S TERRITORY (vers. 25, 31). "Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites." There was thus an earnest of the rest and possession of Canaan, a foretaste of city and settled life that must have been very inspiring to people so long wandering, and having no dwelling more substantial than the tent.

V. THERE IS CONTINUED VICTORY. The second hindrance disappears after the first. Og, king of Bashan, last of the giants (Deut. iii. 11), fared no better for all his strength than Sihon. It was not some peculiar weakness of Sihon that overthrew him. All enemies of God, however different in resource they may appear when they measure themselves among themselves, are alike to those who march in the strength of God. The power by which the Christian conquers one foe will enable him to conquer all. And yet because Og did *look* more formidable than Sihon, God gave his people special encouragement in meeting him (ver. 34). God remembers that even the most faithful and ardent of his people cannot get entirely above the deceitfulness of outward appearances.

VI. THERE IS GREAT ENERGY IN DESTROYING WHAT IS EVIL. Israel asks and is refused a way through the land of brother Edom, and then quietly turns aside to seek another way. By and by he asks Sihon for a peaceful way through his land, and is again refused, whereupon he conquers and occupies the land. But Og did not wait to be asked, perhaps would not have been asked if he had waited. It was a case of

presumptuous opposition in spite of the warning fall of Sihon. And what made Og's opposition especially evil, *looked at typically*, was that he interposed the last barrier before reaching Jordan. Having conquered him, Israel was free to go right on and pitch "in the plains of Moab, on this side Jordan, by Jericho." Og, therefore, is the type of evil fighting desperately in its last stronghold. And similarly the destroying energy of Israel seems to show how utterly evil will be smitten by the believer, when he meets it even at the verge of Jordan. Thus we have a cheering record of unbroken progress from the time the people looked to the lifted serpent to the time when they entered on the plains of Moab.—Y.

PRELIMINARY NOTE TO CHAPTER XXII. 2—XXIV.

That this section of the Book of Numbers has a character to a great extent peculiar and isolated is evident upon the face of it. The arguments indeed derived from its language and style to prove that it is by a different hand from the rest of the Book are obviously too slight and doubtful to be of any weight; there does not seem to be any more diversity in this respect than the difference of subject matter would lead us to expect. The peculiarity, however, of this section is evident from the fact that these three chapters, confessedly so important and interesting in themselves, might be taken away without leaving any perceptible void. From ch. xxii. 1 the narrative is continued in ch. xxv., apparently without a break, and in that chapter there is no mention of Balaam. It is only in ch. xxxi. (vers. 8, 16) that two passing allusions are made to him: in the one his death is noted without comment; in the other we are made acquainted for the first time with a fact which throws a most important light upon his character and career, of which no hint is given in the section before us. Thus it is evident that the story of Balaam's coming and prophecies, although imbedded in the narrative (and that in the right place as to order of time), is not structurally connected with it, but forms an episode by itself. If we now take this section, which is thus isolated and self-contained, we shall not fail to see at once that its literary character is strikingly peculiar. It is to all intents and purposes a sacred drama wherein characters and events of the highest interest are handled with consummate art. No one can be insensible to this, whatever construction he may or may not put upon it. Probably the story of Balaam was never made the subject of a miracle play, because the character of the chief actor is too subtle for the crude intelligence of the age of miracle plays. But if the sacred drama were ever reintroduced, it is certain that no more effective play could be found than that of Balaam and Balak. The extraordinary skill with which the strangely complex character of the wizard prophet is drawn out; the felicity with which it is contrasted with the rude simplicity of Balak; the picturesque grandeur of the scenery and incident; and the art with which the story leads up by successive stages to the final and complete triumph of God and of Israel, are worthy, from a merely artistic point of view, of the greatest of dramatic poets.

There is no such minute drawing out of an isolated character by means of speech and incident to be found in the Old Testament, unless it be in the Book of Job, the dramatic form of which serves to give point to the comparison; but few would fail to see that the much more subtle character of Balaam is far more distinctly indicated than that of Job. Balaam is emphatically a "study," and must have been intended to be so. Yet it must be remembered that it is only to modern eyes that this part of the varied truth and wisdom of Holy Scripture has become manifest. To the Jew

Balaam was interesting only as a great foe, greatly baffled; as a sorcerer whose ghostly power and craft was broken and turned backward by the God of Israel (Deut. xxiii. 5; Josh. xiii. 22; xxiv. 10; Micah vi. 5). To the Christian of the first age he was only interesting as the Scriptural type of the subtlest and most dangerous kind of enemy whom the Church of God had to dread—the enemy who united spiritual pretensions with persuasions to vice (Rev. ii. 14). To the more critical intellects of later ages, such even as Augustine and Jerome, he was altogether a puzzle; the one regarding him as *prophetam diaboli*, whose religion was a mere cloak for covetousness; the other as *prophetam Dei*, whose fall was like unto the fall of the old prophet of Bethel. The two parallel allusions to his character in 2 Pet. ii. 15, 16; Jude 11 do not take us any further, merely turning upon the covetousness which was his most obvious fault. Unquestionably, however, Balaam is most interesting to us, not from any of these points of view, but as a study drawn by an inspired hand of a strangely but most naturally mixed character, the broad features of which are constantly being reproduced, in the same unhallowed union, in men of all lands and ages. This is undeniably one of the instances (not perhaps very numerous) in which the more trained and educated intelligence of modern days has a distinct advantage over the simpler faith and intenser piety of the first ages. The conflict, or rather the compromise, in Balaam between true religion and superstitious imposture, between an actual Divine inspiration and the practice of heathen sorceries, between devotion to God and devotion to money, was an unintelligible puzzle to men of old. To those who have grasped the character of a Louis XI., of a Luther, or of an Oliver Cromwell, or have gauged the mixture of highest and lowest in the religious movements of modern history, the wonder is, not that such an one should have been, but that such an one should have been so simply and yet so skilfully depicted.

Two questions arise pre-eminently out of the story of Balaam which our want of knowledge forbids us to answer otherwise than doubtfully.

I. Whence did Balaam derive his knowledge of the true God, and how far did it extend? Was he, as some have argued, a heathen sorcerer who took to invoking Jehovah because circumstances led him to believe that the cause of Jehovah was likely to be the winning cause? and did the God whom he invoked in this mercenary spirit (after the fashion of the sons of Sceva) take advantage of the fact to obtain an ascendancy over his mind, and to compel his unwilling obedience? Such an assumption seems at once unnatural and unnecessary. It is hardly conceivable that God should have bestowed a true prophetic gift upon one who stood in such a relation to him. Moreover, the kind of ascendancy which the word of God had over the mind of Balaam is not one which springs from calculation, or from a mere intellectual persuasion. The man who lives before us in these chapters has not only a considerable knowledge of, but a very large amount of faith in, the one true God; he walks with God; he sees him that is invisible; the presence of God, and God's direct concern about his doings are as familiar and unquestioned elements of his every-day life as they were of Abraham's. In a word (whatever difficulties a shallow theology may find in the fact), he has religious faith in God, a faith which is naturally strong, and has been further intensified by special revelations of the unseen; and this faith is the basis and condition of his prophetic gift. Balaam's religion, therefore, on this side was neither an hypocrisy nor an assumption; it was a real conviction which had grown up with him and formed part of his inner self. It is true that in Josh. xiii. 22 he is called a soothsayer (*kosem*), a name of reproach and

infamy among the Jews (cf. 1 Sam. xv. 23, "witchcraft;" Jer. xiv. 14, "divination"); but no one doubts that he played for gain the part of a soothsayer, employing with more or less of inward unbelief and contempt the arts of heathen sorcery; and it was quite natural that Joshua should recognise only the lower and more obvious side of his enemy's character.

It remains then to consider how Balaam, living in Mesopotamia, could have had so considerable a knowledge of the true God; and the only satisfactory answer is this, that such knowledge had never disappeared from that region. Every glimpse which is afforded us of the descendants of Nahor in their Mesopotamian home confirms the belief that they were substantially at one with the chosen family in religious feeling and religious speech. Bethuel and Laban acknowledged the same God, and called him by the same name as Isaac and Jacob (Gen. xxiv. 50; xxxi. 49). No doubt idolatrous practices prevailed in their household (Gen. xxxi. 19; xxxv. 2; Josh. xxiv. 2), but that, however dangerous, was not fatal to the existence of the true faith amongst them, any more than is the existence of a similar cultus amongst Christians. Centuries had indeed passed away since the days of Laban, and during those centuries we may well conclude that the common people had developed the idolatrous practices of their fathers, until they wholly obscured the worship of the one true God. But the lapse of years and the change of popular belief make little difference to the secret and higher teaching of countries like the Mesopotamia of that age, which is intensely conservative both for good and evil. Men like Balaam, who probably had an hereditary claim to his position as a seer, remained purely monotheistic in creed, and in their hearts called only upon the God of all the earth, the God of Abraham and of Nahor, of Melchizedec and of Job, of Laban and of Jacob. If we knew enough of the religious history of that land, it is possible that we might be able to point to a tolerably complete succession of gifted (in many cases Divinely-gifted) men, servants and worshippers of the one true God, down to the Magi who first hailed the rising of the bright and morning Star.

There is connected with this question another of much narrower interest which causes great perplexity. Balaam (and indeed Balak too) freely uses the sacred name by which God had revealed himself as the God of Israel (see on Exod. vi. 2, 3). There are two views of this matter, one or other of which is tolerably certain, and for both of which much may be said: either the sacred name was widely known and used beyond the limits of Israel, or else the sacred historian must have freely put it into the mouths of people who actually used some other name. There are also two views both of which may be summarily rejected, because their own advocates have reduced them to absolute absurdity: the one is, that the use of the two names Elohim and Jehovah shows a difference of authorship; the other, that they are employed by the same author with variety of sense—Elohim (God) being the God of nature, Jehovah (the Lord) the God of grace. It is no doubt true that there are passages where the sole use, or the pointed use, of one or other of these names does really point to a diversity either of authorship or of meaning; but it is abundantly clear that in the general narrative of Scripture, including these chapters, not the least distinction whatever can be drawn between the use of Elohim and Jehovah which will stand the simplest test of common sense; the same ingenuity which explains the occurrence of Elohim instead of Jehovah in any particular sentence would find an explanation quite as satisfactory if it were Jehovah instead of Elohim.

II. Whence did Moses obtain his knowledge of the incidents here recorded, many

of which must have been known to Balaam alone? Was it directly, by revelation; or from some memorials left by Balaam himself?

The former supposition, once generally held, is as generally abandoned now, because it is perceived that inspiration over-ruled and utilised for Divine purposes, but did not supersede, natural sources of information. The latter supposition is rendered more probable by these considerations:—1. That a man of Balaam's character and training would be very likely to put on record the remarkable things which had happened to himself. Such men who habitually lead a double life are often keenly alive to their own errors, and are singularly frank in writing themselves down for the benefit of posterity. 2. That Balaam was slain among the Midianites, and that his effects must have fallen into the hands of the victors. On the other hand, it is inconceivable that Balaam, being what he was, should have written these chapters at all as they stand; the moral and religious intent of the story is too evident in itself, and is too evidently governed by Jewish faith and feeling. It may be allowable to put it before the reader as an opinion which may or may not be true, but which is quite compatible with profound belief in the inspired truth of this part of God's word, that Moses, having obtained the facts in the way above indicated, was moved to work them up into the dramatic form in which they now appear—a form which undoubtedly brings out the character of the actors, the struggle between light and darkness, and the final triumph of light, with much more force (and therefore much more truth) than anything else could. If it be objected that this gives a fictitious character to the narrative, it may be replied that when the imagination is called into exercise to present actual facts, existing characters, and prophecies really uttered in a striking light,—and that under the over-ruling guidance of the Divine Spirit,—the result cannot be called fictitious in any bad or unworthy sense. If it be added that such a theory attributes to this section a character different from the rest of the Book, it may be allowed at once. The episode of Balaam and Balak is obviously, as to literary form, distinct from and strongly contrasted with the narrative which precedes and follows.

It has been made a question as to the language in which Balaam and his companions spoke and wrote. The discovery of the Moabite stone has made it certain that the language of the Moabites, and in all probability of the other races descended from Abraham and Lot, was practically the same as the language of the Jews. Balaam's own tongue may have been Aramaic, but amongst his western friends and patrons he would no doubt be perfectly ready to speak as they spoke.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COMING OF BALAAM (vers. 2—40).

Ver. 2.—**Balak the son of Zippor.** The name Balak is connected with a word "to make waste," and "Zippor" is a small bird. Balak was, as is presently explained, the king of Moab at this time, but not the king from whom Sihon had wrested so much of his territory (ch. xxi. 26). He seems to be mentioned by name on a papyrus in the British Museum (see Brugsch, 'Geogr. Inschr.,' ii. p. 32). The later Jews made him out to have been a Midianite, but this is nothing but the merest conjecture.

Ver. 3.—**Moab was sore afraid of the people.** While the Israelites had moved along their eastern and north-eastern border, the Moabites supplied them with provisions (Deut. ii. 29), desiring, no doubt, to be rid of them, but not disdaining to make some profit by their presence. But after the sudden defeat and overthrow of their own Amorite conquerors, their terror and uneasiness forced them to take some action, although they dared not commence open hostilities.

Ver. 4.—**Moab said unto the elders of Midian.** The Midianites were descended from Abraham and Keturah (Gen. xxv. 2,

4), and were thus more nearly of kin to Israel than to Moab. They lived a semi-nomadic life on the steppes to the east of Moab and Ammon (cf. Gen. xxxvi. 35), supporting themselves partly by grazing, and partly by the caravan trade (Gen. xxxvii. 28). Their institutions were no doubt patriarchal, like those of the modern Bedawin, and the "elders" were the sheiks of their tribes. **As the ox licketh up the grass of the field.** The strong, scythe-like sweep of the ox's tongue was a simile admirable in itself, and most suitable to pastoral Moab and Midian.

Ver. 5.—**He sent messengers therefore.** It appears from ver. 7 that Balak acted for Midian as well as for Moab; as the Midianites were but a weak people, they may have placed themselves more or less under the protection of Balak. **Unto Balaam the son of Beor.** בִּלְעָם (Bileam: our common form is from the Septuagint and New Testament, Βαλαάμ) is derived either from בָּלַע, to destroy or devour, and עָם, the people; or simply from בָּלַע, with the terminal syllable ם־, "the destroyer." The former derivation receives some support from Rev. ii. 14, 15, where "Nicolaitans" are thought by many to be only a Greek form of "Balaamites" (Νικόλαος, from νικάω and λαός). Beor (בְּעוֹר) has a similar signification, from בָּעַר, to burn, or consume. Both names have probable reference to the supposed effect of their maledictions, for successful cursing was an hereditary profession in many lands, as it still is in some. Beor appears in 2 Pet. ii. 15 as Bosor, which is called a Chaldeeism, but the origin of the change is really unknown. A "Bela son of Beor" is named in Gen. xxxvi. 32 as reigning in Edom, but the coincidence is of no importance: kings and magicians have always loved to give themselves names of fear, and their vocabulary was not extensive. **To Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people.** Rather, "which is on the river," *i. e.* the great river Euphrates, "in the land of the children of his people," *i. e.* in his native land. The situation of Pethor (Septuagint, Φαθουρά) is unknown. **Here is a people come out of Egypt.** Forty years had passed since their fathers had left Egypt. Yet Balak's words expressed a great truth, for this people was no wandering desert tribe, but for all intents the same great organised nation which had spoiled Egypt, and left Pharaoh's host dead behind them. **They abide over against me.** מִמֻּלִי. Septuagint, ἐχόμενός μου. This would hardly have been said when Israel was encamped thirty miles north of Arnon, opposite to Jericho. The two embassies to Balaam must have occupied some time, and in the mean while Israel would have gone further on his way. We may naturally conclude that the first message was sent immediately after the defeat of Sihon, at a time when Israel was encamped very near the border of Moab.

Ver. 6.—**I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.** This was the language of flattery intended to secure the prophet's services. No doubt, however, Balak, like other heathens, had a profound though capricious belief in the real effect of curses and anathemas pronounced by men who had private intercourse and influence with the unseen powers. That error, like most superstitions, was the perversion of a truth; there are both benedictions and censures which, uttered by human lips, carry with them the sanction and enforcement of Heaven. The error of antiquity lay in ignorance or forgetfulness that, as water cannot rise higher than its source, so neither blessing nor cursing can possibly take any effect beyond the will and purpose of the Father of our souls. Balaam knew this, but it was perhaps his misfortune to have been trained from childhood to maintain his position and his wealth by trading upon the superstitions of his neighbours.

Ver. 7.—**With the rewards of divination.** קְסָמִים, "soothsayings." Septuagint, τὰ μαντεῖα. Here the soothsayer's wages, which St. Peter aptly calls the wages of unrighteousness. The ease with which, among ignorant and superstitious people, a prophet might become a hired soothsayer is apparent even from the case of Samuel (1 Sam. ix. 6—8). That it should be thought proper to resort to the man of God for information about some lost property, and much more that it should be thought necessary to pay him a fee for the exercise of his supernatural powers, shows, not indeed that Samuel was a soothsayer, for he was a man of rare integrity and independence, but, that Samuel was but little distinguished from a soothsayer in the popular estimation. If Samuel had learnt to care more for money than for righteousness, he might very easily have become just what Balaam became.

Ver. 8.—**Lodge here this night.** It was therefore in the night, in a dream or in a vision (cf. Gen. xx. 3; ch. xii. 6; Job iv. 15, 16), that Balaam expected to receive some communication from God. If he had received none he would no doubt have felt himself free to go.

Ver. 15.—**More, and more honourable than they.** Balak rightly judged that Balaam was not really unwilling to come, and that it was only needful to ply him with more flattery and larger promises. The heathens united a firm belief in the powers of the seer with a very shrewd appreciation of the motives

and character of the seer. Compare the saying of Sophocles ('Antig.,' 1055), *τὸ μαντικὸν γὰρ πᾶν φιλάργυρον γένος.*

Ver. 18.—**I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God.** Balaam's faith was paramount within its own sphere of operation. It did not control his wishes; it did not secure the heart obedience which God loves; but it did secure, and that absolutely, outward obedience to every positive command of God, however irksome; and Balaam never made any secret of this.

Ver. 22.—**And God's anger was kindled because he went,** or, "that he was going." כִּי־הוֹלֵךְ הוּא. Septuagint, *ὅτι ἐπορεύθη αὐτός.* There can be no question that the ordinary translation is right, and that God was angry with Balaam for going at all on such an errand. It is true that God had given him permission to go, but that very permission was a judicial act whereby God punished the covetous and disobedient longings of Balaam in allowing him to have his own way. God's anger is kindled by sin, and it was not less truly sin which prompted Balaam to go because he had succeeded in obtaining formal leave to go. **The angel of the Lord stood in the way.** The same angel of the covenant apparently of whom Moses had spoken to the Edomites (see on ch. xx. 16).

For an adversary against him. לְשָׂטָן לוֹ. Septuagint, *διαβαλεῖν αὐτόν.* Not so much because Balaam was rushing upon his own destruction as because he was going to fight with curses, if possible, against the Israel of God (cf. 2 Kings vi. 17; Ps. xxxiv. 7).

Ver. 23.—**And the ass saw the angel of the Lord.** This was clearly part of the miracle, the *σήμειον* which was to exhibit in such a striking manner the stupidity and blindness of the most brilliant and gifted intellect when clouded by greed and selfishness. It is nothing to the point that the lower animals have a quicker perception of some natural phenomena than men, for this was not a natural phenomenon; it is nothing to the point that the lower animals are credited by some with possessing "the second sight," for all that belongs to the fantastic and legendary. If the ass saw the angel, it was because the Lord opened her eyes then, as he did her mouth afterwards.

Ver. 25.—**She thrust herself unto the wall.** Apparently in order to pass the angel beyond the reach of his sword; when this was clearly impossible she fell down.

Ver. 28.—**And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass.** On the face of it this expression would seem decisive that an audible human voice proceeded from the ass's mouth, as St. Peter beyond doubt believed: *ὑποζύγιον ἄφωνον ἐν ἀνθρώπου φωνῇ φθεγξάμενον.* It is truly said, however, that a passing illusion of this kind, while it testifies that the Apostle understood the words, like all his contemporaries, in their most natural and simple sense, does not oblige us to hold the same view; if he was mistaken in this matter, it does not at all affect the inspired truth of his teaching. Two theories, therefore, have been proposed in order to avoid the difficulties of the ordinary belief, while vindicating the reality of the occurrence. It has been held by some that the whole affair took place in a trance, and resembled St. Peter's vision of the sheet let down from heaven (Acts x. 10), which we rightly conceive to have been purely subjective. This is open to the obvious and apparently fatal objection that no hint is given of any state of trance or ecstasy, and that, on the contrary, the wording of the narrative as given to us is inconsistent with such a thing. In ver. 31 Balaam's eyes are said to have been opened so that he saw the angel; but to have the eyes open so that the (ordinarily) invisible became visible, and the (otherwise) inaudible became audible, was precisely the condition of which Balaam speaks (ch. xxiv. 3, 4) as that of trance. According to the narrative, therefore, Balaam was in an ecstasy, if at all, after the speaking of the ass, and not before. By others it has been put forward, somewhat confusedly, that although Balaam was in his ordinary senses, he did not really hear a human voice, but that the "cries" of the ass became intelligible to his mind; and it is noted that as an augur he had been accustomed to assign meanings to the cries of animals. If instead of "cries" we read "brayings," for the ass is endowed by nature with no other capacity of voice, being indeed one of the dumbest of "dumb" animals, we have the matter more fairly before us. To most people it would appear more incredible that the brayings of an ass should convey these rational questions to the mind of its rider than that the beast should have spoken outright with a man's voice. It would indeed seem much more satisfactory to regard the story, if we cannot accept it as literally true, as a parable which Balaam wrote against himself, and which Moses simply incorporated in the narrative; we should at least preserve in this way the immense moral and spiritual value of the story, without the necessity of placing non-natural constructions upon its simple statements. Supposing the miracle to have really occurred, it must always be observed that the words put into the ass's mouth do nothing more than express such feelings as a docile and intelligent animal of her kind would have actually felt. That domestic animals, and especially such as have been long in the service of man, feel surprise,

indignation, and grief in the presence of injustice and ill-treatment is abundantly certain. In many well-authenticated cases they have done things in order to express these feelings which seemed as much beyond their "irrational" nature as if they had spoken. We constantly say of a dog or a horse that he can do everything but speak, and why should it seem incredible that God, who has given the dumb beast so close an approximation to human feeling and reason, should for once have given it human voice? With respect to Balaam's companions, their presence need not cause any difficulty. The princes of Midian and Moab had probably gone on to announce the coming of Balaam; his servants would naturally follow him at some little distance, unless he summoned them to his side. It is very likely too that Balaam was wont to carry on conversations with himself, or with imaginary beings, as he rode along, and this circumstance would account for any sound of voices which reached the ears of others.

Ver. 29.—**And Balaam said unto the ass.** That Balaam should answer the ass without expressing any astonishment is certainly more marvellous than that the ass should speak to him. It must, however, in fairness be considered—1. That Balaam was a prophet. He was accustomed to hear Divine voices speaking to him when no man was near. He had a large and unquestioning faith, and a peculiar familiarity with the unseen. 2. Balaam was a sorcerer. It was part of his profession to show signs and wonders such as even now in those countries confound the most experienced and sceptical beholders. It is likely that he had often made dumb animals speak in order to bewilder others. He must indeed have been conscious to some extent of imposture, but he would not draw any sharp line in his own mind between the marvels which really happened to him and the marvels he displayed to others. Both as prophet and as sorcerer, he must have lived, more than any other even of that age, in an atmosphere of the supernatural. If, therefore, this portent was really given, it was certainly given to the very man of all that ever lived to whom it was most suitable. Just as one cannot imagine the miracle of the stater (Matt. xvii. 27) happening to any one of less simple and childlike faith than St. Peter, so one could not think of the ass as speaking to any one in the Bible but the wizard prophet, for whom—both on his good and on his bad side—the boundary lines between the natural and supernatural were almost obliterated. 3. Balaam was at this moment intensely angry, and nothing blunts the edge of natural surprise so much as rage. Things which afterwards, when calmly recollected, cause the utmost astonishment, notoriously produce no effect at the moment upon a mind which is thoroughly exasperated.

Ver. 31.—**The Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel.** As on other occasions, the angel was not perceptible to ordinary sight, but only to eyes in some way quickened and purged by the Divine operation. This explains the fact that Balaam's companions would appear to have seen nothing (cf. Acts ix. 7).

Ver. 32.—**Because thy way is perverse.** יָרַט, an uncommon word, which seems to mean "leading headlong," *i.e.* to destruction.

Ver. 33.—**Unless . . surely.** אוּלַי - - - כִּי. It is somewhat doubtful whether this phrase can be translated as in the Septuagint (εἰ μή . . γὲ οὖν) and in all the versions; but even if the construction of the sentence be broken, this is no doubt the meaning of it. **And saved her alive.** Compare the case of the ass of the disobedient prophet in 1 Kings xiii. 24. It is plainly a righteous thing with God that obedience and faithfulness should be respected, and in some sense rewarded, even in an ass.

Ver. 35.—**Go with the men.** It may be asked to what purpose the angel appeared, if Balaam was to proceed just the same. The answer is that the angel was not a warning, but a destroying, angel, a visible embodiment of the anger of God which burnt against Balaam for his perversity. The angel would have slain Balaam, as the lion slew the disobedient prophet, but that God in his mercy permitted the fidelity and wisdom of the ass to save her master from the immediate consequences of his folly. If Balaam had had a mind capable of instruction, he would indeed have gone on as he was bidden, but in a very different spirit and with very different designs.

Ver. 36.—**Unto a city of Moab,** or, "unto Ir-Moab" (אֶל־עִיר מוֹאָב), probably the same as the Ar mentioned in ch. xxi. 15 as the boundary town of Moab at that time.

Ver. 39.—**Kirjath-huzoth.** "City of streets." Identified by some with the ruins of Shîhân, not far from the supposed site of Ar.

Ver. 40.—**Balak offered oxen and sheep.** Probably these sacrifices were offered not to Chemosh, but to the Lord, in whose name Balaam always spoke. Indeed the known fact that Balaam was a prophet of the Lord was no doubt one of Balak's chief reasons for wishing to obtain his services. Balak shared the common opinion of antiquity, that the various national deities were enabled by circumstances past human understanding to do sometimes more, sometimes less, for their

special votaries. He perceived that the God of Israel was likely, as things stood, to carry all before him; but he thought that he might by judicious management be won over, at least to some extent, to desert the cause of Israel and to favour that of Moab. To this end he "retained" at great cost the services of Balaam, the prophet of the Lord, and to this end he was willing to offer any number of sacrifices. Even the resolute and self-reliant Romans believed in the wisdom of such a policy. Thus Pliny quotes ancient authors as affirming "in oppugnationibus ante omnia solitum a Romanis sacrdotibus evocari Deum, cujus in tutelâ id oppidum esset, promittique illi eundem aut ampliorem apud Romanos cultum," and he adds, "durat in Pontificum disciplinâ id sacrum, constatque ideo occultatum, in cujus Dei tutela Roma esset, ne qui hostium simili modo agerent." **And sent,** *i. e.* portions of the sacrificial meats.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—40.—*The way of Balaam.* In this section we have some of the profoundest and most subtle, as well as some of the most practical, moral and religious teachings of the Old Testament. In order to draw them out fully we may consider—I. The character and position of Balaam with regard to God and man; II. The policy of Balak in sending for Balaam; III. The conduct of Balaam when asked and urged to come to Balak; IV. The incidents, natural and supernatural, of Balaam's coming.

I. THE CHARACTER OF BALAAM, AND HIS POSITION WITH REGARD TO GOD AND MAN. Consider under this head—1. *That Balaam had a true knowledge of the most high God.* He was not in any sense a heathen as far as his intellectual perception of Divine things went. And it was not merely Elohim, the God of nature and creation, whom he knew and revered, but distinctly Jehovah, the God of Israel and of grace. Speculatively he knew as much of God as Abraham or Job. 2. *That Balaam had an unquestioning faith in the one true God.* Whatever difficulties it may create, it is obviously true that Balaam walked very much by faith, and not by sight. The invisible God, the will of God, the power of God, the direct concern of God with his doings, were all realities to Balaam, strong realities. God was not a *name* to him, nor a theological expression, but the daily companion of his daily life. 3. *That Balaam had an undoubted prophetic gift from God.* He was not an ordinary servant of the true God; he held as it were a very high official position in the service of God. He enjoyed frequent and direct intercourse with him; he expected to receive supernatural intimations of the Divine will; he professed to speak, and he did speak, words of inspired prophecy far beyond his own origination. 4. *That at the same time Balaam's heart was given not to God, but to covetousness.* He loved the wages of unrighteousness. Not perhaps in the lowest sense. He may have valued influence, power, consideration even more than mere money; but money was necessary to all these. 5. *That Balaam was a soothsayer.* He practised magical arts and sought for auguries. He traded on the superstitions of the heathen, and even sought to prostitute his prophetic powers to excite astonishment, obtain power, and make money. He hired himself out to curse the enemies of those who employed him. And note that Balaam's fall in this respect was accountable enough; for we may naturally conclude (1) that Balaam had an hereditary position as seer which it was his interest to keep up at any cost; (2) that the ignorant people put strong pressure upon him to play the soothsayer. How easily Samuel might have become the same if he had been covetous! How constant is the temptation to abuse spiritual powers in order at once to gratify others and to exalt oneself! (cf. 1 Sam. ix. 6—8; Jer. v. 31).

II. THE POLICY OF BALAK, AND HIS ERROR. Consider under this head—1. *That Balak was afraid of Israel,* because he was mighty, and had overthrown the Amorites. Yet he had no cause to fear, for Israel had not touched him, and did not mean to. Men are afraid of the Church of God because it is a great power in the world, albeit it is a power for good, and not for evil. 2. *That Balak was afraid of the God of Israel.* He rightly judged that Israel's success was due to his God; but he wrongly thought that the Lord was but a national deity who was victorious at present, but might be turned aside or bought off. 3. *That Balak put his trust in Balaam because he was a prophet of the Lord, and might be expected to use his*

influence to change the purposes of the Lord; perhaps even to counterwork those purposes. How often do people seek the aid of religion *against* God! How often do they seek for religious support and solace in doing what they must know is contrary to the moral law of God! 4. *That Balak professed, and no doubt felt, a profound belief in the efficacy of Balaam's benedictions and maledictions, even as against the people of Balaam's God.* Here was the very essence of superstition, to suppose that anything whatsoever can have any spiritual efficacy contrary to, or apart from, the will of God; most of all, that the word of God, as officially employed by his ministers, can be made to work counter to the declared mind of God. As though Peter could ban whom Christ hath blessed. Yet note that Balak's superstition was the depraving of a great truth. Balaam had no doubt authority to censure or to bless in the name of God; and his censures or blessings would have had validity if pronounced with a single eye to the glory of God and the good of souls, and in clear dependence upon the higher knowledge and necessary ratification of Heaven. 5. *That Balak sought to obtain supernatural aid from Balaam by means of flatteries, gifts, and promises;* and thought, no doubt, to buy over the powers of the world to come. He rightly gauged the *character* of the man; he was utterly deceived as to the worth of his alliance. How often do shrewd and worldly men make the same mistake! Because they see through the selfishness and worldliness of the human ministers of religion, they fancy they can command the services, and employ in their own behalf the powers, of religion itself.

III. THE COMING OF BALAAM. Consider under this head—1. *That Balaam was solicited to come for a purpose which he must have felt sure was wrong.* To curse any people was an awful thing, and only to be done with sorrow if commanded by God. To curse Israel, of whose history Balaam was not ignorant, was on the face of it treason towards God. When men are invited to lend their aid in opposing or destroying others, how careful should they be to make sure that such hostile action is a matter of duty; for we are called unto blessing (1 Pet. iii. 9). 2. *That Balaam was tempted through his love of money and of good things.* A true-hearted prophet would have been ashamed to receive gifts and promises for the use of his spiritual powers, and he would have vehemently suspected such as offered them, even with flattery and deference. If anything appeals to our cupidity and promises advantage in this world, we ought all the more to turn against it, unless it is irresistibly proved to be right. With what just scorn does the world regard the universal propensity of religious people to exercise their gifts and throw their influence where and as *it pays the best!* 3. *That Balaam was forbidden to go, for the plain and unalterable reason that he could not possibly do what he was wanted to do without flying in the face of God.* If he went, he must either act dishonourably towards Balak by taking his money for nought, or he must act treasonably towards God by cursing his people. And this was perfectly clear to Balaam. The moral law of God is plain enough in its broad outlines, and if men loved righteousness more than gain they would have little practical difficulty. 4. *That Balaam's outward conduct was consistently conscientious.* He would not go without leave; he refused to go when forbidden; when allowed to go, he repeatedly protested that he could and would say nothing but what God told him to say. And no doubt his protestations were sincere. He had no intention of rebelling against God; it was a fixed principle with him that God must be obeyed. 5. *That Balaam's inward desire was to go if possible, because it promised honour and gain to himself.* He obeyed God, but he obeyed grudgingly; he obeyed God, but he gave him clearly to understand that he wished it might be otherwise; he respected the definite command not to go, but he paid no heed to the reason given—because Israel was not to be cursed. The only obedience which God really cares for is obedience from the heart (Rom. vi. 17; Ephes. vi. 6). How many are strict in not violating the moral law (as they understand it), but *not* in order to please God, *not* because they love the will of God! To how many are the commandments of God formal barriers which they do not overleap only because they dare not! But for such these barriers are sooner or later done away, that they may have their own way. 6. *That Balaam did not get credit for the conscientiousness he did possess.* He said that God refused to give him leave, which was true, although not expressed in a proper spirit, whereas the messengers reported that he refused to come; and Balak believed that

he only wanted more pressing. So it is with men who do what is right, yet not from the true motive; they do not get credit even for the good that is in them; they are always tempted afresh, because they are felt to be open to temptation; the world sees that their heart is with it, and puts their hesitation down to mere self-interest. There is no safety for the man whose heart is not on the side of God. 7. *That Balaam, when he referred the matter again to God (as if it were still open), was allowed to go.* This is the very essence of tempting God—to cast about for ways and means to follow our own will and compass our own ends without open disobedience. How many treat the rule of God as a disagreeable restraint which must indeed be respected, but may be thankfully avoided if possible! Such men find themselves able to go with a clear conscience into circumstances of temptation which are presently fatal to them. If thou hast once had a clear intimation of what is right, cleave to it with all thy heart, else shalt thou be led into a snare. 8. *That Balaam's going, though permitted, was controlled;* and this not in his own interest (for he should not have gone), but in the interest of Israel. When men *will* go into evil they are judicially permitted to go, and the law of God ceases so far to constrain their conscience; but the consequences of their inward disobedience are over-ruled that they may not be disastrous to God's own people.

IV. THE JOURNEY OF BALAAM. Consider under this head—1. *That God was angry with Balaam for going, although he had given him leave to go.* For it was sin which made Balaam wish to go if possible; and it was his wish to go on an evil errand for gain which obtained him leave to go. Even so if men are inwardly desirous to do what is wrong, God will suffer them to persuade themselves that it is not actually wrong, and they will go on with a clear conscience; but God will be angry with them all the same. How many very religious people find it permissible to walk in very crooked ways for the sake of gain, and are yet resolute not to do a wrong thing! But God is angry with them, and they have forfeited his grace already. 2. *That the destroying angel stood in the way as an adversary to him.* Even so destruction awaits us in every way wherein greed leads us contrary to the will of God. God himself is an adversary to us (Matt. v. 25), and is ready at any moment to fall upon us and cut us asunder. It is useless to say that we have *done* nothing wrong; if our motives be corrupt, the sword of Divine justice is drawn against us. 3. *That Balaam saw not the angel, but the ass did;* and this although Balaam was a "seer," and prided himself on "having his eyes open," and on being familiar with the unseen things of God. Even so the "religious" and "spiritual" man, who has great "experiences," and yet is secretly led by greed and self-interest, is often much blinder than the most carnal and unenlightened to perceive that he is rushing upon destruction; the most stupid person has often a clearer perception of moral facts and situations than the most gifted, if this be blinded by sin. 4. *That the ass by her fidelity and instinct of self-preservation saved her master.* Even so are men, wise in their own eyes, often indebted to the most despised and neglected agencies for preservation from the consequences of their blind folly. 5. *That Balaam was enraged with the ass, and ill-treated her.* Even so foolish men are often very angry with the very circumstances or persons which are really saving them from destruction. 6. *That the ass was Divinely permitted to rebuke her master, and to teach him a lesson if he would learn it;* for she had been faithful, and docile, and had never played him false ever since she had been his; while he had been and was unfaithful, obstinate, and disloyal to his Master in heaven. Even so do the very beasts teach us many a lesson by their conduct; and those whom we account in some sense worse than the beasts—the heathen, and men who have no religion at all—will often put us to shame by the strong virtues which they display where we perhaps fail. 7. *That then Balaam saw and knew his danger.* Even so do men complacently walk in the road which leads to destruction, and have not the least idea of it, but are angry with any that thwart them, until some sudden influence opens their eyes to their awful danger. 8. *That he offered then to go back, if necessary, and acknowledged that he had done wrong (perhaps sincerely), but was not permitted to go back.* Even so when men have, as it were, insisted upon taking a line which is unwise, dangerous, and wrong, it is often impossible for them to turn back. They are committed to it, and God's providence compels them to go on with it, even

though it brings awful peril to their souls; for God is a jealous God, and the judicial consequences of our own (albeit inward and disguised) disobedience cannot be got rid of in a moment. 9. *That he was met by Balak with honour and ceremony and religious rites*; and no doubt all that happened by the way faded like a dream from his mind. Even so when men walk after their own covetousness they may receive the most solemn and (at the time) impressive warnings, but amidst the converse of the world, and the honour received of men, and the outward ceremonies even of religion, these warnings have no lasting effect, and are as though they had never happened.

Consider again, as to the broad lessons to be drawn from Balaam's character and history—1. *That there may be in a man high spiritual gifts without real goodness.* Balaam was a veritable prophet, and had in a remarkable degree the faculty both of understanding the hidden things of God and of announcing them to men. Yet, as in the case of Saul (1 Sam. x. 11; xix. 24) and Caiaphas (John xi. 51), his prophetic gifts were not accompanied by sanctification of life. Even so many in all ages and lands have great spiritual gifts of understanding, of interpretation, of eloquence, &c., whereby others are greatly advantaged, but they remain evil themselves. 2. *That a man may have a true and strong religious faith, and yet that faith shall not save him, because it does not affect his heart.* That Balaam had a strong faith in the Lord God is evident; on the intellectual side it was as strong as Abraham's; he walked with God as truly as any in the sense of being constantly conscious and mindful of God's presence and concern with him. No definition of religious faith could be framed with honesty which should exclude Balaam and include Abraham. Yet he was not saved, because his faith, although it largely mingled with his thoughts and greatly influenced his actions, did not govern his affections. Even so it is useless, however usual and convenient, to deny that many men have strong religious convictions and persuasions—in a word, have religious faith—who are not saved by it, but fall into deadly sins and become castaway. This is not a matter of theology so much as of facts; the combination of strong religious feelings, and of power to realise the unseen, with deep moral alienation from God, is by no means uncommon. 3. *That a man may do much and sacrifice much in order to obey God without receiving any reward.* Balaam repeatedly crossed his own inclinations, and forewent much honour and emolument from Balak, from a conscientious motive; and yet he was all the time on the verge of destruction, and was miserably slain at last. Even so many men do much they do not like, and give up much they do like, because they feel they ought to; and yet they have no reward for it either here or hereafter, because their self-restraint is grounded on some lower motive than love of God and the desire to please him. 4. *That a man's conduct may be to all appearance irreproachable, and yet be displeasing to God.* No one could have found distinct fault with any one step in Balaam's proceedings; each could be singly justified as permissible; yet the whole provoked the Lord to anger, because it was secretly swayed by greed. Even so many men are careful, and to ordinary eyes irreproachable, in their doings, because no act is by itself without justification; yet their whole life is hateful because its governing motive is selfishness, not love. It is not enough to be able to justify each step as we take it, neither will a mere resolve to keep straight with God insure his favour. 5. *That a man may have profound religious insight, and yet be very blind to his own state.* Balaam justly prided himself upon his intelligent and spiritual religion as compared with the follies and mummeries of the heathen around, yet he was more blind than his own beast to the palpable destruction on which he was running. Even so many of those who are most enlightened, and most removed from ignorance and superstition, are most blind to their own entire moral failure, and to the terrible danger they are in. They, *e.g.*, who most denounce idolatry are often utterly blind to the fact that their whole lives are dominated by covetousness, *which is idolatry.*

Consider again, with respect to the miracle of the dumb beast speaking with human voice—1. *That the lower animals, of which we reck so little, save as a matter of gain, have often great virtues by which they teach us many a lesson.* How much more faithful are they to us than we to our Master! It is their pride and study to observe and follow, almost to anticipate, the least indication of our will. How inferior are we in

that respect! 2. *That God is not insensible to their virtues, as we very generally are, but at times at least gives them a certain recompense of reward* (see on ver. 33). Since they seem to have no future state, it is a duty laid upon us to remember and reward their fidelity in this world. 3. *That to be enraged with dumb animals when their conduct vexes us is sin and folly.* Sin, because we have no right to be angry except with sin (Jonah iv. 4); folly, because they are less in the wrong with us than we are with God; sin and folly, because such anger surely blinds the mind and leaves us a prey to temptation. 4. *That God delights to choose "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," and "things which are despised" and "things which are not" (as the intelligible voice of an ass) "to bring to nought things that are."* Even so are we often rebuked and reproved in our madness by things most contemned and familiar, by those whom we regard as brutish and senseless, and standing upon a lower level than ourselves.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Balaam's greatness and fall.* Balaam's character and history have supplied materials for many theological and ethical studies. His character and conduct, though somewhat perplexing, are not more so than those of many around us, and are full of instruction and warning. At present we confine ourselves to two points:—I. BALAAM'S LOFTY POSITION AND PRIVILEGES. II. THE SECRET OF BALAAM'S HUMILIATING FALL.

I. (1) He had a knowledge of the true God. Among the heathens of Mesopotamia he retains a knowledge of the God revealed "from the creation of the world." (Compare the cases of Melchizedec and Job.) He was like the evening star, showing in which direction the sun of truth had set (Rom. i. 21), and reflecting some of its light. His knowledge may be illustrated by his lofty utterances respecting God and his people; *e. g.* ch. xxiii. 10, 19; and according to some interpreters, ch. vi. 8. (2) He enjoyed the gift of inspiration by God. Though there were no Scriptures, God was not left without witnesses, and among them was Balaam "the prophet" (2 Pet. ii. 16). He expected Divine communications, and was not disappointed. No wonder then that (3) he enjoyed wide-spread fame. It extended hundreds of miles away, to Moab and Midian, whence more than once an embassy crossed the desert with such flattering words as those in ver. 6. Yet we know that Balaam was a bad man who came to a bad end. Thus we have lessons of warning for ourselves, who have a fuller knowledge of God than Balaam, and may enjoy gifts, if not as brilliant, yet more useful than his. All of these may avail nothing for our salvation, but may be perverted to the worst ends. Illustrations:—Hymenæus and Alexander, the companions of St. Paul (1 Tim. i. 19, 20); Judas, the apostle of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. vii. 21—23; xi. 23; 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2).

II. Balaam's name mentioned in the New Testament only three times, and each time it is covered with reproach (2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11; Rev. ii. 14). His root sin was the ancient, inveterate vice of human nature, selfishness. He knew God, but did not love him, for "he loved the wages of unrighteousness." He did not follow the Divine voice, but "followed after" reward. God taught him sublime truths; he "taught Balak" base arts of seduction. His selfishness was shown in—(1) Ambition. There was nothing of the self-forgetfulness of such prophets as Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, or Balaam's contemporary, Moses. He is esteemed as a great man, and he takes good care he shall be so esteemed. He knows divination has no power with God, but to magnify himself among the heathens of Moab, he resorts to it. He constantly aspires to the "very great honour" to which Balak offers to promote him (cf. Ps. cxxxi. 1—3; Jer. xlv. 5). (2) Covetousness. He would be rich, and therefore fell into temptation, &c. (1 Tim. vi. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 15). His words were fair (ver. 18), yet suspicious, like those of a venal voter boasting his incorruptibility. Balaam coveted the offered honour and wealth. How could he gain them while God was keeping him back? Two ways were possible. He might get God to change his mind. He wanted to get permission from God to do what was at present a sin. He might have known from the first, as he says (ch. xxiii. 19). But he struggles to conquer God, as though the fact was *not* that God *cannot* change, but that God

will not change. Hence his repeated changes of place and new sacrifices. At length it was clear that this way was closed against him. He is constrained to bless Israel again and again. At the close of the narrative (ch. xxiv. 10—24) he seems to be taking his place boldly as an ally of the people of God. But it was only a temporary impulse, not a true conversion. Greedy for the wages of unrighteousness, he allies himself with hell. ("*Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.*") What a contrast between his fair promises (ver. 18) and this wicked deed! The reason is that in trying to "bend" God he was miserably perverting himself (like a weak tool used to move a great weight), while seeking permission to sin he was growing less sensitive to sin (see next Homily). Learn then from the fall of this great and gifted prophet to what a depth of infamy selfishness, that mother of sins, and its offspring, ambition and covetousness, may lead us. Warned by the selfishness of Balaam, may we copy the unselfishness of Christ (Rom. xv. 3; Philip. ii. 3—8).—P.

Ver. 13.—*Balaam, an illustration of systematic resistance of conscience.* The final fall of Balaam was not sudden. A process of deterioration had been going on, the first clear sign of which is in the text. In trying to change God's will he had been changing himself for the worse (see Homily on vers. 5, 6). We can trace his resistance of conscience step by step. 1. When the first embassy came, his knowledge of God and of Israel's history should probably have led to a decisive refusal. But if we assume that he needed direction, it is clear that the rewards of divination made him anxious to go. Not that he had a desire to curse Israel; he would just as soon have blessed them for reward. Yet he had no intention then to disobey. If a prophet could have shown him that evening his future career, he might have shrunk in loathing from the self that was to be. The will of God is declared (ver. 12), and the struggle between conscience and covetousness begins. At first conscience prevails, but the form of refusal (ver. 13) indicates double-mindedness. In contrast to Joseph (Gen. xxxix. 9), Balaam lays himself open to fresh temptations. If we give Satan a hesitating "No," instead of a "Get thee behind me," he will understand that we would like to sin, but dare not, and will try us with more honourable embassies and costlier gifts. 2. The ambassadors leave, but lingering regrets keep the fire of covetousness smouldering in Balaam's heart. It flames up afresh on the arrival of the second embassy (vers. 16, 17). Fair professions (ver. 18) reveal his weakness, for what "more" (ver. 19) could he want God to say unless it was to give him permission to sin? God gives him leave *not to sin*, but *to go*. (Illustrate this act by similar Divine proceedings: *e. g.* allowing the Israelites, under protest, to elect a king; a wild youth receiving reluctantly permission to carry out his determination to go to sea.) 3. Balaam went, and God is angry, not because he went, but because he went with a wicked purpose. When he found the ways of transgressors hard, and offers to return (ver. 34), God knows that he would only carry his body back to Pethor, and leave his heart hankering after the rewards of Balak. May we not suppose that if he had shown real repentance in the future, and heartily entered into the Divine purposes, though he lost Balak's rewards, he would have received God's blessing? But he ran greedily after reward, and found, as sinners still find, under God's providence, that it is hard to retrace false steps. Therefore, "enter not," &c. (Prov. iv. 15). 4. Balaam meets with a flattering reception, yet renews his good professions (ver. 38). He means them, for he still hopes to gain God's consent to his purpose. His use of enchantments to impose on the heathen is one sign of unconscientiousness. His first attempt to curse is a failure (ch. xxiii. 7—10), but the struggle with conscience and God is not abandoned. ("No sun or star so bright," &c., Keble's 'Christian Year,' Second Sunday after Easter.) Three times he persists in this "madness," trying to change or circumvent the will of God. At length he *seems* to give up the struggle, but is probably only "making a virtue of a necessity;" at the best it is but a passing impulse, followed by a relapse, and by the infamous act by which he clutched his wages and brought God's curse on Israel (ch. xxv.). He thus shows that he has renounced God, has entered thoroughly into Balak's schemes, and even outstripped him in wickedness. His perverted conscience does not keep him even from such unutterable baseness. His triumph is brief, and his "end is destruction" (ch. xxxi. 8; Ps. xxxiv. 21). Learn from this the guilt

and danger of resisting and thus corrupting conscience. (Explain process of this corruption, and note natural analogies to a conscience dulled by persistence in sin.) To try and bribe conscience is like seeking permission to sin. (Illustrate by story of Glaucus inquiring at the oracle of Delphi whether he might keep stolen money—Herodotus, vi. 86.) Conscience, like a railway signal-lamp, is intended to warn against danger or direct in the path of safety. If through negligence the lamp is put out or shows a wrong light, the consequences may be fatal (Isa. v. 20; Matt. vi. 23). A healthy conscience accuses of sin and warns of danger only that it may be a minister to lead us to Christ.—P.

Vers. 15—17.—*The importunity and impudence of the tempter.* Such appeals as Balak sent to Balaam are constantly addressed to us, in word or substance, by human tempters, and through them by the infernal tempter. The honour offered is represented as "very great," and as essential, and the promises are as vast as we can desire ("whatsoever," &c., ver. 17; Luke iv. 6, 7). Though at first the tempter may be resisted, and may depart "for a season" (cf. ver. 14), yet his solicitations may be renewed in a more alluring form than at first, with this appeal, "Let nothing," &c. (ver. 16). Neither (1) conscience. Away with childish scruples in a man of the world who has to see to his own interests. Nor (2) considerations of mercy to others. Balaam was required to curse and, if possible, ruin a nation that had done him no harm. Selfishness is bidden to make any sacrifice at its shrine. *E. g.* ambitious rulers, dishonest traders or trustees, heartless seducers. Nor (3) the will of God; for who can be sure whether God has really revealed his will, or will enforce it (Gen. iii. 1—5). Nor (4) the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in dying that he might save from the ruin of sin; for though you sin, grace will abound. Nor (5) the fear of judgment; for after all the threats of judgment may be old wives' fables, or you may make all right before you die. Thus speaks the tempter, bidding us make riches and honour "the prize of our calling," and overleap or break down every barrier that God has set up to hinder us from ruining ourselves and others. (Illustrate from the case of Judas, and the barriers he broke through at the call of Satan, and contrast the impregnability of Jesus Christ when offered the wealth and honour of the world.) Christ himself, the motives supplied by his cross when applied by his Spirit, are the greatest hindrances to keep us from yielding to the tempter.—P.

Ver. 32.—*On cruelty to animals.* In ver. 28 we are reminded of the silent protest of the brute creation against the cruelty of men. From ver. 32 ("Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times?") we may learn that this protest is heeded and supported by God. Cruelty of all kinds is one of the foulest of the works of the flesh, opposed to the character of God and to the instincts of humanity. Cruelty to animals is especially hateful, because of I. THE WRONG DONE TO THE CREATURES; II. THE EFFECTS ON OURSELVES.

I. 1. They are our inferiors, therefore magnanimity and sympathy should protect them. 2. They are often helpless to defend themselves; cruelty is then unutterably mean. 3. Some of these animals are part of our property, and of great value to us, though absolutely within our power. 4. If they are not "wont to do so" when they provoke us, some good reason may exist which we should seek to discover. Therefore—5. When tempted to harshness, short of cruelty, it is our duty to consider whether they need it, and in this sense deserve it. For—6. Past misconduct of ourselves or of others may have occasioned their present obstinacy, through timidity or some other cause. 7. Animals suffer too much already, directly or indirectly, through men's sins (war, famines, &c.) without the addition of gratuitous cruelties. 8. No future life for them is revealed, so that we have the more reason for not making them miserable in this life.

II. 1. It fosters a despotic habit of mind, as though might and right were identical. 2. It hardens the heart and tends to nurture cruelty to men as well as brutes. *E. g.* the child Nero delighting in killing flies. 3. It still further alienates us from the mind of Christ, the character of "the Father of mercies." 4. It is a sign of unrighteousness (Prov. xii. 10), against which God's wrath is revealed, and from which we need to be saved by Christ (Rom. i. 18; 1 John i. 9).—P.

Vers. 2—4.—*Moab takes alarm.* I. AN INTERESTED OBSERVER OF AN IMPORTANT ACTION. "Balak saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites." *The thing was worth observing in itself*, that this great host of people, coming with but little notice, having no land of its own, no visible basis of operations, no military renown, should yet have crushed into ruin such powerful kings as Sihon and Og. It was not merely the conquest of one army by another; there was something decisive and very significant about the conquest. Just as in profane history some battles, such as Marathon and Salamis, Waterloo and Trafalgar, stand out like towering mountains because of the great issues connected with them, so these victories of Israel over Sihon and Og are for all generations of God's people to consider. Balak of course was interested as a neighbour, but we, living thousands of miles from the scene of these events, and thousands of years after them, should be not less interested. They concern us just as much as they concerned Balak. Distant as they are from us in time, they have to do very practically with our interests and the yet unaccomplished purposes of the ever-living God. We are too observant of trifles, the gossip of the passing day, the mere froth on the waves of time. *The thing also pressed for notice.* The Amorites were Moab's neighbours, and Moab had been conquered by them. If Israel then had conquered the conqueror, there was need for *prompt action.* So long as Israel was far away, wandering in the wilderness, with no aim in its course that could be ascertained,—that course aimless rather, so far as others could make out,—there was no feeling of alarm. But now, with Israel in its very borders, Moab feels *it must do something.* Yet the pressure was not of the right sort. Moab was driven to consider its position not because of dangers within, not because of idolatry and unrighteousness (ch. xxv.), nor that it might become a pure and noble-minded nation, but because of the selfish fear that another people close to its territory might prove hostile and destructive. Thus we allow considerations to press on us which should not have the slightest force. Where our minds should be well-nigh indifferent they are yielding and sensitive; and where they should be yielding and sensitive, indifference too often possesses them. When Jesus fed the multitude, the action pressed for notice not because the multitude appreciated the spiritual significance of the action, but they eat of the loaves and were filled. Balak did well when he noticed the victories of Israel, but very ill when he noticed them simply as bearing on the safety of his kingdom.

II. THE CONSEQUENT DISQUIETUDE OF MOAB. The Amorites had conquered Moab, but Israel had conquered the Amorites. The presumption then was that Israel, having the power, would as a matter of course advance to treat Moab in the same fashion; just as an Alexander or Napoleon goes from one conquered territory to conquer the next; just as a fire spreads from one burning house to its neighbour. It was therefore *excusable* for Moab to be sore afraid; but though excusable, it was *not reasonable.* The alarm came from knowledge of some things, mixed with ignorance of things more important. The alarm then was *groundless.* General as that alarm was, Moab had really nothing to fear. Its way of reasoning was utterly erroneous. If Moab had known the internal history of Israel half as well as it knew the present external appearance and recent triumphs, it would not have been alarmed because of the children of Israel, and because they were many. The children of Israel had been commanded to cherish other purposes than those of conquering Moab, and the mind of their leader was occupied with things far nobler than military success. Besides, as God had remembered the kinship of Israel and Edom, so he remembered that of Israel and Moab (Deut. ii. 9). Moab was afraid of the people *because they were many.* What a revelation of their craven and abject spirit in the past he would have had if he had seen them threatening to stone Caleb and Joshua (ch. xiv.). And though they were many, he would have seen that all their numbers availed nothing for success when God was not with them (ch. xiv. 40—45).

III. MOAB'S CONCLUSION WITH REGARD TO HIS OWN RESOURCES. He could no more resist Israel than the grass of the field resist the mouth of the ox. This expresses his complete distrust of his own resources, and was a prudent conclusion, even if humiliating, as far as it went, and always supposing that Israel wished to play the part of the ox. The fall of Sihon had taught nothing to Og, the self-confident giant, but the fall of Sihon, and next the fall of Og, had taught Moab this at least, that in

the battle-field he could do nothing against Israel. If a man refuses to go in the right path, it is not, therefore, a matter of little consequence which of the wrong paths he chooses. One may take him swiftly in the dark to the precipice; another, also downward, may afford more time and occasions for retrieval. It was a wrong, blind, useless course to send for Balaam, but at all events it was not so immediately destructive, as to rush recklessly into the field of battle against Israel.—Y.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Balak's message to Balaam.* War being useless, what shall Balak do? In his mind there were only two alternatives, either to fight or to send for Balaam. And yet there was a better course, had he thought of it, viz., to approach Israel peacefully. But prejudice, a fixed persuasion that Israel was his enemy, dominated his mind. We do very foolish things through allowing traditional conceptions to rule us. That Israel was the enemy of Moab was an assumption with not the smallest basis of experience. Many of the oppositions and difficulties of life arise from assuming that those who have the opportunity to injure are likely to use the opportunity. He who will show himself friendly may find friends and allies where he least expects them. We must do our best in dubious positions to make sure that we have exhausted the possibilities of action. Balak then sends a message to Balaam. Notice—

I. A TESTIMONY TO THE POWER OF RELIGION. Balak cannot find sufficient resources in nature, therefore he seeks above nature. When men, who in their selfishness and unspirituality are furthest from God, find themselves in extremity, it is then precisely that they are seen turning to a power higher than their own (1 Sam. xxviii.). Man has a clinging nature, and if he cannot lay hold of the truth as it is in Jesus, he must find some substitute. Balak did not know God as Moses knew him; he knew nothing of his spiritual perfections and holy purposes. But still he recognised the God of Israel as really existent, as a mighty potentate; he felt that Balaam had some power with him; and thus even in his ignorance he believes. It is a long, long way to pure atheism, and surely it must be a dreary and difficult one. May not the question be fairly raised whether there are any consistent atheists, those whose practice agrees even approximately with their theory? There are men without God in the world, *i. e.* lacking conscious and happy connection with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; but even so they may bear testimony unthinkingly to their need of him. The witnesses to the power of religion are not only many, but of all sorts, giving testimony often when they least suspect it.

II. A TESTIMONY TO THE EMPTINESS OF IDOLATRY. Balak had a god of his own, probably more than one, and doubtless he would have felt very uncomfortable in omitting the worship of them; but he did not trust in his gods. He may have sacrificed to them on this very occasion with great profusion and scrupulosity, but he did not trust them. Though they were near at hand, he felt more hope from Balaam far away; and yet if there was any good in his gods, this was the very time to prove it and receive it. There is a Nemesis for all idolatry. The idols of Moab were put to shame before the God of Israel, and that by the very man who was bound to be their champion. It does not need always for a Dagon to fall in the presence of the ark. There are other ways of dishonouring idols than casting them to the moles and the bats. They may have shame written across their brows, even while they stand on the pedestal of honour. Thus we see also *an exposure of formalism.* Balak's great need strips the mask off his religion, and underneath we see, not living organs, but dead machinery. And bear in mind, formalism in serving the true God is just as certain to come to shame as formalism in serving an idol. The principle is the same, whatever deity be formally acknowledged.

III. AFTER ALL, THE RESORT TO BALAAM WAS A VERY PRECARIOUS ONE, even supposing Balaam had all the power with which Balak credited him. For Pethor was a long way off, and the dreaded, victorious Israelites were close at hand. Balaam did not live in the next street. While you are sending from Land's End for the celebrated London physician, the patient's life is steadily ebbing away. That is no sufficient help in our supreme necessities which has to be brought over land and sea. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from

the dead). The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart" (Rom. x. 6—8). Go into thy closet; retreat into the seclusion and security of thine own heart, and meet the mighty Guide and Helper there. The God of Israel went about with his people. Jesus did not say, "Wheresoever I am, there my people are to gather together," but, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

"God attributes to place
No sanctity, if none be thither brought
By men who there frequent, or therein dwell."

IV. A MAN MAY BE IGNORANT OF THINGS LYING NEAREST HIM AND UNSPEAKABLY IMPORTANT, while he abounds in useless knowledge of things far away. Balak knew not the needs of his own heart, the real power of Israel, the disposition of Israel's God to him, the possibilities of friendship which lay within those tents on which he looked with so much apprehension. But somehow he had got to know concerning Balaam in far-away Pethor. How much useless, deceiving, pretentious knowledge we may accumulate with infinite labour, and at the time feeling great certainty of its value. "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers." It is of great moment in a world where so much is to be known, and yet so little can be acquired, not to miss acquiring the right things. Said Dr. Arnold, "If one might wish for impossibilities, I might then wish that my children might be well versed in physical science, but in due subordination to the fulness and freshness of their knowledge on moral subjects. This, however, I believe cannot be; and physical science, if studied at all, seems too great to be studied *ἐν παρεργῳ*. Wherefore, rather than have it the principal thing in my son's mind, I would gladly have him think that the sun went round the earth, and that the stars were so many spangles set in the bright blue firmament." Thus also the great discoverer Faraday in his old age—"My worldly faculties are slipping away, day by day. Happy is it for all of us that the true good lies not in them. As they ebb, may they leave us as little children, trusting in the Father of mercies and accepting his unspeakable gift!"

V. THE MESSAGE WAS VERY FLATTERING TO BALAAM. Kings have much to do with courtiers, and all the delicate preparations of flattery must be well known to them. Balak made Balaam to understand that it was not for a trifle he had summoned him, for a service that could be rendered by a second-rate soothsayer. The people he so dreaded had come out from Egypt, that home of strength in those days, that populous and wealthy land, and by no means lacking in reputed wise men, sorcerers and magicians. They had come in great numbers: "behold, they cover the face of the earth;" and they were in close proximity and apparently settled condition: "they abide over against me." There is the willing confession by Balak of his own inability, and his evident faith in Balaam's power to cast a fatal paralysis over all the energy of Israel. Now all this must have been very pleasant for Balaam to hear, sweeter maybe than the jingle of the rewards of divination. Thus did the temptation to Balaam, already only too open to temptation, begin. His carnal mind was appealed to in many ways. The rewards of divination were only a part of the expected wages of unrighteousness. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. xvi. 18).

VI. BALAK HAD MORE FAITH IN FALSEHOOD THAN ISRAEL FOR A LONG TIME HAD SHOWN TOWARDS TRUTH. The conduct of Balak in sending so far, in casting the fortunes of his kingdom with such simplicity on what was utterly false, should put us to shame, who have the opportunity of resorting at all times to well ascertained and established truth. Balak had only a Balaam to seek, such an ignoble and double-minded man as appears in the sequel; not a Moses, who could have told him truly, not only how the blessing and the curse really come, but how to secure the one and escape the other.—Y.

Vers. 7—14.—*The first visit to Balaam.* I. BALAK'S NOTION OF WHAT WOULD BE MOST ACCEPTABLE TO BALAAM. It is all a matter of money, Balak thinks. "Every man has his price," and the poor man who cannot pay it must go to the wall. Not that we are to suppose Balaam a specially greedy man, but it has been the mark of

false religions and all corruptions of the true service of God that priests and prophets have been greedy after money. They promise spiritual things and make large demands for carnal things; the more they get the more they promise, and the more they get the more they want. "The priests teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money" (Micah iii. 11). Simon Magus must have known well the greed of his tribe when he offered money to Simon Peter. It is the mark of a true bishop that he is not greedy of *filthy* lucre (1 Tim. iii. 3). Jesus sent forth his disciples to make a *free gift* in healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and casting out devils. "*Freely* ye have received, *freely* give." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1).

II. BALAAM'S RECEPTION OF THE MESSENGERS. *He cannot give a prompt answer.* We are certainly very much in the dark concerning Balaam's past life and present position. If he knew anything of Israel's true character and God's purpose concerning Israel, then, of course, there was not the smallest excuse for delay. But even supposing him ignorant in this respect, was there any excuse for delay to an upright man? Did not Balak's wish at once suggest the answer an upright man would have given? Blessing and cursing are great realities, not mere priestly fictions (Deut. xxvii., xxviii.), but they can never become mere matters of money. "The curse causeless shall not come." He who deserves blessing cannot be cursed, nor he who deserves cursing, blessed. God's sovereignty, mysterious enough in its operations, is never arbitrary. An upright man would have felt it was no use pretending to consult God with a bribe in his hand. The bribe vitiated the spirit of his prayer, and prevented a proper reception of the answer. There are certain propositions which upright men do not need to sleep or deliberate over. The answer should follow the request like the instantaneous rebound of a ball. Balak did not send asking advice in general terms, or that Balaam should do the best he could, but he pointed out a certain, well-defined road which no upright man could possibly take. If we acquit the prophet of dishonesty and evasion in this plea of delay, we can only do it by convicting him of great darkness in his own spirit and great ignorance of God.

III. THE INTERPOSITION OF GOD. God does not seem to have waited for any request from Balaam. While the prophet is considering all the honour and emolument that may come to him out of this affair, God comes to him with the prompt and sobering question, "What men are these with thee?" All the depths of this question we cannot penetrate, but at all events it was enough to prepare the prophet, one would think, for an unfavourable answer. And may we not also assume that it was expressive of a desire to extricate him when he had only taken one or two steps into temptation? As to Balak's request, God settles everything with a brief, a very brief, but sufficient utterance: "The people are blessed." And blessed beyond all doubt they had been of late, not in word only, but in deed. Note that *God does not send any message of reassurance to Balak.* There is guidance for Balaam, security for Israel, but for Balak only blank denial. If Balak had come in the right spirit to Balaam, and Balaam in the right spirit to God, then the messengers might have gone back cheerful, and welcome to their expectant master. But what begins badly ends worse. He who sets himself in opposition to God's people cannot expect to hear comfortable words from God. If we are to hear such words, we must approach him in the right spirit. We must not seek good for ourselves by a *selfish* infringement on the good of others. It was one thing for Israel, under the leadership of God, to attack the wicked Amorites; quite another for Moab, on a mere peradventure, to attack Israel.

IV. BALAAM'S ANSWER TO THE MESSENGERS. He does not repeat what the Lord said; thus advancing further in the revelation of his corrupt heart. Why not have told them plainly these words: "Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed"? Simply because it was not pleasant to say such words with the flattering message of Balak still tickling his ears. It was not true then that whom he blessed was blessed, and whom he cursed was cursed; but to have told Moab so would have been to publish his humiliation far and wide, and hurt his repute as a great soothsayer. Yet how much better it would have been for Balaam as a man, and a man

who had been brought in some respects so near to God, if he had told the whole truth. It would perhaps have saved a second embassy to him. Men are looking to the main chance even when among the solemn things of God, and fresh from hearing his voice. Balaam first of all, in speaking to God, omits from the message of Balak, saying nothing of his own reputation in the eyes of the Moabitish king, suspecting very shrewdly that this would be offensive to God. Then he omits again in his answer to the messengers, and, to make all complete, they omit still more in their report to Balak. There is nothing in their word to show that *God had said anything in the matter*. This is what is called diplomacy; not telling a lie, but only leaving out something of the truth, as being of no practical importance. It is a great blessing that there are *Scriptures* for us all to read. Philosophers and preachers may leave out part of the truth, or colour and distort it to suit their own prejudices, but they cannot get over the written word. Out of their own mouths they may be contradicted when they read one thing out of the Scriptures and say another as the fruit of their own lips.—Y.

Vers. 15—21.—*The second visit.* I. THE RESULT OF MUTILATED ANSWERS. 1. *As concerns Balak.* Balaam does not tell the first messengers all that God had spoken to him; they do not tell Balak all that Balaam had spoken to them. The consequence is that he comes to a wrong conclusion, and really he had no information by which to come to a right one. His thoughts on the subject may be supposed to have run thus:—"All the difficulty lies with Balaam. He took the night to think the matter over, and concluded it was not worth his while on such poor considerations to undertake so serious a journey. My messengers and rewards have not sufficiently impressed him with the rank of Moab." In Balak's mind it is *all a question of degree*, and so he sends more princes, and more honourable than before. And possibly, if these had been unsuccessful, as a last resort he would have gone himself. Thus poor Balak, in the quagmire of misunderstanding already, was led still deeper into it. The great end was to get Balaam's curse into operation, and there was nothing to shake his faith in the possibility of this end being gained. Between God and Balak there were interposed a self-seeking Balaam, and, to say the least, messengers who were careless, if nothing more. *Ours is a more secure position.* We come to God through a Christ, not through a Balaam; enlightened by a Spirit who teaches us the proper needs of sinful men, and shows us our real danger. 2. *As concerns Balaam.* Whether he thought that by his first answer he had finally disposed of the request, or wanted time to consider if it should be preferred again, we cannot make sure. His first answer had to be given very much on the spur of the moment. If it had been a truthful answer, one not only with the lips, but with the whole countenance, and the whole man speaking all God had said, he would not have been troubled again. But now he has to deal with more princes, and more honourable than before. He sees precisely why *they* have been sent, and as he listens to their urgent and obsequious words and comprehensive promises, he understands exactly what is expected of him. His proper answer even now was to say that he could not go on any consideration. But there was no spirit and courage of repentance in him. His reply, with all its seeming emphasis, is very evasive and ambiguous. It looks strong to say, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold," and to speak of God as "the Lord *my God*," but after all he leaves the messengers in the dark as to what the word of the Lord was, though he knew it well. He pretends that it is needful to wait another night for what the Lord might say. This time it is a *mere pretence*, beyond any doubt. Perhaps he reckons that he will have nothing to do but wait till the morning, and then repeat to the second messengers what he had said to the first. How startled then he must have been, not only to get another revelation of God, but *a totally different direction!* And yet, when we consider, we see that he could not get the same answer as before. Balaam does not stand where he did at the time of the previous answer. He is a worse man; he has yielded to temptation from which God would have preserved him, and now, with open and greedy heart, he is in the midst of greater temptation still. He had daringly neglected God's previous word, and *would assuredly neglect it again if he got the opportunity.* Why then should God repeat the word? Balaam will still suppress the fact that he cannot curse Israel,

seeing they are blessed. What was the needful word yesterday may become useless to-day. The possible of one hour becomes the impossible of the next. Jesus says, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;" but that does not prevent him saying very soon afterwards, "Sleep on now, and take your rest. . . . *Rise, let us be going.*" The father has not changed because the child whom he commands in one way to-day he commands in another to-morrow. Different actions outwardly may reveal the same character and advance the same purpose. The appearance of contradiction in God's dealing arises from our hasty thinking, not because there is any reality corresponding to the appearance. God was speaking, as we more and more clearly see, both for the real good of Balaam and the safety and blessedness of his own people.

II. THE WORLD'S CONFIDENCE IN THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF ITS REWARDS. The world never has any doubt but what it can make its possessions fascinating to every man, and appeal successfully to his affections and sympathies. Weak as the world is, it never loses its self-confidence. Though Balak's throne is in peril, he brags of the honours he can confer on Balaam; and when he sends the second message, he does not change the considerations, but simply increases them to the utmost. So, to take the other side, the world is equally confident in *the terrifying power of its penalties.* Nebuchadnezzar, sorely troubled about his forgotten dream, does not for all that forget to play the despot. He menaces the astrologers, threatening them with a dreadful death, in right royal style. It must be acknowledged also that the result only too often shows that *the confidence is justified.* We cannot guard too carefully against the world, alike in its attractions and its threats; and he does this best who is filled with a purer love and a worthier fear than anything in the world can inspire.

III. BALAK'S ALARM HAD NOT BEEN LOST NOR LESSENED BY THE LAPSE OF TIME. "These Israelites are not going to steal away my suspicions by their quietude. The less they look my way, the more sure I am they mean ultimate mischief." And yet what was Israel doing all this time of going to Balaam and returning and going again? Why, while Balak is in all this fret and stir, Israel is steadily preparing for the promised land. Whatever God's enemies may do in plot and counsel, let it not hinder our advance. Enemies outside cannot hinder, if only we, whom God has called and guided, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.—Y.

Vers. 22—35.—*The angel, the prophet, and the ass.* I. WE MUST LOOK NOT ONLY AT THE LETTER OF GOD'S COMMANDS, BUT THE SPIRIT OF THEM. "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them" (ver. 20). "God's anger was kindled because he went" (ver. 22). It has been said indeed that God was angry not because he went, but with something that happened on the journey; and to support this view grammatical considerations are urged, from the participle being used instead of the finite verb ('Keil and Delitzsch on the Pentateuch,' iii. 168. Clark's Translations). It is further urged, as a consequence of this construction, that the encounter with the angel took place not at the outset of the journey, but rather towards its close. All this may be true, but there is no distinct affirmation of it in the narrative and it is not necessary to assume it *for reconciling purposes.* There is no difficulty in admitting that God was displeased with Balaam because he went at all. We must not go by *words* simply. There is something, even in communications between men, which cannot be put into words. And just as the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are communications of the answering God which can be put in no human tongue. The obedient heart will distinguish between the permissive and the imperative, between the concession to human weakness and the call to holy duty. Those who want to be right with God, to attend to his will rather than their own desires, will never lift a permission into a command Our interpretations of God's words are a searching test of our spiritual state. How many jump at them to excuse self-indulgence, but conveniently ignore equally prominent words that call for self-denial. The word telling Balaam that he might go to Balak was not like the call to Abram to get out of his country and away from his kindred to a land *which the Lord would show him;* nor like the sending of Moses to Pharaoh, and Jonah to Nineveh.

II. BALAAM WAS GOING ON THIS EXPEDITION EVIDENTLY FULL OF THE DESIRES OF HIS OWN HEART. All, so far as he could see, was pointing in the way he wanted. He could plead God's permission, which was a very comfortable, not to say a necessary, beginning to one who was a prophet. As he rode along, his heart filled with expectation of the future—riches, honours, fame, power—an ample share in the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. God's permission may have seemed to the infatuated man a *clear indication of further favours.* If he allowed Balaam to have his own way in one thing, why not in others? Thus he had in view the possibility of exercising an extraordinary power, one that would make him famed and dreaded far and wide. It is something to make a man's heart swell when he can wield the immense forces of *nature,* say in the strength of a disciplined army, or of some huge steam-engine. But Balaam had in view the possibility of wielding forces *above nature,* cursing Israel so that its strength might utterly melt away. What wonder God was angry with him, seeing he had desires in his heart which could only be satisfied by accomplishing the ruin of the chosen race! Not that he deliberately desired their destruction; but selfishness in its blind absorption destroys with little scruple all that comes in its way. There is some parallel between Balaam and Paul, all the more striking because it extends only a little way. Paul set out for Damascus, like Balaam for Moab, his fanatical heart brimful of darling projects. Hence in both instances we see *special, extraordinary, and unfailing methods adopted to check the men and bring them to consideration.* Men who are in the ordinary paths of sin may be dealt with by ordinary methods, peculiar indeed to each individual, yet never rising above the ordinary experiences of humanity. But Balaam and Paul, being extraordinary transgressors, were dealt with by extraordinary methods. We do not expect sinners to be met by angels now, or to hear human speech from brute beasts. Still we may have this much in common with Balaam and Paul, that we may be so absorbed in our own things, so utterly careless of God, Christ, salvation, and eternity, as to require sharp, sudden, accumulated agencies to stir up our attention. It takes a great deal to bring some men to themselves.

III. THE PROCESS ADOPTED TO MAKE BALAAM FULLY CONSCIOUS OF THE WRATH OF GOD. 1. *The presence of an angel in front.* Why an angel? Why not communicate with Balaam as before? The answer is that Balaam did not appreciate such communications. He heard them indeed, but they did not lay hold of his conscience, they did not secure his obedience, they did not even make him think seriously of his danger. Hence the appearance of a visible sign in the angel—one who should equally speak the word of God *and be seen as he spoke.* We know that persons were greatly terrified and impressed by the visits of angels (Judges xiii.). Men can go about the world delighting in sin, unconscious that all the time they are in the presence of God himself, but let them see what seems an apparition from another world, and they tremble like the aspen. The disciples in their earlier, carnal-hearted days were not much affected by the holiness and spiritual beauty of their Master's life; but what an impression he made when they saw him walking on the sea! They thought it was an apparition. *So soon as Balaam perceived the presence of the angel* it brought him up at once. "He bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face." God makes use of visible agents to prepare results in the sphere of the invisible. And not only did an angel appear, *but he was right in front,* signifying that he was there to meet with Balaam. He had also *his sword drawn.* There was significance in meeting a messenger bearing a sword, but the drawing of the sword, even without a single word spoken, was the clearest possible intimation of opposition. The way of transgressors may be hard in more senses than one. How many persevere in the ways of sin in spite of urgent, repeated warnings and entreaties, everything short of physical force, from those who love and pity them! Such at all events cannot say that no one has cared for their souls. 2. *The extraordinary means by which God made Balaam to notice the angel.* Balaam would not attend to the warnings of an invisible God presented to the eye within, therefore a visible angel was sent to appeal through the eye without to the eye within. But though the angel was in front with the drawn sword, Balaam did not see him. *How then shall he be made to see him?* God, as his custom is, takes the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. He opens the mouth of the prophet's ass. Ridiculous! say

the men who will have no miracles, no admission of the supernatural; and ludicrous as well as ridiculous, seeing that it is an ass, of all animals, which is chosen to speak. But that is only because we associate Balaam with the despised and buffeted animal which the word "ass" recalls to us. We may be sure that a man of Balaam's dignity would have a beast to carry him such as became his dignity. And as to the absurdity of an animal uttering human speech, it is no harder to believe that God should here have opened the mouth of the ass, than that he should afterwards have opened the mouth of Balaam, *being such a man as he was*, to utter glorious predictions concerning the people whom it was in his heart to curse. If we were allowed to think of things as being either easy or difficult to God, we might say that it was more difficult for him to control the mouth of a carnal-minded man like Balaam than the mouth of a brute beast. It is not pretended that he changed the intellect and gave the ass human thoughts along with human speech. The words were the words of a man, but the thoughts were the thoughts of an ass. *Balaam himself was not astonished to hear it speak.* He was too much exasperated with the strange stubbornness of an animal hitherto so docile and serviceable, to notice the still stranger power with which it had been so suddenly endowed. Observe, again, *how naturally all leads up to the speaking of the ass.* The ass is not brought specially on the scene, as the angel was. Balaam saddles the ass, and takes the road on it in his customary way. At first there is nothing miraculous. The ass sees the angel, and turns aside into the field; there is nothing strange in that. Coming to the path of the vineyards, and still seeing the angel, it crushes Balaam's foot against the wall; there is nothing strange in that. Still advancing into the narrow place, and still seeing the angel, it sinks to the ground; there is nothing strange in that. The ass was in a strait before and behind, on the right side and on the left. Thus its speaking is prepared for as a climax. Accept the statement that the ass spoke, and all the previous narrative leads beautifully up to it. Deny the statement, and the chief virtue of the narrative is lost. 3. *Let us not fail to notice this instance of the lower creation recognising God's messenger.* The question of course suggests itself, Who was this angel? one of the unnamed host, or the Son of God himself in his old covenant guise? If the latter, then he who while in human flesh signified his will to the stormy sea might well signify his warning presence to the ass. Not that the ass knew the angel as a human being could; but even as the lower creation is sensible in its own way of the presence of man, so the ass might be sensible in its own way of the presence of the angel. We argue concerning the lower animals far more from ignorance and carelessly-accepted tradition than from real and discerning knowledge. We know positively nothing as to what sort of consciousness underlies the phenomena of their existence. We know wherein they are not like us, but what they are in themselves we cannot know. 4. *Every Balaam has his ass*, i. e. every man who has the spirit and conduct of Balaam in him may expect to be pulled up at last in like manner. What God made the ass to his master, that God makes their consciences to many. For a long time the ass had only been of ordinary and commonly-accepted use. Balaam had ridden on it ever since it was his, a long time we may conclude, and doubtless rejoiced in having so convenient and trustworthy a servant. And thus many find their consciences as little troublesome, as constantly agreeable, as the ass was to Balaam. Some sort of conscience they must have, but it amounts to nothing more than taking care to keep a reputation for honesty and respectability. They find such a conscience useful in its way, just as Balaam found his ass when out on soothsaying business. But even as the ass sees the angel, so *conscience begins to waken to nobler uses.* One gets out of the little world of mere give and take, business customs and local habits. Something suggests that we are in the wrong road, pulls us up for a moment, tries to turn us aside. In reality God is beginning to close with us for our own good. At first there is latitude, opportunity of evasion. We go a little further, and God comes closer. Onward still! and at last the soul cannot escape. Blessed is that man, blessed in his opportunity at all events, whose conscience, once the humble instrument of his baser self, is thoroughly roused so that it will not allow him further with its consent in his chosen and accustomed way. The crisis comes, and the question is, "Will you from the heart obey the Divine command, come in subjection to the angel of God, or go on greedily in the

way of unrighteousness, which you have been so clearly shown is also the way of destruction?"

IV. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROCESS IS SUCCESSFUL. 1. *Balaam is enlightened at last, but after all only partially enlightened.* At last, and only when forced to it, does he become aware of the angel's presence. And now he is quick enough and humble enough to recognise that presence, but not with the quickness and humility of a full repentance. *The Lord opened the eyes of Balaam*, even as he opened the eyes of the ass, but the opening left his disposition and wishes unchanged, even as it left the ass-nature unchanged. He saw the angel, the drawn sword, his danger at the moment, and the danger be bad been in before; but his folly, his duplicity, his covetousness, his spiritual danger he did not see. Then when his eyes were opened, and at the same time his ears unstopped, the angel goes on to speak to him such words as might bring him to a right state of mind. Nothing was left undone that could be done. The angel shows him plainly in what danger he had been from the first swerving of tbe ass, and how tbe ass was perhaps more aware of the master's danger and solicitous for his safety than was tbe master himself. Nothing but tbe sagacity and fidelity of the ass had saved his life. The ass was more faithful to its master than the master bad been to God. 2. *Hence, the enlightenment being partial, the confession is inadequate, indeed worthless.* "I have sinned." There are no more complaints against the ass; there is no extenuation with the lip; so far all is satisfactory. What is said is all right so far as it goes. The mischief is in what is left unsaid, because unthought. Balaam should have asked himself, "How is it that though my ass saw the angel, I did not?" His confession was lacking in that he did not say, "I have sinned because my heart has not been right. I have sinned in going on an expedition to glorify and enrich myself. I will turn back at once." The only thing of real use and worth in God's sight is a voluntary turning from the ways of sin. When the younger son came to himself, he did not say, "I will go back to my father *if he wishes me to go, if he will not let me stop where I am*," but definitely, "I will arise and go," &c. Therefore, in spite of the angel's presence, the drawn sword, the thrice intimation through the ass, in spite of all the words to make all plain, *Balaam goes on.* He may indeed plead God's permission, but this plea will avail him nothing. For himself it matters little now, seeing he is not one whit changed in heart, whether he goes forward or backward; any path that he takes is *downward.* If he returns to Pethor, it will not be to a life of true repentance. He is the same low-minded man wherever he is, and it matters little to himself whether he is destroyed in Pethor or in Moab. Let him then go forward into Moab, so that in his further descent and ultimate destruction he may at the same time be used for the glory of God. Even if he refuses a willing obedience, God may get gain out of him by an unwilling one.—Y.

Vers. 36—38.—*Balaam and Balak meet at last.* I. BALAK'S SOLICITUDE TO CONCILIATE BALAAM AND SHOW HIM HONOUR. Balak does not yet know what unhealed wounds may be in the prophet's pride, or whether that pride has been sufficiently pleased by tbe dignity of the second deputation and the extent of the promises it has made. He does all he can, therefore, to minister to Balaam's vanity. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. They will leave nothing undone to gain their ends; they will creep to reach them, if they cannot reach them standing erect. Balak goes to meet tbe prophet at the utmost border of bis land. It is a dangerous thing to offend the powerful ones of this world; tbey must be kept in good humour. How different from the spirit in wbich God would have us approach him or any one whom he may send! If he sends to bless us, it is because of our need; he is not a man, that he should be kept in a favourable disposition by our flatteries and fawnings. We need to remember this. Cornelius had a sincere desire to serve God, but very mistaken apprehensions in some respects of wbat God required, seeing how he fell before Peter's feet and worshipped him. Let us take heed lest in our anxiety to offer God what we think he wants we are found utterly insensible as to what he really wants. We cannot be too solicitous to please God, if only we are doing it according to his will; we cannot be too solicitous to conciliate men, if only we are doing it for their good. There is nothing degrading or unmanly,

nothing that compels cringing or obsequiousness, in the service of God. When we bow before the grandees and plutocrats of the world and watch their wishes as a dog the eyes of its master, then we are reptiles, not men. We must be all things to all men only when it will save them, not simply to advantage ourselves.

II. BALAAM AND BALAK MEET, IN SPITE OF ALL THE HINDRANCES PUT IN THE WAY. Balak of course has his own notion of these hindrances; he thinks they lay in Balaam's waiting for a sufficient inducement; and very likely he congratulates himself on his insight, his knowledge of the world, his pertinacity, his choice of agents, and of the right sort of bait to attract Balaam. Yet after all Balak had not the slightest idea of what great hindrances he had overcome. If he had known of God's interferences, he might have been prouder than ever; that is, if the knowledge of these interferences had not changed his pride to alarm. Balak's earnest sending had been more potent and fascinating than, in his greeting to Balaam, he unwittingly supposed. It had outweighed the direct commands of God, the mission of the angel, the influence of a very peculiar miracle and a very narrow escape from death. How much there must have been in Balaam's greedy heart to draw him on when even mighty and unusual obstacles like these could only stay him for a moment! Balak drew him because in his heart there was something to be drawn; and they came together as streams that, rising miles apart, and winding much through intervening lands, yet meet at last because each pursues its natural course. All the obstacles put in our way to perdition will not save us if we are bent on the carnal attractions to be found in that way. Drawing is a mutual thing. There was nothing in Balaam's heart to be drawn towards God. The hugest magnet will do no more than the least to attract another body to it unless in that body there is something to be attracted.

III. THE MEETING, AFTER ALL, DOES NOT SEEM A SATISFACTORY ONE. One would have thought that, after overcoming so many hindrances, these two kindred spirits would have met each other with cordial congratulations. But instead of this being so, Balak must show himself a little hurt with what he thinks Balaam's want of confidence in his word and prerogative as king. And though Balaam's difficulty has not lain in these things, he cannot explain the misunderstanding; he has to hear that word "wherefore" as if he heard it not. "Lo, I am come unto thee," that must be sufficient. And as to Balak's expectations, he can only fall back upon the old misleading generalities; he cannot meet the king with the open, eager, joyous countenance of one who sees success within his grasp. Balak, he sees, has more confidence in him than he can possibly have in himself, considering the strange things he has experienced since he set out on his journey. It is not even the proverbial slip between the cup and the lip that he has to prepare for. It is not the probability of success with the possibility of failure, but the strong probability of failure with just the possibility of success. "Have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." Not that we are to suppose Balak was unduly taken aback by such a want of ardour and sympathy in Balaam. Very likely he thought it was nothing more than a proper professional deference to Jehovah, and that in the event all would be right; just as men say "God willing" and "please God" when they are in the midst of schemes where God's will and pleasure are never thought of at all.—Y.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Balaam—the summons.* The story of Balaam is full of contrarieties. The pure faith and worship of Jehovah is seen coming into strange contact with the superstitions of heathenism; and as regards the personal character of Balaam, utterly discordant moral elements are seen struggling together in the same breast. The chief interest of the story centres in the moral phenomenon presented by the man himself—"that strange mixture of a man," as Bishop Newton well calls him. He was a heathen soothsayer, and yet had some real knowledge of God. He was under the influence of sordid passions, and yet was in personal converse with the Spirit of truth, and received from him, at least for the time, a real prophetic gift. He had no part or lot with the chosen people, but rather with their worst enemies, and yet his "eyes were opened," and he had very lofty conceptions of Israel's dignity and blessedness. His history has its clearly-marked stages. In this first stage we have the summons that came to him from Balak, and the answer he was constrained to send back to it. Note here—

I. HEATHEN FAITH IN THE UNSEEN. Balak in the extremity of his fear sends beyond the limits of his own people, into distant Mesopotamia, to secure the help of one supposed to be endowed with supernatural gifts, in special relation to the invisible powers, able to "curse and to bless" (ver. 6). A striking illustration of that blind instinct of human nature by virtue of which it believes ever in the interposition of Deity in the world's affairs. All idolatrous rites, oracles, divinations, incantations, sacerdotal benedictions and maledictions, rest ultimately on this basis. It is this makes the sway of the priest and the supposed "prophet of the Invisible" so mighty in every land and age. Christianity teaches us to lay hold on the substantial truth that underlies these distorted forms of superstition. It enlightens this blind instinct; reveals the righteous "God that judgeth in the earth;" leads humanity to Him who is at once its "Prophet, Priest, and King."

II. THE WITNESS FOR GOD THAT MAY BE FOUND IN THE SOUL OF A DEPRAVED MAN, even of one whose inward dispositions and whole habit of life are most opposed to his will. Balaam practised an art that was "an abomination unto the Lord" (Deut. xviii. 12), and his way was altogether "perverse" (ver. 32), and yet God was near to him. God spoke to him, and put the spirit of prophecy into his heart, and a word into his mouth. He "heard the words and saw the vision of the Almighty." Whether his knowledge of God was the result of dim traditions of a purer faith handed down from his forefathers, or of influences that had spread in his own time into the land of his birth, we at least see how scattered rays of Divine light then penetrated the deep darkness of heathendom. So now God is often nearer to men than we or they themselves suppose. He does not leave himself without a witness, even in the most ignorant and vile. The light in them is never totally extinguished. They have their gleams of higher thought, their touches of nobler, purer feeling. Conscience rebukes their practical perversity, and the Spirit strives with them to lead them into a better way. When God is absolutely silent in a man's soul, all hope of guiding him by outward persuasions into the path of righteousness is gone.

III. THE PROSTITUTION OF NOBLE POWERS TO BASE USES. Here is a man whose widespread fame was the result, probably, to a great extent of real genius. His native capacity—mental insight, influence over men, poetic gift—was the secret of this fame. Like Simon Magus, he "bewitched the people," so that they all "gave heed to him, from the least unto the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." But these extraordinary powers are perverted to the furtherance of an unhallowed cause; he makes them the servants of his own base ambition and desire for gain. "He loved the wages of unrighteousness." It was in his heart to obey the behest of Balak and secure the offered prize. There is a tone of disappointment in the words, "The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." He lets "I dare not" wait upon "I would." And notwithstanding all his poetic inspiration and his passing raptures of devout and pious feeling,

"Yet in the prophet's soul the dreams of avarice stay."

How full is all human history of examples of the waste of noble faculties, the prostitution to evil uses of God-given powers! The darkest deeds have ever been done and the deepest miseries inflicted on the world by those who were most fitted by nature to yield effective service to the cause of truth and righteousness, and to confer blessings on mankind. And it is generally some one base affection—the lust of the flesh, self-love, avarice, an imperious will, &c.—that turns the rich tide of their life in a false direction. As the spreading sails of a ship only hasten its destruction when the helm fails, so is it with the noblest faculties of a man when he has lost the guidance of a righteous purpose.

IV. THE DIVINE RESTRAINT OF MAN'S LIBERTY TO DO EVIL. "And God said, Thou shalt not go with them," &c. The spell of a higher Power is over him. In a sense contrary to that of Paul the Apostle, he "cannot do the thing that he would." So are wicked men often made to feel that there is after all a will stronger than their will; that, free as they seem to be, some invisible hand is holding them in check, limiting their range of action, thwarting their purposes, compelling them to do the very thing they would fain avoid, turning their curses into blessings, so that in the end they serve the cause they meant to destroy. The hope of the world lies in the

absolute mastery of the Will that is "holy, and just, and good" over all conceivable opposing forms of human and Satanic power.—W.

Vers. 31—35.—*Balaam—the arrest.* The secret willingness of Balaam to yield to the solicitations of Balak, seen at first in the tone of his answer, "The Lord refuseth," &c., was still more manifest in his parleying with the second appeal. Though he felt the resistless force of the Divine restraint, yet he delayed the return of the messengers for the night in hope of getting a reversal of the sentence (vers. 18, 19). No wonder God's anger was kindled against him, and that, though permission was at last given him to go, he was made in this startling way to feel that he was in the hands of a Power that would not be mocked. Whatever view we take of the strange incidents of this narrative, whether as objective realities, or as the visions of a trance, the moral lessons remain substantially the same. Three features of Balaam's conduct are specially prominent.

I. HIS CRUEL ANGER. His rough treatment of the dumb ass is marked with reprobation. It was both itself evil and the symptom of a hidden evil. 1. We may believe that the secret unrest of his conscience had a great deal to do with this outburst of anger. Note the subtle connection that often exists between certain unusual phases of conduct and the hidden workings of the heart. Jonah's anger at the withering of the gourd was but one of the signs of his general want of sympathy with the Divine proceedure. Balaam, perhaps, was not a cruel man, but the sense of wrong within and the feeling that he was doing wrong betrayed itself even in this form of behaviour. Conscience made him a coward, and cowardice is always cruel. If it had not been for the "madness" of his passion, he might have judged, as a diviner, that the unwillingness of the beast to pursue her journey counselled him to return; but when a man's heart is not right with God, resentment is often roused against that which is meant to turn him into a better way. "Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. iv. 16). 2. It illustrates the sad subjection of the inferior creatures to the curse of moral evil. "The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly." "The whole creation groaneth," &c. We think it strange that the dumb ass should "speak with man's voice and rebuke the prophet's madness," but, to the ear that can hear it, such a voice is continually going forth from all the innocent creatures that suffer the cruel consequences of man's abuse. Well may St. Paul represent them as "waiting with earnest expectation for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19, 22).

II. HIS BLIND INFATUATION. It is deeply significant that he should not have seen the angel. Even the poor dumb creature that he rode saw more than he did. It was his moral perversity, the frenzy of his carnal ambition, that was the true cause of the dulness of his spiritual vision. Note—1. Sin blinds men to the things that it is most needful for them to apprehend and know. Mental blindness often, not always, has a moral cause. "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing," &c. (Matt. xiii. 15). The highest spiritual truths, realities of the spirit world, tokens of the Divine presence and working, eternal moral laws, sacred responsibilities of life, &c.—all these are darkly hidden from him whose heart is "thoroughly set in him to do evil." 2. Even animal instinct is a safer guide than the moral sense of a bad man. It effectually warns of danger, and prompts to the pursuit of the good nature requires. It is to the animal a sufficient law. But when the "spirit in man, the inspiration of the Almighty that giveth him understanding," the sovereignty of reason and conscience, is overborne by base fleshly lust, man sinks lower than the brutes that perish. Their obedience to the law of their being puts him to shame. Though they "speak not with man's voice," their silent wisdom "rebukes him for his iniquity." "If the light that is in thee be darkness," &c. (Matt. vi. 23).

III. HIS HELPLESSNESS. This is seen—1. In his abject submission. "He bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face," saying, "I have sinned;" "now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." He must have known from the beginning that his obstinate self-will was displeasing to God, but now that the consequences of it stare him in the face he is filled with alarm. There are those who grieve over their sin only when it is found out. It is not the evil itself they dread, but only its discovery and punishment. Fear often makes men repent and reform

when there is no genuine abhorrence of wrong-doing. 2. In the Divine compulsion under which he is placed to pursue his journey. "Go with the men," &c. He would fain draw back, but it is too late now; he must do the work and bear the testimony that God has determined for him. When men are bent upon that which is evil, God often allows them to become entangled in circumstances of danger from which there is no escape, that "they may eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (Prov. i. 31).—W.

EXPOSITION.

BALAAM'S PROPHECIES (ch. xxii. 41—xxiv.). Ch. xxii. 41.—**The high places of Baal**, or "Bamoth-Baal." Perhaps the Bamoth mentioned in ch. xxi. 19, 20. This is, however, by no means certain, because high places were no doubt numerous, and that Bamoth would seem to have been too far from the present camp of Israel. In any case they crossed the Arnon, and ran some risk by adventuring themselves on hostile territory. **That thence he might see the utmost part of the people.** According to the quasi-sacramental character attributed to the cursing of a seer, it was held necessary that the subject of the curse should be in view. Balak desired to attain this object with as little risk as possible, and therefore he took Balaam first of all to these heights, whence a distant and partial view of Israel might be had.

Ch. xxiii. 1.—**Build me here seven altars.** According to the common opinion of the heathen, it was necessary to propitiate with sacrifices the God with whom they had to do, and if possible to secure his favourable consideration on their side. The number seven was especially connected with the revelation of the true God, the Creator of the world, and was probably observed here for this reason. The sacrifices were offered no doubt to Jehovah.

Ver. 3.—**Peradventure the Lord will come to meet me.** It might be concluded from ch. xxiv. 1 that Balaam went only to look for "auguries," *i. e.* for such natural signs in the flight of birds and the like as the heathen were wont to observe as manifestations of the favour or disfavour of God, the success or failure of enterprises. It seems clear that it was his practice to do so, either as having some faith himself in such uncertainties, or as stooping to usual heathen arts which he inwardly despised. But from the fact that God met him (we know not how), and that such supernatural communication was not unexpected, we may conclude that Balaam's words meant more for himself than the mere observance of auguries, whatever they may have meant for Balak. **To an high place.** Rather, "to a bald place" (שְׁפִי—compare the meaning of "Calvary"), from which the immediate prospect was uninterrupted.

Ver. 4.—**I have prepared seven altars.** Balaam, acting for the king of Moab, his heathen patron, in this difficult business, points out to God that he had given him the full quota of sacrifices to begin with. It was implied in this reminder that God would naturally feel disposed to do something for Balaam in return.

Ver. 7.—**Took up his parable.** מָשָׁל (cf. ch. xxi. 27). Balaam's utterances were in the highest degree poetical, according to the antithetic form of the poetry of that day, which delighted in sustained parallelisms, in lofty figures, and in abrupt turns. The "*mashal*" of Balaam resembled the "burden" of the later prophets in this, that it was not a discourse uttered to men, but a thing revealed in him of which he had to deliver himself as best he might in such words as came to him. His inward eye was fixed on this revelation, and he gave utterance to it without consideration of those who heard. **Aram**, *i. e.* Aram-Naharaim, or Mesopotamia (cf. Gen. xxix. 1; Deut. xxiii. 4). **Defy**, or "threaten," *i. e.* with the wrath of Heaven. **Jacob.** The use of this name as the poetical equivalent of Israel shows that Balaam was familiar with the story of the patriarch, and understood his relation to the people before him.

Ver. 9.—**The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned.** Rather, "It is a people that dwelleth apart, and is not numbered." It was not the outward isolation on which his eye was fixed, for that indeed was only temporary and accidental, but the religious and moral separateness of Israel as the chosen people of God, which was the very secret of their national greatness.

Ver. 10.—**The fourth part of Israel.** אֶת־רֹבַע is so rendered by the Targums, as alluding to the four great camps into which the host was divided. The Septuagint has δήμους, apparently from an incorrect reading. The Samaritan and the older versions, followed by the Vulgate, render it "progeny," but this meaning is conjectural, and there seems no sufficient reason to depart from the common translation. **Let me die the death**

of the righteous. The word "righteous" is in the plural (יְשָׁרִים, *δικαίων*): it may refer either to the Israelites as a holy nation, living and dying in the favour of God; or to the patriarchs, such as Abraham, the promises made to whom, in faith of which they died, were already so gloriously fulfilled. If the former reference was intended, Balaam must have had a much fuller and happier knowledge of "life and immortality" than the Israelites themselves, to whom death was dreadful, all the more that it ended a life protected and blessed by God (cf. *e. g.* Ps. lxxxviii. 10—12; Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19). It is hardly credible that so singular an anticipation of purely Christian feeling should really be found in the mouth of a prophet of that day, for it is clear that the words, however much inspired, did express the actual emotion of Balaam at the moment. It is therefore more consistent with the facts and probabilities of the case to suppose that Balaam referred to righteous Abraham (cf. Isa. xli. 2) and his immediate descendants, and wished that when he came to die he might have as sure a hope as they had enjoyed that God would bless and multiply their seed, and make their name to be glorious in the earth. **Let my last end be like his.** אַחֲרִית (last end) is the same word translated "latter days" and "latter end" in ch. xxiv. 14, 20. It means the last state of a people or of a man as represented in his offspring; the sense is not incorrectly expressed by the Septuagint, *γένοιτο τὸ σπέρμα μου ὡς τὸ σπέρμα τούτων.*

Ver. 13.—**Come . . unto another place.** Balak attributed the miscarriage of his enterprise thus far to something inauspicious in the locality. **Thou shalt see but the utmost part of them.** אֶפֶס קָצֵהוּ תִרְאֶה. Both the meaning of the nouns and the tense of the verb are disputed. By some "*ephes katsehu*" (the end of the last of them) is held equivalent to "the whole of them," which seems to contradict the next clause even if defensible in itself. The ordinary rendering is favoured by the Septuagint (*ἀλλ' ἢ μέρος τι αὐτοῦ ὄψει*) and by the Targums. On the other hand, some would read the verb in the present tense, and understand Balak's words to refer to the place they were leaving. This is in accordance with the statement in ch. xxii. 41, and it would certainly seem as if Balak and Balaam moved each time nearer to that encampment which was for different reasons the centre of attraction to them both.

Ver. 14.—**The field of Zophim,** *i. e.* of the watchers. Probably a well-known outlook. **To the top of Pisgah.** They followed apparently on the track of their enemies (see on ch. xxi. 20).

Ver. 15 —**While I meet the Lord yonder.** Rather, "and I will go and meet thus." וְאֵלְכָה כֹּה אִקָּרֶה. Balaam does not say whom or what he is going to meet, but from the use of the same term in ch. xxiv. 1 it is evident that he employed the language of soothsayers looking for auguries. He may have spoken vaguely on purpose, because he was in truth acting a part with Balak.

Ver. 20.—**I have received commandment to bless.** The word "commandment" is not wanted here. Balaam had received, not instructions, but an inward revelation of the Divine will which he could not contravene.

Ver. 21.—**He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob.** The subject of this and the parallel clause is left indefinite. If it is God, according to the A. V., then it means that God in his mercy shut his eyes to the evil which did exist in individuals, and for his own sake would not impute it to the chosen nation. If it be impersonal, according to the Septuagint and the Targums, "one does not behold iniquity," &c., then it means that the iniquity was not flagrant, was not left to gather head and volume until it brought down destruction. **Perverseness.** Rather, "suffering" (עָמָל. Septuagint, *πόνος*), the natural consequence of sin. Compare the use of the two words in Ps. x. 7; xc. 10. **The shout of a king is among them.** The "shout" (תְּרוּעָה) is the jubilation of the nation with which it acclaims its victor king (cf. 1 Sam. iv. 5, 6). In Levit. xxiii. 24; Ps. xlvii. 5 it is used of the sounding of the sacred trumpets.

Ver. 22.—**God.** אֵל, and also at the end of the next verse, and four times in the next chapter (vers. 4, 8, 16, 23). The use seems to be poetic, and no particular signification can be attached to it. **Brought them,** or, perhaps, "is leading them." So the Septuagint: *Θεὸς ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν αὐτόν.* **Unicorn.** Hebrew, רְאֵם. It is uniformly rendered *μονοκέρως* by the Septuagint, under the mistaken notion that the rhinoceros was intended. It is evident, however, from Deut. xxxiii. 17 and other passages that the reem had two horns, and that its horns were its most prominent feature. It would also appear from Job xxxix. 9—12 and Isa. xxxiv. 7 that, while itself untameable, it was allied to species employed in husbandry. The reem may therefore have been the aurochs or urus, now extinct, but which formerly had so large a range in the forests of the old world. There is some doubt, however, whether the urus existed in those days in Syria, and it may have been a wild buffalo, or some kindred animal of the bovine genus, whose size, fierceness, and length of horn made it a wonder and a fear.

Ver. 23.—**Enchantment,** נָחָשׁ. Rather, 'augury." Septuagint, *οἰωνισμός*. See on Levit. xix. 26, where the practice is forbidden to Israel. **Against Jacob,** or, "in Jacob," as the marginal reading, and this is favoured by the Septuagint and the Targums, and is equally true and striking. It was the proud peculiarity of Israel that he trusted not to any magic arts or superstitious rites, uncertain in themselves, and always leading to imposture, but to the direction and favour of the Almighty. **Divination.** קֶסֶם. Septuagint, *μαντεία*. The art of the soothsayer. **According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel.** Rather, "in season," *i.e.* in God's good time, "it shall be said to Jacob and to Israel." **What hath God wrought!** or, "what God doeth." The meaning seems to be that augury and divination were useless and vain in the case of Israel, because God himself declared and would declare his mighty acts in behalf of his people, and that by no uncertain vaticination, but by open declaration.

Ver. 24.—**As a great lion.** לָבִיא, generally translated "old lion," as in Gen. xlix. 9. By some it is rendered lioness (cf. Job iv. 11; Nahum ii. 12). **As a young lion.** אַרְיֵה, the ordinary term for a lion without further distinction. It is altogether fantastic to suppose that Balaam had just seen a lion coming up from the ghor of Jordan, and that this "omen" inspired his "*mashal*." The rising of a lion from its covert was one of the most common of the more striking phenomena of nature in those regions, and the imagery it afforded was in constant use; but in truth it is evident that these similes are borrowed from Jacob's dying prophecy concerning Judah (Gen. xlix. 9), in which the word "prey" (Hebrew, טֶרֶף, a torn thing) is also found. Balaam was acquainted with that prophecy, as he was with the promises made to Abraham (cf. ver. 10 with Gen. xiii. 16; xxviii. 14).

Ver. 27.—**I will bring thee unto another place.** At first (ver. 25) Balak had in his vexation desired to stop the mouth of Balaam, but afterwards he thought it wiser to make yet another attempt to change the mind of God; as a heathen, he still thought that this might be done by dint of importunity and renewed sacrifices.

Ver. 28.—**Unto the top of Peor.** On the meaning of Peor see on ch. xxv. 3. This Peor was a summit of the Abarim ranges northwards from Pisgah, and nearer to the Israelites. The adjacent village, Beth-Peor, was near the place of Moses' burial (Deut. xxxiv. 6). From the phrase used in Deut. iii. 29; iv. 46, with which the testimony of Eusebius agrees, it must have lain almost opposite Jericho on the heights behind the Arboth Moab. From Peor, therefore, the whole encampment, in all its length and breadth, would lie beneath their gaze. **Jeshimon.** See on ch. xxi. 20.

Ch. xxiv. 1.—**As at other times,** or, "as (he had done) time after time." Septuagint, *κατὰ τὸ εἰωθός*. **To seek for enchantments.** Rather, "for the meeting with auguries." לִקְרַאת נְחָשִׁים. Septuagint, *εἰς συνάντησιν τοῖς οἰωνοῖς*. *Nachashim*, as in ch. xxiii. 23, is not enchantments in the sense of magical practices, but definitely auguries, *i. e.* omens and signs in the natural world observed and interpreted according to an artificial system as manifesting the purposes of God. As one of the commonest and worst of heathen practices, it was forbidden to Israel (Levit. xix. 26; Deut. xviii. 10) and held up to reprobation, as in 2 Kings xvii. 17; xxi. 6; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. **Toward the wilderness.** הַמִּדְבָּר. Not "Jeshimon," but apparently the Arboth Moab in which Israel was encamped, and which were for the most part desert as compared with the country around.

Ver. 2.—**The spirit of God came upon him.** This seems to intimate a higher state of inspiration than the expression, "God put a word into his mouth" (ch. xxiii. 5, 16).

Ver. 3.—**Balaam . . hath said.** Rather, "the utterance of Balaam." נְאֻם is constantly used, as in ch. xiv. 28, for a Divine utterance, *effatum Dei*, but it does not by itself, apart from the context, claim a superhuman origin. **The man whose eyes are open.** הַגֶּבֶר שְׁתֻם הָעָיִן. The authorities are divided between the rendering in the text and the opposite rendering given in the margin סְתֻם is used in Dan. viii. 26, and שְׁתוּם in Lam. iii. 8, in the sense of "shut;" but, on the other hand, a passage in the Mishnah distinctly uses שׁתם and סתם in opposite senses. The Vulgate, on the one hand, has *obturatus;* the Septuagint, on the other, has *ὁ ἀληθινῶς ὁρῶν*, and this is the sense given by the Targums. Strange to say, it makes no real difference whether we read "open" or "shut," because in any case it was the inward vision that was quickened, while the outward senses were closed.

Ver. 4.—**Falling into a trance.** Rather, "falling down." *Qui cadit*, Vulgate. The case of Saul, who "fell down naked all that day" (1 Sam. xix. 24), overcome by the illapse of the Spirit, affords the best comparison. Physically, it would seem to have been a kind of catalepsy, in which the senses were closed to outward things, and the eyes open but unseeing. The word for "open" in this verse is the ordinary one, not that used in ver. 3.

Ver. 6.—**As the valleys,** or, "as the torrents" (נְחָלִים), which pour down in parallel courses from the upper slopes. **As gardens by the river's side.** The river (נָהָר, as in ch. xxii. 5) means the Euphrates. Balaam combines the pleasant imagery of his own cultivated land with that of the wilder scene amidst which he now stood. **As the trees of lign aloes.** אֲהָלִים. Aloe trees, such as grew in the further east, where Balaam had perhaps seen them. **Which the Lord hath planted,** or, "the Lord's planting," a poetical way of describing their beauty and rarity (cf. Ps. i. 3; civ. 16).

Ver. 7.—**He shall pour the water,** or, "the water shall overflow." **Out of his buckets.** דְּלָיו is the dual, "his two buckets." The image, familiar enough to one who lived in an irrigated land, is of one carrying two buckets on the ends of a pole which are so full as to run over as he goes. **And his seed . . in many waters.** It is uncertain in what sense the word "seed" is used. It may be an image as simple as the last, of seed sown either by or actually upon many waters (cf. Eccles. xi. 1), and so securing a plentiful and safe return; or it may stand for the seed, *i. e.* the posterity, of Israel, which should grow up amidst many blessings (Isa. xliv. 4). The former seems most in keeping here. **His king shall be higher than Agag.** Rather, "let his king be higher than Agag." The name Agag (אֲגַג, the fiery one) does not occur again except as the name of the king of Amalek whom Saul conquered and Samuel slew (1 Sam. xv.); yet it may safely be assumed that it was the official title of all the kings of Amalek, resembling in this "Abimelech" and "Pharaoh." Here it seems to stand for the dynasty and the nation of the Amalekites, and there is no reason to suppose that any reference was intended to any particular individual or event in the distant future. The "king" of Israel here spoken of is certainly not Saul or any other of the kings, but God himself in his character as temporal Ruler of Israel; and the "kingdom" is the kingdom of heaven as set forth by way of anticipation in the polity and order of the chosen race. As a fact, Israel had afterwards a visible king who overthrew Agag, but their having such a king was alien to the mind of God, and due to a distinct falling away from national faith, and therefore could find no place in this prophecy.

Ver. 8.—**And shall break their bones.** יְגָרֵם (cf. Ezek. xxiii. 34) seems to mean "crush" or "smash." The Septuagint has ἐμυελιεῖ, "shall suck out," *i. e.* the marrow, but the word does not seem to bear this meaning. **Pierce them through with his arrows,** or, "dash in pieces his arrows," *i. e.* the arrows shot at him. חִצָּיו יְמָחֵץ. The difficulty is the possessive suffix to "arrows," which is in the singular; otherwise this rendering gives a much better sense, and more in keeping with the rest of the passage. The image in Balaam's mind is evidently that of a terrible wild beast devouring his enemies, stamping them underfoot, and dashing to pieces in his fury the arrows or darts which they vainly launch against him (compare the imagery in Dan. vii. 7).

Ver. 9.—**A lion.** אַרְיֵ. **A great lion.** לָבִיא. See on ch. xxiii. 24, and Gen. xlix. 9. **Blessed is he that blesseth thee, &c.** In these words Balaam seems to refer to the terms of Balak's first message (ch. xxii. 6). Far from being affected by blessings and cursings from without, Israel was itself a source of blessing or cursing to others according as they treated him.

Ver. 12.—**Spake I not also.** This was altogether true. Balaam had enough of the true prophet about him not only to act with strict fidelity, as far as the letter of the command went, but also to behave with great dignity towards Balak.

Ver. 14.—**I will advertise thee.** אִיעָצְךָ has properly the meaning "advise" (Septuagint, *συμβουλεύσω*), but it seems to have here the same subordinate sense of giving information which "advise" has with us. The Vulgate here has followed the surmise of the Jewish commentators, who saw nothing in Balaam but the arch-enemy of their race, and has actually altered the text into "dabo consilium quid populus tuus populo huic faciat" (cf. ch. xxxi. 16).

Ver. 16.—**Knew the knowledge of the Most High.** Septuagint, *ἐπιστάμενος ἐπιστήμην παρὰ Ὑψίστου.* This expression alone distinguishes this introduction of Balaam's *mashal* from the former one (vers. 3, 4), but it is difficult to say that it really adds anything to our understanding of his mental state. If we ask when Balaam had received the revelation which he now proceeds to communicate, it would seem most natural to reply that it was made known to him when "the Spirit of God came upon him," and that Balak's anger had interrupted him in the midst of his *mashal*, or possibly he had kept it back, as too distasteful to his patron, until he saw that he had nothing more to expect from that quarter.

Ver. 17.—**I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh.** Rather, "I see him, but not now: I behold him, but not near" (אֲרָאֶנּוּ . . . אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ) exactly as in ch. xxiii. 9). Balaam does not mean to say that he expected himself to see at any future time the mysterious Being of whom he speaks, who is identical with the "Star"

and the "Sceptre" of the following clauses; he speaks wholly as a prophet, and means that his inner gaze is fixed upon such an one, with full assurance that he exists in the counsels of God, but with clear recognition of the fact that his actual coming is yet in the far future. **There shall come a Star out of Jacob.** Septuagint, *ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον*. It may quite as well be rendered by the present; Balaam simply utters what passes before his inward vision. The star is a natural and common poetic symbol of an illustrious, or, as we say, "brilliant," personage, and as such recurs many times in Scripture (cf. Job xxxviii. 7; Isa. xiv. 12; Dan. viii. 10; Matt. xxiv. 29; Philip. ii. 15; Rev. i. 20; ii. 28). The celebrated Jewish fanatic called himself Barcochab, "son of the Star," in allusion to this prophecy. **A Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.** This further defines the "star" as a ruler of men, for the sceptre is used in that sense in the dying prophecy of Jacob (Gen. xlix. 10), with which Balaam was evidently acquainted. Accordingly the Septuagint has here *ἀναστήσεται ἄνθρωπος*. **Shall smite the corners of Moab.** Rather, "the two corners" (dual), or "the two sides of Moab," *i. e.* shall crush Moab on either side. **And destroy all the children of Sheth.** In Jer. xlviii. 45, where this prophecy is in a manner quoted, the word קָרְקַר (*qarqar*, destroy) is altered into קָדְקֹד (*quadqod*, crown of the head). This raises a very curious and interesting question as to the use made by the prophets of the earlier Scriptures, but it gives no authority for an alteration of the text. The expression בְּנֵי־שֵׁת has been variously rendered. The Jewish commentators, followed by the Septuagint (*πάντας υἱοὺς Σήθ*) and the older versions, understand it to mean the sons of Seth, the son of Adam, *i. e.* all mankind. Many modern commentators, however, take שֵׁת as a contraction of שְׁאֵת (Lam. iii. 47—"desolation"), and read "sons of confusion," as equivalent to the unruly neighbours and relations of Israel. This, however, is extremely dubious in itself, for שֵׁת nowhere occurs in this sense, and derives no support from Jer. xlviii. 45. It is true that בְּנֵי שֵׁת is there replaced by בְּנֵי שְׁאוֹן, "sons of tumult," but then this very verse affords the clearest evidence that the prophet felt no hesitation in altering the text of Scripture to suit his own inspired purpose. If it be true that קָרְקַר will not bear the meaning given to it in the Targums of "reign over," still there is no insuperable difficulty in the common rendering. Jewish prophecy, from beginning to end, contemplated the Messiah as the Conqueror, the Subduer, and even the Destroyer of all the heathen, *i. e.* of all who were not Jews. It is only in the New Testament that the iron sceptre with which he was to dash in pieces the heathen (Ps. ii. 9) becomes the pastoral staff wherewith he shepherds them (Rev. ii. 27—*ποιμανεῖ*, after the Septuagint, which has here misread the text). The prophecy was that Messiah should destroy the heathen; the fulfilment that he destroyed not them, but their heathenism (cf. *e. g.* Ps. cxlix. 6—9 with James v. 20).

Ver. 18.—**Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies.** Seir (Gen. xxxii. 3), or Mount Seir (Gen. xxxvi. 8), was the old name, still retained as an alternative, of Edom. It is uncertain whether the rendering "for his (*i. e.* Edom's) enemies" is correct. The Hebrew is simply אֹיְבָיו, which may stand in apposition to Edom and Seir, "his enemies," *i. e.* the enemies of Israel. So the Septuagint, Ἡσαῦ ὁ ἐχθρὸς *αὐτοῦ*. **Shall do valiantly,** or, "shall be prosperous" (cf. Deut. viii. 17; Ruth iv. 11).

Ver. 19.—**Shall come he that shall have dominion.** וְיֵרְדְּ. Literally, "one shall rule," the subject being indefinite. **Of the city.** מֵעִיר; not apparently out of any city in particular, but "out of any hostile city." The expression implies not only conquest, but total destruction of the foe.

Ver. 20.—**He looked on Amalek.** This looking must have been an inward vision, because the haunts of the Amalekites were far away (see on Gen. xxxvi. 12; Exod. xvii. 8; Numb. xiv. 25, 45). **The first of the nations.** Amalek was in no sense a leading nation, nor was it a very ancient nation. It was indeed the very first of the nations to attack Israel, but it is a most arbitrary treatment of the words to understand them in that sense. The prophet Amos (vi. 1) uses the same expression of the Jewish aristocracy of his day. As it was in no better position than Amalek to claim it in any true sense, we can but suppose that in either case there is a reference to the vainglorious vauntings of the people threatened; it would be quite in keeping with the Bedawin character if Amalek gave himself out be "the first of nations."

Ver. 21.—**He looked on the Kenites.** This *mashal* is excessively obscure, for both the subject of it and the drift of it are disputed. On the one hand, the Kenites are mentioned among the Canaanitish tribes that were to be dispossessed, in Gen. xv. 19; on the other, they are identified with the Midianitish tribe to which Hobab and Raguel belonged, in Judges i. 16, and apparently in 1 Sam. xv. 6 (see on ch. x. 29). It has been supposed that the friendly Kenites had by this time left the camp of Israel and established them-

selves by conquest in the south of Canaan, and even that they had occupied the territory and taken the name of the original Kenites of Gen. xv. 19. This, however, is a mere conjecture, and a very improbable one. That a weak tribe like that of Hobab should have done what Israel had not dared to do, and settled themselves by force of arms in Southern Palestine, and, further, that they should be already known by the name of those whom they had destroyed, is extremely unlikely, and is inconsistent with the statement in Judges i. 16. **And thou puttest thy nest in a rock.** Rather, "and thy nest laid (שָׁים) upon a rock." We do not know where the Kenites dwelt, and therefore we cannot tell whether this expression is to be understood literally or figuratively. If the Canaanitish tribe is here spoken of, it is very likely they had their residence in some strong mountain fastness, but if the Midianitish tribe, then there is no reason to suppose that they had crossed the Jordan at all. In that case the "nest" must be wholly figurative, and must refer to that strong confidence which they placed in the protection of the God of Israel.

Ver. 22.—**Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted.** כִּי אִם־יִהְיֶה לְבָעַר קָיִן. Rather, "Kain shall surely not be wasted." כִּי אִם is of doubtful meaning, but it seems here to have the force of a negative question equivalent to a negation. Kain is mentioned in Josh. xv. 57 as one of the towns of Judah, but there is little reason to suppose that an insignificant village is here mentioned by name. Probably "Kain" stands for the tribe-father, and is simply the poetical equivalent of Kenite. **Until** עַד־מָה. There is some uncertainty about these two particles, which are sometimes rendered "how long?" In the sense of "until" they are said to be an Aramaism, but this is doubtful.

Ver. 23.—**When God doeth this.** Literally, "from the settling of it by God." מִשֻּׂמוֹ אֵל, *i. e.* when God shall bring these terrible things to pass. Septuagint, ὅταν θῇ ταῦτα ὁ θεός. This exclamation refers to the woe which he is about to pronounce, which involved his own people also.

Ver. 24.—**Chittim.** Cyprus (see on Gen. x. 4). The "isles of Chittim" are mentioned by Jeremiah (ii. 10) and by Ezekiel (xxvii. 6) in the sense apparently of the western islands generally, while in Dan. xi. 30 "the ships of Chittim" may have an even wider reference. Indeed the Targum of Palestine makes mention of Italy here, and the Vulgate actually translates "venient in trieribus de Italiâ." There is, however, no reason to suppose that Balaam knew or spoke of anything further than Cyprus. It was "from the side of" (מִיַּד) Cyprus that the ships of his vision came down upon the Phœnician coasts, wherever their original starting-point may have been. **Shall afflict,** or, "shall bring low." The same word is used of the oppression of Israel in Egypt (Gen. xv. 13). **Eber.** The Septuagint has here Ἑβραίους, and is followed by the Peschito and the Vulgate. It is not likely, however, that Balaam would have substituted "Eber" for the "Jacob" and "Israel" which he had previously used. The Targum of Onkelos paraphrases "Eber" by "beyond the Euphrates," and that of Palestine has "all the sons of Eber." From Gen. x. 21 it would appear that "the children of Eber" were the same as the Shemites; Asshur, therefore, was himself included in Eber, but is separately mentioned on account of his fame and power. **And he also shall perish for ever.** The subject of this prophecy is left in obscurity. It is difficult on grammatical grounds to refer it to Asshur, and it does not seem appropriate to "Eber." It may mean that the unnamed conquering race which should overthrow the Asian monarchies should itself come to an end for evermore; or it may be that Balaam added these words while he beheld with dismay the coming destruction of his own Shemitic race, and their final subjugation by more warlike powers. It must be remembered that the Greek empire, although overthrown, did not by any means "perish for ever" in the same sense as the previous empires of the East.

Ver. 25.—**And returned to his place.** וַיָּשָׁב לִמְקֹמוֹ. It is doubtful whether this expression, which is used in Gen. xviii. 33 and in other places, implies that Balaam returned to his home on the Euphrates. If he did he must have retraced his steps almost immediately, because he was slain among the Midianites shortly after (ch. xxxi. 8). The phrase, however, may merely mean that he set off homewards, and is not inconsistent with the supposition that he went no further on his way than the head-quarters of the Midianites. It is not difficult to understand the infatuation which would keep him within reach of a people so strange and terrible.

NOTE ON THE PROPHECIES OF BALAAM.

That the prophecies of Balaam have a Messianic character, and are only to be fully understood in a Christian sense, seems to lie upon the face of them. The Targums of Onkelos and Palestine make mention of King Meshiha here, and the great mass of Christian interpretation has uniformly followed in the track of Jewish tradition. It is of course possible to get rid of the prophetic element altogether by assuming that the utterances of Balaam were either composed or largely interpolated after the events to which they seem to refer. It would be necessary in this case to bring their real date down to the period of the Macedonian conquests, and much later still if the Greek empire also was to "perish for ever." The difficulty and arbitrary character of such an assumption becomes the more evident the more it is considered; nor does it seem consistent with the form into which the predictions are cast. A patriotic Jew looking *back* from the days of Alexander or his successors would not call the great Eastern power by the name of Asshur, because two subsequent empires had arisen in the place of Assyria proper. But that Balaam, looking *forward* down the dim vista of the future, should see Asshur, and only Asshur, is in perfect keeping with what we know of prophetic perspective,—the further off the events descried by inward vision, the more extreme the foreshortening,—according to which law it is well known that the first and second advents of Christ are inextricably blended in almost every case.

If we accept the prophecies as genuine, it is, again, only possible to reject the Messianic element by assuming that no Jewish prophecy overleaps the narrow limits of Jewish history. The mysterious Being whom Balaam descries in the undated future, who is the King of Israel, and whom he identifies with the Shiloh of Jacob's dying prophecy, and who is to bring to nought all nations of the world, cannot be David, although David may anticipate him in many ways; still less, as the reference to Agag, Amalek, and the Kenites might for a moment incline us to believe, can it be Saul. At the same time, while the Messianic element in the prophecy cannot reasonably be ignored, it is obvious that it does not by any means exist by itself; it is so mixed up with what is purely local and temporal in the relations between Israel and the petty tribes which surrounded and envied him, that it is impossible to isolate it or to exhibit it in any clear and definite form. The Messiah indeed appears, as it were, upon the stage in a mysterious and remote grandeur; but he appears with a slaughter weapon in his hand, crushing such enemies of Israel as were then and there formidable, and exterminating the very fugitives from the overthrow. Even where the vision loses for once its local colouring in one way, so that the King of Israel deals with all the sons of men, yet it retains it in another, for he deals with them in wrath and destruction, not in love and blessing. There is here so little akin to the true ideal, that we are readily tempted to say that Christ is not here at all, but only Saul or David, or the Jewish monarchy personified in the ruthlessness of its consolidated power. But if we know anything of the genius of prophecy, it is exactly this, that the future and the grand and the heavenly is seen through a medium of the present and the paltry and the earthly. The Messianic element almost always occurs in connection with some crisis in the outward history of the chosen people; it is inextricably mixed up with what is purely local in interest, and often with what is distinctly imperfect in morality. To the Jew—and to Balaam also, however unwillingly, as the servant of Jehovah—the cause of Israel was the cause of God; he could not discern between them. "Our country, right or wrong," was an impossible sentiment to him, because he could not conceive of his country being wrong; he knew nothing of moral victories, or the

triumphs of defeat or of suffering; he could not think of God's kingdom as asserting itself in any other way than in the overthrow, or (better still) the annihilation, of Moab, Edom, Assyria, Babylon, Rome, the whole world which was not Israel. The sufferings of the vanquished, the horrors of sacked cities, the agonies of desolated homes, were nothing to him; nothing, unless it were joy—joy that the kingdom of God should be exalted in the earth, joy that the reign of wickedness should be broken.

All these feelings belonged to a most imperfect morality and we rightly look upon them with horror, because we have (albeit as yet very imperfectly) conformed our sentiments to a higher standard. But it was the very condition of the old dispensation that God adopted the then moral code, such as it was, and hallowed it with religious sanctions, and gave it a strong direction God-ward, and so educated his own for something higher. Hence it is wholly natural and consistent to find this early vision of the Messiah, the heaven-sent King of Israel, introduced in connection with the fall of the petty pastoral state of Moab. To Balaam, standing where he did in time and place, and all the more because his personal desires went with Moab as against Israel, Moab stood forth as the representative kingdom of darkness, Israel as the kingdom of light. Through that strong, definite, narrow, and essentially imperfect, but not untrue, conviction of his he saw the Messiah, and he saw him crushing Moab first, and then trampling down all the rest of a hostile world. That no one would have been more utterly astonished if he had beheld the Messiah as he was, is certain; but that is not at all inconsistent with the belief that he really prophesied concerning him. That he should put all enemies under his feet was what Balaam truly saw; but he saw it and gave utterance to it according to the ideas and imagery of which his mind was full. God ever reveals the supernatural through the natural, the heavenly through the earthly, the future through the present.

It remains to consider briefly the temporal fulfilments of Balaam's prophecies.

Moab was not apparently seriously attacked until the time of David, when it was vanquished, and a great part of the inhabitants slaughtered (2 Sam. viii. 2). In the division of the kingdom it fell to the share of Israel, with the other lands beyond Jordan, but the vicissitudes of the northern monarchy gave it opportunities to rebel, of which it successfully availed itself after the death of Ahab (2 Kings i. 1). Only in the time of John Hyrcanus (B.C. 129) was it finally subdued, and ceased to have an independent existence.

Edom was also conquered for the first time by David, and the people as far as possible exterminated (1 Kings xi. 15, 16). Nevertheless, it was able to shake off the yoke under Joram (2 Kings viii. 20), and, although defeated, was never again subdued (see on Gen. xxvii. 40). The prophecies against Edom were indeed taken up again and again by the prophets (*e. g.* Obadiah), but we must hold that they were never adequately fulfilled, unless we look for a spiritual realisation not in wrath, but in mercy. The later Jews themselves came to regard "Edom" as a Scriptural synonym for all who hated and oppressed them.

Amalek was very thoroughly overthrown by Saul, acting under the directions of Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 7, 8), and never appears to have regained any national existence. Certain bands of Amalekites were smitten by David, and others at a later period in the reign of Hezekiah by the men of Simeon (1 Chron. iv. 39—43).

The prophecy concerning the Kenites presents, as noted above, great difficulty, because it is impossible to know certainly whether the older Kenites of Genesis or the later Kenites of 1 Samuel are intended. In either case, however, it must be acknowledged that sacred history throws no light whatever on the fulfilment of the prophecy; we know nothing at all as to the fate of this small clan. No doubt it ultimately

shared the lot of all the inhabitants of Palestine, with the exception of Judah and Jerusalem, and was transplanted by one of the Assyrian generals to some far-off spot, where its very existence as a separate people was lost.

The "ships from the side of Cyprus" clearly enough represent in the vision of Balaam invaders from over the western seas, as opposed to previous conquerors from over the eastern deserts and mountains. That the invasion of Alexander the Great was not actually made by the way of Cyprus is nothing to the point. It was never any part of spiritual illumination to extend geographical knowledge. To Balaam's mind the only open way from the remote and unknown western lands was the waterway by the sides of Cyprus, and accordingly he saw the hostile fleets gliding down beneath the lee of those sheltering coasts towards the harbours of Phœnicia. Doubtless the ships which Balaam saw were rigged as ships were rigged in Balaam's time, and not as in the time of Alexander. But the rigging, like the route, belonged to the local and personal medium through which the prophecy came, not to the prophecy itself. As a fact it remains true that a maritime power from the West, whose home was beyond Cyprus, did overwhelm the older power which stood in the place and inherited the empire of Assyria. Whether the subsequent ruin of this maritime power also is part of the prophecy must remain doubtful.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 41—ch. xxiv.—*Balaam and his prophecies.* The prophecies of Balaam were the utterances of a bad man deeply penetrated by religious ideas, and inspired for certain purposes by the Spirit of God; hence it is evident that many deep moral and spiritual lessons may be learnt from them, apart from their evidential value as prophecies. Consider, therefore, with respect to *the moral character and conduct of Balaam*—

I. THAT BALAK AND BALAAM THOUGHT TO MOVE THE GOD OF ISRAEL BY IMPORTUNITY, OR PERHAPS TO GET THE BETTER OF HIM BY CONTRIVANCE; hence Balak repeatedly shifted his ground and brought Balaam to another point of view. Even so do ungodly men imagine that the immutable decrees of right and wrong may somehow be changed in their favour if they use sufficient perseverance and address. By putting moral questions in many different lights, by getting their outward or inward adviser to look at them from diverse points of view, they think to make right wrong, and wrong right. With what insensate perseverance, *e. g.*, do religious people strive, by perpetually shifting their ground, to force the Almighty to sanction in their case that covetousness which he has so unmistakably condemned.

II. THAT BALAAM CLEARLY HINTED TO THE ALMIGHTY THAT, AS HE HAD PROCURED MUCH HONOUR FOR HIM FROM BALAK, HE WAS EXPECTED TO DO WHAT WAS POSSIBLE IN THE MATTER FOR HIM. Even so do men who are in truth irreligious, although often seeming very much the reverse, give the Almighty to understand (indirectly and unavowedly, but unmistakably) that they have done much, laid out much, given up much for his honour and glory, and that they naturally look for some equivalent. To serve God for nought (Job i. 9) does not enter into the thoughts of selfish people; to them godliness is a source of gain (1 Tim. vi. 5), if not here, then hereafter.

III. THAT BALAAM WAS MOVED TO WISH HE MIGHT DIE THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT WAS NOT DISPOSED TO LIVE THE LIFE OF THE RIGHTEOUS; hence his wish was as futile as the mirage of the desert, and was signally reversed by the actual character of his end. Even so do evil men continually desire the rewards of goodness, which they cannot but admire, but they will not submit to the discipline of goodness. A sentimental appreciation of virtue and piety is worse than useless by itself.

IV. THAT BALAAM RECEIVED NO REWARD FROM BALAK BECAUSE HE HAD NOT CURSED ISRAEL, AND NONE FROM GOD BECAUSE HE HAD WISHED TO CURSE HIM. Even so it is with men whose religious feelings restrain, but do not direct, their lives. They miss the rewards of this world because they are outwardly conscientious, and the rewards of the next world because they are inwardly covetous.

V. THAT BALAAM RETURNED TO HIS PLACE, *i. e.* he went back, as it seemed, to his old home and his old life on the banks of Euphrates; in truth "he went to his own place" (Acts i. 25), for he rushed blindly on destruction, and received the recompense of death.

Consider again, with respect to *the sayings of Balaam*—

I. THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO CURSE WHOM GOD HATH NOT CURSED. There is in fact but one curse which there is any reason to dread, and that is "Depart from me." Any malediction of men, unless it be merely the echo of this upon earth, spoken with authority, does but fall harmless, or else recoil upon him that utters it.

II. THAT THE SINGULAR GLORY OF ISRAEL WAS HIS SEPARATENESS—a separateness which was outwardly marked by a sharp line of distinction from other peoples, but was founded upon an inward and distinctive holiness of life and worship. Even so is the glory of the Church of Christ and of each faithful soul to be "separate from sinners," as was Christ. And this separation must needs be outwardly marked in many ways and in many cases (1 Cor. v. 11; 2 Cor. vi. 17); but its essence is an inward divergence of motive, of character, and of condition before God. To be "even as others" is to be the "children of wrath" (Ephes. ii. 3); to be Christians is to be "a peculiar people" (Titus ii. 14). If men cannot bear to be peculiar, they need not look to be blessed; if they must adopt the fashions of this world, they must be content to share its end (Gal. i. 4; 2 Tim. iv. 10; 1 John ii. 15—17).

III. THAT THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS BLESSED AND AN OBJECT OF DESIRE in a far higher sense than Balaam was able to comprehend. It may appear to the foolish that the life of the righteous is full of sadness, but none can fail to see that his death is full of immortality, that he is in peace by reason of a good conscience, and in hope of glory by reason of the sure mercies of God.

IV. THAT THE LATTER END OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS MORE BLESSED AND DESIRABLE THAN HIS DEATH; for this is to live again, and to live for ever, and to inherit eternity of bliss in exchange for a few short years of strife and patience.

V. THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR MAN TO REVERSE THE BENEDICTIONS WHICH GOD HAS PRONOUNCED UPON HIS PEOPLE. This has been tried by Balaam, and by very many since, but to no effect. The blessings which we are called to inherit, as set forth in the New Testament, will certainly hold good in every age and under all circumstances. No matter what the world may say, or we be tempted to think, the "poor" and the "meek" and the "merciful" and the "persecuted for righteousness' sake" will always be "blessed," in spite of all appearances to the contrary.

VI. THAT GOD DOTH NOT BEHOLD INIQUITY IN HIS PEOPLE. Not that it doth not exist (as it existed then in Israel), but because it is not imputed to them that repent and believe in Christ Jesus. God doth not behold sin in the faithful soul, because he regards it not in its own nakedness, but as clothed with the righteousness of Christ, which admits not any spot or stain (Gal. iii. 27; Philip. iii. 9; Rev. iii. 18). And this non-imputation of sin is not arbitrary now (as it was to a great degree in the case of Israel), because it is founded upon a real and living union with Christ as the source of holiness. There is a *spiritual* unity of life with him (John iii. 5; vi. 57; xv. 4; Gal. ii. 20; Ephes. v. 30), and there is a consequent *moral* unity of life with him (Col. iii. 3; 1 John ii. 6; iii. 3; iv. 17, &c.), which is only slowly and partially attained in this life; but it hath pleased God for the sake of the spiritual unity to regard the moral unity as though it were already achieved, and therefore he imputeth not sin to them that "walk in the light" (1 John i. 7).

VII. THAT IF THE LORD OUR GOD BE WITH US, THEN THE SHOUT OF A KING IS AMONG US, *i. e.* the joyful acclamation of them that welcome the King who never fails to lead them to victory. And this is one note of the faithful, that they rejoice in their King (Ps. cxlix. 2, 5, 6; Matt. xxi. 9; Philip. iv. 4), and that gladness is ever found in their hearts (Rom. xiv. 17) and praise in their mouths (Acts xvi. 25; Heb. xiii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 9; and cf. Eph. v. 18—20).

VIII. THAT NO MAGICAL INFLUENCE CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR AGAINST THE RIGHTEOUS. If they fear God they need not fear any one else (Luke xii. 4, 5; Rom. viii. 38, 39). Superstitious fears are unworthy of a Christian. But note that, according to the other rendering of ch. xxiii. 23, the spiritual meaning is that the

faithful have no need of, and no resort to, any such uncertain and unauthorised pryings into the unseen and unrevealed as superstition and irreligion do ever favour. Here is a warning against all the arts of so-called "spiritualism," which (if it be not wholly an imposture) is rank heathenism and abominable to God. If the gospel be true, then we have all the light we need for our present path, and we have the assurance of all the light we could desire in our future home (John viii. 12; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 John iii. 2).

IX. THAT THE CAMP OF ISRAEL WAS LOVELY IN THE EYES OF THE PROPHET NOT SO MUCH BY REASON OF ITS SIZE, AS BECAUSE OF THE ORDER AND METHOD WITH WHICH IT WAS LAID OUT—like the cultivated gardens of the East. Even so is the order Divinely imparted to the Church its chiefest beauty. It is not its mere size, in which indeed it is inferior to some false religions, but its unity in the midst of variety, its coherence side by side with manifold distinctions, which stamps it as a thing of heavenly origin and growth. The highest art of the gardener is to allow to each tree the fullest liberty of individual growth, while arranging them for mutual protection and for beauty of effect; even so is the art of the Divine Husbandman (John xv. 1) with the trees which he hath planted in his garden.

X. THAT THE FUTURE PROSPERITY OF ISRAEL WAS SPOKEN OF BY BALAAM UNDER TWO FIGURES—OF OVERFLOWING BUCKETS USED IN IRRIGATION, AND OF SEED SOWN BY MANY WATERS. Even so the prosperity of the Church has a twofold character: it stands partly in the diligent and ample watering of that which is already sprung up, which is her pastoral work; partly in the widespread sowing by many waters, far and near, which is her missionary work.

XI. THAT THE CHURCH OF GOD IS NOT AFFECTED BY THE BLESSING OR CURSING, THE GOOD OR EVIL WILL OF MEN, BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IS THE SOURCE OF BLESSING OR CURSING TO THEM; according as they treat her, so must they fare themselves. For since Christ hath loved her and given himself for her (Ephes. v. 25), his interests and hers are all one, and howsoever we act towards the Church, he taketh it unto himself (cf. Matt. xxv. 40, 45).

Consider again, with respect to *the enterprise of Balaam*—

I. THAT BALAAM WAS HIRED TO CURSE ISRAEL, BUT WAS CONSTRAINED TO BLESS HIM ALTOGETHER (cf. Deut. xxiii. 5; Josh. xxiv. 10; Micah vi. 5). Even so all the efforts of the world to cast infamy and odium upon the Church are turned backward, unless indeed she is untrue to herself. No weapon is forged against her more terrible than the interested enmity of gifted and intellectual men, which often promises to succeed where brute force is powerless; but even this cannot prosper. It is often the policy of the world to assail religion by religious influences, but God overrules this also. Gifts which are truly of his giving cannot be really turned against him or his.

II. THAT GOD'S PURPOSES AND PRONOUNCEMENTS CONCERNING HIS CHURCH ARE ETERNAL AND IMMUTABLE, SINCE HE CANNOT DENY HIMSELF, NOR GO BACK FROM HIS WORD. The future of his Church is perfectly safe and absolutely unassailable, because it depends not on any human counsel or constancy, but upon the eternal predestination and changeless will of God.

Consider again, with respect to *that which Balaam spake by the Spirit of God*—

I. THAT BALAAM HAD A VISION OF CHRIST HIMSELF, *i. e.* of a mysterious Being, a King of Israel, exalted and extolled, and very high, whom the Jews believed, and we know, to be the Christ. Even so all true prophecy looks on, more or less consciously, to him in whom all the promises of God are Amen (2 Cor. i. 20), and in whom all the gifts of God to men are concentrated. The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus (Rev. xix. 10), because there was nothing else really worth prophesying.

II. THAT BALAAM SAW HIM UNDER THE EMBLEMS OF A STAR AND OF A SCEPTRE. Even so the Lord is both a luminary (Luke ii. 32; 2 Pet. i. 19; Rev xxii. 16) and a ruler (Luke i. 33; Heb. i. 8; Rev. xii. 5) for ever.

III. THAT BALAAM SAW HIM AS A DESTROYER, CRUSHING THE ENEMIES OF GOD AND OF HIS PEOPLE. And this is at first sight strange, because he came not to destroy

men's lives, but to save them. But as it is quite naturally explained from a moral point of view when we take into account the moral ideas of Balaam's age, so it is found perfectly true in a spiritual sense when we consider what the work of Christ really is. For that work is indeed a work of destruction: he came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John iii. 8); he came to destroy—not men, but—all that is sinful in men; not the enemies of God (for God has no enemies among men), but all in men which is inimical to him and to his truth. Hence he is ever represented as a destroyer in the Apocalypse, which reverts to the imagery of the Old Testament (Rev. vi. 2; xix. 11, 13, 15, &c.). And this aspect of his work, which is true and necessary, and is jealously guarded as his in Holy Scripture, ought not to be set aside or obscured by the gentler and pleasanter aspects of his reign. That he must put all enemies under his feet is the first law of his kingdom, and must somehow or other be brought to pass in us, as in others.

IV. THAT BALAAM SAW (ACCORDING TO HIS DAY) THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD UNDER THE SEMBLANCE OF MOABITES, EDOMITES, AMALEKITES, KENITES, AND ASSYRIANS. And these may be interpreted in a spiritual sense as typifying the different forms in which a common hostility to the truth of Christ displays itself. In Moab we may see the hostility of cunning, which fears an open contest, but enlists the intellect and craft of others on its side; in Edom the hostility of insolent opposition, which loses no opportunity of inflicting annoyance and injury; in Amalek we may see vainglorious anger, which resents pretensions greater than its own, and rushes upon a hopeless conflict; in the Kenites we may see confidence in earthly strength, and in a lodgment so naturally strong as to defy all assaults; in Asshur we have the embodiment of brute force brutally used. If, however, the Kenites were the friends, not the foes, of Israel, then we may see in them how vain is the self-confidence even of religious people in any advantages of position or circumstance. The Kenites are not known to have provoked God, as Israel did, and their abode was peculiarly inaccessible and defensible; nevertheless, they too fell victims to Assyria, at the very time perhaps when Hezekiah and Jerusalem escaped.

V. THAT BALAAM WAS STRUCK WITH FEAR WHEN HE FORESAW THESE DESTRUCTIONS EXTENDING EVEN TO HIS OWN PEOPLE. Who shall live? In the crash of these great contending world-powers who could hope to escape? How much more may evil men fear "when God doeth this" which he hath so clearly foretold! And not evil men only, but all who are not in the truest sense of the Israel of God (1 Pet. i. 17; iv. 17, 18; 2 Pet. iii. 11).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 8.—*The safety of all who enjoy the blessing of God.* God's "defiance" the signal of destruction; God's "curse," fatal. But if protected from these we are safe, for "the curse causeless cannot come." We are safe from—1. Malicious designs. *E. g.* Balaam's wish to curse; the plot of the Jews to stone Paul at Iconium (Acts xiv. 5), and to assassinate him at Jerusalem (Acts xxiii.). 2. Words of execration. *E. g.* Shimei (2 Sam. xvi.); the blasphemies spoken against Christ, and the libels uttered against his people (Matt. x. 24—26). 3. Witchcraft and divination. In reply to all such foolish fears let it suffice to say, "I believe in God" (Isa. viii. 13, 14; 1 Pet. iii. 13). 4. Assaults and all violence. *E. g.* the various attempts to seize or kill Jesus Christ when "his hour was not yet come." When the hour for suffering "as a Christian" is come, "let him glorify God" (1 Pet. iv. 12—16). Such calamities are not "curses" from God, and God can change all other curses into blessings, as in the case of Balaam (Deut. xxiii. 5). 5. Every kind of persecution (Rom. viii. 35—39). The devil's curse is a *telum imbelle;* his defiance an empty threat. The objects of God's care are invincible, if not invulnerable (Isa. liv. 17).—P.

Ver. 19.—*The unchangeable faithfulness of God.* Two truths are suggested in contrast. I. IT IS NATURAL TO MEN TO CHANGE THEIR MIND AND BREAK THEIR WORD. 1. They repent, *i. e.* they change their mind, frequently, hastily, because of ignorance, or short-sightedness, or prejudice, or narrow-mindedness. Picture a man,

fickle, irresolute, and therefore "unstable" (James i. 8). When he does not repent it may be a sign of obstinacy rather than of laudable firmness (Jer. viii. 6). 2. They lie. Children of Satan (John viii. 44), often trained from childhood in ways of falsehood (Ps. lviii. 3), they help to undermine the foundations of society (Isa. lix. 13—15), and to tempt truthful men to universal distrust (Ps. cxvi. 11). Such men are apt to think that God is like themselves, changeable and unfaithful. They project an image of themselves, like idolaters, and call it God (Ps. cxv. 8). *E. g.* Balak (vers. 13, 27), and Balaam himself at first (ch. xxii. 8, 19).

II. IT IS "IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD TO LIE." Some of God's threats and promises are conditional, though in form they may seem absolute. *E. g.* Numb. xiv. 11, 12; Ezek. xxxiii. 12—20. But others are fixed and absolute. We see this in—1 Threats. *E. g.* exclusion of Hebrews from Canaan (ch. xiv. 20—22); Saul's loss of the kingdom (1 Sam. xv. 22—29); exclusion of the impure from heaven (Heb. xii. 14; Rev. xxi. 27). Hence learn the folly of those who hope that God may change his mind, while theirs is unchanged; that God may repent instead of themselves. (Illustrate from Simon Magus, who desired to escape God's wrath while he gave no hint of abandoning his sins—Acts viii. 24.) 2. Promises. *E. g.* (1) To Abraham, hundreds of years before (Gen. xii. 1—3). Therefore Balaam says, vers. 19, 20. So we may trace the effects of the promise down to the latest of the Old Testament prophets (Mal. iii. 6) and the greatest of the Christian apostles (Rom. xi. 28, 29). (2) To believers in Christ. Because with God there is "no variableness," &c., therefore we have "strong consolation," &c. (Heb. vi. 18, 19; James i. 17), and hope of the fulness of "eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised," &c. (Matt. xxiv. 35; Titus i. 2). (3) To suppliants who claim God's promises. God can as soon cease to exist as refuse to "make good" any promise claimed with faith through Jesus Christ our Lord.—P.

Ver. 39—ch. xxiii. 12.—*The first prophecy.* I. THE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS. 1. *The sacrifices.* Balak and Balaam, however different their thoughts in other respects, were agreed as to the necessity of the sacrifices, if the desired curse were to be put in the prophet's mouth. And so there was abundance of sacrificing. Balak first makes spontaneous offerings, and then such as were specified by Balaam. They felt that God was not to be approached in an irregular way or with empty hands. As Balak thought of Balaam, so he thought of God. The prophet was to be bought with riches and honours, and God was to be bought with sacrifices of slain beasts. Here then is this common element in the practice of two men so different in other respects. It is in Aram and Moab alike. The tradition of Abel's accepted offering has come down far and wide, so that both men are found feeling that such sacrifices were in some way acceptable to God. But the faith and spirit of Abel could not be transmitted along with the knowledge of his outward act. These men did not understand that these sacrifices were worthless in themselves. God is a Spirit, and cannot eat the flesh of bulls and drink the blood of goats. Shedding of blood was for the remission of sins, and these men neither felt sin, confessed it, nor desired the removal of it. 2. *The sight of the people to be cursed.* The king took the prophet into the high places of Baal, that he might see the utmost part of the people. Very likely Balak himself had not seldom stood there, and gone down again each time more alarmed than ever. Balaam must now see these dreadful people, to satisfy himself that it was neither a trifling nor a needless work he had been called to do; to see how close at hand they were, and to be impressed with the necessity of making the curse potent, speedy, and sure. Added to which, Balak probably believed that, for the curse to operate, Balaam's eyes must rest on the people. Lane in his 'Modern Egyptians' tells us how dreaded is the evil eye. Here then Balaam looked on these people in something of their wide extent. What an opportunity for better thoughts if the spirit that brings them had been in his heart! How he might have said, "Have I been called then to blast this mighty host, who have now lain so long in such close neighbourhood to Balak, yet harmed him not?" 3. *The prophet has his own special preparations.* While Balak attends to the sacrifices, Balaam retires to his secret enchantments (ch. xxiv. 1) in some high, solitary place. God did choose that his servants should go into such places to meet with him alone, but how differently

Balaam looks here from Moses going up into Sinai, or Elijah when he went his day's journey into the wilderness, or Ezekiel when he heard the Lord say, "Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk to thee" (Ezek. iii. 22); above all, from Jesus, in those solitary, refreshing, blessed hours of which we have some hints in the Gospels! How far this retirement was sincere, how far it was meant to deceive Balak, and how far it was mere habit, we cannot tell. The conscience that is well-nigh dead to practical righteousness, to justice, compassion, and truth, may yet be in an everlasting fidget with superstitious fear.

II. THE UNEXPECTED RESULT. 1. *To Balaam.* The whole of what happened may not have been unexpected. The meeting with God he certainly would be prepared for. He had met with God only too often of late, and not at all to his peace of mind and the furtherance of his wishes. We may conclude that God allowed him to go through with his enchantments, else he would hardly have gone to repeat them a second time (cf. ch. xxiii. 15 and xxiv. 1). And perhaps the very fact that there was no interruption to his enchantments may have lifted his mind in hope that God was at last going to be propitious. If so it was but higher exaltation in order to deeper abasement. God meets with him, puts a word in his mouth, and commands him thus to speak with Balak. Are we to understand that by having the word put into his mouth, Balaam there and then had all the prophecy clearly before his mind, so that he could consider every word he had presently to utter? Possibly so. And it is possible also that as he went back to Balak he considered how he could trim this prophecy, as previously he had trimmed the commands of God. And now comes something for which, with all his assertions of only being able to speak the word God put in his mouth, *Balaam was probably quite unprepared.* He gets no chance of exerting his skill to trim and soften down unacceptable words. God assumes perfect control of those rebellious, lying lips. God, who opened the mouth of an ass and made it utter human speech, now opens the mouth of one whose heart was ready to deceive and curse, and makes that mouth to utter truth and blessing. 2. *To Balak.* The words of the prophecy must have been utterly unexpected by him. He had counted with all confidence on getting what he wanted. Not a shadow of doubt had crossed his mind as to Balaam's power to curse and his own power to buy that power. Hardly a more impressive instance could be found of a man given over to strong delusion, to believe a lie. Counting on the curse as both attainable and efficacious, he now finds to his amazement, horror, and perplexity that Balaam cannot even speak the words of cursing; for doubtless when the Lord took possession of Balaam's mouth he took possession also of eyes, expression, tone, gesture, so that there would be no incongruity between the words and the way in which they were uttered.

III. THE PROPHECY ITSELF. 1. *A clear statement of how these two men come to be standing together.* Balak brings Balaam all this long way in order to curse Jacob and defy Israel. The object of all these messages and these smoking sacrifices is stated in naked and brief simplicity. There is no reference to motives, inducements, difficulties. The simple historical fact is given without any note or comment; the request of Balaam mentioned, in order that it may be clearly contrasted with the reason why it is refused. 2. *Balaam is forced into a humiliating confession.* What he had so long concealed, as dangerous to his reputation, he must now publish from the high places of Baal. And notice that he confines himself to saying that the required curse and defiance are impracticable. No more is put into his mouth than he is able truthfully to say. Glorious as this prophecy is, one might imagine it being made more glorious still by the mingling with it of a penitent, candid confession of wrong-doing. He might have said, "Balak hath brought me," &c., and surely God would not have sealed his lips if it had been in his heart to add, "I bitterly repent that I came." He might have said, "How can I curse whom God hath not cursed? and indeed I discovered this long ago, but pride and policy kept the discovery confined within my own breast." And so we see how, while God kept Balaam from uttering falsehood, and forced him to utter sufficient truth, yet Balaam *the man* remained the same. He says no more than he is obliged to say, but it is quite enough; with his own lips he publishes his incapacity to the world. 3. *The very place of speaking becomes subservient to the purpose of God.* We may presume that Balak well knew

he was taking Balaam to the most favourable view-point. It was thought to be the best place for cursing, and from what Balaam now sees and says it would seem to be a very fit place for blessing. 4. And now, as Balaam looks from the top of the rocks and from the hills, *what does he see?* He may have been struck even already, and at that distance, and before he began the prophecy, with the outward peculiarities of Israel. Some peculiarities of Israel could only be known by a close and detailed inspection; others, *e. g.* the arrangement of the camp around the tabernacle, were best known by a sort of bird's-eye view. An intimate knowledge of London is only to be gained by going from street to street and building to building, but one thus gaining a very intimate knowledge of London would yet be without such an impression of it as is to be got from the top of St. Paul's. As Balaam looks down from the tops of the rocks he sees enough for the present purposes of God. He sees enough to indicate the *separation* and the *vast numerical force of Israel.* It was not needful here to speak of more. The immediate purpose of the prophecy was served if it deterred Balak from further folly. A great deal more might have been said of Israel, and was said afterwards. In one sense this was an introductory prophecy, followed up by fuller revelations in later ones; in another sense it stands by itself. The others would not have been spoken if the first had proved sufficient. Passing over the concluding wish of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" which demands to be considered by itself, we note—5. *The state of suspense in which the prophecy leaves Balak as to his own position.* It would have been so easy to introduce a reassuring word—one which, if it did not actually take away Balak's alarm, would at all events have been fitted to do so. But the king's request had something so peremptory and dictatorial about it that God's answer is confined to a refusal. He might have explained that Israel was now busy with its own internal affairs, and would soon, according to his purpose, cross Jordan, and that in the mean time, if Balak would show himself friendly, there was nothing in Israel to make it his foe. But Balak had so acted that the great thing to be done was to impress him with a deep sense of the strength and security of Israel. If we prefer unreasonable and arrogant requests, we must expect to receive answers which, if we were uneasy before, will leave us more uneasy still. God must go on speaking and acting so as to shake the ground under all selfishness.—Y.

Ver. 10.—"*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*" *The secret of Israel's prosperity.* This certainly appears an extraordinary wish when we bear in mind the position and character of the man who uttered it. Any one taking these words on his lips, and thereby making them his own, would inevitably direct our attention to his life, and compel us to consider what he might be doing to make the wish a reality. From the time of his first entrance on the scene Balaam unconsciously reveals his *character.* He could not by any stretch of the word be described as a good man; the whole narrative is little but an illustration of his duplicity, selfishness, vanity, greed of gain and glory, and utter disregard of the plain commandments of God. The *position* of Balaam at this particular time is also to be remembered. He has been called to curse, twice pressed to make a long journey for this special purpose; he has offered sacrifices and sought enchantments to secure it; and yet he not only fails to curse, but, more than that, is compelled to bless; and, last of all, to crown the reversal of what had been so carefully prepared for, he is heard expressing an emphatic wish that he himself might be found among this blessed people.

I. CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT THESE WORDS OF BALAAM DISCONNECTED FROM ALL THEIR ORIGINAL CIRCUMSTANCES. Consider them as placed before some one who knew neither the character nor position of Balaam as the speaker, nor the position of Israel as the nation referred to. Let him know simply that these words were spoken once upon a time, and ask him to imagine for himself the scene in which they might be *fitly spoken.* Whither then would his thought be turned? Would it not be to some aged believer, gradually sinking to rest, with the experience that as the outward man decayed, the inward man was renewed from day to day, and with the conviction that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord; looking forward from time into eternity, according to the familiar illustration, as being "but

a going from one room into another." Such would be the view suggested by the term "righteous," and the person expressing the wish would seem to be some studious, susceptible observer, with frequent opportunities for observation, who had been impressed by the reality and the superlative worth of the experience on which he had gazed. Then let such a one as we have supposed be confronted *with these original circumstances*. How perplexed he would be when told that the words were spoken *by* such a man as Balaam appears in the narrative, and *of* a people that had done such things as are recorded in the Book of Numbers! These words, looked at in a particular light, might be taken as indicating deep spiritual convictions and earnest, faithful life on the part of whoever speaks them. But we are bound to look at them now in the light of Balaam's character, and in the light also of Israel's past career.

II. CONSIDER THE ACTUAL EXTENT OF BALAAM'S WISH. He wishes to die the death of the righteous. Do not be misled by the prominence of the word "righteous" into supposing that for its own sake Balaam cared about righteousness. It was not righteousness that he desired, but what he saw to be the pleasant, enviable effects of righteousness. He cared nothing about the cause if only he could get the effects. He loved the vine because it produced grapes, and the fig-tree because it produced figs, but if he could have got grapes from thorns and figs from thistles, he would have loved thorns and thistles just as well. *We have God revealing to an ungodly man as much as an ungodly man can perceive of the blessedness of the righteous.* Balaam was entirely out of sympathy with the purposes of God. He showed by the best of all evidence that he would have nothing to do with righteousness as a state of heart, habit of conduct, and standard in all dealings with God and men. But though Balaam did not appreciate the need of righteousness, he did appreciate happiness, and that very warmly, in his own carnal way. He saw in Israel everything a man could desire. To have Balaam uttering this wish was as emphatic a way as any God could have taken to show Balak his favour to Israel. Not only from the top of the rocks does the prophet see the separated and multitudinous people, which in itself was enough to drive Balak to unfavourable inferences, but so desirable does the state of the people appear, that Balaam cannot help wishing it were his own. God had told him at first "the people are blessed," and now, as soon as he sees them, God also makes the greatness of the blessedness sufficiently manifest even to his carnal and obscured heart.

III. THUS WE SEE THE DEEP IMPRESSION WHICH THE BLESSED LIFE OF GOD'S PEOPLE IS CAPABLE OF MAKING ON THE UNGODLY. Those who as yet have no sympathy with righteousness may have a keen desire for security, joy, and peace, and a keen perception of the fact that these somehow belong to real believers in Christ. It is a characteristic of the Scriptures, and a very notable and important one, that many of the appeals found in it are to what seem comparatively low motives. Has it not indeed been made a charge against Christian ethics that they make so much of rewards and punishments? But surely this is the very wisdom of God to draw men by inducements suitable to their low and miserable state, to promise joy to the joyless, peace to the distracted, security to the fearful, life to the dying. Certainly Christ the Saviour can do nothing for us as long as we remain impenitent, unbelieving, and unreconciled, but in his mercy he speaks first of all in the most general and sympathetic terms concerning our needs. The most comprehensive invitation the Saviour ever gave runs thus: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Not a word there of conviction of sin, wrath of God, need of righteousness, need of saving faith! Is it by accident that the first psalm begins with a reference to happiness? The sermon on the mount starts with this as the very beginning of Christ's teaching: "Men are unhappy; how can they find and keep blessedness, real happiness?" Suppose a man who has no experimental knowledge of the saving power of Christ, reading through the promises of the New Testament and the actual experiences therein recorded; suppose him to see that if words count for anything, godliness is indeed profitable for the life that now is. Would it be anything strange for such a man to say, "If righteousness brings such effects as these, then let *me* die the death of the righteous"? Appealing to high motives alone would be all very well if those appealed to were unfallen spirits

or perfected saints; but men being what they are, God does not esteem it too great a condescension to draw them to himself by the promise of blessedness, high, peculiar, rich, and lasting.

IV. GOD GIVES HERE THROUGH BALAAM A CLEAR INDICATION OF HOW THIS DESIRABLE BLESSEDNESS COMES. Israel is not only the happy people, but the righteous people. Righteousness brings the happiness, and is the condition and the guarantee of its continuance. Wherever there is righteousness there is an ever-living and ever-fruitful cause of blessedness. The presence of this righteousness as essential is still more clearly indicated in the next prophecy: "God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob." That is the great difference between Israel and Moab. Moab is not without its possessions and treasures, its carnal satisfactions; Moab has much that it thinks worth fighting for; it has honours and rewards to offer Balaam such as have brought him all this way to utter, if he can, a curse against Israel. But Moab is not righteous, and the sight of its happiness will never provoke such a wish as Balaam's here.

V. THIS BRINGS US TO CONSIDER THE PECULIAR WAY IN WHICH THE WISH IS EXPRESSED. "Let me *die the death* of the righteous, and let *my last end* be like his!" This is as comprehensive a way as was possible at the time of stating the blessedness of the righteous. Life and immortality were not yet brought to light. To die the death of the righteous was a very emphatic way of indicating the present life of the righteous in all its possible extent. No matter how long that life may stretch, it is one to be desired. "The righteous goes on as far as I can see him," Balaam seems to say, "and comes to no harm." The blessedness of God's people, if only they observe the requisite conditions, is a continuous, unbroken experience: not an alternation of oases and deserts. The fluctuations in that blessedness, the flowing and ebbing tides, come from defects in ourselves. Where there is the fulness of faith, prayer, and humility there surely will be the fulness of blessedness also. Then also, when we consider what Christ has shown us by his own experience of *what lies beyond death;* when we consider his own personal triumph, and the definite, unhesitating way in which a blessed resurrection is assured to his followers, and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, we see *a great prophetic importance* in this particular mode of expression: "Let me die the death." Balaam's wish in the very form of it, so peculiar, and we may even say at first so startling, expressed far more than he had any possible conception of. Death stands crowning with one hand the temporal life of the righteous, and with the other opening to him the pure fulness of eternity.

VI. It is very important to notice that by the reference to Israel as the righteous AN UNERRING INDICATION IS GIVEN AS TO WHERE RIGHTEOUSNESS IS TO BE FOUND. Not they who call themselves righteous, but whom God calls righteous, are the people whose death one may desire to die. The true Israelite is he who fulfils the law and the prophets, as he is called to do and made competent to do by the fulness of that Holy Spirit which is given to every one who asks for him. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." There is a worthless and deceiving righteousness which excludes from the kingdom of heaven, though the scribes and Pharisees, its possessors, make much of it. There is also a righteousness to be hungered and thirsted after (Matt. v.). We must be careful in this matter, lest we spend money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not (Isa. lv. 2). God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, for where he beholds iniquity the seed of Jacob is assuredly absent. Those who have learned the corruption and deception, the necessary ignorance and incapacity, of the unrenewed heart, and thereby been impelled to seek and enabled to find renewal, life and light from on high, and holy principles and purposes for their future course, they are the righteous. Israel born of the flesh exists but as the type. We must not limit our view by him. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. iii. 9).—Y.

Vers. 13—26.—*The second prophecy. Balak's state of mind.* Balaam has cursed where he was expected to bless, he has said things very hard to listen to and keep presence of mind, but Balak has not by any means lost faith in Balaam and his

resources. He rather takes the blame to himself than to Balaam. If there be wrath in his heart with the speaker, who, instead of cursing Israel, has blessed it altogether, he manages to conceal the wrath. He cannot afford to quarrel with Balaam, the only known resource he has. He suggests, therefore, as the great cause of failure that the place of cursing has been badly chosen. Remove the cause, and the effect will disappear. Let the prophet come away from the top of the rocks to where his mind will not be filled with the presence of this bewildering multitude; and Balaam, whatever his private thoughts, consents to the experiment. It is the way of the blind, deluded world; all reasons for failure are accepted and acted on save the right one. Balak cannot yet see, will not see for a while, perhaps will never really see, that there is no place on earth where such requests can be granted. He is showing himself now, as Balaam had done before, unsatisfied with the *first intimation*. Balaam had been told plainly at the very first that Israel was blessed, yet here he is dabbling in superstitions, in enchantments and divinations, with no clear perception of the nature and character of God. Thus, all the narrative through, we see what egregious and scarcely credible blunders men make when they are left to themselves to make discoveries of God. What a proof that revelation in all the large extent of its Scriptural fulness is absolutely indispensable! God must not only give us the truth concerning himself, and the proper relation of men to him, but must also open our hearts and our eyes, and give us light whereby we may see the truth already given. How constantly we should remember the inevitable ignorance of those to whom gospel truth, light, and perceptive power have not yet penetrated! Take pity on them and help them—such darkened minds—as you think of Balak stumbling from one blunder to another, from one discredited resource to another, from one disappointment to another, only to find at last that all his schemes are vanity. And now we advance *to consider the second prophecy*. It is not only spoken in Balak's hearing, but is a direct appeal to himself. We are to imagine Balak standing with strained and eager look, already full of excitement and expectation, before ever a word is spoken. But this is not enough; he must be solemnly exhorted to attention. "Things are about to be said directly concerning you, and it may be that when you have heard them, and allowed them to have full effect on your mind, you will cease from these foolish attacks on the established purpose and counsel of Jehovah." That this call upon Balak for attention was not a superfluous one is shown by the fact, that after hearing the prophecy he nevertheless made a third attempt, modified indeed, but still such as to show that he had not taken in the prophecy to anything like its full extent. We know how the Scriptures abound in expressions of which "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," and "Verily, verily, I say unto you," are representative. Such expressions do not make truth any truer, but they do throw on us a great responsibility, and involve us in unquestionable blame for neglect of the things which belong to our salvation.

I. THE PROPHECY BEGINS BY CORRECTING BALAK'S FATAL MISAPPREHENSIONS CONCERNING GOD. Balak having failed the first time he tried Balaam, succeeded the second; having failed the first time he tries Jehovah, it is natural for him to think he may succeed the second. Hitherto he has known only the idols of Moab, and these of course only in such aspects as the priests presented them. As the priests were, so were the gods; and Balak, having experienced Balaam's final compliance, might excusably argue from Balaam to that Being whom he took to be Balaam's God. And now there falls out of a holier sphere some unexpected and much-needed knowledge for poor Balak, whose chief experience had been of equivocating, vacillating, unstable men. "God is not what you think him to be; he is true and steadfast, neither changing his purposes nor failing in them." Notice the way in which this all-important statement is put. God puts himself in contrast with his fallen, unfaithful, and disgraced creature, man. "God is not a man;" and, as if to emphasise this matter, he speaks the word of truth concerning his own truth through lying lips. "Men change their minds, and therefore break their words; they lie because they repent." What a hint then for us all to change from deceitful hearts to sincere ones, from lying lips to truthful ones, from vain purposes that must some day be relinquished, engendered as they are in our own selfishness and folly, to such purposes as

are inspired by the unchanging God himself! Changing thus, we shall get into a state partaking somewhat of God's own steadfastness; or, rather, the only change will be from good to better and better to best. Man may become such that it shall no longer be his reproach that he lies, either carelessly, ignorantly, or maliciously, and repents, playing the weathercock to every wind that blows. God, we may be sure, desires the day to come when, instead of finding in man this awful and humiliating contrast to himself, he will rather be able to say, "Man is now true, clear from all belief in lies, from all deception and evasion, and steadfast in all the ways of righteousness, holiness, and love.

II. THE PROPHECY GOES ON TO REVEAL STILL MORE OF ISRAEL'S STRENGTH. The unchangeable God, having purposed to bless Israel, must go on blessing them. He does it in word continually through the great official channel (ch. vi. 22—27), and now it is Balaam's lot (strange expositor of the Divine goodness!) to show clearly that the blessing of God is anything but a nominal or a secondary one. Much has been done to show this in the first prophecy, but a great deal more is done in the second. God has not only put Israel by themselves and made them into this vast multitude, which was a great deal to do, for Jacob's posterity is likened to the dust in number; but now through Balaam he shows *quality* as well as *quantity*. The people are not only separated outwardly and visibly, but separated still more by some great peculiarity in their inward life. Their vast numbers are but the most easily perceptible result of the vigorous, abundant vitality within. When Balaam got his first glance from the top of the rocks he saw the most obvious fruit of Israel's peculiar relation to God. Now in the second survey he comes as it were nearer, and sees the root and trunk and branches, the sap and substance whence these fruits take their origin. 1. *There is the righteousness of the people.* God, who searches into all secrets, and to whom the darkness and the light are both alike, has beheld no iniquity in Jacob, no wrong in Israel; that is to say, putting the thing plainly, there was no iniquity in Jacob. And though it seems a strange thing to say, considering God's late dealings with the people, we feel at once that it must not only be true, but very important, or it would not be put so prominently forward. God looks upon the ideal Israel which lies yet undeveloped in the midst of all the unbelief and carnality of the present generation. Though at the present moment any dozen Israelites might be as debased as any dozen Moabites, yet in Israel there was a seed of holiness, a sure beginning of the perfect and the blessed, which was not to be found anywhere in Moab. God, bear in mind, sees what we cannot see. God is not a man, that he should lie; neither is he a man that his eye should be stopped by the surface and first appearance of things. Jesus sought a solid ground for the future of his saving work in the world, and he found it not amidst the world's wisdom, but where we assuredly should never have looked—among the stumbling, ignorant disciples whom he gathered in Galilee. Looking with other eyes than men, and where proud men never look, he finds what they never find. 2. *There is the presence of God with them*, and that not only as God, but as King. "When you attack Israel, O Balak, you attack the kingdom of God. You, the king of Moab, appeal to the King of Israel to curse his own people." His sanctuary is also his throne, and where he is worshipped, there he also rules. Every act of worship is also an expression of loyalty. Balak described Israel as a people come out of Egypt (ch. xxii. 5); he is now to learn that they came because they were brought; because that very God brought them whose curse he had so laboriously and patiently sought to invoke. "Does it stand to reason, O Balak, that God can have brought them so far now to leave them for the sake of your sacrifices and Balaam's enchantments?" Thus also we may gather that as God in all the fulness of his being, Father, Son, and Spirit, has so long given his indubitable presence to his Church, he will assuredly for this very reason continue it to the end. God indeed looks on that Church in its actual coldness, indolence, and carnality,—and the Israel of God to-day is quite as far away from the fulness of its privileges, the perfection of its faith, and the exactness of its service as was Israel in the wilderness,—but he regards the ideal still. It is through the believers in Christ alone, the spiritual children of the faithful Abraham, that the nations are to be truly blessed. The ideal believer is the ideal man. Where the faithful

and true God finds germs of faithfulness and truth in man, there he will abide and never depart. 3. *There is strength for all required service and toil.* "He hath as it were the strength of the unicorn (or buffalo)." "Much increase is by the strength of the ox" (Prov. xiv. 4), but an animal stronger even than the ordinary ox is needed to set forth the extent of Israel's advantages. We may take it that the figure here is intended to set forth strength pure and simple. Israel will have power to do whatever the course of events may bring to be done. It is strong *to do God's work* as long as it is left to the peaceful pursuit of that work, and it is also strong *to make a complete defence* whenever it may be attacked. "Rouse Israel by your attacks, and the force that has hitherto been used for internal progress will become a wall against you; and not only so, but you may be swept away in the rush of the roused and maddened unicorn." There is thus a warning to Balak not to provoke. It is when the Church has been provoked by persecution that her true strength has been shown to the world. What a mockery of this world's boasted resources, when all its persuasions, cajoleries, threats, and torments have failed to shake the faith of humble believers! It can burn, but it cannot convert. It is marvellous, the strength, energy, and patience which God has bestowed on some of his servants. Paul toiling on among infirmities and persecutions is a proverb; but, to come nearer home, consider John Wesley, hardly ever out of the saddle except when he was in the pulpit, amply furnished for all the weariness of travel and the work of incessant preaching till long past his eightieth year; and in matters of defence so wonderfully strengthened with the strength of the unicorn that he passed unharmed through all physical perils and social opposition. It is one of the most remarkable of all his remarkable experiences that he could say in his seventy-fourth year, "I have travelled all roads by day and by night these forty years, and never was interrupted yet." 4. *God gives his people certain, authoritative, regular knowledge as to his will and favour.* He does not leave them to auguries and divination. These things indeed were not only useless, but forbidden (Levit. xix. 26). Whatever he has to say he says through appointed and recognised channels, and confirms and illustrates it by suitable acts. There was place and need for lawgivers, prophets, and priests in Israel, but no room for men like Balaam, augurs, magicians, and priestcraft in general. Enchantments and divination had been the mainstay of Balak's hope, and though Balaam's experience may have prevented him from trusting so fully in them, he nevertheless considered them a very important element in propitiating Jehovah. *Man's ways of reaching God are all vanity.* God himself has to come down and lay a way very clearly marked and strictly prescribed. In that way, and in that alone, there is certainty and sufficiency of knowledge, safety, and blessedness of life. "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (Ps. xxxvii. 31).

III. THE PROPHECY CLOSES BY INDICATING HOW THERE WILL BE IN ISRAEL THE SPIRIT OF DESTRUCTION AND THE STRENGTH TO DESTROY. Israel has not only the strength of the buffalo, but the spirit and propensities of the lion. This is the first intimation of threatening. The prophecy closes with, as it were, a growl and menace from the lion of the tribe of Judah. Up to this time God has told Balak to go round about Zion and tell the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks (Ps. xlviii. 12, 13), that he might see how God's ideal people are invulnerable to all enemies. But now the defensive is suddenly turned into the offensive. Israel is a lion. We know from the frequent references to the lion in the Old Testament that this figure must have been a very impressive one to Balak. In Isaiah's prophecy concerning Moab we find these words: "I will bring lions upon him that escapeth of Moab" (Isa. xv. 9). The roar, the spring, the resistless attack, the sudden and complete collapse of the victim, all rise to our minds the moment this majestic animal is mentioned. The idea of defence scarcely enters into our minds in connection with the lion. His resources are those of attack. What shall Balak do if he has to meet a foe whose strength is that of the unicorn, and whose ardour is that of the lion? The figure, remember, is suitable to the occasion. There is a time to compare the people of God to the sheep whom the shepherd leads out and in, and gathers within the protecting fold, but there is also a time to compare them to the restless lion, seeking for his prey, and not lying down till he drinks its blood. The Church of Christ is *a destroying institution,* and this part of its work must not be concealed and softened down to suit the preju-

dices of the world. The claws of the lion must not be clipped when it is dealing with vested interests and established iniquities. As it is not the way of the lion to make compromises with its prey, so neither must we make compromises with any evil. We have nothing to do with evil, save, in the name of the God of righteousness, to destroy it as soon as we can. *Nor need there be any fear of carrying the comparison too far.* He who has taken in the meaning of those words, "Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," will well understand how to be ardent, enthusiastic, uncompromising, almost fierce and lion-like, against monster evils, yet at the same time gentle as the lamb, pitiful as God himself, towards the men whose hearts have been hardened and their consciences blinded by the way in which their temporal interests have become intimately mixed with wrong. Wilberforce was one of the most gentle, affectionate, and considerate of men, always on the alert to say a word or write a letter for the spiritual good of others, yet his greatest work took the form of destroying evil. For many long years he had to look in the sight of the world a combatant more than anything else. When the slave trade was abolished in 1807 it is reported of him that he asked his friend Thornton, "What shall we abolish next?" a playful question, of course, but capable of a very serious meaning. No sooner does one great evil vanish from the scene than another becomes conspicuous. Evil seems continually growing as well as good. It is perhaps not without significance that so many associations clamouring for the attention of good and patriotic men have in the names of them such words as these: "*abolition*," "*repression*," "*prevention*." It must needs be so, even to the end. The devil well knows how to make the selfish interests of one half the world dependent on the sufferings and miseries of the other half.—Y.

Ver. 27—Ch. xxiv. 14.—*The third prophecy.* I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH IT WAS UTTERED. 1. *With regard to Balak.* After hearing the second prophecy, and especially its menacing conclusion, he is naturally much irritated. It is bad enough to have been disappointed even once, but kings like worse to have threatening added to disappointment, and at first Balak makes as if he would have nothing more said on the subject, one way or another. If Balaam cannot curse the people, neither shall he bless them. But becoming a little calmer, Balak determines to try a third time, and from a still different place; so little did he need the solemn assertion of God's unchangeable purposes to which his attention had been specially called. The conduct of Balak is a warning to us to keep our hearts right at all times with regard to the reception of Divine truth. Truths stated very clearly and emphatically, and in critical circumstances, may yet be utterly neglected. That which is necessary to be known will, we may be quite sure, have a clearness corresponding to the necessity. However clear and simple statements are in themselves, they must needs be as idle breath if we refuse to give humble and diligent attention to them. 2. *With regard to Balaam.* He no longer goes out seeking for enchantments, although he still clings to the inevitable sacrifices. This forsaking of the enchantments and clinging to the sacrifices, is it not a sort of testimony out of the very depths and obscurities of heathenism that God cannot be approached without something in the way of vicarious suffering? *Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel.* It had taken him a long time and caused him a great deal of trouble to see this, and yet the sequel proves (ch. xxxi. 8, 16) that, after all, seeing, he did not perceive, and hearing, he did not understand. Nevertheless, at this time he saw sufficient to convince him how vain were Balak's hopes of a curse from Jehovah. If Israel was to be overthrown, it was not in that way. Observe that in uttering this prophecy *Balaam is thrown into a higher state of receptivity than before.* When Balak refused to be satisfied with the first prophecy, he got a second one, specially addressed to himself, and fuller; more indicative of Israel's resources, varied, ample, and unfailing as they were for every possible need. But now he does not so much get a prophecy fuller in itself; it is rather a clearer proof that Balaam is indeed employed by God as a prophet. He is thrown into an ecstatic state. His eyes are closed to the outward world, but the mind's eye is opened, and a picture, first beautiful, and then terrible, is presented to his vision. We see from this *how much God can do in controlling the powers of carnal and unsympathising men.* God not only puts his own words into

Balaam's lying lips, but he makes him see such visions as were customarily confined to men who were spiritually fit for them. Balaam doubtless, looking away into the distance of time from the present encampment of Israel in Moab to their future life in Canaan, would rather have seen ruin, confusion, and desolation—something to rejoice the heart of his employer, and bring to himself the promised rewards. But he could only see what God showed him. If then God held this ungodly Balaam in such control, *what may not his power be over those who submit to him with all their hearts?* There is a sort of proportion in the matter. As the unwilling Balaam is to the completely submissive believer, so what God did to Balaam is to what God will do for such a believer. The more you give to God for working on, the more, by consequence, he will give to you in return. Yield yourselves to God, that he may not only work through you by his mighty power, but in you and for you according to the purpose of his love and the riches of his grace. The sad reflection is that Balaam allowed himself to be an evidence of the power, but not the grace; allowed God's blessings to go through him, yet, in spite of his own expressed wish, made no attempt to keep blessings for himself.

II. THE PROPHECY ITSELF. Here are set before us two pictures, as it were, a beautiful one and a terrible one. *Picture the first.* A spectator in an ordinary state of mind, looking down with his natural vision on the Israelite camp, sees long ranges of tents, set in four divisions, and at a reverent distance from the tabernacle in the midst of them. The people dwelt "not in stately palaces, but in coarse and homely tents, and those, no doubt, sadly weather-beaten." But Balaam in his ecstasy, when the Spirit of God came upon him, looked upon a more attractive and inspiring scene. What he gazed upon at first was indeed these rows of tents, but, just as if in a dissolving view, they faded away before his eyes, and in place of them, valleys, gardens by the river-side, aloes of Jehovah's planting, and cedars beside the waters were spread out before him. Everything is suggestive of quiet, steady prosperity, of fruitfulness, peace, and beauty. This is the internal life of the Church of Christ, when his people are living to the extent of their privileges. This is the difference between the external appearance and the inward life and experience. Just at that moment when the lot of the Christian looks least attractive to the casual and uninstructed glance, it may be rich in all the great elements of true blessedness. The position of the Christian in this world is not seldom like that of the kernel within the shell: outside, the rough, repulsive, unpromising shell; inside, the precious kernel, with "the promise and potency" in it of a tree like that from which it was taken. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit*" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). And thus it is here. It was not possible for Balaam to describe the blessed circumstances of Israel in direct language. He had to fall back on the comparison to certain visible things, such things as would raise in the mind of a dweller in Moab or Canaan, or anywhere round about, a picture of the highest satisfaction and success. *Picture the second.* The first picture is beautiful, and very beautiful; it is Eden raised in the waste wilderness. The second picture is terrible, and very terrible; yet what else could be expected? If Balak will go on presumptuously defying the sacred and beloved people of God, undeterred by the menaces to which he has already listened, then those menaces must be repeated with all the force and thoroughness of expression that can be thrown into them. The sudden transition from such a peaceful, beautiful scene as goes before heightens the effect, and probably was meant to do so. *On one side is Israel engaged in tilling the garden,* the work to which man was set apart in the first days of innocence, watering his far-spread crops and enjoying his fragrant aloes and his cedars; *on the other side is Israel the Destroyer,* emphatically the Destroyer. The qualities of no one animal, however destructive, are sufficiently expressive to set him forth. Fierce, furious, strong, resistless as the lion is, the lion by himself is not enough to show forth Israel, and you must add the unicorn; and there you are invited to gaze on this unicorn-lion, strong in power, thorough in execution, leaving not one of his enemies unsubdued and undestroyed. Let Balak well understand that Israel, under the good hand of God, is climbing to the highest eminence among the nations. The repetition of the references to the unicorn and the lion shows how important the references are, and how needful it is to let the

mind of the Christian dwell encouragingly on them. Balak sets forth the intolerant and suspicious spirit of the world in all its kingdoms; and the world does not heed prophecies; it does not take them to heart, else it would cease to be the world. These prophecies, though they were first spoken by a *Balaam* and listened to by a *Balak*, were meant in due course to reach, guide, assure, and comfort Israel. If there are times when we are tempted to fear the world, with its designs, its resources, and the might of its fascinating spirit, then we shall do well to recollect that, by a double and enlarged assurance, God reckons his Church to have the strength of the unicorn and the spirit of the lion, utterly to subdue and destroy all those kingdoms of the world which, to keep up the figure, are considered as the natural prey of the Church.—Y.

Vers. 7—10.—*Balaam—the first parable.* The word "parable" is used here in a somewhat peculiar sense. It is not, as in the New Testament, a fictitious narrative embodying and enforcing some moral truth, but a "dark saying," a mystic prophecy cast in the form of figurative poetic language, a prophecy that partakes of the nature of allegory. In these ecstatic utterances the impulse of Balaam's better nature over-masters his more sordid passion, and a true prophetic spirit from God takes the place of the false Satanic spirit of heathen divination. The thoughts respecting Israel to which Balaam gives utterance in this first parable are deeply true of the redeemed people of God in every age.

I. THEIR SPECIAL PRIVILEGE AS OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE FAVOUR. "How shall I curse," &c. Balak had faith in Balaam's incantations. "I wot that he whom thou blessest," &c. (ch. xxii. 6). But he himself knew well that there was an arbitrament of human interests and destinies infinitely higher than his. God has absolute sovereignty for good or ill over all our human conditions. There is no real blessing where his benediction does not rest, nor need any curse be dreaded by those who live beneath his smile. "If God be for us," &c. (Rom. viii. 31). No alternative so momentous as this—the favour or the disfavour of God. Note, respecting the Divine favour, that—1. *It is determined by spiritual character.* Not an arbitrary, capricious bestowment. It is for us to supply the conditions. We must "be reconciled to God" if we would know the benediction of his smile. God is "for" those who are *for him.* The cloud in which his glory dwells gives light to those who are in spiritual accord with him, but is darkness and confusion to his foes. 2. *It is neither indicated nor disproved by the outward experiences of life.* External conditions are no criterion of the state of the soul and its Divine relations. The wicked may "have all that heart can wish" of the good of this life, and their very "prosperity may slay them;" while it is often true that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" with sorest tribulations, and those tribulations "work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We judge very falsely if we suppose that spiritual experiences must needs be reflected in outward conditions. 3. *It is the source of the purest joy of which the soul of a man is capable.* This is true blessedness—to walk consciously in the light of God's countenance. "His favour is life," his loving kindness "better than life." This was the pure joy of the well-beloved Son—the abiding sense of the Father's approval. Have this joy in you, and you may defy the disturbing influences of life and the bitterest maledictions of a hostile world.

II. THEIR SEPARATENESS. "Lo, the people shall dwell alone," &c. (ver. 9). The Jews were an elect people ("Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people"—Exod. xix. 5), chosen and separated, not as monopolising the Divine regard, but as the instruments of a Divine purpose. They were called to be witnesses for God among the nations,—the majesty of his Being, the sanctity of his claims, the method of his government, &c.,—and to be the channels of boundless blessing to the world. The same grand distinction belongs to all whom Christ has redeemed from among men. "Ye are a chosen generation," &c. (1 Pet. ii. 9). He says to all his followers, "Ye are not of the world," &c. (John xv. 19; xvii. 16, 17). This separation is—1. *Not circumstantial, but moral;* lying not in the renunciation of any human interest or the rending of any natural human tie, but in distinctive qualities of spiritual character and life. In moral elevation and spiritual dignity only are they called to "dwell alone." 2. *Not for the world's deprivation, but for its benefit.*

Not to withdraw from it powers that might better be consecrated to its service, but to bring to bear upon it, in the cause of righteousness, an energy higher and diviner than its own.

III. THEIR MULTIPLICITY. "Who can count the dust," &c. The promise given to Abraham is gloriously fulfilled in God's spiritual Israel. "Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth," &c. (Gen. xxviii. 14). This indicates at once the grandeur of the Divine purpose and the diffusive power of the Divine life in men. On both these grounds their numbers will surely multiply till they "cover the face of all the earth." Little as we may be able to forecast the future, we know that the question, "Are there few that be saved?" will find its triumphant answer in "the great multitude which no man can number, of all nations," &c. (Rev. vii. 9).

IV. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THEIR END. "Let me die the death," &c. We gather from this not only Balaam's faith in the intrinsic worth of righteousness, but also in the happy issue to which a righteous life in this world must lead as regards the life to come. Why this wish if he had no faith in a glorious immortality and in righteousness as the path to it? There is an instinct in the soul even of a bad man that leads to this conclusion, and his secret convictions and wishes will often bear witness to a diviner good of which his whole moral life is the practical denial. You must be numbered with the righteous now if you would find your place with them hereafter, and live their life if you would die their death.—W.

Ver. 23.—*Balaam—the second parable.* We may look upon Balaam here as representing the Satanic powers that have ever been plotting and working against the kingdom of God among men, and as the unwilling prophet of their ultimate defeat. The spell of a higher Power is over him, and he cannot do the thing that he would. Looking down from "the high places of Baal" upon the tents of Israel spread out over the plain beneath, he is constrained in spite of himself to utter only predictions of good. His magic arts are utterly baffled in presence of the Divinity that overshadows that strange people. It is a picture of what is going on through all the ages. In the triumphant host approaching the borders of the land of promise we see the ransomed Church moving on to its glorious destination, its heavenly rest; the kingdom that Christ has founded among men consummating itself, "covering the face of the whole earth." And in the failure of his enchantments we see the impotence of the devices of the powers of darkness to arrest its progress. The Satanic working has assumed different forms.

I. PERSECUTION. The followers of Christ soon verified his prophetic word: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The infant Church was nursed and cradled in the storms. It no sooner began to put forth its new-born energies than it found the forces of earth and hell arrayed against it. But what was the result? The first outbreak of hostility only brought to the minds of those feeble men, with a meaning undiscovered before, the triumphant words (Ps. ii.), "Why do the heathen rage," &c. It drove them nearer to the Divine Fountain of strength. It made them doubly bold (Acts iv. 23, 30). Scattered abroad, they "went everywhere preaching the word, and the hand of the Lord was with them." A prophecy was thus given of the way in which persecution would always serve the cause it meant to destroy, and God would "make the wrath of man to praise him." Ecclesiastical authority has leagued itself with the tyrannous powers of the world in this repressive work. The sanctions of religion have been invoked for the destruction of the truth. But ever to the same issue. Whatever form it takes, the persecuting spirit is always essentially Satanic; there is nothing Divine in it. And it always defeats its own end. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The fire that has swept over the field, consuming the growth of one year, has only enriched it and made it more prolific the next. The kingdom of Christ has rooted itself in the earth, and its Divine energies have been developed by reason of the storms that have raged against it. Not only has "no weapon formed against it prospered," but the weapon has generally recoiled on the head of him who wielded it. The Satanic enchantments have been foiled just when they seemed to reach the climax of their success, and the curses of a hostile world have turned to blessings.

II. CORRUPTING INFLUENCES WITHIN THE PALE OF THE CHURCH ITSELF. Christianity

has suffered far more from foes within than ever it did from foes without. Christ has been wounded most "in the house of his friends." Read the history of the first three or four centuries of the Christian era if you would know to what an extent the hand of man may mar the fair and glorious work of God. They tell how Christian doctrine, worship, polity, social life gradually lost their original simplicity and purity. The traditions of Judaism, heathen philosophies and mythologies, the fascinations of a vain world, the basest impulses of our nature, all played their part in the corrupting process. The human element overbore and thrust aside the Divine, till it seemed as if Satan, baffled in the use of the extraneous persecuting powers, were about to triumph by the subtler forces of corruption and decay. But God has never left his Church to *itself* any more than to the will of its adversaries. In the darkest times and under the most desperate conditions the leaven of a higher life has been secretly working. Nothing is more wonderful than the way in which the interests of Christ's kingdom have been preserved, not only in spite of, but often through, the instrumentality of events and institutions that in themselves were contrary to its spirit and its laws. What are many of our modern agitations but the struggles of the religious life to cast off the fetters that long have bound it, to shake itself from the dust of ages, symptoms of the *vis vitæ* by which nature throws off disease. Even the retrograde movements that sometimes alarm us will be found by and by to have conspired to the same end. And when the Church shall "awake, and put on her beautiful garments" of simple truth and love and power, when "the Spirit is poured out upon her from on high," then shall it be seen how utterly even these subtler Satanic "enchantments" have failed to arrest her progress towards the dominion of the earth.

III. THE ASSAULTS OF UNBELIEF. The intellectual force of the world in some of its most princely and commanding forms has ever set itself in deadly antagonism to the Church of Christ. Far be it from us to say that all who hold or teach anti-Christian doctrine are consciously inspired by the spirit of evil. But beneath the fairest aspects of aggressive unbelief we discern the Satanic aim to darken the glory that shines from heaven on human souls. It is given to "the mystery of iniquity" to pervert the genius, the learning, even the very mental integrity and honest purpose of men to its own false uses. But have these forces of unbelief ever gained a substantial victory? One would suppose, from what is often said on their side, that they were victorious along the whole line. Is it really so? Is there any one stronghold of revealed truth that they have stormed and taken? In all the battles that have been fought on the field of Christian doctrine, has any ground really been lost? Have any of the "standards" fallen? Is Christianity in any sense a defeated or even damaged cause? Nay, we rather believe that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men," and "the weakness of God is stronger than men." The camp of Israel need fear no hostile "enchantment," for "the Lord their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them."—W.

Vers. 10—14.—*Balak relinquishes his project.* He sees now clearly that there is no chance of prevailing over Israel by means of a curse, and that any further appeal to the prophet would only bring words more galling to his pride and more menacing to his position, if indeed such words could be found. Considerations of policy and prudence need no longer restrain him in speaking out all his mind to the prophet.

I. BALAK'S TREATMENT OF HIS UNSUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLICE. 1. *An outbreak of selfish wrath.* Balaam indeed did not deserve much sympathy, seeing how he had played into Balak's hands from the very beginning. But if he had deserved sympathy ever so much, he would not have met with it. Balak has eyes, heart, and recollection for nothing but his own disappointment. He has no real sympathetic regard for Balaam, no consideration for one who is far from home, and whose professional reputation all around will be sadly damaged by this failure on a critical occasion. Wicked men in the hour of disaster show small consideration for their accomplices. Those in whose hearts the temptation of some great reward for evil-doing is beginning to prevail should consider that if they fail they will meet with scant mercy or excuse. When the Baluks of the world get a Balaam into their hands, they look on him just as a tool. If the tool does its work as they want it, well and good; keep it

carefully for further use; but if it turns out a failure, fling it without more ado on the dunghill. Balak acts here towards Balaam just as he might be expected to act. 2. *He lays the whole blame on Balaam.* He does not consider that the evil purposes of his own heart must needs be frustrated. Three prophecies, full of solemn and weighty matter, uttered in his hearing, have not made him in the slightest degree conscious of the folly and iniquity of his project. He sees indeed that the project must fail, but is blind as a bat to the real reason of the failure. All that he has heard concerning Jehovah, his character, his past dealings with Israel, and his purposes for them, has not impressed him one whit, save with the fact that somehow he cannot get his own way. His curse project has ended in a huge, humiliating, exasperating failure, and Balaam must bear the blame of it. Wicked men cannot be got to give Heaven credit for all its timely and irresistible interferences with their darling schemes. The fault in Balak's angry eye rested with Balaam, and with him alone. "The Lord hath kept thee back from honour." A true word indeed, but not applicable in the way in which Balak intended it. The Lord had kept Balaam back from honour, but not from the paltry honour which Balak would have conferred on him. The lesson for us is, that whenever any selfish plan of ours fails, we should not, like this blind, besotted king, go laying blame elsewhere, as if it would exonerate ourselves. Balaam of course was to blame, grievously to blame, a great deal more than Balak, seeing he sinned against greater light. But we must not let the grievous and conspicuous faults of others cast our own into the shade. We are at the best very poor judges of the transgressions of our fellow-men. When we fail in anything, it is far the wisest, kindest, and most profitable course to give diligent heed to such causes of failure as are in our own heart. Whatever disappointments may come to us in life, we shall never fail in anything of real importance if only *we keep our own hearts right with God.*

II. BALAK'S VAIN ATTEMPT TO GET PROMPT RIDDANCE OF THE PROPHET. He thinks it is enough to say, "Stop." But as he was not able to make Balaam speak what he wanted and when he wanted, so neither is he able to make Balaam cease when the Lord's message is on his lips. God opened Balaam's mouth, and it is not for Balak to close it. Before Balak is left, his impotence shall be manifested in the completest possible way. He had been the thoughtless and unwitting means of turning on the stream of glorious prophecy, and now he finds he cannot stop that stream at will. Jehovah did not seek this occasion, but when it is furnished he deems it well to avail himself of it to the full. And now Balak finds that, whether he will or not, he must listen to the doom of his own people, expressly and clearly announced. Learn that when you begin the headstrong course of making everything on earth—and perhaps, after Balak's fashion, in heaven as well—subservient to self, you cannot stop whenever the consequences begin to get troublesome. Balak said, "Let my will be done, not because it is right, but because it is mine," and he was not contented with a refusal, once or even twice. He must have it a third time, and then he finds that the choice is no longer under his control. Let us choose wisely while we are able to choose.—Y

Vers. 15—25.—*The Star out of Jacob and the Sceptre out of Israel.* The final prophecy, unsolicited by Balak, which indeed he would have been glad to stop, goes far beyond the concerns of his kingdom and his reign. It stretches over an ever-widening extent of space and time. As long as there is any Moab kind of nation to be destroyed, Israel must continue to prevail. The kingdoms of this world not only will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, but no other conclusion is easily conceivable. The power by which Israel conquers one enemy enables it to conquer all; and the disposition which leads it against one enemy must lead it against all. It will again and again be attacked, and must defend where it is attacked. It must expand by the ever-strengthening life within. The more it grows, the more room it will require, until at last the kingdoms of the world become its own. Notice—

I. THE ADVANCE IN THIS PROPHECY UPON THE PRECEDING ONE, AS SHOWN BY THE DIFFERENT FIGURE EMPLOYED. The lion destroys, and that most effectually, but he can do nothing more than destroy. The horse or the ox will draw the cart, and thus serve constructive purposes. Even the tiniest bird can build its compact and sym-

metrical nest, but the lion can do nothing save destroy. You may cage it and curb its savage propensities a little, but it is not tamed; the lion-nature is there, and the smallest taste of blood will cause it to burst forth in all its fury. The lion being thus a destroyer, and nothing but a destroyer, it is needful to present Israel as able to do more—able to destroy in order that there may be room for the construction of something more worthy to endure. It does not become God to stay the current of prophecy with a menace of dreadful destruction as the last word, and so he makes Balaam to speak of the star and the sceptre. The lion, as it rages about, can make a solitude; it can take away wickedness by taking away all wicked men; but a solitude is not a kingdom. The true kingdom of God is only gained when he gets willing hearts. The destruction which is spoken of with such energy and almost fierceness of illustration is for the purpose of completely taking away the evil out of human society, so that only the good may remain to serve and glorify the Maker of mankind.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STAR, AS INDICATING THE METHOD IN WHICH GOD WILL WORK TO CONQUER EVIL AND ESTABLISH GOOD. The star, it is said, is mentioned here as the symbol of governing power, according to the astrological notions of antiquity. It is further said that the joining of the sceptre with the star shows that authority and supremacy are the main things to be indicated by the mention of the star. Certainly the prophecy is full of the idea of supremacy and authority; but if this idea was the only thing to be considered, the mention of the sceptre would be enough. The star is a symbol of power, but it is also a symbol of many great realities besides. Let us ask not only why the sceptre is joined with the star, but why the star is joined with the sceptre. *The very first thing that a star indicates is light.* God will establish his rule by sending the Star out of Jacob to rise in the darkness. Christ, the fulfilment of the star, has come a light into the world, a rival to existent lights, and destined to outshine them all. He is a light ever protesting against the darkness, not comprehended by it, not swallowed up and lost in it. Rejoice in this, that the Star out of Jacob is inaccessible to the meddling of those who hate its inconvenient revelations. Christ comes to destroy, and at the same time to construct by letting light in upon all dark, idolatrous chambers and all self-deceiving hearts. The light is from him who knows what is in man, his wickedness, his weakness, and his wants. He brings reality where others only bring appearance. He brings truth where they, even in their very sincerity, bring error. There is no room for a Balaam in his kingdom. The Demas who makes a few steps within soon retreats from a light far too trying for the darkness of his heart. Notice, further, that *the light of the star is in some respects more significant of the work of Christ than would be the light of the sun.* We must have a figure which will keep before us both the light and the darkness. To us, individually, Christ may be as the sun (and may he be!), filling our hearts with light. We know, alas, that he is far from being a sun to many. Their light is still darkness, but the Star of Bethlehem shines in the firmament, waiting for the hour when in humility they may betake themselves to it. After all the search for truth, and whatever knowledge may be gained, there is still the sense of incompleteness; the knowledge stops with the intellect; it does not find its way to enlighten and comfort the whole heart. We can by no means dispense with the Star out of Jacob, the Star that shines from every page of the Scriptures.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCEPTRE, AS INDICATING THE REALITY OF THE DOMINION. The sceptre is that of Christ's truth, wielded with all the power of God's Holy Spirit. We must have much assurance, not only of the illumination that comes from Christ, but of the consequent actual illumination in accepting human hearts. We must ever be ready in our approaches to God to say, "Thine is the kingdom *and the power.* Thine is not only the *rightful* authority, but also the *actual* authority." What is a more offensive sight than a merely nominal submission to Christ? How soon it becomes evident to the discerning eye that there is an utter want of harmony! Those who are really Christ's subjects soon justify their loyalty by the commotion they make among the accepted customs and traditions of the world. There is a sense in which they may covet often to hear the word, "They that have turned the world upside down have come hither also." As we read the Acts of the Apostles,

we feel that there was not only a new teaching being diffused among men, but, above all things, *a new power*. It was not only fresh thought they brought to men, but a new and gladdening life.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MANY NATIONS REFERRED TO, AS INDICATING THE EXTENT AND COMPLETENESS OF THE DOMINION. The details connected with each nation have of course their peculiar significance, but the significance of the details is not quite so clear as that of the great common element which runs through them all. All the details point forward to a time when the Star out of Jacob shall outshine the star out of every other nation, when the Sceptre out of Israel shall break every other sceptre. The kingdoms of the world are to fall—the kingdoms of mammon, of pleasure, of unbelief in Christ, of science falsely so called, of rationalism, of atheism, of individual self-assertion. These are kingdoms that now stretch their authority far and wide, in all continents, and in all ranks of men, and many are subjects of more than one of the kingdoms. In the kingdoms of this world it is largely true that there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. The Star out of Jacob then has a large work to do in subduing and transforming the many and mighty kingdoms of this world. And all the glorious burden of prophecy heaves and swells with the emphatic assurance that he will do it. The day is to come when we shall all learn that to be king over one's own nature is more than to sway the most populous and wealthy territory among men. Then indeed will the description, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," fully apply, when God in Christ Jesus reigns over kings and lords such as these. The cry concerning man will no longer be,

"Lord of himself, that heritage of woe!"

but, lord of a heritage reclaimed, purified, and made docile by the work of Jesus as he inspires in the breast every loving, righteous, and truthful motive.—Y.

Vers. 1—9.—*Balaam—the third parable.* This passage marks the period at which Balaam becomes finally convinced that it is vain for him to attempt to satisfy Balak, or to carry out the baser promptings of his own heart. He confesses his defeat, gives up his enchantments, "sets his face towards the wilderness" where the camp of Israel lay, and utters the words that God puts into his mouth. But still his spirit is not subdued, for, as we learn from ver. 14, instead of casting in his lot, as he might have done, with the chosen nation, he resolves in spite of all to go back to his own people and his old ways. Combining these two features of his case, we see how a man may "approve the right and follow the wrong." It affords a striking example of (1) true convictions followed by (2) a false and fatal determination.

I. TRUE CONVICTIONS. Though it was by the constraint of a higher Power that Balaam uttered these words of benediction, we must regard them also as being, to a great extent, the result of his own intuitions, symptoms of the struggling of better thought and feeling within him. He was not the mere senseless medium of the spirit of prophecy. Unwillingly, but not altogether unwittingly, was he made the organ of a Divine inspiration. A bad man may utter words that are good and true, and may often be compelled by the force of outward testimony, or of the inward witness of his own conscience, to do honour to that in others which condemns himself. There are chiefly three characteristics here which find their higher counterpart in the spiritual Israel, and which her enemies, like Balaam, have often been constrained to confess. 1. *Beauty.* "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!" Rich valleys, smiling gardens, lign-aloes and cedars planted beside the water-courses, are, to the poetic imagination of the seer, the fitting images of their goodly array. But what is the beauty that captivates the eye compared with that which appeals to the sensibility of the soul? All outward forms of loveliness are but the shadow and reflection of the Diviner beauties of holiness, the spiritual glory of truth, purity, goodness—the "adorning of the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible." The richest Oriental imagery can but feebly represent the changing phases of this beauty. And many a man has felt the charm of it, and yet been utterly destitute of that sympathy of spirit that would move him to make it his own. It compels his admiration, but does not win his love. 2. *World-wide fruitfulness.* "He shall pour the water out of his buckets," &c.—the image of abundant, far-reaching beneficence. The promise to

Abraham was fulfilled: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 16, 17). The benefits the seed of Abraham conferred upon the human race did but foreshadow those of Christianity. It is the "light of the world," the "salt of the earth," carrying the stream of a new life over all lands, diffusing a healing influence through all the waters. Its adversaries know this, and are often constrained in spite of themselves to acknowledge it. They are themselves living witnesses to its truth, for they owe to Christianity the very culture, the spiritual force, the social advantages, the literary facilities, &c., that they turn as weapons against it. 3. *Victorious power.* The triumphant way in which God led forth his people out of Egypt was prophetic of the power that should always overshadow them and dwell among them; often a latent, slumbering strength like that of a crouching or sleeping lion, but irresistible when once it rouses itself to withstand their foes. Such power dwells ever in the redeemed Church. "God is in the midst of her," &c. (Ps. xlvi. 5). "The weapons of our warfare," &c. (2 Cor. x. 4). Nothing so strong and invincible as truth and goodness. The light must triumph over the darkness. The kingdom of Christ is a "kingdom that cannot be moved," and many a man whose heart has had no kind of sympathy with the cause of that kingdom has been unable to suppress the secret conviction that it will surely win its way, till it shall have vanquished all its enemies and covered the face of the whole earth.

II. A FALSE AND FATAL DETERMINATION. "And now, behold, I go unto my people" (ver. 14). He returns to his former ways, plunges again into the darkness and foulness of idolatrous Mesopotamia, having first, it would appear, counselled Balak as to how he might corrupt with carnal fascinations the people whom it was vain for him to "curse" (see ch. xxxi. 16; Rev. ii. 14), and at last is slain with the sword among the Midianites (ch. xxxi. 8; Josh. xiii. 22). Learn—1. How powerless are the clearest perceptions of the truth in the case of one whose heart is thoroughly set in him to do evil. There are those who "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. i. 18). "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him" (Titus i. 16). 2. How there is often a deeper fall into the degradation of sin when such an one has been uplifted for a while by the vision and the dream of a better life. "The last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matt. xii. 45). "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness," &c. (2 Pet. ii. 21, 22).—W.

Ver. 17.—*Balaam—the fourth parable.* Balaam appears before us here as one who "seeing, sees not." His "eyes are open," but he has no real vision of the eternal truth of things. He has a "knowledge of the Most High," but not that which consists in living sympathy with his character and will and law. He recognises the blessedness of the ransomed people, but has no personal share in that blessedness. He discerns the bright visions of the future, the rising of Jacob's Star, the gleam of the royal Sceptre that shall rule the world, the coming of the world's redeeming Lord, but he sees him only from afar. Not "now," not "nigh," does he behold him; not with a vivid, quickening, self-appropriating consciousness; not as the light, the hope, the life, the eternal joy of his own soul. It is a moral portraiture, a type of spiritual condition and personal character, with which we are only too familiar. The faith of many is thus destitute of efficient saving power. "It is dead, being alone." Their religious perceptions are thus divorced from religious life. They have just such a formal, ideal acquaintance with God, without any of that immediate personal fellowship with him which renews their moral nature after his likeness. They walk in the embrace of his presence, but their "eyes are holden that they should not know him." So near is He, and yet so far; so clearly revealed, and yet so darkly hidden; so familiar, and yet so strange.

I. This is seen in THE INSENSIBILITY OF MEN TO THE DIVINER MEANING OF NATURE. The material universe exists for spiritual ends. God has surrounded his intelligent creatures with all the affluence and glory of it in order to reveal himself to them and attract their thought and affection to himself. "The invisible things of him from the beginning of the world are clearly seen," &c. (Rom. i. 20). But how dead are men often to Divine impressions! They hear no voice and feel no influence from God coming to them through his works. They know none but the lower uses of nature,

and never dream of entering through it into communion with Him who inspires it with the energy of his presence. Tribes whose life is nursed and cradled in the fairest regions of the earth are often mentally the darkest and morally the most depraved. The worst forms of heathenism have been found in those parts of the world where the Creator has most lavished the tokens of his glorious beneficence. The sweet associations of rural and pastoral life in a Christian land like ours are connected less than we should expect them to be with quickness of spiritual perception and tenderness of spiritual sensibility. Stranger still that men whose souls are most keenly alive to all the beauty of the world, and with whom it is an all-absorbing passion to search out its wonders and drink in its poetic inspirations, should fail, as they so often do, to discern in it a living God. Physical science is to many as a gorgeous veil that darkly hides him, rather than the glass through which the beams of his glory fall upon them, the radiant pathway by which they climb up to his throne. Their eyes are wondrously "open;" they have a "knowledge of the Most High" in the forms and modes of his working such as few attain to; "visions of the Almighty" in the glorious heavens above and the teeming earth beneath pass continually before them, and yet they see and feel and know him not. How different such a case from that of Job: "O that I knew where I might find him!" &c. (Job xxiii. 1—10). *There* you have the passionate outbreathing of a soul that is hungering and thirsting after a God that "hideth himself." *Here* you have God urging, pressing upon men the signals and proofs of his presence without effect. There is no blindness darker and sadder than that of those who boast that their "eyes are open," and yet, in a glorious world like this, can find no living God.

II. It is seen in THE INDISPOSITION OF MEN TO RECOGNISE THE VOICE OF GOD IN HOLY SCRIPTURE. To know that the Bible is a revelation of truth from God, and to know God as he reveals himself in the Bible, are two widely different things. There are those to whom revelation is as a Divine voice uttered long ago, but "not now;" a voice coming down to them through the ages as in distant echo, but not instant and near. To them these old records may be sacred, venerable, worthy to be preserved and defended, but in no sense are they a channel of direct personal communication between the living God and our living souls; "inspired" once, but not instinct with the spirit of inspiration now. No wonder the word is powerless and fruitless under such conditions. It is of no use to tell men that the Scriptures are "inspired" if they don't *feel God to be in them*, dealing as a personal Spirit with their spirits to draw them into fellowship with himself. A new kind of consciousness is awakened, a new order of effects produced, when once a man begins to feel that the written word is the living voice of God to his own soul. He cannot despise it then. It carries with it an authority that needs no extraneous authority to support it—the true "demonstration of the Spirit." Apart from this, the soul in presence of all these Divine revelations is like one under the influence of some powerful anæsthetic, receiving impressions on the outward sense of all that is going on around him, but conscious of nothing. The "eyes are open," but there is no living, spiritual realisation. "They seeing, see not, and hearing, hear not, neither do they understand" (Matt. xiii. 13; John xii. 40; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

III. It is seen in THE PURELY IDEAL RELATION IN WHICH MEN TOO OFTEN STAND TOWARDS CHRIST. By multitudes Christ is seen, as it were, "afar off." He is to them but as the vision of a dream, a vague, distant abstraction, a mere historic figure, the central actor in a tragical historic drama. They have never entered into any kind of personal relation with him, have never bowed before him in heart-broken penitence, adoring wonder, childlike trustfulness, grateful, self-surrendering love. "Virtue" has never gone forth out of him to heal the disease of their souls, because they have not yet "touched him." There is a wide distinction between the knowledge that comes by mere hearsay and that which comes by personal converse, between a distant vision and the living "touch." Though faith be in great part blind and unintelligent, yet if there is the quick sensibility of life in it, it is better than all the clear, unclouded vision of an eye that is no real inlet to the soul. There is a *future* manifestation of Christ. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him" (Rev. i. 7). What shall be the relation in which we stand towards him then? There are those whose eyes will then be opened as they never were

before. Shall it be only to have them closed again in everlasting night, "consumed with the brightness of his appearing"? You must be in living fellowship with Christ now if you would look with joy upon him when he comes in his "power and great glory."—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SIN OF ISRAEL AND ATONEMENT OF PHINEHAS (vers. 1—18). Ver. 1.—**Abode in Shittim.** For a considerable time; from their first arrival in the Arboth Moab until the crossing of the Jordan. Shittim is the shortened form of Abel-Shittim, "Field of Acacias" (ch. xxxiii. 49). It seems to have been the northernmost part of the last encampment of Israel on that side Jordan, and the head-quarters of the host (Josh. ii. 1; iii. 1). **Began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.** This commencement of sin seems to have been made by Israel without special provocation. The very victories won, and the comparative ease and affluence now enjoyed, after long marches and hardships, may well have predisposed them to this sin, for which they now for the first time found abundant opportunity.

Ver. 2.—**And they called,** *i. e.* the women of Moab, encouraged to do so by the licentious intercourse which had sprung up. Without such encouragement it is difficult to suppose that they would have ventured on such a step. **And the people did eat.** Gluttony added its seductions to lust. No doubt this generation were as weary of the manna and as eager for other and heavier food as their fathers had been (see on ch. xi. 4; xxi. 5).

Ver. 3.—**Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor.** This is a technical phrase, repeated in ver. 5, and quoted in Ps. cvi. 28, expressing the quasi-sacramental union into which they entered with the heathen deity by partaking of his sacrificial meats and by sharing in his impure rites (cf. Hosea ix. 10 and the argument of St. Paul in 1 Cor. x.). There can be little doubt that Peor (פְּעוֹר, from פָּעַר, to open) has the sense of *aperiens, in usu obsceno*, and that it was the distinguishing name of Baal or Chemosh when worshipped as the god of reproduction with the abominable rites proper to this cultus. For a notice of the same thing in the last days of Israel see Hosea iv. 14, and for the practice of Babylonian and (to some degree) Egyptian women, see Herodotus, i. 199; ii. 60). The Septuagint has here ἐτελέσθη τῷ Βεελφεγώρ, "was consecrated," or "initiated," unto Baal-Peor, which admirably expressed the sense.

Ver. 4.—**The Lord said unto Moses.** It seems strange that so fearful an apostasy had gone so far without interference on the part of Moses. He may have been absent from the camp on account of the wars with the Amorite kings; or he may have trusted to the chiefs to see that due order and discipline was maintained in the camps. **Take all the heads of the people,** *i. e.* the chiefs, who ought to have prevented, and might have prevented, this monstrous irregularity, but who seem, if we may judge from the case of Zimri, to have countenanced it. The mere neglect of duty in so gross a case was reason enough for summary execution. **Hang them up before the Lord.** Either by way of impalement or by way of crucifixion, both of which were familiar modes of punishment. In this case the guilty persons were probably slain first, and exposed afterwards. The hanging up was not ordered on account of its cruelty, nor merely for the sake of publicity ("against the sun"), but in order to show that the victims were devoted to the wrath of God against sin (cf. Deut. xxi. 23; 2 Sam. xxi. 2—6). The Septuagint has here παραδειγμάτισον αὐτούς. Cf. Heb. vi. 6, where this word is coupled with "crucify." There is no authority for referring the "them" (אוֹתָם) to the guilty persons instead of to the heads of the people, as is done by the Targums and by many commentators.

Ver. 5.—**The judges of Israel.** אֶל־שֹׁפְטֵי. This is the first place where "the judges" are mentioned by this name (cf. Deut. i. 16; Judges ii. 16), but the verb is freely used in Exod. xviii. in describing the functions of the officers appointed at Sinai. **Every one his men.** The men who were under his particular jurisdiction. This command given by Moses is not to be confounded with the previous command given to Moses to hang up all the chiefs. Moses only could deal with the chief, but it was within the power and the province of the judges to deal with ordinary offenders. It does not, however, appear how far either of these commands was put in practice.

Ver. 6.—**A Midianitish woman.** Rather, "the Midianitish woman." אֶת־הַמִּדְיָנִית. Septuagint, τὴν Μαδιανίτην. The writer deals with an incident only too notorious, and which by the peculiar aggravation of its circumstances had fixed itself deeply in the popular memory. This is the first mention of the Midianites in connection with this

affair, and it prepares us to learn without surprise that they were in reality the authors of this mischief. **All the congregation, . . who were weeping.** According to the loose sense in which this expression is used throughout the Pentateuch, it evidently means that those who truly represented the nation, not only as a political, but also as a religious community, were gathered in this distress before the presence of their invisible King. They wept on account of the wrath of God provoked; probably also on account of the wrath of God already gone forth in the form of a pestilence.

Ver. 7.—**Phinehas, the son of Eleazar.** See on Exod. vi. 25. He seems to have been the only son of Eleazar, and his natural successor in the office of high priest.

Ver. 8.—**Into the tent.** אֶל־הַקֻּבָּה. Septuagint, *εἰς τὴν κάμινον*. The word signifies an arched recess (cf. the Arabic "alcove," from the same root, and the Latin *fornix*), and means probably the inner division which served as the women's room in the larger tents of the wealthier Israelites. There is no sufficient ground for supposing that a special place had been erected for this evil purpose; if it had been, it would surely have been destroyed. **Through her belly.** אֶל־קֳבָתָהּ. Septuagint, *διὰ τῆς μήτρας αὐτῆς*. **So the plague was stayed.** No plague has been mentioned, but the narrative evidently deals with an episode the details of which were very fresh in the memory of all, and is extremely concise. That a plague would follow such an apostasy might be certainly expected from the previous experiences at Kibroth-hattaavah, at Kadesh, and after the rebellion of Korah.

Ver. 9.—**Were twenty and four thousand.** "Fell in one day three and twenty thousand," says St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 8). As the Septuagint does not deviate here from the Hebrew, the Apostle must have followed some Rabbinical tradition. It is possible enough that the odd thousand died on some other day than the one of which he speaks, or they may have died by the hands of the judges, and not by the plague.

Ver. 10.—**The Lord spake unto Moses, saying.** On the Divine commendation here bestowed upon the act of Phinehas see the note at the end of the chapter. In the Hebrew Bible a new section begins here.

Ver. 11.—**While he was zealous for my sake.** Rather, "while he was zealous with my zeal" (אֶת־קִנְאָתִי). Septuagint, *ἐν τῷ ζηλωσαί μου τὸν ζῆλον*, where *μου* stands emphatically before *ζῆλον*). **In my jealousy.** Rather, "in my zeal;" the same word is used.

Ver. 14.—**Now the name of the Israelite** These details as to names seem to have been added as an after-thought, for they would naturally have been given in ver. 11, where the man and the woman are first mentioned. The woman's name is given again in ver. 18, as if for the first time. We may probably conclude that vers. 14, 15 were inserted into the narrative either by the hand of Moses himself at a later date, or possibly by some subsequent hand. **Zimri.** This was not an uncommon name, but the individual who bears it here is not elsewhere mentioned.

Ver. 15.—**Head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian.** Rather, "head of tribes (אֻמּוֹת, for the use of which cf. Gen. xxv. 16) of a father's house in Midian." It seems to mean that several clans descended from one tribe-father looked up to Zur as their head. In ch. xxxi. 8 he is called one of the five "kings" of Midian. That the daughter of such a man should have been selected, and should have been willing, to play such a part throws a strong light upon the studied character and the peculiar danger of the seduction.

Ver. 17.—**Vex the Midianites.** The Moabites, although the evil began with them, were passed over; perhaps because they were still protected by the Divine injunction (Deut. ii. 9) not to meddle with them; more probably because their sin had not the same studied and deliberate character as the sin of the Midianites. We may think of the women of Moab as merely indulging their individual passions after their wonted manner, but of the women of Midian as employed by their rulers, on the advice of Balaam, in a deliberate plot to entangle the Israelites in heathen rites and heathen sins which would alienate from them the favour of God.

NOTE ON THE ZEAL OF PHINEHAS.

The act of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, in slaying Zimri and Cozbi is one of the most memorable in the Old Testament; not so much, however, in itself, as in the commendation bestowed upon it by God. It is unquestionably surprising at first sight that an act of unauthorised zeal, which might so readily be made (as indeed it was

made) the excuse for deeds of murderous fanaticism, should be commended in the strongest terms by the Almighty; that an act of summary vengeance, which we find it somewhat hard to justify on moral grounds, should be made in a peculiar sense and in a special degree the pattern of the great atonement wrought by the Saviour of mankind; but this aspect of the deed in the eyes of God by its very unexpectedness draws our attention to it, and obliges us to consider wherein its distinctive religious character and excellence lay.

It is necessary in the first place to point out that the act of Phinehas did really receive stronger testimony from God than any other act done *proprio motu* in the Old Testament. What he did was not done officially (for he held no office), nor was it done by command (for the offenders were not under his jurisdiction as judge), nor in fulfilment of any revealed law or duty (for no blame would have attached to him if he had let it alone), and yet it had the same effect in staying the plague as the act of Aaron when he stood between the living and the dead with the hallowed fire in his hand (see on ch. xvi. 46—48). Of both it is said that "he made an atonement for the people," and so far they both appear as having power with God to turn away his wrath and stay his avenging hand. But the atonement made by Aaron was official, for he was the anointed high priest, and, being made with incense from the sanctuary, it was made in accordance with and upon the strength of a ceremonial law laid down by God whereby he had bound himself to exercise his Divine right of pardon. The act of Phinehas, on the contrary, had no legal or ritual value; there is no power of atonement in the blood of sinners, nor had the death of 24,000 guilty people had any effect in turning away the wrath of God from them that survived. It remains, therefore, a startling truth that the deed of Phinehas is the only act neither official nor commanded, but originating in the impulses of the actor himself, to which the power of atoning for sin is ascribed in the Old Testament: for although in 2 Sam. xxi. 3 David speaks of making an atonement by giving up seven of Saul's sons, it is evident from the context that the "atonement" was made to the Gibeonites, and not directly to the Lord. Again, the act of Phinehas merited the highest reward from God, a reward which was promised to him in the most absolute terms. Because he had done this thing he should have God's covenant of peace, he and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. This promise must mean that he and his seed should have power with God for ever to make peace between heaven and earth, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; and, meaning this, it is a republication in favour of Phinehas, and in more absolute terms, of the covenant made with Levi as represented by Aaron (see on Mal. ii. 4, 5). Nor is this all. In Ps. cvi. 31 it is said of his deed that "it was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore." This word "counted" or "imputed" is the same (חָשַׁב) which is used of Abraham in Gen. xv. 6, and the very words of the Septuagint here (ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην) are applied to the obedience of Abraham in James ii. 23. It appears then that righteousness was imputed to Phinehas, as to the father of the faithful, with this distinction, that to Phinehas it was imputed as an everlasting righteousness, which is not said of Abraham. Now if we compare the two, it must be evident that the act of Phinehas was not, like Abraham's, an act of self-sacrificing obedience, nor in any special sense an act of faith. While both acted under the sense of duty, the following of duty in Abraham's case put the greatest possible strain upon all the natural impulses of mind and heart; in the case of Phinehas it altogether coincided with the impulses of his own will. If

faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness, it is clear that zeal was imputed to Phinehas for righteousness for evermore.

This being so, it is necessary in the second place to point out that the act in question (like that of Abraham in sacrificing his son) was distinctly one of moral virtue according to the standard then Divinely allowed. An act which was in itself wrong, or of doubtful rectitude, could not form the ground for such praise and promise, even supposing that they really looked far beyond the act itself. Now it is clear (1) that under no circumstances would a similar act be justifiable now; (2) that no precedent could be established by it then. The Jews indeed feigned a "zealot-right," examples of which they saw (amongst others) in the act of Samuel slaying Agag (1 Sam. xv. 33), of Mattathias slaying the idolatrous Jew and the king's commissioner (1 Macc. ii. 24—26), of the Sanhedrim slaying St. Stephen. But the last-mentioned case is evidence enough that in the absence of distinct Divine guidance zeal is sure to degenerate into fanaticism, or rather that it is impossible to distinguish zeal from fanaticism. Every such act must of necessity stand upon its own merits, for it can only be justified by the coexistence of two conditions which are alike beyond human certainty: (1) that the deed is itself in accordance with the will of God; (2) that the doing of it is inspired by motives absolutely pure. That Christ came to save men's lives, and that God would have all men to repent, has made for us the primary condition impossible, and therefore the act of Phinehas would be immoral now. No one may take life unless he has the mandate of the State for doing so. But it was not so then; God was the King of Israel, and the foes of Israel were the foes of God, with whom there could be no peace or amity as long as they threatened the very existence of God's people and worship. The Israelite who indulged in sinful intercourse with a heathen was a rebel against his King and a traitor to his country; he became *ipso facto* an "outlaw," to slay whom was the bounden duty of every true patriot. If it be said that this view of things belongs to an inferior code of morality, which ignored the universal brotherhood of men and Fatherhood of God, that is admitted at once. The elder revelation founded itself plainly and avowedly upon the moral law as then universally held (and by no means supplanted yet by the higher law of Christ), that men were to love their brethren and hate their enemies. To complain that the act of Phinehas was moral in a Jewish and not in a Christian sense is only to find fault with God for suffering a confessedly imperfect and preparatory morality to do its work until the fulness of time was come.

While, therefore, we recognise the act of Phinehas as one determined, in its outward form, by the imperfect morality of the dispensation under which he lived, it is necessary to look below the act to the spirit which animated it for its permanent value and significance. That spirit is clearly defined by the testimony of God—"while he was zealous with *my* zeal." The excellence of Phinehas was, that he was filled with a zeal which was itself Divine against sin, and that he acted fearlessly and promptly (whilst others apparently hesitated even when commanded) under the impulse of that zeal; in other words, what pleased God so greatly was to see his own hatred of sin, and his own desire to make it to cease, reflected in the mind and expressed in the deed of one who acted upon righteous impulse, not under any command or constraint.

It is impossible, in the third place, not to see that this record throws a flood of light upon the doctrine of the atonement; for the act of Phinehas stands, in some respects, upon a higher level than all the types and shadows of the cross which had gone before; being neither an act of submission to a definite command, like the sacrifice of Isaac, nor a piece of ordered ritual, like the sending forth of the goat for Azazel;

but a spontaneous deed, having a moral value of its own. Partly at least for the sake of what it was, not merely what it showed in a figure, it was accepted as an atonement for the sin of Israel (which was very gross), and was imputed to its author for an everlasting righteousness. Phinehas, therefore, in one very important sense, would seem to bear a stronger resemblance to our Lord in his atoning work than any other person in the Old Testament. It may therefore be submitted that we must seek the truest ground of the atonement wrought by Christ not in the simple fact of the passion and death of the God-man, nor in the greatness or value of his sufferings as such; but in that zeal for God, that Divine indignation against sin as the opposite of God, that consuming desire to cause it to cease, which first animated the life of the Redeemer, and then informed his death. Phinehas in his measure, and according to his lights, was governed by the same Spirit, and surrendered himself to the prompting of the same Spirit, by which Christ offered himself without spot unto God. And that Spirit was the Spirit of a consuming zeal, wherein our Lord hastened with an entire eagerness of purpose (Luke xii. 50; John ii. 17; xii. 27, 28, &c.) to "condemn sin in the flesh" and so to glorify God, and to accomplish the object of his mission (Rom. viii. 3), not by the summary execution of individual sinners, but after an infinitely higher fashion, by the sacrifice of himself as the representative of the whole sinful race.

Lastly, it must be noted that as the act of Phinehas enables us, almost more than anything else, to enter into the nature of our Lord's atonement, so it is only in the light of that atonement that we can justify to ourselves either the strength of the Divine commendation accorded to Phinehas, or the vastness of the promises made to him. For the deed was after all an act of violence, and a dangerous precedent, humanly speaking; and, on the other hand, the covenant of peace given to him and to his seed, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, failed to give any peace at all, save in a very broken and partial manner, and did not even continue in the keeping of his family. As the house of Eleazar was the elder of the two descended from Aaron, it would have been only natural that the high priestly dignity should remain with its members; as a fact, however, it passed to the house of Ithamar from the days of Eli until Solomon, for political reasons, deposed Abiathar in favour of Zadok; and it was lost for ever with the final fall of Jerusalem. As in so many cases, therefore, we have to acknowledge that the act of Phinehas was accepted as an atonement for the sake of that truer atonement which (in a remarkable sense) it anticipated; and that the promises given to Phinehas were only partially intended and partially fulfilled for him, while the true and eternal fulfilment was reserved for him of whom Phinehas was a figure. To Christ, in whom was combined an entire zeal against sin and an entire love for the sinner, was indeed given God's covenant of peace and an everlasting priesthood.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—*Sin, zeal, and atonement.* We have in this chapter the sin of man and the righteousness of God set before us in the most striking light; the virulence of the one, and the triumph of the other through the zeal of God's servant. We may contemplate here—I. The seductions of the flesh and of the devil, and the apostasy to which they lead; II. The insolence of sin when allowed to gain a head; III. The zeal against sin which pleases God and obtains favour; IV. In a figure, the atonement wrought by God's holy servant Jesus.

I. Consider, therefore, with respect to THE APOSTASY OF ISRAEL—1. *That it was due to two things—their own licentiousness, and the craft of Balaam taking advantage of it. They* knew not indeed that Balaam had any part in it, but *we* know

that the instigation came from him. Even so there is the same double origination of all grave fallings away from God and grace. A man is drawn away of his own lust (James i. 14), and enticed by the lust of the flesh and of the eyes (1 John ii. 16); but beneath and behind all these temptations is the craft of an evil will counterworking the grace and purpose of God (Ephes. vi. 11, 16; 1 Pet. v. 8). And note that Balaam could not harm them by his curses or magical practices, but only by taking advantage of their evil concupiscence. So has our adversary no power against us, save through our own sins. 2. *That the sin of Israel began with idleness, and the reaction from toil and victory, which encouraged them to give the rein to wandering desires.* Even so the most dangerous moments, morally speaking, in a Christian's life are those intervals of comparative inactivity and apparent safety when dangers seem to be surmounted, foes overcome, and toils left behind. 3. *That the danger of Israel against which they had been so strongly warned now beset them, viz., the danger of too friendly intercourse with people whose religion and morality were altogether inferior to that of Israel.* Even so the great and constant danger of Christian people—especially of such as mix much with others—lies in intercourse with a world which does not acknowledge the laws of God, and in the almost inevitable lowering of the moral and religious tone which follows. 4. *That the first fatal step was indulgence in carnal pleasures*—an indulgence such as was now for the first time thrown in their way. And this is still the frequent source of apostasy; a snare into which the most unlikely persons constantly fall when it is suddenly presented to them. How many of the greatest, intellectually, and most promising, spiritually, have fallen through lust! how many deem themselves absolutely above it simply because the temptation has never yet come in their way! 5. *That fellowship in sin led directly to fellowship in idolatry:* the two things being mutually intermixed in the abominations of those days. Even so it is impossible to take part in the sinful indulgences of the flesh and of the world without denying God and committing treason against him. Immorality is not simply evil in the sight of God, it is an outrage upon him, and a direct renunciation of our allegiance to him. The first Christians rightly regarded Venus and Bacchus as devils. Fleshly sin involves a quasi-sacramental union with the enemy of God (1 Cor. vi. 13—20; x. 21, 22; and cf. Ps. lxxiii. 27; Acts xv. 20; 1 Tim. v. 11). 6. *That the wrath of God burnt especially against the heads of the people, because they had permitted these iniquities to go on, and had perhaps encouraged them.* Even so their sin is greatest and their punishment will be sorest who fail to use their position and authority to discourage vice; much more if they countenance it by their example. 7. *That the sentence of death was pronounced upon all who were joined to Baal-Peor.* It is not the will of God that sin as such should now be punished by the magistrate, but none the less is the sentence of eternal death gone forth against all who through sinful indulgence have made themselves over to the prince of this world (Rom. i. 18, 32; vi. 23; Ephes. v. 5; Rev. xix. 20; xxi. 8). 8. *That the judges of Israel were commanded to execute judgment, not indiscriminately, but each upon such as he was responsible for.* Even so is every Christian held bound to extirpate by all needful violence his own sins and sinful inclinations which cleave unto iniquity and do dishonour to God. For each one of us is responsible for all that is within him, and not for others, save by example and admonition (Rom. viii. 13; 1 Cor. ix. 27; Gal. vi. 5; Ephes. v. 11; Col. iii. 5, where "mortify" is simply "put to death").

II. Consider again, with respect to THE SIN OF ZIMRI—1. *That the bad example and negligence of the chiefs went further in encouraging this evil than the declared wrath of God in discouraging it.* It would have been impossible for such a thing to have occurred if the leaders of Israel had been doing their duty. Even so in a society nominally Christian the bad example of its leaders has much more effect than all the denunciations of Scripture. Nothing is more remarkable than the extreme insolence with which the worst vices are ever ready to assert themselves, and to flaunt their vileness in the face of day, if they find encouragement, or even toleration, with those that lead opinion and set the fashion. Worse sins than that of Zimri, such as adultery, and murder (in the form of duelling), have been and are practised without shame and without rebuke by those who claim the name and privilege of Christians. 2. *That the rank of the two offenders no doubt increased*

their presumption, as shielding them from punishment. Even so in the Churches of Christ it has ever been the rich and the great who have dragged down the moral law and outraged the holiness of their calling, because they seemed to be beyond the reach of discipline or correction in this world. 3. *That their sin was intensified by contrast with the penitential sorrow and the trouble all around them.* Even so does the reckless sin of abandoned people assume a darker hue in the sight of God and of good men, because it shows itself side by side with all the sorrow and the pain, the penitence and supplication, which that very sin has worked in unnumbered souls. There is not a city in Christendom where that scene of sin and weeping in the camp of Israel is not ever being reproduced in full sight of God, if not of men. 4. *That the sin of Zimri was, and is, revolting to everybody, not, however, because it was really worse than numberless other such acts, but only because it asserted itself in its naked hideousness.* Even so the most revolting crimes which all men cry out upon are not really worse than those which are committed every day; it is only that circumstances have robbed them of the disguises and concealments beneath which men hide their ordinary sins.

III. Consider again, with respect to THE ZEAL OF PHINEHAS—1. *That it was well-pleasing in the sight of God because it was a zeal for God, and against sin.* Even such must be the character of all true religious zeal; it must have no lesser or meaner inspiring motive than the pure desire that God may be glorified and sin may be destroyed. It is this zeal, and nothing else, which puts the creature at once on the side of the Creator, and produces an active harmony of will and purpose between God and man. How little religious zeal has this pure character! Hence, although it achieves much,—builds churches, wins converts, gains all its ends on earth,—yet it does not obtain any commendation or reward from God. 2. *That it stood in strong contrast to the supineness of the chiefs, and even apparently of Moses; they (at best) only mourned, Phinehas acted.* True zeal is always rare, and most rare in high places. It is so much easier to deplore the existence of evils than to throw oneself into active contention against them. The enthusiasms and reforms which have purged the Church of its grosser moral corruptions have never come from its leaders. 3. *That it was all the more acceptable with God because it was spontaneous, and not official.* Even so the zeal which pleases God is that which is not paid for directly or indirectly, and which is not prompted by any human expectations, and does not wait for any advantages of position. How often do men tacitly agree to leave zeal for religion and morality to their official exponents, as if it were a professional matter to seek the glory of God and the triumph of righteousness! 4. *That it merited the favour of Heaven because it was unhesitating and unabashed.* No one else perhaps would have "followed" when and where Phinehas followed. Even so a genuine religious zeal does not hesitate to seek its ends by painful courses, and such as natural feeling and ordinary sentiment shrinks from. Zeal knows no shame except the shame of doing wrong or of suffering wrong to be done if it can be helped. 5. *That the act of Phinehas was commended because it was* (1) *according to the will of God, and* (2) *inspired by zeal for God unmixed with lower motives.* According to the law of Israel, as then understood and sanctioned by God, it was right that these sinners should die, and right that any private person in Israel should execute judgment upon them if the rulers hesitated; and Phinehas had no private ends to gain or malice to gratify by what he did. Even such is the ultimate test of every act of religious zeal, by which it must be weighed in the last account. If a thing be right in itself, according to the revealed will of God, yet if it be done from any motive but the highest, it has no reward hereafter, because it seeks its reward here. 6. *That the act of Phinehas was one which was right then, but would be wrong now,* because the present dispensation is built upon eternal, not upon temporal, sanctions. Yet is his zeal and ours all one in its essence: we must put to death the deeds of the flesh by the arms of righteousness; every man must be a Phinehas to his own lusts in act—to others in word and example only (cf. 2 Cor. vii. 11).

IV. Consider lastly, with respect to PHINEHAS AS A FIGURE OF CHRIST IN HIS ATONEMENT—1. *That the act of Phinehas was accepted as an atonement because it was inspired by a pure zeal for God and against sin, without regard of self* And

this was the moral element, the controlling motive power, in the life and death of Christ, which made it infinitely precious in the eyes of God, and infinitely available for the remission of sins. 2. *That God had sought for such an atonement before and it had not been given* (see ver. 4: "Hang them up, . . . that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel"). And God had looked in vain among the children of men for any that should have perfect sympathy with his own hatred of sin, and perfect self-devotion in seeking to destroy it (cf. Isa. liii. 11, "my righteous servant;" lxiii. 4, 5; Matt. iii. 17, &c.). 3. *That Phinehas "satisfied" the wrath of God against sin, inasmuch as he gave expression in the most open and public way to the real mind of God in respect of sin.* And our Lord did not merely regard sin with the eyes of God, but he manifested unto all the world in the very highest sense the righteousness of God as arrayed against the sinfulness of sin. Beholding the carcases of those sinners, Israel awoke from his evil dream to a consciousness of what such lust really was. Gazing upon the dead face of him that was made sin for us, we realise what the hatefulness and hideousness of sin truly is. 4. *That Phinehas condemned sin in the flesh by the death—since nothing less would suffice—of the sinners.* And God condemned sin in the flesh not by inflicting death, but by sending his only-begotten to suffer death in the name and in the place of that sinful race with which he had wholly identified himself. 5. *That Phinehas, having displayed and vindicated the righteousness of God, delivered the rest of Israel from the plague.* Even so our Lord, having condemned sin by his own death, through death destroyed the power of death, and delivered his brethren from the fear of death. 6. *That Phinehas received for his zeal God's covenant of peace, and the promise of an everlasting priesthood.* And our Lord, for that he made atonement for the sins of the world, and reconciled in one life and death the holiness and the love of God, became himself our peace (Ephes. ii. 14), and was made a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec (Heb. v. 9, 10). 7. *That Phinehas could not abide because of death, nor his seed because of infirmity and change;* wherefore the promise could not be permanently made good to him. But Christ abideth for ever, for ever the same, eternal inheritor of all the promises made to all holy men (Heb. vii. 24; xiii. 8, &c.). See the note above.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

VERS. 10—13.—*A terrible atonement.* We see in this narrative—

I. THE NATION WHICH GOD HAD BLESSED, CURSED THROUGH ITS OWN SINS. The Israelites, impregnable against the curses of Balaam, succumb to his wiles. We discover parts of a plot. In the foreground are women (true daughters of Eve the tempter), alluring feasts, flatteries, idolatries. In the background we discern the malignant face of the covetous Balaam (ch. xxxi. 16; Rev. ii. 14), and behind him his master the devil. Learn to discriminate the seen and unseen agents of temptation (Ephes. vi. 12), and to guard against the devices of our diabolical foe (2 Cor. ii. 11; xi. 14, 15). Sin did what Balaam could not do. The wrath of God, the plague on the thousands of Israelites, the execution of the ringleaders, follow in quick succession. Note the destructiveness of sin. Of every sinner it may be said as of Achan, "That man perished not alone in his iniquity." The guilt of the nation reached its climax in the shamelessness and audacity of the sin of Zimri. While shame, one of the precious relics of paradise, survives, there is more hope of restoration, but when shame is gone, sin is ripe for judgment (Jer. v. 7—9; vi. 15). If God's wrath had continued to burn, the whole nation must have perished.

II. THE WRATH REMOVED BY A TERRIBLE ATONEMENT. 1. The essence of it was not an outward act, but a state of heart. It was Phinehas' zeal for God which made the act possible and acceptable. Just so in the atonement, of a very different character, made by the Lord Jesus Christ, the essence of it was the zeal for the will of God which prompted the obedience unto death, the offering of the body of Christ once for all (Heb. x. 5—10). 2. The form of the atonement was a terrible manifestation of the righteousness of God in the prompt punishment of the two audacious transgressors. They expiated their crime by their lives. Phinehas' conduct, being inspired by godly zeal, is justified by God himself. Instead of being treated as a crime, it is regarded as a covering over of the nation's sin. Where that sin

reached its climax, there it received such sudden retribution as to stamp it as an abominable thing which God hates. Zimri and his paramour are branded with eternal infamy, while Phinehas is rewarded by "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood." We learn thus that there is more than one way of making an atonement to God. In both cases it is by the manifestation of the righteousness of God (Rom. iii. 21, 25), but in different ways. 1. By his holy wrath flaming forth against sin, whether immediately (*e. g.* Josh. vii. 11, 12) or through the zeal of a man of God. The weeping of the people was not an atonement, for it did not *manifest* the righteousness of God as the act of Phinehas did. 2. By his righteous grace allowing another to interpose on behalf of sinners, to do or to suffer whatever God sees needful for a manifestation of his righteousness in the covering over of sin. Thus Moses (Exod. xxxii. 30—33) and Paul (Rom. ix. 3) were willing to have made atonement, if possible. Thus the sinless Son of God did atone (Rom. iii. 21—26), and sin is covered not by the destruction of the sinner, but by the righteous pardon of penitents trusting the atonement of Christ.—P.

Vers. 1—5.—*Moab finds a more effective weapon.* In spite of all his efforts and confident expectations, Balak fails in bringing down Jehovah's curse on Israel. But what cannot be accomplished in the way Balak proposes now gives fair promise of being speedily accomplished in another way. While Israel abode in Shittim the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

I. ISRAEL, FULLY AWARE OF SOME DANGERS, IS EQUALLY REGARDLESS OF MUCH GREATER ONES. Israel having been refused passage through Edom, and having also had to fight its way through the strong opposing forces of Sihon and Og, came at last into the plains of Moab, doubtless expecting a similar conflict with Balak. While he was looking for Israel to attack him, Israel would be wondering why he left it unmolested. And while Balak is waiting for the expected curse, Moab puts on a peaceful, harmless appearance. What was more natural than that Israel should enter into neighbourly intercourse? The nearness of the two peoples gave every facility for this. There must also have been a great charm in seeing fresh faces and hearing unaccustomed voices. As day followed day without any signs of hostility, Israelite and Moabite would mingle more freely together. *If Balak had followed the example of Sihon and Og, it would have been far better for Israel.* The worst enemies are those who, on their first approach, put on the smiling face and give the salutation of peace. We know what to do with the open enemy, who bears his hostility in his countenance; but what shall we do with him who comes insidiously, to degrade, corrupt, and utterly pervert the life within; and this by a very slow process, of which the victim at the beginning must not be conscious at all, and indeed as little conscious as possible until it is too late for escape? Puritanism, so much condemned, laughed at, and satirised, is really the only safety of God's people. Go with the courage which he inspires into any den of lions, into any physical peril whatsoever, remembering what Jesus has said: "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke xvii. 33); but refrain with equal courage from everything that is mere pleasure, mere comfort of the flesh, for in doing so you may keep clear from some temptations in a world which is crowded with them. Remember that to go in the way of one temptation is *to go in the way of more than one, perhaps of many.* Israel got conversing with the daughters of Moab, and this led to whoredom, which assuredly was bad enough; but worse remained, for whoredom led on to idolatry, and idolatry to the manifested wrath of God. The devil was delighted when he saw the sons of Israel, God's own chosen and beloved race, of whom such glorious things had been spoken in prophecy, in abominable intercourse with the daughters of Moab; still more delighted when he saw the bowings to Moab's gods; and his delight was crowned when 24,000 died in the plague. One cannot enter a grocer's shop now-a-days without noticing how many things are hermetically sealed, in order to be kept free from taint. The very smallest crevice would be fatal. We cannot indeed be hermetically sealed—that would be to go out of the world, and Christ's prayer is, not that we should be taken from the world, but kept from the wicked one. But surely we shall not be slow in seconding Christ's prayer and effort with our prayer and effort. We must

live in this world as knowing how corruptible we are, and that ceaseless vigilance is the price of spiritual safety.

II. BALAK, FULLY PERSUADED OF THE POWER OF ONE WEAPON, IS UTTERLY UNCONSCIOUS OF THE GREATER POWER OF ANOTHER. Balak, sending all this long way for Balaam, was utterly ignorant of a resource lying close at hand, which probably began to operate even while his negotiations with Balaam were in progress. The world is not conscious of *its greatest resources against the Church;* it does its greatest damage unwittingly. Balaam certainly seems to have had something to do with bringing out to its full extent this power of the daughters of Moab (ch. xxxi. 16), but it must have been already in action, revealing to him something of the disposition of the Israelites, before he guessed what could be done with it towards utterly destroying them. The world inflicts much spiritual mischief simply by doing its own things in its own way—pursuing, with energy and vivacity, its godless, mammon-worshipping, pleasure-loving path, and thus drawing towards it God's people, never sufficiently heedful of their steps, never sufficiently looking away from the world to Jesus. *It is in the resources which the world does not consider that we are to look for the greatest dangers.* Balak was simply counting the fighting men of Moab; the women he considered of no consequence. The world, it would seem, is given to despise its own weak ones as much as it despises the weak ones of the Church. God takes weak ones to do his work, but he takes them consciously, deliberately, and with well-ascertained ends, serviceable to the good of his people and the glory of his name. The world also has weak ones to do its work, but it knows not all they do or can do. The lustful daughters of Moab were more dangerous than a corps of Amazons, for they led Israel into idolatry, and that was even worse than if Israel's prime and strength had been stretched dead on some bloody field. Women have done untold and peculiar service in the Church; and what they have done is but a small part of their possible service, if they would only all waken to their powers and opportunities, and if they were only allowed to make full proof of them. The *ill* that these daughters of Moab did is the measure of the great good that truly Christian women may accomplish. Notice that all the daughters of Moab were not as these mentioned here. There was one daughter of Moab, not so many generations after, of a very different spirit—Ruth, the great-grandmother of David.—Y.

Vers. 6—15.—*Zeal for God: the result and reward of it.* I. ZEAL FOR GOD. 1. *The occasion on which it was shown.* The people were passing through great suffering, as is evident from the mention of the weeping crowd before the tabernacle, and the great number who perished in the plague (ver. 9)—a number much exceeding that in the great visitation of wrath after the rebellion of Korah. God himself had sentenced the leaders of the people to a peculiar and shameful death. The people had sinned, it would seem, even beyond their usual transgressions, and now they are being smitten in a way utterly to terrify and abase them. Yet Zimri, a man of high rank in Israel, and Cozbi, a woman of corresponding rank among her own people, choose this moment to commit a most audacious and shameless act in the presence of weeping Israel. 2. *The person who showed this zeal.* Phinehas, son of Eleazar the priest, and the man who in due time would become priest himself. He might have said, "Is it laid on me more than on any one else to become executioner of Heaven's wrath on this daring couple?" or, "Doubtless the Lord will signify his will concerning them." But holy indignation becomes his guide, and he rightly judges that this is an instance of presumptuous sin deserving immediate and terrible retribution. He shows here the true spirit of the servant of God in an office such as that for which he was in training. Those who had to do with the tabernacle as closely as the Aaronic family thereby professed to be nearer God than others. And if their service was anything more than a hollow form, then when the honour of Jehovah was peculiarly in question it was to be expected that his true servants would be correspondingly indignant. What would be thought of an ambassador who should listen cool, unmoved, and unresenting to the greatest insults upon the nation from which he had come? The act of Phinehas was not that of a common Israelite; there was not merely indignation because of Zimri's callous indifference to the sufferings and sorrows of his brethren; he was zealous for the Lord. It was *daring, shameless*

sin which provoked his wrath; it was as if he looked to heaven in going forth and said, "Against thee, thee only have they sinned." To be easily tolerant in the presence of great sins shows a heart far from right towards God. Mere cynical observations on the frailties and eccentricities of fallen human nature do not fall with good grace from the lips of the Christian, however much they may consist with the conduct of a man of the world. 3. *The way in which the zeal was shown.* A violent and extreme measure certainly, but we are not allowed to judge it. God has taken judgment out of our hands by unmistakably indicating his approval. We must distinguish between the spirit of the act and the outward mode of its commission. If the spirit and essence of the act be right, then the mode is a secondary matter. The mode largely depends on the times. Criminals were punished in England only a few centuries ago in ways which would not be tolerated now. What is wanted is that we should emulate the zeal of Phinehas without imitating the expression of it. One might almost say, better run a javelin through sinners than have that easy-going toleration for sins which some show who call themselves godly. If God is worth serving at all, he is worth serving with zeal. Zeal according to knowledge must be as free from mock-charity and humility on the one hand as from bigotry on the other. The more men there are in the Church of the stamp of Phinehas the better. There are even harder things to be done now-a-days than to thrust javelins through shameless fornicators. It needs a pure and fervent zeal to take one's stand with the few, or even alone, against all sorts of worldly principles and practices prevailing in what ought to be God's kingdom through Christ Jesus. When Paul withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed, he did something quite as hard as if he had run a javelin through him.

II. THE RESULT. The plague was stayed. A strange difference in method, is it not, from that adopted on the occasion when Moses commanded Aaron to take the censer and stand in the midst of the congregation, making atonement for them? (ch. xvi. 46). Why was not something of this sort done now? Did Moses feel that it would be of no use, or was his tongue mysteriously stayed from the command? It is plain that Jehovah felt his honour was seriously in question. The people had actually bowed before idols. The chosen race is disintegrating within sight of the promised land. The patriotism of the theocracy is dead. The shout of a king (ch. xxiii. 21) is not met by the answering shout of confiding and grateful subjects. They have utterly forgotten that God is a jealous God (Exod. xx. 5). Stay! there is one man at least, and he, be it marked, in the priestly succession, who does show an adequate jealousy against these idols, so suddenly and ungratefully exalted over against Jehovah. It is the act of only one man; but the act of one man rightly moved, full of holy indignation, energy, and heroism, is enough to stem Jehovah's wrath. Mark, it is not said that Phinehas did this *in order to stop the plague.* The narrative is evidently intended to convey the impression that what he did was in holy indignation at the slight put upon Jehovah. But a righteous action is never wanting in good results. The zeal of Phinehas for Jehovah stood as an atonement for the monstrous disobedience of Israel.

III. THE REWARD. *The result was in itself a reward.* To a man of the stamp of Phinehas it must surely have been no small joy to see the plague stayed. May we not presume that even the leaders escaped their doom, as in a most comprehensive amnesty? *But there is a specified reward beside.* Phinehas has shown his fitness to wear Aaron's robes; nay, in a sense he has worn them, seeing he has made atonement. The real reward for every one faithful to his present opportunity is to enlarge his opportunity and give him more and higher service. He who has the joy of faithfulness in present and perhaps humble duties cannot have a greater joy than that of faithfulness in all of larger and more conspicuous service that may come before him. Our Lord himself, being zealous for his Father on earth (which the formal and professed custodians of the Divine honour were not), cleansing his Father's house from profane and even unrighteous uses, was advanced to still higher service in the glorious opportunities belonging to a place at God's right hand. Among men there is lamentable waste, humiliating and ridiculous failure, because men are so seldom proportioned to the offices they fill. The fit man in the great multitude of instances does not seem to get his chance. *But in God's service every one really gets*

his chance. Phinehas got his chance here. Everything depended on himself. The act was the outcome of his honest, fiery, devoted, godly heart. He had not to go to his father or to Moses, saying, "Think you I should do this thing?" If there is zeal in us, occasion will not be lacking. Phinehas had been required to show *the zeal of the destroyer*, and it proved to be also *the zeal of the preserver*. We have to be zealous for a God who is not only righteous and holy, and jealous of rivalry from any other god whatsoever, but also loving, and who desires not the death of a sinner. The zeal that can do nothing but protest, denounce, and destroy, God will never approve or reward. The becoming, fruitful, and praiseworthy zeal under the gospel is that which, following in the train of Paul, is all things to all men in order to save some.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SECOND MUSTERING (vers. 1—65). Ver. 1.—**It came to pass after the plague.** This plague was the last event which seriously diminished the numbers of the Israelites; perhaps it was the last event which diminished them at all, for it seems to be throughout implied that none died except through their own fault. It is often supposed that this plague carried off the last survivors of the generation condemned at Kadesh (see ver. 64); but this is opposed to the statement in Deut. ii. 14, 15, and is essentially improbable. The victims of the plague would surely be those who had joined themselves to Baal-Peor; and these again would surely be the younger, not the older, men in Israel. It is part of the moral of the story that these offenders deprived themselves, not merely of a few remaining days, but of many years of happy rest which might have been theirs.

Ver. 2.—**Take the sum of all the congregation.** This was certainly not commanded with a view to the war against Midian, which was of no military importance, and was actually prosecuted with no more than 12,000 men (ch. xxxi. 5). A general command to "vex the Midianites" had indeed been given (ch. xxv. 17) on the principle of just retribution (cf. 2 Thess. i. 6), but no attempt seems to have been made to act upon it until a more specific order was issued (ch. xxxi. 2). In any case the present mustering has to do with something far more important, viz., with the approaching settlement of the people in its own territory. This is clear from the instructions given in vers. 52—56, and from the distribution of the tribes into families. **From twenty years.** See on ch. i. 3.

Ver. 3.—**Spake with them,** *i. e.* no doubt with the responsible chiefs, who must have assisted in this census, as in the previous one (ch. i. 4), although the fact is not mentioned.

Ver. 4.—**Take the sum of the people.** These words are not in the text, but are borrowed from ver. 2. Nothing is set down in the original but the brief instruction given to the census-takers—"from twenty years old and upward, as on the former occasion." **And the children of Israel which went forth out of the land of Egypt.** This is the punctuation of the Targums and most of the versions. The Septuagint, however, detaches these words from the previous sentence and makes them a general heading for the catalogue which follows. It may be objected to this that the people now numbered did not come out of Egypt, a full half having been born in the wilderness, but see on ch. xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8.

Ver. 5.—**The children of Reuben.** The four names here registered as distinguishing families within the tribe of Reuben agree with the lists given in Gen. xlvi. 9; Exod. vi. 14; 1 Chron. v. 3.

Ver. 7.—**These . . the families of the Reubenites.** The mustering according to families (מִשְׁפָּחוֹת—Septuagint, δῆμοι) was the distinguishing feature of this census, because it was preparatory to a territorial settlement in Canaan, in which the unity of the family should be preserved as well as the unity of the tribe.

Ver. 8.—**And the sons of Pallu.** This particular genealogy is added because of the special interest which attached to the fate of certain members of the family. The plural "sons" is to be explained here not from the fact (which has nothing to do with it) that several grandsons are afterwards mentioned, but from the fact that וּבְנֵי ("and the sons") was the conventional heading of a family list, and was written down by the transcriber before he noticed that only one name followed.

Ver. 10.—**Swallowed them up together with Korah.** וַתִּבְלַע אֹתָם וְאֶת־קֹרַח. Septuagint, *κατέπιεν αὐτοὺς καὶ Κορέ.* This distinct statement, which is not modified in the Targums, seems decisive as to the fate of Korah. If indeed it were quite certain from the detailed narrative in ch. xvi. that Korah perished with his own company, and not

with the Reubenites, then it might be deemed necessary to force this statement into accordance with that certainty; but it is nowhere stated, or even clearly implied, that he perished by fire, and therefore there is no excuse for doing violence to the obvious meaning of this verse. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed up, we are told, at the same time that Korah's company were consumed by fire; that is a clear statement, and cannot be set aside by any supposed necessity for avenging the sacrilegious ambition of Korah by the element of fire. **And they became a sign.** The Hebrew נֵס properly means a banner or ensign, and is unusual in this sense. It exactly corresponds, however, to the Greek σήμειον, and has no doubt the same secondary signification — a something made conspicuous in order to attract attention and enforce a warning (cf. ch. xvi. 30, 38).

Ver. 11.—**The children of Korah died not.** The confused nature of the narrative in ch. xvi. is well exemplified by this statement; we should certainly have supposed from ch. xvi. 32 that Korah's sons had perished with him, if we were not here told to the contrary. The sons of Korah are frequently mentioned among the Levites, and Samuel himself would seem to have been of them (see on 1 Chron. vi. 22, 28, 33—38, and titles to Ps. xlii., lxxxviii., &c.); it is, however, slightly donbtful whether the Kohathite Korah of 1 Chron. vi. 22, the ancestor of Samuel, is the same as the Izharite Korah, the ancestor of Heman, in 1 Chron. vi. 38.

Ver. 12.—**The sons of Simeon.** As in Gen. xlvi. 10; Exod. vi. 15, with the omission of Ohad, who may not have founded any family. In such cases it is no doubt possible that there were children, but that for some reason they failed to hold together, and became attached to other families. In 1 Chron. iv. 24 the sons of Simeon appear as Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul. In Genesis and Exodus the first appears as Jemuel. These minute variations are only important as showing that Divine inspiration did not preserve the sacred records from errors of transcription.

Ver. 15.—**The children of Gad.** Cf. Gen. xlvi. 16, the only other enumeration of the sons of Gad.

Ver. 20.—**The sons of Judah after their families.** The Beni-Judah, or "men of Judah," according to their sub-tribal divisions, are clearly distinguished from the "sons of Judah" as individuals, two of whom are mentioned in the previous verse. Of the families of Judah, three were named after sons, two after grandsons. As the Pharzites remained a distinct family apart from the Hamulites and Hezronites, it may be supposed that Pharez had other sons not mentioned here or in Gen. xlvi. 12, or in 1 Chron. ii. 3, 4, 5.

Ver. 23.—**The sons of Issachar.** As in Gen. xlvi. 13; 1 Chron. vii. 1, except that in Genesis we have Job instead of Jashub; the two names, however, appear to have the same meaning.

Ver. 26.—**The sons of Zebulun.** As in Gen. xlvi. 14.

Ver. 29.—**The sons of Manasseh.** There is considerable difficulty about the families of this tribe, because they are not recorded in Genesis, while the details preserved in 1 Chron. vii. 14—17 are so obscure and fragmentary as to be extremely perplexing. According to the present enumeration there were eight families in Manasseh, one named after his son Machir, one after his grandson Gilead, and the rest after his great-grandsons. The list given in Josh. xvii. 1, 2 agrees with this, except that the Machirites and the Gileadites are apparently identified. It appears from the genealogy in 1 Chron. vii. that the mother of Machir was a stranger from Aram, the country of Laban. This may perhaps account for the fact that Machir's son received the name of Gilead, for Gilead was the border land between Aram and Canaan; it more probably explains the subsequent allotment of territory in that direction to the Machirites (ch. xxxii. 40). Gilead appears again as a proper name in Judges xi. 2.

Ver. 33.—**Zelophehad . . had no sons, but daughters.** This is mentioned here because the case was to come prominently before the lawgiver and the nation (cf. ch. xxvii. 1; xxxvi. 1; 1 Chron. vii. 15).

Ver. 35.—**The sons of Ephraim.** These formed but four families, three named after sons, one after a grandson. In 1 Chron. vii. 21 two other sons of Ephraim are mentioned who were killed in their father's lifetime, and a third, Beriah, who was the ancestor of Joshua. He does not seem to have founded a separate family, possibly because he was so very much younger than his brothers.

Ver. 38.—**The sons of Benjamin.** These formed seven families, five named after sons, two after grandsons. The list in Gen. xlvi. 21 contains three names here omitted, and the rest are much changed in form. There is still more divergence between these and the longer genealogies found in 1 Chron. vii. 6—12; viii. 1—5 *sq.* It is possible that the family of Becher (Genesis), who had nine sons (1 Chron.), went under another name, because there was a family of Becherites in Ephraim (ver. 35); and similarly the family of the Ephraimite Beriah (1 Chron.) may have ceded its name in favour of the Asherite family of Beriites (ver. 44). But it must be acknowledged that the various genealogies

of Benjamin cannot be reconciled as they stand.

Ver. 42.—**The sons of Dan.** These all formed but one family, named after Shuham (elsewhere Hushim), the only son of Dan that is mentioned. It is possible that Dan had other children, whose descendants were incorporated with the Shuhamites.

Ver. 44.—**The children of Asher.** Of these three families were named after sons, two after grandsons. In Gen. xlvi. 17; 1 Chron. vii. 30, 31 a sixth name occurs, Ishuah, or Isuah. It is possible that its similarity to the following name of Isui or Ishui led to its accidental omission; but if the family continued to exist in Israel, such an omission could scarcely be overlooked.

Ver. 48.—**The sons of Naphtali.** As in Gen. xlvi. 24; 1 Chron. vii. 13.

Ver. 51.—**These were the numbered of the children of Israel.** The results of this census as compared with the former may be tabulated thus:—

Tribe.	No. of families.	First Census.	Second Census.	Decrease.	Increase.
Reuben.	4	46,500	43,730	6 p. c.	
Simeon.	5	59,300	22,200	63 ,,	
Gad.	7	45,650	40,500	11 ,,	
Judah.	5	74,600	76,500	.. ..	2½ p. c.
Issachar.	4	54,400	64,300	.. ..	18 ,,
Zebulun.	3	57,400	60,500	.. ..	5½ ,,
Ephraim.	4	40,500	32,500	20 ,,	
Manasseh.	8	32,200	52,700	.. ..	63 ,,
Benjamin.	7	35,400	45,600	.. ..	29 ,,
Dan.	1	62,700	64,400	.. ..	2½ ,,
Asher.	5	41,500	53,400	.. ..	28 ,,
Naphtali.	4	53,400	45,400	15 ,,	
		603,550	601,730		

It is evident that the numbers were taken by centuries, as before, although an odd thirty appears now in the return for Reuben, as an odd fifty appeared then in the return for Gad. It has been proposed to explain this on the ground of their both being pastoral tribes; but if the members of these tribes were more scattered than the rest, it would be just in their case that we should expect to find round numbers. The one fact which these figures establish in a startling way is, that while the nation as a whole remained nearly stationary in point of numbers, the various tribes show a most unexpected variation. Manasseh, *e. g.*, has increased his population 63 per cent. in spite of the fact that there is not one man left of sixty years of age, while Simeon has decreased in the same proportion. There is indeed little difficulty in accounting for diminishing numbers amidst so many hardships, and after so many plagues. The fact that Zimri belonged to the tribe of Simeon, and that this tribe was omitted soon after from the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii.), may easily lead to the conclusion that Simeon was more than any other tribe involved in the sin of Baal-Peor and the punishment which followed. But when we compare, *e. g.*, the twin tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, concerning whom nothing distinctive is either stated or hinted, whether bad or good; and when we find that the one has decreased 20 per cent. and the other increased 63 per cent. during the same interval, and under the same general circumstances, we cannot even guess at the causes which must have been at work to produce so striking a difference. It is evident that each tribe had its own history apart from the general history of the nation—a history which had the most important results for its own members, but of which we know almost nothing. It is observable, however, that all the tribes under the leadership of Judah increased, whilst all those in the camp of Reuben decreased.

Ver. 53.—**According to the number of the names.** The intention clearly was that the extent of the territory assigned to each tribe, and called by its name (ver. 55, *b.*), should be regulated according to its numbers at the discretion of the rulers.

Ver. 55.—**Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot.** This can only be reconciled with the preceding order by assuming that the lot was to determine the situation of the territory, the actual boundaries being left to the discretion of the rulers. Recourse was had as far as possible to the lot in order to refer the matter directly to God, of whose will and gift they held the land (cf. Prov. xvi. 33; Acts i. 26). The lot would also remove any suspicion that the more numerous tribes, such as Judah or Dan, were unfairly favoured (ver. 56).

Ver. 58.—**These are the families of the Levites.** The three Levitical sub-tribes have been named in the preceding verse, and the present enumeration of families is an independent one. The Libnites were Gershonites.

(ch. iii. 21), the Hebronites and Korathites (or Korahites) were Kohathites (ch. iii. 19; xvi. 1), the Mahlites and Mushites were Merarites (ch. iii. 33). Two other families, the Shimites (ch. iii. 21) and the Uzzielites (ch. iii. 27; 1 Chron. xxvi. 23, and cf. Exod. vi. 22; 1 Chron. xxiv. 24, 25), are omitted here, perhaps because the list is imperfect (see, however, the note on ver. 62).

Ver. 59.—**Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, whom her mother bare to Levi in Egypt.** Rather, "whom she (אֹתָהּ) bare." The missing subject is usually supplied, as in the A. V., and there certainly seems no more difficulty in doing so here than in 1 Kings i. 6. Some critics take "Atha" as a proper name—"whom Atha bare;" others render "who was born;" this, however, like the Septuagint, ἣ ἔτεκε τούτους τῷ Λευί, requires a change of reading. Perhaps the text is imperfect. The statement here made, whatever difficulties it creates, is in entire agreement with Exod. vi. 20; 1 Chron. xxiii. 6, 12, 13, and other passages. If two Amrams, the later of whom lived some 200 years after the earlier, have been confused (as we seem driven to believe), the confusion is consistently maintained through all the extant records (see the note on ch. iii. 28).

Ver. 62.—**Those that were numbered of them.** We have here again a round number (23,000), showing an increase of 1000 since the former census. It is evident that the males of Levi were not counted by anything less than hundreds, and probable that they were counted by thousands (see note on ch. iii. 29). The smallness of the increase in a tribe which was excepted from the general doom at Kadesh, and which in other ways was so favourably situated, seems to point to some considerable losses. It is possible that portions of the tribe suffered severely for their share in the rebellion of Korah; if so, the families of the Shimites and of the Uzzielites may have been so much reduced as to be merged in the remaining families.

Ver. 65.—**There was not left a man of them.** This had been known to be practically the case before they left the wilderness, properly so called (Deut. ii. 14, 15), but it was now ascertained for certain. For the necessary exceptions to the statement see note on ch. xiv. 24.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—65.—*The final numbering of the elect.* Both the numberings of the children of Israel are to be spiritually interpreted of that knowledge which God has of his elect, and of their inscription in the registers of life. The people of God are to him as his flock is to the shepherd; he knows his sheep, and calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out to the journey, or leadeth them in to rest. Again, the people of God are to him as his army is to the captain; they are drawn up (τεταγμένοι, Acts xiii. 48) and set in array unto eternal life, every one in his proper place, so that each may act most to his own advantage, and to the advantage of all. "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. ii. 19), according to the saying, "I know thee by name" (Exod. xxxiii. 17; cf. Isa. xliii. 1), and, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life" (Rev. iii. 5; cf. Philip. iv. 3). But as the numberings of Israel were two, and a great distinction between them, so God's knowledge of his elect has a double character, which is in some important respects strongly contrasted. The first numbering (see the homiletic notes on ch. i.) was for that march which was to prove a fiery trial to all, and did in fact involve the destruction of most, albeit entirely through their own default; the second numbering was for the actual entry into and possession of their long-promised rest. In like manner there is a twofold election on the part of God, according to which his people are counted his indeed, and are personally known to him. There is the election unto grace, whereby we have been called out of darkness, and made the soldiers of the cross, and assigned our place in the "one body" (Col. iii. 15), to share in its privileges and trials, its strifes and consolations; there is also the election unto glory, whereby, when the probation is past and the temptation overcome, we are numbered unto eternal life and inheritance among the saints. On this distinction hangs all the teaching of this chapter. Consider, therefore, with respect to *this mustering as a whole*—

I. THAT THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN BUT ONE CENSUS TAKEN, SINCE ALL WHO WERE NUMBERED AT SINAI WERE NUMBERED FOR VICTORY AND FOR SPEEDY INHERITANCE IN CANAAN. That a second muster was needful at all was entirely due to the rebellion at Kadesh, and the subsequent rejection of that generation. Even so there is in the

will of God concerning us, as declared at large in the gospel, but one election and one enrolling in the ranks of salvation. All who are called to grace are designed for glory; none are enlisted under the cross but may, and should, attain the crown; the Christian name and calling is not a mockery in any case. That there is a double election, that names may be blotted out of the book of life, that it is not possible to maintain a consistent scheme of salvation on the ground of the Divine predestination alone, is all due, and only due, to the sin and cowardice of men, which does not indeed cancel the election or impair the glory of God's Church, but does alter the personal composition of that Church.

II. THAT AS A FACT NOT ONE (ORDINARY) NAME REMAINED IN THE SECOND MUSTER WHICH BELONGED TO THE FIRST. Even so there is not in any case an assurance that those who are called to grace will persevere unto glory. Not all indeed *will*, but all *may*, be lost through their own rebellion. The two lists, of the baptised and of the finally saved, *ought* (in a true sense) to be coincident; as a fact they will no doubt be startlingly dissimilar.

III. THAT THOSE FORMERLY ENROLLED DISAPPEARED ONE BY ONE, ACCORDING TO THE DECLARATION OF GOD, BECAUSE THEY HAD REFUSED AT KADESH TO ENTER INTO REST. Even so if men fall out of the number of such as are being saved (οἱ σωζόμενοι, Acts ii. 47), it is simply because they have refused to enter upon their lot, and have counted themselves unworthy of, or unequal to, the attainment of eternal life.

IV. THAT, NEVERTHELESS, SOME NAMES WERE FOUND IN BOTH LISTS; as those of Caleb, Joshua, Eleazar, and presumably many of the Levites. Even so it is abundantly evident, not only from the testimony of Scripture, but from the example of our brethren, that nothing in our probation need be fatal to our hopes, if only we be true to God and to ourselves. And note that here is one of the great contrasts between that dispensation and ours, that whereas only two individuals out of the twelve tribes obtained inheritance at the last, there will be of us "a great multitude whom no man can number." Nevertheless, we have the same warning (cf. Luke xiii. 23, 24).

V. THAT IN EACH CASE THE MUSTERING WAS LIMITED TO THE SAME CLASS OF MEN, VIZ., SUCH AS WERE FIT TO BEAR ARMS. Even so there is no difference between election to grace and to glory as far as the position and character of the individual is concerned. The two states are so far one, even when looked at from the side of man, that whoso is called to the one needs nothing more to be ready for the other; he only needs to remain what he is, a soldier of Christ, in order to be crowned (cf. Rev. ii. 7, &c.).

VI. THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ALL ISRAEL REMAINED PRACTICALLY STATIONARY; so that as many entered after all as had refused at Kadesh. Even so God will have his kingdom filled (Luke xiv. 21—23), and his calling is without repentance (Rom. xi. 29); so that if some fall short of salvation, others will be found to take their place. And note that the long waiting of Israel in the wilderness was due to the necessity of an evil generation dying out, and another growing up to equal it in numbers. It may be that the long and unexpected tarrying of Christ is due to a like necessity; that the number of the elect is slowly filled up amidst the defection and unworthiness of so many.

VII. THAT THE VARIOUS TRIBES OF ISRAEL SHOWED A REMARKABLE VARIATION; some showing a great increase, others a decrease quite as great. Even so while the Church of Christ as a whole maintains, it may be, its position relative to the rest of the world, how great has been the variation in size and importance of various branches of the Church! Think, *e. g.*, what the Greek-speaking Churches were at one time, and how they are now reduced; and, on the other hand, to what relative importance have the English-speaking Churches grown from small beginnings.

VIII. THAT IN ONE CASE WE CAN TRACE THE CAUSE OF DECLINE WITH SOME ASSURANCE. Simeon, the tribe of Zimri, omitted in the blessing of Moses, must have joined himself more especially to Baal-Peor. Even so the one thing which we can unhesitatingly assign as the fruitful cause of loss of spiritual life and decay of Churches is immorality. Doubtless purity of doctrine is most potent for good, but impurity of life is still more potent for evil. That Church will train fewest souls for heaven which gives most place to those fleshly lusts which war against the soul. And note that this census was taken "after the plague" which followed on the harlotry of Baal-Peor; for the thousands who perished then were not of them that were

doomed at Kadesh (see Deut. ii. 14), but of those who would have inherited Canaan in a few months. So it is "after the plague" of fleshly sin and of its ruinous effects that the servants of God are numbered for eternal life. "The pure in heart shall see God" (cf. Gal. v. 19—21; Ephes. v. 5; Rev. xxii. 15).

IX. THAT IN ANOTHER CASE WE CAN DISCERN A POSSIBLE REASON FOR DECAY, IN THAT ALL THE TRIBES UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF REUBEN FELL OFF IN NUMBERS (Reuben, Simeon, Gad). This may point to the unhappy effects of bad example, and the contagious nature of a turbulent and self-willed spirit in religious matters.

X. THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, ALL THE CAMPS WHICH WERE UNDER THE STANDARD OF JUDAH INCREASED (Judah, Issachar, Zebulun). For to Judah, as having the birthright, appertained now the promise, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed." Thus for the sake of Jesus, who sprang from the tribe of Judah, the companions of Judah were blessed long ago; and this no doubt because his character and example were more or less in accordance with the dignity of his position.

XI. THAT AFTER ALL THE CAUSES OF INCREASE OR DECLINE ARE FOR THE MOST PART UNKNOWN, AND LIE BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE SACRED RECORD. How little do we know of the inner history of Ephraim and Manasseh, which has left no trace in the narrative, and yet had such important effects in their comparative prosperity! Even so how little do we know of the real life of Churches; how little can we estimate those forces which determine their spiritual growth or decadence!

XII. THAT NOTHING BROUGHT TO LIGHT THE GREAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TRIBES EXCEPT THE MUSTERING ON THE VERGE OF JORDAN. Even so nothing can really test the comparative excellence, the success or failure, of a Church, except the verdict of "that day," and the numbers then found worthy to stand before the Son of man.

Consider also, with respect to *the Levites*—

THAT THEY HAD INCREASED, BUT NOT NEARLY SO MUCH AS THEY SHOULD HAVE DONE, CONSIDERING THEIR IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES. Four tribes, although under the condemnation of Kadesh, had prospered more than they. Even so it is certain that no situation of vantage, ecclesiastical or religious, delivers us from spiritual loss, or really makes religious progress easier. Many who have fewer advantages and greater difficulties, many even who have at some time fallen under greater condemnation, will nevertheless outstrip us in the heavenly race.

Consider again, with respect to *the inheritance of each tribe in Canaan*—

I. THAT ITS SITUATION WAS TO BE DECIDED BY LOT, *i. e.* BY DIVINE DISPOSITION, APART FROM HUMAN CHOICE OR FAVOUR. Even so our "place in heaven" will be allotted to us by God himself, being predestinated for us according to his infinite wisdom, without any respect of persons.

II. THAT ITS BOUNDARIES WERE TO BE DETERMINED BY ESTIMATION OF THE SIZE AND NEEDS OF EACH. Even so our "place in heaven" will be our own, not only as given to us of God's free grace, but as being exactly suited for us, and precisely adapted to our measure of spiritual growth.

Consider again, with respect to *the sins of Korah*—

THAT THEY DID NOT PERISH WITH THEIR FATHER (NOT BEING OF HIS "COMPANY"), BUT LIVED TO FOUND AN HONOURABLE AND USEFUL FAMILY IN ISRAEL. Even so God does not visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unless the children also "hate him." It is a thing pleasing to God when the children retrieve the forfeited honour of their father's name by their good works. How often does the Church of God find its ornaments and supports amongst the children of its greatest enemies!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 52—56.—*The lot is to decide where every tribe shall receive its inheritance.* Seventy years ago a party of emigrants from the Scottish border found themselves at the entrance of the valley in South Africa which had been assigned for their settlement. The patriarch of the party, gazing wistfully on the goal of their long wanderings, gave vent to the feeling of his heart in the exclamation, And this at length is the lot of our inheritance! A sure instinct taught him to see, in the pro-

vidential ordering of the momentous turning-point in life which he and his companions had now reached, the same thoughtful and wise Hand which appointed to the tribes under Joshua their inheritance in the promised land; and the language of the Old Testament history rose naturally to his lips.

I. To do justice to this aspect of Divine providence, it is of consequence to consider well WHAT AN IMPORTANT BUSINESS IS THE ORDERING OF THE LOCALITY IN WHICH MEN ARE TO PASS THEIR DAYS. The complexion of a nation's life and the tenor of its history are exceedingly affected by the sort of locality where it has its seat. A nation whose lot is fixed in the impenetrable depths of Africa, how different its history must necessarily be from that of a nation which has received for inheritance a sea-girt land, like Greece or Italy, Great Britain or Scandinavia! The one is sequestered from all quickening intercourse, and is likely to sleep on in a semi-torpid state; the other lies open to the influence of every tide of foreign thought and sentiment. Now it was precisely this question of *locality* which was determined for the tribes by lot. It is a mistake to suppose that the lot determined everything. The division of the country was to proceed on the principle that the extent of territory bestowed on the respective tribes was to be proportioned to the number of names in each (vers. 53, 54). A glance at the map will show how carefully this was attended to. The number of acres which fell to the lot of "little Benjamin" was much smaller than the number embraced in the inheritance of "the mighty tribe of Ephraim." The business of thus apportioning to every tribe a domain corresponding to the number of its families was devolved on a Commission of Twelve, under the oversight of Eleazar and Joshua (ch. xxxiv. 16—29). But before these commissioners could make the apportionment, it had first to be determined *whereabouts* each tribe was to be planted; and this was done by lot. The Lord reserved to himself the business of determining the bounds of his people's habitation. And, I repeat, this was a momentous determination. If Judah, instead of occupying the inland hills and valleys of the south, had received for its inheritance the lot of Simeon, on the coast of the Mediterranean, and in the way of the Gentiles, how different the course of its history would have been!

II. CONSIDER THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN THIS MATTER OF ORDERING THE BOUNDS OF MEN'S HABITATIONS. It is not the tribes of Israel only about whose bounds Divine providence is exercised. Read Deut. xxxii. 8 and Acts xvii. 26. But although God "from the place of his habitation looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth," it is equally evident from the Scripture that his providence occupies itself very specially about the affairs of his chosen people, and particularly about the ordering of their lot. 1. *How true this is* might be shown by many clear testimonies of Holy Scripture. At present it may be sufficient to remind you of the testimony borne by daily experience. When you left school you had in your mind many projects and resolves about the future—where you would settle, and what you would do. Have these stood? Have they not rather, in nine cases out of ten, been quite overruled? You proposed, but God disposed. Your portion has fallen to you by lot. 2 This being so, *it is surely your duty to consider God's hand and providence in the matter.* "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 33). Here again experience says Amen to God's word. The man must have been blind indeed who has never perceived the hand of a special providence prospering or frustrating his purposes, and ordering his lot far better than he could himself have ordered it. 3. Due consideration of God's hand will move the soul to *trust his providence.* Abraham, being told of a country which he should afterwards receive for inheritance, went out trustfully, although he knew not whither he went. This we also are to do; it is the proper fruit and demonstration of our faith. And as we are to go forward in faith ourselves, so we are in faith to send forth into the world those most dear to us. We need not doubt that in answer to the prayer of faith the Lord will appoint to them a suitable lot, and give them cause to sing, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Ps. xvi. 6).—B.

Vers. 1—62.—*The second census.* I. THE PURPOSE OF IT. 1. *The number of those able to go to war in Israel had still to be ascertained.* Though the people are now

reposing in unaccustomed and grateful quietude, with the promised Canaan just over against them, it is being impressed upon them in many ways that they must win it by conquest. The children, while inheriting the promises given to their fathers, inherit at the same time the services which the fathers had been found incompetent and unworthy to render. We may gather from this repeated census that God would have his people in every generation to count up their strength for conflict. It is only too easy to depreciate and forget our spiritual resources, and think them less than they are. Even a man like Elijah professed himself left alone, when the Lord knew there were still in Israel seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal. Those going forward into life must be made ready, so far as the advice and arrangements of others can make them ready, both for the certain conflict peculiar to each person, and for a part in the great battle against darkness and wrong which goes on through every age, under the leadership of Christ himself. 2. *Possession of the land had to be prepared for* (vers. 52—56). The conflict will be a great, an arduous, and a taxing one, but it will assuredly end in victory. God's command to prepare for war brings as its logical and cheering sequence the command to prepare for possession. God is able to make regulations for the future, which, if men were spontaneously to make them for themselves, would savour of braggadocio (ch. xv. 2).

II. THE EXACT TIME AT WHICH IT WAS MADE. *It was after the plague.* We may presume that Israel had been to some extent purified by this visitation, although the plague was doubtless no respecter of persons, but involved innocent and guilty in one common temporal suffering, according to the fixed law of our fallen nature that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. The dreadful result which the infecting idolatries of Moab had brought upon Israel was indeed a very impressive intimation that the full strength of the people was required. Those numbered in the army by reason of fit age were to see to it, and examine their hearts, and become as fit as possible in all other respects.

III. THE METHOD. *Still the same as before, by tribes.* There had been many changes, losses, and sad disturbances during this time of wandering and severity, but each tribe had kept itself distinct. They were still ranged in the same order round the tabernacle, and regarding it from the same point of view. So if we take a period, say of forty years, in the course of Christ's Church, we shall find the sects at the beginning of the period still existent at the end of it. The men who looked at truth from a certain point of view at the beginning have their spiritual successors who look at truth from the same point of view. The differences, the marked, emphasised, and pertinacious differences, found amongst believers are not so much between truth and error as between different aspects of the same external object.

IV. THE RESULT. It must have been anxiously waited for, not only to see the grand total, but the relative position of each tribe. The result shows somewhat fewer in number, but, as we have suggested, they were possibly purer in quality. Some tribes have increased, others decreased. In Simeon there is a most extraordinary falling away, but still it was quite within truth to say that *for practical purposes* the number had not diminished. Yes; but if Israel had not been passing through a temporary curse there ought to have been, and probably would have been, a marked and exhilarating increase. But instead of increase there is a slight decrease. Things had not been going lately as they did in Egypt, when "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Exod. i. 7). Certainly if one goes by the actual state of the people, there is but little room for Balaam's cheering words concerning the dust of Jacob and the fourth part of Israel (ch. xxiii. 10). In the light of this second census the whole narrative is seen to harmonise in a most subtle way. If Israel were under a curse these forty years, if there were a real suspending of God's favour and of the previous communications of his energy, it is just what might be expected that at the end of the period the people would be found no further forward than at the beginning—600,000 when they left Sinai, 600,000 still when they reach Jordan.—Y.

Vers. 64, 65.—*A generation gone.* Certain things strike us in examining this second census and comparing it with the former one at Sinai: *e. g.* the difference

as to numbers; the fluctuations of the tribes, some increasing, others decreasing; in particular, the extraordinary decrease in Simeon arrests attention. But all these are passed over as not needing notice. There is one thing, however, to which attention is specially called, and indeed it must have been kept in view all the census through, namely, that not one of those numbered in the previous census was now alive. Those counted now had not been counted before.

I. ATTENTION IS CALLED TO A FULFILLED PREDICTION. It deserves special attention as a very remarkable, exact, and early fulfilment of prediction. Most of God's predictions for Israel worked on to their fulfilment slowly and imperceptibly through many generations; some in the highest sense of them are still incomplete; but here was a prediction concerning the present, moving to its fulfilment under the very eyes of many whom in their turn it would also include. Surely it must often have been talked of in the tents of Israel. And here was another purpose that the census served —to show clearly and impressively that the prediction had been fulfilled. The fulfilment had its dark side and its bright one. It was an impressive proof that what penalties God attaches to sin he can accomplish to their full extent. All had perished save Caleb and Joshua. Things had happened *exactly as God said they would*, the people themselves being witnesses. "If any one numbered in the previous census is still alive, save Caleb and Joshua, let him step forward," Moses and Eleazar might have said. But they were all silent in the mystery of a peculiar death. Rightly looked at, it was very comforting and inspiring for Israel to go into Canaan with such a wonderful proof of God's power in their minds. He who had so manifestly fulfilled such a peculiar prediction might be confidently expected to keep his word in all others.

II. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE DIVINE CONTROL OVER THE TERM OF HUMAN LIFE. What God did in the particular instance of this generation he can do in any and every generation, with any and every one of the children of men. We talk very grandly sometimes of the value of a sound constitution, the prudence of attending to the laws of health, and taking such means as may preserve life to a ripe old age. But while these considerations are indeed not to be neglected, God's will also must be taken into account, as at least *a possible* regulating force in the term of every human life. He may have some weighty reason of his own for shortening or lengthening, which will nullify alike the prudence of some and the recklessness of others. It is not competent for us to say that he does actually interfere in every instance, as he so plainly did with the men of this doomed generation; it is enough for us to feel that he has power to do it. We have here but one out of many evidences to be found in the Scriptures that God has death completely under restraint. He can keep us back from its grasp as long as may seem good to him. He can also allow us to fall into its grasp, if thereby his own purposes will be better served. They are much more important than the devices and desires which arise out of our selfish, ignorant, and unexperienced hearts.

III. THE SPECIAL INTERVENTION IN THIS INSTANCE SUGGESTS THAT, AS A GENERAL RULE, NATURE IS LEFT TO ITS OWN COURSE. Every one entering this world is left to the play of what, for want of a better term, may be called the forces of nature. So much of natural vitality and energy, so much power of assimilation and growth, so much, sometimes good and sometimes bad, by way of inheritance from parents, and, over and above what may be peculiar, the taint of that depravity which is the common calamity of the children of men—these are the elements with which we have to do our best. And might we not hope, if only the obstacles were taken away which arise from ignorance, error, prejudice, sensuality, and slavery to base appetites of every sort, that the term of human life would be extended far beyond what it is in the great majority of instances? Should it not be reckoned the normal state of things, the state of things according to God's own wish, for those who come into the world as infants to go out of it as old men? The reason why so many do not should be made a matter of urgent, light-seeking, personal inquiry. It is a very misleading thing to speak, and without any real authority to do so, of God calling people away; particularly infants and children, who furnish such a large and melancholy proportion of the world's mortality. We foreclose many questions of the greatest moment by a traditional, thought-benumbing fatalism, a seemingly pious, yet really impious,

profession of submission to the will of God. The will of God would sooner be complied with in this ignorant, purblind world if Christians, who pray that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven, would only set themselves to discover what the will of God really is. Surely it is a strange and horrible thing that, without some plain reason such as we find in 2 Sam. xii. 14, many infants should breathe their little lives so quickly away; and it is all the more horrible when they thus die in spite of the solicitude and patient care of a loving mother. Where love abounds, wisdom may yet be lacking. A world wiser to consider the laws of nature and self-denyingly to obey them would be a less anguished and sorrowing world. Mothers would not so often be sharing Rachel's bitter lot, weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted.

IV. THE EXTENSION OF GOD'S WRATH OVER THIS LONG PERIOD ESPECIALLY MARKS IT OUT AS WRATH AGAINST UNRIGHTEOUSNESS (Rom. i. 18). God is not a man, that he should be carried away in sudden bursts of passion, and need the exhortation, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." For forty years he went patiently through the vineyard, cutting down the cumberers of the ground. Sudden as were the flamings out of the Divine wrath on Israel, it was because Israel was as dry, susceptible fuel to the flame. Wherever there is unrighteousness of men there must be wrath of God. In the deliberate, steady fulfilling of God's wrath on the doomed generation we see a most sublime contrast with the caprice, uncertainty, and partiality of human passion.

V. THERE IS A VERY EMPHATIC ASSURANCE OF GOD'S INTEREST IN ISRAEL INDIVIDUALLY. Each man who thus died had the eye of the Lord on him as an individual. And though he suffered temporal death as a necessary consequence of belonging to the doomed generation, yet the very same watchful care of God which acted with severity in one way was equally available to act with mercy in another. The doom which fell upon the Israelite as Israelite was quite compatible with mercy to the Israelite as a man. Let us in the midst of our need, in the midst of our difficulties in finding a way to God, lay hold of every assurance we can get, and especially in the Scriptures, as to the reality of God's dealings with individuals. There is special record in the Scriptures of his dealings with some, but of many there is of necessity no such record. Here there is clear evidence of God's dealings, individually, with more than 600,000 men in forty years. That period was given for every one of them to pass from the earth, so that at the end of it there was not a survivor to enter the promised land, save the two men who had been singled out for preservation. *And God is dealing with every individual now*, and by his goodness would lead him to repentance. What is wanted in return is that every individual thus appealed to, when he meets the angel of repentance in the way, should have dealings with God such as may end in the full reception of eternal life and increased glory to the fulness of the Divine Trinity.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD (vers. 1—11). Ver. 1.—**The daughters of Zelophehad.** The genealogy here given agrees with those in ch. xxvi. 29—33 and in Josh. xvii. 3. These women would appear to have been in the eighth generation from Jacob, which hardly accords with the 470 years required by the narrative; some links, however, may have been dropped.

Ver. 2.—**By the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,** *i. e.* evidently by the entrance of the sacred enclosure. Here, in the void space, in the midst of the camp, and close to the presence-chamber of God, the princes (*i. e.* the tribe princes who were engaged upon the census) and the representatives of the congregation assembled for the transaction of business and for the hearing of any matters that were brought before them.

Ver. 3.—**He was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord.** He had not been amongst the two hundred and fifty who gathered themselves together in support of Korah's pretensions. It does not appear why they should have thought it necessary to make this statement, unless they felt that the fact of his having died without sons might raise suspicion against him as one who had greatly provoked the wrath of God. **But died in his own sin.** This cannot mean that Zelophehad was one of those who died in the wilder-

ness in consequence of the rebellion at Kadesh (see the next note). Apparently his daughters meant to acknowledge that they had no complaint against the Divine justice because of their father's death, but only against the law because of the unnecessary hardship which it inflicted upon them.

Ver. 4.—**Give unto us . . a possession among the brethren of our father.** The daughters of Zelophehad did not ask for any share of what had been their father's, but they asked that the lands which would have been assigned to their father in the settlement of Canaan might still be assigned to them, so that their father's name might attach to those lands, and be handed down with them. The request assumes that the "brethren" of Zelophehad would receive an inheritance in the promised land, either personally or as represented by their sons; hence it seems clear that Zelophehad was not of the elder generation, which had forfeited all their rights and expectations in Canaan, but of the younger, to whom the inheritance was transferred (ch. xiv. 29—32). This is confirmed by the consideration that these women were not married until some time after this (ch. xxxvi. 11; cf. Josh. xvii. 3, 4), and must, therefore, according to the almost invariable custom, have been quite young at this time. It is reasonable to suppose that the heads of separate families to whom the land was distributed would be at this time men of from forty-five to sixty years of age, comprising the elder half of the generation which grew up in the wilderness. Zelophehad would have been among these, but that he was cut off, perhaps in the plague of serpents, or in the plague of the Arboth Moab, and left only unmarried girls to represent him.

Ver. 5.—**Moses brought their cause before the Lord.** Presumably by going into the tabernacle with this matter upon his mind, and awaiting the revelation of the Divine will (cf. Exod. xviii. 19; ch. xii. 8).

Ver. 8.—**If a man die, and have no son.** On this particular case a general rule of much wider incidence was founded. The Mosaic law of succession followed the same lines as the feudal law of Europe, equally disallowing disposition by will, and discouraging, if not disallowing, alienation by grant. Upon the land was to rest the whole social fabric of Israel, and all that was valued and permanent in family life and feeling was to be tied as it were to the landed inheritance. Hence the land was in every case so to pass that the name and fame, the privilege and duty, of the deceased owner might be as far as possible perpetuated. **Unto his daughter.** Not for her maintenance, but in order that her husband might represent her father. In most cases he would take her name, and be counted as one of her father's family. This had no doubt already become customary among the Jews, as among almost all nations. Compare the cases of Sheshan and Jarha (1 Chron. ii. 34, 35), of Jair (ch. xxxii. 41), and subsequently of the Levitical "sons of Barzillai" (Ezra ii. 61). The question, however, would only become of public importance at the time when Israel became a nation of landed proprietors.

Ver. 11.—**A statute of judgment.** מִשְׁפַּט לְחֻקָּה. Septuagint, *δικαίωμα κρίσεως*. A statute determining a legal right.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The certainty of the promised inheritance.* The case of Zelophehad's daughters is no doubt in keeping with that favourable consideration of women, as capable of claiming rights and holding a position of their own, which certainly distinguished the Mosaic legislation, and affected for good the Jewish character. But the one thing which we may spiritually discern here is the security of the heavenly inheritance and the faithfulness with which it is Divinely reserved for them that have received the promise. Zelophehad died, and that through sin, but since he was not of the disinherited, therefore his name did not cease, neither was his portion taken away from among the people of the Lord. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT ZELOPHEHAD, AS ONE OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION, HAD A PROMISE OF AN INHERITANCE IN CANAAN TO BE HIS (*i. e.* HIS FAMILY'S) FOR EVER. Even so we, in that we belong to "this generation" (cf. St. Matt. xxiv. 34), which has received the promise of eternal life, and a kingdom which cannot be moved (Heb. xii. 28), are without question heirs of salvation, and look forward to a portion amongst the faithful.

II. THAT ZELOPHEHAD HIMSELF DIED IN THE WILDERNESS, AND THAT BY REASON OF SOME SIN WE KNOW NOT WHAT. Even so we die without having received the promised glory; in all probability we shall all so die; and death is the wages of sin, and the body is turned to corruption because of sin.

III. THAT THE DEATH OF ZELOPHEHAD SEEMED TO BAR HIS CLAIM TO ANY IN-

HERITANCE AMONGST HIS BRETHREN, SEEING HE HAD NO SON TO TAKE HIS PLACE AND NAME. Even so death seems at first sight, and in the eyes of the unwise, to cut off hope and to separate from the living, and to deprive those that "are not" of the reward to which they looked. And this was thought to be the case even by them that believed in the first days (1 Thess. iv. 13, *sq.*).

IV. THAT BY THE WILL OF GOD, HIS NAME AND INHERITANCE WERE PRESERVED IN ISRAEL BY MEANS OF HIS DAUGHTERS. Even so, neither death nor failure in this world will be permitted to deprive us of that inheritance in a better world which the mercy of God reserves for us, not because we have deserved it, but because he has promised it.

Consider again, with respect to *the daughters of Zelophehad*—

I. THAT THEY RECEIVED THE REWARD OF FAITH, IN THAT THEY DOUBTED NOT THAT THE LORD'S PEOPLE WOULD RECEIVE EVERY MAN HIS PORTION IN THE LAND OF PROMISE; although they were yet on the other side of Jordan. It is in perfect faith of the fulfilment of God's promises that we must so ask as to receive.

II. THAT THEY RECEIVED THE REWARD OF COURAGE, IN THAT THEY BEING WOMEN WITHOUT ANY NATURAL PROTECTOR, BROUGHT THEIR CAUSE OPENLY BEFORE MOSES, AND SO BEFORE GOD. It is with boldness, not confounded by our own weakness, that we are to make our requests known unto God (Eph. iii. 12; Heb. x. 19), assured that no one is unimportant with him, and no cause disregarded by him.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The disabilities of sex.* I. THE POSSIBLE INJUSTICE CONSEQUENT ON A STRICT ADHERENCE TO SOCIAL TRADITIONS. Try to imagine how this appeal of the daughters of Zelophehad arises. Canaan is now very near, the borders of it visible across the flood; and God has just told Moses the great general principles on which it is to be allotted. Thus the minds of the people are naturally filled with the thoughts of the inheritance. They can no longer complain of being in desolate places. There was good land even before they crossed Jordan (ch. xxxii.), and so Canaan was looked forward to with great expectations. In such circumstances, every family would be on the look-out to anticipate and assert its share. The disciples after they had heard Jesus discoursing so frequently and earnestly on the coming kingdom of heaven, fell to in hot rivalry as to who should be greatest in the kingdom. So here we may well suppose that the sons of Hepher were only too ready to reckon the daughters of their brother Zelophehad as outside any right to the land that would fall to Hepher's children. Natural relations are only too easily trampled on in the greed of gain. Disputes over the division of property breed and sustain deadly quarrels among kindred (Luke xii. 13). Very possibly the brothers of Zelophehad told their nieces that they had no claim to inherit, it being the settled custom that inheritances were to go to sons. Let them be satisfied with marriage into some other family. But the daughters felt pride in their father's name. They do not claim great things for him, feeling that such a claim would not accord with the lot of one who belonged to the doomed generation; but at all events they can say that he died in his own sin; he was free from the taint of that great rebellion which left so deep an impression on Israel's mind. Why then should his name perish from among his family, because he had no son? The answer which we are led to infer is very simple; very worldly also, it is true, but all the more conceivable because of that, "We cleave to our customs; we cannot even give way to feelings which are so creditable to daughters." This perhaps openly—then in their own hearts they would add, "They are only women; they can do nothing."

II. A BOLD REVOLT AGAINST THE ARTIFICIAL DISABILITIES OF SEX. We have imagined an actual refusal to let these women share in the possession. But even if it were not actual, they have a shrewd idea of what will happen, and come appealing to Moses, in the most public manner, so that they may have his weighty authority to settle the matter before he goes. They were but women, yet they had all a man's decision and courage—and more than belongs to most men—to break away from all conventional notions rather than tamely submit to injustice. Paul's disapproval of

women speaking in the churches was of course very good as pointing out a general rule, but probably he would have allowed, on a prudent occasion for allowing it, that it was a rule not without exceptions. He may have reckoned it well at the time, for reasons drawn from the state of a particular church, to make the injunctions express and decided. *Who were to speak for these women, if not they themselves?* When the down-trodden find no sufficient advocate among spectators, it is time for them to raise their own voices. *Is it not plain that these women were the best judges of their own position?* So in the pressure of modern social life, is it not very inconsistent with the maintenance of liberty and truth, to hinder women from asserting their claims in whatever way they deem best? They may indeed be unfit for many fields of labour which they profess their fitness and anxiety to occupy, but at all events let them discover the unfitness for themselves. Has it not been said beforehand of many achieved and glorious facts that they were impossible of attainment? Modern history abounds with such disgraced predictions. Paul said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," which is surely every whit as needful and every whit as serviceable for the woman as the man.

III. THE ACTION OF THESE WOMEN WAS JUSTIFIED BY THE RESULT. God approves their action, as they gain from him the authoritative laying down of a general principle, applied indeed to property, but surely of equal application to all disabilities of sex which arise in other ways than from the impassable limits of nature. God has written for the woman, in her own nature, certain laws she must not transgress, but he never gave man the right to construe these laws, certainly not after the domineering fashion he so frequently adopts. It is undoubtedly true that God made the woman for the man; human nature finds here its completeness, derives hence the means of its continuance, and that diversity of personality and character which constitute so much of the peculiar riches of humanity. But man is not therefore to settle the woman's sphere with his strong and irresponsible hand. Is it not a thing almost certain that many disabilities of sex have arisen through man being from the first the stronger? In the days when might made right—

> He took advantage of his strength to be
> First in the field.

There is a parallel between much in man's treatment of woman and his treatment of the Sabbath. Christ had to free the Sabbath, in his day, from Pharisees. It had been so fettered up by opinionated, obstinate clingers to the traditions of the fathers, as to have become useless for its original purposes, a burden and a terror more than anything else. He freed it by the great declaration that the Sabbath was made for man, and now we have those who rush to the other extreme, and quote his words for purposes utterly alien from his own. So there are the two extremes in judging the place of woman and the scope of her life and service. Some, blindly wedded to custom, would shut woman up in strict limitations, which though not as degrading as those of a Turkish harem, are quite as unjust and injurious in their own way. Others there are who seem inclined to claim for women more than nature in its utmost kindliness will ever yield. Women, who know their own nature best, can be the only true judges, ever under the guidance of God himself, as to the capabilities of their sex. Paul pleading for oneness in Christ Jesus, says, that in relation to him, as there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, so there is neither male nor female. The woman is on the same level as the man in the sight of Christ. To Christ she is directly responsible, bound to serve him with the fulness of her powers. Hence to take the highest ground, that of allegiance to Christ, it is unfaithfulness to him to put even the smallest obstacles in the way of women acting as their own hearts tell them they may best serve their Master.

IV. WE SEE A GOD OF EQUITY SHOWING HIS DISREGARD FOR MERE LEGAL RIGHTS. Nowhere is it shown more clearly than in the Scriptures that law is one thing and equity another. How should a world ignorant of the righteousness of God, and full of the selfish and domineering, make laws such as he will sanction and uphold? "We have law with us," the uncles may have said. Possibly so; but not the law of him who spoke from Sinai. Any law of men which contradicts the law of love to God, and love to the neighbour, is doomed in the very making of it. And is it not a

blessed thing that such laws get broken and ultimately destroyed by the energy of an expanding life which cannot be contained within them? (Matt. ix. 10—13; xii. 1—13; xv. 1—20; xix. 3—9; xxii. 34—40; Rom. xiv. 5; Gal. iii. 28).—Y.

Ver. 3.—*The man who died in his own sin.* I. A PLEA FOR FAVOURABLE CONSIDERATION. The daughters of Zelophehad felt that if he had been numbered among the conspirators with Korah, it would have been very difficult for them to stand forward and make this claim. It is one of the saddest things in a world of sad things that the innocent children of guilty parents are made to inherit the shame of the parental offence. The parental name, instead of being one of the sweetest sounds to fall upon their ears, becomes one of the most hideous and torturing. Not seldom they are looked upon with suspicion, and though it be admitted they cannot help the parents' crime, yet they begin life with a millstone round their necks. The words of these women, *meant only as a plea for themselves*, inflicted at the same time a blow, none the less severe because unconsciously given, on any children of Korah (ch. xxvi. 11) or of his confederates who might be present. Not that it made any real difference to the principle of the matter in question, whether Zelophehad died in his own sin or as partaker in a huge rebellion, but it did make a difference in the spirit with which these women presented their case. The fact that they were women did not make them afraid to go into the face of the whole congregation, but if they had been children of Korah, the chances are that a sense of shame would have compelled them to suffer wrong. What an admonition to those who stand among temptations to some shameless and heinous deed to ponder well the consequent stain and difficulty that may come to their innocent progeny! That the sins of the fathers are visited on the children is a fact apparent in nature, but society heartily accepts the principle, and only too often works it out in the most unsparing fashion.

II. IT WAS THE RIGHT SPIRIT OF APPROACH TO GOD IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES. Zelophehad belonged to the doomed generation. He may indeed have been a better man than most, but a census had just been taken which revealed the fact that there was not a single survivor of the generation; and it was not the time to say more in way of commendation than that Zelophehad died in his own sin. A deferential humble recollection of the holiness of Jehovah we may well believe to have marked the present approach of these women. He would hardly have connected the assertion of a general principle with their request if there had been anything unseemly or insolent in the manner of it. We shall do well not to claim too much for men in the way of commendation, when we are thinking of them in relation to God. We must neither abase them too low nor exalt them too high, but preserve the golden mean of a loving, charitable, and Christian appreciation. How offensive in the hearing of God many eulogies of men must sound, where not only superlative is piled on superlative, but altogether erroneous principles of judgment are adopted. There is a time and a need to praise devoted servants of God, and to maintain their reputation for fidelity, zeal, and spiritual success, but never let it be forgotten that the very best of men, to say the least of him, dies in his own sin. That will be largely his own consciousness. Whatever his services may have been, it is in the grace, wisdom, and ample preparedness of God in Christ Jesus that he will find his only hope. It only needs a little thought to see the impropriety of praising men, because they are laden with the free gifts of God's grace, and at the very time when the suitability of those gifts is especially made manifest. Any sort of praise of human excellence and service which even for a moment pushes into the background the universal depravity of man and the universal necessity of God's grace and mercy, is thereby self-condemned.

III. THOUGH A MAN DIE IN HIS OWN SIN ONLY, YET THAT IS ENOUGH TO WORK IRREPARABLE MISCHIEF. It was well to be able to say of Zelophehad that he had kept out of Korah's conspiracy, but it was a poor thing to say, if there was nothing better behind. Out of negations, nothing but negations will ever come. It is of no avail to keep out of ten thousand wrong ways, unless we take the one right way. The sum of human duty is to leave undone all the things which ought to be left undone, *and to do all the things which ought to be done.* Your own sin, small as it may seem in your present consciousness, is enough to bring death. The mustard-seed of inborn alienation from God will grow to a mighty and everlasting curse if

you do not stop it in time. Those who have passed through untold agonies because of conviction of sin, once laughed at sin as a little thing. They did not dream it would give them such trouble, and drive them about incessantly till they got the question answered, "What must I do to be saved?" Sin sleeps in most, as far as the peculiar consciousness of it is concerned, but when it wakes it will prove itself a giant. Look at the analogy in physical life. A man says that he is full of health and vigour, and he looks it; he even gets complimented upon it. Suddenly, in the midst of these compliments, he is stricken down with a fierce disease, and a few days number him among the dead. Why? The real disease was in him already, even with all his consciousness of health. There must have been something in his body to give the outward cause a hold. Our present consciousness is no criterion of our spiritual state. The word of God in the Scriptures, humbly apprehended and obeyed, is the only safe guide to follow.

IV. THOUGH A MAN MUST NEEDS DIE IN HIS OWN SIN, HE MAY ALSO DIE IN THE FULNESS OF CHRIST'S SALVATION FROM SIN. The end of life, with all its gloom, with all its manifestations of despair, callousness, and self-righteousness in some, is in others an occasion to manifest in great beauty the power of God in the spirits of men. One must die in his own sin, yet he may also experience the cleansing of that blood which takes away all sin. One must die in his own sin, yet this very necessity may also lead to dying in the faith of Jesus, in the hope of glory, and in the arms of infinite love.

V. WE SHOULD AIM THAT NOTHING WORSE THAN DYING IN OUR OWN SIN MAY BE SAID OF US. It is bad enough that sin should be dominant, even without compelling us to leave the ordinary paths of life; those reckoned, among men, useful and harmless. It is bad enough to feel that in us there are the possibilities of the most abandoned and reckless, of the worst of tyrants, sensualists, and desperadoes; only lacking such temptations, associations, and opportunities, as may make the possible actual. Be it ours, if we cannot show a spotless record, if we cannot claim a personality that started from innocence, at all events to show as little of harm to the world as possible. We cannot keep out of Zelophehad's company; let us keep out of Korah's. There is a medium between being a Pharisee and a profligate.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

MOSES AND JOSHUA (vers. 12—23). Ver. 12.—**And the Lord said unto Moses.** It is impossible to determine the exact place of this announcement in the order of events narrated. It would appear from ch. xxxi. 1 that the war with the Midianites occurred later, and certainly the address to the people and to Joshua in Deut. xxxi. 1—8 presupposes the formal appointment here recorded; but the chronology of the concluding chapters of Numbers is evidently very uncertain; they may, or may not, be arranged in order of time. We may with good reason suppose that the summons to die was only separated from its fulfilment by the brief interval necessary to complete what work was yet unfinished (such as the punishment of the Midianites and the provisional settlement of the trans-Jordanic country) before the river was crossed. **Into this Mount Abarim.** See on ch. xxxiii. 47; Deut. xxxii. 49 *sq.*, where this command is recited more in detail. Abarim was apparently the range behind the Arboth Moab, the northern portion of which opposite to Jericho was called Pisgah (ch. xxi. 20; Deut. iii. 27), and the highest point Nebo (Deut. xxxii. 49; xxxiv. 1), after the name of a neighbouring town (ch. xxxiii. 47). **And see the land.** Moses had already been told that he should not enter the promised land (ch. xx. 12), yet he is allowed the consolation of seeing it with his eyes before his death. It would seem from Deut. iii. 25—27 that this favour was accorded him in answer to his prayer.

Ver. 14.—**For ye rebelled against my commandment.** Rather, "as ye rebelled." The same word, כַּאֲשֶׁר, *quomodo*, is used here as in the previous clause. **That is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.** These words have all the appearance of an explanatory gloss intended to make the reference more plain to the reader or hearer. It is impossible to suppose that they formed part of the Divine message; nor does it seem probable that Moses would have added them to the narrative as it stands, because, in view of ch. xx. 13, no necessity for explanation existed. It is quite possible that both ch. xx. 13 and the present clause are subsequent additions to the text intended

to clear up an obvious confusion between the "strife" at Rephidim (Exod. xvii. 7) and that at Kadesh.

Ver. 15.—**And Moses spake unto the Lord.** The behaviour of Moses as here recorded (see, however, on Deut. iii. 23 *sq.*, which seems to throw a somewhat different light upon the matter) was singularly and touchingly disinterested. For himself not even a word of complaint at his punishment, which must have seemed, thus close at hand, more inexplicably severe than ever; all his thoughts and his prayers for the people—that one might take *his* place, and reap for himself and Israel the reward of all *his* toil and patience.

Ver. 17.—**Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them.** A comparison with the words of Moses in Deut. xxxi. 2, and of Caleb in Josh. xiv. 11, shows that the going out and coming in refer to the vigorous prosecution of daily business, and the fatigues of active service. **Which may lead them out, and which may bring them in.** The underlying image is that of a shepherd and his flock, which suggests itself so naturally to all that have the care and governance of men (cf. John x. 3, 4, 16). **As sheep which have no shepherd.** And are, therefore, helpless, bewildered, scattered, lost, and devoured. The image is frequent in Scripture (cf. 1 Kings xxii. 17; Ezek. xxxiv. 5; Zech. x. 2; Matt. ix. 36). The words of the Septuagint are *ὡσεὶ πρόβατα οἷς οὐκ ἔστι ποιμήν.*

Ver. 18.—**Take thee Joshua.** Joshua was now for the first time designated at the request of Moses as his successor; he had, however, been clearly marked out for that office by his position as one of the two favoured survivors of the elder generation, and as the "minister" and confidant of Moses. In regard of the first he had no equal but Caleb, in regard of the second he stood quite alone. **A man in whom is the spirit.** רוּחַ here, although without the definite article, can only mean the Holy Spirit, as in ch. xi. 25 *sq.* **Lay thine hand upon him.** According to Deut. xxxiv. 9, this was to be done in order that Joshua might receive with the imposition of hands a spiritual gift (*charisma*) of wisdom for the discharge of his high office. It would appear also from the next paragraph that it was done as an outward and public token of the committal of authority to Joshua as the successor of Moses.

Ver. 19.—**Give him a charge.** צַוֵּיתָה. Septuagint, *ἐντεῖλῃ αὐτῷ.* Command or instruct him as to his duties.

Ver. 20.—**Put some of thine honour upon him,** or, "some of thy dignity" (מֵהוֹדְךָ). Septuagint, *δώσεις τῆς δόξης σου ἐπ' αὐτόν.*

Ver. 21.—**He shall stand before Eleazar the priest.** This points to the essential difference between Moses and Joshua, and all who came after until the "Prophet like unto" Moses was raised up. Moses was as much above the priests as he was above the tribe princes; but Joshua was only the civil and military head of the nation, and was as much subordinate to the high priest in one way as the high priest was subordinate to him in another. In after times no doubt the political headship quite overpowered and overshadowed the ecclesiastical, but this does not seem to have been so intended, or to have been the case in Eleazar's lifetime. **Who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord.** Rather, "who shall inquire for him in the judgment of Urim." בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאוּרִים. Septuagint, *τὴν κρίσιν τῶν δήλων.* The Urim of this passage and of 1 Sam. xxviii. 6 seems identical with the Urim and Thummim of Exod. xxviii. 30; Levit. viii. 8. What it actually was, and how it was used in consulting God, is not told us in Scripture, and has left no reliable trace in the tradition of the Jews; it must, therefore, remain for ever an insoluble mystery. It does not appear that Moses ever sought the judgment of Urim, for he possessed more direct means of ascertaining the will of God; nor does it seem ever to have been resorted to after the time of David, for the "more sure word of prophecy" superseded it. Its real use, therefore, belonged to the dark ages of Israel, after the light of Moses had set, and before the light of the prophets had arisen. **At his word.** Literally, "after his mouth," *i. e.* according to the decision of Eleazar, given after consulting God by means of the Urim (cf. Josh. ix. 14; Judges i. 1).

Ver. 23.—**And gave him a charge.** This charge is nowhere recorded, for it cannot possibly be identified with the passing words of exhortation in Deut. xxxi. 7.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 12—23.—*The outward failure and inward victory of Moses.* In this section we have two things very plainly: spiritually, we have the weakness of the law, and its inability to do what only Jesus can do for his people: morally, we have the beauty of an uncomplaining submission to the chastening hand of God, and of gladly seeing others reap where we have sown; succeed where we have failed. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT MOSES MUST NOT LEAD THE PEOPLE INTO THE PROMISED LAND BECAUSE OF THE PROVED IMPERFECTION OF HIS CHARACTER. It can hardly indeed be supposed that Joshua was in himself more perfect, or on the whole more dear to God, than Moses: but Joshua was not known to have failed distinctly and publicly as Moses was at Meribah; therefore he seemed to answer to the Divine ideal, to the requirement of perfect holiness, better than Moses. Even so the law made nothing perfect, accomplished nothing fully, because it was known and felt to be imperfect. As applied to the guidance and training of human life for a better world it broke down. Therefore it must be set aside in favour of something more perfect: its glory must be done away before the glory that excelleth (2 Cor. iii. 10; Heb. vii. 18, 19; x. 1, &c.).

II. THAT MOSES WAS NOT PERMITTED TO CROSS THE JORDAN: so much of the inheritance of Israel as lay on the wilderness side of Jordan, he might enter and settle, but he must not cross the river. Even so it was not possible for the law to enter in any wise upon the life to come, the land which is very far off, beyond the stream of Death. This was its limitation imposed upon it by God, by reason of its weakness, that it dealt only with this life, and with such religious sanctions, joys, and consolations, as lie upon this side the grave exclusively. Immortal life was without the province of the law, and could only be entered in Jesus (John i. 17; xi. 25; 2 Tim. i. 10).

III. THAT MOSES WAS PERMITTED TO SEE THE LAND ERE HE DEPARTED. Even so the law, which brought men to the very confines of the kingdom of heaven, but could not bring them in (cf. Matt. xi. 11), had yet within itself a clear vision of the fulfilment of its own hopes. The Song of Simeon and the Voice of the Baptist are the dying testimony of the law, seeing the salvation of God to which it had led through many a weary year, and so content to pass away without enjoying it (Luke ii. 29, 30; John iii. 29—31, and cf. Heb. xi. 13; John viii. 56).

IV. THAT MOSES CRAVED OF GOD A SUCCESSOR TO HIMSELF WHO SHOULD DO WHAT HE COULD NOT DO. Even so the law through all its voices craved for one, and demanded one of God, who should really save, who should indeed open that kingdom of heaven to which itself pointed, yet was too feeble to enter.

V. THAT GOD DESIGNATED JOSHUA (Ἰησοῦς) TO TAKE UP AND TO FULFIL THE WORK OF MOSES. Even so, what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, that hath God accomplished by his holy servant Jesus (Acts xiii. 39; Rom. viii. 3).

VI. THAT MOSES INSTITUTED JOSHUA TO HIS OFFICE BEFORE THE PEOPLE, AND DECLARED HIS WORK TO HIM. Even so was Jesus proclaimed beforehand to all the faithful by the law which pointed him out as the Captain of our salvation; and our Lord himself, in his human nature, learnt from the law what himself should be and do and suffer (Luke xxiv. 26, 27; John xix. 28; cf. Matt. xxvi. 54; Acts xiii. 27; xvii. 3; xxvi. 23; xxviii. 22).

Consider again, with respect to *the conduct of Moses at this time*, wherein he is not a foil to one greater, but a pattern to all the servants of God —

I. THAT HIS PUNISHMENT SEEMED VERY BITTER AT THIS TIME: much more so surely than when first announced, because *then* the land was far off, *now* it was very nigh; *then* there was yet hope that the Lord would repent him of his sternness, *now* the decree was palpably final and irrevocable. After so many additional toils, and after so many happy anticipations of victory, to find that the sentence of exclusion still held good must have been bitter indeed!

II. THAT HIS PUNISHMENT WAS IN FACT INEXPLICABLE TO HIMSELF, AND TO ALL, AT THAT TIME—FOR THE EXPLANATION WAS NOT TO COME FOR MANY CENTURIES. It is only in the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration that we can understand or justify the apparent severity with which Moses was treated. His sentence was "exemplary," for the sake of the people, in order to show in the most striking instance that God requireth a perfect holiness, and a sinless Mediator. But for himself, as (on the whole) a most faithful servant, the sentence was in fact reversed; the wrath was swallowed up in mercy. Moses died outside the promised land, but his body was preserved from corruption by the power of God (cf. Deut. xxxiv. 6 with Jude 9), and in that body he did actually stand within the inheritance of Israel and talk with

Jesus of the decease (ἔξοδον) which he should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke ix. 31, &c.). *And note*, that in Moses and Joshua we may clearly see the distinction between the Divine treatment of men as *types* and as *individuals*. Moses, *e. g.*, was made in his own time to yield to Joshua, to die in exile while Joshua led on to victory and home; and that obviously because Moses represented the weakness of the law, Joshua the power of the gospel. We, however, with the New Testament in our hands, have no difficulty in seeing that as individual servants of God, Moses is more honoured and more greatly rewarded than Joshua; for God is *not* extreme to mark what is done amiss by those who in the main serve him nobly, unselfishly, and patiently; nor is it in truth a righteous thing with God for one sin of temper to confiscate the rewards of many years of devotion. As a *type* Joshua stands higher because he was unblamed: as a *man* Moses is more dear to God, because his work was far more hard, his position more discouraging, and his lot less happy, than that of Joshua, and he himself not less faithful.

III. THAT MOSES DID NOT COMPLAIN OR REBEL. We know indeed from his own mouth (Deut. iii. 24), that he privately besought the Lord to let him go over; but when the Lord refused him (for the time present) he submitted without a word of complaint. Here was Moses' meekness (ch. xii. 3); not that he was not sometimes provoked so that he forgot himself; but that he habitually humbled himself to bear meekly even what seemed most hard.

IV. THAT HIS HABITUAL UNSELFISHNESS SHOWED ITSELF IN CONCERN FOR HIS PEOPLE WHEN HE WAS GONE. He did not harp upon his own fate, or brood upon his own sorrow, but thought only of the people, what should become of them.

V. THAT IN HIS UNSELFISH CONCERN FOR THEM HE WAS WILLING AND ANXIOUS THAT ANOTHER SHOULD BE PLACED OVER THEM IN HIS STEAD. And this showed the highest generosity of mind, because even very noble and otherwise unselfish people constantly betray jealousy and displeasure at the thought of others taking their place. To one who had wielded absolute power for forty years, it might well have seemed impossible to ask for a successor.

VI. THAT IN HIS LOYALTY TO THE KING OF ISRAEL HE GLADLY DEVOLVED HIS OWN DIGNITY UPON ONE WHO HAD BEEN HIS OWN SERVANT, AND OF ANOTHER TRIBE. Moses made no effort to advance his sons, as even Samuel did (1 Sam. viii. 1), nor had they any name or pre-eminence in Israel; nor did he show the least jealousy of Joshua, although he had been his own minister and (humanly speaking) owed everything to him.

Consider, again, with respect to *Joshua as a figure of our Lord*—

I. THAT HE WAS TO SUPERSEDE MOSES. (See above, and cf. Matt. v. 17; Acts vi. 14; Heb. iii. 3.)

II. THAT HE WAS APPOINTED IN ANSWER TO THE PRAYER THAT GOD WOULD "SET A MAN OVER THE CONGREGATION." Even so the Lord is that Son of man whom God hath ordained to be the Head of the Church, the human arbiter of human destinies, the human pattern and guide of all believers (Acts ii. 36; x. 42; Heb. ii. 16—18; Eph. i. 22, 23).

III. THAT HE WAS TO GO OUT AND TO GO IN BEFORE HIS PEOPLE; *i. e.* he was to lead an active and busy life in their sight and in their behalf. Even so our Lord fulfilled his ministry before the eyes of all the people, not in solitary meditation nor in calm retirement, but in a ceaseless activity of labour for the bodies and souls of men (Luke ii. 49; John iv. 34; ix. 4; xviii. 20; Acts x. 38).

IV. THAT HE WAS TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE OUT, AND TO BRING THEM IN, as a shepherd does his flock. Even so our Lord goes before his own in all things whether in life or in death, leading them out of the uncertain wilderness of this world, bringing them in to the unchangeable rest of the world to come (Ps. xxiii. 4; John x. 3, *sq.*; 1 Pet. ii. 21; Rev. i. 18).

V. THAT HE WAS TO BE A SHEPHERD TO THEM THAT HAD OTHERWISE BEEN SHEPHERDLESS (Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Matt. ix. 36; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Peter v. 4; Rev. vii. 17). *But note*, whereas Joshua was to stand before Eleazar, and seek counsel and command through him, our Saviour is both Captain and Priest of his people, and knoweth of himself the will of the Father (Matt. xi. 27; John i. 18; x. 15), and is the Shepherd and Overseer of souls as well as bodies (1 Pet. ii. 25).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 12—14.—*God's word to his dying servant.* The death of Moses was as singular as his life had been. The *scene* of it, a mountain-top, where he might be alone with God and yet have a wide prospect of the promised land; the *manner* of it, not by gradual failure of natural strength, but while he was still able to breast the steep mountain side; the *mystery* of it, such that no man knew where he was buried. Yet underneath this singularity there was much that is often seen in the departure of God's servants, and which we shall find it profitable to contemplate.

I. THE LORD REMINDS HIS DYING SERVANT OF HIS SIN (ver. 14). Dying thoughts are serious thoughts, and it would be strange if they did not often turn on the falls and shortcomings of the past life. Thoughts about sin are of two kinds:—1. There may be the recollection of sin without any knowledge of forgiveness. It was not so that Moses remembered Meribah. The remembrance of unforgiven sin banishes peace. The soul cannot bear to look back, for the past is full of shapes of terror; it cannot bear to look up, for it sees there the face of an offended God; it cannot bear to look forward, for the future is peopled with unknown terrors. 2. There may be the recollection of sin and at the same time an assured persuasion of forgiveness. This is by no means inconsistent with peace. Not that, even thus, the remembrance of sin is pleasant. Moses is put in mind of Meribah to keep him humble. Sin remembered cannot but cause shame; yet it is quite compatible with great peace of mind. Not only so, there is a calm and soul-filling peace which is the fruit of forgiveness, and diffuses itself most abundantly when the soul expatiates on the remembrance at once of its own sin and the Lord's forgiving grace. "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities."

II. THE LORD COMFORTS HIS SERVANT IN THE PROSPECT OF DEPARTURE. 1. By giving him a sight of the good in store for the Church. It is remarkable how often saints who have spent their strength on some great Christian enterprise, and earnestly desired to see it accomplished before their departure, have been denied this gratification. Moses did not cross the Jordan; David did not see the Temple, nor Daniel the Return, nor John the Baptist the manifestation of Christ's glory. Yet to all those saints there was granted some such view as that which gladdened the eye of Moses on Nebo. He who knows the hearts knew how dear to Moses' heart was the good of Israel. It is an excellent token of grace in the heart when the prospect of good days in store for the Church and cause of God is a cordial in one's last sickness. 2. By telling him of the good and congenial society that awaits him in the other world. "Thy people." When we die we go to God. The ascension of Christ in our nature has filled heaven for us with such a blaze of fresh light that we must ever think of heaven chiefly as a "being with the Lord." Yet it is a precious thought, and full of comfort, that those who fall asleep in Jesus are gathered to their people, their true kindred. Moses goes to be with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, with Joseph, with Miriam and Aaron.—B.

Vers. 18—20.—*The appointment of Joshua to be Moses' successor.* Moses, after having been the leader of his people for forty years, is at length to get his discharge. Nothing has yet been determined regarding a successor. The point is, on every account, too important to be left open till the present leader has passed away. A change of leadership, always hazardous, is especially hazardous when the army is in the field and the enemy is on the watch. If the Divine wisdom judged it necessary that Eleazar should be invested with the high priesthood before Aaron died, much more is it necessary that, before Moses lays down the sceptre, a successor should be appointed and placed in command. We are now to see how this was done. The story, besides its intrinsic interest, which is not small, is interesting, moreover, on this account, that the mode of procedure prescribed and followed in this case furnished precedents which continue to be observed amongst us down to the present day. Three topics claim notice.

I. AT WHOSE INSTANCE THIS APPOINTMENT TOOK PLACE. It was Moses who sued for a successor. It was not the people who urged on the business, nor was it necessary

to overcome the reluctance of the present leader by a Divine command. No sooner does Moses receive notice to demit than he prays for a successor, and begs that his eyes may see him before he dies. His experience of the government makes him dread the dangers of an interregnum. "Sheep without a shepherd," such would the tribes be without a leader; unable to keep order among themselves, and exposed to every enemy. It betokened great nobility of soul in Moses that this was the thought uppermost in his mind on hearing that his hour was come. The paramount feeling of his heart was concern for the honour of the Lord and the good of Israel after his decease. Some men cannot endure the sight of a successor; Moses earnestly desired to see his successor before he died. Such being his desire, see where he carries it. "*Let the Lord set a man over the congregation.*" From the Lord he had received his commission at the bush; from the Lord he sues for a successor. Moses was emphatically the "servant of the Lord;" and none but the Lord has authority to nominate the heir to so high an office. Moses has another reason for turning Godwards at this time. None but the Lord knows the fittest man, or can furnish him with the wisdom and valour the office will crave. He is "*the God of the spirits of all flesh.*" He made men's souls, and he knows them. He admits them into intimacy with himself. He is their Saviour and Portion. When the Church, or any part of it, finds itself in want of a man fit to be intrusted with some office of high responsibility, or to be sent forth on some peculiarly difficult mission, this is the quarter to which it must turn. The God of the spirits of all flesh can furnish them with the man they want; He, and no other.

II. ON WHOM THE APPOINTMENT WAS BESTOWED. "Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit." Joshua was no stranger to Moses; he had been "Moses' minister from his youth" (ch. xi. 28), and known to him as a man every way fitted to be his successor. He must have thought of him; yet he did not presume to suggest his name; he waited to hear what the Lord would speak. N.B. When Moses was about to die and a successor was sought, it turned out that the Lord had anticipated the want. The successor of Moses was in training for forty years before Moses died. This happens oftener than many suppose.

III. THE MANNER OF THE INVESTITURE. 1. Joshua was presented to the congregation in a public assembly. To be sure, he owed his appointment to Divine nomination, not to popular election. He was, like Moses, the Lord's vicegerent. Nevertheless, the people were acknowledged in the appointment. They were to be Joshua's subjects, but not his slaves. Accordingly, it was judged only fair and right that they should be informed publicly of the appointment; that they should witness the investiture and hear the charge (cf. ch. xx. 27). 2. Moses laid his hands upon him. This is the earliest example in Scripture of a rite of investiture which was afterwards much in use, which was transferred by the apostles to the New Testament Church, and is the familiar custom of the Churches of Christ still. The terms in which it is here enjoined place the intention of it in a clear light. (1) It denoted the investiture of Joshua with the office of leader and commander in succession to Moses. "Thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation may be obedient" (ver. 20). Not *all* his honour; for Moses was set over all God's house, and in that respect had no successor; but *part* of his honour, particularly that part in virtue of which he was captain of the host of Israel (cf. Acts vi. 6; xiii. 3). (2) It denoted also the bestowment on Joshua of the gifts appropriate to his new office. Not that Joshua was, till now, without valour or wisdom. During his long apprenticeship of forty years he had given abundant evidence of a rich dowry of these virtues. But the laying on of the hands of Moses by Divine command was a token and pledge that a double portion of his master's spirit would be thenceforward bestowed, to strengthen him to take up his master's task and carry it forward to completion. The pledge was redeemed. "Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. xxxiv. 9; cf. 1 Tim. iv. 14). 3. Moses gave him a charge. The scope and substance of the charge are recorded in Deut. iii. 28 and xxxi. 7, 8. The design of this part of the service was twofold. On the one hand, Moses faithfully expounded the duties belonging to the office with which he was now invested. He certified him that it was no idle dignity he was now entering upon, but an arduous work. And this was done not within a tent, or in some solitary

place, but publicly, and before all the congregation, that they as well as Joshua might hear. On the other hand, Moses laboured to strengthen his successor's heart. No man was so well able to comfort Joshua as Moses was. The Lord in calling Moses at the bush had given him the promise, "Surely I will be with thee." He had kept the promise. Moses was able to testify that when God calls a man to any duty, he will be with him in the discharge of the duty; so that the most timid man may well be strong and of a good courage in the work the Lord has given him to do.—B.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The alleviations of death.* Death a penalty even in the adopted family of God, though turned into a blessing to the believer. Some of the alleviations of the penalty suggested by this command to Moses. Through faith in Christ we may enjoy—

I. A CLEAR VIEW OF THE GLORIOUS FUTURE OF THE CHURCH. As Moses saw the land, not yet possessed, but already "given," so may faith anticipate the goodly heritage of the future. Illustrate Joseph's death-bed (Gen. l. 24); David's anticipations of an age of glory under Solomon; the bright glimpses of the future with which nearly every one of the minor prophets concludes.

II. A RELEASE FROM THE GRAVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THAT FUTURE. Moses was spared from the wars of the Lord in the conquest of Canaan. And Christians, though willing, like the aged Dr. Lyman Beecher, to "enlist again in a minute," "to begin life over again, and work once more" ('Autobiography,' ii. 552), are spared from the conflicts of the "perilous times" of the future.

III. AN ASSURANCE THAT THE WORK OF GOD WILL BE EFFICIENTLY CARRIED ON WITHOUT US. Not even a Moses is essential to the Church of God; Joshua will do the work as well.

IV. AN ADMITTANCE TO THE COMPANY OF THE PIOUS DEAD. "*Thy people,*" who died in faith, and now live with God. With brighter hopes than any heathens, or even than Moses, we may say, "I go to the majority."

V. A PEACEFUL DEPARTURE SUCH AS OTHER LOVED ONES HAVE EXPERIENCED. "As Aaron thy brother was gathered." We have seen "the end of their course" (Heb. xiii. 7), and may expect grace for dying hours such as they enjoyed.—P.

Vers. 18—21.—*The qualifications for the public service of God.* Some of these are illustrated in the case of Joshua.

I. THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD (ver. 18). This obvious from the past history of Joshua, especially at Kadesh (chs. xiii., xiv.). Union with Christ through faith, attested by his Holy Spirit, essential for us.

II. A CLEAR CONVICTION OF DUTY. We need the assurance of a mission, "a charge" (ver. 19), whether addressed from without or heard in the secret of the soul.

III. A PROVIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT. "Lay thine hand upon him." Not every impulse is to be taken for a Divine "charge," lest we should run without being sent (cf. Ps. xxv. 4, 5; cxliii. 8).

IV. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD (ver. 20; cf. 1 Tim. iii. 7). In carrying on our work we may need the cheerful co-operation, or even "obedience" (ver. 20), which confidence in our character and commission inspires.

V. CEASELESS COMMUNION WITH AND DIRECTION FROM GOD (ver. 21). For the welfare of a "congregation" or of a nation may depend on the instructions given, or assumed to be given, in God's name.—P.

Vers. 12—23.—*Preparing for the end.* God has kept in view this solemn departure of Moses, even from the time of sentence on him for his transgression. The heights of Abarim were visible to God from Meribah. And now Israel lies at their base, the work of Moses is done, and God intimates the immediate preparations for his departure. God had already said to him that after taking vengeance on the Midianites he should be gathered to his people (ch. xxxi. 2). (Evidently the events of ch. xxxi. are earlier in time than those of ch. xxvii. 12—23.)

I. THE PLACE OF DEPARTURE IS ALSO THE PLACE OF A GLORIOUS VISION. The eyes of the dying leader closed upon the sight of the land which the Lord had given to the children of Israel. We may be sure that God directed the feet of Moses to the one

spot where there was the most suggestive view of Canaan. Not of necessity the view of greatest geographical extent, but probably one that would sufficiently indicate the variety of surface and products, showing also something of the populous cities. There would be everything to impress on Moses a most decided and cheering contrast with the wilderness. There might be no place even in the promised land itself where he could get a better view for the purpose. He may have climbed to different heights during the sojourn of the people in Moab, and seen many things to gladden his heart, yet never found just the Abarim point of view, until God signified it to him. There are many points of wide and spirit-filling view to which we may come in our excursions through the high lands of Scriptural truth and privilege, but we must wait for God himself to give us the great Abarim point of view. Many a Moabite shepherd had wandered on those heights, and seen with the outward eye the same landscape as Moses; but it needed a Moses, with a long-instructed, experienced, and privileged heart, to see what the Lord would show him. Balaam was driven from one height to another by the unsatisfied Balak, yet from them all *even he*, the man of carnal and corrupt mind, saw something glorious. What then must not Moses have seen, being so different a man from Balaam, and looking from God's own chosen point of view?

II. IT IS ALSO THE PLACE FOR CHEERING ANTICIPATIONS OF THE EARTHLY FUTURE OF GOD'S PEOPLE. Moses is to see with his own eyes that the land was worth forty years' waiting and suffering for. The object stands revealed before him as worthy of the effort. And though the earthly future of Israel is not to be his future, yet how could he look upon it otherwise than with as much interest and solicitude as if it were his own? Certainly that future was assured, as far as promise could assure it, and all the tenor of experience in the past. Whatever the circumstances of Moses' death, they could not materially affect the course of the people, seeing the ever-loving, all-comprehending God had them in charge. But it became God—it was a sign of loving care for a faithful servant—that Moses should die as he did. Quite conceivably he might have died in the gloom caused by some fresh aberration of the people, or at the best in the ordinary circumstances of daily life, with nothing more to mark his departure than if he were one of the most obscure persons in the camp. But God orders all things so that he shall depart where and when his mind may be filled with great joy because of Israel's coming years in Canaan. It happened not to him, as it has happened often in great crises of human affairs, that the leader has been suddenly called away with the feeling in his heart, "After me the deluge." None indeed knew better than Moses that Canaan would have its own difficulties. From the wilderness to Canaan was in many things only an exchange of difficulties, but still Canaan had things the wilderness never had, never could have, else it would not have been the promised land. Moses looks down on Canaan, and he sees not only the land, but a Joshua, with 600,000 fighting men under him, a tabernacle, an ark of the covenant, institutions in a measure consolidated by the daily attention of forty years.

III. THE SIMILAR ASSURANCES WE MAY HAVE AS TO THE FUTURE OF GOD'S WORK IN THE WORLD. We have things which our fathers had not—instruments, opportunities, liberties, and successes which were denied to them. Yet they saw the bright day coming; its first streaks fell on their dying faces; and they rejoiced even in what they could not share. Aged and bone-weary Israelites who died just as the people were leaving Egypt would nevertheless rejoice with all their hearts in the deliverance of their children. And Moses who had been born an exile, who had lived forty years among strangers in Egypt, forty years more in the second exile of Midian, and forty years in the wilderness, was just the man to appreciate the satisfactions which were coming to his brethren at last. Thus we should learn to rejoice with all our hearts in the advent of possessions and privileges which have come too late for us individually to share. It is not enough languidly to say that things will be better for the next generation than they are for the present; it should be our joy to live and work as Moses did for the attainment of this. Let all our life be a slow climbing of Abarim, then our closing days will be rewarded with Abarim's view. It was the glory and joy of Moses that while he looked from the top of the mount, Israel was in the plain beneath. They were not far away in the wilderness of Sinai or,

worse still, in the brick-yards of Egypt. Moses had brought them with him, or rather God had brought him and them together. All humble, unselfish, and God-respecting hearts, who work through evil report and good report to make the world better, will assuredly have something of the reward of Moses from the top of Abarim. As concerns the greatest treasures of the kingdom of God, it matters not in what generation we live. It was better to be a believing Israelite in the wilderness, even though he died there, than an unbelieving one in Canaan. It will be better in the judgment for the man of two thousand years ago who looked forward longingly for the Messiah than for the man of to-day who looks back carelessly on the cross. The resources and revelations of eternity will equalise the disparities of time. All the same it will be no small matter if those who have taken part in guiding a generation through the wilderness see the earthly Canaan on which it is entering before they are gathered to their people. Each generation should leave to the next more of Canaan and less of the wilderness. Each generation, though it enters in some sort upon a Canaan, should leave it as only a wilderness compared with the brighter Canaan that is to follow. Let our confident, determined cry ever be, *Out of Christ there is no hope for the world.* Out of Christ the generations of men must become more and more corrupt, and give more hold for the pessimist with his dismal creed. But equally our cry must be, *In Christ there is no room even for despondency, let alone despair.* Black as the outlook remains on a world's sins and sorrows, the God who showed Canaan to Moses from Abarim holds his resources undiminished still (Matt. xxviii. 20; Rom. viii. 28; xi. 33—36; xv. 19, 29; 1 Cor. xv. 58; 2 Cor. i. 20).—Y.

Vers. 15—17.—*The solicitude of Moses for the helpless flock.* I. THE FIGURE UNDER WHICH MOSES INDICATES ISRAEL. He speaks of them as a flock of sheep, thus venturing on a meek reference to the quality of his own past services. He speaks like a man who had been long preparing, even before Meribah, for an emergency such as this. He knew he could not live always, and he saw no sufficiently hopeful change in Israel. He had to deal with the sheep-nature in them from the first, and that nature was in them still in undiminished vitality. They would, he implies, be as helpless in Canaan as in the wilderness. He had not yet got the view from Abarim, but that view would only deepen his thankfulness that God had given the people a shepherd. For the more impressive the view, and the more there was revealed of rich and abundant pasture, the more evident it would become that the sheep needed guidance in order to make full use of the pasture. Passing from the wilderness into Canaan, while it vastly enlarges the sheep-privileges, does not in itself change the sheep-nature. *The need remains in equal force both for guidance and protection.* Where the privileges are greater, there, consequently, the possessions will be greater; there also there will be more to attack, more danger of attack, and more need of defence. And in like manner how helpless we are of ourselves among the vast resources and promises which belong to God's grace in Christ Jesus. Unless we have some one to guide and strengthen, and show us the meaning and power of Divine truth, we are as helpless as an infant would be with a steam-engine. Weak and strong are relative terms. Sheep are strong enough in certain ways—strong to rebel against wholesome restraints and break through them, but not strong enough to repel the dangers which come when the restraints are broken through. Moses had only too often seen Israel hanging together like sheep, going in troops after some headstrong Korah, while men of the Caleb and Joshua order were almost to be counted on one's fingers.

II. THE PEOPLE BEING SUCH, A SHEPHERD WAS A MANIFEST NECESSITY. Given sheep, it does not take much reasoning to infer a shepherd. Moses had been a shepherd himself, both literally and figuratively, and his experience of the sheep in Midian doubtless sharpened his sense of the analogy as he gazed on the human sheep whom he had led for forty years. A man unfamiliar with pastoral life might indeed talk in a general way of the fallen children of men as sheep; but it needed a Moses to speak of the shepherd's work with such minuteness and sympathetic interest as he shows here. The shepherd is to go out before the sheep. With him rests the responsibility of choosing the place of pasture. And he must lead the sheep. He must go before them, and not too far before them, or he cannot truly lead. He leads

them out to find pasture, and he leads them in to insure security. The Good Shepherd is in himself the guarantee both for nourishment and security, and the sheep follow him, as if to show that the real nourishments and securities of religion must come by a voluntary acceptance. There is much difference between being drawn and driven. The sheep following the shepherd is not like the ox dragging the plough and quickened by its master's goad. There are times indeed when, like the ox, we must be driven and chastised, but the greatest results can only be gained when we are drawn like the sheep. In the lives of God's people there is a very instructive mingling of freedom and constraint. Let us add, that in thinking of the responsibility of the shepherd for the providing of pasture it must not be forgotten how soon the manna ceased when Canaan was entered (Josh. v. 12). The people then needed guiding into a forethought and industry from which, in the presence of the daily manna, they had long been free.

III. IT IS MANIFEST THAT NOTHING BUT A DIVINE APPOINTMENT WAS ADEQUATE TO MEET THIS NECESSITY. *Popular election was certainly not available.* The sheep would make a poor business of it if they had to choose a shepherd. Popular government is less objectionable than the rule of despots, but it has its own delusions, its own narrow aims. The natural man is the natural man, circumscribed by the limits of time, and sense, and natural discernment, whether he be noble or peasant. The follies and cruelties of democracy have caused as sad, humiliating pages to be written in the history of the world as the follies and cruelties of any despot whatever. The man who says *vox populi, vox Dei* speaks error none the less because he speaks out of a generous, enthusiastic heart. Never till the voice of Christ becomes the willing and gladsome voice of the people can *vox populi, vox Dei* be the truth. Equally plain is it that *the choice of Moses was not available.* He feels that the thing can only be done in entire submission to God. Moses himself, in the day of his first call, had spoken very depreciatingly of his own qualifications. Yet not only had God chosen him, but also proved the choice was right. The event had shown that he was the leader after God's own heart. What a thing if he had turned out like Saul; but that he could not do, he was so completely the choice of God. It was not for Moses then, who had gone so tremblingly from Midian to Egypt, to say, "Who is fittest man for shepherd now?" Moses felt well able to estimate the qualifications of a leader; but who best supplied those qualifications was a question which none but the all-searching, all-knowing God could answer. God had not only seen fitness in Moses, but he had seen fitness *in Moses only;* for we must ever believe that in each generation, and for each emergency, he takes the very fittest man among the thousands of Israel. God had chosen at the departure from Egypt; God also shall choose at the entrance into Canaan.

IV. NOTICE THE SUGGESTIVE AND APPROPRIATE WAY IN WHICH GOD IS ADDRESSED. "The God of the spirits of all flesh." It is God who breathes in the breath of life, sustains and controls it, and can fix the time of its cessation. Speaking to God in this way, there is thus *an expression of humble personal submission.* Moses cannot choose the time of death, any more than he has been able to choose anything else. God had shielded the faint and delicate breath of the infant as it lay in the flags by the river's brink, and now he calls upon the old man of a hundred and twenty years, who has passed through such a difficult and oft-endangered course, to yield that breath up. There is also in this mode of address *a clear recognition of how it is that God may be looked to for the choice of a leader.* God has but lately proved his knowledge of individual men by his complete control over those dying in the wilderness (ch. xxvi. 64, 65). He who assuredly knows the hearts of all the 600,000 lately counted can say who of them is fittest to be leader. God knows *who is nearest to him as a follower.* There is no fear but the sheep will recognise those whom God appoints. In spite of all the difficulties of Moses, in spite of rebellions and curses, in spite of the crumbling away of a whole generation, the nation is still there. Moses can say, on the verge of Jordan and at the foot of Abarim, "Here am I and the flock that was given me." But all this achievement only glorified God the more, that God who had chosen Moses and hedged up his way. Any other leader than the one God had chosen could never have got out of Egypt. Any other leader than the one God will now choose cannot get across Jordan.—Y.

Vers. 18—23.—*The solicitude relieved by the appointment of Joshua.* God makes an immediate, gracious, and full compliance with the request of Moses. It is a welcome sight when the will of God runs forward as it were to meet the wishes of man. God has so often to reveal himself refusing and thwarting the wishes of men, or at all events complying with them only in part. This request must have been expected, and the command to go up into Abarim prepared the way for it to be made.

I. THE QUALIFICATION OF JOSHUA. "A man in whom is the spirit;" a spirit doubtless such as was bestowed on the seventy elders, of whom, in all probability, Joshua was one (ch. xi.). Having the spirit was the one indispensable thing. Nothing of such work as Joshua had to do could be done without it. There are diversities of operations, but they are all the operations of those in whom there are special and necessary endowments for the work they have to do. *Others beside Joshua had some of the qualifications he possessed, but, lacking the spirit, they might as well have lacked everything.* What, for instance, was there to prevent Caleb from being leader? Like Joshua, he had been one of the spies, and seen Canaan before. He strikes us as being even a bolder and more resolute man than Joshua; but courage, fidelity, the following of God rather than man, while these are the qualities that make *martyrs*, they are not enough to make *leaders*. A Christian might make an excellent figure at the stake who would be nowhere as the guide of the flock. It is beautiful to feel that Caleb continued his simple-hearted devotion to the cause of Israel. Joshua and he seem to have continued the best of friends (Josh. xiv.). Whether a man is a leader or not should not affect our judgment of him in his whole humanity. Let us esteem most those who are best. It is a foolish question to ask who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, for every one may conceivably have such excellence of spiritual qualities as may put him in the first place. We may conclude then that, good and true man as Caleb was, *he lacked the particular spirit which Joshua possessed.* Notice, again, that some who certainly had the spirit as well as Joshua *lacked other qualifications.* For one thing, Joshua had been long and intimately connected with Moses. It is interesting to notice how many things were done to give Moses pleasure in this departing hour. His death before crossing Jordan is a necessity; there is no way to obviate it; but really as we read of it we have hard work to connect the usual gloom of death with the event. The view that he gets, the compliance with his request, and the choice of one who had been long his faithful and affectionate companion, all these things made the cup of the dying Moses run over. It was *euthanasia* indeed. The friendship of Joshua with Moses may have had a very great deal to do with the appointment. Those who choose the *company* of the good and remain steadfast in it are likely to gain such positions as may enable them to transmit the *influence* of the good. Passing over the immediate circumstances of the appointment, which were such as to impress deeply both the shepherd and the sheep, and remain in the shepherd's mind, at all events, till his latest hour, we notice—

II. THE GREAT RULE FOR THE SHEPHERD'S GUIDANCE. God was not about to visit Joshua as he did Moses. Moses stood in lonely and awful eminence as the prophet with whom God spoke face to face (ch. xii. 8; Deut. xxxiv. 10). Such a mode of revelation was needed for the work Moses was called to do. The work in the wilderness was a peculiarly critical one. In one sense we may say it was even more important than the work in Canaan. Given your *foundation*, which may require great toil and great destruction of existing things if you are to get down to the rock; given your *materials*, which have to be accumulated with much searching, discernment, and exactitude; given, above all things, your *design*, in which even the least thing is to have vital connection with the great principles—given all these, and then the chief thing required is a competent, honest, and industrious builder. Moses was the man who gets to the foundation, gathers the material, and furnishes the design; Joshua, the subordinate, to come in afterwards and by simple-hearted, plodding, tenacious fidelity to complete the construction of what was intrusted to him. There was no need for God to visit Joshua as he did Moses. The signs of the Urim were quite sufficient, and therefore nothing more was given. Notice also that the priest became thus associated with the leader, to confirm his position when right, and to check him

in case he showed signs of going wrong. If Joshua had gone anywhere else than to the intimations of Urim, the resort itself would have been sufficient to condemn him. God took care of Moses in all the directions he had to give by immediately and most abundantly strengthening and supporting him. And so Joshua here was wonderfully helped by the Urim. Any one who refused obedience to him must have been resolutely opposed to truth, for who could deny intimations plainly palpable to the senses? Thus we are helped by the thought of what the Urim was to Joshua in our consideration as to the authority of the New Testament Scriptures over Christians. It is sometimes asked why inspiration should be held to stop with the canon of Scripture. An equally pertinent question is to ask why it should continue. God alone is the judge as to the modes of revelation, and the duration of those modes. It is out of the sovereignty and wisdom of him whose ways are unsearchable that he dealt with Moses after one fashion, and with Joshua after another. And it is by a practical reference to the same sovereignty and wisdom that we shall account for the difference between the New Testament Scriptures and even the most copious and esteemed of the earlier post-apostolic writings. We have our Urim in the great principles of the New Testament.

III. THE CHOICE WAS JUSTIFIED BY THE RESULT. The Book of Joshua is a very remarkable one for this peculiarity, which it shares with the Book of Daniel, that there is no record of any stumbling on the part of its leading character. Joshua is always alert, obedient to God, jealous of God's honour, and keeping the great end in view. There is sin recorded in the Book and a dilatory spirit, but Joshua himself appears in striking contrast to this. And so it always has been and always will be; he whom God chooses will justify the choice. The successful leaders whom God has given his people in the past are an ample assurance that he will continue to provide them.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTERS XXVIII., XXIX.

THE ROUTINE OF SACRIFICIAL OFFERINGS (chs. xxviii., xxix.). Ver. 1.—**The Lord spake unto Moses.** It is impossible to say with any assurance whether the law of offerings contained in these two chapters was really given to Moses shortly before his death, or whether it was ever given in this connected and completed form. It is obvious that the formula with which the section opens might be used with equal propriety to introduce a digest of the law on this subject compiled by Moses himself, or by some subsequent editor of his writings from a number of scattered regulations, written or oral, which had Divine authority. It is indeed quite true that this routine of sacrifice was only suitable for times of settled habitation in the promised land, and therefore there is a certain propriety in its introduction here on the eve of the entry into Canaan. But it must be remembered, on the other hand, that the same thing holds true of very much of the legislation given at Mount Sinai, and avowedly of that comprised in ch. xv. (see ver. 2), which yet appears from its position to have been given before the rebellion of Korah in the wilderness. It is indeed plain that the ritual, festal, and sacrificial system, both as elaborated in Leviticus and as supplemented in Numbers, presupposed throughout an almost immediate settlement in Canaan. It is also plain that a system so elaborate, and entailing so much care and expense, could hardly have come into regular use during the conquest, or for some time after. It cannot, therefore, be said with any special force that the present section finds its natural place here. All we can affirm is that the system itself was of Divine origin, and dated in substance from the days of Moses. In any case, therefore, it is rightly introduced with the usual formula which attests that it came from God, and came through Moses. It must be noted that a great variety of observances which were zealously followed by the Jews of later ages find no place here. Compare, *e. g.*, the ceremonial pouring of water during the feast of tabernacles, to which allusion is made by the prophet Isaiah (xii. 3) and our Lord (John vii. 37, 38).

Ver. 2.—**My offering, and my bread.** Literally, "my *korban*, my bread." The general term *korban* (anything offered to God; cf. ch. vii. 3; Mark vii. 11) is here restricted by the words which follow to the meat offering. "Bread" (לֶחֶם) is translated "food" in Levit. iii. 11, 16 (see the note there). **Sweet savour.** רֵיחַ. Septuagint, *εἰς ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας* (see on Gen. viii. 21; Levit. iii. 16; Ephes. v. 2).

Ver. 3.—**This is the offering made by fire.** The daily offering prescribed at Exod. xxix. 38—42, and which had presumably never been intermitted since, is specified again here because it formed the foundation of the whole sacrificial system. Whatever else was offered was in addition to it, not in lieu of it. The sabbath and festival use of the Jews was developed out of the ferial use, and rested upon it. Hence in a connected republication of the law of offering it could not be omitted. **Without spot.** תְּמִימִם. Septuagint, ἀμώμους. This necessary qualification had not been expressed in the original ordinance, but in respect of other sacrifices had been continually required (see on Exod. xii. 5; Levit. i. 3; ch. xix. 2; Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19).

Ver. 7.—**In the holy place.** בַּקֹּדֶשׁ. Septuagint, ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ. Josephus paraphrases this by περὶ τὸν βωμόν ('Ant.,' iii. 10), and so the Targum of Onkelos; Jonathan and the Targum of Palestine render, "from the vessels of the sanctuary." The former would seem to be the real meaning of the original. There is nowhere any specific direction as to the ritual of the drink offering (see on Levit. xxiii. and ch. xv. 7, 10), nor is it certain whether it was poured at the foot of the altar (as apparently stated in Ecclus. l. 15) or poured upon the flesh of the sacrifice on the altar (as seems to be implied in Philip. ii. 17). **The strong wine.** שֵׁכָר. Septuagint, σίκερα. The Targums render it "old wine," because the drink offering was in every other instance ordered to be made with wine (Exod. xxix. 40, &c.). *Shecar*, however, was not wine, but strong drink other than wine (such as we call "spirits"), and it is invariably used in that sense in contradistinction to wine (see on Levit. x. 9; ch. vi. 3, &c.). It can only be supposed that the difficulty of procuring wine in the wilderness had caused the coarser and commoner liquor to be substituted for it. It is certainly remarkable that the mention of *shecar* should be retained at a time when wine must have been easily obtainable, and was about to become abundant (Deut. viii. 8). As it would seem impossible that *shecar* should have been substituted for wine after the settlement in Canaan, its mention here may be accepted as evidence of the wilderness-origin of this particular ordinance. The quantity ordained (about a quart for each lamb) was very considerable.

Ver. 9.—**And on the sabbath day.** The special offering for the sabbath is ordered here for the first time. It does not say when the two lambs were to be slain, but in practice it was immediately after the morning sacrifice of the day.

Ver. 10.—**The burnt offering of every sabbath.** Literally, "the sabbath burnt offering for its sabbath."

Ver. 11.—**In the beginnings of your months.** The new-moon offering also is here enjoined for the first time, the festival itself having only been incidentally mentioned in ch. x. 10. There can be no doubt that this (unlike the sabbath) was a nature-festival, observed more or less by all nations. As such it did not require to be instituted, but only to be regulated and sanctified in order that it might not lend itself to idolatry, as it did among the heathen (cf. Deut. iv. 19; Job xxxi. 26, 27; Jer. vii. 18; viii. 2). The new-moon feast, depending upon no calendar but that of the sky, and more clearly marked in that than any other recurring period, was certain to fix itself deeply in the social and religious habits of a simple pastoral or agricultural people. Accordingly we find it incidentally mentioned as a day of social gathering (1 Sam. xx. 5), and as a day for religious instruction (2 Kings iv. 23). From the latter passage, and from such passages as Isa. lxvi. 23; Ezek. xlvi. 1; Amos viii. 5, it is evident that the feast of the new moon became to the month exactly what the sabbath was to the week—a day of rest and of worship (see also Judith viii. 6).

Ver. 15.—**One kid of the goats.** "One hairy one (שָׂעִיר) of the she goats (עִזִּים)." See on ch. vii. 16. This was probably offered first in order, according to the usual analogy of such sacrifices (Exod. xxix. 10—14). There is no authority for supposing that this sin offering superseded the one mentioned in ch. xv. 24 *sq.* *This* was essentially part of the customary routine of sacrifice; *that* was essentially occasional, and proper to some unforeseen contingency. It is likely enough that the national conscience would in fact content itself with the first, but it does not in the least follow that such was the intention of the legislator.

Ver. 17.—**In the fifteenth day of this month is the feast.** The fourteenth day of Abib, or Nisan, the day of the passover proper, was not a feast, but a fast ending with the sacred meal of the evening. Only the ordinary daily sacrifice was offered on this day. **Unleavened bread.** מַצּוֹת (*mattsoth*). Septuagint, ἄζυμα, unleavened cakes.

Ver. 18.—**In the first day,** *i. e.* on the fifteenth (see on Exod. xii. 16; Levit. xxiii. 7).

Ver. 19.—**Ye shall offer a sacrifice.** This offering, the same for each day of Mattsoth as for the feast of the new moon, had not been prescribed before, and almost certainly not observed at the one passover kept in the wilderness (ch. ix. 5).

Ver. 23.—**Ye shall offer these beside the**

burnt offering in the morning, *i. e.* in addition to, and immediately after, the usual morning sacrifice. Even when it is not expressly stated, the presumption is that all the sacrifices here treated of were cumulative. Thus the sabbath of the passover (John xix. 31) would have the proper sacrifices (1) of the day, (2) of the sabbath, (3) of the feast of Mattsoth, comprising two bullocks, one ram, eleven lambs, with their meat offerings and drink offerings.

Ver. 26.—**In the day of the first-fruits.** The feast of weeks, or day of Pentecost (Levit. xxiii. 15—21).

Ver. 27.—**Ye shall offer the burnt offering.** The festal sacrifice here prescribed is exactly the same as for the days of Mattsoth and for the feast of the new moon. It is not the same as that prescribed for the same day in Levit. xxiii., and it is difficult to determine whether it was meant to supersede the previous ordinance, or to be distinct and additional. The fact that no notice is taken of the sacrifice already ordered would seem to point to the former conclusion; but the further fact that no mention is made of the offering of wave-loaves, with which the sacrifices in Leviticus were distinctively connected, seems to show that the two lists were independent (cf. Josephus, 'Ant.,' iii. 10, 6). The fact seems to be that throughout this section no sacrifices are mentioned save such as formed a part of the system which is here for the first time elaborated.

Ch. xxix. 1.—**In the seventh month, on the first day of the month.** The month Ethanim had been already specially set apart for holy purposes beyond all other months (Levit. xxiii. 23 *sq.*).

Ver. 2.—**Ye shall offer a burnt offering.** Such an offering had been commanded (Levit. xxiii. 25), but not specified. It comprised one bullock less than the new moon offering, but the reason of the difference is wholly unknown, unless it were in view of the large number of bullocks required at the feast of tabernacles.

Ver. 7.—**On the tenth day.** The great day of atonement (Levit. xvi. 29; xxiii. 27 *sq.*).

Ver. 12.—**On the fifteenth day.** The first day of the feast of tabernacles, which commenced at sunset on the fourteenth (Levit. xxiii. 35).

Ver. 13.—**Ye shall offer a burnt offering.** This also was ordered, but not prescribed, in Levit. xxiii. As it was the feast of the ingathering, when God had crowned the year with his goodness, and filled the hearts of men with food and gladness, so it was celebrated with the greatest profusion of burnt offerings, especially of the largest and costliest kind. **Thirteen young bullocks.** The number of bullocks was so arranged as to be one less each day, to be seven on the seventh and last day, and to make up seventy altogether. Thus the sacred number was studiously emphasised, and the slow fading of festal joy into the ordinary gladness of a grateful life was set forth. It seems quite fanciful to trace any connection with the waning of the moon. The observance of the heavenly bodies, although sanctioned in the case of the new moon feast, was not further encouraged for obvious reasons.

Ver. 35.—**On the eighth day.** On the twenty-second day of Ethanim (see on Levit. xxiii. 36). The offering here specified returns to the smaller number ordered for the first and tenth days of this month. The feast of tabernacles ended with sundown on this day.

Ver. 39.—**These things shall ye do**, or "sacrifice." תַּעֲשׂוּ. Septuagint, *ταῦτα ποιήσετε* (cf. Luke xxii. 19). **Beside your vows, and your free-will offerings.** These are treated of in Levit. xxii. 18 *sq.*; ch. xv. 3 *sq.* The words which follow are dependent upon this clause. All the offerings commanded in these chapters amounted to 1071 lambs, 113 bullocks, 37 rams, 30 goats, in the lunar year, together with 112 bushels of flour, more than 370 gallons of oil, and about 340 gallons of wine, supposing that the drink offering was proportionate throughout.

HOMILETICS.

Chs. xxviii., xxix.—*The perfect system of sacrifice.* We have in this section the round of sacrifice—daily, weekly, monthly, and annual—drawn out in all its completeness and in all its symmetry. There were indeed other sacrifices ordained, such as those of the goat for Azazel and of the red heifer, which find no place here; but these were essentially (as it would seem) of an exceptional nature, and stood out against the unvarying background of the sacrificial routine here depicted. No longer left to be gathered from scattered enactments, it is here ordained as a system, pervaded and inspired by certain definite and abiding principles. That those principles were not read into a fortuitous assemblage of ancient rites by the pious ingenuity of a later and more self-conscious age, but underlay those rites from the beginning, and deter-

mined their character and mutual relation, can hardly be doubted by any one who believes the system to have been of Divine origination; and this, again, can hardly be doubted by any one who recognises the profound congruity between the sacrificial system of Moses and the sacrificial aspect of Christianity. It is this congruity which gives a living interest, because an abiding truth, to the sacrifices of the law. They were not merely shadows to amuse the childhood of the world; they were shadows of coming realities, the most tremendous and of the profoundest moment. It is true that the inspired writers of the New Testament dwell rather on the contrast than on the correspondence between the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices of the law; but they do so just because they took the correspondence for granted, not because they ignored it. The correspondence, in fact, was so obvious and so strong that it was necessary to emphasise the points of contrast, lest they should be overlooked. He that magnifies the substance above the shadow does not thereby deny that the shadow owes both its existence and its form to the substance. If we follow up the Pauline image of body and shadow (Col. ii. 17, where the reference is to this very round of festivals), we shall get at the truth of the matter. The relation of the shadow to the body is not one of simple resemblance, even of outline (except in one particular position), but it is one of certain correspondence. Given the position of the light, and the form of the surface on which the shadow falls, the shadow itself can be precisely determined from the outline of the body, and *vice versâ*. Now the light in our case is the twilight of the Divine revelation as it veiled its brightness to shine in part upon a darkened world; the surface on which it shone was formed by the crude religious ideas and half-barbarous morals of the chosen race—a race whose hearts were hard, and whose eyes were dim, and whose rugged nature of necessity distorted any spiritual truth which came to them. Such was the light shining upon such a surface; the body was "of Christ," *i. e.* was the solid and enduring fulness of his salvation; and the shadow which it threw before was the sacrifical system of the Jews. We should therefore expect from analogy to find (1) a general and unmistakable resemblance; (2) a failure of resemblance in parts and proportions, a likeness mingled with distortion, as in the shadows cast upon a rugged slope by the rising sun. This is exactly what we do find, comparing the substance of the gospel with the shadows of the law. No human art could have constructed the Christian scheme from the fore-shadows which it threw, because no human skill could have allowed for the peculiarities of the Jewish dispensation. But, on the other hand, we can trace along the entire outline of the substance a correspondence to the shadow which cannot be due to chance. It is of course possible to admit the fact of this analogy, and to explain it by the assumption that Christianity itself was the creation of minds saturated with Jewish ideas, and habituated to the Jewish system of sacrifices. But if this had been the case, the correspondence had surely been more direct, and much less oblique than it is, much less subtle in parts and less unequal as a whole. It would seem as much beyond the practical powers of man to translate the types of the law into the substantial and consistent beauty of the gospel, as to reduce the irregularity and distortion of a shadow to the regular symmetry of the unseen human form. We have, therefore, in accordance with apostolic teaching, to regard the daily offerings, the sabbaths, the new moons, the sacred months and annual festivals of the Jews, as so many shadows which are of interest only as they in part resemble, and therefore in part illustrate, the body, the reality, which belongs to Christ, and so to us. Consider, therefore, with respect to *this system as a whole*—

I. THAT IT WAS DESIGNED TO CONSECRATE WITH BURNT OFFERINGS AND OBLATIONS THE WHOLE ROUND OF THE JEWISH CALENDAR. It formed a complete system, combining variety with regularity, under which every day by itself, every week in its seventh day, every month in its first day, every year in its seventh month and in its great festivals, was consecrated by the shedding of blood, by the acknowledgment that their lives were forfeit, by vicarious death, and by vicarious dedication of self to God. Even such is the pervading meaning and purpose of Christianity; that our whole life from end to end should be consecrated to God by the blood of Christ, offered for us on the one hand, and on the other dedicated to God by a voluntary and perfect self-surrender. As the Jewish year was hallowed by an endless round of sacrifice, so the Christian life is sanctified by a never-exhausted self-sacrifice—the

self-sacrifice of Christ wrought *for* us on the cross, the self-sacrifice of Christ wrought *in* us by his Spirit.

II. THAT THE WHOLE SYSTEM RESTED UPON THE DAILY SACRIFICE, WHICH WAS NEVER OMITTED, TO WHICH ALL OTHER SACRIFICES WERE SUPERADDED. Not even the triumph of the passover or the affliction of the day of atonement affected the daily sacrifice. Even so in Christ does all religious life rest upon the hallowing of each day, as it comes and goes, by the blood of the Lamb. Whatever special observance may be given to sacred days and seasons, or reserved for times of special grace, yet such only is true religion which is daily renewed and daily practised. And note that the daily use taking precedence of all additional observances testified even to the Jews of the underlying equality of all days as holy to the Lord. Since each day was essentially sacred, it followed that all distinctions of days were arbitrary and transitory. And this was undoubtedly what St. Paul desired to see realised in the Church of Christ (Rom. xiv. 5, 6; Gal. iv. 10, &c.).

III. THAT UPON THE DAILY USE A SABBATIC USE WAS RAISED UP WITH EXTREME CARE; not only the seventh day of every week, but also the seventh month of every year, being made festal and marked by special sacrifices. This was in truth arbitrary to the Jewish apprehension, although it was mystically connected with the relation between God and the world (Exod. xx. 11), and historically associated with the deliverance from Egypt (Deut. v. 15); but it served to keep the Jew in mind of, and bring him into connection with, an order of things above and beyond the labour and gain and profit and loss of this world. Even so, while the sacredness of the sabbatic number (in days or months or years) is vanished in Christ, yet the meaning of the number, the sabbath or rest of the soul in God, the rest from sin, from self, and from sorrow, is the dominant idea which we find in Christ first and last. This is his first invitation (Matt. xi. 28), and this his last promise (Rev. iii. 21).

IV. THAT TO THE DAILY AND SABBATIC USE WAS ADDED THE NEW MOON FESTIVAL WITH GREAT HONOUR IN THE WAY OF SACRIFICES; and this although the festival was one of natural, and not of sacred, origin. This may have been partly from a wise caution lest superstition should usurp what religion left unoccupied, but more because the God of grace is the God of nature, and he who made the Church made the moon to rule the night. Even so it is the will of God that all natural turning-points and periods in our lives should be consecrated by religion and hallowed with the blood of Christ; for our whole body, soul, and spirit are his. Religion does not war against nature, but takes nature under her patronage. Whatever springs naturally out of our physical and social life (not being evil of itself) may be and should be connected with religious sanctions, and adorned with holy gladness as before God.

V. THAT TO THE DAILY, SABBATIC, AND NEW MOON USE WAS ADDED THE OBSERVANCE OF THE THREE FESTIVALS WHICH WERE ASSOCIATED AT ONCE WITH THE FACTS OF PAST DELIVERANCE AND OF PRESENT PLENTY. For the passover itself, which was mainly a commemoration, also marked the first beginning of the harvest; and the feast of weeks, which was essentially a harvest festival, recalled also the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Even so in Christ, besides the other elements of religion, the sanctification of daily life, the hallowing of natural changes and outward events, the ceaseless seeking for rest in God, there must be found prominently the devout and grateful celebration of the great triumphs of redemption in the past, and of the abounding blessings of grace in the present. And note that none of these may be absent without grievous loss. The new moon feasts, which *seemed* so wholly secular, and would not keep time with the sabbaths of Divine obligation, were as much honoured as the days of passover. And so a religion which does not blend itself with and twine itself about the secular joys and interests of our natural life is wanting in a most important point, and is not perfect before God.

Consider again, with respect to *the ordered sacrifices*—

I. THAT THE DAILY OFFERING, WHICH NEVER VARIED, WAS ONE LAMB. Even so the Lamb of God is the one sacrifice, εἰς τὸ διηνεκές, by which each day is sanctified—a continual burnt offering acceptable to God.

II. THAT THE LAMB WAS OFFERED BOTH MORNING AND EVENING. Even so the Lamb of God was in a manner doubly offered: in purpose and will "from the foundation of

the world" (Rev. xiii. 8), but in outward act only "in these last days" (Heb. i. 2), *i. e.* in the morning and the evening of the world.

III. THAT WHILE OTHER SACRIFICES WERE MOSTLY CONFINED TO THE MORNING HOURS, THE DAILY LAMB WAS OFFERED AT MORN AND EVE. Even so each day of life is to be sanctified by prayer at its opening and its close—prayer which is based upon the sacrifice of Christ.

IV. THAT THE LAMB, ALBEIT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SACRIFICE, WAS NEVER PRESENTED WITHOUT ITS ACCOMPANYING MEAT AND DRINK OFFERINGS; and these considerable in quantity and value. Even so, while we plead the sacrifice of Christ, which alone is meritorious, we must offer with it the tribute of good works, such as are the result and outcome (like the flour and oil and wine) of human toil and industry making the most of Divine gifts; "for with such sacrifices," when sanctified and sustained by the one offering, "God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 16). See above on ch. xv. And note that the flour, the oil, and the wine, which made up the meat and drink offerings, may be typical of Christian labour, Christian suffering (cf. Gethsemane, the oil-press), and Christian gladness respectively (see on Ps. iv. 7; civ. 15; Zech. ix. 17).

V. THAT THE SPECIAL OFFERING FOR THE SABBATH MORN WAS ALSO THE SACRIFICE OF A LAMB, ONLY DOUBLED. Even so there is nothing in the devotions of the Lord's day different from those of any other day, save that we are to seek God through Christ with redoubled ardour.

VI. THAT THE NEW MOON FEAST CALLED FOR A LARGER NUMBER OF BURNT OFFERINGS THAN THE ORDINARY DAY OR THE SABBATH. Even so days of natural joy and festivity need to be more carefully and earnestly dedicated to God by supplication and by self-surrender than days of secular work or of religious rest.

VII. THAT A SIN OFFERING WAS ADDED TO THIS FEAST, AS WELL AS TO THE GREAT FEASTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON. Even so there is almost always sin in times of excitement—not only of secular excitement, but of religious excitement too. There is always occasion in them to seek forgiveness for sins of ignorance and negligence.

VIII. THAT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES IN THE AUTUMN WAS ELEVATED BY A SPECIALLY ELABORATE RITUAL ABOVE ALL OTHER FEASTS; possibly because it foreshadowed the incarnation (see on John i. 14), but probably because it marked the consummation of the year, and so was typical of the gathering together in one of all things in Christ, and of the fulness of joy in heaven (Acts iii. 21; Ephes. i. 10; 2 Thess. ii. 1; Rev. xiv. 15, compared with xv. 3). Even so, whatever glories and gifts the gospel has for the present, its chiefest blessings are reserved for the end of all things.

IX. THAT THE CEREMONIAL OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES WAS ORDERED ON A SLOWLY DECREASING SCALE THROUGHOUT. Even so the law itself, like all things transitory and preparatory, was in its nature evanescent and doomed to dwindle. So again are all things ordered in the predestination of God, that the sabbatic number ("on the seventh day seven") may be finally fulfilled in the rest of heaven.

X. THAT IN ALL THESE SACRIFICES GOD SPAKE OF "MY OFFERING" AND "MY BREAD FOR MY SACRIFICES." Even so all our devotions and our worship are not ours, but God's. They are his because due to him; his because of his own do we give unto him; ours only because we are privileged to render them unto him. Here is the rebuke of all pride and self-esteem in what we offer unto God. "Nemo suum offert Deo, sed quod offert, Domini est cui reddit quæ sua sunt" (Origen). On the typical significance of the three feasts see on Exod. xii., and above, ch. ix.; Exod. xxiii.; Levit. xxiii.; Deut. xvi.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 3—8.—*The lessons of the daily burnt offering.* In verses 1 and 2 we have a general statement respecting offerings to God, reminding us (1) of the paramount claims of God (note repetition of "my" and "me"), and (2) the promptness and punctuality needed in meeting those claims ("in their due season"). Then follow directions as to the most frequent of these offerings—the daily burnt offering, which suggests lessons derived from—I. ITS CHARACTER; II. ITS CONTINUANCE.

I. It consisted of two parts: (1) a lamb, a bleeding sacrifice; (2) a meat and drink offering, flour, &c., bloodless; but the whole was to be burned before God. We see here—1. Expiation. This we need every morning, for we awake and leave our beds *sinful*, and requiring an atonement that we may be able to present acceptable service during the day. And we need it every evening that daily sins may be forgiven, and that we may rest at peace with God, "clean every whit" (John xiii. 10). 2. Dedication. In the burnt offering, as distinguished from the trespass offering, expiation by blood-shedding is taken for granted, but the burning, as the symbol of entire surrender to God, is the culminating point. The various parts of the burnt offering may be regarded as typical of our surrender to God of all the varied powers and gifts he has bestowed. (Illustrate from Rom. xii.) As Christ presented himself in complete sacrifice to God, so should we (Ephes. v. 2, &c.).

II. "A continual burnt offering" (ver. 3). So constant must the Christian's self-surrender be. With each morning comes the summons "*Sursum corda*," and the appeal, Rom. xii. 1. Evening brings rest from earthly toil, but no cessation from a renewed, continual dedication to God. We should desire no exemption from this continual offering of ourselves when we remember the motives to it. 1. We ourselves and all we have are God's. 2. We have enjoyed expiation through the perfect sacrifice of Christ. The law of the daily offering is urged because "ordained in Mount Sinai" (ver. 6). The law of Christian self-sacrifice was published by deed, and not by word, at Calvary (1 Pet. ii. 24; iii. 18). 3. Such sacrifice is pleasing, a sweet savour unto God "the Lord" (ver. 6). 4. Such acts insure Divine manifestations. See Exod. xxix. 38—43, which suggests that the neglect of the daily offering would interrupt communion with God. 5. Thus complete self-surrender brings us into the fullest sympathy with God, and thus into the most perfect liberty (Ps. cxix. 45; John viii. 36, &c.).—P.

Vers. 1—8.—*The daily offering.* I. THE PROPRIETY OF THE DAILY OFFERING. All the offerings were to be made in their due season, and every day that passed over the head of the Israelite people was a due season to make offerings to Jehovah in connection with the daily manifestations of his goodness. As what might be called the ordinary and common gifts of God came day by day, so it was appropriate for Israel to make ordinary and common offerings day by day. We must remind ourselves continually of the unfailing goodness of God. Whatever the special mercies in each individual life, there are certain great common mercies for us all, always something, in acknowledging which every one can join. We know that to God the mere offering was nothing, apart from the state of mind in which it was made. God gave the form, and it was required of the people that they should fill it with the spirit of acceptance, appreciation, and gratitude. We have, indeed, no command for daily offering now, no stipulation of times and seasons; but how shall we utter the petition, "Give us *this day* our daily bread," unless we feel that the bread is a daily gift? This one petition implies that petition, and therefore all the constituents of prayer, must belong to our life every day. There must be the feeling that although the actual production of the bread is spread over a long time, we have to take it in daily portions; and our physical constitution is in itself the witness to the daily duty of making an offering to God in return. We can store up grain for months, for the seven years of famine if need be, but we cannot store up thus the strength of our own bodies. Man is not a hibernating animal. "Give us this day our daily bread" implies daily strength to work for it, daily power within to assimilate it when eaten. And since spiritual supplies and strength are meant to be received in like fashion, an acknowledgment of these should be a principal thing in our daily offering. Considerations drawn from the thought of God's daily gifts, both for natural life and spiritual life, should be beautifully blended in our daily approaches to him. Notice that these daily offerings were appropriately mentioned here at a time *when the camp relation* (ch. ii.) *was about to be dissolved.* Israel was soon to be distributed, not only from Dan to Beersheba, but on both sides of Jordan. Hence the daily offering would be very serviceable in helping to manifest the unity of the people, and to preserve the feeling of it. It was also especially needful to be reminded of this national duty of daily offering after the humiliating apostasy to idols while Israel

abode in Shittim (ch. xxv.). The only guarantee against the soul lapsing into idolatrous offerings is to be continually engaging in hearty and intelligent offerings to God.

II. IT MUST BE A MORNING AND EVENING OFFERING. To make a daily offering was not enough. Israel was not left to its own will as *to the time of day* for the offering. The sustaining of life is indeed going on all day long, by the secret and unfailing power of God, and the recognition of this power is always meet at any hour of day or night. But the day has its own peculiar blessings, and also the night, and they are to be made special in our thoughts, as they are made special in our experience. The dawn and the twilight bring each their own associations. In the morning we look back on the rest, the sleep, and the protection of the night, and forward into the work, the duties, the burdens, and the needs of the day. Similarly evening will have its appropriate retrospect and anticipation. That is no true thanksgiving which does not discriminate, marking the difference between thanksgivings which may be offered at any hour, and those which are peculiar to the morning and evening. The very recollection of the gradual regular changes in the time of sunrise and sunset should impart an ever-freshening sense of the faithfulness of God, and of how orderly and exact all his arrangements are.

III. THE CONSTITUENTS OF THE OFFERING. The lambs, the flour, the oil, the wine. *These were parts of the actual product of Israelite industry.* In presenting the lamb there was the thought that Israel had shepherded it, had watched over the little creature from the day of its birth, and taken all care to obtain the unblemished yearling for the burnt offering. All the shepherd's thoughtfulness, vigilance, and courage are represented in the offering. And mark, *these*, not as the qualities of one man, but of all Israel. The service of the particular man is merged in the shepherd-service of Israel as a whole. So with the offering of the flour; in it there is the work of the ploughman, the sower, the reaper, the miller. The oil is there because the labour of the olive has not failed, and the wine because men have obeyed the command, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." In presenting so much of the result of its work, Israel was thereby presenting part of the work itself. But these offerings were not only the result of work, *they were also the sustenance of Israel, and the preparation for future work.* The lambs, the flour, the oil, the wine were taken out of the present food store of Israel. The Israelites were therefore presenting part of their own life. If these things had not been taken for offerings they would soon have entered into the physical constitution of the people. The acceptability of the offering lay to a great extent in this, that it was from Israel's daily ordinary food. There would have been no propriety in making an offering from occasional luxuries. *The significance of the unblemished lamb thus becomes obvious.* The lamb for God was to be unblemished; but surely this was a hint that all the food of Israel was to be unblemished, as far as this could be attained. The presumption was that if Israel would only give due attention, there would be much of the unblemished and the satisfying in all the products of the soil. We are largely what we eat, and unblemished nutriment tends to produce unblemished life. The constituents of this offering further remind us of *the great demand on us as Christians.* It is the weighty and frequent admonition of Paul that we are to present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice. The offering is no longer one of dead animals, grain, &c., mere constituents of the body, and still outside of it. We are to offer the body itself, made holy and acceptable to God. We must so live then, we must so eat and drink, we must so order habit and conduct, that all the streams from the outside world which flow into us may contribute to the health, purity, and effective service of the whole man. Let everything be tested according to its ability to make us better Christians, and therefore better men. In relation to this great offering which is asked from us, let us ponder earnestly these typical offerings of ancient Israel, and set ourselves to fulfil the law connected with them. Here almost more than anywhere else let it be true of us that we are advancing

> "From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,
> From imposition of strict laws to free
> Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear
> To filial, works of law to works of faith."

Let life be an offering to God, and it will be hallowed, beautified, and glorified as it cannot otherwise be.—Y.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The sabbath offering.* I. THE LESSON OF THE SPECIAL OFFERING. Special blessings belonged to the sabbath, over and above those of the ordinary day, and it became a duty to recognise them. The sabbath offerings represented what Israel had gained by the rest of the sabbath. We make our gains not only by the food we eat and the work we do, but also by the intervals of rest in the midst of labour. Moreover, by this offering God indicated that the sabbath was to have its own appropriate occupation. Most emphatically, by precept (Exod. xx. 10), and by punitive example (ch. xv. 32—36), God had commanded to Israel the cessation from ordinary work. Here he indicates that the most effectual way of providing for cessation is to find a holy work to do. We cannot be too earnest in finding such a positive use of the day of rest as will please God and promote our own spiritual advancement. Surely, in the judgment, many who have reckoned themselves Christians will be convicted of a sore misuse of the weekly opportunity. We may be very precise and even punctilious in our abstentions, but what will this avail by itself? The mind that is not earnestly and comfortably occupied with Divine things will assuredly be occupied in thinking of things that belong to the ordinary day. As it is now, instead of the Sunday casting its brightness on the week-day, the week-day too often casts its shadow on the Sunday. God is able to make the appropriate occupation of his day, if we enter on it in a right spirit, a joy all the day long. In the world, and through the week, we have to deal with all sorts of men. There is the strain, the discord, and the suspicion that must belong to all human relations in this mixed and sinful state. The week-day is the world's day, wherein we cannot get away from the world. The Lord's day ought to be what the name suggests, the day for us to feel that we have not only to do with the hard conditions of a selfish world, but with One in heaven, who is most considerate, and most able to satisfy us with all good things.

II. THE LESSON OF THE DAILY OFFERING WHICH WAS NOT TO BE OMITTED. The sabbath, in respect of God's gifts and dealings in nature, was the same as an ordinary day, and therefore had to be acknowledged as such. So far as God's operations in nature are concerned all goes on without a break, Sunday and week-day alike. The sun rises as on other days, the clouds gather and the rain falls, the rivers run, and the tides flow and ebb. It is as true, Sunday as week-day, that in God we live and move and have our being. The great difference is that while God in nature is making all to go on just as usual, man, if he be in harmony with the will of God in Christ Jesus, is resting from his toils. God needs not rest in the sense in which we need it. He rested from the exercise of his creative energy, but not because of exhaustion. We, who have to eat our bread in the sweat of our face till we return to the ground, need that regular and frequent interval of rest which he has so graciously provided. And thus, coming as we sometimes do to the close of the week, utterly spent and exhausted, ready to welcome the brief respite from toil, we have the joy of recollecting, as we see God continuing on the sabbath his work in the natural world, that he is indeed the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, he who fainteth not, neither is weary. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa. xl. 28—31).—Y.

Vers. 11—15.—*The offering at the new moon.* Here the services rendered to man by God in nature are once again linked in with the duties of religion. As God required offerings in the morning and evening of every day, so on the day when the new moon fell there was an *additional* and largely increased offering. Why should such special notice be taken of this occasion?

I. THE MOON IS OUR OWN SATELLITE AND PECULIAR SERVANT. It has evidently been given for our special benefit. The sun serves us with our share, as it does the other planets that circle round it, but the moon is peculiarly ours. When, therefore, it had passed through all its phases, it was well to mark the renewal of service by a special offering. If it be said that Israel was not aware of this nice distinction between the services of the sun and moon, the distinction is nevertheless real, was

known then to God, and is known now to us. The commandments of God took into consideration not only what was known at the time of their announcement, but what would be further discovered in the progress of human inquiry. We can see a propriety in this ordinance of the monthly offering, as we think of the peculiar relation which the moon alone of all the heavenly bodies sustains to our earth.

II. THE MOON IS AN EMBLEM OF APPARENT CHANGE AND YET REAL STEADFASTNESS. Thus it is an emblem of the way in which God's dealings appear often to us. The Unchanging One looks like a changing one, and it takes all our faith to be sure of his faithfulness. We talk of the waxing and the waning moon, but we know that the moon itself remains the same, that the change of appearance arises from change of position, and depends on how it catches the light of the sun. When we do see it, we see the same face always turned towards us, and mysterious as its movements are to the ignorant and the savage, they are nevertheless so regular that all can be predicted beforehand. The moon therefore is a peculiar and suggestive emblem of constancy, if we look on it aright. Juliet, indeed, in her love-sick prattle says,

> O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,
> That monthly changes in her circled orb.

But appearance is one thing and reality is another, and we are reminded of one who found a very different emblematic value in the moon when he said, "They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations." The faithfulness of God is the same, even when his face is hidden, and when his mercy, like the waning moon, seems to diminish before our very eyes. The mysterious hindrances, sorrows, and gloomy peculiarities of our present life would be largely cleared up, if we only knew as much of the wheels within wheels of God's moral government, as we do of the wheels within wheels in the motions and relations of the heavenly bodies.

III. THE CONNECTION OF THE MOON WITH THE MONTH IS ALSO TO BE BORNE IN MIND. Spring, summer, autumn, winter, are, after all, vague terms. We mark the changing phenomena of the year far more accurately by the months than by the longer seasons. We speak of blustering March, showery April, chill October, drear December, and may we not suppose that the Israelites had somewhat of the same way of thinking with regard to their months?—each month with its own character and making its own contribution to the fulness of the year (Deut. xvii. 3; xxxiii. 14; 1 Sam. xx. 5; 2 Kings iv. 23; Ps. lxxxi. 1—4; lxxxix. 37; Isa. xxx. 26; lx. 20; Gal. iv. 10; Rev. xxii. 2).—Y.

Vers. 16—25.—*The feast at the passover time.* I. IT WAS A REMINDER OF HOW SERIOUSLY GOD'S GIFTS TO THE ISRAELITES HAD BEEN INTERFERED WITH. There was the gift of the day with its morning and evening, the gift of the new moon, and probably we shall not do wrong in concluding that the patriarchs understood and appreciated much of the blessing of the Sabbath. But what were these to the Israelites amid the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt? Pharaoh had taken the choice gifts of God and distorted them into agents of the most exquisite pain. Instead of having a heart for the morning and evening sacrifice, they were in a state such as Moses indicated might occur to them again in the event of disobedience (Deut. xxviii. 67). Their morning cry might justly have been, "Would God it were even!" and their evening cry, "Would God it were morning!" In Egypt they had not materials enough for daily work, let alone holy service. Thus we have a forcible illustration of the way in which spiritual evil has embittered all God's natural gifts. In the use of them, they get turned away from his intentions so as to serve the selfish purposes of some, and cause perhaps the life-long privations and miseries of others. We must indeed be thankful for what God gives, even when it is interfered with, for the gift shows the disposition of the giver, and it is a good thing for us to be at all times assured of this. But then we must also carefully mark how much there is in human society to intercept, distort, and even as it were transmute these loving and suitable gifts of God. The very abundance of the blessings which God is disposed to bestow, should lead us to view with much alarm, with deep and abiding concern,

the obstacles which lie in the way of a complete and profitable reception of the blessings.

II. IT WAS A REMINDER OF HOW COMPLETELY GOD HAD TAKEN THE OBSTACLES OUT OF THE WAY. The week of unleavened bread was a period for joyous commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt; and by their offerings Israel recognised that the deliverance was entirely by the act of God. Israel did nothing but walk out of the prison-door when it was opened. This was an inestimable blessing, to be a free nation, even although a nation whose territory had yet to be gained. Liberty leads to all other blessings. We cannot rejoice too much in the spiritual liberty which Christ has achieved for the children of men. We are bound to commemorate it in fitting ways; ways adequate to glorify God, and to impress us more and more with the magnitude of the blessing we have gained. As to the particular mode of commemoration, every Christian must judge for himself, as in the sight of God, with respect to the due season (ver. 2). Easter has come as a matter of fact to have special associations and special value for many. They feel that they have proved the worth of the season in their own experience, and can amply justify the observing of it. Those of us who live outside the traditions, the habits of thinking, and the peculiar spirit fostered by the observance of an ecclesiastical year, can hardly claim to be competent judges of the value of such times and seasons. But mark one thing. *No observance can be worth calling such unless it commemorates an actual, personal deliverance.* God not only put his strong hand on the gaoler Pharaoh, but drew forth the captive Israel. When Christ our passover was sacrificed for the children of men, he brought them into a new relation to God, one of possible reconciliation to him, and possible liberty for the whole man. How far the reconciliation and liberty shall be actual depends on our personal repentance and faith.

III. THE PARTICULAR COMMEMORATIVE VALUE OF THE UNLEAVENED BREAD. The people leaving Egypt were not allowed to finish the preparing of their bread according to their wont. They were hastened out of the land at a moment's notice. And it was not God who did this, as when the angels hastened Lot out of Sodom. The Israelites were thrust out *by the Egyptians themselves.* The gaoler himself was found a fellow-labourer with the liberator. Thus the unleavened bread becomes an impressive reminder of the complete rupture which God makes between his people and their spiritual enemies. As there could be no mistake about the effect which was produced in Egypt by the death of the first-born, so there can be no mistake about the efficacy of the blow which God in Christ Jesus has dealt on our great spiritual adversary. That our Saviour in his own person, and for himself, has completely conquered sin, is a fact which we cannot dwell upon too much, as full of hope for ourselves and for a sinful and miserable world.

IV. NOTE THE SEASON OF THE YEAR IN WHICH THIS FEAST WAS OBSERVED. It happened in the first month of the year, made the first month on account of this very deliverance. How devoutly would the true Israelite look upon the beginning of this month! Hail! new moon which brings near the season for celebrating the deliverance from Egypt. Who can doubt that such a soul as Simeon kept the days of unleavened bread in the very spirit of them, living as he did in those dark humiliating times, which were Egypt over again, when the land of his fathers was captive, and the temple of his God neglected by its own custodians? It is the most fitting time to recollect the sure mercies of the past when we need a renewal and perhaps an increase of them.

V. THE CONTINUAL OBLIGATION OF THE DAILY OFFERING. The bondage in Egypt embittered the gifts of God, yet even then a patient and willing soul would find something to be thankful for. And when liberty came, if right thoughts came with it, the gifts of God becoming available for use would inspire special thankfulness for the mercy that had made them so. How much God's daily blessings should be heightened and sweetened in our esteem by the larger use which we can make of them as believers in Christ! We must not under-value common, daily mercies even in the presence of God's unspeakable gift. He who is the brightness of the Father's glory casts something of that brightness on every gift of the Father's love. That is no right appreciation of God's mercy in Christ Jesus which does not lead us to a better appreciation of every other mercy. God, whose presence and power we are

called to observe in the redemption of the world, would have us to see the same presence and power wherever we have faculties to see them. To go from the cross, with the meaning of it and the spirit of it filling our minds, and in such a mood to receive the common mercies of God as one by one they come to us, will fill them with a new power. Henceforth they will minister, not only to the wants of flesh and blood, but to our growth in grace and meetness for glory.—Y.

Vers. 26—31.—*The feast of the first-fruits.* I. A RECOGNITION OF THE ANNUAL SUPPLY OF FOOD FROM GOD. The day of the first-fruits was the day for bringing "a new meat offering unto the Lord" (ver. 26). This meat offering was to consist of two wave loaves made of fine flour (Levit. xxiii. 17). Hence by this an indication was given that the chief constituent of the daily meat offering would not be lacking during the following twelve months. Corn is appropriately singled out above all the fruits of the earth as furnishing the staple of man's food. Other things, even the oil and the wine, are to be counted as luxuries in comparison. The prominence here given to bread accords with our Lord's teaching, when he tells us to pray not for *daily food in general*, but for the daily *bread*. It was a good thing thus to mark in a special way the completion of the corn harvest, that which had been "sown in the field," and not to wait and merely include it when the labours of the year had been gathered in (Exod. xxiii. 16). God's mercy in the daily bread flows out of his mercy in the annual harvest. We are called upon to behold him, year after year, filling the storehouse whence day by day he draws and distributes the daily supply. As we behold the annual harvest we can join the appreciative souls of the world in thanking God for the *production* of bread. And then in the daily offering we equally thank him for the *distribution* of what has been produced.

II. A RECOGNITION OF GOD'S EFFECTUAL BLESSING ON HUMAN INDUSTRY. How much in the way of combined effort is suggested by the sight of a tiny grain of corn! What mighty forces are represented there—heat, light, air, moisture, soil—all acting on a living germ! And not only these. That grain also represents human industry, forethought, attention, patience, all crowned with the blessing of God (1 Cor. iii. 6). And if we look upon the grain now, we see the light of modern science brought to bear upon its growth and increase in addition to all the other necessary effort. We may be quite sure that God will bless all honest, intelligent, and sedulous effort to increase the fruits of the earth. After all these centuries, man hardly yet seems to appreciate the scope of that command, "Subdue the earth" (Gen. i. 28). Man has rather learnt to replenish the earth with those who use it as a vantage ground whereon to subdue and devour one another.

III. To a Christian the feast of the first-fruits must ever bring to mind THE ALL-IMPORTANT EVENT WHICH HAPPENED AT THE FIRST PENTECOST AFTER THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST. There was doubtless some weighty reason for choosing the time when the day of Pentecost was fully come as the time when the disciples were to be all filled with the Holy Ghost. There was a close connection, we know, between the Passover feast and the Pentecost feast. A complete week of weeks, a perfect period, intervened between that day of the Passover feast when a sheaf of the harvest first-fruits was waved before the Lord (Levit. xxiii.), and the day of Pentecost, when the full meat offering was presented. Thus in this interval the harvest was gathered in, and then by the Pentecostal service it was signified that in the strength of the food which he had gathered man could go on for another year. And as God chose the Passover season, when the great deliverance from Egypt was celebrated, for that death and resurrection of Christ whereby he delivers his people from guilt, and spiritual bondage, and helplessness, so he chose Pentecost for the entrance of that Holy Spirit who makes the deliverance to be followed by such unspeakable positive consequences. The risen Saviour gives liberty to those who believe in him, and then he gives the Holy Spirit, that the right of liberty may not be a barren gift. What is even a free man without daily food? What advantage is it to a man if you liberate him from prison merely to turn him into a sandy desert? The forgiven sinner with his awakened spirit and new needs has the evident fulness of God's Spirit to which he may continually apply himself. God availed himself of the place which Pentecost naturally held in the minds of the disciples to teach them a great

lesson. Hebrew Christians were not likely to give up their old times and seasons, and so the Passover feast was still further glorified by the recollection of Jesus dying for them, and the Pentecost feast by the recollection of how the Spirit had been poured upon all flesh. It is very certain that we do not sufficiently appreciate the practical significance of that memorable Pentecost. It ought to stand in our minds side by side with that other memorable day when the Word that became flesh first breathed at Bethlehem the air of this sin-tainted world. Is it not a matter of the greatest significance that after Pentecost the Holy Spirit of God was among men as he was not before? What a blessing, and yet what a responsibility, to feel that thus and then he came, and, as he came, still remains!—Y.

Vers. 7, 12.—*A solemn fast and a joyous feast.* Lessons may be drawn from the dates and the order of these two annual solemnities, viz., (1) the day of atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month; (2) the feast of tabernacles, on the fifteenth day of the same month.

I. God's order is first an atonement; secondly, a festival. The expiation of the nation's sins on the most solemn day of the year was God's preparation for the most joyous season of the year (cf. Levit. xxv. 9—the trumpet of Jubilee was sounded on the day of atonement). The world's great atonement must precede the world's feast of tabernacles. The feast of tabernacles was—1. A commemoration of the nation's low estate during its life in the wilderness. The booths ordered probably lest they should, in their prosperity, forget the lowliness of their past condition (Deut. viii. 2—18). 2. A thanksgiving for harvest blessings ("feast of ingathering," Exod. xxiii. 16). We too may "keep the feast" (1 Cor. v. 8) of the Christian life as—(1) A grateful commemoration of the low estate out of which God called us. (Illustrate from Deut. xxvi. 1—11; cf. Ps. xl. 1—3; Ephes. ii. 4—7.) (2) A joyous feast of ingathering of spiritual harvest, of blessings for ourselves and others through the atonement of Christ (Ephes. i. 3, 7—13; 1 Pet. i. 3—5).

II. The knowledge of personal reconciliation with God prepares for the joys of life. Each Israelite who was penitently confiding in God's mercy could appropriate the blessings of the day of atonement (cf. Rom. v. 1, 11; Gal. ii. 20). (Illustrate from 2 Chron. xxix. 27.) An accepted sacrifice brings songs to the offerer's lips. Humiliation precedes exaltation in Christ (Philip. ii. 7—11) and in Christians (Luke i. 52; John xvi. 20; James iv. 10). Those who "sow in tears" of genuine humiliation and "afflicting of the soul" on the tenth day shall "reap in joy" on the fifteenth. Many seek to reverse this order; *e.g.* Isa. xxii. 12, 13.

III. Days of rejoicing are yet to be days of sacrifice. More sacrifices were offered at the feast of tabernacles than at either of the other great festivals. So the joys of life and the greater joys of salvation are to be the occasion of the more entire dedication of ourselves to God, and of cheerful service to others (Neh. viii. 9—12; Heb. xiii. 10—16).—P.

Ch. xxix.—*The offerings of the seventh month.* I. CONSIDER THE INCREASE IN THE OFFERINGS DURING THIS MONTH. There was the customary morning and evening offering for every day; the customary offering at the beginning of the month; and an additional offering, as if to signify that it was the beginning of a more than ordinary month. There would also be the appointed offerings on the sabbaths of the month. The tenth day of the month brought the great day of atonement, when there was to be much affliction of soul because of sin. Then, to crown all, there were the eight days of the feast of tabernacles, when an unusual quantity of offerings were presented. We may therefore consider the seventh month as being, conspicuously, a month devoted in Israel to the service of God.

II. CONSIDER THE LESSONS WE ARE TAUGHT BY THIS MONTH OF SPECIAL SERVICE. 1. *Note that it was at the season of the year when the fruits were all gathered in.* "The feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (Exod. xxiii. 16). There was thus a time of leisure—not the commanded leisure of the sabbath, but the natural leisure of the man who has finished his year's work. There is an interval between gathering the fruits of one year and preparing for the fruits of the next. *What is to be done with this time?* The answer

is, *Man's leisure must be used for God.* Let there be a month largely occupied with special national approach to God. And, depend upon it, something similar is expected from us. There is nothing in which the lot of men is less equal than in the amount of leisure time which they have at their disposal. One man has to labour long hours and hardly finds a holiday all the year round, while another has abundant leisure. What an awful responsibility for the rich and selfish triflers who lounge away their lives in a world where so much may be done for the miserable and the needy! How he spends his leisure is one of the great tests of a man. Where his heart is, there he will go, when for a few hours he is slipped out of harness. If we are God's at all, all our time is God's. If our hearts are right with him, our greatest joy will be in our religion, and we shall hail, we shall grasp, every opportunity of increasing our knowledge of God, of the Scriptures, and of how to render that service to Christ which is so plainly expected from us. The spirit in which an Israelite entered on this festal month would be a great test of him altogether. 2. *If God requires a service out of the common, he will furnish sufficient opportunity for it.* God did not institute these services simply to fill up a leisure month. They had to be rendered at some time or other, and he selected a season when all the details of them could be most conveniently carried out. If God requires any service from us, we may be sure that he will make the duty of that service clear to conscience. It is not allowed to any of us to say, "I have no time for this service, no opportunity for it, therefore I cannot do it." The method of God is to put a service clearly before us, and then tell us to trust him for the making of a way. He will not allow us to plead want of time and opportunity, any more than he allowed Moses to plead want of ability (Exod. iv. 11, 12). Here is the reason why faithful and obedient spirits have been so successful. God has said "Go," and they have gone, when there seemed no way more than a single step ahead. Wherever God finds a real believer he makes a way for him, like that royal road to which the Baptist referred (Luke iii. 4, 5). We see here how the events of the ecclesiastical year are gathered and arranged. When the Israelites first received these commandments to make offerings, receiving them as they did at different times, they may have said to themselves, "How can we possibly get through so much?" But here they are all put in order, and it is seen that there is a time for everything, and that everything can be done in its time. The lesser service prepares for the greater. God does well continually to ask his servants for more, because he is ever making them able to give more. 3. *The day of temporal fulness is the day of spiritual danger.* It is not only that the time of leisure is the time of temptation; there is a peculiar temptation in the leisure because it follows on worldly success. In such circumstances men are tempted to think of their own industry and skill more than of the needful blessing of God. Not without reason did the great day of atonement stand in this month. Everything is good which will force upon a man, in the midst of his worldly prosperity, a sense of the presence and claims of God. When Israel had a good harvest, the time of leisure that followed would be a time of great anxiety to many as to how they might most profitably dispose of the harvest. It is oftentimes the rich man who is in danger of having the least leisure; when his riches lie in capital, the use of which he must watch continually.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXX.

OF VOWS MADE BY WOMEN (vers. 1—16).

Ver. 1.—**And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes.** The regulations here laid down about vows follow with a certain propriety upon those concerning the ordinary routine of sacrifices (see ver. 39 of last chapter), but we cannot conclude with any assurance that they were actually given at this particular period. It would appear upon the face of it that we have in Levit. xxvii. and in this chapter two fragments of Mosaic legislation dealing with the same subject, but, for some reason which it is useless to attempt to discover, widely separated in the inspired record. Nor does there seem to be any valid reason for explaining away the apparently fragmentary and dislocated character of these two sections (see the Introduction). The statement, peculiar to this passage, that these instructions were issued to the "heads of the tribes" itself serves to differentiate it from all the rest of the "statutes" given by Moses, and suggests that this chapter was inserted either by some other hand or from a

different source. There is no reason whatever for supposing that the "heads of the tribes" were more interested in these particular regulations than in many others which concerned the social life of the people (such as that treated of in ch. v. 5—31) which were declared in the ordinary way unto "the children of Israel" at large.

Ver. 2.—**If a man vow a vow.** נֶדֶר, a vow, is commonly said to be distinctively a positive vow, a promise to render something unto the Lord. This, however, cannot be strictly maintained, because the Nazarite vow was *neder*, and that was essentially a vow of abstinence. To say that the vow of the Nazarite was of a positive character because he had to let his hair grow "unto the Lord" is a mere evasion. It is, however, probable that *neder*, when it occurs (as in this passage) in connection with *issar*, does take on the narrower signification of a positive vow. **Swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond.** Literally, "to bind a bond upon his soul." אִסָּר, a bond, which occurs only in this chapter, is considered to be a restrictive obligation, a vow of abstinence. It would appear that the *issar* was always undertaken upon oath, whereas the *neder* (as in the case of the Nazarite) did not of necessity require it. **He shall not break his word.** This was the general principle with respect to vows, and, as here laid down, it was in accordance with the universal religious feeling of mankind. Whatever crimes may have claimed the sanction of this sentiment, whatever exceptions and safeguards a clearer revelation and a better knowledge of God may have established, yet the principle remained that whatsoever a man had promised unto the Lord, that he must fulfil. Iphigenia in Aulis, Jephthah's daughter in Gilead, proclaim to what horrid extremities any one religious principle, unchecked by other co-ordinate principles, may lead; but they also proclaim how deep and true this religious principle must have been which could so over-ride the natural feelings of men not cruel nor depraved.

Ver. 3.—**If a woman vow a vow.** The fragmentary nature of this section appears from the fact that, after laying down the general principle of the sacredness of vows, it proceeds to qualify it in three special cases only of vows made by women under authority. That vows made by boys were irreversible is exceedingly unlikely; and indeed it is obvious that many cases must have occurred, neither mentioned here nor in Levit. xxvii., in which the obligation could not stand absolute. **In her father's house in her youth.** Case first, of a girl in her father's house, who had no property of her own, and whose personal services were due to her father.

Ver. 5.—**If her father disallow her.** It appears from the previous verse that the disallowance must be spoken, and not mental only. If the vow had been made before witnesses, no doubt the father's veto must be pronounced before witnesses also.

Ver. 6.—**If she had at all a husband.** Literally, "if being she be to an husband." Septuagint, *ἐὰν γενομένη γένηται ἀνδρί.* Case second, of a married or betrothed woman. As far as the legal status of the woman was concerned, there was little difference under Jewish law whether she were married or only betrothed. In either case she was accounted as belonging to her husband, with all that she had (cf. Deut. xxii. 23, 24; Matt. i. 19, 20). **When she vowed.** Rather, "and her vows be upon her." Septuagint, *καὶ αἱ εὐχαὶ αὐτῆς ἐπ' αὐτῇ.* The vows might have been made before her betrothal, and not disallowed by her father; yet upon her coming under the power of her husband he had an absolute right to dissolve the obligation of them; otherwise it is evident that he might suffer loss through an act of which he had no notice. **Or uttered ought out of her lips.** Rather, "or the rash utterance of her lips." The word מְבַטָּא, which is not found elsewhere (cf. Ps. cvi. 33), seems to have this meaning. Such a vow made by a young girl as would be disallowed by her husband when he knew of it would presumably be a "rash utterance."

Ver. 9.—**Every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced.** This is not one of the cases treated of in this section (see ver. 16), but is only mentioned in order to point out that it falls under the general principle laid down in ver. 2.

Ver. 10.—**If she vowed in her husband's house.** Case third, of a married woman living with her husband. The husband had naturally the same absolute authority to allow or disallow all such vows as the father had in the case of his unmarried daughter. The only difference is that the responsibility of the husband is expressed in stronger terms than that of the father, because in the nature of things the husband has a closer interest in and control over the proceedings of his wife than the father has over those of the daughter.

Ver. 13.—**Oath to afflict the soul.** No doubt by fasting or by other kinds of abstinence. The expression is especially used in connection with the rigorous fast of the day of atonement (Levit. xvi. 29; Numb. xxix. 7; and cf. Isa. lviii. 5; 1 Cor. vii. 5).

Ver. 15.—**Then he shall bear her iniquity,** *i. e.* if he tacitly allowed the vow in the first instance, and afterwards forbad its fulfilment, the guilt which such breach of promise involved should rest upon him. For the nature and expiation of such guilt see on Levit. v.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16. — *Vows unto the Lord.* This section, although fragmentary, yet reveals to us with great clearness the Divine mind concerning one important portion of practical religion. It lays down directly the principle that vows to God were lawful and binding. It lays down indirectly the limitation (although it only applies it to the case of women not *sui juris*) that no vows to God were valid without the consent of the lawful guardian, if such there were. It implies the general rule that no vows are binding to the damage of any who are not parties to the vow; and this is itself a part of the yet wider principle that God is not served nor honoured by anything which involves the injury or dishonour of man. In applying the teaching of this chapter there is indeed the serious preliminary difficulty of deciding whether vows are lawful at all under the Christian dispensation. Inasmuch as no direct utterance can be found in the New Testament upon the subject, it can only be argued upon broad principles of the gospel, and will probably for ever continue to be decided in different ways by different people. It will be truly said upon one side that by virtue of our Christian baptism and profession our whole self is dedicate unto God, to live a life of entire holiness, such as leaves no room for further and self-imposed limitations and restrictions. On the other side it will be truly replied that although in principle all that we have and are is "not our own," but "bought with a price," and only held in trust by us for the glory of God and the good of men, yet in practice there are many different degrees of self-renunciation between which a good Christian is often called in effect to make his choice, and that his vow may be simply his answer to the inward voice which bids him (in this sense) "go up higher." It will be said, again, and truly said, that the law of Christ is essentially a law of liberty, and therefore inconsistent with the constraint of vows; that as soon as a man crosses his natural will, not because his higher will deliberately embraces pain for the sake of God, but because he is bound by a vow, his service ceases to be free and ceases to be acceptable. On the other side it will be said, and truly said, that just because we are under the law of liberty, therefore we are at liberty to use whatever helps Christian experience finds to be for practical advantage in the hard conflict with self; the law of liberty will no more strip the weakling of the defensive armour which gives him confidence than compel the strong man to hamper himself with it. Once more, it will be said that the Christian service is "reasonable," *i. e.* one which continually approves itself to the honest intelligence of him that renders it; but since it may happen to any to have his convictions altered by growing knowledge or greater experience, it is not fit that the conduct of any be permanently restrained by vows. And this is to a certain extent unanswerable. No vow could oblige a Christian to act contrary to his matured convictions of what was really best for him, and so for God. If, *e. g.*, one who had vowed celibacy came to feel in himself the truth of 1 Cor. vii. 9, he would be a better Christian in breaking than in keeping his vow; for we are not under the law, which rigorously enforces the letter, but under the Spirit, who loves only that which makes for true holiness. It may, however, be truly urged that while no vow ought to be held absolutely binding upon a conscience which repudiates it, yet many vows may be taken with all practical assurance that the conscience never will repudiate them. One thing of course is certain; all vows (at least of abstinence) stand upon the same footing in principle, however various an aspect they may wear in practice. A vow, *e. g.*, of total abstinence from intoxicating liquors is in principle exactly as defensible or as indefensible as a vow of perpetual celibacy; nor can an attempt to defend one while condemning the other be absolved from the charge of hypocrisy. This being the doubtful state of the argument, of which the true Christian casuist can only say, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," it remains to treat of vows in that sense in which they are allowed by all, viz., as promises made by the soul to God, whether fortified or not by some outward ceremonial, whether made in response to the more general persuasions of the gospel, or the more secret drawings of the Holy Spirit. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT A MAN MUST NOT BREAK HIS WORD UNTO GOD. If a man is obliged in hon-

our (and wherever practicable in law too) to keep his promise to his brother man; if an honest man (even among savages), having given his word to his neighbour, may not disappoint him, though it were to his own hindrance (Ps. xv. 4); if God himself have vouchsafed to make promises to man (and with an oath too—Heb. vi. 17, 18), which promises he for his part will most surely keep and perform, how much more is man bound to keep his promise made to God!

II. THAT A PROMISE MADE TO GOD IN SICKNESS OR DISTRESS MAY NOT BE DEPARTED FROM IN HEALTH AND PROSPERITY. No doubt most vows were made under stress of some calamity or need, as Jacob's (Gen. xxviii. 20), Hannah's (1 Sam. i. 11), and others (cf. Ps. lxvi. 13; lxxvi. 11). Yet how often do men treat their God with such indignity! (1 Cor. x. 22).

III. THAT A RESOLUTION DELIBERATELY FORMED AND OFFERED UNTO GOD IS QUITE AS SACRED AS THOUGH MADE WITH AN OATH. For an oath is on the part of God a condescension which has no meaning for him (Heb. vi. 17), on the part of man a device to overawe his own sinful weakness, but it adds nothing to the real sacredness of the vow. How many vows have we taken upon ourselves, either openly or secretly! They are all as binding on us as though we had imprecated the most frightful penalties upon our failure to observe them. The punishment of Ananias and Sapphira was intended to mark the extreme malediction of such as secretly withhold from God what of themselves or of their own they have deliberately dedicated to his service.

IV. THAT NO PROMISE CAN BE MADE TO GOD IN DEROGATION OF THE JUST RIGHTS OF ANOTHER OVER US. God can never be served with that upon which another has a rightful claim, nor honoured by anything which involves dishonour of another. Only that which is really ours to give can we give unto God. If it be unworthy to offer unto the Lord of that which doth cost us nothing (2 Sam. xxiv. 24), it is unjust to offer unto the Lord of that which doth cost another something.

V. THAT IN PARTICULAR A DAUGHTER'S PRIMARY DUTY IS TO HER PARENT, A WIFE'S TO HER HUSBAND. Only what lies beyond the sphere of their legitimate claims can she sacrifice in the name of religion.

VI. THAT THE "RASH UTTERANCE OF THE LIPS" IS NOT HELD BINDING BY THE LORD. Since he utterly rejects any service which is not truly willing, and since he is infinitely above taking advantage of the folly of man, it is mere obstinacy, not religion, which leads a man to abide by what he has ignorantly and rashly said that he will do.

VII. THAT A FATHER OR A HUSBAND MAY NOT PLAY FAST AND LOOSE WITH THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THOSE DEPENDENT UPON HIM, NEITHER DISALLOW ONE DAY WHAT HE ALLOWED THE DAY BEFORE. It is given to them to exercise control even in religious matters, but not to exercise it capriciously. It is a fearful responsibility to cross the devout purposes of God's servants from any but the purest motives, and for any but the weightiest reasons.

VIII. THAT IF WE, THROUGH NEGLIGENCE OR CAPRICE, DISTURB THE SPIRITUAL LIFE, AND HINDER THE HEAVENLY DESIRES OF THOSE DEPENDENT ON US, WE MUST BEAR THEIR INIQUITY. We do not know indeed *how* such responsibility will be apportioned at the day of judgment, but we do know that God will exact vengeance for every injury done to souls, and especially for injury done to such as are committed to our care (Matt. xviii. 6).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The solemn obligation of the vow.* I. NOTICE THE ABSENCE OF ANY REFERENCE TO THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE VOW. Moses does not say anything as to certain vows being right and certain others being wrong. This was not needed, and would only have taken away from the sharp and clear announcement that a vow once made was not to be lightly esteemed. Even the exemptions from obligation which Moses mentions in the remainder of the chapter are those caused not by anything unlawful in the subject matter of the vow, but by the fact that it proceeded from one who was not a sufficiently free agent to make a vow. It was quite evident that a vow must not contradict any commandment of God, nor infringe any right of

other men. It must lie within the proper province of a man's own free will; it must concern such things as he can really control. This was what gave the vow its virtue and significance. Certain things were commanded, with respect to which there was no choice but obedience; and outside of these there was still a large field, where the Israelite was left to his own control. What use he would make of this freedom was of course a test of his own disposition. That he must keep clearly within his own freedom was a thing that needed no insisting upon.

II. CONSIDER THE NECESSITY THERE WAS FOR IMPRESSING ON THE ISRAELITES THE SOLEMN OBLIGATION OF THEIR VOWS. *How came the Israelite to make a vow?* We must recollect that in those days there was a general and practical belief in the power of supernatural beings to give help to men. The Israelites, only too often found unbelievers in Jehovah, were not, therefore, wanting in religious feeling. When they lost faith in the God of Israel, the lapse was not into atheism, but into idolatry. And thus when their hearts were strongly set on some object, not only did they put forth the effort of self and solicit the aid of others, but especially the aid of Jehovah. And as they sought the aid of their fellow-men under the promise of a recompense, so they sought the aid of Jehovah under a similar promise. Under the influence of strong desires and highly excited feelings all sorts of vows would be made by the Israelites, and some of them, probably, very difficult to carry out. Doubtless there were Israelites not a few with somewhat of Balak's spirit in them. They felt how real was the power of Jehovah, and, being as little acquainted with his character as Balak was, they concluded that his power could be secured on the promise of some sufficient consideration in return. Among an unspiritual people whose minds were filled with a mixture of selfishness and superstition, vows would take the aspect of a commercial transaction. So much indispensable help from God, and, as the price of it, a corresponding return from man. And as the help of God would be felt to require a much greater return than the help of man, so the vow would undertake something beyond the ordinary range of attainment. May we not conclude that the petition connected with the vow was oftentimes answered, and that God for his own wise purposes did give people the desires of their own hearts, even as he did to Hannah? If so, we see at once the difficulty that would often arise in fulfilling the vow. We know how the desire of a man's heart, once accomplished, is often felt to be unworthy of the effort and expenditure. Thus there would be a strong temptation to neglect the fulfilling of the vow if it could be safely managed. *It was an invisible God who had to be dealt with;* and ready enough as the Israelite might be to believe in Jehovah as long as it was for self-advantage, the faith in him and the fear of him would begin to wax feeble when it was a question of meeting what had proved a profitless engagement. A vow to an idol was really a vow to be paid to avaricious and watchful priests. A promise made to a fellow-man he may be trusted to exact. But what is a vow to the invisible God? "I may neglect it with impunity," is the thought in the Israelite's heart (Ps. l. 21; lxxiii. 11). But the impunity was a delusion. God had marked the vow only too carefully; and it was less harm for a man to go with some heavy burden and great hindrance hanging about him all the days of his life, than that the sanctity of the vow or oath should be slighted in the smallest degree.

III. CONSIDER HOW THE PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERLIE THIS INJUNCTION ARE TO BE CARRIED OUT BY CHRISTIANS. We are passed into an age when vows are not commonly made. Most of those whose thoughts are filled with the desires of their own hearts do not believe in the power of God to help them. And Christians ought to be free from such desires. It is their part to pray the prayer of the Collect for the fourth Sunday after Easter: "Grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise." But though modern Christians may not have the same inducements to make vows as ancient Israelites, still there are certain principles and duties underlying this injunction of Moses which deserve our careful regard. 1. *Consider well the great projects and ruling views of your life.* Let the prayer of the above Collect be uttered on every Sunday and week-day throughout the year. Enter only on such undertakings as not merely accord with God's will, but spring from it. Nothing really accords with God's will save what springs from it. The

sooner we discover that the most practicable life and the most blessed one is that of being not our own masters, but what the apostles learned to be, servants of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. i. 1; Philip. i. 1; James i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1; Rev. i. 1), the better it will be for us. We shall not then enter upon undertakings which we lack the skill, the resources, and perhaps the heart to finish. This very injunction of Moses is a suggestion of the difficulties which come from a wrong choice. Under the power of excitement and in the ignorance of inexperience we may enter into engagements which afterwards become the burden and curse of life. 2. *Consider wherein the evil of a broken vow really consists.* Do not suppose that God considers it worse to violate a vow or an oath than to violate any other promise. Truth for the sake of truth is a sacred thing in the eyes of God. Who can doubt that in his sight the affirmation, now happily allowed in courts of justice, is as binding as any oath whatsoever? Not but what a solemn appeal to the universal presence and all-seeing eye of Almighty God, if made *voluntarily*, and with evident conviction, earnestness, and sincerity in the mode of expression, is of great service in pressing home the truth. Witness the force of such an appeal in the writings of Paul. The evil has been in forcing the oath on all men irrespective of their disposition. No forced oath will make the liar really truthful; and no forced oath can make the truthful man anything more than truthful. Administering oaths to a man of veracity is like holding a candle to make the sun shine. As has been truly said, the compelled oath makes the ignorant and superstitious to think that there are two kinds of truth, and that it is harmless to say, free from an oath, what it would be very wicked to say under it. 3. *Consider what deliberation is required in entering on the obligations of the Christian profession.* Here are promises which it is right to make; yet they must be made with due caution, circumspection, and inquiry. Christ would have us avoid with equal care the perils of haste and procrastination. We cannot begin too soon seriously to consider the claims of God upon us, but we are warned against hastily plunging into obligations which before long may be altogether too much for our worldly hearts. It is only too evident that many are led into a profession of religion, either in a fit of excitement which cannot be sustained, and which, indeed, would be of no use if it could be sustained, or by an insufficient consideration of all that a profession of religion includes. Our Lord stops us at the very beginning with an earnest entreaty to measure well what we are about, and understand exactly what it is that he asks. We must not mistake his demands and claims, and put some notion of our own in place of them (Matt. vii. 21—29; xvi. 24—26; Luke ix. 57, 58; xiv. 25, 35; John vi. 44). 4. *Consider the great peril of being unfaithful to the knowledge of what is right.* It is a dreadful thing to fall away from truth when it is done in the light of knowledge, and in spite of the prickings of conscience. A broken promise, whether to God or man, broken not through infirmity, but of set and selfish purpose, is in God's eye a great transgression. No doubt in many infractions of promise there are complications and difficulties, pros and cons, which prevent every one save the all-searching God himself from determining the real character of the action. We need not make estimates of particular cases unless we are compelled. Let us keep our own hearts with all diligence, and labour to be on the side of self-denial and a good conscience rather than on that of carnal inclinations. God has made his yea and amen felt in Christ Jesus. So may Christ Jesus be able to make his yea and amen felt in the sincerity, simplicity, and straightforwardness of the lives of his people.—Y.

Vers. 3—16.—*The head of the household honoured and cautioned.* The command contained in this section of the chapter secures a double result. 1. By specifying certain exceptions to the validity of the vow, it makes that validity all the more manifest where the exceptions do not obtain. Stating exceptions to a rule is only another way of stating the rule itself. 2. These exceptions relate to the interests of the household, to the preservation of its integrity, and, to this end, of the rights and authority of the person whom God has placed at its head. Moreover, that which secures the right of the father and the husband equally secures the interests of the daughter and the wife. Consider—

I. WHAT THIS COMMAND IMPLIED WITH RESPECT TO THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD.

Let us take the relation of the father and daughter, similar things being true, *mutatis mutandis*, with respect to the husband and wife. 1. *This command honoured parental authority.* God had laid a solemn injunction on children to honour father and mother, and we see here how careful he was to honour the parental relation himself. He puts everything in the shape of a vow, everything which the daughter was otherwise free to choose, under the father's control. He requires no reason to be given; the simple veto is enough, if only it be uttered at the appointed time. The father had a responsibility which the daughter had not, and it was fitting that God should give the father all possible help in meeting that responsibility. 2. *This command required much watchfulness on the part of the father.* To act rightly here demanded the whole compass of paternal duty. The father was not allowed to say that his daughter's vow was no business of his. He himself might not be a vowing sort of person, and therefore under no temptation to neglect a vow he was not likely to make. But even if indifferent to vows himself, he was bound to be interested in his daughter's welfare, and do his best to keep her from future difficulties. Her limited life hid many difficulties from her eyes. It was not for a father to expose himself in later days to reproach from the lips of his own daughter. It was not for him to run the risk of hearing her say, "Why did not your larger knowledge and experience shelter me from difficulties which my inexperience could not possibly anticipate?" 3. *This command required much consideration on the part of the father.* He must not let the vow pass without notice, and when he noticed it must be with proper consideration. While it was within his right to stop the vow, he might in stopping it be doing a very unfatherly thing, a thing very hurtful to the religious life of his daughter. As God had honoured him and undertaken to help him in his fatherly relation, he must honour that relation himself. That relation from which God expects so much must be prepared to yield much in the way of care and consideration. The father may think too much of his own wishes, too little of his daughter's needs, and too little of the will of God. The vow of the daughter might be a rightful, helpful, and exemplary one, a vow of the Nazarite indeed (ch. vi. 2). It was not enough, therefore, for the father to fall back on the mere assertion of authority. It is a serious thing to offend one of the little ones—a serious thing for any one to do; but how unspeakably serious when the hand which casts down the stumbling-block is that of a father! 4. *This command required, in order to be fully complied with, sympathy with the voluntary spirit in religion.* A father who felt that the services of religion consisted chiefly in exact external conformity with certain rules for worship and conduct would be very likely to stop his daughter's vow as mere whimsicality. But religion must go beyond obedience to verbal commands; it must aim at something more than can be put into even the most exact and expressive of them. Commands are nothing more than finger-posts; and the joys of hope and preparation during the journey are directed towards something lying beyond the last of the finger-posts. The father who would act rightly by all possible wishes of his children must be one who comprehends that experience of John: "We love him because he first loved us" (1 John iv. 19). He must be one who feels that love can never be satisfied with mere beaten tracks and conventional grooves. He must be such a one as appreciates the act of the woman who poured the precious ointment on the head of Jesus. If he be a man of the Judas spirit, grudging what he reckons waste, he is sure to go wrong. He will check his children when he ought to encourage them, and encourage when he ought to check. If God opens their eyes he will do his best to close them again, so that the blind father may go on leading the blind children, till at last both fall into the pit.

II. WHAT THIS COMMAND IMPLIED WITH RESPECT TO THE DAUGHTER AND THE WIFE. 1. *Their right to make a vow was itself secured.* The command did not say that daughter and wife were to make no vow at all. They were as free *to make a vow* as any man in all Israel; and if it had not been for more important considerations connected with the household, they would also have been free to keep the vow. God would have us to understand that inferior and mutilated duties or privileges are no necessary consequence of a subordinate position. 2. *A gentle and patient submission was recommended on the part of the daughter and the wife.* The right to propose the vow being secured to every woman, it was no fault of hers, and would

be counted no blame, if the father or husband cancelled it The Nazarite vow might be thwarted in the very freshness of it, but the spirit of zeal which produced it needed not to grow languid. We cannot be hindered in the attainment of any good, save by our own negligence. God will meet us amid all restraints which untoward circumstances may impose upon us. The claims rising out of natural relations and the present needs of human society are imperative while they last, and must be respected. But they will not last for ever. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Matt. xxii. 30).—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EXTERMINATION OF THE MIDIANITES (vers. 1—54). Ver. 1.—**The Lord spake unto Moses.** The command to "vex the Midianites, and smite them," had been given before (ch. xxv. 17), but how long before we cannot tell. Possibly the interval had been purposely allowed in order that the attack when it was made might be sudden and unexpected. From the fact that no resistance would seem to have been made to the Israelitish detachment, and that an enormous amount of plunder was secured, we may probably conclude that the Midianites had thought all danger past.

Ver. 2.—**Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites.** The war was to be distinctly one of vengeance on the part of Israel. On the grave moral question which arises out of this war, and of the manner in which it was carried on, see the note at the end of the chapter. **Afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.** It is quite possible that Moses himself had been reluctant to order the expedition against Midian, either because it involved so much bloodshed, or, more probably, because he foresaw the difficulty which actually arose about the women of Midian. If so, he was here reminded that his place was to obey, and that his work on earth was not done so long as the Midianites remained unpunished.

Ver. 3.—**Avenge the Lord of Midian.** God, speaking to Moses, had commanded a war of vengeance; Moses, speaking to the people, is careful to command a war of religious vengeance. In seducing the people of the Lord the Midianites had insulted and injured the majesty of God himself. On the question why Midian only, and not Moab also, was punished see on ch. xxv. 17. It is to be remembered that, however hateful the sins of licentiousness and idolatry may be, they have never aroused by themselves the exterminating wrath of God. Midian was smitten because he had deliberately used these sins as weapons wherewith to take the life of Israel.

Ver. 5.—**There were delivered,** or "levied." יִמַּסְרוּ. Septuagint, ἐξηρίθμησαν. The Hebrew word is only used here and in ver. 16 (see note there), and in these two places not in the same sense. The context, however, leaves little or no doubt as to the meaning which it must bear.

Ver. 6.—**And Phinehas the son of Eleazar.** The high priest himself could not leave the camp and the sanctuary, because of his duties, and because of the risk of being defiled (see ver. 19); but his son, who was already marked out as his successor, could act as his representative (see on ch. xvi. 37). In after times the Messiah Milchama ("Sacerdos unctus ad bellum," alluded to in Deut. xx. 2) who accompanied the army to the field was a recognised member of the Jewish hierarchy. Phinehas was of course specially marked out by his zeal for the present duty, but we may suppose that he would have gone in any case. **With the holy instruments, and the trumpets.** Septuagint, καὶ τὰ σκεύη τὰ ἅγια, καὶ αἱ σάλπιγγες. The word "instruments" (כְּלֵי) is the same more usually translated "vessel," as in ch. iii. 31, and is apparently to be understood of the sacred furniture of the tabernacle. It is difficult to understand what "holy vessels" could have accompanied an expedition of this sort, unless it were the ark itself. The Israelites were accustomed at all critical times to be preceded by the ark (ch. x. 33; Josh. iii. 14; vi. 8), and the narrative of 1 Sam. iv. 3 *sq.* shows plainly that, long after the settlement at Shiloh, no scruples existed against bringing it forth against the foes of Israel and of God. Indeed there is a resemblance in the circumstances between that case and this which is all the more striking because of the contrast in the result. Most modern commentators, unwilling to believe that the ark left the camp (but cf. ch. xiv. 44), identify the "holy instruments" with "the trumpets;" this, however, is plainly to do violence to the grammar, which is perfectly simple, and is contrary to the Septuagint and the Targums. The Targum of Palestine paraphrases "holy instruments" by Urim and Thummim; these, however, as far as we can gather, seem to have been in the exclusive possession of the high priest.

Ver. 8.—**They slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain.** This is more accurately rendered by the Sep-

tuagint, τοὺς βασιλεῖς . . ἀπέκτειναν ἅμα τοῖς τραυματίαις αὐτῶν: "they put to death (הָרַג) the kings, in addition to those who fell in battle" (from חָלַל, to pierce, or wound). These five kings, who are mentioned here as having been slain in cold blood after the battle, are said in Josh. xiii. 21 to have been vassals (נְסִיכֵי) of the Amoritish king Sihon, and to have dwelt "in the country." From this it has been concluded by some that the Midianites at this time destroyed included only certain tribes which had settled down within the territory afterwards assigned to Reuben, and had become tributary to Sihon. This would account for the fact that the present victory was so easy and so complete, and also for the otherwise inexplicable fact that the Midianites appear again as a formidable power some two centuries later. **Zur.** The father of Cozbi (ch. xxv. 15). **Balaam also . . they slew with the sword.** Not in battle, but, as the context implies, by way of judicial execution (see on ch. xxiv. 25; Josh. xiii. 22).

Ver. 10.—**Their goodly castles.** מִירֹתָם. Septuagint, ἐπαύλεις. This word, which occurs only here and in Gen. xxv. 16, no doubt signifies the pastoral villages, constructed partly of rude stone walls, partly of goats-hair cloth, which the nomadic tribes of that country have used from time immemorial. Probably these were the proper habitations of the Midianites; the "cities" would have belonged to the previous inhabitants of the land.

Ver. 11.—**The spoil.** הַשָּׁלָל. Septuagint, τὴν προνομήν. The booty in goods. **The prey.** הַמַּלְקוֹחַ. Septuagint, τὰ σκῦλα. The booty in live-stock, here including the women and children, who are distinguished as "captives" (שְׁבִי) in the next verse.

Ver. 14.—**Officers of the host.** Literally, "inspectors." Septuagint, τοῖς ἐπισκόποις τῆς δυνάμεως.

Ver. 16.—**To commit trespass.** לְכַפֵּר עַל. See on ver. 5. The word כפר seems to be used here much as the English word "levy" is used in such a phrase as "levying" war against a person.

Ver. 18.—**Keep alive for yourselves,** *i. e.* for domestic slaves in the first instance. Subsequently no doubt many of them became inferior wives of their masters, or were married to their sons. Infants were probably put to death with their mothers.

Ver. 19.—**Do ye abide without the camp** In this case at any rate the law of ch. xix. 11 *sq.* was to be strictly enforced. **And your captives,** *i. e.* the women children who were spared. No peculiar rites are here prescribed for the reception of these children of idolaters into the holy nation with which they were to be incorporated beyond the usual lustration with the water of separation. In after times they would have been baptized.

Ver. 20.—**Purify all your raiment, and all that is made.** Literally, "every vessel" (כְּלִי). This was in accordance with the principle laid down in ch. xix. that everything which had come into contact with a corpse needed purifying.

Ver. 21.—**And Eleazar the priest said, . . This is the ordinance of the law** (חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה, "law-statute," as in ch. xix. 2) **which the Lord commanded Moses.** There is something peculiar in this expression which points to the probability, either that this paragraph (vers. 21—24) was added after the death of Moses, or that "the law" was already beginning, even in the lifetime of Moses, to assume the position which it afterwards held—that, viz., of a fixed code to be interpreted and applied by the living authority of the priesthood. This is the earliest instance of the high priest declaring to the people what the law of God as delivered to Moses was, and then applying and enlarging that law to meet the present circumstances. It is no doubt possible that Eleazar referred the matter to Moses, but it would seem on the face of the narrative that he spoke on his own authority as high priest. When we compare the ceremonial of the later Jews, so precisely and minutely ordered for every conceivable contingency, with the Mosaic legislation itself, it is evident that the process of authoritative amplification must have been going on from the first; but it is certainly strange to find that process begun while Moses himself was alive and active.

Ver. 22.—**The brass.** Rather, "copper." The six metals here mentioned were those commonly known to the ancients, and in particular to the Egyptians and Phœnicians.

Ver. 23.—**Ye shall make it go through the fire.** This was an addition to the general law of lustration in ch. xix. founded on the obvious fact that water does not cleanse metals, while fire does. The spoils of the Midianites required purification, not only as being tainted with death, but as having been heathen property.

Ver. 26.—**Take the sum of the prey.** No notice is taken here of the spoil (see on ver. 11), but only of the captured children and cattle. **And the chief fathers.** Perhaps אָבוֹת (fathers) stands here for בֵּית־אָבוֹת (fathers' houses). So the Septuagint, οἱ ἄρχοντες τῶν πατριῶν.

Ver. 27.—**Divide the prey into two parts.** This division was founded roughly upon the equity of the case; on the one hand, all Israel had suffered from Midian; on the other,

only the twelve thousand had risked their lives to smite Midian. For the application of a like principle to other cases see Josh. xxii. 8; 1 Sam. xxx. 24; 2 Macc. viii. 28, 30.

Ver. 29.—**An heave offering unto the Lord.** Septuagint, *τὰς ἀπαρχὰς Κυρίου.* The Hebrew word רוּם (to lift) from which *terumah* is derived, had practically lost its literal significance, just as the English word has in the phrase "to lift cattle;" hence *terumah* often means simply that which is set aside as an offering. No doubt the offering levied on the portion of the warriors was in the nature of tithe for the benefit of Eleazar and the priests.

Ver. 30.—**One portion of fifty.** Two per cent. of the prey. This probably corresponded very closely to the number of Levites as compared with the twelve tribes, and would tend to show that God intended the Levites to be neither better nor worse off than their neighbours.

Ver. 32.—**The booty, being the rest of the prey.** Rather, "the prey (הַמַּלְקוֹחַ, see on ver. 11), to wit, the rest of the booty" (הַבָּז, as in ch. xiv. 3, 31). Septuagint, *τὸ πλεόνασμα τῆς προνομῆς, i. e.* what actually remained to be divided. The numbers given are obviously round numbers, such as the Israelites seem always to have employed in enumeration. The immense quantity of cattle captured was in accordance with the habits of the Midianites in the days of Gideon (Judges vi. 5) and of their modern representatives to-day.

Ver. 49.—**There lacketh not one man of us.** The officers naturally regarded this as a very wonderful circumstance; and so indeed it was, whether Midian made any resistance or not. It was, however, in strict keeping with the promises of that temporal dispensation. It would have been no satisfaction to the Israelite who fell upon the threshold of the promised land to know that victory remained with his comrades. His was not the courage of modern soldiers, who fling away their lives in blind confidence that some advantage will accrue thereby to the army at large; rather, he fought under the conviction that to each, as well as to all, life and victory were pledged upon condition of obedience and courage. In this case no one was found unfaithful, and therefore no one was allowed to fall.

Ver. 50.—**What every man hath gotten.** The whole, apparently, of their booty in golden ornaments was given up as a thank offering, and in addition to this was all that the soldiers had taken and kept. The abundance of costly ornaments among a race of nomads living in squalid tents and hovels may excite surprise; but it is still the case (under circumstances far less favourable to the amassing of such wealth) among the Bedawin and kindred tribes (see also on Judges viii. 24—26). **Chains.** אֲצָעָדָה. Septuagint, *χλιδῶνα.* Clasps for the arm, as in 2 Sam. i. 10. **Tablets.** כּוּמָז. Probably golden balls or beads hung round the neck (see on Exod. xxxv. 22). A different word is used in Isa. iii. 20.

Ver, 52.—**Sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.** If the shekel of weight be taken as ·66 of an ounce, the offering will have amounted to more than 11,000 ounces of gold, worth now about £40,000. If, according to other estimates, the golden shekel was worth 30*s.*, the value of the offering will have been some £25,000.

Ver. 54.—**Brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation.** It is not said what was done with this enormous quantity of gold, which must have been a cause of anxiety as well as of pride to the priests. It may have formed a fund for the support of the tabernacle services during the long years of neglect which followed the conquest, or it may have been drawn upon for national purposes. **A memorial.** To bring them into favourable remembrance with the Lord. For this sense of זִכָּרוֹן (Septuagint, *μνημόσυνον*) cf. Exod. xxviii. 12, 29.

NOTE ON THE EXTERMINATION OF THE MIDIANITES.

The grave moral difficulty presented by the treatment of their enemies by the Israelites, under the sanction or even direct command of God, is here presented in its gravest form. It will be best first to state the proceedings in all their ugliness; then to reject the false excuses made for them; and lastly, to justify (if possible) the Divine sanction accorded to them.

I. That the Midianites had injured Israel is clear; as also that they had done s.

deliberately, craftily, and successfully, under the advice of Balaam. They had so acted as if *e.g.* a modern nation were to pour its opium into the ports of a dreaded neighbour in time of peace, not simply for the sake of gain (which is base enough), but with deliberate intent to ruin the morals and destroy the manhood of the nation. Such a course of action, if proved, would be held to justify any reprisals possible within the limits of legitimate war; Christian nations have avenged far less weighty injuries by bloody wars in this very century. Midian, therefore, was attacked by a detachment of the Israelites, and for some reason seems to have been unable either to fight or to fly. Thereupon all the men (*i. e.* all who bore arms) were slain; the towns and hamlets were destroyed; the women, children, and cattle driven off as booty. So far the Israelites had but followed the ordinary customs of war, with this great exception in their favour, that they offered (as is evident from the narrative) no violence to the women. Upon their return to the camp Moses was greatly displeased at the fact of the Midianitish women having been brought in, and gave orders that all the male children and all the women who were not virgins were to be slain. The inspection necessary to determine the latter point was left presumably to the soldiers. The Targum of Palestine indeed inserts a fable concerning some miraculous, or rather magical, test which was used to decide the question in each individual case. But this is simply a fable invented to avoid a disagreeable conclusion; both soldiers and captives were unclean, and were kept apart; and the narrative clearly implies that there was no communication between them and the people at large until long after the slaughter was over. To put the matter boldly, we have to face the fact that, under Moses' directions, 12,000 soldiers had to deal with perhaps 50,000 women, first by ascertaining that they were not virgins, and then by killing them in cold blood. It is a small additional horror that a multitude of infants must have perished directly or indirectly with their mothers.

II. It is commonly urged in vindication of this massacre that the war was God's war, and that God had a perfect right to exterminate a most guilty people. This is true in a sense. If God had been pleased to visit the Midianites with pestilence, famine, or hordes of savages worse than themselves, no one would have charged him with injustice. All who believe in an over-ruling Providence believe that in one way or other God has provided that great wickedness in a nation shall be greatly punished. But that is beside the question altogether; the difficulty is, not that the Midianites were exterminated, but that they were exterminated in an inhuman manner by the Israelites. If they had been so many swine the work would have been revolting; being men, women, and children, with all the ineffaceable beauty, interest, and hope of our common humanity upon them, the very soul sickens to think upon the cruel details of their slaughter. An ordinarily good man, sharing the feelings which do honour to the present century, would certainly have flung down his sword and braved all wrath human or Divine, rather than go on with so hateful a work; and there is not surely any Christian teacher who would not say that he acted quite rightly; if such orders proceeded from God's undoubted representative to-day, it would be necessary deliberately to disobey them.

It is urged again that the question at issue really was, "whether an obscene and debasing idolatry should undermine the foundations of human society," or whether an awful judgment should at once stamp out the sinners, and brand the sin for ever. But no such question was at issue. There were obscene and debasing idolatries in abundance round about Israel, but no effort was made to exterminate them; the Moabites in particular seem to have been just as licentious as the Midianites at this time (see ch. xxv. 1—3), and certainly were quite as idolatrous, and yet they were passed

by. Indeed the argument shows an entire failure, so to speak, in moral perspective. Harlotry and idolatry are great sins, but there is no reason to believe that God deals with them otherwise than he does with other sins. It was no part of the Divine intention concerning Israel that he should go about as a knight-errant avenging "obscene idolatries." Many a nation just as immoral as Midian rose to greatness, and displayed some valuable virtues, and (it is to be presumed) did some good work in God's world in preparation for the fulness of time. Harlotry and idolatry prevail to a frightful extent in Great Britain; but any attempt to pursue them with pains and penalties would be scouted by the conscience of the nation as Pharisaical. The fact is (and it is so obvious that it ought not to have been overlooked) that Midian was overthrown, not because he was given over to an "obscene idolatry," wherein he was probably neither much better nor much worse than his neighbours; but because he had made an unprovoked, crafty, and successful attack upon God's people, and had brought thousands of them to a shameful death. The motive which prompted the attack upon them was not horror of their sins, nor fear of their contamination, but vengeance; Midian was smitten avowedly "to avenge the children of Israel" (ver. 2) who had fallen through Baal-peor, and at the same time "to avenge the Lord" (ver. 3), who had been obliged to slay his own people.

III. The true justification of these proceedings—which we should now call, and justly call, atrocities—divides itself into two parts. In the first place, we have to deal only with the fact that an expedition was sent by Divine command, to smite the Midianites. Now, this does indeed open up a very difficult moral question, but it does not involve any special difficulty of its own. It is certain that wars of revenge were freely sanctioned under the Old Testament dispensation (see on Exod. xvii. 14—16; 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3). It is practically conceded that they are permitted by the New Testament dispensation. At any rate Christian nations habitually wage wars of revenge even against half-armed savages, and many of those who counsel or carry on such wars are men of really religious character. It is possible that if the principles of the New Testament take a deeper hold upon the national conscience, all such wars will be regarded as crimes. This means simply, that in regard to war the moral sentiment of religious people has changed, and is changing very materially from age to age. Even a bad man will shrink from doing to-day what a good man would have done without the least scruple some centuries ago; and (if the world last) a bad man will be able sincerely to denounce some centuries hence what a good man can bring himself to do with a clear conscience to-day. Now it has been pointed out again and again that when God assumed the Jews to be his peculiar people, he assumed them not only in the social and political stage, but in the moral stage also, which belonged to their place in the world and in history. Just as God adopted, as King of Israel, the social and political ideas which then prevailed, and made the best of them; in like manner he adopted the moral ideas then current, and made the best of them, so restraining them in one direction, and so enforcing them in another, and so bringing them all under the influence of religious sanctions, as to prepare the way for the bringing in of a higher morality. What God did for the Jews was not to teach them the precepts of a lofty and perfect morality, which was indeed only possible in connection with the revelation of his Son, but to teach them to act in all things from religious motives, and with direct reference to his good pleasure. Accordingly God himself, especially in the earlier part of their history as a nation, undertook to guide their vengeance, and taught them to look upon wars of vengeance (since their conscience freely sanctioned them) as waged for his honour and glory, not their own. If this seem to any one unworthy of the Divine Being, let him

consider for a moment, that on no other condition was the Old Testament dispensation possible. If God was to be the Head of a nation among nations, he must regulate all its affairs, personal, social, and national. We escape the difficulty, and wage wars of vengeance, and commit other acts of doubtful morality, without compromising our religion, because our religion is strictly personal, and our wars are strictly national. But the Old Testament dispensation was emphatically temporal and national; all responsibility for all public acts devolved upon the King of Israel himself. It was absolutely necessary, then, either that God should reveal Christian morality without Christ (which is as though one should have heat without the sun, or a poem without a poet); or that he should sanction the morality then current in its best form, and teach men to walk bravely and devoutly according to the light of their own conscience. That light was dim enough in some ways, but it was slowly growing clearer through the gradual revelation which God made of himself; and even now it is growing clearer, and still while religion remains fundamentally the same, morality is distinctly advancing, and good people are learning to abhor to-day what they did in the faith and fear of God but yesterday. Take, *e.g.*, that saying, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." For the Jew it meant that in waging wars of vengeance he fought as the Lord's soldier and not as in a private quarrel. For the Christian of the present day it means that revenge of private injuries is to be left altogether to the just judgment of the last day. To the Christian of some future age it will mean that all revenge for injuries and humiliations, private or public, individual or national, must be left to the justice of him who ordereth all things in this world or the world to come. Each has a different standard of morality; yet each, even in doing what another will abhor, may claim the Divine sanction, for each acts truly and religiously according to his lights.

This being so, it is only necessary further to point out that the slaying of all the men whom they could get at was the ordinary custom of war in those days, when no distinction could be drawn between combatants and non-combatants. The practice of war in this respect is entirely determined by the sentiment of the age, and is always in the nature of a compromise between the desire to kill and the desire to spare. As these two desires can never be reconciled, they divide the field between them with a curious inconsistency. The first is satisfied by the ever-increasing destructiveness of war; the second is gratified by the alleviations which strict discipline and skilled assistance can procure for the vanquished and the wounded. Whether ancient or modern wars really left the larger tale of misery behind them is a matter of great doubt: but at any rate the custom of war sanctioned the slaughter of all the combatants, *i. e.* of all the men, at that time; and if war is to be waged at all, it must be allowed to follow the ordinary practice.

In the second place, however, we have to deal with horrors of an exceptional character, in the subsequent slaughter of the women and boys. Now it is to be observed that the orders for this slaughter proceeded from Moses alone. According to the narrative of vers. 13 *sq.*, Moses went out of the camp, and on perceiving the state of the case, gave instructions at once while his anger was hot. It is possible that he sought for Divine guidance, but it does not appear that he did, but rather that he acted upon his own judgment, and under the ordinary guidance of his own conscience. We have not, therefore, to face the difficulty of a direct command from God, but only the difficulty of a holy man, full of heavenly wisdom, having ordered a butchery so abhorrent to our modern feelings. Let it then in all fairness be observed—1. That Moses was not responsible for the presence of these captives. They ought either to have been killed, or left in their own land; it was either the

cupidity or the mistaken pity of the soldiers which brought them there. 2. That Moses could not tolerate their presence in the host. It seems a vile thing to kill a woman, but it was the women more than the men of Midian of whom they had just reason to be afraid. In justice to the men, in fairness to the wives, of Israel, it was simply impossible to let them loose upon the camp. Again, it seems cowardly to slay a helpless child; yet to suffer a generation of Midianites to grow up under the roofs of Israel would have been madness and worse, for it would have been to court a great and perhaps fatal national disaster. For the sake of Israel the captive women and children must be got rid of, and this could only be done either by slaughtering the women and boys, or by taking them back to their desolated homes to perish of hunger and disease. Of the two courses Moses certainly chose the more merciful. The nation was exterminated; the girls only were spared because they were harmless then, and likely to remain harmless; distributed through the households of Israel, without parents or brothers to keep alive the national sentiment, they would rapidly be absorbed in the people of the Lord; within a few weeks these girls of Midian would be happier, and certainly their future prospects would be brighter, than if they had remained unmolested at home.

The charge, therefore, which remains against Moses is, that he ordered the slaughter in cold blood of many thousands of women and children, not unnecessarily nor wantonly, but for reasons which were in themselves very weighty. It is of course an axiom of modern times that we do not wage war against women and children. But this, while partly due to Christian feeling, is partly due to the conviction that they are not formidable. If in any war the women of the enemy habitually attempted to poison, and often did poison, our soldiers, they would probably meet with scant mercy. In blockading a fortified city a modern army deliberately starves to death a great many women and children; and if they seek to escape they are sent back to starve, and to induce the garrison to surrender by the spectacle of their sufferings. If this is justified (as no doubt it is if war is to be prosecuted at all) by the plea of necessity, Moses' plea of necessity must be heard also. He deliberately thought it better that these women and boys should be slaughtered than that the future of Israel should be gravely imperilled. In these days, indeed, he would be wrong in coming to that conclusion, and his name would be justly branded with infamy. It would be unquestionably better to incur any loss, rather than outrage in so violent a manner the Christian sentiment of pity and tenderness towards the young, the innocent, the helpless; it would be better to run any risk than to brutalise the soldiery by the execution of such an order. So slowly do sentiments of mercy establish themselves in the hearts of mankind, and so unspeakably valuable are they when established, that he would be a traitor against humanity and against God who should on any pretence outrage any one of them. But there was no such sentiment to outrage in the time of Moses; none thought it wrong to slay captive women and children if any necessity demanded their lives. It was an axiom of war that a captive belonged absolutely to his captor, and might be put to death, or sold as a slave, or held to ransom, as pleased him best, without any scruple of conscience. Moses, therefore sharing as he certainly did the sentiments of his age, was morally free to act for the best, without any thought whether it was cruel or not; and God did not interfere with his decision because it was cruel, any more than he did with the similar decision of other good men who warred, and slew, and spared not before the coming of Christ, and indeed since that coming too. Finally, if the method of separation was odious, it was still the only way possible under the circumstances of separating the harmless from the harmful, and of clearing mercy towards the captives from danger to the

captors. And here again a proceeding could be sanctioned without sin then which perhaps no necessity could excuse now, because the sentiment of modesty which it would violate did not exist then, or rather did not exist in the same form.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—54.—*The extermination of sinful lusts.* The religious value of this chapter for Christian people must be based upon a "spiritual" interpretation; otherwise it can but excite abhorrence, and can only serve the negative purpose of showing by contrast with that darkness how fair is the light which now shineth. But "all these things," says St. Paul, writing of the events which followed the exodus (1 Cor. x. 11), "were written for our admonition;" and "all Scripture God-inspired is profitable" for some directly religious purpose. Those who reject all "spiritual" application (albeit directly sanctioned by apostolic example—1 Cor. ix. 10; Gal. iv. 24, &c.) must in honesty deny that such a chapter as this is "profitable" for anything except to afford some data for the science of comparative morality, an object valuable in itself, but certainly not worthy of Divine inspiration. If there be here nothing for immortal souls beyond the details of a horrid slaughter and of an enormous booty, it might better be omitted at once from the Bible. But if the hosts of Midian represent in an "allegory" the "fleshly lusts which war against the soul," then may Samson's riddle be found true—"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness" (Judges xiv. 14); and a passage which has given occasion to many fierce and dangerous invectives against religion may yield store of food and refreshment for the souls of the wise. Having, therefore, this clue in our hands to guide us through these dark paths, slippery with blood of slaughtered infants, and ringing with the cries of frantic women, we may see at once a profound meaning in the broad and apparently unwarrantable distinction drawn between Moab and Midian. As to fleshly sin, there was nothing to choose between them; yet Midian only was smitten, because he alone had practised with design against the life of Israel. Even so it is against "fleshly lusts which war against the soul," *i. e.* which are prepared and used by a malignant will to alienate the soul from God, and so to destroy it—it is against such that Christianity denounces bitter and implacable war. Against "fleshly lusts," as they exist among the heathen, springing out of the mere wantonness of natural life untrained to any higher aim than present enjoyment, Christianity (rightly understood) has no vindictive sternness. It may look with sadness upon a melancholy degradation; it may avoid with anxiety a most perilous contamination; but it neither condemns, nor seeks to repress, save by the gentle force of a better example and a higher teaching. Consider, therefore, with regard to *the Midianites*—

I. THAT GOD HIMSELF PRESSED ON THE WAR WITH MIDIAN TO THE BITTER END, and that although there did not seem any present danger to Israel from that quarter. Even so in his holy word God ever urges us to wage an implacable war with the lusts of the flesh, and not to be content because we are not presently assailed by them, but to exterminate them wholly. Nothing is more striking than the urgency and the breadth of these exhortations. The Scripture assumes that all classes of believers (however respectable in outward life and position) have need to strive earnestly against their passions (Gal. v. 17—24; Col. iii. 5, and parallel passages). And note that subsequent events fully justified the slaughter then made of Midian (Judges vi., vii., viii.). We have, and shall have, but too good reason to know that fleshly sins are always a formidable danger.

II. THAT MOSES MUST FINISH THE DESTRUCTION OF MIDIAN ERE HE BE CALLED TO HIS REST, AND ERE ISRAEL MAY CROSS THE JORDAN. Even so the moral law, the wrath of God against sin declared by Moses, must remain in force until sin be destroyed in our mortal members. When the lusts of the flesh are wholly mortified, then, and only then, shall there be "no law," but only grace and love and heaven close at hand (Gal. v. 23; 1 Tim. i. 9, &c.).

III. THAT WAR WITH MIDIAN WAS COMMANDED OF GOD IN ORDER TO "AVENGE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL," BUT OF MOSES IN ORDER TO "AVENGE THE LORD." Even so has

God commanded us to strive against hurtful lusts because they "drown men in perdition" (1 Tim. vi. 9), and have caused incalculable loss of those who should have had inheritance with us; but we on our part fight against these sins because they dishonour God, and destroy the souls for which Christ died. And both these motives are in effect one, and unite to make our warfare a holy war, albeit a war of vengeance, in which no mercy may be shown.

IV. THAT THE WAR WITH MIDIAN WAS DISTINCTLY ONE OF VENGEANCE FOR INJURIES INFLICTED ON THEMSELVES AND ON THE LORD. Even so in the strife of the Christian against carnal sin there is a true element of revenge, and abundant room for holy indignation, and even for sharp reprisals; albeit these are all directed against that in himself which is hateful to a man's better self and to God (1 Cor. ix. 27; 2 Cor. vii. 11; Rom. viii. 13).

V. THAT IF ONLY 12,000 ACTUALLY WENT TO THE WAR, ALL ISRAEL WENT BY REPRESENTATION—1000 FROM EACH TRIBE. So the conflict against sin may be in a few only conspicuous and acute, yet these only represent what is going on secretly more or less in the hearts and lives of Christian people generally. The stress of fight may fall on some, but all are called to fight.

VI. THAT TO THIS WAR ISRAEL WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE PRIEST (Phinehas—see on ch. XXV.), THE SACRED TRUMPETS, AND, AS IT SHOULD SEEM, THE ARK ITSELF. Even so the Christian warfare against sin is guided, sanctified, and cheered by the High Priest himself of our profession (Heb. ii. 18; xii. 2; Rev. iii. 4, 5), and by the stirring tones of the gospel, and by the glorious mystery of the incarnation itself—God with us, the All-holy tabernacled in our flesh, Christ in us, the hope of glory hereafter and the sweet constraint unto purity now.

VII. THAT ALL THE MEN OF MIDIAN WERE SLAIN, TOGETHER WITH THEIR KINGS. Even so it is the destiny of the Church at large, and may be our individual happiness, to overthrow and destroy all hurtful lusts, however strong and active, which are in enmity with the law of God. So also their princes, "the world-rulers of this darkness," shall not stand before us, but shall perish (1 Cor. xv. 25; Ephes. v. 27; vi. 12, &c.).

VIII. THAT THE SOLDIERS ERRED IN SPARING SUCH AS SEEMED WEAK AND HARMLESS, AND MIGHT BE SAFELY TURNED TO PROFIT. The women were in fact more dangerous than the men; the boys would become as dangerous as their fathers. Even so do we err in setting our faces strongly against certain sins which are accounted disgraceful, while we tolerate others because they seem comparatively harmless, or even profitable. This is exactly what civilisation does: it puts down very thoroughly the ruder vices of mankind, but it spares the softer vices, partly because it feels no repugnance to them, partly because they actually make for wealth. But these softer vices are even more fatal to morality, because more insidious and more fascinating; and these sins which seem to add to the general wealth are preparing a disastrous future for the nation. The moral law of the gospel bids us wage an equal war with all sins without exception, and takes no account whether they are offensive or inoffensive, hateful or pleasant, to the natural man, to public opinion, or to the sentiment of the age.

IX. THAT MOSES COMMANDED ALL TO BE SLAIN EXCEPT THE YOUNG GIRLS, WHO BY REASON OF THEIR YOUTH AND INNOCENCE MIGHT SAFELY BE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH THE HOUSEHOLDS OF ISRAEL. Even so all passions which belong to the lower and conquered nature of man must be "mortified" and exterminated, except such as can be safely and thoroughly absorbed in the sanctified life. This is the only test. Whatever natural desires can be taken up into the Christian life without remaining as a foreign element (and therefore a source of danger) within it may be spared, and ought to be welcomed, but no others. All the rest must at any cost be got rid of (Matt. xix. 12; Mark ix 43—49; Rom. viii. 13; 1 Cor. ix. 27; Ephes. iv. 22; Col. iii. 5).

X. THAT ALL THE REST OF THE SPOIL MUST BE PURIFIED EITHER BY FIRE OR WATER, OR BOTH, BEFORE IT COULD COME INTO THE CAMP. Even so whatever is to be brought over (and it is indeed very much) from the natural life of passion into the sanctified life of grace must be purged by the cleansing virtue of the atonement (the water of separation: see on ch. XIX.), and by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (see on Matt. iii.

11). Nothing which has been contaminated with sin can be turned to Christian uses unless it is first sanctified according to its nature. But, subject to this purifying, all that is not in itself sinful may be adapted to Christian ends, and used by Christian people.

Consider again, with respect to *the booty taken*—

I. THAT IT WAS VERY GREAT, AND GREATLY ENRICHED THE PEOPLE. Even so there is more spiritual gain to be made by attacking and destroying sins than by anything else. Churches and souls would never need to complain of spiritual poverty if they busied themselves in waging zealous and unsparing war against the sins within their own reach, within themselves.

II. THAT ALL SHARED IN THE SPOIL, BUT THOSE THAT WARRED HAD BY FAR THE LARGER SHARE INDIVIDUALLY. Even so it is for the profit and edification of all that sins should be successfully assailed; but those who bear the brunt of temptation and strive against sin even "unto blood" have by far the greater reward in themselves. Let this be our Christian ambition, to earn the higher prizes of "him that overcometh" (Mark x. 29, 30; 1 Tim. i. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 4, 5; Heb. xii. 4).

III. THAT AMONGST THE SPOIL THERE WERE A MULTITUDE OF HUMAN BEINGS, AND THESE PROBABLY THE MOST VALUABLE PART OF IT. Even so in the Christian warfare against sin there are a multitude of souls rescued from slavery, and these of priceless worth, beyond all other rewards which we could ask or think of. The girls of Midian seemed to be delivered into slavery; they were in fact delivered from a horrible slavery, and made free in the only way which was then possible. So are those souls which are brought into the service and strictness of Christ made free by the truth (Luke v. 10; John viii. 32, 34, 36; 2 Cor. i. 14; Philip. iv. 1; James v. 20).

IV. THAT THE LORD'S PORTION AND THE PORTION OF HIS MINISTERS WAS EXACTED BEFORE THE SPOIL MIGHT BE APPROPRIATED. Even so, whatever is allowed to Christian use which has belonged to a sinful world, God and his Church have a first claim upon it. It is only through the sanctifying influences of grace that Christian people can freely and safely enjoy the many comforts and luxuries and profits which else they must have forsworn. It is but right that these should first of all be willingly taxed for the glory of God among men, and for the support of all outward ministries of grace (Luke xi. 41).

Consider again, with regard to *Balaam's death*—

I. THAT HE FELL AT LAST WHERE HE HAD NO REASON TO APPREHEND DANGER. Israel had passed by these tribes of Midian, and Balaam no doubt believed that all present danger from them was over. Even so vengeance overtakes the wicked at the moment when he is least afraid, and when justice seems to have forgotten him.

II. THAT HE FELL BY THE SWORD OF ISRAEL, *i. e.* BY THE HAND OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN THE VICTIMS OF HIS GUILE. Even so it is a just thing with God that evil men and seducers should receive their punishment through those whom they have wronged.

III. THAT BALAAM, THE ENCHANTER AND TEMPTER OF ISRAEL, FELL WITHOUT A STRUGGLE WHEN THE PRINCES OF MIDIAN HAD BEEN SLAIN. Even so the tempter himself, the arch-enemy of souls, will (as far as we are concerned) come utterly to an end as soon as we have overcome the allurements to sin which he uses against us (Rom. xvi. 20).

Consider again, with regard to *the offering of the officers*—

I. THAT NOT ONE HAD FALLEN IN THE RANKS OF ISRAEL—a thing clearly beyond expectation in any ordinary expedition. Even so there is no reason why any should fall or fail in the warfare against fleshly lusts. For the promise of victory is not to all in general, or to the Church at large only, but to each soul in particular that will earnestly strive. And victory over sin implies eternal life (Ezek. xviii. 23; Amos ix. 9; Micah vii. 8; Mal. iii. 17; 1 Cor. x. 13, &c.).

II. THAT THE OFFICERS FELT THAT THIS IMMUNITY WAS DUE TO THE SPECIAL PROVIDENCE OF GOD. Even so that we escape from sin and death, that we come unhurt through so many perils to the soul, is not of our strength, but of God's assistance,

and to him all the glory is due (Isa. xl. 29; 2 Cor. xii. 9; Philip. iv. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, &c.).

III. THAT THEY OWED A GREAT DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN COMMITTED TO THEIR CHARGE (literally, "in their hand"). Even so we ought to feel and to show great gratitude to God for the spiritual safety of such as are put in our charge, whether as children or otherwise. According to our responsibility for them, and our sorrow if they were lost, so should be our thankfulness if the good hand of God be upon them to keep them in the way of life (Philip. i. 3; 1 Thess. i. 2, 3, &c.).

IV. THAT THEY SHOWED THEIR GRATITUDE BY THE SPECIAL DEDICATION TO GOD'S SERVICE OF THOSE PRECIOUS THINGS WITH WHICH THAT WARFARE HAD ENRICHED THEM. Even so when we and ours come unscathed out of the temptations of the world and of the flesh, we may well dedicate to God in some special way all the costly gifts of knowledge, of sympathy, of spiritual power and freedom which come of temptation and trial bravely overcome.

And note that the numbering of the men who had been to the war, and the offering of the golden spoil, may be interpreted of the last day. 1. That not one true soldier of Christ shall be missing then (John x. 28, 29; Philip. i. 6; Rev. vii. 3, 4 compared with xiv. 1). 2. That all the precious gifts yielded by human life amid strife and danger shall be brought into the holy city of God, to the glory of God (Rev. xxi. 24, 26). 3. That every one that overcometh shall be the better and the richer for his warfare against sin (see ver. 53).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—54.—*The lion and his prey.* In two of his prophecies Balaam had been compelled to speak of Israel as the lion (ch. xxiii. 24; xxiv. 9). We now behold, in the destruction of Midian, the rousing of the lion-spirit. Something of it had been seen already in the conduct of Phinehas (ch. xxv.), and now there is a manifestation on a larger scale in the achievement of these 12,000 men.

I. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE DESTRUCTION. All the males of Midian were slain, and the five kings are particularly mentioned as being among them. The women and their little ones were taken captive. The whole of their property was turned into spoil, and how large that spoil was we learn from the latter part of the chapter. Their cities and goodly castles were all burnt. And might not this seem destruction enough? Apparently not; for we read that Moses was wroth because the women had been spared, and they, as well as all the males of the little ones, had to be added to the slain. Thus the impression left upon us, and evidently intended to be left, is that of utter and merciless extermination. None were left to continue the race of Midian.

II. THE INSPIRATION OF THIS DREADFUL BLOW WAS EVIDENTLY FROM GOD. It was undertaken at his command, and not only so, but laid on Moses as his last great service before his departure.

> "Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
> Death closes all: but something ere the end,
> Some work of noble note, may yet be done."

Midian did not lie in the way of advancing Israel, as did the hosts of Sihon and Og. In one sense Israel had to turn out of its way in order to inflict this blow. We need to keep distinctly before our minds that God gave special command and made special preparation for it. The motive of this act is not to be found in the vindictive spirit of a half-savage people. The wrongs which, by natural disposition, they would have burned to avenge were not such as those inflicted by Midian. In truth there is no occasion either for blame anywhere, or for attempt at palliation. We must read this dreadful record in a spirit of humble submission to the authority of God, who sees need for temporal destruction where we may fail to see it.

III. That this blow came from God is made still clearer as we consider how HIS POWER GAVE THE BLOW ITS EFFICACY. *Observe how small a part of the whole army was required*—about a fiftieth. There is no mention of a selected company to engage

against Sihon and Og, but now this small force is enough to crush the whole of Midian. If Israel had gone forth of its own accord, it would have made the result as sure as possible by taking a far larger force than actually went. But where God is not present he can turn mere numbers into loss rather than gain. It was an occasion for the excellency of the Divine power to be manifested. *No actual leader is mentioned.* Moses sent them forth, and on their return he went out to meet them, but they evidently lacked what inspiration his presence and counsel might give them in the field. Phinehas went with them, but he was in charge of the holy instruments and trumpets. We are made to feel that the invisible Jehovah himself was leader, not only directing the attack, but also providing sufficient defence; for when the officers came to count up the army on its return, they were able to say, "There lacketh not one man of us."

IV. THE REASON FOR THIS DREADFUL DESTRUCTION IS FOUND IN THE PECULIAR INJURY WHICH MIDIAN HAD DONE TO ISRAEL (ch. xxv. 16—18). It must needs be that offences come, but woe to the Midianites through whom they come! Although they were not a very difficult people to defeat and destroy in battle, they had been very powerful to tempt Israel into idolatry. A thing which is comparatively easy to deal with in one way is impossible to deal with in another. Israel could annihilate Midian, and do something in that way to secure safety, but there was no chance of safety in having friendly intercourse with Midian. It had to be dealt with as a people saturated with the infecting corruptions of idolatry. Everything had to bend to the interests of Israel, as both typifying and cradling the Church of the future. For the sake of Israel God plagued and spoiled the tyrannous Egyptians; for the sake of Israel he made one whole generation of its own people to perish in the wilderness. What wonder then that for the sake of Israel he utterly destroyed the Midianite tempters! When a fire is extending it may be necessary to pull down other buildings to stop it—many buildings perhaps, as Evelyn tells us was the case in arresting the great fire of London. There is something very significant in the following sentence from his diary:—"This some stout seamen proposed early enough to have saved nearly the whole city, but this some tenacious and avaricious men, aldermen, &c., would not permit, because their houses must have been of the first." There may have to be a great deal of temporal destruction to make sure of eternal salvation.—Y.

Vers. 8, 16.—*The death of Balaam.* I. HOW CLEAR IT IS MADE THAT BALAAM DID NOT DIE THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS! He was slain among those who were slain by the vengeance of God. He might, of course, have died in circumstances more peaceful and less indicative of his wickedness, and yet died the death of the wicked all the same. But now the manner of his end is left in no doubt. He had not only suffered himself to be drawn into opposition to the people of God, he had not only been disobedient to God himself, but it seems that he had been the chief provoking agent in bringing destruction on a portion of the present generation of Israel. Moreover, the very people whom he thought to help he had unconsciously led to their own ruin. He certainly could not have done all this if he had not found the materials ready to hand—actual idolatry in Midian, and the spirit of lust and idolatry in Israel. But it was he who saw with a sort of Satanic quickness all that could be done with the material. A man cannot cause an explosion unless he has explosive substances to deal with, but we reckon him responsible who applies the exploding agent. One sinner not only destroyeth much good, but, as we see here, produceth much evil. Wicked men should learn from the history of Balaam that they may do a great deal more harm than they are conscious of. How much better it is to be on the other side, striving to draw men, even though it be with few apparent results, into the paths of purity, self-denial, and love!

II. FROM THE CHARACTER OF BALAAM WE SEE HOW REAL AND DESPERATE SPIRITUAL INSENSIBILITY MAY BE. Rightly considered, the whole conduct of Balaam is a great deal more perplexing than is the speaking of his ass. There we have to do just with the momentary occupation of the vocal organs of a brute by the speech of a human being. For a moment or two the ass was honoured beyond its natural faculties. But here is a man, raised above other men in many respects, acting in a way most

humiliating to humanity. Favoured again and again with light which came to him in different ways, he remained in gross darkness with respect to the character of God as a whole. He saw not the folly, the absurdity, of the path in which he was treading. *The conduct of Balaam in the essential principles of it has often been repeated, and is being repeated still.* We are all spiritually blind unless God be pleased to open our eyes. Seeing the things of God by the light of nature, and judging of them by natural reason, we come to some strange and impotent conclusions. Balaam's indifference to the interferences of God is not one whit more marvellous than the unmoved, matter-of-fact way in which we can bear to have truths presented to our minds which, if they concern us to any extent, concern us more than all outward circumstances taken together. It is easy to say as one reads of Balaam, "What a fool! what an enigma! what a bundle of contradictions! what a mixture in his life of unwilling obedience to God and most obstinate persistence in his own path!" Take care lest it be said to one thus speaking, "Thou art the man." There is not a man of the world living in a land of open Bibles but whose conduct might be so described as to appear quite as perplexing as that of Balaam here.

III. A MAN MAY ENJOY GREAT PRIVILEGES, AND YET BE RUINED AT LAST. A seeing man may be quite safe in a dangerous path, and on the darkest night, with a little lamp, if it is enough to show him where his feet are to be placed. But a blind man will fall into the pit by noonday. A firmament radiant with a score of suns would avail nothing to such a one. A man may live in a land of Bibles, churches, and every conceivable variety of gospel ministrations, and yet die, after a long contact with all these, knowing nothing of his own state as a sinner, or of the power of Christ as a Saviour. Another man, in the midst of Africa, with no more than a torn leaf of the New Testament, might come to know the one thing needful, and be effectually led to repentance, faith, salvation, and eternal life. Privileges, as we call them, are nothing in themselves; all depends on how they are received. It was the same seed that was sown in the four different kinds of ground. One seed sown in the good ground will bring forth more than a cartload scattered by the wayside.

IV. BALAAM KNEW JUST ENOUGH OF THE TRUTH TO MISLEAD HIM, NOT ENOUGH TO LEAD HIM RIGHT. He apprehended the real power of Jehovah without apprehending his character as a whole. He had made the discovery that if Israel fell away into the worship of any other god, it would be very severely dealt with. Doubtless he had found his way into some intercourse with the Israelites, and been made acquainted with their past history, particularly with the commandment of God at Sinai against idolatry, and the sufferings which came upon the people because of the golden calf. But he did not know that in the midst of the most faithless and apostate of generations there would still be preserved a faithful seed; he did not reckon on the energetic and efficacious zeal of a Phinehas. And thus the great mischief to many arises not so much from total indifference to God as from misleading conceptions of him. It is only too easy for us to miss the full view which a sinner ought to have of God, and remain all our lifetime with erroneous and most limited conceptions. Some make too much of God's anger with sin, forgetting his love, his mercy, his patience, his revelation of himself as a Father; others make too much of his mercy, forgetting his unyielding righteousness, and the need of a radical change in man—a change in his motives, purposes, sympathies, and delights. Nothing is more perilous than to see so much of one side of the Divine character as not to see the rest. We must see it as it is revealed in Scripture. There the living God moves before us in his actions. We see his actions, and they cannot be understood unless as the harmonious outflow of all his character.—Y.

Vers. 25—47.—*The distribution of the spoils.* I. GOD TAKES THE DISTRIBUTION INTO HIS OWN HANDS. The victory was his, and it was for him to arrange the spoils as might best serve his own purposes. It was the only effectual way of blighting in the bud all discord and jealousy. It was also the means of teaching important lessons to all in the community who were willing to learn. It helped to manifest afresh the unity of Israel. Those who had gone to the war had gone as representatives of the whole of Israel, hence it was for the whole of Israel to share in the spoil. While part was away, avenging the Lord of Midian, another part stayed at

home, also serving God in its own way, and looking after the interests of those who were absent. We must not get into the way of looking at one part of the community as more necessary than another. It was not for the army to say, "What would Israel have done in taking vengeance on Midian but for us?" seeing that God had made it plain how he was working in and through the army. Nor was it for the people who stayed at home to say, "What right have twelve thousand men to half the spoils?" The twelve thousand were not looked at in themselves; they stood for Israel militant. All Israel gained a real blessing by this expedition, and the chief gain to them was in so far as they were effectually warned against the perils of idolatry. Whatever there might be in the way of improved perception of truth and duty and the Divine character was far more than all the spoil. God did not send them against Midian for the sake of the spoil, but for the sake of vengeance.

II. THE SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO THE LEVITES. It was very appropriate that this should be strictly exacted, after all the service which Phinehas had rendered. The tribe of Levi had done its part in a way which could not be mistaken. Upon this great occasion, when so much had to be distributed, God taught the lesson that distribution should be made according to the needs of men. The Levites had need not only to be supported, but well supported. The work they had to do, in the reality, the extent, the continuity, and the minuteness of it, had been lately indicated in more ways than one. Consider all the Levitical service that was involved in the offerings mentioned in chs. xxviii. and xxix. It was becoming more and more clear that Levi must be set apart and properly maintained; for thus only could there be regularity and efficiency in the service of God.

III. BALAAM'S ASS WAS PROBABLY AMONG THE ASSES THAT WERE TAKEN (ver. 34). It is pleasant to imagine that it may have found its way into the Lord's tribute, and that the animal which had so long borne a wicked man faithfully, would now with equal faithfulness be able to bear perhaps Eleazar himself. We need much of the spirit of obedience to God to use rightly that vast multitude of the brute creation which God has put under our control. How pitiable to see the horse carefully trained for war, and, as one might almost think, taught to cherish feelings which by nature are alien to it! May we not well wish for the day when not only the sword of the dragoon shall be turned to the ploughshare, but the horse on which he rides shall draw that share along? Think how the horse and other animals are degraded by the occasions for gambling which they furnish. Think of all the cruel field-sports in which man finds such pleasure. When he leaves the pleasures which are appropriate to his nature, what a tyrannous and hideous monster he may become! Man in all his life should be drawing nearer to God, and, rising higher himself, should raise all creation with him. Whereas he is drawn downward, and in his willing descent he degrades even the lower creation.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TWO AND A HALF TRIBES BEYOND JORDAN (vers. 1—42). Ver. 1.—**The children of Reuben and the children of Gad.** Reuben and Gad had both been camped on the same (southern) side of the tabernacle, but had not apparently been neighbours, since Simeon intervened on the march (see on ch. ii. 10—14). Simeon, however, was at this time enfeebled and disgraced, and was not likely to assert himself in any way. The "great multitude of cattle" belonging to the two tribes probably point to pastoral habits of long standing, since the cattle of the Amorites and Midianites would be equally divided among all. **The land of Jazer.** Jazer, or Jaazer, probably stood near the northern source of the Wâdy Hesbân, which enters the Jordan not far from its mouth. The "land of Jazer" would seem to mean the Mishor, or plateau, of Heshbon, over which the Israelites had passed on their way to the plains of Moab (see on Deut. iii. 10, "all the cities of the Mishor"). **The land of Gilead.** Gilead as the name of a district only previously occurs in Gen. xxxvii. 25. It is used with a considerable latitude of meaning in this and the following books. In its widest sense it stands for the whole territory to the east of Jordan (see on vers. 26, 29), including even the rugged, volcanic districts of Bashan (Deut. xxxiv. 1; 1 Chron. v. 16); but more properly it denoted the

lands on both sides the Jabbok, from the Wâdy Hesbân on the south, to the Yermuk and lake of Tiberias on the north, now known as the provinces of Belka and Jebel Ajlun. These lands are by no means uniformly flat, as the name "Mount Gilead" testifies, but include mountains and hills covered with fine open forests of oak (cf. 2 Sam. xviii. 8, 9) as well as rolling downs and treeless plains. The soil is almost everywhere of great fertility, and the water supply, although very scanty in summer, is sufficient if carefully husbanded. Even now these provinces produce great store of grain, and are depastured by vast flocks of sheep. In Roman times, as the innumerable ruins testify, they were filled with a large and opulent population. Indeed there could be no comparison in point of agricultural and pastoral value between these open and fertile lands and the broken, stony country of Southern Palestine. If they ever enjoy again the blessing of a strong government and continuous peace they will again justify the choice of Reuben and Gad. **A place for cattle.** מָקוֹם (Septuagint, *τόπος*) is used here in the broader sense of district (cf. Gen. i. 9), and is equivalent to אֶרֶץ in ver. 4.

Ver. 3.—**Ataroth.** As to the nine places here mentioned, see on vers. 34—38. They all lie to the south of Gilead, properly so called, within a comparatively short distance of the route by which the main body of the Israelites had advanced. Probably the cattle which followed the host were still grazing under guard around these places, and it was very natural that tribes which had hitherto lived closely crowded together should not at first contemplate spreading themselves very far afield.

Ver. 5.—**Bring us not over Jordan.** The two tribes have been charged on the strength of these words with "shameless selfishness," but there is nothing to justify such an accusation. If they thought at all of the effect of their request upon their brethren, it is quite likely that they intended to do them a kindness by leaving them more room on the other side Jordan; and indeed Canaan proper was all too strait for such a population. Whether they were *wise* in wishing to stay in the wider and more attractive lands which they had seen is another matter. They knew that the God of Israel had designed to plant his people between Jordan and the sea, and they certainly risked a partial severance from his promises and his protection by remaining where they did. The subsequent history of the trans-Jordanic tribes is a melancholy commentary on the real unwisdom of their choice. Yet it would have been difficult for them to know that they were wrong, except by an instinct of faith which no Israelites perhaps at that time possessed.

Ver. 6.—**Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?** Moses had good cause to feel great anxiety about the entry into Canaan proper. Once already the faith and courage of the people had failed them on the very threshold of the promised land, and a slight discouragement might bring about a similar calamity. Hence he spoke with a degree of sharpness which does not appear to have been deserved.

Ver. 7.—**Discourage.** The verb נָאַשׁ, translated "discourage" here and in ver. 9, is of somewhat doubtful meaning. The Septuagint renders it by *διαστρέφω*, and perhaps the sense is, "Why do ye draw away the heart?" *i. e.* render it averse from going over.

Ver. 8.—**Thus did your fathers.** It is impossible not to see that this mode of address is in striking contrast to that used in the Book of Deuteronomy (*e. g.* in ch. i. 22, 27; v. 3, 23). At the same time it is obviously the more natural, and the more in accordance with facts, because there was not a man left of all those who had rebelled at Kadesh. **At Kadesh-Barnea.** This mode of writing the name forms a link between the closing chapters of Numbers (here and in ch. xxxiv. 4) and the two following books. In Deuteronomy it occurs four times, and "Kadesh" twice. In Joshua "Kadesh-Barnea" occurs exclusively. In the later books "Kadesh" only is used, as in Genesis and in the previous chapters of Numbers. The meaning of the combination is uncertain, and the etymology of "Barnea" altogether obscure. It may be an old name attaching to the place before it became known as a sanctuary. The Septuagint has Κάδης τοῦ Βαρνή in one place, as though it were the name of a man.

Ver. 9.—**When they went up,** *i. e.* no doubt the spies, although the word is not expressed. Moses, indeed, in the heat of his displeasure, seemed to charge their "fathers" generally with the wickedness of ten men. No further proof is needed to show that Moses was often disposed to speak unadvisedly with his lips.

Ver. 11.—**That came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward.** Here is another instance of the haste and inaccuracy with which Moses spoke. The Divine sentence of exclusion had been pronounced upon all who were numbered at Sinai as being then over twenty (ch. xiv. 29).

Ver. 12.—**The Kenezite.** See on chap. xiii. 6.

Ver. 14.—**An increase of sinful men.** תַּרְבּוּת is rendered by the Septuagint *σύντριμμα*, which properly means a contusion or fracture; but it is probably equivalent to "brood," used in a contemptuous sense. The strong language of Moses was not justi-

fied by the reality, although it was excused by the appearance, of the case.

Ver. 15.—**He will yet again leave them in the wilderness.** Properly speaking, Israel had already emerged from the wilderness; but until they had fairly made good their possession of Canaan, their desert wanderings could not be considered at an end.

Ver. 16.—**Sheep-folds.** גְּדֵרֹת צֹאן. These were rude enclosures built of loose stones piled on one another, into which the flocks were driven at night for safety.

Ver. 17.—**We ourselves will go ready armed.** Rather, "we will equip ourselves in haste." נֶחְלִץ חֻשִׁים. They meant that they would not delay the forward movement of Israel, but would hasten to erect the necessary buildings, and to array themselves for war.

Ver. 19.—**On yonder side Jordan.** לְיַרְדֵּן מֵעֵבֶר. Septuagint, *ἀπὸ τοῦ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου.* This phrase is here used in what is apparently its more natural sense, as it would be used by one dwelling in the plains of Moab (see on ch. xxii. 1, and on next verse). **Or forward.** וָהָלְאָה. Septuagint, *καὶ ἐπέκεινα, i. e.* onwards towards the west and south and north, as the tide of conquest might flow. **Our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.** It does not appear on what ground they spoke so confidently. They do not seem to have received any Divine intimation that their lot was to be on the east of Jordan, but rather to have been guided by their own preference. If so, they cannot be acquitted of a certain presumptuous wilfulness in action, and of a certain want of honesty in speech. The phrase here rendered "on this side Jordan" (מֵעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן) cannot be distinguished grammatically from that which bears an opposite signification in the preceding verse. In itself it is perfectly ambiguous without some qualifying word or phrase, and it is very difficult to know what the ordinary use of it was in the time of Moses. In later ages, no doubt, it came to mean simply the trans-Jordanic territory, or Peræa, without reference to the position of the speaker. The difficulty here is to decide whether the expression, as further defined by "eastward," would actually have been used at that time and in that place, or whether the expression is due to a writer living on the west of Jordan. All we can say is, that the awkward use of the phrase in two opposite meanings, with words of clearer definition added, points more or less strongly towards a probability that the passage as it stands was written or revised at a later date.

Ver. 20.—**Before the Lord.** Perhaps in a quasi-local sense, as the vanguard of the host before the sacred symbols of the Lord's presence (see on ch. x. 21, and Josh. vi. 9). But since the same expression (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה) is twice used in a much vaguer sense in ver. 22, it is more probable that it only means "in the Lord's service," or "beneath his eye."

Ver. 23.—**Be sure your sin will find you out.** Or rather, "yo will know your sin" (וְרֵעוּ חַטַּאתְכֶם) "which shall find you out" (for מָצְאָה cf. Gen. xliv. 16). So in effect the Septuagint: *γνώσεσθε τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ὑμῶν, ὅταν ὑμᾶς καταλάβῃ τὰ κακά.* When they had cause to rue their folly, then they would recognise their sin.

Ver. 26.—**In the cities of Gilead.** The name is used here in a vague sense for all the central and southern trans-Jordanic districts.

Ver. 28.—**Moses commanded.** See on ch. xxxiv. 17, 18; Josh. i. 13 ff.; xxii. 1 ff.

Ver. 33.—**And unto half the tribe of Manasseh.** As no mention has been previously made of this tribe in this connection, we are left to conjecture why it should, contrary to all analogy, have been divided at all, and why the one half should have received the remote regions of Northern Gilead and Bashan. That the tribe was divided at all can only be explained by the pre-existence of some schism in its ranks, the probable origin and nature of which are discussed in the notes on vers. 39, 41. The enormous increase in the tribal numbers during the wanderings (see on ch. xxvi. 34) may have made the division more advisable, and the adventurous and independent character of the Machirites may have rendered it almost a necessity. They had not apparently preferred any request to Moses, but since the trans-Jordanic territory was to be occupied, Moses probably prevented a grave difficulty by recognising their claim to the conquests they had made.

Ver. 34.—**The children of Gad built,** *i. e.*, no doubt, they put these places in some habitable and defensible state of repair until they should return. **Dibon.** Now Dhibân, four miles north of Arnon. It is called Dibon-gad in ch. xxxiii. 45, 46, but it is doubtful whether there is any allusion to its present occupation, since "Gad" was a common affix in the languages of Canaan (cf. Josh. xi. 17). Dibon was subsequently assigned to Reuben (Josh. xiii. 9), but was recovered by Moab, and became one of his strongholds (cf Isa. xv. 2; Jer. xlviii. 18, 22). The Moabite stone was found here. **Ataroth.** Now Attârûs, seven miles from Dibon. **Aroer.** Not the Aroer before Rabbath (Josh. xiii. 25), but the Aroer by the brink of Arnon (Deut. ii. 36; Josh. xiii. 16).

Ver. 35. — **Atroth, Shophan.** Rather, "Atroth-Shophan," another Ataroth, the site of which is unknown. **Jaazer.** See on ver. 1. **Jogbehah.** Now perhaps Jebeiha, to the north of Jaazer (cf. Judges viii. 11). All these places were only temporarily occupied by the Gadites, and fell to Reuben in the subsequent division.

Ver. 36.—**Beth-nimrah and Beth-haran.** Supposed to be the present Nimrûn and Beit-haran in the plains of Moab, beside the Jordan, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the Israelitish camp. The latter would seem to have fallen subsequently to Reuben. **Fenced cities, and folds for sheep.** There should be no stop between these two clauses. All these places were "built" for the double purpose of affording protection to the families and to the flocks of the tribe.

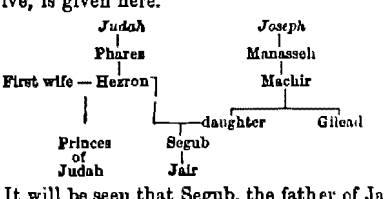
Ver. 37.—**The children of Reuben.** Reuben had, at the time of the last census, been greater in number than Gad, and had been his leader on the march. He now begins to take that secondary position which was always to be his. Of the towns which he now occupied, the Moabites recovered many, while the most important of all (Heshbon) had to be surrendered to the Levites. He was indeed compensated with the southern settlements of the Gadites as far as the Wady Hesbân, but even so his limits were very straitened as compared with those of Gad and of half Manasseh. **Heshbon.** Cf. ch. xxi. 25. In Josh. xxi. 39; 1 Chron. vi. 81, Heshbon is spoken of as belonging to Gad. This can only be explained on the supposition that the temporary settlements of the two tribes were really intermixed, and that Heshbon, as the old capital of that region, was jointly occupied. In after times it, too, together with Elealeh and Kirjathaim, Nebo, Baal-meon, and Sibmah, all fell into the hands of Moab (Isa. xv. 2, 4; xvi. 8; Jer. xlviii. 22, 23).

Ver. 38.—**Baal-meon.** Called Beon in ver. 3, Beth-meon in Jer. xlviii. 23, Beth-Baal-meon in Josh. xiii. 17. **Their names being changed.** מוּסַבֹּת שֵׁם, "with change of name," dependent on the verb "built." The Septuagint has περικεκυκλωμένας (Symmachus, περιτετευχισμένας), apparently reading שׁוּר for שֵׁם, but without authority. It is possible that the Beon of ver. 3 may be an instance of this attempt to change names, many of which were connected with idolatry. The attempt failed, but both the attempt itself and its failure were very characteristic of the partial and feeble hold which Israel had on this territory. **Gave other names to the cities which they builded.** Literally, "they called by names the names of the towns;" a round-about expression correctly paraphrased by the A. V.

Ver. 39.—**The children of Machir.** The relation of the Beni-Machir to the tribe of Manasseh is obscure, because all the Manassites were descended from Machir. In the absence of any direct information, we can only guess at the nature of the tie which united the Beni-Machir as a family, and kept them distinct from the other Manassite families. It is evident from their history that they formed a sub-tribe powerful enough to have a name of their own in Israel (cf. ver. 40 and Judges v. 14, and see note on ver. 41). **Went to Gilead.** This would seem to refer to the expedition briefly recorded in ch. xxi. 33. It is mentioned here out of place, in the simple historical style of the Pentateuch, because the gift of Gilead to Machir grew out of its conquest by Machir. The name Gilead is again used in a very vague sense, for the territory actually allotted to Machir was rather in Bashan than in Gilead proper.

Ver. 40.—**And he dwelt therein.** This expression does not necessarily look beyond the lifetime of Moses, although it would be more naturally taken as doing so. In ch. xx. 1 יֵשֶׁב is used of the "abiding" of Israel at Kadesh.

Ver. 41.—**Jair the son of Manasseh.** This hero of Manasseh is mentioned here for the first time; in Deut. iii. 14 his conquests are somewhat more fully described. His genealogy, which is instructive and suggestive, is given here.



It will be seen that Segub, the father of Jair, was a Machirite in the female line only. His father Hezron, according to 1 Chron. ii. 21, married the daughter of Manasseh in his old age, when his elder sons were probably already fathers of families. It may probably be conjectured also that Manasseh, who must have inherited exceptional wealth (cf. Gen. xlviii. 17), and had but one grandson, left a large portion to his grand-daughter, the young wife of Hezron. It was therefore very natural that Segub should have attached himself to the fortunes of his mother's tribe. Is it not also very probable that Machir had other daughters (cf. Gen. l. 23), who also inherited large portions from their grandfather, and whose husbands were willing enough to enter into a family which had apparently brighter prospects than any others? If so, it would account at once for the existence of a large family of Machirites not descended from

Gilead, and not on the most friendly terms with the rest of the tribe. It is quite possible that many of the more adventurous spirits amongst the tribe of Judah joined themselves to a family whose reputation and exploits they might naturally claim as their own (see on Josh. xix. 34). **The small towns thereof**, or, "their villages." Septuagint, τὰς ἐπαύλεις αὐτῶν, *i. e.* the hamlets of the Amorites who dwelt in Argob (Deut. iii. 14), the modern district of el Lejja, on the north-western waters of the Yermuk or Hieromax. **And called them Havoth-jair.** חַוֹּת יָאִיר. Septuagint, τὰς ἐπαύλεις Ἰαίρ, and so the Targums. The word *chavvoth* only occurs in this connection, and is supposed by some to be the plural of חַוָּה, "life." There does not, however, seem to be anything except the very doubtful analogy of certain German names in favour of the rendering "Jair's lives." It is more likely the corruption of some more ancient name. There is some discrepancy in subsequent references to the Chavvoth-jair. According to 1 Chron. ii. 22, Jair had twenty-three towns in Gilead; from Judges x. 4 it appears that the sons of the later Jair had thirty cities "in the land of Gilead" which went under the name of Chavvoth-jair; while in Josh. xiii. 30 "all the Chavvoth-jair which are in Bashan" are reckoned at sixty. The plausible, though not wholly satisfactory, explanation is, that the conquests of Nobah came to be subsequently included in those of his more famous contemporary, and the vague name of Chavvoth-jair extended to all the towns in that part of Gilead, and of Bashan too (see notes on the passages cited).

Ver. 42.—**Nobah.** As this chieftain is nowhere else named, we may probably conclude that he was one of the companions of Jair, holding a position more or less subordinate to him. **Kenath.** The modern Kenawât, on the western slope of the Jebel Haurân, the most easterly point ever occupied by the Israelites. It is apparently the Nobah mentioned in Judges viii. 11, but it has reverted (like so many others) to its old name. In spite of the uncertainties which hang over the conquest of this north-eastern territory, there is something very characteristic in the part played by the Machirite leaders. That they acted with an independent vigour bordering on audacity, that they showed great personal prowess, and had great personal authority with the humbler members of their family, and held something like the position of feudal superiors among them, is evident from the way in which they are spoken of. And this is quite in keeping with the character of the Manassites in after times. The "governors" who came at the call of Barak, Gideon, the greatest of the warrior-judges, and probably Jephthah also ("the Gileadite"), as well as the younger Jair, maintained the warlike and impetuous character of their race. If "Elijah the Tishbite" was really from this region (although this is extremely doubtful), we should find in him the characteristic daring and self-reliance of Machir transmuted into their spiritual equivalents.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—42.—*The mistaken choice.* In this chapter we have, spiritually, the choice of those who do not (on the one hand) wish to sever themselves from the people of God, nor to desert their brethren, but who are (on the other hand) greatly disinclined to go the whole length to which the word of God would lead them, and are determined to abide in the middle ground between the Church and the world. And this choice is set before us both on its worse side, in that it is at once presumptuous and foolish, albeit not unnatural; and on its better side, as being consistent with a large measure of really good and honest principle. The whole spiritual value of the chapter turns upon the lesson thus taught. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE CHILDREN OF REUBEN AND GAD DESIRED TO STAY YON-SIDE OF JORDAN BECAUSE IT SUITED THEM; *i. e.* because (1) they had much cattle, (2) for which the rolling downs and plateaux of that region were admirably adapted, whereas (3) it would be a difficult matter to transport their scattered flocks and herds across the tangled valley and deep stream of Jordan, and (4) the straiter limits of Canaan proper seemed unsuited to pastoral wealth. Even so a multitude of Christians hang back from going all lengths with Christ because (1) they have much wealth of this world, (2) for the enjoyment of which a manner of life only partially limited and restrained by strict Christian principle is on the face of it very suitable, while (3) there is a manifest difficulty about introducing this wealth into a strictly religious life, and (4) an evident incongruity between the requisite attention to such wealth and the restraints and demands of such a life.

II. THAT THESE TWO TRIBES WERE UNDOUBTEDLY INTENDED, LIKE THE REST, TO FIND THEIR INHERITANCE IN CANAAN PROPER. For this, and not the land beyond Jordan, was the land which the Lord had sworn to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this was the land of the seven nations, the promised land, of which the land of Jaazer and Gilead formed no integral part, but only as it were a vestibule, an outlier, an *annexe*. These did indeed belong to the Holy Land, but were distinctly less holy than the rest. Even so it is the will of God that all Christians should press on unto perfection, *i. e.* to the perfect life of faith and duty spoken of in the New Testament. This is distinctly what God hath called them to, for it is to this that he hath attached his blessings and promises. Nevertheless there is in practice a vast tract of Christian living which is as clearly distinct from this as it is inferior to it; which lies outside of it in the strict sense, but yet in a wide sense is certainly united to it.

III. THAT NATURE ITSELF JUSTIFIED THE DIVINE WISDOM IN CALLING THE PEOPLE INTO CANAAN PROPER. For this Holy Land is separated from all other lands by remarkable geographical features, especially by the deep cleft of Jordan from the children of the east; whereas the trans-Jordanic territory was wholly exposed to a multitude of heathen and hostile neighbours towards the east, and south, and north. Even so it is a matter which needs no discussion that a strict Christian life is by the very laws of human nature fenced from innumerable dangers and assaults to which a half-and-half religion lies completely open. Nothing indeed is more practically helpless, or at least more utterly unsafe, than the Christian life of a half-converted man.

IV. THAT THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL SUPPLIES A MELANCHOLY COMMENTARY ON THE UNWISDOM OF THEIR CHOICE. The very places mentioned as the first settlements of Reuben all fell into the hands of the Moabites, with some of those of Gad. Amidst the uncertainties which overhang their history we can make out that these regions were a continual battle-field, never attained a settled prosperity, and were finally conquered before the rest. Even so all experience sets forth the sad results of such a life as is a compromise between the claims of religion and of the world. It is always and of necessity the first to go; the powers of evil strike upon it first, and with the greatest strength. In the day of temptation, when those who live most near to God can hardly stand, what chance is there (humanly speaking) for the half-hearted and half-converted?

V. THAT THE CHOICE OF REUBEN AND GAD WAS AFTER ALL VERY NATURAL. Unquestionably the open lands which they had seen were then (as they are now) much more fertile and pleasant than the stony limestone ridges of Southern Palestine; and the deep, sullen stream of Jordan was a formidable obstacle. Even so there is to the natural man something very attractive about the comparative freedom of a life which claims the promises of Christ, and yet is not altogether constrained by his demands. To cross the gloomy-looking gulf of an entire conversion, and to be cooped within the apparently uninviting limits of a consecrated life, *is* repugnant to much that exists in all of us, and that reigns supreme in many of us.

VI. THAT THEIR CHOICE REALLY SHOWED A WANT OF FAITH. For they knew that God had attached his promises to the land beyond Jordan, and they knew that the ark of God was going across, and that the chosen site of God's presence would be on the other side, yet they deliberately risked the danger of being (to some real extent) separated from the presence and promises and protection of their Holy One. Even so when men settle down in a half-and-half Christianity, it is because they have no strong faith in the promises, and no great longing for the presence of God; they do not disbelieve or despise these, but they are in practice less concerned about them than about temporal advantages.

VII. THAT THEIR CHOICE ALSO SHOWED A BLINDNESS TO THEIR ACTUAL DANGERS. Had they foreseen the swarms of enemies to whose assaults they would remain exposed, and realised their comparatively defenceless position, they would surely have petitioned to go over Jordan too. Even so men remain half converted with a light heart because they under-estimate their danger, and over-estimate their strength. Conscious that they intend what is right, they are content to abide far from the succours of Divine grace, at once more exposed to temptation and less able to resist it than more earnest Christians.

VIII. THAT THE TWO TRIBES WHICH ASKED, AND THE HALF TRIBE WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN WITHOUT ASKING, OBTAINED THEIR INHERITANCE WHERE THEY WISHED TO HAVE IT; and they were not cast out of the chosen people, nor treated with disdain. Even so a great multitude of Christians remain distinctly and deliberately below the level and outside the pale (so to speak) of the true Christian life as portrayed in the Gospels and Epistles. Their life and conversation is in fact governed half by the gospel, and half by the precepts and fashions of the world. Yet they are Christians, and, however great their danger and unsatisfactory their position, they are not and cannot be separated from the Church of God.

Consider more particularly, as to *the petition of the two tribes*—

I. THAT IT WAS PARTLY POSITIVE—"let this land be given unto thy servants;" PARTLY NEGATIVE—"bring us not over this Jordan." Here we have the attraction of a life of apparent freedom and enjoyment, the repulsion of a concentrated effort, and of a life apparently limited and uninteresting.

II. THAT THE CONQUESTS ALREADY MADE MIGHT SEEM THE NATURAL CONCLUSION OF THEIR LONG JOURNEYING AND WAITING. Why should they go further and perhaps fare worse? Here we have the secret of much imperfect religious life. Many stop far short of a thorough-going obedience because they have advanced far enough to feel themselves safe from judgment, and at rest from stings of conscience, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; and they have no mind (because they see no necessity) to go any further in the onward path.

III. THAT THE TWO TRIBES, BECAUSE THEY HAD DETERMINED TO REMAIN WHERE THEY WERE, ASSUMED THAT THEY HAD DIVINE AUTHORITY TO DO SO: "Our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan." Here we have that confidence which Christian people constantly express, that *they* are not called to "go on unto perfection." Other people have their own vocation, but it is given unto them to lead a life less strict and less devout because business, or society, or their own disposition requires it, *i. e.* because they choose to.

Consider again, as to *Moses' treatment of their petition*—

I. THAT HE JUDGED THEM HARSHLY AND UNFAIRLY, AS IF THEY HAD BEEN WILFUL REBELS AGAINST GOD AND COWARDLY BETRAYERS OF THEIR BRETHREN, which was not at all the case. Even so those who have the interests of God's kingdom very much at heart are always tempted to judge too harshly those who show a want of earnestness and of forwardness, and to cast them out as unprincipled; whereas in fact there is often very much to thank God for in their character and conduct.

II. THAT HAVING THUS PUT HIMSELF IN THE WRONG, HE COULD NOT TAKE UP THE TRUE GROUND OF REMONSTRANCE, *i. e.* the injury they would entail upon themselves. Even so to condemn imperfect Christians altogether is to prevent any effective appeal to their own highest interests and truest ambitions.

III. THAT WHAT MOSES DID EXACT WAS AN ASSURANCE THAT THEY WOULD NOT ABANDON NOR WEAKEN THEIR BRETHREN PRESSING ON. Even so we have a right to require that those who are not willing themselves to go all lengths with Christ shall at least not hinder nor discourage those who are willing and are trying. Here is the crying evil and sin of our degenerate Christianity, that it not only falls short of the gospel standard, but practically sets up a standard of its own, and utterly discourages any attempt to rise above it; and this is certainly that wickedness against God and man which Moses mistakenly charged on the two tribes.

IV. THAT THE EVIDENT POLICY OF MOSES WAS TO UNITE THE TRIBES WHICH REMAINED BEYOND JORDAN BY AS MANY TIES AS POSSIBLE TO THE REST. Even so it is our wisdom to unite all Christian people, especially those who are lukewarm, in common enterprises for good, and in common labours for the Church, so that they may not be more separated from one another than is unavoidable.

Consider again, on the words, "bring us not over this Jordan"—1. That "this Jordan" is the accepted figure of the narrow stream of death, which divides us from the promised land wherein God dwelleth. 2. That the trans-Jordanic territory represents the less perfect holiness of life *here* as contrasted with the more perfect holiness of life *there*. 3. That this saying, therefore, represents the shrinking

which so many feel from that death which is the gate of true life, and their desire to remain amid the familiar and congenial scenes of this world. 4. That this saying, although very natural (since this life is sweet, and death awful, and the land beyond unknown), is certainly due to a want of faith (since the kingdom prepared for us is there, not here), and betrays a certain presumption, since as long as we live here we are in danger of separation from God. 5. That we justify the saying on the ground that life *here* is holy (as indeed it is), not sufficiently remembering that life *there* is holier, and that we are only here on the march with a view to crossing Jordan and reaching the true rest. 6. That however good may be the land on this side, "Jerusalem," the place which God hath chosen, the centre of Israel's life and happiness, is beyond Jordan. "Absent from the body," "present with the Lord."

Consider again, on the words, "be sure your sin will find you out"—1. That it is indeed true, as the heathen witnessed in many remarkable ways. "Nemesis" is a fact. 2. That it is not what Moses meant to say; rather, "Ye will recognise your sin when it overtakes you." 3. That men fail to recognise their sin at the time; often, that it is a sin at all; generally, how great a sin it is in deed. 4. Then when it overtakes them in its consequences, then they see it in its true light. The awfulness of sin is not due to its awful consequences, but it is manifested by them. 5. That the particular sin against which Moses warned them was the sin of selfishly deserting their brethren, and thereby discouraging and enfeebling them. And this is a sin as great as it is common, the disastrous consequences of which are most sadly evident.

Consider again, with respect to *the "cities" which the children of Reuben and Gad "built"*—

I. THAT AT THE TIME, AS COMPARED WITH THE TENTS AND BOOTHS OF THE WILDERNESS, THEY SEEMED NO DOUBT TO BE IMPORTANT AND PERMANENT SETTLEMENTS, BUT THEY PROVED TO BE VERY TEMPORARY. Even so there is nothing fixed or abiding in any religious life short of that perfect life unto which we are called. It is not only the "fashion of this world," but "the fashion" of the "religious world," which passeth away, because it is in truth only partly and provisionally Christian.

II. THAT IN AFTER DAYS THEY MOSTLY FELL INTO THE HANDS OF THE CRUEL AND IDOLATROUS MOAB, AND RESUMED THEIR OLD HEATHEN NAMES. Even so a manner of life which is not distinctly Christian, albeit lived by Christians, is for ever slipping back into practical heathenism, and reverting to the evil and sinful conditions from which it seemed to have been rescued.

III. THAT THE CURSE OF REUBEN (Gen. xlix. 4) BEGAN NOW TO BE FULFILLED THROUGH UNHAPPY CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WERE YET ENTIRELY OF HIS OWN SEEKING. It was he that settled himself close upon the frontier of Moab, where he could not have peace or prosperity for any length of time. Even so that incapacity to excel in anything which seems to cling to some Christian people like a curse is after all due to their own precipitate unwisdom in placing themselves at a permanent disadvantage for the sake of immediate gain or ease.

Consider once more, with respect to *Machir*—

I. THAT THEY SEEM TO HAVE ACTED INDEPENDENTLY OF MOSES, AND TO HAVE TAKEN THEIR OWN WAY. Even so there are those in the Church whose great natural abilities and singular daring lead them to act without much reference to the law of Christ, and yet it is not easy to condemn them, or to refuse their aid.

II. THAT THEY DID LITTLE GOOD TO THEMSELVES BY CONQUESTS SO REMOTE, BUT THEY DID MUCH GOOD IN MANY WAYS TO ISRAEL. Even so these irregular champions of the Church gain little spiritual profit to themselves, but they are often the means of manifold gain unto their brethren at large.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 23.—"*Be sure your sin will find you out.*" These words, though ultimately true of every sin, are spoken of actions which, going forth from us, perform their mischievous errands, but will come home again, bringing retribution with them. The Eastern proverb is true of crimes as well as curses: "Curses, like chickens, always come home to roost." God urges this truth as one out of many motives for strengthening us against allurements to sin. Sinners indulge vague hopes of impunity; they act as though they said, "The Lord shall not see," &c. (Ps. xciv. 7). But they cannot escape from sin. Lapse of time will not annihilate sin; careful concealment will not hide it up; mere repentance will not avert all its consequences. Nor will death screen from detection. We cannot escape from our sins—

I. BY LAPSE OF TIME. "Sin is the transgression of the law." It is a disturbing element, like a poison in the blood, or an error in a calculation as to the course of a ship. It is useless to say, "Let bygones be bygones" (cf. Ps. l. 21, 22 and Eccles. viii. 11). There is no "statute of limitations" in regard to the debt of sin. Illustrations: —Lot going to live in Sodom, and reaping domestic ruin years afterwards; Adoni-bezek (Judges i. 5—7); Saul's "bloody house" (2 Sam. xxi. 1).

II. CAREFUL CONCEALMENT. A sin may appear to be safely buried (like a murdered corpse), and grass may grow on the grave; but a resurrection awaits it. No immunity, because no concealment from God. In the law of Moses certain secret sins are mentioned which, through the ignorance or connivance of the judges, might escape punishment (Levit. xvii. 10; xx. 1—6, &c.); but God himself threatens to be the executioner. Conscience may at last make further concealment impossible. (Confessions of murderers.) A sinner should stand in awe of himself and dread the spy within him. Or a strange combination of circumstances may bring the sin to light when detection seemed almost impossible. Illustration:—Dr. Doune finding a nail in a skull dug up in his churchyard. Apply Eccles. x. 20 to the greater danger of sinning against God (Job xx. 27; Eccles. xii. 14).

III. BY REPENTANCE. The penitent who trusts in Christ is forgiven; but a sin when committed may have put in motion a series of temporal results from which no subsequent repentance may be able wholly to deliver us; *e. g.* habits of dissipation, or single acts of passion or of falsehood. Illustrations:—Jacob's receiving in the course of his life "the fruit of his doings" after having wronged Esau and deceived Isaac; David, pardoned, yet followed by the consequences of his sin (2 Sam. xii. 10—14). Thus God would make us wary of sin, as of a mad dog, or a poison that may lurk long in the system (Matt. vii. 2). God's caution signals against sin.

IV. BY DEATH. After death, in the fullest sense, sin must find the transgressor out. There is a fearful contrast suggested by the benediction in Rev. xiv. 13: "Cursed are the dead that die in their sins; for they have no rest from their transgressions, but their guilt follows them." Think of being found out in that world where the prospect is of "eternal sin" (Mark iii. 29). The only true salvation is from sin itself, assured to us through repentance and faith (Matt. i. 21; Titus ii. 14).—P.

Vers. 1—5.—*A bird in the hand worth two in the bush.* This common proverb, so limited in the scope of its application, and so liable to be misused by timid and selfish people, is clearly illustrated in the conduct of these two tribes. Doubtless it is a sound principle to hold a small certainty rather than run the bare chance of a large possibility. But principles are nothing unless we rightly apply them, and the children of Reuben and Gad were forsaking the most certain and enduring of all precious things, and leaning to their own frail understanding. It is a poor exchange to leave the path of Divine providence for that of purblind human prudence.

CONSIDER HERE THE MISTAKEN PRACTICAL NOTIONS BY WHICH REUBEN AND GAD WERE LED INTO THIS REQUEST. 1. *An exaggerated estimate of the importance of temporal possessions.* Reuben and Gad had a great multitude of cattle; the lands of Jazer and Gilead were places for cattle; and so the way is straight to the conclusion that these lands were the proper habitation of these tribes. It is the man of

the world's view that the place which is good for one's property must be good for oneself, seeing that a man's abundance is in the things he possesses. The thought of the cattle so filled the minds of the two tribes that they could give no weight whatever to any other consideration. How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven! That faith which is the substance of *things hoped for* and the evidence of *things not seen* finds no room to grow in a heart choked up with the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. At this time, indeed, Reuben and Gad had many cattle, but it by no means followed that they would always have cattle. Job had many cattle, but in a few hours Sabeans and Chaldeans swept them all away. Consider well the thoughts that filled the mind of Lot (Gen. xiii. 10), as illustrating the foolish, partial, and short-sighted views of the children of Reuben and Gad. *The Dead Sea was no great distance from these very lands of Jazer and Gilead.* 2. *They acted on the presumption that a man is himself the best judge of his own interests.* They did not stop to consider that if God had meant this territory for them, he would have indicated his meaning in unmistakable fashion. He had made no sign, and this was in itself a proof that he judged their true home to be on the Canaan side of Jordan. It is the highest wisdom of man to wait, in simplicity and humility, on the *indispensable* directions of the All-Wise; even as the mariner finds his position by looking heavenward, and by the aid of the compass confidently finds his path across pathless waters. In an unfamiliar place you can gain no knowledge of the points of the compass by the minutest consideration of terrestrial circumstances, but get a glimpse of the sun and know the time of day, and the information is yours at once. The heavens declare the glory of God in this, that they never mislead us; and the God who made them is like them in ministering to the needs of our spirits. We cannot do without him. Instinct, so kind, so all-helpful to the brute, does little or nothing for us. God made us so that he might guide us with his eye. The great bulk of men act as these children of Reuben and Gad acted. The way of God, with all its real advantages, is yet so unpromising to the carnal eye that few there be who find it. 3. *Especially they had forgotten that the purposes of God were to be the great rule of life to them.* The great multitude of cattle was not theirs, but his. If they had made this proposition with a sense of stewardship in their minds, the proposition might have been not only excusable, but laudable. But the sense of stewardship was the very furthest of all feelings from their hearts. It is a late, a hard, and perhaps always an imperfect discovery, that a man only gains his right position when he manifests the glory of God. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. These people had not risen to the thought of Canaan as being the very best land *simply because it was God's choice.* Their minds were not full of Canaan, but of their own cattle. A great deal depends on our conception of heaven. If we think of it as the place and state where God is all in all, where law and life exactly correspond, and Christ is glorified in the perfection of all his people, then heaven is begun already. Caleb and Joshua had been waiting forty years for the promised land, yet in a certain sense it had been theirs all the time. It was not simple habitation that made Canaan a promised land, else the Canaanites would have been as blessed as the true Israel. Rightful possession, honest spiritual inheritance, these constituted the full and abiding enjoyment of Canaan.—Y.

Vers. 6—15.—*A thorough exposure of a selfish proposition.* I. MOSES APPEALS TO THE SENSE OF SHAME. They had been one nation until now. The suffering of one tribe had been the suffering of all. They had marched in company and fought in company; but now, when Reuben and Gad see what seems the main chance, they say, "We have found what we want, we need go no further." Often the only way of treating selfishness is to make it thoroughly ashamed of itself. If there is no loving sympathy in the heart to be appealed to, we must do our best by appealing to a sense of decency; we must ask the selfish, if they have nothing else to think of, to think a little of their own reputation. It was a very humiliating thing, if only Reuben and Gad had been able to see it, that Moses here made no appeal to high motives. He did not say, "Consider well, for your own sakes, what you propose to do; consider whether you are not seeking a mere present, external, paltry gain, and paving the way for a tremendous loss hereafter." He might so have spoken, but what would

the answer have been? "We are ready to take the risk of that." And so he leaves unasked and undetermined the whole question of what Reuben and Gad's own interest might be. That came up again in due time, as it was bound to do (Josh. xxii.). But there was a question bearing on the welfare of Israel which could not be postponed, and Moses sets it before the two tribes in a very direct way, neither repressing his just indignation nor softening his language. If men persist in taking a course which is hurtful to the real welfare of others, they must be whipped out of it by the readiest available means. There are only too many in the world who will do anything they can get others submissively to tolerate. Seemingly having no conscience of their own to speak of, they are dependent on the indignant, unsparing remonstrances of others. These remonstrances have to supply the place of conscience as best they can.

II. HE POINTS OUT A PROBABLE PERIL TO THE NATION. When an army is advancing to the attack, it is a serious thing if a sixth part of the whole shows signs of desertion and of want of interest in the desired victory. From patriots Reuben and Gad had sunk all at once into mere mercenaries. They had gone with the nation only as long as it seemed their interest to go. They could, without the slightest compunction, leave a great gap in the order of the camp round the tabernacle. They did not stop to consider how their desertion would affect the arrangements of the whole camp. Lukewarm, unspiritual, and self-indulgent Christians—if the name may be allowed where such qualities prevail—little think of the continual hindrances and discouragements they bring to struggling brethren. The Christian life is hard enough when there is the outside world to contend with, but how peculiar and how difficult to surmount are the perils that come from false brethren! Note how Moses bases his fear of this peril *on an actual experience.* If the words of the ten craven-hearted spies drove the whole of Israel into rebellion, and doomed a whole generation to die in the wilderness, then how great a danger was to be feared from the desertion of two whole tribes!

III. HE PLAINLY FIXES THE RISK OF THIS PERIL AND THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT UPON REUBEN AND GAD. It was not open to them to say, "All these gloomy chances that you foreshadow depend on the other tribes. They need not be discouraged. Canaan is just as attractive now as it was before. Our staying here can really make no difference." It is both cowardly and unavailing to try and escape responsibility by insisting on the personal responsibility of others. It is of no use to say that we do not wish others to look on us as leaders. We know that men will do it whether we wish it or not, and the very fact of this knowledge fixes on us a responsibility which we cannot escape. God makes use of this very disposition to follow which is found in human nature for his own gracious purposes. Jesus says, "Follow me." And those who follow him find that some at least become followers of them. If the way in which we are going is a way into which others may be drawn to their ruin, then the way is at once condemned. No amount of individual prosperity, pleasure, and ease can compensate the destruction of others who have perished in a path which they never would have entered but for us. Offences must needs come, but the caution and the appeal remain: "Woe be to him through whom the offence comes." Better for every beast in the herds to perish in Jordan than for the obscurest in all Israel to be prevented from getting into Canaan.—Y.

Vers. 16—32.—*The final arrangement.* I. REUBEN AND GAD DO NOT RESENT THE LANGUAGE OF MOSES. This is all the more noticeable because the language is so strong and humiliating. They seem to admit that his reproaches, his warnings, and his predictions had been only too clearly justified by their conduct. Learn from this that when there is occasion to express righteous anger, one must not begin to take counsel with the shallow maxims of worldly prudence. There is need in the service of God for great common sense, for far more of it than usually finds exercise, but there is no common sense where courage, straightforwardness, and the manly assertion of all Christian principles are absent. It is a very foolish thing to use strong language just by way of liberating the effervescence of the soul. But when strong language is deserved and the occasion demands the utterance of it, then do not spare. Moses might have said to himself, "This is a very ticklish state of affairs; if I do

not humour these people they will certainly act according to their desire, whether I consent or not." Some leaders and so-called skilful managers and tacticians would have humoured Reuben and Gad at such a crisis as this. But it was not for Moses to humour anybody, or trifle with men who were trifling with God. And he had his immediate reward. "They came near unto him" (ver. 16). You can see them almost cringing before Moses, fawning upon him in their eagerness to get their requests. His eye has pierced into their mean hearts, and they know it. They have not one word of defence to offer, not one protest against being so hardly dealt with. Learn then from the example of Moses here, and of Paul on more than one occasion, how to speak out when silence, or, what is worse, delicate picking and choosing of words, involves unfaithfulness to God. We must never be coarse, vindictive, abusive, or spiteful; but if we have a genuine concern for the good of men and the glory of God, he will put as it were his own word into our lips, so controlling language, tone, and features that it will be what his word always is, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

II. BUT THOUGH THEY DO NOT RESENT THE REBUKE OF MOSES, THEY HOLD TO THEIR ORIGINAL PURPOSE. So confident are they that they call this much-coveted land their inheritance. They cannot but feel the probing force of what Moses has said, but they are also quick to notice what he has omitted to say. If they had put their thoughts into speech they would have run somewhat like this: "He has been a shepherd himself, a practical man in flocks and herds, and of course he knows nicely that these lands for which we ask are just the place for our cattle. We shall hold to our choice, though it may involve a little more trouble and delay than we could have wished." Even when men are made to smart under a just, unanswerable rebuke they keep to their darling projects. They do not believe in their hearts, even though Christ says it, that one cannot serve God and mammon. Reuben and Gad mean to try the experiment of living east of Jordan, and yet keeping their place in the unity and the privileges of Israel.

III. THEY PROPOSE A RASH AND DIFFICULT COMPROMISE. The more we consider what they undertook to do, the more also we see their short-sighted policy. Mark *their overweening self-confidence.* They cannot risk the chance—which was indeed no chance at all, but a Divine certainty—of finding suitable pastures in Canaan, but they are quite willing to risk their families and flocks in fenced cities of the land they had chosen. Yet on their own admission fenced cities were no adequate security. The fighting men among them were going across Jordan to help in conquering a land where, as had been reported to their fathers, the cities were walled and very great (ch. xiii. 28). There appears in their resolution a curious mixture of reasonable faith and rash self-confidence. They have learned enough to assure them that Canaan will be conquered, and they are quite ready to believe that in some unaccountable way their own dearest possessions will also be safe. Yet they did not really know how long they were to be absent. It seems to have been several years before they were allowed to return, and when they did return it was not with the unmingled self-congratulations which might have been expected. He who would learn how disastrous their choice turned out in the end must carefully consider Josh. xxii. Most assuredly, whatever Reuben and Gad gained in pastures they more than lost in their permanent isolation from their brethren.—Y.

Ver. 23.—*The eyes of the sinner opened at last.* "Be sure your sin will find you out."

I. THESE WORDS IMPLY THE POSSIBILITY OF SIN BEING COMMITTED. The particular danger in this instance was of breaking a promise. These words of Moses certainly imply a humiliating estimate of the persons addressed, but it must be admitted that the estimate was justified by past experience. Moses cannot quickly accept the promise, for he knows well how hastily and recklessly it is made. There was no occasion to cast any doubt on the sincerity of their words, or to attribute to them a deliberate purpose of deception. But there was everything in impending circumstances to lead them into a broken promise. The promise itself was hastily made. It was made not for its own sake, but under a kind of compulsion, in order to get hold of a much-coveted possession. The fulfilment of it was beset, as Moses well

knew, with difficult conditions, ever tending to increase in difficulty. Moses himself would not be with them across the Jordan, and when he had vanished from the scene, who else was to enforce with equal energy and authority the promise he had extorted? Moreover, the promise had been made on behalf of a heterogeneous crowd. Some of the better sort might be inclined to persevere in keeping it; others might only too readily make it an excuse that their leaders had promised without sufficiently consulting them. The great bulk had already shown themselves to be steeped in selfishness; were they likely then to stick at desertion, if only it could be managed with safety? It is a needful thing, even though it be a painful and humiliating one, *to assert, as Moses did here, the weakness of human nature.* When we form purposes which in themselves show the corruption and depravity of the human heart, we must not complain if we are dealt with in a humiliating fashion. And in our expectations from others we must ever make ready to meet with broken promises. Recollecting our own infirmities, we shall not be surprised at the many and sad consequences which come from the infirmities of our brethren. We should never feel insulted when any one gives us a word of caution against effusive and extravagant promises. He is the wisest Christian who, while he promises least in the hearing of his fellow-men, is ever striving to carry out in practice, and to its fullest extent, all that his heart would lead him to perform.

II. THESE WORDS ALSO AFFIRM THE CERTAINTY THAT IF SIN IS COMMITTED THE SINNER WILL AT LAST BE MADE FULLY CONSCIOUS OF HIS SIN. There was much, as we have seen, to lead Reuben and Gad to break their promise. In addition to what has already been mentioned, there was this as a possible consideration—that they might be able to break the promise with impunity. Indeed, from this solemn warning of Moses we may infer that he looked upon some such thought as likely to gain dominion in their minds. When the time of difficulty and sore temptation came they might argue thus: "If we do return, who is to mark our return or hinder it? The other tribes (perhaps hard beset in their conflict with the Canaanites) can do nothing against us. Moses is gone." They may have had it in their thoughts, after making the promise, that it would be enough to cross the river, wish their brethren God-speed, and then return. "They will understand our position, and not be so hard on us as Moses is. If they are willing that we should just go across, and then return, what can there be to make complaint about?" But Moses evidently meant them to keep their promise to the full. To break it was not only unbrotherly and ungrateful to the other tribes who had done so much for them; it was, he says with great emphasis, a sin against God, and in due time it would come back to them revealed as such, with all its dreadful consequences. 1. *We have a timely warning to those who are entering the paths of sin.* As it is true that God would have those who in their young enthusiasm and devotion propose to enter his service to consider well what it is that he asks, so it is equally true that he would have those who are beginning a life of sin to consider well what the end will be. These are the words of an *old and long-observant man, one who had lived unusually near to God.* They are spoken out of the fulness of his experience. He had seen sin revealed in all its enormity, and punished with the utmost severity. There must needs be in this world thousands of undetected crimes, thousands of accused persons acquitted not because they are innocent, but for lack of legal evidence. These failures come from the infirmities of men; but be sure of this, that they are failures only so far as men are concerned; not one evil-doer can escape God, though he may enjoy the pleasures and immunities of sin for a season. Sin may seem not to find men out while they are here, but it will be time enough by and by. Men must not despise the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God as if he were heedless of all their doings. The dresser of the vineyard who begged another year's reprieve for the fruitless fig-tree had marked its fruitlessness and anticipated its doom just as much as the man who owned the vineyard. We cannot too often recollect that the eye of God is on every unprofitable tree. The axe is laid to its roots, ready for use, if the use be compelled. 2. *We have here a great comfort and stay to the people of God.* The foolish, wicked man, making his proud and careless advances, says, "Doth God see?" Our answer, made not so much to him as to our own hearts, is, "God does see." He sees every sinner in his course, his doom, *and the opening of his eyes at last.* How

many there are in the world whom we feel sure to be wrong! We cannot, try as we may, feel anything else; we cannot but believe them to be villains at heart, veneered and varnished up with a show of religion and goodness to impose on the simple-minded. But to give free utterance to our thoughts would be counted uncharitable and censorious, and assuming to be better than other men. What a comfort then to feel that what we cannot do God will do at last! The wolf will be utterly stripped of all his sheep's clothing, after all his gormandising and the warm, snug life he has lived so long; he will stand revealed in his true character, and become a gaunt, starving creature with all his opportunities of rapacity gone. "Found out at last" will be written on all those vain pretenders to a good and honourable life who at present fume and bluster and look unspeakably grieved when any of their actions are questioned in the slightest degree. And this, recollect, will be the crown of all other discoveries, that *the sin of sinners will be made clear and unquestionable in their own eyes.* 3. The practical lesson for you, O sinner, is, that *instead of waiting for sin to find you out, you should try with all energy and expedition to find sin out.* You know that though the Scriptures are full of references to it, there are, nevertheless, the greatest misapprehensions with respect to it. What a terrible thing it is to mock God by an outward and conventional confession of sin, and then go away to sin as much as before! It is one thing to join the customary crowd in saying, "We have sinned;" quite another to have an individual, searching, agonising experience such as we find in Ps. li. Find out what sin is, its reality, its magnitude, and how it stands behind all secondary causes of misery, almost as a great first cause. Find it out as dwelling deep-seated in your own heart, baneful beyond all imagination, spoiling the present life, and threatening the life to come.

Before passing from the consideration of this request from these two tribes, it is very noticeable that they kept their promise. When the time came for them to return to Jazer and Gilead, Joshua spoke to them in a very complimentary way (Josh. xxii.). Did this fulfilment show that the word of Moses had been constantly in their minds? Possibly his word had weight with some, but in all probability the miraculous discovery of Achan's guilt, and his terrible doom, had much more connection with the persistence of Reuben and Gad in keeping their promise. They doubtless saw very clearly that steady and patient obedience was the only way of escaping something like Achan's fate.—Y.

Ver. 42.—*Nobah—the man and the place.* This proceeding on the part of Nobah suggests a good deal of speculation as to the character, purposes, and actual achievements of the man. Concerning the children of Reuben, we are simply told in general terms that they gave names to the cities they builded (ver. 38). Jair, the son of Manasseh, gave to the small towns of Gilead the name of Havoth-Jair, which seems to be a general indication of them as being the property of Jair. Then in the last verse of the chapter we come to a kind of climax as we read that Nobah boldly called by his own name the district he had gained. What did he mean by this? Perhaps it was *for the sake of a fancied security.* The rigorous, inexorable demands of Moses were going to take him away, he knew not how long, and he may have reckoned that giving his name to his property before he went would be an excellent plan to guard himself against covetous and unscrupulous neighbours. How suspicious of one another selfish people are! When we busy ourselves laying up treasures on earth instead of in heaven, we have to use all sorts of schemes and devices in order to gain a security which in the end proves to be no security at all. Or Nobah may have been a man *full of personal ambition.* David tells us, in strains half-pitying, half-despising, of those infatuated, purse-proud grandees who call their lands after their own names (Ps. xlix. 11). From this we may infer that Nobah was not alone in his folly. Very possibly the name took root and lasted for generations; but even supposing it did, who in after days would trouble himself concerning the man Nobah? Calling a town or a street after a man will do nothing to preserve his memory if the man himself has been nothing more than a plutocrat. But if the man himself, by deeds and character, becomes memorable and glorious, then his birth-place and dwelling-place, however mean they otherwise may be, share in the glory of the man. How many obscure hamlets have thus become dignified in history,

and chief among them stand Bethlehem, the little one among the thousands of Judah, and Nazareth, the mean, secluded village in the highlands of Galilee. "This place, dearest to the Christian heart of all on earth except Jerusalem, is not mentioned in the Old Testament, nor even by Josephus, who was himself on every side of it, and names the villages all about it, but seems yet totally ignorant of its existence."—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ITINERARY OF THE WANDERINGS (vers. 1—49). Ver. 1.—**These are the journeys.** The Hebrew word מַסָּעָי is rendered σταθμοί by the Septuagint, which means "stages" or "stations." It is, however, quite rightly translated "journeys," for it is the act of setting out and marching from such a place to such another which the word properly denotes (cf. Gen. xiii. 3; Deut. x. 11).

Ver. 2.—**And Moses wrote their goings out** (מוֹצָאָם. Septuagint, ἀπάρσεις) **according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord.** The latter clause (עַל־פִּי יְהוָה) may be taken as equivalent to an adjective qualifying the noun "goings out," signifying only that their marches were made under the orders of God himself. It is more natural to read it with the verb "wrote;" and in that case we have a direct assertion that Moses wrote this list of marches himself by command of God, doubtless as a memorial not only of historical interest, but of deep religious significance, as showing how Israel had been led by him who is faithful and true—faithful in keeping his promise, true in fulfilling his word for good or for evil. The direct statement that Moses wrote this list himself is strongly corroborated by internal evidence, and has been accepted as substantially true by the most destructive critics. No conceivable inducement could have existed to invent a list of marches which only partially corresponds with the historical account, and can only with difficulty be reconciled with it—a list which contains many names nowhere else occurring, and having no associations for the later Israelites. Whether the statement thus introduced tells in favour of the Mosaic authorship (as usually accepted) of the rest of the Book is a very different matter, on which see the Introduction.

Ver. 3.—**They departed from Rameses.** Hebrew, Raemses. See on Exod. i. 11; xii. 37. The brief description here given of the departure from Egypt touches upon every material circumstance as related at large in Exod. xi., xii. **In the sight of all the Egyptians.** The journey was begun by night (Exod. xii. 42), but was of course continued on the following day.

Ver. 4.—**Buried all their first-born, which the Lord had smitten among them.** Literally, "were burying (Septuagint, ἔθαπτον) those whom the Lord had smitten among them, viz., all the first-born." The fact that the Egyptians were so universally employed about the funeral rites of their first-born—rites to which they paid such extreme attention—seems to be mentioned here as supplying one reason at least why the Israelites began their outward march without opposition. It is in perfect accordance with what we know of the Egyptians, that all other passions and interests should give place for the time to the necessary care for the departed. **Upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments.** See on Exod. xii. 12, and cf. Isa. xix. 1. The false deities of Egypt, having no existence except in the imaginations of men, could only be affected within the sphere of those imaginations, *i. e.* by being made contemptible in the eyes of those who feared them.

Ver. 6.—**Etham.** See on Exod. xiii. 20.

Ver. 7.—**Pi-hahiroth.** Hebrew, "Hahiroth," without the prefix. See on Exod. xiv. 2.

Ver. 8.—**In the wilderness of Etham.** This is called the wilderness of Shur in Exod. xv. 22, nor is it easy to explain the occurrence of the name Etham in this connection, for the Etham mentioned in ver. 6 lay on the other side of the Red Sea. We do not, however, know what physical changes have taken place since that time, and it is quite possible that at Etham there may have been a ford, or some other easy means of communication, so that the strip of desert along the opposite shore came to be known as the wilderness of Etham.

Ver. 9.—**Elim.** See on Exod. xv. 27.

Ver. 10.—**Encamped by the Red Sea.** This encampment, like those at Dophkah and at Alush (ver. 13), is not mentioned in the narrative of Exodus. The phraseology, however, used in Exod. xvi. 1; xvii. 1 leaves abundant room for intermediate halting-places, at which it is to be presumed that nothing very noteworthy happened Nothing whatever is known of these three stations.

Ver. 15.—**The wilderness of Sinai.** See on Exod. xix. 1.

Ver. 17.—**Kibroth-hattaavah . . Hazeroth.** See on ch. xi. 34, 35.

Ver. 18.—**Rithmah.** Comparing this verse with ch. xii. 16 and xiii. 26, it would appear

as if Rithmah were the station "in the wilderness of Paran" from which the spies went up, and to which they returned—a station subsequently known by the name of Kadesh. There are two difficulties in the way of this identification. In the first place we should then only have three names of stations between Sinai and the southern border of Palestine, on what is at least eleven days' journey. This is, however, confessedly the case in the historical narrative, and it admits of explanation. We know that the first journey was a three days' journey (ch. x. 33), and the others may have been longer still, through a country which presented no facilities for encamping, and possessed no variety of natural features. In the second place, Rithmah is not Kadesh, and cannot be connected with Kadesh except through a doubtful identification with the Wady Retemât in the neighbourhood of Ain Kudes (see note at end of ch. xiii.). It is, however, evident from ch. xii. 16, as compared with ch. xiii. 26, that Kadesh was not the name originally given to the encampment "in the wilderness of Paran." It seems to have got that name—perhaps owing to some popular feeling with respect to an ancient sanctuary, perhaps owing to some partial shifting of the camp—during the absence of the spies. Rithmah, therefore, may well have been the official name (so to speak) originally given to the encampment, but subsequently superseded by the more famous name of Kadesh; this would explain both its non-appearance in the narrative of Numbers, and its appearance in the Itinerary here.

Ver. 19.—**Rimmon-parez.** The latter part of the name is the same as *parats* or *perets*, which commonly signifies a breaking out of Divine anger. This place may possibly have been the scene of the events related in chs. xvi., xvii., but the Targum of Palestine connects them with Kehelathah.

Ver. 20.—**Libnah.** Hebrew לִבְנָה ("whiteness") may perhaps be the same as the Laban (לָבָן, "white") mentioned in Deut. i. 1. So many places, however, in that region are distinguished by the dazzling whiteness of their limestone cliffs that the identification is quite uncertain. The site of this, as of the next eight stations, is indeed utterly unknown; and the guesses which are founded on the partial and probably accidental similarity of some modern names (themselves differently pronounced by different travellers) are utterly worthless. Of these eight names, Kehelathah and Makheloth seem to be derived from קָהָל, "an assembling," and thus give some slight support to the supposition that during the thirty-eight years the people were scattered abroad, and only assembled from time to time in one place. Rissah is variously interpreted "heap of ruins," or "dew;" Shapher means "fair," or "splendid;" Haradah, or Charadah, is "terror," or "trembling" (cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 15); Tahath is a "going down," or "depression;" Tarah is "turning," or "delay;" Mithcah signifies "sweetness," and may be compared (in an opposite sense) to Marah.

Ver. 30.—**Hashmonah.** This is possibly the Heshmon of Josh. xv. 27, since this was one of the "uttermost cities . . toward the coast of Edom, southward." The name, however ("fruitfulness"), was probably common on the edge of the desert. **Moseroth.** This is simply the plural form of Moserah ("chastisement"), and is no doubt the place so called in Deut. x. 6 (see note at end of chapter).

Ver. 31.—**Bene-Jaakan.** The full name is given in Deut. x. 6 as Beeroth-beni-Jaakan, "the wells of the children of Jaakan." Jaakan, or Akan, was a grandson of Seir, the legendary tribe father of the Horites of Mount Seir (Gen. xxxvi. 20, 27; 1 Chron. i. 42). The wells of the Beni-Jaakan may well have retained their name long after their original owners had been dispossessed; or a remnant of the tribe may have held together until this time.

Ver. 32.—**Hor-ha-gidgad.** The MSS. and Versions are divided between Chor ("cave") and Hor ("summit," or "mountain"). Gidgad is no doubt the Gudgodah of Deut. x. 7.

Ver. 33.—**Jotbathah.** The meaning of this name, which is apparently "excellent," is explained by the note in Deut. x. 7 "Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters." It would be difficult to find such a land now in the neighbourhood of the Arabah, but there are still running streams in some of the wadys which open into the Arabah towards its southern end.

Ver. 34.—**Ebronah,** or "Abronah," a "beach," or "passage," called "the Fords" by the Targum of Palestine. It is conjectured that it lay below Ezion-geber, just opposite to Elath, with which place it may have been connected by a ford at low tide, but this is quite uncertain.

Ver. 35.—**Ezion-gaber,** or rather "Etsion-geber," the "giant's backbone." This can hardly be other than the place mentioned in 1 Kings ix. 26; 2 Chron. viii. 17 as the harbour of King Solomon's merchant navy. At this later date it was at the head of the navigable waters of the Elanitic Gulf, but considerable changes have taken place in the shore line since the age of Solomon, and no doubt similar changes took place before. It was known to, and at times occupied by, the Egyptians, and the wretched village which occupies the site is still called Aszium by the

Arabs. The name itself would seem to be due to some peculiar rock formation—probably the serrated crest either of a neighbouring mountain or of a half-submerged reef.

Ver. 36.—**The wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh.** See on ch. xx. 1.

Ver. 37.—**Mount Hor.** See on ch. xx. 22.

Ver. 38.—**In the fortieth year, . . in the first day of the fifth month.** This is the only place where the date of Aaron's death is given. It is in strict accordance with the Divine intimation that Israel was to wander forty years in the wilderness (ch. xiv. 33, 34), that period being understood, according to the usual mercy of God, which shortens the days of evil, to include the time already spent in the wilderness.

Ver. 39.—**An hundred and twenty and three years old.** He had been eighty-three years old when he first stood before Pharaoh, forty years before (Exod. vii. 7).

Ver. 40.—**And king Arad . . heard of the coming.** See on ch. xxi. 1. The introduction of this notice, for which there seems no motive, and which has no assignable connection with the context, is extremely perplexing. It is not simply a fragment which has slipped in by what we call accident (like Deut. x. 6, 7), for the longer statement in ch. xxi. 1—3 occupies the same position in the historical narrative immediately after the death of Aaron. It is difficult to suppose that Moses wrote this verse and left it as it stands; it would rather seem as if a later hand had begun to copy out a statement from some earlier document—in which it had itself perhaps become misplaced—and had not gone on with it.

Ver. 41.—**Zalmonah.** This place is not elsewhere mentioned, and cannot be identified. Either this or Punon may be the encampment where the brazen serpent was set up; according to the Targum of Palestine it was the latter.

Ver. 42.—**Punon.** Perhaps connected with the Pinon of Gen. xxxvi. 41. The Septuagint has Φινώ, and it is identified by Eusebius and Jerome with Phæno, a place between Petra and Zoar where convicts were sent to labour in the mines. Probably, however, the march of the Israelites lay further to the east, inasmuch as they scrupulously abstained from trespassing upon Edom.

Ver. 44.—**Oboth, . . Ije-abarim.** See on ch. xxi. 11.

Ver. 45.—**Dibon-gad.** This encampment may have been the same as that previously called by the name of Nahaliel or Bamoth (ch. xxi. 19, and see on xxxiii. 34). Several stages are here passed over in the Itinerary. At a time when the conquest and partial occupation of large districts was going on, it would be hard to say what regular stages were made by the host as such (see note at end of chapter).

Ver. 46.—**Almon-diblathaim.** Probably the same as the Beth-diblathaim mentioned in Jer. xlviii. 22 as a Moabitish town contiguous to Dibon, Nebo, and Kiriathaim. The name, which signifies "hiding-place of the two circles" or "cakes," was doubtless due either to some local legend, or more probably to the fanciful interpretation of some peculiar feature in the landscape.

Ver. 47.—**The mountains of Abarim, before Nebo.** The same locality is called "the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward the waste," in ch. xxi. 20 (see note there, and at ch. xxvii. 12). Nebo is the name of a town here, as in ch. xxxii. 3, 38, and in the later books; in Deut. (xxxii. 49; xxxiv. 1) it is the name of the mountain, here included in the general designation Abarim.

Ver. 48.—**In the plains of Moab.** See on ch. xxii. 1.

Ver. 49.—**From Beth-jesimoth even unto Abel-shittim.** Beth-jesimoth, "house of the wastes," must have been very near the point where Jordan empties itself into the Dead Sea, on the verge of the salt desert which bounds that sea on the east. It formed the boundary of Sihon's kingdom at the south-west corner. Abel-shittim, "meadow of acacias," is better known by the abbreviated name "Shittim" (ch. xxv. 1; Micah vi. 5). Its exact site cannot be recovered, but the Talmud states that it was twelve miles north of the Jordan mouth. Probably the centre of the camp was opposite to the great fords, and the road leading to Jericho.

NOTE ON THE TWO LISTS OF STATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND THE JORDAN.

There can be no question that the chief interest of the Itinerary here given is due to its literary character as a document containing elements at least of extreme and unquestioned antiquity. At the same time it is a matter of some importance to compare it with the history as given at large in Exodus and Numbers, and to note carefully the points of contact and divergence. It is evident at first sight that no pains have been taken to make the two lists of stages agree, each list containing several names which the other lacks, and (in some cases) each having a name of its own for what appears to be the same place. With respect to the latter point, the explanation usually given seems quite natural and satisfactory: the names were in many cases given by the Israelites themselves, and in others were derived from some small local peculiarity, or belonged to insignificant hamlets, so that the same encampment may very well have received one name in the official record of the movements of the tabernacle, and retained another in the popular recollection of the march. With respect to the former point, it may fairly be argued that the narrative only records as a rule the names of places where something memorable occurred, and indeed does not always mention the place even then, while the Itinerary is simply concerned with the consecutive encampments as such. It would be more correct to say that the narrative is essentially fragmentary, and does not purport to record more than certain incidents of the wanderings.

We have, therefore, no difficulty in understanding why the Itinerary gives us the names of three stations between Egypt and Mount Sinai not mentioned in Exodus. There is much more difficulty with the ensuing notices, because the name of Kadesh only occurs once in the list, whereas it is absolutely necessary, in order to bring the narrative into any chronological sequence, to assume (what the narrative itself pretty clearly intimates) that there were two encampments at Kadesh, separated by an interval of more than thirty-eight years. It has accordingly been very generally agreed that the Rithmah of the Itinerary is identical with the nameless station "in the wilderness of Paran," afterwards called Kadesh in the narrative. This is of course an assumption which has only probabilities to support it, but it may fairly be said that there is nothing against it. The *retem*, or broom, is so common that it must have given a name to many different spots—a name too common, and possessing too few associations, to stand its ground in popular remembrance against any rival name (see note on ver. 18). It has been argued by some that the whole of the twenty-one stages enumerated in vers. 16—35 were made on the one journey from Sinai to Kadesh; and as far as the mere number goes there is nothing improbable in the supposition; the "eleven days" of Deut. i. 2 are no doubt the days of ordinary travellers, not of women and children, flocks and herds. It is true that the supposition is commonly connected with a theory which throws the whole historical narrative into confusion, viz., that Israel spent only two years intead of forty in the wilderness; but that need not cause its rejection, for the whole thirty-eight may be intercalated between ver. 36 and ver. 37 of the Itinerary, and we could explain a total silence concerning the wanderings of those years better than we can the mention of (only) seventeen stations. The only serious difficulty is presented by the name Ezion-geber, which it is very difficult not to identify with the place of that name, so well known afterwards, at the head of the Elanitic Gulf; for it is impossible to find the last stage towards Kadesh at a spot as near to Sinai as to any of the supposed sites of Kadesh.

It is of course possible that more than one place was known as the "giant's backbone;" but, on the other hand, the fact that at Moseroth Israel was near Mount Hor, and that they made five marches thence to Ezion-geber, is quite in accordance with the site usually assigned to it. It must remain, therefore, an unsettled point as to which nothing more can be said than that a balance of probabilities is in favour of the identification of Rithmah with the first encampment at Kadesh. Proceeding on this assumption, we have thereafter eleven names of stations concerning which nothing is known, and nothing can be with any profit conjectured. Then come four others which are evidently the same as those mentioned in Deut. x. 6, 7. That this latter passage is a fragment which has come into its present position (humanly speaking) by some accident of transcription does not admit of serious debate; but it is evidently a fragment of some ancient document, possibly of the very Itinerary of which we have only an abbreviation here. Comparing the two, we are met at once with the difficulty that Aaron is said to have died and been buried at Moserah, whereas, according to the narrative and the Itinerary, he died on Mount Hor during the last journey from Kadesh. This is not unnaturally explained by assuming that the official name of the encampment under, or opposite to, Mount Hor, from which Aaron ascended the mountain to die, was Moserah or Moseroth, and that the Israelites were twice encamped there—once on their way to Ezion-geber and back to Kadesh, and again on the last march round Edom, to which the fragment in Deut. refers. There remain, however, unexplained the singular facts—1. That the station where Aaron died is called Moserah in Deut. x. 6, whereas it is called Mount Hor not only in the narrative, but in the Itinerary, which nevertheless does give the name Moseroth to this very station when occupied on a previous occasion. 2. That the fragment gives Bene-Jaakan, Moseroth, Gudgod, and Jotbath as stages on the last journey, whereas the Itinerary gives them (the order of the first two being inverted) as stages on a previous journey, and gives other names for the encampments of the last journey. There is no doubt room for all four, and more besides, between Mount Hor and Oboth; but it cannot be denied that there is an appearance of error either in the fragment or in the Itinerary.

A further objection has been made to the statement that Israel marched from Ezion-geber to Kadesh, both on the score of distance and of the apparent absurdity of returning to Kadesh only to retrace their steps once more. It is replied (1) that the return to Kadesh for the final move may have been hurried, and no regular encampment pitched; (2) that when Israel returned to Kadesh it was still in expectation of entering Canaan "by the way of the spies," and in ignorance that they would have to treat with Edom for a passage—much more that they would have to come down the Arabah once again.

Lastly, with respect to the names which occur after Ije-abarim, we have again an almost total want of coincidence with this peculiarity, that the narrative gives seven names where the Itinerary only gives three. It must, however, be remembered that the whole distance from the brook of Arnon, where the Israelites crossed it, to the Arboth Moab is only thirty miles in a straight line. Over this short distance it is quite likely that the armies of Israel moved in lines more or less parallel, the tabernacle probably only shifting its place as the general advance made it desirable. That the two accounts are based on different documents, or drawn from different sources, is likely enough; but both may nevertheless be equally correct. If (as regards the last march) one record was kept by Eleazar, and another by Joshua, the apparent disagreement may be readily explained.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—49.—*The journey home.* We have here a brief summary of the stages by which Israel travelled onwards from Egypt to Canaan; spiritually, therefore, we have an epitome of the Church's progress, or of the progress of a soul, through this world to the world to come. Hence it follows that all the lessons, encouragements, and warnings which belong to these forty years weave themselves about this Itinerary, which might to the careless eye seem a bare list of names. "Per has (mansiones) currit verus Hebræus, qui de terrâ transire festinat ad cœlum," says Jerome. And in this connection it can hardly be an accident that as there are forty-two stations in this list, so there are forty-two generations in the first Gospel from Abraham (the starting-point of the faithful) to Christ (in whom they find rest). And, again, it may be more than a coincidence that the woman in the Apocalypse who represents the Church militant (Rev. xii.) was in the wilderness forty-two months. In all three cases (as certainly in the last) it is likely that the number forty-two was designedly chosen because it is $12 \times 3\frac{1}{2}$, and $3\frac{1}{2}$, or the half of 7, is the number which expresses trial, probation, and imperfection. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THIS ITINERARY WAS WRITTEN "BY THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD," NO DOUBT AS A MEMORIAL UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OF THEIR TRIALS AND OF HIS FAITHFULNESS. Even so it is the will of God that every Church and every soul should keep in memory the stages of its own spiritual progress, for these are full of holy memories and needful lessons, all being eloquent of our own insufficiency and of his goodness. No one, being in plenty and at rest, should ever forget the straitness and the trial through which the good hand of God hath led him.

II. THAT THE TWO ENDS OF THIS ITINERARY ARE PLAINLY FIXED, THE ONE IN THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT "AFTER THE PASSOVER," THE OTHER ON THE VERGE OF JORDAN IN FULL VIEW OF CANAAN. Even so all spiritual life histories begin with the redemption from bondage through the blood of the Lamb, and end with the sure hope of immortality on the verge of the river of death.

III. THAT THE INTERMEDIATE STAGES ARE TO A GREAT EXTENT UNCERTAIN, SOME QUITE UNKNOWN, AND OTHERS MATTER OF DISPUTE. Even so, while we know whence all Christian progress leads men at the first, and whither it brings men at the last, yet the intermediate course (sometimes a very long one) is for the most part strangely indiscernible, its points of contact with the outer world having little meaning or interest save for the travellers themselves. Just as maps help us little to follow the forty-two stages, so do religious theories give us small assistance in tracing the actual course of a soul through the trials and perplexities of real life.

IV. THAT WITH EXCEPTION OF THE BEGINNING AND THE END, THE ONLY FIXED POINTS IN THE ITINERARY ARE SINAI, KADESH, AND HOR—WHERE THE LAW WAS GIVEN, WHERE PROGRESS WAS RESUMED AFTER LONG DRIFTING TO AND FRO, WHERE AARON DIED. Even so there are in the history of most souls these three conspicuous epochs to be noted: (1) where the obligation to obey the higher law of God's will came upon them; (2) where after much drawing back and consequent failure a new call to advance was heard; (3) where the old outward associations, upon which they had all along leaned, failed them, and yet left them none the weaker.

V. THAT THE FEW NOTES OF EVENTS APPENDED TO CERTAIN NAMES OF PLACES (ELIM, REPHIDIM, HOR) SEEM TO BE SELECTED ARBITRARILY. Some other places certainly had, and many others probably had, more interesting associations for the Israelites. Even so it is not only or chiefly those passages which attract attention and secure comment in the history of a Church or of a soul which are of deep interest and profound importance to itself; names and facts which have no associations for others may for it be full of the deepest meaning.

And note that all the stations named in this list have their own signification in the Hebrew, but the spiritual teaching founded on such signification is too arbitrary and fanciful to be seriously dealt with.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—49.—*The journeyings of the Israelites.* Reading through this record, which looks, on the first appearance of it, much like a page from a gazetteer, we are made to feel—

I. HOW LITTLE WE SHOULD KNOW OF THE EXPERIENCES OF ISRAEL IN THEIR WANDERINGS IF WE HAD BEEN TOLD NO MORE THAN THIS. A period of forty years has to be covered; and though by one kind of narration it takes four books, full of solemnity and variety, abounding in matters of stirring interest, and often going into the minutest detail, in order to indicate sufficiently the events of the period, yet by another kind of narration the period can be comprised in forty-nine short verses. All the way through these verses it is assumed that a particular aspect of the course of Israel is being presented, and that a full, edifying, and satisfying narrative is to be sought elsewhere. Consider what great omissions there are. We do indeed see something of the manner of starting, but even here there is hardly anything to explain how Israel came to leave Egypt. It is said that they passed through the midst of the sea, but nothing is said of the wonderful and glorious manner in which the passage was effected. There is nothing of all the law-giving at Sinai; nothing of the tabernacle, the ark, the offerings, and the priestly office; nothing of the great manna mercies; nothing even of the cloud and trumpets, though they had so much to do with the journeys; nothing of the rebellion which was the great cause of this long wandering. If it was a mere record of places we could better understand it, but there are just enough of additional matters introduced to perplex us as to why some are inserted and others omitted. How clear it becomes, in the light of an artless record like this, that we shall err if we allow ourselves to look too constantly on the books of the Old Testament as being the literature, the classic literature, of the Hebrews! That they are literature is of course true, but it is so small a part of the truth concerning them, that if we allow it to become too prominent, it will hide much more important truth. Moses was evidently not a man to care about the niceties and elaborations so dear to fastidious writers. His hands were too full of guiding and governing. If what he wrote was written in a way to glorify God, that was sufficient. We find in the Pentateuch not history, but the rough, yet authentic and unspeakably precious, materials of history. A man with the requisite interest and knowledge may analyse, select, and combine these materials into a history from his own point of view, but thanks be to God that he took a meek, humble, and unselfish Moses, who had no views of his own to assert, and who thought of no *monumentum ære perennius*, and made him his pen to write something a great deal more important than the history of any nation, namely, the dealings of God with his own typical people, and through them with the world at large.

II. Though this is such a brief and apparently artless record, little more than a copy of names from a map, yet HOW MUCH IT WOULD TELL US, EVEN IF WE HAD BEEN TOLD NO MORE. If this were but the sole surviving fragment of the four books, it would nevertheless indicate the presence of God, and that in very remarkable ways. It would indicate *the authority of Jehovah over Israel.* Moses and Aaron are spoken of as the leaders of Israel (ver. 1), yet only leaders under God; for Moses wrote this very record at the commandment of God (ver. 2), and Aaron went up into Mount Hor to die at the commandment of God (ver. 38). We should also learn something of *the punitive power of God.* We should feel ourselves in the presence of some terrible sin, some terrible suffering, and some crowning blow which had come upon Egypt. We should learn that God was *able to vindicate his majesty and glory against the arrogance of idolatry* (ver. 4). We should learn that human life was at the sovereign disposal of God, for he controls the death of the first-born and the death of Aaron. And from what we thus plainly see of God's presence in certain places, we might infer that he was also in the places where we see him not. We might infer that if he was in the midst of the Israelites when they left Egypt, and in their midst forty years after, then he must have been with them all the time between. Thus, though in these forty-nine verses we are told nothing whatever, in *a plain, direct way, of human character*, we are yet brought face to face with very suggestive intimations

concerning *the character of God.* From the human point of view the record is indeed a very barren one; but this only helps to show how when man becomes scarcely visible, unless as a mere wanderer, the glory of God shines brilliantly as ever.

III. We have thus tried to imagine this passage as being the sole surviving fragment of the four books which deal with the wanderings. But we know in reality that it is only a sort of appendix to the record of notable and solemn proceedings already given. It may even seem as if it would not have been much missed if it had been left out. As we think over it, however, we become conscious that A DISTINCT AND PECULIAR IMPRESSION IS BEING PRODUCED ON OUR MINDS. Reading through the Book of Numbers, we wander with Israel from the day they leave Sinai down to the day they enter the plains of Moab by Jordan; and now in this passage we are all at once lifted as it were into an exceeding high mountain, and get a bird's-eye view of *the wandering, shifting life of Israel during these forty years.* It is well to be brought face to face with something that will remind us of the shifting character of human life. Even the lives that seem most stationary, as far as local circumstances are concerned, are full of change. It is not because a man is born, lives, and dies in one locality, perhaps even in one house, that his life is to be reckoned a settled one. Wherever we are, however rooted and grounded in appearance, we see one generation going and another coming, ourselves being a part of what we see. Here, in the record of these journeyings, was something true *for all Israel;* Moses and Aaron were brought down to the same level with the humblest of their followers. There are certain necessary outlines of change in the course of every human being who lives to the allotted term—birth, unconscious infancy, the common influences of childhood, the time to choose a temporal occupation, the day when father dies and when mother dies, the dropping away of kindred, companions, and friends, and so on till death comes at last. There is so much of life lived and so much of biography written under the fascinating glamour of mere mundane interests, that it is a good thing to go where, along with God himself, we may look down on the changing scenes of earth from the dwarfing and humbling heights of eternity. There is a time to listen to the botanist and the expert in vegetable physiology, while they discourse to us on the wonders of the leaf; there is a time to see what the painter can do with it, and what the poet; but from all these we must turn at last to God's own Isaiah, and hear him drawing out the great final lesson, "We all do fade as a leaf."—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE CLEARANCE, THE BOUNDARIES, AND THE ALLOTMENT OF CANAAN (ch. xxxiii. 50—xxxiv. 29). Ver. 50.—**And the Lord spake.** It is quite obvious that a new section begins here, closely connected, not with the Itinerary which precedes it, but with the delimitation which follows. The formula which introduces the present command is repeated in ch. xxxv. 1, and again in the last verse of ch. xxxvi., thus giving a character of its own to this concluding portion of the Book, and to some extent isolating it from the rest.

Ver. 51.—**When ye are passed over Jordan.** Previous legislation had anticipated the time when they should have come into their own land (cf. ch. xv. 2; Levit. xxiii. 10), but now the crossing of the river is spoken of as the last step on their journey home.

Ver. 52.—**Ye shall drive out.** The Hebrew word (from יָרַשׁ) is the same which is translated "dispossess" in the next verse. The Septuagint has in both cases *ἀπολεῖτε,* supplying (like the A. V.) the word "inhabitants" in ver. 53. The Hebrew word, however, seems to have much the same sense as the English phrase "clear out," and is, therefore, equally applied to the land and the occupants of it. No doubt it implies extermination as a necessary condition of the clearance. **Their pictures.** מַשְׂכִּיֹּתָם. Septuagint, *τὰς σκοπιὰς αὐτῶν* (their outlooks, or high places). The Targums of Onkelos and Palestine have "the houses of their worship;" the Targum of Jerusalem has "their idols." The same word occurs in Levit. xxvi. 1, in the phrase אֶבֶן מַשְׂכִּית, which is usually rendered "a stone image," *i. e.* a stone shaped into some likeness of man. If so, מַשְׂכִּית by itself has probably the same meaning; at any rate it can hardly be "a picture," nor is there the least evidence that the art of painting was at all practised among the rude tribes of Canaan. The same word, *maskith,* is indeed found in Ezek. viii. 12 in connection with "gravings"

(from חָקַק; cf. Isa. xxii. 16; xlix. 16 with Ezek. iv. 1; xxiii. 14) on a wall; but even this belonged to a very different age.

Their molten images. צַלְמֵי מַסֵּכֹתָם, "images cast of brass." Septuagint, *τὰ εἴδωλα τὰ χωνευτά*. The word *tselem* is only elsewhere used in the Pentateuch for that "likeness" which is reproduced in Divine creation (Gen. i. 26, 27; ix. 6) or in human generation (Gen. v. 3); in the later books, however (especially in Daniel), it is freely used for idols. On "*massekah*" see on Exod. xxxii. 4; Isa. xxx. 22. **Their high places.** בָּמוֹתָם. See on Levit. xxvi. 30. The Septuagint translates Bamoth in both places by *σπήλαι*, and of course it was not the high places themselves, which were simply certain prominent elevations, but the monuments (of whatever kind) which superstition had erected upon them, which were to be plucked down. As a fact, it would seem that the Jews, instead of obeying this command, appropriated the Bamoth to their own religious uses (cf. 1 Sam. ix. 12; 1 Kings iii. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 58, &c.). The natural result was, as in all similar cases, that not only the Bamoth, but very many of the superstitions and idolatries connected with them, were taken over into the service of the Lord.

Ver. 53.—**I have given you the land.** "The earth is the Lord's," and no one, therefore, can dispute his right in the abstract to evict any of his tenants and to put others in possession. But while the whole earth was the Lord's, it is clear that he assumed a special relation towards the land of Canaan, as to which he chose to exercise directly the rights and duties of landlord (see on Deut. xxii. 8 for a small but striking instance). The first duty of a landlord is to see that the occupancy of his property is not abused for illegal or immoral ends; and this duty excuses, because it necessitates, eviction under certain circumstances. It is not, therefore, necessary to argue that the Canaanites were more infamous than many others; it is enough to remember that God had assumed towards the land which they occupied (apparently by conquest) a relation which did not allow him to overlook their enormities, as he might those of other nations (see on Exod. xxiii. 23—33; xxxiv. 11—17, and cf. Acts xiv. 16; xvii. 30). It was (if we like to put it so) the misfortune of the Canaanites that they alone of "all nations" could not be suffered to "walk in their own ways," because they had settled in a land which the Lord had chosen to administer directly as his own earthly kingdom.

Ver. 54.—**Ye shall divide the land by lot.** These directions are repeated in substance from ch. xxvi. 53—56. **Every man's inheritance.** Not only the tribe, but the family and the household, was to receive its special inheritance by lot; no doubt in such a way that the final settlement of the country would correspond with the blood relationships of the settlers.

Ver. 55.—**If ye will not drive out the inhabitants.** As was in fact the case (Judges i.). The warning is here given for the first time, because the danger was now near at hand, and had indeed already shown itself in the matter of the Midianitish women and children. **Pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides.** Natural symbols of dangerous annoyances. Possibly the thickets which fringe the Jordan supplied them with present examples. In Josh. xxiii. 13 we have "*scourges* in your sides, and thorns in your eyes," which sounds somewhat more artificial. In Judges ii. 3, where this warning is quoted, the figure is not expressed at all: "they shall be in your sides."

Ver. 56.—**I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them,** *i. e.* I shall execute by other hands upon you the sentence of dispossession which ye shall have refused to execute upon the Canaanites. The threat (although in fact fulfilled) does not necessarily involve any prophecy, since to settle down among the remnants of the heathen was a course of action which would obviously and for many reasons commend itself to the Israelites. Indolence and cowardice were consulted by such a policy as much as the natural feelings of pity towards vanquished and apparently harmless foes. The command to extirpate was certainly justified in this case (if it could be in any) by the unhappy consequences of its neglect. Israel being what he was, and so little severed in anything but religion from the ancient heathen, his only chance of future happiness lay in keeping himself from any contact with them. On the morality of the command itself, see on the passages referred to, and on the slaughter of the Midianites. As a fact, the extirpation of the conquered did not offend the moral sense of the Jews then any more than it did that of our heathen Saxon ancestors. Where both races could not dwell in security, it was a matter of course that the weaker was destroyed. Such a command was therefore justified at that time by the end to be attained, because it was not contrary to the moral law as then revealed, or to the moral sense as then educated. Being in itself a lawful proceeding, it was made a religious proceeding, and taken out of the category of selfish violence by being made a direct command of God.

Ch. xxxiv. 2.—**Into the land of Canaan.** Canaan has here its proper signification as the land (roughly speaking) between Jordan and the sea (so in ch. xxxii. 32; Josh. xxii. 11, 32). Nor is there any clear instance of

its including the trans-Jordanic territories. In the prophets the word reverts to its proper (etymological) meaning, as the "flat country" along the Mediterranean coast (cf. Isa. xix. 18; Zeph. ii. 5; Matt. xv. 22). **This is the land that shall fall unto you.** These words should not be placed in a parenthesis; it is a simple statement in the tautological style so common in these books. **With the coasts thereof,** or, "according to its boundaries," *i. e.* within the limits which nature and the Divine decree had set to the land of Canaan.

Ver. 3.—**Then your south quarter.** Rather, "and your south side." **From the wilderness of Zin along by the coast of Edom.** This general preliminary definition of the southern frontier marks the "wilderness of Zin" as its chief natural feature, and asserts that this wilderness rested "upon the sides" (עַל־יְרֵכֵי) of Edom. The wilderness of Zin can scarcely be anything else than the Wady Murreh, with more or less of the barren hills which rise to the south of it, for this wady undoubtedly forms the natural southern boundary of Canaan. All travellers agree both as to the remarkable character of the depression itself and as to the contrast between its northern and southern mountain walls. To the south lies the inhospitable and uncultivatable desert; to the north the often arid and treeless, but still partially green and habitable, plateau of Southern Palestine. The expression, "on the sides of Edom," can only mean that beyond the Wady Murreh lay territory belonging to Edom, the Mount Seir of Deut. i. 2, the Seir of Deut. i. 44; it does not seem possible that Edom proper, which lay to the east of the Arabah, and which barely marched at all with the land of Canaan, should be intended here (see on Josh. xv. 1, and the note on the site of Kadesh). **And your south border.** This begins a fresh paragraph, in which the southern boundary, already roughly fixed, is described in greater detail. **Shall be the utmost coast of the salt sea eastward.** Rather, "shall be from the extremity (מִקְצֵה) of the salt sea eastward" (cf. Josh. xv. 2). The easternmost point in this boundary was to be fixed at the southernmost extremity of the Salt Sea.

Ver. 4.—**Shall turn from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim.** It is not at all clear what מִנֶּגֶב לְמַעֲלֵה can mean in this sentence. The A. V., which follows the Septuagint and the Targums, does not seem to give any sense, while the rendering, "to the south side of the ascent," does not seem grammatically defensible. Moreover, it is quite uncertain where the "ascent of Akrabbim," *i. e.* the "Scorpion-pass," or "Scorpion-stairs," is to be placed. Some travellers have recognised both place and name in a precipitous road which ascends the northern cliffs towards the western end of the Wady Murreh, and which the Arabs call Nakb Kareb; others would make the ascent to be the steep pass of es Sufah, over which runs the road from Petra to Hebron; others, again, identify the Scorpion-stairs with the row of white cliffs which obliquely cross and close in the Ghor, some miles south of the Salt Sea, and separate it from the higher level of the Arabah. None of these identifications are satisfactory, although the first and last have more to be said in their favour than the second. Possibly the ascent of Akrabbim may have been only the Wady Fikreh, along which the natural frontier would run from the point of the Salt Sea into the Wady Murreh. **Pass on to Zin.** It is only here and in Josh. xv. 3 that the name Zin stands by itself; it may have been some place in the broadest part of the Wady Murreh which gave its name to the neighbouring wilderness. **From the south to Kadesh-barnea.** Here again we have the expression מִנֶּגֶב לְ, of which we do not know the exact force. But if Kadesh was in the neighbourhood of the present Ain Kudes, then it may be understood that the frontier, after reaching the western end of the Wady Murreh, made a *détour* to the south so as to include Kadesh, as a place of peculiarly sacred memory in the annals of Israel. It is indeed very difficult, with this description of the southern frontier of Canaan before us, to believe that Kadesh was in the immediate neighbourhood of the Arabah, where many commentators place it; for if that were the case, then the boundary line has not yet made any progress at all towards the west, and the only points given on the actual southern boundary are the two unknown places which follow. **Hazar-addar.** In Josh. xv. 3 this double name is apparently divided into the two names of Hezron and Addar, but possibly the latter only is the place intended here. A Karkaa is also mentioned there, which is equally unknown with the rest.

Ver. 5.—**The river of Egypt,** or "brook (נַחַל) of Egypt." Septuagint, χειμάῤῥουν Αἰγύπτου. It was a winter torrent which drained the greater part of the western half of the northern desert of the Sinaitic peninsula. It was, however, only in its lower course, where a single channel receives the intermittent outflow of many wadys, that it was known as the "brook of Egypt," because it formed the well-marked boundary between Egypt and Canaan (cf. 2 Chron. vii. 8, and Isa. xxvii. 12, where the Septuagint has ἕως Ῥινοκορούρων, from the name of the frontier fort, Rhinocorura, afterwards built there). So far as we are able to follow

the line drawn in these verses, it would appear to have held a course somewhat to the south of west for about half its length, then to have made a southerly deflection to Kadesh, and from thence to have struck north-west until it reached the sea, almost in the same latitude as the point from which it started.

Ver. 6.—**And as for the western border.** The Hebrew word for "west" (יָם) is simply that for "sea," because the Jews in their own land always had the sea on their west. Thus the verse reads literally, "And the sea boundary shall be to you the great sea and boundary; this shall be to you the sea boundary." It would seem very unlikely that the Jews familiarly used the word "*yam*" for "west" after a residence of several centuries in a country where the sun set not over the sea, but over the desert. Nothing can of course be proved from the use of the word here, but it cannot be overlooked as one small indication that the language of this passage at any rate is the language of an age subsequent to the conquest of Canaan (see on Exod. x. 19; xxvi. 22, and ch. ii. 18) The line of coast from the brook of Egypt to the Leontes was upwards of 160 miles in length.

Ver. 7.—**Ye shall point out for you,** *i. e.* ye shall observe and make for, in tracing the boundary. Septuagint, *καταμετρήσετε . . παρά*. **Mount Hor.** Not of course the Mount Hor on which Aaron died, but another far to the north, probably in Lebanon. The Hebrew הֹר הָהָר, which the Septuagint had rendered Ὄρ τὸ ὄρος in ch. xx., it renders here τὸ ὄρος τὸ ὄρος, taking הֹר as simply another form of הָר, as it probably is. Hor Ha-har is therefore equivalent to the English "Mount Mountain;" and just as there are many "Avon rivers" on the English maps, so there were probably many mountains locally known among the Jews as Hor Ha-har. We do not know what peak this was, although it must have been one clearly distinguishable from the sea. There is, however, no reason whatever for supposing (contrary to the analogy of all such names, and of the other Mount Hor) that it included the whole range of Lebanon proper.

Ver. 8.—**From Mount Hor ye shall point out your border unto the entrance of Hamath.** Literally, "from Mount Hor point out (תְּתָאוּ, as in the previous verse) to come to Hamath," which seems to mean, "from Mount Hor strike a line for the entrance to Hamath." The real difficulty lies in the expression לְבֹא חֲמָת, which the Septuagint renders εἰσπορευομένων εἰς Ἐμάθ, "as men enter into Hamath." The same expression occurs in ch. xiii. 21, and is similarly rendered by the Septuagint. A comparison with Judges iii. 3 and other passages will show that "l'bo Chamath" had a definite geographical meaning as the accepted name of a locality in the extreme north of Canaan. When we come to inquire where "the entrance to Hamath" was, we have nothing to guide us except the natural features of the country. Hamath itself, afterwards Epiphaneia on the Orontes, lay far beyond the extremest range of Jewish settlement; nor does it appear that it was ever conquered by the greatest of the Jewish kings. The Hamath in which Solomon built store-cities (2 Chron. viii. 4), and the Hamath which Jeroboam II. "recovered" for Israel (2 Kings xiv. 28), was not the city, but the kingdom (or part of the kingdom), of that name. We do not know how far south the territory of Hamath may have extended, but it is quite likely that it included at times the whole upper valley of the Leontes (now the Litâny). The "entrance to Hamath" then must be looked for at some point, distinctly marked by the natural features of the country, where the traveller from Palestine would enter the territory of Hamath. This point has been usually fixed at the pass through which the Orontes breaks out of its upper valley between Lebanon and anti-Lebanon into the open plain of Hamath. This point, however, is more than sixty miles north of Damascus (which confessedly never belonged to Israel), and nearly a hundred miles north-north-west from Dan. It would require some amount of positive evidence to make it even probable that the whole of the long and narrow valley between Lebanon and anti-Lebanon, widening towards the north, and separated by mountainous and difficult country from the actual settlements of the Jews, was yet Divinely designated as part of their inheritance. No such positive evidence exists, and therefore we are perfectly free to look for "the entrance to Hamath" much further to the south. It is evident that the ordinary road from the land of Canaan or from the cities of Phœnicia to Hamath must have struck the valley of the Leontes, have ascended that river to its sources, and crossed the watershed to the upper stream of Orontes. The whole of this road, until it reached the pass already spoken of leading down to the Emesa of after days, and so to Hamath, lay through a narrow valley of which the narrowest part is at the southern end of the modern district of el Bekáa, almost in a straight line between Sidon and Mount Hermon. Here the two ranges approach most nearly to the bed of the Litâny (Leontes), forming a natural gate by which the traveller to Hamath must needs have entered from the south. Here then, very nearly in lat. 33° 30′, we may

reasonably place the "entrance to Hamath" so often spoken of, and so escape the necessity of imagining an artificial and impracticable frontier for the northern boundary of the promised land. **Zedad.** Identified by some with the present village of Sadad or Sudad, to the south-east of Emesa (Hums); but this identification, which is at best very problematic, is wholly out of the question if the argument of the preceding note be accepted.

Ver. 9.—**Ziphron.** A town called Sibraim is mentioned by Ezekiel (xlvii. 16) as lying on the boundary between Damascus and Hamath, and there is a modern village of Zifrân about forty miles north-east of Damascus, but there is no probable ground for supposing that either of these are the Ziphron of this verse. **Hazar-enan,** *i. e.* "fountain court." There are of course many places in and about the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon ranges to which such a name would be suitable, but we have no means of identifying it with any one of them. It must be confessed that this "north border" of Israel is extremely obscure, because we are not told whence it started, nor can we fix, except by conjecture, one single point upon it. A certain amount of light is thrown upon the subject by the description of the tribal boundaries and possessions as given in Josh. xix., and by the enumeration of places left unconquered in Josh. xiii. and Judges iii. The most northerly of the tribes were Asher and Naphtali, and it does not appear that their allotted territory extended beyond the lower valley of the Leontes where it makes its sharp turn towards the west. It is true that a portion of the tribe of Dan afterwards occupied a district further north, but Dan-Laish itself, which was the extreme of Jewish settlement in this direction, as Beersheba in the other, was southward of Mount Hermon. The passage in Josh. xiii. 4—6 does indeed go to prove that the Israelites never occupied all their intended territory in this direction, but as far as we can tell the line of promised conquest did not extend further north than Zidon and Mount Hermon. "All Lebanon toward the sunrising" cannot well mean the whole range from south to north, but all the mountain country lying to the east of Zidon. One other passage promises to throw additional light upon the question, viz., the ideal delimitation of the Holy Land in Ezek. xlvii.; and here it is true that we find a northern frontier (vers. 15—17) apparently far beyond the line of actual settlement, and yet containing two names at least (Zedad and Hazar-enan) which appear in the present list. It is, however, quite uncertain whether the prophet is describing any possible boundary line at all, or whether he is only mentioning (humanly speaking at random) certain points in the far north; his very object would seem to be to picture an enlarged Canaan extending beyond its utmost historical limits. Even if it should be thought that these passages require a frontier further to the north than the one advocated above, it will yet be impossible to carry it to the northern end of the valley between Lebanon and anti-Lebanon. For in that case the northern frontier will not be a northern frontier at all, but will actually descend from the "entrance of Hamath" in a southerly or south-westerly direction, and distinctly form part of the eastern boundary.

Ver. 11.—**Shepham** is unknown. **Riblah** cannot possibly be the Riblah in the land of Hamath (Jer. xxxix. 5), now apparently Ribleh on the Orontes. This one example will serve to show how delusive are these identifications with modern places. Even if Riblch represents *an* ancient Riblah, it is not *the* Riblah which is mentioned here. **On the east side of Ain,** *i. e.* of the fountain. The Targums here imply that this Ain was the source of Jordan below Mount Hermon, and that would agree extremely well with what follows. The Septuagint has ἐπὶ πηγάς, and there is in fact more than one fountain from which this head-water of Jordan takes its rise. Immediately before the Septuagint has Βηλά where we read Riblah. It has been supposed that the word was originally Ἀρβηλά, a transliteration of "Har-bel," the mountain of Bel or Baal, identical with the Harbaal-Hermon (our Mount Hermon) of Judges iii. 3. The Hebrew הָרִבְלָה being differently pointed, and the final ה taken as the suffix of direction, we get הַרְּבֵל; but this is extremely precarious. **Shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward.** Literally, "shall strike (מָחָה) the shoulder of the sea," &c. The line does not seem to have descended the stream from its source, but to have kept to the east, and so to have struck the lake of Galilee at its north-eastern corner. From this point it simply followed the water-way down to the Salt Sea. The lands beyond Jordan were not reckoned as within the sacred limits.

Ver. 15.—**On this side Jordan near Jericho.** Literally, "on the side (מֵעֵבֶר) of the Jordan of Jericho." It was not of course true that the territory which they had received lay eastward of Jericho, but it was the case that the tribe leaders had there asked and received permission to occupy that territory, and it was in this direction that the temporary settlements of Reuben and Gad lay, perhaps also those of half Manasseh.

Ver. 17.—**Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun.** As the ecclesiastical and military heads respectively of the theocracy (see on ch. xxxii. 28).

Ver. 18. — **One prince of every tribe.** This was arranged no doubt in order to insure fairness in fixing the boundaries between the tribes, which had to be done after the situation of the tribe was determined by lot; the further subdivision of the tribal territory was probably left to be managed by the chiefs of the tribe itself. Of these tribe princes (see on ch. xiii. 1; Josh. xiv. 1), Caleb is the only one whose name is known to us, and he had acted in a somewhat similar capacity forty years before. This may of itself account for the tribe of Judah being named first in the list, especially as Reuben was not represented; but the order in which the other names follow is certainly remarkable. Taken in pairs (Judah and Simeon, Manasseh and Ephraim, &c.), they advance regularly from south to north, according to their subsequent position on the map. Differing as this arrangement does so markedly from any previously adopted, it is impossible to suppose that it is accidental. We must conclude either that a coincidence so apparently trivial was Divinely prearranged, or that the arrangement of the names is due to a later hand than that of Moses.

Ver. 20. — **Shemuel.** This is the same name as Samuel. Of the rest, every one except the last occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament as the name of some other Israelit

HOMILETICS.

Ch. xxxiii. 50—xxxiv. 29.—*The Holy Land.* In this section we have, spiritually, the promised inheritance of the saints, the kingdom of heaven, with the conditions under which it is to be received and enjoyed. No one can overlook the correspondence (which is fundamental and far-reaching) between *their* "holy land" and ours; between that "rest" which awaited *them* in Canaan, and that "rest" into which we do now enter. The kingdom of heaven is the spiritual antitype of Canaan. But that kingdom is (practically considered) twofold: it is heaven, or rather rest in heaven, only reached by crossing the stream of death; it is also (and in the Scripture much more often) the rest of the new life in Christ, which yet is neither absolute nor independent of our continued striving against sin (cf. Matt. v. 3, "theirs *is* the kingdom;" Luke xvii. 21 *b.*; Rom. xiv. 17; Col. iii. 3; Heb. iv. 3 *a.*). To this latter aspect (the kingdom as a spiritual and moral *state*) belong the lessons of this section, for the most part. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE ONE GREAT DUTY OF ISRAEL IN TAKING POSSESSION OF HIS OWN LAND WAS WHOLLY TO DISPOSSESS THE NATIVES, AS BEING ENEMIES OF GOD AND OF HIS WORSHIP. Even so the one condition on which we inherit that kingdom which (in its present aspect) is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is that we put to death the deeds of the flesh, and crucify the old man, and wage a war of extermination against all the sinful affections which have made their home in our human life.

II. THAT ISRAEL WAS FURTHER REQUIRED TO ABOLISH ALL THEIR MONUMENTS OF IDOLATRY, HOWEVER PLEASING AND INTERESTING. Even so all the devices and imaginations of the natural man, however attractive, which are contrary to the sole worship and service of the living God must be wholly, and without exception, destroyed.

III. THAT THE COMMAND TO EXTERMINATE SEEMED HARD, AND WAS UNGRATEFUL (NO DOUBT) TO MOST IN ISRAEL. Why be so extreme? Why not enough to conquer, without extirpating? Why not enough to possess the best of the land, without labouring to clear all the corners? What harm could feeble remnants of heathen do? could they not even make them useful? Even so it seems hard that Christian people may make no compromise with, and show no toleration for, what is sinful and selfish in human life. Why need we be perfect? Shall nothing be allowed to the old Adam? May we never be content? If leading on the whole a Christian life, why weary ourselves about small points of moral excellence? Many things not exactly right may be very useful; may they not be turned to account?

IV. THAT AS A FACT THE COMMAND TO EXTIRPATE WAS NOT OBEYED. Many were left unmolested out of indolence and cowardice when the first rush of conquest was passed; many were spared out of unwillingness to go to extremes with them. Even so most Christian people leave considerable portions of their own lives (which God hath given them for a prey, Jer. xlv. 5) under the dominion of passions, emotions, motives which are not Christian. They overcome the tyrannies of sin, but leave the remnants of sin unsubdued; in other words, they subdue their evil passions and

desires, but shrink from destroying them. *E. g.*, how few have their *temper* entirely under control! Thus the kingdom of heaven is never truly theirs, because of the sins which they have been too indolent or too self-confident to dislodge.

V. THAT AS A FACT THE OTHER COMMAND WAS NOT OBEYED WHOLLY; SOMETIMES GRAVEN IMAGES WERE SERVED, SOMETIMES HIGH PLACES TURNED TO THE WORSHIP OF THE LORD, TO THE GREAT DETRIMENT AND DANGER OF THE TRUE FAITH. Even so the vain devices and perverted imaginations of the natural man have not been discarded by the servants of Christ in many cases; too often they have been either *adopted* in their blank disloyalty to Christ (as, *e. g.*, that "covetousness which *is* idolatry"), or else *adapted* to religious ends (as many forms of will-worship, material and mental) to the detriment of that singleness of eye and heart which God requires.

VI. THAT THE REMNANTS OF THE HEATHEN, IF SPARED, WERE TO BECOME PRICKS AND THORNS (*i. e.* CONSTANT AND DANGEROUS ANNOYANCES) TO THEM, AND WOULD VEX THEM. Even so if we leave the remnants of sin in the new life which God has given us to lead, these will surely become a continual source of unhappiness and danger. This is why most Christians are more or less restless, dissatisfied, uneven in temper, uncertain in behaviour, having little "peace" and less "joy in the Holy Ghost." It is simply that they have not obeyed the call to make a clearance of old bad habits and evil tempers; do not recognise the sinfulness of little sins; think it does not matter; will not take the trouble necessary to hunt them down; have learnt by experience to tolerate them. No *more* than this, but no *less*. They can never be made happy save through patient, prayerful toil to root the remnants of sin out of their hearts and lives.

VII. THAT THE END OF SUCH UNFAITHFULNESS, IF NOT AMENDED, WAS TO BE EXPATRIATION. Both races could not dwell in the land; if Israel would not drive out the heathen, he must be driven out himself. Even so if Christian people will not labour by grace to take complete possession in God's name of their own lives, the end will be that they will lose them altogether. Either grace must make a full end of our sins, or our sins will make an end of grace, because God will withdraw it. There may not be any wilful toleration of moral evil in ourselves, nor urging of excuses for its continuance.

Consider again, with respect to *Canaan*—

I. THAT ISRAEL WAS TO POSSESS IT, BECAUSE GOD HAD GIVEN IT TO THEM; IT WAS HIS, AND HE CHOSE TO DO SO; NO SUCH TITLE WAS EVER GRANTED TO ANY PEOPLE. Even so we are to take possession (by patient well-doing) of the kingdom of heaven, not because it can be earned, but because God hath freely given it to us, whom he hath chosen. This kingdom, therefore, whether as within us or as above us, is ours by a most absolute and indefeasible title.

II. THAT THE GRANT OF CANAAN TO ISRAEL IMPLIED ALL NECESSARY SUCCOUR IN CONQUERING AND OCCUPYING IT, else had the name of God been disgraced. Even so the fact that God hath given to us the kingdom of heaven is pledge positive that we shall receive strength to overcome every hindrance and obstacle, if we be faithful.

III. THAT THE DIVISION OF THE LAND WAS SO ORDERED THAT EQUALITY SHOULD AS FAR AS POSSIBLE BE PRESERVED, AND FAVOURITISM MADE IMPOSSIBLE. Even so God hath so ordered his kingdom that none has cause to envy other, and none can complain of partiality; since all shall inherit heaven alike, and yet heaven itself shall be diverse according to the growth of each in grace (cf. Matt. xx. 13—15 and 23 with Luke xix. 15—19 and Matt. xxv. 21—23).

IV. THAT THE HOLY LAND WAS DELIMITED BEFORE THEY ENTERED, BUT THE BOUNDARIES ARE TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT UNKNOWN. Even so the kingdom of heaven is defined and described in manifold ways in the word of God, and yet it is hard to know how far it extends, and where the boundary runs between that which is of nature and that which is of grace. And as those frontiers could only be traced by such as were locally familiar with the places named, so the extent of the kingdom can only be known by such as are familiar by experience with every part of it.

V. THAT THE LIMITS MARKED DOWN WERE APPARENTLY THE NATURAL LIMITS OF CANAAN, WITHOUT ANY RESERVATIONS (such as Philistia, Phœnicia, &c.). Even so

God hath given to us to possess the whole life of man which may be lived in holiness, according to the utmost possible expansion of our human nature in all its fulness.

VI. THAT THE LAND ACTUALLY OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL WAS BOTH LARGER AND SMALLER THAN THAT DELIMITED; not reaching so far from south to north, yet not so strait from west to east. Even so it is certain that Christian life, as lived, does not agree with the ideal in the New Testament. It does not reach so far, not attain its full measure, in one way, while it occupies additional space in another way. And as the additional breadth gained by the trans-Jordanic settlement, while not commanded, was yet (it seems) allowed of God, so the unexpected developments of Christianity (as in the way of civilisation, with its varied gifts), although quite outside anything to be gathered from the New Testament, must yet be held allowed of God.

VII. THAT KADESH, OF FAMOUS MEMORY, WAS SPECIALLY INCLUDED IN THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER. Even so the experiences of our pilgrimage—the "sanctuaries" of our trial time—will be part of our eternal inheritance; nothing "holy" will be lost to us.

VIII. THAT THE LAND WAS ALLOTTED TO THE PEOPLE BY ELEAZAR THEIR PRIEST AND JOSHUA THEIR CAPTAIN. Even so our inheritance is in all particulars assigned to us by him who is at once the High Priest of our profession and the Captain of our salvation.

IX. THAT TOGETHER WITH THEM THERE ACTED PRINCES FROM EACH TRIBE, THAT JUSTICE MIGHT BE MANIFESTLY DONE TO ALL. Even so it would appear that in the judgment of the last day respect will be had even to human ideas of justice; and, moreover, that in some way not yet explained men will themselves act as assessors in that judgment (see 1 Pet. iv. 6, where κατὰ ἄνθρωπον seems to mean "in accordance with human ideas [of justice];" and 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3, which seems clearly to refer to the final judgment).

And note that the order of the tribes as here given is very different from any previous list; for two are absent, and the precedence of the rest is determined after a peculiar law by their subsequent position in the Holy Land. So the Divine order in which Churches or individuals stand is different from any founded on earthly or visible considerations, being in accordance with God's foreknowledge of their heavenly place.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

VERS. 50—56.—*No compromise with idolatry.* I. THE COMMAND GIVEN. The Israelites were to be delivered from complicity with the immoral idolatry of Canaan by such extreme measures as these. 1. The idolaters were to be utterly driven out, and in some cases exterminated. On no account were covenants to be made with them (Exod. xxxiv. 12—17). 2. The idols were to be broken to pieces; even the precious metals on them were not to be spared (Exod. xxiii. 24, 30—33; Deut. vii. 25, 26). 3. The high places, groves, altars, pillars, &c. were to be destroyed (Exod. xxxiv. 13; Deut. xii. 2, 3). 4. Works of art, "pictures," &c., were doomed if tainted by idolatry. 5. The very names of the idols were to be consigned to oblivion, and all curious antiquarian inquiries as to the idolatries of the land were discouraged (Deut. xii. 3, 30, 31). Our missionaries have had to urge similar precepts on converts from heathenism; *e. g.* in Polynesia. And these precepts suggest applications to all Christians who have "escaped the pollutions of the world" and its spiritual idolatries, but who are still surrounded by them. No "covenants" are to be made with men of the world which would compromise the servants of Christ, or mar their testimony against the evil deeds of the world (2 Cor. vi. 14; Ephes. v. 11). Apply to marriages with the ungodly, and to other close alliances of interest. Illustrate from Jehoshaphat's history (2 Kings viii. 18; 2 Chron. xviii. 1; xix. 2). Even things lawful in themselves may have to be abandoned; whether money, in order to conquer "covetousness, which is idolatry" (illustrate Mark x. 21), or pleasures which may have associations of evil clinging to them (1 Cor. vi. 12), or even past helps to devotion—*e. g.* 2 Kings xviii. 4, Popish images, &c. To look back with strong desire even towards things elegant and attractive in themselves, but infected *to us* by the spirit of worldliness, may be fatal (Luke xvii. 32; 2 Cor. vi. 17). The Church

of God has the duty of possessing the whole land, "the world" (1 Cor. iii. 22); but to do this they must "dispossess the inhabitants," *i. e.* they must make no compromise with the spirit of the men of the world. Worldliness is a *spirit* rather than a course of outward conduct. We must "use the world as not abusing it."

II. THE MOTIVES URGED. 1. The peril of perpetual unrest (ver. 55). Just so if Christians seek to make compromises with the sins and idolatries of the world they are called to overcome (1 John v. 4), and become subject to its maxims and fashions, there can be no true rest. The joy of entire obedience can never be known (Ps. xix. 11). Compromise is perpetual conflict, with the conviction of being on the losing side. We are wounded in the tenderest part ("pricks in our eyes") and vexed in the secret chamber of conscience ("thorns in our sides"). 2. The peril of being regarded as "conformed to the world," and therefore treated as "enemies of God" (ver. 56; Ps. cvi. 34—42; Rom. xii. 2; Philip. iii. 18, 19; James iv. 4; 2 Pet. ii. 20—22). From such guilty compromises we may be delivered through Christ—through his atonement (Gal. i. 4), intercession (John xvii. 15), example (*ibid.* xvi. 33; xvii. 16), and Spirit (Rom. viii. 2; 1 Cor. ii. 12).—P.

Vers. 50—56.—*How to deal with the Canaanites: an urgent warning.* It is assumed here that Israel will conquer the Canaanites; probably by this time the people had grown to somewhat of confidence, by reason of their recent successes over Sihon, Og, and Midian. But it was a thing of the first importance, when the victory was gained, to follow it up in the right way. Victories have been gained, and then worse than lost by want of wisdom to use them aright. Here we have a plain, strict, and severe command concerning the very first thing to be done upon the defeat of the Canaanites. They themselves were to be driven from the land, and all the instruments of idolatry utterly destroyed. The need of this command will be clearly seen if we consider—

I. THE GREAT OBJECT WHICH WAS BEFORE THE MIND OF GOD IN GIVING THE COMMAND. This is alluded to in ver. 54. Canaan was ever under the eye of God as being the destined inheritance of Israel; it had been counted as such even from the time of Abraham. The sadness of the threat against Israel in the day of its apostasy lay in this, that it was a threat of disinheriting (ch. xiv. 12). And that which had been so long preparing for Israel, which even while the Canaanites were dwelling in it had been under the peculiar supervision of God, was become at last an inheritance of great value. It was to be cultivated to the full, and would then richly repay for all the cultivation. Such interest did God show in giving this land to the Israelites in all its fulness, that he was about to portion it by lot. Each tribe in particular was to feel that the place of its habitation had been chosen by God. Hence the need of leaving no precaution unemployed *to make this favoured land secure.* It must be guarded from every kind of danger, however remote, improbable, and practically innocuous it may seem. If Israel lost this inheritance, there was no other place for it, no other possession on which it could advance with the certainty of conquest and, what was even more important, with the consciousness of being engaged in a righteous cause. In Canaan, as long as it kept its allegiance to God, Israel was the rightful possessor; but everywhere else it was a lawless, unblessed invader. That which is of inestimable value, and which once gone cannot be replaced, must first of all be founded in security and surrounded with the same. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. xi. 3). The security of the people was threatened by all that threatened the honour of God. And it was a distinct dishonour to his name to allow idolaters to remain in the land openly to practise their vicious and degrading rites. Moreover, there was every chance that the people themselves would be subtly and gradually drawn to idolatry. Recollect all these perils, and then you will see good reason why God made a stringent demand for such a sweeping treatment of the Canaanites. The cause of a world's redemption was bound up with the safety of Israel's inheritance. And *we also have an inheritance* (Matt. xix. 29; xxv. 34; Acts xx. 32; xxvi. 18; Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iii. 29; Ephes. i. 11, 14; iii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 4) far transcending that Canaan which was so much in the eyes of the Israelites. If it is worth anything at all, it is worth everything; worth all the self-denial, perseverance complete submission to God, and patient waiting which are

necessary for the attaining of it. We must not leave unexpelled from our life or undestroyed from our circumstances anything that may imperil the inheritance. Walk with no companion, engage in no business, cultivate no taste or recreation, if there be in them the slightest chance of peril to the inheritance. It is a glorious thing to conquer temptation in actual conflict, but it is better still so to watch and pray as not to enter into temptation at all.

II. THE GREAT TEMPTATION ON THE PART OF ISRAEL TO REST SATISFIED WITH AN IMPERFECT CONQUEST. Not of course that Israel thought it imperfect. Israel was anxious in its own way to have the conquest and possession complete. But God alone had the requisite wisdom and foresight to direct the people into real security. There were many temptations to what he knew was a premature cessation of hostilities. *The Canaanites would in due time make attempts at compromises and partial surrenders*, even as Pharaoh had made like attempts when his people were smitten by the plagues. There was the temptation that came from *the weariness of long waiting*. A complete expulsion involved much delay. We are tempted even in the affairs of this life to premature conclusions through sheer impatience. We want to pluck the fruit long before it is ripe. Moreover, the Israelites, many of them at least, would wish *to make slaves of the Canaanites*. They were not entering Canaan with the steward-feeling in their hearts. The promise was sufficiently fulfilled in their estimate when they got the land to do as they liked with it. The tribes crossing Jordan had the same carnal views concerning their possession as Reuben and Gad concerning the land which they had chosen. There was the temptation coming from self-confidence; that of supposing *an enemy enfeebled to be practically the same as an enemy destroyed*. There might be the temptation also to show *a human, ignorant, undiscerning pity, as contrasted with a Divinely wise severity*. Such utter expulsion as God demanded could easily be made to look unreasonable, and indeed nothing better than sheer tyranny. It takes much patient inquiry to discover that what may be kind on the surface is cruel underneath; kind at the present, cruel in the future; kind to the few, cruel to the many; kind for time, utterly ruinous for eternity. There was no reasonable pity in leaving those who were utterly corrupt to become the plentiful sources of idolatrous infection to the people of Jehovah. There was also the temptation that came from *a very imperfect sympathy with the purposes of God*. During their wanderings the Israelites had shown again and again their lack of apprehension and appreciation with respect to Jehovah. What then of hearty aversion from idolatry could be expected when its subtle perils came upon them? Only those who were filled with an abiding sense of the holiness and majesty of God could estimate the dangers of idolatry and take the precautions needful to guard against them.

III. THE EARNEST WARNING IN WHICH GOD SPECIFIES THE RESULTS OF NEGLIGENCE. 1. *The earlier result* (ver. 55). These Canaanites, however fairly they speak, and with whatever leniency they be treated, will turn out pricks and thorns in the end. "Those which ye let remain of them." One, even though he be a child, and seem easily moulded to other ends, may be the cause of measureless mischief. A *little* leaven leavens the whole lump. Behold how great a mass of matter a tiny flame will kindle. A Canaanite, a real Canaanite, worshipping his idols, must be a bad man. Just as a true, believing connection with God leads into all purity and virtue, so a grovelling before idols makes a man vicious; and not only vicious, but the viciousness is upon a sort of principle and rule. Those who change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, change at the same time much besides. It is one of the unspeakable miseries of idolatry that it changes vices into virtues, and idolaters do the most wicked things for conscience' sake. Hence the Canaanite could not but hurt the Israelite; it was his very nature so to do. He might undertake allegiance and amity, but by the very necessity of the case he must prove in the end a prick in the eye and a thorn in the side. Therefore let Israel uproot with a timely and unsparing severity all that would end in pricks and thorns. Study the nature of things in their germs. Stop evil if you can at the very beginning. Consider, in connection with this expulsion of the Canaanites and the dangers of idolatry, the whole of the first chapter of Romans. 2. *The later result* (ver. 56). Leave the

Canaanites unexpelled, and the end will be the expulsion of Israel. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James iv. 17). In the light of this threatening, how clearly it is seen that what made the Canaanites so offensive in the sight of God was their idolatry! For centuries they had been pursuing their hideous practices in that very land where a holy and righteous God had revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And if the Israelites by a disobedient leniency fell into idolatry, their state would be even sadder and more dishonourable than that of Canaan, because the fall would be from such privileges. Note that God placed this expulsion of the Canaanites as a work of obedience for the people to perform. If they failed in obedience he would not by some miracle expel the Canaanites himself. "*As I thought to do unto them.*' The land in itself was no more than any other land on the face of the earth. It was the people—the holy people of God—who sanctified the land, and not the land the people. And if they disobeyed God in the presence of all these idols, with their associated abominations, then the holy became unholy, and the Canaanites might as well stay there as remove anywhere else (Prov. viii. 20, 21; xx. 21; Eccles. vii. 11; Rev. xxi. 7).—Y.

Vers. 1—15.—*The Lord appoints boundaries for the promised land.* I. CONSIDER THESE BOUNDARIES ACCORDING TO THE EXTENT OF WHAT THEY INCLUDED. The territory was a very limited one, geographically speaking. The promised land, intended to typify the large privileges of the believer, and the heavenly and everlasting inheritance, was not a continent, nor even a considerable part of a continent. The Lord would teach Israel, and through them all his people, the difference between bigness and greatness, between quantity and quality, between mere superficial extent and the inexhaustible wealth that comes out of a really good ground. A square mile in the land that the Lord hath blessed is better than all the sands of Sahara. There was no legitimate room in Israel for men of Alexander's spirit, weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer. The scene that God thus mapped out was large enough to give impressive and beautiful illustrations of his ways, and to bring peace, prosperity, and happiness worthy of bearing such names to all who received his will in the fulness of it. Though only a limited territory, it was for that reason all the more compact; and at a very short notice the whole nation could gather to any point for purposes of worship or defence. Outsiders, who did not know how blessed was the nation whose God was the Lord, might count the land only a little one among the thousands of the whole earth. All depends on what we mean when we speak of the lives of certain people as limited, poor, narrow, and unprivileged. Such words may only reveal our ignorance, our erroneous principles of judgment, and not the real state of affairs. It should ever be part of the brightest radiance of God's glory in the eyes of his people that he can welcome the poor and the lowly to his choicest blessings and to the sweetest pleasures he can confer upon the human heart. Their poverty and lowliness do not unfit them for these things. Paul, who had to work with his own hands, and who said that having food and raiment he was therewith content, was also able to say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. xi. 33). No lord of broad acres ne, no partaker of luxurious repose among intellectual pleasures, but still he knew of the peace that passeth all understanding, the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, and something of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. We had need be very sure of our competency before we begin to pronounce judgment on the compass and depth of a true believer's life.

II. CONSIDER THE EXACTNESS OF THESE BOUNDARIES. The country was carefully defined, and could give no occasion for boundary disputes. And all Christians have a carefully-defined life marked out for them. Even external circumstances are more under our control than at first seems to be the case. Many such circumstances indeed we cannot control, but many also depend on the spirit in which we regard the will of God. For instance, it could hardly be said that God marked out their territory for Reuben and Gad. For his own wise purposes he allowed their choice, but it was no true choice of his. If we have only a thoroughly trustful spirit, a spirit of stewardship towards God, we may all have the profit and comfort of feeling

that we are working within the channels and limits that he would choose for our life. Social station makes no difference in this respect. The path of a pious king is just as strictly fixed as that of the humblest of his subjects. The farthest planet that circles round the sun has its path just as much marked out as the nearest one, though it travels a far longer distance.

III. CONSIDER THE EFFICACY THESE BOUNDARIES WERE MEANT TO HAVE IN THE WAY OF EXCLUSION. We see God clearly providing one necessary part in the means whereby to drive out and dispossess the Canaanites. He fixed the line beyond which they were to be driven, and within which they were not allowed to return and dwell. The lines between the Church and the world are not to be tampered with by such as value all that is most precious in spiritual possessions. Let the world have its own principles and assert them in its own field of action and in its own way. Let the men of the world act as men of the world, and transmit their much-belauded policy of life from generation to generation of such as believe in their principles. They go by what men are and by what they cynically assume men must be, for they do devoutly believe the fact that what is born of the flesh is flesh, even though they can make nothing of Christ's reference to the fact.' But let us ever claim and preserve a place, and earnestly defend it, where the supercilious egotism of worldly wisdom shall find no entrance. Let our territory be fenced round with "Thus saith the Lord," and let us watch with a jealous vigilance the slightest encroachment on it. We also believe that what is born of the flesh is flesh, and that we must go by what men are; but then we regard in addition what men ought to be, and recollect that what is born of the spirit is spirit. Blessed is he who feels marked out in his own heart the boundary which Paul specifies when he says, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17); Canaanite against Israelite, and Israelite against Canaanite. It availed a man nothing to live within Israelite borders if he had a Canaanite heart. Of old idolaters were rigorously excluded from a certain well-marked territory, and the typical significance of this is that idolatries themselves must be driven out of the regenerate heart, and kept out of it by all the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.

IV. CONSIDER THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WESTERN BORDER (ver. 6). The great sea was there, the open pathway of nations, the symbol, and to a large extent the avenue, of Israel's connection with the whole world. For though Israel had destroyed Amorite and Midianite, and was laid under command to drive out the Canaanite, yet in the seed of Abraham all families of the earth were to be blessed. From Canaan there was a path of blessing by a landward way to many lands beside, but by sea there was a way to every island also. Consider the place in respect of Christian privileges and influences which the island England occupies among the nations. The seaward aspect of Israel suggests to us the blessings that we, and indeed many peoples beside, have gained from her. Notice also *the element of reference to the sea which this seaward boundary of Canaan has brought into the Scriptures.* The Scriptures were written by men who felt the power of the ocean. Men within reach of the sea could then hear the whole of nature praise God. They could not only say, "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad," but also, "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. xcvi. 11). How could David have given Ps. civ. its completeness without a sight of the sea? And thus we find Haggai contrasting the great elements, first of the heavens and the earth, and then of the sea and the dry land (Hag. ii. 6). It helped David to think of the omnipresence of God, as he imagined himself dwelling in the uttermost parts of the sea, and feeling even there that mighty grasp guarding and sustaining him (Ps. cxxxix. 9, 10). And it served also to remind men how in after days the Lord would famish all the gods of the earth, and men would worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen (Zeph. ii. 11). Truly it was by no accident, but by a deep and gracious design, that the land of promise had the great sea for one of its borders.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LEVITICAL CITIES, AND CITIES OF REFUGE, AND LAWS AS TO HOMICIDE (vers. 1—34). Ver. 1.—**And the Lord spake.** Cf. ch. xxxiii. 50; xxxvi. 13.

Ver. 2.—**That they give unto the Levites . . . cities to dwell in.** This legislation forms the natural sequel and complement of the Divine decrees already promulgated concerning the Levites. Separated from the rest of the tribes from the time of the first census (ch. i. 49), excluded from any tribal inheritance (ch. xviii. 20), but endowed with tithes and offerings for their maintenance (ch. xviii. 21, &c.), it was also necessary that they should be provided with homes for themselves and their cattle. They might indeed have been left to exist as they could, and where they could, upon the provision made for them in the law. But, on the one hand, that provision was itself precarious, depending as it did upon the piety and good feeling of the people (which must often have been found wanting: cf. Neh. xiii. 10; Mal. iii. 8, 9); and, on the other, it is evident that the Levites were intended, as far as their family and social life was concerned, to share the ordinary comforts and enjoyments of Israelites. Nothing could have been more foreign to the Mosaic ideal than a ministry celibate, ascetic, and detached from this world's wealth, such as readily enough sprang up (whether intended or not) under the teaching of the gospel (cf. Luke x. 4; xii. 33; Acts xx. 34, 35; 1 Cor. vii. 7, 25, 26; ix. 18, 27; 2 Cor. vi. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 4). **Suburbs.** The Hebrew word מִגְרָשׁ undoubtedly means here a pasture, or a paddock, an enclosed place outside the town into which the cattle were driven by day to feed. It is possible that the A. V. may have used the word "suburbs" in that sense. To keep cattle to some extent was not only a universal custom, but was well-nigh a necessity of life in that age.

Ver. 3.—**For their cattle.** לִבְהֶמְתָּם, "for their great cattle," *i. e.* oxen, camels, and any other beasts of draught or burden. **For their goods.** "For their possessions," which in this connection would mean their ordinary "live stock," chiefly sheep and goats; the word itself (לִרְכוּשָׁם) is indeterminate. **For all their beasts.** לְכָל־חַיָּתָם, an expression which apparently only sums up what has previously been mentioned.

Ver. 5.—**Ye shall measure from without the city** (מִחוּץ לָעִיר—ἔξω τῆς πόλεως) . . . **two thousand cubits.** These directions are very obscure. Some have held that the country for 1000 cubits beyond the walls was reserved for pasture (according to ver. 4), and for another 1000 cubits for fields and vineyards, so that the Levitical lands extended 2000 cubits in all directions. This is reasonable in itself, since 2000 cubits is only half a mile, and rather more than a square mile of land would not seem too much for pastures, gardens, &c. for a town with at least 1000 inhabitants. The smallest tribe territories seem to have comprised some 300 square miles of country; and if we take the Levitical towns as averaging 1000 cubits square, their forty-eight cities would only give them seventy-three square miles of territory. There is, however, no notice of anything being given to the Levites except their "suburbs," so that this explanation must be at best very doubtful. Others have argued for a plan according to which each outer boundary, drawn at 1000 cubits' distance from the wall, would measure 2000 cubits, plus the length of the town wall; but this is far too artificial, and could only be considered possible as long as it was confined to a paper sketch, for it presupposes that each city lay four-square, and faced the four points of the compass. If the first explanation be untenable, the only alternative sufficiently simple and natural is to suppose that, in order to avoid irregularities of measurement, each outer boundary was to be drawn at an approximate distance of 1000 cubits from the wall, and each of an approximate length of 2000 cubits; at the angles the lines would have to be joined as best they might. In Levit. xxv. 32—34 certain regulations are inserted in favour of the Levites. Their houses might be redeemed at any time, and not only within the full year allowed to others; moreover, they returned to them (contrary to the general rule) at the year of Jubilee. Their property in the "suburbs" they could not sell at all, for it was inalienable. It is difficult to believe that these regulations were really made at Mount Sinai, presupposing, as they do, the legislation of this chapter; but if they were actually made at this time, on the eve of the conquest, it is easy to see why they were subsequently inserted in the chapter which deals generally with the powers of sale and redemption.

Ver. 6.—**And among the cities.** Rather, "and the cities." וְאֵת הֶעָרִים—καὶ τὰς πόλεις. The construction is broken, or rather is continuous throughout vers. 6—8, the accusative being repeated. **Six cities for refuge.** See below on ver. 11.

Ver. 7.—**Forty and eight cities** The

Levites numbered nearly 50,000 souls (see on ch. xxvi. 62), so that each Levitical city would have an average population of about 1000 to start with. There seems no sufficient reason for supposing that they shared their towns with men of the surrounding tribe. Even if the provision made for their habitation was excessive at first (which does not appear), yet their rate of increase should have been exceptionally high, inasmuch as they were not liable to military service. It is possible that mystical reasons led to the selection of the number forty-eight (12×4, both typical of universality), but it is at least equally probable that it was determined by the actual numbers of the tribe.

Ver. 8.—**And the cities which ye shall give shall be**, &c. Rather, "And as to the cities which ye shall give from the possession of the children of Israel, from the many ye shall multiply, and from the few ye shall decrease." What seems to be a general rule of proportionate giving is laid down here, but it was not carried out, and it is not easy to see how it could have been. From the large combined territory of Judah and Simeon nine cities were indeed surrendered (Josh. xxi.), but all the rest, great and small, gave up four apiece, except Naphtali, which gave up three only. As the territory of Naphtali was apparently large in proportion to its numbers, this was probably for no other reason than that the tribe stood last on the list. **Every one.** Hebrew, אִישׁ. It was in fact each tribe that surrendered so many cities, but since the tribal inheritance was the joint property of all the tribesmen, every man felt that he was a party to the gift. No doubt it was the Divine intention to foster in the tribes as far as possible this local feeling of interest and property in the Levites who dwelt among them (compare the expression "*their* scribes and Pharisees" in Luke v. 30). The dispersion of the Levites (however mysteriously connected with the prophecy of Gen. xlix. 5—7) was obviously designed to form a bond of unity for all Israel by diffusing the knowledge and love of the national religion, and by keeping up a constant communication between the future capital and all the provinces. According to the Divine ideal Israel as a whole was "the election" (ἡ ἐκλογή) from all the earth, the Levites were the ἐκλογή of Israel, and the priests the ἐκλογή of Levi. The priestly family was at present too small to be influential, but the Levites were numerous enough to have leavened the whole nation if they had walked worthy of their calling. They were gathered together in towns of their own, partly no doubt in order to avoid disputes, but partly that they might have a better opportunity of setting forth the true ideal of what Jewish life should be.

Ver. 11.—**Ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you.** God had already announced that he would appoint a place whither one guilty of unpremeditated manslaughter might flee for safety (Exod. xxi. 13). The expression there used does not point to more than one "place," but it is not inconsistent with several. Probably the right of sanctuary has been recognised from the earliest times in which any local appropriation of places to sacred purposes has been made. It is an instinct of religion to look upon one who has escaped into a sacred enclosure as being under the personal protection of the presiding deity. It is certain that the right was largely recognised in Egypt, where the priestly caste was so powerful and ambitious; and this is no doubt the reason (humanly speaking) for the promise in Exod. xxi. 13, and for the command in the following verse. Inasmuch as the whole of Canaan was the Lord's, any places within it might be endowed with rights of sanctuary, but it was obviously suitable that they should be Levitical cities; the Divine prerogative of mercy could nowhere be better exercised, nor would any citizens be better qualified to pronounce and to uphold the rightful decision in each case.

Ver. 12.—**From the avenger.** Hebrew, גֹּאֵל. Septuagint, ὁ ἀγχιστεύων τὸ αἷμα. In all other passages (twelve in number) where the word occurs in this sense it is qualified by the addition "of blood." Standing by itself, it is everywhere else translated "kinsman," or (more properly) "redeemer," and is constantly applied in that sense to God our Saviour (Job xix. 25; Isa. lxiii. 16 &c.). The two ideas, however, which seem to us so distinct, and even so opposed, are in their origin one. To the men of the primitive age, when public justice was not, and when might was right, the only protector was one who could and would avenge them of their wrongs, and by avenging prevent their repetition. This champion of the injured individual, or rather family,—for rights and wrongs were thought of as belonging to families rather than to individuals,—was their goel, who had their peace, their safety, above all, their honour, in his charge. For no sentiments spring up quicker, and none exercise a more tyrannous sway, than the sentiment of honour, which in its various and often strangely distorted forms has always perhaps outweighed all other considerations in the minds of men. Now the earliest form in which the sentiment of honour asserted itself was in the blood-feud. If one member of a family was slain, an intolerable shame and sense of contumely

rested upon the family until blood had been avenged by blood, until "satisfaction" had been done by the death of the manslayer. He who freed the family from this intolerable pain and humiliation—who enabled it to hold up its head, and to breathe freely once more—was the goel; and in the natural order of things he was the nearest "kinsman" of the slain who could and would take the duty upon him. To these natural feelings was added in many cases a religious sentiment which regarded homicide as a sin against the higher Powers for which they too demanded the blood of the guilty. Such was the feeling among the Greeks, and probably among the Egyptians, while among the Hebrews it could plead Divine sanction, given in the most comprehensive terms: "Your blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man; . . . whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. ix. 5, 6). The moral difficulties of this proclamation need not here be considered; it is enough to take note that the Divine law itself recognised the duty as well as the lawfulness of private blood-revenge when public justice could not be depended on. The goel, therefore, was not merely the natural champion of his family, nor only the deliverer who satisfied the imperious demands of an artificial code of honour; he was a minister of God, in whose patient efforts to hunt down his victim the thirst for vengeance was to some extent at least superseded by, or rather transmuted into, the longing to glorify God (compare the difficult case of Rev. vi. 10). It was not merely human feelings of great reach and tenacity which were outraged by the immunity of the manslayer; it was still more the justice of God which received a grievous wound. Just because, however, God had made the cause of the slain man his own, and had sanctioned the avenging mission of the goel, he could therefore regulate the course of vengeance so as to make it run as even as possible with true justice. It was not indeed possible to distinguish *ab initio* between the homicide which deserved and that which did not deserve capital punishment. Such distinction, difficult under any circumstances, was impossible when vengeance was in private hands. But while the goel could not be restrained from immediate pursuit unhindered by investigation or compunction (lest his whole usefulness be paralysed), the manslayer might have opportunity to escape, and to be sheltered under the Divine mercy until he could establish (if that were possible) his innocence. No better instance can be found of the way in which the King of Israel adopted the sentiments and institutions of a semi-barbarous age, added to them the sanctions of religion, and so modified them as to secure the maximum of practical good consistent with the social state and moral feelings of the people. No doubt many an individual was overtaken and slain by the goel who did not deserve to die according to our ideas; but where perfection was unattainable, this error was far less dangerous to that age than the opposite error of diminishing the sanctity of human life and the awfulness of Divine justice. **The congregation.** Hebrew, עֵדָה. This word is used frequently from Exod. xii. 3 to the end of this chapter, and again in Joshua and the last two chapters of Judges. It is not found in Deuteronomy, nor often in the later books. In every case apparently *eydah* signifies the whole nation as gathered together, *e. g.* as represented by all who had an acknowledged right to appear, for of course 600,000 men could not gather together in any one place. The force of the word may be understood by reference to its use in Judges xx. 1; xxi. 10, 13, 16. Another word (קָהָל) is also used, less frequently in Leviticus and Numbers, but more frequently in the later books, for the general assembly of the people of Israel. No distinction of meaning can be drawn between the two words, and it cannot, therefore, be maintained that the "congregation" of this verse means the local elders of Josh. xx. 4. The regulations there laid down are not inconsistent with the present law, but are quite independent of it. They refer to a preliminary hearing of the case as stated by the fugitive alone in order to determine his right to shelter in the mean time; which right, if accorded, was without prejudice to the future judgment of the "congregation" on the whole facts of the case (see below on ver. 25).

Ver. 13.—**Six cities.** See on Deut. xix. 8, 9, where three more are apparently ordered to be set aside upon a certain contingency.

Ver. 14.—**Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan.** According to Deut. iv. 41—43, Moses himself severed these three cities, Bezer of the Reubenites, Ramoth of the Gadites, and Golan of the Manassites. Those verses, however, seem to be an evident interpolation where they stand, and are hardly consistent with previous statements if taken literally. It is tolerably clear that the two tribes had only formed temporary settlements hitherto, and that their boundaries were not defined as yet; also that the Levitical cities (to which the cities of refuge were to belong) were not separated until after the conquest. It is likely that Deut. iv. 41—43 is a fragment, the real meaning of which is that Moses ordered the severance of three cities on that side Jordan as cities of refuge, for which purposes the three cities mentioned were afterwards selected.

Ver. 16.—**With an instrument of iron.** There is no reasonable doubt that בַּרְזֶל has here (as elsewhere) its proper meaning of iron. The expression must be held to include both weapons and other instruments; the former may have been mostly made of bronze, but where iron is used at all it is sure to be employed in war.

Ver. 17.—**With throwing a stone, wherewith he may die.** Literally, "with a stone of the hand, by which one may die," *i. e.* a stone which is suitable for striking or throwing, and apt to inflict a mortal wound.

Ver. 18.—**A hand weapon of wood.** A club, or other such formidable instrument.

Ver. 19.—**When he meeteth him,** *i. e.* outside a city of refuge.

Ver. 20.—**But if.** Rather, "and if" (וְאִם). The consideration of wilful murder is continued in these two verses, although chiefly with reference to the motive. It is to be understood that the deliberate intent was present in the former cases, and a new case is added, viz., if he smite him with his fist with fatal consequences.

Ver. 22.—**Without enmity, . . . without laying of wait.** These expressions seem intended to limit mercy to cases of pure accident, such as that quoted in Deut. xix. 5. Neither provocation nor any other "extenuating circumstances" are taken into account, nor what we now speak of as absence of premeditation. The want of these finer distinctions, as well as the short and simple list of fatal injuries given, show the rudeness of the age for which these regulations were made.

Ver. 25.—**The congregation (עֵדָה) shall restore him to the city of his refuge.** It is perfectly plain from this (and from Josh. xx. 6) that the general assembly of all Israel was to summon both homicide and avenger before them with their witnesses, and, if they found the accused innocent, were to send him back under safe escort to the city in which he had taken refuge. **He shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest.** No doubt his family might join him in his exile, and his life might be fairly happy as well as safe within certain narrow limits; but under ordinary circumstances he must forfeit much and risk more by his enforced absence from home and land. It is not easy to see why the death of the high priest should have set the fugitive free from the law of vengeance, except as foreshadowing the death of Christ. No similar significance is anywhere else attributed to the death of the high priest; and it was rather in its unbroken continuance than in its recurring interruption that the priesthood of Aaron typified that of the Redeemer. To see anything of a vicarious or satisfactory character in the death of the high priest seems to be introducing an element quite foreign to the symbolism of the Old Testament. The stress, however, which is laid upon the fact of his decease (cf. ver. 28), and the solemn notice of his having been anointed with the holy oil, seem to point unmistakably to something in his official and consecrated character which made it right that the rigour of the law should die with him. What the Jubile was to the debtor who had lost his property, that the death of the high priest was to the homicide who had lost his liberty. If it was the case, as commonly believed, that all blood feuds were absolutely terminated by the death of the high priest, might this not be because the high priest, as chief minister of the law of God, was himself the goel of the whole nation? When he died all processes of vengeance lapsed, because they had really been commenced in his name.

Ver. 26.—**Without the border of the city,** *i. e.* no doubt beyond its "suburbs."

Ver. 30.—**By the mouth of witnesses,** *i. e.* of two at least (cf. Deut. xvii. 6).

Ver. 31.—**Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer.** The passion for vengeance is both bad and good, and is therefore to be carefully purified and restrained; but when the desire for vengeance can be appeased by a money payment, it has become wholly bad, and is only a despicable form of covetousness which insults the justice it pretends to invoke. Such payments or "ransoms" are permitted by the Koran, and have been common among most semi-civilised peoples, notably amongst our old English ancestors.

Ver. 32.—**That he should come again to dwell in the land.** No one might buy off the enmity of the avenger before the appointed time, for that would give an unjust advantage to wealth, and would make the whole matter mercenary and vulgar.

Ver. 33.—**The land cannot be cleansed.** Literally, "there is no expiation (יְכֻפַּר) for the land." Septuagint, *οὐχ ἐξιλασθήσεται ἡ γῆ*. By these expressions the Lord places the sin of murder in its true light, as a sin against himself. The land, his land, is defiled with the blood of the slain, and nothing can do away with the guilt which cleaves to it but the strict execution of Divine justice upon the murderer. Money might satisfy the relatives of the slain, but cannot satisfy his Maker.

Ver. 34.—**For I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.** Therefore the murderer's hand is raised against me; the blood of the slain is ever before my eyes, its cry for vengeance ever in my ears (cf. Gen. iv. 10; Matt. xxiii. 35; Rev. vi. 10).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—34.—*The dwelling of the faithful: the Redeemer: the sanctity of life.* There are in this chapter three things closely connected historically, and therefore closely consecutive in the narrative, but distinct in their spiritual application. We have, therefore, separately to consider—I. THE PROVISION WHICH GOD MAKES FOR HIS OWN, AND THEIR DISPERSION; II. THE REFUGE SET BEFORE HIM THAT IS GUILTY OF BLOOD; III. THE SANCTITY OF LIFE.

I. In the regulations made for the habitation of the Levites and their cattle we have some sort of precedent for religious endowments; but this precedent loses all value in argument when we consider that the old dispensation was essentially temporal, which ours is not; moreover, the Levites do *not* correspond to the clergy, but rather to the inner circle of the faithful, who are more emphatically the "salt of the earth." Consider, therefore, as to the habitation of the Levites—1. *That it was the will of God to disperse them as widely as possible throughout Israel*—a thing which might have been looked upon as a punishment to them (Gen. xlix. 7), but was really for the common good. Even so it is his will that his own, who are more especially his own, should be scattered far and wide among the mass of imperfect or nominal Christians; not gathered together in one corner of Christendom, but everywhere found as the few among the many. And note that this is the very law of "salt," which must be scattered and diffused to exercise its antiseptic functions. 2. *That the Levites, although dispersed, yet lived in communities*, and this no doubt that they might set forth the life of holiness according to the law. Even so there is, beside the law of dispersion, a counter-law of aggregation for "the spiritual," which makes mightily for holiness. For Christianity is a life, and life is complex, and therefore can only be lived by many who agree. There should be centres of high religious influence everywhere, but those centres should be strong. 3. *That the allotments of the Levites, though sufficient, were far from being extensive*, on any understanding of the text. Even so, for those who would be an example to Christ's flock, sufficiency is the rule, and nothing more (1 Tim. vi. 8). God does not *design* poverty for his own (Luke xii. 31), unless voluntarily embraced (*ibid.* ver. 33), but assuredly not wealth (*ibid.* vi. 24). 4. *That the object aimed at in the allotment of their cities was to give each tribe, and even each tribesman, a personal and local interest in the Levites.* Even so it is the will of God that those who specially follow after him should be identified as strongly as possible with those around them, in order that these may love and reverence them. Every Christian land has its "saints," by whom it is the more edified in that it feels them to be specially its own.

Consider also, mystically—1. *That the Levitical cities numbered forty-eight*, i. e. 12×4—the first being the symbol of the universal (apostolic—see Rev. xxi. 14) Church, the second of the whole earth (Matt. viii. 11; Rev. xxi. 13), the whole signifying diffusion throughout the world. Even so the religious life is universal in all parts of the Church of God, even in those which seem to us most remote. 2. *That the enclosures round the Levitical cities measured the same every way—lay foursquare as far as possible.* Even so it is the ideal of the religious life that it be not one-sided, or unequal, but attain its full development in all directions; if not it must be *starved* to some extent.

II. The law of refuge from the goel is one of the most striking, and yet difficult, of the foreshadowings of the gospel. It is complicated, in the spiritual interpretation, by the fact that Christ is the Victim with whose blood our hands are stained, and our only Refuge, while he is also typified as Redeemer by the goel, and as Messiah by the anointed priest. Consider, however—1. *That the law presupposed and provided for a state of blood-guiltiness, which brought after it the sentence of death* (Gen. ix. 6). Even so the gospel presupposes that all have sinned, and have become guilty of the death of Christ, who died for our sins, and have incurred the sentence of eternal death. David said, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness" (Ps. li. 14), but he had already incurred it (2 Sam. xii. 9); and so have we (cf. Heb. vi. 6; x. 29). 2. *That it provided for such blood-guiltiness as was unwittingly incurred.* Even so Christ's excuse for us is that we "know not what we do" (Luke xxiii. 24), and our

hope is that we have not wilfully and deliberately preferred sin as such (Acts iii. 17; 1 Tim. i. 13). 3. *That it presupposed that the avenger was on foot to take the life of the manslayer.* Even so the gospel testifies by its very offers of mercy that the Divine justice is surely gone forth with the edict of death against every soul that hath sinned, and that it is a mere matter of time when that justice shall overtake the sinner (Gen. iii. 3; Ezek. xviii. 4; Rom. iii. 9, 19, &c.). 4. *That it pleased God to open a door of safety to the fugitive without staying the avenger.* For the mission of the goel was very needful for that age, and yet it was the will of God to spare the unwitting homicide. Even so it has pleased God in a wonderful manner to provide a refuge for the sinner without compromising the Divine justice. The wrath of God against sin and the necessary punishment of sin are declared by the very means which bring salvation to the sinner (Rom. iii. 26, &c.). 5. *That this refuge was so distributed in six cities, three on each side Jordan, that it was everywhere accessible.* Even so the sinner's refuge in Jesus Christ is everywhere and by all accessible, if they will without delay flee into it (Heb. vi. 18, &c.). And note that whereas almost all other religious privilege and promise was concentrated at Jerusalem, this refuge was distributed to all quarters of Jewish settlement, intimating that salvation in Christ is attainable wherever men call upon his name (Rom. ix. 33, &c.). 6. *That in order to be safe the manslayer must flee to the city of refuge, which was a Levitical city (not a solitary post or a mere sanctuary), and there must take up his abode among the Levites.* Even so the sinner who desires to escape from the sentence of Divine justice must flee for refuge unto Christ to take hold on his merits; but in doing so he does *ipso facto* find a home in the society of the truly faithful, and in that society he will abide. The life of one that is escaped from wrath is *not* a solitary walk with God, but a dwelling in a populous city (Acts ii. 42; Col. iii. 15; Heb. xii. 22, 23; cf. Ps. xxxi. 21, &c.). 7. *That the manslayer must never stir outside his refuge at risk of his life;* if he did, the goel was at liberty to slay him. Even so the sinner must never quit his refuge in Christ for one hour, lest he perish; neither may he (which is part of the same thing) withdraw from the society of the faithful, for that is his (outward) protection. At whatever risk and loss of things temporal, he must abide under the shelter of the atonement.

Consider again, with respect to the death of the high priest, and the staying of blood-feuds—1. That the high priest typified Christ, not in that he died by virtue of individual mortality, but in that he lived by virtue of official immortality (see on ch. xx. 28; Heb. vii. 24, 25); wherefore it is contrary to the whole analogy of Scripture to attribute any power of atonement to the death of the high priest. 2. That the high priest was not only the mediator and intercessor for Israel, but was also the chief minister of the law of God, and therefore the avenger of all iniquity against Israel, especially of all blood-guiltiness; in a word, he represented Divine justice as well as Divine compassion. 3. That the death of the high priest, which set the escaped manslayer free from all constraints and restrictions, must be taken to represent the passing away (as far as we are concerned) of the law of God as directed against sin. But this will only be when sin itself shall have wholly ceased, *i. e.* at the resurrection of the just; *then*, and only *then*, will all restraints, all constraints, all necessities for sacrifice and renunciation, all penalties for forsaking the society of the faithful, be for ever abolished as no longer needful.

Consider also, in connection with this—1. That the word *goel* is translated avenger, kinsman, and redeemer; the same personage sustaining in fact all these characters, and that by a natural law due to the circumstances of the age. 2. That our Lord is unquestionably our Goel, in that he is our Kinsman, who has made himself our nearest blood relation, and in that he is our Redeemer, who hath redeemed for us our forfeited possession in the kingdom of heaven. 3. That he is also our Goel in that he is in readiness to avenge as Judge all wrongs done unto the temporal or spiritual lives of his own. This is indeed little considered, but is certainly true, since he alone wields all power in heaven and in earth (see Matt. xxviii. 18; Heb. iv. 12, 13, where the "Word of God" is evidently the personal Word; Luke xviii. 7; 2 Thess. i. 6; Rev. vi. 10; xix. 2, &c.). 4. That the work and office of Christ as Avenger and Defender of his own will cease and determine with the final end of all wickedness, and then he will be Goel no longer in this sense (see 1 Cor. xv. 24—28 compared

with Rev. vii. 17, &c.). And this change, whereby the Avenger will be wholly swallowed up in the Kinsman and Redeemer, seems to be symbolised by the death of the high priest (see above).

III. The laws of manslaughter here declared have rather a moral than a spiritual value. The one thing which they uphold as a principle is the sanctity of human life, and the duty of inflicting capital punishment for murder, as laid down in Gen. ix. It is difficult to see that this duty is less under the gospel, because the bringing in of the gospel has not changed the fundamental relations of man to his Maker as based upon creation; rather it would seem to have added to the sanctity of human life by adding to the ties which knit that life to the life of God (cf. Acts ix. 4, 5; 1 Cor. vi. 15; 2 Pet. i. 4). Whatever may he held, however, as touching the duties of civil governors, we may consider—1. That the sin against God involved in murder is enormous, and this guilt is incurred by every one that hateth his brother (1 John iii. 15). 2. That the guilt of murder lay before God in the intention to kill, wherefore murders also proceed out of the heart (Mark vii. 21). 3. That it was laid upon the congregation to show by prompt and righteous procedure that they had no sympathy with the murderer. 4. That in the absence of such vindication of justice the land was polluted with blood in the eyes of God, who dwelt therein. 5. That there is a crime which is murder, but is worse than any killing of the body, *i. e.* the destroying of the soul by leading it into sin. 6. That it is laid upon all the faithful to show their horror and detestation of this crime by their treatment of seducers and tempters (1 Cor. v. 11; Ephes. v. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 21; 2 John 11). 7. That indulgence and sympathy extended to destroyers of souls that have not repented brings down the wrath of God upon a Church, and makes it hateful in his eyes (see Isa. i. 21, &c.). 8. That this sinful indulgence of seducers is excused by human considerations, in forgetfulness that God is in the midst of his people, and that every sin so lightly excused or ignored stares him in the face (2 Cor. vi. 16; Rev. ii. 1). 9. That if the blood of Abel cried to him from the ground, and if the land of Canaan could not be cleansed from the blood of its slain, how much more will he be moved by that destruction of immortal souls which is wrought by the wicked lives and solicitations of bad Christians!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Levites to be distributed in certain cities throughout the whole land.* Unlike the other tribes, the Levites were to have no inheritance in the land. The names of Judah, Ephraim, Manasseh, Reuben figure on the map of Palestine, each giving name to a province or county of its own; but the map knows no tribe of Levi. The Lord was the inheritance of this tribe. For their subsistence the Levites were to depend partly on the tithe, partly on certain dues and perquisites, supplemented by the free-will offerings of the faithful. But although they were landless, it was never the Lord's will that they should be houseless. A vagabond ministry could not have failed to be a scandalous ministry. Accordingly, the law here provides dwellings for the sacred tribe in forty-eight Levitical cities.

I. In this law TWO POINTS CLAIM NOTICE. 1. That the forty-eight cities, although denominated "Levitical cities," *were not devoted exclusively to members of this tribe.* For example, Hebron, which was perhaps the most noted of the forty-eight, being the city of refuge for what was afterwards the whole kingdom of Judah, formed part of the inheritance of Caleb the Kenezite (Josh. xiv. 14). Doubtless many families of Judah would also be found among the residents; for the city belonged to Judah. What the Levites obtained was not, in any instance, exclusive possession of the city, but certain houses within the walls, and certain pasture grounds ("glebe lands") adjoining. The houses and glebes th is set apart became the inalienable inheritance of the respective Levitical families. They were as strictly entailed as the *lands* which constituted the patrimony of the other families in Israel. If at any time they were sold for debt, they reverted to the family at the Jubilee. 2. *The Levitical cities were scattered up and down the whole country.* The arrangement was a remarkable one. At first sight, indeed, it looks awkward and unnatural. For were not the Levites set apart to do the service of the sanctuary? Would it not have been more convenient to

have had them located where they would have been within easy reach of the sanctuary? In the ideal arrangement sketched in Ezekiel's vision, the Levitical families are seen located in the vicinity of Jerusalem. The circumstance that the law ordained an arrangement so different was meant, I cannot doubt, to suggest to the Levites that they had other duties to discharge in Israel besides doing the service of the sanctuary. It was the will of God that they should, in their several districts, be the stated teachers of the people in the Divine law (Deut. xxxiii. 10; Mal. ii. 4—8). This office and calling of the Levites being so honourable, it has often been thought strange that their dispersion throughout Israel should have been predicted by Jacob as a curse upon the tribe for their father's sin (Gen. xlix. 7). In itself it was honourable; nevertheless the words of the patriarch were fulfilled in the end. When the ten tribes revolted from the house of David, they fell away also from the sanctuary; and the Levites dwelling within those tribes had to choose between forfeiting their cities or being cut off from the sanctuary. In either case they found how bitter it was to be divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel.

II. WHAT MAY WE LEARN FROM THIS LAW? 1. It has been usual to see in the distribution of the Levites over the whole land *a type and prelude of the arrangement which, in Christendom, assigns to every parish and every congregation its own pastor.* The apostles "ordained elders in every city." Ministers of the gospel are not to be massed together in the great cities, but to be scattered everywhere, so that no family in God's Israel may be beyond reach of one "at whose mouth they may seek the law." Of the institutions which have co-operated to make society what it is in the Christian nations, it would not be easy to name one which has been more influential for good than this. 2. The arrangement may be regarded as representing *the principle according to which the lot of Christ's people in this world is ordered.* The faithful do not live apart from other men in towns and provinces of their own. Separation from the world, in this literal sense, has been often the dream of Christian reformers, and not seldom have societies been organised for the purpose of realising it. But the well-meant schemes have in every case failed. They were bound to fail, for they ran counter to our Lord's great prayer and rule: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John xvii. 15). Nor is the reason of the rule doubtful. Christ's people are the salt of the earth; and salt, to do its work, must be mingled with that which it is to preserve. The godly must be content to have ungodly persons, more or fewer, for neighbours so long as they abide in this world. An unmixed "congregation of the righteous" belongs to the felicities of the world to come. But if Christ's people are like the Levites in regard to dispersion, they are like them also in respect to the provision made for their brotherly communion. As the Levites dwelt in their cities with other Levites, so Christians are to be gathered into Churches for mutual comfort and for common work. "We believe in the communion of saints."—B.

Vers. 9—29.—*The manslayer and the cities of refuge.* The law of sanctuary, as it is here laid down, never fails to remind the devout reader of the refuge which God's mercy has provided in Christ for those who, by their sin, have exposed themselves to the vengeance of the law. This way of regarding the matter can be thoroughly justified. At the same time it is well to bear in mind that the law was framed, in the first instance, for a humbler purpose.

I. THE ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF REFUGE CONSIDERED AS A PART OF THE MOSAIC CRIMINAL LAW. In primitive and barbarous states of society the execution of vengeance for murder was devolved by ancient custom on the next kinsman of the murdered man. The *goël*, the redeemer and kinsman, was also the avenger of blood. The custom is sufficiently harsh and barbarous, and gives rise to blood-feuds and untold miseries. Yet, for the states of society in which it originated, it cannot be dispensed with. There are at this day tribes without number, especially in the East, in which the sanctity of human life is guarded only by fear of the avenger of blood. Accordingly, the law of Moses does not abolish the custom; the next kinsman was still held bound to take vengeance for blood. The aim of the Mosaic jurisprudence was to conserve what was good in the ancient custom, and at the same time to impose such a check upon it as would prevent its abuse. This twofold design was accom-

plished in the following way:—1. *Certain cities were made sanctuary cities* (Exod. xxi. 13). The avenger of blood might pursue the manslayer to the gate of the city of refuge; might kill him, if he could, before reaching the gate; but at the gate he had to halt and sheathe his sword. 2. Although the gate of the city of refuge was open to every manslayer, *the city did not suffer the wilful murderer to laugh at the sword of justice.* It gave provisional protection to all, but only to save them from the blind and indiscriminating anger of the avenger of blood. The refugees were sheltered only till they had stood a regular trial (ver. 12). If it should be proved to the satisfaction of the congregation that the accused person had been guilty of murder, he was to be delivered up to the avenger of blood to be killed. 3. *If, on the contrary, it should be found that the manslayer meant no harm, that it was a case of accidental homicide, the city of refuge was to afford him inviolable sanctuary.* The law did not (as with us) suffer him to go home free. Accidental homicide is often the result of carelessness. To teach men not to trifle with the sanctity of life, the manslayer, although no murderer, had to confine himself to the city of his refuge. But so long as he abode within its walls he was safe.

II. THE ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF REFUGE CONSIDERED AS A TYPE. That it had a typical reference might be gathered (were there nothing else) from the direction that the manslayer was to continue in the sanctuary city "until the death of the high priest;" a meaningless provision if the statute had been only a piece of criminal law. Considered as a type, the ordinance represents—1. *Our condition as sinners.* We are exposed to the vengeance of God's law, and the stroke may fall upon us at any moment. A condition in which there can be no solid peace. 2. *What Christ is to those who are found in him.* He is their High Priest, whose life is the security for their life; who "is able to save to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth" (Heb. vii. 25). And he is their Refuge, insomuch that for them the one thing needful is that they be found in him (Rom. viii. 1, 38, 39; Philip. iii. 8, 9). 3. *How we may obtain the salvation which is in Christ.* It is by fleeing into him for refuge and thereafter abiding in him continually. In him we are safe, out of him we are lost. This way of salvation is such as renders inexcusable those who neglect it. The cities of refuge were so distributed that no manslayer had far to run before reaching one. There were three on each side of Jordan; of the three, in each case, one lay near the north border, one near the south border, and one in the middle. Every city was the natural centre of its province and accessible from every side. They were so situated that no fugitive required to cross either a river or a mountain chain before reaching his refuge. How strikingly is all this realised in Christ our refuge!—B.

Vers. 30—34.—*Why the murderer must be put to death.* This passage brings up a subject not often discussed in the pulpit. Yet it surely is a subject which comes home to the business of us all. In a country like ours the administration of justice, the execution of vengeance on evil-doers, is a duty in which every one has to bear a part. We may not all be officers of justice, but we must all act as informers, or witnesses, or jurymen. It is of high importance, therefore, that every member of the community should be well instructed regarding the principles which lie at the foundation of the criminal law, and, in particular, should know why and on what authority the community lays hold upon evil-doers and inflicts on them the punishment of their crimes.

I. Observe THE OCCASION of the statute here delivered. It is an appendix to the law regarding the cities of refuge. That law was designed to shield the involuntary homicide from the avenger of blood. The intention was good; but good intentions do not always prevent dangerous mistakes. It often happens that good men in labouring to cast out one evil open the door to a greater evil. A follower of John Howard may so press the duty of humanity towards prisoners as to deprive the prison of its deterrent power. So in Israel there was a danger that the care taken to restrain the avenger of blood from touching the involuntary manslayer might have the effect of deadening the public sense of the enormity of murder, and weakening men's resentment against the murderer. The design of the statute before us is to prevent so mischievous a result.

II. What then are THE PROVISIONS OF THE STATUTE? 1. *The ancient law which*

condemned the murderer to death is solemnly reaffirmed (ver. 30; compare with vers. 16—21 and Gen. ix. 6). To be sure, the extreme penalty ought not to be executed without extreme circumspection. The unsupported testimony of one witness is not to be held sufficient to sustain a charge of murder. Nevertheless, if there is sufficient evidence, the sword must strike, the murderer must not be suffered to go free. 2. *The death penalty may not be commuted into a fine* (ver. 31). In regard to this point the Mosaic law differs from many, perhaps from most other primitive codes; for they suffered the murderer to compound with the kinsmen of his victim by paying a fine in cattle or in money. The law of Moses suffered no such composition. The murderer must be put to death. Even the restraint to which the law subjected the involuntary manslayer was not suffered to be relaxed by a money payment. In all cases affecting the sanctity of life pecuniary compositions are utterly forbidden.

III. THE REASON OF THIS STATUTE is carefully explained (vers. 33, 34). The reason lies in these three principles:—1. "*Blood defileth the land*" (cf. Ps. cvi. 38). That sin defiles the sinner, that murder especially defiles the conscience of the murderer—these are facts patent to all. It is not so often observed that crime perpetrated in a city defiles the whole city. The whole community has a share in the guilt. Hence the remarkable law laid down in Deut. xxi. 1—9 for the expiation of an uncertain murder. 2. *The proper expiation of murder is by the death of the murderer.* "The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein but by the blood of him that shed it." Justice is satisfied, the honour of the law vindicated, when the murderer is put to death, and not otherwise. To accept a pecuniary satisfaction for blood is simply to pollute the land. 3. In this whole matter *the paramount consideration ought to be the honour of God.* Murder is criminal beyond all other offences, because it is the defacement of the image of God in man. Murder must not go unavenged, because it defiles the land before God.——Let these principles be carefully weighed. They set in a clear light the true and adequate reason for inflicting punishment on evil-doers. The true reason is neither the reformation of the criminal (for the sword must strike although there should be no hope of reformation) nor the protection of society. These are important objects, and not to be overlooked; but the proper reason of punishment is the vindication of righteousness, the executing of vengeance on the man who doeth evil (Rom. xiii. 4).

IV. In conclusion, DOES NOT ALL THIS SHED WELCOME LIGHT ON THE ATONEMENT OF OUR BLESSED LORD? The death of Christ for our sins accomplished many great and precious purposes. It was an affecting proof of his sympathy with us. It was a revelation of the Father's love. But these purposes do not contain the proper and adequate reason of our Lord's sufferings. He died for our sins. It was necessary that our sins should be cleansed, that expiation or atonement should be made for them. (N.B. It is the same Hebrew word, commonly translated *atonement* elsewhere in the Old Testament, which in this passage is translated *cleansing* in the text and *expiation* in the margin.) They might have been expiated in our blood. But, blessed be God, his mercy has found out another way. By a blessed exchange Christ has become sin for us; he has borne our sins and made atonement for them. This was the end of his sufferings—to satisfy the justice of the Father for our sins, so that his righteousness might not be dishonoured although we should go free.—B.

Vers. 9—34.—*The cities of refuge.* The laws in regard to the cities of refuge and manslaughter suggest truths on the following subjects. We see in them—

I. A TOLERATION OF WHAT GOD NEITHER HAS APPOINTED NOR APPROVES. The old custom of blood-avenging by the *goel*, though open to grave abuses, was not altogether proscribed. The laws given by God to Moses were not always absolutely the best, though, relatively to the state of the people, the best they could endure. Other illustrations are found in the laws relating to divorce, polygamy, and slavery. These examples of a wise conservatism suggest lessons for parents, who have to "overlook" (Acts xvii. 30) the times of ignorance of their children, and for missionaries, who may have for a time to tolerate inevitable evils in converts whose consciences are not yet trained. As God dealt with the Jews during their childhood as a nation, so does he in mercy deal with his sinful children during their education in this life (Ps. xix. 12; cxxx. 3, 4).

II. AN EDUCATION BY MEANS OF THE CUSTOMS OF THE PAST. God tolerated the old custom, but not in its entirety. He modified it, and thus carried on the education of the nation. On the one hand, the cities of refuge were not like the *asyla* of the Greeks and Romans, for wilful murderers were led forth from them to justice (ver. 30). On the other hand, the homicide by accident was safe under certain conditions (vers. 12, 25—28). So too now God discriminates between wilful sins (Heb. x. 26—31, 38, 39) and sins of ignorance and imprudence, which may bring after them serious disabilities, but do not doom to destruction.

III. A PREFIGURATION OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH IN THE FUTURE. The cities of refuge, if not strictly a type, are an illustration of Christ, the sinner's refuge. The rules prescribed by Jews in regard to the road being kept in good condition, finger-posts being provided, &c., suggest various applications. 1. The cities of refuge were near every portion of the land, and Christ is within reach of every one of us. 2. The way was to be made plain; and the word of the truth of the gospel is plain, so that "he that readeth it may run" straight to the refuge. 3. Every manslayer, native or foreign, received the shelter of the refuge; and sinners of every degree of guilt and every nation have no safety except in Christ. 4. Within the city, and "in Christ," there is no condemnation. 5. To quit the refuge, and to "go away" from Christ, is to meet destruction. 6. A murderer had but the appearance of safety within the city, and the wilful sinner can find no shelter from the wrath of God even when professing to believe in Christ.—P.

Vers. 1—8.—*God provides places for the Levites to dwell in.* God had laid upon the tribe of Levi many and onerous services, such as gave full occupation for their time (chs. i., iii., iv., viii., xxviii., xxix.); he had also made abundant provision for their support in the matter of food (ch. xviii.); it remained that he should give a clear indication of where they were to find a place of abode in Canaan. If their particular place of settlement was important to the other tribes, it was surely of peculiar importance to the tribe which in a representative aspect stood nearer to God than any of the rest. Levi, with all its solemn responsibilities, would assuredly not have been tolerated in such an assertion of self-will as came from Reuben and Gad. As we examine the mode of settlement indicated in this passage, we perceive how *God points out the golden mean between too much concentration and too much diffusion.*

I. THE LEVITES WERE SO SETTLED AS TO AVOID THE GREAT EVILS CONSEQUENT ON UNDUE CONCENTRATION. They might have had the tabernacle fixed up in a certain tribal allotment of their own, and then what would have happened? Those living at a distance from the territory of Levi would have been debarred from many privileges belonging to those in immediate proximity. God is no respecter of persons. He did all that was possible to put every tribe in Israel in a position of religious equality. The proportion of land and the proportion of Levitical service was to be according to the needs of each tribe. 1. Thus, *by a judicious diffusion, the unity of the nation was promoted.* Different circumstances require different means for the same end. While the Israelites were encamped in the wilderness, the tribe of Levi was all together, in the midst of the camp, and immediately around the tabernacle. But when the Israelites became distributed in Canaan, the Levites were distributed also, thus acting still as a principle of unity, although in a different way. And this distribution had been made all the more necessary since two tribes and a half had chosen to dwell on the east of Jordan. That the Israelites themselves were not supremely conscious of the need of unity had been shown only too clearly by the conduct of Reuben and Gad. Much more was wanted than to lie side by side within the same borders. A mere geographical unity was a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. 2. This judicious diffusion also helped in *promoting the knowledge of all that needed to be known in Israel.* The Levites were privileged to become—and the privilege was a very high one—the guides, instructors, counsellors, and monitors of the people. That which God had made known to Moses needed to be brought down very patiently and carefully to individual, private, daily life. The Levites had ample opportunities to explain the commandments of God and the significance of the types, the rites and ceremonies, and the great historic commemorations. And as the history of Israel grew, there grew with it opportunities to stimulate and warn by pointing out the

mingled glory and shame of the nation's career, and the lessons to be learnt from considering the men who had been conspicuous in that career (2 Chron. xxxv. 3). But these opportunities of instruction only came because God had sufficiently distributed the instructors throughout the land. If a house is to be fully lighted up there must be a light in every room. Those who are already instructed must be where they can firmly lay hold of the ignorant, for the ignorant in the things of God need not only to be instructed, but first of all thoroughly wakened out of sleep. 3. *This diffusion also indicated the service which all Israel was to render to the world.* What Levi was to Israel, that Israel was to become to all mankind. Levi was diffused through the whole nation, and only kept its individuality as a tribe in proportion as it kept its fidelity to God. Other tribes were distinguished by their territory; Levi by being specially engaged in the holy service of the tabernacle and the temple. Thus what a benefit has been produced—more real perhaps than exactly appreciated—by the dispersion of Israel among all nations to bear their own peculiar, solemn, and pathetic testimony to Israel's God, and to the historic verity of the Old Testament! Thus also does God make his own gracious and comprehensive arrangements to diffuse believers in his Son throughout the world, according to the spiritual needs of the world. In one sense they are rigorously separated from the world, even as Israel was by the hard and fast lines of the national borders; in another sense they are meant to be so diffused that wherever there is a dark place, there the light of the truth as it is in Jesus may brightly shine. The gospel is debtor to all nations and all ranks, to both sexes and to all ages. We find the true Israelite in every society where a man has any right to be at all: among the highest and the lowest; in Parliaments, in courts of justice, in commerce, in literature, in science, and in art.

II. CARE WAS ALSO TAKEN IN THE SETTLEMENT OF THE LEVITES THAT THE NECESSARY DIFFUSION SHOULD NOT BE PUSHED TOO FAR. They were to be distributed through all Israel, but not according to the free choice of the individual Levite. Forty-eight cities, with sufficient accompanying land, were set apart for them. Thus, by fixing a limit of diffusion, God conferred a benefit both on them and on the whole people. Those who are engaged in a special work of such incalculable importance as the work of the Levites was, need to be where they can frequently counsel, comfort, and encourage one another. It was not good for the Levites to be alone. To be isolated was in itself a sore temptation. And though the work of God is only truly done where there is individual consecration, energy, and initiative, yet he is not a wise Christian who sets lightly by the advantage he gains from frequent recourse to those like-minded with himself. A certain measure of coherence among the Levites was needed for a healthy and profitable state of the official life. You shall have a fire blazing brightly in the grate, and if you leave it so it will go on for a long time giving out its flame, heat, and light. But take the pieces of coal and range them separately on the hearth, and very quickly the glowing fragments will become a dull red and soon die out altogether. The limits which God fixes are wise and loving limits; he ever keeps us from all the dangers of extremes. The Levites were neither to be too much separated from the people nor too much mingled with them.—Y.

Vers. 9—34.—*The cities of refuge.* We in our modern English life have an experience of the stability of social order, of general submission to a national law, and of confidence in the strict administration of justice, which causes this provision for the cities of refuge to come on us in a very unexpected way. We are not unprepared to read the other announcements which come at the close of this Book—*e. g.* the strict injunction to expel the Canaanites, the allotment of the inheritance, and the Divine marking out of the boundaries of the land; but this appointment of the cities of refuge is like a great light suddenly lighted up to reveal to us the peculiar social state of Israel.

I. We are brought face to face with A TIME WHEN THERE WAS NO GENERAL AND SECURE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. God had to make provision here for a strong feeling which had evidently grown up through many centuries. This provision pointed back to those unsocial days when the only effectual avengers of murder were the kinsmen of the slain person. The punishment of the murderer had come

to be regarded as a family duty, because no one else would concern himself with it. And in the course of time what had begun in necessity ended in a conventional sense of honour, and of the obligations of kinship, which there was no way of escaping. Private revenge, whatever its abuses, whatever the dark instigations to it in the heart of the avenger, was in a certain sense imperatively necessary when there was no efficient public tribunal of justice. Thus we see how much of the barbaric element still remained in Israel. It is a matter of common agreement among us that a man must not take the law into his own hands, but in ancient Israel every man seems to have done it without the slightest hesitation.

II. We have here another illustration of THE ALLOWANCE THAT WAS MADE FOR HARDNESS OF HEART ON THE PART OF ISRAEL. When the Pharisees came to our Lord, tempting him with a question concerning divorce, he replied, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives" (Matt. xix. 8). So here we may say that Moses, because of the hardness of heart in Israel, provided these cities of refuge. It was no manner of use to tell the *goel*, the blood avenger, not to pursue the manslayer. If he had neglected to do so he would have rested under heavy reproach all the days of his life. Moses knew well how deeply fixed was this institution of blood revenge. Had he not himself, in his patriotic zeal, taken the law into his own hand some eighty years before, and slain the Egyptian? God might indeed have forbidden this blood revenge altogether, but the command would have been a dead letter. He did a more efficacious thing in providing these cities of refuge. The existence of them was incompatible with the continuance in undiminished vigour of the practice of blood revenge. By appointing them God recognised the necessity out of which the practice had arisen. He allowed all that might be good and conscientious in the motive of the avenger. If the person pursued were really guilty of wilful murder, he could not escape; the city of refuge was no refuge for him. The line between murder and accidental homicide was very plainly drawn. Under such a system as God had established in Israel he could not but protect the unfortunate man who was fleeing from a passionate, unreasoning pursuer, and secure for him a fair inquiry. Everything was done to secure the best interests of all. God could not but honour his own solemn and exalted command, "Thou shalt not kill."

III. An illustration also of THE UNDESERVED CALAMITIES WHICH MAY COME UPON A MAN IN A WORLD WHERE SIN REIGNS EVEN UNTO DEATH. One man slaying another unwittingly deserves our deepest pity and sympathy. We have heard of those to whom such a misfortune had come having to walk softly all the days of their life because of the unintended act. They could not get it out of their minds. Yet here, in addition to possible grief of heart, there was a serious, a long, perhaps a life-long, disadvantage. The homicide, however really innocent he might be, had to flee for his life and stay in the city of refuge till the death of the high priest. Thus we have another proof of the manifold power which death has to disturb the world. These inconveniences to the manslayer could not all at once be removed. We live in a world where we not only may in a spirit of love bear one another's burdens, but some of them we must bear as a matter of necessity. The unwitting homicide had to bear the consequences of his fellow-man being mortal. Yet at the same time we are made to see how God was surely advancing to break the power of death. The lot of the manslayer was greatly mended by the institution of these cities of refuge. We may well believe that in the course of time their character became so recognised that this particular obligation of the *goel* would fall into disuse; the nation would come to accept the security, the superiority, and the rightness of public justice.

IV. Consider the points in connection with the institution of cities of refuge which show THE RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE WHICH GOD WAS SEEKING TO TEACH THE PEOPLE. The path of Israel from Egypt to Canaan had indeed been marked by much of violent death. The overwhelming of Pharaoh's army, all the sudden visitations of Divine wrath upon Israel, the slaying in battle of the Amalekites, Amorites, and Midianites—these had made God to seem as if he were continually girt with the horrid instruments of the executioner. But for all these acts, dreadful as they were, there was a reason—a Divine, and therefore sufficient, reason. Whatever was done was done judicially. If the circumstances and times of the Israelites are taken into

account, sufficient cause will appear for the frequency with which God had recourse to violent death in the carrying out of his punitive purposes. Then, with respect to murder, it was the feeling of the time that a murderer must not be suffered to live. Putting the murderer to death was the only effectual way in those semi-savage times of teaching respect for life. Respect for life was taught to the avenger by putting the city of refuge between him and the unwitting homicide. Respect for life was taught also by the inconvenience, to say the least of it, to which the homicide was put. It was taught by the requiring of more than one witness to establish a capital charge. *And we also need more respect for human life than we often show.* We should not take it so recklessly and exultingly in war; we should not take it under an insufficient plea of necessity on the gallows. There is a lamentable way of speaking of the brutal and hardened members of society, the class from which murderers so often come, as if they were little better than vermin. Many seem to think that it is a matter of no great consequence whether a man be hanged or not. True, he has to die at last; but surely there is a great difference between death when it comes in spite of the attempts of physician and attendants to ward it off, and when it comes by our deliberate infliction of it. We have all sorts of institutions and instruments to defend life by land and by sea; we have one hideous instrument, the gallows, to take it away. And as we see God advancing men, by the appointment of these cities of refuge, from the "wild justice" of private revenge to a calm reliance on public justice, so we may hope that the spirit of love and the spirit of Christ will more and more prevail amongst us, till at last the gallows will be banished, if not into utter oblivion, at all events into antiquarian obscurity.

V. CONSIDER HOW THESE CITIES OF REFUGE WERE TO BE LEVITICAL CITIES. It was fitting that the Levites should have charge of these cities, since the Levites belonged to no tribe in particular, but to the whole nation. They were removed from the temptation which would otherwise have come, if the city of refuge had belonged to the same tribe as the blood avenger. Unless the city of refuge was made really efficacious, it was no city of refuge at all. Giving Levi the charge of these cities also prevented jealousies between tribes. It conferred too on the homicide certain privileges he might not otherwise have had; he gained opportunities of Levitical instruction. God can make his own abiding compensations to those who fall into calamity by no fault of their own. None can really hurt us but ourselves in that which is inward, permanent, and of real importance.

VI. CONSIDER HOW THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST AFFECTED THE POSITION OF THE UNWITTING MANSLAYER. He was then free from any further disability and need of confinement. The death of the high priest had a great expiatory effect. According to the value of the types, he was holier than all the unblemished beasts, and his death counted for very much indeed in its cleansing efficacy. Thus we see, by this reference to the death of the high priest, how God regarded his own honour as a holy God. Blood defiled the land, even when spilt unwittingly, and nothing less than the death of the high priest could cleanse away the stain. Nothing less could do it, but this did it quite sufficiently.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MARRIAGE OF HEIRESSES (vers. 1—13). Ver. 1.—**The chief fathers.** The same phrase is more correctly translated in Exod. vi. 25 "heads of the fathers." It is, however, probable that רָאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת (fathers) is a contraction for בֵּית־הָאָבוֹת (fathers' houses). The fathers' house was the next recognised and familiar division below the *mishpachah* (family). Probably the fathers' house included originally all the descendants of a living ancestor, who formed the bond of union between them; but this union no doubt survived in many cases the death of the common ancestor, whose authority would then devolve upon the oldest efficient member of the house. **The families of the children of Gilead.** "The *mishpachoth* of the Beni-Gilead" certainly did not include the Machirites, who were somewhat sharply distinguished from the other Manassites (see above on ch. xxvi. 29; xxxii. 39 ff.); it is even doubtful whether they included the Gileadites proper, who took their name (and perhaps traced their descent) from Gilead, but not from his sons. It may be con-

fidently assumed that the Machirites, who had received an extensive and remote territory beyond Jordan, had nothing whatever to do with this application. It was the other section of the tribe, the *mishpachoth* of the six sons of Gilead, who were yet to receive inheritance by lot in Canaan proper, to whom the matter appeared so serious that they came to Moses about it.

Ver. 2.—**My lord.** אֲדֹנִי. The singular form is constantly used in Hebrew, as in other languages, together with the plural personal pronoun (see at Gen. xxiii. 6). The deference now paid to Moses (cf. ch. xxxii. 25, 27) is in marked contrast to the treatment he had received from the former generation. Only Aaron (and that under the influence of terror—Exod. xxxii. 22; ch. xii. 11) and Joshua (ch. xi. 28) had addressed him as Adoni before.

Ver. 3.—**Whereunto they are received.** Literally, as in the margin, "unto whom (לָהֶם referring to the men of the tribe) they shall be."

Ver. 4.—**When the jubile of the children of Israel shall be.** It is remarkable that this is the only reference by name to the Jubile (יוֹבֵל *jubeel*; not jubilee, which is the vulgar form of the same word derived from the Latin *jubilæus*) to be found in the Scriptures. Some allusions more or less doubtful have been pointed out in the prophets, but the only one which seems incontrovertible is in Ezek. xlvi. 17, and belongs to the ideal *régime* of that vision. Jeremiah's right of redemption over the lands of his family was probably due to the fact that they were priestly lands (Josh. xxi. 18; Jer. i. 1; xxxii. 7—9), and as such incapable of permanent alienation. It is, therefore, doubtful whether the Jubile was ever actually observed, although the principle upon which it rested, the equity of redemption which no Israelite could divest himself of, was undoubtedly acknowledged (see notes on Levit. xxv.). **Then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received.** It is again remarkable that the one explicit reference to the Jubile should be only to an indirect consequence of its practical working. The Jubile could not really transfer the property of the heiress to her husband's tribe, but it would in effect confirm that transfer, and make it permanent. In practice no property would be considered to have finally changed hands until the year of Jubile, when an extensive re-settlement took place, and when all titles not successfully challenged would be considered as confirmed. Since the title of the heiress's children could not be challenged, and since any intermediate disposition of the land must then determine, the Jubile would seem to effect the transfer of which it compelled the recognition. It is, however, none the less strange that the Manassites should have laid such stress upon the practical effects of a piece of legislation which had never yet come into use. It seems to point to the conclusion that the same thing had been customary among them in their Egyptian homes, and that they were acquainted, at least by tradition, with its actual working.

Ver. 5.—**The tribe of the sons of Joseph.** "The tribe (*matteh*) of the Beni-Joseph." There were two, or rather in effect three, tribes of the Beni-Joseph; Moses referred, of course, to the one which had come before him.

Ver. 6.—**Only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry.** The direction is not altogether plain, since the tribe (*matteh*) contained several families (*mishpachoth*), and in this case one or more of the families were widely separated from the rest. Probably the words are to be read, "only to the tribe-family of their father," *i. e.* only into that *mishpachah* of Manasseh to which their father had belonged. Practically, therefore, they were restricted to the family of the Hepherites (ch. xxvi. 32, 33). This is made almost certain when we remember that the territory of the "family" was to be apportioned within the tribe in the same way, and with the same regard to relationship, as the territory of the tribe within the nation (see on ch. xxxiii. 54).

Ver. 7.—**Every one . . shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.** This was to be the general rule which governed all such questions. Every Israelite had his own share in the inheritance of his tribe, and with that he was to be content, and not seek to intrude on other tribes. Accordingly the decision in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad is extended to all similar cases.

Ver. 11.—**Mahlah, &c.** It is a curious instance of the inartificial character of the sacred records that these five names, which have not the least interest in themselves, are repeated thrice in this Book, and once in Joshua (xvii. 3). It is evident that the case made a deep impression upon the mind of the nation at the time. **Their father's brothers' sons.** The Hebrew word דּוֹד is always translated "father's brother," or "uncle;" and that seems to be its ordinary meaning, although in Jer. xxxii. 12 it stands for uncle's son. There is no reason to depart from the customary reading here. No doubt the daughters of Zelophehad acted according to the spirit as well as the letter of the law, and married the nearest male relatives who were open to their choice. The Septuagint has τοῖς ἀνεψιοῖς αὐτῶν.

Ver. 13.—**The commandments.** הַמִּצְוֹת. This is one of the words which recur so continually in Deuteronomy and in Ps. cxix. It is found four times in ch. xv., and in a few other passages of the earlier books, including Levit. xxvii. 34. **The judgments.** הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים. A similar formula is found at the conclusion of Leviticus (xxvi. 46), where, however, "the commandments" represents a different word (הַחֻקִּים), and a third term, "the laws" (הַתּוֹרֹת), is added. It is difficult to say confidently what is included under the "these" of this verse. Comparing it with ch. xxxiii. 50, it would seem that it only referred to the final regulations and enactments of the last four chapters; but as we have no reason to believe that the later sections of the Book are arranged in any methodical order, we cannot limit its scope to those, or deny that it may include the laws of chs. xxviii.—xxx. For a similar reason we cannot say that the use of this concluding formula excludes the possibility of further large additions having been subsequently made to the Divine legislation in the same place and by the same person, as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. All we can say is, that the Book of Numbers knows nothing about any such additions, and concludes in such sort as to make it a matter of surprise that such additions are afterwards met with. The continuity, which so clearly binds together the main bulk of the four books of Moses, ends with this verse. This fact does not of course decide any question which arises concerning the fifth book; it merely leaves all such questions to be determined on their own merits.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The sure inheritance.* The decision here recorded, and expanded into a general law, was wholly intended to preserve to each tribe and each family its own inheritance in the land of promise inviolate and undisturbed. Spiritually it can but point to the inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. i. 4), for which we look. That there was any special intention in connection with this law to preserve intact the inheritance of Judah, or that it has any bearing on the tribal relationship of the earthly parents of the Divine child, is extremely unlikely. It would certainly appear that Mary had no patrimony, even if she had no brothers. Consider, therefore—

I. THAT THE OBJECT OF THE DIVINE LEGISLATION WAS BY ALL MEANS TO PRESERVE TO EACH ISRAELITE HIS FULL INHERITANCE IN CANAAN. Even so the final end of the dispensation of the gospel is that every one of the elect may obtain for ever that fulness of joy and of life which is prepared for him; to this end all things are made to work together.

II. THAT IN ORDER TO SECURE THIS, NOT ONLY THE INDIVIDUAL POSSESSION, BUT ALSO THE JOINT INTEREST OF EACH IN THE TERRITORY OF HIS TRIBE WAS JEALOUSLY GUARDED FROM INVASION. Even so there will, no doubt, in the future reward be many elements of common as well as of individual happiness, and some of these common to those who have lived and suffered together as members of the same particular Church; these also will be preserved inviolable. Whatever special graces have been developed in the common Christianity of any Church will doubtless be reflected in the immortal state.

III. THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL WAS TO KEEP TO HIS OWN LOT, AND NOT SEEK AFTER ANY ALIEN INHERITANCE. Even so every one of us should cultivate the grace given him, and seek the reward set before him, not coveting the gifts which belong to others, not aspiring to the glory to which he is not called.

IV. THAT EACH TRIBE WAS, IN LIKE MANNER, TO KEEP TO ITS OWN INHERITANCE, AND NOT TO INTRUDE UPON ITS NEIGHBOURS. Even so the different branches of Christ's Church, so far as they by the will of God divide the field between them, are strictly forbidden to invade one another's heritage.

V. THAT THIS WAS SECURED EVEN AT SOME COST OF LIBERTY OF CHOICE ON THE PART OF INDIVIDUALS. Even so the necessity of not intruding upon the portion of others must and does involve considerable self-restraint, and the sacrifice perhaps of cherished desires, on the part of individual members of the Church.

And note that this case so carefully recorded appears trivial, and unworthy of the space it occupies in Holy Writ. Nevertheless, it was not trivial, because it involved a most important principle, and because it was settled by an act of perfect

obedience. And note again that the operation of the Jubile, which was so graciously designed for all Israelites, threatened in this case to aggravate an evil, which, however, was averted by Divine provision. There may be cases in which even the grace of the gospel may threaten hardship to some; but if there are, God will find a remedy.

It would not be right to press the example of Zelophehad's daughters in a social sense, but we may draw the general moral lesson—1. That if any have exceptional opportunity of bestowing advantage on others, they should not consult their own fancy nor make an arbitrary choice, but be guided by the general good of all. 2. That none should put themselves forward in order to secure exceptional advantage, but let it fall to those for whom God has designed it.

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