

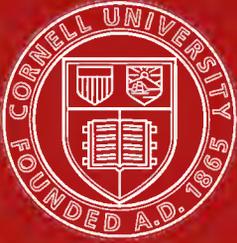
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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

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

VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.—RT. REV. H. COTTERILL, D.D., F.R.S.E.
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FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
NEW YORK AND TORONTO.

LVS

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PULPIT COMMENTARY

EDITED BY THE

REV. CANON H. D. M. SPENCE, M.A.,

VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF ST. PANCRAS, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD
BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, A.M

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BY THE VEN. ARCHDEACON FARRAR, D.D.

Homiletics:

BY REV. DAVID THOMAS, D.D.

EDITOR OF THE "HOMILIST."

Homilies by Various Authors:

REV DONALD FRASER D.D.,

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THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

VERY little is needed by way of introduction to the Second Epistle; for it is, in fact, a sequel to the First.

The apostle's departure from Ephesus had been precipitated by the tumult, in which, as appears from various scattered references, he had incurred extreme danger of his life. He went straight to Troas, still eager to preach the gospel of Christ. He had told Titus to meet him there; and it was the first place where he could hope to receive any tidings as to the reception by the Corinthians of his first letter—a point respecting which he was painfully anxious. But either St. Paul arrived at Troas earlier than the time appointed, or the journey of Titus had been delayed. St. Paul was preaching with success—"a door was opened for him in the Lord;" but the anxiety to which he found himself a prey rendered it impossible for him to continue his mission. Seeking some relief for the intolerable oppression of his spirit, he hurried to Macedonia, and there, perhaps in Philippi, he first met Titus. The meeting at once relieved the tension of his feelings, and caused an outburst of joy. For the tidings which Titus had to tell were good. He had been cordially received. The First Epistle had caused among the Corinthians an outburst of salutary grief, of yearning affection, of holy zeal. They had listened to the apostle's message with fear and trembling. The offender had been promptly and even severely dealt with. The news appeared at first to be so encouraging that St. Paul, with deep thankfulness, determined to send Titus, with "the brother whose praise is in the gospel," to finish the good work which he had begun, and to arrange about the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem. And as, this time, Titus was not only ready but anxious to go, St. Paul began to dictate the letter of which Titus was to be the bearer.

But little by little the apostle learnt—what perhaps Titus, out of kindness and sympathy, might not have deemed it necessary at once to tell him—that there was another side to the picture. His change of plan about the

double visit had given rise to a charge of levity, and many remarks most injurious to his character had been industriously disseminated, especially, it would seem, by some Jewish emissary. His opponents hinted at his cowardice in not coming; his vacillation and insincerity in changing his mind; the conscious inferiority which made him abstain from any claim to maintenance; the meanness of his aspect; the baldness and simplicity of his speech; the fact that he had no commendatory letters from Jerusalem; his dubious position as regards the Law. They insinuated doubts about his perfect honesty. They charged him with underhand guile, and fraudulent or self-interested designs with reference to the collection. They even ventured to hint their doubt as to his perfect sanity. Such charges would have been hard to endure at any time. They were so especially at a time when the apostle was suffering overwhelming distress—a combination of fears without and fightings within, which produced a mental and physical prostration. It became a duty and a necessity, however distasteful, to defend himself. Personally he neither required nor cared for any self-defence. But before God in Christ he felt bound to clear his character from these detestable innuendoes, because they were liable, if unnoticed, to hinder his work both in Corinth and in other Churches; and his work had on him a sacred claim. Hence, though nothing was more repellent to his sensitive humility than any semblance of egotism or boasting, he is driven by the unscrupulosity of his opponents to adopt such a tone of self-defence that the word “boasting” occurs in this Epistle no less than twenty-nine times. He neither could nor would appeal to any letters of commendation or to any certificate from his brother apostles, because he had received his own apostolate direct from God; and hence he is forced to appeal, on the one hand to his visions and revelations, and on the other hand to the seal of approval which in every way God had set to his unparalleled activity and devotion.

These circumstances sufficiently mark out the characteristics of the letter.

1. It entirely differs from the First Epistle. That is a letter in which he dealt with practical and speculative difficulties, answering the inquiries and correcting the abuses of a most unsatisfactory Church. The Second Epistle is the impassioned self-defence of a wounded spirit to erring and ungrateful children. It is the apostle's *Apologia pro vita sua*.

2. Hence, as *hope* is the key-note of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, *joy* of that to the Philippians, *faith* of that to the Romans, *heavenly things* of that to the Ephesians, *affliction* is the one predominant word and thought in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

3. As Bengel says, “It reminds us of an itinerary, but interwoven with the noblest precepts.” “The very stages of his journey,” says Dean Stanley, “are impressed upon it—the troubles at Ephesus, the anxiety of Troas, the consolation of Macedonia, the prospect of moving to Corinth.”

4. It is the least systematic as the First Epistle is the most systematic, of all St. Paul's writings.

5. It is the most emotional, and therefore in some respects—in its style, expressions, and causal connections—the most difficult of St. Paul's Epistles. The labouring phraseology, the interchange of bitter irony with deep pathos, the manner in which he is haunted and possessed and mastered by word after word which seizes his imagination—now "tribulation," now "consolation," now "boasting," now "weakness," now "simplicity," now "manifestation"—only serve to throw into relief the frequent bursts of rushing and impassioned eloquence. The sorrow and tenderness displayed are a measure of the insolence and wrong which called out in the concluding chapters so stern an indignation.

6. At the end of the ninth chapter there is a sudden, startling, and complete break in the whole manner and tone of the Epistle. The remainder (ch. x. 1—xiii. 10) seems to be written in a mood so wholly different from that of the former, that some have even (though needlessly) supposed that it really was a separate Epistle. Vehement though suppressed indignation, scathing irony, strong denunciation, commanding authority, take the place of the pathetic tenderness and effusive thankfulness which are predominant in the previous chapters. This phenomenon of a tone suddenly changed is found in other writings both sacred and secular, and may be accounted for by circumstances under which the apostle wrote.

7. The analysis of the Epistle in minor details will be found in the notes. The main divisions are: ch. i.—vii., hortatory and personal, with an undercurrent of calm apology; ch. viii., ix., directions and remarks about the collection; ch. x.—xiii., impassioned defence of himself and his apostolic position against the calumnies of his enemies.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Address and greeting (vers. 1, 2). Thanksgiving for the comfort sent to him by God, wherein, as in his affliction which rendered it necessary, they sympathetically shared (vers. 3—11). He has earned a right to their sympathy by his sincerity (vers. 12—14). His change of purpose with respect to a visit to Corinth, with digression on the unchangeableness of the gospel (vers. 15—22). Explanation of his reasons (ver. 22—ch. ii. 4).

Ver. 1.—By the will of God (see 1 Cor. i. 1). In the face of Judaizing opponents, it was essential that he should vindicate his independent apostolate (Acts xxvi. 15—18). And Timothy. Timothy had been absent from St. Paul when he wrote the First Epistle, and Sosthenes had taken his place, whether as amanuensis or merely as a sort of joint authenticator. Our brother; literally, *the brother*, as in 1 Cor. i. 1. The brotherhood applies both to St. Paul and to the Corinthians; there was a special bond of brotherhood between all members of "the household of faith." The saints. Before the name "Christians" had come into general use, "saints" (Acts ix. 13) and "brethren" were common designations of those who were "faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. i. 1). In all Achaia. In its classical sense Achaia means only the northern strip of the Peloponnesus; as a Roman province the name included both Hellas and the Peloponnesus. Here St. Paul probably uses it in its narrower sense. The only *strictly* Achaian Church of which we know is Cenohrea, but doubtless there were little Christian communities along the coasts of the Corinthian gulf. To the Church at Athens St. Paul never directly alludes.

II. CORINTHIANS.

This letter was not in any sense an encyclical letter; but even if it were not read in other communities, the Corinthians would convey to them the apostle's greeting.

Ver. 2.—Grace be to you and peace. On this pregnant synthesis of the Greek and Hebrew greetings, see 1 Cor. i. 3; Rom. i. 7.

Ver. 3.—Blessed be God (Eph. i. 3). This outburst of thanksgiving was meant to repress the relief brought to the overcharged feelings of the apostle by the arrival of Titus, with news respecting the mixed, but on the whole good, effect produced at Corinth by the severe remarks of his first letter. It is characteristic of the intense and impetuous rush of emotion which we often notice in the letters of St. Paul, that he does not here state the special grounds for this impassioned thanksgiving; he only touches upon it for a moment in ch. ii. 13, and does not pause to state it fully until ch. vii. 5—16. It is further remarkable that in this Epistle almost alone he utters no thanksgiving for the moral growth and holiness of the Church to which he is writing. This may be due to the fact that there was still so much to blame; but it more probably arose from the tumult of feeling which throughout this letter disturbs the regular flow of his thoughts. The ordinary "thanksgiving" for his readers is practically, though indirectly, involved in the gratitude which he expresses to God for the sympathy and communion which exists between himself and the Church of Corinth. Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek is the same as in Eph. i. 3, where, literally rendered, it is, "Blessed be the God and Father." The same phrase is found also in 1 Pet. i. 3; Col. i. 3. The meaning is not, "Blessed be the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (although the expression, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," occurs in

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Eph. i. 17; comp. John xx. 17). but "Blessed be God, who is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and who is therefore "our Father" by adoption and redemption, as well as our God by creation. The Father of mercies. This corresponds to a Hebrew expression, and means that *compassionateness* is the most characteristic attribute of God, and emanation from him. He is the Source of all mercy; and mercy

"Is an attribute of God himself."

He is "full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth" (Pa. lxxxvi. 15). "The Law," says the Talmud, "begins and ends with an act of mercy. At its commencement God clothes the naked; at its close he buries the dead" ('Sotah,' f. 14, 1). Thus every chapter but one of the Korán is headed, "In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful;" and it is an Eastern expression to say of one that has died that "he is taken to the mercy of the Merciful." Comp. "Father of glory," Eph. i. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 8 ("of spirits," Heb. xii. 9; "of lights," Jas. i. 17). The plural, "compassions," is perhaps a plural of excellence, "exceeding compassion" (Rom. xii. 1), and may be influenced by the Hebrew word *rachamim*, often literally rendered by St. Paul "bowels." The article in the Greek ("the Father of the compassions") *specializes* the mercy. The God of all comfort. So in ch. xiii. 11 God is called "the God of love and peace;" Rom. xv. 5, "the God of patience and of comfort;" ii. 15, "the God of hope." This word "comfort" (unfortunately interchanged with "consolation" in the Authorized Version) and the word "affliction" (variously rendered by "trouble" and "tribulation" in the Authorized Version), are the key-notes of this passage; and to some extent of the whole Epistle. St. Paul is haunted as it were and possessed by them. "Comfort," as verb or substantive, occurs ten times in vers. 3—7; and "affliction" occurs four times in succession. It is characteristic of St. Paul's style to be thus dominated, as it were, by a single word (comp. notes on ch. iii. 2, 13; iv. 2; see note on ch. x. 8). The needless variations of the Authorized Version were well intentioned, but arose from a false notion of style, a deficient sense of the precision of special words, and an inadequate conception of the duties of faithful translation, which requires that we should as exactly as possible reflect the peculiarities of the original, and not attempt to improve upon them.

Ver. 4.—Who comforteth us. The "us" implies here, not only St. Paul and Timothy, but also the Corinthians, who are one with them in a bond of Christian unity which

was hitherto undreamed of, and was a new phenomenon in the world. St. Paul always uses the first person in passages where he is speaking directly of individual feelings and experiences. In other passages he likes to lose himself, as it were, in the Christian community. The delicate play of emotion is often shown by the rapid interchanges of singular and plural (see vers. 13, 15, 17; ch. ii. 1, 11, 14, etc.). The present, "comforteth," expresses a continuous experience, with which the Christians of the first age were most happily familiar (John xiv. 16—18; 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17). In all our affliction. The collective experience of affliction is sustained by the collective experience of comfort. That we may be able to comfort. Thus St. Paul takes "a teleological view of sorrow." It is partly designed as a school of sympathy. It is a part of the training of an apostle, just as suffering is essential to one who is to be a sympathetic high priest (Heb. v. 1, 2). In any trouble. The original more forcibly repeats the words, "in all affliction." Wherewith we ourselves are comforted. By means of the comfort which God gives us, we can, by the aid of blessed experience, communicate comfort to others.

Ver. 5.—As the sufferings of Christ abound in us; rather, *unto us*. "The sufferings of Christ" are the sufferings which he endured in the days of his flesh, and they were not exhausted by him, but overflow to us who have to suffer as he suffered, bearing about with us his dying, that we may share his life (ch. iv. 10). The idea is, not that he is suffering in us and with us (though the truth of his intense sympathy with his suffering Church may be shadowed forth in some such terms, Matt. xxv. 40—45; Acts ix. 4), but that we have "a fellowship in his sufferings" (Phil. iii. 17); Gal. ii. 20, "I have been crucified with Christ;" Heb. xiii. 13, "Bearing his reproach." Our sufferings are the sufferings of Christ because we suffer as he suffered (1 Pet. iv. 13) and in the same cause. Aboundeth by Christ. If his sufferings, as it were, overflow to us, so too is he the Source of our comfort, in that he sendeth us the Comforter (John xiv. 16—18).

Ver. 6.—And; rather, *but*. The verse expresses the additional thought that the comfort (i.e. encouragement and strengthening) of the apostle, as well as his affliction, was not only designed for his own spiritual training, but was the source of direct blessing to his converts, because it enabled him, both by example (Phil. i. 14) and by the lessons of experience, to strengthen others in affliction, and so to further their salvation by teaching them how to endure (Rom. v. 34). The affliction brings encouragement, and so works

endurance in us, and, by our example and teaching, in you.

Ver. 7.—And our hope of you is steadfast; literally, *And our hope is steadfast on your behalf*. The variations of text and punctuation in the verse do not materially affect the sense. The meaning is “And I have a sure hope that you will reap the benefits of our common fellowship with Christ in his affliction, and of the comfort which he sends, because I know that you have experienced the sufferings, and am therefore sure that he will send you the strength and the endurance. The close connection of tribulation and Divine encouragement are found also in Matt. v. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 12; 1 Pet. v. 10. The interchange of the two between teacher and taught is part of the true communion of saints (comp. Phil. ii. 26).

Ver. 8.—For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant. This is a favourite phrase with St. Paul (Rom. i. 13; xi. 25; 1 Cor. xii. 1; 1 Thess. iv. 13). Of our trouble; rather, *about our affliction*. He assumes that they are aware what the trouble was, and he does not specially mention it. What he wants them to know is that, by the help of their prayers and sympathy, God had delivered him out of this affliction, crushing as it was. Which came to us in Asia. Most commentators refer this to the tumult at Ephesus (Acts xix.); and since St. Paul’s dangers, sicknesses, and troubles are clearly understated throughout the Acts, it is possible that the perils and personal maltreatment which were liable to occur during such a season of excitement may have brought on some violent illness; or, again, he may have suffered from some plots (1 Cor. xvi. 9, 32; Acts xx. 19) or shipwreck (ch. xi. 25). In Rom. xvi. 4 he alludes again to some extreme peril. But St. Paul seems systematically to have made light of external dangers and sufferings. All his strongest expressions (see Rom. ix. 1-3, etc.) are reserved for mental anguish and affliction. What he felt most keenly was the pang of lacerated affections. It is, therefore, possible that he is here alluding to the overpowering tumult of feelings which had been aroused by his anxiety as to the reception likely to be accorded to his first letter. To this and the accompanying circumstances he alludes again and again (ch. ii. 4, 12; vii. 5, etc.). The sense of “comfort” resulting from the tidings brought by Titus (ch. vii. 6, 7, 13) is as strong as that expressed in these verses, and the allusion to this anguish of heart is specially appropriate here, because he is dwelling on the sympathetic communion between himself and his converts, both in their sorrows and their consolations. That we were pressed out of measure, above strength; literally,

that we were weighed down exceedingly beyond our power. The trial seemed too heavy for him to bear. The phrase here rendered “out of measure” occurs in ch. iv. 17; Rom. vii. 13; 1 Cor. xii. 31; Gal. i. 13; but is only found in this particular group of letters. Inasmuch that we despaired even of life. This rendering conveys the meaning. Literally it is, *so that we were even in utter perplexity* (ch. iv. 8) *even about life*. “I fell into such agony of mind that I hardly hoped to survive.” Generally, although he was often in perplexity, he succeeded in resisting despair (ch. iv. 8).

Ver. 9.—But; perhaps rather, *yea*. The word strengthens the phrase, “were in utter perplexity.” We had the sentence of death in ourselves. The original is more emphatic, “Ourselves in our own selves we have had.” Not only did all the outer world look dark to me, but the answer which my own spirit returned to the question, “What will be the end of it all?” was “Death!” and that doom still seems to echo in my spirit. The sentence; rather, *the answer*. The word is unique in the LXX. and the New Testament. In ourselves. Because I seemed to myself to be beyond all human possibility of deliverance. That we should not trust in ourselves. There was a divinely intended meaning in my despair. It was meant to teach me, not only submission, but absolute trust in God (see Jer. xvii. 5, 7). Which raiseth the dead. Being practically dead—utterly crushed with anguish and despairing of deliverance—I learnt by my deliverance to have faith in God as one who can raise men even from the dead.

Ver. 10.—From so great a death. From a state of dejection and despair, which seemed to show death in all its power (see ch. iv. 10-12). And doth deliver. Perhaps a pious marginal gloss which has crept into the text of some manuscripts. We trust; rather, *we have set our hope*. That. This word is omitted in some good manuscripts, as also are the words, “and doth deliver.” He will yet deliver us. This implies either that the perils alluded to were not yet absolutely at an end, or St. Paul’s consciousness that many a peril of equal intensity lay before him in the future.

Ver. 11.—Ye also helping together by prayer for us. St. Paul had a deep conviction of the efficacy of intercessory prayer (Rom. xv. 30, 31; Phil. i. 19; Philem. 22). By the means of many persons; literally, *from many faces*. Probably the word *prosôpon* here has its literal meaning. The verse, then, means “that from many faces the gift to us may be thankfully acknowledged by many on our behalf.” God, he implies, will be well pleased when he sees the gratitude beaming from the many coun-

tenance of those who thank him for his answer to their prayers on his behalf. The word for "gift" is *charisma*, which means a gift of grace, a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 4).

Vers. 12—14.—*Vindication of his right to their sympathy.*

Ver. 12.—For our rejoicing; rather, for our boasting is this. My expression of confidence in your sympathy with me may sound like a boast, but my boast merely accords with the testimony of my conscience that I have been sincere and honest to all, and most of all to you. The testimony of our conscience. To this St. Paul frequently appeals (Acts xxiii. 1; xxiv. 16; Rom. ix. 1; 1 Cor. iv. 4). In simplicity; rather, in holiness. The best reading is ἀγιότητι (κ, A, B, C, K), not ἀπλότητι. "Holiness" seems to have been altered to "simplicity," both on dogmatic grounds and because it is a rare word, only occurring in Heb. xii. 10. And godly sincerity; literally, sincerity of God; i.e. sincerity which is a gift of Divine grace (comp. "peace of God," Phil. iv. 7; "righteousness of God," Rom. i. 17). For the word used for "sincerity," see note on 1 Cor. v. 8. Not with fleshly wisdom (comp. ch. ii. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 4), but by the grace of God. The preposition in both clauses is "in." The grace of God was the atmosphere which the apostle breathed, the sphere in which he worked. We have had our conversation. We lived and moved. The word "conversation" originally meant "mode of life," and is used to translate both *anastrophe* and *politeuma*, which means properly "citizenship." The exclusive modern sense of "conversation" is not earlier than the last century. In the world; i.e. in my general life as regards all men. More abundantly to you-ward. Sincerity, holiness, the signs of the grace of God, were specially shown by the apostle towards the Corinthians, because they were specially needed to guide his relations towards a Church which inspired him with deep affection, but which required special wisdom to guide and govern. The fact that, in spite of all his exceptional care, such bitter taunts could still be levelled at him, shows that he had not been mistaken in supposing that no Church required from him a more anxious watchfulness over all his conduct.

Ver. 13.—For we write none other things unto you, etc. Remarks like these obviously presuppose that the conduct and character of St. Paul had been misrepresented and calumniated. The perpetual recurrence to a strain of self-defence would have been needless if some one—probably Titus—had not told St. Paul that his opponents accused him of insincerity. Here, therefore, he tells them that he is opening out his very heart towards

them. What he had to say to them and of them was here set forth without any subtrefuges or *arrière pensées*. He had nothing *esoterio* which differed from *exoterio* teaching. It is a melancholy thought that even such a one as Paul was reduced to the sad necessity of defending himself against such charges as that he intrigued with individual members of his Churches, wrote private letters or sent secret messages which differed in tone from those which were read in the public assembly. Or acknowledge; rather, or even fully know; i.e. from other sources. The paronomasia of the original cannot be preserved in English, but in Latin would be "Quæ legitis aut etiam intelligitis." And I trust . . . even to the end; rather, but I hope that, even unto the end, ye will fully know—even as ye fully knew us in part—that we are your subject of boast. After telling them that they have in this letter his genuine and inmost thoughts, he adds that "even as some of them (for this seem to be implied by the 'in part') already knew well that the mutual relations between him and them were something wherein to glory, he hopes that they will appreciate this fact, even to the end." He knows that some honour him; he hopes that all will do so; but he can only express this as a hope, for he is aware that there are calumnies abroad respecting him, so that he cannot feel sure of their unbroken allegiance. Such seems to be the meaning; but the state of mind in which St. Paul wrote has evidently troubled his style, and his expressions are less lucid and more difficult to unravel in this Epistle than in any other. To the end. The expression is quite general, like our "to the last." He does not seem definitely to imply either to the end of his life or to the coming of Christ, which they regarded as the end of all things, as in 1 Cor. i. 8; xv. 24; Heb. iii. 6.

Ver. 14.—In part. Not as a whole Church. Some only of the Corinthians had been faithful to his teaching and to himself. (For the phrase, see Rom. xi. 25; xv. 15, 24; 1 Cor. xi. 18; xii. 27; xiii. 9.) Rejoicing; rather, ground of boast, as in ch. ix. 3; Rom. iv. 2, "whereof to glory;" 1 Cor. v. 6. In ver. 12 the substantive means "the act of rejoicing." The word is characteristic of this group of Epistles, in which it occurs forty-six times. Even as ye also are ours. This clause takes away all semblance of self-glorification. In 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20 and Phil. ii. 16 he expresses the natural thought that a teacher's converts are, and will be in the last day, his "crown of exultation." Here alone he implies that they may glory in him as he in them. The thought, however, so far from being egotistical, merely indicates the intense intercommunion of sympathy which existed between him and them. He does

but place himself on a level with his converts, and imply that they mutually gloried in each other. In the day of the Lord Jesus (see on 1 Cor. iii. 13).

Vers. 15—22.—*His change of purpose in not visiting Corinth.*

Ver. 15.—In this confidence. In reliance on the mutual respect and affection which exists between us. I was minded. The stress is partly on the tense: "my original desire was." When speaking of matters purely personal, St. Paul generally reverts to the first person. To come unto you before. I meant to visit you, first on my way to Macedonia, and again on my return from Macedonia, as explained in the next verse. A second benefit; rather, a second grace. There is another reading, χαρά, joy, and the word χάρις itself sometimes has this sense (as in Tobit vii. 18), but not in the New Testament. Here, again, there is no boastfulness. St. Paul, filled as he was with the power of the Holy Spirit, was able to impart to his converts some spiritual gifts (Rom. i. 11), and this was the chief reason why his visits were so eagerly desired, and why his change of plan had caused such bitter disappointment to the Corinthians. The importance of the Church of Corinth, its central position, and its unsettled state made it desirable that he should give them as much as possible of his personal supervision.

Ver. 16.—To be brought on my way (see note on 1 Cor. xvi. 6) toward Judæa (1 Cor. xii. 4—6).

Ver. 17.—When I therefore was thus minded. Without saying in so many words that all this plan was now given up, he proceeds to defend himself against the charges which had been evidently brought against him by his opponents. The Corinthians were aware that he no longer meant to come to them direct from Ephesus. They had certainly been informed of this by Titus, and he had indeed briefly stated it in 1 Cor. xvi. 5. Their disappointment had led some of them into angry criticisms upon the "indecision" of the apostle, the more so because he had (out of kindness, as he here shows) spared them the pain of expressing his reasons. Did I use lightness? Was this change of plan a sign of "the levity" with which some of you charge me? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, etc.? Every phrase in this clause is of ambiguous meaning. For instance, the "or" may imply another charge, namely, that his purposes are carnal, and therefore capricious; or it may be the alternative view of his conduct, stated by way of self-defence—namely, "Does my change of plan imply that I am frivolous? or, on the contrary, are not my plans of

necessity mere human plans, and therefore liable to be overruled by God's will?" Thus the meaning of the "or" is doubtful, and also the meaning of "according to the flesh." Generally this phrase is used in a bad sense, as in ch. x. 2 and Rom. viii. 1; but it may also be used to mean "in a human way," as in ch. v. 16. That with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay. There is probably no clause in the New Testament of which the certain sense must be left so indeterminate as this. (1) The Authorized Version gives one way of taking the clause. The grammar equally admits of the rendering. (2) *That with me the yea should be yea, and the nay nay.* Whichever rendering we adopt, it may be explained in accordance with the view indicated in the last note. "I was not showing the levity which my opponents speak of, but my purposes are necessarily mere human purposes, and therefore my 'yes' and 'no' can be only 'yes' and 'no' when I make a plan. My 'yes' or 'no' may be overruled by the Spirit (Acts xvi. 7) or even hindered by Satan, and that more than once (1 Thess. ii. 18)." "With me," i.e. as far as I am concerned, I can only say "yes" or "no;" but *l'homme propose, Dieu dispose.* His intended double visit to them was prevented, not by any frivolity of his, but, as he afterwards shows, by their own unfaithfulness and his desire to spare them. There is yet a third way of taking it which involves a different meaning—"In order that with me the 'yea yea' may be also 'nay nay.'" Am I inconsistent? or, are my purposes merely carnal purposes, in order that my "yes yes" may be, as far as I am concerned, no better than "no no"—like the mere shifting feebleness of an aimless man? A fourth way of taking the clause, adopted by St. Chrysostom and many others, is, "Do I plan after the flesh, i.e. with carnal obstinacy, so that my 'yea' and 'nay' must be carried out at all costs?" This suggestion can hardly be right; for St. Paul was charged, not with obstinacy, but with indecision. The phrases, "yea" and "nay," as mentioned in Matt. v. 37 and Jas. v. 12, throw no light on the passage, unless indeed some one had misquoted against St. Paul our Lord's words as a reason for adhering inviolably to a plan once formed. Of these various methods I adopt the first, because it seems to be, on the whole, most in accordance with the context. For on that view of the passage he contents himself with the remark that it cannot be inconsistency or levity on his part to alter plans which are liable to all the chance and change of ordinary circumstances; and then tells them that there was one part of his teaching which has nothing to do with mere human weakness, but was God's everlasting

“yea;” after which he explains to them the reason why he decided not to come to them until he had first visited Macedonia, and so to give them one visit, not two.

Ver. 18.—But as God is true; rather, *but God is faithful*, whatever man may be (1 Cor. i. 9; x. 13; 1 Thess. v. 24; 2 Thess. iii. 3; 1 John i. 9). Our word towards you, etc. The verse should be rendered, *But God is faithful, because* (faithful herein, that) *our preaching to you proved itself to be not yea and nay*. Whatever you may say of my plans and my conduct, there was one thing which involved an indubitable “yea,” namely, my preaching to you. In that, at any rate, there was nothing capricious, nothing variable, nothing vacillating. St. Paul, in a manner characteristic to his moods of deepest emotion, “goes off at a word.” The Corinthians talked of his “yea” and “nay” as though one was little better than the other, and neither could be depended on; well, at any rate, *one thing*, and that the most essential, was as sure as the faithfulness of God.

Ver. 19.—For. This is a proof of what he has just said. His preaching was as firm as a rock; for, tried by time, it had proved itself a changeless “yea,” being a preaching of Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. By me and Silvanus and Timotheus. They are mentioned because they had been his companions in the first visit to Corinth (Acts xviii. 5), and he wishes to show that his preaching of Christ had never wavered. “Silvanus” (1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1) is the “Silas” of Acts xv. 22. He disappears from the New Testament in this verse, unless he be the “Silvanus” of 1 Pet. v. 12. Was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. “Became not (proved not to be) yes and no (in one breath, as it were, and therefore utterly untrustworthy), but in him there has been a yea.” The perfect, “has become,” means that in him the everlasting “yes” has proved itself valid, and still continues to be a changeless affirmation (Heb. xiii. 8).

Ver. 20.—For all the promises of God in him are yes; rather, *For so many as be the promises of God, in him is the yea*. All the promises of God find in him their unchangeable fulfilment. He was “a minister to confirm the promises” alike to the Jews and the Gentiles (Rom. xv. 8, 9); and “the promise of the eternal inheritance” can only be fulfilled in him (Heb. ix. 15). And in him Amen. The true reading is, “Wherefore by him also is the Amen to God, uttered by us to his glory” (κ, A, B, C, F, G, etc.). In Christ is the “yea” of immutable promise and absolute fulfilment; the Church utters the “Amen” of perfect faith and grateful adoration. Here, as in 1 Cor. xiv. 16, we have a proof of the ancientness of the custom by which the congregation utters the “Amen”

at the end of praise and prayer. But as the “yea” is in Christ, so it is only through him that we can receive the grace to utter aright the “Amen” to the glory of God.

Ver. 21.—Now he that stablisheth us. They will have seen, then, that steadfastness not levity, immutability not vacillation, has been the subject of their teaching. Who is the Source of that steadfastness? God, who anointed us and confirmed us, and you with us, into unity with his Anointed. With you. We partake alike of this Christian steadfastness; to impugn mine is to nullify your own. In Christ; rather, *into Christ*, so as to be one with him. They are already “*in Christo*,” they would aim more and more to be established “*in Christum*.” Who anointed us. Every Christian is a king and priest to God, and has received an unction from the Holy One (1 John ii. 20, 27).

Ver. 22.—Who hath also sealed us. We cannot be deconsecrated, disanointed. Still less can the confirming seal be broken. He continues to dwell on the conception of the unchangeableness of God and of the gospel into which he had been incidentally led by the charge of “lightness.” The earnest of the Spirit. The promises which we have received are not mere promises, they are already so far fulfilled to us and in us as to guarantee hereafter their plenary fruition. Just as in money bargains “earnest money,” “money on account,” is given, in pledge that the whole will be ultimately discharged, so we have “the earnest of the Spirit” (ch. v. 5), “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom. viii. 23), which are to us “the earnest” or pledge money that we shall hereafter enter upon the purchased possession (Eph. i. 13, 14). We now see the meaning of the “and.” It involves a climax—the promise is much; the unction more; the seal a still further security (Eph. iv. 30; 2 Tim. ii. 19); but beyond all this we have already a part payment in the indwelling of the Present of God (Rom. v. 5; viii. 9; Gal. iv. 6). The word *arrabon*, rendered “earnest,” has an interesting history. It is very ancient, for it is found (עֲרָבֹן) in Gen. xxxviii. 17, 18, and comes from a root meaning “to pledge.” It seems to be a Phœnician word, which had been introduced into various languages by the universality of Phœnician commerce. In classical Latin it is shortened into *arra*, and it still exists in Italian as *arra*, in French as *arrhes*. The equivalent Hebrew figure is “firstfruits” (Rom. viii. 23).

Ver. 23.—Moreover I call God for a record; rather, *But I call God for a witness*. At this point, to ch. ii. 4, he enters for the first time on the kindly reasons which had led him to forego his intended earlier visit. He uses a similar adjuration in ch. xi. 31; and although these appeals (comp. 1 Cor. xv.

31; Rom. i. 9; Gal. i. 20) may be due in part to the emotional fervour of his temperament, yet he would hardly have resorted to them in this self-defence, if the calumnies of his enemies had not gained much credence. The French proverb, *Qui s'excuse s'accuse*, is often grossly abused. The refutation of lies and slanders is often a duty, not because they injure us, but because, by diminishing our usefulness, they may injure others. Upon my soul. Not "to take vengeance on my soul if I lie," but to confirm the appeal of its honesty and integrity. By the use of such "oaths for confirmation," St. Paul, no less than other apostles, shows that he understood our Lord's rule, "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay," as applying to the principle of simple and unvarnished truthfulness of intercourse, which requires no further confirmation; but not as a rigid exclusion of the right to appeal to God in solemn cases and for good reasons. To spare you. This postponement of the intended visit was a sign of forbearance, for which they should have been grateful. After all that he had heard of them, if he had come at all, it could only have been "with a rod" (1 Cor. iv. 21). I came not as yet. The rendering is erroneous. It literally means "I no longer came," i. e. I forbore to come as I had intended.

Ver. 24.—Not for that we have dominion over your faith. The expression, "to spare you," might have been resented as involving a claim "to lord it over their faith." He had, indeed, authority (1 Col. iv. 21; ch. x. 6; xiii. 2, 10), but it was a purely spiritual authority; it was valid only over those who recognized in him an apostolic commission. St. Peter, no less than St. Paul, discourages the spirit of ecclesiastical tyranny (1 Pet. v. 3). But are helpers of your joy. We are fellow-helpers of your Christian joy, and therefore I would not come to cause your grief. That was how I desired to spare you. The object of my visits is always "for your furtherance and joy of faith" (Phil. i. 25). For by faith ye stand. The expression is not a mere general principle, but explains his disclaimer of any desire "to lord it over their faith." As far as their "faith" was concerned, they were not to blame; that remained unshaken, and was independent of any visit or authority of St. Paul. But while "in respect of faith ye stand" (Eph. vi. 13), there are other points in which you are being shaken, and in dealing with these I should have been obliged to take severe measures, which, if I postponed my visit, would (I hoped) become unnecessary.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The will of God.* "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ," etc. Here are three subjects of thought.

I. THE SUPREME LAW. "By the will of God." 1. God has a will. He is, therefore, personality, free and intelligent. His will explains the origin, sustenance, and order of the universe. His will is the force of all forces, the law of all laws. 2. God has a will in relation to individual men. He has a purpose in relation to every man, every man's existence, mission, and conduct. His will in relation to moral beings is the standard of all conduct and the rule of all destiny. Love is its primal fount or mainspring.

II. THE APOSTOLIC SPIRIT. Judging from what Paul says here, we observe: 1. The apostolic spirit involves subjection to Christ. "An apostle of Jesus Christ." Christ is the moral Master; he the loving, loyal servant. 2. The apostolic spirit is that of special love for the good. He calls Timothy his "brother," and towards "the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia," he glows with loving sympathy. Love for souls, deep, tender, overflowing, is the essential qualification for the gospel apostolate or ministry.

III. THE CHIEF GOOD. 1. Here is the highest good. "Grace and peace." He who has these has the *summum bonum*. 2. Here is the highest good from the highest Source: "From our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Vers. 3—5.—*The God of Christianity.* "Blessed be God, even the Father," etc. The God of nature is revealed in nature as the Almighty and the All-wise. "The invisible things of the world are clearly seen, being made visible by the things that are seen, even his eternal power and Godhead." But God in Christianity appears in three aspects.

I. AS THE FATHER OF THE WORLD'S REDEEMER. "Blessed be God, even the Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ is the world's Redeemer, and the world's Redeemer is the Son of God. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

II. AS THE SOURCE OF MAN'S MERCIES. "The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," or the merciful Father. Mercy implies something more than mere benevolence; it is a modification of goodness; it implies sorrow and suffering. God is good to all, but he is merciful to the afflicted—he compassionates and comforts them. God in nature does not appear as the God of mercy and comfort for the fallen and the lost.

III. AS THE COMFORTER OF AFFLICTED SAINTS. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble," etc. The best of men have their tribulations here. Most, if not all, the men who have entered heaven have passed through much tribulation. 1. He comforts his afflicted people "in all their tribulations." Whatever the nature and variety of affliction, he has suitable and adequate comfort to bestow. Moral remorse, worldly losses, social bereavements,—he has a healing balm for all. 2. He comforts his afflicted people, that they may be able to administer comfort to others. "That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." Affliction is necessary to qualify us to sympathize with and administer comfort to others. "They comfort others who themselves have borne," says Sophocles. By affliction Christ qualified himself to comfort others. "We have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," etc.

Vers. 6—11.—*Personal sufferings.* "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation," etc. The words suggest a few remarks concerning personal sufferings.

I. THEY ARE OFTEN EXPERIENCED IN THE BEST OF ENTERPRISES. What a glorious enterprise Paul and his fellow-apostles were engaged in!—nothing less than the restoration of mankind to the knowledge, image, and friendship of the great God. Yet how great their sufferings! "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life."¹

II. THEY ARE EVER NECESSARY FOR THE RENDERING OF THE HIGHEST SERVICE TO MANKIND. "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer." The apostle here teaches that his sufferings and those of his colleagues were *vicarious*. He and his co-labourers incurred them in their endeavours to extend the gospel, and they had the "consolations" which came to him, qualified him to sympathize with and administer comfort to all who were in the same trying condition. Paul could say to the sufferers at Corinth—We were in sufferings and were comforted; you are in sufferings and may participate in the same comfort. If you are partakers of the same kind of suffering, that is, suffering on account of your religion, you shall also be partakers of the same comfort. Suppose a man who had been restored from a certain disease by a certain specific were to meet another suffering under a complaint in all respects identical, and were to say to the man—I can not only sympathize with you, but I can assure you of that which will cure you, for it has cured me;—this, perhaps, may serve as an illustration of the apostle's meaning here; and this every true Christian man who has suffered can say to all—I was in your condition, I was restored; I can sympathize with you, and I urge the same means of restoration.

III. THEIR DETAILMENT PURELY FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS IS JUSTIFIABLE. Paul says, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble." There is a wonderful tendency in men to parade their sufferings and their trials, to apread them out before men, in order to enlist their sympathy and excite commiseration. This is selfish, is not justifiable. Christ—perhaps the greatest of all sufferers—never did this: in this respect, "he opened not his mouth." But to declare sufferings in order to benefit others, to give them courage and comfort, and to establish between you and them a holy unity in the Divine cause, this is right, this is what Paul does here. He does it that they may believe in his sympathy and seek the comfort which he himself experienced.

IV. THEIR EXPERIENCE OFTEN PROVES A BLESSING TO THE SUFFERER. They seem to have done two things for Paul. 1. *To have transferred his trust in himself to trust in God.* "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God." Paul no doubt felt that he was brought near unto death, to the

¹ See a sketch of Paul's trials, ch. xi. 23, 29.

very extreme of suffering, and that led him to look away from self, to put his trust in God. When affliction does this it is indeed a blessing in disguise. When it detaches us from the material and links us to the spiritual, takes us away from self and centres us on God, then, indeed, it worketh out for us a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2. *To have awakened prayers by others on his behalf.* "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our own behalf."

Ver. 12.—*Conscience and the inner life of man.* "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." Three remarks are suggested.

I. WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE SOUL CONSCIENCE OBSERVES. This is implied in its "testimony." The eye of conscience pierces into the deepest secrets of motives, and is cognizant of all our hidden impulses, thoughts, and aims. We may appear sincere to others, but hypocrites to conscience; hypocrites to others, but true to conscience. Conscience is the best judge.

II. WHATEVER IS GOOD IN THE SOUL CONSCIENCE APPROVES. 1. Paul's conscience approved of his *inner principles*—his "simplicity" or holiness, and "sincerity." On these elements it has ever smiled and will ever smile, but not on "fleshly wisdom," carnal policy, and worldly expediency. 2. Paul's conscience approved of his *external demeanour*. "We have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." His outward conduct was the effect and expression of his inner life. Conscience smiles on every holy deed, however mean in the sight of men.

III. WHATEVER IS JOYOUS IN THE SOUL CONSCIENCE OCCASIONS. "Our rejoicing is this," or, "our glorying is this." Where there is not an approving conscience there is no real, moral joy. Its "well done" sets the soul to music; with its approval we can stand, not only calm and serene, but even triumphant, under the denunciations of the whole world. Dr. South says, "Conscience is undoubtedly the grand repository of all those pleasures which can afford any solid refreshment to the soul; when this is calm and serene, then properly a man enjoys all things, and, what is more, himself; for that he must do before he can enjoy anything else. It will not drop but pour in oil upon the wounded heart; it will not whisper but proclaim a jubilee to the mind."

Vers. 15—22.—*Possessions of a genuine Christian.* "And in this confidence," etc. These verses may be regarded as indicating what every genuine disciple of Christ—that is, every Christly man—possesses *now* and *here*.

I. HE POSSESSES MORAL STABILITY. Paul is here writing on the defensive; indeed, the whole tone of his letter is apologetic. Because he did not visit the Corinthians according to his first promise, they perhaps pronounced him fickle, vacillating, untrue to his word. Against this he protests. "And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judæa." Here he admits his intention and his promise, but in reply says emphatically, "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?" etc. He claims stability, and the stability which he claims is possessed by all true Christians. 1. *A stability of purpose.* "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay." What we said we meant; there was no equivocation, no "yea" and "nay" in the same breath. In defending his veracity: (1) He makes an asseveration. "As God is true," or as God is faithful, we meant to perform what we promised. (2) He indicates an incongruity. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea," etc. He means to say that the gospel which he had preached to them necessarily bound him to faithfulness, Christ, in whom he lived and for whom he laboured, was the grand Reality, the "Amen," the Truth. The idea of a man in Christ being unvaracious, untruthful, was preposterous. An untruthful man cannot be a Christian. This the apostle means and declares. 2. *A stability of character.* "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." The stability he claims for himself he accedes

to all the Christians at Corinth. How blessed to have the heart fixed, their character "in Christ" established, "rooted and grounded in love"!

II. HE POSSESSES DIVINE CONSECRATION. He that "hath anointed us is God." Among the Jews in olden times, kings, priests, and prophets were set apart to their offices by anointing them with oil; hence here the word "anointed" means they were consecrated by God to a Christly life and labour. A truly Christian man is divinely consecrated, not to a mere office, but to the noblest character and the sublimest mission. As such he has God's seal on him, "who hath also sealed us."

III. HE POSSESSES A PLEDGE OF THE HIGHEST PROGRESS. "Given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." "Let us," says F. W. Robertson, "distinguish between an earnest and a pledge. A pledge is something different in kind given in assurance of something else, as when Judah gave his staff and ring in pledge for a lamb which he promised should be given afterwards. But an earnest is part of that thing which is eventually to be given, as when the grapes were brought from Canaan, or as when a purchase is made and part of the money is paid down at once." There is no finality in the life of goodness; it passes on from "strength to strength," from "glory to glory." In every step, after the first, up the celestial mountains, the scenes widen and brighten, and the breezes become more balmy and invigorating as we advance. He who has the Christly life within has already Paradise in germ.

Vers. 23, 24.—A *threefold theme*. "Moreover I call God for a record," etc. In these verses we have three things worthy of note.

I. THE FULFILMENT OF A PROMISE ADJOURNED. "Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth." Paul here, in the most solemn way, assigns the reason why he had adjourned his promised visit to Corinth. It was not for his personal convenience, or from a change of purpose, or from any indifference towards them, but on the contrary, out of tender regard to their feelings—"to spare you I came not." Knowing the prevalence of the spirit of schism and disorder which had crept into the Church, he shrank from the exercise of that discipline which of necessity would inflict great pain. Hence, hoping that the admonishing letter which he had addressed to them would have the effect he desired upon them, he delayed. Surely a love so generous, so pure, and exquisitely sympathetic, would justify, if not the breaking of a promise, the postponement of its fulfilment. Regard for the feelings of others, it has been said, is the grand characteristic of the "gentleman." Anyhow, it is an essential element in personal Christianity.

II. AUTHORITY OVER THE FAITH OF OTHERS DISCLAIMED. "Not for that we have dominion over your faith." Had we desired to set up a lordship over you, we might have hastened to you at once, but we respected your feelings, and sought your happiness. The authority which Paul here disclaims has been assumed by priestly ecclesiastics in all times. It is the very spirit of priestism. The minister, whoever he may be, to whatever Church he belongs, who endeavours to make men believe that his own personal ministry, or the ministry of his denomination, is the special ministry of heaven, and essential to the salvation of mankind, has in him the intolerant spirit of the priest, he seeks dominion over the faith of men, he would restrain liberty of thought, and subject the minds of men to his credenda. These men, whether Papists or Protestants, Churchmen or Nonconformists, outrage the spirit of the mission they have received, and inflict untold mischief on the minds of men.

III. THE TRUE WORK OF A GOSPEL MINISTER. "But are helpers of your joy." He is a helper, not a lord; a helper, not a substitute. A true minister is: 1. To help men to *think* aright. To think aright is to think on the right subject, in the right way. 2. To help men to *feel* aright. Feel aright in relation to self, mankind, the universe, and God. 3. To help men to *believe* aright. "By faith ye stand." Spiritually men can only "stand" by faith, and the work of a true minister is to help people to "stand" by "faith" on the right foundation. When will ministers come to feel that they are the spiritual "helpers" of the people; to help them, not by doing their work for them, but to assist them in working for themselves?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—Salutation. It is a greeting from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from "Timothy our brother," instead of Sostheneas, as in the First Epistle. It is to the Church of God at Corinth, with all the saints in the whole of Achaia, all connected in the province with the central Church at Corinth. "Beginning at Jerusalem"—the holy city was to be the starting-point. Antioch, Caesarea, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, were to be early reached by the gospel. Community-centres were to become Church-centres, so that the social idea of Christianity should have prompt and impressive development. As usual with St. Paul, "Grace be to you and peace," opening and closing with the word so comprehensive, so precious, "grace."—L.

Vers. 3—11.—Thanksgiving in the midst of tribulation; uses of sorrow; comforting others; personal references. The ascription begins with "blessed," the strongest term the apostle could employ as representing the highest and strongest emotions, the headword in the vocabulary of gratitude and praise, found in the Old and New Scriptures, and common to Jews and Gentile Christians. "Blessed;" the best in us acknowledging the God of grace, an anthem in a single utterance, and embodying the whole nature of man in reverence and adoration. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" not only God, but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a Father to us in him. What significance Christ gave to the word "father" we all know. It is the root-word of the Lord's Prayer, every ascription and every petition being but an offshoot from "Our Father which art in heaven." So of the entire Sermon on the Mount; it is the motive to trust Providence, the reason to be like God, the ground of brotherhood, the inducement to forgive those who offend us, the inspiration of each duty, each sacrifice, and the joy and strength of each beatitude. So of the last conversations and discourse—all of the Father and of the Son in him, and the disciples in the Son. So after the Resurrection, "My Father and your Father." St. Paul rejoiced in the word. Nor did he hesitate to use on Mars' Hill the quotation, "We are also his offspring," and from this point of view expose the error and sin of idolatry. And wherever he comes to give it the fulness of its import, as in Rom. viii., his heart overflows with feeling. Here (ver. 3) he is also the "Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," and no matter how the mercies reach us and what their nature and connections, they are from the Father as the God of all comfort. Physical and spiritual blessings, a visit from Stephanas, the return of Titus, good news from Corinth,—all alike are mercies from the Father, the God of all comfort. One may lose himself in the omnipresence of Jehovah and be overwhelmed by its sublimity, but it is a very practical doctrine with the apostle, a constant reality, and he feels it deeply because he feels it always. "Not far from every one of us." How can he be, when "we live and move and have our being" in him? We say these great words, but with what little consciousness of their massive import! Reason tries in vain to comprehend omnipresence; imagination labours and sinks under its images; while the humble and docile heart accepts the grandeur of God's presence in immensity as the grandeur of his nearness in all the affairs of life. "God of all comfort" because "Father of mercies;" the mercies very welcome to him just then in that sore emergency, and the fatherhood of God in Christ unspeakably dear. It enlivened the sense of special providence in his soul; it was the Comforter whom Christ had promised as more than a compensation for his absence, and while this Comforter was never taken from him, yet, as occasion demanded, his Divine manifestations were augmented. Just as we need human sympathy, assurances of human friendship and love, more at some times than at others, so need we the Consoler, and to this varying want he adapts himself in the infinitude of his power and tenderness. No soul is saved, we may suppose, on an unvarying plan; no soul is cheered and strengthened by a rigid monotony of spiritual influence. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," a zephyr, a breeze, a gale, but in all the wind. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." "Blessed be God," not only for "mercies" and "comfort," but for them in particular adaptations to seasons and experiences that doubly endear the gracious offices of the Paraclete. Now, these words of praise naturally lead us to expect a justification of their special utterance, and we have it immediately. "Who comforteth us in all our tribula-

tion," and for what purpose? Titus and Timothy had brought him much cheer and consolation, and why? Was it just to revive his drooping spirit? Just to assuage his personal pain, soothe his unquiet nerves, invigorate his tone of mind? Nay; consolation was not selfish. Happiness is not exclusively or even mainly for its possessor "Doth God take care for oxen?" Yea; for the owner of oxen too in his providence over the beast. The tribulation had not fallen on St. Paul because of anything peculiar to him; it was vicarious; and the comfort had been granted, not in his behalf alone, but that he might know how to console others. This is his statement: "That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." If the Holy Ghost is the Comforter, we are his agents, and, just as the gospel of doctrine reaches you from him through us, so too the gospel of consolation comes to your hearts through our hearts. Look at what the apostolic office meant. Far more than preacher, organizer, administrator, leader, champion, was included in its high duties and arduous responsibilities. To console was one of its greatest tasks. Everywhere the dejected were to be lifted up, the discouraged animated, the afflicted taught to hope. To be a physician to suffering souls was a ceaseless requisition on St. Paul. Think of what it entailed on such a man as he. Think of but one aspect of the matter—tension of sensibility. The exhaustion consequent on the unceasing strain upon sensibility is the hardest of all things to bear. It opens the door to all manner of temptations. It is the crucial test of manly fortitude. Now, the quality of emotion has much more to do with the exhaustion of the nervous system than the quantity. Every preacher knows that a funeral occasion on which he has to officiate is a severer tax on his nerves than half a dozen ordinary pulpit services. The more solemn, and especially the more pathetic, the circumstances, the more rapid and complete the subsequent exhaustion. Think now of what St. Paul had to endure in this kind of apostolic experience, and that too without a respite; how many thorns rankled besides "*the thorn in the flesh*;" and how many hearts bled in that one bleeding heart of his. Just now, moreover, he was suffering greatly on account of the Corinthians. This will appear hereafter. The main point before us is—How was he qualified to be a consoler? What his discipline, what his education, for this beautiful and holy service? Ah, Tarsus and Jerusalem, Gamaliel, all other teachers, pass out of view in this deepest and most personal of all culture, and the Holy Ghost and the man are the only parties to the work. "By the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Talking from the intellect is in such a case of no avail. A man must have been a sufferer, must have felt Christ in his sufferings, must have abounded in these "sufferings of Christ," as St. Paul designates his afflictions, before he can be fitted to minister unto others. Only sorrow can speak to sorrow. Notice the correspondence in the degree; if the sufferings of Christ abounded, so "our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." "By the sufferings of Christ abound in us" ("unto us," Revised Version), we understand the apostle to mean his fellowship with Christ in suffering the ills and sorrows that came upon him as an apostle and as a man because of his spiritual union with Christ. Mediation in all its offices, in the peculiar and exclusive work of Christ as the one Reconciler and Healer, in the subordinate and imperfect operations of human sympathy, is essentially painful. And allowing for the infinite distinction between the Divine Sufferer and human sufferers, there is yet a unity in suffering predicable of Christ and the members of his mystical body. For it is the capacity to suffer which is the dignity and glory of our nature. We are God-like in this quality. It is the basis of all grand excellence, nor can our innate love of happiness nor any other ideal of our being have its fulfilment except through *that kind of sorrow* which Christians undergo in the Man of sorrows. Ver. 6 emphasizes this fact. If we are afflicted, argues he, it is for your good, that we may be instrumental in your salvation, and that grace may abound to you because of what we endure. And, furthermore, it was for their present consolation; it was "effectual;" the example of their distressed apostle operated to strengthen and establish them, and the consolation wherewith he was sustained availed to animate their souls. For this reason, his hope of them was "steadfast." Corruptions were among these Corinthians; God's judgments had overtaken them because of their free-thinking and laxity of morals; they were punished, they were chastened; but, in the midst of all, St Paul was encouraged to hope for their stability and growth in grace, seeing that they were not only sympathizers but participants both in the suffering and in the consolation he himself experienced for their sakes. Two points here come into view: first, the

apostle was in great distress on their account, and they shared with him this peculiar burden of grief; and, secondly, the supporting grace which God had given him was not confined to his soul, but overflowed (abounded) in their souls. What a great truth is this! There are times in our history as believers when, if left without the support of Church relations, we should be overcome by temptation. In such hours God shows us the worth of membership in the Church; grace comes to us through their affections, and brethren in Christ are our best friends in the flesh. The human, or rather the Divine in the human, saves us when all else would be ineffectual, and thus it is that associates and companions in the faith co-operate with other "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." And what a meaning this imparts to the Holy Communion, wherein we express, not only our remembrance of Christ's suffering and death, but our fellowship with his sufferings in others! Keep in mind how sorrow ennobles us. Is it the silence and loneliness, the self-examination, the penitence, the amendment, in which the divinest fruits of chastening appear? These are not ultimate results. It is not alone what the discipline of pain makes us in ourselves; it is not the individual man, but the social man, that is under God's plastic hand, and who, while learning to "bear his own burden," is also learning a lesson far more difficult, to bear another's burden and "so fulfil the law of Christ." Who are they that practise the "so"? Who are the burden-bearers—those that carry the ignorance, perverseness, folly, misfortune, troubles, of other people on their hearts? Only such as have known Christ as he suffered from taking "our infirmities" and bearing "our sicknesses," and who have been taught by the Holy Spirit that the mediating life to which we are called as the highest sphere of life is possible only by means of personal affliction. Was Bunyan immured in Bedford jail on his own account or for the world's benefit? Was Milton blind for his own sake or for England's? How could 'Pilgrim's Progress' or 'Paradise Lost' have been produced except in obedience to the law—partakers in suffering, partakers in consolation? St. Paul proceeds to the illustration. Of his general sufferings we have a definite idea. How he was misrepresented by his enemies, how he was charged with meanness and cowardice, how he was vilified for his self-denial, how the Judaizers pursued him with merciless zeal, we all know. We know, too, how his heart was moved by the deplorable state of things at Corinth. Now, it is quite true that the endurance of trouble prepares us to bear a new trouble; but it is true also that trouble increases the sensitiveness to pain, and hence, in a succession of sorrows, the last, though not in itself the heaviest, is virtually such because of the sensibility involved. This was St. Paul's condition. At this very conjuncture, when a phalanx of evils threatened, he had one particular trouble, of which he says, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia." What it specifically was, we know not. He tells us, however, that it was exceptional even in his sad life; for he was "pressed [borne down] out of measure," and again, "above strength" (human resistance inadequate to bear the load), so much so that he saw no way of escape, life hung in peril, "we despaired even of life." In that dreadful hour all seemed over. Such hours do come to the best and noblest of God's servants. Body gives way, heroism is weakened, faith is half shorn of its strength. It is the eclipse of all light, the hour of darkness and of the Prince of darkness; the very soul seems to put off its better attributes, and life to its core appears an unreality. St. Paul "had the sentence of death" in himself. Was there any "lower deep"? Yet in this season of terrible experience a Divine lesson was being taught him, and it was "that we should not trust in ourselves." Had he not learned it long ago? Yes; in part, but not in this precise shape nor in this degree. The capacity to suffer is peculiar in this, that its development requires a manifold experience. One trouble is not another trouble; one grief is not another grief. Affliction that reaches a certain sentiment or a particular section of our nature may leave other sentiments and sections altogether untouched. Every quality within must go through this ordeal. The loss of money is not the loss of position and influence, the loss of friend is not the loss of a child, the loss of a child is not the loss of a wife. Each affection must pass through the refiner's fire. Nay, the very instincts must share the purification ordained for such as are to be made "perfect through suffering." Every link must be tested, must be thoroughly known, before the chain can be formed. What the issue was in St. Paul's case he informs us, and it was this—all self-reliance was

taken away, and, in utter hopelessness, his heart was committed to God with his life, even the God "which raiseth the dead." Could anything represent his marvellous deliverance except the resurrection? "Who delivered us from so great a death;" it was an act of omnipotence, and as signal as raising the dead. After this era in his career imagine his consciousness of God's power in him. There it was—part and portion of his being, thought of his thought, feeling of his feeling, separable never from the existence of self. Had the crisis passed? Yea; but maligners and intriguers and foes were still on his track; the half-Christianized Pharisees nursed the old grudge against him, and the Judaizer, who believed in no gospel of which the Law of Moses was not a vital part as a requisite to salvation, was as inveterate as ever in cunning and in the arts that undermine. Yet what a potency of assurance lies in sorrow! After this season of trial, St. Paul, who was very apprehensive of mischief from this Judaizing source, and most serious mischief, and who felt his own ministry more imperilled at this point than at any other, must have had an unwonted degree of heavenly strength imparted to his spirit. Is it not likely, indeed, that it was a period of special education for this struggle with the Judaizers? May it not have been that, while in Ephesus, Troas, Macedonia, the principal warrior on the side of Christianity and free grace had his armour refitted and burnished for the dangers newly impending? It is on record that he was revived and reinvigorated; for he speaks of God as one who had not only "delivered," but "doth deliver," and "in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." "So great a death" had been escaped; why might he not hope for future and triumphant victory? Would not these Corinthians be brethren indeed? "Ye also helping together by prayer for us;" the joy of deliverance from his enemies would not be complete unless they were "partakers;" not even would he have triumph at the price of selfishness, but self in them and self in him must be one; and, therefore, the recurring plural, "*we*" and "*us*." "By the means," or through the agency of "many persons," the future deliverance, "the gift bestowed upon us," will be secured, and what then? It would be no private and personal thanksgiving on his part. Instead of that, "thanks may be given by many on our behalf." His joy would be their joy; their joy his joy; and, in their mutual thanksgiving, all would see that a common sorrow had been overruled for a common glory.—L.

Vers. 12—24.—*Defence of himself; character of his preaching.* "On our behalf" were the closing words of the preceding verse, and St. Paul would now impress upon the Corinthians that he was worthy of their confidence and affection. And yet, further, if their regard had been manifested by intercessions in his behalf, he wished to assure them that he had in his own mind a blessed witness to the truth and sincerity of his apostolic work. Conscience was this witness. It testified that, "in simplicity and godly sincerity" ("godly honesty and singleness," "a plain, single mind"), and without any carnal wisdom that is begotten of selfish intellect, and under the control of grace determining the matter and manner of his preaching, he had shown his character and done his work at Corinth. This was his "rejoicing;" it was inward, it was from God; it applied to his "conduct in the world," and especially to his labours among the Corinthians. Were they not the witnesses of all this? How could he be charged with duplicity? They read his heart in the letters written to their Church, and acknowledged his open and frank dealing. Certain persons were sharply censorious, questioning his integrity, attributing baseness to his motives, but some had testified to his "simplicity and godly sincerity," and rejoiced in his apostleship. And they and he would be united in this bond till the end, the day of the Lord Jesus. The day was already anticipated, and even now the "rejoicing" was a foretaste of its bliss. Such was his pleasure in them that he had been anxious to visit Corinth and confer "a second benefit," and so enlarge his usefulness in their community, and bind their hearts and his in a fellowship closer, firmer, tenderer. Two visits had been intended. Circumstances had changed his purpose. Was he, then, light-minded, fickle, irresolute? The explicit statement of the reason is delayed, but, while not assigning at the moment the cause of postponing the visit, he meets the charges of his enemies by speaking the stern, strong language of that internal authority, the conscience, to which he had just referred. Was he playing the part of a trifler and deceiver by raising expectations he never meant to fulfil? Was he carnally minded, saying, "Yea, yea, and nay, nay," so emphatically?

If he had this shifting and variable intellect (so said his enemies), what dependence was to be placed in such an apostle? Then the solemn protestation breaks forth, "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay." It was our purpose to come to you, but it was changed in the spirit of the gospel, and just as certainly as the preaching of Christ in this gospel was "yea," just so certainly was our conduct in this matter in the "yea" of the gospel, *i.e.* truthful and reliable. All God's promises were made to be kept, and they are "yea" in Christ and we are "yea" in him. The response of the Church is "Amen," and it glorifies God through our instrumentality. All is in the Spirit of Christ—our preaching, promising, and living. God has made us firm and strong in Christ, has given us the unction of his Spirit, so that while Jesus of Nazareth was by distinction the Anointed, and received the Holy Ghost without measure, he has taken us, apostles and believers, unto himself, and conferred on us the gifts of grace. We are "sealed;" the mark is evident that we belong to Christ, and this "earnest" or pledge is "in our hearts." On the broad ground of his apostolic ministry and fidelity to its obligations, St. Paul makes his first defence as to sincerity and consistency. The charge of his adversaries, that he was guilty of double-dealing, is without foundation. His teaching and its results were proofs beyond question that he was anointed to his work, and these believers were the acknowledgment, the "Amen," that certified the fact. Why did he defend himself, at first, in this general way? Why not come at once to the specific reason for not visiting Corinth as he had promised? The reason is obvious. These Judaizers were striking at his apostleship, and the true issue between him and them turned on this point. What did they care about the assurance that he was coming to Corinth? This was a small matter. The main thing with his opponents, in their fiery zeal, was to overthrow the power of his ministry among the Gentiles by heaping contempt on his character and conduct. St. Paul saw this clearly, and hence his line of argument. He appealed to his ministry, to its fruits, most of all to the fact that the "yea" here was "yea," and the "Amen" of all converted souls was the endorsement of its success. And having met these slanders precisely in the form they were designed to affect him, he proceeds to tell the Corinthians why he had failed at the time to make them a visit. Hoping that his letter would lead them to see their grievous errors and induce them to repent and amend, he had deferred the journey to Corinth. "To spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth." The "rod" of severity (1 Cor. iv. 21) might not be needed, it would not if they administered the proper discipline in the case of the incestuous man and rectified the disorders in the Church. Had he not asked them to decide whether he should come to them "with a rod, or in love and in the spirit of meekness"? In this spirit of tender conciliation he had waited to see the issue. And now, vindicating his action in this matter, he solemnly appeals to God to be a witness against his soul if he had not spoken the truth. "I call God for a record upon my soul." Was not the case very clear? In what stronger light could it be put? There was the testimony of conscience, the seal of God, the unction and the earnest, the *yea* and the *Amen*; and here, last of all, the calling on God to testify against him if he had been untruthful. But, writing as he was under the consciousness that every word would be subjected by his adversaries to a merciless criticism, he would explain that he claimed no "dominion" over their "faith." In fact, they were steadfast in the faith, and his only wish was to be a helper of their joy. Thus ends the first chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. It is personal in an uncommon degree, a revelation of the man and the apostle in one of the critical periods of his career. Yet it is not a new revelation, but rather a fuller disclosure of what had been previously seen in part. No man can be known in one attitude and aspect. To see him in a single light and from a fixed angle of observation is impossible. Sculptors and painters, in representing men, work under this limitation. They select a characteristic expression, a dominant appearance, an historic moment. But not so with the historian, the poet, the dramatist. St. Luke in the Acts gives us St. Paul in various positions; but St. Paul is his own biographer, and, in this chapter, admits us to the privacy of his heart. Throughout the Second Epistle we shall enjoy this inner communion with him, and feel every moment the heart that throbs beneath the words.—L.

Ver. 1.—"An apostle by the will of God." Paul claims to be what he is, not by his own choice, not by the favour or nomination of his fellow-men, but by the Divine will.

There were special reasons why he should so think of himself; the *office* to which he was called was special, for he was a commissioned apostle; and the *manner* in which he was called to that office was marvellous, supernatural, and miraculous. But the principle contained in this language applies to every Christian; whatever we are, whatever we do, we are, we do, by the will of God.

I. THIS IS EMPHATICALLY A CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE. Our Lord Jesus lived a life of conscious obedience, for he came to do, not his own will, but the will of him who sent him. And he calls his disciples to a like life of subjection to the Divine will, by his precious blood redeeming them from self-will and summoning them to recognize the will of God in their salvation.

II. THIS PRINCIPLE APPLIES TO THE OCCUPATION OF EVERY CHRISTIAN. This may not be easy for the follower of Christ at once to see and believe. He looks back upon the time when he decided upon his business or profession, and he remembers that he was guided to a large extent by his own tastes and interests and by the advice of friends. But reflection will assure him that Providence is discernible in very familiar and ordinary means. And the appointment of God is to be observed, not only in the life of the statesman, the reformer, the missionary, but also in the life of the lowliest of Christ's disciples. It is not the scale upon which actions are performed that associates them with the Divine will, but the motive, the moral quality, the spiritual tendency. What is your calling? Are you a servant, a mechanic, a tradesman, a lawyer, a surgeon, a magistrate? In any case, if you are a Christian, and are in the path of duty, you are what you are, not simply through circumstances or through choice, but through the will of God. This principle has an obvious reference to *spiritual* work, for such is manifestly assigned by heavenly wisdom. The will of God calls the Christian labourer to witness, to work, and to endurance.

III. CONSIDER WHAT THIS PRINCIPLE IMPLIES ON THE PART OF GOD. It implies that the great Creator and Lord of all is conscious of all the affairs of all his people. He is not merely interested in their affairs; he exercises his will with reference to them. His will is not arbitrary or tyrannical; it does not override our liberty, for it is in harmony with justice and with kindness. Yet it has a supreme moral authority.

IV. CONSIDER WHAT THIS PRINCIPLE IMPLIES ON OUR PART. 1. The belief that we are what and where we are by the will of God gives dignity and grandeur to our life. It exalts the Divine will, yet it places us in a position of honour, as workers together with God. 2. It requires us daily to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and then to bring our actions into harmony with the Divine will. 3. It induces a habit of cheerfulness and content. If we are not just what and where our will would choose, be it remembered that our Father has appointed our lot. What joy and strength must come to him who is convinced that his daily life is assigned and regulated by the will of the Eternal and Supreme!—T.

Vers. 4—7.—*Comfort, Divine and human.* The human heart is so sensitive, and the human lot is so sorrowful, that it cannot excite surprise when it is found that religion lays great stress upon the provision for true and lasting comfort which Divine wisdom furnishes and offers to the pious. And whilst the consolations of friendship and of philosophy are superficial, those of Christianity go down to the depths of the nature and extend throughout the whole period of life.

I. THE SUPREME AUTHOR OF SPIRITUAL COMFORT. Instead of looking merely to the earthly streams, the apostle goes straight to the living Fountain. 1. The universal sufficiency of this Divine consolation. God is the God of *all* comfort, and he comforts us in *all* our tribulation. For he is omniscient and knows all our sorrows: "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." He is infinitely sympathetic: "In all our afflictions he is afflicted." 2. Divine comfort abounds by Christ. Christ is all to his people. If, then, we share his sufferings and benefit by them, the ministration of his consolatory grace is enjoyed by us who recognize him as upon the mediatorial throne.

II. THE MINISTERS OF DIVINE COMFORT TO THEIR FELLOW-MEN. The apostle says of himself here what in a measure may be said of all true pastors. 1. They are qualified for this office by their participation in those sorrows which are the common lot of humanity. 2. By their experimental participation in the sufferings of the Redeemer.

They know something of that pain which human sin inflicted upon Christ's heart, and something of that sympathy which showed itself in Christ's tears and sighs. 3. By their interest and affection cherished towards those for whose spiritual welfare they are concerned.

III. THE RECIPIENTS OF SPIRITUAL COMFORT. 1. In order to the enjoyment of true consolation, Christians must submit themselves with humility and resignation to the will of God. 2. If they have committed sin or neglected duty, they must not expect consolation except through contrition and repentance. 3. By whatever ministrations consolation may be administered, in order that it may be received aright, it must be sought from the God of comfort, and it must be sought in the Name and for the sake of Christ.—T.

Ver. 11.—*Intercessory prayer.* The grateful mind of the apostle recognized in the deliverance which had come to him at Ephesus the answer to the intercessions of the Corinthians on his behalf. Looking back upon affliction, illness, danger, he sees that a Divine hand has brought him out of adversity; yet he acknowledges his debt to those who had pleaded for him at the throne of grace. "Prayer moves the arm that moves the universe." Seeking the continuance of this intercessory application, he hopes great things from it in his future life and ministry.

I. FOR WHOM SHOULD INTERCESSORY PRAYER BE OFFERED? For all men doubtless, yet especially for certain classes. 1. For those who represent their brethren in devoted labour in Christ's cause. 2. Especially for all the public officers of the Church, for bishops and pastors, evangelists and teachers. They need it; for their responsibility is great and their difficulties are many, whilst their discouragements and disappointments are often sore.

II. WHO SHOULD OFFER INTERCESSORY PRAYER? The answer is emphatic and instructive: "*the many*," i.e. the whole Church in the person of all its members—privately, in the family, and in an especial manner in the great public and solemn assemblies upon the Lord's day and other appointed seasons. The gatherings of worshippers should be composed of "*the many*," and everything should be done to secure the attendance of large numbers at the services of the Church.

III. WHAT BLESSINGS SHOULD BE SOUGHT IN INTERCESSORY PRAYER? Surely that the Christian labourers, whose case is remembered, may be made devoted, efficient, and successful. That they may be diligent in toil, faithful to their trust; that they may be cheered and comforted amidst their difficulties; and that their labour may not be in vain in the Lord.

IV. WHAT ADVANTAGES MAY BE EXPECTED FROM INTERCESSORY PRAYER? The expression, "*helping together*," seems to point to good results widely diffused. 1. To him who labours, the strength which comes from sympathy and the strength that comes from the abundant bestowal and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. 2. To him who prays, reflected blessings, such as ever abound to those who live, not for themselves, but for others. There is a reaction, a rebound of spiritual blessing, and they who water others themselves are watered. 3. To the world, a hallowed impression, as it sees how its salvation is near to the hearts both of those who labour and of those who pray for its enlightenment.

V. WHAT ULTIMATE RESULT MAY BE ANTICIPATED AS CERTAIN TO FOLLOW INTERCESSORY PRAYER? *Thanksgiving* on the part of many; thanksgiving to God, who alike prompts the petition, qualifies the labourer, and gives his benediction to make all effort successful. Thanksgiving, here sincerely though imperfectly on earth, and hereafter perfectly, eternally in heaven.—T.

Vers. 18—20.—*The promises of God.* If Paul, in delaying his promised visit to Corinth, had seemed chargeable with levity and fickleness, he was not really thus guilty. Such qualities were alien from his Christian nature. And not only so; they were contrary to the character of the God he worshipped, the Saviour he preached; contrary to the promises of the gospel he believed—which they had received through his ministry. Thus the personal reference suggests the statement of a great Christian doctrine.

I. GOD IS GRACIOUS AND GIVES PROMISES. 1. Revelation is one long promise; it

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consists, not merely of commands and admonitions, but of assurances of favour and of help. Herein it proves its adaptation to the nature and to the needs of men. There were promises addressed to our first parents, to Abraham, to Moses. 2. The one promise distinctive of the old covenant was the promise of the Saviour, the Servant of the Lord, the Desire of all nations. In promising the Christ, Jehovah did indeed virtually promise all spiritual blessings to mankind. 3. The one promise of the new covenant is the promise of the Holy Spirit, in whom is grace and help for all human want and need. 4. The promises of God extend beyond this life into eternity, and include the vision of our Saviour and the possession of an immortal inheritance and home.

II. GOD IS FAITHFUL AND FULFILLS HIS PROMISES. 1. Of this his unchangeableness and omnipotence are the certain pledges. What his fatherly goodness assures, his inexhaustible resources will realize. 2. The gifts of his Son and of his Spirit are the proof of his faithfulness. All his promises relating to these gifts have been already made good, and none who receives them can doubt his power and willingness to fulfil what yet remains. 3. The promises of individual guidance, protection, and aid cannot be falsified. "Ye know in all your hearts, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you." 4. Our confidence in Divine faithfulness may be tried, but cannot be disappointed. The stream sometimes disappears and flows for a space underground and unseen; but it is there, and soon emerges in beauty and power. So with the purposes of God; they may be hidden and delayed, but they shall all be accomplished.—T.

Vers. 21, 22.—*The Spirit in the heart.* The signs of an apostle were abundantly manifested in the case of St. Paul. Some of these signs were outward and visible; the wonders which he wrought and the labours which he fulfilled were evidences to many of his high calling. There were other signs which were rather internal, revealed in his own spiritual nature and life. These were precious to himself, whether they were recognized or not by others.

I. THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT. 1. This rite received a significance from its employment under the old covenant in the designation of the prophet, the priest, and the king. 2. This significance is enhanced by the application to the Son of God of the official appellation, the Christ, *i.e.* the anointed One, the Being consecrated and commissioned by the Eternal. 3. The anointing claimed by the apostle is the qualification, by a supernatural and spiritual power, for holy and responsible office.

II. THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT. 1. By this sealing the apostle was stamped with the mark which was the sign of Divine property in him. 2. And he was thus inwardly and graciously authenticated as the Lord's messenger to men. By the seal we understand the mark set upon the moral nature, the character, indicating Divine possession and Divine authority.

III. THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT. The other operations of the Holy Ghost relate to this present state; this refers to the future. 1. The Spirit within the heart is the earnest of a fuller indwelling; they who receive the Spirit are assured that they shall be "filled with the Spirit." 2. The earnest of a clearer revelation. The light shall brighten until the dawn shall be succeeded by the splendour of noonday. 3. The earnest of a richer, purer joy. The measure in which gladness is experienced in the present is a foretaste of the joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. 4. The earnest of an eternal inheritance. They who are possessed by the Spirit and pervaded by his gracious influences have within them both an anticipation of heaven and a preparation for heaven. To whom the Lord gives the pledge, he will give the redemption; to whom he gives the promise, he will give the glorious fulfilment and the eternal possession.—T.

Ver. 24.—*Helpers of joy.* Even when the immediate effect of the apostle's language and action was to produce heaviness and grief of spirit, the real and ultimate design was to awaken and to intensify spiritual joy. A benevolent nature can find no pleasures in the infliction of suffering; yet it may be that, as was the case with these Corinthians, the way of sorrow and repentance is the only path which can lead to true and lasting gladness.

I. THE CAUSES OF CHRISTIAN JOY. It is well known what the world calls joy—pleasure, mirth, exhilaration of spirits, occasioned by festivity and by prosperity. But the Scriptures represent, what Christian experience supports, that there are purer sources of nobler joy. 1. The joy of spiritual deliverance, known by those who are emancipated from the bondage of sin, ignorance, and error. 2. The joy occasioned by Divine favour. The psalmist appreciated this when he exclaimed, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." 3. The joy of anticipating the gracious and final approval of God.

II. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF CHRISTIAN JOY. 1. The most natural sign of spiritual gladness consists in the abundant utterance of thanksgiving and praise. "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." 2. Where there is inward joy there is happy and energetic labour for Christ. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Whilst a gloomy disposition cripples the energies of the worker, gladness within expresses itself in cheerful toil. He works well who "sings at his work."

III. THE WAYS IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER MAY HELP HIS PEOPLE'S JOY. 1. By presenting those Divine truths which are the spring and source of joy. 2. By fortifying their minds against all that would disturb and spoil their joy. 3. By providing for them outlets, in worship and in work, for the expression of the joy that is in them. 4. By encouraging all those special exercises which will promote joy. 5. By exhibiting to them the privilege of rejoicing, as a Christian virtue, and admonishing them to spiritual gladness as a happy duty: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice."—T.

Ver. 1.—"Saints." A beautiful title frequently conferred upon the people of God in Scripture. They are called *believers*, since they exercise faith in Christ; *disciples*, as they place themselves under the teaching of Christ; *servants*, as they are pledged to do his bidding; *children*, as they are adopted into the family of God; and *saints*, since they are to live holily—"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke [blemish], in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. ii. 15). Christian saintship lays emphasis upon Christian holiness. 1. Upon *present* Christian holiness. It is not that we are to be saints in heaven only, but saints on earth. And we can have no well-founded expectation of being holy *there* unless we are holy *here*. It is the easiest thing in the world to be holy in the future! All are saints next year. But who is a saint *now*? The true child of God is—*must* be, or he cannot be a true child of God. 2. Upon *universal* Christian holiness. All real believers are real saints. Not so with the Romish Church, which canonizes a certain number, some of them very strange ones. Not as in our New Testament (erroneously continued in the Revised Version), *Saint* Matthew, *Saint* Mark, etc., as though these were saints because of their eminence in the Church. All Christians are saints. The idea of a Christian as a *believer* and *nothing more* is preposterous and utterly unscriptural. If a man believes, we want to know what his belief has done for him—what effects it produces. If it *does nothing*, it is nothing. Belief, says one, unites me to Christ. Very good; but Christ ridiculed the idea of a branch being united to the true Vine without bringing forth fruit. Belief, says another, alters my condition; being in Christ by faith, I am a "new creature." Excellent; but if you are a "new creature," let us see that you are, else we shall be apt to think that you are the *old creature* with a *new name*. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead" (Jas. ii. 17). A *true* belief is ever followed by holiness. This, however, only suggests how much *false* belief there must be. True belief is something like the firing of a loaded cannon. If there be true firing the shot will be propelled. So, if we truly believe, we shall be propelled along the course of holiness. It would be but a poor thing if Christianity made us something very excellent in another world, and left us just as it found us in this. Holiness is, no doubt, progressive. But love of holiness, desire of holiness, striving after holiness, and some realization of holiness, are the possession of every true child of God.

I. HOLINESS IN HEART. Not the mere approval of holiness. Many applaud holiness who do not *possess* it and who do not *want to possess* it. It must reign in the centre of our being. A child of the devil has unholiness reigning in his heart, but a child of

God has holiness upon the heart-throne. "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. li. 6—10). Holiness must *begin* in the heart; a holiness *tacked on to us* goes for very little. Many commence with *outward* reformation, when what they need is *inward*. The holiness of not a few is *very indifferent fruit hung on to the branches of a dead tree*. It is the pushing round of the hands of a clock which has no works behind the dial-plate. Mere external holiness is of nothing worth; God looks upon the heart. External saintship is the most miserable of shams.

II. HOLINESS IN THOUGHT. Some pass for holy livers who are very unholy thinkers. But if the heart be pure the thoughts are likely to be. Christ attached the same guilt to evil thinking as to evil doing (Matt. v. 28). It is not what we do, but what *we want to do!* Moreover, evil thinking is the father of evil doing. A child of God may be overtaken by a fault, sudden temptation may carry him away; but to think evil, to plan or purpose evil, is against the genius of his life. We should watch carefully our thoughts.

III. HOLINESS IN WORD. No man could tame the tongue, so God came to tame it. The true saint is pure in speech. The true saint speaks *holily*, not *cantingly*. Whenever a man speaks after a sanctimonious, shuffling, canting fashion, he is speaking under the inspiration of the devil. Some religious talking is peculiarly unholy; it sickens and disgusts; it is enough to turn the stomach of leviathan. But those who thus talk think they are infinitely pious, imagining probably that God Almighty measures his people's faces to ascertain how much grace there is in their hearts, and accounts them holy in proportion to their ability to pour forth unmeaning, impertinent or pretentious twaddle. We should speak holily, and then we shall be as far removed as we possibly can be from speaking sanctimoniously. And we should remember *the power of words*.

IV. HOLINESS IN DEED. Our actions will, as a general rule, show what we are, especially our *unstudied* actions. The true child of God is not only holy in profession, but in practice. The good tree will bring forth good fruit. Men judge us chiefly by what we *do*. The saint desiring the honour of God will let his light so shine that men may see his good works, and thus be led to glorify the Father in heaven. We shall not persuade either man or God that we *are* saints unless we *act* as saints. A *secret* holiness is no holiness. If we alone know that we are holy, we may be quite sure that we are unholy.

V. HOLINESS IN THE SPIRIT OF THE LIFE. The child of God is to have the fragrance of holiness pervading his life. The general bent of his life will be holy. To aid in the attainment of holiness we have: 1. *A Pattern*. Christ. He was "without fault." We are to seek to be *like him*. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy" (1 Pet. i. 15). 2. *A Helper*. The Holy Ghost. To (1) dwell within us; (2) sanctify us; (3) aid us in every emergency. Without holiness our prospect is dark; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14).—H.

Vers. 3—7.—*True comfort*. I. ITS SOURCE. God. Some seek comfort in reflecting that their case is no worse than that of others, that things will improve, that "it can't be helped;" in attempted forgetfulness; in exciting and dissipating pleasures; in unmeasured complaint and repining. But the child of God goes to his Father. God is the God of comfort; he is "the God of *all* comfort" (ver. 3). All true comfort is of him. From God as "the Father of mercies" (ver. 3). All mercies are of him, and this great mercy of comfort amongst others. Comfort is a *mercy*; it is of grace, not of right. Our sin has bred our sorrow, and we might have been left to it. But through the *mercy* of God we have abundant solace. As our comfort comes through mercy, we are not surprised to find that it comes "through Christ" (ver. 5), *the incarnation of the mercy of the Most High*. It is of the God who is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 3). It is thus associated with our redemption. It is for those who can say "*our* Lord Jesus Christ;" *his* Father is then *their* Father. God's children shall be comforted; for they are the children of the One who is the sole Source of all true comfort.

II. ITS BESTOWAL. It comes to us when most needed. 1. *In affliction*. The

world's consolations, such as they are, are offered to us when we least need them. Affliction finds few friends; but it finds one Friend. In the dense darkness the Christian has light in his dwelling, like Israel in Egypt. When the child of God is sick and troubled, his Father comes to him. 2. *In all our affliction.* (Ver. 4.) No affliction is beyond the reach of Divine comfort. God does not desert us in any trouble. Human comfort often aggravates our sorrow. When we are sore stricken we can bear no other touch but God's. We are sinking, but "underneath are the everlasting arms." Infinite in power; infinite also in consolation. 3. *In proportion to our affliction.* (Ver. 5.) God weighs all our troubles. He knows our sorrows. "As thy days so shall thy strength be." He is acquainted with our need, and will he not supply it? We may reckon upon sufficient Divine consolation in all our sorrows; very especially so when those sorrows have been directly brought upon us by our steadfastness in the faith, our loyalty to Christ, our faithfulness to God. Each martyr had a martyr's portion of comfort as well as of pain. And so with Paul, whom we may regard as a long-lived martyr, dying daily, yet living through the death-blows and comforted under them.

III. ITS OBJECT. We are comforted for our peace and happiness, but here we learn that we are comforted for *our usefulness* also. Like the apostle, we are comforted of God that we may comfort others. Divine comfort enables us to do this; for: 1. We can then speak from experience of the efficacy of Divine comfort. 2. We can direct to the Source of comfort. 3. We can testify to the Divine faithfulness in bestowing comfort. 4. The salutary influence of sorrow comforted by God will make us efficient comforters. Only those who have tasted trouble are fitted to minister to the troubled. And of these only they who have been divinely comforted can truly comfort. Such will be just unlike Job's comforters. Christ was perfected as a Comforter by his sorrows, and by the Divine consolation which kept him from sinking under them. We are brought down and then lifted up again, that we may be made meet for this service. And great will be our joy if we see those comforted by us patiently enduring (ver. 6) their tribulation.

IV. ONE OF ITS EFFECTS. Gratitude, mingled with adoration. "Blessed be the God," etc. (ver. 3). We shall thank God: 1. That he has comforted us. 2. That through this we have been enabled to comfort others. No stinted praise should we offer for such mercies. We shall all regard the first as great, but gracious spirits will regard the second as greater.—H.

Vers. 8—11.—*In the depths and out of them.* I. THE EMERGENCIES OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. God's children are often afflicted children. Far from escaping trial, it is frequently multiplied to them. Through much tribulation they enter the kingdom; with much tribulation they often abide in it whilst on earth. For them the furnace seems not seldom to be made "seven times hotter." Children of sorrows follow the "Man of sorrows." Like the apostle, they are sometimes "pressed out of measure," "weighed down exceedingly" (ver. 8), until their own power collapses. It is uncertain to what special exigency Paul refers, but in such straits was he that even his brave heart despaired of life. Happy are we if, like him, we do not in such tribulation despair of God. When our strength fails, his is untouched. As easy is it for him to deliver us when we are in great peril as when we are in little. God knows nothing of *emergency*.

II. THE LESSONS OF TRIAL AND PERIL. Very numerous—to teach us our weakness, to induce the pilgrim spirit, to bend our will to God's, to rouse us from lethargy, etc. One chief lesson noted here is to lead us to trust in God (ver. 9). He "raiseth the dead," and can do all things for us. Our perfect helplessness is demonstrated, and then faith lays hold of God's perfect helpfulness. Creatures become nothing, especially that very little creature, ourself. The soul cries out for God, and can rest upon nothing but omnipotence. This is Christian life—despairing of our own power, confident in God's. God sometimes keeps us in the fiercely hot furnace until he sees us walking therein by the side of the Son of God (Dan. iii. 25). Before we felt the fire we thought we could walk alone. God shakes us until he has shaken all the self-trust out of us. Self-confidence is poison; trial is intended to destroy that poison. When everything seems to fail us but God, then we lie at his feet.

III. PROVIDENCE DOES NOT EXCLUDE PRAYER. (Ver. 11.) In our extremity we can do

one thing—we can cry to God. The afflicted believer should say, “This one thing I do.” 1. *Our own prayer.* Christians should not be dumb dogs. The command to pray is bound up with the command to trust. Prayer is *proof* of a trustful spirit. A confidence in God which makes us too lazy to call upon him is a confidence which will get more blows than blessings. We may be kept in the fires till we find our voice. 2. *The prayers of others.* The apostle evidently believed in the efficacy of intercessory prayer (ver. 11). He regarded such prayer as very real “help.” Confidence in God’s help which excludes confidence in spiritual help from our fellows is not so pleasing or honouring to God as some imagine. He has ever honoured “united” prayer. The prayers of saints are very precious and very prevailing as they ascend from the golden altar. God was very willing to deliver Peter out of prison, but he gave to the saints at Jerusalem the great honour of praying him out (Acts xii. 5). The prayers of righteous men avail much. God loves not only solo praying, but choral praying.

IV. PRAYER ANSWERED IN PROVIDENCE CALLS FOR PRAISE. (Ver. 11.) Oftentimes, alas! we are so pleased with our deliverance that we forget to thank God for it. We say “Thank you” to every one except God. These things ought not so to be. When God hears us once in supplication, he should hear us once again in thanksgiving. Deliverances by God call for “songs of loudest praise.” When prayer has been answered, praise should be exceedingly full and hearty. We do not prevail in prayer because we *did*—and *were unthankful*. When many have prayed and have been answered many should give thanks. We must have united praise meetings as well as united prayer meetings.—H.

Ver. 12.—*The testimony of our conscience.* I. THE FAVOURABLE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE IS A GREAT SUPPORT IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL AND SUFFERING. Affliction brought upon us directly by our own folly or sin is as wormwood for bitterness. Suffering is then greatly intensified by the reproaches of conscience. We feel that we are reaping only as we have sown. But when conscience acquits us we gain great moral support. The pressure of the heaviest burden is relieved; in the darkest day there is then some light. We may be “cast down,” but we are “not destroyed” (ch. iv. 9). Sometimes the approval of conscience is enough to turn our sorrow into gladness, and to lead us to rejoice when otherwise we should have greatly lamented. We may glory in this without vain-glory. Paul was greatly comforted in his tribulations by a conscience which witnessed to the integrity of his conduct.

II. THE FAVOURABLE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE CAN BE SECURED ONLY BY HOLY LIVING. 1. Like the apostle, we must live in: (1) *Simplicity.* Singleness of purpose. Holiness: refraining from evil; walking ever before God. Though we shall not, it may be, be absolutely pure, we may abstain from all *wilful* transgression. (2) *Sincerity.* We must be true, honest, guileless, straightforward. Godly sincerity—*God-like* sincerity—*thorough*; a sincerity which comes from God. (3) *Not in fleshly wisdom.* A wisdom which has selfish aims, which is not particular about the means employed, a wisdom which ignores God. 2. This must apply to all our life. Our conversation in the world must be the same as in the Church. Some live double lives. It is no wonder that they have little peace of mind. Their conduct is ruled by *place* rather *principle*. We must be the same amongst the enemies of God as amongst his friends.

III. WE CAN LIVE SO AS TO SECURE THE FAVOURABLE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE ONLY BY THE GRACE OF GOD. We may “sear” conscience, dull it, so that its voice may be scarcely heard; but if free, unfettered, it will assuredly condemn unless we are in alliance with the Eternal. We cannot live a life of which the healthy conscience will approve apart from him. We may lay down excellent plans for life, but we shall have to lay them down unless we get strength from the Strong One. The apostle had to say, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. xv. 10). Of ourselves we can do nothing—except sin. Our sufficiency is of him. He causes us to triumph. We cause ourselves to fail. We can walk “*in* the grace of God” only “*by* the grace of God.”—H.

Vers. 17—20.—*Unchangeableness.* I. THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF CHRIST. He is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever” (Heb. xiii. 8). Paul, compelled by circumstances to alter his plans, and charged with fickleness, dreaded lest inconstancy

should be associated with his Master or with the doctrines of the gospel. He passes rapidly from a defence of himself to defend that which is of so much more importance. Well would it be if we were equally jealous of the honour of Christ, equally anxious that through us no shadow should fall upon his glory. Christ is unchangeable as (1) a Saviour, (2) a Teacher, (3) an Example, (4) an Advocate, (5) a Master, (6) a Friend.

II. THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD. Illustrated by the fulfilment of Divine promises in Christ (ver. 20). Not one jot or tittle has fallen to the ground. In Christ is the "yea"—the affirmation, the accomplishment of Divine promise. True believers acknowledge this; "through him is the Amen" (ver. 20, new version); they say "Amen" to the Divine faithfulness which they see so strikingly illustrated in Christ. This is "to the glory of God." The glory of his character is proclaimed. God is not inconstant. A promise made by him is, to all intents and purposes, a promise fulfilled. This unchangeableness applies to all Divine dealing. Threat will as certainly be fulfilled as promise. Many believe in the *semi-unchangeableness* of God. They think he will fulfil all that they wish to be fulfilled, and kindly dispense with the remainder. They *make their own god*, as the heathen do.

III. THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. Christian doctrine is certain, definite, abiding. It is not "yea" to-day and "nay" to-morrow (ver. 18). As there is no change in Christ, there is no room for change in statements respecting him. The apostle was assured that what he promulgated was *the truth about the Truth*. To change from that would have been to embrace error. If we change our utterances concerning the Saviour, we are justified only in so far as our prior statement was erroneous. The "old gospel" is the gospel for all new times. In Christianity the truest progress is to *go back*—to go back to what God himself revealed. As we do that, "more light will break from God's Word." But note, it will break *from God's Word*, not from the poor constellations of human wisdom. *There*, in the Word, we have the doctrine, which, like him in whom it centres, is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." There is no development in Christian doctrine as the ages roll on. There may be much development in our knowledge of it. The *same doctrine* is to come from the lips of all preachers at all times. The doctrine preached by Paul was preached also by Silvanus and Timothy (ver. 19).

IV. THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF THE TRUE BELIEVER. This is relative, not absolute. But in proportion as we resemble Christ we shall become unchangeable—unchangeable in principle, in bent of mind, in love of holiness, in life-purpose, etc. We are not to be fickle, but steadfast. Men are to find us ever the same in loyalty to Christ, in devotion to his service. Paul was charged with lightness, instability of purpose (ver. 17); but it was a false charge. He altered his movements that he might not be altered himself. The same principles which led him to form his plans led him to change them. Change in them was evidence of unchangeableness in him. Inconstancy and inconsistency were grievous charges in apostolic eyes.—H.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Four privileges of the believer.* I. TO BE ESTABLISHED IN CHRIST. Brought into ever closer union with him. More and more firmly settled in faith. Increased in knowledge of him and of his doctrine. Made constant to Christ. Developed in likeness to him. Perfected increasingly along all the lines of Christian character. A work continuous; so Paul uses the present tense. The Christian's course is like that of the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Not all at once is he at his best. The seed of the kingdom takes time to develop. The points of contact at first may be few; but we are to be established "into" Christ. Believers should seek closest association with their Lord. True self-interest does not prompt the question—How far may we safely keep from Christ? but—How near to him may we draw? "Abide in me . . . if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered" (John xv. 4—6).

II. TO BE ANOINTED. The believer is made like his Lord. Christ was the Anointed; so therefore is the believer anointed. Christ was the Anointed of God; so by God is the believer also anointed. Christ was anointed as King and great High Priest; so as king and priest is the believer anointed—"a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. ii. 9). Christ was anointed for a special life and a special work; so is the believer. It is not for nought that we receive our anointing from the Holy One (1 John ii. 20). We are consecrated,

set apart, to carry out the Divine purposes. Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts x. 38); so is the believer. With the anointing comes the power to realize the purpose of the anointing (1 John ii. 27). Here is great privilege, but at the same time great responsibility. Are we fulfilling the design of our anointing?

III. **TO BE SEALED.** Believers are sealed by the reception of the Holy Ghost (Eph. i. 13 and iv. 30). This is the Divine mark or seal put upon them. This sealing: 1. *Indicates proprietorship.* Believers have God's seal upon them because they are God's. He lays claim to them. They are in a most special sense *for God*. "Ye are not your own." 2. *Authenticates.* The genuineness of a believer is guaranteed by this mark. If he is sealed, then he is of God, though in some things he may seem eccentric. No spurious goods pass under this brand. Yet imitations of the Divine seal are many, so that we have need to "try the spirits," to ascertain whether they are truly of the Holy Spirit. The true seal authenticates us to ourselves. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. viii. 16). Our assurance springs from the Divine sealing. Dreamings, frames and feelings, and fancies, even opinions of others, are as nought compared with the witness of the Spirit. 3. *Invests with authority.* That which bears the royal seal has weight and authority among men; and those who bear the Divine seal are intended by God to exercise large influence over their fellows. They have the weight and authority of accredited servants of God. Not lightly are they to be esteemed; not contemptuously are their words to be received. So far as they are true to their sealing, they are of God, and are to be regarded as his messengers. 4. *Preserves.* Safety is often ensured by the human seal, always by the Divine. If God has marked us for his own, none shall pluck us out of his hand. Though the universe should rise up against a sealed saint, it should ingloriously fail; for the Divine seal is the pledge that Omnipotence will defend the sealed. God is not mocked. What he has set apart for himself he will have, and who shall say him nay? The saints are safe, for they are sealed of God. 5. *Testifies to value.* We seal only that which we value. And yet there may be no *intrinsic* value in that which is sealed. In itself it may be of no account; but we seal it because we can use it for some important purpose. So with the believer. Of himself he is nothing and less than nothing, and vanity. The sealing is no teacher of pride. He is sealed of God, not because he is excellent or of himself of any service, but because God in his infinite grace designs to make him so. The seal praises, not us, but God, who of us can make that which will redound to his glory and accomplish his purposes.

IV. **TO BE ENDOWED WITH THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT.** The Divine Spirit with which believers are sealed is the "earnest money," the pledge of that which has yet to come. The expression refers to that part of the purchase money which was paid in advance as a security for the remainder. Of what, then, is the possession of the Divine Spirit a guarantee? 1. Of yet fuller possession of the Spirit. 2. Of complete salvation. The "firstfruits" of the Spirit a pledge of the great harvest (Rom. viii. 23; Eph. i. 13, 14). 3. Of fulfilment of all Divine promises. 4. Of our enjoyment of the eternal inheritance. The heaven is begun. No great heaven above for those who have no lesser heaven below. This pledge of the future does not conflict with diligence and faithfulness in Christian walk. These are the signs of the possession of the Divine Spirit—a mirror in which alone we may see the reflection of the great privilege we claim. The holier we are in inner and outer life the more clearly shall we see what we possess. If we walk unholy the mirror will reflect only sin and condemnation. The perseverance of saints is saints persevering.

V. **THE SOURCE OF THESE PRIVILEGES.** God. We are debtors for these vast mercies. In them we are "enriched by him." Knowing the Source, we shall know where to seek for those things which are "more precious than rubies."—H.

Ver. 5.—Christian suffering. It is correct to say that Christ suffered in order that we may not suffer, died that we may never die. "Christ suffered for us." But it is also correct to say that Christ suffered in order that we may suffer with him, and, following him in the path of self-denial and patience, may be with him in his kingdom and glory. The apostles Paul and Peter regarded sufferings for Christ as continuations of the sufferings of Christ, and always looked, and taught their brethren to look, along a vista of trial and affliction toward the happy issue of being glorified together with Christ

at his appearing. *As members of the body of Christ we suffer.* As the natural body of Christ suffered in the days of his flesh, so now the mystical body, the Church, suffers in these days of the Spirit. It must have its agony and bloody sweat before the end comes; blows of contempt, scourging, buffeting; and must have its "bones sore vexed," as were those of his body on the cross; sore vexed, but not broken: "A bone of him shall not be broken." *As witnesses for the Name of Christ we suffer.* While walking and witnessing in the acceptance and power of his resurrection, we must be identified with him as the despised and rejected One. We are in collision with the spirit of the world, and the more firmly we lift our testimony against it the more the sufferings of Christ abound in us. In primitive times men suffered as Christians, for no other offence than the confession of the Saviour's Name. The council of the Jews arrested the apostles Peter and John, and put the deacon Stephen to death, on this charge. The cultivated Pliny, when Proconsul of Bithynia, about forty years after the death of St. Paul, is shown, by his correspondence with the Emperor Trajan, to have regarded the very fact of being a Christian as a crime worthy of instant punishment. Christian faith was in his eyes nothing but "an absurd and excessive superstition," and the noble constancy of the Christians under threats and torture "a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy." So the witnesses for our Lord suffered in Bithynia under the illustrious Trajan, as well as in Italy under the infamous Nero, and throughout the empire under the cruel Domitian and Diocletian. But it sustained them to know that they were fulfilling the sufferings of Christ. His grace was sufficient for them. On them rested the Spirit of glory and of God. Such discipline continues, though without actual peril of life. Faithful Christians suffer many things, at many points, and from many quarters. And when they suffer for the Church it is a continuation of our Lord's unselfish suffering. So St. Paul endured all things for the Lord's sake and the sake of the elect. He used the expression, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" (Col. i. 24), in reference to his inward anxiety and "agony" for those at Colosse and Laodicea, who had not seen his face in the flesh. His anxiety for their confirmation in the mystery of God was a sort of supplement to the deep struggle of the Saviour in behalf of multitudes, Paul included, who had not seen and could not see his face in the flesh. The apostle had no thought of adding to the sufferings of Christ in respect of their expiatory virtue, but rejoiced that he was permitted to follow his Master in this same path of affliction and solicitude for the Church. All sowers of "the incorruptible seed" have to sow with tears. And hearers of the Word are most profited when they receive it "in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Three views may be taken of those afflictions which are distinctively Christian. 1. They are for the Lord, incurred and endured for his Name. So were the afflictions of Christ for the Name and glory of the Father. The world hated both him and his Father. 2. They are for the good of the Christian sufferer—tribulations that work patience, chastisements for his profit. So were the afflictions of Christ for his own good. "Though he were a Son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered." 3. For the sake of his brethren, or for the good of the Church, which is edified through the self-denial and godly patience of individual believers in successive generations. So were the afflictions of Christ for the Church which he redeemed, and in which he now succours them that are tempted. The present time, then, is one of communion with our Lord in suffering. Let four advices be given to those who suffer with a good conscience—for well doing and not for evil doing.

I. HAVE A CARE ONE FOR ANOTHER. Trouble may make men sullen and self-engrossed. Correct this tendency by remembering that you are not isolated persons, but parts of the body of Christ, and so members of one another. If you suffer, bear yourselves so that others may be confirmed by your faith and patience. If they suffer, suffer with them, help to bear their burdens, condole in their sorrow, minister to their necessity. "Weep with them that weep."

II. LEARN PATIENCE FROM "THE MAN OF SORROWS." It ought to cure peevishness and wilfulness to read the story of our Lord's passion, and consider the meekness of him "who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." See how St. Peter sets before suffering saints the example of their Master (1 Pet. ii. 20—23).

III. LOOK FOR STRENGTH TO THE SYMPATHIZING SAVIOUR. In the present connection between Christ and Christians the Scripture marks a distinction. The saints suffer

with Christ; Christ sympathizes with the saints. The word for the former is συμπάσχειν: the word for the latter is συμπάθειν. The Head is raised above suffering, but sympathizes with the distressed and bruised members, and loves to supply consolation and relief. "Our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." He makes us strong, even in the hour when our hearts are jaded and our spirits faint. The crook in the lot, the thorn in the flesh, the buffeting in the world, the disappointment in the Church,—he knows it all, and he can bear us through it all.

IV. REJOICE IN THE HOPE OF HIS COMING. There is a deep wisdom of God in the long-drawn affliction of Christ and the Church. Glory comes out of the dark womb of trouble. How long the travail must be God only knows. Jesus Christ suffered till he was perfected, and then God exalted him. The Church must suffer and struggle till she is perfected and God exalts her too. And the glory that awaits her is that of her Beloved. As the Church enters into his sufferings, so is she to enter into his glory. This is the day for faithful service and saintly patience. The coming day is that of honour and reward, "that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."—F.

Ver. 9.—"The sentence of death in ourselves." St. Paul had just recovered from a depression of spirit under which his frame, never very robust, had been bowed down almost to the grave. He was no Stoic. No spiritual man is. Regenerate life brings quickened sensibility. The new heart is both deep and rapid in its appreciations, and feels intensely both joy and sorrow. St. Paul had not lost faith or comfort in his distress. He trusted in the living and life-giving God. All spiritual men find that faith thrives when they have to endure hardness. If they occupy places of ease or walk on sunny heights, they look down into the sorrows of life and call them dark and dismal. But when their path lies through the valley on which death-shadows fall, they lift their eyes to the hills whence help comes. The hills are near and strong, and the sky above reveals its golden stars. It is in houses of comfort that we often find doubt and discontent; but Divine serenity floats over the tried saints, and the secret prayers of God's stricken ones have the sweetest tones of hope. The reason of this is not obscure. If your chamber is full of light by night, and you look out through the window, you discern little or nothing—all is dark. But if your chamber be in darkness, and you look forth, you see the moon and stars ruling the night, the trees standing as solemn sentinels in the valley, and the mountain casting a broad shadow on the sea. So, when you have worldly ease and pleasure, heavenly things are very dim to you. But, when the world is darkened, heaven brightens, and you trust in God who raises the dead. There is a heathen conception of death which makes all vigorous life shrink and recoil. The dead are thought to go away into a mournful stillness, or move through the air and haunt lonely places, as pallid shades or ghosts. There is also a Hebrew conception of death which sufficed in the time of the Old Testament, but falls quite short of what is now brought to light by the gospel (see Ps. cxv. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19). But Christ has delivered from the fear of death. Every believer in Christ may enter into the consolation of St. Paul. If he is in sickness and has a sentence of death in himself, or sees that sentence written on the wan countenance of one whom he loves, he is not without a strong solace. It is not the mere philosophical tenet of the immortality of the soul, which implies an endless being, but by no means attains to the Christian doctrine of eternal life. It is faith in God who raises the dead. Father Abraham had this comfort when he strode up the hill, with the knife to slay and the fire to consume in sacrifice his dear son, "accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." We read of certain Hebrew women who through faith "received their dead brought to life again." We remember one instance in the ministry of Elijah, and another in that of Elisha. In those times it was an object to live long in the land which Jehovah God had given to his people; and so it was a blessed resurrection to be restored so as to prolong one's days on the earth. In the beginning of the gospel a few such cases are reported. We allude to the ruler's daughter, the widow's son, Lazarus, and Tabitha or Dorcas. But the gospel being fully unfolded, and the hope laid up in heaven made known, there are no more instances of restoration to mortal life. To depart out of the world and be with Christ is far better than to remain in it. So the resurrection for which we wait is that

of the just at the appearing of Jesus Christ. When we believe in God who raises the dead, the first and chief reference is to his having raised up the slain Jesus (see Rom. iv. 24; x. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 15). This is in the very heart of the gospel, and this carries with it the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of "the dead in Christ." "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." The sentence of death which St. Paul had felt was not executed till years had passed; but it was well to be forearmed. Ere long, warned or unwarned, we all must endure death, if the Lord tarry. And before we die we may have to see the sentence carried out in others whom we love and for whom we must go mourning. There is no help in facing death but that which comes of faith; there is no comfort in regard to those who have endured it but in the belief that they are already with God, "breathers of an ampler day," and in the hope that he will raise them up complete and glorious at his coming.—F.

Ver. 19.—*Christ is "yea."* The apostle defended himself against imputations of levity and self-contradiction. He did not lightly form or change his plans. He did not bandy about "yea and nay." The serious theme of his ministry was some security for its grave and consistent treatment. At the present day one hears a good many complaints of vagueness and vacillation in the pulpit. Preachers are said to use ambiguous phrases, propound shifting opinions, and leave their hearers unsettled and perplexed. They seem to have no certainty in their own minds, and therefore cannot convey a sure and straightforward gospel to others. Their word is "yea and nay." Now, there may be reason for hesitancy on some topics of religion. It may be a great deal wiser than absolute assertion. But as to the main theme of gospel preaching there should be perfect certainty; for the very essence of it is the setting forth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the True One, and ought to be proclaimed with firmness, consistency, and "much assurance." The Greeks were fond of speculation. At Athens they inquired after some new thing. At Corinth they were fickle and disputatious. On such a people the calm certainty of St. Paul's preaching must have fallen with surprise. It was testified that Jesus, who had taught in Judæa, but never even visited Greece, and who had been crucified at Jerusalem, was the Son of God; that he had ascended to heaven, and would judge the world on an appointed day. This was not submitted to the critical acumen of the Greeks for their examination and approval. It was delivered as truth, and not as a lie—yea, and not nay. Jesus, the Son of God, was the grand Reality in a world of delusions, and the grand Essence in a world of shadows. Such had been the teaching of St. Peter and the other apostles at Jerusalem, of Philip at Samaria, and of the Cypriote and Cyrenian brethren who first delivered the testimony at Antioch. No one was more clear or more intent upon this than St. Paul. Though his powerful mind could easily have dealt with many questions that would have interested the Greeks, he resolved to adhere to the simple testimony to Jesus, the Son of the living God. It may be said that, though this was right and needful in the world which St. Paul looked upon, and is right and needful still among Jews and heathens, it is not necessary in Christian countries. But alas! it is necessary. Countries called Christian are still very ignorant of Christ; all of them need full, definite, and firm preaching of the Son of God. There is nothing like it for delivering men from their sins, and drawing them away alike from the arid sands of unbelief and from the marshy places of superstitution. But the testimony must be delivered with unflinching heart and voice; for it is the preaching of the Yea, the Faithful and True—a pillar that cannot be shaken, a foundation that cannot be moved. Heathenism was full of contradiction, incoherence, and contrast. Its gods conflicted with each other and its oracles were uncertain. It was and still is a thing of "yea and nay." Buddhism, in some respects an improvement on the heathenism which it supplanted, after all amounts to a mere dreary nihilism. One who had studied it carefully (Sir J. Emerson Tennant) said of Buddhism that, "insufficient for time and rejecting eternity, the utmost triumph of this religion is to live without fear and to die without hope." This is not "yea," not even "yea and nay," but a perpetual dismal "nay." In Christendom, too, something like it appears. There is a weary scepticism which a famous writer described as "the everlasting No." Partly it is a shallow fashion, partly it is a real plague and misery of the generation to have "nay" only in regard to the unseen. God is not. The Bible is not. The devil is not. Heaven is a dream. Hell is a fable. Prayer is useless.

Faith is a fond fancy. So the mist wraps men in its chilly fold. Against all this we place the everlasting Yea. Jesus Christ is God's mighty and loving Yes to the children of men. And whatever the differences among our religious communities, in this testimony all are at one. The Son of God is he who can give light to the darkened mind, rest to the weary spirit, warmth to the frozen heart. In him desire is satisfied, apparent contradictions are reconciled, or hope is given of solutions by-and-by, for which we can well afford to wait. Some contrast the Christian faith unfavourably with the physical sciences. They say that it is full of mysticism and loose conjecture, whereas the sciences proceed by rigorous induction of facts observed, collated, and scrutinized. In the former we are asked to walk on air; in the latter, every step we take is on sure and solid ground. This we totally deny. There is no fair and proper test of historical and moral truth to which our holy religion refuses to be subjected. We have the well-authenticated records spoken and written by those who saw and heard Jesus Christ. We have the best reasons for trusting their testimony; and in the words, and works, and character, and suffering of Jesus, in his reappearance after death, and in the whole influence which he has exerted over millions of men for nearly nineteen centuries, we have overwhelming proof that, while human, he is superhuman—he is the Son of God. It is science that has to change its voice, not religion. It has to modify its assertions, correct its conclusions, and recousider its theories; but Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;” and the gospel which proclaims him brings to us the Divine “yes” to which we have only to respond with the human “yes” of an unwavering faith. The Saviour asks, “Believest thou that I am able to do this?” Be ready with the answer, “Yea, Lord.”—F.

Ver. 20.—*The certainty of Divine promises.* I. ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD. From the first (Gen. iii. 15) which points to the Saviour's first coming, to the last (Rev. xxii. 20) which assures us of his second coming, these are all very good. Their range is vast, their bounty large, their comfort sweet and strong. They bring balm to our wounds, help to our infirmities, rest to our weariness, encouragement to our prayers. They are “exceeding great and precious.” Scattered as the promises are over the Bible, they should be searched out and read with an intelligent regard to the time when they were given, the persons to whom they were addressed, and the nature of the dispensation under which they were issued. They are profitable in a general sense as exhibiting the Divine character and mind, and they convey individual comfort to those who, in express terms or by fair inference from the express terms, are indicated in particular promises. These comprehend assurances of (1) temporal welfare; (2) free pardon; (3) a renewed and obedient heart; (4) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; (5) the return of the Lord and our gathering to him in his glory. These are the keys to open all doors in the dungeons of Doubting Castle and set captives free. These are the strong withes that bind the holiest affections of men, or the cords and bands let down from above, which they hold as they skirt the precipices of moral danger and climb the steep places of duty. These are the stepping-stones across waters of despondency, on which pilgrims may pass dry-shod to the happy shore.

II. THE SECURITY OF ALL THOSE PROMISES IS IN JESUS CHRIST. No Divine promises are made to us out of Christ, and no promise in him can fail. This arises from: 1. The constitution of his mediatorial Person. He is very God and very man; God who is true and cannot lie, in union with a guileless Man who had no deceit in his mouth. 2. The nature of his mediatorial offices. As he is the Prophet, all the promises of Divine teaching and enlightenment are secure in him. As he is the Priest, all the promises of pardon, of acceptance in worship, and of salvation to the uttermost, are secure in him. As he is the King, all the promises of the subdual of sin and of deliverance from spiritual adversaries are secure in him. 3. The covenant relations of Christ to his people. They are so comprehended in him or represented by him that all the promises made to him are for their help and consolation, and all the promises made to them are for his glory. So are they assured of pardon through him, eternal life in him, the Holy Spirit of him and by him, and the new heavens and new earth with him who is the Amen, faithful and true.

III. THE END IN VIEW IN THE SUBRENESS OF THE PROMISES. “For glory to God through us.” It is glorifying to him that we go to the promises for solace and live on the

promises by faith. It was when Abraham believed a promise, and was strengthened in faith, that he gave glory to God. And this way of glorifying our God is open to all of us. Let us not stagger at his promises, but believe his love and rely on his faithfulness. He cannot deny himself. Glory be to the Father, who promises to be a Father to us, and to take us for his sons and daughters! Glory be to the Son, in whom all things are ours by free grace, and God himself is not ashamed to be called our God. Glory be to the Holy Ghost, for the anointing, the sealing, and the earnest in our hearts (vers. 21, 22)! The promises of God being established in Christ, we too who believe are established in Christ by the Holy Spirit, and so the promises are ours. What will you do who have no hold of the promises, no hearty faith in the Divine Promiser? For you there is no bright future; for the inheritance is by promise of free grace in Christ Jesus. Yet we do not ask you to believe a promise. Strictly speaking, there is no promise to men who are not in Christ. But Christ himself is set before you and offered to you. Believe on the Name of the only begotten Son of God, according to the tenor of the gospel. Then all things will be yours. The promises of grace and glory are for you; for they are all yea and amen in Jesus Christ our Lord.—F.

Ver. 24.—*The apostolic ministry.* I. APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY. Our religion is based on facts seen and known, abundantly verified and honestly related. Of these facts apostles were the chosen witnesses. When they spoke to their countrymen, the Jews, they showed how those facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled Old Testament types and prophecies of the Christ. But the real foundation which they laid everywhere was one of fact. Jesus had died and God had raised him from the dead. Of these things they were absolutely sure, and on their testimony the Church was built. On this it is well to lay emphasis. From one side there comes an insidious suggestion to cease from asserting the miraculous nativity and the actual bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as historical facts, and to content ourselves with the elevation of ideas and sweetness of culture which are associated with his Name. To this we cannot listen, because we cannot live in a house without foundations, and we do not believe that the ideas and influences of Christianity can long remain with us if we part with the historical Christ to whom the apostles bore witness. From the opposite side we encounter another danger. The facts which were testified by apostles and prophets are overlaid with masses of theological statement and niceties of controversial distinction. Not the Redeemer is preached, but the scheme of redemption; not the death of Christ, but the doctrine of atonement; not his resurrection, but the tenets of the schools regarding the results secured by his "finished work." Now, we do not for a moment disparage theology, systematic or polemical, or forget that St. Paul put much theology into his letters to the Churches; but it is a thing taught and argued, not witnessed. We must adhere to our point, that the gospel is a proclamation of facts, and the Church rests on a foundation of facts, certified by the apostles as competent and chosen witnesses—facts, however, not dry and barren, but significant, suggestive, full of profound meaning and intense spiritual power. St. Paul was careful to assume no higher place in regard to the gospel than that of a faithful witness. He delivered it just as he had received it, "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." He told the Galatians that, if he himself should be found at any future time proclaiming any other gospel, or if an angel from heaven should do so, he was not to be listened to—he was to be accursed. Any perversion of that gospel which had been delivered from the beginning would be sufficient to discredit an apostle as a false apostle, an angel as a fallen angel.

II. APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY. The apostles had authority to "bind and loose," to direct and administer in the early Church. On fit occasions they exerted such authority, and none of them more firmly or wisely than Paul. But they forbore as much as possible to press mere authority even in matters of order and discipline, and they disclaimed any right of dominion over the faith of their fellow-Christians. The Apostle Paul in particular is never found demanding attention or obedience to his teaching on the ground of his official dignity. Many signs and special miracles attended his ministry and confirmed his word; but he never posed as a worker of wonders in order to awe the minds and compel the submission of his hearers. His aim was to manifest the truth to the consciences of men. In founding the Corinthian Church he had "reasoned," "persuaded," "testified," and "taught the Word of God" (see Acts xviii.). His own

statement is, "I declared unto you the testimony of God" (see 1 Cor. ii. 1—5). The object of St. Paul in thus refraining from any assertion of a right to dictate was to build the faith of the Church, not on apostles, but on God. He would not say, "Believe because we bid you, and whatever we tell you." He was one of a band of witnesses to Jesus Christ the Lord; but, once those facts were believed with the heart, the disciples in every Church stood for salvation on the same ground with the apostles themselves, and had the same confirmation of the truth by the Holy Spirit.

III. LESSONS FOR THE MODERN MINISTRY OF THE WORD. For the propagation of the gospel there must still be witnesses; for the edification and peace of the Church there must be teachers, helps, governments, overseers. But none of these have a right to "lord it over God's heritage;" least of all may they lord it over the faith of their brethren. If the apostles of the Lamb disclaimed such dominion, how much more should they who have ministries to fulfil in the modern Churches of God! It is preposterous to connect apostolic dignity or the glory of apostolic succession with pomp and lordliness and the assertion of official superiority. It is apostolic to serve diligently and suffer patiently, to preach the truth in love, and to teach the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, but seeking no honour or glory from men. The object of the ministry in regard to those who are without is to bring them to repent and believe the gospel. The object in regard to those who are within the household of faith is to promote their joy and health. 1. "In faith ye stand." This is not submission to a human authority, but allegiance of heart to God in Christ Jesus. In emotions, opinions, anxieties, conjectures, there is no standing. Only by faith is the heart fixed, the mind established, in this world of change and disappointment, solidity imparted to the character, and calm courage breathed into the soul. Want of faith or decay of faith accounts for restlessness, weakness, rashness and inconstancy. The heart is "tossed and not comforted." The will is yielded to selfish desires and uneasy impulses. But "we have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand." 2. Those who minister to the faith of Christians increase their joy. The apostles were intent on this (see Rom. xv. 13; Phil. i. 25, 26; 1 Pet. i. 8; 1 John i. 4). And every true minister of Christ will find, with St. Paul, that his own spiritual life is bound up with the steadfastness and liveliness of those whom he instructs in the truth.—F.

Ver. 1.—"By the will." In this assertion, "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God," St. Paul briefly summarizes the claim to apostleship which he elsewhere argues, and which he so earnestly vindicates in a later portion of this Epistle. He carries the question to the final court of appeal, declaring that the primal source whence comes all call to office in the Christian Church is the "will of God." It matters not how that "will" may be expressed; whether, as to the older disciples, in the call of their Master to apostleship, or, as to St. Paul, by direct revelation from heaven. The only point of interest is this—Have sufficient signs of the Divine will concerning us been given to carry conviction to our minds? And what is the proper influence which the recognition of the will of God concerning us should have as we hold and fulfil the duties of the office? Such a conviction is—

I. A MAN'S HUMILIATION. It makes him nothing and God all. It sets him down among the ministries that God may use as he wills. But it brings to him a holier humiliation than that. It bows him down under the greatness of the trust he bears, oppresses him with the honour that is laid upon him, makes him feel his helplessness and unworthiness, as may be illustrated in the hesitations and humble expressions of Moses and Jeremiah when they were called of God. The healthiest humility is that wrought by a great and solemn trust.

II. A MAN'S INSPIRATION. It gives him an idea and an object in his life. It moves him with the power of a great purpose. It calls him to high endeavour. It wakens into bright activity every faculty and power of his nature. It urges him with the sense of duty. It delivers him from the weakness that ever attends a conflict of motives. It holds out before him the reward of the faithful.

III. A MAN'S STRENGTH. In the power of the conviction that he is where God would have him be, and is doing what God would have him do, a man can overcome and dare all things. St. Paul's own endurance are inconceivable save as we can feel that he had this strength. Especially illustrate from his wearying controversy with the Jewish

party. They said evil things of him, but this was his strength—he knew that he was an apostle by the will of God.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Comforted, and therefore comforters.* It may seem strange that the Bible, and Christian ministers following its example, should deal so frequently and so largely with troubles and afflictions. You sometimes half suspect that Christian people must have a larger share of earthly sorrow than falls to the lot of others. We may admit a sense in which this is true. The higher susceptibilities of the Christian man, his clearer vision of unseen things, and his separateness from the world, do seem to involve some special kinds of suffering from which the heedless and the godless are free. The influences on personal character and on individual life, wrought by God through the sorrows he sends, are often presented. In the passage now before us the apostle puts another side of their influence. Our afflictions and our comfortings become a blessing to others. “That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.” Our sorrows have by no means exhausted their stores of blessing when they have dispelled our doubts, delivered us from our dangers, and cultured our characters; they have stores of blessing left in them still, with which, through us, to enrich and comfort others. This may be set before us in two of its aspects.

I. OUR AFFLICTIONS AND COMFORTINGS ARE THE SOURCES WHENCE COMES OUR FITNESS FOR INFLUENCING OTHERS. It may be a question beyond present solution, what exact share have the sorrows of our past lives had in the formation and nourishment of our present abilities for Christian work and influence? And yet surely no man can reach middle life or old age, and feel the respect in which he is held, his power to comfort and help others, and the value that is set upon his judgment and counsel, without recognizing how much of that fitness for influence has come out of his experience of sorrow. Precisely what qualities are nourished by particular forms of trouble we may not be able to decide, but the whole result we can estimate, and there is not one true Christian who would hesitate to say, “Blessed be God for the afflictions of my life; yes, even for those which bruised and almost broke my heart, because, as sanctified by God, they have fitted me to sympathize with and to comfort others.” Experience brings power. But the Christian’s experiences are not of griefs only; they are of griefs together with *Divine comfortings*, and these together bring a peculiar kind of power. This may be illustrated from any of the spheres of Christian influence. 1. Take the power of a Christian’s ordinary conversation. We can discover in the very tones of the voice the holy subduedness that tells of some great woe that has put into the words and the voice that humbleness and gentleness. How often this tone of the stricken ones has had its power upon us! 2. Take the special efforts which are made, by conversation, for the conversion and instruction of others. 3. Take any endeavour to express sympathy with those who may now be suffering under God’s mighty hand. How different are the consolations offered by stricken and by unstricken ones! The unstricken can find beautiful words, and be truly sincere as they utter them. But the stricken ones can express unutterable things in silence and look. Send the long-widowed woman to cheer the newly widowed. Send the mother who has children in heaven to comfort the mother who sits so still, with broken heart, bending over the baby’s coffin. The plant of healing sympathies grows and blossoms and fruitens out of our very wounds and tears and deaths. Then it will but be reasonable to expect that, if God has high places of work for us, and valuable influence for us to exert, he will need to bring us through great and sore troubles. St. Paul recognizes this necessity in our text. How his life was filled with anxieties and sorrows we seldom worthily estimate. Great soul! He did not care to be always talking about himself; only once or twice does he lift the veil and show his secret history; but there—in much affliction awaiting him everywhere, and the comfortings of God abounding in all—is the explanation of his mighty and gracious influence. He was “comforted of God that he might be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.” The same truth shines out even more clearly from the life and cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is able to succour because in all points tempted. Lifted up, “he draws all men unto him.” Gaining his influence by his own sufferings borne in patience and faith. Winning power to save and help the world by dying an agonizing death, and knowing, the uttermost needs of a dying hour, the gracious comfortings of God.

II. OUR AFFLICTIONS AND COMFORTINGS GAIN FOR US ALL THE POWER OF A NOBLE EXAMPLE. In the previous part of the subject our *conscious* efforts to help and bless others have been chiefly considered; but the good man's influence is by no means to be limited to them. There is an *unconscious* influence, less easily calculated, but more mighty, reaching more widely, blessing as does the bracing air of the hills, or the fresh blowing of sea-breezes, or the face of a long-lost friend. And this kind of power to bless belongs peculiarly to those who have come out of God's tribulations and comfortings. 1. Estimate the moral influence of those in whom afflictions have been sanctified upon men who are living with no sense of spiritual and eternal things. 2. Estimate their influence on doubting and imperfect Christians. 3. Estimate the influence of such persons on children. You may have thought that your afflictions have set you aside from your work. Nay, they have just lifted you up to the trust of some of God's highest and best work. Tribulation worketh patience, experience, and hope. It matures the finer elements of character. But it does more—it fits us for work, for higher influence on others, enabling us to set before men all the power of a noble example. Our afflictions and comfortings are really our clothing with the soldier's dress, our putting on the soldier's armour, our grasping the soldier's weapons, our drilling for the soldier's service, that we may be good soldiers of the cross. Each one of us may become a Barnabas, a son of consolation. Comforted of God, let us learn to comfort others.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Christ's sufferings renewed in his disciples.* "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us." We have expressed here a characteristic and familiar thought of the apostle's—the one which brought to him the fullest and deepest consolations. It is true, but it is too easily apprehended to be all the truth, that St. Paul's sufferings, borne in fulfilling his ministry, were Christ's sufferings because a part of his service; but the apostle evidently reached the unspeakably precious and inspiring view of Christian suffering which sees it to be Christ's, because it is essentially *like his*—it is vicarious, it is borne for others. He says, "Whether we be afflicted, it is for *your* consolation and salvation . . . or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." St. Paul would know "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" even to that death in its vicariousness, as a sublime self-sacrifice for the salvation of others. For the thought that in our sufferings, of whatever nature, we share Christ's sufferings, comp. ch. iv. 10; Phil. iii. 13; Col. i. 24; 1 Pet. iv. 13. All vicariously borne suffering is Christly; it is the kind of which he is the Leader and the sublime Example; it is even necessary, as attendant on all human efforts to bless others. Every one who would help another must take into account that he may have to suffer in doing it. Illustrate by the doctor, or the man who tries to save, from water, or fire, or accident, a fellow-creature. He may even perish in so doing. The Christian may cherish this supreme comfort—he may become to others, in measure, what Christ is to him. He may become the inspiration of vicarious service. His Christly example may act on men as Christ's example acted on him. If it might be so, St. Paul was willing to suffer. It may be shown and illustrated that such Christ-like enduring has—

I. A **TEACHING** power on others. It brings its revelations of God and brotherhood. It opens mysteries. It impresses the evil of sin.

II. An **ELEVATING** power on others. It lifts men up to bear their own sufferings well, when we can show them the Christ-likeness of ours.

III. A **COMFORTING** power, since it shows, not only how God's grace can abound, but also how God can turn even what we think evil into gracious agency for blessing. Sufferers still can strengthen, help, and save others.—R. T.

Vers. 8—11.—*The sanctifying influence of nearness to death.* In God's providence he brings his people sometimes to the "border-land," and, after giving the expectation, and almost the experience, of death, he leads them back to life and labour and relations again. Of this Hezekiah is the prominent Bible example. The sufferings through which the apostle had passed are not here detailed, and there is found much difficulty in deciding to what experiences he refers. Some think he recalls the tumult in Ephesus, which Dean Stanley shows was a more serious affair than Luke's narrative alone would suggest. Others think that some time of grievous and imperilling sickness he alluded

to. And the apostle's mind may go further back to the stoning at Lystra, when he was left for dead (see Acts xiv. 19). It has been remarked that "the language is obviously more vividly descriptive of the collapse of illness than of any other peril." The point to which we now direct attention is that the sufferings imperilled life and brought him to the full contemplation of death—brought him to the "border-land;" and he gives the Corinthians some account of his feelings and experiences at the time, and tries to estimate some of the spiritual results then attained. They are these—

I. A FEELING OF SELF-HELPLESSNESS. Man never feels that fully until he faces death. He knows that no resolution, no energy, no sacrifice, can ensure his "discharge from that war." He can do nothing, and that most humiliating conviction may be a part of our necessary experience. Somewhere in life we need to be brought up before a great sea, with mountains around and foes before, much as Israel was when led forth from Egypt. It is good for us to feel helpless, utterly helpless, and then to hear the voice saying, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God."

II. DELIVERANCE FROM SELF-TRUST. Some sort of reliance on ourselves is necessary in order to meet the claims of life aright, and do its duties faithfully. Some measures of self-reliance blend with the Christian's trust in God all through his life of activity and service. Seldom, indeed, are full surrender to God, and entire conformity to his will, and simple reliance on his care, really won; and the experience of nearness to death alone breaks away the last bonds binding us to self, and enables us to "trust wholly." Life, after visiting the "border-land," may be wholly the "life of faith upon the Son of God."

III. FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE CONTINUING AND ABOUNDING OF DIVINE GRACE. This follows from so extreme an experience of what "almighty grace can do." Short of the experience of death, we may doubt whether "grace" can meet us at every point of our need; whether there really are no complications of circumstances which may overmaster grace. A man may say—Grace can meet many needs, *but* not just this condition or this particular frailty. A man brought back from the "border-land" has won an impression of God's power and mercy that enables him to look forward to life and feel that God's efficient grace can be with him everywhere and in everything. It is St. Paul, who "had the sentence of death in himself," who was a personally delivered man, and who spoke of God as being able to make all grace abound towards us, so that we, having all sufficiency in all things, might abound unto every good word and work (ch. ix. 8). Death is the climax of all human woes, and he who can deliver from death can master all our troubles and "make all things work together for good." In concluding, show that the sanctified influence of his extreme experience may be seen in the tone and spirit and manner of the Christian thus brought back from the "border-land;" but that there is great danger of misusing even such Divine dealings with us, as Hezekiah seems to have done. A man restored from imperiling sickness may *presume* on the very mercy which has been so gloriously manifested in his case. We should take as our model such an experience as that of the Apostle Paul.—R. T.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The gracious influence of prayerfulness and sympathy on suffering souls.* The apostle wanted his friends to know of his sufferings so that he might have—

I. THEIR SYMPATHY IN THE TROUBLES. Very tenderly beautiful is the way in which St. Paul, while turning to God for his great consolations, yet yearns for the sympathy of those among whom he laboured. He liked to have some of them with him. He was a most brotherly and sympathetic man, and could neither suffer nor rejoice alone. In this he illustrates what is the great want of *all* warm natures; they yearn for sympathy, and we may render noble service who can give such sympathy in response to them. It is help and healing for stricken ones that we can "weep with those who weep."

II. THEIR PRAYERS FOR HIS PRESERVATION. A man in trouble longs for the feeling—that which men may easily scoff, but which is nevertheless a most real and helpful feeling—that he is upheld by the prayers of those that love him. None of the difficulties about prayer in relation to material changes need meet us when we speak of prayer in relation to *spiritual* influences. We ought to pray for the preservation of our friend's life when he is in peril from disease, but we do this with uncertainty as to what the will of God is, and so with full submission to whatever the decisions of that will may be. We

pray that our suffering friends may be inwardly upheld, comforted, and strengthened, and in such prayers we know what the will of God must be. Sympathizing prayers have a really gracious influence on suffering souls, and surely bring down Divine blessings on them.

III. THEIR THANKSGIVINGS WHEN HE WAS RESTORED. The apostle could not rejoice alone. He wanted others to help him sing both of "mercy and judgment." From this subject arises, as the point of practical impression, the question—How can we help our suffering brothers and sisters? Even the Lord Jesus wanted sympathy, and the uplifting of others' prayers for him, when he was in the agony of Gethsemane; and so do his brethren. In what ways can such sympathy and help find expression? Neither utterances of sympathy nor earnest prayers can suffice instead of, and as an excuse for, not rendering practical helpings, but they will be found to inspire such practical efforts; for those whom we take on our hearts to pray for we are most likely to take into our hands to help.—R. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*The conscience-testimony.* "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience." This passage may be thus paraphrased: "It is this which causes such a perennial flow of joy and consolation into my heart amid all my anxieties and distresses. I can feel in my conscience that what knits us together in sympathy is a Divine and not a human bond. On my part there is the inspiration from above, on yours the verifying faculty which enables you to recognize the truth of what I deliver to you." Now, no man ever needs publicly to appeal to the testimony of his conscience unless he is misjudged, misrepresented, maligned, or slandered by his fellow-men. He may, however, be placed in such circumstances that he can make no other appeal than to the consciousness of having acted in sincerity and uprightness. Such a testimony may not be accepted by others, but the ability to render it brings rest and peace to a man's own heart. St. Paul was at this time greatly suffering from misrepresentations and slanderings; and so was David, in the older time, when he turned with such passionate intensity to God, saying, "Judge me according to mine integrity, and according to my righteousness which is in me." The worst hurt a true and faithful man can receive is the misjudging of his sincerity. F. W. Robertson says, "Met by these charges from his enemies, and even from his friends, the apostle falls back on his own conscience. Let us explain what he means by the testimony of conscience. He certainly does not mean 'faultlessness,' for he says, 'Of sinners I am chief.' And St. John, in a similar spirit, declares that none can boast of faultlessness: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.' And here St. Paul is not speaking of his own personal character, but of his ministry; and again, he is not speaking of the blamelessness of his ministry, but of its success. No; it was not faultlessness St. Paul meant by the testimony of conscience, but this—integrity, moral earnestness in his work; he had been straightforward in his ministry, and his worst enemies could be refuted if they said that he was insincere." Now, the conscience-testimony may be said to include self-approval before self, self-approval before man, and self-approval before God.

I. SELF-APPROVAL BEFORE SELF. Treat conscience as the exercise of a man's judgment concerning the right and wrong of his own conduct—a man's self-appraisal. A man may be calm amid all storms of slander or persecution who can feel that he is consciously sincere, and that he has been true to himself. Carefully distinguish this from mere self-satisfaction, and from the pride that leads a man to "think of himself more highly than he ought to think." A man's moral strength depends upon his self-approval when conscience makes its searching estimate of conduct and of motives. A man is only weak when his conscience upholds his accuser.

II. SELF-APPROVAL BEFORE MAN. 1. A man is often compelled to take action which he knows men are likely to misconceive and misrepresent. He can only do so with the assurance that he is right. 2. Men are corruptly disposed to put a wrong construction on the actions of their fellows, and every man must take this into account who occupies prominent or public positions. He dares not waver or change to try and meet everybody's wishes. He can but fall back upon the testimony of his own conscience.

III. SELF-APPROVAL BEFORE GOD. He, being the Searcher of the heart, knows the

very secrets of motive and feeling, and it may seem as if there could not be any "self-approval" in his presence. And yet God's Word teaches us that God looks for sincerity, expects it, and knows that we can reach it. Perfect we cannot be; sincere we can be. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." David may even speak of his integrity before God. And the height of a man's moral strength is only gained when he feels consciously sincere in the Divine presence, but is truly humble even in the consciousness and says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my ways."—R. T.

Vers. 21, 22.—*The sealing and earnest of the Spirit.* The figure used in the passage is taken from the custom, common to nearly all lands, of affixing marks to a man's peculiar property. That mark was frequently a seal, with a characteristic device. The shepherd has some mark which he places on each of his sheep, so that if any one of them strays away it may at once be known as his. And so Christ, the good Shepherd, has a mark by which he knows, and would have all men know, the members of his flock. That mark is the seal of the Spirit. The meaning of the term is explained by a passage in Rev. vii. The angel demands a little delay until he shall have "sealed the servants of God in their foreheads." That is, by a distinctive mark, the sons of God are to be separated from the world, stamped as God's chosen ones. And as that shall then be done by a glorious name, blazoned on the forehead; as it was done, in the older time, to Israel, by a blood-sprinkled lintel; so now it is done by the gift of the great Comforter and Friend, the Holy Spirit of promise. The presence of the Spirit pledges the fact of our reconciliation to God, and so it seals us. That Spirit may work *on* ungodly men and *by* ungodly men, but he cannot properly be said to work *in* ungodly men. His is an influence *on* them from without; his dwelling *in* the heart is the assurance that the great change has taken place. A man must be "born again" ere he can be the dwelling-place of the Spirit. "The Spirit witnesseth with our spirit that we are the children of God." And it is not possible to overstate either the dignity or the safety that attends such a sealing. God stamps his people by giving them his own presence. It is not enough to affix a mark, not enough to entrust to guardian angels. Satan may conceivably overcome them, and sin may blot out the mark. God would give his people no other seal than his own omnipotent presence. Divinest seal! No human hands can tear that from our soul. It can only be lost by our own self-willed acts. We can pluck off the seal. We may grieve the Spirit away. None can deny the livery of the eternal King, with which we are clothed, but we may ourselves choose another service and strip off the King's dress. What the sealing and earnest of the Spirit are may best be illustrated by the experiences of the apostolic company when the Spirit first came in Pentecostal power and glory. The disciples were waiting at the throne of grace, waiting for the fulfilment of the as yet mysterious promise of the Lord. It was the early morning, when a sweeping sound of wind came about the house, and filled the room where they were sitting. Presently dividing tongues of flame rested on their heads, and they felt new power thrilling within them. Those were the symbols of the Spirit's sealing them for their great missionary service. In this new might a surprising change passed over them. They were ignorant Galilæans; now they could speak so as to be understood by people of all tongues; now they were swayed with feelings that raised timid disciples into moral heroes and noble witnesses and faithful martyrs. That was the first sealing of the Spirit, and it does but illustrate how still God takes us as his, gives to us his Spirit, secures us by a Divine indwelling, and inspires us with Divine motives and impulses.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Continuation of his reasons for not coming to them direct from Ephesus (vers. 1—4). Their treatment of the inebriated offender (vers. 5—11). His thankfulness at the news

which Titus had brought from Corinth (vers. 12—17).

Ver. 1.—But I determined **this**. The division of chapters is here unfortunate, since this and the next three verses belong to the paragraph which began at ch. i. 23.

The verb means, literally, "I judged," but is rightly rendered "determined," as in 1 Cor. ii. 2; vii. 37. He is contrasting his final decision with his original desire, mentioned in ch. i. 15. With myself; rather, for myself; as the best course which I could take. That I would not come again to you in heaviness. The "again" in the true reading is not placed immediately before the verb, but it seems (as Theodoret says) to belong to it, so that the meaning is not "that I would not pay you a second sad visit," but "that my second visit to you should not be a sad one." There have been interminable discussions, founded on this expression and on ch. xiii. 1, as to whether St. Paul had up to the time of writing this letter visited Corinth twice or only once. There is no question that only one visit is recorded in the Acts (xviii. 1—18) previous to the one which he paid to this Church after this Epistle had been sent (Acts xx. 2, 3). If he paid them a second brief, sad, and unrecorded visit, it can only have been during his long stay in Ephesus (Acts xix. 8, 10). But the possibility of this does not seem to be recognized in Acts xx. 31, where he speaks of his work at Ephesus "night and day" during this period. The assumption of such a visit, as we shall see, is not necessitated by ch. xiii. 1, but in any case we know nothing whatever about the details of the visit, even if there was one, and the question, being supremely unimportant, is hardly worth the time which has been spent upon it. If he had paid such a visit, it would be almost unaccountable that there should be no reference to it in the First Epistle, and here in ch. i. 19 he refers only to one occasion on which he had preached Christ in Corinth. Each fresh review of the circumstances convinces me more strongly that the notion of three visits to Corinth, of which one is unrecorded, is a needless and mistaken inference, due to unimaginative literalism in interpreting one or two phrases, and encumbered with difficulties on every side. In heaviness. The expression applies as much to the Corinthians as to himself. He did not wish his second visit to Corinth to be a painful one.

Ver. 2.—For if I make you sorry. The verse may be rendered, "For if I pain you, who then is it that gladdens me except he who is being pained by me?" The "I," being expressed in the original, is emphatic, and the verse has none of the strange selfish meaning which has been assigned to it, namely, that St. Paul thought "the grief which he had caused to be amply compensated for by the pleasure he received from that grief." It has the much simpler meaning that he was unwilling to pain those who gladdened him, and therefore would not pay

them a visit which could only be painful on both sides, when the normal relation between them should be one of joy on both sides, as he has already said (ch. i. 24). The singular, "he who is being pained by me," does not refer to the offender, but to the Corinthians collectively. Who is he then, etc.? The "then" in the original is classically and elegantly expressed by *καί, and* (comp. Jas. ii. 4).

Ver. 3.—And I wrote this same unto you. And I wrote. He meets the tacit objection. If you shrink from causing us pain, why then did you write to us in terms so severe? The "I wrote" may be what is called the epistolary aorist, and will then be equivalent to our "I write:" "What I write to you now has the very object of sparing you a painful visit." If the aorist has its more ordinary sense, it refers to the First, and not to the present Epistle; and this seems the better view, for the "I wrote" in ver. 9 certainly refers to the First Epistle. This same thing; namely, exactly what I have written (whether in this or in the former Epistle). The words, "this very thing," may also, in the original, mean "for this very reason," as in 2 Pet. i. 5, and like the *εἰς τούτο* in ver. 9. Unto you. These words should be omitted, with A, B, C. When I came. The emphasis lies in these words. He preferred that his letter, rather than his personal visit, should cause pain. In you all. It is true that in the Corinthian Church St. Paul had bitter and unscrupulous opponents, but he will not believe even that they desired his personal unhappiness. At any rate, if there were any such, he will not believe that they exist, since "love believeth all things, hopeth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 7).

Ver. 4.—For. He proceeds to assign the anguish which his First Epistle had caused him as a proof of his confidence that, as a body, they loved him as he loved them. If they had regarded each other with indifference, his letter would not have been written to them, as it were, in his heart's blood. Out of much affliction and anguish of heart. The word for "anguish" means "contraction," "pressure," "spasm" (Luke xxi. 25). The expression may seem far too strong to be accounted for by the tone of the first letter. Hence some have supposed that he is referring to some other letter now lost; and others that ch. x.—xiii. of this letter, where the whole tone of affection and tenderness suddenly changes into one of impassioned irony and indignation, really belonged to this intermediate letter. There is no need, however, for these hypotheses. In 1 Cor. v. 1—vi. 11 he had spoken of the errors of the Church with strong reprobation, and the anguish with which he wrote the letter may have been all the more deeply felt because,

in expressing it, he put on his feelings a strong restraint. With many tears. I wrote "out of" anguish, and that anguish showed itself through the tears which bathed my cheeks as I wrote. Such tears, says Calvin, "show weakness, but a weakness more heroic than would have been the iron apathy of a Stoic." It must, however, be remembered that, in ancient times, and in Southern and Eastern lands, men yielded to tears more readily than among Northern nations, who take pride in suppressing as far as possible all outward signs of emotion. In Homer the bravest heroes do not blush to weep in public, and the nervous, afflicted temperament of St. Paul seems to have been often overwhelmed with weeping (Acts xx. 19, 31; 2 Tim. i. 4). Not that ye should be grieved. The "not," by a common Hebrew idiom, means "not only," "not exclusively." His object in inflicting pain was not the pain itself, but the results of godly repentance which it produced (ch. vii. 11). The love. In the Greek this word is placed very emphatically at the beginning of the clause. More abundantly. I loved you *more* than I loved other converts, and the abundance of my love will give you a measure of the pain I felt. The Philippians were St. Paul's best-beloved converts; but next to them he seems to have felt more personal tenderness for the members of this inflated, wayward, erring Church than for any other community, just as a father sometimes loves best his least-deserving son. There was something in the brightness and keenness of the Greek nature which won over St. Paul, in spite of its many faults.

Vers. 5-11.—*The results of his letter in their treatment of the incestuous offender.*

Ver. 5.—But if any have caused grief. The word "pain" or "grief" which has been so prominent in the last verses, naturally reminds St. Paul of the person whose misdoings had caused all this trouble. The "any" is in the singular. He hath not grieved me, but in part, etc. Of the various ways of taking this verse, the most tenable seems to be this: "If any one has caused pain, he has not pained me but partly (not to weigh down too heavily) all of you." St. Paul is denying that the feelings with which he had written his severe letter were due to mere personal sorrow or indignation. In writing he felt for the wrong done to them, to the whole Corinthian Church, at least as much as for the smart of his own grief and disappointment. The word "partly" is introduced, as St. Chrysostom says, to soften the expression, "he has grieved you all." It will then mean "to a certain extent." The words, "that I may not overcharge," or rather, as in the Revised Version, "that I press not too heavily," assign the reason for the modifying clause,

"in part." When St. Paul says that this man's conduct had *even to any extent* grieved the whole community, his words may seem to conflict with 1 Cor. v. 2; but he is thinking, not of the immediate condonation of the offender there alluded to, but of the agony of subsequent repentance which his letter had awoke in the whole (or practically the whole) community (ch. vii. 11). The phrase, "that I press not too heavily," refers then to the offender: "I will not say outright that he has grieved not me, but all of you, because I do not wish to bear too hard on him" (comp. 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8), "but I will say that he has grieved you and me alike to some extent." The phrase, "in part," occurs also in Rom. xi. 25.

Ver. 6.—Sufficient to such a man is this punishment. What the punishment was we do not know, but of course the Corinthians knew that what St. Paul had directed them to do was to summon the Church together, and there, by excommunicating the man, "to hand him over to Satan." But this handing over to Satan was, as we have seen, designed solely for a merciful purpose, and to awaken his repentance, so as to secure his ultimate salvation (1 Cor. v. 4, 5). Whether the Corinthians had done exactly as St. Paul bade them is uncertain; but whatever they had done is here acquiesced in by St. Paul, and even if (as we may suspect) they had dealt more leniently with the offender than he originally intended, he here not only refrains from urging them to use greater severity, but even exhorts them to a still more absolute condonation. St. Paul's object had not been that they should take a particular course of action, but that they should bring about a desired result. The result had been achieved, and now the matter might rest. *To such a man.* St. Paul mercifully abstains from re-cording his name or from thrusting him into unnecessary prominence before the assembly in which the letter would be read. The apostle evidently entered into the Jewish feeling that there is a criminal cruelty in needlessly calling a blush of shame into a brother's face. *This punishment.* The word *epitimia*, which occurs here only in the New Testament, but is also found in Wisd. iii. 10, means "punishment," as in later Greek, and is not used in its classical sense of "rebuke" (Vulgate, *objurgatio*); but the mildness of the word, perhaps, implies that the Corinthians had not resorted to the severest measures. Which was inflicted of many; rather, *by the majority.* The verb is expressed in the original, and St. Paul seems to allude to the steps taken, whatever they were, with a certain dignified reticence. It is obvious that there were still some opponents of St. Paul in the Church, who

retained in this matter their "inflated" sentiments of spurious independence; and this may, perhaps, have driven others into too rigid an attitude of severity.

Ver. 7.—Contrariwise; i.e. contrary to the line taken or to the view expressed by the severer portion of the community. Rather. The word is omitted in A and B. To forgive him. The word is used of the mutual attitude of gracious forbearance which ought to exist among Christians ("Forgiving one another," Eph. iv. 32; Col. iii. 13), so that they might be not only Christians, but as Gentiles ignorantly called them, *Christians* ("kind-hearted," Eph. iv. 32). And comfort; i.e. "strengthen," "encourage." The "*him*" is omitted in the Greek, with the same delicate, compassionate reticence which leads St. Paul to speak of this person as "a man of such a kind." In Gal. vi. 11 St. Paul suddenly breaks off the course of his remarks to give similar advice in a tone of peculiar solemnity; and in 2 Thesa. iii. 15 he warns against any *excess* in the severity which he enjoins in the previous verse. Such a one. Like the indefinite "one" in 1 Cor. v. 5. In the Greek it is compassionately placed last in the clause. Should be swallowed up. The same metaphor, of being swallowed in an abyss, occurs in 1 Cor. xv. 54. In 1 Pet. v. 8 it is said that Satan is ever striving to "swallow up" men. With overmuch sorrow; rather, *with the, or his, excessive grief*. Despair might drive the man to suicide, or apostasy, or the wretchedness of unclean living.

Ver. 8.—To confirm your love toward him; literally, *to ratify towards him, love*.

Ver. 9.—For to this end also did I write. This is another reason which he gives for the severe tone of his First Epistle. It was written (1) to avoid the necessity for a painful visit (ver. 3); (2) to show his special love for them (ver. 4); and (3) to test their obedience. The proof of you. Your proved faithfulness (ch. viii. 2; ix. 13; xiii. 3; Rom. v. 4); your capacity to stand a test.

Ver. 10.—To whom ye forgive any thing. In the original there is a conjunction, "but." It would, perhaps, be pressing it too much to imply that their "forgiveness" showed that they had not accurately stood the test of perfect obedience; yet it is difficult to read the whole passage without suspecting that St. Paul, while by temperament he leaned to the side of mercy, is here showing a spirit of generous self-suppression in accepting the course which the Corinthians had followed, although it had, in some way or other, diverged from his exact directions. *To whom*. Obviously, again, a purposely indefinite reference to the incestuous person. I forgive also. The

power of "binding" and "loosing," of "forgiving" and "retaining," had only been given to the apostles representatively and collectively, and therefore to the Christian Church (John xx. 23) in its corporate capacity. The Corinthian Church had in this case decided to forgive, and St. Paul ratifies their decision. For if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it. The reading here varies between *ð, what*, and *ò, to whom*, which in dictation might be easily confused. The order of the words also varies. The best reading seems to be expressed by the version, "For what I also have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything (I have pardoned it) for your sakes." This represents the reading of *κ, A, B, C, F, G*, etc., and is followed by the Revised Version. There seems to be here an intentional vagueness, and reference to circumstances of which we are not informed, which might, perhaps, have given room for wounded feelings in any one less magnanimous than St. Paul. The line he took in this matter was taken for their sakes—that is all he says, he adopted it as the best *relatively*, whether it was *absolutely* the best or not. In the person of Christ; literally, *in the face of Christ*; which seems to mean "in the presence of Christ," as though he were looking on at what I did (comp. ch. i. 11; iii. 7, 13, 18; iv. 6). It may be doubted whether the word *prosōpon* ever means "person" in the New Testament, except in a secondary sense.

Ver. 11.—Lest Satan should get an advantage over us; literally, *lest we should be overreached by Satan*, which would have been the case if our severity had resulted in the desperation of the offender, and not in his deliverance (comp. 1 Cor. v. 5). We are not ignorant of his devices. So too in Eph. vi. 11 we are told of the "crafty wiles of the devil."

Vers. 12—17.—*Outburst of thanksgiving for the news brought by Titus*.

Ver. 12.—Furthermore, when I came to Troas. "Furthermore" is too strong for the "but" of the original. There is an apparently abrupt transition, but the apostle is only resuming the narrative which he broke off at ver. 4 in order that he might finish the topic of the painful circumstance in which his First Epistle had originated. *To Troas*. Not "the Troas." St. Paul had to do with the city, not with the district. The city (now *Esaki Stamboul*), of which the name had been changed from *Antigonia Troas* to *Alexandria Troas*, was at this time a flourishing colony (*Colonia Juris Italici*), highly favoured by the Romans as representing ancient Troy, and therefore as being the mythological cradle of their race. He visited it on his being driven from Ephesus

after the tumult, a little earlier than he would naturally have left it. He had visited Troas in his second missionary journey (Acts xvi. 8—11), but had left it in consequence of the vision which called him to Macedonia. He now stopped there on his journey through Macedonia to Corinth, which he had announced in 1 Cor. xvi. 5. And a door was opened unto me of the Lord; literally, *and a door had been opened to me in the Lord*; i.e. and I found there a marked opportunity (1 Cor. xvi. 9) for work in Christ. Some commentators, in that spirit of superfluous disquisition and idle letter-worship which is the bane of exegesis, here venture to discuss whether St. Paul was justified in neglecting this opportunity or not. Such discussions are only originated by not observing characteristic modes of expression. St. Paul merely means "circumstances would otherwise have been very favourable for my preaching of Christ; but I was in such a state of miserable anxiety that I lacked the strength to avail myself of them." He was no more responsible for this state of mind, which belonged to his natural temperament, than he would have been responsible for a serious illness. To say that he *ought* to have had strength of mind enough to get the mastery over his feelings is only to say that Paul ought not to have been Paul. The neglect to use the opportunity was a "hindrance" which might in one sense be assigned to God, and in another to Satan. Moreover, that the opportunity was not wholly lost appears from the fact that St. Paul found a flourishing Christian community at Troas when he visited it on his return from this very journey (Acts xx. 6, 7), and that he stayed there at least once again, shortly before his martyrdom (2 Tim. iv. 13). Indeed, it was probably at Troas that his final arrest took place (see my 'Life of St. Paul,' ii. 569, 576). *Of the Lord*; rather, *in the Lord*; i.e. in the sphere of Christian work.

Ver. 13.—I had; literally, *I have had*. The perfect vividly realizes the scene through which he had passed. I had no rest. St. Paul had evidently told Titus to come from his mission to Corinth and meet him at Troas. But either St. Paul reached the town earlier than he intended, or Titus had been delayed. Now, the apostle was so intensely eager to know how his rebukes had been received—the name of "Corinth" was so deeply engraven on his heart—he could so ill endure the thought of being on angry terms with converts which he so deeply loved, that the non-appearance of Titus filled him with devouring anxiety and rendered him incapable of any other work. In my spirit; rather, *to my spirit*.

It was the loftiest part of St. Paul's nature—his spirit—which was utterly incapacitated from effort by the restlessness of his miserable uncertainty about the Corinthian Church. The disclosure of such feelings ought to have had a powerful influence on the Corinthians. We see from 1 Thess. iii. 5, 9 that St. Paul yearned for tidings of his converts with an intensity which can hardly be realized by less fervent and self-devoted natures. I found not Titus my brother. Not only "*the brother*," but "*my brother*;" the man whom in matters of this kind I most trusted as an affectionate and able fellow-worker (ch. vii. 6; viii. 6; xii. 18). Titus, though not mentioned in the Acts, is the most prominent person in this Epistle, and it is evident that St. Paul felt for him a warm affection and respect (ch. vii. 13, 15; viii. 16, 17; 2 Tim. iv. 10). Taking my leave of them; i.e. of the Christians in Troas. The word for "taking leave" is also found in Mark vi. 46. Into Macedonia. As he had intended to do (1 Cor. xvi. 5; Acts xx. 1). He had doubtless told Titus to look out for him at Philippi, and expected to meet him there on his way to Troas.

Ver. 14.—Now thanks be unto God. The whole of this Epistle is the apostle's *Apologia pro vitâ sua*, and is more full of personal details and emotional expressions than any other Epistle. But nothing in it is more characteristic than this sudden outburst of thanksgiving into which he breaks so eagerly that he has quite omitted to say what it was for which he so earnestly thanked God. It is only when we come to ch. vii. 5, 6 that we learn the circumstance which gave him such intense relief, namely, the arrival of Titus with good news from Corinth about the treatment of the offender and the manner in which the first letter had been received. It is true that this good news seems to have been dashed by other remarks of Titus which, perhaps, he withheld at first, and which may only have been drawn from him, almost against his will, by subsequent conversations. But, however checkered, the main and immediate intelligence was good, and the apostle so vividly recalls his sudden uplifting out of an abyss of anxiety and trouble (ch. vii. 5) that the mere remembrance of it awakens a thankfulness to God which can only find vent by immediate utterance. *Now thanks be unto God*. The order of the original is more forcible, "But to God be thanks." The remembrance of his own prostration calls into his mind the power and love of God. Which always causeth us to triumph; rather, *who leadeth us in triumph*. The verb *triumbeo* may undoubtedly have this meaning, on the analogy of *choreuo*, I cause to dance, *basileuo*, I cause to reign, etc.; and other neuter verbs

which sometimes have a factitive sense. But in Col. ii. 15 St. Paul uses this word in the only sense in which it is actually found, "*to lead in triumph*;" and this sense seems both to suit the context better, and to be more in accordance with the habitual feelings of St. Paul (Gal. vi. 17; Col. i. 24), and especially those with which these Epistles were written (1 Cor. iv. 9—13; ch. iv. 10; xi. 23). St. Paul's feeling is, therefore, the exact opposite of that of the haughty Cleopatra who said, *Ὁὐ θριαμβεύθησομαι*, "I will not be led in triumph." He rejoiced to be exhibited by God as a trophy in the triumphal procession of Christ. God, indeed, gave him the victory over the lower part of his nature (Rom. viii. 37), but this was no public triumph. The only victory of which he could boast was to have been utterly vanquished by God and taken prisoner "in Christ." The savour of his knowledge. The mental vision of a Roman triumph summons up various images before the mind of St. Paul. He thinks of the streets breathing with the fragrance of incense offered upon many a wayside altar; of the tumult and rejoicing of the people; of the fame and glory of the conqueror; of the miserable captives led aside from the funeral procession to die, like Vercingetorix, in the *Tullianum* at the foot of the Capitoline hill. He touches on each of these incidents as they crowd upon him. The triumph of L. Mummius over the conquest of Corinth had been one of the most splendid which the Roman world had ever seen, and in A.D. 51, shortly before this Epistle was written (A.D. 57), Claudius had celebrated his triumph over the Britons and their king Caractacus, who had been led in the procession, but whose life had been spared (Tacitus, 'Ann.,' xiii. 36). *The savour of his knowledge*; i.e. the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ. By us. The details of the metaphor are commingled, as is often the case in writers of quick feeling and imagination. Here the apostles are no longer the vanquished who are led in procession, but the spectators who burn and diffuse the fragrance of the incense. In every place. Even at that early period, not twenty-five years after the Crucifixion, the gospel had been very widely preached in Asia and Europe (Rom. xv. 18, 19).

Ver. 15.—We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ. The undeveloped metaphor involved in these words is that "we and our preaching diffuse to God's glory the knowledge of Christ which is as a sweet savour." The apostles are identified with their work; they were as the incense, crushed and burned, but diffusing everywhere a waft of perfume. St. Paul is still thinking of the incense burnt in the streets of Rome during a triumph—"Dabimusque Divis Turæ benignis" (Horace, 'Od.,' iv. 2. 51)—though his

expression recalls the "odour of a sweet smell," of Lev. i. 9, 13, 17 (comp. Eph. v. 2); see on this passage the excellent note of Bishop Wordsworth. In them that are saved, and in them that perish; rather, *among those who are perishing and those who are being saved* (comp. Acts ii. 47). The odour is fragrant to God, though those who breathe it may be variously affected by it.

Ver. 16.—The savour of death unto death; rather, *a savour from death to death*. To those who are perishing, the incense of the Name of Christ which our work enables them to breathe, seems to rise from death, and to lead to death. They (for here again the outlines of the metaphor shift) are like the doomed captives, who, as they breathed the incense on the day of triumph, knew where that triumph would lead them before the victors can climb the Capitol. To them it would seem to bring with it not "airs from heaven," but wafts from the abyss. So Christ was alike for the fall and for the rising again of many (Luke ii. 34). To some he was a Stone of stumbling (Acts iv. 11; Rom. ix. 33; 1 Pet. ii. 8), which grinds to powder those on whom it falls (Matt. xxi. 44). This contrast between the intended effect of the gospel as the power and wisdom of God, and its *accidental* effect, through man's sin and blindness which converts it into a source of judgment, is often alluded to in the New Testament (1 Cor. i. 18, 23, 24; John iii. 19; ix. 39; xv. 22, etc.). St. Paul is fond of intensified expressions, like "from death unto death," as in Rom. i. 17; "from faith to faith," etc. (comp. iv. 17). *Savour of life unto life*; rather, *a savour from life*, as before. It came from the Source of life; it is issued in the sole reality of life. Similarly the rabbis spoke of the Law as "an aroma" alike of death and of life. "Why are the words of the Law likened to princes (Prov. viii. 6)? Because, like princes, they have the power to kill and to give life. Rava said to those that walk on its right, the Law is a medicine of life; to those that walk on the left side, a medicine of death" ('Shabbath,' f. 88, 2; 'Yoma,' f. 72, 2). Everything is as a two-edged sword. All Christian privileges are, as they are used, either blessings or banes (Wordsworth). And who is sufficient for these things? St. Paul always implies that nothing but the grace of God could enable him to discharge the great duty laid upon him (ch. iii. 5, 6; 1 Cor. xv. 10).

Ver. 17.—For we are not as many; rather, *as the many*. This clause is introduced to show how much courage and effort the work requires. "The many" might, by Greek idiom, mean "the majority." The apparent harshness of the assertion that the majority of teachers in the apostolic age

dealt untruly with the Word of God, led to the substitution of *oi πολλοι*, the rest, in some manuscripts (D, E, F, G, L). But "the many" here means "the many antagonists of mine," who preach a different gospel (Gal. i. 6). It must be remembered that conceit, Pharisaism, moral laxity, and factions were all at work in the Corinthian Church. Which corrupt. The Word means who are merely "trafficking with," "adulterating," "huckstering," the Word of life. The word occurs in the LXX. of Isa. i. 22; Ecclus. xxvi. 29; and Plato applies the same metaphor to the sophists, who peddle their wisdom about ('Protag.' p. 313 d). The substantive *kapēlos* means "a retail dealer," and especially a vintner, and the verb *kapēleuo* is always used in a bad sense,

like the English "to huckster." Such deceitful dealers with the gospel are described in 2 Pet. ii. 3, and in one of the Ignatian letters they are called *Christemporoi*, Christ-traffickers. Such were those who altered the perspective of the gospel, lowered its standard, and adulterated it with strange admixtures. Their methods and their teaching are constantly alluded to in these Epistles (1 Cor. i. 17, 31; ii. 1—4; and ch. x. 12, 15; xi. 13—15, etc.). But as of sincerity, but as of God. Like one who speaks from the sincerity of his heart (ch. i. 12; iv. 2) and by the inspiration of God (1 Cor. xiv. 25). Before God speak we in Christ. The *sphere* of our teaching as of our life is Christ; and our work is done

"As ever in our great Taskmaster's eye."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The uniting force of Christian love.* "But I determined this with myself," etc. The subject which these words suggest is the uniting force of Christian love. We see it here uniting all its subjects in a common sympathy, a common punishment, and a common forgiveness. Here is Christian love—

I. UNITING ALL ITS SUBJECTS IN A COMMON SYMPATHY. "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?" The language of Paul in the first four verses implies that the "heaviness" of one would be the heaviness of all, the sorrow of one the sorrow of all, the grief of one the grief of all, the joy of one the joy of all. And this is what Christian love does in all its subjects, wherever it exists. To whatever Church they belong, it gathers them together in one, it binds them together as attraction binds the material universe into one magnificent and harmonious system. What one feels all feel, all affections are drawn to a common centre, all hearts point to a common home. The pulsations of all throb in harmony and make music in the ear of God.

II. UNITING ALL ITS SUBJECTS IN A COMMON PUNISHMENT. "But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part; that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many." In the whole passage from vers. 5—10 Paul's reference is to that incestuous person of whom he wrote in his First Epistle (see 1 Cor. v. 1—5), and whose excommunication or "punishment" he secured. The retribution which that man received was not the work of any one of them, but all joined in it. They all sympathetically concurred in it, and thus it was inflicted on many. They all loathed the same wrong and all endured the same punishment. *True punishment for wrong is the work of love, not vengeance.* Therefore punishment is not for destruction, but for restoration. The punishment that destroys the criminal is Satanic, not saintly; devilish, not Divine. Restoration is the work of love, the work of God. This is here distinctly stated. "So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." It would seem from the language of the apostle that the punishment they had inflicted on this guilty person had produced a deep penitential sorrow—lest he "should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." His punishment had answered its purpose, therefore restore him and "confirm your love toward him."

III. UNITING ALL ITS SUBJECTS IN A COMMON FORGIVENESS. "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also." As if Paul had said, "You and I are so united in loving sympathy that those whom you forgive I forgive." Observe here three things. 1. That *forgiveness is the prerogative of Christian love.* There is no love that has the true spirit of forgiveness but Christian. It is the highest form of love; higher than gratitude, esteem, adoration. It is the "new commandment." 2. That in the exercise of forgive-

ness there is a *consciousness* of Christ. "For your sakes forgive I it in the person of Christ." He who has Christly love in him has the very consciousness of Christ, feels as he feels, "one in the presence of Christ." How often does Christ urge his genuine disciples to proclaim forgiveness where there is genuine repentance! "Whatsoever is loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven." 3. That the forgiving spirit *thwarts the purposes of the devil*. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." Forgiveness is not, then, the prerogative of priests, but the prerogative of Christian love. A truly Christly man represents Christ—stands, so to say, in his stead; and "Christ hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Vers. 12—16.—*The preaching of the gospel*. "Furthermore, when I came to Troas," etc. The subject of these verses is the preaching of the gospel. Notice—

I. THE DIFFICULTIES CONNECTED WITH IT. "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia." Just at the time when the apostle was about opening his mission at Troas, and the prospect of usefulness seemed most suitable, he encountered a serious difficulty, and that difficulty was the absence of Titus, whom he fully expected. The disappointment cost him such great anxiety that he resigned his purpose, retired from the scene, and wended his way in another direction. Strange that an inspired man should have met with such a disappointment, and stranger still that a disappointment should have so disheartened him that he relinquishes for a time the grand message with which Heaven had especially entrusted him. Antecedently we might have supposed that a man going forth in a true spirit to preach the gospel would encounter no difficulties, that Heaven would sweep away all obstructions from his path; but not so. Perhaps no class of men encounter more difficulties in their mission than ministers. Many become so baffled, confounded, and depressed that, like Jeremiah, they exclaim, "I will speak no more in thy Name."

II. THE TRIUMPHS ACHIEVED BY IT. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." The grandest of all victories is the victory over sin. He who conquers the moral foes of one soul achieves a far grander triumph than he who lays a whole army dead upon the battle-plain. There is no grandeur, but infamy, in the latter conquest. It is here taught that these victories were achieved whenever they preached. "Always causeth us to triumph." Wherever they preached, "in every place," and always through God, "thanks be to God." He is the Author of their victory; he constructed the weapon, he instructed the soldiers, he inspired and gave effect to the strokes.

III. THE INFLUENCES RESULTING FROM IT. "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." Observe: 1. The *manward* aspect of gospel preaching. (1) It quickens some. "To the other the savour of life unto life." (2) It destroys others. "To the one we are the savour of death unto death." These effects occur wherever the gospel is preached. 2. The *Godward* aspect of gospel preaching. "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ." Whatever the results of preaching, baneful or beneficial, it is acceptable to God if rightly discharged. Ay, the preaching of the gospel is *the cause of immense good and the occasion of great evil*. Like the waters of the sea, the light of the firmament, the breeze of the atmosphere, it is the Divine cause of good; but man, through the perversity of his nature, may make it the occasion of his ruin.

IV. THE SOLEMNITY CONNECTED WITH IT. Paul felt its solemnity and exclaims, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who, of himself, is "sufficient" to expound the meaning of the gospel, to exemplify the spirit of the gospel, to inwork into human souls the eternal principles of the gospel? Paul adds in another place, "Our sufficiency is of God."

Ver. 17.—*The way in which the gospel should be preached*. "For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." The words suggests the way in which the gospel should be preached.

I. WITH CONSCIOUS HONESTY. "As of sincerity." This is a state of mind in direct antagonism to all duplicity. No man who is not true to his convictions and to himself can preach the gospel. He must be a true man who would preach truth, a loving man who would inculcate love. To have conscious honesty he must preach his own *personal convictions* of the gospel, not the opinions of others.

II. WITH CONSCIOUS DIVINITY. "As of God, in the sight of God." 1. He must be conscious that God *sent* him. From God, not from schools, sects, Churches, or ecclesiastics, but direct from God himself. 2. He must be conscious that God *sees* him. "In the sight of God." This consciousness will make him humble, earnest, fearless, caring nothing for the frowns or smiles of his audience.

III. WITH CONSCIOUS CHRISTLINESS. "Speak we in Christ." To be "in Christ" is to be in his character, in his Spirit. "The love of Christ constraineth me," etc. He who is conscious of the Spirit of Christ within him will be free from all self-seeking, all sordid motives, all cravings for popularity and fame.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—Further explanations and directions touching matters just discussed. The most copious writer in the New Testament is the man whose inward constitution and life are most fully brought into view. If the fact itself is noteworthy, the art of its management is even more significant. Didactic treatises would have excluded this method of blending the abstract and the concrete, and therefore the epistolary form which St. Paul adopted. What do we mean by this form? Much more, indeed, than a facile and graceful way of communicating facts and truths. In the Epistle we have the personality of the writer interblended with doctrine, duty, experience; so that in St. Paul's case we have not merely the gospel as a body of facts and truths, but the gospel in the consciousness of a leading exponent, and, in some respects, the most prominent representative of certain phases of that gospel. Gentile Christianity, as distinguished from the earlier Judaic Christianity, could never have been understood except for this intermingling of Christianity as a system and Christianity as a life in the history of our apostle. Both the conditions met in him as they met in no other apostle. The two things must not be confounded. Many in our day fall into this error and speak of Christianity as if it were only "a life." It is *a life*, but it is something else besides and something antecedent to *life*. Now, the epistolary style, and still more its method of thought, allow full play to the wholeness of Christianity. Its dogmas are preserved. Its experimental and practical forces are maintained. Its individuation is provided for. And thus, while seeing the system, we see also its life in the soul. If the psalmist; King David, is the signal representative of formal and spiritual Judaism in the Old Testament, St. Paul is the corresponding figure in the New Testament. At this point we are able to estimate the very great and specific value of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Beyond any of his writings, this unfolds the author, and does it with such masterly skill and on so comprehensive a scale as to give a twofold insight into his system and life. What an extension of the "Acts"! No St. Luke could have done this. It was the "Acts" in their secret head-springs in the man, and the man only could record what they were. The account of his personal feelings is resumed in this chapter. Not only for their sakes, but for his own, the visit had been postponed, since he was unwilling to come in sorrow. The "rod" would have been painful to him; they were to exercise discipline under the directions of his letter and thus forestall an occasion of grief to him. If he had made them sorry, who but they could give him joy? This was the reason for his writing, the reason too of deferring his visit; and thus the two things had been designed to co-operate in one result. A controversy is like a disease; the mode of treatment must be varied to suit its stages. No doubt personal presence, conversations, direct appeals, are best at some times for adjusting difficulties; at other times, letters are preferable. The discernment of the apostle prompted him to write and then to await the effect; and it was all in the interest of peace and for his and their consolation. Inspired by this confidence, he had written them a severe rebuke. It was a most painful duty; it was a duty, however, of love; and because of this coincidence, conscience and affection being at work in his soul,

he had suffered most keenly. "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears." The great soul was not afraid of words nor of the critics of words. He had a rare kind of courage. It was the boldness to say *how much* he thought and *how much* he felt, and to send forth his words laden with the meanings they had for him, that they might convey exactly those meanings to others. The love was not overstated, for it was a father's love towards the children of his heart: "More abundantly unto you." Evidently his paramount aim is to assure the Corinthians of his warm affection for them. Other feelings are held in abeyance; no mention now of suspicions, jealousies, backbitings, and other wrongs, by which he had been tortured; only the love, the impassioned love, he cherished for those whose sorrow and joy were his sorrow and joy. How naturally the way is prepared for what follows! "If any have caused grief [referring to the incestuous person], he hath not grieved me, but in part, that I may not overcharge you all." The Revised Version, "If any hath caused sorrow, he hath caused sorrow, not to me, but in part (that I press not too heavily) to you all." Conybeare and Howson, "As concerns him who has caused the pain, it is not me that he has pained, but some of you (some, I say), that I may not press too harshly upon all." Many commentators read it thus: "If any have caused grief, he hath grieved not me, but more or less (that I be not too heavy on him) all of you." What is the point of interest is the light in which St. Paul now regarded the offender and the punishment inflicted upon him. Punishment had been punishment; it had expressed righteous indignation, upheld official order, vindicated the holy authority of law. It had been effectual in bringing the flagrant sinner to repentance and had proved a warning to others. But were the effects to stop here? A great work had been done and yet other results were possible—were most desirable. Precisely here the far-sighted wisdom of St. Paul attracts our admiration. Discipline of a mechanical or of a military kind is cheap enough. True reformatory and saving discipline is a costly thing, requiring forethought and afterthought, the looking "before and after," which has won its place among the aphorisms of statesmanship. Much fruit falls and rots just as the ripening season approaches. Special care was needed, so the apostle argued, lest Satan should spoil the wholesome act in the sequel. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many." "Sufficient" leads the sentence. And the "many" has its weight, since in nothing is the power of the *many* so much felt as in condemnation.

"There is no creature loves me,
And if I die, no soul shall pity me."

This is Gloster perfected in King Richard. St. Paul urges the forgiveness of this gross offender. On the contrary, "Ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Make evident your love to him; so he beseeches them. If he is restored to their affection, this would prove that the Church was "obedient in all things." All through he keeps the dignity and authority of the Church in commanding view, and, as he had laid a most solemn duty on its conscience, so now he recognizes its high relationship in the matter of reconciliation. Would the brethren forgive him? So would he, and that too in the most impressive manner—"in the sight of Christ." The reasoning of the apostle at this point ought to make a most profound and lasting impression on Christian thinkers. Sincere motives and upright intentions do not always preserve good men from terrible blunders in administering Church discipline. All unawares, the imagination exaggerates, right feeling becomes jealous of itself, motives are looked at askance, a spurious consistency sets up its tyrannical claims, and, in no long time, law parts company with authority, and equity is crushed by justice. No attitude in which St. Paul appears before us is so finely characteristic of high manhood as when he pleads for extreme thoughtfulness and tender consideration in the use of legitimate power. Who ever suffered from the numberless forms of injustice as he did? Who died daily as he did? The "beasts" at Ephesus were not merely such as do physical violence, but in their utter want of all moral sensibility to truth and right. Yet this was not the worst. Ask a man who has had a large experience in public life what has occasioned him the greatest amount of vexation, and he will tell you that it was the misrepresentation and carping criticism and wilful littleness of spirit pursuing him continually which had most

embittered his career. St. Paul was subjected to these annoyances through all the middle period of his apostolic life. And what did he learn from them? To be distrustful of his own heart, to keep an open and vigilant eye on his infirmities, to be specially guarded as to the ambitious uses of power, and to foreclose every avenue to his soul through which an entrance might be effected of a fanatical temper in rebuke, in the management of Church troubles, and in the relation sustained to the other apostles. In the case of the Corinthian offender we see his lofty bearing. Ready to forgive, glad to forgive, yet he waits till he can say to the Church, "If ye forgive anything, I forgive also." And hear his reason, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Never could he have been St. Paul, apostle of the Gentiles, without this intense conception intensely realized of Satan as an infernal agent of prodigious power and unceasing activity. In his theology, in his way of looking at men and things, in his calculation of the forces to be met in the great conflict, it would have been inexplicably strange had he ignored or depreciated this gigantic spirit of evil. Elsewhere we have his allusions to Satan in other aspects of his character. Here he is the schemer, the wily plotter, the adroit strategist, observant of every movement, and on the alert for every opportunity. St. Paul was not afraid to acknowledge that in this matter at Corinth Satan might even yet turn things to his advantage. Recall the words (1 Cor. v. 5), "To deliver such a one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh;" and yet they were to labour and intercede "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." And now, this repentant and forgiven man, should they not save him from the snares of Satan?—save themselves, too, from being overreached by the arch-enemy of Christ and all goodness?—L.

Vers. 12—17.—*Coming to Troas; disquietude; defence of his apostleship.* Quite abruptly St. Paul mentions that he came to Troas. Why he left Ephesus he does not say, but we infer it was because of his anxiety to see Titus, and hear from him how his letter to the Corinthians had been received. There was a fine opening at Troas to preach the gospel, and yet he was greatly disquieted as Titus did not meet him. "Taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia." Here he met Titus, though, in the excitement of joy, he fails to state it. The sudden outburst of gratitude, "Thanks be unto God," expresses his exultation over the good tidings Titus had brought from Corinth, so that here, as is frequently the case, we get the outward history of events from the biography of the apostle's heart. All he had expected, and even more, had been realized, and he breaks forth in thanksgiving.

"Ye that in waters glide, and ye that walk
The earth, and stately tread or lowly creep,
Witness if I be silent, morn or ev'n,
To hill or valley, fountain or fresh shade,
Made vocal by my song, and taught his praise."

St. Paul was not a silent man in his happiness. No depth of emotion satisfied him unless it could be imparted to others. On this occasion his soul found utterance in thanking God, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." A military triumph rises before him; the victorious general is returning to the capital; the long procession moves before his eye; and, in the train, the captives brought home are conspicuous. Such a captive is the apostle following the chariot of his Lord. "Yet (at the same time, by a characteristic change of metaphor) an incense-bearer, scattering incense (which was always done on these occasions), as the procession moves on" (Conybeare and Howson). Christ is the fragrance; "we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ." Whether men are saved or lost, Christ is Christ, and the fragrance cannot perish. There will be a "savour of death unto death" and a "savour of life unto life;" but, in either issue, the glory of God's government is maintained. For, so far as we can see into the relations of Christ to man and of man to Christ, the fundamental fact in each aspect of the subject is human freedom. Of his own free-will Christ took upon himself our flesh and blood, suffered, and died; and of our own free-will, made such by him and acted on as such by the Holy Spirit, we accept his atonement. If we reject the offered mercy, the act of our rejection testifies to the infinitude of the mercy, and the "savour of Christ" is none the less "sweet" in itself.

“And who is sufficient for these things?” Here is no one-sided gospel, that accommodates conscience to taste, and allows a compromise between duty and inclination. Here is a gospel that is the “savour of death unto death” and of “life unto life.” Who is competent to maintain its stern truthfulness by preaching both these doctrines? The test of a faithful minister lies in the wise and earnest use of each class of facts. Is anything so difficult? Take the natural intellect; take the natural affections; take language as the vehicle of expression; and by what power of culture can a preacher be found who can set forth the gospel in its twofoldness of “death unto death” and “life unto life”? St. Paul, in the seventeenth verse, answers the question as to sufficiency. Now, as always, it is not simply the gospel which is the power and wisdom of God, but his way of preaching it. He declares that “many corrupt the Word of God;” not of this number is he. And where does the danger of corruption exist? In not holding with a balanced mind the “death” and the “life,” so as to shun overstatements and under-statements in each instance. To preach after St. Paul’s manner, one must have *sincerity*—the truth unmingled with human speculations; he must preach what God has revealed as to his Law and its righteousness, no more, no less; and he must preach it in Christ, himself in Christ, his gospel in Christ, and so preach as to spirit and temper and manner that the fragrance shall breathe in all his words.—L.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Sympathy in grief and joy.* How far from a formal or mechanical ministry was that of the apostle! He entered into the circumstances and the feelings of those for whom he had laboured. Nothing which affected their interests was indifferent to him. Some in his position would have said, “We have done our duty; it is no affair of ours how they act; why should we trouble ourselves regarding them?” Not so St. Paul. When the Corinthians acted unworthily, his sensitive heart was distressed; when they repented, that heart bounded with joy. This was not altogether the effect of natural temperament; it was the fruit of true fellowship of spirit with his Lord.

I. THE SPIRIT OF SYMPATHY IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST AND OF CHRISTIANITY. In the earthly life of our Saviour we behold evidences of this spirit. He rejoiced in men’s joys; he wept by the grave of his friend; he sighed and groaned when he met with instances of unspirituality and unbelief. It was pity which brought him first to earth and then to the cross of Calvary. Similarly with the precepts of the New Testament. The lesson is often virtually repeated, “Rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

II. THE SPIRIT OF SYMPATHY IS SOMETIMES THE OCCASION OF SORROW. 1. The spectacle of a professing Christian falling into sin awakens commiseration and distress in the mind of every true follower of Christ. 2. The spectacle of a Christian conniving at sin, or regarding it with comparative unconcern, is painful in the extreme to one solicitous for Christian purity. 3. Sorrow, from whatever cause, awakens sorrow in a mind sensitive as was that of Paul.

III. THE SPIRIT OF SYMPATHY IS SOMETIMES THE OCCASION OF JOY. Even amidst personal difficulties and opposition encountered in his ministry Paul was not indifferent to the joys of his converts. And when those whose conduct had pained him came to a better mind and afforded him satisfaction, he rejoiced with them in their happiness. If there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, surely he most resembles the Father of spirits and his immediate attendants whose heart is lifted up with exhilaration and delight by anything that manifests the growth and victory of the Divine kingdom upon earth.—T.

Ver. 11.—*The devices of Satan.* The course of St. Paul with regard to the Christian Church at Corinth was one of great difficulty. A flagrant case of immorality demanded his decided interference. Yet he wished to deal, both with the offender and with those who made too light of his offence, in such a way as not to endanger his personal influence over the Corinthian Christians generally. If he were too lax or too severe, in either case he would give his enemies an opportunity to malign him. And he knew that there were Judaizing teachers who were ready to attribute the immorality to Paul’s doctrines of grace. So that the apostle trod a very difficult path, which Satan had set with snares on either hand. He needed to be on his guard against the insidious

machinations of the enemy, and he gave the Corinthians to understand that such was his attitude.

I. **SATAN'S DEVICES ARE MANY AND VARIED.** The resources of an earthly foe ought not to be under-estimated by a general who would gain the victory; and if the tactics vary with circumstances, vigilance and self-possession, courage and care, are all needed. Satan besets Christians with many temptations; if he cannot tempt them into conscious sin, he will endeavour to entrap them into some error of judgment and conduct which may give him an advantage over them.

II. **SATAN'S DEVICES ARE SKILFUL AND CRAFTY.** In the temptation of our Lord this was abundantly manifest, and the Saviour gave his disciples to understand that they would be called upon to endure the assaults of the same unsleeping foe. Against his ever-varying tactics, against his all but inexhaustible resources, it becomes, therefore, every Christian soldier to be upon his guard.

III. **SATAN'S DEVICES ARE THE MEANS OF SNARING MANY OF THE UNWARY.** Some who once ran well have been hindered. Some who have resisted one enemy have fallen beneath the attack of another. The annals of every Church, however pure, tell of those against whom the adversary has directed his blows only too successfully. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

IV. **SATAN'S DEVICES NEED TO BE WITHSTOOD WITH WATCHFULNESS AND PRAYER.** It is something not to be ignorant of them. The unwary and unthinking are entrapped through very ignorance. Yet knowledge is no sufficient protection. A distrust of our own ability and a reliance upon superior power and wisdom are indispensably necessary in order to safety and deliverance. Well may the inspired counsel be received with gratitude and acted upon with diligence, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."—T.

Ver. 12.—*An open door.* Men are prone to think what doors are open to them to enter, through which they may pass to their own profit, or advancement, or pleasure. Paul's was an unselfish and benevolent nature. He was a true follower of Christ, who came, not to do his own will, and not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Again and again, in the course of his life, his heart was gladdened by the spectacle of a door of holy service set open before him by God's providence, inviting him to enter in and in the name of the Lord to take possession.

I. **THE OPEN DOOR LEADS TO OPPORTUNITIES OF WORK FOR CHRIST.** To the true Christian this is more desirable than aught beside. Paul went nowhere but some door opened before him. A synagogue was open; he entered it, and reasoned out of the Law or the prophets. A market-place thronged with citizens afforded him opportunity for preaching the true God and the eternal life. Even a prison door, when it closed upon him, did not shut him off from human souls. It is well that Christians should think, not so much of their own interests, as of the service of their Master.

II. **THE OPEN DOOR IS SET OPEN BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE.** "Opened of the Lord" is the apostle's expression. We may not see the hand, but we should not ignore it. When God himself makes a way, his doing so is a command to his people to adopt and to follow it. When he opens, "no man can shut."

III. **THE OPEN DOOR IS A DOOR OF PROMISE TO THOSE WHO WILL ENTER IN.** Why is the door set open? Is there no purpose in this? Surely it is a want of faith to hold back when the Lord himself so manifestly encourages his servants to "go in and possess the land."

IV. **THE OPEN DOOR WILL BE SHUT AGAINST THOSE WHOSE NEGLIGENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE HINDERS THEM FROM ENTERING IT.** As the door of salvation will be closed against those who fail to enter in, so the door of service will be shut to exclude those who turn aside when the hand of God has opened it and has beckoned them to enter, but has beckoned them in vain.—T.

Vers. 14—16.—*The solemnity of the ministry.* A Roman triumph, to which the apostle refers in this passage, was the most magnificent of earthly pageants. The conqueror, in whose honour it was given, was an illustrious commander, who had defeated an enemy or gained a province. The route traversed by the triumphal procession lay through Rome to the Capitol itself. The spectators who feasted their eyes

upon the sight were the vast population of the city. Before, the victor passed onwards the captives taken in the campaign, and the spoil which had been wrested from the foe. Behind, followed the army, flushed with victory and rejoicing in the insolence and pride of military might. The conqueror himself, mounted aloft upon his car, was the centre of observation and attraction. Every mark of honour was paid to him. Sacrifices were offered by the priests to the gods to whose favour victory was ascribed. Incense-bearers marched in the procession, and fragrant clouds ascended, floating in the air and mingling with the shouts and with the strains of martial music. And in the temples sacrificial offerings were accompanied by the presentation of the odorous incense.

I. THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL. The warfare of the Word is against the sins of the rebels who have defied the authority of the Most High. In apostolic times the progress of the gospel, though often opposed and often checked, appeared to the view of Paul as a triumphal progress. God, who had triumphed over the enemies whom he converted into his friends and companions, made them, as his representatives, triumph in their turn, and admitted them to share his triumph over the enemies of truth and righteousness.

II. THE INCENSE-BEARERS IN THE TRIUMPHAL TRAIN. There is a prodigality of wealth in the imagery here employed. Paul and his fellow-ministers were themselves both captives and also incense-bearers—"unto God a sweet savour of Christ." As the Son of the Eternal is infinitely acceptable to his Father, so those who share his mission and purpose, and faithfully publish his gospel, are well-pleasing to him, as the odour of the fragrant incense to the nostril.

III. THE ACCOMPANIMENTS AND RESULTS OF THE GOSPEL TRIUMPH. These are twofold and opposed. 1. To the perishing the ministry is a sentence of death. Some captives were taken aside and put to death in cold blood as the procession approached the Capitoline hill. The incense to such was deadly—an odour premonitory of a violent and miserable death. Thus the proclamation of the gospel, in itself an unspeakable blessing, is actually the occasion of the condemnation of unbelievers, who reject and despise it. 2. To those in course of salvation the ministry is a message of life. Welcome and pleasant alike to God and man, the glad tidings of redemption tell of life to those whose desert is death. A welcome and delightful fragrance to the saved, it promises participation in the glorious victory and the eternal reign of the Divine Redeemer.—T.

Ver. 14.—The triumph. The emotional and susceptible nature of the Apostle Paul was quick to recognize either opposition or success. And when it occurred to him, in the providence of God, to meet with instances in which his message was gratefully welcomed and he himself was cordially appreciated, his heart was filled with joy, and he was eager to utter forth gratitude and praise. When elated with prosperity in his evangelistic work, he felt that God was always making him to triumph. His spiritual successes were to him more glorious than the triumph which the victorious general enjoyed upon his return to Rome, when he ascended the Capitoline hill, with his fellow-warriors in the procession and his captives in his train. What an inspiration do these words of the apostle afford to those who are engaged in the service of the Saviour, and are experiencing the vicissitudes of earthly ministry!

I. IF THERE IS WARFARE, THERE WILL BE VICTORY. The Christian life is a warfare, involving effort, danger, and resistance. Much more manifestly does this figure apply to those who preach the gospel, especially as evangelists among the heathen, the degraded, the unbelieving. Such stand in need both of spiritual courage and of spiritual weapons. And in the stress of the conflict, in the noise and tumult of warfare, it is well for them to remember that the issue is not uncertain, that conquest is close at hand.

II. IF THERE ARE ENEMIES, THEY WILL BECOME EITHER CAPTIVES OR, BETTER STILL, ALLIES AND FELLOW-SOLDIERS. When spiritual opponents are many and daring, and when their onset is sore and perhaps alarming, the heart of the soldier of Christ may sometimes sink within him. But he is required to estimate the fortunes of the war, not by human probabilities, but by Divine predictions. Of those who oppose themselves none shall prevail. Some shall be vanquished and put to shame. Others shall confess the justice and the grace of Christ, shall lay down the arms of rebellion, shall enlist in the spiritual host, shall take to them the armour of God.

III. IF THERE IS DISAPPOINTMENT, THERE WILL BE RECOMPENSE. Paul knew often

enough what it is to be cast down. The higher the hope, the bitterer the sorrow when that hope is frustrated. It sometimes happens that, where the Christian warrior spends all his strength, and attacks the enemy with courage and perseverance, there he experiences the most humiliating rebuff. Then let him be assured that different experience is in store for him. Foes shall yield, whose stubbornness, it seemed to him, no power could subdue. Victory shall be to the faithful and to the brave.

IV. IF THERE BE A SHARING OF CHRIST'S CROSS, THERE SHALL BE ALSO A SHARING OF HIS THRONE. Our Lord, the Captain of our salvation, knew by experience the power of the enemy. And can it be expected that with us all will be prosperous? Shall we not be followers of him, and know the likeness of his death? Thus shall it be given to him that overcometh to sit down with him upon his throne.—T.

Ver. 16.—“*Who is sufficient?*” Those to whom the ministry of the gospel of Christ is merely a profession, who regard the offices of religion as a routine, who consider chiefly such emoluments and advantages as may be connected with it, read these words with astonishment and without sympathy. But those who think as Paul thought of the ministry, with a wondering amazement at the grace of God and at the provision made in Christ for the passage of that grace to man, those who realize the preciousness of the soul and the solemnity alike of life and of eternity, cannot but cherish a conviction that, for a service so high and holy as the ministry of God's Word, no human qualification can suffice.

I. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF HUMAN POWER. To understand this we must regard: 1. The deficiencies of the human agent. No minister has an adequate view of the Saviour he preaches; none has a sufficiently keen sympathy with the souls of his fellow-men; none has a power of persuasion commensurate with the necessities of the case; none has the burning zeal for God which was perfectly displayed by Christ alone. 2. The peculiar difficulties of the work to be accomplished. The ignorance, the levity, the prejudices, the wilfulness, the gross sinfulness of men,—all must be taken into account if we would have a just conception of the magnitude of the great task which is entrusted to the Christian minister.

II. THE SUFFICIENCY OF DIVINE GRACE. 1. This is revealed to those, and to those alone, who are sincerely conscious of their own powerlessness and the inadequacy of all human aid. 2. God's own commission is an assurance that he will not withhold the assistance needed. The work is his; his is the call and his the authority. 3. God, by his Spirit, assists all lowly and faithful agents in his service, strengthening the feeble, so that by their means, however seemingly inadequate, great results are accomplished. 4. By the same invisible but marvellous agency God overcomes the obstacles encountered in the sinner's heart, and makes the word of man effectual because the vehicle of the power and grace of Heaven.—T.

Ver. 4.—*The pains of rebuking.* I. THESE ARE VERY REAL TO GRACIOUS NATURES. Some delight to castigate; but they are not gracious or noble—they are rather fitted to feel the rod than to wield it. An affectionate parent often suffers more than his chastened child; a faithful pastor than the rebuked Church member. Paul said that if he came to Corinth he would not spare; before he came, he did not spare himself. There was grief at Corinth, but as much or more in Macedonia. Joy in causing suffering is a mark of degradation. We condemn pleasure obtained from cruel sports; pleasure obtained from wounding minds is even more barbaric and revolting. We may feel compelled to rebuke, and that sharply. We can never be justified in extracting joy from the suffering occasioned.

II. WHEN REBUKE IS PAINFUL TO THE REBUKER IT IS MORE LIKELY TO PROVE EFFICACIOUS TO THE REBUKED. 1. *There is evidence of qualification to rebuke.* The rebuke does not spring from personal feeling. 2. *Undue harshness will be avoided.* 3. *A gracious tenderness is likely to permeate the severest rebuke.* 4. *If known to the rebuked, a salutary influence will be exercised.* Nothing is more irritating or hardening than to be rebuked by one who evidently enjoys his office. But if the one who points out our fault is evidently deeply pained himself, we must be very obdurate if we are insensible to such an appeal. The wayward child is conquered, not by the rod in his mother's hand, but by the tears in her eyes

III. THE OBJECT OF RIGHT REBUKING IS NOT THE PAIN OF THE REBUKED. This should ever be kept in mind. We are not judges to pass sentences of mere punishment. We may grieve our fellows, but only for their good. We may cause pain, but only as a means to something else. Castigation is a beginning, not an end. We have effected nothing except failure if we have merely caused sorrow. It is a thankless task indeed merely to make men sad. It is a noble one to make them sad that we may make them holier.

IV. RIGHT REBUKING IS EVIDENCE OF MUCH LOVE. Not to suffer sin upon our neighbour is a great duty; but the best natures are apt to shrink from reproving. Great love will compel them, as it did Paul. We often cannot show our love more conclusively. It may not at once be apparent to men, but it will to God—and to men by-and-by. The strongest evidence of Paul's love for the Corinthian Church was exhibited in the rod which he held over it. So of God himself: those whom he loves he chastens. (Heb. xii. 6).—H.

Vers. 5—11.—*Restoring the backslider.* I. CHURCH DISCIPLINE SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED BY THE CHURCH. "This punishment which was inflicted by the many" (ver. 6). Not by an individual, be he the pope himself, nor by priests or clergy, but by the whole body of the individual Church or a majority of its members. A Christian has a right to be judged by his peers.

II. CHURCH DISCIPLINE SHOULD EVER HAVE IN VIEW RESTORATION. Its object is not to punish the offender so much as to do him good, and at the same time to preserve the Church's purity. Church discipline should not be regarded as a *final act* towards the backslider, but with it should ever be associated prayers and hope that the severance may be brief. The Church rejects that she may accept; she casts out that she may receive back again. So Church discipline should never be of a character to hinder repentance or to render restoration impossible.

III. CHURCH DISCIPLINE SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED WITH GREAT DISCRETION. 1. On the one hand, it may be too slight and not produce suitable effects. 2. On the other, it may be so excessive as to drive the offender to despair. 3. In either case Satan will gain an advantage (ver. 11), which he is ever seeking and has often found when the Church or its leaders have attempted the delicate task of discipline. The Church's discipline of persecution and intolerance has served the devil's purposes admirably in many a dark century. And the Church's discipline of indifference and false charity has done similar service in many a century boasting of its light and breadth of thought and liberty.

IV. PENITENCE ON THE PART OF AN OFFENDER IS A STRONG ARGUMENT FOR PROMPT RESTORATION TO FELLOWSHIP. The duty of restoration is not so fully recognized as it might be. Often it is the predilection of the powers that be, rather than the condition of the offender, which determines whether he shall be restored or not. But when the honour of the Church has been vindicated, and the offender is undoubtedly contrite, the way of duty is clear. A Church which will not restore *then*, deserves to be excommunicated itself.

V. RESTORATION IS NOT TO BE TO TOLERATION, BUT TO LOVE. The love is to exist whilst the discipline is being inflicted. It is to manifest itself unreservedly when discipline is removed. Many are restored to suspicion, coldness, contempt—a restoration which paves the way for a more fatal fall. If God forgives some professing Christians as they forgive others (and this is their frequent prayer), their share of the Divine forgiveness is likely to be a very slender one.—H.

Vers. 14—17.—*The constant triumph of the faithful minister.* I. HE TRIUMPHS BECAUSE WHEREVER HE GOES HE MAKES KNOWN GOD AND CHRIST. This is a true triumph. If he succeeds in doing this he has a great success—the success of performance of duty and of fulfilment of the Divine will. Moreover, the kingdom of God is almost certain to be extended. Apparent failure, when more closely examined and tried by the test of time, will often be found to be success.

II. HIS TRIUMPH IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON THE RECEPTION OF HIS MESSAGE. 1. *To some his word is a savour from death unto death.* The Christ proclaimed is to them a *dead* Christ, and his gospel lifeless and powerless, leading them only to denser spiritual

death. This is very disheartening when viewed under one aspect. But Christ is preached, the work is acceptable to God, the Divine mercy is vindicated, and the responsibility of the disastrous issue rests solely on the rejecters. The excellence of the truth is demonstrated by its rejection on the part of the vile and sin-loving. 2. *To others his word is a savour from life unto life.* Here the triumph is unquestioned by all. A living Christ is recognized, and one who has life-giving power.

III. HE TRIUMPHS ONLY AS HE IS FAITHFUL. For only so does he honour God and set forth the truth as it is in Jesus. The faithful minister: 1. Does not corrupt the Word of God (ver. 17). Many do (1) by false interpretation, (2) bias, (3) insinuation, (4) omission, (5) addition. Prompted by (1) gain, (2) applause, (3) carnal preferences. 2. But (1) distrusts himself, crying, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2) uses utmost sincerity; (3) gets his message from God—"of God" (ver. 17); (4) speaks as in the sight of God; (5) speaks in Christ, in communion with him as the Head.

IV. HIS TRIUMPH IS OF GOD. He is led in triumph by God (ver. 14). God has triumphed over him, and now God triumphs through him. His sufficiency is of God (ch. iii. 5). He has no power when he only has his own; he has all power when he has God's.—H.

Vers. 1—4.—*The sorrow of faithful love.* The apostle has still in mind the unfaithful member who had brought so sad a disgrace upon the whole Church. His conduct in the matter, especially in changing his mind when he was fully expected at Corinth, had been misrepresented, and made the occasion of accusations against him as a fickle-minded, self-willed man. He therefore here explains why he did not visit Corinth while it remained uncertain how the offending member would be treated. He had no thought but for the truest well-being of the Corinthian Church. He could not leave them to go on in sin. He could not bear to think that those whom he had instructed in Christ were indifferent to sin. Love, feeling sorrow for the sinning member and for the dishonoured Church, cannot be satisfied without earnest warnings about the sin and efforts to remove it. Such efforts carry and express both the sorrow and the love. Illustrate by the patient, gracious pleadings of God with sinning and backsliding Israel, as given in the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea.

I. SUCH SORROWING LOVE CAN PERSONALLY SUFFER. Here it led the apostle to act in a way which brought to him the bitterest form of suffering, even the suspicion and mistrust of his very friends. Even that he would bear, if but his desire for the spiritual welfare of the Corinthian Church could be realized. "Men might think that it had cost him little to write sharp words like those which he has in his mind. He remembers well what he felt as he dictated them—the intensity of his feelings, pain that such words should be needed, anxiety as to their issue, the very tears which then, as at other times, were the outflow of strong emotion. Those who were indignant at his stern words should remember, or at least learn to believe this, and so to see in them the strongest proof of his abounding love for them." The heart of St. Paul was in this matter as the heart of him who said, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Illustrate what a pressure on personal feeling it is for the parent or teacher to chasten. They often suffer much more than do those whom they feel called to smite. Even the misunderstanding, and even the temporary hatred, of those whom we would benefit, must be borne, in our earnest endeavours to deliver them from the dominion and defilement of their sins.

II. SUCH SORROWING LOVE CAN DEAL SEVERELY WITH THE SINNER. It is never love to pass by sin. It is no true love that touches the sin too lightly and gives inefficient and unworthy apprehensions of it. St. Paul seemed to be too severe. He could not be. The case called for an extreme of severity. It was not merely that the offence was an open and scandalous one, but, what was even worse, the Church seemed to be pervaded by a false sentiment concerning it, and manifested no distress in having the guilty member among them. In some way, St. Paul felt, he must arouse them to a sense of their shame. Strong language, refusal to give them a personal visit, anything that would waken a sense of sin, were necessary. It had been the time for sternest rebuke. And still love needs to use severity. For some forms of sin the gentler persuasions are inefficient; men must be roughly shaken out of their self-confidences, and their pride must be humbled and broken. The Church of modern days so gravely fails

of her witness and her duty because she has no "discipline," no severe dealings for her grave offenders. She has no love to burn against transgressors.

III. SUCH SORROWING LOVE CAN SHOW FINE CONSIDERATION FOR THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS. Paul did not wish to make his second visit to Corinth in grief, and if he had carried out his first plan that would have been the almost inevitable result. He would wait, delaying his visit, so that he might have the chance of seeing them with a smile on his face, after receiving the tidings of their heeding his warning and putting away the sin. "The second reason St. Paul alleges for not coming to Corinth is apparently a selfish one—to spare himself pain. And he distinctly says he had written to pain *them*, in order that *he* might have joy. Very selfish, as at first it sounds; but if we look closely into it it only sheds a brighter and fresher light upon the exquisite unselfishness and delicacy of St. Paul's character. He desired to save himself pain because it gave them pain. He desired joy for himself because his joy was theirs. He will not separate himself from them for a moment; he will not be the master and they the school; it is not *I* and *you*, but *we*; 'my joy is your joy, as your grief was my grief.'" Do we love enough to rebuke and punish those whom we love?—R. T.

Vers. 5—11.—*The Church's dealings with unworthy members.* "The main defence of the apostle against the charge of fickleness in the non-fulfilment of his promise was that he had abstained from going to Corinth in order to spare them the sharp rebuke he must have administered had he gone thither. A great crime had been committed; the Church had been compromised, more especially as some of the Corinthians had defended the iniquity on the ground of liberty, and St. Paul had stayed away after giving his advice, that not he, but they themselves, might do the work of punishment. He gave sentence that the wicked person should be put away, but he wished *them* to execute the sentence. For it was a matter of greater importance to St. Paul that the Corinthians should feel rightly the necessity of punishment, than merely that the offender should be punished." We notice—

I. THE SINNER WITHIN THE CHURCH GRIEVES THE WHOLE CHURCH. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with him; and if one member sin, the whole Church ought to feel grieved and distressed by the sin. St. Paul argues that, if a Church fails to clear itself of complicity with the wrong of its members, the guilt of such wrong attaches to it as well as to him. No man within Christ's Church can be alone in his sin, for we are "members one of another." The judgment of the Church may be the means of winning the penitence of the erring member.

II. THE SINNER WHEN PENITENT SHOULD FIND THE LOVE AND FORGIVENESS OF THE WHOLE CHURCH. In relation to him there should be harmonious and united Church action. Yet, in actual fact, the wrong-doing of individuals too often creates party feeling. Some take the side of the wrong-doer and prevent the full exercise of Church discipline.

III. SUCH FORGIVENESS OF THE CHURCH MAY EXPRESS GOD'S FORGIVENESS. It is only becoming, and only efficient, as following upon God's forgiveness. And it has its special use in being the earthly assurance of the Divine forgiveness and acceptance. The Church can *give* no absolution; it can only find expression for the absolution which God has already granted to the penitent, and add its forgiveness of the wrong so far as it disturbed Church relations. In the proper expression of Church feeling towards moral offenders, the Apostle Paul, as a recognized Church leader, herein sets an efficient example. He is as jealous for the Church's honour and mercifulness as he is for the restoration of the penitent offender.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Satanic devices within the Church.* The reference here made to Satan must be regarded as figurative. It should not be used as an argument for the existence of a supreme evil spirit, however the existence of such a spirit may be assumed. St. Paul has elsewhere used the figure of "delivering unto Satan" (1 Tim. i. 20). By this we are to understand a solemn excommunication or expulsion from the Church, possibly with the infliction also of some bodily disease. The offender was to be left to feel all the physical and social consequences of his wrong-doing, in the hope that, through suffering, he might be brought to a sense of his sin. Satan is thought of as the power which leads men into vice and then torments them when they have followed the leadings. The apostle conceives of God as overruling the very sin, and consequent

suffering, for good, through them bringing the sinner to a hopeful penitence and humility of heart. There was, however, this danger to be recognized and guarded against. Satan might, as it were, outwit the Church, in its dealing with erring members, and make the suffering following on sin produce *remorse* rather than *repentance*. "Penitence works life, remorse works death. The latter is more destructive even than self-righteousness, for it crushes, paralyzes, and kills the soul." There must consequently be a judicious limitation of the punishment, and a watchfulness for the first opportunity of showing mercy and granting restoration. "Not to release the offender from the bondage when he was truly penitent would be to afford the enemy of souls an opportunity of which he would not be slow to avail himself. Nothing is so likely to plunge a man into every kind of crime as despair." For St. Paul's experience of Satanic schemes, devices, and strategy, comp. ch. xii. 7; I Thess. ii. 18; Eph. vi. 12. We may treat the subject in its wider and more general applications if we illustrate the following and other ways in which Satan may be said to get advantage within a Church:—

I. BY OVERMASTERING INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS. Failure does not come to the Church as a whole, but to individuals in it. All are exposed to temptation and evil. We must be in the world, and Christian men may yield themselves to the power of the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Some of the gravest of our Church anxieties arise from the moral failure of individual members. Illustrate cases occurring in youth-time; but especially cases in men's middle life, when the passions for wealth, sensuality, or drink often gain an overmastering energy. Show also the force that may be gained by the *suddenness* of the temptation, and by the condition of spiritual *unwatchfulness* in which the man may be found. The forms of failure which we usually find are dishonesty, immorality, or self-indulgence in meat or drink. But, by the law that those in the Church are members one of another, the failure of one is the shame, and should be the distress and grief, of all. Satan disturbs and injures a whole Church if he can gain influence over one member; and to do this is ever "one of his devices."

II. BY SECURING THE HARSH AND UNLOVING TREATMENT OF THOSE WHO FAIL. Perhaps it would be true to say that Satan never more certainly gets the advantage over Churches than when he makes them exaggerate punishment, overpress discipline, and fail to temper judgment with mercy. The action of a Church must be exactly in harmony with the action, when he was with us on earth, of the Church's Lord. He was quick and keen to discern sin. He was swift and severe to punish sin. But he was watchful for signs of gracious influence effected by the punishment, and ready at once to restore and forgive the penitent. He never "breaks the bruised reed or quenches the smoking flax." Man's punishments are always in danger of running to excess. Man cannot judge motives or read hearts, and so he too often fails to recognize soon enough when discipline has accomplished its work. Explain the evil influence exerted by unwillingness to forgive members of a family or of a Church; and show that a most mischievous conception of God himself, and wrong relations with him, would follow if we were not quite sure that he is "ready to forgive."

III. BY MAKING A CHURCH INDIFFERENT TO THE MORALITY OF ITS MEMBERS. Laxity, carelessness about purity of life, uprightness of relations, and consistency of conduct, often do creep into Churches, and they are among the most grievous of "Satan's devices." Illustrate from the evil work done by Carnal Security, in the town of Mansoul, as described in John Bunyan's 'Holy War.' The evil influence is felt, not only by the erring brethren, who come under no kind of correction, but are left to go on in sin, until "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;" but also by the Church, which is defiled before God by the taint on its good name, and which fails to be duly sensitive to the Divine honour. Illustrate by the lesson that was taught in the failure of Israel at the siege of Ai, when the "accursed thing" was in their camp.

IV. BY PERSUADING A CHURCH TO MAKE ITS FORGIVENESS A FORMALITY, NOT A FULL RESTORATION. Too often this grave mistake is made: the offender is formally restored to membership, but he is not really taken back into the love and trust of the brethren, and he receives no signs of restored confidence and no help back to goodness. He is a blighted man, and it seems to him that his slip or fall can never really be forgotten, never really be wiped out, and therefore he must hang down his head among the brethren to his dying day. The Church's forgiveness and restoration must be like God's, a help to the erring one towards realizing the glorious completeness of God's forgiving, for-

gettings, and restorings. For he casts our sins behind his back, and into the depths of the sea. "As the punishment of man is representative of the punishment and wrath of God, so the absolution of man is representative of the forgiveness of God." Impress, in conclusion, the extreme painfulness of the possibility that, in regard to her discipline, the Christian Church may be out-manceuvred by Satan, and come really to do his work.—R. T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Providential doors.* Introduce by describing the leading instances of providential deliverance, care, and guidance in the life of the Apostle Paul. Especially dwell on the cases in which his life was preserved from peril and from the plots of his enemies. The reference made in our text is rather to the gracious way in which his missionary journeyings and missionary spheres had been opened before him; and the illustration may be taken from the singular way in which doors were opened and shut, when the Divine will was for the apostle to preach the gospel in Europe (see Acts xvi. 6—9). For the figure of a "door" for an "opportunity," see 1 Cor. xvi. 9; Rev. iii. 8. The truth of the Divine providence ordering our lives is not one that is so familiar to us as it was to our fathers. Possibly our warmer thought of God's fatherly care has taken the place of the colder conception of an impersonal providence. Still, it may be well to revive the older notion and make it glow with Christian sentiment and feeling.

I. THE ORDERING OF PROVIDENCE FOR EVERYBODY. Irrespective of religious state and relations. Illustrations of this are found in all times of danger, disease, or calamity. Some are taken and some are left. We constantly read of remarkable providential escapes.

II. THE SPECIALITY OF PROVIDENCE FOR CHRISTIANS. It may in part be that Christians more readily recognize the hand of God in their rescuings and guidances, but we may also believe that God gives a special protection to his own. Such a belief may be a great comfort to us, but it must be kept from becoming exaggerated and extravagant. The Christian cannot always be preserved, because his suffering may be for the good of the whole.

III. THE ATTITUDE IN WHICH CHRISTIANS SHOULD STAND TOWARDS THE EVER-ACTIVE PROVIDENCE. It may be shown to include (1) earnest watchings; (2) patient waitings; (3) prompt actings; (4) full and unhesitating obediences; and (5) thankful rejoicings.—R. T.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The twofold issues of a preached gospel.* Heroes, in the older days of the apostle, were usually great generals, leaders of mighty armies, conquerors of other nations—men whose "glory" came from desolated cities, down-trodden races, wasted harvests, and crushed and bleeding hearts. And such heroes were permitted to have a "triumph," as it was called. A triumphal procession was arranged in their honour, and to this event the Roman generals looked as to the very goal of their ambition. Magnificent and thrilling scenes they must have been. The general was received, at the gates of the imperial city, by all that was noble and grave and venerable among the officials, and he was led from the gate through the crowded and shouting streets to the Capitol. First marched the ancient men, the grave senators of the Roman council, headed by a body of magistrates. Then came the trumpeters, making the air ring again with their prolonged and joyous blasts. Then followed a long train of carriages and frames laden with the spoils brought from battle-fields or plundered from conquered cities, the articles which were most remarkable for their value, or rarity, or beauty being fully exposed to view. There might be seen models of the forts or cities which had been captured; gold and silver statues, pictures, handsome vases, and embroidered stuffs. Then came a band of players on the flute, and then white bulls and oxen destined for sacrifice; and incense-bearers, waving to and fro their censers, and sending forth their sweet savour. Then were seen caged lions and tigers, or monstrous elephants, or other strange creatures, brought as specimens from the captive lands. And then the procession filled with pathos, for there followed the leaders of the conquered foe, and the long train of inferior captives, all bound and fettered, and altogether a sad and humiliating sight. At last came the great conqueror, standing in a splendid chariot, drawn by four milk-white horses, magnificently adorned, the conqueror bearing a royal sceptre, and having his brow encircled with a laurel crown. After him marched his great

officers, the horse-soldiers, and the vast army of foot-soldiers, each one holding aloft a spear adorned with laurel boughs. And so the procession moved on through the crowded, shouting streets until it reached the Capitoline hill. There they halted, dragged some of those poor captives aside to be killed, and then offered their sacrifices and began their triumphal feast. St. Paul's mind was evidently full of such a scene as this, and he took his figures from it. He says that God permits us, as apostles and ministers, always to triumph with Christ. We are, through grace, always conquering generals. But St. Paul fixed his thoughts chiefly on those miserable, naked, fettered captives, who were going on to death. He could not help thinking—What was the sound of the clanging trumpet and the piping flute to them—poor hopeless ones? What was the savour of sweet incense in the air to them—poor agitated ones? Some among them may indeed have had the promise of life, and to them the savour of the incense would be sweet; it would be "life unto life." But so many of them knew what their fate must be; they dreaded the worst; they trembled as they came nearer to the ascent of the hill; and as the wind wafted the savour of the incense to them they could but sadly feel that it was a savour of "death unto death." And the apostle thought of his life-work of preaching the gospel. It was even thus with the savour of the gospel-triumph. To some it was *death*, to others it was *life*. Not, indeed, at the arbitrary will of some proud general, but as the necessary issue of the relations in which men stand to a preached gospel; for "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

I. THE PROPER RESULT OF A PREACHED GOSPEL IS LIFE. It was God's gracious purpose that men, "dead in trespasses and sins," should have life, and have it more abundantly. In his Son Jesus Christ life and immortality are brought to light. In the early days God set before men life and death, and, with all holy persuasions, urged them to choose life and good. This was the one absorbing purpose and endeavour of the Lord Jesus. While he was here he was ever doing one thing—quicken life, restoring life, renewing life: the life of health to those afflicted, of reason to those possessed with devils, of knowledge to ignorant disciples, and even of the body to those smitten and dead. And the apostles carried his gospel forth into all the world as the light and life of men. Dwell upon the significance and interest of the word "life," and explain the new life in Christ Jesus, which the Christian enjoys.

II. THE MOURNFUL RESULT OF A PREACHED GOSPEL OFTEN IS DEATH. Our Lord used forcible but painful figures to express the death of the impenitent and unbelieving: "outer darkness;" "wailing and gnashing of teeth;" "worm that never dies;" "fire that none may quench." We must feel the force of these things, for no man can worthily explain them. This "death" was the mournful issue of a preached gospel when the Son of man was himself the Preacher. Foolish Gadarenes besought him to depart out of their coasts, and leave them to their night and death. Hardened Capernaum, exalted even to heaven in privilege, must be thrust down to hell. St. Paul must turn from bigoted and prejudiced Jews, and go to the Gentiles, leaving the very children of the covenant in a darkness that might be felt. He who came to give life is practically found to be a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence. Five foolish virgins put their hands about their flickering lamps as they cry against the closed door; and this is the simple, awful ending of their story, "The darkness took them." We do see men hardened under a preached gospel now. Illustrate by the dropping well at Knaresborough. Water ought to soften and melt, but these waters, falling upon things, encrust them with stone, and even turn them into stone. Such may have been the droppings of the "water of life" upon us. There are only these two issues. The gospel must either take us by the hand and lead us up into the sunlight or it must bid us away down into the dark. Only two issues, but what issues they are! Life! As we think of that word, all joy, light, and heaven come into our view. Death! As we speak that word, all darkness, woe, and hell come into our thoughts. "Who indeed is sufficient for these things?"—even for the preaching of a gospel which must prove to be a "savour of life unto life or of death unto death."—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*Conscious simplicity and integrity.* "The word for 'corrupt,' formed from a word which signifies 'huckster,' or 'tavern-keeper,' implies an adulteration like that which such people commonly practised. We, says St. Paul, play no such tricks of trade

with what we preach; we do not meet the tastes of our hearers by prophesying deceits. The very fact that we know the tremendous issues of our work would hinder that." God's gospel word, the message of eternal life in Christ Jesus, may be adulterated or corrupted in three ways. 1. By mixing up with it foreign, inharmonious, merely human, teachings. 2. Or by making the gospel revelation into a stiffened, formal creed, over the precise terms of which we may wrangle and dispute. 3. Or by displacing the true motive in preaching it, and giving place to low aims, and purposes of merely selfish ambition, and longing for the praise of men. The appeal of the text has its special force when we remember of what things the Judaizing party accused the apostle. St. Paul's enemies forced this appeal from him. Usually it is enough that the sincere and true man should keep on his faithful way, little heeding the opinions or accusations of others, trusting the care of his reputation to God. But occasions do arise when something like public vindication becomes necessary, and a man is called to assert his conscious integrity. Of this we have two very striking instances recorded in Scripture. Samuel, when set aside by the mistaken longing for a visible king, felt deeply hurt, though more for the insult thus offered to Jehovah, the ever-present but invisible King, than for his own sake. He pleaded thus with the people: "I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you" (1 Sam. xii. 2, 3). And David, misunderstood and slandered, turns to speak to God in the hearing of the people, and says, "Judge me . . . according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me" (Ps. vii. 8). Consider—

I. THE GREAT GOSPEL TRUST. 1. On the one side, the trust of Divine revelation and message. Illustrate by the direct communications of the Divine will made to the ancient prophets. These they were expected to deliver with all simplicity and completeness, and without making any additions of their own to them. 2. On the other side, the trust of men's souls. The world was given to the apostles as the sphere in which their gospel message was to be delivered. Such a trust demanded seriousness, sincerity, and holy zeal. It should ever call out the best that is in a man.

II. THE PERIL OF ITS INJURY THROUGH THE GUILF OF THE SELF-SEEKER. Men will surely take their impressions of it from the character of the men who preach it. If we get a soiled idea of the gospel preacher, as an insincere, self-seeking man, it is only too likely that we shall have a soiled and stained image of the gospel that he preaches in our minds. Men can make golden glowings or deep shadows rest on the gospel that they declare, the message which they have in trust.

III. THE FORCE OF IT AS PRESERVED WHEN THE AGENT IS GUILFLESS AND SINCERE. The stream gets no foulness as it flows through him. Illustrate how men of transparent character and beautiful piety put honour on religion. The commendation of Christ's gospel to men is (1) the pure and stainless Christ himself, and then (2) the graciousness and charm of his servants who are like him. The force behind gospel preaching is the *life* of the men who preach. The simple-minded, sincere, uncorrupted man may positively make additions to the practical power of the gospel upon men. Distinguish, however, between simplicity and moral weakness, and also between guilelessness and ignorance. The simplicity required is "unity" as opposed to "double-mindedness;" it is being wholly for God.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Defence against the charge of self-recommendation, which St. Paul does not need (vers. 1—3). His sufficiency comes from God (vers. 4—6), who has made him minister of a covenant far more glorious than that

given to Moses (vers. 7—11). This ministry needs no veil upon the face (vers. 12, 13), such as to this day darkens the hearts of the Jews (vers. 14, 15), though it shall one day be removed (vers. 16—18).

Vers. 1—11.—*St. Paul's ministry & his sufficient letter of commendation.*

Ver. 1.—Do we begin again to commend ourselves! The last verse of the last chapter might be seized upon by St. Paul's opponents to renew their charge—that he was always praising himself. He anticipates the malignant and meaning smiles with which they would hear such words. The word "again" implies that this charge had already been brought against him, perhaps in consequence of such passages as 1 Cor. ii. 16; iii. 10; iv. 11—14; ix. 15—23; xiv. 18, etc. Such passages might be called self-laudatory and egotistical, were it not that (as St. Paul here explains) they arose only from a sense of the grandeur of his office, of which he was the almost involuntary agent, used by God as it seemed best to him. Hence he says later on (ch. vii. 18) that self-praise is no commendation, and that the true test of a man is God's commendation. The verb "I commend," technically used in the same sense as our "commendatory letters," occurs also in Rom. xvi. 1. Or need we, etc.? The reading, *ἢ μὴ*, thus translated, is better supported than *εἰ μὴ*, unless, which would have a somewhat ironical force. The *μὴ* in the reading *ἢ μὴ* implies, "Can you possibly think that we need," etc.? Generally, when a stranger came to some Church to which he was not personally known, he carried with him some credentials in the form of letters from accredited authorities. St. Paul treats it as absurd to suppose that he or Timothy should need such letters, either from the Corinthians or to them. As some. He will not name them, but he refers to the Judaists, who vaunted of their credentials in order to disparage St. Paul, who was too great to need and too independent to use them. We can hardly, perhaps, realize the depth and bitterness of antagonism concealed under that word "some" in 1 Cor. iv. 18; Gal. i. 7; ii. 12. It is not meant that there was anything discreditable in using such letters (for Apollos had used them, Acts xviii. 27), but the disgraceful thing was that St. Paul should be disparaged for not bringing them. Epistles of commendation. The phrase, *ἐπιστολαὶ συστατικαὶ*—"introductory letters"—was familiar in later Greek. In days when there were few public hostels, and when it was both a duty and a necessity for small and persecuted communities like those of the Jews and Christians to practise hospitality (Rom. xii. 13; Heb. xiii. 2, etc.), it was customary both for synagogues and Churches to provide their friends and emissaries with authentic testimonials. Otherwise they might have been deceived by wandering impostors, as, in fact, the Christians were deceived by the vagabond quack Peregrinus. We can easily see how the custom of using such letters might be

abused by idle, restless, and intriguing persons, who have never found it very difficult to procure them. We find traces of their *honest* use by Phœbe, by Silas and Jude, by Apollos, by Mark, and by Zenas, in Rom. xvi. 1; Acts xviii. 27; xv. 25; Col. iv. 10; Titus iii. 13; and of their unfair use by certain Judaists, in Gal. i. 7 and ii. 12. Nothing can more forcibly illustrate the necessity for St. Paul's protest against the idle vaunt of possessing such letters, than the fact that, *more than a century afterwards*, we find malignant innuendoes aimed at St. Paul in the pseudo-Clementines, under the name of "the enemy" and "Simon Magnus" and "a deceiver." He is there spoken of as using letters from the high priest (which, indeed, St. Paul had done as Saul of Tarsus, Acts ix. 1, 2); and the Churches are warned never to receive any one who cannot bring credentials from James; so deep-rooted among the Judaists was the antagonism to the independent apostolate and daring originality of the apostle of the Gentiles! Dr. Plumtree quotes Sozomen ('H. E.', v. 16) for the curious fact that the Emperor Julian tried to introduce the system of "commendatory letters" into his revived paganism. Or letters of commendation from you. The substitution of "letters" for "epistles" is an instance of the almost childish fondness for unnecessary synonyms, which is one of the defects of the Authorized Version. The true reading probably is "to you or from you" (x, A, B, C). The word "commendatory" (*sustatikōn*) is omitted in A, B, C. Or from you. It was worse than absurd to suppose that St. Paul should need those *litteræ formatæ* to a Church of which he was the founder; and nothing but the boundless "inflation" which characterized the Corinthians could have led them to imagine that he needed letters from them to other Churches, as though, forsooth, they were the primary Church or the only church (1 Cor. xiv. 36).

Ver. 2.—Ye are our epistle. Their very existence as a Church was the most absolute "commendatory letter" of St. Paul, both from them and to them (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 2, "The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord"). Written in our hearts. The expression has no connection with the fact that the high priest bore the names of Israel graven on the jewelled Urim, which he wore upon his breast. St. Paul means that others may bring their "letters of commendation" in their hands. His letter of commendation is the very name and existence of the Church of Corinth written on his heart. Known and read of all men. The metaphor is subordinated to the fact. All men may recognize the autograph, and in it were read the history of the Corinthian

converts, which was written on the apostle's heart, and which therefore rendered the notion of any other letter of commendation to or from them superfluous and even absurd. The play on words (*epigignōsko* and *anagignōsko*) is similar to that in ch. i. 13.

Ver. 3.—Manifestly declared. The fame and centrality of Corinth gave peculiar prominence to the fact of their conversion. The epistle of Christ ministered by us. The Corinthians are the epistle; it is written on the hearts of St. Paul and his companions; Christ was its Composer; they were its amanuenses and its conveyers. The development of the metaphor as a *metaphor* would be somewhat clumsy and intricate, but St. Paul only cares to shadow forth the essential fact which he wishes them to recognize. Not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; *i.e.* not with visible or perishable materials, but spiritual in its origin and character. The notion of "the finger of God" naturally recalled the notion of "the Spirit of God" (comp. Matt. xii. 28 with Luke xi. 20). Not in tables of stone. God's writing by means of the Spirit on the heart reminds him of another writing of God on the stone tablets of the Law, which he therefore introduces with no special regard to the congruity of the metaphor about "an epistle." But in fleshy tables of the heart. The overwhelming preponderance of manuscript authority supports the reading "but in fleshen tablets—hearts." St. Paul is thinking of Jer. xxxi. 33, "I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;" and Ezek. xi. 22, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh." The tablets were not hard and fragile, but susceptible and receptive. Our letters of introduction are inward not outward, spiritual not material, permanent not perishable, legible to all not only by a few, written by Christ not by man.

Ver. 4.—Such trust. The confidence, namely, that we need no other recommendation to or from you. Through Christ. Who alone can inspire such confidence in myself and my mission (1 Cor. xv. 10). To Godward; *i.e.* in relation to God; towards whom the whole Being of Christ is directed (John i. 1), and therefore all the work of his servants (Rom. v. 1).

Ver. 5.—Not that we are sufficient of ourselves. He here reverts to the question asked in ch. ii. 16. He cannot bear the implication that any "confidence" on his part rests on anything short of the overwhelming sense that he is but an agent, or rather nothing but an *instrument*, in the hands of God. To think anything as of ourselves. He has, indeed, the capacity to form adequate judgments about his work,

but it does not come from his own resources (*ἀπ' ἑαυτῶν*) or his own independent origination (*ἐξ ἑαυτῶν*); comp. 1 Cor. xv. 10. But our sufficiency. Namely, to form any true or right judgment, and therefore to express the confidence which I have expressed. Is of God. We are but *fellow-workers* with him (1 Cor. iii. 19).

Ver. 6.—Who also. Either, "And he it is who;" or, "Who besides *this* power, has made us adequate ministers." Hath made us able ministers; rather, *made us sufficient ministers*. Of the new testament; rather, of a *fresh covenant* (Jer. xxxi. 31). The "new testament" has not the remotest connection with what we call "The New Testament," meaning thereby the book—which, indeed, had at this time no existence. The word "testament" means a will, and in this sense implies neither the Hebrew *berith* nor the Greek *diatheke*, both of which mean "covenant." In one passage only of the New Testament (Heb. ix. 16, 17) does *diatheke* mean a "testament" or "will." For the thought, see Eph. iii. 7; Col. i. 25; 1 Tim. i. 11, 12. Not of the letter, but of the spirit. In other words, "not of the Law, but of the gospel;" not of that which is dead, but of that which is living; not of that which is deathful, but of that which is life-giving; not of bondage, but of freedom; not of mutilation, but of self-control; not of the outward, but of the inward; not of works, but of grace; not of menace, but of promise; not of curse, but of blessing; not of wrath, but of love; not of Moses, but of Christ. This is the theme which St. Paul develops especially in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians (see Rom. ii. 29; iii. 20; vii. 6, 10, 11; viii. 2; Gal. iii. 10; v. 4, etc.). *Not of the letter*. Not, that is, of the Mosaic Law regarded as a yoke of externalism; a hard and unhelpful "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not;" a system that possessed no life of its own and inspired no life into others; a "categoric imperative," majestic, indeed, but unsympathetic and pitiless. Both the Law and the gospel were *committed to writing*; each covenant had its own *book*; but in the case of the Mosaic Law there was the book and nothing more; in the case of the gospel the book was nothing compared to the spirit, and nothing without the spirit. *Out of the spirit*. That is, of the gospel which found its pledge and consummation in the gift of the Spirit. The Law, too, was in one sense "spiritual" (Rom. vii. 14), for it was given by God, who is a Spirit, and it was a holy Law; but though such in itself (*in se*) it was relatively (*per accidens*) a cause of sin and death, because it was addressed to a fallen nature, and inspired no spirit by which that nature could be delivered (see

Rom. vii. 7—25). But in the gospel the spirit is everything; the mere letter is as nothing (John vi. 63). For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. This is one of the very numerous "texts" which have been first misinterpreted and have then been made, for whole centuries, the bases of erroneous systems. On this text more than any other, Origen, followed by the exegetes of a thousand years, built his dogma that the Scripture must be interpreted allegorically, not literally, because "the letter" of the Bible kills. The misinterpretation is extravagantly inexcusable, and, like many others, arose solely from reading words away from their context and so reading new senses into them. The contrast is not between "the outward" and the inward sense of Scripture at all. "The letter" refers exclusively to "the Law," and therefore has so little reference to "the Bible" that it was written before most of the New Testament existed, and only touches on a small portion of the Old Testament. *Killeth*. Two questions arise. (1) *What and whom does it kill?* and (2) *how does it kill?* The answers seem to be that (1) the letter—the Law regarded as an outward letter—passes the sentence of death on those who disobey it. It says, "He who doeth these things shall live in them;" and therefore implies, as well as often says, that he who disobeys them shall be cut off. It is, therefore, a deathful menace. For none can obey this Law with perfect obedience. And (2) the sting of death being sin, the Law kills by directly leading to sin, in that it stirs into existence the principle of concupiscence (Rom. vii. 7—11; 1 Cor. xv. 56; Gal. iii. 10, 21). *But the spirit giveth life*. This contrast between a dead and a living covenant is fundamental, and especially in the writings of St. Paul (Rom. ii. 27—29; vii. 6; viii. 11; Gal. v. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 45). The Law stones the adulteress; the gospel says to her, "Go, and sin no more."

Ver. 7.—The ministration of death. The ministration, that is, of the Law, of "the letter which killeth." St. Paul here begins one of the arguments *a minori ad majus* which are the very basis of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Written and engraven in stones; literally, *engraved in letters on stones* (Exod. xxxi. 18). The reference shows that, in speaking of "the letter," St. Paul was only thinking of the Mosaic Law, and indeed specifically of the Decalogue. Was glorious; literally, *occurred in glory*, or, *proved itself glorious*. In itself the Law was "holy, just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12), and given "at the disposition of angels" (Acts vii. 53); and its transitory glory was illustrated by the lustre which the face of Moses caught by reflection from his inter-

course with God (Exod. xxiv. 16). Could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30). St. Paul has been led quite incidentally into this digressor in the course of defending himself by describing the nature of his ministry; but it bears very definitely on his general purpose, because his chief opponents were Judaists, whose one aim it was to bind upon the Church the yoke of Mosaism. That they could not "behold" the face of Moses is the *hagadah*, or traditional legend, derived from Exod. xxxiv. 30, which says that "they were afraid to draw nigh to him. The reader may recall the beautiful lines of Cardinal Newman—

"Lord! grant me this abiding grace—
Thy words and saints to know;
To pierce the veil on Moses' face,
Although his words be slow."

Because of the glory of his countenance. This circumstance is so often alluded to as to have become identified with the conception of Moses. The Hebrew words for "a ray of light" and "a horn" are identical; hence, instead of saying that his face was "irradiated," the Vulgate says, *Corruata erat ejus facies*; and even in our version of Heb. iii. 4 we find "And he had horns [i.e. 'rays of light'] coming out of his hand." To this is due the mediæval symbol of Moses with horns, as in the matchless statue by Michael Angelo. Which glory was to be done away. The Greek might be expressed by "the glory—the evanescent glory—of his countenance." It was not "to be done away," but from the first moment they saw it it began to vanish. The verb "to do away," implying annulment, and the being abrogated as invalid, is a characteristic word in this group of Epistles, in which it occurs twenty-two times. This illustrates the prominence in St. Paul's thoughts of the fact that the Law was now "antiquated" and "near its obliteration" (comp. Heb. viii. 13). But in dwelling on the brief and transient character of this radiance, St. Paul seizes on a point which (naturally) is not dwelt upon in Exod. xxxiv.

Ver. 8.—The ministration of the spirit. That is, "the apostolate and service of the gospel." Be rather glorious. A contrast may be intended between the ministration of the letter, which "became glorious," which had, as it were, a glory lent to it (*ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ*), and that of the spirit, which *is*, of its own nature, in glory.

Ver. 9.—The ministration of condemnation. The same antithesis between the Law as involving "condemnation" and the gospel as bestowing "righteousness" is found in Rom. v. 18, 19. The glory; perhaps, rather, *a glory*; a stronger way of describing it as

“glorious.” Of righteousness. Involving the further conception of “justification,” as in Rom. v. 21; i. 16, 17; iv. 25; v. 21.

Ver. 10.—For. He proceeds to show that the latter ministration was far more superabundant in glory. That which was made glorious, etc. Many various interpretations have been offered of this text. The meaning almost undoubtedly is, “For even that which has been glorified [namely, the Mosaic ministry, as typified by the splendour of his face] has not been glorified in this respect [i.e. in the respect of its relation to another ministry], because of the surpassing glory [of the latter].” In other words, the glory of Mosaism is so completely outdazzled by the splendour of the gospel, that, relatively speaking, it has no glory left; the moon and the stars cease to shine, they “pale their ineffectual fires” when the sun is in the zenith. The phrase, “in this respect,” occurs again in ch. ix. 3 and 1 Pet. iv. 16.

Ver. 11.—For. An explanation of the “surpassing” glory of the later covenant founded on its eternity. That which is done away; rather, *that which is evanescent*; “which is being done away,” as in ver. 7. Was glorious . . . is glorious. The expression is varied in the Greek. The brief, the evanescent covenant was “through glory,” i.e. it was a transitory gleam; the abiding covenant is “in glory;” i.e. it is an eternal splendour. It is, however, a disputed point whether St. Paul intended such rigid meanings to be attached to his varying repositions (Rom. iii. 30, ἐκ πύστεως . . . διὰ τῆς πίστεως; v. 10, διὰ τοῦ θανάτου . . . ἐν τῇ ζωῇ; Gal. ii. 16, ἐξ ἔργων . . . διὰ πίστεως; Philem. 5, πρὸς τὸν Κύριον . . . εἰς τοὺς ἀγίους). That which remaineth. The final, eternal, unshakable gospel (Heb. xii. 27). Is glorious; literally, *is in glory*. Christ is eternally the Light of the world (John i. 9; ix. 5); and Moses and Elias derived all their permanence of glory by reflection from this transfiguring light.

Vers. 12—18.—*The confidence inspired by this ministry, and the veil on the hearts of those who will not recognize it.*

Ver. 12.—Such hepe. A hope based upon the abiding glory of this gospel covenant. Plainness of speech. The frankness and unreserved fearlessness of our language is justified by the glory of our ministry. It was impossible for Moses to speak with the same bold plainness.

Ver. 13.—And not as Moses. We need not act, as Moses was obliged to do, by putting any veil upon our faces while we speak. And here the image of “the veil” as completely seizes St. Paul’s imagination as the image of the letter does in the first verses. Put a veil; literally, *was putting,*

or, *used to put,* a veil on his face when he had finished speaking to the people. That the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished; rather, *that the children of Israel might not gaze on the end of what was passing away.* The object of the veil, according to St. Paul, was to prevent the Israelites from gazing on *the last gleam of the covenant.* In other words, he did not wish them to be witnesses of a *fading* glory. It is preposterous to imagine that St. Paul is here casting any blame on the conduct of Moses, as though he acted fraudulently or delusively. Moses was aware, and even told the people, that his legislation was not final (Deut. xviii. 15—19), but it would be quite natural that he should not wish the people to witness the gradual dimming of the lustre which, in St. Paul’s view, was typical of that transitoriness. It seems, however, that St. Paul is here either (1) following a different reading or rendering of Exod. xxiv. 33; or (2) is adopting some Jewish *hagadah*; or (3) is giving his own turn to the narrative, as the rabbis habitually did, by way of *midrash*, or exposition. For from the narrative of Exodus we should not gather that it was the object of Moses to hide the disappearance of the splendour, but rather to render the light enduring. In our Authorized Version the verse runs, “*till* Moses had done speaking with them he put a veil on his face;” but the meaning of the original may be, “*after* he had done speaking with them;” as the LXX. takes it and the Vulgate. *The end.* To interpret this of Christ, because of Rom. x. 4, is an instance of the superstitious and unintelligent way in which systems are made out of a mosaic of broken texts. The foolish character of the interpretation is shown when we consider that it involves the inference that Moses put a veil on his face in order to prevent the Israelites from seeing Christ! But this attempt to illustrate Scripture by catching at a similar expression applied in a wholly different way in another part of Scripture, is one of the normal follies of scriptural interpretation.

Ver. 14.—Their minds. This word is rendered “devices” in ch. ii. 11; “minds” in ch. iii. 14 and iv. 4; and “thought” in ch. x. 5. It means that their powers of reason were, so to speak, petrified. Were blinded; rather, *were hardened.* The verb cannot mean “to blind.” By whom were their minds hardened? It would be equally correct to say by themselves (Heb. iii. 8), or by Satan (ch. iv. 4), or by God (Rom. xi. 7, 8). The same veil. Of course the meaning is “a veil of which the veil of Moses is an exact type.” The veil which prevented them from seeing the evanescence of the light which shone on the face of Moses was symbolically identical

with that which prevented them also from seeing the transitory character of his Law. It had been as it were taken from his face and laid on their hearts (see Acts xiii. 27—29; Rom. xi.). Many commentators have seen in this verse a reference to the Jewish custom of covering the head with the *tallith*, a four-cornered veil, when they were in the synagogues. But this is doubtful, since the *tallith* did not cover the eyes. More probably his metaphor may have been suggested by Isa. xxv. 7, "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." Untaken away. There are two other ways of rendering this verse: (1) "For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth unfolded; which veil is done away in Christ," as in the Revised Version; or (2) "The same veil remaineth, it not being revealed that it is done away in Christ," as it is taken by Chrysostom and many others, and in the margin of the Revised Version. The latter seems to be the better view. It is not the veil, but the old covenant, which is being done away in Christ. To the Jews that truth still remained under a veil. The present tense, "is in course of annulment," might naturally be used until the utter abrogation of even the possible fulfilment of the Mosaic Law at the fall of Jerusalem. In the reading of the old testament; rather, *the old covenant*. There is no allusion to the Old Testament as a book, but the phrase is equivalent to "Moses is read" in the next verse. (On this obduracy of the Jews, see Rom. xi. 7, 8, 25.)

Ver. 15.—When Moses is read (Acts xv. 21). The veil; rather, *a veil*; a veil of moral obstinacy, which prevents them from seeing the disappearance of the old covenant, as effectually as the veil on the face of Moses prevented them from seeing (as St. Paul viewed the matter) the disappearance of the transitory lustre on the face of Moses.

Ver. 16.—When it shall turn to the Lord. The nominative of the verb is not expressed. Obviously the most natural word to supply is the one last alluded to, namely, "the heart of Israel." The verb may have been suggested by Exod. xxxiv. 31. Shall be taken away; literally, *is in course of removal*. The tense imply that "the moment the heart of Israel shall have turned to the Lord, the removal of the veil begins." Then "they shall look on him whom they pierced" (Zech. xii. 10); "He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations" (Isa. xxv. 7).

Ver. 17.—Now the Lord is that Spirit. The "but" (Authorized Version, "now") introduces an explanation. To whom shall they

turn? To the Lord. "But the Lord is the Spirit." The word "spirit" could not be introduced thus abruptly and vaguely; it must refer to something already said, and therefore to the last mention of the word "spirit" in ver. 8. The Lord is the Spirit, who giveth life and freedom, in antithesis to the spirit of death and legal bondage (see ver. 6; and comp. 1 Cor. xv. 45). The best comment on the verse is Rom. viii. 2, "For the law of the *spirit of life in Christ Jesus* hath made me free from the law of sin and death." All life and all religion had become to St. Paul a vision of all things in Christ. He has just said that the spirit giveth life, and, after the digression about the moral blindness which prevented the Jews from being emancipated from the bondage of the letter, it was quite natural for him to add, "Now the Lord is the Spirit to which I alluded." The connection in which the verse stands excludes a host of untenable meanings which have been attached to it. There is liberty. The liberty of confidence (ver. 4), and of frank speech (ver. 12), and of sonship (Gal. iv. 6, 7), and of freedom from guilt (John viii. 36); so that the Law itself, obeyed no longer in the mere letter but also in the spirit, becomes a royal law of liberty, and not a yoke which gendereth to bondage (Jas. i. 25; ii. 12)—a service, indeed, but one which is perfect freedom (Rom. v. 1—21; 1 Pet. ii. 16).

Ver. 18.—But we all. An appeal to personal experience in evidence of the freedom. With open face; rather, *with unveiled face*; as Moses himself spoke with God, whereas the Jews could not see even the *reflected* splendour on the face of Moses till he had shrouded it with a veil. Beholding as in a glass. This is *at least* as likely to be the true meaning as "reflecting as a mirror," which the Revised Version (following Chrysostom and others) has substituted for it. No other instance occurs in which the verb in the middle voice has the meaning of "reflecting," and the words, "with unveiled face," imply the image of "beholding." They are, in fact, a description of "the beatific vision." An additional reason for retaining the translation of our Authorized Version is that the verb is used in *this* sense by Philo ('Leg. Alleg.' iii. 33). The glory of the Lord. Namely, him who is "the Effulgence of God's glory" (Heb. i. 2), the true Shechinah, "the Image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15). Are changed into the same image. The present tense implies a *gradual* transfiguration, a mystical and spiritual change which is produced in us while we contemplate Christ. From glory to glory. Our spiritual assimilation to Christ comes from his glory and issues in a glory like his (1 Cor. xv. 51; comp. "from strength to

strength," Ps. lxxxiv. 7). (For the thought, comp. 1 John iii. 2.) As by the Spirit of the Lord. This rendering (which is that of the Vulgate also) can hardly be correct. The natural meaning of the Greek is "*as by the [or, from] the Lord the Spirit.*" Our change into glory comes from the Lord, who, as St. Paul has already explained, is the Spirit of which he has been speaking. No such abstract theological thought is here in

his mind as that of the "*hypostatic union,*" of the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is still referring to the contrast between the letter and the spirit, and his identification of this "spirit" in its highest sense with the quickening life which, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, we receive from Christ, and which is indeed identical with "the Spirit of Christ."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Soul-literature.* "Do we begin again to commend ourselves?" etc. In the early Church it was customary for the member who was travelling into another locality to take with him a letter of commendation from the Church to which he or she belonged. The apostle says he did not require such a document from the Corinthian Church, as some others did, for they themselves were letters written on his own heart; and his ministry was a letter written on their hearts also. They were the living "epistles of Christ, . . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." Our subject is soul-literature, or Christianity written on the heart; and I offer five remarks.

I. Christianity written on the soul is **CHRISTIANITY IN THE MOST LEGIBLE FORM.** There are some whose caligraphy is difficult to decipher and whose thoughts are difficult to understand; their ideas are misty and their style involved; but what is written on the *soul* is written so clearly that a child can make it out.

II. Christianity written on the soul is **CHRISTIANITY IN THE MOST CONVINCING FORM.** Books have been written on the evidences of Christianity; not a few by the ablest men of their times, such as Paley, Lardner, Butler. But one life permeated and fashioned by the Christian spirit is a far more convincing power than any or all of their most magnificent productions. He who has been transformed by Christianity from the selfish, the sensual, and corrupt, into the spiritual, the benevolent, and the holy, furnishes an argument that baffles all controversy and penetrates the heart.

III. Christianity written on the soul is **CHRISTIANITY IN THE MOST PERSUASIVE FORM.** There are many books "persuasive to piety," and many of them very powerful; but the most powerful of them are weak indeed compared to the mighty force of a Christly life. There is a magnetism in gospel truth embodied, which you seek for in vain in any written work. When the "Word is made flesh" it becomes "mighty through God."

IV. Christianity written on the soul is **CHRISTIANITY IN THE MOST ENDURING FORM.** The tablet is imperishable. You may put truth on paper, but the paper will moulder; put it into institutions, but the institutions will dissolve as a cloud; put it on marble or brass, but these are corruptible.

V. Christianity written on the soul is **CHRISTIANITY IN THE DIVINEST FORM.** The human hand can inscribe it on parchment or engrave it on stone, but God only can write it on the heart. "The Spirit of the living God." Paul was but the amanuensis, God is the Author.

Ver. 6.—*The ministry of the letter and the ministry of the spirit.* "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Notice—

I. The twofold **MINISTRY.** "Ministers . . . not of the letter, but of the spirit." What does this mean? Not the two dispensations, the Mosaic and the Christian; for both alike had "letter" and "spirit." Nor does it mean a double interpretation of the Scripture, the literal and the spiritual. It means, I think, the word and the thought, the sentence and the sentiment. Christianity has both "letter" and "spirit." If it had no "letter," it would be unrevealed, a thought shut up in the mind of God; if it had no "spirit," it would be but a hollow sound. The words point to two distinct methods of teaching Christianity. 1. *The technical method.* Who are the technical teachers? (1) *The verbalist.* There were men in the Corinthian Church who thought

much of words. "The words of man's wisdom," high-sounding sentences, oratoric periods, they scrupulously studied. The spirit of thought is so subtle that it goes off in the attempt to give it grand verbal costume. (2) *The theorist*. Those who throw into a logical system the ideas they have derived from the gospel; he who exalts his system of thought or creed and makes it a standard of truth is a minister of the "letter." The grandest system of theology can no more contain the whole truth than a nutshell can the Atlantic. (3) *The ritualist*. Men must have ritualism of some kind. What is logic but the ritualism of thought? art but the ritualism of beauty? rhetoric but the ritualism of ideas? civilization but the ritualism of the thoughts of ages? But those who represent those symbols as supernatural powers and mystic media of saving grace are ministers of the "letter" rather than of the "spirit." 2. *The spiritual*. What is it to be a minister of the "spirit"? He is a man more alive to the grace than the grammar, to the substance than the symbols of revelation. He is a man who has a comprehensive knowledge of those eternal principles that underlie all Scriptures, and has a living sympathy with those eternal elements.

II. The twofold RESULTS. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." 1. The result of the *technical ministry*. It "killesh." (1) *The verbalist kills*. It was said by Burke "that no man understands less of the majesty of the English constitution than the *nisi prius* lawyer, who is always dealing with the technicalities of precedence." And truly no man understands less of the gospel than he who is constantly dealing with its verbalities. Words in religion, when taken for realities, "kill," kill inquiry, freedom, sensibility, moral manhood. (2) *The theorist kills*. He who preaches his own little creed instead of the gospel of God kills souls. The Jews formulated a theory concerning the Messiah from their Scriptures. In their theory he was to appear in such a form, do such a work, reach such a destiny. He came, but did not answer to their theory, and they rejected him and were damned. Man's theory of the gospel is not the gospel, any more than pneumatological science is the life-breathing atmosphere. (3) *The ritualist kills*. He who exalts even the authorized ritualism of the gospel, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, to say nothing of the unauthorized rites, kills souls. The ceremonial Church has ever been a dead Church. The ministry of the "letter" then "killesh;" it reduced the Jewish people to the valley of dead bones, entombed the souls of Europe for many a long century. 2. The result of the *spiritual ministry*. "The spirit giveth life." "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." "The spirit giveth life"—life to the intellect, conscience, sympathies, the whole soul.

CONCLUSION. How little of this soul-life we have in congregations! Creed-life, sect-life, Church-life, we have in abundance; but where is soul-life, the life of holy love, earnest inquiry, independent action, spiritual freedom in relation to all that is Christ-like and Divine?

Vers. 7—11.—*Divine revelation more glorious in Christ than in Moses*. "But if the ministration," etc. At the outset three facts are noteworthy. 1. The infinite Father has made a special revelation of himself to his human offspring. 2. This special revelation of himself has mainly come through two great general sources—Moses and Christ. 3. The special revelation of himself, as it came through Christ, far transcends in glory the form it assumed as it came through Moses. The essence of the revelation is the same, but the forms differ, and the form it assumes in Christianity are the most glorious. There are two facts here.

I. That the special revelation as it came through MOSES WAS GLORIOUS. It was so glorious that "the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses." Four things impress us with its glory as revealed in Moses. 1. *The wonderful display of divinity attending its manifestation on Mount Sinai*. The expression, "the face of Moses," refers to this (Exod. xxxiv. 1). What wonderful things Moses saw and heard during the forty days he was on the mount! "The Lord rose up and came from Seir with ten thousand of his saints," etc. 2. *The magnificence of its religious scenes and celebrations*. The temple, how splendid! the priesthood, how imposing! the psalmody, how inspiring! "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of God." 3. *The stupendous miracles that stand in connection with it*. The wilderness

was the theatre of magnificent manifestations—the pillar, the manna, the flowing rock, the riven sea, etc. 4. *The splendid intellects which were employed in connection with it.* Solomon, Elijah, Daniel, David, Ezekiel. For these reasons Divine revelation as it came through Moses was truly glorious.

II. That although this special revelation was glorious as it came in connection with Moses, it was MORE GLORIOUS as it came in connection with CHRIST. "How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" etc. Confining our illustrations on this point to the passage before us, we observe: 1. *The Christian form of revelation is more likely to give life than the Mosaic.* In Moses it was the "ministration of death." The Jews exalted the "letter" that "killeth" above the "spirit that giveth life," and they got buried in forms. In Christ the revelation is the gospel in life. 2. *The Christian form of Divine revelation is more emphatically spiritual than the Mosaic.* It is here called the "ministration of the spirit." In Moses it was associated with numerous forms and ceremonies; in Christ there are only two simple rites, and the spirit throbs in every sentence. 3. *The Christian form of Divine revelation is more restorative than the Mosaic.* The apostle speaks of the one as the "ministration of condemnation," of the other as the "ministration of righteousness." Maledictions thunder in the former, beatitudes in the latter. 4. *The Christian form of Divine revelation is more enduring than the Mosaic.* "For if that which is done away [which passeth away] was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." Judaism is gone; Christianity is the "Word of God, which abideth for ever." It is the final revelation of Heaven to our world.

Such, then, is a brief illustration of the apostle's position; and the subject, in conclusion, serves several important purposes. 1. It serves to *expose the absurdity of making Moses the interpreter of Christ.* It has been common with professing Christians to look at the New Testament through the spectacles of Moses, and thus to Judaize Christianity. Much in popery, much, alas! in old puritanism, much even in modern theology, is but Christianity Judaized, a going back to the "beggarly elements." 2. It serves to *show the wrongness of going to Moses to support opinions which you cannot get from Christ.* You can support war, slavery, capital punishment, by going to Moses; but you cannot find the shadow of a foundation for these in Christ. 3. It serves to *reveal the glorious position of a true gospel minister.* To show this was the object of the apostle in the text. The position of Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the great teachers under the old administration was glorious, but it is scarcely to be compared with the position of him who preaches that Christ of "whom Moses and the prophets did write."

Vers. 12—18.—*The gospel as a transcendent benefactor.* "Seeing then that we have such hope," etc. Amongst the invaluable services which the gospel confers on man, there are four suggested by the text. It gives him moral courage, spiritual vision, true liberty, and Christ-like glory. It gives him—

I. MORAL COURAGE. "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness [boldness] of speech: and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished," etc. This means that, seeing the revelation we have of God in Christ is not so terrible as his revelation in Moses, we have "great boldness." We need have no superstitious fear or dread. Unlike the Jews, who were afraid to look at the Divine radiance on the face of Moses, who trembled at the manifestation of God on Sinai, and who lacked the courage to look at the fact that their system was a temporary one, passing away; we have courage to look calmly at the manifestations of God and the facts of destiny. We use "great boldness." He who has the spirit of Christianity in him has courage enough to look all questions in the face, and to speak out his convictions with the dauntless force of true manhood.

II. SPIRITUAL VISION. "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ." The "veil" of Moses was on his face, some material used for the moment and then withdrawn, but the "veil" referred to here was that "veil" of prejudice and traditional notions which prevented them from seeing when Paul wrote that the old dispensation has passed away before the brightness of the new. The souls

of unrenewed men are so veiled by depravity that they fail to see anything in the great universe of spiritual realities. The spiritual is no more to them than nature is to men born blind. Now, the gospel is the only power under God that can take the "veil" from the soul, and enable us to see things as they are. Its grand mission is to open the eyes of the blind, etc.

III. TRUE LIBERTY. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." By the "Spirit of the Lord" here is meant the Spirit of Christ, his moral temper; and wherever this is, there is freedom. 1. Freedom from the *bondage of ceremonialism*. 2. Freedom from the *trammels of legality*. 3. Freedom from the *dominion of sin*. 4. Freedom from the *fear of death*. The Spirit of Christ is at once the guarantee and the inspiration of that liberty which no despot can take away, no time destroy—the "glorious liberty of the children of God."

IV. CHRIST-LIKE GLOBY. "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," etc. 1. The glory of Christ was the glory of moral excellence. He was the "brightness of his Father's glory." 2. The glory of Christ is communicable. It comes to man through transformation: "changed into the same image." 3. The glory of Christ which comes to man is progressive: "from glory to glory." The gospel alone can make men glorious.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1—6.—*No letters of commendation needed; his converts were epistles.* In the close of the last chapter St. Paul had spoken of men who corrupted the Word of God (retailed it as a commodity for their own profit), and he had put himself and his ministry in contrast to them. Likely enough, this would provoke criticism. The quick interrogation comes—Was he commending himself, or did he need letters of commendation to them and from them? "Ye are our epistle;" written on his heart, known and read of all men—an epistle coming from Christ, and produced instrumentally by him as Christ's agent; not written with ink, but by the Spirit; "not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." With regard to the figure, it is probable that there was not another occasion in his life when it would have occurred to his imagination. Circumstances conspired with his state of mind to produce it, and one can almost trace the sequence of associations out of which it came. What solicitude the former Epistle had given him! What would be the effect? Amid his thanksgiving to God (ch. xi. 14) it was a matter of joy that he had written this letter, and he could now see God's hand very clearly in its production. Was not that Epistle a new and additional proof that he was Christ's apostle? Yet what was that Epistle, written with ink, to this "epistle of Christ," recorded on the soul, a part of itself, a part of its immortality? It was "manifestly declared" that they were Christ's epistle, and it was equally clear that this epistle was due to his ministration. "Ministered by us." Had they not given a new and striking evidence of the two facts, viz. Christ the Author of the epistle written on their hearts, and he the apostle, the ministerial agent of the work? It was a fresh motive to confidence: "Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward." Are we boasting of the late success of our Epistle—of our former successes? Nay; how can we be "sufficient of ourselves," or rely on our own wisdom and strength, when we have just confessed that we wrote to you "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears," and while the period of suspense lasted we were unfitted for our work, and at last, no rest in our spirit, we left Troas for Macedonia so as to see Titus the sooner? Nay; "our sufficiency is of God." It is he who also "hath made us able ministers of the New Testament." And wherein differs this new covenant from the old? Already he had spoken of "tables of stone" as contrasted with "fleshy tables of the heart," and the antithesis is resumed and further elaborated. The covenant is *new*, it is of the *spirit*, it is of the spirit that *giveth life*. Opposite in these particulars was the old covenant, the Mosaic Law, its ministers being chiefly engaged in executing a system of rules and ceremonials, adhering in all things to the exact language, and concerning themselves in no wise beyond the outward form. The external man with his interests and fortunes occupied attention. A nation was to exemplify the system, and therefore, by necessity, it largely addressed the senses, borrowing its motives and enforcing its

penalties from a consideration of objects near and palpable. If we read Rom. vii. we see what St. Paul meant by "the letter killeth." On the other hand, the dispensation of the spirit "giveth life." The antithesis is stated in the strongest possible form—death and life. This, accordingly, was the apostle's "sufficiency," a spiritual wisdom for enlightenment, a spiritual power for carrying out his apostolic plans, and an attained spiritual result seen in the recovery of Gentiles from the degradation of idolatry, and in the freedom of Jews from the bondage of the Mosaic Law.—L.

Vers. 7—11.—*Ministry of the Old Testament compared with that of the New, and the superiority of the latter shown.* He speaks now of the "ministration of death," not of it as the ministry of the letter; and yet it was "glorious." Compared with the revelation made to Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, it was "glorious." Whether witnessing to the unity of God or to his providence over an elect race, it was an illumination, or splendour, unequalled in the centuries before Christ. Tribes were organized as a nation, bondmen transformed into free men; and, despite their proclivity to heathenish idolatry, they came finally to hold and defend the doctrine of one God, their Jehovah, their Lord of hosts, their Benefactor and Friend, as the doctrine underlying all their hopes and aspirations. The sanctity of human life which the great lawgiver made the foundation of his system, the rights of persons and property, the obligations of brotherhood among themselves, duties to the poor and the stranger, duties to their nation, reverence for the sabbath and its worship, obedience to God in the minutest things, were taught them with a precision and a force that largely succeeded in producing the only phenomenon of its kind in history—a nation educated in the sense of God, of his presence in their midst, and of his providence as an unceasing and omnipotent agency in their homes and business. What a "glory" there was in their literature we all know. No psalmody is given in the New Testament; none was wanted; inspired poetry reached its full measure of excellence in King David and his poetic successors; and the Christian heart, whether in prayer or praise, finds much of its deepest and most devout utterance in these ancient Judean hymns. Reproduction is the test of enduring greatness. In this respect the genius and piety of David stand unrivalled. Whenever men worship God, he is the "chief singer" yet; nor have we any better standard by which to try the merit of our religious poetry and music than the similarity of their effect upon us to that produced by the Psalms of David. Last of all in the order of time, first in its importance, what a "glory" in him born of the Virgin Mary! On this system St. Paul made no war. What he antagonized was the misunderstanding and abuse of the system in the hands of Pharisees and Sadducees, and, especially in the shape it assumed among the Judaizers at Corinth and in Galatia. He calls the old covenant "glorious," a word he never uses but in his exalted moods of thought. True, it was "written and engraven in stones," but by whose hand? Even "the face of Moses" was more than the Israelites could bear, "for the glory of his countenance." The splendour irradiating Moses was transient—"which glory was to be done away;" but it did what it was intended to do by demonstrating where he had been and on what mission. Yet—the glory acknowledged—it was "the ministration of death." All the sublimity was that of terror, none that of beauty, when Sinai became the shrouded pavilion of Jehovah. "Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death." This external characterization was a symbol of its condemning power. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." It was not in the language of the Law that David prayed, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me;" nor in sympathy with the Law that Isaiah spoke of the Anointed One, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me;" but in contemplation of grace beyond Law, and therefore *extra* to the ordinary workings of the Mosaic economy. A provision existed for these spiritual anticipations, and it was a part of its excellence, the highest part, that it had on a few minds this preventive influence. Still, the distinctive feature stands, "a ministration of death;" and to the hour when Jerusalem and her temple fell, Sinai was the mount that could not be touched without death. It had a glory, a derived and subordinate glory, and the glory itself was to die. Certain qualities of Hebrew mind under the system, methods of thought, poetic modes of looking at nature, cultivated instincts of providence, yearnings for spirituality, were to survive and attain their completeness; but the system was to end by the law of

limitation organic in its structure. Now, on this basis, the glorious economy of which Moses was the minister, and the transientness of its duration, St. Paul builds an argument for the superior glory of the gospel. It is the "ministration" of the Holy Ghost. It is "the ministration of righteousness." Under the economy of grace the righteousness of God was first secured. That done, the justice of God appeared in the sinner's justification. And in this justification the converted man realizes that sense of demerit and guilt which arises in his personal instinct of justice, is met and satisfied; while, at the same time, gratitude and love are awakened by the unmerited goodness of God in Christ. The two stand together. They are inseparable in the constitution of the universe. They are inseparable by the laws of the human mind. The joy of the one is vitally blended with the gladness of the other; so that if the renewed heart feels its indebtedness to the mercy of God in Christ, it feels also that its salvation rests on the vindicated righteousness of God in Christ. It is what Christ is to the Father that makes him precious as the Christ of his faith, hope, and love. Most fitly, then, St. Paul presents the antithetic emphasis on *condemnation* and *righteousness*. Condemnation and righteousness are legal terms. The element of similarity in their common relation to Law is clearly recognized. Without this common element the antithesis could have no meaning. The dissimilarity is thus made vivid. "Much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." Each is a "ministration," each a "ministration" of "glory," but the "ministration of righteousness doth exceed in glory." The idea is explained and strengthened yet further. A favourite thought of the Jews, and particularly of the Pharisees, was the perpetuity of the Law. After the Exile, this was the stronghold of patriotism, sentiment, and religion. On no other ground could Pharisaism have acquired its popular ascendancy. This was the battle it was ever fighting for the nation—the dignity of the Law as seen in its permanent utility, since only thereby could Israel attain her true destiny and far surpass her ancient renown. Of course the anti-Pauline party at Corinth had much to say on St. Paul's view of the Law. Here, then, is an opportunity for him to defend his ministry. The point now is that the Mosaic ministration had no glory "in this respect," that is, in respect to the succeeding dispensation, which had entirely obscured its lustre. The once stately figure was not erect, but prostrated; it was disrobed of its gorgeous vestments; it wore no longer the breastplate with its precious stones; its glory had departed; and all this "by reason of the glory that excellet." If so, then how transcendent the splendour of the Spirit's dispensation? "If that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." In the former Epistle he had written of various glories—one of the sun, another of the moon, still another of the stars, the radiance distributed over immeasurable spaces and among orbs widely different, each preserving from age to age its own distinctive splendour, every ray of light imaging the world whence it issued. A firmament was before his eye in its circles of magnificence. But now the glory, on which in other days he had looked with so much pride as a Pharisee, had passed for ever from his sight. Yet, so far from feeling that there was loss, he exulted in the infinite gain, because "of the glory that excellet."—L.

Vers. 12—18.—*Boldness of speech; the two ministries; from "glory to glory."* Dwelling on the superior excellence of the gospel, it was natural for the apostle to speak of his hopefulness (such hope) and of the effect thereof on his ministry. He had spoken of his trust (ver. 4), and now he expresses the hope which filled his soul from "the intervening vision of the glory of his work" (Stanley) and its future results. He uses "great plainness of speech"—unreservedness, without disguise, boldness (the last conveying his meaning most fully). The "able ministers of the new covenant" were also bold, having no reason for concealment, but every reason for openness and candour. From the beginning of the Spirit's dispensation this boldness had characterized apostolic preaching. St. Peter, who had shown such cowardice in the high priest's palace, evinced the utmost fearlessness at Pentecost. It was a spectacle of wonder to the Sanhedrim. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John . . . they marvelled;" and what was the explanation of their courage? "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Immediately thereafter we hear of prayer offered by the Church that "with all boldness" they may speak God's Word. Boldness, at that time, was a virtue in request, and not one of the apostles failed to meet its requisitions. At this point the

contrast between the Law and the gospel presents a new aspect. Moses had veiled his face, "that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." The veil concealed the evanescence of the brightness and was symbolic of that judicial blindness which fell upon Israel. "Their minds were blinded," or hardened, so that their perceptions were not in accordance with facts; impressibility was lost, feeling was callous. "Until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament." The punishment continued. What were the old Scriptures but a sealed book to most of the Jews in the apostle's day? and now, after eighteen centuries, how palpable to us the confirmation of his words in the ignorance and the delusions of the Jews touching the spiritual import of their sacred books! "Until this day" has a meaning for us it could not have had to St. Paul's contemporaries. Time has done nothing or next to nothing to remove the darkness enveloping Jewish mind. Shrewd, intelligent, sagacious, in everything else; distinguished on nearly every arena of commercial and professional life; often foremost among men in matters as widely separated as music and statesmanship;—they yet present the strangest of contrarieties in adhesion to prejudices almost two thousand years old, and that too while evincing an adaptiveness to every form of civilization and to all the modifications going on in the current activities of the age. Find them where you may, they are pliant to circumstances. Not a national mould can be mentioned in which their external character cannot be cast, and yet, while this plasticity is such that we have Russian, Italian, German, Spanish, French, English, American, Jews, and withal the individual nationality apparent, there is the same religious blindness of which St. Paul wrote long ago. Their land, homes, institutions, the objects that come before us when we think of Judæa and Galilee, have passed from their grasp; but they hold fast to the shreds of their ancient beliefs, nor can any power relax their hold. Now, surely, this is inexplicable on the ordinary grounds of human experience. No law of the mind, no law of society, can explain the phenomenon. Such a spectacle as the Jews present of retaining their attachment and devotion to a skeleton religion, from which the soul has departed, is unique in the world's history. St. Paul solves the enigma; it is providential, it is punitive; "*until this day* the veil is untaken away." Two statements follow: (1) the "veil is done away in Christ;" (2) but, though done away in Christ, "even unto this day, when Moses [his writings] is read, the veil is upon their heart." Only in and through Christ have we the power to see Christ in the Old Testament. Only in Christ risen and glorified, only in him as sending the Holy Ghost, can we understand the relations of Moses to the gospel. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures"—a post-resurrection matter altogether and coincident with the preliminary gift of the Holy Ghost during the forty days. Yet, while asserting that Moses has been unveiled, and that his testimony to Christ, as the end of the Law to every believer, has been made clear and simple, nevertheless, the veil remains. The idea would seem to be, "The veil remains not taken away in the reading of the old covenant, it not being unveiled to them that it (the old covenant) is done away in Christ" (note in Lange's 'Commentary'). But was there not room for hope? Already, in thousands of cases, the veil had been removed. A blinder and more rabid Pharisee than St. Paul lived not in Jerusalem, and he had had the veil taken away. The work was going on. One day it would be completed and Israel would know her Messiah. "When it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." We, in the present day, read this third chapter of the Second Corinthians in a fuller light than even our immediate ancestors. The events of the nineteenth century have shown us how near the Jews are to the heart of Providence. Taken as a body of people, they are advancing in wealth, in culture, in certain elements of social power, at a rate beyond the average progress of races. Christian thinkers cannot look at these facts without seeing much more than material prosperity. Providence is the historic antecedent of the Spirit. The prophets of God in our age are not Elijahs and Elishas, but events that revolutionize thought and silently change the hearts of nations. But this turning to the Lord (ver. 16) must be explained as to its Divine Agent, and the nature, thoroughness, and growing excellence of the work be set forth. *Its Divine Agent.* He is the Holy Ghost. Not only did Christ teach that he depended on the Holy Spirit for his anointing as the Messiah, and that the unction proceeding thence was the strength and inspiration of his earthly work ("The Spirit of the Lord is upon me"); not only did he refer everything to the fulness of the Spirit in him ("I do

nothing of myself"); not only did he wait for its baptismal descent upon him before entering on his ministry, and acknowledge his presence in his miracles and teaching ("If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God," etc.; "The words I speak unto you, I speak not of myself"); but, in the most solemn hours of his existence, death just at hand, he taught the disciples to expect the Spirit as his gift, stating what would be his offices as Remembrancer, Convincer, Witness, Glorifier, and in all the Comforter. This was to be their outfit for discipling all nations, for victory over themselves as to all self-seeking and self-furthering emotions, for triumph over all opposing forces. This was to be the means of realizing him as their glorified Lord, so that they should know him no more after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Now, we must not fail to notice that we are indebted to St. Paul for a very full portrayal of the actual work of the Spirit in the Church. One may call him the historian of the Spirit, the thinker who, under God, discerned his blessed operations in their variety and compass, the writer who put them on record for the illumination of the Church in all ages, the man who laid bare his own soul in extremities of sorrow and in moments of supreme happiness so that we might have his theology of the Holy Ghost in its experimental results. From him, then, we have not only the completest doctrinal instruction on this most vital subject, but likewise the flesh-and-blood view superinduced upon the anatomy of theological truth; witness this third chapter: yet this is only one among his many-sided presentations of this topic. Observe, however, this chapter fills a special place in his system of teaching. Step by step he had been approaching a point at which he could demonstrate the pre-eminent excellence of the gospel. Charity had been delineated once and for ever; the resurrection had been argued on a method and in a manner unusual with him; so too the economy of the Church as a society divinely planned. In this third chapter all his prominent ideas coalesce in one great master-truth, viz. the dispensation of the gospel as the ministry of the Spirit. The phrase, "ministry of the Spirit," is itself remarkable. It includes, in a certain sense, the ministry of Moses, while differentiating the old covenant from the new. It takes in all ministrics, apostolic, ordinary, and the numerous kinds of the ordinary. If we have lost some of these as they existed in St. Paul's day, how many have we gained as original to later times and generic to circumstances called into existence by England and America in the eighteenth century—the century of a constellation of epochs in the firmament of history? "Now the Lord is that Spirit." Everywhere, in everything, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Dispenser of its manifold influence. "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." It is the doctrine of Pentecost. It is the miracle and grandeur of Pentecost. Yet St. Peter does little more than state the fact. The doctrinal elaboration waits for St. Paul, and these two Epistles furnish the opportunity. *Nature, thoroughness, and growing excellence of the Spirit's work.* It is *liberty*. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Liberty from the pedagogy of the Law; liberty from the tyranny of the carnal intellect; liberty from that national domination which in the case of the Jews offered such a solid resistance to the gospel; liberty from Gentile idolatry; liberty from every agency that wrought evil in the soul of man. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." But it was the glorified Son who was to make men free by communicating the Holy Ghost. It is a revelation of God in Christ and Christ in the Spirit of the consciousness and conscience of men, and therefore *thorough*. It addresses his consciousness as one who has the capacity to think, feel, judge; and it addresses his conscience as to how he should think, feel, judge, as touching his obligations and as enforcing them by an immortality of reward or punishment. By the truth of the gospel, by the Spirit accompanying that truth and rendering it effective, consciousness is enlightened, cultivated, enlarged. The man sees much in himself he never saw before. And his moral sense or conscience, that mightiest of the instincts, is instructed and guided so as to represent the Spirit. It is in the soul a Remembrancer, a Convincer, a Witness, a Glorifier of Christ, a Comforter. And under this twofold development which is brought into unity by the Spirit of truth and love, the work of grace extends to all the man's faculties. The intellect, the moral sensibilities, the social affections, lift up the physical man into themselves, and grow together into the spiritual man. Not an appetite, not a passion, not an attribute, of body or soul is left neglected. The ideal is "body, soul, and spirit" consecrated to Christ, living, working, suffering, so that "whatsoever ye do

in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus." And its *growing excellence* is seen in this, that in harmony with its freedom and its development of spiritual consciousness and conscience, it has an unveiled face. The eye is open and unhindered. Nothing intervenes between it and the glory of the Lord. True, it sees only in a mirror; it sees by reflection; it sees the image merely—the image of God in Christ, the image of humanity in Christ, the God-Man, the one perfect Man of the human race. We see him in the New Testament, in the Gospels and Epistles, in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Apocalypse, the *acts of Providence* future and final. We see him in all his relations and aspects—the babe of Mary, the boy of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, the public Man, Teacher, Benefactor, Healer, Helper, Friend. Every page of the New Testament is as a burnished surface whereon he is presented to the eye of faith as a manifestation of God's righteousness and love, while he exhibits also the guilt and condemnation of man. "The glory of the Lord" is thus brought to view amidst the scenes and circumstances that instruct us in daily life. It is on a level with our comprehension. It finds the same kind of access to our sympathies that human qualities have in ordinary intercourse. "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," was the prayer of Moses, and the Lord answered and made all his goodness pass before him. What Christ's glory was in Moses, in the Psalms and prophecies, in his incarnation and atoning death, in his glorification; what it has been, is now, and will be;—all this we have in the Scriptures of the Spirit and in his Divine offices to sanctify the Word. If we behold as in a mirror, is the image distorted, confused, inoperative, ineffective? Nay; it is with "open face" that we look, and the result is we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory." Faith is the organ of vision, and faith is essentially transforming by its power to make what is an object of thought and feeling the most effectual of subjective influences. It takes the object from the outer world, separates it from the limitations of sense and intellect, disconnects the object from whatever is darkening and enervating, and secures to it fulness of activity. Faith is the purest, truest, noblest, form of belief. It is belief of things unseen and eternal, revealed to us by God and testified unto by the most honest and faithful witnesses the human race could furnish. To give us a Peter, a John, a Paul, as testifiers, the world was under providential training for many centuries and especially its elect race, whose ancestor, Abraham, inaugurated the career of the nation by an act of faith the most pathetic, the most sublime, the most illustrious, in the annals of mankind. It is not only a belief of things invisible as disclosed by a Revealer and assured by witnesses, but likewise a belief created, directed, and sustained in personal consciousness by the agency of the Holy Ghost. Hence its power to conform us to the Divine image as displayed in Christ, and hence also its progressive work. Not only are we changed, but we are changed "from glory to glory." "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith," so that we realize more and more clearly the consistency of the Divine righteousness in our justification, and the righteousness formed in our souls by the Spirit. We know why we are pardoned and by whom renewed, and, as we advance into new stages of experience, the past work of grace is rendered more and more intelligible. Current experiences leave much unexplained. Infancy, childhood, youth, in religious life are not fully comprehended till the interpretative light of manhood is thrown back upon them. "*From glory to glory*;" this is true of every Christian virtue. At first we are timid in confessing Christ before the world; the cross is heavy; self-denial is often very painful; the remains of the carnal mind are yet strong enough to resist when some onerous task is put upon us; but in time we gain strength, and in time are able to run and not weary, to walk and not faint. It is "from strength to strength," as the psalmist sang long ago. Take the virtue of patience; what years are needed to acquire it in any large degree! St. Peter says, "Add to your faith, virtue," etc.; keep up the supply, and exercise all diligence in building up one virtue by means of another. Again, "Grow in grace;" if growth stops, grace stops. "*From glory to glory*." Temptations that had to be fought against, and sometimes ineffectually, twenty years ago, trouble us no longer. Infirmities are less infirm. Mysteries that used to perplex have ceased to disturb. People whose presence was an annoyance can be borne with. Irritations, recurring daily, have lost their power to ruffle the temper. Many a crooked way has been made straight, many a rough place smooth, many a darkened spot bright, to our steps. "*From glory to glory*." Grace has worked its way down into our instincts and begun their fuller development. Thence comes the white light so grateful to sight and

so helpful. It is reflected upon the intellect, the sense-organs, the outward world, and dissipates the occasional gloom that falls upon us when Satan's "It is written" obscures our perceptions, or when the logic of the sense-intellect gathers its mists about our pathway. Blessed hours of illumination are those which attend the later stages of grace penetrating the depths of instinct. Doubts are over; for we know whom we have believed. "*From glory to glory.*" Gradually our hearts are detached from the world, and, while its beauty and love and tenderness are none the less, they are seen as parts of a higher life and a remoter sphere. Afflictions, once "grievous," yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness;" for the "afterward" has come, and what an "*afterward*!" To be reconciled to the cross of pain; to glory in the cross of the Divine Sufferer; to die to self as we die when the Man of sorrows becomes the Christ of our instincts; to say, "Thy will be done" with no half-way utterance, but from the heart, and submit not only willingly but gladly to whatever it may please Providence to ordain;—this indeed is proof that we have advanced "*from glory to glory.*"—L.

Ver. 2.—"*Our epistle.*" Paul did the work of his life partially by his voice, but to no small extent by his pen. His compositions which have come down to us, and by which we chiefly know him, are epistolary. His letters were admitted, in his own time, and even by his enemies and traducers, to be weighty and powerful. But in his own view the best of all his epistles—those which most unmistakably witnessed to his apostleship—were the characters, the new lives, of those who by his ministry had received the gospel of Christ. Whether as *amanuenses* who had indited these spiritual epistles, or as *tubellarii*, or letter-carriers, who had charge of them, and delivered them to human society, the apostles "ministered" their converts, who attested their skill and fidelity. At the expense of complicating the figure, Paul observes of the Corinthians that they were written in the hearts of himself and his colleagues. The lesson of the text is that *Christians are ever authenticating the ministry of faithful preachers of the gospel.*

I. MEN MAY READ IN THE HEART AND LIFE OF THE CONVERT THE DIVINE COMMISSION OF THE MINISTER. There are such proofs of the divinity of the doctrine in its effects upon the character and conduct of its sincere recipients as point up to the heavenly authority by which the agents were appointed and authenticated.

II. AND THE FAITHFULNESS AND ZEAL OF THE MINISTER. Paul had a good conscience with regard to the manner in which he had discharged his sacred and benevolent service to his fellow-men. Especially was this the case with his ministry to the Corinthians. In his First Epistle to them he had written, "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord."

III. AND THE ADAPTATION OF THE MINISTRY TO THE NEEDS AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MEN. Events proved that to Jew and to Gentile, to men of every class and character, the gospel of Christ was the power of God unto salvation. This Church at Corinth was as an epistle written in various languages, in various styles, addressed to all nations and to all conditions of men, and assuring them that the apostles of Christ were laden with treasure which was able to enrich and to bless the world.—T.

Ver. 3.—"*Epistles of Christ.*" Some teachers had visited the Christians of Corinth, who boasted of the letters of introduction they brought with them, authenticating their commission and their ministry. Paul needed no such epistles; for the members of the Church were themselves *his* epistles; and better still, they were not only his, they were *Christ's* epistles, manifestly and undeniably such. The same may be said of all true disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus; it is an honourable and an inspiring designation.

I. THE WRITER—CHRIST. Many great men, especially great thinkers, have perpetuated their influence and have served their race by their writings. As poets, philosophers, or moralists, they have made a place for themselves in the mind of humanity. The greatest of all, the Divine Man, wrote nothing. It is greater to be than to write; and the Lord Jesus simply lived and worked, suffered, died, and conquered. He could not compress and limit his mind within the compass of a treatise or a volume. He left his evangelists and apostles to write of him; his earthly manifestation thus spoke a universal language. Yet, in a sense, he has always been writing, and he is writing now. He is still daily issuing epistles to the world.

II. **THE EPISTLE—CHRISTIANS.** As a friend and counsellor, when on a journey and at a distance, communicates by letter with those who need his guidance and the assurance of his interest, so our Lord, though he has ascended on high, is ever sending epistles to the children of men. Every Christian upon whom he impresses his own will, character, and purposes, thus becomes Christ's communication to the world, written by his hand, and authenticated by his autograph. Every individual is a syllable, every congregation a word, every generation of believers a line, in the ever-lengthening scroll, which approaches its close as the ages near the end.

III. **THE TABLET—THE HEART.** God does not write on stone, as men did in ancient monumental inscriptions, or as he once did on the tables of the Law. Nor on waxen tablets, as men wrote of old with the stylus, in notes of ordinary business or friendship. Nor on parchment or papyrus, as perhaps these Epistles of Paul were written. But Christ writes on tablets that are hearts of flesh. The expression, adapted from the Old Testament, is an impressive one. In the Proverbs, Wisdom invites the young man to write her precepts upon the tablets of his heart. By Jeremiah the Lord promised to write his Law upon his people's heart. Christ takes the human soul and works upon it, and engraves there his own characters, sets down there his own signature, and sends the human nature—so written upon—into the world, to tell of himself, to convey his thought, his will.

IV. **THE AGENCY—NOT INK, BUT THE SPIRIT OF GOD.** As in the processes of nature we see the operation of the living God, so in grace we discern spiritual handwriting. The Spirit of God most deeply reaches and most blessedly affects the spirit of man. The Spirit carries truth and love home to the heart with an incomparable power. He writes upon the soul in deep, legible, sacred, and eternal characters.

V. **THE HANDWRITING AND SUBSTANCE OF THE EPISTLES.** What difference there is in the appearance and in the matter of the letters we daily receive! They vary in handwriting, in style, in tone, in matter, according to the character of the writer, the relation of the writer to the reader, the business upon which they treat. But there is something characteristic in all—all tell us something of our correspondents, and of their mind and will. So is it with these living epistles described in the text. Every epistle tells of the Divine Writer, bears witness to the Lord from whom it emanates, is evidently written in his handwriting, and reveals his mind and heart. Every epistle must be so authenticated by his signature that it cannot be suspected to be a forgery. Spirituality, holiness, obedience, meekness, benevolence,—these are the proofs that the epistle is the composition of the Christ. This is to be manifestly, unmistakably, declared.

VI. **THE READERS—ALL MEN.** There is some writing which only a few can read; the characters may be ill written and illegible, or they may be in cipher, or the language may be scientific and technical. There are letters of private business or of personal friendship, only intended for certain individuals. But there is literature, such as the Bible or the law of the land, intended for the instruction and benefit of all. So, whilst there is religious language only fully understood by the initiated, by a select class—e.g. doctrines, meditations, prayers—there is language intended for all mankind. The Christian character and life can be read with profit by all men. They can comprehend the virtues which adorn the Christian, and which are the manifest signs of the Lord's spiritual presence. If we are truly Christ's, then his handwriting will be legible to all men, and all men who know us may gain some advantage through reading what the Divine hand has inscribed upon our nature.—T.

Vers. 6—11.—*The old and the new.* The warm and affectionate nature of the apostle had embraced the religion of Christ with a fervour, an attached devotion, exceeding even that which he had shown in his earlier days towards the dispensation in which he had been nurtured. Not that he had lost any of the reverence, the affection, he had cherished towards the covenant which God had established with his Hebrew ancestors; but that the new dispensation was so glorious to the view of his soul that it shed its brightness upon the economy which it replaced. The contrast drawn here seems almost depreciatory of that Law which was "given by Moses," when that Law was brought into comparison with the "grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ."

I. **THE NEW IS BETTER THAN THE OLD.** If God is a God of order, if progress characterizes his works, if development is a law of his procedure, then it is only

reasonable to believe, what we find to be the case, that that which displaces and supercedes what was good is itself preferable and more excellent.

II. THE SPIRIT IS BETTER THAN THE LETTER. Yet "the letter" was adapted to the childhood of the race, and was indeed necessary for the communication of the spiritual lesson to be conveyed from heaven. But Christianity cannot be compressed into any document; it is itself a spirit, unseen and intangible, but felt to be mighty and pervasive.

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS BETTER THAN CONDEMNATION. The old covenant abounded in prohibitions and in threats of punishment. The Law, when broken, as it incessantly was broken, is a sentence of condemnation to all who are placed under it. But it is the distinctive honour of Christianity that it brings in a new, a higher, an everlasting righteousness. It has thus more efficacy than the most faultless law of rectitude, for it supplies the motive and the power of true obedience.

IV. LIFE IS BETTER THAN DEATH. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"—such is the import of the old covenant, which thus ministered death to those who were under it. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"—such is the evangel of the new covenant to mankind. Death is the emblem of all that is dark, dreary, and repulsive; life is fraught with brightness, beauty, joy, and progress. Well might the apostle rise to fervid eloquence when depicting the incomparable moral excellence and beauty of the covenant of Divine grace. And justly might he deem his office one of highest honour and happiness, as bringing salvation and a blessed immortality to the lost and dying sons of men.

V. ETERNAL GLORY IS BETTER THAN TRANSITORY AND PERISHABLE SPLENDOUR. There was a glory in the scene and circumstances amid which the Law was given; there was a glory in that code of piety and rectitude which was then conferred upon the chosen nation; there was a glory in the illumined countenance of the great lawgiver when he came down from the mount. But this glory was for a season, and indeed it almost lost its title to be spoken of as glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth. The ministrations of the Spirit, of righteousness, that which remaineth, this is encompassed with a halo, an aureole, of spiritual and heavenly splendour which shall brighten until it merges in the ineffable glory of eternity.—T.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The veil.* The historical incident in this passage makes way for the allegorical representation. When Moses came down from the mount he veiled his face that the people might not see his features and might not witness the fading of his celestial glory. And Paul affirms that a similar veil conceals the countenance of the great prophet and lawgiver when his writings are publicly read in the hearing of his countrymen. In many ways the Pentateuch is a witness to the Messiah, even Jesus. But over the Pentateuch, as read, there rests a veil which hinders the Jews from penetrating to the spiritual, the prophetic, meaning of the inspired writer. Moses testified of Christ; but to the unenlightened the writings of Moses prevent any perception, any vision, of the Divine Lord. A similar veil keeps many from apprehending the truth which is so near them.

I. IN WHAT DOES THE VEIL CONSIST? Especially in prejudice and in unbelief. As the Israelites were so persuaded of the incomparable excellence of the Mosaic Law that they could not discern the higher revelation to which that Law was designed to lead, so oftentimes men's minds are so preoccupied with their own notions of religion, of righteousness, etc., that they are not prepared to give heed to the Divine manifestation and appeal.

II. WHAT DOES THE VEIL HIDE? The covering referred to in the context hid the face of the lawgiver; but the veil of error and of unbelief conceals the countenance of Christ, the revelation of Divine attributes, purposes, and promises. What it would be most for our interests to behold we may, by our sin and folly, obscure from our own view. See what we may, if we behold not the light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ we forfeit the highest privileges of which we are capable.

III. HOW IS THE VEIL REMOVED? The answer is very simple, "When it shall turn to the Lord." That is to say, the obstacle to spiritual vision lies with ourselves and not with Heaven. Repentance, or the turning of the heart away from sin, is the condition of true enlightenment. Whilst the mind is occupied with itself and its own

inclinations and fancies, the spiritual glory of the Saviour is not discernible. It only needs that, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, the mind should look away from self to Christ, in order that at once the scales should fall from the eyes of the beholder, and the veil should drop from the face of the Redeemer, and a true *re-volation* should take place.

IV. WHAT DOES THE REMOVAL OF THE VEIL EFFECT? 1. The transitory character of preparatory dispensations is clearly discerned; the veil being dropped, it is seen that the glory of the older covenant has gone. 2. The true glory of Christ and of Christianity is made manifest; the new covenant appears in all its splendour, unfading and eternal.—T.

Ver. 17.—*The spirit of liberty.* If there are two words especially dear to St. Paul, they are these—the *spirit* as distinguished from the form and the letter, and *liberty* as distinguished from religious bondage.

I. MAN'S NEED OF LIBERATION. 1. Sin is bondage, however he may confuse between liberty and licence. There is no slave so crippled and so pitiable as is the bondman of sin. 2. Man's happiness and well-being depend upon his deliverance from this spiritual serfdom. 3. No earthly power can effect this great enfranchisement.

II. THE DIVINE LIBERATOR. Many of the designations applied to our Lord Jesus imply this character and function. He is the Saviour, who saves from the yoke of sin, the doom of death; the Redeemer, who ransoms from a spiritual captivity, who pays the price, and sets the prisoner free. "The Lord is the Spirit;" *i.e.* the work of redemption was wrought by Jesus in the body, and is applied and made actual to the individual soul by the unseen but mighty and ever-present Spirit, in whose operations the Lord Christ perpetuates his action and achieves his dominion.

III. THE ESSENCE OF SPIRITUAL LIBERTY. It is irrespective of personal condition; for the slave can enjoy its sweets, even when his clanking chains remind him of his earthly bondage. It is emancipation from the curse and penalty of the Law, as this oppresses every sinner who is at all aware of his real condition. It is freedom from what St. Paul calls the dominion of sin. It is the glad consecration of all powers to the service of the Divine Redeemer. It is "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

IV. THE FRUITS OF FREEDOM. 1. *Obedience*, strange and paradoxical as the assertion seems, is the consequence of the gracious enfranchisement of the soul. The service of the heart, which cannot be rendered in bondage, is natural in the state of emancipation. 2. *Joy* is natural to the emancipated slave, who realizes the dignity and the blessedness of freedom. 3. *Praise* of the Deliverer never ceases, but ascends in unintermitting strains to the Author and Giver of spiritual and everlasting liberty.—T.

Ver. 18.—*The glorious transformation.* An exulting joy seems to have moved the soul of the apostle, when he meditated upon the present immunities and honours, and upon the prospects of future blessedness and glory which, through Christ, belong to all true believers and followers of the Lord. A kind of spiritual exhilaration pervades and exalts his spirit, and adds eloquence and poetry to his enraptured language.

I. UNINTERRUPTED VISION. The figure of the veil continues to haunt the mind of the inspired writer, even after it has answered the purpose of its first introduction. Associating his brethren in the faith with himself, he affirms, concerning Christians, that the veil was in their case removed, so that for them was actually realized a wonderful approach to the unseen Saviour. Before their enlightenment by the Spirit of God, the scales were upon their eyes and the veil was before their countenance. Now, in Heaven's light they see light. The sin, the prejudices, the unbelief, which hid the Saviour from their view, have been removed, and nothing comes between the soul and its Saviour.

II. SPIRITUAL REFLECTION. Instead of the countenance being concealed by a veil, it is, in the case of true Christians, converted into a mirror, which receives and then reflects the rays of light. Thus the glory of the Lord, which is ever manifested in nature, and which shone in the face of our incarnate Redeemer, is gathered up and given forth by the renewed and purified character of the Christian. This is a moral process. A spiritual nature alone is capable of attracting and receiving such light, alone is capable of giving it forth in uncontaminated, though reflected, rays. Thus the disciple mirrors

the Teacher and the servant mirrors the Lord. We are living representatives of the Divine Head.

III. GLORIOUS TRANSFORMATION. Faith in Christ and fellowship with Christ are the forces which produce assimilation to Christ. The image which is beheld seems to infix itself upon the mirror-like soul that receives it. The life of faith thus serves to carry on a gradual process of spiritual assimilation. The *progression* is denoted by the phrase "from glory to glory," by which we understand, not earthly splendour, but spiritual excellence and perfection. And the *agency* is indicated by the expression here used, "as by the Lord the Spirit." Because he is the Spirit, the Lord has access to the heart, and renews, hallows, and glorifies the nature to which he makes himself graciously and divinely known. And there seems to be no limit to this most blessed process. In fact, the future state appears to offer the most amazing scope for its continuation: "We shall be like Christ; for we shall see him as he is."—I.

Ver. 3.—*The Christ-letter.* The people of God are set forth under various figures in Scripture. For example—as corn ripening for harvest; as Lebanon's cedars, standing like rocks under fiercest blasts; as stars fixed in heavenly places; as the sun climbing the heavens, enlightening the world; as purified gold, fit for the King; as jewels flashing forth tints of loveliness, prepared for regal crown; as vine branches richly laden; as pomegranates and figs, sweet and refreshing; for might, the lion and eagle; and, great paradox, for weakness, the defenceless sheep and lamb; for humility, the lily; for dignity, the palm tree; for usefulness, the salt of the earth. Here, as "the epistle of Christ." A singular but impressive title. And this sets forth what each individual believer should be—a Christ-letter. We have been accustomed to regard epistles as certain books of the Scripture or letters passing between men. The apostle leads us to this thought—*men are epistles.* Apart from nature and providence, we have regarded the Bible as God's only book. Now we are directed to other books of God, volumes of redeemed humanity. We speak of the Epistles of Scripture as inspired; men who are the epistles of Christ are inspired by the same Spirit. Of the former we think as testimonies for God, for Christ, for religion; the latter are equally so. And, as though God were not content with giving to mankind silent and secluded epistles, he has placed in the midst of the world *living* epistles, moving amongst men, unobscured, ever beheld and perused. We regard the Scriptures with reverence. What a thought that we, if we are truly of Christ, constitute part of the great Scriptures of God! The Bible we esteem as sacred; if of Christ, we are sacred, appointed to bear a like witness to the verities of the Christian faith. It would seem as though there could scarcely be a more honourable designation than this—"the epistle of Christ." If we are to be the epistles of Christ—

I. GOD MUST WRITE OUR LIVES. The epistle, to be worth anything, must be dictated by God. We say Paul's Epistles, Peter's Epistles, John's Epistles; but, if this adequately represents them, they are nothing. If they are anything, they are *God's* Epistles—God's Epistle to the Corinthians and to the Romans, and so on. So with us. If we are epistles of Christ, we must be "of God," "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" (ver. 3); and the writing must be, not on "tables of stone" for us, but in "tables that are hearts of flesh" *within* us. The work of the Divine Spirit in our natures and in our lives can alone make us epistles of Christ. This is the highest form of human life, when it is *made* by God, day by day, hour by hour—the will of God finding expression in conduct, thoughts, motives, being. Free-will is the glory of man, received by the fiat of the Eternal; but the noblest act of free-will is its voluntary subjection to the will of God. We are highest when we are willing to become most completely the *servants* of God. Satan tempted our first parents to pass from under the will of God by the promise, "Ye shall be as gods." There was wonderful deceit here. The temptation *found them* as gods, it *left them* as devils. To live otherwise than in subjection to the will of God is to go down. The way upward is, "Not my will, but thine, be done." To consult the Divine wish in all our undertakings, to follow the Divine instruction in all our deeds, to wait upon the Divine purpose in our whole being and course, is for *God to be writing our lives.* How different, alas! is our experience! How often we have taken the pen out of the Divine hand, that we ourselves might write a little! How often, by our wilfulness, our self-seeking, our sin, we have rendered the Divine writing blurred, and the manuscript of our life blotted and defaced! How often

have our foolish insertions entirely altered the meaning of what the Divine fingers were tracing! What chaos, confusion, disaster, have come into the epistle of our life because it has been largely of ourselves and not of God! How poor has been the influence of the life-letter because it has not been inspired of the Holy Ghost!

II. OUR LIVES WILL THEN TESTIFY OF CHRIST. This must be our supreme aim if we desire to be epistles of Christ. He is to be the one conspicuous feature in our life and being. Epistles we are to be, which, when men read, they shall find that they are *reading of Christ*. Many professing Christians are anything but epistles of Christ. There are some very great epistles of doubt, read and known of many men, telling us that they do not claim apostolical succession, and proving this with conclusiveness by being anything but fully persuaded in their own minds; epistles of dismalness, epistles of idleness, epistles of delay, epistles of change, epistles of frivolity, epistles of self, epistles of quarrelsomeness, and others who seem to be epistles of nothingness. In contrast to the true consistent believer—Christ manifested in his actions, Christ breathed forth in his influence, Christ the utterance of his life. To him "*to live is Christ*." If we are the epistles of Christ: 1. *We must allow men to read us*. We must not be too reserved. We must not hide our light. 2. *We should not be too forward*. Much talk of our attainments and graces will convince most men that we have not any. A book is not instructive which has the most of the printing outside. 3. *Men will be willing to read us when very unwilling to read the Epistles of the Scriptures*. There are two things which men are very fond of reading—their newspaper and each other. The true epistle of Christ is likely to have wide circulation and large usefulness.—H.

Ver. 6.—*The new covenant*. I. A COVENANT OF THE SPIRIT. The old covenant, the Law which came by Moses, was the "letter"—precepts laid down to be literally obeyed, fixed and rigid, external and ritual. The new covenant, the gospel, is the covenant of love, of spiritual obedience. The Jew, under the old covenant, could not be exempted by any piety of spirit from the letter of the legal ordinance; but under the new covenant the spirit of the observance is chief. The old covenant did not supply the inward power producing obedience—it was something outside of man, imposed upon him. But the new covenant has for an essential feature the power of God operating in the heart, leading to newness of life. The old covenant approached man from without, the new covenant works from within. One is "letter"—external; the other is "spirit"—internal.

II. A COVENANT OF LIFE. In the old covenant there was the holy Law and the command to fully obey it: "The Law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Gal. iii. 12). The old covenant demanded perfect obedience: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10). Thus the old covenant tended to condemnation and death, because fallen human nature failed to keep the perfect Law of God. The "letter" of unswerving righteousness convicted man of sin, and then "killed" him. Not that the Law was evil, but that it showed the evil in man. "The wages of sin is death." The Law, by discovering sin, showed *that the wages were due*. The old covenant thus left man condemned, and, if man was to be justified and restored, there was urgent need of a new covenant. We find, thus, that the old covenant is ever pointing to the new, and that the design of the former was to lead to the latter: "The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. iii. 24). Moreover, the Jew possessed the new covenant as well as the old, though not so fully unfolded as we have it. Men condemned by the old covenant lived the life of faith upon the Son of God who was to come, and thus participated in the life-giving principle of the new covenant. This new covenant is a covenant of life: 1. Because Christ has perfectly fulfilled the Law of God on man's behalf, and to man this perfect obedience is imputed. Condemnation is thus avoided. Life is secured for man by man's Substitute. 2. Man's personal transgressions are atoned for by the sacrifice of Christ. 3. The Holy Ghost is given to kindle spiritual life in man, to sanctify his nature, to bring him at last into full accord with the perfect Law of God.

III. A COVENANT NOT TRANSITORY. The old covenant has passed away. The new covenant puts men in a position with relation to God which is an everlasting one. Death and the next world will not call for the abrogation of this covenant, nor any

changes occurring during the residence of the human family in the world. The old covenant was imperfect; it demanded something beyond itself; it was designed to do this. There is no such element in the new. It is complete; it calls for nothing outside of its own provisions.

IV. A COVENANT OF SURPASSING GLORY. This arises largely from points already noticed. 1. Its spiritual character. 2. Its issues in bringing life, not death, to fallen man. 3. Its enduring character. 4. Its direct initiation and administration by the Son of God. "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 17). The inauguration of the old covenant saw the face of Moses illumined. The new covenant came with the transfiguration of Christ. 5. Its marvellous revelation of Divine love. The old covenant laid the emphasis upon Divine righteousness; the new, whilst displaying with untarnished lustre this attribute of Deity, exhibits pre-eminently the love of God.—H.

Ver. 15.—*The veil on the heart.* The veil which Moses put on his face (Exod. xxxiv. 33) obscured its brightness. The apostle seizes upon the event, so familiar to readers of Jewish history, to illustrate moral blindness, and especially the moral blindness of Jews in his own day. As moral blindness is subjective, he speaks of the veil, not upon those things which are obscured, as in the case of the face of Moses, but as upon the heart. Upon the heart, because in spiritual matters the inability does not spring from the head, but from the heart. This veil upon the heart—

I. OBSCURES THE GLORY OF THE OLD DISPENSATION. It did so to Jews in Paul's day; it does so to Jews now. The true glory of the old covenant lay in its foreshadowing of the new. It was a covenant of types and shadows. Underlying its legality was a deep spirituality. The Law condemned, and only condemned, but the "Law" was not the whole of the old covenant. Associated with the Law was the embryo of the gospel. And unveiled hearts looked through condemnation and shadow and type to the delivering Messiah, by whom men could be justified by faith and not by works. But the veil upon the heart caused the Jew to regard the old covenant as complete in itself, and to disregard the deeper spiritual meanings of its provisions. From him its true glory was thus hidden. A rigid system became much more rigid. The wings of a dispensation rising to something higher were clipped. A hard, narrow creed was substituted for an expansive and noble theology.

II. HIDES CHRIST. It did so when Christ came. When the Messiah appeared, veiled hearts failed to recognize him. The Jews would have welcomed a Messiah who came to continue Judaism as Judaism was understood by them. But the development of Judaism into Christianity, the fruition of the old covenant in the new, had no charms for them; on the contrary, it was obnoxious to them in the highest degree, as spirituality is ever to a carnal nature. In the Christ they could not see the Christ. He was not *their* Christ, and by facile logic was thus demonstrated to be no Christ at all. "Their minds were blinded" (ver. 14). From many to-day Christ is thus hidden. To them "a root out of a dry ground" is as beautiful as he. They think the fault is in *him*, but it is *in themselves*. False conceptions of the objects, duties, and pleasures of life possess them, and are the coloured media through which Christ is looked at. They see a darkened, shorn, maimed Christ; the *true* Christ is hidden from them.

III. CAUSES MEN TO REST IN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. This was the only way of justification which was apparent to the Jew upon whose heart the veil rested. The veil shut out all, except legalism. So with many now. It is *their* righteousness, not the righteousness of Christ, to which they look. They seek to save themselves, not to be saved by another. Each is a Messiah to himself. But poor rest is secured. The voices of old sins make themselves heard, and to their clamour no satisfactory response is forthcoming. Present power to do right is found lacking. This is not to be wondered at, seeing that the Source of all true spiritual power has been abandoned. Piety becomes either a vague dream of the future or a dismal formality of the present.

IV. KEEPS MEN UNDER CONDEMNATION. The Law of God condemns, and if only the bare Law is seen there is no deliverance. Self-righteousness, if attained to in perfection, would not cancel past sentences on sin. But self-righteousness practically is ever self-unrighteousness, and, instead of atoning for sin, continuously increases it. The most moral man has but the cheerless vision of a broken Law imperiously demanding its penalties

V. THE VEIL IS REMOVED AS WE TURN TO THE LORD. (Ver. 16.) When the Jew, led by the Spirit, believed on Christ, the veil, which had obscured his vision of the old covenant, and which had thus perverted his being and life, was removed. He saw then the true significance of the old economy, and perceived that Christ, in his own person and work, constituted the very fulfilment of the Law. Old things passed away, all things became new. The veil is destroyed for ever as we come to Christ. The apostle has, no doubt, in his mind the action of Moses: "When Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off" (Exod. xxxiv. 34). Our turning to the Lord is a sign that the veil is rent in twain like the veil of the temple, and as we reach the Lord and are taught by the Divine Spirit, the veil vanishes, obscurity gives place to brightness, and we marvel that we ever could have been as we once were. When Moses came out from the presence of the Lord he again assumed the veil, but he is not here an example to us; for we are not to come out again, but to abide with Christ, to be "for ever with the Lord."—H.

Ver. 18.—The great change. I. WHAT THIS CHANGE IS. Into the Divine likeness. This, which was lost through the Fall, is recovered in the gospel. Believers become like Christ, who is the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his person (Heb. i. 3). The change is not merely of opinion, or feeling, or even conduct, but a change of *being*. It is not something connected with ourselves, but our very selves which are changed, and changed so as to be like Christ. 1. *A marvellous change.* For before men believe, they are singularly unlike Christ. By nature like Satan; by grace like Christ. 2. *An all-desirable change.* For ennoblement, peace, joy, usefulness.

II. THE MANNER OF THE CHANGE. It follows upon turning to the Lord (ver. 16). As Moses, standing before God, was singularly changed in countenance, so that his face reflected the Divine glory, so we are changed as we are turned towards Christ, as we turn towards him in penitence and faith and in desire to be his. The figure of a mirror is employed. 1. We may read "reflecting as a mirror," and then the idea conveyed will be that, as Christ shines upon us, as he acts upon us, we become changed. Or: 2. If we read "beholding as in a mirror," the thought will be that, as we gaze upon Christ as he is reflected in the mirror of the gospel, we become like him. Both thoughts are correct, though it is by the Divine action we are changed, our looking upon Christ being only the means by which the Divine action reaches us.

III. A SPECIAL FEATURE OF THE CHANGE. Progressive—"from glory to glory." The change is often gradual. There is a great fundamental change at conversion. A condition of "glory" is reached, but there is a glory beyond this. We "grow in grace." At first we are "habes in Christ," but we develop into the stature of perfect men in him (Eph. iv. 13). Conversion is but the first stage. Many seem to think that it is the final one. Justification is enough for them; sanctification is not in their thoughts. But this is not the salvation of Christ. We are saved for holiness, for usefulness, for the service of God, and as continuously we gaze upon Christ in faith, and as his power falls upon us, we pass into a further "glory."

IV. A CONDITION OF THE CHANGE. Our face unveiled. And here face stands for heart. The veil occasioned by the old enmity, by prejudice, by misconception, by ignorance, must be removed. This will be so with all who in sincerity turn to the Lord. "When it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (ver. 16). The more completely our face is unveiled the more rapidly shall we pass from "glory to glory." We should strive to remove all that is likely to hinder our development into the likeness of Christ. Anything that comes between ourselves and him will do this. Heart-veils are of very various patterns.

V. THE STRIKING USEFULNESS OF THE CHANGE. Adopting the reading "reflecting as a mirror," we see that: 1. Those who turn to the Lord reflect the glory of the Lord. They show forth Christ. Men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. They reflect the redemptive glory of Christ. They exemplify the power of his salvation. They are monuments upon which is inscribed "Christ, and him crucified." They reflect the love of Christ in Christian activity. Having been saved themselves, they desire the salvation of all around them. What a thought, that we may reflect Christ! 2. As they seek to reflect Christ the change progresses. It is when we are diligent in the Master's business, when we consecrate ourselves to him, when we strive

to set him forth in daily life, that we become changed into his image. As we strenuously endeavour to be like him we become like him. Our endeavour to reflect him is responded to by the change in us which enables us to reflect him. Reflecting his glory as a mirror, we are changed into the same image.

VI. THE WORKER OF THE CHANGE. The Holy Ghost, "the Lord the Spirit." Christ working by his Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my Name" (John xiv. 26). The work is Divine; it calls for Divine power. We cannot work this change, yet we can "turn to the Lord," that it may be worked.—H.

Vers. 2, 3.—*A living letter.* Apollos had carried to Corinth written credentials (see Acts xviii. 27; xix. 1). Why had Paul not done so too? He claims that he needed them not. The converts in that city were themselves his credentials. His appeal to the Corinthians on this point proceeds on a principle easily understood and often applied. The best testimonial a teacher can produce is the proficiency of his pupils. The most satisfactory evidences of the skill of a physician are the patients who have recovered health under his care. The convincing proofs of the competency of a gardener are the prosperity of the plants and the abundance of flowers and fruits which he produces from the ground. So was the Church at Corinth itself the best diploma or commendation of the apostle who had founded it and watched over it (see 1 Cor. iv. 14—16). A good teacher needs no letter of commendation to his own pupils, or a father to his own children. Seizing the idea of a letter, and showing that the Corinthian saints themselves formed the only letter he needed to produce, St. Paul used this as an illustration in two forms. 1. The Christians at Corinth were written on his heart, for they were dear to him (ch. vii. 3; Phil. i. 7). And this was no secret. The tie of affection between St. Paul and the Corinthian brethren was "known and read of all." 2. Christ had written upon their hearts what served as a powerful letter of commendation for his servant Paul. Let us pursue the second use of the metaphor. A Church is an epistle of Christ, open for all men to read.

I. THE AUTHOR OF THE LETTER. This is Christ. Whatever Divine thoughts are given to human minds, or spiritual impressions are stamped on human hearts, proceed from Christ. And it is true of Churches in all ages. As Christ is the living One, he is ever writing new epistles—in harmony with those which were written at the beginning—and yet new and fresh and suited to the current time.

II. THE AMANUENSIS. At Corinth this was Paul. In modern Churches it is the faithful ministry of the Word. The epistle is not invented or dictated by us, but "ministered by us." The mind of Christ is thereby conveyed to and impressed on the company of believers.

III. THE TABLETS. They are not of stone, but of the heart. The ministration of death was written and engraven on stone in the form of ten commandments. The more glorious ministration of the spirit and of righteousness is inscribed on the convictions and affections of living men. The law of Christ is put into the inward parts and written on the heart. For this end, too, the Lord knows how to soften the tablets, to make the heart tender and warm, and so susceptible of the instruction and impression of the Word. Oh to have a still heart, not restless, that the writing may be plain, and to have a lowly heart, not hard, that the engraving may be deep!

IV. THE MANNER OF WRITING. "Not with ink." St. Paul's letters were so written, as were those of other apostles (2 John 12); and by ink of the scribe and the printer have they been preserved and propagated. But for writing on the heart perishable material is unsuited. Jehovah wrote the Law on the tablets of stone with his own hand; and on the tablets of the human heart Jesus Christ writes, using ministry as he pleases in the process with the finger or power of God—"the Spirit of the living God." And so, in all times and all Churches of the saints, the application of the truth is by the living Spirit.

V. THE THING WRITTEN. It is the mind of Christ. Ye "have learned Christ, and the truth as it is in Jesus." There is no higher truth to learn, no better message to carry.

VI. THE PUBLICATION OF THE LETTER. It is "manifestly declared," and may be known and read of all men. This is said of the Church collective, for such is the temple of

God and such is the epistle of Christ—an argument surely for Christian consistency and for brotherly concord, that the sacred epistle may not be rendered unintelligible. If each member of a Church abide in his place, and all together dwell in peace and walk in the truth, there is produced an epistle of Christ which puts the gainsayer to silence. Thank God that even a faulty Church or blotted epistle has something of a Divine element, some impression and expression of Christ! The obligation which lies on the Church may be pressed on each member thereof. Would that Christ were more apparent and more legible in Christians! Let your character be a consistent representation or epistle of your Lord, and let it be an original, not a copy of some other man's religion, but a genuine production of Jesus Christ by "the Spirit of the living God." If you go to the Lord justifying yourself and accusing others, he will only write on the ground; but if you with a penitent heart accuse yourself, he will write on you his grace and truth. Hereafter, when you have overcome, he will write on you his new Name.—F.

Ver. 6.—*The letter and the spirit.* The contrast between letter and spirit is in Scripture peculiar to the pages of St. Paul (see Rom. ii. 29; vii. 6). The subject specially occupied him, as the champion of Christian liberty and a profound thinker on the relations of the Old and New Testaments.

I. THE CONTRASTED TERMS—LETTER AND SPIRIT. A more frequent opposition is between flesh and spirit (see John iii. 6; vi. 63; Rom. viii. 1—13; Gal. v. 16—25). The distinction is obvious between a fleshly and a spiritual disposition, and the alternative is shown to be one of life or death. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." But, by letter and spirit must be intended things of which it is possible for men to be ministers. St. Paul was a minister, not of the letter, but of the spirit; and the context shows that by letter he meant the old covenant, and by spirit the new. Not that there was nothing but letter in the one and nothing but spirit in the other. The contrast is between predominant characteristics; and characteristically, though not exclusively, the old covenant was letter and the new covenant was spirit. Therefore the latter excelled in glory. The old economy, or testament, is not spoken of with disrespect. It was adapted in the wisdom of God to the training of the Hebrew people as his chosen nation. It was not a mere dead writing, but had a meaning in it which was Divine. The very term "letter" implies some import or significance. And there was enough in the Old Testament to educate the minds of men in religious ideas, and bring home sacred obligations and hopes to their hearts. But it is called "the letter" because that which bulked largely in it was a code of law and a handwriting of ordinances. In its prescription of law it was to sinful men a ministration of death; and in its ritual of worship it was inferior to that holy liberty which we now enjoy in everywhere worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. The old covenant had shadows, the new has substance; the old had rudiments and elements, the new has perfection; the old had patterns of heavenly things, the new has heavenly things themselves; the old was a dispensation of dimness as of light seen through a veil, the new is one of unveiled faces and God's marvellous light. The new economy, or testament, while characteristically one of "spirit," is not altogether without letter. As every soul must have a body, and every essence a form, in order to be known among men, so has the spirit of the New Testament embodiment and exact expression. But here lies the contrast. Pre-Christian religion contained a small proportion of spirit and life in a large bulk of letter and ordinance. Christianity has a large proportion of spirit and life in a bulk of law and form as small and light as possible. The teachings of Christianity are facts and principles, not propositions and restrictions; its institutions are simple outlines, not precise ceremonies; and its laws are moral sentiments, not minute mechanical directions.

II. THE EFFECTS WHICH FLESH AND SPIRIT SEVERALLY PRODUCE. The letter, void of spirit, kills. The spirit, in whatever form or letter conveyed, gives life. We must still be on our guard against making that absolute which is intended only as a strong comparative. We must not say or suppose that under the Mosaic economy there was nothing but condemnation, bondage, and death. Beneath and within the letter which had such prominence, there was spirit; and men who knew how to penetrate the letter got the spirit, and with it got life. But the more that men made of mere traditional letter and form, the less they knew of the spirit of liberty and the power of godliness,

Most apparent was the killing power of the letter in that generation of Hebrews to which Paul himself belonged. They gloried in circumcision, but had it in the flesh only, and not in the heart. They sought life by the law of works, and fell under its condemnation. The more devoted they were to religious peculiarities and ceremonial restrictions, the more did a shadow of death cover them. They clung to the types and would not recognize the Antitype. They trusted to a covenant which had exhausted its use and was passing away. So this letter-worship destroyed spiritual life. Israel after the flesh fell under a ministration of death. On the other hand, in that new dispensation, of which St. Paul was such an earnest minister, and in which spirit predominates, there is abundance of the grace of life. True that, under this dispensation also, a formalist or one who is self-righteous may turn the life into death. Externalism and traditionalism are as powerless as ever to make alive. But, when the letter which in some manner is indispensable to mortal worshippers is kept in due subordination, the spirit gives life, and the ministration of righteousness is exceeding glorious. And the Lord is that Spirit. The Lord is the Life-giver and the Life.

III. LIGHT CAST BY THIS STATEMENT ON SUNDRY QUESTIONS. 1. On the interpretation and use of certain precepts and usages mentioned in Scripture. Reverence for antiquity is good, is in some degree essential to historical Christianity; but there is a pedantry about the forms of things which is unintelligent and unspiritual. To correct this we must always distinguish between letter and spirit, and bear in mind that, in the long course of time and in altered conditions of society, there not only may be but must be circumstantial changes of form and expression in order to the conservation of spirit and truth. Apply this to (1) the precept of turning the cheek to the smiter; (2) that of washing one another's feet; (3) the forbiddal of lawsuits between Christians; (4) the salutation with a holy kiss. 2. On the corruptions of Christianity. Some harm, no doubt, has been done by the endeavour to abstract the spirit of the gospel too much from its letter, and to dispense altogether with definite forms of doctrine and service. But a greater danger has shown itself on the opposite side. The most formidable corruptions of Christianity have resulted from magnifying letter over spirit, and giving to our religion an imposing exterior while its heart fainted and all but perished. The great bane of the Church has been in the direction of exaggerated ceremonial and tyrannical insistence on outward usage and form. 3. On the propagation of the gospel. The old dispensation was not intended for world-wide diffusion; but the new has a gospel for all nations, and is meant to live in every climate and among all the tribes and races of mankind. But of its ever reaching its consummation we should despair if it were a religion of unbending, unelastic literalism, and committed itself to the maintenance of dry and rigid forms. We take courage when we remember that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;" that the emphasis in Christianity lies on its active, spiritual, penetrating force; and that the Lord himself "is that Spirit." We do not set Christian form against heathen form, but preach Christ Jesus the Lord. The letter and the ritual will appear quickly enough, and may be expected to vary in a Church of all nations. What we should be most concerned about is the world-wide proclamation of him in whom all nations of the earth are to be blessed.—F.

Ver. 18.—*The Christian transfiguration.* When Moses, the minister of the Law, communed with God, his countenance became irradiated, and, on his return to the people of Israel in the camp, he was obliged to put a veil over his face. But that radiance did not last long. It faded from the prophet's countenance; and this is taken to illustrate the passing away of the glory of all that legal ministration. The Jews who rejected that gospel which St. Paul preached were still occupied with the Law. Moses stood before them still; and, when Moses was read, they failed to see that the lustre had faded from his face. Yet it was so. Not that the Law was at fault or obscure; not that Moses misled or clouded their minds. The veil was no more on his face, but on their hearts; and so they persisted, and the bulk of that nation still persist, in trusting to Moses and rejecting the more glorious ministration by Jesus Christ. The anti-Christian Jews are dimly reading the words of their Lawgiver instead of rejoicing in the light of the Lord. But "we all," whether Jews or Gentiles in the flesh, who have believed the gospel, enjoy a ministration of righteousness and glory.

I. THE GLORY OF THE LORD. Moses said to Jehovah, "I beseech thee, show me thy
II. CORINTHIANS.

glory." And he had some vision of the Almighty, and heard Jehovah God proclaim his Name as he passed by; but the God of Israel said, "Thou canst not see my face." Now this, which was impossible under the old covenant, and which was thought of by the faithful as the blessing of a future state (Ps. xvii. 15), is not only possible but actual under the new covenant. Christ is the Image of the invisible God. We see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He who of old surrounded himself with clouds or dwelt "in the thick darkness" now reveals himself brightly in his Beloved. The New Testament is, more fully than the Old, a revelation. God is revealed in a manner surpassing all the partial disclosures among the Jews, and correcting all the vain imaginations among the heathen. The holy Child was Immanuel, God with us. The Man who lived so purely, spoke so wisely, and suffered so patiently, revealed the unseen God; and God was glorified in him. So the apostle regarded Christianity as the breaking forth of new light on the human race, and that the very radiance of God in Jesus Christ his Son. So let us regard it. Truly the light is good—the inner light of the New Testament—the glory of the Lord.

II. CONTEMPLATION OF THAT GLORY. We behold it as one looks upon a mirror on which an object out of his reach is reflected. Our Lord has ascended to the Father, and we do not see him face to face in the present life, but we look on the Divine testimony, and, as we look, we gain "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." In order to this, two things are necessary. 1. We must have our faces unveiled. The veil is prejudice or unbelief. The ignorance of God, long spread over the earth, is described by a prophet as "the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." The removal of that covering or veil results in the turning of nations to the Lord. Alas! readers of the New Testament may be as blind to its true meaning and beauty as any Jews were in reading the Law. A vague light, perhaps, comes through the veil, but there is no clear discernment of that glory of the Lord which gives to the New Testament its surpassing power and value. St. Paul knew this well, and felt himself unable to make all men see what he saw. From some who heard him his gospel was hid. It was and is the preacher's duty to manifest and proclaim the truth; but blinded minds and veiled hearts could, and still can, defeat the testimony. St. Paul himself had once been very blind. When light shone in the face of the martyr Stephen as he stood before the council, "as it had been the face of an angel," Saul of Tarsus was only bewildered and irritated, and he consented to Stephen's death. Soon after, on his way to Damascus, a strong light from heaven shone round about him, and the voice of the Lord reached his ear. Some holy light through the veil fell on his countenance, but the veil was not yet removed, and the Pharisee was not yet a Christian. Illumination came to him when, at the word of the disciple Ananias, the eyes of his body, which had been blinded by the sudden effulgence on the way, were opened, and at the same time the eyes of the inner man were freed from the scales of unbelief, and God shone into his heart. 2. We must form a habit of beholding that glory. We do not presume to say what amount of blessing may be gained through even a rapid or occasional glance cast on the Lord Jesus; but what the apostle intends is an habitual and daily contemplation of that "brightness of the Father's glory." No study of books, acquaintance with doctrines, or observance of rites can do for us what is done by the habit of "looking to Jesus."

III. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF SUCH CONTEMPLATION. "Changed into the same image." A moral metamorphosis is wrought, not magically as by a spell or charm, but in the manner proper to a moral nature, by the moulding influence of a new habit of thought and affection. This proceeds on the well-known principle that, whatever we look upon with frequency and with congenial feeling, stamps itself on our minds and characters. He who looks upon evil becomes evil. He who occupies himself with trifles grows trivial. He who associates with the wise grows wise. He who admires the good himself becomes good. So likewise he who beholds the pure and gracious image of God in the face of Jesus Christ is changed insensibly into that image, learns to think the thoughts of God and to exhibit the mind of Christ. Two important features of this great change are indicated in the text. 1. It is a progressive one. "From glory to glory." No doubt, if we could abide continually under the radiance of Christ, his glory would transform us more rapidly and completely than is the experience of average Christians. And we must not dwell on the idea of gradualness so as to excuse a low level of Christian

attainment. But the truth lies here, that, as we receive out of Christ's fulness grace for grace, so are we transformed into his likeness from glory to glory, the light of the Lord gaining upon us and dispelling all the darkness until we are "light in the Lord."

2. While this change follows a law of moral influence, it is produced by the active operation of a Divine power—"as by the Lord the Spirit." The reference is to the Lord Jesus as "a quickening Spirit," who is here brought into contrast with Moses, the minister of the killing "letter." At the same time, we know from other Scriptures that the Lord pervades his Church on earth and renews men in his own image by the gracious presence and work of the Holy Ghost. Without this doctrine of spiritual operation, both direct and indirect, we fail to apprehend the transforming power of a pure Christianity. Note in conclusion: 1. *The connection between faith and character.* Some raise a cry that faith leads to mysticism and genders dispute, while nothing is wanted, nothing is to be valued, but an exemplary character and a good life. But what if such character and life are best attained by the habit of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? It might as well be said that it is of little consequence whether a man can see or is blind, so long as he walks and works well. He cannot walk or work well unless he can see. No more can one walk or act like Christ unless he looks to him in faith. Others raise a different cry. They are all for faith, and yet show no conformity to Christ. All such boasting is vain. The effect of beholding the glory of the Lord is to be changed into the same image. If there is no such change the faith is only in imagination, not in heart.

2. *The far reach of the principle of assimilation to what we habitually and willingly behold.* In this way are Christians conformed to Christ in this present time. But the principle carries much further. It is thus that the saints will be glorified with Christ at his appearing. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 3. *The evil case of those who see in Christ "no beauty that he should be desired."* They miss both the way of peace and the way of holiness. Alas! when the gospel is set before them, the veil lies upon their hearts. They can see something to be admired in the wisdom of sages and the courage of heroes, and yet see nothing in the Son of God. They may look on nature with admiring eye, and see "the glory in the grass and splendour in the flower;" but Jesus Christ is to them "as a root out of a dry ground." Lord, remove the veil! Shine into these hearts with power!—F.

Vers. 1—3.—*The best commendation.* It was an early custom in the Christian Church for teachers to carry with them "letters of commendation" when they passed from town to town. Of this custom we have an indication in Acts xviii. 27, "When Apollos was disposed to pass into Achaia [Corinth], the brethren [of Ephesus] wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him." And the thirteenth canon of the Council of Chalcedon ordained that "clergymen coming to a city where they were unknown, should not be allowed to officiate without letters commendatory from their own bishop." It seems to have been made a charge against the apostle that he never presented any credentials, but assumed an authority for which he had no warrant. The apostle is here replying to such a charge, and his plea is that, having so manifestly received the greater commendation of God's witness with his work, he in no sense can need man's good word. His converts were the best possible commendation. His letters were those written by God as truth on human hearts. From the Christian standpoint the only satisfactory proof of call to ministry is the Divine seal set on the work of the ministry. It was the plea of St. Peter, when accounting for his admitting the Gentiles into the privileges of the Christian Church, that the "Holy Ghost had fallen upon them, even as upon us at the beginning." And that was felt to be an all-sufficient attestation of the work which St. Peter had done. In the same way St. Paul pleads that spiritual results had followed his ministry among the Corinthians. God had set his seal upon it, and that was his wholly satisfactory commendation, and the basis of any authority he claimed. Speaking in a figure he says, "The Corinthians are an *epistle*." He regards Christ as the Author, and himself as the amanuensis. The characters of this epistle were preserved by no visible or perishable medium, but by the invisible operation of the Spirit. We consider—

I. THE USEFULNESS OF HUMAN COMMENDATIONS. Such are found to be necessary in the intercourse of nations. The ambassador is duly furnished with his credentials; and the representative of the business firm carries with him his authority to act in the

name of the firm. So it is found of practical value that clergymen and ministers going to other districts or countries should have such attestation as will win for them the confidence of those to whom they may happen to minister. Several questions of interest arise in connection with this subject. 1. From what central bodies, or from what individuals, should such letters of commendation come? 2. What should they properly concern? And can they ever wisely go beyond the attestation of personal character and ministerial efficiency? Men must be judged by their works rather than by the opinion which others may have formed concerning them. Still, in every age, Churches have needed to be guarded against plausible but unworthy men, who force themselves into positions of influence unawares. And this has been the special trouble of all smaller Churches, and those existing apart from Christian organizations. Every ordinary man should depend for his acceptance upon his letters of recommendation.

II. THE LIMITATION OF THE DEMAND FOR SUCH LETTERS. Sometimes they are merely vexations. The demand for them is a mere piece of officialism. Some men so stand before the world that no letters about them can be necessary. And the letters may only concern (1) character, (2) efficiency. They should not deal with disputable opinions. A full and fair estimate of character is sufficient to give confidence that a man's work will be honest and faithful. Commendations of so-called "orthodoxy" or "heterodoxy" can never be anything but mischievous. We may commend the *man*; we had better take care not to commend his opinions. Of these let those to whom he ministers be the judges.

III. GOD'S WAYS OF MAKING SUCH LETTERS WHOLLY UNNECESSARY. From the case of St. Paul we learn that God may so manifestly show his acceptance of a man and a man's work that no other credential can possibly be necessary. A man's labours and successes may sufficiently declare that he is a man of God, a messenger of God. Illustrate by such cases as Luther, Whitefield, Brainerd, etc. We must well apprehend that, because a thing is *unusual*, it is not therefore *untrue*. And in every age men have been raised up whose strongly marked individuality leads them to take fresh lines of thought and of work. Men may hesitate to give such men their credentials; it is enough if God manifestly accepts them.—R. T.

Vers. 4—6.—*The power, and the agency it uses.* The apostle here dwells upon the confidence he has in the Corinthian Church as the all-sufficient commendation of his ministry and apostleship. But he will take no honour to himself over his successes at Corinth. He had but been the agent, and the power and sufficiency were altogether of God. St. Paul was always before *men* firm, confident, bold; but always before *God* humble and dependent. The expression, "through Christ to God-ward," probably means "that our eyes are directed towards God, the Source of our confidence, and that it is through Jesus Christ alone that we possess the right thus to lean on him." Illustrate, from Old Testament Scriptures, the Jewish habit of mind which referred all events to God's direct working, confounding the cause with the agency. For instance, God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart, and to send a lying spirit among the prophets. Such direct reference of all things to God is characteristic of the imaginative, uncultured, superstitious ages; but, in intelligent form, it is found in Christianity. There is no confusion of power and agent, but behind agency the "power" is fully and humbly recognized. This we further unfold, noting the following points:—

I. IN CHRISTIANITY THE MAN STILL WORKS. God proposes to save the world by man. He does not use miracle, but deals with men as moral beings, subject to various moral influences arising from their relations one to another. Every man is a force upon his fellow-man. Some, by reason of particular positions and endowments, exert great influence on other men. It is at once true that man must be saved by man, and that man cannot be saved by man. The paradox is not a difficult one to explain from the Christian point of view. Christianity asks, therefore, from every man three things. 1. The consecration of his talents and trusts. 2. The sanctifying of his relationships. 3. And the faithful use of his opportunities. True of man in his ordinary life-spheres, this is more especially true of man as occupied in the Christian ministry.

II. IN CHRISTIANITY THE MAN IS ONLY AGENT. He has no sort of independent authority. He is not fittingly likened to the plenipotentiary, who has a matter wholly committed to his judgment and decision. The Christian minister or worker is *never*

free of his close and intimate relations with God. His "sufficiency" is never of himself. 1. He works *for* another, and has no self-seeking ends to gain. 2. He works at the *will* of another, holding himself ever in attitudes of dependent and submissive obedience, saying continually, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" 3. He works in the *strength* of another, leaning upon the "everlasting arms." Taking these as characteristic features of the Christian ministry, it will be readily shown in what a marked way they contrast with the spirit of the self-depending and self-seeking worldly man.

III. IN CHRISTIANITY THE MAN IS ACTUALLY ENDUED WITH DIVINE POWER. "Our sufficiency is of God." It is this truth that needs such distinct assertion for the sake of the Christian worker himself, as well as for the sake of those to whom his work is a witness. The Christian is a man quickened with a new life; it is that "new life" which finds expression in his working. The Christian is a man sealed by the Holy Ghost, who dwells in him, and that Holy Ghost is his secret strength and inspiration. Two figures may be contrasted. The water flowing in pipes, and the sap flowing in the branch. The latter is the only figure that efficiently represents the relation of power and agency in the Christian worker, and it is the figure used by our Lord himself. The union and relation are such that, while the full manhood is retained, and even nourished into vigour, the vitality, the real force behind the manhood, and the direction of all details of action, are God's. The Christian conceives of himself as not even able to *think* anything as of himself, much less to do anything. He is "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The letter and the spirit.* It does not appear that St. Paul had in mind the different senses in which Scripture can now be read. Such distinctions as the literal, the allegorical, and the mystical belong to modern times. The apostle is contrasting the Old Testament with the New. The older revelation consisted of exact directions for the guidance of life and conduct. The new revelation consists of principles and examples by the help and application of which a man may guide his own conduct. But, while this distinction is carefully noted, it should be observed that, in the older revelation, there was both letter and spirit, and devout souls recognized and lived in the light of the inner principles, the spiritual truth which precise injunctions did but illustrate. F. W. Robertson says, "It was the business of Moses to teach maxims, and not principles; rules for ceremonial, and not a spirit of life. And these things—rules, ceremonials, maxims, law—are what the apostle calls here the *letter*. Thus, for instance, truth is a principle springing out of the inward life; but Moses only gave the rule: 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself.' It is impossible not to see how plainly inadequate this rule is to all that truth requires; for he who scarcely avoided perjury may have kept nevertheless to the letter of the Law! Again, love is a principle; but Moses said simply, 'Thou shalt not kill, nor steal, nor injure.' Again, meekness and subduedness before God,—these are of the Spirit; but Moses merely commanded fasts. It was in consequence of the superiority of the teaching of principles over a mere teaching of maxims that the ministry of the letter was considered as nothing." "The difference between the old covenant and the new was that the former *prescribed*, the latter *inspired*; the former gave written precepts, the latter the power to fulfil them; the former laid down the rules, the latter brought man's heart into the condition in which such rules became a part of his nature." In an educational point of view the letter must come first, the child must have precise direction of his conduct, and only through this will he be helped to grasp principles, and apply them himself to his conduct and duties. So that we must not undervalue the letter, but give it a proper place as a stepping-stone to higher and better things. The distinction between the letter and the spirit may be illustrated in a variety of spheres.

I. IN THE EARLY MOSAIC RECORDS. The imaginative and the historical records of the first ages. Perplexities and difficulties abound when we force literal meanings. The first principles of morals and religion come to view when we read the spirit of them.

II. IN THE JUDAIC RELIGIOUS SYSTEM. That does seem to be a round of formal injunctions, covering all the various family, social, and religious relations of the people, and yet our Lord taught us, in his sermon on the mount, to find spiritual principles within it. He showed that the spirit of hate underlay the sin of murder, and the spirit of purity assured the maintenance of right marriage relations.

III. IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHETS. It was almost the one essential thing in their work that they were to set free the spirit of the older revelation, which was in danger of being overcrushed by the letter of commandment and ceremonial rule. It may even be shown that, in the prophets, there was a tendency to undervalue the *letter*, in the earnestness of their effort to get a right value set on the *spirit* of obedience.

IV. IN THE LIFE AND GOSPEL OF THE LORD JESUS. Illustrate by our Lord's parables, and by his teaching as in John vi. 63.

V. IN THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY. Especially illustrated in St. Paul's teachings respecting the relation of the Judaic and Christian systems, and equally illustrated in St. John's revelation of the inner and mystical meanings of the Christian truth and requirements. Conclude by showing how this distinction is still applicable to modern religious teaching. 1. The "letter" is needed. In some stages of religious experience and attainment precise directions are the best helps. 2. The mere "letter" may still be exaggerated, so as to become a mischievous bondage. 3. The true teacher uses the formal "letter" only to carry the "spirit." But the higher teaching of the very spirit of Christianity demands from the teacher a very marked and cultured spirituality, or spiritual insight.—R. T.

Vers. 7—11.—*The old covenant and the new.* In some sense it may be said that teachings respecting the relations between the older revelation in Judaism and the newer revelation in Christianity were special to the Apostle Paul. On this point he had direct revelations from Christ, and the liberal form which his teachings took exposed him to the peril of being misunderstood and misrepresented, and brought persecutions around him. No man could be found more truly loyal to the older revelation than the apostle of the Gentiles, but while he honoured it he saw clearly that it had its day and its mission. That day had now passed; that mission had been fulfilled. The older covenant had made open and plain the way for the new, and it was loyalty to the old for Paul to accept fully the new, in which it found its fulfilment, its completion, its glory; for the ministration of Jesus and the Spirit is but Judaism glorified, the gospel of the letter passed into the gospel of the spirit. Three contrasts are here dwelt upon. The old covenant and the new are conceived as—

I. A MINISTRATION OF DEATH AND A MINISTRATION OF LIFE. St. Paul had said (ver. 6) that the "letter killeth." He meant that it crushed hope and effort, since no man could reach a perfect obedience. The old covenant condemned all who failed even in the least thing. It provided no *life*, no strength in which obedience could become possible. On the other hand, the new covenant provided a new life for the will and a new grace unto obedience. The old crushed down heart and hope, and made a man cry out, "I cannot." The new cheered him, lifted him up, and made him say, "I can, through him who strengtheneth me."

II. A MINISTRATION OF CONDEMNATION AND A MINISTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The old covenant said, "Thou shalt not," and it denounced its penalties on the offenders. The new covenant says, "Thou shalt," holds before us the model life of obedience lived by the Lord Jesus, and provides grace unto changing us into his image.

III. A MINISTRATION THAT WAS PASSING AND A MINISTRATION THAT WAS PERMANENT. (Ver. 11.) The older covenant was of necessity transitory. It had but a temporary and preparatory mission. The new is abiding, for there can be nothing higher than or beyond that spiritual righteousness which is its sublime aim to accomplish.—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*The liberty of the Spirit.* "The apostle assumes, almost as an axiom of the spiritual life, that the presence of the Spirit gives freedom, as contrasted with the bondage of the letter—freedom from slavish fear, freedom from the guilt and burden of sin, freedom from the tyranny of the Law." Distinguish carefully between liberty and licence. Whether a man can have and use liberty depends entirely upon what a man *is*. Some men are better in bonds; they must be in bonds; their fancied liberty is but a delusion. The point urged by the apostle is that the man who is renewed in Christ Jesus can be safely trusted with his full liberty, because he is established in principles, and upheld by a power which guarantees that he will put his liberty into reasonable and righteous limitations. We observe some of the reasons why "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

I. BECAUSE THERE IS LIFE. A new life, a Divine life. Life can always be allowed its free and natural expression. It is disease that must be set in limitations and bondages. The forces and expressions of *life* are evenly and harmoniously balanced; and order is preserved when life is permitted to be free. The expressions of the Christian life, the life of the Spirit, can only be true and beautiful and good.

II. BECAUSE THERE IS FREEDOM FROM BONDS. That is, from the bonds of formal rules. The Spirit establishes *principles*, and so frees us from *rules*. God's laws are written by the Spirit in our minds and on our hearts. Illustrate by the passing away of schoolboy commands and regulations when manhood has come and principles are established.

III. BECAUSE THERE IS KNOWLEDGE OF THE RIGHT. This the indwelling Spirit guarantees, because he takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. He is our inward Monitor, our Teacher as well as our Comforter. Illustrate by the perplexity of life if we must control it by fashion and custom, deciding what we may eat and what we may not eat; what we may enjoy and what we may not enjoy; what is consistent and what is inconsistent. The Spirit shows the right; it is liberty to act on its great principle that we must everywhere be (1) true to God, and (2) helpful to our brethren.

IV. BECAUSE THERE IS DESIRE FOR THE RIGHT. He who is without the Spirit may "know the better but follow the worse." That is saying he is in bondages of self-will and evil which he cannot break. The indwelling Spirit controls the will and affections so that we desire what is right, and therefore are free to follow the *right* of which we may know.

V. BECAUSE THERE IS QUICK SENSITIVENESS TO THE WRONG. So that it is detected and its slavery resisted. The liberty of the Spirit is such that it cannot be taken at unawares. From these considerations plead for the importance of keeping our minds and hearts ever open to the Spirit's love and lead, as the secret of maintaining the only liberty that is worth calling such. For the liberty that is assured to man by the gospel, see John viii. 32; Rom. vi. 18, 22; viii. 2; Jas. i. 25; ii. 12; 1 Pet. ii. 16.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*The vision of God in Christianity.* This passage contains evident reference to an incident occurring in the life of Moses. He had tarried on the mount for forty days, in some mysterious manner within the immediate radiance of the Divine glory, holding some very near, yet very secret, fellowship with God. We might expect to find an influence from such converse resting on Moses' spirit ever after, and we could not wonder if some traces of it were left upon his very face. Such was the case. Unknown to himself, the skin of his face shone, and when the people of Israel saw it they were afraid to come near him. Partly to shadow the glory from them, and partly, as St. Paul tells us in this chapter, that they might not see the glory fade and die away, he covered himself with a veil. This glory on the face of Moses had two great lessons in it for the Jews and for us. 1. That the vision of God has a transforming power on human souls. 2. And that this glory of Moses was a symbol of the passing and preparatory character of the Old Testament dispensation. St. Paul's argumentative use of his reference to Moses may be thus traced. He is exalting his office as a minister of the new covenant. He argues that if a glory was shed upon the ministration of the Law, a Law written in letters and graven upon stones, much greater must be the glory which rests upon the ministration of the Spirit, which ministration is permanent. Being the minister of this more glorious covenant, St. Paul says he may speak and act with boldness, without disguise. He need not spread a veil over his face, as Moses did, in order that the sons of Israel might not see the end of that fading brightness. And this reminds him that, when he wrote, the minds of Israel were still blinded, a veil was on their hearts, so that they imagine the glory lies still on Moses and his system; they cannot see that the older covenant has done its work, that the Law has given place to love. When their hearts turn to the Lord Jesus, the veil is rent away; they have the vision of the Lord the Spirit; their bondage gives place to freedom. "We all, while with face unveiled we behold in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are ourselves transformed continually into the same likeness; and the glory which shines upon us is reflected by us, even as it proceeds from the Lord the Spirit." Two questions invite

attention. 1. How is the vision of God granted to us? 2. What influence does the vision of God exert?

I. HOW IS THE VISION OF GOD GRANTED TO US? Man can never find rest for head or heart save in God. The deepest longing of every human soul is the vision of God. Idolatry is the expression of the desire to find and see God. Humanity in all ages is knit together as one man in this cry for God. Illustrate by references to Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Job, Isaiah, Stephen, and the Apostle John, who says, "We know that, when he doth appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." These, indeed, are all cases of *good* men, but the universal efforts to make a religion show that all men are alike in this, they would behold the glory of God. The vision is given us: 1. By the inner ministration of the Spirit. This is the meaning of the "open face, unveiled." St. Paul had just said, "We use great plainness of speech;" that is, in our ministry we can speak with freedom and boldness, without any disguise or veil, because we are ministers in the *power of the Spirit*. So, he would say, we all need no veil, we have openness, to behold the glory of the Lord in the leadings of the Spirit; for "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is [this] liberty;" veils are removed, hindrances are taken away, we can "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord." 2. By the outward mirror of the Christ. "Beholding as in a glass." God's actual glory can be seen by no created eye; it must be reflected—it can only be seen as mirrored. We cannot look on the sun; we can see its image in a pool, we can find its reflected glory in the tinted flowers, and in the glorified clouds of the sunset. So our pained, strained, spiritual eyes rest delightfully upon the "Man Christ Jesus," who is the "Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of the Father's person." The infinite excellences of the Divine character are exhibited in Christ in a form comprehensible by men. What the virtues and moral excellences of God are we could never know, but Christ shows them to us as if they were the graces and virtues of a man. Illustrate thus God's holiness, justice, mercy, and love.

II. WHAT INFLUENCES DOES THIS VISION OF GOD EXERT? "Changed into the same image." Moses could not see God and be the same man that he was. It changed his soul somewhat into the Divine likeness, even as his face lost its natural expression and shone with the glory. The sight of God is ever a transforming sight. It is seen to be so in the case of the transfiguration. The disciples saw our Lord's very raiment white and glistening, and glory all overspreading his frame. When a man sees God there is an inner change, of which that is the symbol. Illustrate by the way in which a close and trustful friendship makes the friends grow alike. As the Christian man maintains his daily relations with Christ the mirrored God, as he "dwells in the secret place of the Most High," he finds a transforming and transfiguring work is being carried on: the mind of God is coming to be his mind; the work of God is coming to be his work; the very life of God is coming to be his life. And this further result comes. They who are changing into the likeness of God are gradually reflecting the glory of God out upon men. They are becoming themselves, in turn, mirrors of God, glasses in which men may behold the glory of the Lord. We hardly know which is the more gracious and surprising—the change that is wrought in us by the constant communion of God and our souls, or the infinite condescension which permits us, in our earthly lives, to be light-bearers for God, mirrors to reflect the glory and attraction of his saving grace, so that men may be won to him. Conclude by showing (1) that the heart must be a veiled heart which resists the ministration of the Spirit; (2) that from such a veiled heart must ever be hidden the glory of the redeeming God.—B. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

The glory of the gospel ministry (vers. 1—6), which sustains the hearts of Christ's ministers among all weaknesses and trials (vers. 7—15), especially by the faith in things unseen (vers. 16—18).

Ver. 1.—Therefore. Because of the freedom and open vision of the gospel. As we have received mercy. Gratitude for a mercy so undeserved (1 Tim. i. 13) makes us fearless and vigorous in a ministry so glorious (Acts xx. 23, 24). We faint not. The word implies the maintenance of a holy courage (1 Cor. xvi. 13) and perseverance (2 Thess.

iii. 13). It occurs again in ver. 16, and in Luke xviii. 1; Gal. vi. 9; Eph. iii. 13.

Ver. 2.—But have renounced; rather, *but we renounced*. We renounced them once and for ever at our baptism. The hidden things of dishonesty; literally, *of shame*; meaning, of course, of all that causes shame. Disgraceful as may be calumnies of my Jewish opponents, I have said farewell for ever to everything for which a good man would blush. "Honest" was originally like the Greek word *καλός*, a general expression for moral excellence, as in Pope's line—

"An honest man's the noblest work of God."

Fletcher's—

"Man is his own star, and the soul that can
Be honest is the only perfect man."

In craftiness. The word implies all subtle, cunning, underhand dealing (ch. xi. 3), and it is clear from ch. xii. 16 that St. Paul had been charged with such conduct. The word is both used and illustrated in Luke xx. 23. Handling the word of God deceitfully. He has already repudiated this charge by implication in ch. ii. 17, and he was always anxious to maintain an attitude of transparent sincerity (ch. i. 12) by uttering the truth and the whole truth (ch. ii. 17; Acts xx. 27), and not adulterating it. He had to meet such insinuations even in his first extant letter (1 Thess. ii. 3). By manifestation of the truth. The constant recurrence to this thought shows the apostle's anxiety to remove the suspicion, created by the attacks of his opponents, that he had an *esoteric* teaching for some (ch. i. 13), and kept some of his doctrines in the background. "The truth" cannot be preached by the aid of lies. The prominence of the word "manifest" in this Epistle is remarkable. St. Paul seems to be haunted by it (ch. ii. 16; iii. 3; iv. 10; v. 10, 11; vii. 12; xi. 6). Commending ourselves. This is the only form of self-commendation or of "commendatory letter" for which I care. There is evidently a reference to the same verb used in ch. iii. 1. Before God (see ch. ii. 17; vii. 12; Gal. i. 20). These solemn appeals are meant to show that it would be morally impossible for him to act as he was charged with acting. If he can assert his own integrity he will do so only as consciously in the presence of God.

Ver. 3.—But if our gospel be hid. This is added to avoid the semblance of a contradiction. He has spoken of "*manifestation of the truth*," and yet has spoken of all Jews as unable to see it because they will not remove from their hearts the veil which hides it from them. How can "a veiled gospel" be a "manifested truth"? The answer is that the gospel is bright, but the

eyes that should gaze on it are wilfully closed. Similarly in ch. ii. 16, he has compared the gospel to a fragrance of life, yet to the doomed captives—"to the perishing;"—it comes "like a waft from the charnel-house." A better rendering would be, *But even if our gospel* (1 Cor. xv. 1; Rom. ii. 16) *is a veiled one, it is veiled only among the perishing* (comp. 1 Cor. i. 18). *Be hid*; rather, *has been veiled*. To them that are lost; rather, *to the perishing* (see note on ch. ii. 15).

Ver. 4.—The god of this world; rather, *the god of this age*. It is, as Bengel says, "a great and horrible description of the devil." He is not, however, here called a god of the kosmos, but only of the *olam hazzeh*, the present dispensation of things as it exists among those who refuse to enter that kingdom in which the power of Satan is brought to nought. The melancholy attempt to get rid of Manichean arguments by rendering the verse "in whom God blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers of this world" is set aside by the fact that the terrible description of Satan as "another god" (*El acher*) was common among the rabbis. They knew that his power was indeed a derivative power, but still that it was permitted to be great (Eph. ii. 2; vi. 12). In John xii. 31 (xiv. 30) our Lord speaks of him as "the ruler of the kosmos." Hath blinded; rather, *blinded*. The verb here has no other meaning than "to blind," and is quite different from the verb "to harden," rendered by "to blind" in ch. iii. 14 with the same substantive. They are blind from lack of faith, and so being "unbelieving" they are "perishing" (Eph. v. 6), seeing that they "walk in darkness" (John viii. 12) and are in Satan's power (Acts xxvi. 18). "Blindness of heart," says St. Augustine, "is both a sin and a punishment of sin and a cause of sin." The light of the glorious gospel of Christ; rather, *the illumination of the gospel of the glory of the Christ*. The word *photismos* in later ecclesiastical Greek was used for "baptism." Who is the image of God (ch. iii. 18; Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3). Should shine unto them; or, as in the Revised Version, *should dawn upon them*. The other rendering, "that they should not see the illumination," gives to the verb *augāō*, a rarer sense, only found in poetry, and not known to the LXX.

Ver. 5.—For we preach not ourselves. There is no glory or illumination on our faces, and we have no personal ends to gain, nor are we "lords" over your faith. This is, perhaps, meant as an answer to some charge of egotism. The Lord; rather, *as Lord* (Phil. ii. 11; 1 Cor. xii. 3). Your servants; literally, *your slaves* (1 Cor. ix. 19). For

Jesus' sake. So Christ had himself desired (Matt. xx. 27).

Ver. 6.—Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness. The argument of the verse is that God, who created the material light (Gen. i. 3) and who is the Father of lights (Jas. i. 1) and sent his Son to be the Light of the world (John viii. 12), did not shine in our hearts for our sakes only, or that we might hide the light under a bushel for ourselves, but that we might transmit and reflect it. There is an implied comparison between the creation of light and the dawn of the gospel light, and each of these was meant for the good of all the world. The verse should be rendered, if we follow the best manuscripts, "Because it is God, who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shone in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God." In the face of Jesus Christ (see ch. ii. 10; iii. 7). Probably, however, there is a reference to the glory of God, not as reflected from the face of Christ, but as concentrated in and beaming from it (Heb. i. 2).

Ver. 7.—15.—*Glory of the ministry in the midst of its weakness and suffering.*

Ver. 7.—In earthen vessels. The glorious light which we have to show to the world is, like Gideon's torches, carried in earthen pitchers. The word *skēnos*, vessel, is used in Mark xi. 16, and "vessels of earthenware" in Rev. ii. 27. St. Paul, in Acts ix. 15, is called "a vessel of election," whence Dante calls him *lo vas d' elezione*. Man can never be more than an earthen vessel, being frail and humble, and the metaphor specially suits an apostle of Christ (see 1 Cor. ii. 3—5; 2 Tim. ii. 20). But when he takes the Word of life from the earthen pitcher and waves it in the air, it illuminates all on whom the light shines. No commentator seems to have seen the probable allusion to Gideon's pitchers. It is the "light," of which he has been speaking exclusively in the last verses, which constitutes the "treasure." Those who suppose that the "treasure" is gold or silver or something else of value, refer to Jer. xxxii. 14, and Herod., iii. 103; Pers., 'Sat,' ii. 10. The excellency; literally, *the excess or abundance*. Of God, and not of us; rather, *of God, and not from us*.

Ver. 8.—Troubled; *afflicted*, as in ch. i. 4. On every side; *in everything*. Distressed; rather, *driven to straits*. Perplexed, but not in despair. In the original is a beautiful paronomasia, which might, perhaps, be represented in English by "pressed, but not oppressed." Literally the words mean, *being at a loss, but not utterly at a loss*. In the special anguish of trial of which he spoke in ch. i. 8 (comp. ch. vii. 5), he was indeed for a time "utterly at a loss," reduced to

utter despair; but in the normal conditions which he here describes he always, as it were, saw some outlet out of his worst perplexities.

Ver. 9.—Not forsaken. St. Paul, like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, knew by blessed experience the truth of the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. xiii. 5, 6). Cast down. Flung to the ground, as in some lost battle; yet not doomed, not "perishing." "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Ps. xxxvii. 24).

Ver. 10.—The dying of the Lord Jesus; literally, *the putting to death* (Vulgate, *mortificatio*). This is even stronger than ch. i. 5. It is not only "the sufferings," but even "the dying," of Christ of which his true followers partake (Rom. viii. 36, "For thy sake are we killed all the day long"). St. Paul, who was "in deaths oft" (ch. xi. 23), was thus being made conformable unto Christ's death (Phil. iii. 10). Philo, too, compares life to "the daily carrying about of a corpse," and the Curé d'Ars used to speak of his body as "ce cadavre." That the life also of Jesus, etc. The thought is exactly the same as in 2 Tim. ii. 11, "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him."

Ver. 11.—For Jesus' sake. St. Paul, as Bengel says, constantly thus repeats the name of Jesus, as one who felt its sweetness. The verse contains a reassertion and amplification of what he has just said. In our mortal flesh. This is added almost by way of climax. The life of Jesus is manifested, not only "in our body," but even by way of triumph in its lowest and poorest element. God manifests life in our dying, and death in our living (Alford).

Ver. 12.—So then. In accordance with what he has just said. Death worketh in us, but life in you. The life of us apostles is a constant death (Rom. viii. 36); but of this daily dying you reap the benefits; our dying is your living; our afflictions become to you a source of consolation and joy (ch. i. 6; Phil. ii. 17).

Ver. 13.—We; rather, *But we*. The same spirit of faith. The spirit manifested by the psalmist in the quotation which follows. It is from Ps. cxvi. 10, a psalm which corresponded with St. Paul's mood because it was written in trouble sustained by faith. And this faith inspires him with the conviction that, after "the body of this death," and after this death in life, there should begin for him also the life in death. St. Paul says nothing as to the authorship of the psalm, which probably belongs to a period far later than that of David. The words are from the LXX., and seem fairly to represent the disputed sense of the original

Ver. 14.—Which raised up the Lord Jesus (see 1 Cor. vi. 14). Shall raise up us also. The thought is again expressed in Rom. viii. 11. As he is here alluding mainly to the resurrection from the dead, it is clear that he contemplated the *possibility* of dying before Christ's second coming (comp. 1 Thesa. iv. 15). By Jesus. The reading supported by nearly all the best manuscripts is "with Jesus" (S, B, C, D, E, F, G), which perhaps appeared unsuitable to the copyists. But Christians are "risen with Christ" here (Col. ii. 12; iii. 1); and in another sense also we rise *with* him, because the Church is "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 23). Shall present us with you. So St. Jude speaks of "God our Saviour" as able "to present us" before the presence of his glory (Jude 24, 25).

Ver. 15.—All things are for your sakes. St. Paul has already implied that his life is not his own (ch. i. 6; comp. 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23), and he recurs to the same thought in Col. i. 24, and repeats once again towards the close of his life: "I endure all things for the elect's sakes" (2 Tim. ii. 10). Might . . . redound. The verb *perisseuo* may mean either "I abound" or "I make to abound" as in ch. ix. 8 and Eph. i. 8. Here there is a similar thought to that expressed in ch. i. 11, and the best rendering is, *In order that the Divine favour, being multiplied through the greater number* (of those who share in it), *may make the thanksgiving* (which it excites) *abound to the honour of God.*

Vers. 16—18.—*The Christian minister is upheld by hope.*

Ver. 16.—Therefore. Knowing that our daily death is the pathway to eternal life (ver. 14). We faint not (see ver. 1). Though; rather, *even if*. Our outward man. Our life in its human and corporeal conditions. The inward man. Namely, our moral and spiritual being, that "new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. iii. 10). Is renewed; literally, *is being renewed*; i.e. by faith and hope. Day by day. The Greek phrase is not classical, but is a reminiscence of the Hebrew.

Ver. 17.—For our light affliction, which is but for a moment; literally, *for the immediate lightness of our affliction*. Worketh for us. Is bringing about for us, with all the immeasurable force of a natural and progressive law. A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; literally, *in excess unto excess*. For the phrase, "to excess"—characteristic, like other emotional expressions, of this group of Epistles—see ch. i. 8; Gal. i. 13. The word "eternal" is in antithesis to the "for a moment." The "weight" is suggested by the "lightness," and possibly also by the fact that in Hebrew the word for "glory" also means "weight." The general contrast is found also in Matt. v. 12; 1 Pet. v. 10; Heb. xii. 10; Rom. viii. 18. The frequent resemblances between this Epistle and that to the Romans are natural when we remember that they were written within a few months of each other.

Ver. 18.—While we look not at the things which are seen. The Greek suggests more of a reason, "Since we are not gazing at things visible" (see ch. v. 7). Things which are not seen. The negative is the *subjective* negative. It expresses not only the fact that now these things are not seen, but that it is their *nature* to be unseen by the bodily eyes. Temporal. That is, temporary, transitory, phantasmal, a passing world; for which reason we do not fix our gaze or our aim upon it. But the things which are not seen are eternal. The clause is important, as showing that eternity is not a mere extension of time, but a condition qualitatively different from time. The "things eternal" exist as much now as they will ever do. We are as much living in eternity now as we ever shall be. The only difference will be that we shall then see him who is now unseen, and realize the things which now are only visible to the eye of faith. This is one of the passages of St. Paul which finds a close parallel in Seneca ('Ep,' 59). "*Invisibilia non decipiunt*" was, as Bishop Wordsworth tells us, the inscription put at the end of his garden arcade by Dr. Young, the poet.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The character and work of a true minister of Christ.* "Therefore seeing we have this ministry," etc. These words present to us a true minister of Christ as he is in himself and in his labours, that is, his character and work.

I. HIS CHARACTER. It is here suggested that his character is marked by three things. 1. *Its strength*. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." Having in mercy such a gospel as this to preach, we are not disheartened. "We faint not;" on the contrary, we are courageous. The character of every minister of Christ should be marked by strength—strength of conviction, strength of principle. 2. *Its purity*. "But have renounced the hidden things"

of dishonesty," or rather, of "shame." Every element and form of sin is a thing of "shame," a thing which makes the conscience blush. Falsehood, in chastity, meanness, selfishness, dishonesty, are all things for shame and disgust. A true minister has renounced all these things, he is thoroughly cleansed of them. 3. *Its straightforwardness.* "Not walking in craftiness." No attribute of character is more common, at the same time more morally ignoble and anti-Christian, than artfulness or stratagem. Ministers of religion are frequently charged with this "craftiness," and the charge is, alas! too often true. The craft of priests is notorious. Now, a true minister is free from this; he is a man of frankness, candour, transparent honesty.

II. HIS WORK. How does he fulfil his mission? The answer is given here: 1. *Negatively.* "Not handling the Word of God deceitfully." It is thus handled when it is used to support a system, to advance a sect, to exhibit self, to gain a living and to win popularity. He is not a true minister who does this. 2. *Positively.* "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (1) He appeals to the conscience of humanity. "Every man's conscience." Elsewhere Paul calls conscience the "inner man;" it is in truth the man of the man, his moral self. It is thus he addresses himself, not merely to the passion, or to the imagination, or to the intellect, but to that which underlies and permeates every spiritual faculty of man. (2) He appeals to the conscience of humanity through the truth. "By manifestation of the truth." What is the "truth"? "The Word of God." And that word, not as literature, but as life, the life of Christ. He is "the Truth." It is "truth as it is in Jesus," not in creeds or Churches that he addresses to the conscience. (3) He appeals to the consciences of humanity, through the truth under the felt inspection of Almighty God. "In the sight of God." The man who preaches the truth under a consciousness of the Divine eye will be free from (a) fear, (b) affectation, and from (c) dulness.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The condition of unregenerated men.* "But if our gospel be hid," etc. These words give an appalling view of ungodly men.

I. They are BLIND TO THE GOSPEL. "If our gospel be hid [or, 'veiled']," Men have different organs of vision. There is the *bodily* eye: the gospel is not "hid" from that—they can see the volume that contains it, they can see the print, and perhaps read its chapters. There is the *intellectual* eye to discover its sense and discern its meaning. There is the *spiritual* eye, the conscience which discerns the moral significance of things; this is the eye which alone can see the gospel, its real essence. And this is the veiled eye, the eye of conscience is closed, so that the gospel is no more discerned than the bright heavens are observed by the man who is born blind.

II. They are PERISHING IN SIN. "It is hid to them that are lost," or veiled from them that are perishing. Soul-ruin is a *gradual* process. Souls are neither ruined nor saved at once. The wicked are "going into everlasting punishment;" they are not hurled there at once; step by step they proceed. With every sin their sensibility of conscience is perishing, their power of will is perishing, all the better tendencies of their nature are perishing. It matters not how strong in body, how prosperous in wealth, how elevated in society, they are perishing. Startlingly solemn this!

III. They are VICTIMIZED BY SATAN. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Observe: 1. Satan is not a principle, but a personality. 2. Satan has immense dominions. "The god of this world." Satan is a personality that has access to human souls. He enters men, acts on their springs of thought and fountains of feeling. 3. Satan is a personality whose action on the soul is essentially pernicious. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." He closes the moral eye of the soul, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them."

Ver. 5.—*Preaching.* "For we preach not ourselves," etc. Here is—

I. A SAD POSSIBILITY in preaching. What is that? To "preach ourselves." To preach ourselves is to propound our own notions, to exhibit our own talents, genius, and learning, to parade our own productions. It is to put self, not Christ, in the front. In these days the egotism of the pulpit has become all but intolerable.

II. A GLOIBIOUS THEME for preaching "Christ Jesus the Lord." 1. Preach him

as the Mediator between God and man. He whose grand mission it is to reconcile man to his Maker. 2. Preach him as the great Example for man's imitation. He who embodies the ideal of human perfection and blessedness.

III. THE RIGHT SERVICE in preaching. "Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." The true preacher is: 1. The servant of souls. 2. The servant of souls inspired by love for Christ. "Servants for Jesus' sake."

Ver. 6.—*True soul-light*. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." There are two lights in the soul. There is the *light of nature*. This light consists of those moral intuitions which Heaven implanted within us at first. These intuitions are good enough for angels, did for Adam before he fell; but now, through sin, they are so blunt and dim that the soul is in moral darkness: "The light that is in thee is darkness." The other light is that of the *light of the gospel*. This comes because the light of nature is all but gone out, and comes as essential to our spiritual well-being. This is the light to which the passage refers, the new soul-light. The words call attention to three facts concerning it.

I. IT EMANATES FROM THE HIGHEST SOURCE. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." The reference is here to the creation (Gen. i. 3). It reminds us: 1. Of *antecedent darkness*. The state of the soul before this light enters it is analogous to the state of the earth before God kindled the lights of the firmament. It was cold, chaotic, dead. In what a sad condition is the unregenerate soul! 2. Of *almighty sovereignty*. "Let there be light"—"Let light be, and light was." The luminaries of the firmament were kindled by the free, uncontrolled, almighty power of God. So it is with real spiritual light. It comes because God wills it. Everywhere he "worketh according to the counsel of his own will."

II. IT REVEALS THE GRANDEST SUBJECT. Light is a revealer. All the hues and forms, beauties and sublimities of the earth would be hid from us without the light. What does this soul-light reveal? "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God." Gospel light entering the soul makes God visible as the eternal Reality, the Fountain of being, and the Source of all blessedness. Where this gospel light is not, the soul either ignores or denies him; or, at most, speculates about him, and at best has now and then fitting visions. But under the radiance of the gospel, God is the *Reality* of all realities, the *Fountain* of all existences, the *Root* of all the sciences. In this light they see God, and through him they see and interpret his universe.

III. IT STREAMS THROUGH THE SUBLIMEST MEDIUM. "In the face of Jesus Christ." There is undoubted allusion here to what is said of Moses (ch. iii. 13) when the Divine glory was reflected on his face, and produced such a splendour and magnificence that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon it. The sense here is that, in the face or the person of Jesus Christ, the glory of God shone clearly, and the Divinity appeared without a veil. This light coming through Christ, "who is the image of the invisible God," is: 1. *True* light. He is the Truth. 2. *Softened* light. The soul could not stand the light coming directly from the infinite Source; it is too dazzling. Through the medium of Christ it comes so softened as to suit our weakness. 3. *Quickening* light. It falls on the soul like the sunbeam on the seed quickening into life.

Ver. 7.—*The true gospel ministry*. "But we have this treasure," etc. The words lead us to consider the true gospel ministry in various aspects.

I. AS CONTAINING AN INESTIMABLE TREASURE. The gospel is a system of incalculable worth. The most valuable things in nature are employed to represent it—water, light, life, etc. There are four criteria that determine the worth of a thing—*rarity, utility, duration, the appreciation of the highest authorities*. All these applied to the gospel demonstrate its surpassing value.

II. AS THE SERVICE OF FRAGILE MEN. "In earthen vessels." To whom have the inestimable truths of the gospel been entrusted for exposition, enforcement, and distribution? Not to angels, but to frail and dying men. 1. They have frail *bodies*. They are subject to infirmity, exhaustion, decay, etc. 2. They have frail *minds*. The most

vigorous in intellect is weak, the most lofty in genius is feeble, the most enlightened is ignorant.

III. AS DEVELOPING A DIVINE PURPOSE. "That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." The grand reason why frail men are employed to preach the gospel is that the glorious renovating and soul-saving effects may evidently appear as the work of God, and not of man. When sermons prove effective in converting souls, it is not because of the originality of their thought, the force of their logic, the splendour of their rhetoric, or the majesty of their eloquence, but because of the Divine power that accompanies them. "Not by might, nor by power," etc.

Vers. 8—12.—*Trials in the cause of Christ.* "We are troubled on every side," etc. Three remarks are suggested.

I. THAT THE TRIALS ENCOUNTERED IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST ARE SOMETIMES VERY GREAT. Hear what Paul says about his trials: "We are troubled on every side." He speaks of himself as hemmed in by enemies, pursued by enemies, stricken down by enemies, and dragging about with him, as it were, a living corpse. It may be laid down as a principle, that the man who is earnestly engaged in any righteous cause in this world will have to encounter trials. The old prophets had their trials, some of them were insulted, some incarcerated, some martyred. So with John the Baptist, and so with the apostles, so with the confessors, reformers, and genuine revivalists.

II. THAT, HOWEVER GREAT THE TRIALS ENCOUNTERED, THEY ARE NOT BEYOND BEARING. The apostle says that although "troubled on every side, yet not distressed," or straitened; though "perplexed," or bewildered, yet not benighted; though "persecuted," or pursued, yet not "forsaken," or abandoned; though "cast down," or stricken down with a blow, yet not perishing. The idea is that he had support under his trials; they did not entirely crush him. The true labourer in the cause of Christ, however great his trials, is always supported: 1. By the *approbation of his own conscience*. 2. By the *encouraging results of his own labours*. 3. By the *sustaining strength of God*. "As thy days, so thy strength shall be."

III. THAT THE RIGHT BEARING OF THESE TRIALS SUBSERVES THE GOOD OF SOULS. 1. In the right bearing of these sufferings the sufferer reveals the life of Christ to others. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." Rightly endured sufferings bring the sufferer so near to the sufferings of Christ that he is in a sense a sharer of those sufferings, and hence in them the life of Jesus is made manifest. Who that has witnessed the true Christian languishing on the bed of suffering and death has not seen the spirit of the life of Christ revealed? 2. In the right bearing of these sufferings the sufferer promotes in himself and others the Christian life. "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." "God," says Dean Alford, "exhibits death in the living, that he may also exhibit life in the dying."

Ver. 13.—*The speech of true faith.* "We having the same spirit of faith," etc. The world is full of speech. Human words load the atmosphere. All the speeches may be divided into three classes. 1. Speech *without* faith. Vapid and volatile talk. 2. Speech with *wrong* faith. Wrong faith is of two descriptions. (1) Faith in wrong subjects. Men believe errors. (2) Improper faith in right subjects. Weak wavering, etc. 3. Speech with *true* faith. Take the true faith as faith in Christ. In him, not in *propositions concerning him*, propositions either including doctrines or facts. I offer three remarks concerning the speech of this faith.

I. IT IS INEVITABLE. The man who truly believes in Christ feels that "necessity is laid upon him," that he "cannot but speak the things seen and heard." Such is the influence of faith on man's social sympathies that his emotions become irrepressible.

II. IT IS RATIONAL. How much speech there is in connection even with the religion of Christ that clashes with the dictates of human reason, and is an insult to common sense! But he who really has faith in Christ can give reasons for his convictions in language clear as the day. It is the lack of true faith that makes our sermons hazy.

III. IT IS STRONG. True faith in Christ is the strongest of all convictions, and a strong conviction will always have a strong utterance. The words will be free and full.

Vers. 14, 15.—*Soul-inspiring facts.* “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus,” etc. There are four glorious facts here.

I. THAT CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD. “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus.” “No fact in history,” says Dr. Arnold, “is more firmly established by argument than this.”

II. THAT THE GENUINE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST WILL ALSO BE RAISED. “Shall raise up us also by [with] Jesus, and shall present us with you.” Raised as he was raised, and all be presented together.

III. THAT ALL THINGS ARE FOR GOOD TO THE GOOD. “All things are for your sakes.” “We know that all things shall work together for good,” etc. “All things are yours.”

IV. THAT ALL THINGS IN LIFE SHOULD RESULT IN THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD. “That the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.” It is only in worship that the soul can find the free and harmonious development of all its spiritual powers. Worship is heaven. It is not the means to an end; it is the sublimest end of being.

Ver. 16.—*Soul-growth.* “For which cause we faint not,” etc. Observe at the outset: 1. Man has a duality of nature—the *outward* and the *inward*; the latter the man of the man. 2. The decayableness of one of the natures. “Our outward man perisheth.” This is constantly going on. 3. The constant growth of the inner nature. “The inward man is renewed day by day.” Soul-growth implies three things.

I. SOUL-LIFE. Dead plants and dead animals can no more grow than stones. The inner man unrenewed is morally dead; its life consists in *supreme sympathy with the supremely good.*

II. SOUL-NOURISHMENT. No life can live upon itself. The appropriation of outward elements is essential to sustentation and growth. Moral and spiritual truths are the nutriment of souls.

III. SOUL-EXERCISE. All life seems to require exercise. Even the productions of the vegetable world cannot grow without it; though they cannot move themselves, they are moved by the breezes of heaven. Animal life requires it, and the soul must have it in order to grow. It must “exercise itself unto godliness.” “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”

Vers. 17, 18.—*The afflictions of Christly men.* “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” These words suggest a few thoughts concerning the afflictions of Christly men.

I. They are COMPARATIVELY “light” and “momentary.” They are “*light* :” 1. Compared with what they deserve. 2. Compared with what others have endured. 3. Compared with the blessedness that is to follow. They are *momentary*, “but for a moment.” Momentary compared (1) with the enjoyments of this life; compared (2) with the interminable blessedness of the future.

II. That, though light and momentary, they WORK OUT GLORIOUS RESULTS. They issue in what? “A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” What is the affliction to the glory? 1. The one is “light;” the other is weighty. Put all the afflictions of the whole Church against the everlasting glory of one Christly soul, and how light! 2. The one is momentary; the other is eternal. “Eternal weight of glory.” But the result is not only an eternal weight of glory, but “far more exceeding.” No expression could be stronger than this. The apostle here seems to struggle after the strongest language to express his idea of the transcendent blessedness that awaits the Christly man.

III. That they work out these glorious results BY THE REALIZATION OF SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL REALITIES. “While we look not at the things which are seen . . . for the things which are seen are temporal.” Observe: 1. That there are things *invisible to the bodily eye that can be seen by the soul.* There are two classes of invisible things: (1) those that are *essentially* invisible, such as thoughts, spirits, God; and (2) those that

are *contingently* invisible, such as those things that are visible in their nature, but, through minuteness, distance, or some other cause, are at present invisible. It is to the first of these that the apostle refers—things that are essentially invisible to the bodily eye. The soul can see thoughts, moral intelligences, and the great God. 2. That the things that can be seen only by the soul are *not temporal, but eternal*. We talk about the everlasting mountains, eternal sun, etc.; but there is nothing that is seen is lasting—all is passing away. Moral truths are imperishable; spiritual existences are immortal; God is eternal; these are things belonging to a kingdom that cannot be moved. 3. That the things that are seen only by the soul are the things that, if realized, will make this mortal life issue in transcendent good.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Glory of the apostolic ministry; how its duties were discharged.* It is still "this ministry." The question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" has been answered in part by a statement of his "sincerity" and "plainness of speech," and he now proceeds to speak of his courage and steady zeal. "We faint not," allowing no difficulties or dangers to dishearten us. But what was the nature or spirit of this resolute energy? Energetic men, brave men, who are bent on their purpose, are not always choicest or chary of the means employed to gain their ends. "Hidden things of dishonesty," plots, schemes concocted in secret, were renounced, nor did he in any way adulterate the gospel. Not only did he preach the Word, but he delivered it as received from the Lord Jesus. The mirror was kept clean and bright, so as to reflect the image. Of course, he contrasted himself with his opponents, who used intrigues to acquire influence. If certain men handled the Word of God deceitfully, he was not one of that number, for his single aim was; "by manifestation of the truth," to commend himself "to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Divine truth, such as the gospel contained, was a manifestation, a showing of its real and intrinsic character, to the only faculty competent to receive it as a self-evidencing system; and that faculty was the conscience. Reason lies back of all our reasoning, and is greater and truer than our formal logic. Instinct antedates experience, and is the condition precedent to experience. And these instincts with their intuitions constitute their own evidence and form the basis of all knowledge. St. Paul argued that the spiritual doctrines of the gospel, if faithfully presented to the conscience, would be recognized and accepted by conscience as the truth of God. History is history; testimony is testimony; judgment is judgment; conscience is conscience; and he will not disparage any one of these to exalt another, but will keep each in its place according to the constitution of our nature. Yet the human mind, made in God's image, must be master of its impressions, sovereign over its motives, lord of itself when most obedient to God; and, accordingly, it must have a conscience to witness "magisterially," as Bishop Butler puts it, for the authority of God. It was not to worldly taste and selfish intellect St. Paul appealed in preaching the gospel, nor to low and mercenary feelings of any kind, but to the conscience as the supreme sense of right in man. And was this all? Nay; they commended themselves, their persons, their private and public lives, their experience and conduct, to the consciences of others. Witness what we are, what we do, how we live, as well as what we preach, was St. Paul's argument. No man enjoyed true appreciation and love more than he; but, most of all, he sought the testimony of their conscience that he was their servant for Christ's sake, and was in no respect crafty and dishonest in his relations to the brethren. Private character and public character are, alas! too often disjoined, and not seldom are opposites; but St. Paul thought that gifts and graces should go together. What he professed as an apostle he would practise as a man, and in each respect he would commend himself to consciences. On no account would he have the confidence and regard of the Church except so far as he impressed this purest and safest kind of human judgment. And he did this most solemnly, "in the sight of God." Observe, then, it was not to their consciousness but conscience, to which his ministry, character, and life appealed. Nor was this limited to the Church. It was exhibited before all, believers and unbelievers, a savour of life, a savour of death. The manifestation of the truth would commend itself to every man's conscience; and yet the general verdict of conscience

would be accepted and acted on by some, while it would be opposed and disobeyed by many. But who were the rejecters? "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (who are now perishing), not finally lost, but at present unsaved, their day of grace not over, salvation yet possible. The state spoken of is one of mental blindness, which includes the want of spiritual perceptions and the darkness of the understanding. Conscience is instructed, but the intellect overpowers conscience. Conscience is on the side of truth; intellect on the side of the senses. Conscience entreats, warns, condemns, in the name of God; intellect is sophistical and imperious in behalf of the carnal man. And the intellect is thus alienated from its rational subordination to a ruling conscience by a usurper who is Satan, "the god of this world." Men have allowed him to assert sovereignty over them, have made him "a god," and have yielded to his wicked agency what belongs to the one God. They have robbed God to give him power over their bodies and souls. Without this clear and vivid recognition of the personality, the activity, the prodigious energy of Satan, the theology of St. Paul would have no consistency, no logical coherence, no adaptiveness to the convicting and renewing work with which he associates it. With him, human depravity is not an abstract thing, an isolated thing, but part and parcel of a vast system of evil, an immense empire of untruth, deception, fraud, cruelty, of which Satan is head and front. Is unbelief powerful? Satan is behind it. Are the lusts and appetites of the flesh tyrannic? Satan is the tyrant. Are men blinded to their interest and well-being? By him, "god of this world," are they blinded. One who estimates human depravity solely by what it is in itself will have a very different view of its actual character in experience and outworking from one who looks at it as an instrumentality in such hands as Satan's. In the former case it is the man indulging in depravity for his own gratification—he personally and individually and directly is its motive, impulse, and end; in the latter there is a kingdom and a despotic ruler, whose objects are furthered by widening his dominion and enhancing his sway. St. Paul is explicit. Satan is the blinder, and he is the blinder as "the god of this world." And he blinds the minds of men, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them." Turn to the close of the previous chapter and read of the "open face," of the reflected "glory of the Lord," of the assimilating power of the "image," of its transforming wonder in changing "from glory to glory." And now take this awful contrast—a fallen angel, a dethroned principality and power, the "god" among his hierarchies, the "god" of a world where men are on probation for an immortality of good or evil, and this "god" of darkness busy everywhere to hide the only light that reveals Christ as the Image of God. Here is this light in the history of Christ's life, death, resurrection, exaltation. It is glorious. It is preached as a "glorious gospel;" it is preached by men who have "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty," and who themselves, by their candour, integrity, purity, commend themselves to every man's conscience under the eye of God. But Satan exerts all his skill and influence, controls myriad agencies, works continually and works so successfully that the minds of many are blinded by unbelief. Destroy belief and you destroy the soul. And this is the Satanic might of evil, the climax of all his influence, that the blindness with which he shrouds the soul is the blindness of unbelief. Can he think of "the glorious gospel of Christ" and not be humbled? "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." And now the idea which has occupied so much of his attention—the veiled face of Moses, the open vision of Christ, the image of the Father in him, the glory that excelleth, the ministry as a manifestation of glory, Christian growth as an expansion from one degree of resplendency to another till it reaches "the perfect day," and the contrasted blindness of unbelievers who are under Satan's power,—this idea, so suggestive, attains its final expression in the sixth verse. God had once said, "Let there be light, and there was light." It was the opening grandeur of creation; but was this all? This was to be the permanent symbol of God, the source and centre of more associations and suggestions than any other object in the material universe, a creative force to the imagination of metaphor, image, and illustration that cannot be measured. And, as such, St. Paul uses it when he says that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." What fuller embodiment could the thought take than "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"?

“Light,” “knowledge,” “glory of God,” “face of Jesus Christ,”—what a collocation of sublime ideas!—L.

Vers. 7—18.—*Ministers in their weakness and strength; present affliction and future issues.* There is the ever-recurring contrast. It is now the ministry as a “treasure,” and this treasure is “in earthen vessels.” We understand the apostle to refer to the body when speaking of the “clay vessel,” the contrasted elements being the glory of the ministry as a Divine illumination and the fragile human form in which it was contained. It was thus that “the excellency of the power” was seen to be “of God, and not of us.” Not only was it the power of God, but of “exceeding greatness” (Kling), and while the “surpassing might” demonstrated itself in the gracious and widespread effects of the ministry, it was also obvious in the physical support given in the midst of such unprecedented labours and trials. To illustrate this “surpassing might” (Conybeare and Howson), St. Paul adduces his own experience. As it respects the “earthen vessel:” 1. Troubled on every side. 2. Perplexed. 3. Persecuted. 4. Cast down. 5. Always dying; bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. As it respects the “excellency of the power:” 1. Not distressed. 2. Not in despair. 3. Not forsaken. 4. Not destroyed. 5. Life of Jesus made manifest in our mortal body. These ideas of suffering are taken from the body. 1. Pressed or hemmed in on every side. 2. Benighted on our path. 3. Pursued in a conflict. 4. Thrown down and expecting to be killed. 5. The dying of the Lord Jesus never absent as a bodily impression. This is the second of those vivid pictures St. Paul has given of his personal life, the first being found in 1 Cor. iv. 9—13. There is a marked difference between the two representations, the former referring to the contrast between himself and the self-sufficient Corinthians, while the latter sets forth the contrast between “the glorious gospel” and the weakness of its ministration by means of men. Here the prominence is given to the similarity of his own life to that of Christ, “that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” Had he spoken in the previous Epistle of self-denials and voluntary sufferings over and above “other apostles,” going on a warfare “at his own charges,” planting a vineyard and eating not “of the fruit thereof,” a shepherd who “eateth not of the milk of the flock”? No such allusions (except in the reference made in the twelfth verse) are found in this chapter. Before him, in full view, is the career of Jesus of Nazareth, his resignation of the comforts of earth, the homelessness and other privations he endured, and he, the apostle of the Gentiles, is conformed in outward or physical aspects to the sufferings of Christ. Still more, the life of Christ’s resurrection and exalted glory appears in him, and this life, so manifested in “our mortal flesh” and the more signally exhibited because of infirmities and afflictions, is for their benefit. “Death worketh in us, but life in you.” But is death a shadow, a discouragement, a paralyzing terror? Nay; the life imparted to the Corinthians through him returned from them to his own soul. He believed and spoke; they heard and believed. Furthermore, he had another consolation, the hope of a resurrection, when he and they should be presented by Christ to the Father for final acceptance. Yes; the fellowship would be immortal as well as glorious. “All things are for your sakes,” whatever had befallen him, and this “abundant grace,” extended to an ever-enlarging number, would swell the volume of thanksgiving to God. In his mind “the glory of God” is never associated with narrow bounds, never with a few, always with the “many”—“through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.” This is his manhood; largeness in everything; breadth of thought and sentiment for this world and the future! a manhood that could breathe in nothing smaller than a universe. How much he is worth to us in this particular! On this account “we faint not.” Nothing had power to dishearten his spirit or depress his efforts. The burden rallied the strength; the heavier the weight the more energetic the resistance. Another contrast—*outward* man, *inward* man: man in each. St. Paul, who is the theologian of the Bible on the subject of the body no less than of the soul, is here in one of his favourite moods, and, as usual, his philosophy (if we choose so to regard his discernment) is as profound as his piety. “Though our outward man perish.” It cannot but perish. “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” The body exists for no independent purpose, it is for the soul, and the ideal of the soul determines the ideal of the body’s history. It eats, sleeps, works, for the soul. It decays for the sake of the soul. Now, this decay which the apostle is consider-

ing, we may look at in the light of modern physiology. St. Paul is no teacher of physiology or of science in any form, but he mentions facts, which we can interpret by aid of recent science. What, then, do we know of decay as a bodily law? We know it is a law co-existent and co-operative with our physical life. It sets in early, goes on continuously, and ends only when the body dies. It is a *succession of decays*. Viewed in this light, decay is a function of activity or a sequel to activity, and, accordingly, a *condition of renewal*. Exercise the arm like a blacksmith, and it rapidly wastes matter. Exercise the brain as a student, and certain constituents are constantly thrown off and expelled from the system. Yet, in all this, there is reproduction and even growth. *The decay has an order*; it proceeds from the less serviceable to the more useful functions. Early in life, animal sensations are in excess. The outer world floods the young senses, and no image is painted on the brain that is not a copy of something external. But this abates. It lessens by providential law. The spirits decline in boisterousness; perceptions are not so vivid; reflectiveness increases; and the pulse is more of a pulse of thought, will, emotion. What we can spare best is the first to decay. Long before eye and ear show signs of failing other organs begin to advertise their decline. And hence the decay proceeds as to time and method in such a form as to answer the ends of the body in its relation to the soul. Seldom are there violent changes. No great revolutions occur. Little by little the alterations go on, so that the mind is insensibly accommodated to them. Agreeably to this law, decay contributes till late in life to the development of the mind. Not until decay has accomplished higher ends does it tend towards dissolution. Gently, indeed, the hand of the Father touches the frail tenement, here a nerve and there a muscle, so as to make it less a body for the earth and more a body for the soul. *Physiologically*, therefore, there is a basis for St. Paul's *theology of the body*. Now, physiologists may say, as some of them have said, that their science has nothing to do with religion, and, forsooth, this in one sense may be true. But it is certain that Christianity has a good deal to do with their science. Nor, indeed, have we to look further than the text for proof of the fact that, while St. Paul was doing nothing more than unfolding the glory of the gospel, one or more of the rays of that splendour shone on facts which science is only just now beginning to understand. But the inner man, what of him? "*Renewed day by day*." We have seen that Providence uses decay for restoration and even enhancement of power, and moreover, not until physical development has attained its *maximum* in respect to mind, does it happen that decay operates towards dissolution. Outward and inward—both the man, as we have said—and yet the differencing adjectives are very expressive. Look at the outside of a tree, the rough bark adapted to the hard usages of wind and weather, and fitted to enclose and protect the fibre and circulating sap. So of the body. It is a sheath to the soul, preserving its freedom from being overpowered by the outward world and guaranteeing self-direction to its activity. More than this, body is a developing instrumentality of mind, and, in this respect, fulfils the special purpose of Providence. Nevertheless, the soul has its own prerogatives. It is God's image, and, as such, witnesses to its own nature as infinitely different from matter. We call it *soul* because it is perfectly unlike body. We call it *spirit* because "God is a Spirit." Such words as *body, soul, spirit*, stand alone and contain the truth of all truths. Now, the apostle urges this contrast; body decays and dies, spirit under the influence of the Holy Ghost is renewed daily. Spirit has a capacity for interminable growth. *Day by day*, a clearer knowledge of itself, a keener penetration of consciousness, a deeper sense of sinfulness in its nature, and, anomalously enough, while gaining a victory more and more over particular sins, having an acuter conviction of inbred sin. *Day by day*, the world falling away from its senses, and yet, amid the decay of sensuousness, a continual ascension of delight and gladness as the spirit loses its hold on merely æsthetic beauty and enters more fully into moral beauty, so that, while the body becomes more and more the "temple of the Holy Ghost," the earth grows into a sanctuary of God, where the hours fail not to observe their ritual of worship and the air is never so hushed as not to breathe praise to God. *Day by day*? Ah! are there not idle days, apparently useless days, even days when prayer and holy service seem a burden? Doubtless; but we must not conclude that these seasons are altogether unprofitable. If we are learning nothing else, we are learning how weak and impotent we are, and how unreliable are our constitution and habits except we have daily renewing grace. God leaves us to ourselves sometimes that

we may find out what company we keep when he is absent. *Day by day*, the most precious of all is a growing nearness to the Lord Jesus Christ. We can recall the time when he was mainly to our young souls a traditional Christ. We knew him by the hearing of the ear and by the sight of the eye. Voices there were that spoke of him and commanded our listening. Faces there were that shone with unearthly light and touched our eyes to a reverent gaze. They are gone now. Sorrow has done its work, and, if that be done, all other work is made effective for spiritual progress. How real he becomes when we suffer as Christians! In the loneliness that comes with all profound grief, what a personal Christ is he to our hearts! Hearts, we say, for the revelations of sorrow, the fullest and grandest ever made to the soul, are all revelations of the blessed Jesus to the affections. Once we could not have thought it possible, but, in later years, the secret of the Lord is with us, and we commune with him as friend with friend. The wonder now is, how we could ever live an hour without this sense of sonship possessing the soul. "Out of the depths" we have learned to say, "Abba, Father," and then we can rejoice with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." The outward man perishing, the inward man renewed day by day, how would such a man as St. Paul look upon trial and adversity? We know more of the nature, variety, and depth of his sufferings than of any one among the saints of the New Testament, and yet he calls his *affliction light*. It is also "but for a moment." Why he spoke in this way is made clear at once, for the light and momentary affliction is working for his benefit, fulfilling a purpose, executing a design, and this is a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." These words are best left to private meditation. "Glory" in contrast with "affliction," "weight" with "light," "eternal" with "moment," and then the "exceeding," the "more exceeding," the "far more exceeding;" we honour the sublimity most by thoughtful silence. And this working, which is now going on by means of Christ's presence in affliction and derives no merit from him, is so far realized by the apostle that he cannot look upon the things about him other than as transient. It is not the mere decay of the outward man nor the evanescence of the world's glory that produces in him this exalted state of mind. The point of view is altogether different. From the height of spiritual life as essentially eternal life, he glances at the panorama of the world as it passes by, but his look—the fixed eye, the earnest gaze—is on the things which are eternal. For him this eternity has already begun; and while every new grief and every repetition of an old sorrow "worketh" a deeper feeling of the spiritual and eternal life within, he is equally well assured that each one adds something to the accumulated glory of the heaven awaiting him as an apostle of the Lord Jesus.—L.

Ver. 2.—*Truth and conscience.* In these comprehensive words of the apostle is revealed the true power of the Christian minister. This is represented as consisting of three several elements.

I. THE INSTRUMENT WHICH IS ENTRUSTED TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER TO WIELD.

1. In itself it is the truth. All truth is precious and powerful. But *the truth*, as it is in Jesus, is supreme in moral, spiritual power. The truth of God's righteousness and love, as they are united and harmonious in the gospel of Christ, is the greatest moral force which has entered and wrought in our humanity. It has power to convince the judgment, to convert the heart, to control the will, to constrain the life. 2. This truth exercises its power by simple manifestation. It does not need our apologies or defence, our ornaments or recommendations. It does its work best when it is simply allowed to shine by its own light, to take its own course.

II. THE MATERIAL UPON WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER HAS TO WORK; i.e. "every man's conscience." Some religious teachers appeal to men's interests, others to their fears, some to their superstition, others to their vanity. But the true appeal is to the conscience. "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say." Other principles of action address themselves to inferior parts of human nature, and produce proportionate results. But Christian truth aims high, calls forth into action the noblest faculties of the soul. Literally translated, the phrase is, "to every conscience of men," which seems to suggest that, whether the conscience be enlightened or crude, sluggish or active, it is evermore, when aroused, a witness to God's Word. The truth and the conscience are alike of Divine origin, and they are adapted the one to the other. What the truth utters the conscience echoes.

The preacher of righteousness may be assured that to his words there is always a response in human hearts.

III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER USES THE DIVINELY FASHIONED IMPLEMENT WHICH OPERATES UPON THE DIVINELY FASHIONED NATURE. It is "in the sight of God." He who works thus will work honestly, faithfully, earnestly. And his work will be profitable to men and acceptable to God.—T.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The gospel veiled.* Those things which are intended for man's welfare are often so perverted by sin that they become the occasion of the greatest evils. So that it is proverbial that the best things, when abused, prove to be the worst. The gospel of Jesus Christ, when it is received aright, is a power to enlighten, bless, and save. But to those who reject and despise it the gospel becomes the occasion of condemnation and destruction.

I. THE INVISIBLE AND SPIRITUAL POWER THAT VEILS THE GOSPEL FROM THE EYES OF MEN. The expression used by the apostle is very strong; he attributes this mischievous act to "the god of this world," apparently a personal principle of evil working in human society and in human hearts. Elsewhere we are reminded of the might of the evil one, who is designated "the ruler of this world," "the prince of the power of the air."

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE EYES OF MEN ARE VEILED. These are many, and are craftily adapted to the varying characters and habits of men. 1. *Sensuality* often incapacitates for spiritual vision; for the more it makes a man sensitive to the attractions of carnal pleasure the more it hinders his spiritual apprehensions and dulls his spiritual vision. 2. *Worldliness* fills the whole horizon of vision with the things of earth and time, and thus shuts out the shining of the true light which is from heaven. 3. The *pride of human reason*, which fancies itself to be independent and all-powerful, obscures in the case of many the rays of Divine truth which often reach the lowliest and the least esteemed among men.

III. THE EFFECTS WHICH THIS BLINDNESS PRODUCES IN THE MINDS OF MEN. 1. The glad tidings are regarded with indifference. 2. Christ himself, the very "Image of God," is contemplated with aversion and repugnance. There is no spiritual sympathy to draw the soul to the holy and the gracious One; his very features are regarded through a distorted medium. 3. All spiritual excellences lose their charm, fail to awaken to admiration and emulation. 4. The true condition in which they lie is altogether ignored and denied by the spiritually blind. 5. For lack of light they perish; the spiritually and wilfully blind doom themselves to death.—T.

Ver. 5.—*The theme of preaching.* Christianity was first diffused by the proclamation of the living voice, and the same method has always held the most prominent position in the history of the Church and especially of its missions. Yet the success of this method has been in proportion to the prominence which preachers give to their theme in comparison with their own individuality.

I. THE THEME THE APOSTLE DISCLAIMS. "We preach *not ourselves.*" 1. *I.e.* not about ourselves, as is the way with many. Not our own speculations, our own theories, our own fancies. Not even our own experiences in the religious life. 2. For it was felt by the modest and the wise that such preaching could only be to offer, in many cases, weakness, folly, and ignorance; in all cases human imperfection, and infirmity, to men who know quite enough of all this, and who stand in need of what is superhuman and Divine.

II. THE THEME IN WHICH THE APOSTLE GLORIES. 1. Christ as an *historical Person*. It was and still is necessary, in the first place, to inform the hearers of the gospel of the actual facts of our Lord's earthly manifestation—his incarnation, his ministry, his humiliation and obedience, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and exaltation. All good, sound doctrine is based upon fact. 2. Christ as a *Divine Person*; *i.e.* the Lord. He is to be preached as being what he declared himself to be—one with the Father, the King of angels and of men. It is such an all-sufficient Friend and Helper that man needs.

"If thou wert less than One Divine,
My soul would be dismayed;
But through thy human lips God says,
'Tis I; be not afraid!"

3. Christ as a *Mediator*, complete in all the qualifications needed to discharge the duties of all the offices he sustains. 4. Christ as a *living* Person—One who has not ceased to interest himself in men because he is no longer among them in bodily form; but One who, as represented in the Apocalypse, is living with and for those whom he died to save.

APPLICATION. There is danger lest those who accept this view of the apostle should be content with the mere reiteration of Christ's name. Be it remembered that Christ should be preached as to the *intelligence* and to the *heart* of men.—T.

Ver. 6.—*The light of spiritual knowledge.* Nature is a parable by means of which the Creator and Lord of all is ever teaching us concerning himself and his will. All the vast forces and sublime objects of nature have their spiritual analogues. So is it, as appears from this passage, with light, which typifies the truth, the gospel of God. We learn—

I. WHENCE THE LIGHT COMES. Physical light comes from the sun, and the sun was kindled by the Creator. He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." So all intellectual and moral light is from the Father of lights. He is light, and in him is no darkness. "He clotheth himself with light as with a garment." Our souls find their full enlightenment and satisfaction in the revelation of his mind, which is as the rising of the sun upon our benighted nature.

II. WHAT THE LIGHT IS. In the apostle's view this is "the knowledge of the glory of God." If this be so, God is not the Unknown, the Unknowable. The glory of the Eternal is not so much in his power and wisdom as in his moral attributes, his holiness, and love. The revelation of the Divine character is as light to his intelligent creation. It is welcome, cheering, illuminating, reviving.

III. WHERE THE LIGHT SHINES. "In the face of Jesus Christ." In our Lord's resurrection this light shone visibly from his face, as it had done on the occasion of his transfiguration. But really and spiritually it is always streaming forth; for Christ is himself the "Emanation of his Father's glory." Behold his face when teaching: the light of Divine knowledge is upon it. When pitying and healing the sufferer, the light of Divine compassion and love is there. When patiently enduring insult, upon it rests the lustre of majestic sweetness. When dying on the cross, the light of sacrificial victory is kindled on the features. When uttering his royal commands from heaven's throne, "his countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength."

IV. WHITHER THE LIGHT PENETRATES. "Into your hearts," says the apostle. As the sunbeams only awaken the sensation of light when they fall upon a receptive and sensitive eye, so the revelation of God's character implies a receptive and responsive heart. Though light ever shines from Christ, multitudes have no benefit or enjoyment from it. When the heart turns like the sunflower to the light, then the day dawns within, and the whole spiritual nature comes to bask in the light of God.

V. WHY THE LIGHT SHINES. In answer to this may be summed up the whole spiritual purpose and significance of the Christian revelation. 1. That we may *perceive* it. It is, alas! possible to hide from the light at noonday. But those who welcome the heavenly light rejoice in it, are guided by it, and know its power to inspire hope eternal. 2. That we may *walk* in it. "Walk ye in the light of the Lord;" "Walk in the light while ye have the light." For God's truth is profitable to all men, having the faculty of directing those who will be led by it into paths of wisdom, peace, and life. 3. That we may *reflect* it. The light of God is not absorbed by the soul that receives it. It is shed upon those who are around. Christians are "the light of the world"—are "light-bearers," through whose agency the earth is to be filled with the radiance of spiritual and immortal noon.—T.

Ver. 7.—*Spiritual treasure.* In this Epistle Paul speaks more frankly and warmly than in any other of his compositions of the ministry which was the work of his life. It is observable, however, that, in treating of this ministry, whilst he uses the most honourable terms in characterizing the office, he displays the utmost humility in what he says of himself.

I. PRICELESS TREASURE. 1. What it is. It is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is the truth which Paul declared, the

gospel which he preached, the mystery which he unfolded. The promise of free pardon for sin, of a new law and power for life, was what the apostles were privileged to convey to mankind. This is still, as it was then, the true wealth of the world, which enriches the mind and heart of man. 2. Upon whose authority this "treasure" is so described. This is the highest authority, that of the Divine Christ, who designates his gospel the "true riches," "the treasure hid in the field," "the pearl of great price;" who reminds us of "treasure in heaven;" who tells us that "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also;" who counsels to buy of him "gold tried in the furnace." 3. What makes this treasure so valuable? It is unvaryingly satisfying: it is inexhaustible; it is enduring, and not like the "riches that take to themselves wings;" it is accessible to all, so that the poor in this world, having it, are "rich in faith."

II. EARTHEN VESSELS. 1. Explain the figure. As Eastern kings stored their gold, silver, and jewels in earthen jars, so a plain casket may hold a costly jewel, a miry soil may yield an abundant crop, a battered ship may carry a precious freight, a lamp of clay may give a brilliant light, a mean book as to appearance may contain noble thoughts. So it is no objection against the gospel that those who preach it are in many respects unworthy of an office so dignified. 2. Exhibit its application. Christ was apparently a peasant, a carpenter's son; yet he was the Son of God most high. The apostles were fishermen, toll-takers, tent-makers; yet they were the heralds of salvation to mankind. The upper rooms where the early disciples met were not comparable to heathen temples, but they were scenes of Divine communion. Among those who frequented the assemblies where Christian ordinances were observed were not many noble or great, but there were inheritors of the kingdom of God. The apostle was deeply conscious of defects and weakness, was often distressed by humiliations and persecutions and contempt. His frail body, his fallible judgment, his imperfect character, his lowly and harassed condition, all contrasted with the preciousness of the gospel which was deposited in his heart and ministered by his labours. If it was so in the case of St. Paul, how much more manifestly was it so in the case of those far less gifted and far more burdened with infirmity!

III. DIVINE GREATNESS. To what purpose was this arrangement which the apostle here describes? He himself gives the true reason. 1. That all Christian labourers may feel their littleness and their weakness. 2. That they may recognize the exceeding greatness of the spiritual power of God. 3. That they may give Heaven the glory, alike for what they receive and for what they impart.—T.

Vers. 17, 18.—*Divine discipline.* In this pathetic and sublime passage Paul reveals to us his own spiritual experience. And the great lesson which he conveys for the fortifying of Christian faith and endurance, and for the inspiration of Christian hope, comes home to the heart with tenfold power, because it is so manifestly a lesson which he himself is learning, through the stress of earthly sorrow and the lapse of laborious years.

I. THE REVEALED PURPOSE OF DIVINE DISCIPLINE. Though oftentimes men fail to recognize the truth, there is in reality a purpose in human life, a purpose wise, beneficent, Divine. 1. The *means*: affliction. By this is intended here what is endured in Christ's service; as, for example, by missionaries and evangelists. Yet in the case of the true Christian affliction of every kind partakes of this character. The apostle says of affliction that it is "light" in quality, and that it is "momentary" in the time of its incidence. This is evidently a matter of comparison; for it is only when compared with the "weight" and the "eternity" of glory that earthly affliction can be denominated light and transitory. 2. The *end*: glory. This is future; for the present state is not characterized by this quality, save as a stormy day may be diversified by rays of light which break through the riven clouds. It is Christ's glory, such as that into which he entered when he had accomplished his vicarious sufferings. And, being such, it is weighty and eternal.

II. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH THE CHRISTIAN PROFITS BY DIVINE DISCIPLINE. In this passage God's part and ours are interwoven together. We can only receive the advantage by submitting to and falling in with the intentions of God. It is not a matter of course that the afflicted should be the better for their painful experience. 1. What is seen, what is known by sense, must be regarded and dealt with as of

inferior importance, as soon to pass away. Men are prone to exaggerate the events of this perishing life; but Christians must see them as they appear to God. 2. The regards must be steadily fixed upon the unseen; *i.e.* upon the Christ who has gone before us, and who is apprehended in the exercise of faith; upon the heaven which is to be rest to the weary, joy to the sad, relief to the burdened; upon the God who, though invisible, is "near unto all who call upon him," and is the true Life of all holy souls. It must be remembered that these realities, in which Christians are deeply, supremely interested, are eternal. Over them decay, time, and death have no power; of them the glorious things of earth can give but the promise and the earnest. 3. Thus shall strength be experienced to endure what is appointed for us to bear on earth; and thus shall an aspiring hope anticipate the glory which shall hereafter be revealed.—T.

Vers. 1—6.—How men should preach. I. WITH FAITH. Many preach *with despair* and prepare the way for failure. We should reflect that the preaching of the gospel is the divinely appointed way for saving men. We are likely to have success if we lay hold of God when we seek to lay hold of men. Our own salvation furnishes abundant evidence of the Divine power to save. "God shined in our hearts" (ver. 6); "We obtained mercy" (ver. 1). What God has done for us he can do for others. And we have the Divine promise that the Word shall not return unto God void. "Light shall shine out of darkness" (ver. 6). We must seek a faith which will prevent us from fainting even when the outlook is darkest (ver. 1). If we have not faith, how can we expect our hearers to have it?

II. WITH COURAGE. We must not faint because of foes. Many an assault upon strongholds has failed because of half-heartedness and cowardice. Preachers should be very bold and very brave. We have nothing to be ashamed of in our message. Shall the devil's work be done more bravely than Christ's? Shall the highest service on earth be marked by vacillation and timidity? "But that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death" (Phil. i. 20). The Church would be more aggressive if she were more courageous. Preachers should have stout hearts as well as tender ones.

III. WITH PERSEVERANCE. We must not faint because of difficulties. Discouragements are many, but persistency will bury them all. The preacher's motto must be, "On! on! on!" He must spend and be spent in the service. After the manner ascribed to British soldiers, Christ's soldiers must never know when they are worsted. "Line upon line, precept upon precept." Many things come to the preacher who can wait and work.

IV. WITH GREAT HONESTY AND SINCERITY. "Not walking in craftiness" (ver. 2). The preacher who wants his hearers to walk in holy ways must not walk in devious ways himself. He must not be a trickster. Some seem willing to do anything to please; but the object of the ministry is not to please. Meat cut with a dirty knife is likely to become unsavoury, and the gospel administered with knavish arts will lose its beauty and power.

V. WITH PURE DOCTRINE. "Not handling the Word of God deceitfully" (ver. 2). "Manifestation of the truth" (ver. 2). Christ gives us pure doctrine to preach, and woe unto us if we adulterate it! We must not season it to the tastes of the carnal, or keep back portions likely to offend influential sinners. 1. We preach in the sight of God. How, then, dare we tamper with his truth! 2. We are to commend ourselves to every man's *conscience*. Nothing but preaching *the truth* will do this. We may commend ourselves to men's fancies by preaching our own, and to their predilections by trimming doctrines according to their demands; but only by preaching *our* doctrine shall we reach the *consciences* of men. Theological juggling may please men not a little; gospel doctrine will convict them. To our own Master we stand or fall. 'Tis a poor thing to please men if we displease him. Let Luther's caustic saying, "Counterfeits of money are burned, but falsifiers of God's Word are canonized," be never so true, the preacher must adhere to the doctrine delivered to him, though he lose all earthly things by doing so. In a heterodox world nothing is so likely to be so popular as heterodoxy.

VI. WITH PURITY OF LIFE. "We have renounced the hidden things of shame" (ver. 2). If we preach we should practise. Christianity is often weak because Chris-

tians are inconsistent. Men want to see the gospel as well as hear it. A preacher must live as well as talk. A man cannot preach *without himself*. There is always more in the pulpit than the sermon—there is *the man*. We inevitably wonder what the gospel has done for the gospel preacher when he so earnestly recommends it to us. And *life* has a strange power of revealing itself *in preaching*. It *peeps out*. If the preacher has a Judas-life it will betray him sooner or later. But when *the man* speaks as well as his sermon, a mighty influence is exerted. The light must shine in our own hearts and lives (ver. 6).

VII. WITH DISCERNMENT AS TO CAUSES OF NON-SUCCESS. The apostle teaches that those who reject the gospel when faithfully proclaimed are those whose minds are blinded by the god of this world (ver. 4). They have yielded themselves so utterly to evil influences that the gracious message of God through Christ fails to interest or arouse them. They are “perishing.” Their rejection of the gospel says nought against the gospel or against the manner of its promulgation. The fault is not in it or in the preacher, but in themselves. It is well for a preacher to realize the possibility of such cases, so that undue discouragement may be avoided when they are met with.

VIII. WITH HUMILITY AND SELF-SUBORDINATION. 1. Preachers are not to preach themselves (ver. 5). A man may very easily preach himself even when he takes his text out of the Bible. There is not a little temptation sometimes to ministers to preach themselves. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” 2. Preachers are to be servants for Jesus’ sake (ver. 5); servants of those to whom they preach. Not only servants of Christ, but servants of *men*—“*your servants*”—for Christ’s sake. The preacher who would win souls must sacrifice self. For acoustics it is well for the pulpit to be above the people, but not otherwise. He who would catch fish must not be seen.

IX. WITH LOYALTY TO CHRIST. (Ver. 5.) Preachers must be true in all things to him from whom they have received their commission. They must believe in him, love him, follow him, preach him, live him, obey him, and in all things seek to glorify him.—H.

Ver. 7.—“*Earthen vessels.*” I. GOD HAS CHOSEN AS MINISTERS OF HIS GOSPEL “EARTHEN VESSELS.” 1. *Not angels or other celestial beings*. Not heavenly vessels, but earthly. 2. *Men*. (1) Frail; (2) imperfect; (3) lowly; (4) weak; (5) unimposing.

II. THESE EARTHEN VESSELS ARE HELD IN THE DIVINE HAND. 1. *They are thus preserved*. “He had in his right hand seven stars” (Rev. i. 16). Often they seem in peril. “Pressed on every side . . . perplexed . . . pursued . . . smitten down” (vers. 8, 9); but the vessel is not allowed to be broken until it has done its work. 2. *They are thus useful*. (1) They are in the Divine hand to be filled. (2) They are in the Divine hand to be poured forth from. (3) They are in the Divine hand sometimes to be shaken, and the shaking of the vessel often makes the contents more efficacious.

III. A GREAT TREASURE IS COMMITTED TO THE EARTHEN VESSELS. The treasure is the truth as it is in Jesus—the great gospel message. Christ’s ministers are vessels to hold this treasure and to dispense it to those to whom they minister. 1. Ministers have not to originate what they convey. It is given to them by their Master. The vessel is filled by a Divine hand from a Divine source. 2. Ministers have not to convey themselves to their people. The people do not want the vessel, but its contents. “We preach not ourselves” (ver. 5). An earthen vessel is poor food for folks to live upon, and poor medicine for a sin-sick soul to be cured with. The “vessel” must be “the servant” (ver. 5). Even an alabaster box may well be broken that the precious ointment may be poured forth. 3. The contents are apt to taste of the vessel. This must be avoided as much as possible. The less of ourselves and the more of Christ that we convey to men the better. The contents must change the vessel, not the vessel the contents. The preacher must be Christ’s as well as his message. “We also believe, and therefore speak” (ver. 13).

IV. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE EARTHEN VESSELS AND THEIR CONTENTS. A treasure; and what a treasure! For it how long the world has been waiting! What marvels it has to work! What wonders it has wrought! And committed to “*earthen vessels*”! No royal vessels for this royal gift. What honour to the vessels chosen! A minister of Jesus Christ!—how poor all other titles are compared with this!

V. THE OBJECT OF THE DIVINE CHOICE. 1. *The uninterrupted working of the Divine power.* An "earthen vessel" can do nothing but receive and pour forth. What egregious folly for a minister of Christ to seek to enter into partnership with his Lord for the production of a theology! The earthen vessel cannot do anything, and should not attempt to. 2. *The glory of the Divine Being.* No glory can attach to the mere earthen vessel. God is "all in all." This should be the desire of every servant of God. Many, it is to be feared, are robbers of God in this matter. They snatch at the glory to which they have not the smallest claim.

VI. THE FUTURE OF THE EARTHEN VESSELS. They will be raised up (ver. 14). 1. *Made glorious.* "This mortal must put on immortality." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 49). The "vile body" will be exchanged for a "glorious body." We shall be made like Christ. The earthen vessels will be transformed into the likeness of him who filled them. The change is taking place whilst the earthen vessels are in the earthly service. "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (ver. 16). But when we see him as he is we shall be like him. 2. *Fitted for higher service.* Heavenly activities. We know not how closely associated the earthly service is with the heavenly, how much the one may depend upon the other, how much the one will influence and shape the other. Let us make the earthly service as true and perfect as we may.—H.

Vers. 16—18.—*Heavy affliction made light.* Paul's troubles were exceedingly heavy. So the troubles of many believers have been and are. The sufferings of saints often seem severer than those of sinners. For them the furnace is made seven times hotter. But Paul with his heavy sorrows speaks of them as light, and speaks of them as they really seemed to him to be under the conditions to which he refers. No affliction could well be heavier than his, and yet it was light. So is the believer's—

I. WHEN HE CONSIDERS DURING HOW SMALL A PORTION OF HIS LIFE IT HAS TO BE BORNE. It is but "for a moment." Not so long as a second contrasted with a thousand years. Eternity makes time short. Our troubles are like Pharaoh's horsemen—they cannot pass the Red Sea of death. In this *flash* of our existence we may weep, but in the ever-continuing life of heaven we shall rejoice.

"There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast."

Our cross is borne but for a moment, our crown for ever.

II. WHEN HE CONTRASTS THE PRESENT BRIEF TROUBLE WITH THE ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY. True thoughts of heaven prevent exaggerated views of earthly sorrows. When the future is shut out we can easily sit down and lament, but when faith sees the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. i. 4), our present griefs dwindle into insignificance. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed" (Rom. viii. 18). Why should we be disquieted so much by *these* things when *those* are so near? Shadows hang heavily over us until the sunshine of the coming glory breaks through the clouds, and then the shadows flee away. Why should we concentrate thought upon the short present when the long future is so fair? If we think much of the home, the journey homewards will seem short, and the troubles of the way of little account. Every hour of sorrow brings us an hour nearer the land that is sorrowless. And what shall we possess there? The apostle strives in vain to find language sufficiently strong to describe even what he on earth could perceive of heaven—"more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (ver. 17).

III. WHEN THE MEANING OF PRESENT TROUBLE IS REALIZED. To the true child of God: 1. It may mean the destruction of the outward man, but it assuredly means the renewal and development of the inward. It is not even present injury—it is present good. It is medicine, not poison. 2. It prepares us for the coming glory. The fire consumes the dross, the knife cuts away the diseased part, the chisel strikes off that which would impair the beauty of the statue. The apprenticeship of sorrow fits us for

the long service of glory. Through much tribulation we enter the kingdom and are prepared for its duties. The joys of heaven are dependent on the sorrows of earth; without the latter we should not be ready for the former. "Tribulation worketh patience," etc. (Rom. v. 3). 3. Whilst suffering cannot in any way merit salvation, affliction rightly endured shall not be without reward. If we fight the fight of faith, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we shall receive a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away. "If we suffer we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. ii. 12).

PRACTICAL. 1. *Faint not.* Many faint because they see no reason why they should not faint. Yet all reasons point the Christian to patient endurance. If we lose heart we lose strength. To despair is to charge our Master with unfaithfulness. Seek to be a good swimmer in the sea of trouble, and if the waves go over you, still faint not, for soon you will rise to the surface again, and see that the shore is nearer. 2. *Be not much concerned about the things of this life.* (Ver. 18.) These are perishing. The imperishable are our better portion. Look not at the things which are seen; they are not worth looking at. "Set your affection on things above" (Col. iii. 2.) 3. *Look at things unseen by the carnal sense, but clear to faith's vision.* (Ver. 18.) God, Christ, holiness, usefulness, spiritual joys, the new Paradise,—these are "eternal."—H.

Ver. 5.—*Not self, but the Lord.* Two imputations had been cast on St. Paul during his absence from Corinth, and to each of these this verse contains a reply. It had been said that he sought commendation; and he answered that he set forth, not himself, but his Lord. It had been said that he tried to domineer over the Churches; and he answered that he was a servant of the Church for Jesus' sake.

I. THE PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THE LORD. "We preach not ourselves." By this disclaimer is not meant that the apostle excluded all reference to his own faith or experience, and maintained an altogether impersonal tone while delivering Christian testimony and instruction to the Churches. Extant specimens of his preaching and writing indicate the contrary. St. Paul freely spoke of his own experience of the mercy of God and sustaining grace of Christ, of his faith and hope, his sorrow and joy. So have all wise and successful ministers of the Word of life shown their own hearts to the people as holding the gospel precious. They have said, "What we preach to you we ourselves know and believe; what we commend to your acceptance we have ourselves accepted and proved; so we come before you, not merely as messengers by whom tidings are sent, but also as witnesses who can testify that those tidings are true." The apostle spoke and wrote freely of himself, but did not preach himself, *i.e.* did not set himself before the people as the leader or the Saviour. It was the fault of those factious teachers at Corinth, who tried to disparage the authority of St. Paul, that they commended themselves, taught their own speculations, eyed their own advancement, and drew away disciples after them. This was what the apostle disclaimed and abhorred, and what all preachers of the gospel must scrupulously, and even jealously, avoid. It is positively fatal to spiritual success to project one's self before the people instead of setting forth the all-sufficiency of Christ Jesus, the living Essence of the gospel. Some one complained to the excellent William Romaine of his constantly preaching Christ; and he answered, "We have nothing else to preach;" *i.e.* we preach nothing separate from him or disconnected with him. All sound doctrine converges towards, and all acceptable obedience issues from, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. "Preach the Law," the Jews demanded of Paul; and he preached Christ, the end of the Law to every believer. "Preach wisdom," cried the Greeks; and he preached Christ as the Wisdom of God. "Preach practical virtues and good conduct," cry many modern critics and monitors; and we must preach Christ in order to make hearts new, and so make lives pure and upright from the roots. It is not enough to teach the existence of God, his attributes of being and character, his all-controlling providence, or even his universal fatherhood. We preach Jesus, the Teacher, the Healer, the Saviour, the Son of God. We preach him as Christ, the Messiah announced in ancient prophecy, who should suffer many things and so enter into his glory. And we preach Jesus Christ as Lord. He is Lord of all. He is Lord both of the dead and of the living. He is Lord "to the glory of God the Father." Do any think this impracticable? Do they point to the ignorance that has to be removed,

vice to be restrained, selfishness to be corrected, and count it a mere waste of time to speak so much of a Personage who lived, and the things which he said and did in Judæa ever so long ago? Do they ask, "What good can this do?" We are bold to answer—If this will not do good, nothing will. Moral directions and monitions cannot lift men out of themselves or raise them above low levels of thought and conduct. There must be some new and near relation to God, some help from heaven; and this is gained only through faith in Jesus Christ the Lord. In no other way have been produced powerful and permanent transmutations of human character. In no other way are men rescued from evil habits and made good, and kind, and just, and pure. Therefore we will persist in preaching what Paul preached.

II. THE PLACE TAKEN BY THE APOSTOLIC PREACHER. We do not wish to lord it over the Church. "We are your servants for Jesus' sake." The factious teachers at Corinth sought their own advancement, and, judging St. Paul by themselves, alleged that he assumed more authority than he was entitled to, and wished to play dictator to the Churches. The sensitive and generous heart of the apostle acutely felt the imputation. He was, indeed, bound to assert his apostolate, but, absorbed as he was with the thought of his Saviour's authority as Lord, he abhorred the idea of claiming lordship over God's Church, and was careful to describe himself as a servant, and to associate with himself by name such fellow-servants as Silas and Timothy. Much more are modern ministers of the Word, while maintaining the reality and dignity of their ministry, to beware of anything that savours of lordly assumption. They are servants of the saints for Jesus' sake. Not for the sake of men, or for any inducement or remuneration which men can offer. They are not *employés* of the people, engaged by them to do their religious work, and responsible to them for their conduct. In fact, they are servants of the people, and yet the people are not their masters. One is their Master, even Christ; and they serve the Church under his orders and for his sake. So Jesus Christ himself became the Servant of all because he was God's elect Servant. Among his followers it is always better and nobler to serve than to be served. What an example Paul showed as a servant for Jesus' sake!—wearing out his frame in severe and dangerous travels and voyages, caring for all the Churches, praying for them, writing to them, visiting and revisiting them, running all risks, enduring all things—even that which was hardest of all, the ingratitude and fickleness of those to whom he had ministered—that he might fulfil the service which had been assigned to him by the Lord Jesus. Others might spare themselves, but he never did. "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls." It is a high standard; but we do well to keep lofty models before us, and try to rise to them according to the necessity and opportunity of our own time, and the ability which is given to us of God.—F.

Ver. 6.—*Light of the knowledge of Divine glory.* The Christianity of St. Paul was not a formulated religion, but the revelation or unveiling of God in his Son our Saviour.

I. THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST. In that face, turned so graciously on the sons of men, is not merely the glow of human sympathy and pity, but the ineffable glory of the most high God. There is no thought here of the comparison sometimes made between the Divine glory in creation and that glory in redemption. The contrast still in the apostle's mind is between the Law and the gospel. He recalls the glory of God that once shone on the face of Moses as he descended from the holy mount; and he sets above it the glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The lustre on the prophet's countenance was transient, and its effect on the people was only to agitate them and make them desirous to have it softened by a veil. But Christ is the permanent and gracious Image of God; and he reveals it, not to drive men away in terror, but to save them and change them into the same image.

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST Without this the salvation in the gospel profits us not. We can determine nothing about the benefit which may be derived from or through Christ by those who have had no opportunity to hear of him or know him. That will be as God sees meet. But to us who have the gospel, the blessing must come through spiritual knowledge. If knowledge of law and ordinances could save, Paul would have been saved while he was a Pharisee; but he entered not on a state of salvation till he gave up all for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Taught by his own experience, he commended

this knowledge to others. It was his daily care and effort to spread abroad that knowledge. And its propagation in the early ages of Christianity seemed like a fulfilment of the ancient prophecy that "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

III. **THE LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST.** God was light. The nations, estranged from him, sat in darkness. In Judæa there was a lamp for his Name, but it was dim. Pharisaic pride and Sadducean scepticism threatened to put it out. Then the true Light came into the world. And now, as Christ becomes known in the Spirit to this man or that, he lights up both mind and heart. There is to every believer a revelation of the Lord. It is a light above all other lights—calm, pure, searching, gladdening. And the shedding abroad of the light of Christ and the love of God is always by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Thus "the excellency of the knowledge" of God in Christ is imparted by "the excellency of the power" of the Spirit.—F.

Ver. 7.—*The lamp in the pitcher.* This verse is often quoted to express human insufficiency for the ministry of the gospel. It deserves to be quoted, for, if St. Paul felt so deeply his powerlessness without God, how much more should this feeling influence ordinary ministers of the Word of life!

I. **THE TREASURE.** Paul, working in the factory making tents, or passing through the street undistinguished by dress or retinue, may have been taken for a poor artisan. But he was conscious of possessing a treasure by the use and distribution of which he, while poor, made many rich. It was no store of silver or gold. It was not even the treasure of intellectual eminence, the wealth of a large and lofty mind; for, though he had this, he could not impart it to others. It was the ministry of righteousness and liberty whereby he communicated to his fellow-men "the unsearchable riches of Christ." There is no need to draw a distinction here between the ministry which is the topic of the whole context and the light of knowledge which is the immediately preceding subject. In the apostle's thought these are intimately and necessarily combined and together constitute the treasure. It was as an illuminated man that he showed the light to others. And so at this day, only a man in whom the true light shines can be a minister of Christ. But who has the light may spread the knowledge of the glory of God, and has a treasure better than silver and more to be desired than fine gold.

II. **THE EARTHEN VESSELS.** It was and is the custom of Orientals to keep valuables and money in jars which might be hid, and, in case of danger, might be buried underground. A mere earthen jar might thus contain an enormous treasure. Alluding to this, St. Paul pointed to his own body, hard pressed by labours and afflictions. His bodily presence was weak. He had no external advantages for making an impression on either Jews or Greeks. Yet in such an earthen vessel was contained a treasure beyond all computation, and not needing to have its worth enhanced by adventitious surroundings. If we think of the treasure as one of light—the light of the knowledge of God's glory—there is a story in the Old Testament which may illustrate the phrase. The followers of Gideon had their lamps in pitchers, or earthen vessels, when they stole a march on the invaders from Midian, and, with sound of trumpet and loud war-shouts, fell upon their camp. So, by the light in earthen vessels, with the trumpet-notes of their testimony, did the apostles and other early preachers assail and defeat those opposing powers of the world that would have laughed at their weakness. It is still the same. Gospel victories are gained, not by a great array of human might, but by the treasure of light in earthen vessels, and by the shout of faith that makes appeal to Heaven.

III. **THE POWER.** "That the excellency," etc. This corresponds to the previous expression, "excellency of the knowledge," and both illustrate an Hebraic form of the superlative. The excellency of the power was that surpassing energy which, in St. Paul's time, attended the ministry of the gospel, and bore down the most formidable opposition. The contrast between the power of the ministry and the weakness of the ministers struck the apostle in thinking of his own early labours at Corinth (see 1 Cor. ii. 1—5). It is a remarkable, and in some respects a mortifying, fact that the modern Christian ministry, with all its advantages of special training, public respect,

and perfect protection by law, shows less of conscience-convincing and heart-compelling power than the primitive ministry did when it was surrounded by difficulty and threatened with death. When it seemed weak, it was strong; and now that it seems strong, it is weak. As some explanation of this, it is only fair to admit that the modern ministry in Christendom has no longer the charm which lies in novelty. It has to be exercised where the terms and facts of our religion are already known, and the Holy Bible is the most widely circulated book. And when it goes to fresh fields, as India, China, or Japan, it has this disadvantage as compared with the apostolic ministry, that in those countries there is no such preparation for the gospel as there was in the countries and cities which were visited by St. Paul. The settlements of Jews, and the very considerable number of proselytes who knew the Old Testament in the Greek Version, and looked for a Messiah, gave an important facility to the Christian preacher, who formed out of them an intelligent nucleus round which to gather his converts from among the heathen; whereas now preachers must go to heathen communities that know not their language, and are wedded to religious conceptions quite different from those in which the missionaries have been trained, and, if there be Christians living among the heathen, holding office or in pursuit of commerce, too often they impede rather than promote the success of the gospel. All this may be recognized, and still it is true that the ministry might and should exert much more spiritual power everywhere than it does. Let prayer be made for this, since the power belongs to God, and only he can enable the ministers of his Word to overcome the dulness of religious routine as well as the hardness of anti-religious prejudice; to sober the frivolous; to abase the proud; to arrest minds that engross themselves with trifles, and recover those that have debased themselves with fleshly vice or avaricious deceit; to wound and to heal; to warn and to win; to kill and to make alive. Oh for power to prevail, to search the breasts of men, to make conscience start and hearts quiver, to reprove sin, to shatter vain excuses, to kindle new resolves and hopes! We cannot do it; but he who supplied all-sufficiency to St. Paul can supply it to us. "Our sufficiency is of God."—F.

Ver. 9.—"Cast down, but not destroyed." In ministering the Word, we need to play, if we may so speak, on various instruments of music. We take the silver trumpet when we would utter "the joyful sound." We take the harp when we show forth God's praise. What shall we take for encouragement and comfort to the weary? As a great poetess has it—

"Experience, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand."

Let us play on the dulcimer. A good man struggling with adversity has been the subject of many moral reflections. We want to go further than the moralist, and show how the mau of God is preserved in time of trouble. What heroism in the immortal Jew of Tarsus! All the sharp ordeal through which he passed—his personal disadvantages, the disparagement by false apostles jealous of his influence, the coldness of former friends when he was in bonds at Rome, the hardship and misconstruction under which his great work had been done,—all served only to bring out more fully the singleness of his aim and fortitude of his spirit—

"And give the world assurance of a man."

"Struck down, but not destroyed." Trouble threw him down, as one wrestler might throw another in the arena; but the cast was not mortal. He revived, for Christ lived in him. Nay; his sufferings increased his usefulness. No follower of Christ ever made such an impression on mankind, or did so much for the gospel, as this troubled, persecuted, perplexed, cast-down Paul of Tarsus. Times have changed. Religious liberty prevails. Gross forms of persecution for confessing Christ are prevented by law and condemned by public sentiment. But it does not follow that the course of a faithful Christian is made easy. It is often beset with difficulty, broken, and uneven. Good men are "cast down;" and it is painful to have the skin grazed, even when the bones are not broken. Under such disappointing experiences feeble souls are apt to become more timid and more querulous, while bolder natures grow selfish and cynical. These

last, if they have been struck down when grappling with something to them impracticable or forbidden, resolve to knock others down, and, if need be for their own interest, trample on them. But natures that are sweet and sound learn wisdom, consideration for others, and knowledge of themselves through hard experience. And hearts that trust in God have this joy in the worst defeat, that they are not, they cannot be, destroyed. Life is not wrecked by every trouble or by a score of troubles. A mistake may be the very making of a man, if he knows how to correct it. If the way is blocked in one direction, other paths are open. And if helpers fail and friends forsake, God still lives. We do not, indeed, conceal from ourselves that some overthrows cannot be quite remedied in this world; some losses are irreparable on earth, just as some diseases are incurable. But no Christian needs to be inconsolable. If he be stripped of ever so much that he valued, his best treasure remains, and is above the reach of worldly vicissitude. There is a good part which shall not be taken away. Thus life is always worth living. For a brave man it cannot be utterly wrecked by misfortune. For a devout man it cannot be shattered, though once and again struck down to the ground. The good Shepherd restores the soul. But many are the uses of adversity. Remember your faults and correct them; your mistakes, and avoid them; but do not waste time in vain regrets or temper in weak complaints. What purpose does it serve to brood over disappointment and "feed with sighs the passing wind"? How much better to gird up your purpose and make the best of what is left to you of time, strength, and opportunity! You may yet stand all the more firmly because of that casting down. The ill you have suffered may lead to higher good. "Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day." God knows how to give—

" Secret refreshings that repair your strength,
And fainting spirits uphold."

F.

Ver. 16.—*Inward renewal and outward decay.* The contrast here is not that which the apostle draws elsewhere between the flesh and the spirit, or the old man and the new. That is a moral distinction. But this is between the physical and the spiritual in man, the outward and palpable on the one hand, the inward and impalpable on the other. These are intimately connected. They have a constant sympathy. An aching body jades the mind; an aching mind jades the body. A healthy body invigorates the mind; a cheerful mind sustains the body. Each affects and is affected by the other. Yet there is sometimes witnessed a glorious mastery over outward disadvantages by the force of the inward man. The heroic mind is firm, even when the physical frame is shattered. And nothing is so productive of this heroism as faith. They who have "the same spirit of faith" as was in Paul "faint not."

I. OF INWARD RENEWAL. The case in view is that of a regenerate man. It is assumed that spiritual life has been received. And now it is shown that "the washing of regeneration" is followed by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Good men are liable to fits of inward fainting, languor, and emotional deadness, when they are in great danger of being overcome by temptation. Therefore they need to pray often for a stronger life. "Renew a right spirit within me." 1. *Wherein* is the inner man renewed? "In righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 24). And so in all spiritual strength—the power of resistance to sin, of self-denial, of patience, and of generous charitable action. 2. *Whereby* is the inner man renewed? By the power of God; by the energy of the Holy Ghost. It is he who, with the Word of truth, makes vivid demonstration of righteousness to the conscience, strengthens holy purpose in the will, and gives fervour to devout affections in the breast. 3. *How often* is the inner man renewed? "Day by day." Not that all days are alike. As a nation has its special dates in history, days by which its future has been moulded, on which its decisive battles were fought or its independence was won, so may a Christian man have his dates more or less clearly marked, outstanding and precious days by which his spiritual history has been determined, on which his fight of faith was well fought, and his liberty in Christ became established and sure. But while we recognize special days or eras of spiritual progress, we are disposed to say that in grace, as in nature, the ordinary is, after all, more expressive of Divine goodness than the extraordinary, and more essential to our welfare. The daily revival and maintenance of spiritual life is a

better and greater thing than any occasional and exceptional blessing. "He holdeth our souls in life." The strength, moral as well as physical, which is daily expended is also daily restored. John Bunyan makes the Christian pilgrim see a man secretly feeding with oil a fire on which another cast water, and the fire burned "hotter and hotter." The Interpreter explained it of Christ's secret and constant renewal of the sacred fire in "the souls of his people."

II. OF THE RELATION WHICH INWARD RENEWAL MAY BEAR TO OUTWARD DECAY. St. Paul was conscious of two changes—an outward descent to feebleness and earth, and an inward ascent to firmer strength and higher vitality. 1. *The inward defies the outward.* "Though our outward," etc. The constancy of the believing heart is all the more triumphant because of the feeble or decaying frame. What might of spirit has shown itself in tender women under acute suffering! What force of character and splendour of patience in men who scarcely had a day without bodily pain! 2. *The inward renewal is often helped forward by the outward decay.* It pleases God to further the spiritual life of his children in ways that are hard to flesh and blood. Indeed, we seldom see a keen relish for the things of the Spirit of God, a weaned spirit, a holy fervour—while the outward man is quite at ease and commands every gratification. There is need of trouble in the outer sphere to exercise and quicken the inner life. Bengel, near the end of his course, said to a friend, "Illnesses serve to quicken and enlarge us in spirit after we have been dwindling. When our spiritual lamp burns dimly, it is often because its wick needs retrenching; and retrenchments are made from time to time upon the outward man by sickness and affliction." Thus it is not merely "though," but also sometimes "because," our outward man perishes that our inward man is renewed. What a sad case is theirs whose outward man decays while there is no spiritual life in them! Time passes, health fails, life ebbs away, and there is nothing to put against it. The outward man perishes and the inward man perishes too. But why will ye die? The Lord wishes not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.—F.

Ver. 18.—*Seeing the unseen.* I. THE HABIT OF MIND HERE DESCRIBED. The apostle speaks, not of an act or effort, but of a steady mental habit which he had formed—an intentness of regard in a particular direction. He describes it in a form that sounds paradoxical, but the thing meant is well known to all experimental Christians. The things seen and not seen in this passage are not the visible and invisible by mortal eyes, as in Rom. i. 20. The things not seen in the verse before us are so, not because they cannot be seen, but because the time has not yet come for their manifestation. The things seen, from which St. Paul turned away his eyes, were the toils and afflictions endured by him as a servant of Christ. The things not seen were the rewards of faithful service at the coming of the Lord—the "weight of glory." And the habit here indicated is that of looking off from labours and sufferings to the glorious appearing of the Lord, and the bright "recompense of reward." It is the highest form of looking on the cheerful side of things. As this is a habit, it must be formed by degrees and by reiterated efforts. By bending the mind as much as we can towards the future with Christ, we must train it to habitual expectation and desire.

II. THE REASON ASSIGNED FOR FORMING THIS HABIT. "For the things which are seen are," etc. St. Paul reflected that "the sufferings of the present time" were, after all, of short continuance. The affliction he endured was only for a moment as compared with the eternity before him. So he felt that he would outlive and triumph over all his trials. They were temporal, and so could not reach into the life beyond or mar the hope laid up for him in heaven. Was not this the way with the Divine Master himself? For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame. And so should all who are his bear the cross and endure patiently, because the time will not be long and the things not seen are eternal.

III. THE BENEFITS WHICH ACCOMPANY OR FLOW FROM THIS HABIT WHEN FORMED. 1. *Elevation of the tone of life.* Life is as its motives are; and the motives come from the convictions, fears, and hopes that are strongest in the mind. A superficial religion has not power enough to cleanse the heart or ennoble the principles of conduct. But a formed habit of regarding the things eternal as those to which we hasten must raise and refine the character. "Every one who has this hope in him purifies himself, even

as he is pure." And this is no selfish hope, no egotistical ambition. It is the hope of being crowned along with all who love his appearing, and of being rewarded along with all the faithful servants of the King. 2. *Consolation in hardship and adversity.* Even when a lamp is not near enough to cast a clear light on our path, it is cheering to see it in a murky night; and so are we comforted as we look for the glory with Christ. We move towards it over ever so rugged a path. We steer towards it over ever so restless a sea. If we look at the things which are seen, the waves and the threatening rocks, we lose strength and courage; but with the eye fixed on the light of that blessed hope, we make straight for the harbour. 3. *Preparation for departure hence.* It is appointed to men to die. To take no thought about this appointment, and to occupy the mind with only the things that are seen, forgetting their transience, is to play the part of a fool. The wise man is he who, while fulfilling the duties of the passing time, looks much and steadily into the future, and so, when he departs, goes, not into regions unknown, but to the Saviour, whom he has loved and served, to wait with him and with all the saints for the resurrection and the glory.—F.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Full confidence in the power of the truth.* "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The great work of the Christian ministry is to set forth before men *the truth*. But we are not to understand by that term *all* truth or *any* truth. Reference is precisely to that truth about God, and his relations with men, which had been partially revealed before, and was fully disclosed in Jesus Christ the Saviour. That special truth had been committed to the trust of the apostles. They were to proclaim it freely to men, as they had or could make opportunity. And they were to be sure that God would make that truth his *power* unto men's salvation. Referring to the work of the modern ministry, it has been well said that we have not so much "to tell the truth as to make the truth tell." The apostle, in these verses, reminds us of some things that are necessary if we would efficiently set forth the gospel truth.

I. PERSEVERANCE. "We faint not." There must be no shrinking back in face of difficulties, no losing heart because things will not go smoothly, no wearying in our well-doing. St. Paul himself gave the noble example of what he enjoined. He did not count his life dear to him so that he might finish his course with joy. Succeed or fail, in strength or in weakness, he was "instant in season and out of season."

II. SIMPLICITY. The faithful minister will absolutely refuse all merely sensational aids to his work. He will wholly separate himself from worldly and guileful schemes for accomplishing his ends. He will refuse in any way to "do evil that good may come." It had been made an accusation against the apostle that he had shown craftiness and guile in his dealings with the Churches. This charge he most vigorously rebutted, and was led to urge that guilelessness is essential to the faithful minister, whose conduct and motives may be searched through and through. Illustration may be taken from the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He resorted to no arts, or schemes, or tricks, either of speech or of conduct. His work was simple. It was the living of a life, the delivery of a message, a genuine effort to bless and save men.

III. FAITH. In the witness which the truth ever makes, and the response to it which is always given by men's consciences. We may preach with this confidence—conscience will surely acknowledge the claim of God, and the guilt of sin, and the need of redemption. Men may indeed silence conscience and put away the truth, but we always have this assurance—the best and deepest in every man responds to our message.

IV. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF BEING UNDER GOD'S EYE. "In the sight of God." That Divine presence the minister realizes as the fulfilment of Christ's words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." There is a hardness and coldness about the idea that we should work "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." There is warmth, tender sympathy, and inspiration in the assurance that the spiritual "Man, Christ Jesus," is with us everywhere.

In conclusion, such points as these need careful treatment. 1. Is this confidence in the power of the truth justified by experience? 2. Does Christ's truth ever really stand in peril? 3. If so, from what sources or in what directions does the peril come? Agencies and organizations and human moulds imperil it, and in every age men are raised up who can set Christ's truth free from our human limitations and bondage.

The true revival is the freeing of the truth to win its own good way. We can have no ground for glorying comparable to this—"the Word of God is not bound."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—Christ as the Image of God. "The glorious gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God." From 1 Cor. xi. 7 we learn that there is a sense in which *man* is the "image and glory of God." In Col. i. 15 the Son of God is spoken of as the "Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature." The word used in our text is exactly equivalent to our word "likeness." "An image, or likeness, is a visible representation of an object. So Christ, in his humanity, is a visible representation of the unseen God. No revelation of the wisdom and power of God that man has received can compare with that made in the life, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Son." The point to which we ask attention is this—the gospel sets forth the glory of *Christ*. But, when it is rightly viewed, this is found to be the setting forth of the glory of *God*. For God can only be known in image and symbol; and this is the perfect and wholly satisfactory image, precisely adapted to our human faculties and necessities. Jesus Christ is the "Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his person." His sonship is the earthly presentation of the Divine fatherhood. The Son is the very image of the Father. Phillips Brooks well says, "This is the sum of the work of the Incarnation. A hundred other statements regarding it, regarding him who was incarnate, are true; but all statements concerning him hold their truth within this truth—that Jesus came to restore the fact of God's fatherhood to man's knowledge, and to its central place of power over man's life. Jesus is mysteriously the Word of God made flesh. He is the Worker of amazing miracles upon the bodies and the souls of men. He is the Convincer of sin. He is the Saviour by suffering. But, behind all these, as the purpose for which he is all these, he is the Redeemer of man into the fatherhood of God." Christ brings the light of God's fatherly love to shine on prodigal and sinful sons; that light wakens the old son-spirit in their hearts, and wins them home, in penitence and faith, to their heavenly Father. And just this is the mission of Christ and his gospel—to shine God's light into men's souls.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—Light from God and light on God. The new Revised Version makes an important alteration in this verse, reading it thus: "Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light [or, 'illumination'] of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

I. LIGHT FROM GOD IN CREATION. (Gen. i. 3.) The following points may be illustrated. 1. All material light, as a warming, life-giving, beautifying agent, is from God. 2. All moral light, as the intimation of what is good and right in the relationships of men, is from God. 3. All revelational light, as the unfolding of the mysteries belonging to God and his claim and mercy, must come directly from himself. On spiritual things man can have no knowledge, save as God is pleased freely to give it; and, on these higher themes, all light must be tempered to the capacity of those on whom it shines.

II. LIGHT ON GOD IN CHRIST. Calvin says of this verse, "A notable place, whence we learn that God is not to be investigated in his unsearchable height, for he inhabits the light unapproachable (1 Tim. vi. 16), but to be known as far as he reveals himself in Christ. . . . It is more useful for us to behold God as he appears in his only begotten Son than to investigate his secret essence." The face of Christ is said to reveal the glory of God, as the shining of Moses' face told of the splendour about the mount where he had been with God. But the glory of God is his redemption-work. That showed (1) pity, (2) love, (3) wisdom, (4) holy purpose; and all these we find in the face of Jesus Christ. Illustrate the power of expression, and the power of revealing thought and heart, that are in the human face, and then show how the face of the Lord Jesus reveals to us the "heart of God." Before Christ came God was a half-known, if not an unknown, God. And the incomplete conceptions of him involved, too often, imperfect and unworthy conceptions. We now know the "true God and eternal life" in the face of Jesus, his manifested Son—or rather, his manifested Self.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—Heavenly treasure in earthen vessels. "It was the practice of Eastern kings,

who stored up their treasures of gold and silver, to fill jars of earthenware with coin or bullion" (see Jer. xxxii. 14). To this custom allusion is made. St. Paul says that in these frail bodies of ours, with their limited faculties and powers, in these "earthen vessels" we have that priceless treasure, the knowledge of the glory of God as a Redeemer. Cecil says, "The meanness of the earthen vessel which conveys to others the gospel treasure takes nothing from the value of the treasure. A dying hand may sign a deed of incalculable value; a shepherd's boy may point out the way to a philosopher; a beggar may be the bearer of a valuable present." Three points claim attention.

I. THE TREASURE. This may be regarded as (1) a revelation, (2) as a gospel, (3) as a life. In either respect, the personal Christ being the very Centre and Essence of it, *he* is properly the Treasure. Christ himself is our most sacred Trust. We have the one Saviour for men committed to our care. Then how jealously we should guard the treasure! and how wisely we should put it to use!

II. THE NEED FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF THIS TREASURE. For it is not to be stored up in hiding-places, but somehow made the treasure of all men. It is a spiritual treasure, and needs some kind of material conveyance. Christ himself must be ministered to men by his disciples.

III. THE VESSELS FOUND FOR THE DUE CONVEYANCE OF THE TREASURE. Humbly spoken of as *earthly*, or as mere earthenware. Enlarging upon them beyond St. Paul's immediate thought in the use of the term, we may show (1) their frailty; (2) their fitness, especially in that they do not take away the honour that is due to the treasure by directing attention to themselves; (3) their safety, since God, who guards the treasure, will guard the vessel that holds it; (4) their usefulness, as the human agency commends the heavenly truth; and (5) their reward, for God will surely commend those who, in such a trust, are found faithful.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Suffering showing forth character.* It has been said that "affliction" is the one predominant word in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. And perhaps no other Epistle is so charged with wounded personal feeling and reminiscences of varied suffering. This may be explained by the circumstances under which this letter was written. Perhaps we do not sufficiently realize how much personal suffering, from disease and bodily infirmity, the apostle had to endure; and yet this is evidently the key to many of his intense expressions. Either from constitutional weakness, or in consequence of his many exposures, he had upon him some painful and humiliating form of disease, which was incurable; and this his enemies made the occasion of scorn and insult, until they wounded him to the very quick, and drove him to the throne of grace, seeking, with threefold importunity, to have the "thorn in the flesh" removed. When we apprehend this, we begin to feel the meaning of our text; he was "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus:" pain, disease, suffering—like a daily dying—brought on him in the fulfilment of his ministry for the Lord Jesus. But St. Paul never dwelt long on the merely sad side of things, and so he goes on to say—Even if our life on earth be like the dying of the Lord Jesus, this also is true, through our very suffering and dying, the life of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal flesh and earthly spheres. "St. Paul felt that every true human soul must repeat Christ's existence. He could bear to look on his decay; it was but the passing of the human; and, meantime, there was ever going on within him the strengthening of the Divine. Pain was sacred, since Christ also had suffered. And life became grand when viewed as a repetition of the life of Christ."

I. ST. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF OUR LORD'S LIFE. It had been a daily dying which nevertheless showed up himself, in the glory of his character and spirit. The dying manifested to men the life that was in him. St. Paul had, probably, never seen Christ in the flesh, but it was given to him, by his fellowship of suffering, to understand better than all the rest what a suffering Saviour Jesus was. It is St. Paul who writes so much about the *cross* of the Lord Jesus. He dwells oftener than any other early teacher upon our Lord's death, but when you apprehend his meaning, you find that he looked upon Christ's whole life as a dying. He saw that Jesus was every day dying to self, dying with shame, pain, exhaustion, conflict, and agony. And you do not read Christ's life aright unless you can see in it what St. Paul saw, even humiliation, limitation, suffering, burdening it every day. But that was not all St. Paul's conception

of Christ. In that, standing alone, he could have found no rest, no inspiration. He saw also this, that our Lord's sufferings were just the dark background that threw out so perfectly, with such well-defined lines and graceful forms, his noble spirit, his Divine character, his sublime sonship, his blessed life. And so he could speak calmly, even triumphantly, of the suffering Saviour, and glory in the dying of the Lord Jesus, through which the life of Jesus found its highest and best manifestations. How much a picture depends upon its background! Fill the front with the most exquisite figures or landscape, still all the tone and character and impression of the figure will depend upon its background. You may so paint as to leave the forms and figures indistinct and uncertain. You may throw out into prominence the special thought or truth which you seek to embody in form; your picture may be calm morning, hot noonday, flushed evening, tender twilight, or gathering night, according to your background. St. Paul felt what shadows of suffering and woe lay all behind that life of his Lord; but they helped him to see the glory of Christ himself; they seemed to bring out so clearly the Divine and blessed life that was in him. Illustrate by the language of Isa. liii. and Phil. ii. 5—11. Also from the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect, to our view, through suffering.

II. **St. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF HIS OWN LIFE.** He could wish nothing better for himself than that what was true of Christ might be true of him, and that his sufferings, too, might show up his character and help to make him a blessing and a power for good. St. Paul never could glory in mere suffering. Suffering is grievance and loss. But if they could be like Christ's sufferings, not merely borne for him, and in the doing of his work, but actually like his, and ordained by God to be the same to him, and to others through him, as Jesus' sufferings did! The apostle felt he could glory in that. And this is the view of suffering that we also need to gain. Our troubles and sorrows are as the dying of the Lord Jesus. Once laying hold of this, we find that we have one thing to be supremely anxious about—it is that our dying shall show up Christ's life in us, shall make the Christly virtues and graces manifest in our mortal flesh. We have our sorrows. Does our character shine out clearly on the darkness of them? Do men see and feel our "whiteness" by the contrast of them? Are we beautiful with a Divine patience, and fragrant with a Divine sweetness, in the very darkness? On the background of our pain do men see our submission? In the hour of our disappointment do we show up to men our trust in God? When heart and flesh fail does the sanctifying Spirit of Christ make our very faces glow with the heavenly light? Is it true of us that the "life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh"?—R. T.

Ver. 16.—The outward and the inward man. For the word "perish" in this verse, the Revised Version reads "is decaying." "Outward man" is the body, "inward man" is the soul, so far as the terms may be understood by anybody. "Outward man" is the whole sphere of the senses and the flesh; "inward man" is the whole sphere of the moral, the spiritual, the Divine, the eternal, so far as the terms may be apprehended by the quickened and regenerate of mankind. The "outward man" is man related to the "seen and temporal;" the "inward man" is man related to the "unseen and eternal." And what the apostle so plainly says in our text is this—the "outward man," the material framework of the body, and the whole circle of purely human and earthly relations, are yielding to a gradual process of decay, and soon they must all pass away. But the "inward man," the spiritual life, the very man himself, is day by day rising, through successive stages of renewal, to yet higher life. And the very decayings of the body and of the earthly surroundings bear directly upon the nourishment and growth of the soul's life, and so upon the soul's future. This is the thought which is set before us for our consideration, and we begin with that familiar truth on which the statement of the text rests.

I. **BODY-LIFE AND SOUL-LIFE BOTH DEPEND ON NOURISHMENT, ON FOOD.** This is the law of all created life. Angels live on angels' food. Souls live on appropriate souls' food. And bodies live by meat and drink and air. Science tells us that bodily life, health, fatness, and vigour directly depend on the character and quantity and appropriateness of the food supplied. Given vitality and freedom from active disease, and any bodily result that is desired can be obtained by giving flesh-forming, or bone-forming, or brain-making foods. And the health, the vigour, and the work of our

soul's life just as directly depend upon the food with which it is nourished. Would you get more good work out of your souls? Then you must feed them better. Do you expose your souls to much peril? Then you must improve and increase their food. We may speak of the soul's life as being *faith* and *love*, and as having for its natural expression *worship* and *work*. Then the soul's food which we provide must bear, in the most direct and efficient way, on these four things. Here is a most practical problem for each one of us to solve in our daily life—What will nourish into the fullest health and strength my soul's faith and my soul's love? What will strengthen the soul's brain and heart for holy worship, for prayer and praise, and the soul's muscle and nerve for holy work? As life unfolds there come to us all times of special stress and strain. Business has its unusual anxieties. Home has its unusual cares. Decisions of grave importance have to be made, and we too easily forget at such times that we need better soul-food; we must be oftener at the secret sources of spiritual nourishment; we must find out how strong they can become who eat of the tree of life, who partake of that Bread of life which satisfies, and that "flesh and blood" which are "meat indeed and drink indeed."

II. NOURISH THE BODY-LIFE HOW WE MAY, IT IS WEARING DOWN TO DECAY AND DEATH. "The outward man perishes." "The fashion of this world passeth away." All the feeding, all the nourishing, all the fresh air, cannot keep the bodily powers working over-long; for soon the sight grows dim, and the hearing fails, and the taste palls, and the hands tremble, and the breath goes hard, and the limbs totter, and then the golden bowl is broken at the fountain, and man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets. There is a fixed limit beyond which the body cannot go. None of us can with impunity exert ourselves beyond the limits of our physical strength, for gradually, as the years pass on, our vital force is lowered, our recuperative power fails, the body is really decaying and wasting down to helplessness and death. But why should we trouble because we cannot feed these bodies of ours into a strength that shall resist disease and old age, and make our years last through all the generations? They are not *us*. They are but the machinery, the agency, the sphere, of our sublime moral trial. They may last no longer than is needed for the perfecting of the trial. I shall not want this frail body, with its limited senses and relations, nor shall I want this "over sin-burdened earth," when God sees that my moral trial is over; when he has found out, by this practical experiment, what I really am. I can see them both pass away, and enter God's spiritual and incorruptible body—the glorified counterpart of this body I now have—which is fashioned akin to the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

III. NOURISH THE SOUL-LIFE, AND IT WILL GROW ON FOR EVER. For there are no forces that can touch the regenerate soul to destroy it. "I give unto them eternal life," He said who brought life and immortality to light by His gospel, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Law, Satan, sin, temptation, worldly atmospheres, death, and hell cannot hurt the soul whose vitality is well nourished and maintained. Take food for the body, and its service is soon spent. Take food for the soul, and its service never can be spent; it becomes a permanent element of good; it has gone to the making of character, which death has no power to touch. There are, indeed, varieties of religious experience, ups and downs of religious feeling. We may encrust our lives with worldliness, we may feed our souls with nothing but the luxuries of human pleasure, and if we do so we must suffer, and bitterly suffer. Great diseases and calamities may come to us as cleansing and correcting processes. But God will not let the soul-growth be permanently hindered. If we will not make the soul thrive by the food of truth, and duty, and worship, and prayer, and fellowship, then he will make it thrive by the medicine of pain, and distress, and humiliation, and bereavement, and loss; but thrive and grow it shall. "The inward man [shall be] renewed day by day."

IV. THE VERY WEARING DOWN, SUFFERING, DEGRADING, AND DYING OF THE BODY-LIFE ARE MADE AGENTS IN NOURISHING THE SOUL'S LIFE. St. Paul goes on from our text to say, "For our light affliction . . . worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." How bright and hopeful that bruised, worn, suffering apostle always was! He even found it in his heart to glory in his infirmities, because, the weaker he was, the more of Christ's power must rest on him and work through him. The outward

man perishes, but he is not going to be sad or to faint about it, since the inward man is renewed day by day. And Paul says that there is such an intimate relation between these two that, by the dying of the one, the life of the other is actually furthered. Our light afflictions and our testing death are even made food for our soul's growth. We may thrive upon our very woes. Trial, toil, struggle, weariness, frailty, pain, bereavement, all the body can know of sorrow and care, are the soul's food. It lives by them. It thrives on them. It steps up toward heaven with the help of them. "Out of the eater it brings forth meat; out of the strong it brings forth sweetness."—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*The Christian estimate of affliction.* There is a passionate intensity, a kind of extravagance, in these words, which we often notice in the utterances of the noble but impulsive apostle. High feeling, strained emotion, are often helpful in our religious experiences. They lift us, as on a great wave, over the bar of difficulty. They help us in the doing of duty, and they lighten the burden of our sorrow. Our hymns and sacred poems are often the expression of such high emotions as are only felt by the best of men in their best of times; but they are an inspiration and a joy to us, though they may be beyond our actual attainment. In this way we may get gracious help through our text. The context refers to ministerial troubles, but troubles are our common human lot, and if we had to choose what form they should take for us, we should make sad mistakes. Concerning the blessings wrought by affliction we have remarkable Scripture testimonies. Moses would rather "suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." David says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now will I keep thy word." Solomon tells us that it is "better to go into the house of mourning than into the house of feasting." And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Our text suggests what estimate the child of God may and ought to make of afflictions, and he may judge them as regards *weight, time, and influence.*

I. AS TO THEIR WEIGHT. He may call them "light afflictions." This is apparently untrue. Surely Job, and Jacob, and Naomi, and David, and Martha and Mary could never call theirs "light afflictions." It is truly said that "no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous." It seems impossible to call such a catalogue of woes as is given us in ch. xi. 23—27 "light afflictions." And yet this is the deeper truth, and we may see that it is if we weigh our troubles in fair balances: (1) in the balances of our deservings; (2) in the balances of comparison with the sufferings of others; and (3) in the balances of consequences, for out of sorrow comes spiritual health. Both knowledge and faith may help us to call our affliction "light."

II. AS TO THEIR TIME. "But for a moment." This also is apparently untrue. Joseph cannot call those weary prison years "but a moment." The captives in Babylon, worn out with hope deferred, hung their harps upon the willows because they could sing no longer. They could not call their captivity "but for a moment." And we can never call "short" those dreadful six hours of agony borne by our Lord upon the cross. And yet this also is the deepest truth. In comparison with life itself it is. Our times of suffering are few, of joy are many; they lie together in something of the proportion of streams and fields. Then, too, it is the actual fact that in our suffering times only brief moments bring unbearable pain. And it is found that the worst pain is the least remembered; it passes, and we cannot even recall it, so as to suffer it over again in imagination. And earthly suffering is truly but for a moment if it be compared with the eternity of joy into which it leads us.

III. AS TO THEIR INFLUENCE. "Working a . . . weight of glory." It is as important that we should be prepared for the glory as that the glory should be prepared for us. St. Paul's idea of glory is what is done by affliction in the Christian himself. And amongst the things wrought in the Christian character and life we may note these. 1. *Patience*—the power to be quiet and wait. 2. *Trust*—the full committal of our keeping to God. 3. *Holiness*—the deliverance from the enslaving power of evil. 4. *The sanctifying of human relationships*, which nothing makes so tender and so true as does our sharing in common sorrows. 5. *And the renewal of Christian activity; for affliction is the time when we may seriously review the past, and make earnest resolves for the days to come.*—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Continuation of the topic that hope is the chief support of the preacher of the gospel (vers. 1—10). Their self-sacrifice in preaching the gospel of reconciliation (vers. 11—21).

Vers. 1—10.—*The hope of the future life is the great support of our efforts.*

Ver. 1.—*For.* A further explanation of the hope expressed in ch. iv. 17. We know. This accent of certainty is found only in the Christian writers. Our earthly house. Not the "house of clay" (Job iv. 19), but the house which serves us as the home of our souls on earth; as in 1 Cor. xv. 40. Of this tabernacle; literally, *the house of the tent*; i. e. the tent of our mortality, the mortal body. In 2 Pet. i. 13, 14 it is called *skenoma*, and the expression, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," is literally, "he tabernacled among us"—he wore "a tent like ours and of the same material." The figure would be specially natural to one whose occupation was that of a tentmaker. Compare—

"Here in the body pent,
Afar from him I roam,
But nightly pitch my wandering tent
A day's march nearer home."

A very similar expression occurs in Wisd. ix. 15, "*The earthly tabernacle (σκήνος) weigheth down the mind.*" Be dissolved; rather, *be taken to pieces.* A building. Something more substantial than that moving tenement. Of God; literally, *from God*; namely, not one of the "many mansions" spoken of in John xiv. 2, but the resurrection-body furnished to us by him. We have this building from God, for it exists now, and shall be ours at the same time that our tent-home is done away with. Not made with hands. Not like those tent-dwellings at which St. Paul was daily toiling with the hands which ministered to his own necessities. In the heavens. To be joined with "we have." Heaven is our general home and country (Heb. xi. 16), but the present allusion is to the glorified bodies in which our souls shall live in heaven (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 42—49).

Ver. 2.—*In this we groan.* Since we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, who assures us of that future building from God, we, in this earthly tent, "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23). To be clothed upon; rather, *to further clothe ourselves with.* Here the metaphors of a tent and a garment—the "wandering tent" and the "mortal vesture of decay"—are interfused in a manner on

which only the greatest writers can venture. The corruptible yearns to clothe itself with the incorruptible, the mortal with immortality (1 Cor. xv. 53). The glorified body is compared to an over-garment. House; rather, *habitation (οικήτηριον).*

Ver. 3.—*If so be that.* The verse may be rendered, "If, that is, being clothed, we shall not be found naked." The word "naked" must then mean "bodiless," and the reference will be to those whom, at his coming, Christ shall find clothed in these mortal bodies, and not separated from them, i. e. quick and not dead (1 Thess. iv. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 51). This seems to be the simplest and most natural of the multitude of strange interpretations with which the pages of commentators are filled. It is true that the aorist *endusamenoi*, means literally, "having clothed ourselves," and that, in taking this meaning, we should have expected the perfect participle *endedumenoι*, having been clothed. If this be thought an insuperable difficulty, we must suppose the verse to mean "If, that is, in reality we shall be found [at Christ's coming] after having put on some intermediate body, and therefore not as mere disembodied spirits." But there is no allusion in Scripture to any intermediate body, nor is any gleam of light shed on the mode of life among the dead between death and resurrection, though the Church rejects the dream of Psychopannychia, or an interval of unconscious sleep. The uncertainty of the meaning is increased by two various readings, *ei per* instead of *ei ge*, which latter expresses greater doubt about the matter; and *ekdusamenoi* (D, F, G), which would mean "if in reality, after unclathing ourselves [i. e. after 'shuffling off this mortal coil'], we shall not be found naked." This seems to be the conjecture of some puzzled copyists, who did not see that a contrast, and not a coincidence, between the two expressions is intended. If this reading were correct, it would mean, as Chrysostom says, "Even if we would lay aside the body, we shall not there be presented without a body, but with the same body which has then become incorruptible." It is quite untenable to make "clothed" mean "clothed with righteousness," as Olshausen does. In the Talmud, 'Shabbath' (f. 152, 2), the righteous are compared to men who keep from stain the robes given them by a king (i. e. their bodies), which robes the king deposits in his treasury and sends the wearers away (bodiless) in peace; but foolish servants stain these robes, and the king sends the robes to the wash, and the wearers to prison.

Ver. 4.—*For we that are, etc.*; literally, *for indeed we who are in the tent*; i. e. in the

transitory mortal body. Do groan. "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). Being burdened. "The corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things" (Wisd. ix. 15). Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon; more literally, *since we do not wish to strip off (our bodily garment) but to put another garment over it*. St. Paul here repudiates the Manichean notion that the body is a disgrace, or in itself the source of evil. He was not like Plotinus, who "blushed that he had a body;" or like St. Francis of Assisi, who called his body "my brother the ass;" or like the Curé d'Arns, who (as we have said) spoke of his body as "ce cadavre." He does not, therefore, desire to get rid of his body, but to "clothe it over" with the garment of immortality. Incidentally this implies the wish that he may be *alive* and not *dead* when the Lord returns (1 Cor. xv. 35—54). Mortality; rather, *the mortal*; that which is mortal. Might be swallowed up of life. As in the case of Enoch (Gen. v. 24) and Elijah (2 Kings ii. 11), who entered into life otherwise than through "the grave and gate of death." St. Paul wishes to enter the "building from God" without having been first buried in the collapses of the "soul's dark cottage battered and decayed." He desires to put on the robe of immortality without stripping off the rent garb of the body.

Ver. 5.—He who hath wrought us for the selfsame thing. God prepared and perfected us for this very result, namely, to put on the robe of immortality. The earnest (see ch. i. 22). The quickening life imparted by the Spirit of life is a pledge and part payment of the incorruptible eternal life. The Spirit is "the Earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 14; iv. 30).

Ver. 6.—Therefore we are always confident; literally, *being of good courage*. The sentence in the Greek is unfinished (an anacoluthon), but is resumed after the parenthesis by the repetition, "we are of good courage." *Always* (ch. iv. 8). We are at home in the body. The tent is pitched in the desert, and even the pillar of fire can only shine through its folds. Yet the tent may become brighter and brighter as life goes on.

"To me the thought of death is terrible,
Having such hold on life. To you it is not
More than a step into the open air
Out of a tent already luminous
With light which shines through its transparent folds."

(Longfellow.)

Absent from the Lord (John xiv. 2, 3). Christ is indeed with us here and always; but the

nearness of presence and the clearness of vision in that future life will be so much closer and brighter, that here, by comparison, we are absent from him altogether.

Ver. 7.—For we walk by faith (oh. iv. 18; Heb. xi. 1; Rom. viii. 25). Not by sight; rather, *not by appearance; not by anything actually seen*. We do not yet see "face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12), but are guided by things which "eye hath not seen."

Ver. 8.—To be absent, etc.; literally, *to be away from the home of the body, but to be at home with the Lord*. To be present with the Lord. The hope expressed is exactly the same as in Phil. i. 23, except that here (as in ver. 4) he expresses a desire not "to depart," but to be quit of the body without the necessity for death.

Ver. 9.—We labour; literally, *we are emulous*. This, says Bengel, is "the sole legitimate ambition." The same word occurs in Rom. xv. 20. Whether present or absent; literally, *whether at home or away from home*; i.e. whether with Christ or separated from him (as in ver. 8); or, "whether in the body or out of the body" (as in ver. 6). The latter would resemble 1 Thess. v. 10, "That *whether we wake or sleep we may live with him*." We may be accepted of him; literally, *to be well-pleasing to him*.

Ver. 10.—We must all appear; rather, *for it is necessary that we must all be made manifest*; that we must be shown in our real nature and character. The verb is not the same as in Rom. xiv. 10, which occurs in ch. iv. 14. Before the judgment-seat of Christ. The special final judgment is represented as taking place before the *bema* of Christ, although in Rom. xiv. 10 the best reading is "of God" (Matt. xxv. 31, 32). St. Paul might naturally use this Roman and Greek idea of the *bema*, being too familiar with it in his own experience (comp. Acts xii. 21; xviii. 12; xxv. 6; Rom. xiv. 10). The things done in the body; literally, *the things (done) by the instrumentality of the body*. Another reading (which only differs by a single letter from this) is, "the proper things of the body" (τὰ ἴδια τοῦ σώματος); i.e. the things which belong to it, which it has made its own. St. Paul, always intent on one subject at a time, does not stop to co-ordinate this law of natural retribution and inexorable Nemesis with that of the "forgiveness of sins" (1 Cor. v. 11; Rom. iii. 25), or with the apparently universal hopes which he seems sometimes to express (Rom. v. 17, 18; xi. 32). *Omnia exeunt in mysterium*. According to that he hath done; rather, *with reference to the things he did*. The *arist* shows that all life will be as it were concentrated to one point. The Pelagians raised questions on this verse about the sinlessness of infants, etc., all of which

may be left on one side, as probably nothing was more absolutely distant from the thoughts of St. Paul. Observe that each is to receive the natural issue of what he has done. There is to be an analogy between the sin and the retribution. The latter is but the ripe fruit of the former. We shall be punished by the action of natural laws, not of arbitrary inflictions. We shall reap what we have sown, not harvests of other grain (Rom. ii. 5—11; Rev. xxii. 12; Gal. vi. 7). Whether it be good or bad. St. Paul, who always confines himself to one topic at a time, does not here enter on the question of the cutting off of the entailed curse by repentance and forgiveness. He leaves unsolved the antinomy between normal inevitable consequence and free remission.

Vers. 11—19.—*Self-devotion of the ministry of reconciliation.*

Ver. 11.—Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Multitudes of texts have been torn from their context and grossly abused and misinterpreted, but few more so than this. It is the text usually chosen by those who wish to excuse a setting forth of God under the attributes of Moloch. With any such views it has not the remotest connection. It simply means, "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men," either "to keep in view the same fear of the Lord as ourselves," or (reverting to his last assertion of his own sincerity and integrity in ver. 9), "that our sole ambition is to please God." The rendering, "the terror of the Lord," for the every-day expression, "the fear of the Lord," was wantonly intruded into modern versions by Beza, and has not a single word to be said in its favour. The phrase means (as always) not the dread which God inspires, but the holy fear which mingles with our love of him. To teach men to regard God with *terror* is to undo the best teaching of all Scripture, which indeed has too often been the main end of human systems of theology.

We persuade men. Not in a bad sense (Gal. i. 10). The attacks and calumnies of enemies make it necessary to vindicate our integrity to men; but we have no need to do so to God, because he already knows us (comp. "*persuading* Blastus," Acts xii. 20). We are made manifest unto God; rather, *but to God we have been (and are) manifested.* He needs no self-defence from us. Are made manifest in your consciences; *but I hope that I have been, and am now, made manifest in your consciences.* In other words, I trust that this apology into which you have driven me has achieved its ends; and that, whatever may be your prejudices and innuendoes, before the bar of the individual *conscience* of each of you we now stand clear (comp. ch. iv. 2).

Ver. 12.—For we commend not ourselves again unto you. Still reverting to the charge that he was guilty of self-praise, he says that his object is not this, for it was needless (ch. iii. 2, 3). *But give you occasion to glory on our behalf.* But we speak as we have done to give you a starting-point for something to boast of on our behalf. He has already said (ch. i. 4) that the teachers and the taught in their mutual affection ought to have some ground for "boasting" (*i.e.* for speaking with some praise and exultation) of each other. The Corinthians were being robbed of this by the interested lies of St. Paul's opponents, who thought only about outward appearances. This is why he has set forth to them the aim and glory of his ministry. Nothing could be more gentle and forbearing than such a mode of stating his object. Yet for those who were sufficiently finely strung to understand it, there was an almost pathetic irony involved in it. Which glory in appearance, and not in heart; literally, *in face.* The grounds of their boasting, whatever they were, were superficial and external (ch. x. 7), not deep and sincere. But those who would judge of Paul aright must look into his very heart, and not on his face.

Ver. 13.—For whether we be beside ourselves; rather, *for whether we were mad.* Evidently some person or some faction had said of St. Paul, "He is beside himself," just as Feetus said afterwards, "Paul, thou art mad," and as the Jews said of Paul's Lord and Master (John x. 20). The fervour of the apostle, his absorption in his work, his visions and ecstasies, his "speaking with tongues more than they all," his indifference to externals, his bursts of emotion, might all have given colour to this charge, which he here ironically accepts. "Mad or self-controlled—all was for your sakes." It is to God; rather, *for God.* My "enthusiasm," "exaltation," or, if you will, my "madness," was but a phase of my work for him. We be sober. The word "sober" (*sôphrôn*) is derived from two words which mean "to save the mind." It indicates wise self-control, such as was represented also by the many-sided Latin word *frugi*. It is the exact antithesis to madness (Acts xxvi. 25). What you call my "madness" belongs to the relation between my own soul and God; my practical sense and tact are for you. For your sakes; literally, *for you.*

Ver. 14.—The love of Christ. It matters little whether this be interpreted as a subjective genitive, "Christ's love to man," or as an objective genitive, "our love to Christ;" for the two suppose and interfuse each other. St. Paul's usage, however, favours the former interpretation (ch. xiii. 14; 1 Cor. xvi. 24). *Constraineth.* The word means that it com-

presses us, and therefore keeps us irresistibly to one object (Luke xii. 50). That if one died for all, then were all dead. This is an unfortunate mistranslation and wrong reading for *that one died for all, therefore all died*. What compels Paul to sacrifice himself to the work of God for his converts is the conviction, which he formed once for all at his conversion, that One, even Christ, died on behalf of all men (Rom. v. 15—19) a redeeming death (ver. 21); and that, consequently, in that death, all *potentially* died with him—died to their life of sin, and rose to the life of righteousness. The best comments on this bold and concentrated phrase are—"I died to the Law that I might live to Christ;" "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 19, 20); and, "Ye died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). When Christ died, all humanity, of which he was the federal Head, died potentially with him to sin and selfishness, as he further shows in the next verse.

Ver. 15.—*Unto themselves*. That they should live no longer the psychic, *i.e.* the animal, selfish, egotistic life, but to their risen Saviour (Rom. xiv. 7—9; 1 Cor. vi. 19).

Ver. 16.—*Know no man after the flesh*. It is a consequence of my death with Christ that I have done with carnal, superficial, earthly, external judgments according to the appearance, and not according to the heart. Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh. The word for "know" is different from the one just used (*oida, seio; εγνωκα, cognovi*), and may be rendered, "though we have taken note of." The whole phrase, which has been interpreted in multitudes of different ways, and has led to many different hypotheses, must be understood in accordance with the context. St. Paul is saying that he has now renounced all mere earthly and human judgments; and he here implies that the day has been (whether—which is a very unlikely view—before his conversion, when he looked on Christ as a "deceiver," or just after his conversion, when possibly he may only have known him partially as the *Jewish* Messiah) when he knew Christ only in this fleshly way; but henceforth he will know him so no more. Probably this "knowing Christ after the flesh" is a rebuke to those members of the Christ party at Corinth who may have boasted that they were superior to all others because they had personally seen or known Christ—a spirit which Christ himself not only discouraged (John xvi. 7) but even rebuked (Matt. xii. 50). To St. Paul Christ is now regarded as far above all local, national, personal, and Jewish limitations, and as the principle of spiritual life in the heart of every Christian. In the view which he took of his Lord St. Paul henceforth has banished all Jewish particu-

larism for gospel catholicity. He regards Christ, not in the light of earthly relationships and conditions, but as the risen, glorified, eternal, universal Saviour.

Ver. 17.—*Therefore*. If even a human, personal, external knowledge of Christ is henceforth of no significance, it follows that there must have been a total change in all relations towards him. The historic fact of such a changed relationship is indicated clearly in John xx. 17. Mary Magdalene was there lovingly taught that a "recognition of Christ after the flesh," *i.e.* as merely a human friend, was to be a thing of the past. In Christ; *i.e.* a Christian. For perfect faith attains to mystic union with Christ. A new creature; rather, a new creation (Gal. vi. 15). The phrase is borrowed from the rabbis, who used it to express the condition of a proselyte. But the meaning is not mere Jewish arrogance and exclusiveness, but the deep truth of spiritual regeneration and the new birth (John iii. 3; Eph. ii. 10; iv. 23, 24; Col. iii. 3, etc.). Old things; literally, *the ancient things*, all that belongs to the old Adam. Behold. The word expresses the writer's vivid realization of the truth he is uttering. All things. The whole sphere of being, and therewith the whole aim and character of life. The clause illustrates the "new creation."

Ver. 18.—*And all things are of God*; literally, *but all things* (in this "new creation") *are from God*. Who hath reconciled us; rather, *who* (by Christ's one offering of himself) *reconciled us to himself*. We were his enemies (Rom. v. 10; xi. 28), but, because he was still our Friend and Father, he brought us back to himself by Christ. The ministry of reconciliation. The ministry which teaches the reconciliation which he has effected for us.

Ver. 19.—*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*. This and the many other passages of Scripture which always represent the atonement as the work of the blessed Trinity, and as being the result of the love, not of the wrath, of God, ought to have been a sufficient warning against the hideous extravagance of those forensic statements of the atonement which have disgraced almost a thousand years of theology (Rom. v. 10; 1 John iv. 10). That God's purpose of mercy embraced all mankind, and not an elect few, is again and again stated in Scripture (see Col. i. 20). Not imputing their trespasses unto them. See this developed in Rom. xv. 5—8. Hath entrusted unto us; literally, *who also deposited in us*, as though it were some sacred treasure.

Ver. 20.—*Now then*. It is, then, on Christ's behalf that we are ambassadors. This excludes all secondary aims. St. Paul uses the

same expression in Eph. vi. 20, adding with fine contrast that he is "an ambassador in fetters." As though God did beseech you by us; rather, as if God were exhorting you by our means. In Christ's stead; rather, we, on Christ's behalf, beseech you. Be ye reconciled to God. This is the sense of the embassy. The aorist implies an immediate acceptance of the offer of reconciliation.

Ver. 21.—He hath made him to be sin for us; rather, he made; he speaks with definite reference to the cross. The expression is closely analogous to that in Gal. iii. 13, where it is said that Christ has been "made a curse for us." He was, as St. Augustine says, "delictorum susceptor, non commissior." He knew no sin; nay, he was the very righteousness, holiness itself (Jer. xxiii. 6), and yet, for our benefit, God made him to be "sin" for us, in that he "sent him in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin" (Rom. viii. 3). Many have understood the word "sin" in the sense of sin offering (Lev. v. 9, LXX.); but that is a precarious applica-

tion of the word, which is not justified by any other passage in the New Testament. We cannot, as Dean Plumptre says, get beyond the simple statement, which St. Paul is content to leave in its unexplicable mystery, "Christ identified with man's sin; man identified with Christ's righteousness." And thus, in Christ, God becomes Jshovah-Tsidkenu, "the Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6). That we might be made the righteousness of God in him; rather, that we might become. The best comment on the pregnant significance of this verse is Rom. i. 16, 17, which is developed and explained in so large a section of that great Epistle (see iii. 22—25; iv. 5—8; v. 19, etc.). In him In his blood is a means of propitiation by which the righteousness of God becomes the righteousness of man (1 Cor. i. 30), so that man is justified. The truth which St. Paul thus develops and expresses is stated by St. Peter and St. John in a simpler and less theological form (1 Pet. ii. 22—24; 1 John iii. 5).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Christian knowledge concerning the future body of the good.* "For we know that if our earthly house," etc. Two things are to be noticed at the outset. 1. *Metaphorical representations of the body.* The body is here spoken of under the figure of a "tabernacle" or a tent, and of a vestment or clothing. These two things would not be so distinct in the mind of the apostle as they are in ours, for both had the same qualities of *movableness* and *protection*. The "house" to which the apostle refers was not a building of bricks or stone, a superstructure that would be stationary, but a mere tent to be carried about. 2. *The implied necessity of the body.* Paul's language implies that the body is a clothing or protection. As a clothing, or protection, for the soul it is necessary, both here and in the other world. The soul must have an organ wherever it is. Now what does the Christian know concerning the future body?

I. He knows it will be **BETTER THAN THE PRESENT.** 1. It will be directly Divine. "A building of God." The present body is from God, but it comes from him through secondary instrumentalities. The future body will come direct, it will not be transmitted from sire to son. 2. It will be fitted for a higher sphere. "In the heavens." The present body is fitted for the earthly sphere, it is of the "earth, earthy." The future will be fitted for the more ethereal, and celestial. 3. It will be more enduring. "Eternal." This body is like the tent, temporary; it has no firm foundation; it is shaken by every gust. We "perish before the moth." The future body will be eternal, free from the elements of decay. 4. It will be more enjoyable. "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," etc. In this body we "groan, being burdened." To what pains and diseases is the present body subject! By implication the apostle states the future body will be free from all this, for all that is mortal will be "swallowed up of life." In that body there will be no groaning, no sighs or sorrows, no burden, no weight to depress the energies or to impede progress. The future body will be more fitted to receive the high things of God, and more fitted to communicate them also.

II. He knows he is now **BEING DIVINELY FITTED FOR THE BETTER BODY OF THE FUTURE.** "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." Every seed has its own body; it is the seed that makes the body; the organization does not produce the life, but the life the organization. And this spiritual life in man God is now preparing to pass into a higher body. Just as the chrysalis is being fitted to struggle into an organization with higher appe-

tencies, more exquisite in form, and with faculties that shall bear it into mid-heaven
When will you have this body? When your soul has the life-energy to produce it.

Vers. 8—10.—*The philosophy of courage.* “We are confident, I say,” etc. Paul says we are courageous, or of good courage. Courage is often confounded with recklessness of life, a brutal insensibility to danger. True courage always implies two things. 1. *The existence of unavoidable dangers.* He who rushes into danger is not courageous, but reckless. Paul had unavoidable dangers: “We are troubled on every side.” 2. *True convictions of being.* Ignorance of existence may make men reckless, but never courageous. What was Paul’s view of life? (1) He regarded the body as the organ of himself. He speaks of it as a “house,” a “tabernacle,” etc. (2) The soul he regards as the personality of his being. “We that are in this tabernacle,” etc. The soul, not the body, is the “I,” or self. (3) He regarded death as a mere change in the mode of his being. Death changes the house and the garment; it is not the extinction of the tenant or the wearer. (4) He regarded heaven as the perfection of his being. “The house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The courage of which the apostle here speaks seems to have been based on three things.

I. A consciousness that his death would not ENDANGER THE INTERESTS of his being. Notice: 1. His view of the interests of being. It was being “present with the Lord.” 2. His view of the bearing of death upon the interests of being. He regarded it as the flight of the spirit into the presence of the Lord. “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” A view of death this antagonistic to the ideas of *purgatory, annihilation, soul-sleep.* 3. His state of mind under the influence of these thoughts. “Willing rather to be absent from the body.”

II. A consciousness that death would not DESTROY THE GREAT PURPOSES of being. It is the characteristic of a rational being that he has some purpose in life—the purpose is that in which he lives, it makes life valuable to him. To a man who has no purpose in life or has lost his purpose, life is deemed of little worth. What was Paul’s purpose in life? “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” Is not this purpose sublimely reasonable? If there be a God, does not reason teach that to please him should be the supreme purpose of all intelligent creatures? Now, Paul felt that death would not destroy this purpose. It destroys the purpose of the voluptuous, avaricious, etc.; and hence to them it is terrible. But it does not destroy the chief purpose of the Christian. In all worlds and times his chief purpose will be to be “accepted of him.”

III. A consciousness that death would not PREVENT THE REWARDS of being. “We must all appear [or, ‘be made manifest’] before the judgment-seat of Christ.” Success, while it should never be regarded either as a rule of conduct or a test of character, must ever have an influence on the mind of man in every department of labour. Non-success discourages. Paul felt that his labour here would appear and be recognized hereafter. “We must all appear,” etc. 1. Every one shall receive the recompense of labour after death. “Must all appear.” None absent. 2. Every one shall receive a reward for every deed. “That every one may receive the things done in his body.” No lost labour. With this consciousness we may well be courageous amidst all the dangers here and in view of the great hereafter. Dread of death is a disgrace to the Christian. “If,” says Cicero, “I were now disengaged from my cumbrous body, and on my way to Elysium; and some superior being should meet me in my flight and make me the offer of returning and remaining in my body, I should, without hesitation, reject the offer; so much should I prefer going into Elysium to be with Socrates and Plato and all the ancient worthies, and to spend my time in converse with them.” How much more should the Christian desire to be “absent from the body, and present with the Lord”!

Vers. 11—18.—*Man in Christ a new man.* “For whether we be beside ourselves,” etc. To be “in Christ” is to be in his Spirit, in his character, to live in his ideas, principles, etc. Such a man is “a new creature.”

I. The man in Christ has a new IMPERIAL IMPULSE. “The love of Christ constraineth us.” Whether the “love of Christ” here means his love to us or our love for him is of no practical import. The latter implies the former; his love is the flame that

kindles ours. Now, this love was Paul's dominant passion; it "constrained" him; it carried him on like a resistless torrent; it was the regnant impulse. Two thoughts in relation to this new imperial impulse. 1. *It is incomprehensible to those who possess it not.* "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God," etc. Probably Paul appeared as mad to his contemporaries. They saw him brave the greatest perils, oppose the greatest powers, make the greatest sacrifices. What was the principle that moved him to all? This they could not understand. Had it been ambition or avarice, they could have understood it. But "the love of Christ" they knew nothing of; it was a new thing in the world. Only the man who has it can understand it; love alone can interpret love. 2. *It arises from reflection on the death of Christ.* It is not an inbred passion, not a blind impulse, not something divinely transferred into the heart. No; it comes "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." Paul assumes as an undoubted fact that Christ died for all. Because of this fact he concludes: (1) That the whole world were in a ruined condition: "Then were all dead." (2) That this fact should inspire all to act with the same sacrificing spirit as Christ. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him."

II. The man in Christ has a new SOCIAL STANDARD. "Henceforth we know no man after the flesh." The world has numerous standards by which it judges men, birth, wealth, office, etc. To a man filled and fired with love to Christ these are nothing. He estimates man by his *rectitude*, not by his rank; by his *spirit*, not by his station; by his *principles*, not by his property. Paul might have said—I once knew men after the flesh, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, learned or ignorant; but now I know them so no more; I see them now in the light of the cross, sinners dead in trespasses and sins; "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh," etc., I think no more of his body, but of his mind, not of his station, but of his Spirit. The fact that this is the true standard serves: 1. As a test by which to try our own religion. 2. As a guide for us in the promotion of Christianity. 3. As a principle on which to form our friendships with men. 4. As a rule to regulate our social conduct.

III. The man in Christ has a new SPIRITUAL HISTORY. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." In what sense can this change be called a creation? 1. It is the production of a *new thing*. This passion for Christ is a new thing in the universe. 2. It is the production of a *new thing by the agency of God*. Creation is the work of God. 3. It is the production of a *new thing according to a Divine plan*. The almighty Maker works by plan in all.

IV. The man in Christ has a NEW STANDING. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us," etc. That is, all things pertaining to this new creation. The great want of man is reconciliation to God. Man's alienation or apostasy from his Maker is *the* sin of all his sins, and the source of all his miseries. His reconciliation is not the means to his salvation; it is his salvation. Friendship with him is heaven. On the other hand, alienation is hell. A river cut from the fountain dries up; a branch cut from the tree withers and dies; a planet cut from the sun rushes into ruin. Separate a soul from God its Fountain, its Root, its Centre, and it dies—dies to all that makes existence tolerable. Such, then, is what Christianity does for us.

Vers. 19, 20.—*God's work in Christ.* "To wit, that God was in Christ," etc. God is a great Worker. He is the eternal Fountain of life in unremitting flow. He is essentially active, the mainspring of all activity in the universe but that of sin. There are at least four organs through which he works—*material laws, animal instincts, moral mind, and Jesus Christ*. By the first he leads on the great revolutions of inanimate nature in all its departments; by the second he preserves, guides, and controls all the sentient tribes that populate the earth, the air, and the sea; by the third, through the laws of reason and the dictates of conscience, he governs the vast empire of mind; and by the fourth, viz. Christ, he works out the redemption of sinners in our world. There is no more difficulty in regarding him in the one Person, Christ, for a certain work than there is in regarding him as being in material nature, animal instinct, or moral mind. The words lead us to make three remarks concerning God's work in Christ.

I. It is a work of RECONCILING HUMANITY TO GOD. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." The work of reconciling implies two things—*enmity*

on the side of one of the parties, and a *change of mind* in one of the parties. The enmity here is not on God's part—he is love; but on man's. The "carnal mind is enmity with God." Nor is the change on God's part. He *cannot* change, he *need* not change. He could never become more loving and merciful. The change needed is on man's part, and on man's *exclusively*. Paul speaks of the world being reconciled to God, not of God to the world. The "world;" not a section of the race, but all mankind.

II. It is a work involving the REMISSION OF SINS. "Not imputing [reckoning] their trespasses unto them." The reconciled man is no longer reckoned guilty. Three facts will throw light on this. The state of enmity towards God is: 1. A *state of sin*. There is a virtue in disliking some characters, but it is evermore a sin to dislike God, for he is the All-good. 2. A state of sin *liable to punishment*. Indeed, sin is its own punishment. 3. In reconciliation, the enmity being removed, *the punishment is obviated*. What is pardon? A separating of man from his sins and their consequences. This God does in Christ.

III. It is a work in which GENUINE MINISTERS ARE ENGAGED. "He hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Observe: 1. The *position* of the true minister. He acts on behalf of Christ, and stands in "Christ's stead." 2. The *earnestness* of the true minister. "We pray you."

From the whole we observe concerning this work: 1. That it is a work of *unbounded mercy*. Whoever heard the offended party seeking the friendship of the offender? 2. It is a work *essential to human happiness*. In the nature of the case there is no happiness without this reconciliation. 3. It is a work *exclusively of moral influence*. No coercion on the one hand, no angry denunciations on the other, can do it; it can only be effected by the logic of love. 4. It is a work that must be *gradual*. Mind cannot be forced; there must be reflection, repentance, resolution.

Ver. 21.—*Christ made sin*. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (Revised Version). From this passage we gather three wonderful truths.

I. That Christ was ABSOLUTELY SINLESS. "Who knew no sin." Intellectually, of course, he knew all the sin in the world; but he never experienced it, he was absolutely free from it. 1. He was "without sin," although *he lived in a sinful world*. Of all the millions who have been here he alone moved amongst the world and received no taint of moral contamination. 2. He was "without sin," although he was *powerfully tempted*. Had he been untemptable there would have been no virtue in his freedom from sin, and had there been no tempter there would have been nothing praiseworthy in his sinlessness. "He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

II. That, though sinless, Christ was in some sense MADE SIN BY GOD. "He hath made him to be sin for us." What meaneth this? 1. It cannot mean that God made the sinless One a sinner. This would be impossible. No one can create a moral character for another. 2. It cannot mean that God imputed to him the sin of the world, and punished him for the world's sin. The idea of literal substitution is repugnant to reason and unsustained by any honest interpretation of God's Holy Word. The atonement of Christ consists, not in what he said, did, or suffered, but in what he was. *He himself is the Atonement, the Reconciler*. What, then, does it mean? Two facts may throw some light. (1) That God sent Christ into a world of sinners to *become closely identified* with them. He was related to sinners, mingled with them, ate and drank with them, and was in the community, counted as one of them. "He was numbered with the transgressors." (2) That God permitted this world of sinners to *treat Christ as a sinner*. He was calumniated, persecuted, insulted, murdered. God permitted all this, and what he *permits* is, in Scripture language, often ascribed to him.

III. That the sinless One was thus made sin in order that men MIGHT PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Never did Divine moral excellence or the righteousness of God shine out with such glory to man as in the sufferings which Christ endured in consequence of this connection with sinners. As the stars can only show themselves at night, and as aromatic plants

can only emit their precious odour by pressure, so the highest moral virtues can only come out by suffering and battling with the wrong. What self-sacrificing love, what unconquerable attachment to truth, what loyalty to the infinite Father, what sublime heroism of love, was here exhibited in the incarnation, the beneficent deeds, and overwhelming sufferings of Jesus!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Assurance of eternal life; faith and its effects.* Death intervenes between the present state of affliction and the glory of heaven, but death is only the destruction of the body now existing. It is not an end to bodily form and life. This is no speculation of the apostle's; it is an assurance, "for we know" that if this earthly tent be destroyed, it will be followed by an enduring habitation—a mansion, not a tabernacle. In the earthly body he groans, not because it is a body, but because it is flesh and blood suffering under the effects of sin, and hence he longs for the "house which is from heaven." It is a heaven for body as well as soul that he so ardently desires. To be bodiless even in glory is repulsive to his nature, since it would be nakedness. Death is repugnant. The separation of soul and body, however, is only temporary; it is not for unclothing, but for a better clothing, one suited to the capacities of spirit. If the fourth verse repeats the second verse, it enlarges the idea and qualifies it by stating the reason why he would be "clothed upon," viz. "that mortality might be swallowed up of life." And this longing is no mere instinct or natural desire, but a feeling inspired of God, who "hath wrought us for the selfsame thing." A Divine preparation was going on in this provisional tabernacle—a training of the spirit for the vision of Christ and a training of the body for the immortal companionship of the spirit. An "earnest" or pledge of this was already in possession. The sufferings sanctified by the Spirit, the longing, the animation of hope, were so many proofs and tokens of a waiting blessedness. How could he be otherwise than confident? Yea; he is "always confident." Though now confined to the body, yet it is a home that admits of affections and loving fellowships; and though it necessitates absence from the Lord and the house of "many mansions," nevertheless it is a home illumined by faith. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." The home is in the midst of visible objects that exercise our sense of sight, but our Christian walk, or movement from one world to another, is not directed by the eye, but by faith, the sense of the invisible. We know what are the functions of the eye. If we did not, the antithesis would convey no meaning. The eye receives impressions from external things, communicates them to the soul, is a main organ in developing thought and feeling, acts on the imagination and the will, and is continually adding something to the contents of the inward nature. Faith is like it as a medium of reception, unlike it in all else. Faith is not conversant with appearances. We do not see Christ in his glory; we see him (using the term figuratively) in his Word by means of the Spirit; and this seeing is faith. How do we know when we have faith? It attests itself in our capacity to see the path leading to eternal glory, and it enables us to walk therein. The path is from one home to another—from the home on the footstool to the home by the throne of Christ, and faith has the reality and vigour of a home sentiment. So strong and assuring is St. Paul's confidence that he prefers to depart and be with Christ. "At home in the body;" yes, but it is a sad home at best, and trial and affliction had begun to make it dreary to him. To die is to be with the Lord, and he was "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Whether absent or present, at home or away from home, we labour that we "may be accepted of him." To make himself and his life acceptable to Christ was paramount to every other desire; to labour was his absorbing thought. Such an energetic soul as his must have felt that its energies were immortal. There was no selfishness in his hope of heaven, no longing to be freed from work, no yearning for the luxury of mere rest. It was to be with Christ, for Christ was his heaven. If this was his confidence, if he was labouring untiringly to be acceptable to the Lord Jesus, was he understood and appreciated as Christ's apostle and servant among men? The burden of life was not the work he did, but the obstacles thrown in his way—the slanders he had to bear, the persecutions open and secret that followed him everywhere. He thinks of the "judgment-seat of Christ." It will be a judicial inquiry into works done and "every

one" shall "receive [receive back] the things done in his body." Measure for measure, whatsoever has been done here shall return to every one. The individuality of the judgment, the complete unveiling of personal character, the correspondence between the reward and the good done on earth and between the retribution and the evil done here, he brings out distinctly. This was with him a fixed habit of thought. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." How near the two worlds are—the growing field here, the harvest in another existence hereafter! But observe another idea. "We must all appear," we must be *made manifest*, every one shown in his true character. Not only will there be recompense as a judicial procedure, but a revelation "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." St. Paul had vindicated himself again and again from the charges made against him; but the battle was now going on, nor was there any sign of its speedy abatement. It was natural that he should have the idea of manifestation prominent in his mind, since we all think of the future world very much according to some peculiarity in our experience on earth. How engrossed, heart and soul, in his apostleship is beautifully indicated by the fact that heaven itself was the heaven of St. Paul as the apostle of Christ. The sufferings of the man are never mentioned. First and last, we have the autobiography of an apostle, and hence, looking forward to the glory to be revealed, the supreme felicity is that he will *appear* in his true character as the Lord's servant.—L.

Vers. 11—21.—*Person and ministry of the apostle further considered; his work as an ambassador.* How was he conducting this ministry, of which he had spoken so much and had yet more to say? It was in full view of accountability to the day of judgment. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," adding motives to affect them, and not remaining content with arguments to convince their understandings. And in this work he now felt God's approval; before he had declared, "we are confident," and he reaffirms it in the words, "we are made manifest unto God." Every hour he stood at the bar of his conscience an acquitted man, and this conscience was a manifestation of God. Honestly was he striving to please God, as honestly labouring to save them, and in this spirit he was ever seeking to manifest himself to their consciences. If he were a temporizer, a man-pleaser, he might adopt worldly arts and captivate them. No; he would address their consciences; the best in them should come to his side or he must lose them. "Savour of life unto life" or "savour of death unto death;" no other alternative. But do not misunderstand us. Commendation is not our object. If we have, as we trust, manifested ourselves to your consciences, then let your consciences speak in our behalf, and let their voices boast in this—that we are truthful in the sight of God and man. This is the way to answer our enemies who "glory in appearance and not in heart." Suffer he would rather than be wrongly vindicated. Do it in the highest way or not at all. "Your cause" is the great interest. No doubt we seem "beside ourselves," or we may appear "sober," but you may boast of this—"it is for your cause." And in this devotion to your well-being what motive presses with weight enough to make us endure all things for your sakes? "The love of Christ constraineth us." And wherein is this love so signally demonstrated as to embody and set forth all else that he did? It is love in death. Looking at this Divine death, we form this judgment or reach this conclusion, that he "died for all" because "all were dead—" dead under the Law of God, dead in trespasses and sins, dead legally, morally, spiritually. Nothing less than such an atoning death for all men—so it seems to us the apostle meant—could exert on him this constraining influence. And how should this influence operate? "They which live should not henceforth live unto themselves." The very self had been redeemed by Christ's vicarious death; body, soul, and spirit had been bought with a price, and the price was Christ's blood; and with such a constraining motive, the most potent that the Holy Ghost could bring to bear on the human mind, how could men live unto themselves? If, indeed, the constraining power had its legitimate effect, only one life could result, a life consecrated to "him which died for them and rose again." If, therefore, all being dead, one died for all, that all might live in freedom from selfishness and be the servants of him who had redeemed them from sin and death, we can know henceforth no man after the flesh. The very purpose of Christ's death was that the fleshly life of sin might pass out of view (might be covered over and thus disappear from sight), and another life be entered

on, a life in the redeeming Christ. Admitting that this passage presents the moral aspects of Christ's death and the obligations consequent thereupon as they act on moral sentiment, yet the fundamental idea of the apostle is that Christ stood in the stead of sinners, took their guilt upon himself, and made an offering of his life for their rescue. To strengthen this doctrine, he says that, though he once knew Christ after the flesh (as a mere man), he knew him now in a very different way. We are not to suppose that he had seen him in his earthly life, but merely that he knew of him. St. Paul, after his conversion, had an experimental knowledge of Christ as his Redeemer through the sacrificial death of the cross; nor was there any room in his heart for moral sentiment, nor any spiritual force in Christ's teaching and example, nor ground for any trust or hope, till he as "chief of sinners" had realized the righteousness of God in the atoning blood of Calvary. Such a change was a creation. He was "a new creature," and whoever experienced this power of the Lord's death was a new creature. Old things had passed away—the old self in taste and habit, the old unbelief rooted in the fleshly mind, the old worldliness—and all things had become new. No wonder that "all things" had become "new;" for "all things" pertaining to this change in its cause, agency, instrumentalities, "are of God." Strong language this, which sounds even yet to many as the rhetoric of excited fancy; but not stronger than the blessed reality it represents. Nay; words cannot equal the fact. A man may overstate his own experience of Divine grace; never can he exaggerate the grace itself. "All things are of God;" and how is this fact manifested? In the method of reconciliation which is God's act through Christ. "Who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." To understand what is implied in reconciliation, we must remember that much more is involved in it than the moral state of a sinner's mind toward God. The enmity of the carnal man has to be subdued, and in this sense he is "a new creature," but the possibility of this creation rests upon an antecedent fact, viz. a changed relation to the violated Law of God. What has been done for him must take precedence, as to time, of what is done in him. We must know how God as Sovereign stands to us, and by what means the sovereignly co-operates with the fatherhood of God, before we can accept the offered boon of mercy. There must be a reason why God should pardon in advance of a reason why we should seek pardon. A principle of righteousness must be established as preliminary and essential to the sentiment of Christianity, since it is impossible for us by the laws of the mind to appreciate the power of any great sentiment unless we have previously felt it as connected with a great principle. "Whom God set forth to be a Propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to show his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 25, 26, Revised Version). There is a "ministry of reconciliation" because "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing [reckoning] their trespasses unto them." Forgiveness through Christ, the Propitiation, is free to all who believe in him. Nor are we left in doubt as to the substance of our belief. It is faith in Christ, God in Christ, the Reconciler, who pardons our sins and makes us new creatures in him. To make this reconciliation known, to demonstrate its infinite excellence as the method of grace, to show its Divine results in the very men who proclaimed the gospel, Christ had instituted the ministry, and its title was, "*ministry of reconciliation*." Recall, O Corinthians, what I have said in defence of my apostleship. Recall my sufferings in your behalf. See the reason of it all. Whom are these factious Judaizers fighting? Whom did those beasts at Ephesus try to destroy? Who is this man, troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, cast down, dying everywhere, dying always? This is the character he sustains, the office he fills—an "ambassador for Christ." Has he manifested himself to your consciences? Does he look forward to the day of judgment as a day of revelation as well as a day of reward and punishment? Know we not a man, not even Christ, after the flesh! Behold your minister, your servant, as an "ambassador," commissioned to offer you the terms of reconciliation. "We pray you in Christ's stead [on behalf of Christ], be ye reconciled to God." Nothing remains to be done but for you to accept the offered reconciliation. And he enforces this idea by stating that he who "died for all," since "all were dead," had been made "sin for us, who knew no sin." "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;" yet he was "made

to be sin for us," made a substitute or ransom, an offering, whereby the wrath of God was turned away. Reconciliation is accomplished not by our repentance and confession of sin, nor by any suffering on our part, nor by any merit of our work, but altogether by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in our behalf. God's righteousness is thus set forth. The plan of salvation changed nothing in the character of Almighty God. Neither his righteousness nor his love was modified integrally by Christ's atonement. "*God is righteous*," "*God is love*," are no truer facts now than they eternally were. What the gospel teaches is that the righteousness and the love of God have assumed special forms of manifestation and operative activity through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is *righteousness*, not in the normal relation of Law to the original transgressor, but in an instituted relation of Law to one who took the place of the transgressor. It is *love as grace*, the form of love that provided for the righteousness on which St. Paul lays such an emphasis. It is not a change in the Law, but in the administration of Law, and the glory of it lies in the fact that the Divine government presents in this higher form the resplendent spectacle of that progression from the "*natural*" to the "*spiritual*," which St. Paul discusses in his argument on the resurrection. Whatever obstacles existed in the way of this sublime advance have been removed by Christ. "*Mercy and truth*" have their existence as attributes of the Divine nature; they have "*met together*." "*Righteousness and peace*" are not to be confounded, but they have "*kissed each other*."—L.

Ver. 6.—"*Absent from the Lord*." To those disciples and apostles who were with the Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry, the separation which commenced upon his ascension must have been painful indeed. In the case of Paul, however, the language employed in this passage scarcely seems so natural. But we learn from the record of his sentiments what ought to be to all Christians their first thought, their governing principle, viz. their relation to Jesus Christ. The earthly state of all such is a state of absence from the Lord—a fact not to be grieved over, but to be recognized and felt.

I. THIS ABSENCE IS NOT SPIRITUAL, BUT BODILY. His own word is fulfilled, "A little while, and ye shall not see me." The exclamation of his people is verified, "Him, not having seen, we love."

II. THIS ABSENCE IS APPOINTED BY DIVINE WISDOM AND LOVE. It cannot be regarded as a matter of chance or of fate. It is the will of him who most loves us and who most cares for us, which is apparent in this provision.

III. THERE IS A BENEFICENT PURPOSE IN THIS ABSENCE. Such was the obvious intention of our Saviour himself. "It is good for you," he said, "that I go away." His aim was to lead his people into a life of faith, and to excite our confidence in himself who has gone to prepare a place for us.

IV. THERE ARE CERTAIN DANGERS INVOLVED IN THIS ABSENCE. There is danger lest, separated from our Lord, we should grow worldly and carnal, lest our love to Jesus should wax cold, lest we should magnify ourselves, lest we should be ashamed of a religion whose Head is not visibly among us.

V. YET THERE ARE COMPENSATIONS IN THIS ABSENCE. It is intended to fortify and perfect the truly Christian character. It will make the meeting, when it takes place, more delightful and welcome.

VI. WHAT EXERCISES ARE SUGGESTED BY THIS ABSENCE? 1. Remembrance of Christ. 2. Faith in Christ. 3. Communion with Christ. 4. Fidelity to Christ in his absence. 5. Anticipation of his speedy return.

VII. THE TERMINATION OF THIS PERIOD OF ABSENCE IS AT HAND. Those who live until the Lord's return shall welcome him to his inheritance. Others must be absent from Christ until they are absent from the body, when they shall be "*present*" with the Lord."—T.

Ver. 7.—"*The walk of faith*." Life is a pilgrimage which men undertake and accomplish upon very different principles and to very different results and ends. In this parenthesis St. Paul very succinctly and very impressively describes the nature of that pilgrimage which he had adopted and with which he was satisfied.

I. THE WALK WITH WHICH THAT OF THE CHRISTIAN IS CONTRASTED. This, which is that of the unenlightened and unrenewed, is the *walk by sight*; i.e. by repressing the

spiritual nature and walking by the light which earth offers, by the mere guidance of the senses, by the influence of society, the approval and esteem of men, by considerations drawn from earth and limited to earth. This is a course of life in which there is no satisfaction, no safety, and no blessed prospect.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WALK OF FAITH. Faith in itself is neutral; its excellence depends upon its object. The Christian regulates his course through this life of temptation, danger, and discipline by: 1. Faith in the existence of God, the God who possesses all moral excellences as his attributes. 2. Faith in Providence; *i.e.* in the personal interest and care of him who is called Friend and Father. 3. Faith in God as a Saviour, which is faith in Christ, the salvation of the Lord revealed to man. 4. Faith in a righteous and authoritative law. 5. Faith in ever-present spiritual aid—guidance, protection, bounty, etc. 6. Faith in Divine promises, by which the pilgrim is assured that he shall reach home at last.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS TO UNDERTAKE AND TO PERSEVERE IN THE WALK OF FAITH. 1. It is the one principle enjoined throughout revelation, from the day of Abraham, the father of the faithful, down to the apostolic age. 2. The possibility of the walk by faith has been proved by the example of the great and the good who have gone before us (*vide* Heb. xi.). 3. To those who live by faith life has a meaning and dignity which otherwise cannot possibly attach to it. 4. Faith can sustain amidst the trials and sorrows of earth. 5. And faith is the blossom of which the vision of the glorified Saviour shall be the heavenly and immortal fruit.—T.

Ver. 14.—*The love of Christ.* Every quality met in the Lord Jesus which could adapt him to accomplish the work which he undertook on behalf of our human race. But if one attribute must be selected as peculiarly and pre-eminently characteristic of him, if one word rather than another rises to our lips when we speak of him, that attribute, that word, is love.

I. THE OBJECTS OF CHRIST'S LOVE. Look at his earthly life and ministry, and the comprehensive range within which the love of Jesus operates becomes at once and gloriously obvious. 1. His friends. Of this fact—Christ's love to his friends—we have abundant proof: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." 2. His enemies. This is more wonderful, yet the truth of what the apostle says is undeniable: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And we cannot forget his prayer offered for his enemies as they nailed him to the cross: "Father, forgive them." 3. All mankind. During his ministry the Lord Jesus was gracious to all with whom he came into contact. His aim was by the bands of love to draw all men unto himself, that they might rest and live in his Divine and mighty heart.

II. THE PROOFS OF CHRIST'S LOVE. The great facts of his ministry and mediation are evidences of his benevolence. 1. His advent.

"Nothing brought him from above—
Nothing but redeeming love."

2. His ministry. He went about doing good, animated by the mighty principle of love to man. Every sickness he healed, every demon he expelled, every sinner he pardoned, was a witness to the love of Christ. 3. His death. His was the love "stronger than death;" for not only could not death destroy it, death gave it a new life and power in the world and over men. 4. His prevailing intercession and brotherly care.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST'S LOVE. 1. It is sympathizing and tender, "passing the love of women." 2. It is thoughtful and wise, ever providing for the true welfare of those to whom it is revealed. 3. It is forbearing and patient, otherwise it might often have been checked and repressed. 4. It is self-sacrificing, counting nothing too great to be given up in order to secure its ends. 5. It is faithful: "Having loved his own, he loved them even unto the end." 6. It is unquenchable and everlasting: "Who can separate us from the love of Christ?"—T.

Ver. 14.—*The constraint of Christ's love.* The apostle represents the Saviour's love, not merely as something to be admired and enjoyed, but as something which is to act as a spiritual force. He experienced it as the supreme power over his own life, and he had confidence in it as the principle which should renew and bless the world.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS CONSTRAINT. Men are influenced by many and various motives, some lower and some higher. Their natural instincts and impulses, their interests, their regard for public opinion and their ambition, the laws of the land,—these are among the admitted and powerful inducements to human conduct. But these are not the highest motives, and are unworthy of the nature and possibilities of man, unless in conjunction with something better. Even the sacred obligation of duty is insufficient. But Christ's love in his redemptive work, revealed to us in the gospel, is a moral and spiritual force of vast power. It awakens gratitude, love, devotion, obedience. It is the universal Christian motive. He who does not feel it, however correct his creed and conduct, is not in the proper sense of the term a Christian. Happy they who live under its sweet and constant constraint!

II. THE DIRECTION OF THIS CONSTRAINT. Physical power is of two kinds—it is either energy or resistance; *e.g.* the ocean and the dyke, the powder and the cannon, the steam and the boiler. As with physical, so with moral power. 1. Christ's love acts by way of *restraint*. It withholds those who experience it from self-indulgence, from worldliness, and from other sins to which men are naturally prone, and from which only a Divine power can deliver. 2. It acts by way of *impulse*, inducing to the imitation of Jesus in character and conduct; to obedience such as he enjoins when he says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" to consecration such as Paul exemplified when he said, "We live unto the Lord."

III. THE EFFICACY OF THIS CONSTRAINT. This depends upon a just interpretation of the passage. Were it our love to Christ which is imputed, this would be a feeble and vacillating motive; but it is something far greater and better, viz. Christ's love to us. The power of this motive may be seen in the life of every faithful friend of Jesus; *e.g.* in the apostles, as Paul, Peter, John; in the confessors and martyrs and reformers; in the missionaries and philanthropists, etc. It may be seen in the dangers braved, the opposition encountered, the persecutions suffered, the efforts undertaken and persevered in. What of noble and beautiful and beneficent conduct has not this Divine motive proved able to inspire! Greater deeds and more heroic sufferings than the love of Christ has accounted for, the annals of mankind do not record. It is to this motive that we must look for all that in the future shall bless our common humanity. What nothing inferior can effect the love of Christ will certainly prove powerful to accomplish.—T.

Ver. 18.—"The ministry of reconciliation." Every good man is a peacemaker. Both unconsciously by his character and disposition, and consciously and actively by his efforts, he composes differences and promotes concord and amity among his fellow-men. The Christian minister, however, goes deeper when he aims at securing harmony between God and man. And he purposes to effect this reconciliation, not by the use of ordinary persuasion, but by the presentation of the gospel of Christ.

I. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY PRESUMES THE NEED OF RECONCILIATION. 1. There is a moral Ruler and a moral law, righteous and authoritative. 2. Against this Ruler men have rebelled, they have broken the law, and thus introduced enmity and conflict. 3. Divine displeasure has thus been incurred, and Divine penalties, by which just displeasure is expressed.

II. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IS AUTHORIZED BY HIM WHO ALONE CAN INTRODUCE RECONCILIATION. God is the greater, and not only so, he is the wronged, offended party. If any overtures for reconciliation are to be made, they must proceed from him. He must provide the basis of peace and he must commission the heralds of peace.

III. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY PROCLAIMS THE MEDIATOR OF RECONCILIATION. The Lord Jesus has every qualification which can be desired in an efficient Mediator. He partakes the nature of God and of man; he is appointed and accepted by the Divine Sovereign; he has effected by his sacrifice a work of atonement or reconciliation; his Spirit is a Spirit of peace. And in fact he has "made peace," removing all obstacles on God's side and providing for the removal of all on man's.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY CONSISTS IN THE OFFER OF RECONCILIATION. It is a moral and not a sacerdotal ministry; it is *experimental*, being entrusted to those who are themselves reconciled; it is a ministry accompanied with *supernatural power*, even the energy of the Spirit of God; it is an *authoritative* ministry, which men are not at

liberty to disregard or despise; it is an *effectual* ministry, for those who discharge it faithfully are unto many the "savour of life unto life."—T.

Ver. 20.—"*Ambassadors for Christ.*" Even among the members of the Corinthian Church there were those who had offended the Lord by their inconsistency and who needed to be reconciled. How much more was and is this true of mankind at large! There is no denying the need of a gospel and of a ministry of reconciliation.

I. WHO ARE CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS? Probably the language is most justly applicable to the apostles only, inasmuch as their commission and credentials were altogether special. An ambassador owes his importance, not to himself, but to the power he represents, the message he bears. The preachers of Christ are all heralds, if they cannot be designated ambassadors. They may learn hence the dignity of their office and their personal unworthiness and insufficiency, and they may be admonished as to the imperative duty of fidelity.

II. BY WHAT COURT ARE THESE AMBASSADORS COMMISSIONED? They are the ministers of the King of heaven, and their authority is that of the King's Son. Thus their mission is one entrusted by a *superior* power and authority; and not only so, it is from an *offended* and outraged power. This appears when we consider—

III. TO WHOM THESE AMBASSADORS ARE SENT. Properly speaking, an ambassador is one accredited to a power sovereign and equal to that from whom he comes. But in this case the resemblance fails in this respect, inasmuch as the ministers of the gospel address themselves to offenders, to rebels, to those who cannot treat with Heaven upon equal terms, or any terms of right.

IV. WHOSE SUBSTITUTES ARE THESE AMBASSADORS? They act "on Christ's behalf," "in Christ's stead." The Lord himself first came upon an embassy of mercy. He has entrusted to his apostles, and in a sense to all his ministers, the office and trust of acting as his representatives, in so far as they publish the declaration and offer of Divine mercy.

V. WHAT IS THE COMMISSION WHICH THESE AMBASSADORS ARE SENT TO EXECUTE? It is an office of mercy. Their duty is to publish the tidings of redemption, the offer of pardon, and themselves to urge and to entreat men that they accept the gospel and thus enjoy the blessings of reconciliation with God.—T.

Vers. 1—9.—*The two bodies of the saint.* I. THE BODY THAT NOW IS. 1. Frail. 2. Perishing. 3. Often a burden. 4. Frequently a temptation. 5. Not helpful to spiritual life. 6. Subject to many pains. 7. Debased.

II. THE BODY THAT SHALL BE. 1. *Eternal.* (Ver. 1.) Having no tendencies towards decay, no marks of coming death. A body of *life*. Stamped with the eternalness of God. 2. *Heavenly.* (Ver. 1.) The first body is of the earth, earthy; the second body is spiritual and heavenly in origin and character. Capable of heavenly joys. Fitted for heavenly service. Free from earthly weaknesses, pains, and soil. 3. *From God.* (Ver. 1.) The present body is this in a certain sense, but it has passed through the hands of the devil. The resurrection-body shall be of God and only of God, his unmarred workmanship. It shall be like the glorified body united to Deity in the person of Jesus Christ: "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phil. iii. 21).

III. THE SAINT'S CONDITION WHILST IN THE EARTHLY BODY. Frequently a condition of sorrow. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened" (ver. 4). There are (1) the ordinary afflictions which befall mankind; (2) the special chastisements of God inflicted for the saint's welfare, but still painful; (3) the sense of living in a strange country, not in his own—uncongenial surroundings; (4) struggles against temptations: the presence and power of hated sin.

IV. THE SAINT'S ASSURANCE OF THE HEAVENLY BODY. 1. *Revelation.* 2. *Preparation.* "He that wrought us for this very thing" (ver. 5). 3. *The Spirit's witness.* We have the "earnest" of the Spirit, which is a pledge of the fulness of the Spirit (ver. 5). In the next life we shall be dominated by the Spirit; shall have a *spiritual* body—one pervaded by the Spirit. The apostle's confidence is strong; he says, "We *know*;" there was no uncertainty about the matter.

V. THE SAINT'S LONGING FOR THE HEAVENLY BODY. The desire is *very* intense,

especially when the lot is hard and the nature spiritual. "We groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven" (ver. 2). The paramount attraction is, however, not in the body itself, but in the fact that the union with Christ will be closer. We shall be present with the Lord—at home with the Lord (ver. 8). Now we walk by faith; then we shall see him as he is, and be like him. The gaining of the heavenly body will be the gain of closer access to our Lord, and will be the entering into our heavenly home, out of which we shall go no more for ever.

VI. THE SAINT'S DESIRE FOR A SPEEDY CHANGE FROM ONE BODY TO THE OTHER. (Ver. 4.) 1. The intermediate state between death and the resurrection will probably not be so perfect as that which follows. 2. There is a natural shrinking from death. "Not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon" (ver. 4). The apostle seems to desire what is expressed in 1 Thess. iv. 17—a *translation*, not death and tarrying for the resurrection.

VII. THE SAINT'S RESOLUTION WHETHER IN THE EARTHLY OR HEAVENLY BODY. To please Christ. This the apostle made his "aim" (ver. 9). This was his supreme ambition. He resolved to live, not to himself, but to Christ and for Christ. Note, that the life for the heavenly and earthly body is to be the same. We must do now what we hope to do by-and-by. Heavenly life in the earthly body is the preparation for the heavenly life in the heavenly body.—H.

Ver. 10.—*The judgment.* I. THE JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN. 1. It is a matter of most definite revelation. 2. It is necessary for the vindication of Divine justice.

II. CHRIST WILL BE THE JUDGE. "The judgment-seat of Christ." 1. A very solemn fact (1) for those who have rejected his salvation and his rule; (2) or who have treated his claims with neglect and indifference; (3) or who have professed to believe on him, but in works have denied him. 2. A very joyous fact for those who have loved, confessed, and served him. 3. A very impressive fact that the One who died for men will judge men.

III. ALL WILL STAND BEFORE CHRIST'S JUDGMENT-SEAT. Not one will be missing. How vast an assemblage! A great multitude, and yet no one lost in the crowd! We shall be conscious of the great number which no man can number, and yet be impressed with our own individuality. "Each one" will receive (ver. 10)—*one by one*. Every day we are brought a day nearer to that dread convocation.

IV. AT THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST THERE WILL BE A GREAT REVELATION. 1. *Of character.* 2. *Of condition.* 3. *Of life.* We shall be "made manifest." Life-secrets will cease. Successful deceptions will be successful no longer. All veils and disguises will be torn off. The world as well as God will see us as we are.

V. AT THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST WE SHALL RECEIVE OUR DOOM. This will be according to the deeds of our life. Will the faithful then be justified by faith? Yes; by faith *which produces works*. *Profession* will then go for very little. "Lord, Lord," will be but an empty cry. Ability to pray fluently or to preach eloquently will not come into the account. Nor the ability to look extremely pious. Nor facility of talk respecting "blessed seasons" enjoyed on earth. *What faith has wrought in us will be the question.* What our Christianity has amounted to really and practically. "A name to live" then will be nothing if we are found "dead." Upon the branch professedly united to the Vine *fruit* will then be sought. "Faith without works is dead." At the judgment it will seem very dead indeed. Yet not by the mere outward act shall we be judged. The *motive* will be considered as well as the actual deed. "Faith which worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6) will be diligently sought for. Note: 1. The distinction between good and evil will be strictly drawn at the judgment. 2. There will be degrees of reward and punishment. Some "saved as by fire;" some having an "abundant entrance;" some beaten with few stripes, some with many. It will be "according to what he hath done." 3. The dependence of the future upon the present. We shall receive *the things done in the body*. A remarkable expression. What we do now we shall receive then. We are now writing the sentence of the judgment! Time is *sowing*. Judgment is *reaping*. "What manner of persons ought we to be?"—H.

Ver. 14.—*The constraining influence of the love of Christ.* I. CONSIDER THE LOVE OF CHRIST. Shown in: 1. *Advent*. Relinquishment of heavenly glory. The highest

place above exchanged for one of the lowest on earth. 2. *Assumption of human nature.* A vast condescension. A most striking proof of love. 3. *Life.* Miracles, acts of kindness, words, spirit. 4. *Death.* A transcendent proof. (1) Death for enemies. (2) Death at the hands of those he came to save. (3) Most painful death, (a) physically, (b) mentally, and (c) spiritually. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (4) A death the object of which was the redemption, purification, exaltation, and eternal happiness of men. 5. *Intercession.* "He ever liveth to make intercession" (Heb. vii. 25).

II. CONSIDER THE EFFECT OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST. It constrained the apostle—"compressed with irresistible power all his energies into one channel." "Constraineth"—its influence was *continuous*. Its power was not soon spent; rather that power increased as the love of Christ was increasingly realized. 1. *Negatively.* Not to live to himself (ver. 15). There was now a greater power operating upon him than the mighty power of self. 2. *Positively.* To live to Christ (ver. 15). The love of Christ overmastered him. He felt that through it he had been purchased with a great price, and therefore sought to glorify Christ in his body and spirit which were peculiarly his. (1) By a blameless life. (2) By seeking to show forth Christ in his character, spirit, acts, etc. (3) By submitting his will to Christ's in all things. (4) By cherishing a deep love for Christ. (5) By seeking to extend the kingdom and to increase the glory of Christ. (6) By being wholly devoted to Christ. He was wont to speak of himself as the "slave of Christ."—H.

Ver. 17.—"A new creature." I. HOW THE NEWNESS ORIGINATES. 1. *The believer has died with Christ.* (Ver. 14.) Christ is his Substitute, has borne his sins, has made complete satisfaction for his guilt. By faith he is so united to Christ that what Christ has done is imputed to him. He is thus new in relation to God. He was condemned; now he is justified. 2. *The believer partakes of the life of Christ.* He is "risen with Christ" (Col. iii. 1). He has received the Spirit of Christ. Having been justified, he is now being sanctified. The likeness of the Redeemer is being wrought upon and in him by the Holy Ghost. There is thus a "new creation." The old life was a life of sin, but the new life to which he has risen is a life of righteousness. The love of Christ constrains him (ver. 14) to live, not to himself, but to Christ.

II. HOW THE NEWNESS IS MANIFESTED. In the believer's (1) spirit; (2) speech; (3) character; (4) acts; (5) plans, purposes, desires, etc. "All things are become new" (ver. 17). There is no part of the believer's life from which the newness should be absent. Whilst not yet perfect, manifestly a great change has taken place: "Old things are passed away" (ver. 17).

III. THIS NEWNESS FURNISHES A TEST. What have we more than our profession of Christianity? Have we been transformed; made new creatures? "Ye must be born again" (John iii. 7). Can faith save a man—faith which has a name to live, but is dead; faith which we only know a man possesses because he tells us so? We are not in Christ at all unless thereby we have become new creatures. The test is beyond appeal. The sentence of the judgment will proceed upon the assumption of its infallibility (ver. 10). All men in Christ become new creatures. "If any man," etc. A decided change takes place in the best as well as in the worst. All men may become new creatures in Christ. The vilest can be re-created equally with the most moral. This newness is not to be waited for till we enter another world. It belongs to *this* sphere in which we now are. Unless we are new creatures in this world we shall not be new creatures in another. It is on earth that "new creatures" are specially needed.—H.

Ver. 20.—"Ambassadors of Christ." I. THE DUTIES OF AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST. 1. *Negative.* (1) Not to originate their message. (2) Not to think lightly of their mission. (3) Not to seek their own glory. (4) Not to aim at their own comfort and pleasure as a chief object. (5) Not to depart from their instructions. Not to add to them nor take away. 2. *Positive.* (1) To go where they are sent. (2) To communicate the mind of their Lord. (3) To defend his honour. (4) To be influenced by the welfare of his kingdom. (5) To make their Master's business pre-eminent. (6) To strive in every way to qualify themselves for their work. (7) To endeavour to do their work

in the best possible way. (8) To endure loss and suffering rather than the interests of their Master's kingdom should be prejudiced.

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST. 1. That God loves men. 2. That he has given Christ for men. A vast proof of love! The first step was on God's side. Whilst we were enemies Christ died for us. 3. That Christ willingly gave himself for men. The death of Christ was perfectly voluntary. 4. That by the death of Christ God has provided the means for the perfect reconciliation of the world to himself. In the death of Christ God *does* reconcile; *i.e.* he removes every obstacle to reconciliation. Justification is *fully prepared* for the sinner. Christ was made sin for us (ver. 21). He bore our sins. Our sins were imputed to him. God's justice was satisfied. Christ is made our Substitute, and this so perfectly that what we are is imputed to him, and what he is is imputed to us. He takes our sins; we take his righteousness. No hindrance to complete restoration thus remains, except hindrance which may lie in the human heart itself. 5. That God earnestly invites men to be reconciled to him. Amazing condescension! The climax of Divine love! "As though God were entreating" (ver. 20).

III. HOW THE MESSAGE IS TO BE CONVEYED. 1. *With courtesy.* 2. *With intense earnestness.* It is momentous. What issues depend upon its acceptance or rejection! 3. *With zealous pleading.*

IV. HOW AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST ARE TO BE REGARDED. 1. As speaking on behalf of Christ. 2. As declaring the mind of God.—H.

Ver. 1.—*The tent and the house.* I. THE CONTRAST EXPLAINED. The foundation of this passage is to be found in ch. iv. 18, where a contrast is drawn between "the things seen," viz. the toils and afflictions endured in the service of Christ, and "the things not yet seen," viz. the joys of resting in Christ from present labours and of receiving from him approval and reward. Pursuing this train of thought, St. Paul writes, "We are here in a tent upon the earth, surrounded, affected, and limited by the things which are seen. But this tent will be struck, to be set up no more. The things which are seen are temporal. The present conditions of our life of toil and suffering will cease, and we shall enter a house of everlasting habitation." The apostle mixes together the figures of a dwelling in which we reside and that of a garment with which we are clothed. It was not an unnatural combination of metaphors; for the haircloth tents with which Paul was familiar, and which his own hands had made, suggested almost equally the idea of a dwelling and that of a vesture. The tent is to be taken down, the clothing to be removed. The present condition of labour and trial will come to an end. What then? Things not yet seen; a building from God; a new condition of life and order of things which will be permanent. Hands of men have not provided it and cannot destroy it. It is a house where nothing fades, nothing falls to ruin, nothing decays or dies—a house eternal in the heavens.

II. THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE FUTURE. It was St. Paul's habit to regard the state after death and the state after resurrection as from one angle of vision, and to describe them together. Probably he had no idea of the long interval which was to extend through all the Christian centuries. In his first letter to the Corinthians he had said, "We shall not all sleep," as though some of that generation might not see death. But now the feebleness of his body was as "a sentence of death" in himself. He expected and even wished to die; and yet his thoughts never paused on death or even on the rest of the departed, but rushed past death to the coming of Christ and the glory to be revealed. There is a real and obvious distinction between the post-decease and the post-resurrection state; but let us not overdo distinctions between conditions of blessedness which to an apostle's eye were so intimately blended. If some of the things which belong to the ultimate state are supposed by any to belong to the proximate, no great harm is done. The future is not mapped out with the precision of a chart. It is not for definite knowledge, but for hope. St. Paul, as we have said, never paused on death, took no pleasure in the thought of being "unclothed." At the resurrection he would be clothed with a body of incorruption and immortality. Nay; before that great day of triumph over death, he knew that he would be well clothed or guarded. He would be in God's building, "clothed upon" with the house which is from heaven.

III. THE MOOD OF MIND THAT WISHES FOR DEATH. St. Paul wrote this in dejection of spirit. To his sickness, which had much enfeebled him, was added at that time much anxiety about the condition of the Churches in Greece and their feelings toward himself. So his heart, as tender and sensitive as it was ardent and brave, was bruised and weary; and he fell a-thinking of death as welcome. Let the outward man perish; let the earthen vessel break; let the weary spirit escape and be at rest. A mood this into which, at one time or other, many Christians fall; but it should not be elevated into a pattern or rule, as though it were the duty of every Christian to long and sigh for death. Our holy faith requires nothing so unnatural. They who are in health and well employed ought to make the most of life—to value and not despise it. Enough that they do not forget death; and they need not fear it if they live well. We must do Paul the justice to acknowledge that there was nothing peevish or impatient in his mood. So long as there was service for him to render to the Church on earth, he was willing to abide in the flesh and to endure any toil or suffering in order to finish his course. But the mood that was on him led him to long for the finish, when he might leave the little horsehair tent on earth and be at home in God's building in the heavens.—F.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The secret of devotedness.* No one now flings a charge of madness at the sublime enthusiasm of St. Paul. He is looked on as a paragon of Christians. But, while he lived, he had no such general appreciation to encourage and sustain him. What he had above other men were not praises, but labours and reproaches. He endured all because he had in himself the mainspring of faith and the holy energy of love. Throughout this Epistle he shows his feelings and motives with the utmost candour, and in this passage tells how he came to be so enthusiastic toward God and so thoughtful and self-controlled toward his fellow-Christians.

I. THE MOVING PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS. It is the strong unchanging love of Christ to his people, assured to them by his Spirit and his Word. Paul had a fear of God, a reverence for the Law, and walked in all good conscience; but when the love of Christ was revealed to him and suffused his spirit it made a new man of him—thrilled, stirred, animated, constrained him to love and serve Christ and the Church. And as the apostle grew old and experienced, this motive lost nothing of its power. The love of Christ became to him, as it does to all experienced Christians, more and more wonderful—a Shepherd's love, that led him to die for us, and that now secures that we "shall not want;" a Brother's love, and "love beyond a brother's;" a Bridegroom's love, who gave himself for the Church and will present the Church to himself.

II. THE WAY IN WHICH THE MOTIVE ACTS. It is through no mere gush of feeling, but through consideration of the purpose and efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection. 1. He died for all to this intent and with this result, that all of them died. Virtually and in the estimate of God this crucifixion of the whole Church took place when Christ was crucified. In the actual realization of it it becomes true to each man as and when he looks to Christ crucified and is united to him by faith. And with effects both legal and moral. He who was married to the Law dies to the Law, and is freed from its claims, so as to be married to the risen Christ. He who lived in sin dies to sin, and may not any longer live therein. He who loved the world is crucified to it, that he may love and live to God. 2. He rose again; and all the crucified ones live by him. So they have justification, as represented by the accepted One, who has gone to the Father; and sanctification too, as separated to God in holy living and guided by the indwelling Spirit. The former manner of life is marked by self-regard. The new manner of life exchanges this for the habit of regarding Christ. So his constraining love induces his followers "to live unto him."

III. USES OF THIS DOCTRINE. 1. *Let it instruct us.* Many are very ill informed of the relation of our Lord's death and resurrection to the Divine will and to human salvation; and for this reason they are much less constrained by his love than they ought to be. Study these things. Bring thought and consideration as well as emotion to the theme. The love constrains "because we judge." 2. *Let it humble us.* Has the Son of the living God so loved us, and where is our love to him?

"Lord, it is my chief complaint
That my love is cold and faint."

3. *Let it impel us.* What we need to overcome our moral indolence and habits of self-pleasing is the pressure of strong convictions and motives; and we can best get these in contemplating the love, the death, and the resurrection of Christ. This, too, is a great security against departure from the Lord. When we know and feel little of Christ's love we are easily tempted; but when this is in our thoughts and affections we abhor and repel whatever might separate us from him. 4. *Let it comfort us.* We are delivered from the wrath to come. Christ loves us. Then the Father also loves us. Duties are pleasant, afflictions are light; to live is Christ, to die is gain.—F.

Vers. 18—21.—*Reconciliation.* Great truths hang together. When the Lord Jesus had told Nicodemus of regeneration, he immediately proceeded to teach him salvation through a Redeemer. So when the Apostle Paul has spoken of new creation in Christ (ver. 17), he instantly follows it with the doctrine of reconciliation through Christ.

I. THE NEED OF RECONCILIATION. The world is not in harmony or at peace with God. Sin has done it. On the one hand, God's displeasure is declared against the workers of iniquity; on the other, those workers are afraid of God and alienated from him. A great gulf yawns between God and man; and the need of reconciliation is the need of a bridge across that chasm. Or, a great mountain is cast up between God and man; and the need of reconciliation is the need of that mountain becoming a plain, so that God and man may not merely approach, but unite and be at peace. "What can be the difficulty," some exclaim, "if God desires it? Is he not omnipotent, and can he not accomplish whatever he pleases?" But we speak of a moral obstacle, not a physical. And, while God can certainly do what he pleases, he cannot please to do anything but what is perfectly righteous. So there is a difficulty. It is twofold: there is a sentence of condemnation in heaven against the transgressors of the law of righteousness; and there is an enmity to God or a cowering dread of him in the hearts of those transgressors on earth.

II. THE AUTHOR OF RECONCILIATION. "All things [*i.e.* all the things of the new creation] are of God, who has reconciled us to himself." Man, the creature and the sinner, should have been the first to seek the healing of the breach, by suing for pardon and imploring mercy from God. But it has not been so. The initiative has been taken by God, who is rich in mercy, and, loving the world, has provided for its reconciliation by Jesus Christ.

III. THE METHOD OF RECONCILIATION. Messages sent from a distant heaven or throne of God could not suffice. There was need of an authorized Messenger. So God sent his only begotten Son. For so great a work was constituted a unique and wonderful personality. The Son of God became man and yet continued Divine. So, in the very constitution of his person, he brought the Divine and the human together. And thus his relation to both parties was such as perfectly fitted him to be the Reconciler. He loved God, and therefore was faithful to all Divine claims and prerogatives; while at the same time he loved man and was intent on securing his salvation. 1. He dealt with the difficulty on the side of eternal righteousness. He did so by taking the room and the responsibility of the transgressors and making atonement for them. And the hand of God was in this. "He hath made him," etc. (ver. 21). "Made . . . sin," though he never was a sinner, and laden with it as a burden, enveloped in it as a mantle of shame. "Jehovah laid upon him the iniquity of us all." The issue is that we "become the righteousness of God in him." And in this is nothing illusive or fictitious. There was a real laying of our sins on the Lamb of God, that there may be a real laying or conferring of Divine righteousness on us who believe in his Name. 2. He deals with the difficulty of alienated feeling. No change is needed in the mind or disposition of God. He does not need to be persuaded to love the world. All the salvation in Christ proceeds from his love. But the enmity of men to God must be removed, and this is effected by the revelation of God as gracious and propitious to sinners in Christ Jesus. When this is known and believed, the heart turns to God and actual reconciliation is made.

IV. THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION. (Vers. 19, 20.) When St. Paul preached the gospel it was as though God entreated or exhorted the people through his servant's lips. He was an ambassador, not a plenipotentiary with powers to discuss and negotiate terms of peace, but a King's messenger sent to proclaim terms of free grace and

to press the acceptance of them on the enemies of the King. This embassy continues. Do not meet it with excuses and delays.—F.

Ver. 1.—Our permanent building. Taking the apostle's words in a general way, and not confining them to the precise topic which he has under consideration, we are taught by them that, regarding all our present things as but shadows and symbols, we need not trouble ourselves overmuch about their changing forms, or even about their passing away. All our heart and all our efforts should go out in the endeavour to bring nearer, and make clearer and fuller, the sense of our dwelling in, breathing in, working in, the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal. Our sphere is God. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." The real is the unseen. The stable and lasting is the eternal. And this view of things alone can put us in right relations with the body, and set us upon the right use of things seen and temporal. Whenever we are brought face to face with any passing, dissolving, removing, earthly thing, then God seems to call us, saying, "Remember the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Take for illustration—

I. THE TENT AND THE HOUSE. No figure could be more appropriate than this for the apostle, who gained his living as a tentmaker, and was familiar with its material, its construction, and its use. We can well imagine how, as he wrought, either at weaving the rough Cilician cloth, or at sewing together the various lengths, and the holes for the poles and ropes, he would meditate on the frailty of the tent which he was thus making, contrasting it with the stable marble and stone mansions found in such cities as Corinth. In his day tents were chiefly made for travellers; for those who journeyed from place to place, either for business or for pleasure, in districts where accommodation at inns could not be found. They had their settled homes in the great cities, and they went forth on their travels with quiet hearts, because of the cherished feeling that they had a home. They used the tent awhile, camping out in the open country; but if the wild storm did come, and even lift and carry away the tent; if the midnight robber did overthrow it, and seize the spoil,—the traveller might bear the hardship and the loss, in pleasant confidence that he had a home. If the worst came, it could be but the *shadow* of his home passing away; in yonder city stood his secure dwelling.

II THE DOCTRINE AND THE TRUTH. For doctrine is like the frail tent, and truth is like the granite mansion that outlasts the passing ages. We cannot be too thankful for the forms in which sacred truth is conveyed to us, unfolded before us, or impressed upon us. We bless God for all holy and helpful words, full of tender and dear associations; words of simple catechism for our childhood's weakness; words of formal doctrine fashioned to help us when, in our youth-time, we tried to get personal hold of mysterious and many-sided truth. Let no man despise the doctrines which, like tents, have often given us their shelter and their help. And yet they are only like "earthly houses of this tabernacle." Truth is the "building of God, the house not made with hands," wherein alone human souls may find quietness from controversy or from fears. Doctrines are only symbols and shadows, the human representations of the Divine and eternal things, the unspeakable realities which yet our souls may apprehend. Within, behind, above, around, the doctrine ever dwells the truth; and, at first, we are very dependent on the forms which it gains for mortal eyes and ears and minds; but, as the soul grows, and gains its vision, its hearing, and its touch, we get loosened from our dependence on the forms, we can calmly see them change and pass. Resting in the stable house of truth, we calmly look on all transitory forms, even of doctrine, and say, "We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

III NATURE AND GOD. Nature, the world of things seen—the firmament, golden-glowing, cloud-shaded, and star-sprinkled; earth, with its vales, and hills, and flowers, and trees; the great and wide sea—is in a very serious sense *God*. It is God manifest to our senses. Behind what is called pantheism there is a deeply poetical and spiritual truth. Nature is God seen; God in toned picture for mortal eyes to see; God, if we may so say, in photograph. Earth is the plate which has caught all that human eyes may see of the figure of God. Nature is the tent-symbol of the eternal *house*. The Jew called his mountains "the hills of God," because they brought to him the sense of the highness and almightiness of God. He called the splendid trees "the cedars of Jehovah," because they brought to him a sense of the stately beauty of God.

Yet nature is not really God himself, only God in expression for our apprehending, only the veil that he shines through. Therefore we turn from the shadow to the substance which throws it; from the form to the reality which it does but exhibit. And if all nature passed away, we should lose nothing. It would be but dropping the veil that we might see *the face*.

IV. OUR EARTHLY AND OUR HEAVENLY BODIES. St. Paul was plainly thinking of his body, the vehicle by means of which our souls come into contact with the world of created things. But he cherished the idea of a spiritual body, which could be the clothing and vehicle of his soul through the long, the eternal ages. Thinking of it he could say, "What matter if my tent-body be destroyed? I have a building of God, a house not made with hands."—R. T.

Ver. 5.—"The earnest of the Spirit." The apostle has been referring to the great hope set before us in the gospel, which, as he regards it, is this, that "mortality might be swallowed up of life." That is the object of the Divine working in the believer, and of its final realization he has this "earnest," or pledge of assurance, God has given us already the "earnest of the Spirit," who is the power that alone can work out such a sublime result as our final triumph over the flesh and sin, and meetness to take our place and part in a spiritual and heavenly state. "It is because the Spirit dwells in us by faith while we are here that we are to be raised hereafter. The body thus possessing a principle of life is as a seed planted in the ground to be raised again in God's good time" (comp. the sentence in ch. i. 22 and Rom. viii. 1—11). Observe that the Holy Spirit is presented to us under many aspects and figures; no one representation of his Divine mission can exhaust his relations to us. We must see his work on one side after another, and be willing to learn from all the figures under which it is presented.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY AN "EARNEST"? It is something offered as a pledge and assurance that what is promised shall surely be given. But it has been well pointed out that an "earnest" materially differs from a "pledge." A pledge is something different in kind, given as assurance for something else, as may be illustrated by the sacraments; but an earnest is a part of the thing to be given, as when a purchase is made and a portion of the money is paid down at once. The idea of the "earnest" may be seen in the "firstfruits," which are a beginning of, and assure the character of, the coming harvest.

II. WHAT IS THE SPIRIT AS "EARNEST" TO US NOW? St. Paul's one point here is that it is an assurance of the final victory of the higher life over the lower. We have indeed that higher life *now*, in its initial and rudimentary stages, in having the Spirit dwelling in us.

III. WHAT FUTURE IS PLEDGED IN OUR HAVING THE SPIRIT NOW? Precisely a future in which the spiritual life shall be victorious and supreme, and our vehicle of a body simply within the use of the Spirit. That is full redemption, glory, and heaven.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Walking by faith*. "We walk by faith, not by sight." "Walking" is a familiar Scripture term for a man's life on the earth. It seems to have been associated with the figure of life as a "pilgrimage" in the Old Testament, and as a "racecourse" in the New Testament. It is joined to another word sometimes, and our "walk and conversation" are spoken of, our "going forward" and "turning about."

I. WALK AS DESCRIPTIVE OF HUMAN LIFE. Its suitability will be seen if we notice: 1. That it is a moving on. The days of our life go by as do the scenes in a panorama. 2. It is a slow moving on, steady and regular as the clock; time moves on, bearing all its sons away. 3. It is a moving on through ever-changing scenes, as is the path of the traveller, now up the hillside, now along the dusty highway, and now through the shaded valleys, with ever-varying sights and sounds around us. 4. It is a moving on somewhere; for he who walks has some end before him or some home in view. So our human life has its goal. We pass on into the eternal, where we may find our home.

II. WALK BY SIGHT AS DESCRIPTIVE OF THE WORLDLY LIFE. "Walk by sight" does not mean "in the power of our vision," but "under the influence and persuasion of things seen and temporal." It is the one essential characteristic of the worldly man that his

judgments and decisions are made, his affections are ruled, and his conduct is ordered by what may be gathered under the term "the fashion of this world." Sense-conditions determine his place. Sense-requirements command his allegiance. Sense-principles inspire his doings and decide his relations. He "walks" with a horizon no further off than yonder ridge of hills, and with no thought really bigger in his soul than "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and what shall we enjoy?" Saying this is the saddest revelation of man's essential wrongness before the God who "made him for himself."

III. WALK BY FAITH AS DESCRIPTIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. We are not yet face to face with the eternal realities, but faith as the "substance of things hoped for" gives us a present actual possession of those eternal things, and makes them exert their power on our "walk." Faith in the unseen and eternal can (1) cheer; (2) raise the tone; (3) bring steadfastness into our walk and conversation. The realities are revealed to faith; human sight can only see passing shadows of things.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—"The judgment-seat of Christ." It is needlessly forcing language to regard this expression as referring to the general judgment of mankind. This letter is addressed to the saints, the Church at Corinth, and it may be specially instructive to keep within the limits of St. Paul's thought when he said, "For we"—that is, we Christians—"must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Such a judgment, or appraisalment, of our conduct is involved in the very idea of our mastership to Christ. He will be sure one day to take account of his servants, and this Jesus himself taught us in his parables of the talents and pounds. Christians are as stewards, men entrusted for a time with their Master's goods. They are even to be thought of as "slaves," wholly the Master's possession; and he has full power to estimate their conduct, reward faithfulness, and punish neglect and disobedience. St. Paul even loves to think of himself as the bondsman of Jesus. And the apostles long to prove so faithful in all things that they may not be ashamed, or terrified, or loth to meet their Master at his coming. "The feeling of accountability may take two forms. In a free and generous spirit it may be simply a sense of duty; in a slavish and cowardly spirit it will be a sense of compulsion." To us it should be a joy and an inspiration that our own loved Master will appraise our lives; and that, if he is true to observe our faults, he will be no less gracious to recognize what he may call our goodnesses and our obediences. The thought of his judgment can only be a terror to the rebellious, disobedient, and wilful among his servants. We notice three things.

I. LOYALTY TO CHRIST IS OUR SPIRIT. "We call him Master and Lord, and we say well; for so he is." The rule of our life is the will of our glorified and ever-present Lord. We have voluntarily given ourselves to him. To him we owe our supreme allegiance. He is to us what his queen and country are to the general who leads forth his army. We must be ever true to him; and he, and he alone, is the Lord whose approval or condemnation of our work we should seek. Because I am loyal to Christ I will care about nobody's judgment of my life until I know *his*.

II. SERVICE OF CHRIST IN RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OUR LIFE. This is the very essence of the matter. Christ is served by *righteousness*, and really by nothing else. Our place of service, our kind of service, our success in service, are quite the secondary things. The first thing is the *rightness* with which we do the service. Was the work *good*?—this it is that Christ asks. Herein Christ differs from all other masters. They can only judge the work; he judges the *character* which found expression through the work. It is that personal righteousness that Christ will search for when he judges his servants.

III. THE APPRAISEMENT OF CHRIST IS OUR EXPECTATION AND OUR HOPE. A day of final judgment is men's expectation, but not their hope. It is too often a terror to them, a thought put away in fear. Christ's judgment of his saints is our hope; it is the first day of our glory. The thought of it may make us serious and watchful, but it never can make us sad. Christ will test and try our lives. Christ will weigh us in his balances. Christ will apportion our future place. Christ will chastise if there be found evil in us, and his chastisements shall be our joy; for we too want all the evil in us found out and put away. We even glory in this coming appraisalment by our Lord; for if, in subtle disguises, evil lurks in any of our secret places of heart and life, Jesus will find it out, and will not leave us until we stand in the likeness of his own spotless

purity. And upon our Lord's judgment of us our future, our eternal location and work, must depend. Tested in this life, he will know what we can do; and it may be that he will give us trust of higher things, "authority over ten cities."—R. T.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The power of the Christian motive.* The life of an intelligent being must be under the sway of some chosen and cherished motive. High degrees of intelligence find their expression in the careful selection of the motive. Where the intelligence is low and untrained, we find men blindly obeying motives which the accident of the hour may have raised up, or to which the bodily passions may excite. We can look into the face of no fellow-man and say, "That man is living without a motive." The consideration of the motives that actually rule men's lives give us very sad thoughts of our humanity. They range all the distance between the animal and the Divine, but they belong for the most part to the lower levels. The entire aspect and character of a man's life may be changed by a change of his motives. A new and nobler motive will soon make a man a better man. No man ever did rise to do noble things while his motive concerned only self and self-interests. All noble lives have been spent in service to others. All the best lives in private spheres have been self-denying lives. All the heroic lives in public spheres have been the lives of patriots, the lives of the generous, the pitying, and the helpful. St. Paul was in every way a remarkable man, full of energy, consecration, self-denial, and the "enthusiasm of humanity;" and in the passage now before us he tells us what was the supporting motive, the secret strength, of it all. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

I. THE SOURCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MOTIVE. "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died in him." Apparently that life of the apostle was the life of an enthusiast. But if you used that word in any bad sense he would indignantly deny such an accusation. It was indeed a life to which he was constrained, held fast, impelled, coerced, and that by the intense love of his soul for another—a love passing the love of women. But St. Paul would most earnestly urge that this love of his was no mere passion, no mere impulse, no blind force taking sudden mastery of his heart, and crushing down and silencing thought and judgment and will. He declares it to be a love based on judgment, and strengthened by maturer judgment. If that love was first won by the gracious vision granted to him when he was nearing Damascus, it was more truly a love confirmed and established by the serious meditations and calm decisions of his time of blindness, and by the Scripture studies of his lonely days in the desert. That sober consideration took up: 1. The sadness of man's condition. "Then were all dead;" or, as otherwise read, "then all died." 2. St. Paul's judgment decided that it was quite true about Jesus Christ—he had intervened to save men by his own sufferings and death. "He died for all." Paul—or Saul, as he was then called—was nearing the fulness of manhood when he heard of the appearance of a new prophet-teacher in the land of his fathers. But all his prejudices arrayed themselves against the acceptance of him and against belief in his special commissiou and authority. It appeared from the reports that he was a poor man; that he came from the despised Galilean Nazareth, about which Old Testament Scriptures prophesied no such great thing; that he made himself the "friend of publicans and sinners;" that he was an unsparing foe of Paul's own sect, the Pharisees; but that at last he had been stopped in his mischievous career, and made a public example of by an ignominious and shameful death. And then one day prejudice was overthrown. Prejudice was made to see the living glory of him whom it had tried to believe was disgraced and dead. Prejudice heard the authoritative voice of the supposed impostor speaking out of the heavenly places. Prejudice was conquered; the reason, the judgment, and the heart were enthroned, and set to form a judgment concerning Christ. And what a different thing the career of the Lord Jesus became when it was soberly, thoughtfully judged! Poor was he? It was the worthy outer garb of the unspeakable humiliation of the Divine Lord to the weakness of men. It was the fit outward seeming for "Immanuel," God with us. Out of Nazareth did he come? That was only one of the thousandfold proofs that he was indeed the Messiah promised to the fathers, now in dimmer and now in clearer outlines. Friend of publicans and sinners was he? No wonder; for he well knew that the real want of men is, not the removal of diseases, or the extensions of ceremonial worship, or even the unfolding of new truths, but the pardon of sin, the

cleansing away of iniquity, and the assurance, carried home to the very soul, that God loves and would save the sinner. Despised and rejected of men was he? Yes; and it must have been so. Sinful humanity could not bear the reproach of the presence of perfect virtue. The forces of evil would be sure to wrestle hard against him who came that he might cast them out and destroy them. Die, did he, a mournful, shameful death? Judgment says—There, amid the very shame of the cross, thrown up by the very darkness that lies behind it, shine forth rays of transcendent glory. There, in those hours of agony, may be seen sublime self-sacrifice, mystery of spiritual suffering, Divine sin-bearing, and the most persuasive manifestation of God's love to men. There is God "not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all;" and there is God's Son "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree." On that sober judgment the apostle based his new life-motive. He set the love of that dying Saviour so high in his soul that it became from henceforth the master motive of all that he did.

II. THE WAY IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MOTIVE WORKS. "They which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." The motive works by establishing a new law for the ruling of our life and conduct. It is the *not-unto-self* law. We do not know ourselves as we really are in our carnal state if we think that is not a new law. Gratification of self is the great *unnatural* human law. The not-unto-self law is the chosen life-principle of all the good. It is the law of God, the life-rule of Jesus the Christ; and, learnt of him, it has made many a human story since then beautiful and gracious. Could it be established in all hearts, the golden age would have come, in which the unselfish King can reign for ever and ever. The only possible deliverance from the sway of the old self-law is found in the elevating of some new and inspiring love to the throne of the heart. And Jesus makes *himself* the Object of just such love. The new motive also works in another way. It gives an inner spiritual force to sustain us in the endeavour to obey the law. Love becomes to us what it is to the child. The love of the parent becomes the law of the child's life; but the love, as it dwells in the heart of the child, makes obedience easy. So our love to Christ can become the inner force by which our obedience is sustained day by day.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*God the Reconciler*. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "This is the first occurrence, in the order of time, in St. Paul's Epistles, of this word 'reconcile' as describing God's work in Christ. The idea involved is that man had been at enmity and had now been atoned (*at-oned*), and brought into concord with God. It will be noted that the work is described as originating with the Father and accomplished by the mediation of the Son" (Plumptre).

I. THE DISTURBANCE WHICH CALLS FOR RECONCILIATION. This may be presented as a disturbance occurring between (1) a Creator and his creatures; (2) a King and his subjects; or (3) more worthily in this case, a Father and his children. The point of impression is, that the disturbance is in no sense due to any action or neglect of God as Creator, King, or Father, but is wholly due to the self-willed and rebellious conduct of the creatures, subjects, or children. It involved a state of enmity, a withdrawal of pleasant relations, and acts of judgment on the part of God. All these statements need illustration and enforcement. Only as the difficulty is duly estimated can the grace of the remedy be fully understood.

II. THE SIDE ON WHICH WAS THE EARLIEST DESIRE FOR RECONCILEMENT. Not man's side. The offenders did not seek forgiveness and restoration. Show that this is true (1) historically, (2) experimentally. None of us, now, are *before God* in seeking reconciliation. The offended Creator, King, and Father seeks to make both one, and break down the middle walls of partition. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." The deep ground of redemption is God's pitying love for us sinners. We must not think that we claimed the love or that Christ persuaded God to show it. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son." The enmity of man to him grieved him, and love found the ways in which to break the enmity, and win, by a free forgiveness, the very heart of the offenders.

III. THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD EFFECTS THE RECONCILEMENT. All are summed up in Christ. He is the Agent through whom God practically carries out his reconciling purpose. We may gather all the ways under two heads. 1. God reconciles by

removing the hindrances. 2. God reconciles by persuading the offenders. For both Christ is the Agency. He takes "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us out of the way, nailing it to his cross." He could say, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Plead, in conclusion, that God's reconciling mercies, embodied in Christ Jesus, ought to be a mighty persuasion on us to yield ourselves to him. They should say in our hearts, "Be ye reconciled to God."—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*The Sinless counted as a sinner.* We give but the bare outline of a course of thought on this subject, because it is so suggestive of controversial theological topics, and can be treated from the points of view of several distinct theological schools.

I. CHRIST AS A SINLESS MAN. What proofs of this have we? And how does such sinlessness separate him from man and ensure his acceptance with God?

II. THE SINLESS CAN NEVER, IN FACT, BE OTHER THAN SINLESS. Neither God nor man can be deceived into regarding Christ as a sinner. No exigencies of theology may make us speak of God as regarding Christ as other than he was.

III. THE SINLESS CAN TAKE, AS A BURDEN ON HEART AND EFFORT, THE SINS OF OTHERS. Show fully in what senses this can be done.

IV. WITH SIN THUS ON HIM, A SINLESS MAN MAY SUBMIT TO BE TREATED AS IF HE WERE HIMSELF A SINNER.

V. WHEN THE SINLESS MAN THUS TAKES THE SINS OF OTHERS ON HIM HE BEARS THE SIN ALTOGETHER AWAY. Jesus took up the matter of our sin that it might be a hindrance and trouble to us no more for ever.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

The methods and conditions of an apostolic ministry (vers. 1—10). Appeal to the Corinthians to reciprocate his affection and separate themselves from evil (vers. 11—18).

Ver. 1.—We then, as fellow-workers. Continuing the entreaty of ch. v. 20, he adds, "But as [his] fellow-workers we also exhort you." The "also" shows that he does not rest content with merely *entreating* them (*δεόμεθα*), but adds to the entreaty an exhortation emphasized by a self-sacrificing ministry. "Fellow-workers with God" (1 Cor. iii. 9). *Beseech*. The word is the same as that rendered "beseech" by the Authorized Version in ch. v. 20, and it should be rendered "exhort:" "God exhorts you by our means; we therefore entreat you to be reconciled to God; yes, and as Christ's fellow-workers we exhort you." That ye receive not. The word means both passively to receive and actively to accept as a personal boon. The grace of God. To announce this is the chief aim of the gospel (Acts xiii. 43; xx. 24). In vain; that is, "without effect." You must not only accept the teaching of God's Word, but must see that it produces adequate moral results. It must not, so to speak, fall "into a vacuum (*eis kenón*)." "He," says Pelagius, "receives the grace of God in vain who, in the new covenant, is not himself new." If you really are in Christ you must show that you have thereby become "a new creation" (ch. v. 17). The branches of the true Vine

must bear fruit. (For the phrase, "in vain," see Gal. ii. 2; Phil. ii. 16,) What the grace of God is meant to effect is sketched in Titus ii. 11, 12.

Ver. 2.—For he saith; that is, "God saith." The nominative is involved in the "fellow-workers," so that this is hardly to be classed with those rabbinic methods of citation found also in Philo, which deliberately omit the word "God" as the speaker, and use "He" by preference. I have heard thee, etc. The quotation is from the LXX. of Isa. xlix. 8, and is meant to express the necessity for receiving the grace of God, not only efficaciously, but at once. The "thee" in Isaiah is the Servant of Jehovah, the type primarily of Christ, and then of all who are "in Christ." In a time accepted; literally, in the Hebrew, *in a time of favour*. It is the season of grace, before grace has been wilfully rejected, and the time for judgment begins (Prov. i. 24—28). The accepted time; literally, *the well-accepted opportunity*. St. Paul in his earnestness strengthens the force of the adjective. The same word occurs in ch. viii. 12; Rom. xv. 16, 31.

"There is a deep nick in Time's restless wheel

For each man's good."

(Chapman.)

Now. No doubt St. Paul meant that, as long as life lasts, the door of repentance is never absolutely closed; but it is probable that he had specially in view the nearness of the advent of Christ. Compares the stress laid upon the word "to-day" in Heb. iii. 7, 8,

and "at least in this *thy day*" (Luke xix. 42).

Ver. 3.—Giving no offences in anything. An under-current of necessary self-defence runs through St. Paul's exhortation. The participle is, like "fellow-workers," a nominative to "we exhort you" in ver. 1. *Offence*. The word here is not *skandalon*, which is so often rendered "offence," but *proskopē*, which occurs here alone in the New Testament, and is not found in the LXX. It means "a cause of stumbling." *Proskomma*, a stumbling-block, is used in 1 Cor. viii. 9. Be not blamed. When any just blame can be attached to the minister, the force of the ministry of reconciliation is fatally weakened (For the word, see ch. viii. 20.)

Ver. 4.—Approving ourselves; rather, *commend*ing ourselves. He is again referring to the insinuation, which had evidently caused him deep pain, that he was not authorized to preach, as his Judaic opponents were, by "letters of commendation" (ch. iii. 1—3) from James or from the elders at Jerusalem. His credentials came from God, who had enabled him to be so faithful. As the ministers of God (1 Cor. iv. 1). The article should be omitted. In much patience. Christ had forewarned his apostles that they would have much to endure, and had strengthened them by the promise that "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22). In afflictions. This word, as we have seen, is one of the haunting words in ch. i. 4—11. In necessities. St. Paul was poor, and was often in want (Acts xx. 34). In distresses. The same word which occurs in ch. iv. 8. It means "extreme pressure" (literally, *narrowness of space*), and is a climax of the other words.

Ver. 5.—In stripes (comp. ch. xi. 23—28). The stripes were of two kinds—from Jewish whips and Roman rods. But of the five scourgings with Jewish whips not one is mentioned in the Acts, and only one of the three scourgings with Roman rods (Acts xvi. 23). Nothing, therefore, is more clear than that the Acts only furnishes us with a fragmentary and incomplete record, in which, as we gather from the Epistles, either the agonies of St. Paul's lifelong martyrdom are for some reason intentionally minimized, or else (which is, perhaps, more probable) St. Paul was, as his rule and habit, so reticent about his own sufferings in the cause of Christ that St. Luke was only vaguely, if at all, aware of many scenes of trial through which he had passed. In imprisonments. St. Paul was frequently in prison, but St. Luke only tells us of one of these occasions (Acts xvi. 24)—at Philippi; the Roman imprisonment and that at

II. CORINTHIANS.

Cæsarea were *subsequent* to this Epistle. In tumults. These were a normal incident of St. Paul's life, both up to this time and for years afterwards (Acts xiii. 50; xiv. 19; xvi. 22; xvii. 4, 5; xviii. 12; xix. 28, 29; xxi. 27—39; xxii. 22, 23; xxiii. 9, 10; xxvii. 42, etc.). The word *akatastasiai* might also mean "insecurities," i.e. homelessness, wanderings, uncertainties (comp. 1 Cor. iv. 11); but New Testament usage seems decisive in favour of the former meaning (ch. xii. 20; 1 Cor. xiv. 33; Jas. iii. 15). In labours (ch. xi. 28; 1 Cor. iv. 12; xv. 10. Acts xx. 34; 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8). In watchings. "Spells of sleeplessness" were a necessary incident of such a life; and an eminently nervous nature like that of St. Paul is rarely capable of the habitual relief of sound sleep. Hence he again refers to this in ch. xi. 27. His "sleeplessness" was sometimes the necessary result of labours "night and day" (Acts xx. 31; 1 Thess. ii. 9, etc.). In fastings. St. Paul never inculcates the practice of voluntary fasting as a duty (for the reading in 1 Cor. vii. 5 is more than dubious); but it is probable that he found it personally useful at times (Acts xiii. 2, 3; xiv. 23; ix. 9). The nine forms of suffering hitherto mentioned—three general, three specific, and three voluntary—are all *physical* sufferings borne with "much endurance."

Ver. 6.—By pureness; rather, *in pureness*, as the preposition is the same. He now gives six instances of special gifts and virtues. The "pureness" is not only "chastity," but absolute sincerity (1 John iii. 3; ch. iv. 2; 1 Thess. ii. 10). By knowledge. The knowledge is the true knowledge of the gospel in its fulness (Eph. iii. 4). In his depth of insight into the truth St. Paul was specially gifted. The word *gnosis* had not yet acquired the fatal connotations which afterwards discredited it. By long-suffering (2 Tim. iii. 10; iv. 2). The patient endurance of insults, of which St. Paul shows a practical specimen in this Epistle, and still more in Phil. i. 15—18. By kindness. "Love suffereth long, and is kind" (1 Cor. xiii. 4); "Long-suffering, kindness" (Gal. v. 22). By the Holy Ghost. To the special gift of the Spirit St. Paul attributed all his success (1 Thess. i. 5; Rom. xv. 13, 19). By love unfeigned; which is the surest fruit of the Spirit, and the best of all spiritual gifts (ch. xii. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 1; xiii.; Rom. xii. 9, etc.).

Ver. 7.—By the word of truth. St. Paul now passes to the more specific endowments of the true teacher (comp. ch. ii. 17; iv. 2; 1 Cor. ii. 4; Gal. ii. 5). By the power of God; literally, *in power of God* (ch. iv. 7; 1 Cor. ii. 4; iv. 20). "For the kingdom of God is not [only] in word, but in power."

By the armour of righteousness. Here first the preposition "in" (*ἐν*) is changed for "through," "by means of" (*διὰ*). *Armour*; rather, *arms*. On the right hand and on the left. That is, both by offensive weapons and a defensive panoply (ch. x. 4; Eph. vi. 11—17; 1 Thess. v. 8).

Ver. 8.—By honour and dishonour; rather, *by glory and dishonour*. There is no need to change here the meaning of *διὰ*, "by means of;" to "through," *i.e.* "amid." The honour and dishonour are alike means which contribute to the commendation of the ministry. Of our Lord some said, "He is a deceiver," while others said, "He is a good man" (John vii. 12); and the dispraise of some is the highest praise (Matt. v. 11). Compare with the whole passage 1 Cor. iv. 9—13, where we see that "abuse," "insult," and "slander," constituted no small part of the apostle's daily trial. By evil report and good report. The beatitude of malediction (Luke vi. 22; 1 Pet. iv. 14). St. Paul had deliberately abandoned the desire to win the suffrages of men at the cost of undesirable concessions (Gal. i. 10). As deceivers. The Jews called Christ "a deceiver" (*mesith*, *i.e.* a deliberate and misleading impostor), Matt. xxvii. 63; John vii. 12. This is an illustration of the "evil report," and in the Clementine homilies, a century later, St. Paul, under the disgraceful pseudonym of "Simon Magus," is still defamed as a deceiver. And yet true. There is no "yet" in the original, and its omission gives more force to these eloquent and impassioned contrasts.

Ver. 9.—As unknown; literally, *as being ignored; as those whom no one cares to recognize*. And yet well known. "And becoming fully recognized." "Recognized" by God (1 Cor. xiii. 12), and ultimately by all good men (ch. xi. 6), though they might be contemptuously ignored by men. As dying (ch. i. 9; iv. 10, 11). Behold. The word calls attention to what seemed like a daily miracle. The paradox of the Greek tragedian—

"Who knows if life be death, and death be life?"

which seemed so supremely amusing to Aristophanes and the wits of Athens, became a familiar fact to the early Christians (Rom. viii. 36; 1 Cor. xv. 31; Eph. ii. 5, 6; Col. ii. 13, etc.). As chastened. The daily Divine education of suffering (Ps. cxviii. 18).

Ver. 10.—As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. The early Christians always insist on "joy" as one of the fruits of the Spirit (comp. Matt. v. 10—12), and especially joy in the midst of grief and anguish (Rom. v. 8; xiv. 17; 1 Thess. v. 16, "Rejoice always"). The best proof that this was no mere phraseo-

logy, but an amazing and new *charism* granted to the world, may be seen in the Epistle to the Philippians. It was written when St. Paul was old, poor, deserted, imprisoned, in danger of immediate death, and apparently in the lowest depths of forsaken sorrow; yet the spontaneous key-note of the whole Epistle is, "I rejoice; rejoice ye" (Phil. iv. 6, 12). As poor. The word means even "paupers," and describes a very literal fact. St. Paul, for Christ's sake, had suffered "the loss of all things" (Phil. iii. 8). Yet making many rich. Not by getting collections for them (which would be a most unworthy antithesis, though it is strangely accepted by Chrysostom and others); but "by imparting to them the true riches, in the form of spiritual gifts, and the teaching of the gospel" (comp. Jas. ii. 5). Possessing all things; rather, *as having nothing, and fully having all things*. The verb means "possessing all things to the full." For "all things are ours" (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22).

Vers. 11—18.—An appeal to the Corinthians to reciprocate his love for them, and separate themselves from evil.

Ver. 11.—Corinthians! A rare and very personal form of loving appeal, which occurs nowhere else in these Epistles (comp. Phil. iv. 15). Our mouth is open to you. St. Paul has evidently been writing in a mood of inspired eloquence. The fervour of his feelings has found vent in an unusual flow of beautiful and forcible language. He appeals to the unreserved freedom with which he has written as a reason why they should treat him with the same frank love. Our heart is enlarged. After writing the foregoing majestic appeal, he felt that he had disburdened his heart, and as it were made room in it to receive the Corinthians unreservedly, in spite of all the wrongs which some of them had done him (comp. ch. vii. 3, 27). On the antithesis of the *mouth* and the *heart*, see Matt. xii. 34; Rom. x. 10.

Ver. 12.—Ye are not straitened in us. Any narrowing of the sympathy or straining of the relations between us does not rise in any way from me. (For the verb, see ch. iv. 8.) Ye are straitened in your own bowels; rather, *in your own hearts*. Any tightening or pressure of the feelings which should exist between us rises solely from your own hearts. Enlarge and open them, as I have done, and we shall once more love each other aright. The verb has already occurred in ch. iv. 8 ("distressed"). *Your own bowels*. It is to be regretted that the Authorized Version adopted the meaningless and often rather incongruous word "bowels" for the Greek word *σπλῆγνα* used in its Hebraic sense of "feelings," "affections"

(Cant. v. 4; Isa. xvi. 11). This literalism is always out of place, and especially in Philem. 7, 12, 20.

Ver. 13.—Now, for a recompense in the same. He begs them to give him “a reward in kind;” in other words, he wishes them to be as frank with him as he has been to them. As unto my children. And therefore, as a spiritual father, I may surely ask for sympathy. St. Paul uses the same metaphor in 1 Cor. iv. 14; 1 Thess. ii. 11. Be ye also enlarged. Treat me as I have treated you (comp. “Be as I am,” Gal. iv. 12).

Ver. 14.—Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Ewald, followed by Dean Stanley, Holsten, and others, thinks that here there is a sudden dislocation of the argument, and some have even supposed that the section, ch. vi. 14—vii. 1, is either an after-thought written by the apostle on the margin of the Epistle after it was finished; or even an interpolation. The latter view has arisen from the unusual expressions of the section, and the use of the word “Belial,” and the command of Greek shown by the varied expressions. There is no adequate ground for these conjectures. Every writer is conscious of moods in which words come to him more fluently than at other times, and all writers of deep feeling, like St. Paul, abound in sudden transitions which correspond to the lightning-like rapidity of their thoughts. It is doubtful whether the readers would not have seen at once the sequence of thought, which depends on circumstances which we can only conjecture. Probably the alienation from St. Paul had its root in some tampering with unbelievers. Such might at any rate have been the case among the Gentile members of the Church, some of whom were even willing to go to sacrificial feasts in heathen temples (1 Cor. viii.—x.). “Unequally yoked” is a metaphor derived from Lev. xix. 19 and Deut. xxii. 10, and is the opposite of “true yoke-fellow” (Phil. iv. 3). What fellowship; literally, *participation* (Eph. v. 6—11). Unrighteousness; literally, *lawlessness* (1 John iii. 4). It was a special mark of heathen life (Rom. vii. 19). Light with darkness. This antithesis is specially prominent in Eph. v. 9—11 and Col. i. 12, 13, and in the writings of St. John (John i. 5; iii. 19; 1 John, *passim*).

Ver. 15.—Concord; literally, *harmony* or *accord*. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament or in the LXX. The adjective *sumphōnos* occurs in 1 Cor. vii. 5. Christ with Belial (see 1 Cor. x. 21), *Belial*. Here used in the form *Beliar*, as a proper name, because no Greek word ends in the letter *r*. In the Old Testament it does not stand for a person, but means “wickedness” or “worthlessness.” Thus

in Prov. vi. 12 “a naughty person” is *adam belial*. “A son of Belial” means “a child of wickedness” by a common Hebraism (Deut. xiii. 13; Judg. xix. 22). And hence, since Belial only became a proper name in later days—

“To him no temples rose,
No altars smoked.”

Perhaps, as has been conjectured, this clause, which contains two such unusual words, may be a quotation. It is, however, no ground of objection that Belial does not occur elsewhere in St. Paul, for until the pastoral Epistles he only uses *diabolos* twice (Eph. iv. 27; vi. 11). What part, etc.? This is not, like the other clauses, an illustration, but the statement of the fact itself which “has come in amidst the lively, sweeping flow of the discourse.” With an infidel; *i.e.* with an unconverted Gentile.

Ver. 16.—What agreement. The word means “unity of composition.” This is the fifth synonym which St. Paul has used in this clause—*μετοχή, κοινωνία, συμφώνησις, μερίς, συγκατάθεσις*. The verb *συγκατάθεμι* occurs in Luke xxiii. 51. St. Paul in this chapter shows an almost unwonted command over the Greek language. With idols (Matt. vi. 24; 1 John v. 21). Ye. “We” is the reading of κ , B, D, L. Ewald, without sufficient ground, makes it one of his arguments for regarding this section as interpolated (comp. ch. v. 21). Are the temple of the living God. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every Christian heart, which is the distinguishing result of the new covenant, was very prominent in the thoughts of St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19; Eph. ii. 21, 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; comp. 1 Pet. ii. 5; Heb. iii. 6). As God hath said. The quotation is altered slightly from the LXX. of Lev. xxvi. 12. But in this and the next verses we have “a mosaic of citations” from this passage and Exod. xxix. 45; Isa. lii. 11; Ezek. xx. 34; 2 Sam. vii. 14; comp. Jer. xxxi. 9; Isa. xliiii. 6. This mode of compressing the essence of various quotations into one passage was common among the rabbis. In them. In the original Hebrew this means “among them” (Exod. xxix. 45; Lev. xxvi. 12), since the *indwelling* of God by his Holy Spirit belongs only to the new covenant.

Ver. 17.—From among them; *i.e.* from among the unbelievers. Touch not the unclean thing (Lev. xi. 8, etc.; Isa. lii. 11). I will receive you (comp. Ezek. xx. 34). These promises to Israel are naturally transferred to the ideal Israel, the Christian Church.

Ver. 18.—And will be a Father unto you. These reminiscences are sufficiently near to 2 Sam. vii. 8—14; Isa. xliiii. 6; Jer. xxxi. 9,

to render needless the supposition that they come from any apocryphal book (Ewald) or Jewish hymn (Grotius). Saith the Lord Almighty. The phrase, not elsewhere used by St. Paul, is taken from 2 Sam. vii. 8

(LXX.). The epithet indicates the certain fulfilment of the promises. *Pantokrator*, for "Almighty," is used in the LXX. for "Lord of sabaoth," and in the New Testament only occurs elsewhere in the Apocalypse.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The grace of God received in vain.* "We then, as workers together," etc. There are three topics here for meditation.

I. A SUBLIME MISSION. "Workers together with him." What is the grand work in which God is engaged and in which we can co-operate? He is engaged in numerous works—works of creation, government, conservation, in which we can have no hand. The work here is evidently the work spoken of in the preceding chapter—the work of reconciling man to himself, the work which he does in Christ. Now, all genuine ministers co-operate with him in this; their grand endeavour is to bring alienated souls into friendship with him. Blessed partnership this.

II. A SOLEMN POSSIBILITY. "Receive not the grace of God in vain." The grace of God here evidently refers to the offer of this reconciliation. This may be looked upon objectively or subjectively. Objectively it is the gospel, which is called the "gospel of the grace of God;" subjectively it is personal Christianity. It may be received "in vain" in two forms. Many have the offer of reconciliation and reject it, and to them the offer has been received "in vain." It is possible for those who have personally experienced it to lose it. The free agency of man, the exhortations of the Scriptures, and the facts of apostasy—as in the case of David, Peter, etc.—show the possibility of losing this. No greater calamity can happen to a man than to receive this "grace in vain;" hence the earnestness of the apostle.

III. A SUPREME OPPORTUNITY. "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." To use the words of a modern writer, "There is, so to speak, a 'now' running through the ages. For each Church and nation, for each individual soul, there is a golden present that may never again recur, and in which lie boundless possibilities for the future. The words of the apostle are, as it were, the transfigured expression of the generalization of a wide experience, which tells us that 'there is a tide in the affairs of men.'"

Vers. 3—8.—*The highest office injured by its officer.* "Giving no offence in any thing," etc. Paul was engaged in the highest office—the office of *reconciling men to God*; in this he was a co-worker with the Infinite, and here he refers to—

I. AN EVIL TO WHICH MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL ARE LIABLE. The evil referred to is bringing blame upon the ministry. "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." So perverse is man that he often degrades some of the highest offices he is called to sustain. There are merchants that degrade commerce, doctors that degrade medicine, judges that degrade justice, statesmen that degrade legislation, kings that degrade the throne; but, what is worse far, there have been ministers who have degraded the ministry, and there are such still, ignorant men, intolerant men, worldly men, unspiritual men, blatant dogmatists. Ah me! how the pulpit is often degraded!

II. AN EVIL WHICH MUST BE AVOIDED AT ANY COST. See what Paul did and suffered to avoid this stupendous evil. "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses," etc. Mark: 1. How he suffered in order to maintain the honour of the ministry. "Afflictions," "necessities," "distresses," "stripes," "imprisonments," "tumults," "labours," "watchings," "fastings," etc. 2. How he wrought in order to maintain the honour of the ministry. By "pureness," "knowledge," "long-suffering," "kindness," etc. He learned to labour and to wait. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The ministry in these days is too often degraded into a trade, a profession, a medium for the gratification of the vanity,

ambition, and the greed of men. The millions have come to call churches and chapels "preaching-shops." One of the greatest trades carried on in this commercial age is, perhaps, the trade in the gospel.

Vers. 9, 10.—"*Things are not what they seem.*" "As unknown, and yet well known," etc. Against misrepresentations and slanders, Paul, in the context, vindicates his apostolic authority, and proclaims at the same time the unworldly principle which animated both him and his fellow-workers. These words present to us the two opposite sides of a good man's life—the secular and the spiritual. The side revealed, as seen by man, and the side in the sight of God.

I. TO THE SECULAR EYE HE WAS UNKNOWN; TO THE SPIRITUAL WELL KNOWN. "As unknown, and yet well known." The world has never yet rightly interpreted and understood the real life of a genuine disciple of Christ. To the world, Paul appeared an ignominious fanatic. John says, "The world knoweth us not." The world does not understand self-sacrificing love, the animating, shaping, directing principle of a godly man's life. It understands ambition, greed, revenge, but not this. Hence men in every age, so far as they have come under the rule of this "new commandment," have been regarded as monsters unworthy of life. This explains martyrdom, ay, and the crucifixion of Christ. But, though thus unknown to men, they are well known to others. 1. Well known to *Christ*. "I know my sheep." Christ knows all his disciples. 2. Well known to *heavenly spirits*. They are famous in heaven. At their conversion heaven rejoiced, and over every step of their subsequent history heaven watches with a loving care.

II. TO THE SECULAR EYE HE WAS DYING; TO THE SPIRITUAL HE WAS LIVING. "As dying, and, behold, we live." To worldly men Paul appeared as mortal as other men; with a frame scourged by persecution, shattered by perils, wasted by labour and want, he was nothing but a dying man. His contemporaries knew that he would soon run himself out, and mingle with the dust of all departed men. But *spiritually* he was living. "Behold, we live." The soul within that dying body of his was living a wonderful life—a life of Christly inspiration and aims, a life of communion with heaven; a life destined to become more sunny, vigorous, and beautiful with every aspiration and act. Living is not *body-breathing*, but *spirit-acting*, acting according to the Divine laws of our constitution.

III. TO THE SECULAR EYE HE WAS MUCH TRIED; TO THE SPIRITUAL HE WAS NOT DESTROYED. "Chastened, and not killed." The word "chastened" here refers, I think, to his various scourgings, suffered in the synagogues and elsewhere. To worldly spectators he, with all his wounds, would appear a dead man; but he was spiritually alive. The hardships and the strifes did not touch his soul; his spiritual purposes, enjoyments, and hopes were not killed. Spiritual life is unkillable; like certain plants in the vegetable kingdom, which have their germs or roots so deep down in the soil, and so thoroughly mixed up with it, that, though you cut down the trunk, or pull up the roots from the earth, their life will break out again.

IV. TO THE SECULAR EYE HE WAS VERY SORROWFUL; TO THE SPIRITUAL HE WAS ALWAYS REJOICING. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." As if Paul had said, "Under our sufferings, we seem to be very cast down and sad; dreary, degraded, and wretched does our life seem to the worldly men around us." So it often is with the life of a Christian man. But, on the spiritual side, a truly godly man is "always rejoicing," rejoicing in a good conscience, rejoicing in a stream of pure and noble thoughts, rejoicing in a consciousness of Divine favour.

V. TO THE SECULAR EYE HE WAS VERY POOR; TO THE SPIRITUAL HE WAS WEALTH-GIVING. "As poor, yet making many rich." Paul and his colleagues were poor; they had suffered the loss of all things. Yet spiritually they were not only rich, but made others rich. 1. The highest work of man is to impart spiritual riches to his brother man. 2. Worldly poverty does not disqualify a man for the discharge of this sublime mission.

VI. TO THE SECULAR EYE HE WAS DESTITUTE; TO THE SPIRITUAL HE WAS ENORMOUSLY RICH. "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Nothing of this world's good, yet "possessing all things," not legally, but *morally*. Christliness gives us an interest in all things. "All things are yours."

Do not estimate life by appearances—things are not what they seem. Christliness with poverty, persecution, and suffering, is infinitely to be preferred to wickedness with the whole world at its command.

Vers. 11—12. —*Genuine Christian love.* “O ye Corinthians,” etc. Notice—

I. ITS POWER. What does it do? It enlarges the heart. “Our heart is enlarged.” The heart means the whole spiritual nature, and this spiritual nature is capable of indefinite expansion and Christian love, and nothing else can effect this. A man’s intellect may be expanded by ideas, but his heart, out of which are “the issues of life,” only by love. What a difference between the heart of a miser or a bigot to the heart of a Paul, a Howard, or a Fénelon! Selfishness contracts the soul into a grub, love expands it into a seraph. Therefore “covet earnestly the best gift,” that is, love.

II. ITS IRREPRESSIBILITY. “Our mouth is open unto you.” A large heart is so full of loving sympathies and aims that speech becomes a necessity. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” The language of love is the language of nature, the language of eloquence, the language of inspiration.

III. ITS HUNGER. What does it hunger for? “Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels [‘affections,’ or ‘hearts’],” etc. Paul states that their hearts towards him were “straitened,” or narrow, compared with his to them. He entreats them to be “enlarged,” and thus “recompense” or return his affections. Love, by a necessity of its nature, hungers for a return of its affections from the object on which it is bestowed. Paul did not ask them for their money, or their patronage or praise, but simply for a return of the love which he had for them.

Vers. 14—18.—*Unequally yoked.* “Be ye not unequally yoked,” etc. Observe here three things.

I. THERE IS AN ESSENTIAL SPIRITUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE TRULY CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT. The line of demarcation is broad and conspicuous. The difference is the difference: 1. Between “righteousness and unrighteousness.” 2. Between “light and darkness.” 3. Between Christ and Satan. “What concord hath Christ with Belial?” 4. Between faith and infidelity. “What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” 5. Between the “temple of God” and the “temple of idols.”

II. NOTWITHSTANDING THE SPIRITUAL DIFFERENCE, THE CONVERTED ARE IN DANGER OF BEING ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNCONVERTED. Hence the command, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” Also the command, “Come out from among them.” Alas! we find such association in almost every department of life—in the matrimonial, the commercial, the political, etc.

III. FROM SUCH AN ASSOCIATION IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CONVERTED TO EXTRICATE THEMSELVES. “Wherefore come out from among them,” etc. Observe two things. 1. The nature of the separation. “Come out from among them.” It must be: (1) *Voluntary.* Not to be driven out, but you must break away from all the ties that bind you. Agonize to enter the “strait gate.” (2) *Entire.* “Touch not the unclean thing.” Sin is an *unclean thing*—unclean in its essence, its phases, and its influences. 2. The *encouragement* to the separation. “I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” As a Father, what does God do for his children? (1) He *loves* them. His love is the fountain of all the love in the universe. All the love that human parents have for their children is but one drop from the boundless ocean. (2) He *educates* them. Who teaches like God? He teaches the best lesson, in the best way, for the best end. He educates the whole soul, not for temporal purposes, but for ends spiritual and everlasting. (3) He *guards* them. Human parents can only guard the bodies of their children. This Father guards the soul—the conscience from guilt, the heart from impurity, the intellect from error, etc. (4) He *provides* for them. The best of human parents can only provide for their children a few supplies for their bodies, and that for a time only. This great Father provides for the soul, and provides for ever. “He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Appeal growing out of the foregoing argument.* The grace of God had been manifested in the reconciliation of which he had been treating; and this reconciliation had its period, or season, special as to its character and advantages. Everything has relation to time. Life has infancy, childhood, youth—successive eras. Nature has her seasons. It was now God's receiving-time, a dispensation of mercy, an acceptable time, a day of salvation. So sensible was St. Paul of this fact that he, as a co-worker with God, pressed the exhortation on the Corinthians not to neglect the grace of God freely vouchsafed in this auspicious time. Good influences were conspiring in their favour; "receive not the grace of God in vain." It was a co-working period. Out of the turmoil, the strife of tongues, the collisions within the Church and without, doctrines were emerging into clearer view, and, as doctrines were better understood, duties would be more faithfully discharged. Had not these Corinthians been revived and strengthened of late? Had they not heeded his affectionate warnings and purified the Church? It was a season for continued and enlarging co-working, the Holy Spirit and the Church combining in an effort, peculiarly desirable then, to extend Christ's kingdom. And what was he doing to this end? For his part he was studious to put no stumbling-block in the way of others, lest the ministry be reproached. That was the prudence which wards off evil. It has grave duties. It is vigilant, able to see the approach of danger and measure the extent of the peril. It is prompt to act in a precautionary manner. Yet this was only one part of a co-worker's duty. On the other hand, then, he was intent on commending himself to their confidence and affection, and by what means? The portraiture of St. Paul as a co-worker is now presented. Previously to this he had sketched himself (see ch. ii., iii., iv.) in certain specific relations, such for instance as an "able minister," and as one who carried his treasure in an "earthen vessel;" but it was now his purpose to delineate himself and his experience with reference to a particular end. To be a co-operator, patience is the first virtue required. He speaks, therefore, at the outset, of "much patience," and assuredly he did not mistake the basic position of this great quality. He mentions nine forms of suffering which have been regarded by some commentators as constituting three classes, viz.: afflictions or general calamities, necessities, distresses, the leading idea being pressure, or "narrow straits;" then stripes, imprisonments, tumults, referable to the popular excitement against him as a preacher; and *lastly*, labours, watchings, fastings, as indicative of ministerial experience. In all these things patience was exercised, keeping him steadfast, enabling him to endure, and preserving his mind in the peace of Christ. It is a description of one whose body was open on all sides to the invasions of pain as the infliction of opposition and malice; and again, of one whose mind had anxieties and sorrows originating in its own sense of responsibility. Body wrought upon mind, mind upon body. Under these conditions the co-worker had to proceed with his task—patience, "much patience," being the cardinal excellence of his character. But, further, the co-worker speaks of purity, knowledge, long-suffering, kindness, endowments of the Spirit, sincere love; and again, he speaks of the word of truth, how he worked with God's power, and fought also with an armour of righteousness, right hand and left hand engaged in the conflict. Just here the mind of St. Paul reacts from its subjective state, the enumeration of his moral virtues is suspended, and the idea of conflict brings back the "afflictions" alluded to (ver. 4). Nearly all his transitions occur in one of two ways, either as the immediate product of a physical sensation or as the result of some exciting thought, having its source in his train of reflection. At the instant when the image of battle comes before him, the co-worker has the doctrine and morality of the gospel to defend against fierce, vindictive, mighty assailants. The honour of his position and the glory of Christ as the Captain of his salvation are at stake. Sword and shield are in hand, and for what is he fighting and how? "Armour of righteousness" is very expressive. The great truth was present in his mind, foremost as a restraint as well as an impulse, the truth so ably argued in the previous chapter that we are "made the *righteousness* of God in him." Give the ethical philosopher all the credit he deserves; honour the moralist who strives to protect society from immorality; and yet it is very obvious that a man

who feels himself set for the defence of the "righteousness of God" as manifested in Christ stands on ground infinitely higher than the mere philosopher and moralist. This cannot be denied; such a man has a spirit, a motive, an end, far remote from the others, and peculiar to the sphere he fills. What the apostle fights for is *righteousness*. And how is he fighting? It is important that we should see his temper, his tactics, his whole method of conducting the campaign. Men who ostensibly fight for righteousness are not always righteous fighters. "I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me," said one of the psalmists. "Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation," was David's prayer. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," were the words of Jesus when the "sons of thunder" wished to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritan village. Michael the archangel, in contention with the devil, "durst not bring against him a railing accusation." A bad spirit is not allowable even towards Satan, nor can an archangel go beyond "The Lord rebuke thee." Now, the apostle speaks of himself as fully armed for offensive and defensive warfare. And the fight goes on amid honour and dishonour, praise and cheer from friends, hostility and contempt from enemies; by evil report and good report; vilified as a deceiver, but yet a true man; as unknown ("obscure nobodies") to men, but known to God; as dying, and behold, out of perils, life springs renewed and enlarged; chastened as a discipline needed for a spiritual warrior who was meantime in everything a co-worker with Christ; a sorrowful man in the estimation of many, but in reality always rejoicing; poor, working with our own hands for a living, but making many rich in spiritual blessings; and, finally, *having nothing*, and yet—glorious paradox—possessing in Christ *all things*.—L.

Vers. 11—18.—*His warmth of affection; anxiety of the apostle lest the grace of God be received in vain.* The ruling thought of the chapter is twofold. St. Paul, the ambassador, is a fellow-worker with God in Christ, and as such he is deeply concerned that the Church at Corinth should not fail to use its means and opportunity for salvation then within reach. A critical period had come in its history, and he saw it very clearly. What so sagacious as love? what love so abounding as his? "O ye Corinthians," out of the depths of my heart, the heart just described—out of its purity, knowledge, long-suffering; "O ye Corinthians," by my kindness, by the Spirit of God in me, by love unfeigned; "O ye Corinthians," amid my chastenings from God and my afflictions from men,—whom I have besought not to receive the grace of God in vain, once more I pray you hearken. "Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." Only a very large and roomy nature could have entertained the thoughts and feelings, could have suffered, could have passed through the experiences which had just been described; but various and multiplied as were that heart's burdens and tribulations, it had ample space for his brethren at Corinth. "Ye are not straitened in us [no narrow place you occupy in our affection], but ye are straitened in your own bowels [narrowness in your love for us]," the word "bowels" being used to express the seat of the feelings. "For a recompense [return of love] . . . be ye also enlarged," and he asks this as a father seeking affection from his children. A sudden break occurs in the movement of thought. Did the use of the word "children" quicken a feeling akin to parental solicitude? Or did the sorrows he was undergoing in behalf of this Church at Corinth, a moment before so vividly pictured, give him a new insight into the dangers surrounding its members? Or was he recalling the supreme truth in his theology, the atoning death of Christ, and the righteousness that came to us and became a part of us? One in whose mind associations gathered so very rapidly and suggestions arose with such spontaneous vigour would probably feel the sudden return of the ideas and images on which he had been dwelling. A peculiarity with him is this partial development of a thought on its first appearance in his intellect. A similar law is traceable in his emotional nature. There is a second production, and this "aftermath" is very valuable. The subject under consideration (vers. 14—18) had engaged attention in the First Epistle, and he now reverts to it under the apprehension that these Corinthians, who were particularly exposed to the "evil communications" that "corrupt good manners," might receive the grace of God in vain. If there had been a strong reaction against the Judaizing party in the Corinthian Church, that may have introduced unusual hazards as to

Gentilism. Reactions, no matter how wise and truthful in themselves, always involve more or less danger. Facts are distorted, truths are mixed with prejudices, and the victory is our victory. Generally, indeed, only when time has befriended our infirmities and given us an opportunity to recover from reactions are we put in an attitude to see and judge with entire fairness. But, whatever the impulse at the moment on St. Paul's mind, his words are surcharged with energy. Question hastens after question. "Unequally yoked together with unbelievers" is the trumpet-note of alarm. What the union was he does not specify. It may have been promiscuous intercourse with heathens, or participation in idol festivals, or mixed marriages. Whichever it was, it was unequal yoking, a very ill-devised union; and under how many aspects did it deserve condemnation? The heart of the evil is exposed; could righteousness have fellowship with unrighteousness, light commune with darkness, Christ have concord with Satan, believers have part with infidels, the temple of God agree with idols? Metaphors multiply, as they commonly do with him when excited. By their profession of Christ they were pledged to depart from all iniquity, especially all associations that might revive their former Gentile tastes and habits, most especially those social usages which identified them with idolatry. Quoting twice from the Old Testament (Leviticus and Isaiah), he shows what the true religion demanded of its subjects in its earlier stage under Moses and its later under the prophets, in both cases separation from a world given over to heathenism. Only by means of this line of demarcation between them and the corruptions of society would God acknowledge them as his people, walk in their midst, and be a Father unto them. "Touch not the unclean thing." It was the language of Judaism from her tabernacle in the wilderness, from her temple in Jerusalem, and now reaffirmed and emphasized anew and with most solemn intensity by Christianity. St. Paul saw that history repeats itself. Not otherwise were it history. The peril of the gospel was precisely that which had wrecked Judaism. From this point of view it is profitable to re-read this earnest chapter. Chrysostom and others have spoken of its lofty eloquence. Stanley, Robertson, Webster, and Wilkinson have taught us to appreciate the breadth of its ideas and the classical force of its diction. It is a chapter of warning from the memorials of the past, as that past demonstrates most signally the jealousy of God's rule over men. On the one hand, we have the terrible fascinations of that spirit of idolatry which in some form or other is the besetting sin of the human race, the innate disposition to supplant Jehovah, the fatal surrender to "the god of this world," never so blinding as when he makes men as gods unto themselves. On the other hand, we have the visible symbols of God's presence among his people in the temple and its institutions, and further, the proof of the Spirit's power in their hearts, his actual indwelling and sanctifying agency. Yet this grace may be received in vain. The higher the gift, the more freedom in its use. No sooner has the apostle set forth the fact that God was in Christ recovering the world unto himself, than the magnitude of the risk presses on his attention. The risk was altogether in man. It was a risk, moreover, in the Christian man who had received grace and might lose its influence. Law had been violated, but Christ, as the eternal Son of God, had expiated the guilt, and by faith we accepted him as the Divine Reconciler. Man's responsibility had utterly failed under Law; would it fail under grace? If it did, there was an end of hope, since there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. St. Paul was aware of the local circumstances that enhanced the dangers of the Corinthians. The style of the appeal recognizes this fact. Let it not be forgotten, however, that, while men as men have these local surroundings, Christianity deals with man as man, and, accordingly, the warning is addressed to us not to receive the grace of God in vain. Our probation goes on in the midst of contingencies; temptation and trial are things most completely shut out from ordinary modes of calculation, and no prophetic eye reads our future. Yet this very sense of uncertainty is the most merciful of all providential arrangements. It is a source of great power. Except for its keen sensitiveness, our liability to evil would be far greater. Apprehension acts in two ways—it constantly reduces the amount of evil existing; and again, it fortifies us to resist the evil that remains. Now, Christianity operates in both these modes. With the latter only have we now to do. The problem for every individual Christian is the efficiency of grace in his resistance to Satanic influence. So far as the Scriptures teach us on this subject, Jesus Christ had no temptations save those which Satan offered; and,

while we have no warrant to say this of believers, we may safely affirm that it is the reconciled man in Christ, "made the righteousness of God in him," who is the object of Satan's sharpest assaults. To destroy the power of grace in the child of God is his unceasing effort. Now, this grace is received through two great channels—the conscience and the affections. St. Paul is referring continually to these organs of spiritual activity, and hence, we infer, that he would have his converts most earnest at these points. Conscience must be enlightened by the gospel and directed by the Spirit. It must be a conscience of that righteousness we have in Christ and through Christ, external to us as the ground of justification, internal to us as the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." But this sense of righteousness in the conscience must act likewise in the affections, or it cannot be "the law of the Spirit of life." If, then, St. Paul commended the gospel "to every man's conscience in the sight of God," was he content to rest here? "O ye Corinthians, . . . our heart is enlarged." Open your hearts, open them freely, open them as mine is opened unto you. If they would thus realize the righteousness of Christ, they could not receive the grace of God in vain. It is here, while speaking of the enlarged heart, that he appeals to them as his children. "Be ye also enlarged." Here we see how grace is lost; the heart, instead of expanding, is narrowed and cramped. Ministers must preach the gospel of love; and, to do this, they must be lovely in spirit and conduct. Christians must accept the grace of the gospel in hearts that enlarge, so that growth in loveliness may develop strength of character in its most enduring form. Just at this point backsliding sets in. No man's conscience begins to be blinded till his heart begins to be narrowed. Sympathy is checked; openness of feeling arrested; giving to charitable objects abated; cordiality of intercourse with ministers and members of the Church supplanted by fault-finding, prejudice, and censoriousness; and then conscience becomes careless, then inert, then callous, and grace dies in the soul. The enlarging heart is the secret of growth. Nor is there any growth so beautiful as this in itself and so inspiring as an example to others. Its *fellowship* is with souls that are its kindred in Christ; its *communion* with that wisdom and purity symbolized by light; its *concord* with him who took upon himself our nature that we might bear his image; its *part* or share is in the possession of holiness; and its capacity is a *temple*, or habitation, of which "God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them."—L.

Ver. 1.—"Workers together." One who is sent upon a mission, who fills the office of an ambassador, is evidently one who, however he works, does not work alone. He is the representative of the court from which he is sent, by which he is accredited. When the apostle thought of his life-mission, especially when he thought of its difficulties, it was natural that he should recall to his own mind the fact that God, who had commissioned him, was working with him and giving efficacy to his labours. And, in writing to others, it was appropriate that he should remind them that they had to deal, not merely with a fellow-man, but with a fellow-man who was supported and authorized by Divine wisdom and grace.

I. GOD WORKS. He not only wrought the earth and the heavens, which are "the work of his fingers:" he follows his work of creation by the unceasing work of providential care, government, and oversight. The laws of nature are the ways in which God works. And the spiritual realm is his highest and noblest sphere of operation, in which he is carrying out his holy purposes.

II. MEN, WHEN THEY WORK SUCCESSFULLY, WORK WITH GOD. Take two illustrations. The husbandman toils through all the changing seasons of the year, and in his ploughing, sowing, and reaping depends upon the processes of nature, *i.e.* works along with God. The physician studies the human frame, and, when it is diseased, seeks its recovery to health through co-operation with the laws of the various organs and tissues of the body, and succeeds only by working with God. So is it in the spiritual sphere. The preacher of Christianity makes use of God's truth and relies upon God's Spirit; any other method must involve failure and discouragement.

III. HUMAN LABOURERS WORK IN SUBJECTION TO THE DIVINE LORD. There is no equality in this fellowship. God can dispense with any man's services, however great, wise, and good he may be. No man can dispense with the counsel and the aid of

Heaven. 1. In the recognition of this lies the labourer's strength. 2. And the dignity attaching to his position and office, which is not personal, but ministerial. 3. And the responsibility of all for whose welfare the Christian labourer toils. Such are bound to consider, not the human minister merely, but the Divine Lord, whose servant and messenger he is.—T.

Ver. 2.—*The acceptable time.* As an ambassador for Christ, Paul used both authority and persuasion in urging his readers and hearers to take advantage of the opportunity afforded them of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. And he very naturally and justly pressed upon them an immediate attention to the summons, the invitation of Divine grace. There are reasons why delay should be avoided, why acceptance should be unhesitating.

I. THE BLESSING. This is set before us in two lights. 1. On the *Divine* side, we observe that God is ready both to hear and to succour. To hear the cry of those in danger, the petition of those in want. To succour those who are in present distress and who are unable to deliver themselves from their afflictions. 2. On the *human* side, we observe that men may be accepted and reconciled, that they may be delivered and saved. The salvation here proffered is spiritual and eternal.

II. THE OPPORTUNITY. It is not for us to speculate as to God's reasons, so to speak, for limiting the day of grace and of visitation. We have to deal with the fact that there is a period during which the blessings of salvation may be sought and secured. The first advent of our Saviour may be fixed as the *terminus a quo* of this period, the second advent as the *terminus ad quem*. During the Christian era, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, the gospel is preached to all men, and the invitation is freely offered to those who need to apply, with the assurance that their request shall not be refused.

III. THE APPEAL. The blessing is great and adapted to the case of the sinner; the opportunity is precious and not to be despised without guilt and folly. What, then, follows? Surely the appeal is powerful and timely; it deserves the immediate attention of all to whom the gospel comes. 1. The conditions are such that they may be at once fulfilled. The call is to obey God, to believe in Christ, to repent of sin, to live anew. 2. Nothing can be advanced to justify delay. Delay is unreasonable, dangerous, and foolish. To neglect the appeal would be to defy and displease God. 3. Those of every age and condition are alike placed in this position of privilege and of responsibility.—T.

Ver. 4.—“*Ministers of God.*” Man is not meant to be a law or an end unto himself. He finds the true secret of his being, who lives, not unto himself, but unto his Lord. To take employment under a wise and holy Master, to engage in a spiritual service, to look up daily for direction and for blessing, to aim at the glory of the Eternal,—this is the true vocation and the true happiness of man. Paul found his strength for labour and his consolation in suffering, not in anything personal, but in losing and merging himself in his Lord and King.

I. THE MASTER. Our Lord has bidden us call no man master, by which he directs our attention to the fact that we receive our instructions for duty and our revelations of truth, not from human, but from Divine authority. God is, to those who accept service under him, a wise, just, forbearing, considerate, and liberal Master. In him we find one free from all imperfections of knowledge, and all flaws of character, such as must be expected in all human governors.

II. THE SERVICE. In its outward aspects this varies in different cases, so that the life-work of no two men is quite the same.

“How many serve! how many more
May to the service come!—
To tend the vines, the grapes to store,
Thou dost appoint for some;
Thou hast thy young men at the war,
Thy little ones at home.”

III. THE OBLIGATIONS OF SPIRITUAL SERVANTS. 1. Obedience. This is indispensable. The vow which Christians take is that they will be the Lord's servants to obey him,

2. Fidelity. The allegiance due to the Divine Lord must, upon no consideration, be transferred to another; his cause must not be betrayed. 3. Readiness to suffer in the path of devotion. The context shows us that this was an element in Paul's conception of true ministry.

IV. THE RECOMPENSE. 1. This is entirely of grace; the priest and the best have no claim to it. 2. Success in ministry is the true servant's best reward. 3. With this is conjoined approval on the Master's part. 4. And the recompense is imperishable and immortal.—T.

Ver. 7.—“*The armour of righteousness.*” There was something soldierly both in the nature and in the life-course of the Apostle Paul. His resolution, courage, fortitude, capacity for endurance, fidelity to his spiritual Commander, were all high military qualities. We do not wonder that he made in his writings use so frequent and so effective of the warrior's life. The Christian's career, and much more emphatically the apostolic career, appeared to him one large campaign. Hence his reliance upon “the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.”

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S NEED OF SPIRITUAL ARMOUR. 1. His foes are many, active, vigilant, formidable, untiring. 2. The warfare to which he is called is accordingly perilous and serious. 3. His own natural resources are utterly inadequate for his defence.

II. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S SPIRITUAL ARMOUR. 1. It is not physical, or carnal, but moral. 2. It is described in one word as “the armour of righteousness,” as opposed to fraud and cunning and iniquity of every kind. 3. It is adapted to the several necessities of the welfare. *Vide* Eph. vi., where the several weapons are enumerated and described.

III. THE PURPOSES WHICH THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR EFFECTS. 1. The right hand of the warrior wields the sword; and this is the emblem of the weapon of *attack* which the Christian grasps—even “the sword of the Spirit,” which is the Word of God. 2. The left hand of the warrior holds the shield, which is the symbol of that mighty principle of faith, which is the *defensive* weapon used by every soldier in the spiritual warfare, with which he quenches the fiery darts of the evil one.

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE WARFARE WAGED BY THE CHRISTIAN THROUGH THE USE OF HIS SPIRITUAL ARMOUR. 1. To himself, security and honour. He is delivered from his foes, and he fights the good fight of faith. 2. To his cause, victory. Righteousness is destined to conquer; there is no uncertainty as to the issues of the holy war. 3. To his Commander, great and growing renown, as his foes are vanquished and his kingdom is consolidated and extended.—T.

Ver. 16.—*A temple of God.* The temple at Jerusalem, built for the glory of Jehovah, and honoured by him as his dwelling-place and shrine, was an edifice quite unique. No material structure can with justice be said to have replaced it; for, when the old dispensation passed away, all local and material sanctity vanished, and a spiritual dispensation surpassed as well as abolished the glory that had been. The body of Christ was the temple of God, and when that had been taken down, the only temple which remained was the spiritual edifice, built of living stones and inhabited by the Holy Spirit of God.

I. THE RESPECTS IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD. 1. Christians are separated from the world around. As the temple at Jerusalem was different from all other edifices, so the spiritual society designated the Church is distinct from the common and secular associations which men form for their own convenience, advantage, or pleasure. 2. In this spiritual temple the living God makes his chosen dwelling-place. The Lord loved the gates of Zion; he revealed his glory in the Shechinah-cloud; he was sought and found in his sanctuary. In like manner the Eternal chooses the hearts of his people for his congenial abode, where he makes himself known, and especially reveals his holiness and his grace. 3. The Church is the scene of worship; there praise, prayer, and sacrifices of obedience are offered to God and accepted by him.

II. THE PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AS THE TEMPLE OF GOD. 1. It is holy. 2. It is universal, extending throughout the world, and including

within it men of every race and of every condition. 3. It is enduring. For, whilst the individual members disappear from sight, those who quit the Church militant do so only to join the Church triumphant. And whilst human societies, organizations, and states pass away, this Divine society loses nothing of its glory, but lives from age to age. 4. It is growing, Every several stone built into it adds to its majestic proportions, and prepares for its final completeness; it "groweth an holy temple unto the Lord."

III. THE PRACTICAL OBLIGATIONS LAID UPON ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH IN RESPECT OF THEIR INCORPORATION IN THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE. 1. They are called upon to uphold the dignity of their calling and position. 2. And to maintain that purity which is their distinctive quality—to be "separate, and to touch no unclean thing." 3. And to seek the consolidation and unity of the spiritual edifice. 4. And at the same time to strive after its enlargement and ultimate completeness.—1.

Ver. 18.—*Father and children.* No human relation is close enough and no human language is strong enough to set forth the union which subsists between God and his people. They are the temple, he is the Deity inhabiting, inspiring, and glorifying the sacred and spiritual edifice. Nay, he is the *Father*, and they the sons and daughters whom he has adopted and whom he loves.

I. THE NATURAL BASIS OF THIS RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE. This has ever been recognized by the thoughtful and pious. Even heathen philosophers and poets could say of themselves and their fellow-men, "We also are his offspring." Created by his power, sustained by his bounty, cared for by his wisdom and goodness, the children of men are also the children of God.

II THE REDEMPTIVE ELEVATION OF THIS RELATIONSHIP. The old covenant contained intimations of the Divine fatherhood, as is apparent from the language of the text. But it was in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that this truth was fully realized. "Ye are all the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ." The Spirit of adoption makes and seals the true believers in Christ as members of the Divine family. It is to his fellow-Christians that the Apostle John exclaims, "Beloved, now are we the children of God." It is in the case of those who are born anew of water and of the Spirit that the relation in question is made unmistakably evident; the spiritual features of the Father are, so to speak, reproduced, and the subjection and obedience of the children evinces their sacred kindred.

III. THE INNUMERABLE PROOFS OF GOD'S FATHERHOOD. God is not satisfied simply to be called our Father; he feels and acts like a Father. He provides for his children all that is necessary for their spiritual well-being and happiness, supplies their wants, directs their steps, defends them from danger, comforts them in sorrow. And, above all, he assures them an abode in his own—in the Father's—house, where they shall for ever enjoy the blessedness, the fellowship, the glory of a sacred, secure, and everlasting home. Thus both in this world and in the world to come the gracious Parent justifies his Name and fulfils his promises.

IV. THE EXPECTED RESPONSE OF FILIAL LOVE AND OBEDIENCE. Alas! how often is this withheld, or very partially and inadequately rendered! Yet in the hearts of God's true children there resides a principle which impels to childlike love and service. God has a right to his children's reverence and service, gratitude and love, devotion and consecration. "If I be a Father," he asks, "where is my honour?" Nothing that we can do can ever sufficiently express the sense we ought to cherish of the infinite love and pity, forbearance and generosity, of our heavenly Father. It is for his children to witness to his faithfulness, to hallow his Name, to cherish his revelation, and to do his will.—T.

Ver. 2.—"*Now . . . now.*" I. GOD HAS PROVIDED A SALVATION FOR MEN. This salvation (1) is in Christ; (2) is to be obtained by repentance and faith; (3) embraces justification and sanctification; (4) results in present joy, holy and useful life; and (5) is in these in far higher degree, and eternally, in heaven.

II. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SECURING THIS SALVATION IS LIMITED TO THE PRESENT. 1. *The present age.* 2. *In an individual to his brief life on earth.* No unsaved one can afford to waste any time; no saved one will want to. Salvation is so great a matter

that it should be sought instantly. To miss it is to miss everything. If we get nought but this, we should see to it that we get this. "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33).

III. TENDENCIES TO PROCRASTINATE ARE OFTEN STRONG. Such pleas as the following have power with not a few: (1) there is time enough; (2) after temporal matters are arranged we can attend to spiritual; (3) pleasure must be tasted, after that seriousness; (4) it will be easier to repent and believe "to-morrow." This reflects the human view, and the *Satanic* (for Satan is a great advocate of delay). The Divine is otherwise: "*Now* is the acceptable time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

IV. THE PERILS OF DELAY. 1. Life may be cut short speedily and suddenly. 2. Painful sickness prior to death may render attention to spiritual concerns practically impossible. 3. Desire for salvation may pass away. 4. The heart may be fatally hardened. 5. The Spirit may cease to strive. "God is not mocked."

V. THE SINFULNESS OF DELAY. 1. What an insult to God! 2. What a return for the love and sacrifice of Christ! 3. What a pernicious example! 4. What an injustice to ourselves!

VI. THE DIVINE URGENCY. When Paul is intensely earnest in this matter it is because God makes him so. It is the Divine mind declared by a servant. And so of all faithful ministers; their voices are echoes of the voice of God. Christ on earth cried, "Repent." "Wherefore even as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. iii. 7, 8). The Divine message of salvation is pressed upon the instant attention of those to whom it is delivered. We cannot wonder at the urgency of God, for: 1. God knows the tendencies of our nature. 2. God knows what loss of salvation involves.—H.

Vers. 3—10.—*Not hindering the gospel.* I. PAUL'S GREAT ANXIETY NOT TO HINDER THE GOSPEL. He preached the gospel faithfully and with utmost earnestness, but: 1. He guarded anxiously against lessening the effect of his preaching by his conduct. 2. He realized that life speaks as well as verbal utterance. 3. That what is built up by the lip is often pulled down by the life.

II. PAUL'S EFFORTS TO AVOID IN LIFE AND CONDUCT THAT WHICH MIGHT HINDER THE GOSPEL. He sought not to give offence in anything (ver. 3). He dreaded proving a stumbling-block to his hearers. So in every way he endeavoured to commend himself as a true minister of God, and thus to advance the cause which he had at heart. Illustrated: 1. *In his endurance of trial and suffering.* Here he exhibited amazing patience and fortitude. (1) *In those of a general kind.* Afflictions, necessities, distresses. Of these he had a large share. Ministers, especially very active and devoted ones, must be prepared for a like experience. (2) *In those inflicted by enemies.* Stripes, imprisonments, tumults. These were largely occasioned by his faithfulness to the gospel. He was so faithful to the gospel that he would bear these in such a spirit as to further advance that gospel among men. That which his enemies intended as a check he would transform into a help. (3) *In those of voluntary origin.* Labours; working with own hands for support, and toiling in the ministry. Watchings; sleepless nights in travel, peril, and sickness occasioned by exposure or excessive effort. Fastings; "foodlessness"—he was often hungry when, if less devoted, he might have had abundance. 2. *In the conduct of his ministry and life.* (1) *Pureness.* Chaste living. Disinterestedness. Singleness of motive. (2) *Knowledge.* Knowledge of gospel truth, and this sincerely conveyed to hearers. A minister is often a hinderer through ignorance, especially through spiritual ignorance. But Paul sought to be thoroughly furnished, so that he might not retard but help forward the truth. To teach others he felt that he himself must be taught, and he was as diligent a learner as a teacher. Paul was well acquainted in every way with the gospel which he preached. (3) *Long-suffering.* Patient submission to wrongs. Not quick to retaliate. The pulpit may be irritable as well as the pew. (4) *Kindness.* Gentleness. Courtesy. Benevolence. A kindness which ever meant usefulness. (5) *In the Holy Ghost.* Showing in all utterance and conduct that he was under the influence of the Divine Spirit. (6) *Love unfeigned.* A ministry of true love is a ministry of real power. To call our hearers, as some are very fond of doing, "beloved," is one thing; to have them truly in our hearts is another. (7) *The Word of truth.* Ever preaching the truth as it is in Jesus. Not proclaiming

human theories, but Divine revelations. Holding to the "one thing," and not carried about by every wind of doctrine. The weathercock preacher may be amusing, but he will do little to advance the gospel. (8) *The power of God.* Upon this Paul relied. To this he submitted himself. He humbled himself into nothingness, that God might work through him and be all in all. He gave the praise of everything accomplished to the great Worker. And God specially honoured him by manifesting his power in and through him. Some ministers are too strong and great to accomplish anything. They can do without the power of God; they do without it, and then they *do nothing* except hinder the gospel. (9) *The armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.* He was clad in the whole armour of God (Eph. vi. 13). Offensive and defensive. Himself justified and accepted and living in holiness; and weapons in his hand by which he smote evil wherever he saw it. 3. *In the maintenance of consistency and integrity under specially trying circumstances.* Whether he was held in honour or dishonour, whether subject to good report or evil, he strove to be ever the same, to preach the same gospel, to manifest the same spirit, to live the same life. His life and ministry were not dependent upon surroundings. 4. *By not succumbing to adverse circumstances.* (1) Though branded as a deceiver, he convinced the caudid that he was true and sincere. (2) Though unknown in true character by many, his faithful persistent ministry and life made him well known to multitudes, and won their high regard. (3) Though chastised by enemies and dying daily, his heroic spirit continued its hold upon God, and he was not overborne. (4) Though sorrowful as to outward lot, his inward condition enabled him ever to rejoice, and his joy found constant expression and was a powerful tribute to the gospel. (5) Though poor and outcast, he laboured so zealously in the gospel that many were made rich. (6) Though seeming to have lost all possessions, he could and did lay claim to everything. In the spirit of his own words to the Corinthians, "All things are yours" (1 Cor. iii. 21). Such conduct, spirit, life, bore the most powerful testimony to the gospel. *Paul himself* was a great sermon which, under God, shook the world. What Paul *was* is to-day one of the mightiest witnesses for Christianity.—H.

Vers. 14—18.—Unequal yoking. Intimate associations ought not to be formed by the people of God with the ungodly. The reference is, no doubt, to Deut. xxii. 10.

I. **HOW THIS MAY BE DONE.** 1. *In religious fellowship.* The apostle had occasion to warn the Corinthians against fellowship with idolaters. We may be attracted by a religious community in which the truth is not found or in which it is greatly obscured or distorted. 2. *In marriage.* With believers the religious question should be a prime question. Alas! it is often no question at all. Religious inequality is most frequently esteemed as the dust of the balance, and less than that. Consent is asked of the earthly father, but the heavenly Father is too commonly forgotten altogether. Marriages too often are not made in heaven, and that is why they have so little heaven about them. The ill-assorted union does not lead so much to Paradise as to misery and the divorce court. 3. *In friendships.* There is often much unequal yoking here. A wise man chooses his friends with care, but a fool takes them haphazard or on mere "liking." The power of a friendship is great, for good or for evil. Believers should choose friends who will help, not hinder, and friends who will be friends for ever, and not severed at the grave. 4. *In business.* Partnership in commerce is a yoke which brings men very close together. They must have very much in common; their lives must run in very much the same channel; their actions must largely agree. Or, if not, their union will be disunion, and the issue, quarrels first, and perhaps bankruptcy or worse next. How often a child of God has lived to rue the day when he entered into partnership with a child of the devil!

II. **WHY THIS SHOULD NOT BE DONE.** 1. *Unreasonable in itself.* Consider what believers and unbelievers are. (1) The one, "righteousness" (ver. 14)—lovers of holiness, striving for its fuller possession. The other, "iniquity"—the heart alienated from God, loving sin and walking in it, though possibly exterior gloss may obscure inward defilement. (2) The one, "light" (ver. 14)—illumined by the Holy Ghost, shone upon by the "Light of the world"—possessing a knowledge of the truth, children of the day. The other, "darkness"—the true light rejected or ignored, subjects of error, preparing themselves for "the outer darkness." (3) The one, in Christ (ver. 15)—members of his

body, his disciples, his ransomed people. The other, followers of Belial, the children of the wicked one, serving him daily. (4) The one, the temple of God (ver. 16), consecrated to God, God dwelling in them. The other, the temple of idols—of the idols of sin, made into gods. God in the one, the devil in the other. How can such opposites as these be united? Why should righteousness seek alliance with iniquity? Can light and darkness walk together? Can Christ and Belial be on terms of concord? How can temples of God and temples of vilest idols be brought to agreement? 2. *Extremely perilous.* How many have found this! In marriage, for example. What misery, loss of peace, loss of holiness, loss of everything most prized once, have followed upon an unequal alliance! The life has been utterly ruined and lost. Some marry in order to convert; but we should always convert people before we marry them. The peril applies to all cases of unequal yoking. The evil generally triumphs because the good has robbed itself of power by taking a false step. 3. *Expressly forbidden by God.* The Divine Word is emphatic: "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing" (ver. 17). This is a Divine command which we dare not set aside. This is Divine wisdom; our wisdom may not accord with it, but if so, our wisdom is assuredly folly. This is Divine love, purposing to save us from misery and loss. 4. *A most gracious promise for the obedient.* The resolve not to be unequally yoked may sometimes seem to entail large sacrifice. If we lose something, this is what we gain. God says: (1) "I will receive you" (ver. 17). We shall be with God. We shall have God. Though we may lose the creature, we shall gain the Creator. God will be gracious to us if others are ungracious. If the stream fail, we may resort to the Fountain. Here is the warrant for doing so. (2) "And will be to you a Father" (ver. 18). We may lose the earthly father, who may have singular views respecting our "prospects;" we shall have a Father above. If we are obedient, God will reveal himself in the tenderest and most loving guise. If God be our Father it must be well with us whatever betide. (3) "And ye shall be to me sons and daughters" (ver. 18). Note, "daughters" are specially mentioned. These have frequently to endure much when "unequal yoking" is resisted. We shall be "children of God." Then we shall be "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Sweet, indeed, are the fruits of obedience. We may lose much; let us never imperil *this*.—H.

Ver. 2.—"Now." Before Christ came, religious privileges were with Israel. The Gentiles walked in darkness through "times of ignorance." But with Christ came tidings of great joy to all people. And when the Holy Spirit fell on Gentiles as well as on Jews who heard the gospel, it was evident that a new age had come. This is the "acceptable year of the Lord," and is the dispensation of grace intended to continue till the second coming of Christ. It is the world's great opportunity. So it is on the large scale; but when we take groups of men and individuals, the scale of time is proportionally reduced. Nations miss opportunities which may never return. Congregations have a bright season, a time of visitation, which may come to a lamentable end. The Lord may withdraw his favour; may even fight against an unfaithful Church with the sword of his mouth. Shorter still is the day of salvation for the individual.

I. THE VALUE OF OPPORTUNITY. In affairs of this life it is fully recognized. It is the dictate of worldly wisdom to wait for and to seize the fit occasion. Does a speculator watch for a rising market? or a capitalist look out for a good investment? or a politician aspire to office? Such men keenly watch their opportunities and must not let them slip.

"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;
And we must take the current when it serves
Or lose our ventures."

All this is quite as true of spiritual advantage. There is an opportunity to be seized, a tide to be taken at the flood. There is a day which must become the birthday of the soul, the peace-day of the conscience, or loss will be suffered—eternal loss. There

is an emergency on which all the future secretly depends, and which, if one let slip, he may wring his hands and curse his folly, but will never find a remedy.

II. INDICATIONS OF OPPORTUNITY. The favourable day for spiritual life is not so easily recognized as that of worldly advantage. In external aspect it is as other days. A preacher may speak to you whom you have often heard and not heeded. The view of truth which is to carry you captive may be one which has often been pressed on you to little purpose. But somehow you are moved; you catch the urgency of *now*; and you listen and believe as you never listened or believed before. So that common day becomes a beginning of days and a spiritual epoch to you. There are, however, indications or hints of a critical time which watchful spirits may perceive. Often it is preceded by sickness, sorrow, or disappointment, making one more thoughtful and more wistful about the things unseen. Or there springs up, one hardly knows how, a sense of inward weariness and want. Conscience is uneasy, and the heart cannot rest. Then some word in season falls on the ear, or looks out of a book or a friend's letter. These things indicate opportunity. Miss it not. Embrace the gospel at once. Receive not the grace of God in vain.

III. PENALTY OF MISSING OPPORTUNITY. The wasted day can never be recalled. Lost property may be recovered; lost friendships regained; but the lost year never comes back. It was a sign of wisdom in the young Roman emperor that he grieved when a day had been wasted. *Perdidi diem!* But such tasks as he had in hand might still be accomplished by redoubled diligence on the morrow. Not so with him who wastes the day of salvation. *Perdidi vitam!* The day of grace neglected is followed by the night of doom.

IV. THE APPEAL FOR IMMEDIATE COMPLIANCE WITH THE GOSPEL. 1. *Let gratitude move you.* The God of grace calls you to him; not exacting his rights and dues from you as his creature and his subject, but with open hands extending pardon and countless benefits for time and eternity, freely. "Now then," exclaimed an old English preacher, "what is more suitable to ingenuous gratitude than to embrace the season of God's bestowing so free a favour? Surely the least we can do is to accept of that God that accepteth of us; of him who is full of beauty and rewards, while we have nothing to bring to him but deformity and beggary." 2. *Let a proper self-regard move you.* Why should you lose your own soul? Why will ye die? It is more pleasant for the preacher to speak as from the gate of heaven; but it is necessary to cry aloud sometimes as from the mouth of hell. Turn ye! Get you back! Seek the Lord, and do it now!—F.

Ver. 10.—*Sorrow and joy.* The apostle's experience is in some degree known to many Christians. The apparent paradox of simultaneous grief and joy is to them a fact of sober consciousness.

I. SORROWFUL. Not querulous, but bruised and sad. The course of the world rushes past us, and we sit down with our pain or grief. We are chastened. And not without reason. 1. We must take our share of the troubles common to mankind. Spiritual life carries with it no exemption from the usual cares and losses of the present state. To bring about such exemption would require a multiplication of miracles without any sufficient reason. If famine come upon a land, or war, or pestilence; if a railway train or a passenger steamship be wrecked,—there can be no discrimination between the good and the bad in the common catastrophe. Indeed, it is questionable whether a special immunity from pain and grief accorded to spiritual men might not do serious harm to religion, by giving strong temporal inducements to worldly men to cover themselves over with a thin coating of godliness. And there are sorrows which no personal qualities can ward off. Some troubles are inherited; others come from the mishap or misconduct of a relative or of a partner in business. And the sickness and death of those who are dear to us must bring us grief. Man is born to trouble. 2. We find in the discipline of sorrow some of the best lessons and impulses of the Christian life.

"Night brings out stars;
So sorrow shows us truths."

And conformity to Christ is gained in suffering with him, working out a deeper patience and keener moral sensibility

II. YET ALWAYS REJOICING. The Man of sorrows had joy in his Father's love; though it is his affliction that is made prominent in the account of his state of humiliation. There was also a joy set before him, and in this he now sits at the right hand of God. As his followers, we too have joy now amidst sorrow, and fullness of joy set before us. *Always.* Not sorrowing always, but always rejoicing. It cannot mean any ecstatic emotion, for that cannot be habitual; the excessive strain would break the springs of feeling. But we may be always glad and satisfied and triumphant in our Lord. Not only is this possible to the sorrowful; it seems to be fullest and strongest in them. Remember Paul and Silas singing in the dark dungeon with their stripes unwashed. Samuel Rutherford in prison at Aberdeen, and Madame Guyon in prison at Vincennes, tasted the same gladness. The latter said, "My heart was full of that joy which thou givest to them that love thee in the midst of the greatest crosses." This can be understood only by those who have some real acquaintance of heart with the Lord Jesus, and know what treasures his people have in him—unsearchable riches, unerring wisdom, precious atonement, prevailing intercession, helpful sympathy, victorious strength, and everlasting love. Genius often shows the combination of a pensive vein, a tenderness, a pathos, with a healthy elastic hopefulness, nay, with a joyfulness robust as in a man, yet simple and playful as in a child. But we speak of what is better than even genius—the grace of God. This can make even very ordinary people both gentle and brave, tender and strong, patient in sorrow, and constant in joy. "The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."—F.

Ver. 13.—"Be ye enlarged." The apostle had specially in view the increase of joy. But we may use the exhortation to commend the enlargement of Christian people as respects head and heart and hand.

I. BE ENLARGED IN YOUR THOUGHTS. No doubt there is a dangerous breadth or laxity; but there is also mischief in the opposite direction, in narrowness. Good people are apt to become the slaves of their own phraseology, and to insist on their own traditions of expression and definition as exclusively safe and orthodox. Christian truth appears to be with them quite a narrow ledge of stone shaped to their liking, whereas it is a broad firm rock that does not submit itself to men's measuring-lines. Never follow a narrow-minded religious teacher. He is sure to be opinionative and monotonous. And even when he lodges a truth in the mind, he gives it the effect of a prejudice. Be enlarged in the comprehensive and manifold wisdom of the Bible. Dare to give yourself room in the far-reaching thoughts and words of God. Especially seek to be enlarged in your estimate of Jesus Christ. Only by degrees was any sufficient knowledge of him attained by those who "compared with him" on earth. They loved him from the first and often wondered. They tried by questions to peer into his mind, but could not make him out. They were surprisingly slow in their apprehensions, till he opened the Scriptures to them after his resurrection, and the Holy Spirit fell on them after his ascension. And now, though the Holy Spirit is with us, his teaching is not received all at once by disciples, and they need more and more enlargement. It is the mark of a growing Christian that in his view Christ increases; the mark of a great Christian that to him Christ is very great. Augustine, Bernard, Leighton, Rutherford, Owen, Martyn,—were these great Christians? And what had they in common? Large and admiring thoughts of Christ.

II. BE ENLARGED IN YOUR SYMPATHIES. Narrow hearts are even more mischievous and unchristian than narrow heads. It is confessedly difficult for one who may have received little mental culture, or has been early imbued with strong prejudices, to gain breadth of view; but there is no excuse for any one who, while naming the name of Jesus, and professing to know the love of God, retains a pævish and contracted heart. We have said "professes to know the love of God," because, when this love is really "shed abroad by the Holy Spirit," it must tend to expand the affections and sympathies. Argument will not do it. Admonition cannot produce the effect. Love only kindles love, and so imparts a larger kindness and more delicate sensibility. Love cries shame on harshness and envy, spreads brotherly kindness, disposes to forgiveness of wrong and a kindly construction of motives, covers a multitude of sins. Have sympathy with all good objects, though you cannot actually help all. Take the part of

right-hearted men. A great Christian is one to whom the Lord has given "largeness" of heart. Paul, Chrysostom, Bengel, Baxter, Whitefield, Chalmers,—were these great Christians? And what had they in common? Great hearts, large generosity of soul, the capacity of loving much, and of enlisting the love and sympathy of others for worthy objects.

"The truly generous is the truly wise,
And he who loves not others lives unblest."

III. BE ENLARGED IN LABOURS AND GIFTS. A grudging hand and indolent temper in the Church go with a narrow spirit; but where mind and heart are enlarged in Christ, the hands will be found ready to every good enterprise and open in giving up to the measure of ability.—F.

Vers. 14—18.—*Separation.* St. Paul wished to see the Corinthian brethren enlarged, enlivened, and encouraged. But this was not to be by the easy and unprincipled method of ignoring all distinctions and binding together incongruous materials and moral opposites. The exhortation, "Be ye enlarged," must be taken with this, "Be ye separate;" and charity must go hand in hand with purity. The contrasts expressed in this passage were very apparent in ancient Corinth, where the Christians, as saints, were openly separated from the heathen worship and heathen vices around them. A similar state of things may be seen now at mission stations in populous heathen cities. The Christians turn away from the temples, disown the priests and soothsayers, disregard the festivals, and have nothing any more to do with idols. They may still maintain family and social intercourse with the heathen, because conversion, as St. Paul explains, does not break family ties, or change the station in which one is when "called," or drive Christ's followers "out of the world." But they may not be unequally yoked with non-Christians or profane persons in Church fellowship. The distinction cannot be made so palpable where all society has accepted the Christian name as when and where the Church is in sharp contrast with a powerful heathenism. Yet in principle the distinction insisted on by St. Paul must be maintained, else the strength of the Church as a spiritual institution is sapped, and a compromising spirit enters which destroys the glory of Christ. To carry out the principle in actual Church discipline is confessedly difficult; but the Church has a right to expect that her overseers will prevent the admission of scandalous persons; and individual professors of the Christian faith should not claim Church fellowship without examining themselves as to the side on which they stand with reference to the five points of contrast indicated in this text. 1. *Between righteousness and iniquity.* This takes us at once into the region of conscience and moral conduct. The Christian should be a righteous man. He may not lie, or cheat, or overreach, or take unfair advantage of another, because to do so would not be right or righteous. The rogue and the worker of iniquity are as heathen men, and not fit for Christian fellowship. 2. *Between light and darkness.* This points to the mental and moral environment as affecting thought, feeling, and action. It is a mode of expression common with St. Paul, as may be seen in other Epistles. The Christian is a child of the light and of the day. Darkness, on the contrary, is the covering of the heathen world; and its works are unfruitful and shameful. 3. *Between Christ and Belial.* Abstractions are left, and the leaders of two conflicting hosts are set in opposition. A Christian is "of Christ," as the Lord whom he obeys and the pattern which he follows. On the other side is a man of Belial, or the follower of a worthless and profligate spirit. So this contrast has reference to disposition, and excludes every false and wicked person from Christian fellowship. 4. *Between the believer and the unbeliever.* This takes us to the question of religious persuasion and conviction. A Christian is a believer on the Son of God. In this lies the secret of his life, strength, holiness, and patience. A man without faith is no more fit for fellowship in the Church than a heathen. To him the trials and triumphs of the life of faith are alike unknown. 5. *Between the temple of God and idols.* The Church is the living temple of the living God, the holy temple of the holy God. The individual Christians are stones in that temple, and must be in harmony with its sacred character and use. What agreement has it with idols? If the Jew would have thought it a horrible profanation to set up a graven image in the temple at Jerusalem, much more should Christian minds abhor the setting up of idols of selfishness, covetousness, or

sensuality in that better temple which is now the habitation of God in the Spirit. So much of incompatibilities and contrasts. Then the apostle, who did not address himself to the heathen, bidding them stand off, but wrote to the Christians, urging them to avoid entanglement with the heathen, gave them a charge from the Lord, and enforced it by a gracious promise. (1) *The charge*. "Wherefore come out from among them." The Christians were not to leave Corinth, but to hold their positions and preserve their callings in that city, while scrupulously avoiding the contamination of idolatry and vice. So should we continue in the world, yet not be conformed to it or love it; should do our part in our generation, yet separate ourselves from all that is unjust or unholy. "Touch not the unclean," under which category comes, not mere licentiousness, but all that is unhallowed, and so out of harmony with the purity of God. (2) *The promise*. "I will receive you," etc. (vers. 17, 18). Such was the promise made to King David in regard to his posterity (2 Sam. vii. 14); and it is extended to all the household of faith. From the sure belief of this promise we may derive strength and resolution to keep the rule of separation. Are we to be openly acknowledged as the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty? What, then, have we to do with iniquity, with darkness, with Belial, with unbelief, with idols? The best-known Christians are not always the best. They may have some striking quality or rare endowment, or may have reached by favour some conspicuous post. But the best are those men and women who most fully and consistently obey the holy calling. How sweet is fellowship with such Christians, and how stimulating! It is good to be yoked together with them under Christ's yoke which is easy, and his burden which is light. It is good to be builded together with them in the temple of the living God. It is good to be joined as brothers and sisters in the same family, and call the Lord Almighty our Father. The friendship of the world, the alliance of the sons of Belial, the communion of the unclean,—what are these to the dignity of the people of God and the family affection of his children?—F.

Ver. 2.—"*The accepted time.*" This text immediately follows upon the full declaration of the truth in Jesus, the free offers of Divine mercy, and the earnest pleadings of ch. v. St. Paul understood well that there was this sad and strange tendency in men—they are ever disposed to shift into the future the most serious duties of life. In the time of disease they will not send for the doctor until they absolutely must. They put off making their wills until the very power to make them is gone. How is the tendency to be explained? It is one of the forms in which man's hopefulness expresses itself. The future always seems to be richer and better than the present; though, when that future is reached, it very seldom realizes our hope. It is, however, a mischievous form of hopefulness if it lifts us off from the performance of present duty. Then it becomes procrastination, "the thief of time."

I. THE INCOMPARABLE ADVANTAGES OF TIME PRESENT. The "*now.*" By this term is properly meant that moment in which any duty stands right before us. Observe: 1. Its security. We have it; it is here; it is ours. The only thing in all the world that is or ever can be ours. The only sphere for the activity of our will. We "act in the living present." Nothing really belongs to us except that which we have at this moment. The past is gone. The future may never come. When we put off duty to the future, we deal with something that is not our own. We have no future until God gives it to us and makes it present. We have only the *now*, and on it may hang eternity. 2. Its peculiar suitability for action. Because the whole nature is aroused, awakened, interested, prepared, and action can be taken so easily and so heartily, *now*. You can never again be sure of the same interest, and, if neglected duties do *ever* get done, they must push into the place of some other duty, and push it aside. *Now* we have the assistance of all aiding impulses. We are helped by an awakened conscience, by deep emotions, and by the urgings of the Divine Spirit. *Now* is the time of our opportunity. Illustrate by the boats waiting for a wave to help them ashore. How the men watch, and at last say, "*Now, now!*" as they bend to the oar! The times when the claims of Christ come home to us are just such times; then why not now be flooded over all hindrances and difficulties unto the harbour of salvation?

II. THE SERIOUS PERIL INVOLVED IN THE NEGLECT OF TIME PRESENT. Notice: 1. The

insecurity of the return of such another opportunity. Others we may have, but this precise one will never come again. There is only one round of seasons in each life. Spring-time never comes but once, with its encouraging assurance, "They that seek me early shall find me." Summer-time and autumn-time come but once, and by-and-by we may have to wail, and to say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." 2. The burdening of life with the sense of unfulfilled duty. That may indeed be made an impulse to higher activity, but usually it presses as a hopeless hindrance. 3. The injury done to our moral nature by resisted spiritual influences. There is a disease whose special feature is the ossification of the heart, the turning of its flexible walls into hardness and bone. It is the disease which they suffer from—in its spiritual form—who neglect the golden opportunities offered them in the time present. Illustrate by the man on the *Royal Charter*, who was on the stern half when the vessel broke in two, and had but a moment in which to leap for dear life. Yet how men resist the claims of God to their immediate attention! Some willfully put off the matter, deliberately finding excuses for delay. Surely no other proof of human depravity is needed than this. Men will hang their immortality on the thread of life, and even dally with the offered mercy of their God. But some honest hearts may be in real difficulty as to the claims of Christ upon them *now*. They think they are too young, or that they have not been anxious long enough; or they are waiting for a deeper sense of sin, or, it may be, for more faith. But all these are subtle ways in which we show our desire to manage our own salvation. If we were really willing that Christ should save us, we would be quite willing that he should save us *now*.—R. T.

Vers. 3—10.—*The holy power of character.* The subject occupying the attention of the apostle is the "ministry of reconciliation;" the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God unto the forgiveness of sins and restoration of man to the Divine favour. This ministry has been entrusted to him. He had, indeed, no "letters of commendation" to rely on, as had some other teachers, but he could appeal to the character of his ministry, to the sufferings he had endured in fulfilling it, and to the Divine benedictions which had rested upon it. He does, in a sense, commend himself; but how? He looks back on his life of labours and sufferings, and challenges comparison. Can others, with their letters of commendation, point to anything like this? Dean Stanley divides the means by which the apostle commended himself into four classes: (1) from "patience" (or endurance) to "fastings," referring to the bodily sufferings of the apostle; (2) from "pureness" to "love unfeigned," referring to the virtues, that is, the manifestations of the Divine presence in St. Paul; (3) from "by the word of truth" to "by evil report and good report," referring to the means whereby he was enabled to prove himself to be a true minister of God; and (4) the remainder, relating to the acceptance in which the apostles were held, and its contrast with the reality. St. Paul's personal appeal presents for our consideration the importance of securing for the gospel a favourable hearing through the consistency and gracious beauty of the character of those who proclaim it. Its spiritual efficiency directly depends on the *character* of its ambassadors. The three following subjects need careful treatment:—

I. THE PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL MUST SHOW ITS POWER ON HIS OWN CHARACTER AND LIFE. Illustrate by a man offering an infallible remedy for a skin-disease, from which everybody could see he was still suffering. The gospel is life for dead souls, and he who preaches it must be himself "alive unto God." The gospel is healing for sin-sick souls, and he who proclaims it must be able to tell his own experiences of the Balm of Gilead. The gospel provides a regeneration of character, and what it can do for men we expect to see in the men who commend it to us. As a fact, the men who show the power of the gospel in themselves are the men who alone can wield the power of the gospel on others. The preacher must be an ensample of them that believe.

II. AS EXAMPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, MINISTERS MAY EXPECT UNUSUAL TESTINGS. These come in several ways: (1) in the bodily strain which a Christian ministry involves; (2) in the more anxious and careful self-culture which the ministry demands; (3) in the fatigues and perils which come in carrying out the ministry; and (4) in the difficulties found in dealing pleasantly with all kinds of men. To these should be added those direct dealings of God with his servants, by means of which he prepares them for service, sharpens and furbishes their swords for his war. Even "fiery

trial" is not strange for those who have to stand in the chief places of influence. They must have a large experience, if, in measure like their Lord, they are to be fully "touched with the feeling of men's infirmities."

III. THEIR EXPERIENCES WILL GIVE THE TRUE POWER TO THEIR PUBLIC PLEADINGS. Illustrate in the case of the Apostle Paul, who could not have written such letters if he had not passed through such trials. Experience is the secret of power. It gives the tone of tenderness and sympathy to a minister's work. It gives confidence in speaking of the comforting and sustaining power of Divine grace. It is the true power on our fellow-men to be enabled to speak to them of "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." But if all this be, in high degrees, true of the recognized ministry, it is true of all who seek to influence others for God and goodness. The world which we long and strive to save very properly asks of us this most searching question, "What has this gospel done for you?"—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*Where are men straitened?* The apostle, in an intense outburst of feeling, had just said, "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." He was referring to that opening of his ministry, and disclosure of his love for them, which filled the previous part of the chapter. And so he is led to ask from them a worthy response. He would have his love quicken love. He wanted it to break down the barriers and enmities and prejudices which were so sadly limiting the confidence of the Corinthians in St. Paul. So he pleads with them, "Ye are not straitened in us;" there is no limit of our love to you; "but ye are straitened in your own bowels," your own affections, which are sadly kept in bondage by your passions and prejudices and antipathies; by misrepresentations of me and my doings, and the influence of unworthy teachers. Then he urges them to break the bonds, to be enlarged, and to let their hearts express the love they feel. What they needed in their spiritual life was breadth and expansiveness of affection. There is suggested by the apostle's words a series of contrasts between—

I. THE LIMITED IDEAS AND AFFECTIONS OF MEN. Who are straitened by ignorance, imperfect character, prejudice, false sentiments, readiness to misjudge and to impute bad motive, etc.

II. THE BROAD IDEAS AND AFFECTIONS OF APOSTLES. Who see in men souls to be redeemed unto God, and, labouring for men's spiritual and eternal well-being, can rise above the smaller occasions of difference and separation.

III. THE SUBLIME IDEAS AND AFFECTIONS OF GOD IN CHRIST. Who would have all men saved; who loved the world; whose love found expression in self-sacrifice; and whose invitations now are sent to whosoever will. No man is straitened in God. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." In his heart and home there "yet is room." Men are straitened, limited, in themselves, not in God, not in the gospel, not in Christian teachers. They forge, and fix on, their own bondages.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Christian friendships.* The Bible would not be a complete book, adequately representing all phases of human life and experience and associations, if it contained no instance of close, personal, sacrificing friendship. But we have the very beautiful illustrative case of David and Jonathan. Christianity would not meet us at every point of our need if it had not something to say about the *choices*, the *changes*, and the *claims* of friendship.

I. ON THE CHOICES OF FRIENDSHIP. Our friendships are not always gained by choice; they are sometimes determined by outward circumstances; sometimes by felt affinities; and sometimes they are started by some impressive or generous deed. But friendship ought always to be put to the decision of our will, seeing that it bears so directly on our character and on our life. It sounds chilling to the freshness and warmth of our love to say that we must *decide* who is to be our friend, and put into careful consideration the qualities and habits and probable influence upon us of the person towards whom we are drawn. Yet, surely, as we would not trust our property to a man whom we did not know, or our child to an education that we had not carefully selected for him, so we would not give our hearts to one whom we were not sure that we might

fully trust. Moreover, as Christians, we guard against the approach of evil in every form, and nothing will more directly affect our Christian spirit than the influence of an unworthy friend. He may be a scoffer. He may be one whose sneer at all we love and seek may hurt and wound us far more than the scoffer's open speech. He may be an indulgent pleasure-seeker, whose disposition will be sure to nourish the worldliness and self-loving of our spirit. And, on the other hand, few things will help us more than a well-chosen Christian friendship. Many a doubt is scattered by the contact of a friend's faith, and many a sliding step is steadied by the influence of a friend's firmness. Two things lie at the basis of a worthy and lasting friendship, viz. a certain felt sympathy and a certain recognized equality.

II. ON THE CHANGES OF FRIENDSHIP. Sometimes friendships are broken through changeableness of disposition. Others are broken by the wrong-doing or unfaithfulness of one of the friends. And at other times friendships are broken by the rude, rough hand of death.

III. ON THE CLAIMS OF FRIENDSHIP. All associations of men together bring claims and responsibilities. If we have the privilege of a loving friendship, it claims from us two things. 1. Unfailing confidence in our friend. And this involves openness one with the other. Close natures, that can keep secrets, seldom know the full joy of friendship. 2. Mutual self-sacrifice, readiness to spend our best for our friend, and to put forth our best efforts in his behalf. Foote well says, "Be thankful if God has given you a sympathizing friend, one who can share with you your deepest griefs, who is one with you in all your interests for time and for eternity, whose heart answers to your heart. This is one of God's best gifts; be thankful for it and use it right, for he may deprive you of it, and leave you grieving,—Would I had prized it more! It is a most sweet and blessed fellowship; use it—use it for the high ends of mutual, spiritual good, and the Divine glory."—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*Christian relations with the world.* This verse is a partial quotation from Isa. lii. 11, which reads, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." The first reference of these words is to the captives in Babylon, who were thus counselled to prepare for their return to Canaan, and to see to it that they carried back with them none of the evils of the idolatrous land in which they had so long sojourned. "The local and historical meaning has for the apostle passed away, and the 'unclean thing' is identified with the whole system of heathenism." Since we are counselled to be separate from the world, it will be well for us to understand what is properly meant by "the world." Some have thought that they were called to separate from the world of creation, and compel themselves to find no interest in field, or flower, or song, or the thousandfold charms of nature. Others have thought that "the world" must mean the mass of humanity, and so a true religious life could only be lived in convent or hermit-cell. Others, again, think that "the world" must mean the common scenes and pleasures of life, and that we can only live for God by resisting every pleasure and severing ourselves from every form of personal enjoyment. But "the world," in the New Testament sense, is not a thing or a set of things, but a spirit and disposition—it is *worldliness*. It is none of these things, but it may be *in them all*. It is all these if we persist in having them without God. This green earth, with its vales and hills, apart from God, is just "the world." But with God, seen as God's, it is no longer "the world;" it is the footstool of the eternal throne, the dwelling-place of the Divine majesty, the garment of the all-glorious King. The mass of humanity, without God, is just "the world;" but in the light of God's relation, it is the Father's family, the Father's school. The common cares and pleasures of life are filled with an infinite meaning and importance when they become the testing-scenes out of which God purposes to bring his children, "faultless in the presence of his glory." Whether a thing is worldly or not depends simply on this—Can you see God in it? To the Christian man God is in everything, and if he finds anything into which he cannot bring the thought of God, then he calls that worldly and shrinks from it. The "world" is that act, that scene, with which we feel the cherished thought of God does not harmonize. It is heaven where God *is*; it is earth where he *is not*; it is hell where he will not come.

I. THE CHRISTIAN MUST BE IN THE WORLD. He cannot, he may not, get free from outward and physical relations. His present sphere of life and duty is earthly; and his Master did not pray that his disciples should be taken "out of the world."

II. THE CHRISTIAN NEED NOT BE OF THE WORLD. In the sense of adopting its principles or its maxims, yielding to its fashions or seeking its ends.

III. THE CHRISTIAN MAY BE ABOVE THE WORLD. In the sense of having a Divine life, which masters worldly principles, resists worldly influences, and even makes him a quickening and healing power on the world, as Christ himself was. This is expressed in plain terms by the apostle, in Rom. xii. 2, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The separation from the world is not to be effected by any mere watching of our acts and habits. Let us realize the higher transformation in the renewal of our minds, and we shall find it easy to reach a true nonconformity to the world. He who glorifies God in the spirit will be sure to glorify him in the body too. He who is daily more renewed in mind will most readily discover, in practical details, what is the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."—R. T.

Ver. 18.—Proving sonship by obedience. Then—if ye fulfil my commands in separating yourselves from the unclean thing, then I "will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The thought to which we now direct attention is that a merely abstract relationship is of very little value apart from the fulfilment of those duties which are involved in the relationship. It is a very little thing for a man to stand in the abstract relation of a citizen to this great country. It is a very great thing for a man to fulfil, nobly and cheerfully, the duties of citizenship. It is a very little thing to stand in the mere relation of a husband, a father, and a master. It is a great thing indeed that we are earnestly striving to meet the responsibilities and fulfil the duties that belong to those relationships. So the name of a "son of God" will save and bless no man apart from the spirit of a son manifested and proved in an obedient, humble, devoted, and faithful life. Only the obedient sons can have the comforting sense of the Divine fatherhood.

I. THIS WAS TRUE OF CHRIST, THE FIRSTBORN SON. God said of him and to him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom," evidently meaning, in whose obedience, "I am well pleased." Each of the relations in which men stand to each other has some one thing which is its essential characteristic. The essential of kingship is the spirit of judgment. Of fatherhood, is loving authority. Of motherhood, is self-denying affection and service. Of sonship, is obedience. Whatever other expressions childhood may find, all are worthless if there be no obedience. I have no right to the name of a son, save as I obey. I show, I prove, my sonship in this—that I obey. We take, then, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek it for the signs of what we know to be the very essence of sonship, and we receive surprising impressions of the completeness of his obedience. Jesus when a boy gained and settled the principle of life: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Painting and poetry gain truest insight of his spirit when they represent him dutifully working at the carpenter's bench. When weary at the well of Sychar, he was beyond the interest of earthly food; "his meat and his drink were to do the will of his Father." And when the sorrows of an awful conflict and agony were gathering thickly over him, he could utter the perfect devotion of a Son, saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Watching that life of cheerful, hearty, loving obedience, who of us is not prepared to say—We know now what it is to be a son or a daughter of the Lord Almighty? Let us not, however, fail to observe that the obedience of his sonship was not a mere *series of acts*; it was that series of acts instinct with the cherished *spirit of obedience*, done in the freeness of the will, under the impulse of holy affections and resolves. A life full of obedient acts will no more make a real sonship than a wealth of apples, tied on, will make a fruitful tree. They must be the genuine utterances of the soul's life of obedience.

II. THIS IS TRUE OF US, THE YOUNGER SONS. "Now are we the sons of God." "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." What is the value of a right without fitness; of a title without preparation to fulfil its claims; of the name of a son without the spirit and obedience of the son? "If any man have not the Spirit

of Christ"—that is, the sonlike spirit of Christ—"he is none of his." "If ye be sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." How, then, are we proving our sonship? Are we breaking free from the old worldly bondages? Are we separating ourselves from all unclean things? Are we perfecting holiness in the fear of God? Can God meet our daily practical obediences of his will by saying, "I will be a Father unto you"?—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

Conclusion of his appeal (ver. 1). The apostle's feelings towards them (vers. 2—4). Explanation of the objects of his last letter, and expression of his joy at the good results it had brought about (vers. 2—16).

Ver. 1.—Having then these promises. The promises of God's indwelling and fatherly love (ch. vi. 16—18). Dearly beloved. Perhaps the word is added to soften the sternness of the preceding admonition. Let us cleanse ourselves. Every Christian, even the best, has need of daily cleansing from his daily assailing (John xiii. 10), and this cleansing depends on the purifying activity of moral effort maintained by the help of God's grace. Similarly St. John (1 John iii. 1—3), after speaking of God's fatherhood and the hopes which it inspires, adds, "And every man that hath this hope *in him purifieth himself* even as he is pure" (comp. Jas. iv. 8). From all filthiness; rather, from all defilement. Sin leaves on the soul the moral stain of guilt, which was typified by the ceremonial defilements of the Levitical Law (comp. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26). The word used for "filth" in 1 Pet. iii. 21 is different. Of the flesh and spirit. From everything which outwardly pollutes the body and inwardly the soul; the two being closely connected together, so that what defiles the flesh inevitably also defiles the soul, and what defiles the spirit degrades also the body. Uncleaness, for instance, a sin of the flesh, is almost invariably connected with pride and hate and cruelty, which degrade the soul. Perfecting holiness. This is the goal and aim of the Christian, though in this life it cannot be finally attained (Phil. iii. 12). In the fear of God. There is, indeed, one kind of fear, a base and servile fear, which is cast out by perfect love; but the fear of reverential awe always remains in the true and wisely instructed Christian, who will never be guilty of the profane familiarity adopted by some ignorant sectarians, or speak of God "as though he were some one in the next street" (Heb. xii. 28; 1 Pet. iii. 15).

Ver. 2.—Receive us; rather, *open your hearts to us; make room for us* (comp. Mark ii 2; John ii. 6). It is an appeal

to them to get rid of the *narrowness* of heart, the constricted affections, of which he has complained in ch. vi. 12. We have wronged . . . corrupted . . . defrauded no man. The "no man" in the original is placed first, and this emphatic position, together with its triple repetition, marks St. Paul's insistence on the fact that, whatever his enemies might insinuate, there was *no single member* of their Church who could complain of injury, moral harm, or unfair treatment from him. Clearly he is again thinking of definite slanders against himself. His sternness to the offender may have been denounced as a wrong; his generous sanction of broad views about clean and unclean meats, idol-offerings, etc., may have been represented as corrupting others by false teaching (ch. ii. 17) or bad example (ch. iv. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 6); his urgency about the collection for the saints (ch. xii. 16; Acts xx. 33), or his assertion of legitimate authority, may have been specified as greed for power. The verb *pleonektein* is often used in connection with other verbs, implying sensuality. It is difficult for us even to imagine that St. Paul had ever been charged with gross immorality; but it may have been so, for in a corrupt atmosphere everything is corrupt. Men like Nero and Heliogabalus, being themselves the vilest of men, openly declared their belief that no man was pure, and many in the heathen world may have been inclined to similar suspicions. Of Whitefield, the poet says—

"His sins were such as Sedon never knew,
And calumny stood up to swear all true."

We know too that the Christians were universally charged with Thyestean banquets and promiscuous licentiousness. It is, however, more natural to take *pleonektein* in its general sense, in which it means "to overreach," "to claim or seize more than one's just rights" (see ch. ii. 11). In 1 Cor. ix. 1—6 he is defending himself against similar charges, as also in this Epistle (v. 12; vi. 3; x. 7—11; xi. xii., *passim*). For similar strains of defence, see those of Moses and of Samuel.

Ver. 3.—I speak not this to condemn you. "Not by way of condemnation am I speaking." My object is to maintain the old love between us; what I say, therefore, is merely

to defend myself, not to complain of you (comp. 1 Cor. iv. 14). I have said before. He has not said it in so many words, but has implied it in ch. iii. 2, 3; vi. 11—14. Ye are in our hearts. So he says to his beloved Philippian, "I have you in my heart" (Phil. i. 7). To die and live with you. Similarly he tells the Thessalonians that he was ready to give them even his own life (1 Thess. ii. 8). This is no mere conventional expression of deep affection, like Horace's, "Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam libens;" nor is it the description of some compact for life and death like that of the Theban Band. It has the deeper meaning which was involved by the words "life" and "death" on the lips of a Christian (ch. iv. 11.; vi. 9). And one whose life was, for Christ's sake, a daily death, naturally mentions death first.

Ver. 4.—**Boldness of speech.** St. Paul feels that he may address them with perfect frankness and openness (ch. iii. 12). My glorying of you. "My boasting on your account" (ch. i. 14; v. 12; viii. 14; comp. 1 Cor. i. 4—7). I am filled with comfort. "I have been filled with the consolation." "Consolation" is the word which occurs so frequently in ch. i. 3, 4. I am exceeding joyful. "I superabound in my joy" (ch. ii. 2—14). In all our tribulation. The clause belongs to both the preceding clauses. Joy in the very midst of affliction was an essentially Christian blessing (Phil. ii. 17).

"Thou shalt have joy in sadness soon;
The pure calm hope be thine
Which brightens the Eastern moon,
When day's wild lights decline."

(See ch. vi. 10; Gal. v. 22; Rom. xiv. 17; John xv. 11.)

Ver. 5.—**For, when we were come into Macedonia.** "For even when we came." The word "affliction" reminds St. Paul to resume the thread of the narrative which makes this letter almost *like an itinerary*. He has spoken of his trials in Ephesus (ch. i. 8) and in the Troad (ch. ii. 12, 13), and now he tells them that *even* in Macedonia he was no less troubled and agitated. Our flesh had no rest. *External* troubles assailed him as well as inward anxiety. "Had" seems here to be the best reading (B, F, G, K); not "has had," which may be borrowed from ch. ii. 13. *Rest*; rather, *emission, respite*. But we were troubled on every side; literally, *but in everything being afflicted*. The style, in its picturesque irregularity, almost seems as though it were broken by sobs. Without were fightings, within were fears. "From without battles, from within fears." No light is thrown on these "battles." The Acts of the Apostles has no details to give us of this brief stay

in Macedonia. The "fears" were doubtless still connected with anxiety as to the reception of Titus, and of his First Epistle (ch. xii. 20).

Ver. 6.—**Who comforteth those that are cast down.** "The Comforter of the humble comforted us, even God." The word "humble" has in classical Greek the sense of "mean," "abject." Pride, not humility, was the virtue even of Stoic morality. Christ was the first to reveal the beatitude of lowliness (Matt. xi. 29; Luke i. 52). Doubtless the word still retained some of its old associations, and had been used of St. Paul in a disparaging sense (ch. x. 1). But he whom his opponents accused of so much egotism, ambition, and arrogance, meekly accepts the term and applies it to himself. God (ch. i. 4). "The God . . . of consolation" (Rom. xv. 5). By the coming of Titus. This was the cause of that outburst of joy in ch. ii. 13, 14, which passage here finds its explanation. The absence of Titus from the Acts is another proof of the fragmentariness of that book. It is evident that he was an ardent, able, active fellow-worker, and most beloved friend of the apostle (Gal. ii. 1, 3; 2 Tim. iv. 10; Titus i. 4; iii. 12). We learn most about him from this Epistle.

Ver. 7.—**And not by his coming only.** The mere fact of Titus's arrival cheered St. Paul, because Titus seems to have been of a strong and cheery temperament. St. Paul, partly because of his infirmities, was peculiarly dependent on the support of human sympathy (1 Thess. iii. 1—8; Phil. ii. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 4; Acts xvii. 15; xxviii. 15). It was not, however, the mere arrival of Titus which cheered him, but still more the good news which he brought, and which partially lightened his anxieties. In all probability this letter was written almost immediately after the arrival of Titus, and while the joy caused by his presence was still glowing in the apostle's heart. It is characteristic of the seclusion of an austere life that St. Jerome supposes the cause of the apostle's distress to have been that Titus was his interpreter, and that in his absence he could not preach! Your earnest desire. Your yearning to see me once more. Mourning; rather, *lamentation* (see ch. ii. 12). They were aroused to lament their past "inflation" (1 Cor. v. 2) and remissness. Your fervent mind toward me. This rendering well expresses the kindling affection implied by the word *zēlos*. So that I rejoiced the more. More than he had even anticipated could be possible; or, as the next verse may imply, all the more because of his past anguish (ch. ii. 4).

Ver. 8.—**With a letter; rather, with my Epistle.** Probably the First Epistle, though some suppose that the allusion is to a lost

intermediate letter. I do not repent, though I did repent; better, *I do not regret it*. Every one has experienced the anxiety which has followed the despatch of some painful letter. If it does good, well; but perhaps it may do harm. The severity was called for; it seemed a duty to write severely. But how will the rebuke be received? Might we not have done better if we had used language less uncompromisingly stern? As St. Paul thought with intense anxiety that perhaps in his zeal for truth he may have irrevocably alienated the feelings of the Corinthians, whom, with all their grave faults, he loved, a moment came when he actually regretted what he had written. He himself assures us that he had this feeling. Those who try all kinds of fantastic hypotheses and tortuous exegesis to explain away this phrase as though it were inconsistent with St. Paul's inspiration, go to Scripture to find there their own *a priori* dogmas, not to seek what Scripture really says. The doctrine of inspiration is not the fetish into which it has been degraded by formal systems of scholastic theology. Inspiration was not a mechanical dictation of words, out the influence of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men who retained all their own natural emotions. For I perceive, etc. There are various ways of taking this clause. Nothing, however, is simpler than to regard it as a parenthetical remark (for I see that that Epistle, though it were but for a time, saddened you). Though it were but for a season. (For the phrase, see Philem. 15; Gal. ii. 5.) He means to say that their grief will at any rate cease when they receive this letter, and he can bear the thought of having pained them when he remembers the brevity of their grief and the good effects which resulted from it.

Ver. 9.—Not that ye were made sorry. They might have drawn this mistaken conclusion from his remark that he "rejoiced" when he heard of their "lamentation" (ver. 7). After a godly sort; literally, according to God; i.e. in a way which he would approve (Rom. viii. 27). In nothing. Not even when we rebuked you, and caused you pain.

Ver. 10.—For godly sorrow, etc. "For the sorrow which is according to God worketh out a repentance unto salvation which bringeth no regret." Sin causes regret, remorse, that sort of repentance (*metameleia*) which is merely an unavailing rebellion against the inevitable consequences of misdoing; but the sorrow of self-reproach which follows true repentance (*metanoia*, change of mind) is never followed by regret. Some take "not to be regretted" with "salvation," but it is a very unsuitable adjective to that substantive. The sorrow

of the world. Here sorrow for the loss, or disappointment, or shame, or ruin, or sickness caused by sin; such as the false repentance of Cain, Saul, Abithophel, Judas, etc. Death. Moral and spiritual death always, and sometimes physical death, and always—unless it is followed by true repentance—eternal death, which is the opposite of salvation (Rom. v. 21).

Ver. 11.—For behold, etc. The effects produced by their repentance showed that it was "according to God;" for it brought forth in them "the fruits of good living to the honour and glory of God." Carefulness; rather, *earnestness, active endeavour*. Yea what. There is an untranslatable energy about the original Greek. The same use of ἀλλὰ (Latin, *immo vero*) in a climax is found in 1 Cor. vi. 11. Clearing of yourselves; literally, *apology, self-defence*, addressed to me through Titus. Indignation. Against themselves for their neglect. Fear. Of the measures which I might take, if I came to you "with a rod" (1 Cor. iv. 21). Vehement desires. Longing that I should return to you (see ver. 7). Zeal. To make up for past remissness. Revengs. Judicial punishment of the incontinent offender. The "apology" and "indignation" referred to themselves; the "fear" and "yearning" to the apostle; the "zeal" and "judicial retribution" to the offender. In all things. His summing up is, "In every respect ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter." Whatever may have been your previous carelessness and connivance, the steps you took on receiving my letter vindicated your character. In this matter; rather, *in the matter*. It is quite in accordance with St. Paul's usual manner that "he speaks indefinitely of what was odious" (1 Thess. iv. 6).

Ver. 12.—Wherefore, though I wrote unto you. "So then, even if I *did* write you," namely, about that matter. For his cause that had done the wrong, etc. My object in writing was not to mix myself up with the personal quarrel. I had in view neither the wronger nor the wronged, directly and primarily, but wrote for the sake of the whole Church (1 Cor. v. 1, 2; vi. 7). Nor for his cause that suffered wrong. Apparently the father of the offender (1 Cor. v. 1). Our care for you, etc. Among the diversity of readings in this clause, which seem to be still further confused by mere mistakes of copyists, the best supported reading is "your care for us" (B, C, E, K, L, and various versions, etc.). The Sinaitic manuscript has "your care for yourselves." The variations have partly risen from the apparent strangeness of the remark that his letter had been written in order that their care for him might be manifested to themselves; in other words, that

they might learn from their own conduct the reality of their earnest feelings for him. He has already spoken of this "earnest care" of theirs (ver. 11), but not in quite the same sense. Certainly, however, the reading followed by our Authorized Version, even if it be a correction, furnishes a more natural meaning (comp. ch. ii. 4), and the other may have arisen from a clerical error.

Ver. 13.—Therefore we were comforted, etc. Since my Epistle secured the result of manifesting your true feelings towards me, "we have been comforted." The Revised Version and many editions put the stop here, and continue (reading *se* after *en*), and *in addition to our consolation, abundantly the more did we rejoice at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.* Exceedingly the more. In the Greek this is expressed by double comparatives (comp. ch. xii. 9; Phil. i. 23). Was refreshed; rather, *has been (and is) refreshed.* The same verb is used in 1 Cor. xvi. 18; Philem. 7, 20.

Ver. 14.—I am not ashamed. The due rendering of the tenses brings out the sense much more accurately. "Because if I have boasted anything to him on your behalf, I was not put to the blush;" in other words, "One reason of my exceeding gladness was that you fully justified that very favourable

picture of you which I had drawn for Titus when I was urging him to be the bearer of my letter." Is found a truth; literally, *proved itself to be a truth.* Here again there is a most delicate reference to the charge of levity and unveracity which had been brought against him (ch. i. 17). I always spoke the truth to you; but I might well have feared that, in speaking of you to Titus, my affection for you had led me to overstep the limits of perfect accuracy. But you yourselves, by proving yourselves worthy of all I said of you, have established my perfect truthfulness, even in the only point where I might have thought it doubtful. Nothing could exceed the tact and refinement, the subtle delicacy and beauty, of this gentle remark.

Ver. 15.—His inward affection. The same word which is so needlessly rendered "bowels" in ch. vi. 12. More abundant. His love for you has been increased by his recent visit. With fear and trembling. On this Pauline phrase, see 1 Cor. ii. 3.

Ver. 16.—I rejoice therefore. The "therefore" concludes the whole paragraph, but is omitted in many manuscripts. I have confidence in you; literally, *I am bold in you;* i.e. I feel courage about you. The phrase in 2 Thess. iii. 4 expresses a calmer and less hazardous trust.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—**A minister's address to his people.** "Having therefore these promises," etc. In these verses the apostle exhorts the Corinthians to two things.

I. TO THE PURSUIT OF SPIRITUAL PURITY. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." He seems to regard the attainment of spiritual purity as consisting in two things. 1. *Getting rid of the wrong.* "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." Perhaps the reference to "filthiness" here referred especially to the idolatry and unchastity which was so prevalent in the Corinthian Church. All sin is "filthiness," and cleansable; it is not nature, it is a stain on nature; it is not something inwrought into the very texture of our being, otherwise it could not be cleansed away. It is no more ourselves than the soil on the white robe is the robe. It can, it should, it must, be washed out, that we may appear "without spot or wrinkle." 2. *Attaining the right.* "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Holiness implies the consecration of our entire nature, flesh and spirit, body and soul, to the Divine will, and this requires habitual, solemn effort in "the fear of God." Now, the grand end of Christ's mission to the world is to produce this purity in man. "Having therefore these promises" (viz. the promises in the last verse of the preceding chapter, which are in substance the promises of the gospel), this spiritual purity should be struggled for. "The grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching them that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," etc. The supreme desire of every true minister of the gospel is that his people shall become pure.

II. TO REGARD HIM WITH AFFECTION. "Receive us [open your hearts to us]," etc. He grounds his claim on their affection: 1. On the fact that he had done *harm* to none. "We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man." This is said, no doubt, in answer to some of the charges which his enemies had brought against him—said in self-vindication. He had "wronged no man," done

injustice to none; he had "corrupted no man" in doctrines or morals; he had "defrauded no man," he had availed himself of no circumstance in order to extort from them money or power. A grand thing this for a minister to be able to say to his people without any fear of contradiction, and in the sight of God. 2. On the fact that he *loved* them. "I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to live and to die with you." Although I might "condemn" you, I still love you; you are so strong in my affections that I will not only visit you, but would live and die with you, if my mission would allow. 3. On the fact that he *rejoiced in the good* that was in them. "Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you. I am filled with comfort," etc. Thus he commends himself to their affection. It is self-commendation, it is true; but who else could commend him? There were none greater than he living. There is no egotism in his self-commendation.

Vers. 5—7.—*The good tried and comforted.* "For when we were come into Macedonia," etc. Here we have—

I. A GOOD MAN GREATLY TRIED. "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." In ch. ii. 13 he refers to one circumstance that troubled him on his way to Macedonia. "I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother." He had come from Troas full of excitement and agitation, fully expecting to meet with Titus, who would convey to him some information concerning the Church at Corinth, which would allay his intense anxieties. But he was disappointed. What the other particular troubles were that he refers to here, the "fightings without" and "fears within," we know not; but well we know that everywhere in the prosecution of his apostolic mission he met with trials—great, varied, and most distressing. The best of men in this life are frequently "cast down." There are many things that "cast down" the spirits of good men. 1. *The prosperity of the wicked.* Asaph felt this. "My feet had almost gone, my steps were well-nigh slipped," etc. 2. *The triumphs of wrong.* Fraud in trade, corruption in politics, errors in science, moral filth in popular literature, blasphemies, sectarianism and cant in religion. What noble souls are depressed here in England with these things! 3. *The non-success of Christly labour.* How many preachers of spiritual thought, disinterested love, inflexible loyalty to truth, are subject to depressing moods on account of the little success apparently resulting from their arduous and self-denying toils! Often, like Elijah, they feel inclined to retire into the caves of solitude; like Jeremiah, who resolved "to speak no more" in his Name, and like One greater than either or all, who wailed out the words, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought."

II. A GOOD MAN DIVINELY COMFORTED. "Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." God is a Comforter. No one requires higher qualifications than a true comforter. He must have a *thorough knowledge of the sufferer*, know his constitution, and the causes of the complaint; his diagnosis must be perfect. He must possess the necessary *remedial elements*; he must have the antidote at *command*. He must also have the *tenderest sympathy*; an unsympathetic nature can never administer comfort, whatever the extent of his knowledge or the suitability of his means. God has all these qualifications in an infinite degree. Hence he is the Comforter. God comforted Paul by sending him Titus. 1. *The appearance of Titus was comforting.* The advent of his young friend was as the rising of the morning sun in the dark heavens of his spirit. God comforts man by man. Moses was comforted in the wilderness by the unexpected visit of his father-in-law Jethro (Exod. xviii. 7). Hannah was cheered in spirit by the talk of old Eli (1 Sam. i. 18). David, dejected in the wood, had his heart strengthened by Jonathan (1 Sam. xxiii. 16). 2. *The communication of Titus was comforting.* "And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more."

CONCLUSION. Learn: 1. That Christianity in its highest form does not exempt from the trials of life. A more Christly man than Paul perhaps never lived. Yet how great his trials! 2. That the vicarious sufferings of love are amongst the most

depressing. The more love a man has in him in this world of affliction and sorrow, the more, by the law of sympathy, will he endure. Paul now suffered for the Corinthians. 3. A genuine disciple of Christ carries comfort into the house of his distressed friend. Young Titus carried comfort into the saddened home of the Apostle Paul.

“He who hath most of heart
Knows most of sorrow; nor a thing he said
Nor did but was to him at times a woe,
At times indifferent, at times a joy.
Folly and sin and memory make a curse
Wherewith the future fires may vie in vain,
The sorrows of the soul are graver still.”

(Festus.)

Vers. 8—11.—Godly sorrow. “For though I made you sorry,” etc. Three remarks here concerning the godly sorrow that was wrought on the minds of the members of the Corinthian Church.

I. IT WAS PRODUCED BY A FAITHFUL REPROOF OF WRONG. There were, as we have seen, certain evils more or less prevalent in the Church at Corinth, such as schism, idolatry, unchastity, and abuse of the Lord’s Supper. These so affected the mind of the apostle that his letter abounded with strong reproof. Concerning the reproofs he administered to them, two facts are noteworthy. 1. *They caused him much pain.* “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent.” Men, more or less malign in their nature, take pleasure in dealing out reproaches and reproofs, but to those whose natures are of the genial and the generous type, few things are more painful than the administration of reproofs. Paul no doubt felt it so; still it had to be done. Loyalty to his conscience and his mission demanded it. A loving nature recoils at the idea of giving pain to any one. 2. *They were administered with the tenderest affection.* In almost every reproving sentence contained in his letter there beats the pulse of affection, and it is evermore this love that invests reproof with a heart penetrating and melting power. With the tenderest love ministers should always reprove, admonish, and exhort.

II. IT WAS ESSENTIALLY DIFFERENT TO THE SORROW OF THE WORLD. “Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance,” etc. Great is the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. 1. The one is *selfish*, the other is *generous*. In the former the man regrets having done the wrong thing simply on account of inconvenience to himself; in the latter the anguish is in the wrong itself. 2. The one results in future *regret*, the other in future *joy*. All the sorrow that an ungodly man has felt will lead to some deeper, darker, more terrible distress. 3. The one leads to *ruin*, the other to *salvation*. See the results of worldly sorrow in Cain (Gen. iv. 12); in Saul (1 Sam. xxxi. 3—6); in Abithophel (2 Sam. xvii. 23); in Judas (Matt. xxviii. 3—25). See godly sorrow in the prodigal son (Luke xv.); in Peter (Matt. xxvi.); in the converts on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 44—47).

III. IT WROUGHT GREAT RESULTS IN THE SOUL. It wrought: 1. *Solicitude.* “What carefulness it wrought in you!” Careful to resist the wrong and pursue the right. 2. *Deprecation.* “What clearing of yourselves!” How anxious to show your disapproval of the evil of which you have been guilty! 3. *Anger.* “What indignation!” Indignation, not against the sinner, but against the sin. This is a holy anger. 4. *Dread.* “What fear!” Dread, not of suffering, but of sin; not of God, but of the devil. This fear is, indeed, the highest courage. He who shrinks from the morally wrong is the truest hero. 5. *Longing.* “What vehement desire!” What longing after a better life! All these expressions mean intense earnestness, and earnestness, not about temporal matters, which is common and worthless, but about spiritual matters, which is rare and praiseworthy. Genuine repentance is antagonistic to indifference; it generates earnestness in the soul, it leads to the most strenuous efforts, to the most vehement cries to Heaven. “Sorrow in itself,” says F. W. Robertson, “is a thing neither good nor bad; its value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hothouse, a great power also in the coffin: it

expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigour to vegetable life; and warmth, too, develops with tenfold rapidity the wetering process of dissolution. So, too, with sorrow. There are spirits in which it develops the seminal principle of life; there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay."

Vers. 12—16.—Church discipline. "Wherefore, though I wrote unto you," etc. The subject of these words may be regarded as that of Church discipline, and two general remarks are suggested.

I. CHURCH DISCIPLINE SHOULD BE EXERCISED FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE CHURCH. "Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you." The particular individual referred to here, on whom Paul calls discipline to be exercised, was the incestuous person (1 Cor. v. 1). The apostle here states that this was done, not merely for the offender's sake, nor indeed for the sake of the person whom the offender had injured (*viz.* his father, whose wife he had taken as his own). His object in writing was, not merely to chastise the one and to obtain justice and redress for the other, but that "our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you." He had a larger aim; it was to prove to them how much he cared for their spiritual *purity and reputation*. Punishment should not only be for the reformation of the wrong-doer, but as an example to others. The unhealthy branch should be cut off for the sake of the tree's health and growth. All true chastisement for wrong aims, not only at the good of the offender, but at the good of the community at large.

II. WHEN THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH IS MANIFESTED THEREBY IT IS A JUST MATTER FOR REJOICING. "Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all." The Church was improved by Paul's disciplinary letter. Of this Titus had assured him, for they had "refreshed" his "spirit" during his visit among them. Their improvement, too, justified the high testimony which he had given Titus concerning them. "For if I have boasted anything to him of you, I am not ashamed," etc. The love of Titus for them was increased by the discovery of it. "His inward affection is more abundant toward you." Thus the godly sorrow which they manifested on account of that which was wrong amongst them, was in every way satisfactory to him; it gave him comfort, it greatly refreshed the spirit of Titus, increased his affection for them, and inspired the apostle himself with confidence and with joy.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—An exhortation to perfection. "Having therefore these promises," which the apostle had just mentioned (ch. vi. 16—18), what were the Corinthians expected to be? "Sons and daughters" of the Father, God in Christ. But the condition was, "Be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." There was a character involved ("sons and daughters"); there was something to be done ("come out from among them, and be ye separate"); then "I will receive you." St. Paul is specific in his appeal: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness [defilement] of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The enlarged heart, of which he had been speaking and would soon speak again, has a tender voice, addressing them as "dearly beloved." Nothing magisterial appears; he is one of them—"Let us cleanse ourselves;" nor has he any doubt of their ability to do this thing. Separation from old associations, changes in customs and habits, call for firm resolution and self-denial; but he is well assured that God makes no promise without giving ample strength for the accepting party to comply with the terms offered. If the promises embraced every good connected with their relation to God as a Father, then they must be like God in Christ; they were to entertain no views of God, except as God in Christ, but were to reverence, love, serve him in this one single and complete relationship. The ground, motive, impulse of action, were to spring from this consideration—God in Christ as a Father. If so, the righteousness of Christ was not only to be the reason of their

justification before the law of rectitude, but they were also to have that righteousness as a property of personal character. By nature they were far gone from righteousness; they were defiled, born in sin; grace had already been communicated to renew their evil character; he had written to them as "washed, sanctified, justified," in the "name" of Christ, and by "the Spirit of our God." As yet the work was only begun. Much was to be done. Sinful tendencies were in them which had never come under the eye of consciousness. Enemies lurked within and without, of whom they were unaware. Imperfect as they and he were, they must go on to perfection. Strength consisted in putting forth strength, to be stronger. First of all, this perfection was to be sought by purifying themselves from evil. What an amount of corruption still remained was seen in the fact of the filthiness in the flesh and spirit. Each part of our complex nature was vitiated, and each combined with the other in opposing the progress necessary to attain holiness. There were vices of the animal man. There were vices of the moral man. And there were vices resulting from the union of the two, so that a thorough and complete cleansing was required. "All filthiness;" no matter of what class or kind, hereditary or acquired, local as respected the wickedness of Corinth, or general as belonging to the human family, the wrong-doing among you from the Judaizers, from the free-thinkers, from all your ambitious partisanships,—"cleanse" yourselves from "all filthiness," whether of the "flesh" or the "spirit." This was the negative side of a great and imperative duty, not all, but much, and very much, since, until this were done, they could take no direct steps towards perfection. Observe now that gross bodily sins were not the only lusts. Tempers and dispositions were just as urgent as passions and appetites in seeking unlawful enjoyments. Reflect on this point. "The spirit in us *lusteth* to envy." Inordinate affections led to transgression. Nay, they often excited the body to wicked indulgences. Physical organs are frequently torpid; they are aroused by images in the intellect, and stimulated by an impure imagination; and, furthermore, after these organs, because of age or over-gratification, have little or no originating force, and are well-nigh worn out, the recollections of past pleasures kindle the expiring embers into a flame. Thus, indeed, depravity assumes its most licentious forms. For it is not the animal man that is the chief or the most dangerous factor in this sort of iniquity. The intellectual and moral man descends into corporeal abuses, and then it is these temptations are strongest. In many of these sins there is an element of sentiment supplied by an unholy imagination, which makes them far more tyrannical and debauching than they would be otherwise. And hence it is not the beastly possibility in man that is the greatest danger, but the Satanic agency brought to bear on the body by means of the spirit. It is the devil of the spirit that is the devil of the body. A terrible conjunction this, and yet it is not a common spectacle. Ordinarily the incipient stage of vice is a bodily evil merely. It is a matter of blood and nerves. Not such does it remain long. Satan knows his citadel, and hastens to its occupancy. While it does continue, a man may be reasoned with; he is open to shame, conscience may be reached, and concurrent motives made operative on his feelings, but when physical vice allies itself with spirit, men "glory in their shame," and are "taken captive by Satan at his will." In the final outcome there is but one will, and it is Satan's will. Much more than this cleansing from the "filthiness of the flesh and spirit" is necessary, if "these promises" are to be fully realized. Therefore he adds, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Here we have the positive side of that experience which is demanded of those who are the "sons and daughters" of God in Christ. It is *inward* holiness. Under the Law, beasts were clean and unclean; things, vessels, places, were externally holy; emblems and symbols of purity abounded; manners, customs, domestic and national usages, were so ordered as to impress on the senses the difference between good and evil. Under the gospel, spiritual holiness is demanded. The circumcision is of the heart, not of the flesh; the sanitary idea of the human body, so frequently set forth in the Old Testament, is changed into that of the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost; and hence, no sooner does the Lord Jesus begin to unfold the constitution of the new kingdom in the sermon on the mount, than he speaks directly to the heart. Righteousness must exceed the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees. Impure thoughts are forbidden. Passions that have no outward voice utter their sinfulness in the ear of God; and feelings that escape not into visible acts are realities in the light of eternity. Inasmuch as the

cleansing was a purification of body and spirit, St. Paul argues that the sanctification, begun in regeneration, was to continue, body and spirit sharing together the Spirit's influence. Neither the one nor the other was to be lost sight of; neither part of the work was to be carried on in a way detrimental to perfect unity; neither was to be exaggerated at the expense of the other. But as body and spirit had been redeemed by Christ's blood, so were both to be hallowed by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Throughout St. Paul's Epistles there run these two leading ideas—the sanctification of body and of spirit; and if, at times, the idea of the former is prominent, and then, at other times, the idea of the latter, we must recollect that this variation was necessary to the full presentation of his subject. Great truths are not to be vividly seen except in great moods, and great moods are not habitual, but occasional. Now, this mode of displaying his subject by a rotation of its aspects exposes the apostle to misconception. The ascetic takes him in one mood of thought, dominant at the moment, because of the nature of his argument. The mystic takes him in another. And they both do him injustice, the ascetic by laying an undue stress on bodily mortifications, the mystic by extravagance in spiritual abstractions. St. Paul is always true to his theology. He never loses his balance, never exalts spirit at the expense of body, never forgets that body is mated with spirit under an economy of permanent neutrality. Hence the argument for inward holiness, that cleansing of spirit and flesh which proceeds from the Holy Ghost in the conscience and heart, and works from the centre and seat of vitality through all the organs of life. It is *growing* holiness. Growth is the law of existence. The body grows until it attains its physical development, say from twenty-one to twenty-five years of age in men, and then another and much higher growth sets in, that of intellectual and moral adaptiveness to the mind, whereby the nerves, the ganglia, the brains, are brought into closer union with thought, volition, sensibility. But it is in religious life that growth is most perceptible—a growth in the fear of God, a filial and tender fear, that is jealous of its sense of sonship, and ever watchful lest it grieve the witnessing Spirit. There is an increasing delight in the discharge of duty, in taking up the daily cross, in practising self-denial, and especially in a clearer view of the ground and reason of self-denial. How the Scriptures grow upon us, the exercises of the closet, the Holy Communion, the fellowship of Christians! And, as we advance, we feel more and more the evil of sin as it is in itself. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." This psalm, the most profoundly heart-searching and personal of the psalms, is nevertheless most representative of that sense of sin which forgets all else in the thought of an offended God. In that bitterest hour of David's life, his home, other homes, a nation's homes, involved in his terrible transgression, there is the one overwhelming reflection, "*Against thee!*" The growing Christian sees the innate quality of sin, its deep-seated hold, its presence in the life-blood of his old nature, and learns from thence to perfect holiness, by realizing, as far as may be, the holiness of God. "By studying the character of Christ and imitating his example, this Divine holiness defines itself to his mind and engages his affections. "Looking unto Jesus" is the secret of his growth. He looks to him as the "Author" of his faith; how long ago it was! How feeble then! What gracious forbearance! The bruised reed not broken, the smoking flax not quenched! And the "Author" is the "Finisher;" for he is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Law changes into love, and love advances from one degree of strength and beauty to another, from one relation of life to another, from one victory to a victory still greater, the holy ideal rising before him and assuming new glory, and yet, as it retreats to a loftier height, drawing him towards itself with a stronger charm. "Blessed are the pure in heart." It is far on in the Beatitudes; but it is there, thanks to God, it is there as an attainment. The pathway to it is very clearly marked out, the successive steps, the preparatory agencies, the gradual advances, the blessedness of poverty of spirit, of mourning, of meekness, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, of mercifulness. One may know what progress he is making towards it, and this is the great thing to be known. Milestones along the road record the onward tread and assure the pilgrim of the certain goal. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."—L.

Vers. 2—7.—*Appeal for affectionate relations between himself and the Corinthians*
 II. CORINTHIANS. N

sorrow and consolation. The rendering of ver. 2, Revised Version, is full of vigour. "Open your hearts to us: we wronged no man, we corrupted no man, we took advantage of no man." Room in their hearts for whom? Room for him who had violated no rights, led no one astray, acted fraudulently in nothing towards any person, so that he challenges their confidence to the full. But had he not done this before, and that very earnestly? Had he not done it again and again? Yes; but his enemies had their head-quarters at Corinth; they were untiring, ever inventing new scandals, ever increasing in zealotry, for his overthrow. Now, it is a matter of interest to understand St. Paul's motive in this frequent and vehement defence of himself. From the outset his position had been singular. Not one of the original twelve who had "compained" with the Lord Jesus, a converted persecutor and blasphemer, an apostle called to an exceptional apostleship, and placed in the forefront of that battle which was to liberate Christianity from Jewish thralldom, and preserve it from Gentile corruptions. It was inevitable that the man and the apostle should be subjected to a most critical and severe inquisition. Yet how wonderfully was this overruled! Only think of the *spiritual biography* that has grown out of this painful necessity of his attitude before the Church. Somewhat of this kind of writing we have in the Old Testament, particularly in the Book of Job, in the Psalms, and in Ecclesiastes, but nothing as to depth, variety, profundity, compass of experience, such as we have in St. Paul's Epistles. In the latter we see the Christian consciousness in its early realizations, and that too in all its important aspects. For what is there in the struggles of the "new creature" with the "old Adam"? What is there in outward conflict we have not here in exactness of detail? No finer illustration of this could be given than the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Was he simply giving his spiritual history? Nay, indeed, but writing a typical biography of the human heart under the training of the Holy Ghost. This is its distinctive merit—the portraiture of the human soul forming and shaping in the image of Christ for eternal glory. Such a mirror was needed. Of what avail a standard of doctrine without a standard of experience? Of what utility a knowledge of duties, and yet entire ignorance of the legitimate results of precepts carried into practice? From his pen we have Christianity as a system of truths; from the same pen, Christianity in personal consciousness; and the two are so wrought together and interblended, that we are no more at a loss to understand what Christianity is as an inspiration of life than a revelation of Divine wisdom. Follow the man in this chapter. Do you admire manly boldness? There it is in that second verse. Are you touched by delicacy and tenderness? You have them in the third verse: "I say it not to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die together and live together." Is this commonplace sentiment? Is this the language, the air, the spirit of a persecuted hero of the world? Match it if you can. "*To die together and live together*"—this would be poetry, if it were not that rarer thing, the most impassioned and exalted prose. "In our hearts;" there they abide to die and live together. If he had written to them, it was not to coudemn, but to save them. Inclined to find fault and harshly criminate? Far from him a censorious temper. "Great is my boldness of speech towards you;" and why bold? "Great is my glorying on your behalf;" and why glory? The glad spirit, free once more from its oppressive burden, cannot repress its exultation. "*My boldness,*" "*my glorying;*" just before "*we*" and "*us*" and "*our*," the personal intensity bursting forth. "I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction." Such a heart authenticates itself instantly to our confidence and love. To doubt its truthfulness would be treachery to our own instincts. We all love a fervent lover. However cold and constrained our temperament, there is something divinely contagious in a spirit like St. Paul's; and, for the sake of humanity, "great" is our "glorying" on his "behalf." If, then, we find him in the next verses (5—7) referring to his individual solitudes, we may be sure that this has its place in the development of Christian doctrine, going on in the history of the Church. Instead of being an insight into the private heart of the apostle only, it is likewise a most trustworthy record of religious experience, to which we may come for instruction and help when burdened by cares and anxieties. Unable to remain in Troas, because of his deep concern to hear from Corinth, he passed into Macedonia; but there was no relief from the pressure. "We were troubled on every side." His whole nature shared the suffering of the mind, his "flesh had no rest," and

the sorrow reached such an extent that he sums it up in the condensed expressions, "without were fightings, within were fears." Things had put on their darkest look. Yet in that very hour consolation was near by. Titus came with good tidings from Corinth, and, in his opportune arrival, St. Paul sees the good hand of God. The statement is given in an emphatic form. At first it is he "who comforteth the lowly;" and then *even God* "comforteth us by the coming of Titus;" and how happy Titus himself was! The visit to the Corinthians had been a blessing to his young friend, and this added much to his joy, for he participated in "the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you." Grace to others is often grace, and the richest grace, to our own souls. And in this instance we can easily understand how a man with St. Paul's quick sympathies entered into the experience of Titus. A delicate task had been assigned to his youthful companion, and it had been managed with success. Added to his intense pleasure growing out of the favourable change at Corinth was the gratification from the skill and efficiency of Titus's mission. One pictures the scene of the meeting, the narration, the questions asked and answered, the frequent interruptions of the story by the sudden outbreaks of the listener's emotion, the happy exclamations, and the surprise increasing as the detail of incidents progressed to the completion of the history. Had not St. Paul a valuable helper now? Was not God giving him a co-worker precious to his heart? Could he not see the future Titus, the same who was afterwards to be associated so closely with him, and to whom he would write a pastoral letter? Those were gracious hours, and he might well say, "I rejoiced the more," since he was not only greatly cheered by the "earnest desire," the "mourning," the "fervent mind" of the Corinthian brethren towards him, but was confirmed in the impression that Titus was to be a valuable auxiliary in the work now enlarging on his hands, and daily getting to be more complicated.—L.

Vers. 8—16.—*True repentance and its effects; ministry of Titus.* There are reactions from our highest moods. There are reactions from our wisest deeds. Nor can it be otherwise under the present constitution of our nature. That St. Paul should have had these reactions was perfectly natural, the more so as his temperament made him liable, in an unusual degree, to their occurrence. If they did not appear in his writings we should be surprised, nor could their absence be explained but on the supposition that he was an exception in this respect to the ordinary laws of mind, and particularly to those laws as seen in men of his class. Some persons think it very strange that he should say, "Though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent." What was his inspiration, they ask, if he could "repent" of writing his former Epistle to the Corinthians? Whatever he meant by "repent," he did not mean moral self-reproach, nor indeed any permanent state of mind, but simply a transient emotional condition, due probably to excess of nervous sensibility. His inspiration from the Holy Ghost was the inspiration of a man. It did not set aside his temperament. It was in perfect harmony with the characteristics of his intellect, and quite likely intensified those characteristics as related to his physical peculiarities. Who has not had these seasons of experience in which things that were very clear a few days before have been suddenly darkened? Judgments were then formed, commitments made, promises given, that now seem unwise or even rash; and how gladly would we undo what was done!—and that too in matters which were entered on after long and earnest deliberation, and which proved in the sequel to be eminently fortunate. Are the arguments that led us to certain conclusions less valid now than then? No; the arguments are the same, but nerves and brain are not in the same state, not in the same vigorous tension, and, consequently, we do not see the truth and the grounds of the truth as we did when we were in fuller possession of ourselves. The logic of nerves and brain is a very wayward and fitful thing, and a very different thing from the logic of the intellect. Pascal says, in the 'Pensées,' "To have a series of proofs incessantly before the mind is beyond our power." Now, in the instance under review, St. Paul would have been more or less than man not to have undergone precisely this temporary reaction. Ill health, an unusual combination of exciting circumstances, dangers of an extraordinary sort threatening the Church, a new and most promising sphere of labour and by far the greatest that had opened in his ministry overcast with sudden gloom, Titus still absent, suspense wearing upon a

fortitude taxed already to the uttermost; what a lack of the human and of the genuine manliness of the human, if he had felt no uneasiness, no misgivings, no rebound! It was not weakness, but weakness struggling into strength, that led him to say, "I did repent." Let us take comfort from the apostle's human nature and the grace manifested in its infirmities. Companionship in weakness aspiring to get the victory is very precious to honest souls. Men are never wanting to teach us the ideals of life. What is needed far more is to have traced in a distinct manner the progress of the soul towards perfection. Who in this respect can compare with the Apostle Paul? Who has delineated the Christian consciousness in all its various moods, in all its alternations, in its baffled endeavours, in its victorious strength, and done it in such a natural way that the lowliest heart feels at home in his fellowship and finds no language of its own so much its own as the words in which he tells how he sorrowed and how he rejoiced? Lest they should misunderstand his joy by supposing that he had any pleasure in their pain, he explains (ver. 9) why he was happy. They had "sorrowed to repentance." Instructed by the doctrinal truths he had unfolded in the First Epistle, moved by his entreaties, made conscious of their delinquencies, made ashamed of their gross inattention to discipline, they had repented of their backslidings and reformed their evil doings. A "godly sorrow" had they shown, and could anything "godly" be deplored? Least of all, could a "godly sorrow" over envy and jealousy, over strife and schismatic partisanship, over vices tolerated in the bosom of the Church—could such a sorrow be regretted? It was "godly," indeed, for it had wrought out its true nature and was known by its fruits. Of course he gave it a doctrinal form, and, for all time, thus reads one of the most vital and solemn of all Christian verities: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Well might he claim that they had received "damage in nothing." It was all gain, infinite gain. Notice the development of the thought. A true repentance is from God. Christ said that the Holy Spirit should come to rebuke "the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." It is not our idea of sin, but God's idea, that enables us to realize what sin is, and this proceeds from the Spirit. Think of it as we may, study its consequences, feel its enormity as far as we can, look at the paradise it blighted, read its records on the earth, picture the hell it has created; this is not that sense of the guilt of sin which leads to repentance. Not what sin is in our sight, but what it is in God's sight, determines the estimate of the penitent. And just in the degree that this initial process is from the illumination and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in that same degree is the work genuine and profound. Large allowance must be made for individuality of character. Modes of thinking, habits of feeling, education and circumstances, must be taken into consideration, since men are very thoroughly personal when God comes to deal with their souls. Nevertheless, the truth cannot be stated too strongly, that repentance is a "godly sorrow" only so far as the Holy Ghost is concerned in the work. And, further, it is salutary. It works no "damage." Now, at this point, the apostle confesses that he had been anxious, and certainly there was ground for anxiety. To rebuke men for their sins is the most difficult and the most hazardous of all the functions devolved on a minister of the gospel. Happy the minister who can say that he has not done "damage," some time in his career, in this particular. But in the present case all had turned out well. The censure, the exhortation, the personal lovingness, he had put into his letter, had blended in one gracious influence, so that conscience had witnessed to conscience, heart to heart, energy on their part to decision and resoluteness on his part, and a result most blessed to him, to Titus, to the Church, had been effected. It was not the sorrow of the world that "worketh death." Instead of that, it had wrought life, a renewed and most hopeful life, a change so glorious that it would never be repented of. But he would particularize. If the repentance had been "godly," and therefore without "damage," he would show them the full meaning of these words. "Behold this self-same thing." He would arouse their attention and concentrate thought on this manifestation of God's mercy. To see it they must look within. What a transformation! Lately so careless, so insensible, so puffed up, even the Holy Communion shockingly abused; what save a "godly sorrow" could bring about a radical change? It was a sorrow to humble them, not to "damage" them. It was not the sorrow of the world, mortifying to pride and vanity, intensifying to selfishness, driving to

deperation, and arming the soul in deadlier hostility to goodness. The proof of all this was at hand. *Carefulness*; activity and diligence in ferreting out evils and extirpating them. *Clearing of themselves*; anxiety to get rid of the stain on their Church character, and stand fair with the apostle. *Indignation*; not only against the incestuous man, but that feeling of self-veaxation which arises when we see the folly and evil of our conduct. *Fear*; lest a heavier punishment should come from God than that already experienced. *Longing*; fervent desire to do better. *Zeal*; industrious effort in discharging their duties, and especially such duties as concerned Church discipline. *Avengeing* the wrong done by punishment so as to evince their sincerity of amendment. *Yea*; repeated in every item, specified that each element of the sentence might maintain its proper degree of force. Finally, his hearty commendation; *in every respect*, approving themselves to be right-minded in this matter. A word of justification for himself follows. Not for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for his sake who had suffered the wrong, had he written, but that their earnest care in his behalf might be manifested and his apostleship honoured. In the name of God he had called them to repentance, and they had promptly hearkened to the Divine message. Once more the power of the gospel had been vindicated, and "therefore we have been comforted." Throughout the affair he had been intensely personal, but had he been actuated by selfishness, or had any element of selfishness mixed with his motives, this personal intensity could not have assumed the form presented in his conduct. Yet in that hour of gladness there was an uppermost joy. A beautiful touch of nature it is when he says that he "joyed the more exceedingly" on account of his young associate Titus, "because his spirit was refreshed by you all." The long-continued trouble seems over now. The unrest, the fightings without and the fears within, Ephesus and Troas and Macedonia, pass out of presence, and the only spectacle left in the horizon of vision is Paul the apostle standing firmly on the historic soil he has won for Christ, with Titus at his side, in whose blooming spring-time his eye reads the harvest not far off. "O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged." Can he express his gratification too often, too freely? Once again, "I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things."—L.

Ver. 1.—Holiness. It is too customary for religions of human origin and authority to lay stress upon merely external and ceremonial purity. Many such religions pay not the slightest attention to the higher claims of morality. Now, Judaism used all its ceremonial cleansings as means for developing the idea of true morality. And Christianity is emphatically a religion of holiness. This appears from considering the unique and sinless character of Christ, the spirituality of his teaching; and further, from the atonement he has made for sin, and the provision for true purity made in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

I. THE NEGATIVE VIEW OF HOLINESS. The text assumes that man's state is naturally impure, that his heart is defiled and polluted by sin, that his life is stained and dyed with its moral blackness. Hence the admonition to cleave: 1. From all filthiness of the flesh. There was a special reason why this should be made prominent in addressing the Corinthians, inasmuch as not only was their city celebrated for its licentiousness, but the Church itself had tolerated a flagrant case of immorality. The sins of the flesh are indeed the especial fault of those who have lately been rescued from the corruptions of paganism; yet we shall mislead ourselves if we suppose that, in any state of civilization or Christian privilege, men are free from temptations to offences of this kind. 2. From all filthiness of the spirit. Our Lord himself has been careful and faithful to warn against these; the heart may sin as well as the body. In fact, it is the heart that needs to be the first and chief seat of purification.

II. THE POSITIVE VIEW OF HOLINESS. The expression is noticeable, "perfecting holiness." Such language implies: 1. That there are degrees of moral purity, and that it is expected of the Christian that he should go forward, from one stage to another, conquering sin, achieving new degrees of virtue, and leaving infirmities behind. 2. It is implied also that this is to be the result of effort. No sanction can be found here for that quietism which represents holiness as acquired without effort, struggle, and conquest. 3. Yet it is to be understood that in this process we stand in need of the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, whose distinctive work is a work of sanctification.

III. THE CHRISTIAN MOTIVES TO HOLINESS. They are represented here as two. 1. The fear of God, by which we understand a reverence for his holy character, respect for his holy Law, and a proper dread lest we should by disobedience incur his displeasure and indignation. 2. The promises of God. The promises here adduced are indeed sufficient to animate us to the most ardent efforts. The favour and indwelling of the Eternal, his most tender representations of his fatherhood, and his assured consideration and treatment of us as his beloved children,—these surely are promises which should and will exercise a mighty influence over the heart and urge to a cheerful and consecrated obedience.—T.

Ver. 3.—“In our hearts.” The strong personal feeling which breathes throughout this Epistle is at its strongest here. Paul claims to occupy a very close and tender relation to these Corinthians; however they may feel towards him—and he acknowledges that they have shown respect to his authority and have caused him joy—he holds them very dear. “Not merely are you,” he seems to say, “on our lips, not merely are your names upon our pen, not merely do we keep you in memory; ‘ye are *in our hearts* to die together and live together.’”

I. HOW TO ACCOUNT FOR THIS AFFECTIONATE INTEREST. The feeling here described is appropriate in the case of all Christian ministers in relation to those placed in their spiritual charge. 1. The *general* reason: Christ’s friendship towards his people is the model and the motive of the friendship which obtains among them mutually. There is something distinctively Christian in sentiments and relations of this kind. Not kindred, not interest, but fellowship in Christ, constitutes the bond of union. 2. The *special* reason: labour and suffering deepen interest and strengthen and hallow love. The apostle had toiled for these Corinthians, had exposed himself to danger on their behalf, had suffered anguish of spirit through their unspirituality and folly. Hence the tender interest, resembling maternal affection, which he cherished towards them. 3. The *personal* reason. Many of the members of this congregation had come to love their evangelist, to regard him as the minister of God to their souls; and he had found in their devotion a rich reward for all he had done for their good. Those who would benefit their fellow-men spiritually and lastingly must have them “in their hearts.” This will give a zest, a vigour, to all efforts for their good.

II. IN WHAT RESPECT TO TRACE THE RESULTS OF THIS AFFECTIONATE INTEREST. If the heart be the very spring of action, the true explanation of conduct, it may be expected that the minister who has his people in his heart will be by that fact powerfully affected in his ministerial life. 1. Such a minister will leave no labour unaccomplished which may tend to the good of his people. Much occurs to deject the zealous servant of God; and, as a mere matter of duty, it will often be hard for him to persevere in his endeavours. But, prompted by love, he will not grow weary or hopeless, but will persevere in his faithful efforts and sacrifices. 2. Such a spiritual labourer will be either distressed or cheered by the treatment with which he may meet from those to whom he ministers. We may be indifferent as to the conduct of some of our acquaintances; but those who are in our hearts must needs give us either satisfaction and comfort or anxiety and grief. Let all hearers of the gospel, all members of the Church, consider how deeply their action must affect the hearts of God’s servants. 3. The true minister hopes to enjoy the society of his people in the heavenly state. So closely are pastor and flock united, that in heart, in feeling, they may be said to “die together” as well as to “live together.” The saved are to those who have been helpful in their salvation their joy and crown of rejoicing in the world of glory.—T.

Ver. 5.—*Fighting and fears.* The course of the apostle was one remarkably varied; sometimes prosperous, sometimes adverse. At the time when he wrote this Epistle he looked back upon a period of trouble, contention, and opposition, and upon experiences of suffering and disappointment. His nature was not one to pass through life unmoved; he was sensitive to all influences. And at Ephesus, at Troas, and in that Macedonia from which he was now writing, Paul had endured much which was fitted to harass and depress his mind. Never was affliction more comprehensively summed up than in the language he here employs—“without, fightings; within, fears.”

I. THE TROUBLES WHICH ASSAIL THE CHRISTIAN WORKER FROM WITHOUT. 1. Oppo-

sition to his doctrine. This Paul experienced, and this every servant of Christ must expect, both from open enemies of Christianity and from false brethren who corrupt the truth. 2. Persecution. That the apostle was exposed to this, the record of his life abundantly proves; and, in the first age, as at many subsequent periods, such experience was common. Thus the Master suffered, and thus his servants must expect to suffer like him.

II. THE TROUBLES WHICH ASSAIL THE CHRISTIAN WORKER FROM WITHIN. What were the "fears" to which St. Paul refers? We can but conjecture. 1. Fear lest there had been a want of wisdom, or devotion, in the services undertaken. 2. Fear lest the work of the Lord should have suffered through any insufficiency on the part of the worker. 3. Fear lest at last the labourer should fail of acceptance and approval.

III. THE SUPPORT AND CONSOLATION PROVIDED FOR THE CHRISTIAN WORKER TO SUSTAIN HIM UNDER THESE TROUBLES. 1. The testimony of a good conscience, that, however imperfectly and inadequately the service has been rendered, it has yet been rendered in sincerity. 2. The assurance that an overruling Providence has remarked and has permitted all that has taken place, even to the temporary discouragement of the toiler for Christ. 3. The conviction that in such trouble the servant has had fellowship with his Lord. 4. The hope and expectation that light affliction will work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.—T.

Ver. 6.—*The Comforter of the lowly.* We are accustomed to think of the apostle as the soldier of the cross, the hero of the spiritual war. And this is just. Nevertheless, we should not forget that he had a human heart, with human susceptibilities and cravings; that he knew what it was to be weary, disappointed, and sorrowful, and what it was to be consoled, encouraged and elated. This Epistle represents him as bitterly distressed by the conduct of the Corinthian Christians, and yet as truly comforted by the tidings brought by Titus and by the brotherly fellowship and sympathy of his youthful colleague.

I. THE NEED OF COMFORT. This is owing to the fact that Christian people and Christian workers are sometimes among the downcast, the lowly, the depressed. It is a permitted experience of human life, and there are reasons, some of them obvious enough, why the faithful and zealous servant of Christ should not be exempt from such feelings. It may be necessary, in order to keep him humble, to preserve him from self-confidence, to cherish within him a spirit of dependence upon Divine assistance.

II. THE AUTHOR OF COMFORT. This view which the apostle here takes of God may to some seem derogatory to his dignity. But it should rather be regarded as setting God's character in an admirable and attractive light. If God has made the human heart such as it is, if he has appointed its varied experiences, it cannot be beneath him to minister to that nature which is his own handiwork, to overrule to highest ends those circumstances which his wisdom has created. He has delighted to reveal himself to his people as a God of consolation, especially when their hearts have been most sore and their cry most piercing.

III. THE MEANS OF DIVINE COMFORT. These means accord with the nature with which the Creator has endowed us, and are none the less honouring to his wisdom because they are often of the simplest kind. The case of Paul illustrates this. 1. The presence and brotherly kindness of a friend is consolatory to the afflicted; e.g. the coming of Titus. 2. The good tidings that reach the downcast cheer the soul; e.g. good news concerning the Corinthian Church. 3. The assurance of affection and sympathy on the part of those whose welfare is sought (*vide vers. 7—9*).—T.

Ver. 10.—*Sorrow and repentance.* There is only one way to avoid sorrow, and that is to avoid sin. Even then sympathy will awaken sorrow on account of the sin of others. But so long as there is evil in this world, so long will it be a world of anguish and of tears. It is not the sorrow which is to be regretted, but the sin which is its cause. "They that lack time to mourn lack time to mend."

I. THE SORROW OF THE WORLD. The ungodly may sorrow because they have sinned. But observe: 1. What are the characteristics of this sorrow. When the irreligious are rebuked and chastened for their wrong-doing, their vanity is wounded, their anger is excited, their resentment is aroused, they are vexed because they lose the favour of their

neighbours or suffer in reputation. 2. The *issue* of this sorrow is death; instead of being profitable, it is deleterious, drawing the thoughts away from the moral heinousness of sin, and confirming the sinner in courses whose only end is spiritual death.

II. THE SORROW WHICH IS GODLY. 1. This is occasioned by the recognition of the sin as an offence against the Divine Law. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." 2. And by the feeling that sin is a grief to the Divine heart. As a tender child grieves to hurt his father's spirit, so a truly sensitive nature is pained in the very pain of Christ. 3. And by the knowledge that human sin brought the holy Saviour to the cross. 4. And is heightened by the knowledge that privileges have been abused and grace defied.

III. THE REPENTANCE TO WHICH GODLY SORROW LEADS. It is a change of mind and purpose; a turning away from the error, the folly, the unbelief of the past, a turning away from temptation and from the society of the sinful, a turning to God as he has revealed in Christ his infinite mercy and loving-kindness. Especially is this repentance that "which bringeth no regret." He who comes out of bondage into liberty can never rue his choice.

IV. THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF TRUE REPENTANCE. This is salvation, which contrasts with that death to which worldly sorrow leads. Such is the appointment of Infinite Wisdom. And he who studies this process must acknowledge that, to a true and eternal salvation, there can be no other path than the path of repentance and of faith.—T.

Ver. 13.—*Refreshment of spirit.* The very decidedly personal character of this Epistle is the occasion of its bringing before the reader some topics to which otherwise his attention might not be directed. The writer, his friends and colleagues, Timothy and Titus, the several persons in the Corinthian Church alluded to, the community which was called upon to take action,—all seem to live before us. Human feelings appear in the light of Christian truth, privilege, and duty. The experiences of the heart are represented as hallowed and elevated by the principles of spiritual religion. Titus is depicted as visiting Corinth, as received with respect, and as obeyed with alacrity, and consequently as cherishing a deepened affection for the Corinthian Christians, as rejoicing because of their attitude of spirit and their united action, and, in fact, as refreshed in spirit by his visit to them.

I. THE SPIRIT'S NEED OF REFRESHMENT. This may arise from: 1. Weariness in labour. One may become weary *in* the work when not weary of it. 2. Disappointment in efforts made for the good of others. When energy and self-denial have done their best, and no results have followed, or at all events none have become apparent, the spirit is sometimes saddened and dejected. 3. Opposition, whether from the world without or from professed brethren, produces a most disheartening effect upon the sensitive nature.

II. THE POWER OF TRUE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP TO REFRESH THE SPIRIT. It does this in many ways. 1. It brings home the conviction that the Christian labourer is not alone. He may be disposed to lament, as Elijah did, that he is left alone in the world; but it is not so, and there are occasions upon which he realizes this. 2. It sometimes takes the form of appreciation of services rendered on behalf of the brotherhood. The pastor finds that his visits have been valued; the preacher that his word has been a living seed in hearts of which he had thought there was but little that was good; the admonition awakens confessions, acknowledgments, resolutions, which were but little expected. 3. United exercises of praise and prayer react upon the weary soul; listlessness, discouragement, disappear; the whole nature is braced by Heaven-born energy for new and happier service.—T.

Ver. 1.—*The promises of God an incentive to holy living.* I. CONSIDER THE DIVINE PROMISES. 1. *How numerous they are.* Some are specified in preceding verses. Divine promise is, however, found in all parts of the Scripture. The crown of revelation is thickly studded with the pearls of promise. God encourages his people by multiplying promises to them. 2. *How varied.* There are promises suited to every condition—for joy, sorrow, sickness, health, penury, prosperity, weakness, strength. We change greatly in experience, but in every new condition we find a promise appropriate to it. The *mana* of promise covers the path of pilgrimage. 3. *How needful to us.* For our support, guidance, comfort, encouragement, happiness, advance. God's promises are

our rods and staffs. Were it not for such upholdings, we should soon sink in the mire. 4. *How precious.* What promises are like unto these? How can we compute the value of that which is invaluable? Divine promises are things by themselves. Nothing could compensate for their loss. Of such value are they that only a God is rich enough to bestow them. 5. *How faithful.* What reliance may be placed upon them! They are all "yea" and "amen" in Christ (ch. i. 20). Promises, indeed, are easily obtained from men, but what men fail in is fulfilment. But the word of Jehovah cannot be broken. His promises are precious, but they are not more precious than sure. 6. Divine promise culminates in such special promises as those given in preceding verses (ch. vi. 16—18): God's engagement to dwell within us; God's continuous adoption of us, whereby we are ever his sons and daughters. If these things be ours, then all things are ours.

II. CONSIDER THE LIFE TO WHICH THESE PROMISES SHOULD LEAD. 1. *Sins of the flesh should be discarded.* If we are God's, our body is the temple of God (ch. vi. 16). Such a temple must be kept pure. Such sins as intemperance, gluttony, lust, etc., must be renounced by the child of God. We are to glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. vi. 20). Many forget how truly they may do so. Sins of the flesh are defilements of the flesh. If we defile the temple of God, God will not bless us, but curse us (1 Cor. iii. 17). It is not enough to be pure within, we must be pure without also. Our whole being must be consecrated to God and ruled by his laws. 2. *Sins of the spirit must be renounced.* Such sins as pride, malice, wrath, envying, falsehood, idolatry, impure conceptions, etc. Many cleanse the exterior only; they whiten the sepulchre, but trouble not about the dead bones within. Many are quite satisfied with external piety; God is not. Note: Sins of the spirit lead to sins of the flesh, and *vice versa*. 3. *We are to seek complete holiness.* We are to cleanse ourselves from "all" defilement. We are to "perfect holiness." We are not to be easily satisfied with ourselves. 'Tis not enough to do a little and then rest. The statue must be finished; it is begun that it may be completed. The ideal set before us is a high one. Like the painter, the poet, the orator, we must strive to realize this ideal. We are not to rest until all things have become new. 4. *All should be done in the fear of God.* Our duty to God must influence us more than our own happiness or the welfare of others. True life is a life which is *full of God*. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and the fear of the Lord runs throughout the truly wise life. Much righteousness is society-satisfying righteousness; social sanction takes the place of Divine; our fellows become our god. In our righteousness we must seek to please and satisfy God. Fear of God's disapprobation will spur us to sterner efforts. 5. *Earnest effort on our part is necessary.* The apostle says, "Let us cleanse ourselves." Many wait for God when God is waiting for them. Our salvation is ascribed to God; nevertheless, we are enjoined to work it out; and our efforts to work out our salvation are the evidence that God is working in us. All cleansing of our life is voluntary on our side; and there is no high spiritual life without *striving*.

III. CONSIDER WHY GOD'S PROMISES SHOULD LEAD TO SUCH A LIFE. 1. *Gratitude.* This is a life well pleasing to God. He in his promises has done how much for us! What is our "reasonable service"? 2. *The fulfilment of the Divine promises is conditional upon our seeking to live the new life.* Newness of *living* is the evidence of newness of *condition*. God's promises are made to God's people, or to those who sincerely desire to be his people; but if we do not walk in righteousness we have evidently believed in vain. We are then only of the *nominal*, not the *real*, Israel; and the promises are for the latter, not the former. The nominal Jews lost their privileges because they possessed only nominal piety. All God's promises are conditional. If we are not fruit-bearing trees, we must expect not to be cared for, but to be cut down. The promises of God are not for any save those who walk in his fear and love.—H.

Vers. 2—4.—*Christian affection.* I. HINDERS WRONG-DOING. Paul had many reasons for not in any way injuring the Corinthians, but his love for them was certainly one. He loved them too well to wilfully do them any evil. As true love to God leads to obedience to Divine commands and abstention from injuring the Divine kingdom, so love to men leads us to consult their interests. We should love men too well to harm them. This check of love is very beautiful as well as very powerful. It is love, after all, that rules the world; only, alas! it is largely love of self and love of sin.

II. LEADS TO FAITHFUL UTTERANCE. The apostle was very outspoken to the Corinthians because of his great love for them. His love rendered silence impossible. If we love our brother much we shall not suffer sin upon him. Blindness and dumbness towards the sins of our brethren are cruelty, not kindness. If we find it practically impossible to admonish the erring, it is not because we love them so much, but because we love them so little. Ministers and teachers should have great boldness of speech. A house-dog is no good unless he barks. A surgeon who never uses the knife deserves few patients. Faithful speech is a true child of the chief of the graces.

III. SHOULD BE VERY INTENSE TOWARDS BELIEVERS, ESPECIALLY TOWARDS OUR SPIRITUAL CHILDREN. The only manacles of the children of God are golden ones. Believers can be truly knit together by love alone. The cement joining together the living stones of God's house is love. Churches without love are scandalous spectacles to the world, dens of misery in themselves, and hateful in the sight of God. But love can make a happy family out of otherwise incongruous elements, and a holy family out of elements still marked by imperfections. A particular affection should be cherished towards those whom we have led to Christ. Paul's affection for his spiritual children was remarkable; yet not greater than ours ought to be. If we love such greatly, we can do much for them; our love to them and special relation will give us power over them. They will need guidance, counsel, possibly admonition. A great love for them will prompt to great efforts on their behalf. Paul's love made him cleave to his converts; they were in his heart "to die together and live together" (ver. 3).

IV. SHOULD BE STRONG ENOUGH TO BEAR A GREAT STRAIN. It is very likely to be subjected to this. So easy is it to love when we are loved, deferred to, obeyed, courteously treated; so difficult otherwise. But apostolic love could bear this test (see ch. xii. 15). We are apt to love *ideal* persons, or to suppose that the real persons of our affection have ideal excellences. Love is tested when we discover the many imperfections in the objects of our affection; but love ought to bear the test. Profitably may we remember that, if we see faults in others, they probably see not a few in us.

V. WILL OFTEN TRIUMPH OVER OPPOSITION. If you want to conquer men, love them. Persist in loving the unlovely. Some hearts may not yield even to love, but nothing is likely to bring them so near to yielding. There is mighty power in love. But it must be real, solid, test-bearing, abiding. Paul's great power was love-power.

VI. BRINGS MUCH JOY TO THOSE EXERCISING IT. It has its pains, but these are chastened. It is the unloving heart which is the unrejoicing heart. Especially is the joy great when this love is reciprocated or begins to triumph. Paul's cup ran over when the Corinthians yielded to his love. He could say, "I overflow with joy in all our affliction" (ver. 4). God is love, and God lives in unsullied bliss. If we were more like God in love we should be more like God in joy. The atmosphere of heaven is love; if we breathe this atmosphere on earth we experience heavenly delight.

VII. FITS US FOR USEFULNESS. A less loving apostle than Paul could never have done Paul's work. The greatest teacher the world has ever seen was the One who had most love. Love drives us to usefulness and qualifies us for it at the same time. If we would be more educated for Christian service, let us labour to take a higher degree in the university of love. The world wants Christian workers whose hearts are full of apostolic, yea, of Christ-like, love.—H.

Vers. 5—7.—*Ministerial sorrows and their alleviation.* I. MUCH SORROW IS OFTEN THE PORTION OF MINISTERS OF CHRIST. Arising from various causes, such as: 1. *Bodily weakness.* Some seem to forget that ministers have bodies at all. Certainly many expect them at all times to be ready for their duties. Ministerial work is very trying to bodily strength. And ministerial work is exceedingly painful in bodily sickness and infirmity. Here many ministers bring much sorrow upon themselves by carelessness as to the body. In some Churches it might be a good thing to appoint a deacon whose special function should be to see that the pastor took sufficient open-air exercise. 2. *Mental weariness.* The mind soon tires. The Lord's servant has often to do his work with a flagging brain. Great sorrow is felt when the need of work is seen and the capacity not possessed through exhaustion. 3. *Mental depression.* "Fears within." Sometimes experienced in the very midst of success. When under adverse

circumstances, it becomes indeed a *Marah* of bitterness. 4. *Church troubles.* A Church, carefully planted with prayers and tears and toil, threatened with ruin or with severe injury. Factious opposition—"fightings without." Misrepresentation; ingratitude; division. 5. *The inconsistencies of believers.* The true pastor deeply loves his spiritual children, and can say, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). But when they go astray, when they dishonour the cause to which they belong, his anxiety becomes intense and his grief profound; when they grow careless, idle, worldly; when the prayer-meetings and more spiritual gatherings are neglected; when no spirit of zeal burns in their hearts or is manifested in their lives. 6. *The callousness of the impenitent.* When the wave of his own earnestness beats upon the rock of carnality, and is dashed back, leaving the rock as hard and cold as ever. When the very heart of a man is nearly preached out of him, and yet no sign follows. 7. *The opposition of men of the world.* The sneer of the sceptic, and his insidious efforts. The open or covert endeavour of ungodly men to hinder the progress of the truth. 8. *Personal difficulties, doubts, and temptations.* The minister has his own spiritual life to care for, and whilst it might easily be concluded that his special work is pre-eminently favourable to that life, the fact is that ministerial labours involve very special temptations, and that much grace is needed to preserve a spiritual tone. The minister, too, is the favourite target of Satan and of the followers of Satan. These troubles are cumulative. Many, and sometimes all, press at the same time; and yet the all-responsible work of the ministry has to be carried on under such conditions. Well may one cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

II. NOTE SOME ALLEVIATIONS OF MINISTERIAL SORROW. 1. *Conviction of the Divine approval.* The faithful minister often has this joy, and may always have it if he will. This is enough to make any man brave in peril, and to cheer any man in heaviest sorrow. This was one of Paul's sheet-anchors. 2. *A good conscience.* If conscience does not condemn, we may pluck up our courage. Still, a man must not conclude too easily that he is faultless. There are some over-contented, non-successful ministers who are a bane to the Church. 3. *Realization of the grandeur of the work.* The soul sinks when this is lost sight of or obscured. The soul rises when the service of Christ is seen in a clear, true light. 4. *Evidences that labour is not in vain.* God sends some Titus with good news. Conversions, causing joy in the presence of the angels of God, cause joy also in the pastor's heart of hearts. Here is infinite compensation for all toil, anxiety, and suffering. 5. *Suitable response of those under charge when appealed to.* Paul's joy was largely caused by the Corinthian response to the First Epistle. When the inconsistent give up much of their inconsistency under pastoral admonition; when the worldly become more spiritual; when the indifferent become earnest;—then the under-shepherd is made glad indeed. 6. *The anticipation of the Master's commendation at last.* Paul ever had regard to "the crown of righteousness." If we can but please our Master, everything else must be a matter of comparative indifference.

Applies to some extent to all Christian workers. All such are "ministers," and in their degree share in ministerial joys and sorrows.—H.

Vers. 8—15.—*Marks of true penitence.* I. TRUE REPENTANCE IS IN CONTRAST WITH THE SORROW OF THE WORLD. It is the fruit of "godly sorrow" (ver. 10). It is sorrow "after a godly sort" (ver. 9), or "according to God." It makes us see sin as *against God*. It is *coming to the mind of God* as to sin. It leads to salvation—to eternal life. It is never the subject of regret, but of thankfulness. The sorrow of the world is not because of sin, but because of its penal consequences. It issues in death because it still holds to the sin. It is a regret that sin in any stage should be so painful. *It would reform hell by banishing its pains, not its wickedness.*

II. IT INVOLVES DEEP SOLICITUDE. (Ver. 11.) Opposed to prior indifference. The Corinthians had regarded their sin as of little importance, but now they feel far otherwise towards it. So unrepentant men boast that they have sinned so little. Job said, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." When true penitence is begotten in the heart, the time for carelessness in respect of sin has gone, and the time of carefulness has come. Sin is no longer a light matter, but one most momentous and urgent.

III. RENUNCIATION OF THE EVIL. Thus the Corinthians sought to clear themselves

(ver. 11). Before, they had connived; now, they repudiated. True repentance involves a desire to be separate from the sin. The evil thing is renounced. To hold to the evil, whilst we profess to repent of it, is to demonstrate that we do not repent at all.

IV. DETESTATION OF THE EVIL. (Ver. 11.) We may renounce what we still love, but in true penitence the mind is enlightened, the true nature of sin is perceived, and the soul ceases to love and begins to loathe it. Sin is detested, and self is detested because self has sinned. The soul is roused against sin; there is "indignation."

V. FEAR. (Ver. 11.) 1. Of the Divine wrath. 2. Of again sinning.

VI. DESIRE FOR RESTORATION. (Ver. 11.) 1. To the approval of righteous men. 2. To peace with conscience. 3. Above all, to the favour of God.

VII. ZEAL. (Ver. 11.) 1. In immediately taking a right course. 2. In seeking to remedy the effects of sin. 3. For God's honour.

VIII. CONVICTION THAT SIN DESERVES PUNISHMENT. (Ver. 11.) A sense of justice is aroused. It does not seem wrong for the sinner to be punished then, but right. Hearts unstirred by true penitence carp at and question sin-penalties. But "godly sorrow" gives to sin a tongue crying loudly for wrath. When sin is rightly apprehended it becomes an evil for sin *not* to be punished. This applies to ourselves; we condemn ourselves. This applies to others; we feel that they ought to be condemned. "Yea, what avenging!"

IX. A HUMBLE, TEACHABLE SPIRIT. (Ver. 15.) Godly sorrow breaks down pride. The Corinthians before had found fault with the teaching of Paul himself. Now they are willing to be taught by one of his disciples.—H.

Vers. 9—11.—*Two kinds of sorrow.* Reproof works well when it induces sorrow toward God and issues in repentance. But of sorrow there are two kinds.

I. THE SORROW OF THE WORLD. 1. *Its nature.* It is regret for worldly loss, or, if for faults and sins, it is for them as bringing worldly discredit. It is vexation, not for wrong done, so much as for damage incurred, credit spoilt, advantage missed, pride wounded. 2. *Its issues.* It works death. It wears the mind, sours the temper, fills the breast with discontent, takes away all zest of exertion, chokes the heart with resentment and chagrin. It actually kills; a rankling annoyance or shame tends both to embitter and to shorten life. There are more than is commonly believed dying of vexation; as Spenser has it—

"Dying each day with inward wounds of Dolour's dart."

II. SORROW ACCORDING TO GOD. 1. *Its nature.* It springs from a sense of sin in the light of God, and in relation to his Name, Law, and glory. It is the grief of a mind that has learnt to honour, observe, and follow the Lord, and therefore mourns for sin as committed against heaven and in his sight. See the sorrow of the world in King Saul, who, when he was reproved by the prophet, admitted, "I have sinned;" but immediately added this request to Samuel, "Yet honour me now." See the sorrow according to God in King David, who, when he was reproved by a prophet, said, "I have sinned against Jehovah," and then prayed the fifty-first psalm, saying, "Hide thy face from my sins." 2. *Its result.* It works "repentance to salvation," otherwise described as "repentance toward God" and "repentance unto life." The sorrow does not exhaust itself in emotion, but induces a change of mind, a turning from sin to God, and so from death to life. And such repentance will never be regretted. St. Paul had regretted his first letter, but now did not regret it, since he learned the good effect it had produced. A minister of Christ may have to speak sharply to men about their sins. He may have to regret that he evaded such duty or spoke smooth things, but not that he brought trouble to the consciences of sinners or godly sorrow to their hearts. And many a hearer of the Word may have to grieve that he was deaf to reproof, but none that he listened to it and mourned for his sin. No one will ever regret that he repented toward God. 3. *Its further issues and evidences.* The moral earnestness which was connected with sorrow according to and repentance toward God showed itself thus at Corinth. "What carefulness it wrought in you!" What diligence! Blessed is the reproof, healthy is the sorrow, which puts a stop to trifling, and makes us face the reality and feel the seriousness of living in God's sight. We must not then excuse our faults or count them unavoidable, but set about the correction of them

with all diligence. "Yea, what a clearing of yourselves!" What solicitude to be right with God! "Yea, what indignation!" What lively abhorrence of evil! "Yea, what fear! yea, what longing desire!" What anxiety to satisfy the apostle, or any servant of God who has brought our sins home to our conscience, that we are and mean to be what he would approve! Thus the effect of godly sorrow is to make the heart tender and affectionate as well as pure. "Yea, what zeal" in reformation! "Yea, what revenge!" What holy severity against sin! When a sinner, charged with his offences against God, stands on his defence, he is fertile in excuses. The sin was a little one; or the motive was not bad; or the provocation or temptation was great; or the circumstances almost compelled him; or he did it without thought; or he did as others do. But when he is convinced of the Holy Ghost and moved with godly sorrow, he has no plea, and does not wish to have any excuse pleaded for him. He wants rather to have revenge upon his sin, and abhors himself on account of it, repenting in dust and ashes. There is no peace for his conscience but in the sin-purging blood of Jesus Christ. When the believer (and this rather than the other is the case which this text suggests) is reproved for grave inconsistency, moral earnestness is roused within him. Not that he is bound to accept the strictures and rebukes of ill-natured and censorious persons who call it faithfulness to find fault freely with their neighbours. But let a righteous man smite him, and he takes it as an excellent oil. As his fault is shown to his conscience, he scorns to excuse it. He breaks off the sin by righteousness, and that with a sort of sacred indignation, not against the reprover, but against the thing reproved. Indeed, a sorrow God-ward for one fault works a repentance for all sin. As Gurnal says, "One spot occasions the whole garment to be washed. A careful man, when he findeth it rain in at one place, sends forth the workmen to look over all the roof. So should the discovery of one fault lead to a general renewal of self-examination and repentance; and sorrow for one sin should rend the heart for all sins."—F.

Ver. 1.—The practical power of the promises. The Apostle John gives a very similar counsel. In 1 John iii. 3 he says, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Our hope is based upon the promises; and the promises which the apostle has been recalling to mind are (1) the indwelling of God; (2) his free reception of us; and (3) his fatherhood and our sonship, with all the love and care and keeping which these involve (ch. vi. 16—18). St. Paul argues in this way—Because you are saved, because you have entered into such a state of privilege, because you are covered by such "exceeding great and precious promises," therefore be in earnest to cleanse yourselves from all evil, watch over all the various forms of conduct, and seek to tone and purify every expression of the life. The expression, "filthiness of the flesh and spirit," needs explanation. St. Paul evidently had in mind the immoralities which are associated with idolatry, and which the Corinthian Church had treated too lightly when brought into their midst by the incestuous member. Writing of the apostle's association with Corinth, Archdeacon Farrar says, "There was one characteristic of heathen life which would come home to him with overwhelming force, and fill his pure soul with infinite pain. It was the gross immorality of a city conspicuous for its depravity even amid the depraved cities of a dying heathenism. Its very name had become a synonym for reckless debauchery. . . . So far from acting as a check upon this headlong immorality, religion had there taken under its immediate protection the very pollutions which it was its highest function to suppress. It was to the converts of this city that he addressed most frequently, and with most solemn warning and burning indignation, his stern prohibition of sensual crime. It was to converts drawn from the reeking haunts of its slaves and artisans that he writes that they too had once been sunk in the lowest depths of sin and shame. It is of this city that we hear the sorrowful admission that in the world of heathendom a pure life and an honest life was a thing well-nigh unknown." Distinguishing between the flesh and the spirit, though these are so subtly related, we may say, "The outward defilement is caused by sins of the *flesh*, or bodily part of man; the inward by those of the *spirit*, such as pride, unbelief, or the like." Dealing comprehensively with the topic suggested by the passage, we may show—

I. THE VARIETY OF THE PROMISES. They are found scattered throughout the sacred

Word, and taking every variety of form. They are sometimes: 1. Involved in the Divine dealings with individuals. 2. At other times they are embodied in doctrinal truths, and found as soon as we try to give those truths practicable applications. 3. And at other times they are words which come to us with the seal of the experience of good men through all the ages. In all God's gracious dealings, as well as in all God's gracious words, lie hid precious and inspiring promises for all who can read aright.

II. THE ADAPTATION OF THE PROMISES. As life advances it comes to us with a great and blessed surprise, that we never pass into circumstances and conditions for which precise promises have not been provided. They are manifestly suited just for us, and for just the conditions in which we, at any given time, are placed. It seems as if they were fashioned and sent for us and to us.

III. THE ESSENCE OF ALL THE PROMISES. This is given in the promises which St. Paul has been impressing on the Corinthians. It is God's *fatherliness*. All promises are the assurance of our acceptance with God, our sonship with God, and the expression of the love and the faithfulness with which he fulfils his fatherhood. At the heart of every promise lies this declaration, "I will be a Father unto you."

IV. THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE PROMISES. They set us upon seeking to be what God would have us be. Assuring *strength* they set us upon *endeavour*. Or, to put the matter in relation to the previous division of the subject, realizing the fatherliness of our God, we are set upon seeking to be true and faithful "sons and daughters"—pure sons of the holy Father, obedient sons of the King-Father, loving sons of the loving Father, very sensitive to the things that are unworthy of him, and very earnest in the endeavour to put them wholly away from us.

V. THE COMFORTING POWER OF THE PROMISES. This may be added to complete the treatment of the subject, though it is not the point set forth prominently by the apostle, and is a familiar topic. The true comforting, however, of God's promises only can come to those who carry out the Christian duties, walk worthily of the Lord, and need grace and upholding and cheer in their Christian conflict.—R. T.

Ver. 1.—Our great life-work. "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The former clause of the verse indicates one side of Christian duty—the putting away of sin; this presents the other side—the putting on of holiness. We must "put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts." We must "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Melvill says, "At present the believer is like the marble in the hands of the sculptor; but though day by day he may give fresh touches and work the marble into greater emulation of the original, the resemblance will be far from complete until death. Each fresh degree of likeness is a fresh advance toward perfection. It must then be that when every feature is moulded into similitude, when all traces of feebleness and depravity are swept away for ever, the statue breathes, and the picture burns with Deity,—it must be that then we 'shall be filled.' We shall look on the descending Mediator, and as though the ardent gaze drew down celestial fire, we shall seem instantly to pass through the refiner's furnace, and, leaving behind all the dishonour of the grave, and all the dross of corruptible humanity, spring upwards an ethereal, rapid, glowing thing—Christ's image, extracted by Christ's lustre." The apostle had been speaking of the temple, and of Christians as Divine temples, and so his idea of "holiness" was chiefly "consecration," "separation unto God," "entire devotement to God." Treating the perfecting of holiness as a continuous work, to which the whole of the Christian life and effort must be given, we consider—

I. THE INITIAL STAGE. The *winning* of holiness. There is some danger of confusing justification with sanctification. The distinction between the two may be simply expressed if we say that a man must be *set right* before he can *go right*. Regeneration is the setting of our will right with God. Justification is the setting us in the right standing with God. These stand at the very threshold of the holy life, and there is no entrance to it by any other way. Regarded from another point of view, the act of solemn personal decision for God and consecration to his service is the winning of holiness, the beginning of the godly life.

II. THE CONTINUOUS STAGE. The beginning is a frail and feeble thing. Good so far as it goes, and full of hopefulness; but needing growth, culture, perfecting. In

New Testament Scriptures the word "perfect" stands for "whole," "entire," in opposition to "one-sided," to imperfect developments of parts, to monstrosities; and so it is suggestive of the many-sided forms in which the perfecting of holiness must be carried on. The Christian has to win *holiness* in thought, expression of thought in word, in conduct, in relations. He is even to keep before him this unattainable ideal, "Be ye holy, even as I am holy," saith the Lord. And the perfect holiness is no merely cleaned surface, whitened free of all old stains of sin and self; it is that whitened surface painted all over with the infinite grace and purity and goodness of the Lord Christ. It is being free of the old image, but it is also being changed into *his* image. Whether the "perfect holiness" has ever been attained by any man while he dwelt among the shadows of the earthly can never be known, for the best of men will say to their dying days as did David, "My goodness extendeth not to thee, only to the saints that are in the earth." Enough for us to know that it is a lifelong pursuit, the cry of the soul as long as the soul can cry, the endeavour of the life so long as the life endureth. Only when passed through shall we know that we are holy; and then "he that is holy may be holy still."

III. THE INSPIRATION OF THE ENDEAVOUR AFTER HOLINESS. "In the fear of God." With the ever-present thought of him who is revealed as the "consuming fire." The fear of offending God, and the desire to please God, are necessary elements in the process of sanctification. F. W. Robertson says, "We cannot do without awe; there is no depth of character without it. Tender motives are not enough to restrain from sin."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*A minister's joy in tribulation.* The intensity of the apostle's language is explained by the intensity of his feelings in relation to the Corinthians. He loved them greatly, and was ready to make any sacrifices for them. And he was proportionately grieved when the news came, through Titus, of the way in which evil men were trying to destroy his character and his influence. The tribulation he here refers to is chiefly this mental distress and the bodily suffering which it involved. His great relief in circumstances of so much distress was that the Corinthian Church, as a whole, had received his first letter in a right spirit. He could be joyful in this, even amidst his tribulation. Two points may receive illustration.

I. THE TRIBULATION COMES FROM ANXIETY CONCERNING SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING. Precisely this is the minister's sphere. His interest is in the moral and spiritual condition of those who are set in his charge. But this is the most serious and overwhelming of all burdens that can be laid upon a man's heart and effort. If we estimate what the due maintenance and culture of our own spiritual life involves, we may understand how great is the anxiety of Christian ministers who watch over souls as well as watch for souls. Illustrate by Samuel Rutherford's intense expression of feeling, "God is my witness that your salvation would be two salvations to me, and your heaven two heavens to me." Show what a strain upon nervous constitutions the pressure of the ministry becomes in these our days.

II. THE JOY COMES FROM DUE RESPONSE MADE TO EFFORTS FOR SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING. Compare other expressions by apostles: e.g. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth;" "What is our joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy." The minister has, in the culture of spiritual life, to use truth, warnings, threatenings, as well as comfortings and inspirings; and his joy is ever this—his people are open-hearted to receive, are humble enough to regard what he may say, and earnest enough to obey. No earthly joy is like that which they know who help their brethren to truth and purity and God.—R. T.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Godly sorrow; or, the sorrow that is after the will of God.* Reference is to the distress which the more spiritual members of the Corinthian Church felt on the receipt of St. Paul's first letter. He had written severely, and, after sending his letter, almost regretted that he had expressed himself so strongly; but he now felt thankful to hear that they had so well responded to his appeals, and sorrowed unto repentance and putting away of the evil in a manner that would be so certainly approved by God. "The series of emotional words in ver. 11 represent the apostle's

estimate of what he had heard from Titus. There was (1) *earnestness* where there had been indifference to evil, and even approval of it (1 Cor. v. 2); and this was shown (2) in the *vindication* of their conduct which they had sent through Titus; and (3) in their stern 'indignation' against the offender; (4) in their fear, partly of the supernatural chastisement which St. Paul had threatened, partly of the judgment of God which was against such things; (5) in the *longing* to have him once more among them, which mingled with their fear; (6) in their new *zeal* for the law of purity; (7) in their actual *vengeance*, i.e. their sentence of condemnation passed upon the offender." "The apostle rejoiced, not that the Corinthians sorrowed, but that they sorrowed unto repentance. Sorrow has two results—it may end in spiritual life or in spiritual death, and in themselves one of these is as natural as the other. Sorrow may produce two kinds of reformation: a transient or a permanent one; an alteration in habits, which, originating in emotion, will last so long as that emotion continues, and then, after a few fruitless efforts, be given up; a repentance which will be repented of; or again, a permanent change which will be reversed by no after-thought—a repentance not to be repented of." Beza says, "The 'sorrow of the world' is the certain way to desperation, unless God prevent it, as appears from the horrid examples of Cain, Saul, Abithophel, and Judas; but the written tears of David give the clearest example of the other kind of sorrow."

I. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN REMORSE AND REPENTANCE. The word "remorse" has in it the figure of "biting back," and it means going over our sins in thought, with a keen gnawing regret at having done them, but without any softened feelings such as belong to the penitent. Remorse is exactly that "sorrow of the world" which worketh death. Repentance is that humble, regretful spirit which sets a man ready to receive and to value the Divine forgiveness.

II. THE TESTS OF GENUINE REPENTANCE IN THE INDIVIDUAL. They are: 1. Mental distress. 2. Humility and self-abasement. 3. Confession without attempt at excuses. 4. Earnest seeking of Divine forgiveness. 5. Resolute putting away of the evil. 6. Keen watchfulness over the circumstances that involve temptation to the sin. 7. And an attitude of simple and unquestioning obedience to the will of God, and submission to whatever judgments on the sin it may please him to appoint. "Sorrow has done its work when it deters from evil. In the sorrow of the world the obliquity of the heart towards evil is not cured; it seems as if nothing cured it; heart-ache and trials come in vain; the history of life at last is what it was at first. Sorrow avails only when the past is converted into experience, and from failure lessons are learned which never are to be forgotten."

III. THE TESTS OF GENUINE REPENTANCE IN A CHURCH. These more especially are dealt with in the passage before us. Bengel says that the six results mentioned by the apostle fall into pairs. The first two relate to their feelings towards themselves, the next to their feelings towards the apostle, the last to their feelings towards the offender and his offence. The tests we notice are (1) clearings, earnest efforts to put away the wrong, and to show that they had no complicity in it, and would make no excuses for it; (2) anxiety for each other, that the membership may be quite purified, and no brother cherish even a secret sympathy with the wrong; (3) discipline on the wrong-doer, by at least a temporary removal of him from the Church fellowship. The penitence of a Church will also find expression in united acts of confession and humiliation, and in prayer for Divine forgiveness and restoration. Perhaps much too little is made in these days of the united acts of the corporate Church life. There is a befitting Church penitence, a proper godly sorrow of a community, when, by any evil of its members, such a community has become defiled.—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*Apostolic cares*. "Our care of you in the sight of God might appear unto you." The apostle always used the persuasion of his affection, whenever it was possible, rather than the force of his apostolic authority. Elsewhere he pleads thus: "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." And he speaks of "that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches." We may compare the care of a wise and faithful mother for the well-being of her children, and the burden of thought and interest which they are to her every day. The apostle's care concerned three things.

I. PURITY. Of this he was supremely zealous. Christians must be seen to differ essentially from pagan idolaters. Immorality and uncleanness were directly associated with heathenism, and were even consecrated by idolatrous religions; but there must be no possibility of questioning that the Christian Church was "called unto holiness." "Every member must know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." There must be no "touching of the unclean thing."

II. EDIFICATION. Security for the Christian lies in continuous growth. This, indeed, is the law of all life. When a thing ceases to grow it begins to die. The growth or upbuilding of the plant is St. Paul's supreme anxiety; and he evidently feared that the Corinthians must have been neglecting their spiritual culture, seeing they could suffer such evils to come in amongst them. Fungus-growths only attack trees in which the vitality is lowered.

III. WITNESS. St. Paul expects the Churches to make positive and active testimony to all around them. That witness can only be a fitting one and a powerful one as the Church is kept pure. So St. Paul is moved with so much anxiety for the clearing of the Corinthians. He wants the light that shines from them on all the heathen world around to be a pure light, clear, white, in no way dimmed, and therefore he can rejoice that they have so fully responded to his supreme care on their behalf.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Apostolic confidence*; or the fulness of the restoration man may make to follow on his forgiveness of his fellow-men. "I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things." F. W. Robertson says, "We learn from this the value of explanations. Had St. Paul left the matter unsettled, or only half settled, there never could have been a hearty understanding between him and the Corinthians. Whenever there is a misunderstanding between man and man, the true remedy is a direct and open request for explanation." This sentence closes the apostle's reference to a very painful subject; he wishes it now to be put quite away, out of thought, and so he assures the Corinthians that no relic of suspicion or fear is left in his mind; he restores them fully to his affection and esteem; he has "confidence in them in all things." Now, in this complete restoration of the Corinthians to favour we see that man may be the shadow of God, and his forgiveness and full reconciliation may help his fellow-men to realize the fulness of the restoration which God gives to the penitent. He puts our sins behind his back. He casts them into the depths of the sea. He separates them from us as far as the east is from the west. He remembers them no more against us for ever. He blots out our transgressions as a cloud, and our iniquities as a thick cloud. The figure of our God is the father in the parable of the prodigal son, who brings the penitent and forgiven son into the old place at the family table, dresses him in the son's robes, and gives him such a welcome as will show the sad past to be all forgiven and forgotten. It should be a serious thought to us that men may take their ideas of God's dealing with them from the manner of our dealing with them. If they find that we cannot forgive and forget, and wholly restore confidence, it will be very hard for them to believe that God can. Three points of man's dealing with man, especially of the Christian man's dealing with his fellow-Christian, may be taken as representing God's dealings with us. In these we may be ourselves examples of God.

I. MAN WITHDRAWING CONFIDENCE BECAUSE OF CHERISHED SIN. God never passes by sin, and we must not. Every Church member should be quickly sensitive to the inconsistencies and sins of his fellow-members. If the sin is kept and cherished there ought to be withdrawal of confidence, for whenever his people cherish sin there is a cloud passes before God and hides his face from them.

II. MAN ENDEAVOURING TO INFLUENCE FOR THE PUTTING AWAY OF SIN. Falling into transgression ought to set our brothers upon our Christian love and effort. Erring brothers must not be left to go in their evil ways. Illustrate from St. Paul's efforts to bring the incestuous man to repentance. Too often Churches are more eager to exercise discipline than to attempt recovery, and labour to secure repentance. "Ye that are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness."

III. MAN RESTORING TO CONFIDENCE WHEN THE SIN IS PUT AWAY. This we have illustrated in the hearty words of the apostle. Speaking of Newman's sentence, "A true penitent never forgives himself," F. W. Robertson says, "A false estimate of the gospel of Christ and of the heart of man! A proud remorse does not forgive itself the

forfeiture of its own dignity; but it is the very beauty of the penitence which is according to God that at last the sinner, realizing God's forgiveness, does learn to forgive himself." And help to this "self-forgiving" we can render if we show to the sincere penitent the heartiness of our forgiveness and restoration.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Liberality shown by the Macedonian Churches (vers. 1—5). He is sending Titus to receive their contribution for the Church of Jerusalem, and he invites them to give according to their power (vers. 6—15). Recommendation of Titus and the other delegates (vers. 16—24).

These two chapters (viii. and ix.) form an independent section of the Epistle. The plural alone ("we") is used throughout; participial and unfinished constructions abound; the style is a little embarrassed; and various words, such as "grace," "blessing," "righteousness," "simplicity," occur in somewhat unusual shades of meaning. All this arises: 1. From St. Paul's natural delicacy in alluding to pecuniary subjects. 2. From a desire to conciliate the Corinthians, while at the same time he cannot conceal from them a little apprehension that they were rather more forward and zealous in words than in deeds. Their large promises had led him to speak of them in a way which seemed unlikely to be justified by the fulfilment. He was thus more or less under the influence of conflicting emotions. Out of patriotism (Rom. ix. 3) and compassion, and an effort to fulfil an old pledge (Gal. ii. 10), and a desire to conciliate and, if possible, win over the affection of the Jewish Church—which had been much alienated from him by differences of opinion and by assiduous calumnies—and from a wish to show that his Gentile converts were faithful and loving brethren (Rom. xv. 31), he was intensely anxious that the contribution should be a large one. This feeling is apparent, not only throughout every line of this appeal, with the solemn topics which it introduces, but also in all his other allusions to the subject (Rom. xv. 26; 1 Cor. xvi.; Acts xx. 22; xxi. 4, etc.). On the other hand, he was careful lest he should seem to have even the most distant personal aims, and lest he should lay on his Gentile converts a wholly unfamiliar burden.

Ver. 1.—We do you to wit; rather, *we make known to you*. The phrase is like the modern "I wish to inform you." In this and the next chapter St. Paul, having fully spoken of the joy which had been caused to him by their reception of his first letter, and having said as much as he then intended to say in answer to the charges insinuated against him, proceeds to give directions about the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem. He had already spoken of it (1 Cor. xvi. 1—4), but feared that they were behind-hand, and now sends Titus to stimulate their zeal. The style throughout is brief and allusive, because he had already, in various ways, brought this matter fully before them. Throughout this section he shows in a remarkable degree the tact, courtesy, high sense of honour, and practical wisdom which were among his many gifts. The "but" with which the chapter begins in the original is St. Paul's ordinary formula of transition, as in 1 Cor. vii. 1; xii. 1; xiii. 1, etc. (For the phrase, "we inform you," see 1 Cor. xii. 3; xv. 1.) It is one of numberless incidental proofs of the genuineness of this group of Epistles—the Epistles of the second great missionary journey—that the same words, phrases, and thoughts constantly recur in them. The grace of God (see next note). Bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia; rather, *which is being bestowed in the Churches*. St. Paul wants to tell the Corinthians how extremely liberal the Macedonians have been, since it was his custom to stir up one Church by the example of another (ch. ix. 2); but he begins by speaking of their generosity as a proof of the grace which they are receiving from the Holy Spirit. *The Churches of Macedonia*. The only Macedonian Churches of which we have any details in the New Testament are those of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroë. They seem to have been peculiarly dear to St. Paul, who was attracted by their cheerfulness in affliction and their generosity in the midst of want.

Ver. 2.—In a great trial of affliction; rather, *in much testing of affliction*; i.e. in an affliction which put to the proof their Christian character. "They were not simply afflicted," says St. Chrysostom, "but in such a way as also to become approved by their endurance." (For the word rendered "trial," see Rom. v. 4, and in this Epistle, ch. ii. 9; ix. 13; xiii. 3.) "Affliction" seems to have befallen the Churches of Macedonia very

heavily (1 Thess. i. 6; ii. 14), chiefly through the jealousy of the Jews, who excited the hatred of the Gentiles (Acts xvi. 20; xvii. 5, 13). The abundance of their joy. Another reference to joy in sadness (see on ch. vii. 4). There is not the least necessity to understand the verb "is" or "was" after this clause. "The abundance . . . abounded" is indeed a pleonasm, but is not at all unlike the style of St. Paul. He means to say that their joy overflowed their affliction, and their liberality overflowed their poverty (Mark xii. 44). Their deep poverty; literally, *their pauperism to the depth*; their abysmal penury. Though they were *βαβύρωτοι*, they showed themselves in generosity to be *βαβύρωτοι*. Stanley refers to Arnold's 'Roman Commonwealth,' where he mentions that the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, which had suffered greatly in the three civil wars, appealed successfully to Tiberius for a diminution of their burdens. The gift of the Macedonians was like the widow's mite (Luke xxi. 3, 4, where similar words occur—*perisseuo, husterēma*). Of their liberality; rather, of their singleness of purpose or simplicity (Eph. vi. 5). The "grace" and single-heartedness to which he alludes showed themselves in liberality.

Ver. 3.—They were willing of themselves. "Of their own accord," as in ver. 17. The verb in the original is energetically omitted, with the "they gave" of ver. 5. St. Paul does not mean that the notion of making the collection originated with them (ch. ix. 2), but only that they displayed a voluntary energy in carrying it out.

Ver. 4.—Praying us. The entreaties came from them, not from me. That we would receive. These words are almost certainly an explanatory gloss. The translation then is, "begging us for the grace of participation in this ministration to the saints." They were so willing in the matter that they entreated me, as a favour (*χάρις*), to allow them to have a share in this contribution, because it was to be given to the saints, that is, the suffering poor in the Church of Jerusalem. This Church suffered from chronic poverty. Even the Jewish population were liable to famines, in one of which they had only been kept alive by the royal munificence of a proselyte, Queen Helena, of Adiabene. The Christians would, of course, suffer even more deeply, because they were drawn from the humblest classes and had fewer friends. This was one of the reasons why, as an act of common humanity, it was incumbent on the Gentile Christians to help them (Acts xi. 29; Rom. xv. 25, 26). St. Paul had already brought the subject to the notice of the Corinthians (1 Cor. xvi. 1—4).

Ver. 5.—Not as we hoped; rather, *not as we expected*. They were so poor that it was

impossible to expect much from them, but they surpassed my expectations in every way. The Church of Philippi, perhaps under the influence of Lydia, was remarkable for generosity, and was the only Church from which St. Paul would accept any personal help (Phil. ii. 25; iv. 15—18). First. "They gave themselves to the Lord, which is the best of all, and they gave themselves as helpers to us also—by the will of God." (For a similar use of "and" to imply a matter of less importance, see Acts xv. 28.) The phrase, "by the will of God," implies a thanksgiving to God for the grace which enabled them to give themselves to him, and their goods to his saints. Being "a peculiar people," they naturally showed themselves "zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14). First (Rom. i. 16; ii. 9, 10).

Ver. 6.—Inasmuch that. Their liberality encouraged me so greatly that I exhorted Titus to return to Corinth once more, and see whether he could not receive some proof that you were equally liberal. The remarks that follow are full of delicate reserve, but under their exquisite tact and urbanity we can perceive that the Corinthians had talked very loudly about their contributions, and had promised with great zeal, but had shown themselves somewhat slack in redeeming their promises. We exhorted Titus. It is curious that this word is constantly used of the missions of Titus (ver. 17; ch. xii. 18; 1 Cor. xvi. 12). As he had begun. "That as he inaugurated (this collection), so he would also complete towards you this gracious work also." Among other works of grace which Titus might complete by returning to them from Macedonia was the kindly collection which he had begun to set on foot in his previous visit (ch. xii. 18).

Ver. 7.—Therefore; rather, *but*. In the following verses to ver. 15 he tells them his wishes about this collection. He desires them to show generosity among their other graces (ver. 7), not by way of command, but that they may emulate others and show their love (ver. 8) by following the example of Christ (ver. 9). And by acting thus they would prove the sincerity of their former promises (vers. 10, 11), especially as he did not wish them to give more than they could justly spare by way of reciprocity (vers. 12—15). As ye abound in every thing, in faith, etc. Perhaps "by faith," etc., "St. Paul," says Grotius, "knew the art of the orators to move by praising." This method of conciliating attention is technically called *proparatēsis*. The praise was, of course, sincere, though, no doubt, it was expressed with the generosity of love (see 1 Cor. i. 5). And in your love to us. The Greek is more emphatic, "and by the love from you in us;" *i. e.* by the love which streams from you, and

which I feel in myself. In this grace also; namely, the grace of Christian liberality.

Ver. 8.—Not by commandment. St. Paul felt an honourable sensibility which prevented him from straining his authority by urging the Corinthians to give of their substance. Among Gentiles such contributions towards the needs of others—the result of unselfish compassion—were all but unknown. The forwardness; *i.e.* the ready zeal. The sincerity; more literally, *the genuineness*.

Ver. 9.—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word “grace,” as in vers. 4, 6, 7, here means “gracious beneficence.” Though he was rich (John xvi. 15; Eph. iii. 8). Became poor. The aorist implies the concentration of his self-sacrifice in a single act. By his poverty. The word “his” in the Greek implies the *greatness* of Christ. The word for “poverty” would, in classical Greek, mean “pauperism” or “mendicancy.” Dean Stanley (referring to Milman’s ‘Latin Christianity,’ v. bk. xii. c. 6) points out how large a place this verse occupied in the mediæval controversies between the moderate and the extreme members of the mendicant orders. William of Ockham and others, taking the word “poverty” in its extremest sense, maintained that the Franciscans ought to possess *nothing*; but Pope John XXI., with the Dominicans, took a more rational view of the sense and of the historic facts.

Ver. 10.—And herein I give my advice; and in this matter I offer an opinion (only). For this is expedient for you. It is more to your advantage that I should merely suggest and advise you about the matter than command you. Who have begun; rather, *seeing that you formerly began*. The verb is the same as in ver. 6. Not only to do, but also to be forward; rather, *not only to do, but also to be willing*. The “to do” is in the aorist, the “to be willing” in the present. We should naturally have expected a reversed order, “not only to be willing, but also to put in action.” There must be a strong touch of irony in the words, unless we interpret it to mean “not only to make the collection, but to be willing to add yet more to it.” Perhaps in the “to be willing” lies the notion of “the cheerful giver,” “the willing mind” (ch. ix. 7; 1 Tim. vi. 17—19). A year ago; rather, *since the previous year*; *i.e.* last year (ch. ix. 2). They had probably begun to collect in the previous Easter, and it was now soon after Tisri, or September, the beginning of the Jewish civil year.

Ver. 11.—Now therefore perform the doing of it, etc.; “but now complete also the actual work, in order that, as was the readiness of the willing, so may be also the completion according to your means.” Out of that which ye have. This, and not “out of your

ability,” is probably the right reading, as we see from the next verse.

Ver. 12.—For if there be first a willing mind, etc. “For if the readiness is forthcoming, it is acceptable,” etc. In other words, God considers not *quantum*, but *ex quanto*; not the magnitude of the gift, but the proportion which it bears to the means of the giver.

Ver. 13.—And ye be burdened; literally, *for not that there may be relief to others, but to you affliction*. In other words, I have no wish that you should *distress* yourselves to set others at ease. You must not suspect me of Jewish proclivities which would lead me to impoverish you to provide luxuries for the Christians at Jerusalem. Others refer it to the Macedonians: “I do not wish to burden you, but the Macedonians, who are poor, have contributed, and if you join them in this good work now, they may help you hereafter.” But there is no hint of this anywhere.

Ver. 14.—But by an equality, etc. The verse, like so many in this chapter, is expressed very elliptically: “But by a reciprocal fairness in the present case, your superabundance to their lack, that also their superabundance may be in proportion to your lack, that there may come to be reciprocal fairness.” St. Paul may possibly be thinking of the reciprocity of spiritual and temporal benefits, as in Rom. xv. 27; but if so he leaves the thought unexpressed. The application of the text to “works of supererogation” (Art. XIV.), as forming a fund at the disposal of the hierarchy in the way of indulgences, pardons, etc., is a singular perversion. The passage has been pointed out by Dean Stauley as one which indicates a possible acquaintance with the writings of Aristotle.

Ver. 15.—As it is written (Exod. xvi. 17, 18, LXX.). The reference is to the gathering of manna.

Ver. 16.—Which put; rather, *which giveth*. The zeal is *continuous*. The same earnest care. The same in the heart of Titus as in my own.

Ver. 17.—The exhortation. My request that he would undertake this task. Being more forward. Because he was more earnestly zealous than I had ever ventured to hope, he went spontaneously. (On the word *authairetos*, see ver. 3.)

Ver. 18.—The brother, whose praise is in the gospel. The phrase means, “whose worth is praised wherever the glad tidings are preached.” There can be no reference to any of the four written Gospels, for they were not in the hands of Christians till a later date; nor did the word “gospel” acquire this significance till afterwards. From Acts xx. 5. it is somewhat precariously inferred that

St. Luke is meant. Others have conjectured Barnabas, Silas (who are out of the question), Erastus, Mark, a brother of Titus, etc. St. Luke is not unlikely to have been selected as a delegate by the Church of Philippi; but further than this we can say nothing. St. Luke was not a Macedonian by birth, and any Macedonian (e.g. Aristarchus, Sopater, Secundus, Epaphroditus) seems to be excluded by ch. ix. 4. Paley notes it as curious that the *object* of St. Paul's journey to Jerusalem, which is so prominent in this group of Epistles, is only mentioned indirectly and incidentally by St. Luke (Acts xxiv. 17) in the Acts of the Apostles.

Ver. 19.—Chosen. The word (literally, *chosen by show of hands*) implies a popular vote (comp. 1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4). This brother was not only widely known and valued, but also specially selected for this task. To travel with us. "As our fellow-traveller." The word occurs in Acts xix. 29. With this grace. The better reading is "in:" "in this matter of kindness." To the glory of the same Lord. The word "same" should be omitted. And declaration of your ready mind. The best reading is "our," and the clause should be rendered, *to further the glory of the Lord and our readiness.*

Ver. 20.—Avoiding this. The object in sending Titus and the brother was to cut away the possibility of blame and suspicion. The word "avoiding" (*stellomenoi*) literally means "furling sail," and then "taking precautions." It may, however, mean "making this arrangement" (see 2 Thess. iii. 6). Too much stress has been laid on St. Paul's "use of nautical terms" (Acts xx. 20; Gal. ii. 12, etc.). They belong, in fact, to the very phraseology of the Greek language. That no man should blame us (see ch. vi. 3). St. Paul here sets a valuable and necessary example to all Christians who are entrusted with the management of charitable funds. It is their duty to take every step which may place them above the possibility of of suspicion. Their management of the sums entrusted to them should be obviously and transparently business-like and honourable. St. Paul taught this behaviour both by example and by precept (Rom. xii. 17; Phil. iv. 8). There is such a thing as a

foolish and reprehensible indifference to public opinion (1 Pet. ii. 12). Yet with all his noble carefulness, St. Paul did not escape this very slander (ch. xii. 18). In this abundance. The word, which occurs here only, means literally "succulence," but in the LXX. the adjective means "rich" (1 Kings i. 9). It here implies that the sum which had been collected by St. Paul's exertion was a large one.

Ver. 21.—Honest things. The word "honest" means "honourable" (Rom. xii. 17; Prov. iii. 4, LXX.). Not only in the sight of the Lord. Such precautions would be unnecessary if others were not concerned, for God knows our honesty (ch. v. 11). But also before men. Although the text "avoid all appearance of evil" should be rendered "avoid every species of evil," the mistranslation conveys a wise lesson. "In a field of melons," says the Chinese proverb, "do not stoop to tie your shoe;" for that will *look* as if you wanted to steal one of the melons.

Ver. 22.—Our brother. It is impossible to conjecture with any certainty who was the brother thus warmly eulogized. Clement, Epænetus, Apollos, Luke, Zenas, Sosthenes, Trophimus, and Tychicus have all been suggested. Stanley conjectures that the two who accompanied Titus were the Ephesians Tychicus and Trophimus (Acts xx. 4; xxi. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 12; Eph. vi. 21; Titus iii. 12; Col. iv. 7).

Ver. 23.—Whether any do inquire of Titus; literally, whether about Titus, or, as to Titus; i.e. "if I speak about Titus." (For the phrase, comp. ch. i. 6, 8; 2 Thess. ii. 1.) Titus, long afterwards, was delegated on a similar mission to Crete (Titus i. 1—5; ii. 15). My partner and fellow-helper concerning you; rather, *my associate* (Philem. 17) and, as regards you, *my fellow-worker*. Messengers; literally, *apostles*. The word is used in its original and untechnical sense of delegates (Phil. ii. 25; Rom. xvi. 7). The glory of Christ. Men whose work and worth redound to Christ's honour (Gal. i. 24).

Ver. 24.—Of your love. Not only of your love "to me," but of your brotherly love in general. And of our boasting. Show to the Church that my boasting of you was justifiable.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—Genuine beneficence (1). "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God," etc. The subject of these words is *genuine beneficence*, and they suggest certain general truths concerning it.

I. THAT ALL GENUINE BENEFICENCE IN MAN IS FROM GOD. "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of [we make known to you] the grace of God." All that is loving and generous in all moral beings is from one Source, and that is God. He is the primal Font whence all flows. Wherever you see love, in young or old, rich or poor, cultured

or rude, you see an emanation from and a reflection of the Eternal. As you may see the ocean in a dewdrop, you may see God in every throb of affection in human souls.

II. THAT IN SOME MEN IT IS MORE STRONGLY DEVELOPED THAN IN OTHERS. According to St. Paul, the "Churches of Macedonia" displayed it in a remarkable degree. It would seem from what Paul says concerning the beneficence of the Macedonian Churches that it was: 1. *Self-sacrificing*. "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." It would seem from this that they could ill afford—as the phrase is—to render any help in the way of property to others, and yet their contributions "abounded unto the riches of their liberality." 2. *Spontaneous*. "They were willing of themselves." They were not pressed into it by outward appeals. The only pressure was from love within. 3. *Earnest*. "Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift." Instead of giving because they were besought by others to do so, they themselves besought the reception of their gifts. They might have presented plausible reasons for withholding their contributions to this charity. They might have pleaded *distance*, and said, "Jerusalem is a long way off, and charity begins at home." They might have pleaded *lack of personal knowledge*, and have said, "We are utterly unacquainted with any of these saints at Jerusalem;" or they might have pleaded their own affliction or poverty. But instead of that, they earnestly seized the opportunity to render what help they could. 4. *Religious*. "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." "This means," says a modern expositor, "of course, that they had done what was far beyond his hopes. And here the point lies in the fact that they gave, not their money only, but themselves, their time, thought, energy, primarily to Christ as their Lord, and then to the apostle as his minister. And this they had done because they allowed the will of God to work upon their will." Consecration of self to God is at once the cause and virtue of all our gifts to men. Unless we give ourselves to God, all our gifts to men are morally worthless.

III. THAT THOSE IN WHOM IT IS MOST STRONGLY DEVELOPED MIGHT BE URGED AS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS. Paul here holds up the beneficence of the Macedonians as an example to stimulate the charity of the Corinthians. It would seem that the Church at Corinth had, through the influence of Titus, commenced a subscription for the poor at Jerusalem, and that Titus was about to return in order to obtain larger contributions. The charity of the Macedonian Churches Paul quotes as an example in order to help forward the work. His argument seems to be this—You have the advantages of the Churches at Macedonia in many things; you "abound in everything," you are wealthy, they are poor; your endowments are greater than theirs, your "faith, and utterance, and knowledge," and "in your love to us;" this being so, "See that ye abound in this grace also;" see that you excel in your contributions to this charity. It is wise and well to hold up the good example of others to stimulate men to a holy emulation. The good deeds of other men are amongst the Divine forces to purify and ennoble our own characters.

IV. THAT THE HIGHEST EXAMPLE OF IT WE HAVE IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. Christ is the supreme Model of philanthropy. 1. *His philanthropy was self-sacrificing*. "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." Observe: (1) He was rich in material wealth before he came into the world. It is of material wealth that the apostle is speaking. (2) His existence on earth was that of material poverty. "The foxes have holes," etc. (3) He passed voluntarily from one stage to another. "For your sakes he became poor." Of all the myriads of men that have appeared on this earth, and that will appear, he alone had the choosing of his circumstances, and he chose poverty. 2. *His philanthropy aimed supremely at the promotion of spiritual wealth*. "That ye through his poverty might be rich." Rich spiritually. Great is the difference between spiritual wealth and material. (1) The one is absolutely *valuable*, the other is not. (2) The one is essential to *happiness*, the other is not. (3) The one is *within the reach of all*, the other is not.

Vers. 10—15.—*Genuine beneficence* (2). "And herein I give my advice," etc. In these verses there is a continuation of the subject presented in the preceding passage, viz. *genuine beneficence*. And there are three further remarks suggested concerning this all-important subject.

I. IT IS THE EMBODYING OF THE BENEFICENT DESIRE IN CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS. "Herein I give my advice [judgment]: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before [who were the first to make a beginning], not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. Now therefore perform [complete] the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance [completion] also out of that which ye have." They had shown the will to contribute, for they had "a year ago" commenced their subscriptions. Now Paul exhorts them to go on and complete the work. "As there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance." The mere generous will is good in itself, but is not enough; it requires to be embodied in deeds. Every good desire requires embodiment; 1. *For our own sake.* It is only as our best desires are translated into deeds that they give solidity and strength to our character. In words and sighs they die away; they are like the morning dew. A good desire in itself is like the raindrop on the leaf of the tree; it may excite admiration as it glistens like a diamond in the sun, but it is soon exhaled, and probably does no good to the tree. But when embodied in a generous deed it is like the raindrop that penetrates the roots and contributes some portion of strength to all the fibres. A charity-sermon delivered with the eloquence of a Chalmers may excite in the congregation the beneficent idea, almost to a passion, but, unless that passion takes the form of a self-denying act, it evaporates and leaves the congregation in a worse state than the preacher found it. 2. *For the sake of others.* It is generous deeds that bless the world. They go where ideas cannot penetrate, into the hearts and consciences of men; they work silently and salutarily as the sunbeam.

II. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BENEFICENCE ARE ONLY VIRTUOUS AS THEY SPRING FROM A GENEROUS DESIRE. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." The doctrine is this, that the disposition of the heart, not the doings of the hand, constitute the essence of moral character. This is the Divine method of estimating human conduct. "The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth," etc. The motive is the soul of the deed. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Do not judge the desire by the effort, but judge the effort put forth by the desire. The poor widow would have made munificent contributions, but she could only give a "mite;" but in that mite there was more value than in all the amount in the temple exchequer. Some have the means to do good and not the heart, and some have the heart but not the means. The former are grubs in the universe, the latter are angels. There are deeds done *in* the body, seen of God, infinitely more numerous and essentially more valuable in most cases than deeds done by the body.

III. THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS CANNOT SUPERSEDE THE OBLIGATION OF OURS, BUT MAY SUPPLEMENT THEIR DEFICIENCIES. 1. *It is not a substitute.* "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened." It behoves every man to contribute to the extent of his riches, to the good of others. If one man gives a thousand it does not relieve me from my obligation to contribute what I can. 2. *It is a supplement.* "But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want." It is the duty of all to contribute. Some have the ability to contribute a hundred times the amount of others; let their large sums go to supplement the deficiencies of their poorer brethren, so that there may be "an equality." Thus the old Scripture will be illustrated, that "he that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."

Vers. 16—24.—Stimulating men to beneficent actions. "But thanks be to God," etc. The verses under notice present to us the subject of *stimulating men to efforts of beneficence*, and three remarks are suggested concerning this occupation.

I. IT IS A WORK THAT REQUIRES THE HIGHEST ORDER OF CHRISTIAN MEN. We find here that not only Paul employs himself in it with all his loving earnestness and logical power, but he engages Titus also, and a "brother" with him of such distinction that his "praise is in the gospel throughout all the Churches." To excite men to beneficent enterprises is pre-eminently a Christian work. Christianity is the mother of all philanthropic labours and institutions. Christian piety is a fountain whence all the myriad streams of human beneficence that circulate through all the districts of human life proceed. To stimulate this beneficence in men is the highest ministry on earth,

and for it men of the most distinguished character and faculty are required. No man is too great for it, and but few men are equal to its successful discharge.

II. IT IS A WORK DESERVING THE GRATITUDE OF ALL. Paul refers to: 1. The gratitude of those who had been excited to beneficent efforts. "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you." It is implied that Titus conferred on them an immense favour in stimulating them to generous deeds. No man can render us a greater service than by taking us out of ourselves and inspiring us with a genuine concern for the interests of others. It is not he who gives me a good thing, *but who stimulates me to do a good thing*, that is my greatest benefactor; for it is "more blessed to give than to receive." In giving we become God-like, and therefore we ought to thank the man most devoutly who evokes within us the spirit of true charity. Instead of endeavouring to avoid appeals to our benevolence, we should hail them and thank our Maker for them. 2. The gratitude of those who have effected the excitement. Paul says, "Thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you." (1) There is no office *higher in itself* than this. This is the work for which Christ came into the world, the work for which he established the Christian ministry. The aim and tendency of the gospel are to drown the selfish *ego* in the sunny tide of universal charity. The love of Christ constrained men to feel that they should not henceforth live to themselves. (2) There is no office more *useful* than this. Success in this means ruin in all that is ruinous to souls in human history, ruin to selfishness and all its fiendish brood. Well, therefore, may those who are engaged in such a work thank God for the distinguishing honour to which they have been called. Paul says nothing here about the gratitude of those on whom the excited beneficence has bestowed its favours—the beneficiaries. He seems to take it for granted that they ought and would be thankful; that they ought to be admits of no doubt, but that they always are cannot be asserted. Ingratitude, alas! is one of the reigning sins in human life.

III. IT IS A WORK EXPOSED TO THE SUSPICIONS OF WORLDLY MEN. The apostle seems to have been afraid that the contributions that would flow from stimulating the beneficence of the Corinthian Church would occasion the allegation that they were participating in them, and so obtaining some personal advantage. Hence, to guard against the possibility, he gets the Churches to choose from amongst them some men of the best reputation, whom he calls "messengers of the Churches," and Titus, and perhaps Luke, in the administration of the charity, and thus "providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Dishonest men have existed in all ages, and the more dishonest men are, the more suspicious. Paul here guards himself against all scandalous imputations. He had great respect for his own reputation, so much so, that one at times, in reading these Epistles, is well-nigh astonished that a man so great in nature and sublime in character should think so much about the opinions of others.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Christian liberality in the Macedonian Churches.* Grace prepares the way for grace. Denial of self in one direction leads to cross-bearing in other forms. Duty is a spirit, not a mechanical thing; a life, and not a mere performance. If the Corinthians had shown such a "godly sorrow," they would now be eager to demonstrate their renewed Christian strength by a more faithful regard to all obligations. Carefulness, zeal, vehement desire, had characterized their repentance, and these would not expire with the occasion that had called them into exercise. Deep feeling is quiet feeling, and therefore permanent, and deep feeling is always the mark of true penitence. St. Paul had confidence in his Corinthian brethren, and it was a large-hearted trust; "confidence in you in all things." The "all things" is the *nexus*, between the seventh and eighth chapters. So then he proceeds to speak of the liberality of the Macedonian Churches preparatory to urging on them the duty of benevolence. Observe his manner. If he states a doctrine, he illustrates it. If he teaches a duty, he gives an example. Never so abstract as to neglect the practical side of life, never so intent on action as to lose sight of the determinative principle, he reminds one of Lord

Bacon's remark, that the highest order of mind is that combining most fully the abstract and the practical. The example of these Macedonian Churches was well worthy of imitation. Macedonia had been overrun by armies, and we all know how armies devastated countries in those days and stripped the inhabitants of their wealth. St. Paul speaks of their "great trial of affliction," the losses and persecutions they were enduring, and yet they had "abundant joy," that could only be represented by its filling the depth of their poverty and overflowing in "the riches of their liberality." No common poverty was theirs—"deep poverty;" and no ordinary love was theirs, but a very profound and tender love. "This sentence is completely shattered in passing through the apostle's mind" (Stanley). How much more is unsaid than said in the marvellous words, "Their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality"! Two things are taught us. 1. The inspiration of a joyous influence. Duty, motive, impulse, all exalted into Christian happiness. "Rejoice evermore." Such joy is a glorious power. Let us not make a mistake here. Fine feelings, exuberant emotions, loud hallelujahs, the thrill and shout and ecstasy, may deceive us. If they exhaust themselves in sensational excitement, they do deceive us, and that most awfully. Joy as a fruit of the Spirit is a giving joy, a sacrificing joy, a joy in the cross by which we are crucified to the world and the world unto us. 2. And we learn that even "deep poverty" is no obstruction to helping others. It often hinders us from doing what we would; but in the estimate of the Lord Jesus, the heart of this matter is in the "could," not in the *would*. "She hath done what she could." Capacity is always a mystery. It surprises us ever, and more and more, and in nothing is it so surprising as in the charitable heart with small means at its command. The glory of giving is in the quality of love, and it never fails to find something to bestow. "She of her penny hath cast in all the living that she had." If this poor widow could spare "two mites," who can plead depth of poverty? Notice that St. Paul emphasizes the depth of poverty in the Macedonian Church. If it had been simply a case of poverty, the example would not have been so instructive, and, accordingly, we find the apostle citing his cases from such as had to make sacrifices of personal comfort in order to aid those poorer than themselves. So that while in the Acts of the Apostles we hear of "possessors of lands or houses" selling them and laying the prices at the feet of the apostles, this fades from view in the tragic deaths of Ananias and Sapphira. But the image of the poor widow returns to us in the Epistles, with many suggestions as to the class of persons who do the most of the steady Christian giving. What is further noteworthy is the apostle's description of the self-moved generosity of these Macedonians. "Willing of themselves." Liberality is not a common virtue, and self-induced liberality is its rarest form. Men wait to be urged, begged, entreated; special occasions set are for special efforts; fine speakers are engaged; and the whole system of giving, or very much of it, proceeds on the habitual reluctance of giving for the support of the gospel. As to spontaneousness in this matter, who thinks of it, who trusts it? Now, we do not suppose that all religious people in the apostolic age were like these Macedonians. We know they were not. Yet, consider this fact, viz. they were the persons held up as shining examples of what liberality ought to be in the Church of Christ. And this accords precisely with the incidents mentioned concerning Mary of Bethany, and the poor widow and her mites, and the disciples after Pentecost who disposed of their property to help the poor. It was cordial and voluntary action, no external agency operating to give inducements. Without pressing this point too far, we must say that whatever utility belongs to the machinery of collecting funds for Church uses (and this seems to be necessary), it is nevertheless clear enough that spontaneous liberality is the truest, noblest, surest, mode of cultivating this grace in our hearts. So, unquestionably, the apostle thought. With what a glow he writes! "According to their power;" nay, it was more than this, for they went "beyond their power [beyond their means];" and so earnest was their purpose that they prayed the apostle to receive their gifts and let them share the grace and fellowship of ministering to the saints. No doubt many of these men found life a hard struggle, and for them, in more senses than one, "without were fightings, within were fears." Yet they deemed it a privilege to give; they coveted earnestly the best gift, which was the gift of giving; they prayed "with much entreaty" that they might participate in a work which was most blessed. To let such

an opportunity slip was more than they could bear. And this conduct exceeded his expectations; for they had given themselves first to the Lord Jesus, and then, anxious to show their affection for the apostle, had given themselves in this special matter to him. Heart and property; what a consecration! What a page in *spiritual biography*! Out of "deep poverty;" what chorus of voices ever rose like this, pleading that these Macedonians might be permitted to share the grace of ministration! "The short and simple annals of the poor" have added much to our English literature, nor is it extravagant to claim that this is one of the most praiseworthy marks of that distinctive genius which has signalized its excellence in so many departments of poetry and fiction. But do we realize our indebtedness to the Bible for this beautiful and humanizing element in English literature? Here, in this single chapter from the Apostle Paul, what a touching picture of Christian poverty, surrendering means it could ill afford to spare, and doing it "with a self-dedication which involved a complete renunciation of all personal interests" (Kling)!—L.

Vers. 7—15.—*Appeal to the Corinthians.* A wise use had been made by the apostle of the example of the Macedonians. He had not appealed to pride, vanity, or any selfish feeling, but had simply presented a remarkable case of Christian philanthropy. Robertson very properly remarks, "Had the apostle said, 'Be not beaten by those Macedonians;' had he called natural prejudices into play—a Corinthian to yield to a Macedonian!—then all the evil passions of our nature had been stimulated." Emulation is a true principle, and may be a religious principle. The danger lies, not in the thing itself, but in its abuses, and particularly in the encouragement which it may afford to false rivalry and jealousy. In a large measure, the spirit and conduct of others make the social atmosphere we breathe, nor can we live in the world without contact with it. Goodness assumes its most attractive forms in noble examples, and, except for these, our own ideals, if they existed at all, would be very imperfect. Consistently, then, with his purpose of stimulating the Corinthians to seek a high degree of Christian excellence, the apostle sets before them in most vivid colours the liberality of the Macedonian Churches. Titus had begun, and he would have him "finish in them the same grace also." Men are channels of Divine influence to our souls, and, as such, should be acknowledged in their work. St. Paul saw God's blessing on the labours of his young friend, and he would not deprive him of the honour of completing the task. He stood out of his way, encouraged his efforts, and lent him a fatherly hand in furtherance of his undertaking. This sympathy with young men is one of his characteristic qualities, and it is worthy of warm admiration. Many an elderly officer in the Church might heed it to great advantage. Titus should have all the credit. Let the brethren at Corinth heartily second his exertions in behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem. If they abounded "in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence," and in their love for the apostle, let them "abound in this grace also." The *quality* being pure, *quantity* was a favourite idea which he never lost an opportunity to urge. "Abound" and "abundant" flow freely from his pen. "Not by commandment" was this written. Free hearts, joyous impulses, could alone be recognized in this enterprise of humanity. This was the value of example, it was a sympathetic influence; and hence his reference to "the forwardness of others," which would test the "sincerity of their love." What a great truth is taught here, and that too so incidentally as to escape the attention of all save those who make the cultivation of discernment a constant duty! Noble examples are Divine tests; they prove, as we have said, the depth and activity of our sympathies, and in this respect supply the means of a discipline otherwise lacking. "Forwardness of others;" study its meaning. God commissions the leaders. Vast enterprises are never born of masses, but of individuals; apostles first, and then Churches; Bunyan, and two centuries of literature for the poor and illiterate; Watts and the sacred poets following; Raikes and Wesley; Martyn and Judson; successors multiplied because of their "forwardness." Having dwelt on the example of the Macedonians, the transition is easy to the Divine Exemplar. A single verse reminds them of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," the surrender of his eternal glory, the riches of his Godhead's state, the extent of the abnegation, the earthly poverty assumed, and all for their sakes, that "through his poverty" they "might be rich." The supreme consideration must be kept in full

view. Of the Macedonians he had spoken; of the "great trial of affliction," of their "deep poverty," and how it abounded "unto the riches of their liberality." Whence came this power? A new heart had been given to poverty, so that now, though its means were meagre, its social position unhonoured, its claims to influence set at nought, yet it had achieved wonders such as had never been thought possible. Macedonia had stretched out her arms of blessing to distant Jerusalem, and Gentiles and Jews long alienated were now one in the holiest of brotherhoods. It was due to the grace of Christ. It was his Spirit reproducing itself in the lives of believers. And therefore he had cited their conduct; but most of all let them remember the one great sacrifice of the incarnate Christ. Years subsequently we have in another Epistle (Phil. ii.) a similar train of thought. Age was upon him then, and life was drawing to a tragical close at Rome. Yet then, as now, then and now as throughout his ministry, the grace of the Lord Jesus was the one thought that inspired all other thoughts. It is still "advice." "Advice" is better than "commandment." They had begun the work of the collection, complete the task; they had a "readiness to will," let the effort be consummated. And, again, an important principle is brought to their notice. Was not "advice" sufficient? Would not an *opinion* be strong enough without a command? Yea, indeed, for a year ago the Corinthians had made a start in this matter. A willing mind is the first thing; grace begins here, and if this willing mind gives all it can, it is accepted of God, according to what "a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Mark the solicitude of the apostle as to the education of this sentiment of giving. He cannot think of it as a thing to which they must be constrained, and, accordingly, he acknowledges the largest freedom, only it must be Christian freedom. Motive must have free play. Conscience must advance into affection, or conscience is stunted. Sensibility must be self-impelled. Nor must any conclude that he wished to oppress them that others might be relieved, "but only to establish between Jewish and Gentile Churches a reciprocity of aid in time of need" (Dr. Farrar). To establish an "equality" was his object. Do not mistake his meaning. Political, social, natural equality was utterly foreign to his thought and purpose. No revolutionist, no anarchist, no leveller, was he in any sense, in any degree, but simply the advocate of such an equality as should be produced by the sentiment of Christian liberality in the distribution of gifts. That equalizing influence was not to proceed from an arbitrary law nor from force-work of any sort. It was to be spontaneous, each man a judge for himself, and the superabundance in one place was to supply the deficiency at another place, so as to secure an abundance for all. Reference is made to the manna in the wilderness. If one gathered more manna than the allotted supply, it was sent to those who had not collected enough, so that the necessities of all were met. This was the law of Judaism as between Hebrew and Hebrew, and the spirit of this law, fifteen centuries afterwards, reappears in a letter to the Corinthians. History in one portion of the world and among one people becomes prophecy in another portion and among another people. Prophecy, in turn, becomes a new history. And to-day, A. D. 1884, thousands in Europe and America are acting on this equalizing sentiment in the use of their property.—L.

Vers. 16—24.—*Prudential management; care to avoid blame.* St. Paul has given us many sketches of himself, especially much insight into his varying moods; and in these chapters (vii. and viii.) he interests us in the character of Titus. The section opens with thanksgiving to God, who has inclined the heart of his young friend towards the Corinthians and awakened his zeal in behalf of their welfare. No doubt it had occurred to Titus to undertake the project of collecting for the Jerusalem Church, but he had not broached the subject to the apostle. It lay quiet in his heart, doing the Spirit's work, expanding and strengthening his purpose, yet nursed in silence. "While I was musing, the fire burned." St. Paul had presented the matter to him and found him willing, ready, and zealous to enter on the task. "More forward [more earnest], of his own accord he went unto you." Two brethren of reputation had been chosen by the Churches to accompany Titus, and the three travellers, having this loving embassy in hand, would manifest "this grace," so that they and he as co-workers in the ministration would glorify God. Not enough for the apostle to honour Christ in the gifts alone, but he would enhance the glory by the manner of doing the work. The way of

performing it should be exceptional, impressive, and great-hearted, and thus the very mode of the act should prove a blessing as well as the thing done. For this course another reason existed. Appearances should always be consulted. No one can afford to put himself above them, to neglect, and still less to despise, them. Circumstances have their laws, and they must be obeyed. The contribution was "abundant," and he would take all possible precaution in the administration, lest the enemies of his apostleship should invent and propagate some new slander about him. The inspired man, the ambassador, the pioneer of a new Europe, was not ashamed to practise the lowly code of common sense and put a very strong emphasis on prudence. Hence his extreme caution. Blameless in the sight of God, he would be blameless in the eyes of men. And now a commendation of our brother, and a special word in behalf of Titus, "my partner and fellow-helper," not forgetting to say "partner and fellow-helper concerning you," and to exhort the Corinthians to make good his boasting to the Macedonian Churches on their behalf. So ends this admirable chapter. Is it not a beautiful pendant to that lamp which, for eighteen hundred years, in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, has hung out its blaze of splendour before the world?—L.

Ver. 5.—*Dedication.* If it seems strange to us that a large portion of an inspired Epistle should be occupied with directions as to a charitable collection which was going forward at the time, it should be remembered that Christianity introduced into human society new and more powerful principles of benevolence, and further, that the new and Divine revelation was one which laid the foundation for this as for all human duties in the character and action of God himself.

I. THE PRIMARY AND ALL-IMPORTANT DEDICATION IS THAT OF THE WHOLE PERSONAL NATURE UNTO THE LORD. 1. This appears when it is recollected that the Lord has first given himself for us. His sacrifice thus becomes the ground of our consecration. 2. Our very constitution, taken in connection with our natural relation to our Lord, points to such a dedication. "No man liveth unto himself." Our "chief end is to glorify God." 3. This spiritual consecration is pre-eminently acceptable to God. His demand is, "Give me thine heart." Every gift which does not flow from this is vain and worthless in his sight.

II. THE DEDICATION OF SELF TO THE LORD SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY THE DEDICATION OF SELF TO THE LORD'S PEOPLE. Paul looked for the brotherhood, the confidence, the co-operation of his converts, and indeed of all Christian people whom Divine providence might bring into contact with him. The Corinthians apparently wished to be personally associated with him in the ministrations to the Judæan Christians who were in poverty, and their wish was a source of satisfaction and joy to him.

III. TRUE CHRISTIAN CONSECRATION INVOLVES THE GIFT OF PROPERTY TO THE LORD'S CAUSE. It is sometimes objected against calls for liberality that God cannot be enriched by our giving. This is true, yet God's people may receive advantage, and Christ has shown us that what is done for his people is done for himself. As most people value their possessions, their generosity is a proof of the sincerity of their love and the reality of their consecration.

"How can I, Lord, withhold
Life's brightest hour
From thee; or gathered gold,
Or any power?"

Why should I keep one precious thing from thee,
When thou hast given thine own dearself for me?"

T.

Ver. 8.—*Sincere love.* In giving liberally towards the collection made for the poor Christians of Judæa, the Corinthians showed their love to the objects of their charity, to the apostle to whose appeal they responded, and also to the unseen Lord and Saviour by whose desire and for whose sake they befriended the least of his brethren.

I. LOVE TO CHRIST IS THE MIGHTIEST OF ALL SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES. Human life abounds with evidence of the might of love; every family, every society, has some exemplifications of the power of love to overcome difficulties, to prompt to exertion, to sustain under self-denial. And all Christendom in every age has shown that love to

Christ is an unrivalled motive to holiness, to patience, to benevolence. The hymns of the Church's literature, and the gifts and labours recorded in the Church's annals, are alike proof of the vitality and efficacy of Christian love.

II. **THE PROFESSION OF LOVE TO CHRIST IS NOT ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED BY THE REALITY.** The early disciples were admonished to "love unfeigned," were warned, "Let love be without dissimulation." Doubtless in all ages there have been those who have deceived themselves, and have imagined that they loved Christ, because they have felt some glow of admiration towards him, but who in time of trial have made it manifest that they had no depth of love. Weighed in the balance, they are found wanting. The soul is brought face to face with its own weakness and worthlessness, inconsistency and treachery.

III. **THE LORD JESUS TESTS IN MANY WAYS THE SINCERITY OF HIS PEOPLE'S PROFESSION OF LOVE.** 1. By his bodily absence from them, which shows whether they have an attachment to their professed Lord which can abide even though not fostered by sight and constant personal intercourse. 2. By permitting rival powers and persons to invite the supreme affection of the heart. These, though they cannot satisfy, may please, and the Lord of all suffers their attractiveness; for the love which cannot abide amid rival attractions is poor indeed. 3. By his demand that we should surrender what is dear to us, if to retain it conflicts with our supreme attachment to Christ. The young ruler was subjected to this test. In some form it comes to many. Feigned love will then go away, even though it go away grieved. 4. By our necessary and probationary contact with an unloving world. In the presence of the unspiritual and unsympathizing, the sincerity of the Christian's love is often sorely tested. 5. The trials and sufferings of life not only exercise the faith, they test the love, of the professed follower of Jesus. The storm proves whether the vessel is seaworthy or not. 6. By enjoining upon his people obedience to commandments which are contrary to our natural inclinations. Love can vanquish even the attachment to a "darling sin." 7. Love is tested when it is invited to direct itself towards others also, for Jesus' sake. Who can love Christ, and yet hate his brother, for whom Christ died?—T.

Ver. 9.—The condescension of Christ. According to the teaching of the New Testament, human kindness should be based upon Divine benevolence. Such is the import of this wonderful parenthesis—a jewel which the inspired writer drops by the way and passes on.

I. **CHRIST'S NATIVE RICHES CONTRASTED WITH HIS VOLUNTARY POVERTY.** 1. His proper rightful wealth is apparent, not only from his nature as the Son of God, but from his evident command, during his earthly ministry, of all the resources of nature. Bread, wine, money, he could multiply or create; the earth and the sea obeyed his will; diseases and demons fled at his bidding. 2. His poverty was not compulsory; it was a "grace." We see it in his incarnation, in which he emptied himself of his glory; in his ministry, passed in a lowly and all but destitute condition of life; in his refusal to use his power for selfish ends; in his cheerful submission to a shameful death. Compare the glory which he claimed to have had with the Father before the world was, with the homelessness and poverty of his life and the desertion and ignominy of his death, and his "grace" appeals to every just mind, to every sensitive heart.

II. **OUR NATIVE SPIRITUAL POVERTY CONTRASTED WITH OUR ACQUIRED SPIRITUAL WEALTH.** 1. Our natural destitution is undeniable; by sin we have lost our possessions, our inheritance, our powers of acquisition, and are left resourceless and friendless. Apart from the interposition of Christ, and where Christianity is unknown, such is still the state of man. 2. Christ's humiliation was for the sake of man's spiritual enrichment. Only by condescension, compassion, and sacrifice could man be reached. Thus he drew near to us, and imparted to us of his own true and Divine riches, of knowledge, of righteousness, of favour, and of glory. 3. By Christ's mediation all things are ours, God, giving Christ, gives with him all good things. "I have all things and abound," is the testimony of every right-minded and appreciative disciple of Christ. The history of the Church is the history of the enrichment of the race; and this in turn is the pledge and promise of the inestimable and inexhaustible riches of eternity.—T.

Ver. 12.—The rule of acceptance. Justice is distinctive of all the demands and of

all the proceedings of the providence of God. Often, as in the case before us, the righteousness of the principles of the Divine government is so apparent that no question can possibly be raised concerning it.

I. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE HERE PROPOUNDED. It is that the requirements of God correspond to the possessions of man. 1. What men have, they have received from the undeserved bounty of their Creator. This holds good with regard to property and to talents and opportunities. 2. An account is expected from every man by him who is the Judge and sovereign Lord of all. We are to some extent and in some matters accountable to our fellow-men, but for everything to him in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." 3. The rule according to which the supreme Governor will judge mankind is one of absolute rectitude—"according to that a man hath." The feeble man will not be expected to have done the work of the strong; the dull man the work of the genius; the peasant the work of the prince; nor the beggar to have given with the generosity of the millionaire. But each must answer for that which has been entrusted to himself. In all things the disposition, the spirit, the endeavour, will be taken into account; "if there be first the ready mind"—"if the forward zeal be at hand." Such is the universal condition of Divine acceptance and approval.

II. THE SPECIAL APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE HERE DEDUCED. 1. In the matter of gifts there is scope for moral culture and watchfulness. Unless liberality be shown upon definite principle, it will most likely not be shown at all. There is need of watching against selfishness and avarice. 2. It is well for every Christian to anticipate and apply beforehand the Divine principle—to judge himself, that he may not be judged by God; to put to himself the question, "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" 3. Especially should the inspired rule of liberality be observed by those who are prospering in the world. As means increase, let gifts be enlarged. The Judge cannot accept from the wealthy the gifts which were approved when offered by the poor.—T.

Ver. 21.—*Things honourable.* It might have been supposed that the apostle would have considered himself superior to the considerations here adduced. His life was so completely unselfish, so obviously governed by higher than interested principles, that it seems as if he might have taken it for granted that no suspicion could attach to his personal administration of the alms to be forwarded to Judæa. Probably others thought thus; few, if any, could have suspected Paul of fraud and misappropriation. But he judged himself by a standard which was applicable to all Christian agents, a standard which every wise man, experienced in the ways of the world, will do well to adopt as his own.

I. THE RULE OF CONDUCT HERE PROPOSED. 1. Things honourable are things actually good, admirable, beautiful, in themselves. The word in the original denotes primarily this. What things are morally excellent and praiseworthy, let these things be done. 2. Things honourable are things reputable and approved. It is especially prudent to be very careful and scrupulous, and very open, in the administration of public money, and so to act that there may be no opening for slander or misrepresentation. And the same rule applies to other departments of conduct. It should not be a prominent motive with us to secure men's approval, yet our conduct should be such as to secure that approval, and even to command it. 3. Things honourable may best be provided by endeavouring to realize the inquisitive inspection of men and the all-searching gaze of the omniscient God.

II. THE MOTIVES URGING TO THE PRACTICAL ADOPTION OF THIS RULE. 1. It will tend to the satisfaction and peace of our own conscience. 2. It will tend to the honour of the religion we profess, when it is seen to be, not a cloak for covetousness, but an impulse to disinterestedness and a principle of integrity. 3. It will be for the glory of God. Actions done in his sight and at his command, from the motive of his love, and with the hope of his approbation, are the actions which the Christian should aim consistently and constantly to perform, in all positions and in all relations of life.—T.

Ver. 23.—*The appreciation of fellow-labourers.* Anxious as Paul was that a generous contribution should be sent to Judæa for the relief and assistance of the poor Christians in that province, he was equally anxious that the *mode* in which this contribution was transmitted should be open and above all suspicion of carelessness in

misappropriation. Hence he secured that Titus and two others should be appointed as trustees, so to speak, of the fund, to take charge of it and to carry it to the destined quarter. Of these three Christian men Paul speaks in terms of notable commendation. He terms them—

I. HIS OWN ASSOCIATES. The expressions used with this intent are three in number. 1. They are *partners*, engaged in the same work, under the same Master, and with the expectation of a similar reward, with himself. 2. They are *fellow-workers*, each having his own faculty, his own implement, for labour, but all co-operating to the one end. 3. They are *brethren*; i.e. bound together by a personal tie, a spiritual kindred, in the Christian family and household of faith. These expressions involve a deep and lasting attachment, such as should unite those who are engaged in one and the same service rendered to the one great Master.

II. MESSENGERS OF THE CHURCHES. The expression in the original is very strong. They are apostles; i.e. sent forth by the congregation as their representatives and plenipotentiaries. This gives a special dignity to the office and work of accredited servants of the body of Christ, and therefore of Christ himself.

III. THE GLORY OF CHRIST. There is something mystical, something difficult to expound, in this epithet. It certainly implies that these faithful men were exalted to a position of very high honour, and were looked upon as related very closely to the Lord himself. Certainly it was to the glory of the Redeemer that a new principle of benevolence was introduced into human society, impelling the Gentile of Europe to display a practical interest in the welfare of the Jew of Palestine. Here was exhibited a moral glory radiating from Christ himself, before which the world might well bow down in wonder, admiration, and reverence.—T.

Vers. 1—7.—A pattern of charity. The charity commended is that of the Macedonian Churches.

I. THEY GAVE UNDER VERY UNFAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. *They were in much affliction.* (Ver. 2.) This might have suggested special care of themselves rather than of others. Suffering often produces selfishness. Our pain often prevents us from realizing the pains of others. 2. *They were in deep poverty.* (Ver. 2.) How could they give? Charity must begin at home, and does not “deep poverty” demonstrate that it must end there? How inconsiderate, and indeed absurd, to ask *them* to give! Was it not *their duty* to be provident? to hold some reserve in store against possibly worse times? *No people talk more of duty than those who intend to violate it.* The Macedonians saw the high duty of charity, and nobly performed that duty.

II. THOUGH AFFLICTED AND POOR, THEY GAVE LARGELY. (Ver. 3.) Their danger was not that they might give too little, but that they might give too much. “Beyond their power.” Affliction and poverty combined could not cramp their large-heartedness. Many ask how little they can give; the Macedonian Christians asked how much. A modern curse of the Church is small giving. There are too many threepenny-bit Christians.

III. THEY GAVE VOLUNTARILY. (Ver. 3.) Compulsory kindness is of little worth. And there are other compulsions than physical. “Voluntary offerings” are often anything but voluntary.

IV. THEY GAVE WITHOUT URGENT APPEAL. They gave “of their own accord.” They did not require the importunities of a “collection sermon.” They required only to know of the need; the charity was spontaneous.

V. THEY BEGGED FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF GIVING. (Ver. 4.) They *longed* to help, and supplicated for a share of the good work. Giving, to them, was a privilege—a gain, not a loss. Giving was not a thing to be avoided, but a thing to be sought. Perhaps they remembered the words of the Lord, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Had they given in an assembly it would not have been necessary to have the collection in the middle of the meeting to avoid a stampede and empty plates at the close. Much giving of to-day is not an illustration of charity, but a burlesque of it.

VI. THEY GAVE WITH MUCH JOY. (Ver. 2.) They reaped the firstfruits of charity at the time of the seed-sowing! Such are the wonders of spiritual agriculture. The grudging giver defrauds no one so much as himself. To miss the joy of giving is to miss how much! There are few luxuries so sweet as the luxury of charity.

VII. THEY GAVE THEMSELVES AS WELL AS THEIR MONETARY CONTRIBUTION. (Ver. 5.) 1. *To the Lord.* They solemnly dedicated themselves and their belongings to the Most High. "Twas easy for them to surrender a part when they had surrendered the whole. We give haltingly because we do not believe the Scripture which saith, "Ye are not your own." Our gifts cannot be acceptable to God if we withhold ourselves or parts of ourselves. 2. *To the apostle.* As to a servant of their Lord. For service. When they surrendered themselves to God they did not surrender themselves to idleness, but to activity. Many present to God a mass of indolence. Some consecrated people seem consecrated to do nothing. The Macedonian conduct exceeded the apostolic expectation, not the Divine. This was what God expected, and what he expects from us. It was "by the will of God" (ver. 5).

PRACTICAL. 1. Here is an example for us. Though we abound in faith, utterance, knowledge, earnestness (ver. 7), yet if we have not this practical love we are no better than "sounding brass" (1 Cor. xiii. 1). 2. We can attain to this only as the Macedonian Christians attained to it, by "the grace of God" (ver. 1). We do not want more money in our pockets, but more grace in our hearts. God can work this work in us. Let us commit ourselves into his hands, that this miracle may be wrought in us also.—H.

Ver. 9.—*The great Example of benevolence.* Consider—

I. HOW RICH THE SON OF GOD WAS. 1. *In possessions.* All things were made by him. All things were his. Not this world only, but all worlds. Not one race of creatures, but all races and orders. 2. *In power.* Omnipotence untrammelled and unrepressed. 3. *In homage.* (1) The adoration of the heavenly hosts; and (2) their perfect obedience to every command and wish. 4. *In the love and fellowship of the Father.* 5. *In purest happiness.*

II. HOW POOR HE BECAME. 1. *In condition.* (1) The Godhead veiled in humanity. (2) The Divine power restricted. (3) The God of joy transformed into the Man of sorrows. 2. *In circumstances.* (1) At his birth. His cradle a manger. An outcast; no room for him in the inn; a foreshadowing of the whole earthly life. (2) At Nazareth an artisan, earning bread by the sweat of his brow, standing thus so closely to fallen Adam. (3) As a preacher, dependent upon casual charity. (4) As a traveller, journeying in penny. (5) For his triumphal entry, dependent upon strangers. (6) As a prisoner, stripped of the little he possessed. "They parted my garments." (7) His dying bed, a cross; his last resting-place, a borrowed tomb. 3. *In surroundings.* (1) Instead of homage, mockery and insult. (2) Few friends. One of these a traitor and the remnant faithless at the supreme moment. (3) Heaven darkened to him. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

III. THIS MARVELLOUS TRANSFORMATION AND ITS CAUSE. 1. *It was purely voluntary.* He gave himself. "No man taketh it from me . . . I lay down my life" (John x. 13, 15). 2. *It was prompted by love.* "Ye know the grace," the spontaneous, unmerited love. The compulsion was the compulsion of compassion and affection. 3. *It had for its object the enrichment of men.* (1) Men were poor. (a) Always dependent. (b) Through sin, had forfeited all title to things bestowed by God, all title to the Divine favour, all title to brighter prospects. (c) Thus were poor deservedly. (2) Through Christ's poverty men are made rich. Those who are redeemed by Christ lose the poverty which is inseparable from sin, and: (a) Gain holiness. (b) Become partakers of the Divine nature. (c) Receive the adoption of children and become heirs of God. (d) Become inheritors of the heavenly kingdom. (e) Obtain present and future joy. (f) Become sharers in the glory which Christ for a while set aside. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them" (John xvii. 22).

IV. CHRIST IS HERE OUR EXAMPLE. 1. If Christ did this for us, how ready we should be to do what lies in our power for others! In doing it to them, we show our love to him. 2. How small our sacrifice must be compared to his! 3. Self-sacrifice makes us like Christ. He not only said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" he himself tasted this blessedness. And he gave *what*? He gave *himself* for us.—H.

Vers. 10—15.—*Things that belong to charity.* I. **TO WILL.** 1. *Charity must be voluntary.* No one can make us will. We can be made to give, but such giving is

morally worthless. God loveth a cheerful giver, because a cheerful giver is in all certainty a voluntary giver. The "voluntary system" is not *one* form of charity; it is the *only* form. Unless we willingly give, the less said about our charity the better; *for we have none!* 2. *The "willing" must be rightly prompted.* True charity means heart-love. The coin is base unless it bears this stamp. Though it may pass current amongst men, God will arrest and condemn it. Motives in giving should be carefully studied; not others' motives, but *ours!*

II. To do. Some are charitable in *intention*, not in *action*. Fruit trees are sometimes destitute of fruit, but to those thus symbolized there is but little encouragement in the fate of that barren tree which confronted Christ as he walked from Bethany to Jerusalem. Charity must be spiritual, but it must be practical also. Our *love* will never feed the hungry nor clothe the naked; and if our love does not prompt us to *do*, it is of less value than a mote in the sunbeam. Faith without works is dead, and charity without works is dead, buried, and rotting in its grave.

III. To give according to our ability. (Ver. 12.) Not according to what others give. We are apt to give according to the ability of somebody else. Perhaps when we judge of our own ability we had better ask God to help us. There are two occasions when a man's possessions are apt to dwindle—the one when he makes out his income-tax return, and the other when he is asked for a subscription. We need much grace rightly to estimate our own resources. Charitable appeals are apt to derange the laws of arithmetic and to lead to astonishing results.

IV. To give judiciously. 1. *The needs of any case should be carefully considered.* Not to make them *less* than they are, but to know them *as they are*. To give to undeserving cases is not only to waste our substance, but to do a vast amount of mischief. 2. *We are not required to impoverish ourselves that others may be enriched.* (Ver. 13.) Though, if we had tendencies in this direction, perhaps we should **not** be travelling away from our Master's example (ver. 9). Our danger probably lies in being content with the impoverished condition of others. But the object of charity is not that the poor should be made rich and the rich poor. 3. *An equality is to be aimed at.* (Ver. 14.) As to believers especially we should remember that they are members of the same faith, and should seek to make their condition equally healthy with our own. But our charity should not be restricted by the limits of "the household of faith." One has well said, "Our luxuries should yield to our neighbour's comforts, and our comforts to his necessities." This seems Paul's conception, who explains what he means by "equality" in the expression following: "Your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want" (ver. 14); and he illustrates it by reference to the manna given to Israel in the wilderness (Exod. xvi. 18). How far from approach to this equality is the giving of many! 4. *We must not so give as to check the exertions of those whom we help.* Paul does not apprehend that so undesirable a result will follow the charity which he recommends; he anticipates that the poor may become so rich as to help those now helping them. Unwise charity hinders, not helps, the recipient. Pauperism is a poor harvest to reap. Still we must see that this argument is not unduly pressed. It is to be a *protector*, it is not to be a *murderer*, of charity.—H.

Ver. 18.—*An enviable reputation.* I. A GREAT CHARACTER IS BETTER THAN A GREAT NAME. The brother referred to here is unnamed; a better mark than a name is put upon him. A great name may be inherited; may be won by a merely fortunate conjunction of circumstances; may be unmerited; may have no moral excellence associated with it. A great character must be earned. A great name blesses one's self; a great character, others.

II. THE APPROBATION OF HOLY MEN IS VERY PRECIOUS. The applause of a taller world may be reckoned at a cheap rate. Mere popularity is quite in contrast with the praise of all the Churches. That men who love Christ, and who thus have corrected tastes, can see in us what is lovely should cause us to be deeply thankful to God, who has wrought this good thing in us. When the approval is widespread and general among such, it becomes correspondingly precious. The praise of God, indeed, is what we should strive after; but this may be expressed by the lips of his children.

III. REPUTATION "IN THE GOSPEL" IS MOST TO BE DESIRED. This was the repu-

tation of the brother alluded to by Paul. It was in the sphere of the gospel that he had obtained his renown. And this is the very highest sphere. How can we make known the gospel? How can we exalt it in the estimation of men? How can we show forth its excellences in our lives? These should be supreme questions with us. Reputation in arms, art, science,—what are these compared with reputation in the gospel? What can arms do for men, or art, or science, compared with the gospel? The gospel presents the most magnificent arena for human life and achievement.

IV. OPINION IS TESTED BY TRUST. Here is a test of men's words. Will those who praise us put confidence in us? It was so with the brother in question (ver. 19). The friends who praised him trusted him with *money*, and this is an extreme form of trust with most men. They praised him for a piety which extended to the secularities of life. His gospel ruled the money-bag. We want more pounds-shillings-and-pence religion. If our piety does not make us uncorrupt in practical life, we had better cast it to the dogs, for it is only fit for them.—H.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Ministerial carefulness in money matters.* I. STRICTEST HONESTY IS, OF COURSE, ESSENTIAL. How can a man preach this common Christian virtue if he lacks it himself? How can his ministry in spiritual things be blessed if he is tainted with the slightest dishonesty in things carnal? What peace of conscience can he possess if he knows that herein he is faulty; and without peace in his own conscience how can he minister in the gospel of all peace? Those who bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean. What a fearful condemnation will be theirs who, whilst expatiating upon the preciousness of heavenly treasure, are all the while dishonestly grasping the treasure which perishes!

II. STRICTEST HONESTY IS NOT SUFFICIENT. A servant of God may be perfectly innocent, and yet by carelessness may give occasion to some to denounce him as guilty. It is not only needful to do right, it is needful to *appear* to do right as well. Whilst no man should be content with satisfying men apart from God, a wise man will not rest content with satisfying God and his own conscience, but will recognize the importance of not giving a handle for reproach to those amongst whom he lives. Prudent, indeed, was the apostle when he resolved to "take thought for things honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (ver. 21). Through lack of such wisdom on the part of ministers: 1. *Many a ministerial reputation has been wrecked.* The lie has been believed, and has been believed because it has been corroborated by unwise conduct. A lie thus strengthened is very attractive to many minds. Lies need no help on our part. It is often easier to make a man believe the barest lie than to make him believe the barest truth. It has been quaintly said, "A lie will travel round the world before truth has finished putting on its boots." 2. *Powerful ministers have been rendered impotent.* 3. *Churches have been greatly injured.* The shadow falling upon the minister has spread its darkness over the Church. 4. *Many have become prejudiced against the gospel.* 5. *Much dishonour has fallen upon the Name of Christ.* Christians dare not be careless; they carry with them the honour of their Master. It is not a question about being careless of *our own name*; the matter affects *his Name*. No man can afford to despise popular opinion in such a matter as this. If a false accusation has been brought without occasion given, that accusation will have the elements of weakness in it, and may generally be successfully repelled; but if occasion has been given, the honest man furnishes evidence of his own dishonesty, he forges the chain wherewith he is bound, he signs his own condemnation. Public men have many enemies. Ministers are the targets of the devil, and often of the devil's children. Great wisdom do they need to walk so that they shall not unwittingly furnish their adversaries with a weapon against themselves and their cause. This applies, of course, not only to money matters, but to all matters. 'Tis the utmost folly to present our own sword to the foe. If we fall, let it be by our *enemy's* weapon, not by our own.—H.

Ver. 23.—*What true Christian workers are.* I. THEY ARE THE GLORY OF CHRIST. 1. *They are the monuments of the triumph of Christ.* They are "saved" to some purpose. Many assert that they are "saved," but they cannot discover, neither can any one else, *unto what they are saved.* They seem to be saved unto *nothingness*,

and in this sense to have experienced a singularly complete redemption. But the active, devoted Christian proves the reality of his faith by works following. Christ has not only triumphed over the judgment and heart, but over all powers, which are now willingly dedicated to his service. 2. *They resemble Christ.* Christ was pre-eminently a *worker*. He "went about doing good;" they seek to do so. He practised self-denial and endured suffering that others might be benefited; they strive to imitate him. 3. *They exalt Christ.* They desire that his kingdom may be extended over the earth. Whilst they labour for others, they do this out of their love for him. He is *first*, all else second. The exaltation of Christ is their supreme wish. Their mission is to speak well of his Name wherever they go. 4. *Christ delights in them.* They are the fruitful trees which he loves. He cursed the barren tree, but these he blesses. They are the faithful servants of the absent Lord. He loves not idlers who filch the name of "servant;" but those who are servants indeed his soul rejoices in. He glories in these, for they show forth his praise.

II. THEY SHOULD SEEK FULLY TO REALIZE THEIR HIGH CALLING. 1. The dignity of Christian work is not always perceived as fully as it should be. It is *infinitely* superior to all other work. 2. Nor its privilege. Were this adequately realized, what alacrity there would be in entering upon Christian service! As it is, alas! almost force has to be employed in some cases. 3. Nor its responsibility. 4. Nor how much the work done is affected by the life lived.

III. THEY SHOULD BE HIGHLY ESTEEMED. They are the instruments through which God works. They are the means employed by him for the building up of the kingdom of Christ. They are the special representatives of Christ upon earth. They should be (1) encouraged, (2) helped, (3) honoured.—H.

Ver. 5.—*Praiseworthy Churches.* Praise from St. Paul was worth having. He was a serious man, who could not pay empty compliments, and having a high sense of the Christian calling, he would never think of praising a Church merely to please the people or ingratiate himself with them, if he had not judged it worthy of commendation. Here are two marks of a Church on which the grace of God has been bestowed.

I. CONSECRATION OF ITS MEMBERS TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Before they made their contribution to the relief of the poor saints elsewhere, the Macedonian Christians "gave their own selves to the Lord." Though poor and afflicted, happy were they and generous, because their conversion was thorough, and their devotion to Christ hearty and unfeigned. By profession all Christians give themselves to the Lord; but alas! in some cases it is a mere profession. Not every one so believes and lives as to entitle him to say, "I am my Lord's, and he is mine." This, however, is the true ideal. "Thy people shall be freewill offerings in thy day of power." And without this spirit in its members no Church is strong or pleasing to Christ, no matter how venerable its history, how admirable its constitution, or how well conducted its services.

II. SUBJECTION TO APOSTOLIC GUIDANCE BY THE WILL OF GOD. Some of the Macedonian Christians gave themselves to St. Paul as his companions and assistants in missionary labour. Such were Sopater, Secundus, Aristarchus, and Epaphroditus; of whom the first was a Berean, the second and third were Thessalonians, and the fourth was a Philippian. But these choice men were only favourable specimens of the Churches to which they belonged, and which were pervaded by reverence for the apostle and gratitude for his labours. Every true Church of Christ must be apostolic. It must stand on the apostolic testimony and doctrine, follow apostolic direction and practice, and both inhale and exhale the spirit of apostolic devotion to Christ. Of the history and writings of the apostles enough is extant to guide and comfort every Church that is, like those of Macedonia, ready to learn of an apostle by the will of God. We are "built on the foundation of apostles and prophets." On the twelve foundations of the wall of the holy city are inscribed the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

EXHORTATION. Follow those of Macedonia. Give yourselves to the Lord, and then to the apostolic word and fellowship. Present yourselves a living sacrifice.—F.

Ver. 9.—*Amazing love.* The insertion of this compact statement of our Saviour's love and self-devotion for our sakes into an exhortation to love and liberality in the Church, illustrates the habit of St. Paul's mind to revert often to central truths, and

take his motives and arguments directly from Christ and the cross. "Ye know the grace of our Lord." But consider what you know, that it may influence your disposition and conduct; for nothing is more common than to hold known truth so loosely and carelessly in the mind that it is as though it had never been known or were quite forgotten.

I. THE SAVIOUR'S WEALTH. Of the riches of his pre-existent glory who can adequately speak? Who can tell the wealth of Divine power and dignity and love in the Word which was with God and was God—all the angels of God his servants, all the works of God full of his praise? But this is not a subject on which to dilate. It is above the reach of our comments and illustrations. Read John i.; Col. i.; Heb. i.

II. THE SAVIOUR'S IMPOVERISHMENT. (Comp. Phil. ii. 5—11.) Our Lord's participation of the Divine essence was not, could not, be surrendered. But the form of God could be and was laid aside. The form cannot be without the being and nature; but the being and nature may dispense with the form. So the Son of God in his grace toward us assumed the form of a man, and that in low estate—the form of a servant. He accepted a lowly human rank, with no attendants on his person but such as followed him in love, and no house of his own wherein to lay his head at night. In wisdom, indeed, and all that constitutes moral wealth and dignity, Jesus of Nazareth was rich; but in earthly station and treasure he was poor, and poor by choice. See him in youth in the carpenter's house, eating the bread of the working man with cheerfulness. In the little town there must have been many a piece of furniture, and on the farms and vineyards around many a tool, which had been under the human hands of the Son of God. See him on foot on the rough roads of Palestine, while others rode past on horses and mules. See him in the days of his ministry dependent on any who pleased to minister to his necessities; at last deserted by his friends and insulted by his foes—despised and rejected of men. Truly he became poor.

III. THE SAVIOUR'S GRACE. "For your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be enriched." In this short statement the whole work of substitution and redemption is implied. You are enriched through his poverty, blessed because of his suffering, accepted by reason of his rejection, reconciled through his death. It is evident that the riches thus secured to those that believe are not treasures of this world, but of the same order with the riches which the Saviour laid aside for a season. They receive the privilege of sonship with God, and therefore also the heirship of all things with Christ Jesus. The Son of God became man, and a poor man, that they, being men, and poor men, might be owned as sons of God. Dwell upon the riches in redemption, regeneration, forgiveness, justification, adoption, sanctification, comfort, patience, the earnest of the inheritance now, and the inheritance itself at his coming. And all because he became poor for your sakes. You get sweetness out of sorrow, glory out of shame, strength from weakness, wealth through poverty, and life through death.

IV. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF CONSIDERING THE SAVIOUR'S GRACE. 1. Not to raise a foolish admiration of poverty for its own sake. At one time this text was cited in support of lazy beggary. The mendicant friars quoted it, insisting that the Lord himself was a mendicant, and that this must be the most holy and Christ-like state. Great schoolmen debated this, and papal bulls dealt with this notion. Such questions we can no longer discuss with seriousness. Property is not to be abandoned by Christians, but wisely administered. The rich and the poor are to continue together in the Church, each condition having its own duties and its own attendant temptations. 2. To set our hearts on the true riches—faith and good works, a calm conscience, and affections set on things above. He is rich who has a patient spirit, a pure heart, a heavenly mind, and a hope of glory. 3. To live and give that others may be blessed. Be generous in service and gifts to the Church and the poor. Be willing to communicate, ready to distribute. Otherwise do not allege that you have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have not felt the constraint of his love or the beauty of his example.—F.

Ver. 12.—*Readiness accepted.* It is characteristic of St. Paul that, when dealing with specific questions of duty, he laid down principles of much wider application. Thus, while the immediate topic was a collection for the relief of poor saints, and he

acknowledges the liberality of the Corinthians, the apostle takes occasion to explain the value of "readiness," *i.e.* a disposition stretching forward to serve God and the Church, and not needing to be dragged forward by importunity. This is acceptable to God, the supreme Lover and spontaneous Giver of every good and perfect gift. What he regards is not the amount of the gift laid on his altar, but the disposition which gives promptly and gladly according to the resources at its command. Now, this principle is of wide application. It will prove all kinds of service. God is pleased with those servants of his who have a ready mind. An apt but misleading phrase is sometimes heard—"taking the will for the deed." Too often it is used as an excuse for shirking duty or withholding gifts. Two things must be kept in mind—

I. GOD DOES NOT ACCEPT INTENTION OR GOOD WILL INSTEAD OF THE DEED WHEN IT IS WITHIN ONE'S POWER TO PERFORM. And God looks behind the excuses that a covetous or indolent heart puts forward, and knows the absolute fact regarding what each man has or has not, can or cannot do. In giving to the poor or for the propagation of the gospel, one may obtain praise of men by bestowing a large sum in answer to an urgent appeal; but he has no praise from God if his contribution has been reluctant, or if it does not bear a fair proportion to the resources at his disposal. Sometimes one cannot give as much as formerly or as much as his neighbours, and therefore prays to be excused from giving anything, expressing a hope that the will may be taken for the deed. But it will not be so taken. He is required to give according to what he has, not what he has not. And the willing offering is just as acceptable to God as a gift a thousand times as large from a man a thousand times as rich. So also in regard to personal service. How many who call Jesus "Lord," when any definite piece of Christian work is proposed to them, put it aside, alleging that they have no turn for it or no time for it! So they stand all the day idle. Because they cannot serve with great ability or in a conspicuous station, they do nothing, and simply wish well to the cause of God and of righteousness. But empty good wishes are cheap and little worth, and God will not in such cases take the will for the deed. He who employs two talents with a willing mind will be commended in exactly the same terms as his fellow-servant who has had five. And let him who has only one beware of hiding it in the earth. Men are very apt to take gifts from Christ, but not the gift of his "yoke." They are also not unwilling to own their faults, but do not mend them—merely raise a sort of foolish protest against their own weakness. In like manner they hear with much satisfaction of the efforts made to purify and reform society, but personally they take no trouble about it, devote no time or pains to such endeavours. The hard work of philanthropy they complacently leave to others. Many act in the same way in regard to the expense incurred in a good cause. They are quite proud of the large sums raised in their church, and of the free-handedness of their country. But they do not give. They blandly wave their best wishes over the gifts of others. But where there is power to do something for the good cause, God will not accept a wish for the deed. Where there is power to give, he will not accept a smile for a gift.

II. WHERE GOOD WILL SHOWS ITSELF IN DEEDS OR GIFTS, GOD LOOKS NOT SO MUCH ON THE AMOUNT OF THE OFFERING AS ON THE HEART OF THE DOER OR GIVER. It is the *prothumia*, the readiness of disposition, which pleases him. He loves the earnest worker and the cheerful giver. He approves that doer of the Word who does not need to be coaxed and pressed to undertake some part of Christian service, and that giver who, instead of waiting to be solicited, seeks out the objects most worthy of help, and makes his offering with a simplicity and a spontaneousness which greatly enhance the gift. In fact, while God does not accept the will for the deed from those who are able to do, he always accepts the will in the deed, and is pleased with the evidence of a ready mind. King David was not permitted to build a temple to Jehovah; but it was well that it was in his heart to do so (1 Kings viii. 18), and the preparations which he made for the work are recorded with honour (1 Chron. xxix.). The women who prepared spices and ointments for the dead body of Jesus Christ were not allowed to carry out their purpose, for before they reached the sepulchre he had risen; but their readiness of mind was pleasing to the Lord, and they got something better to do than anoint a corpse. They were made the first preachers of his resurrection (Luke xxiv. 10). The men who had followed Jesus were more slow of heart. They brooded over the disappointment of their hopes about the Messiah's kingdom, and the dark storm of

odium which had broken on their Master and on his cause. So they had no thought of an early visit to the sepulchre. But the women thought less of the cause and more of the Master. And so with their ready mind they got the highest honour. Learn that the secret of happiness and usefulness lies in having the same ready mind, fastened, not so much on this piece of work or that, as on the Lord himself, for or to whom all Christian work is to be done. You may not get outlet for your readiness in the way that you planned or expected, but you will get outlet and employment for it; and God will accept it according to what it is, not according to its apparent success. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart.—F.

Ver. 1.—*The model Churches of Macedonia.* By these we are to understand the Churches at Thessalonica, Philippi, and Berea. There is a sense in which we speak of the Church of Christ as *one*, and also a sense in which we speak of it as *many*. It is correct to say, “the Church,” and it is also correct to say, “the Churches.” All who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and have surrendered their will and life to his ruling, and have made open profession of their devotion to him, make together the one catholic and apostolic Church, and may properly be thought of as a whole, as the members of the one body of Christ; but as these are located in various places, as they unite for purposes of fellowship and worship in different spheres and different buildings, they may be spoken of as Churches. The answering terms, which help to explain those on which we are dwelling, were used by our Lord, who spoke of his many *folds* and his one *flock*. St. Paul might with equal truthfulness have spoken of the *Church* in Macedonia, but he probably desired to direct attention to the special circumstances of each individual community, in order to bring out forcibly the remarkable character of their generosity and self-denial. He sets before us for our consideration this fact, that, just as a Christian man’s conduct and character may make him a model to others, and a gracious power upon them, touching and quickening into power that spirit of emulation which dwells in various strength in us all, so an individual Church, or a set of Churches, may act with a nobility, a generosity, and self-denial that should make them an inspiring model to other Churches. We consider in what ways the Macedonians became a model to the Corinthians.

I. A MODEL AS THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE GRACE. “We do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia.” By “grace” here we are to understand the special *favour* of God, and the precise “gifts” with which they were endowed. The disposition and the power to give is to be regarded as a divinely bestowed talent or trust, and as a special sign of the Divine favour. The gift of benevolence, charity, generosity, is as truly a Divine trust or bestowment as the gift of healing, of preaching, or of tongues. And, like all other Divine gifts, it is dependent on reciprocity, preparedness to use such gifts aright. Divine bestowments on Churches are never made at hap-bazard, upon any kind of favouritism, or in the exercise of any so-called *sovereignty*. Neither Churches nor individuals can get free from the responsibility of being *ready to receive*. The loving and thoughtful spirit of the Philippian, and the studious openness of the Bereans, and the suffering experiences of the Thessalonians, prepared them to receive this special grace of God unto generosity and brotherly charity. Illustrate and impress this point, that nowadays Churches lack “grace” because they are not in attitudes and moods fitting them for its reception. We are not straitened in God, in God’s provisions, or in God’s willingness, but we are sadly straitened in ourselves, in our unreadiness and unfitness to receive. Of God it is said, “He giveth more grace;” but of us it must be said, “Ye have not because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss.” Illustrating how God delays his bestowments until there is the fitting attitude for their reception, the Prophet Hosea (ii. 21, 22) represents God as saying, “It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.” When all unite to cry for the refreshing rains, then, and only then, shall the windows be opened, and grace in copious showers descend.

II. A MODEL AS RESPONDING TO DIVINE GRACE. For the grace may come, and be neglected or misused. Compare the expression St. Paul uses concerning himself (1 Cor. xv. 10): “By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I,

but the grace of God which was with me." It is a great and ever-working law that all Divine gifts that are unused or undervalued will be taken away or lost. The one condition of the renewal and enlargement of grace is that we have faithfully responded to the grace we have had. We retain the gift of preaching only by preaching, and the gift of charity only by the exercise of generosity and self-denial. The remarkable thing about the Macedonian Churches, the thing which made them a model to other Churches, was that they so nobly responded to the grace that rested upon them, and acted in so earnest and self-sacrificing a manner. So often Churches have more grace than they follow out, and so they lose the grace. The grace abounds, but the response to the grace is set under unworthy limitations.

III. A MODEL AS SELF-DENYING. The apostle notices two things which might reasonably have excused the Macedonians from sharing in the contribution. 1. Their persecution, and the anxieties and distresses which it had brought them. 2. Their poverty, for the Church was not gathered from the rich; the poor of this world were made "rich in faith." So their large and generous gifts were a delightful surprise, and a testimony to the power of Christian principle upon them. Christian motive mastered worldly considerations; and their gifts became peculiarly acceptable to God, because upon them rested the Christly stamp of self-sacrifice. St. Paul commends, in these Macedonians, just what our Lord commended when he directed attention to the poor widow who cast two mites into the treasury—"all her living."

IV. A MODEL AS THOROUGHLY EARNEST IN GENEROUS SCHEMES. St. Paul dwells, in a very delighted way, upon their *willingness* and their *earnestness*. It was not merely that they gave, but that they gave in such a hearty way, so cheerfully, under the sway of such high motives, and with such evident warmth of affection for himself. If it is true that "what is worth doing is worth doing well," it is especially true of the Christian duty of brotherly kindness as finding expression in self-denying gifts. The great blessing of a gift is the spirit in which it is made. The value is taken away when it is given grudgingly. God loveth—and so do men—the cheerful, willing giver.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*The religion of association must be made personal.* One of the words in this passage is evidently used in an unfamiliar sense. "Hoped" means "expected," "anticipated." The verse is connected with the collection for the saints at Jerusalem, and is part of the apostle's endeavour to inspire the Churches of Achaia to nobler endeavour by the example of the Churches of Macedonia. The text expresses the deeply religious character of the Macedonian gift. As St. Paul saw it, it was no mere gift, it was the expression of consecrated and devoted hearts. They gave themselves, and then their gifts. They gave themselves *in* their gifts. We dwell now, not on the charity, but on the expression, "gave their own selves to the Lord," which suggests for consideration the *personal character* of saving religion.

I. ALL OF US ARE, IN OUR MEASURE, RELIGIOUS. There may still be godless audiences, such as Whitefield gathered at the fairs, or Wesley and Hill at the mouths of colliery pits. But in the ordinary assemblies in our Churches there is not a man, woman, or child who is not, in some degree, religious. They are religious (1) as belonging to a Christian country; (2) as baptized into mystical relations with the Church of Christ; (3) as by acts of formal worship making Christian profession; or (4) as variously related to Christian families. But the question comes again and again before us—Is our kind and degree of religion satisfactory?

II. IN TOO MANY CASES OUR RELIGION IS WHOLLY MATTER OF ASSOCIATION. 1. We are members of a Christian home, and share in the religion of the home. And this is, for the children, an every way beautiful and hopeful beginning of religious life. 2. We are affected by the tone of the spheres we occupy. Illustrate by young people in situations, where they join in family worship and in attendance at the house of God; also by the influence of Christian friendships. 3. We are swayed by our near relationship with those who are godly, as in the case of the husband and wife. But the question comes—Is this *all* our religion? Is it enough? Is it saving? Can any reliance be placed upon it? Will it stand in the coming testing-day? It is so far good. It is a favourable breeze catching the sails, but it is not safety in the harbour. It is the angel's voice in our ear crying, "Flee for thy life;" it is even the angel's

hand on our arm, as on the arm of Lot; but it is not safety in Zoar. There is a familiar old saying that "Hell is paved with good intentions;" it might have been with "good associations." Such associations are good if they are used as helps, but not if they are relied on as sufficient. They are only evil if they are allowed to hinder personal anxiety. Religion is personal or it is nothing.

III. GOD, BY HIS PROVIDENCE AND BY HIS WORD, IS EVER URGING US TO MAKE RELIGION PERSONAL. Providence breaks up our associations. A time comes when the child passes into manhood or womanhood, and must learn to go alone. Then changes and testing-times come, which show what the religion of association has been worth. Illustrate by the child going to boarding school; the youth to business; the assistant changing his situation; the man or woman going through times of sorrow. In each God is wanting to lead the soul to personal religion. God's preached Word, with its various persuasions, is ever bearing on the same point. It is a singling out of the individual; a two-edged sword to the individual; a pressure of the personal claims of God on the individual. Its voice is, "Thou art the man;" "To you is the word of this salvation sent." It labours to secure a personal decision for Christ, a giving of "our own selves to the Lord." Is, then, your religion yet no more than the religion of your home and associations? And is your manhood come, your womanhood come? Remember that you are *not saved*, only associated with salvation. This is the question which should set you upon anxious self-searchings, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" It is not enough to be *close by* salvation, to be even on its doorstep. Enter in. Strive to enter in. Strive to enter in *now*.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The poverty that made others rich.* The question is often asked—Which gives most pleasure to us—the faculty of memory, which vivifies the past, or anticipation, which brightens the future? The answers we make at once depend upon, and become revelations of, character. The apostle in this passage is using the faculty of memory; he is recalling what is known respecting the Lord Jesus Christ. He is treating of the grace of self-sacrificing liberality and generosity; and of this Christ is the most illustrious and glorious example. We hold the memory of a twofold exchange on the part of the Lord Jesus—(1) from riches to poverty; (2) from poverty to riches; but here the apostle contrasts Christ's exchange from riches to poverty with our exchange, through Christ, from poverty to riches, and this is the double exchange on which we propose to dwell.

I. THE FIRST EXCHANGE. *Christ*—from riches to poverty. Christ's riches may be treated under the headings (1) rank; (2) wealth; (3) pleasure. Or we may say that he was rich (1) in his Divine nature; (2) in the infinite love and acceptance of the Father; (3) in the adoration of all holy beings; (4) in possession of all the wealth and joy of heaven. Christ's poverty, which was a comparative thing, may be brought out by presenting such contrasts as (1) God—man; (2) son—servant; (3) at home—homeless; (4) rich—empty; (5) happy—suffering. He became poor by (1) giving up the wealth of heaven; (2) in his birth as a poor man's child; (3) in his lowly station as one of the common people; (4) in his death-time of sorest humiliation. Such a condescension in incarnation had never before been conceived. It surpasses thought. It is the exceeding great mystery which the eternal ages will not fathom. It is "so great love;" it is "what manner of love."

II. THE SECOND EXCHANGE. *We*—from poverty to riches. By our poverty we need not understand our earthly conditions, seeing that poverty is but a relative thing, and depends upon the degree in which a man matches his circumstances. The man who has little and wants little is not poor; the man who has little and wants much is the man who can alone be called "poor." Our real poverties are the conditions to which we have reduced ourselves by our sins. See how much we have thus lost, so that we are become poor indeed. (1) Lost harmony with the world; (2) lost peace within; (3) lost brotherhood with men; (4) lost fellowship with God. Then what are the riches we attain through Christ Jesus? They are riches for the souls, which are our real selves; they are not any mere riches of circumstances. They consist in (1) the smile and favour of God; (2) the love of a living and Divine Friend; (3) the prospect of an eternal glory. Or we may say that we become rich (1) in the hope that Jesus brought; (2) in the words that Jesus spoke; (3) in the love to us that Jesus showed; (4) and

in the salvation that Jesus secured. But no human words can exhaust our riches in Christ Jesus.

III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO EXCHANGES. "*For your sakes.*" The one exchange was made in order to accomplish the other. To bless us Christ must condescend to become one of us. Illustrate by the missionary making himself a Chinaman, and living all alone among the people that he might reach them with the gospel message. Or by the Moravian missionary, giving up friendship, love, and hope, to enter the lazar-house and try to teach and save the lepers. And what did Christ do for us when he had thus humbled himself to take our nature on him? It is said that "he went about doing good," and that was his way of making everybody rich with (1) blessings; (2) truth; and (3) salvation. And St. Paul appeals to the Corinthians and to us, saying, "Ye know the grace." But *do we know?* Have we felt the persuasion and attraction that are in such "love Divine, all love excelling"?—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*Willing minds putting value on gifts.* "First a willing mind." The apostle has been calling to mind the resolve which the Corinthian Church had made a year previously. They had determined to join in the collection that was being made for the poor and suffering saints at Jerusalem. It seems that the disturbed state of the Church and the delay of St. Paul's visit had led to the forgetfulness of this resolve, and little or nothing had been done in relation to it. The apostle now brings the matter again before them, reminds them that there was at one time the *willing mind*, and he seems delicately to suggest to them that it would be a beautiful way of testifying to the restored relations between himself and them, if they would revive this collection, carry the matter through, and give him the joy of carrying their gifts to the poor Jerusalem saints, in whom he was so deeply interested. He was thus led to dwell upon the importance, before God, of the spirit in which gifts are made. They ought to carry our hearts to him, just as the old Mosaic sacrifices carried the hearts of the worshippers. Gifts have voices which God can hear, and he reads our hearts by the help of them. Two points are here suggested.

I. MAN ESTIMATES GIFTS BY THEIR MONEY VALUE. A fair enough standard in view of the institutions that have to be sustained and the work which has to be done. The Church needs large gifts, and is compelled to ask for quantity. She needs the devotements of the rich, and is not wholly wrong in trying to raise ever higher the standard of Christian gifts for Christian uses. But the money estimate of gifts needs to be set under most careful limitations. It fails to take account of the relative circumstances of the givers. A pound is a pound, whoever may give it; but the rich man passes it over, and knows that it will not involve his going without any one thing that he wishes to have. The poor man hands it over, and knows it means wearing the threadbare coat a few months longer, or going without some personal gratification. In really worthy scales that poor man's pound weighs heavy, for there is added to it that self-denial which is, in God's sight, of great price. Man cannot discern or rightly appraise *motives*. The business principle too often wholly sways men in their Christian and Church relations, and men are accepted by the largeness of their contributions rather than by the largeness of the love with which they contribute.

II. GOD ESTIMATES GIFTS BY THEIR WILL VALUE. "If there be first the willing mind, there is acceptance." God seeth not as man seeth. Man looketh on the countenance; God looketh on the heart. Man appraises the value of the thing; God reads the state of the will and the purpose of the heart. Illustration may be taken from the large gift of Barnabas to the early Church. God accepted it because it was the expression of a willing mind. The gifts of Ananias and Sapphira were smaller; they were not, however, refused on this ground, but only because the will was wrong and the motive mixed and had. The "amount" of a gift is quite as important in the sight of God as in the sight of man, because a great gift alone can express the willing mind of a man with great means. God judges proportions. He only desires to see Christian love triumphing over disabilities, and making the rich, who cling to riches, splendidly generous, and the poor making the "poverty which had consumed them" even to the very bottom" (ver. 2) yield noble and self-denying contributions. With God the question is—How much did your heart give? It is a second thing, with him, to ask—How much did your hand give? But he does expect the heart and the

hand to honourably act together, the hand honestly expressing what the heart feels.—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*Honest before God and man.* Comp. Prov. iii. 4, which, in the Greek Version reads, “Write them upon the table of thine heart, and thou shalt find favour. Provide things honest in the sight of God and man.” This may be treated as a general precept, applicable to all Christian people; or it may be regarded as a reminder of the care which the apostle had taken that, in the administration of money affairs, he should not be misunderstood or blamed. Consider—

I. THE COUNSEL AS APPLIED TO THE APOSTLE HIMSELF. As a fact he had been jealously providing for honest things, and doing everything possible in order to secure the due checking of the gifts and safety of the stored money. Calvin says, “He was not so satisfied with himself as to think it unworthy of his dignity to avoid calumny.” Dean Plumptre says, “In this case, had the apostle had only the judgment of God to consider, he could with a pure conscience have taken up the money to Jerusalem by himself. But he had to consider that men were judging him, and might suspect him, and therefore he insisted on having his accounts audited.” F. W. Robertson says, “In this is to be observed St. Paul’s wisdom, not only as a man of the world, but as a man of God. He knew that he lived in a censorious age, that he was as a city set on a hill, that the world would scan his every act and his every word, and attribute all conceivable and even inconceivable evil to what he did in all honour. It was just because of St. Paul’s honour and innocence that he was likely to have omitted this prudence.” Archdeacon Farrar indicates the kind of things that were said about the apostle by his Corinthian enemies, which made such an earnest self-vindication absolutely necessary. He represents them as saying that St. Paul was “half demented, and yet there was some method in his madness which showed itself partly in self-importance and partly in avarice, both of which were very injurious to the interests of his followers. What, for instance, could be more guileful and crafty than his entire conduct about this collection which he was so suspiciously eager to set on foot? He had ordered them to get up a subscription in his first letter, had, in answer to their inquiries, directed that it should be gathered, as in the Galatian Churches, by a weekly offertory, and had, since this, sent Titus to stimulate zeal in the matter. They dared to insinuate that all this was only a cunning device to hide his real intentions, and give him a securer grasp of their money.” Give in detail the arrangements made by the apostle to secure the due safety and auditing of the collection; and urge that all who have responsible positions in relation to Christian monies should show a similar anxiety to “provide things honest.”

II. THE COUNSEL AS APPLIED TO CHRISTIAN GIVING. Those who give must give only that which is honourably their own. The man who is in debt must pay his debts before he gives. The man who has family claims is bound to make adequate provision for them before he gives. To use the familiar proverb, “A man must be just before he is generous.” When this rule is neglected, a man’s gifts can neither be acceptable to God nor right in the sight of his fellow-men.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

Encouragement to the Corinthians to fulfil their promises by giving speedily (vers. 1—5), amply (ver. 6), cheerfully (ver. 7), and thereby earn God’s blessing (vers. 8—11) in a cause fruitful of blessed consequence (vers. 12—14). He concludes the subject with a heartfelt thanksgiving (ver. 15).

Ver. 1.—*For.* This word shows that he

is continuing the same subject, and therefore excludes the supposition that this chapter is a separate letter or fragment. No doubt, however, the express mention of the collection after he has been practically writing about it through the whole of the last chapter looks as if he had been interrupted, or had left off dictating at the end of the last verse. Such breaks must often and necessarily have occurred in the dictation of the Epistles, and doubtless help to account for some of their phenomena. Perhaps, on reperusing the last paragraphs

before resuming the subject he observed that, after all, he had not directly mentioned the contribution, and therefore explains that he thought it superfluous to do so. To the saints. The poor Christians of Jerusalem (ch. viii. 4). Superfluous. Because the subject had been already fully brought to their notice by himself and by Titus.

Ver. 2.—I boast of you; literally, *I am boasting*. The tense shows that he is writing from Macedonia, probably from Philippi (ch. viii. 24). Achaia (see ch. i. 1). Was ready a year ago; *has been prepared since last year*. Your zeal hath provoked very many; literally, *zeal from you hath stimulated the majority*. "Zeal from you" means zeal which emanated from the Corinthians and aroused emulation in others.

Ver. 3.—But. Though it is needless to write to you about this collection, I sent the brethren to make sure that all I had said about you might be justified by reality. In this behalf; *i.e.* about this matter (comp. ch. iii. 10), or, as we might express it, "in this direction." He seems to have felt more uncertainty about their liberality than about other matters (ch. vii. 4).

Ver. 4.—They of Macedonia; rather, *Macedonians*; *i.e.* any friends from Macedonia (Acts xx. 4). Shall Achaians have to blush before Macedonians? We, that we say not ye. Nothing can exceed the delicacy of this touch. St. Paul asks them to be ready with their contributions for *his* sake, not for their own; that *he* may not have to blush for his generous words respecting them, whereas really the discredit would be simply theirs. Confident boasting; rather, *confidence*. The reading "of boasting" is not genuine here. For the word *hypostasis* in the sense of "confidence," see ch. xi. 17; Heb. iii. 4. The use of the word to represent the "Persons" of the Blessed Trinity is later. The other sense of the word, "substance" (or underlying base of attributes), is found in Heb. i. 3.

Ver. 5.—That they would go before unto you. The triple repetition of the word "before" shows how earnest St. Paul is in the matter. The Corinthians had promised largely; it was evident that there had been, or that there was ground for fearing that there might be, some slackness of performance. St. Paul was so unwilling to have seemed inaccurate in what he had said about them in Macedonia that he wished to give them ample notice before the Macedonian delegates arrived. Your bounty, whereof ye had notice before; *your previously promised blessing-bounty*; literally, *blessing*. The mere word should have acted as an inducement to generosity. See the use of the word to express a generous gift in Gen. xxxiii. 11; Judg. i. 15, etc. (LXX.); Eph.

i. 3. In this sense it resembles the Hebrew *berachah* (Josh. xv. 19, etc.). As a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness; *as a blessing, and not as an extortion*; *i.e.* as a free gift of your own, and not as something which I had wrung from you, or "got out of you" (ch. vii. 2; xii. 17, 18). It is less likely that the word *pleonexia* refers to the "parsimony" of the Corinthians, as though the *smallness* of their gift would show their greed for large gains.

Ver. 6.—But this I say. The Greek only has "But this." The ellipse can hardly be "I say." It is an accusative used absolutely—"as to their." Compare "But one thing" (Phil. iii. 14). Shall reap also sparingly. In the Greek the more emphatic order is "sparingly also shall reap." The metaphor of the harvest implies that the more generous the gift the richer will be the return; and that "withholding more than is meet" will only tend to poverty (Prov. xi. 24, 25; xix. 17; xxii. 9). (For "sowing" and "reaping" in this connection, comp. I Cor. ix. 11.) Bountifully; literally, *with blessings*; Vulgate, *in benedictionibus* (comp. Gal. vi. 7, 8). Bountifulness blesses both him that gives and him that takes.

Ver. 7.—In his heart. The heart must not only go with but anticipate the hand. Grudgingly; literally, *from grief* (Exod. xxv. 2; Rom. xii. 8). A cheerful giver. The phrase is from the addition to Prov. xxii. 8, which is found in the LXX.; except that "loveth" is substituted for "blesseth." Compare "He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom. xii. 8). The rabbis said that cheerful kindness, even if nothing was given, was better than a morose gift.

Ver. 8.—To make all grace abound toward you. God can give you such abundant gifts that you will not feel the loss of a generous contribution to his service. Sufficiency. The word *autarkeia* (1 Tim. vi. 6) in the Stoic philosophy was used for the perfect independence which enabled a man to stand alone. The term is here softened and Christianized to express the contentment which arises from the full supply of all our needs by God. The affirmations of the original are as emphatic as language can make them. They express that the man who places all his trust upon God will be "perfect and entire, lacking nothing" (Phil. iv. 11, 19).

Ver. 9.—As it is written. The quotation is from the LXX. in Ps. cxii. 9. He hath dispersed abroad. He has been a large and generous giver. The poor. The word here used is *penēs*, which does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means moderate and honourable poverty, whereas in classical Greek *ptochia* implies disreputable pauperism and mendicancy (comp. ch.

viii. 9). His righteousness. Meaning here his good deeds. The word is often rendered "pity" by the LXX. (*eleēmosinē*, from which word comes our "alms"), and this word occurs as a synonymous reading in Matt. vi. 1. Remaineth for ever. Because—

"Good deeds never die.

They with the sun and moon renew their light,
For ever blessing him that looks on them."

Ver. 10.—He that ministereth. The verb used is *epichōregein*, to furnish abundantly. At Athens a *choragus* was one who furnished a chorus, and as this was a *leitourgia* (or "public service"), involving great expense, and often discharged with extreme munificence, the verb came to imply "provide abundantly." St. Paul may (so to speak) have "picked up the word" at Athens. Seed to the sower (Isa. lv. 10). Both minister. The true reading almost certainly is "will both supply bread for food, and will multiply your seed for sowing, and will increase the fruits of your righteousness" (see Isa. lv. 10, LXX.). The fruits of your righteousness (Hos. x. 12, LXX.). In "righteousness," as in all things else, it is God only who "gives the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 10).

Ver. 11.—To all bountifulness; rather, to all simplicity, or "singleness of heart" (ch. viii. 2). Through us. We are the agents in collecting and distributing your gifts (ch. viii. 19, 20). Thanksgiving to God. From the recipients of your single-hearted generosity.

Ver. 12.—For the administration of this service. The word "liturgy," here rendered "service," is used in the same connection in Rom. xv. 27. Generally it means "religious service" (Acts xiii. 6; Phil. ii. 17; Heb. x. 11). Here it more resembles its classic sense of "a public office discharged for the good of the state," such as undertaking the office of a *choragus* (see ver. 10). Not only. St. Paul is anxious to emphasize the *religious* side of the contribution fully as much as its *philanthropic* object. Is abundant. It *overflows* as it were in the form of thanksgivings to God.

Ver. 13.—By the experiment of this ministration; rather, by the test (of your love)

furnished by this ministration (ch. viii. 2). For your professed subjection; literally, for the submission of your confession to the gospel of Christ. And for your liberal distribution unto them; rather, and for the simplicity of your fellowship towards them. A large contribution would prove two things; namely, (1) that the Corinthians showed due subjection to the truths and duties which they theoretically accepted as resulting from the gospel; and (2) that they were united to their Jewish-Christian brethren and to all others in single-hearted fellowship. It is very doubtful whether *haplotēs* ever means "liberality," and *koinōnia* is here better understood of "communion" than of "communication." Unto all men. For if the Corinthians behaved with such brotherly kindness to the once-despised Jews, who were now their Christian brethren, they would be not likely to refuse fellowship with any others.

Ver. 14.—And by their prayer for you. These words are joined by our Authorized Version with "glorifying God." The saints at Jerusalem would, in consequence of the proved sincerity of the Corinthians, glorify God with thanksgiving for their faithfulness and kindness, by prayer for them. The Revisers take the clause with the following participle, "while they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you." This is the only right view of the construction. Long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you; literally, *yearn for you because of the grace of God which overabounds to you.*

Ver. 15.—Thanks be unto God. Nothing ever seems so much to disburden the full heart of St. Paul after deep emotion as an utterance of thanksgiving (Rom. vii. 25; ix. 5; xi. 33; 1 Cor. xv. 57; Gal. i. 5; 1 Tim. i. 17). The thanksgiving here is like a great sigh of relief. The subject of it is perfectly general. It is not a mere "Amen" uttered, as it were, by St. Paul at the end of the thanksgivings of the saints at Jerusalem which he has been presupposing; but an offering of thanks to God for the issues of grace in general, all summed up in one act of "inestimable love" (John iii. 16; Rom. vi. 23; xi. 33; Eph. iii. 19).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—Paul's directions for collecting the contributions of the Corinthian Church. "For as touching the ministering to the saints," etc. The work of collecting was entrusted to Titus and a brother whose praise was "throughout all the Churches," and probably to other Christians more or less distinguished. Concerning the collecting of their subscriptions, three things are observable in Paul's own conduct.

I. HE RECOGNIZED THEIR MERITS. "For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know the forwardness of your mind, for

which I boast of you to them of Macedonia that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many." He gives them full credit for what they had already done. They had so much cheered him some months before with the readiness with which they had entered into his beneficent enterprise, that he had boasted of them to those of Macedonia and Achaia, and he assures them that their zeal had stimulated, or "provoked very many." We may be assured that Paul not only credits them for what they had done, merely as a matter of policy or politeness, but as a matter of justice. It is right that goodness in others should be recognized wherever found, and that we should with a hearty frankness praise them that do well. This is a duty sadly neglected.

II. HE RESPECTED THEIR REPUTATION. "Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting." The apostle knew human life and the circumstances that influence it, and he apprehended that, had the members of the Corinthian Church been called upon suddenly, without any previous advice, to complete the beneficent work into which they had entered so readily some twelve months before, they might not be able on a sudden either to do justice to their own reputation or to justify the high praise he had given them. The reputation of Christian men should always be sacredly respected. Reputation is social power; deprive a man of this, and he is powerless in society; deprive a Church of this, and you leave it as infirm as a merchant without credit. Respect for the reputation of good men is the duty of all. No man can deprive me of my character, but he may of my reputation, and without my reputation my social influence is *nil*.

"The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation; that away,
Men are but gilded loam or painted clay."
(Shakespeare.)

III. HE STUDIED THEIR CONVENIENCE. "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty," etc. "Every one knows," says Robertson, "how different is the feeling with which we give when charity is beforehand, from that which we give when charitable collections come side by side with debts and taxes. The charity which finds us unprepared is a call as hateful as that of any creditor whom it is hard to pay. Paul knew this well; he knew that if the Corinthians were taken unawares their feelings would be exasperated towards him with shame, and also towards the saints at Jerusalem, to whom they were constrained to give. Therefore he gave timely notice." Special duties have times and seasons. There are moods of mind, and passing circumstances so unfavourable as to render their discharge almost impossible, hence men's conveniences have to be studied. The apostle, in recognizing merits, respecting reputations, and studying conveniences, should be taken as an example by all Christian ministers in dealing with their people.

Vers. 6—15.—*The way and worth of genuine beneficence.* "But this I say, He which soweth," etc. Our subject is—*The way and worth of genuine beneficence.*

I. THE WAY OF GENUINE BENEFICENCE. What is the method of its operations? How does it develop itself? 1. *Bountifully.* "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." The apostle does not intimate, still less dictate, the amount of contribution he required, but what he requires is bountifulness. Nothing niggardly or from restraint, but with a full, open, generous heart. A man may give bountifully who only subscribes a mite, and niggardly who subscribes his ten thousand pounds. In the fifth verse Paul says, "The same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness." 2. *Deliberately.* "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give." A spurious charity gives from impulse or pressure. There is a species of eloquence which extorts money, which the giver regrets as soon as he has parted with it. Genuine charity acts not thus; it forms a generous purpose, and from that purpose it acts, as love always acts, on the universe. 3. *Cheerfully.* "Not grudgingly, or of necessity." There are those who part with their contributions as if they parted with

their life-blood. They have been wrung from them, and they groan when they are gone. Genuine charity acts not thus; its greatest happiness is in giving. In sooth, he who gives reluctantly never truly gives at all. "God loveth a cheerful giver." His own happiness is in giving; he rejoices in the happiness of the creation, and to be happy there must be giving.

II. THE WORTH OF GENUINE BENEFICENCE. The most valuable thing in the universe is genuine, practical love, or charity. 1. It is a most valuable thing in its *issues*. (1) It confers happiness on the man who practises it. Every act of it is to him a seed of life, a seed which in his own soul, as in a garden, will germinate and grow, and will produce fruits, delectable to the moral tastes, and strengthening to the moral powers of the soul, imperishable fruit. The more of these deed-germs he sows, the more abundant the harvest. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." He will be "blessed in his deed;" in truth, there only is blessedness to be found. (2) It ensures the blessing of the Almighty. (a) He sees that the man of charity shall lose nothing by his contributions. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." The God of goodness sees that no man shall be really injured by his goodness. "In all thy gifts show a cheerful countenance, and dedicate thy tithes with gladness. Give unto the Most High according as he hath enriched thee; and as thou hast gotten, give thee with a cheerful eye. For the Lord recompenseth, and will give thee seven times as much" (Eccles. xxxv. 9—11). (b) He sees that his beneficent deeds shall be blessed for ever. "His righteousness remaineth for ever." A good deed is a seed that will go on multiplying for ever. Beneficence, after all, is righteousness. (3) It alleviates the distress of mankind. "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God." What hushes the sorrows of the distressed, heals the wounds of the afflicted, relieves the poverty of the indigent, dispels the darkness of the ignorant, etc.? Practical beneficence. It is, indeed, through this that God helps the world to rise from its fallen condition of guilt and misery. (4) It is promotive of universal worship. "Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ." And "which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." The tendency of practical beneficence is to turn the world to the universal worship of the one God, the Source of all good. 2. It is a most valuable thing in *itself*. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." What is the "gift" here? Undoubtedly charity, or practical love. Has Paul here a special reference to Christ? Be it so. The value of that gift was the love which it expressed, incarnated, and diffused. The gift of love is the highest gift. The greatest thing in the universe is mind, the greatest thing in mind is love, and the greatest element in love is practical philanthropy.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Reference to his former argument; its completeness; why he resumes the subject.* Reviewing the reasoning on the duty of Christian beneficence, the apostle concluded that he had expounded the subject in a manner so clear and explicit as to make any addition "superfluous" on the score either of logic or of appeal. Recall the argument for a moment, and see if he was not justified in this opinion. The appeal was for the poor of the Church at Jerusalem. Macedonia was depressed and sorely troubled, Achaia was internally agitated by Judaizers and free-thinkers; and between this upper and nether millstone the young Churches were well-nigh ground to powder. St. Paul himself was greatly afflicted. But he had strong faith in Christ and in human nature under the influence of Christ's grace, and having this confidence he was hopeful, resolute, and courageous. Macedonia had done nobly. Corinth would not fall below the standard he had set for their generosity. Full of heart, he presses the claim of the occasion, but his zeal and anxiety never betray him into using a false motive or into pushing a true motive too far. The "rod" is not threatened. All through, the appeal is to the best elements of our nature, for he recognizes, as "the sacred writers constantly recognize, the fact that the freest and most spontaneous acts of men, their inward

states and the outward manifestations of those states where good, are due to a secret influence of the Spirit of God which eludes our consciousness. The believer is most truly self-determined when determined by the grace of God" (Hodge). We have seen that the apostle never loses sight for a moment of the one inspiring motive—the love of Christ towards us and his Divine sacrifice in our behalf. Equal with God and infinitely blessed, he left his glory, assumed our flesh, took its infirmities, bore its sins, endured its shame and humiliation, and expiated its guilt. The abnegation was so complete that he depended on the Holy Ghost for wisdom, fortitude, and strength. A man of prayer, he sought the Spirit's aid on every occasion, and was so dependent as to say, "I do nothing of myself." Every adventitious help was set aside; loneliness and sorrow were his self-chosen lot; and he made himself the poorest of men, that he might show how supremely he rested upon the Father in his mediatorial work. But poverty and sorrow were not thus borne for their own sake, nor, indeed, was it the circumstances of his lot, but the lot itself, that marked the greatness of his condescension. The argument of St. Paul is directed to one point, viz. what Christ was and what he became, so that the contrast between his earthly position and that of other men is not so much as hinted at, but the whole force is thrown upon the contrast as to his being "rich" and becoming "poor," that we "through his poverty might be rich." On this basis Christian beneficence was founded. Christian "equality" was a natural sequel. For this was, in the order of Providence, the one specific and pre-eminent sphere in which Christian conscience and affection and humane impulses would most fully and freely combine to glorify God in Christ. On no other ground could a Church be a spiritual *human* community, and hence the stress laid on human virtues sanctified by the grace of Christ. There is emulation; how he exalts it! There is imitation; how he emphasizes it! There is prudence; what an excellence it is to protect our good from being spoken of as evil! After such a presentation of gospel truth and its effective enforcement, he might well say that it was "superfluous" to write concerning "the ministering to the saints." One bright spot had all along lingered on that murky horizon; "Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many." Men who are backsliding in religion do not lose their hold all at once on the Christian virtues. Happily for us, some of these virtues are stronger than others, and these act as a breakwater against the incoming surges of temptation. One or more qualities exist in us that are more receptive of grace than other qualities, and they are specially resistant of decay. As in physical disease life would often succumb were it not that some organs have so much more functional vitality than others, so in religious life, a single vigorous principle or sentiment may save us from spiritual death. So it was with the Corinthians. Despite of their corruptions, they had one redeeming excellence, viz. the "forwardness" of their "mind" in this benevolent enterprise of helping the poor saints in Jerusalem. God honoured this trait of their character. Many a virtue had gone down under the pressure of worldliness and carnality. This survived, and it was capable of being evoked into healthy and energetic action. St. Paul knew his opportunity. He saw the good in these erring brethren. If he had not, he could never have seen the evil. And seeing the good so clearly, he recognized it and laboured for its immediate development in a very earnest form. The true growth would choke out the weeds, and to this he directed his wise husbandry. Every way the prospect was encouraging. Yet he would make assurance doubly sure. He had boasted of the Corinthians. If they should not be ready in time with the collection, "we [too delicate to say, 'ye'] should be ashamed in this same confident boasting." On this account he sent Titus and the deputies to "make up beforehand" their bounty. It must be "bounty," not a matter of "covetousness." Postponing the work might open the way for selfishness to suggest reasons for less giving. Love of money might have a sudden quickening. Risks were numerous when men believed that the heart of to-day would be the heart of to-morrow. Satan was mightier at some times than at others, and Christian men were not always quite themselves. "Make up beforehand." The right thing was ennobled by doing it at the right time, and the right time was now. "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." Debts of love mature when the heart is first warmed by the Spirit. Putting off invites covetousness. "Beforehand" is the watchword of the bountiful soul.—L.

Vers. 6—9.—*Correspondence between Christian sowing and reaping.* There was nothing of chance or luck in the operations of beneficence. It was a transaction with God, who had instituted certain laws for its government. 1. As to the law of proportion. If they sowed sparingly, they reaped sparingly; if bountifully, they reaped bountifully. This was natural law. It was also spiritual law. If the law met them everywhere, addressed the senses and the soul, and enforced itself both in providence and grace, surely they could not but give very profound heed to a principle which was so amply illustrated. 2. As to the spirit of giving. The law was spontaneity of sentiment—"according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give;" and agsin, it was cheerfulness of feeling—not "grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." On this aspect of giving, the apostle had delivered his mind without reservation. Freedom here was scrupulously insisted on. To be Christ-like it must be wholly self-directed. It must be born directly of the Spirit. Vast and indeed sacred as human agency is, there are seasons when the Spirit bids it retire, and he takes the soul into his solitary communion. 3. The element of recompense is stated. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you." Blessings used rightly would bring other and larger blessings. Benevolent contributions were disciplinary. The act was educative. If a man gave because of his love to Christ, if he gave willingly and cordially, if he gave freely, then he was being trained as a giver, and of course was, in this particular, a growing man. Any sort of arrested development in goodness is bad enough, but this checking of progress in charity is peculiarly harmful. Worldliness rushes back with an overwhelming current. Avarice, denied its food for a time, has a voracious appetite. And, therefore, the very urgent need of growth in this sentiment, which the apostle argues in a manner uncommonly forcible. Spiritual blessings are assured. "All grace abound toward you." Temporal blessings are promised. "Always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." There was to be an "*all sufficiency*," an overflowing measure on God's part, so as to furnish the means or resources for continued and enlarged benevolence, or otherwise the growth would stop. "Every good work" has a very broad signification. We take it to mean a very wide and generous activity in kind deeds, an "enthusiasm," not for "humanity," but for Christ in humanity, and a desire and a purpose expanding in the ratio of new blessings, spiritual and temporal, to pour forth its heart in ministration to others. "God is able." Yet we must not forget that he never resigns his Divine sovereignty in a promise or to a promise, but is infinitely wise and considerably tender in the administration of providential blessings. To elucidate his meaning, St. Paul quotes from Ps. cxli. 9, "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever." The rule is that God gives us what we have in order that he may give us more. There is a future in everything, a future in every seed, a future in every dollar honestly made, a future in every blessing God bestows. But it is for him alone to order this future, so as to "make all grace abound" in us, and to enable us to "abound to every good work."—L.

Vers. 10—15.—*Unity in nature and grace; manifold results of beneficence; thanksgiving.* St. Paul had spoken in the sixth verse of the law of the spiritual harvest—proportion of reward in reference to quantity, so much sowing followed by so much reaping. But there is another law—a grain of corn or wheat produces many grains. In some instances hundreds of seeds come from one seed. Seeds multiply seeds, and the harvest of a county may sow a large territory. Nothing in the vegetable kingdom is on a stinted scale. Omnipotence touches a clod of earth, and in a few months it is transformed into bread; but this is not all the wonder, for that clod has yielded far more than it received. Thus it is that, in the physical world, labour becomes accumulative, producing over and above its own wants a vast surplus, which goes to feed those who are unable to work. Not abundance but superabundance is the lesson nature teaches. We make enough to supply necessities, comforts, and luxuries; enough to meet artificial wants; enough to compensate for impotence, idleness, and dissipation; enough to allow for a waste that can scarcely be computed. So it is in spiritual things. The productive power is immensely rewarded. This striking correspondence was in his view when St. Paul said, "He that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness"

(Revised Version). The fact is always grander than the figure, and hence we may believe that the fruits of righteousness will infinitely surpass the work done. Observe now that this was a present thing as well as a future thing. Just then a gracious influence was spreading through the Churches and uniting them in closer fellowship by reason of a common interest in behalf of Jerusalem. And, furthermore, they should be "enriched in everything to all bountifulness," no lack of seed for sowing, fruits of righteousness abounding, and especially their liberality should cause thanksgiving to God. This idea of thanksgiving fills a large space in his mind. It becomes in the twelfth verse "many thanksgivings." What joy would it bring to Jerusalem! How far would the glad tidings spread! Not only for the pecuniary aid afforded, but for this new and cheering evidence of their obedience unto the gospel of Christ, what praise would ascend to God! If we could transfer ourselves into the position of these early Christians and enter into their feelings, especially those of the Jerusalem Church, we should realize the apostle's meaning where he lays such a stress on the results of this Gentile beneficence. But we can hardly approximate this state of mind. The loneliness of the saints at Jerusalem, the large sacrifice of property after Pentecost, the loss of employment because of professing faith in Christ, the destitution and suffering that had befallen them, the growing disturbances with Rome, the increase of bitter strife among the Jews, the darkness with its prophetic woes descending on the doomed city, parties becoming more and more virulent in their antagonisms to one another, and amid it all, the "poor saints" subjected to all sorts of insult and grievance, give us but a general idea of the misery and wretchedness they were enduring. It was all very real to St. Paul. No such earthly reality as Jerusalem occupied his intellect and heart. Was he looking forward to the day (as Stanley suggests) when he should stand in the holy city and witness the gratitude of the Church for this great benefaction? Likely enough; but whether so or not, it is certain that his soul overflowed with joy. It was a grand proof of brotherhood between Jewish and Gentile Christians. It was the perfecting link in the chain that was to bind them together. It was a blessed testimony to the divineness of the gospel. Contemplating the gifts, he rises in a moment to the Divine Gift, and exclaims, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift!"—L.

Ver. 2.—*The contagion of zeal.* The interest which Christians living in distant lands learned, under apostolic guidance and by the spiritual tuition of the indwelling love of Christ, to take in one another's welfare, was an evidence of the introduction into humanity of a new moral power, a principle of universal love and brotherhood. It is very instructive to see the congregations of Macedonia and of Corinth rivalling one another in the benevolent enterprise of relieving the wants of the mother Church at Jerusalem. Paul evidently encourages this beneficial emulation.

I. ZEAL IN CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE IS IN ITSELF GOOD. The languid and unemotional, the cold and calculating, however they may pride themselves upon their justice and reasonableness, are not the people who do the good, the benevolent work of the world. It is good to be zealously affected in a good cause.

II. THE CONTAGIOUSNESS OF ZEAL IS FOUNDED UPON THE SOCIAL NATURE OF MAN. We are members one of another, and it is not desirable, it is not possible, for any person, for any community, to be indifferent to the welfare of others. And the conduct of each has some influence upon the conduct of others. It is not easy to be zealous when all around are unconcerned and inactive, whilst, on the other hand, the spectacle of zealous devotion and self-denial is stimulating and encouraging.

III. THIS EMULATION MAY BE CARRIED TO A PREJUDICIAL EXTENT. It cannot but be acknowledged that emulation may lead to ostentation. Who can question that the motive of some givers to charitable and religious institutions is impure? One wishes to excel another, for the pleasure of triumphing over him, or of cutting a more important figure in the eyes of his fellow-men. And thus the true motive is lost sight of, and a moral injury is wrought.

IV. YET IT IS WELL TO FEEL THE FORCE OF A GOOD EXAMPLE AS A PRACTICAL MOTIVE TO ZEALOUS SERVICE. We may learn from the case of others what may be done where there is consecration, self-denial, and prayerful effort. Our apathy may be rebuked, our flagging benevolence revived. It is when the coals are not only kindled, but put together, that the fire burns clear and bright, and gives forth its genial warmth.—T.

Ver. 6.—Sowing and reaping. This is one of those natural analogies which are common to all languages and to all ages. There is sowing and reaping in the history of the individual; the moral bias of his youth may determine the direction of his after life. There is sowing and reaping in the experience of a Christian community; its founders may impart to it an impulse the consequences of which shall be discernible in distant generations. And in this passage the apostle reminds his readers that giving is a kind of sowing, and that, as the husbandman reaps as he has sown, so shall it be in the experience of all benefactors. The liberal shall reap abundantly; the grudging and sparing shall gather a slender crop.

I. THE LAW OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SOWING AND REAPING IS A JUST LAW. It is an appointment of a God of righteousness. It is in harmony with the principles of his government. Its maintenance is evidently productive of the welfare of Christian society.

II. THIS LAW IS ONE THE OPERATIONS OF WHICH WE CAN IN SOME MEASURE TRACE.
 1. It may be observed that illiberality stunts the spiritual stature of the giver, whilst generosity promotes his growth. There is noticeable in large-hearted and generous natures an expansion which is its own reward; a happy disposition, a constant satisfaction in the result of gifts and efforts; a width of view which removes such from the petty and miserable emotions of envy, jealousy, and suspicion. 2. In connection with this it may be remarked that the treatment of the generous by others is in itself a rich reward. The liberal man is honoured, appreciated, loved. Small services, slight tokens of respect, are offered him which are evidences of deep feeling, and which cannot be received without gratification. It may be left to observation whether the reverse of this picture is not equally just—whether the mean, selfish, and niggardly do not suffer personal deterioration, and whether they do not receive from their neighbours a merited contempt.

III. THERE ARE OPERATIONS OF THIS LAW WHICH IT IS BEYOND OUR POWER TO TRACE. If we believe that the results of earthly labour extend into the future eternity, what a solemnity does this conviction impart to the principles upon which we are accustomed to act! The labours of the evangelist, the teachings of the pastor, the gifts of the supporters of religion, all bear fruit in the world to come. The nature and the measure of the harvest are largely determined by the way in which the field is tilled and sown in time. A motive this to that diligence and devotedness which is commended in the text by the inspired apostle. Only sow liberally, and by all waters, and, even if you sow in tears, it is promised that you shall reap in joy.—*T.*

Ver. 7.—“A cheerful giver.” Paul here supports his appeal for liberality by a quotation from Old Testament Scripture. The words are almost literally those of the Septuagint Version of the Book of Proverbs. If the most powerful and practical motive to benevolence and especially to almsgiving is that which comes from the incarnation and from the cross of Christ, still all revelation enjoins and commends a virtue which is always beneficial to the giver, even when the advantage to the recipient is questionable.

I. GOD HIMSELF IS A CHEERFUL GIVER. There is no grudging in his benevolence. If he shows mercy, he delights in mercy. If he gives, he gives with open hand and smiling face.

II. CHEERFULNESS IN THE GIVER ENHANCES TO THE RECIPIENT THE VALUE OF THE GIFT. “One may give with his hand and pull it back with his looks.” Some benevolent characters give with such a grace that those who receive at their hands think more of the giver than of the gift. Even a trifle in such case is more welcome than a handsome donation from an unsympathizing and uninterested donor. A foreign scholar waited upon a theological professor in London, who was a man well known for his exquisite grace and suavity of manner, to lay before him his position as one of peculiar destitution. That he was assisted, and assisted generously, is certain; but as he left the house he was heard to break forth into the exclamation, “Oh, the *modus*, the *modus*, the *modus*!” i.e. the manner of the giver in the bestowal of his liberality.

III. CHEERFULNESS IN THE GIVER REACTS UPON HIS OWN SPIRITUAL NATURE. He who gives coldly, ungraciously, and grudgingly, is none the better for the act. But the ready, liberal, and cheerful giver is a happier and a more truly Christian man, because of the spirit in which he has discharged a duty and rendered a service.

IV. THERE IS A SPECIAL RECOMPENSE ASSURED TO THE CHEERFUL GIVER. "The Lord loveth him." The Lord sees his own character reflected in that of his servant; he witnesses in the generous and unselfish spirit the fruit of the redemption wrought by his Son, and of the fertilizing operation of his own gracious, free, and beneficent Spirit.—T.

Ver. 8.—Abounding grace and abounding service. Christianity does not come to men, saying, "This is pleasant," or "This is expedient," or "This is what society expects from you, and therefore do it." It comes saying, "This is what God does, and what God requires you to do." It lays the basis for human duty in Divine acts. So with liberality, as in this passage.

I. THE ABUNDANT RESOURCES GOD PUTS AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE CHRISTIAN. 1. Men are at their best estate altogether dependent, having in themselves nothing but want, weakness, and sin. 2. All grace is in God; he has both the power and the disposition to supply every want. It is his nature to bestow; he is the God of grace. 3. His grace not only gives, it *abounds* to us. The gift of his Son is the proof of inexhaustible love. So with the gift of his Spirit. In fact, in the gospel there is a generosity of bestowment; no withholding and no grudging. 4. Christians, as his people, are thus partakers of Divine sufficiency. "All things are yours;" such is the deed of gift in which the heavenly Father places at the disposal of his family all the resources of his nature and liberality. 5. The liberality of God extends through every stage of individual life, and through every period of the Church's history. His bounties and favours are as the leaves of the forest, the waves of the sea, the stars of the sky—unnumbered and innumerable.

II. THE CORRESPONDING REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS OF GOD FROM HIS PEOPLE. Religion consists of two parts—what God does for us, and what God demands from us. 1. It is taken for granted that the Christian life consists in "good works;" that the disciple of Christ is naturally a worker, whose energies and possessions are to be consecrated to God in his Son. Gifts, services, sympathy, speech, aid,—such are the manifestations of the spiritual life which the Lord of all desires and beholds. 2. Here is implied a relation between God's works and those of his people. His abounding gifts are to be regarded as (1) the example of ours; (2) the means of ours, for we can only give others what he has given us; (3) the measure of ours, as liberal and generous; and (4) the motive to ours, inasmuch as we are constrained by the love of God and by the cross of Christ.—T.

Ver. 11.—True enrichment. The encouragement which the apostle here addresses to the Corinthian Christians, in order to stimulate their liberality, is appropriate to all professed followers of the Lord Jesus. Paul urges that the liberal helper of others is in every respect the wealthier and happier for his generosity. It is not the highest motive, but it is sound and powerful and effective.

I. THE HUMAN NEED OF SUCH ENRICHMENT. Impoverishment is the lot of multitudes; but whilst many are deeply sensible of their temporal needs, it is too often the case that, with regard to spiritual possessions, they boast that they are rich and increased with goods, and know not that they are poor. In fact, we have nothing which we have not received from the free bounty of him who is the Giver of all.

II. THE DIVINE AUTHOR OF SUCH ENRICHMENT. The God of nature supplies the need and relieves the poverty distinctive of our bodily and physical state. The God of grace provides liberally for the wants of the soul, saying to his child, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

III. THE VARIETY AND PLENTITUDE OF THIS ENRICHMENT. "In everything," says the apostle. He appears to teach that, as a general rule, it is the ordinance of Providence that the way of liberality should be the way of prosperity. All have known fortunate and wealthy niggards; and all have known generous men who have come to poverty; but such cases are the exception. And if generosity is the way to temporal abundance, a liberal spirit is sure to acquire virtues and excellences. Faith, hope, and love,—all are cultivated in the exercise of liberality; progressive enrichment is the recompense of a large heart and open hands.

IV. THE HUMAN AND EARTHLY RESULT OF THIS ENRICHMENT. This is increase of

liberality; the more the generous man receives from God, the more he helps his fellow-men.

V. THE ULTIMATE RESULT OF THIS ENRICHMENT. Thanksgiving will be rendered to God, both by the liberal who are enriched, by the grateful recipients of their abundant bounty, and by all who witness the fruit of the Spirit and the evidences of the power of the Saviour's love.—T.

Ver. 15.—*The unspeakable gift.* The gifts of the Corinthians to their poor brethren in Judæa were welcomed, acknowledged, approved. But every Christian duty and service led the mind of the apostle up to Christ himself. Earthly gifts suggested to his mind that Gift which is heavenly and supreme.

I. GOD'S GIFT TO MAN. 1. The Lord Christ is emphatically *the* Gift of God. He was sent by the Father, and his mission was a proof of the Father's interest and love. All gifts beside are pale and poor, by reason of the splendour and the beauty of this. 2. The Lord Christ is the *unspeakable* Gift of God; i.e. so rich and wonderful as not to be capable of a full description. Observe: (1) Its intrinsic value. Could God himself give a more precious treasure than the Son of his love? He is "the Pearl of great price." (2) Its adaptation to the needs of those to whom it is given. Christ is the Gift of bread to the hungry, of water to the thirsty, of freedom to the slave. Spiritual good was what man needed; and it was what came to man by Christ. (3) Its infinite train of blessing. We are told that "all things" are placed at the disposal of those from whom God has not withheld his Son. And this doctrine is one which experience supports. The innumerable blessings which have come into the world with the gospel are a proof that the language of Scripture is not exaggerated.

II. MAN'S GRATITUDE TO GOD. 1. It is often wickedly withheld. Our Lord was despised and rejected of men when he was upon earth; and there are still multitudes who are insensible to his preciousness, and who take no part in the grateful praises of his Church. 2. It is offered by appreciative hearts. They who have gratefully accepted the boon, who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good,—they are forward to acknowledge the liberality and the loving-kindness of the great Giver above. 3. It is openly and joyfully expressed by those who feel it. Hymns of grateful praise; a loving witness to the world of the Divine pity and kindness; gifts to his cause, which are accepted as offered to himself; deeds of cheerful and holy obedience;—such are the means by which the redeemed and spiritually enriched may show forth their gratitude for the Gift which is unspeakable.—T.

Ver. 2.—*The contagion of charity.* I. AN INDISPUTABLE FACT. Man is imitative, even in generosity. Example is often potent when appeal falls flat. Many do not see that they can afford to give until others in similar circumstances demonstrate the possibility. Men do not like to be outdone in good works; a friend's beneficence is a spur to our own.

II. A SUGGESTIVE FACT. When we give we often think only of the direct good which our contribution will effect, but much other good may follow. Our charity may be stimulative. Should lead us: 1. *To give promptly.* Delayed gift may be in time for the special object, but may be too late to induce others to give in time. Our charity must have time to work; some people take hints slowly. *Bis dat, qui cito dat,* is true in more ways than one. 2. *To give liberally.* We may curtail the charity of others. On the other hand, a liberal gift may draw forth liberal responses. 3. *To give joyfully.* If we give with evident gladness, others may desire to share our happiness. Joyful giving is more contagious than any other, since all men naturally crave for joy. 4. *To give to suitable objects only.* We may misdirect the charity of others. There is not a little *responsibility* attaching to benevolence. Some seem to think that, if they give, it is little matter how or to what they give.

III. A COMFORTING FACT. The truly liberal are often distressed because they can give so little. But small gifts may have large issues. The small rudder directs the great ship. The little weight often turns the scale. Our gift, of little value, may call forth large help from those wealthier than ourselves. This is likely if men see that, though we give little, we give as much as we can.

IV. A USEFUL FACT. To be made use of according to the example set by Paul. A

legitimate instrument for moving sluggish natures. Whilst we may be silent respecting our own charity, we may often profitably speak of the charity of others.—H.

Ver. 7.—The cheerful giver. I. **HOW THE CHEERFUL GIVER GIVES.** 1. *Bountifully.* His cheerfulness ensures liberality. It is the grudging giver who gives but little. But he who gives with gladness will desire much of that gladness. And he who sows bountifully reaps bountifully, and that without waiting, for he has at once a great harvest of joy. 2. *Willingly.* No compulsion is needed. He runs eagerly in the flowery and fruitful path of charity. He is not driven by the stings of conscience or by a desire to stand well with his fellows. His heart is enlisted, and the service he renders is hearty. 3. *Joyfully.* It is not a pain to him to give, but a pleasure. Some give their money to the needy as they give their teeth to the dentist; and often the disposition to give totally disappears on the threshold! But the cheerful giver enjoys giving. It is a delight to him. How giving is transformed in character when this is so! The same thing, how different to different natures! When we have learnt to love giving, what a pure joy we experience! Before, it was but the carcase of Samson's dead lion, but now we gather most luscious honey by handfuls. We miss a most heavenly joy if we miss the gladness of giving.

II. **GOD'S REGARD FOR THE CHEERFUL GIVER.** What God thinks of us is the all-important question. Now, the cheerful giver approves himself to the Most High. And not with cold approbation does God behold him. "God loveth a cheerful giver." God loves this kind of giving, and he loves the one who thus gives. A grudging giver is peculiarly offensive to God. It is so monstrous that, when God has *lent* us so many things, we should hesitate to return to him the few for which he asks. But when we have as much joy in returning as we had in receiving, he is well pleased. And when we rise still higher and believe truly that "it is *more* blessed to give than to receive," we please him the more. The cheerful giver resembles God, for God is a cheerful Giver;—how bountifully and how willingly he has endowed us! Here are incentives to cheerful giving—that we please God, secure the love of God, and become like God.

III. **GOD'S PROMISE TO THE CHEERFUL GIVER.** A promise of great prosperity (vers. 6, 8—10). The short-sighted always judge that giving means losing, and that saving means gaining; but "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty" (Prov. xi. 24). And our Master said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke vi. 38; see also Mark x. 29, 30). If we want to get little we must give little. The niggardly farmer gets a scanty crop. In God's providence those who are benevolent are commonly largely blessed in earthly things. Approving themselves to God, they are the subjects of his special care; "And God is able to make all grace abound" unto them (ver. 8). If those who give money do not always get more money, they always get much of what is far better than money. The distinct promise of God is that they shall be blessed and prospered. What *form* the blessing and prosperity shall take will be gladly left to God by the devout spirit. Often an increase of the means of charity results. God gives us more that we may give more. Having wisely used our talent, he entrusts us with further riches (see vers. 8, 10, 11).

IV. **THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHEERFUL GIVER.** 1. *He convinces men of the reality of religion.* (Ver. 13.) Men appreciate such a test of piety as this. Words they are apt to reckon at a cheap rate, but spontaneous and joyful liberality staggers them. Cheerful giving is to be ranked amongst the evidences of Christianity. 2. *He causes men to thank and to glorify God.* (Vers. 11—13.) What is the *origin* of Christian benevolence? is a question suggested to the minds of those blessed by it. And this inquiry terminates in God. As he has implanted charity in his people's hearts, he is clearly entitled to the praise. Aided believers naturally bless God that he has inclined his stewards to minister to their needs, and magnify his grace which has produced such fruitfulness in human hearts. The cheerful giver has a wider and more powerful influence than sometimes he suspects.

V. **THE GIFTS OF MEN TO THE CHEERFUL GIVER.** 1. *Their prayers.* (Ver. 14.) What is the price of prayer! What a valuable return for the expenditure of mere gold! If we secure the earnest, loving, believing prayers of those to whom we minister, we shall be greatly enriched. The "prayer of a righteous man availeth much"

(Jas. v. 16). Men are willing to give much if their friend will but speak for them to the sovereign; but the cheerful giver is often spoken for to the King of kings. 2. **Their love.** (Ver. 14.) Love is not to be lightly estimated; it is spiritual gold, much more precious than material. A man is rich if his treasury is well stored with the love of his fellows. The love of good men especially is a large recompense. Here we have the love of man and the love of God promised to those who delight in mercy and in helpfulness to the children of want.—H.

Ver. 15.—*The Gift of gifts.* Undoubtedly the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul has been speaking of the lesser gifts of saints. Now he rises to God's supreme Gift. Consider—

I. **THE GIVER.** God. Who could give Christ but God? We must not forget that God gave Christ. Many do, and form the erroneous notion that, whilst Christ is their friend, God is their enemy. Redemption is of the whole Deity. "God so loved the world," etc. Note: the Giver was a God (1) unworshipped, (2) unserved, (3) unloved, (4) grievously sinned against, (5) defied in the very act of giving. It was whilst we were yet sinners that Christ came to redeem us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10).

II. **THE GIFT.** 1. *A gift.* (1) A free gift. Nothing was given in exchange. Men had nothing to give. (2) A voluntary gift. Prompted by Divine compassion and love. (3) An undeserved gift. Men deserved condemnation, not Christ. (4) A continuous gift. Christ is not ours merely for a time. He is ours for ever and ever. He is the saint's everlasting inheritance. 2. *An unspeakable gift.* (1) In value. The most costly of gifts. The pearl of great price. The treasure discovered in the fields of heaven. Who can estimate the value of such a gift as this? If God had given a thousand worlds or all the angelic hosts, he would have given less. (2) In splendour. Consider the *graces, powers,* and infinite *excellences* of Christ. His presence made heaven glorious. (3) In efficacy. This gift fully met our need. How fully we yet know not, for now we are looking through a darkened glass. All our known wants are supplied by the Redeemer, and the vast catalogue of wants as yet unknown to us. Through him we are pardoned, cleansed, sanctified, adopted, and through him we shall at last be brought into the great home above.

III. **THE RECIPIENTS OF THE GIFT.** 1. *Human beings.* Christ was given to the human race, not to the angelic, nor to the merely animal. How greatly honoured is mankind! If Christ was given to men, what a future must be before those who receive this gift! 2. *Fallen human beings.* Man, "made a little lower than the angels," soon fell much lower, and then the gift came. A marvellous return for man's apostasy! When the cry of humanity was for sternest punishment, Heaven's response was "Jesus of Nazareth." Well may we exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!" (Rom. xi. 33).

IV. **APPROPRIATE GRATITUDE.** Paul cries, "Thanks be to God;" and well he may. How can we thank God enough for such a gift as this? What would be our state if this gift had not been bestowed?

"Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Throughout eternity we shall praise God for the gift unspeakable. Now let us praise him with: 1. *Lip.* Tell out our gratitude. Suppressed praise is indecent. We should desire all the world to know how thankful we are. 2. *Heart.* The tongue in this matter must be moved by the spirit, or it will not make sweet music in the ear of God. The gift came from the heart of God: let our thanksgiving come from the heart also. 3. *Active service.* What are we willing to do to show our gratitude? Paul was so subdued by the "unspeakable gift" that he loved to call himself "the slave of Jesus Christ;" and he counted no toil too severe to show his thankfulness. 4. *Life.* Our whole being and existence should constitute a psalm. This is the true "psalm of life." Every power should be pressed into the service. As this gift is ever the supreme blessing in our life, we should ever be praising God for it.

Terrible thought! The unspeakable Gift may be rejected! What unspeakable folly, what unspeakable guilt, what unspeakable condemnation, must follow!—H.

Ver. 8.—“*Always.*” Let us not take our standard of Christian life and experience from our own hearts, or from the customary piety which shows itself around us. The Lord requires and expects of us constancy—a life regulated by the steady action of principle, and animated daily by faith, hope, and love. Alas! how many are unsteady in his service! How their light flickers! how their faith wavers! how their convictions and affections fluctuate! This is so common that it seems to be regarded as inevitable. Vacillation and inconstancy are supposed to be not so much sins as very pardonable infirmities. But is constancy, while theoretically right, practically impossible? When called to maintain a steady tenor of Christian life and conduct, may we say, *Non possumus*? What says Reason? And what says Holy Writ?

I. WE ASK THE QUESTION OF REASON, AS A FAIR JUDGE OF THE NATURE OF THINGS. Physical life is maintained in us by certain natural processes which never cease from the moment of birth to the moment of death. The lungs play always, and the heart beats always. We call these automatic movements, as being not dependent on our volition. They continue when we are fast asleep. But moral and spiritual life rises above mere automatism, and requires for its continuance and growth a succession of moral volitions, a steady and well-directed purpose. Now, is this state of the will possible? Reason will answer that it is the proper habit of a healthy and vigorous mind. Weak minds are obstinate or fickle; dull minds are stolid and monotonous; but those that are strong and intelligent have a steady moral pulse, a wise tenacity of purpose, and a careful balance of temper and will. It is the most rational, healthy, and happy condition of man to believe firmly what he believes, and to maintain an even tenor of conduct in harmony with his belief. George Herbert is right to praise the man of constancy, who

“Doth still, and strongly, good pursue;
To God, his neighbours, and himself most true.”

II. WE ASK THE QUESTION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. Does it admit excuses for inconstancy? or does it assume and require that men who believe in God should live to him always? David said, “I have set the Lord always before me.” No doubt this is absolutely true only of the great Son of David, of whom the Spirit of prophecy spake in the sixteenth psalm, as St. Peter taught on the day of Pentecost. But of all that was most worthy in the career of the poet-king of Israel this was the sustaining principle; and of his character this formed the sacred charm, that he constantly kept his eyes upon God. In great deeps of sorrow, in dens and caves of the earth, in exile, in peril by the sword, among temptations of ambition, tumults of war, cares of government; in the obscurity of his youth, in the sudden promotion and the stirring adventures of his early manhood; in all the publicity of his later years, in “that fierce light which beats upon a throne;”—always and everywhere the son of Jesse looked to God, and sought to walk in the light of his countenance. Alas! he looked off, and sinned grievously. We find no perfect example but that of the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of David, who maintained a constant obedience to, and therefore a constant communion with, God (see John viii. 29; xi. 42). In the midst of incessant occupations and in the face of frequent “contradiction of sinners against himself,” he found it possible to look always to the Father in heaven, and do always the Father’s will. So he knew that the Father heard him always. Now, every one admits that the life of Christ is, in its principles and motives, the supreme model for the life of Christians. But the force of the admission is sadly weakened for any practical purpose by the prevailing impression that actual conformity to so perfect a Pattern is not to be expected of any one. Let us take the example of a servant of Christ. It will not be disputed that we may and should emulate the attainments and experience of St. Paul. Now, he had extraordinary vicissitudes in the course of his ministry, and does not conceal from us the changing moods of his mind—now depressed and sorrowful, now bold and enthusiastic. But as respects the main current of his life and service, Paul was, ever after his conversion, gloriously consistent. In love to God, in zeal for Jesus, in fidelity to the gospel, in care for the Churches, in abhorrence of sin, in esteem of

holiness, in vigilant resistance to the devil, and in tender affection for the saints, he was always the same, and wavered not. Accordingly we find the word "always" often used in regard to his own spiritual experience and missionary life (see Acts xxiv. 16 on conscience; ch. ii. 14 on the career of a missionary; ch. iv. 10 and v. 6 on sufferings and joyful hope). What a living sacrifice to God was this apostolic man! What singleness of purpose he had, what integrity of heart, what constancy, in serving the Lord always! Why may not similar constancy be shown by us? God is able to make all grace abound toward us. And all the injunctions for Christian life given in the Holy Book assume that we are to be always and wholly the Lord's. Our speech should be "always with grace, seasoned with salt." Our prayers should be offered up always; and in active service we should be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." The proper season for piety is always. Labour sometimes, study sometimes, recreation sometimes, sleep sometimes; but the fear of the Lord always, and the life of faith always. No day of the week, no hour of the day, without the Lord. This is not bondage; it is the best liberty. This is not being "righteous overmuch." It is simply to order our character and conduct habitually by the highest aims and models set before us. It is the aspiration of the meek and lowly, not of the proud. It is the path of the just, which shines more and more until the perfect day.—F.

Ver. 2.—*Forwardness in good works.* Very remarkable is the tenderness, consideration, and delicacy of feeling with which St. Paul addresses the better, the more spiritual, part of the Church at Corinth. He was very anxious that they should stand well in the matter of the collection, and therefore he had sent messengers to collect their gifts; but he gives them notice of their coming, and heartily expresses his confidence in the ready and willing mind of these Corinthian saints. In such expressions "there was no subtle policy; there was no attempt to get at their purses by their weak side. St. Paul was above such means. It was natural, instinctive, real delicacy; and yet it was the surest way of obtaining what he wished, and that which the deepest knowledge of the human heart would have counselled. For thereby he appealed, not to their selfish, but to their most unselfish, feelings. This is a great principle—one of the deepest you can have for life and action. Appeal to the highest motives; appeal, whether they be there or no, for you make them where you cannot find them. Let men say what they will of human nature's evil, a generous, real, *unaffected* confidence never fails to elicit the Divine spark." Consider—

I. ST. PAUL'S CONFIDENCE IN THEIR GOOD-HEARTEDNESS. "I know the forwardness of your mind." 1. So far as tidings had reached him, and so far as he knew their Christian disposition and character, he felt sure that they were thinking rightly about the matter, cherishing proper sentiments concerning Christian brotherhood and charity, and the duty of the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. This would be the matter of first importance to the apostle, for mere gifts are of no more acceptableness to God nowadays than mere sacrifices were in older days. God reads hearts and motives, and accepts the *spirit* of generosity and brotherly kindness which may find expression through gifts. So God could send this gracious message to David, "Thou didst well that it was in thy heart." 2. The Corinthians also planned to meet the apostle's wishes. There had been consideration and consultation and united endeavour to form good schemes for the regular devotement of gifts, for the storing and the ingathering of the moneys. In such signs of thought and care and wise arrangement St. Paul could but unfeignedly rejoice. 3. It seems that the Corinthians had actually made a good and hopeful beginning. They had been "forward" in advance of other Churches; to use a familiar figure, they had "taken time by the forelock." This the apostle could not fail to regard as a most encouraging and hopeful sign of earnestness, as well as of the preparedness to act upon principle rather than upon mere impulse and excitement.

II. ST. PAUL'S USE OF THEM FOR THE INSPIRATION OF OTHERS. "For which I boast of you to them of Macedonia." Probably St. Paul had been setting their example before the Churches of Macedonia previous to his receiving news of the trouble at Corinth over the incestuous member, and the disturbance of the Church by St. Paul's personal enemies and traducers. Show that whenever a Church of Christ, or a Chris-

tian individual, affords prominent illustration of any grace or duty, they properly become, in such matters, models and examples for the inspiration of others. All who attain above an average level in Christian living ought to be used for the permanent raising of the average. It is a somewhat difficult question, how far lesser motives, such as emulation and rivalry and ambition to be topmost, may be appealed to in Christian life and work. Certainly it must be admitted that they can only be secondary motives, buttresses of a building that is well founded on the one great motive of loyalty and love to Christ.

III. ST. PAUL'S FEARS LEST THEY SHOULD COME SHORT OF HIS HOPE. "His boasting of them might be in vain in this behalf." He was very properly anxious "lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting." The ground of fear was the influence which the troubles and conflicts through which the Corinthian Church had been passing would have upon such a matter of external interest. Churches whose peace is disturbed are seldom found zealous in good works. The energy of the Church which is turned into dissension and strife is taken from its proper spheres of growth, witness, and charity. But St. Paul had further cause for his fears. Enemies of Corinth were so earnestly endeavouring to undermine his authority and destroy his influence that it seemed likely the Church would throw up this collection for the Jerusalem saints as a merely Pauline affair, with which they had better have nothing to do. The apostle opposes this malign influence by his delicate pleading, and by sending messengers who would testify that the collection was a matter of public concern, not one of personal interest to the apostle, and not one which was left in his hands. It was the united contribution of the Gentile Churches to the mother Church in her distress, and the matter was wholly under the regulation of those Churches. Impress how important is manifest clean-handedness for all who have to do with Church moneys. No man must blame us concerning the gifts which we administer.

IV. ST. PAUL'S ANXIETY TO SECURE THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF RIGHT FEELING. He had been made glad by the report which he had received concerning the more spiritually minded Corinthians. They had received his reproofs and counsels with right feeling. They had cleared themselves of all complicity with the doings of the unworthy member; and the apostle felt that now all that was needed, as a sign of their right-heartedness, was the resumption of this collecting scheme. If they would earnestly take that up and carry it through, in a generous and self-denying way, it would be the all-sufficient and outward proof that they had come well through the stormy and troubled periods of their Church history.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Covetousness*. "As a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness." Dean Plumptre translates, "as a work of *your* bounty, and not of *my* claims upon your purses." The Revised Version renders, "and not of extortion," but putting the word "covetousness" in the margin. The Greek of the word "covetous," signifies "to have more," and it signifies (1) one who has more than enough; (2) one who desires more than enough of whatever kind; and (3) one greedy after money. But these do not precisely express the thought which is in the word as employed in Scripture. Covetousness is that exaggerated consideration for *self* which makes it possible, not only to neglect the interests of others, but even to injure others to secure a man's own ends. It is the desire to get and to hold for self, which shuts up a man's hand and heart so that he cannot give to others. We suggest for treatment—

I. THE COVETOUS SPIRIT. Distinguish between covetous acts, and the covetous spirit which may be cherished in such a way as to utterly spoil acts which men may call acts of liberality. It is "covetousness," the self-seeking spirit, concerning which St. Paul is anxious, and this is a form of spiritual evil to which we are all more exposed than we think. The most painful exemplification of it is found in Judas Iscariot. Its subtle and mischievous workings in him can be clearly traced. The examples of Achan, Demas, etc., may also be given. "It is not necessary to describe at any length the sin which the Word of God brands under the name of 'covetousness,' and always associates with whatever is most offensive and most vile, 'the root of all evil,' by bad pre-eminence, 'idolatry.' We assume its existence. It will not be denied. Its spell is upon all. It is the abuse and perversion of a great law of man's nature—the law

which teaches him to aspire heavenward and Godward; or of a law not less primary—the law of self-preservation. It is the ruling passion of nearly all men, of all tastes and times. ‘Take heed, and beware of covetousness,’ said the All-wise; and though his Word teems with such warnings against the sin, men have not been warned. At one time men call it ‘the great queen-regent of the world;’ at another, ‘the all-consuming cancer’ of the Church; at another, her ‘deadly upas;’ at a fourth, ‘a fatal opiate;’ while others assure us that, at the best, man is only the heir of a vault or the lord of a grave. Yet vain are all such exposures. Though it creeps stealthily upon man like grey hairs or dropsy, the conquests of covetousness continue far wider than those of Alexander. The monarch and the menial are alike its slaves. The phlegmatic are covetous because this freezing sin specially suits their nature; the earnest, because it stimulates; the licentious, because it can pamper; the ambitious, because it can exalt; the stupid, because it compensates for dulness. Prosperity fans it, and adversity cannot quench it; men willingly bow down before it, as the tyrant summoned them of old to bow before another idol” (W. K. Tweedie, D.D.).

II. ITS RELATION TO THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. It is always and necessarily injurious, and, wherever willingly cherished, not only imperilling the finer and more delicate features of character, but even destructive of its root and branch. For the very essence of Christian character is the love of Christ, which takes us out of ourselves, and absorbs us with concern for him; and the love of others, for Christ’s sake, which sets us upon making their interests superior to our own. Covetousness may linger in the holes and caves of Mansoul while Immanuel is its King, but where covetousness reigns Christ cannot; or, to put it in other words, it is absolutely impossible to raise a Christian character upon a foundation of covetousness, and this spirit will but exert itself to daub and spoil the whole picture of the Christian graces.

III. ITS HINDRANCE TO CHRISTIAN GIVING. 1. By preventing the reception of a due impression of cases of need. Covetousness hardens, deafens, and blinds. 2. By compelling its victim to form a false estimate of his ability. 3. By deceiving a man through the presentation of unworthy excuses.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Cheerful givers.* Those to whom giving is no forced service, no painful duty, no grudgingly yielding to command, but the joy of their life, the thing which brings them their keenest and purest pleasure. We need only suggest the sources whence such cheerfulness will come. Dean Plumptre points out that in this sentence we have a distinct echo of Prov. xxii. 8, as it stands in the Greek Version: “He that soweth wicked things shall reap evils, and shall complete the penalty of his deed. God blesseth a cheerful man and a giver, and shall complete [in a good sense] the incompleteness of his works.” “Cheerfulness in visits of sympathy, in the daily offices of kindness, in the life of home, in giving instruction or advice,—all come under the head of that which God approves and loves. So the greatest of Greek ethical teachers (Aristotle) had refused the title of ‘liberal’ to the man who gave without pleasure in the act of giving. The pain he feels proves that, if he could, he would rather have the money than do the noble action.”

I. CHEERFULNESS THROUGH THE MOTIVE OF GIVING. Which is that thankfulness and love to him who was God’s great saving Gift to us, which kindles in our hearts the joy unspeakable.

II. CHEERFULNESS THROUGH THE PLEASURE OF GIVING. For our Lord read human hearts aright when he said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

III. CHEERFULNESS THROUGH THE HOPE OF BLESSING BY GIVING. Our giving meets and supplies needs; it tends to lift off burdens and to soothe sorrows. It is glad work to find ourselves, in a sinful and a sorrow-stricken world, healers, comforters, and saviours. No joy is like the joy of wakening joy in others.

IV. CHEERFULNESS THROUGH THE SENSE OF DIVINE APPROVAL ON GIVING. “God loveth the cheerful giver,” and when he loves, there is for us his uplifted countenance, his acceptance, and his smile.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*God’s ability and man’s.* Even in the early Church, the first Church of the apostles, there was need of money. In the first Council it was resolved to send a general direction to the Churches that they should “remember the poor.” The Apostle

Paul was deeply interested in a collection, which he set on foot throughout the Churches he had founded, on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem, and his last journey to the holy city was occasioned by his earnest desire to present these "alms and offerings of the Gentiles" with his own hands to the apostles and elders. This text is directly connected with the matter of money, of Christian giving for Christian uses, which we properly regard as still one of the first duties, as it is certainly one of the highest privileges, of the Christian Church. St. Paul had been boasting in other places of the willingness, the heartiness, and the liberality of the Church at Corinth; but in consequence, perhaps, of the interruption of his relations with them, he feared that they would hardly come up to the account which, in his trustfulness, he had given of them. He therefore sent on before him collectors, who were to gather their stored gifts together, and he reminds them again of those considerations by which he had already urged them to a noble liberality. "Give," he says, "according to the generous purposings of the heart that is made tender and thankful by the sense of God's saving love. Remember, 'he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.' Let your giving be a 'matter of bounty, not as of covetousness.' 'God loveth a cheerful giver.' And God is able to give all temporal good to you, so that, having sufficiency for all your own needs, you yet may be able to distribute generously. And did not the Lord Jesus lay down for all his people this most comprehensive principle, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'?" And did he not illustrate, in his own uttermost self-sacrifice, the glory of his own great principle? Verily the beatitude of God rests on those who *give!*" This is the first connection of the passage before us, but it broadens its reach beyond the money and the giving. It covers and hallows all the features and expressions of our religious life. Whosoever we may be, whatsoever we may have to do, whensoever needs arise, the sound of this assurance comes to us, quieting all fears, and stilling the heart to peace and rest. There is a gracious power in the word "all," repeated as it is again and again in the verse. The word seems designed to drive away every lingering doubt. "All grace," "all sufficiency," "all good."

I. GOD'S ABILITY, AND ITS CONDITION. Nothing that is not an absurdity in the statement is beyond God's power. Much has been made of the contention that God cannot put two things into the same place at the same time, or that he cannot make the addition of two and two make five, or make two parallel lines ever meet. But, in view of the essential conditions of human thought and human language, these things are absurdities, and not impossibilities; and it is no limitation of the Divine omnipotence to say that God cannot do what is absurd in the very statement. "He is able." We feel the truth of this in the world of nature. Sky and earth and sea proclaim that he is "able." Who can listen to the wild storm, hear the mighty winds bowing the great trees, and the thunder-echoes rolling from hill to hill, and the breakers plunging against the guardian cliffs, and not reverently say, "He is able"? Who can feel how the gentle spring sunshine warms the wintry air and the chilled ground, tenderly touching every life-germ in bud and seed and plant, and wakening life and hope and beauty all around, and not lovingly say, "Verily thou art able"?

"O spirit of the strong things and the gentle, thou art able."

But nature is outside us. We may watch the omnipotent workings, but we want to ask this: "Do we come within the all-powerful grasp?" Admit all we may about our "free-will," nevertheless, of ourselves, of body, soul, circumstances, can we say, "He is able"? Yes; in him we "live, and move, and have our being." Our circumstances are his overruling. Our souls are his inbreathing. He in whom we trust *can* do all things. We are continually crushed by being compelled to say, "I cannot;" but the feeble limited creature steadies its tremblings by leaning on One who can. "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." But we long to know this—What can the almighty God really be to us? Can he come right into the spheres of our life and work? and is he able to make all grace abound to us there? Can he "supply all our need out of his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"? Into the shadow of his fatherhood may we run, since our "heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him"? That is the ability of God concerning which we need to gain such deep and satisfying impressions. As a redeemed son of his, is he able to find all the grace

I need; able to meet me at every point; able to give the grace according to the day; able to adapt himself to all the changes and fluctuations of my moods and circumstances? The little child brings all her broken dolls and damaged toys to her father; she is perfectly sure that, however dreadful the damage may be, "father can mend it." And the sweet confidence dries up the tears. But the little thing never stops to consider how strong the father-arms are or how skilful his fingers; she only reads his power by the light of his love; and she is quite sure that he will try, and her trust says that he will succeed. What can God do for us, his blood-bought children? He can breathe on us the spirit of a holy contentment. He can inspire us with zeal unto all good works. He can strengthen us for all noble enterprise. He can make the mountains of difficulty before us lie level as a plain. He can so prosper and bless us that very thankfulness shall urge us to generous and noble deeds. "I cannot indeed, but God can:" let us learn to say that, and then this will be our glorying—"Here, there, yonder, in this and in that, in the light and in the dark, I can, through him who strengtheneth me." There is a condition upon which the ability of God alone can come to us. We must gain and keep the *receptive mood*, which includes the humble, obedient, and trustful spirit.

II. MAN'S ABILITY AND ITS EXPRESSION. For we also are "able to abound unto every good work." Sometimes we are deeply impressed with the feebleness, the imperfection, of the best that we can do. But when we estimate that work of grace which God, the All-merciful, is carrying on in the world—so silent, yet so mighty; so long, and yet so surely triumphant at last; so rich in long-suffering patience; so quick to take up and use a thousand trifling influences, sanctifying even a passing word and a gentle look to its gracious ends,—then it seems wonderful that, in so great a matter, we should be "co-workers with God," and that the rich streams of Divine grace should even flow to others through us. With the grace of God *we can* do all things. In the renewed man there is ability. God makes him mighty, and uses him to "pull down the strongholds." God shows him what great things he can suffer, and what great things he can do, for his Name's sake. In full harmony with the Christian humility and dependence we may gain this sense of Christian ability. We want the inspiration of the conviction settled deeply into our souls—"I can." We need the cheer that comes to every man when God says to him, "Thou canst." We are weak, depressed, hesitating; we touch things with a trembling hand; we faint before the first difficulty, so long as we say to ourselves, "I cannot." With the "all efficiency" we can abound to every good work.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*God's rewards for liberal souls.* This verse may be read in a sentence: "The liberal soul shall be made fat." F. W. Robertson's passage in reference to this is so characteristic of him, and so wise and suggestive, that it cannot be withheld. He says, "In the particular instance now before us, what are the rewards of liberality which St. Paul promises to the Corinthians? They are (1) the love of God (ver. 7); (2) a spirit abounding to every good work (ver. 8); (3) thanksgiving on their behalf (vers. 11, 12, 13). A noble harvest, but *all* spiritual. Comprehend the meaning of it well. Give, and you will not get back again. Do not expect your money to be returned, like that of Joseph's brethren in their sacks' mouths. When you give to God, sacrifice, and know that what you give *is* sacrificed, and is not to be got again, even in this world; for if you give, expecting it back again, there is no sacrifice: charity is no speculation in the spiritual funds, no wise investment, to be repaid with interest either in time or eternity! No, the rewards are these: Do right, and God's recompense to you will be the power of doing more right. Give, and God's reward to you will be the spirit of giving more; a blessed Spirit, for it is the Spirit of God himself, whose life is the blessedness of giving. Love and God will pay you with the capacity of more love, for love is heaven, love is God within you." Setting out the various forms in which Divine rewards come to liberal souls, we notice—

I. TEMPORAL PROSPERITY. However true it is that this was associated with goodness only under the Old Testament economy, it is still found that the liberal soul makes friends, wins love, and so secures actual temporal advantages.

II. HUMAN LOVE. It is our best earthly treasure, and it comes in response to our power to give. The dearest relationships of human life are the rewards of them that

can give. And Job reminds us how the good man, the gracious man, gets his reward in the love of the poor whom he seeks to bless (Job xxix. 11—17).

III. SOUL-CULTURE. For it is a steadfast law of soul-life, that it cannot grow by keeping; it can only grow by giving, expending. The law of receiving more grace is this—we must use up, in good generous deeds, the grace that we have.

IV. POWER TO DO MORE GOOD. See the extract from F. W. Robertson given in the introduction to this homily.

V. DIVINE FAVOUR. Which must include those rewards of the heavenly world which now escape our apprehension, because they can only be presented to us in material forms and figures. T. Binney says, "Beneficent acts, right in spirit and principle, though they may be forgotten by the doer—who may not let his 'left hand know what his right hand doeth'—are not forgotten by him to whose will they have an ultimate respect, and by whom they are received as a sacrifice. They have a relation to God, and are regarded by him long after they have been accomplished and have passed away from the memory of man. They do not terminate with their being finished and done with here, or, so to speak, with the immediate pleasurable impression on the Divine mind. That impression is retained and prolonged. He to whom they rise up as incense gives to them, as it were, a substantial embodiment in the upper world—lays them up there as valuable treasure belonging to his children, and thinks of and surveys them with satisfaction and complacency."—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The unspeakable Gift.* This can refer to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who himself said, in such a striking way to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the *gift of God*, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John iv. 10). In Jesus Christ "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (comp. Rom. v. 15; vi. 23; Heb. vi. 4).

I. CHRIST IS A GIFT. This is but reminding us that salvation is altogether of grace. We in no sense can be said to have *purchased* Christ. Nor did any merit of ours attract him. Nor by any power of ours did we win him. God pitied us in our lost estate, and *gave* his Son. A priceless Gift indeed, seeing that it includes: 1. Pardon. 2. Peace. 3. Eternal life.

II. CHRIST IS GOD'S GIFT. This reminds us that salvation is a Divine work. We read of the "grace of God" and the "gift by grace." And "when there was no eye to pity and no arm to save, his own arm brought salvation." Salvation is said to be of God to show us: 1. It is not some human scheme. This is the essential difference between Christ's salvation and all other salvations. They are human devices—philosophies or religions; this is Divine intervention, arrangement, and revelation; God's power directly working in God's way. It is indeed God himself saving men. To trust in any merely human redemption schemes is like hoping to save a drowning man with a rope that is too short. 2. To give us right views of God. Man's usual thought of God is that of an offended King or stern Judge. But the unspeakable Gift reveals the higher truth that God is *love*, and the gift being that of a Son unfolds the sublime fact that God is Father. So we know God through his gift.

III. CHRIST IS AN UNSPEAKABLY PRECIOUS GIFT. This reminds us that salvation is priceless. It is beyond all possibility that we could speak worthily (1) all the glory of Christ himself; (2) all the sorrow Christ went through; (3) all the needs which Jesus can meet; or (4) all the love that Jesus feels. The apostle felt overwhelmed with the thought of it, and spoke of the "love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

IV. CHRIST IS A GIFT OFFERED FOR OUR ACCEPTANCE. It suffices no man to know that this Gift has come; nor to know that others have received it to the joy and rejoicing of their hearts. No man can offer worthy heart-thanksgiving for this Gift until he has personally accepted it, sufficiently proved it, and can speak for himself of the pricelessness of it. The law is this: "He that *hath the Son hath life.*" And he can "thank God for his unspeakable Gift."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

With this chapter begins the last great section of the Epistle (ver. 1—ch. xiii. 10), which contains an impassioned vindication of the apostle's position as compared with that of his opponents. It is so much more vehement and severe than the former part of the Epistle, and the whole style and tone of the Epistle at this point change so completely, that many have supposed that this is in reality another letter, and some have even identified it with the letter alluded to in ch. vii. 8—12. There is no trace of external evidence in favour of this view. It is much more probable that St. Paul would here have ended his letter but for fresh information given him by Titus, or the arrival of some new messenger from Corinth, from whom he learnt the bitter way in which his enemies spoke of him. The most flagrant offender seems to have been one teacher from Jerusalem (vers. 7, 10, 11, 12, 18; ch. xi. 4). This man and his abettors and other party opponents spoke of St. Paul as mean in aspect (vers. 1, 10), untutored in speech (ch. xi. 6), bold at a distance and cowardly when present, a man of mere human motives (ver. 2), and not quite sound in intellect (ch. xi. 16, 17, 19). They had been introducing new teaching (ch. xi. 4), and had shown themselves boastful (ver. 7), insolent, rapacious, violent (ch. xi. 20, 21), intrusive (ver. 15), and generally dangerous in their influence (ch. xi. 3), which had succeeded in alienating from St. Paul the minds of many (ver. 18; ch. xi. 8, 20; xii. 13, 14). Such accusations and such conduct now roused the deep indignation of St. Paul, and his *Apologia pro vitâ suâ* is mainly given in these chapters.

Plunging at once into his subject, with a solemn appeal, he declares his apostolic power (vers. 1—8), and that he will exercise it in person as well as by letters, in answer to the taunt of his opponents (vers. 9—11). He then shows that his estimate of himself is formed on very different methods from those of his adversaries (vers. 12—16),

and that he referred all grounds of boasting solely to the judgment of God (vers. 17, 18).

Ver. 1.—Now I Paul myself. The words, as Theodoret says, express the emphasis of apostolic dignity. He is going to speak of himself and for himself. "I, the very Paul, with whose name you make so free." The conjecture may not even be impossible that this portion of the letter may have been written with his own hand. Perhaps he began without any intention of writing more than a few concluding words, but he was carried away by his feelings, and the subject grew under his hands (comp. Gal. v. 2; Eph. iii. 1; Philem. 19). Beseech; rather, *exhort*. By the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The conduct which he is obliged to threaten might seem incompatible with this meekness and gentleness (Matt. xi. 29, 30). It was not *really* so, because even Christ had been compelled at times "to burst into plain thunderings and lightnings." Still, severity and indignation were not in themselves after the inmost heart and will of Christ, though human perversity might compel love itself to assume such tones. He entreats them, however, not to force him to stern measures. *Gentleness*. The word *epieikeia* means "fairness, forbearance, sympathetic consideration for others," or, as Mr. Matthew Arnold prefers to render it, "sweet reasonableness" (see Acts xxiv. 4; Phil. iv. 5; Jas. iii. 17; 1 Pet. ii. 18). Who in presence, etc. Here, and in many similar passages of this section, he is evidently adopting or quoting the actual taunts of his adversaries. In modern times the words would be enclosed in inverted commas. Base; rather, *humble* (see note on ch. vii. 6; xii. 7). Being absent am bold. The charge, if true, would have been the mark of a coward; and it naturally awakens an indignant echo in the language of St. Paul.

Ver. 2.—I beseech you. The "beseech" is here right (*deomas*). The "you" is not in the Greek, but is rightly supplied. It rests with them to avert the necessity of personal severity, and he entreats them to do so (comp. ch. xiii. 2, 10; 1 Cor. iv. 21). Against some. He leaves these undefined till the vehement outburst of ch. xi. 13, 14. As if we walked according to the flesh (see note on ch. v. 16). To say this of St. Paul was to charge him with being insincere and not disinterested.

Ver. 3.—We walk in the flesh. St. Paul does not disclaim the possession of human infirmities, but maintains that such trials

and temptations were not the guiding force of his life. We do not war after the flesh, His *campaigns* (Luke iii. 14) were fought with spiritual weapons. The metaphor is a constant one with St. Paul (ch. ii. 14—16; 1 Cor. ix. 26; Eph. vi. 10—17, etc.).

Ver. 4.—Weapons (see ch. vi. 7; Rom. vi. 13). Not carnal. He did not rely on the mere “arm of flesh,” or on earthly sword or panoply. Mighty through God; literally, *powerful for God*; i.e. either (1) powerful for the cause of God, or (2) powerful in his estimate. To the pulling down of strongholds. The word for “pulling down,” which implies the entire clearance of an obstacle, is only found in the New Testament in this Epistle (vers. 4, 8; ch. xiii. 10). The word for “strongholds” is found here alone. These “fortresses” were the opposition aroused by factious and hostile partisans, and he hoped to subdue them by the strong exercise of apostolic authority (1 Cor. iv. 21; v. 1—5). Dean Stanley suggests a reminiscence of the hundred and twenty *Cilician* fortresses pulled down by Pompey; but I think that these general allusions are often pressed too far.

Ver. 5.—Casting down. This agrees with “we” understood, not with “weapons.” Imaginations; rather, *disputations, or reasonings*. Every high thing that exalteth itself; rather, *every height that is exalted*. Against the knowledge of God (see 1 Cor. xv. 34). There, however, we have passive ignorance, here active opposition. Bringing into captivity. When the fortresses are razed, their defenders will be taken prisoners, but for a beneficent end. Every thought. Even intellectual result. The word (*noëma*) is not common in the New Testament. It occurs five times in this Epistle (ch. ii. 11; iii. 14; iv. 4; x. 5; xi. 3), but elsewhere only in Phil. iv. 7.

Ver. 6.—Being in a readiness; i.e. being quite prepared. My sternness of purpose is ready, but my hope is that it may not be called into action. To revenge; rather, *to do justice upon*. In any case, in this infliction of justice, whatever form it might take, he would only be an *agent of God* (Rom. xii. 19). When your obedience is fulfilled. St. Paul is confident that he will overcome the mazes of those opposed to him, and win them to Christ's obedience; but if there were any who should obstinately refuse to submit, they must be reduced to submission by action, not by words.

Ver. 7.—Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? Like many clauses in this section, the words are capable of different interpretations. They might mean, (1) as in the Authorized Version, “Do you judge by mere externals?” or, (2) “You judge by things which merely lie on the

surface!” or, (3) “Consider the personal aspect of the question.” The Authorized Version is probably right (comp. John vii. 24). If any man. Perhaps alluding to some party ringleader. That he is Christ's. If a man holds this in an exclusive and partisan sense (1 Cor. i. 12). Some manuscripts (D, E, F, G) read, “a slave of Christ.” Of himself. The true reading is probably $\epsilon\phi$, not $\alpha\phi$, but in either case the meaning is, “by his own fair judgment.” Even so are we Christ's. In a true and real sense, not by external knowledge and connection (which he has already disclaimed), but by inward union. This he proceeds to prove by the fact that he was the founder of their Church (vers. 13—18); that he had always acted with absolute disinterestedness (ch. xi. 1—15); that he had lived a life of toil and suffering (ch. xi. 21—33), and that he had received special revelations from God (ch. xii. 1—6).

Vers. 8—11.—*Assertion of his intentions*. Ver. 8.—Should boast. In this section St. Paul is thoroughly *haunted* by this word. The fact that a word could thus possess and dominate over his style and imagination shows how deeply he was moved. The Corinthian Church, with its inflated factions and their flegmen, reeked with boasting, and St. Paul is driven, with utter distaste, to adopt in self-defence language which, to the uncanid and indiscriminating, might seem to wear the same aspect. The word, which is unfrequent in other Epistles, occurs eighteen times in these chapters alone. Other haunting words are “tolerate,” “bear with” (ch. xi. 1, 4, 19, 20), and “senseless,” “fool” (ch. xi. 16, 19; xii. 6, 11); see note on ch. i. 3. Somewhat more; *something more abundantly*. For edification, and not for your destruction; *for building you up, not pulling you down*. The word *kathairestin* is from the same root as the verb in ver. 5. I should not be ashamed; rather, *I shall not be ashamed*. No shame shall ever accrue to me from my “boast” being proved false.

Ver. 9.—By letters; rather, *by the letters*. He had certainly addressed two letters to them (1 Cor. v. 9).

Ver. 10.—Say they; literally, *says he*. The phrase may, indeed, imply “it is said” (*on dit*); but it may refer to one main critic and opponent (comp. vers. 7, 11). Perhaps it would have been wiser and kinder if no one had reported to St. Paul all these subterranean calumnies and innuendoes. Weighty and strong. This could not be denied, considering the immense effect which had been produced by his first letter (ch. vii. 7). His bodily presence is weak. This is usually taken to mean that St. Paul's personal appearance was unprepossessing

(Gal. iv. 1). This, indeed, we should infer from many other passages (1 Cor. ii. 34; Gal. iv. 13, 14), and as a natural result of his "stake in the flesh." It is, too, the consistent though late tradition respecting him (see my 'Life of St. Paul,' ii. 628). Here, however, the words may mean no more than that "he adds nothing to his cause by being present in person, since he shows vacillation and want of energy." Contemptible; rather, *despised* (see 1 Cor. ii. 3, 4).

Ver. 11.—Such a one. A formula used to avoid mentioning a special name (see note on ch. ii. 7). Such will we be; rather, *such are we*. The verb is not expressed, but it would have been if the future tense had been intended. In this verse St. Paul is not saying what he would do hereafter, but is rebutting with calmness and dignity the false charge that he was in any way different when absent from what he was when present.

Ver. 12.—We dare not. They are in this respect of self-praise much bolder than I. Make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves; literally, *judge ourselves among or judge ourselves with*. There is a play on the words, like the Latin, *inferre* or *conferre*, or the German, *zurechnen* oder *gleichrechnen*. That commend themselves. The verb rendered "commend" is that from which is derived "the commendatory letters" (ch. iii. 1) at the arrogant and intrusive use of which he had glanced already. St. Paul is once more rebutting the charge of self-commendation (ch. iv. 2; v. 12; vi. 11). But they measuring themselves . . . are not wise. The clause is difficult; for (1) to compare ourselves with others in order to learn what we can and cannot do is usually accounted wise; (2) some manuscripts and editions, omitting *ὁ συνιοῦσιν ἡμεῖς δὲ*, render, "But we ourselves (*αὐτοί*), measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves with ourselves, will not boast above measure;" (3) some, for *συνιοῦσιν* (they are not wise) read *συλοῦσιν* (with ourselves, who are not wise). The reading, however, of the Authorized Version is undoubtedly right, and most probably the rendering also. The meaning is that the little cliques of factious religionists, never looking outside their own narrow circles, became inflated with a sense of importance which would have been annihilated if they had looked at higher standards. Hence they thought themselves at liberty to intrude and lay down the law and usurp a claim to infallibility which there was nothing to justify. Such conduct

is the reverse of wise. It is a mixture of selfishness, Pharisaism, and conceit, and there have been abundant examples of it among religious parties in all ages. St. Paul, on the other hand, keeps within his own measure, because he has learnt to adopt larger and loftier standards.

Ver. 13.—Will not boast of things without our measure. This might be rendered, "will not indulge in these immeasurable boastings;" but ver. 15 points to the sense, "we will not glory beyond our measure." Of the rule; i.e. of the measuring-line. I will keep to the province and limit which God has assigned to me in my proper measure. St. Paul declines the favourite office of being "other people's bishop (*ἀλλοτρι-ἐπίσκοπος*)" (1 Pet. iv. 15). Hath distributed; rather, *apportioned*.

Ver. 14.—As though we reached not unto you. In including you within the reach of our measuring-line, we are guilty neither of presumption nor of intrusion. Your Church is a part of our legitimate province and range of work (Acts xviii. 1, 4). We are come as far as to you; rather, *we anticipated others in coming to you*; "we were the first to come as far as unto you." To St. Paul belonged the undisputed glory of having first introduced the gospel into the regions of Macedonia and Achaia.

Ver. 15.—That is, of other men's labours. Not to thrust himself obtrusively into spheres of labour which legitimately belonged to others was a part of St. Paul's scrupulously chivalrous rule (ch. iii. 10; Gal. ii. 9; Rom. xv. 20). It contrasted with the usurping arrogance of these Jerusalem emissaries. When your faith is increased; rather, *increases or grows*. He delicately implies that their lack of faith prevents the extension of his labours. He could not leave in his rear an unstormed fortress of opposition to the gospel. The spread of the gospel *depends on them*. We shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly. The Revised Version renders it more clearly, "We shall be magnified in you according to our province unto further abundance."

Ver. 16.—In the regions beyond you. Even to Rome and Spain (Rom. xv. 19, 24, 28).

Ver. 17.—But he that glorieth, etc.; literally, *he that boasteth*, etc. (see note on 1 Cor. i. 31; Jer. ix. 24).

Ver. 18.—But whom the Lord commendeth (comp. 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14, iv. 5; Prov. xxvii. 2).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—Self-vindication. “Now I Paul myself beseech you,” etc. Paul, as we have frequently intimated, had detractors in the Corinthian Church, men who sought to gain power by calumniating him. We are not in possession of all the calumnies. Paul knew them all. Throughout these two Epistles we find him constantly on the defensive; here again we find him standing up for himself. In his defence he manifests—

I. A STRONG DESIRE TO DEAL WITH THEM IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. “Now I Paul myself beseech [entreat] you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” He seems to shrink from the idea of so defending himself as to act contrary to the mild and gentle spirit of Christ. Whatever I say in my defence, I would say in the spirit of him “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.” Thus we should always act, even in reproofing others and defending ourselves; in all we should be actuated and controlled by the spirit of Jesus Christ. No reproof will go so thoroughly home to the heart of the offender as that which breathes and echoes his spirit.

II. A KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONTEMPTUOUSNESS WITH WHICH HIS DETRACTORS REGARDED HIM. “Who in presence am base [lowly] among you, but being absent am bold [of good courage] toward you.” This does not seem to be the estimate he forms of himself, but the character which his slanderers had given him. In ver. 10 it is so stated: “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” It would seem that they spoke somewhat thus—How bold and courageous this man is in his “letters;” but how mean and contemptible in his appearance and conduct! He here intimates that when he comes amongst them he would be “bold” and courageous. They shall know that I am no coward, and with indomitable fearlessness I shall administer the necessary rebuke.

III. A DREAD OF EXERCISING SEVERITY TOWARDS THEM. “But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some; which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.” It is the characteristic of a great soul, especially of a great soul inspired with the spirit of Christ, to shrink from inflicting pain on any heart. Yet when duty calls it must be done.

Vers. 3—6.—The true soldiership. “For though,” etc. The passage leads us to notice the *weapons* and *victories* of a true soldiership.

I. THE WEAPONS OF TRUE SOLDIERSHIP. The apostle states two things concerning these weapons. 1. *They are not carnal.* The word “carnal” here may be regarded as standing in contradiction to three things. (1) To miraculous agency. Miracles, though employed at first, are not the regular weapons by which Christianity fights her battles. (2) To all coercive instrumentality. The civil magistrate now for fifteen centuries has sought by exactions and penalties to force Christianity upon the consciences of men. Such weapons disgrace and misrepresent it. (3) To all crafty inventions. In nothing, perhaps, has the craftiness of men appeared more than in connection with the profession of extending Christianity. What are the tricks of rhetoric, the assumptions of priests, and the clap-trap of sects but craft? 2. *Though not carnal, they are mighty.* “Mighty through God.” (1) They are mighty through God because they are his *productions*. Gospel truths, the weapons of which the apostle speaks, are God’s ideas, and those ideas are mighty—mighty with truth and love. (2) They are mighty through God because they are his *instruments*. God goes with his ideas and works by them.

II. THE VICTORIES OF TRUE SOLDIERSHIP. What are the victories? 1. *They are mental.* Paul is speaking about *imaginings* and things pertaining to mind. They are not over body. There is not any glory in destroying the bodily life of man. The lion, the bear, a poisonous gust of air, will excel man in this. The victories of a true soldiership are over *mind*. And indeed you do not conquer the man unless you conquer his mind. If there be a future world, then the men you slay upon the battle-field may hate you in the great eternity with a profounder hatred than ever. 2. *They*

are corrective. These victories do not involve the destruction of the mind nor any of its native faculties, but certain evils that pertain to it. What are they? (1) The evil fortifications of the mind. "The pulling down of strongholds." What are they? Prejudices, worldly maxims, associations, passions, habits; behind these "strongholds" the mind entrenches itself against God. (2) The corrupt thinking of the mind. "Casting down imaginations." The word "thinking" comprehends this, for the faculty which we call imagination thinks as well as the intellect. It is against evil thinkings, therefore. (3) The antitheistic impulses of the mind. "And every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." Every feeling and passion that rises against God. These are the victories of true soldiership. 3. *They are Christian.* They "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Thought is everything to man. Now, the work of a true soldier is to bring this frontal force into entire subjection to Christ.

Ver. 7.—*Paul's special power.* "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" These words point to two evils.

I. **JUDGING FROM APPEARANCE.** "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" or that "are before your face." The teachers at Corinth who were opposed to the apostle prided themselves on their external advantages, and regarded themselves as superior in appearance, rank, and manners to Paul. They judged from appearance. This judgment led them to regard Paul as their inferior. But was he inferior? Was he not, in all that is intrinsically excellent, in mental capacity, in spiritual knowledge, in Christly enthusiasm, and supernatural power, their superior, the very prince of the apostles? Men judged Christ by the "outward appearance," and how false, wicked, and pernicious their judgment turned out to be! The only true test is the fruit. "By their fruits ye shall know them;" fruits, not actions—which often misrepresent the character of the soul—but productions that are the natural, complete, and spontaneous outgrowth and expression of the leading moral principles of man's life. Because men judge from "the outward appearance," wolves in society pass for sheep, paupers for princes, devils for saints, churls for philanthropists, etc.

II. **ARROGATING SUPERIOR CHRISTLIENESS.** "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's." Whilst there were those in the Corinthian Church who said some of them were of Paul, of Apollos, of Cephas, there were some who said they were of Christ. They wished to be regarded as superior to all, as knowing more of Christ, being more intimate with him, having a stronger claim upon him. It might be that some of the members of this party had (not like Paul) been with Christ while on earth, had talked with him, walked with him, feasted with him, and of this they would boast. But thousands could boast of this who had no vital fellowship with Christ. There always have been men in Churches who have arrogated superior piety. I have known not a few, not distinguished by any spiritual nobleness, who were accustomed to speak of him as "*my Christ*," "*my Saviour*," "*my Redeemer*," implying that he was more to them than to others.

Vers. 8—10.—*God's gift of special power to man.* "For though I should boast," etc. These verses present to our attention *God's gift of special power to man.* The "authority" of which the apostle here speaks was, in all probability, a supernatural endowment. Such an endowment he both claimed and manifested (see Acts xiii. 8—11; xiv. 8—10; xv. 9—12). Having this power he was superior even to the ablest of his censors in Corinth, and he felt that should he "boast somewhat" of this there was no reason for him to be ashamed. The words suggest three remarks concerning such special gift of power to man.

I. **IT IS UNDER MAN'S CONTROL.** Paul's language seems to imply that he might or might not use his "authority" or power; it did not coerce him; it did not make him a mere instrument; it did not overbear his will or infringe in any way his freedom of action. God has given exceptional power to some men—to Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, etc.; but in all cases it seemed to leave them free—free to use it or not, to use it in this direction or in that. The Maker and Manager of the universe respects evermore the free agency with which he has endowed his rational and moral offspring.

We may enslave ourselves, but he will not. He will always treat us as responsible for all we do.

II. ITS GREAT DESIGN IS USEFULNESS. "The Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction." He gives power to men, not to pull down, but to build up. Usefulness is the grand end of our existence. We are formed, not to injure, but to bless our fellow-creatures. Whatever endowments we have, be they ordinary or transcendent, all are given by our Maker to promote truth and virtue and human happiness through the world. Alas! how extensively men pervert these high gifts of Heaven!

III. IT IS NO PROTECTION FROM MALICE. Though Paul was thus so distinguished by signal endowments, he was nevertheless the subject of bitter envy and cruel slander. "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." Did the supernatural power with which some of the old Hebrew prophets were endowed shield men from the malice of men? How were Moses, Elisha, and Elijah treated? The fact is, the higher gifts a man has the more he is exposed to the malice of others; the more distinguished a man is in gifts and graces, the more he will arouse among his contemporaries the spirit of detraction and hate. It was so with Christ himself.

Vers. 11—13.—*The false and true method of estimating men.* "Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present. For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you." In these verses we have two subjects worthy of notice.

I. THE FALSE AND TRUE METHOD OF ESTIMATING THE CHARACTER OF OTHERS. "Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters," etc. 1. To judge by *public report is a wrong method.* It would almost seem that there was a general impression in Corinth that not only was Paul's "bodily presence" somewhat contemptible, but that his letters were not a fair representation of himself, that they displayed an elevation and a heroism of which the writer was destitute, and from this general impression he was judged and considered to be something of a boaster and charlatan. How common it is for people to judge those they have never seen by general report! But a miserably false standard of judgment is this. Not unfrequently have I received impressions concerning a person whom I have never seen, which a subsequent personal acquaintance has completely dispelled. As a rule, the public estimate of men, both in Church and state, is most fallacious and unjust. 2. To judge by *personal knowledge is the true method.* "Let such a one think [reckon] this, that, such as we are in word by letters . . . such will we be also in deed when we are present." The meaning of this seems to be—Wait until I come amongst you, and you will find that I am true to the character of my letters, that I will act out their spirit. A man's own letters, even when rightly interpreted, will not give a free and a complete idea of the author. The author is greater than his book, the man greater than his productions. One hour with an author will give me a better idea of him than I could obtain from all the productions of his pen, however voluminous.

II. THE FALSE AND TRUE METHOD OF ESTIMATING OUR OWN CHARACTERS. 1. The *false method is comparing our own character with the character of others.* "Measuring themselves by themselves." This the Corinthians seem to have done, and this, perhaps, is the general tendency of mankind. We judge ourselves by the characters of others. When we are accused we are prone to say we are not worse than So-and-so. A false standard this, because: (1) The mass of mankind are corrupt. (2) The best of men are more or less imperfect. (3) There is only One perfect character—Jesus Christ. In these words Paul indicates: (a) That it is a *terrible* thing thus to judge ourselves. "We dare not [are not bold enough to] make ourselves of the number." Truly it is a *terrible* thing, for it leads to fearful issues. (b) That it is an *unwise* thing thus to judge ourselves. Those who compare themselves with others "are not wise," or are "without understanding." 2. The *true method is judging ourselves by the will of God.*

“According to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us.” Though the apostle by the expression, “rule which God hath distributed,” *primarily refers to the Divine limits of his apostolic work*, as will appear again, the “rule” applies also to his personal character. God’s will is the standard or canon by which all characters are to be determined.

CONCLUSION. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Vers. 14—18.—*The true sphere of human usefulness and the source of human glory.* “For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly. To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.” Here are two subjects for meditation.

I. THE TRUE SPHERE OF HUMAN USEFULNESS. 1. It is a sphere in which we are placed by *Divine appointment*. Paul teaches that his sphere of labour in Corinth was according to the Divine will. “We stretch not ourselves beyond our measure [overmuch], as though we reached not unto you.” As if he had said, “I am not come to Corinth merely by my own inclinations, or as a matter of impulse or caprice, or as an intruder. I am come here by the will of God. I am licensed by him to this sphere.” 2. The consciousness that we are in this sphere is a *just reason for exultation*. “Not boasting of things without our measure.” As if Paul had said, “My boasting, or my exultation, is not that I have entered into the sphere of other men’s labours, but that I am in the sphere to which I have been divinely commissioned.” The opponents of Paul, in Corinth, boasted of the influence they had gained in the Church which he himself had founded by his self-sacrificing labours, and whose members owed, either directly or indirectly, their conversion to him; whereas his rejoicing was that he was doing the work of God in the *sphere to which he had been sent*. 3. It is a sphere which *widens with our usefulness*. Although Paul felt that Corinth was the sphere to which he had been sent, he knew that the field would be widened according to his spiritual success. “Having hope, when your faith is increased [that as your faith groweth], that we shall be enlarged [magnified] by you according to our rule [province] abundantly.” The increase of their faith would lead to an enlargement of his sphere of labour. *The true method of extending the sphere of labour to which we have been sent is by the multiplication of our converts*. Each soul which a minister brings to Christ enlarges the field of his usefulness, enables him to break up new ground still further on.

II. THE TRUE SOURCE OF HUMAN EXULTATION. In what did Paul exult or “boast”? 1. Not in *crediting himself with the labours of other men*. He did not “boast in another man’s line [province] of things made ready to our hand.” How common it is for men to credit themselves with the labours of others! We find this in every department of labour. In literature there are plagiarists, in scientific discoveries and artistic inventions there are unjust claimants, and even in religion one minister is often found to claim the good that others have accomplished. Paul was above this. The genius of Christianity condemns this mean and miserable dishonesty. 2. Not in *self-commendation*. “For not he that commendeth himself is approved.” That conscience approves of our conduct, though at all times a source of pleasure, is not a true source of exultation; for conscience is not infallible. Conscience sometimes deceives. What, then, was his true source of exultation? “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Change in the Epistle; spirit of his defence.* No one can fail to notice the change in the tone of the Epistle which appears in this chapter. Every thought-

ful reader of St. Paul knows how abrupt his transitions frequently are, and how rapidly he digresses from his main point to something incidental to his topic. His mental associations are governed by two distinct laws—first, by ideas exciting feelings which lead him to diverge from his main line; and next, by emotions arising from some occult source that vary his action of intellect. In this instance there may have been a pause in writing after he had finished the subject of the collection. Naturally a reaction would set in. One of his excitable temperament could not have been relieved of oppressive solicitude, as he had been by the return of Titus, nor given such an expression to his joy as we have in ch. viii. and ix. without subsequent exhaustion of nervous energy. If, meantime, news came to him of the renewal of Judaizing zeal at Corinth, and of some sudden accession of strength to the party so inflamed against him, we can readily see why his indignation should be aroused. To have his hopes dashed in this way, in such a conjuncture and by such unscrupulous opponents, would put a terrible strain on a nature organized as sensitively as his, all the more so since a new era seemed about dawning in the history of the gospel. Europe and Asia appeared ready to join hands most heartily in the work of evangelizing the world, and, just at this most auspicious period, to witness a fresh outbreak of discord was the severest of trials that could have befallen him. Whatever the cause, it was a sad thing for this noble spirit to be sorely chafed in an hour when it was rallying from an unusual depression and girding itself for special endeavours to cement the Asiatic and European Churches closer together. Here, in the very heart of Achaia, were agents from the Judaizing party at Jerusalem, who appear to have become more jealous than ever of his growing influence, and were heated to fiercer hostility against the apostle because of the recent triumph of his authority. While he was exerting every nerve to help the Church in Jerusalem, men from that very community were working in Corinth to disparage his ministry and undermine his personal character. It was shocking ingratitude. In itself it was rankling jealousy; in its connections, base partisanship. At that moment the interests of Christianity hung on the precise work he was doing. The liberal gospel he was preaching, the gospel of free grace and of equal honour and privilege to Jew and Gentile, was attesting its Divine excellence in the “exceeding grace of God” manifested by means of the abounding charity of Macedonia and Achaia. And yet all the promise and hope of this inspiring movement were thrown into the utmost peril by these fanatical zealots. Had he not felt this wrong keenly and resisted it courageously, he would have shown a want of manliness; for no character can have force that lacks indignation when its own integrity and a great cause identified with that integrity are ruthlessly assailed. It is under such circumstances that the true man appears in the way his sense of injustice operates. Quite as plainly the wise leader will display himself in the perception of what the emergency requires and in the decision with which his measures are executed. Now, the apostle is before us again as a study in this particular aspect of his character and ministry. Much as we have learned of him, something remains to be seen, and we may feel assured that the additional insight will amply reward us. The first utterance of his soul enkindles our admiration. Wronged, vilified, St. Paul appeals to the Corinthians “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” It is not “we,” but “I Paul,” for he was the person singled out for these malicious attacks and he would reply from his own heart. It is not that sort of “meekness and gentleness” which craft and conventionality often assume to hide their art and malignity. It is the spirit of Christ, the meekness which acts by turning inwardly upon the mind and soothing its faculties, and the gentleness that exhibits itself in outward tranquillity. St. Paul cannot speak of these except as Christ’s virtues. They are his; they have his life; they take their power and beauty from him. “I Paul myself”—his individuality emphasized in an unusual manner—“beseech you,” at the instant when the lion was more likely to show itself in human nature than the lamb, that it may not be necessary for me to exercise my authority over these offenders. If, as my enemies say, I am base in presence among you and bold only when absent, I pray you not to let this matter go to such an extremity that I shall have to use “the rod.” When one’s courage has been challenged and his heroism derided, it is extremely hard for a brave man like St. Paul to forbear. But had he not said, “Love suffereth long and is kind”? Words were things to him and here was the proof of love, side by side with the irony that was not to be

concealed. Would he announce an inflexible determination to punish? No; further discipline might be needful for him, further forbearance might be desirable in the case of his assailants; and all he ventured to affirm was, "I *think* to be bold against some." Who were the "some"? Evidently those who impeached his motives and openly reviled his ministry. How does he describe them? By the thoughts they entertained of him as an apostle. "They think of us as if we walked according to the flesh," referring to a course of conduct "determined by the fear of men or the desire of pleasing men, and hence a personal bearing disgraced by cowardice or servility. The human nature referred to was therefore one enfeebled, not merely from the want of Divine support, but from sin" (Lange's 'Commentary'). Such an opinion respecting the apostle indicates clearly enough the evil source whence it sprang. It happens often that the judgments we pronounce on others are most true in application to ourselves, and, unawares, we have disclosed what our own hearts are in estimating outside parties. A politician who is always charging other politicians with being demagogues is generally a demagogue himself, and the man who never hesitates to apply the epithet of a liar to others is quite sure to be a liar himself. But how does St. Paul meet the charge of being carnally minded in his high office? "Though we walk in the flesh [live a corporeal life], we do not war after the flesh," or "according to the flesh," the contrast being in the words "in" and "according." And forthwith he proceeds to show the difference between walking in the flesh and warring according to the flesh. A warrior he is, an open and avowed warrior—a warrior who was to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; a warrior too who would punish these Judaizers if they continued their disorganizing work; but a prudent and considerate warrior, deferring the avenging blow till "I am assured of your submission" (Stanley) "that I may not confound the innocent with the guilty, the dupes with the deceivers." What kind of a *preacher* he was he had shown long before; what kind of an *apostle* he was among apostles as to independence, self-support, and resignation of official rights in earthly matters, he had also shown; further yet, what kind of a sufferer and martyr he was had been portrayed. Step by step he had gone on with this faithful unfolding of himself, giving the most unique spiritual biography in the world of literature, and that too on no preconceived plan. How many aspects of his character had been sketched! The man as ambassador, representing the majesty of a glorified King, and labouring to reconcile a world to his Divine sceptre; the man as co-worker with all the blessed ministries of earth and heaven; the man as philanthropist sharing the poverty of his countrymen in a far-off city; and now the man as warrior, leading on his hosts to battle against alien spirits;—what a wide activity, how minute, how full, how varied, how comprehensive! At no point does this personal narrative draw its interest from self alone. Self is always subordinate. The biography interweaves with a history that infinitely transcends all private fortunes and all earthly affairs, and is nothing less than the history of providence in the development of Christian doctrine coincident with the work of the Holy Ghost in glorifying the ascended Christ of the Father. "Casting down imaginations." The reference is to reasonings or disputings of the natural man in the pride of his intellectual power. Yet they are *imaginings*, the products of the imaging faculty, the fond conceits of creative ingenuity. All these were religious beliefs or connected in some way with them, so that what the apostle said at Athens was true elsewhere: "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." Men who held these beliefs were earnest supporters of them and were always ready to defend their tenets. No matter in what province or city he preached the gospel, these disputants appeared. It was a battle on all occasions, and hence a battle figure, "casting down," or the destruction of bulwarks. Philosophy, art, manufactures, trade, husbandry, seamanship, military life, domestic life, statesmanship, were all intimately associated with these religious beliefs. Paganism occupied the ground. Or, if Judaism had found lodgment over the empire at every prominent centre of industry, it was the Judaism that had crucified Jesus of Nazareth. So then there was battle everywhere. The "wisdom of the world" and of "the princes of the world," backed by social influence and civil authority, was arrayed against the gospel. In the land of its birth, Christianity had nothing to show but a few Galilean fishermen, with a community of poor disciples, and

behind these a malefactor's cross. In the lands to which it came on its mission of grace, it summoned men to repent of sin, to practise self-denial, to become new creatures, to abandon idolatries that were in league with lust and cruelty, and, in lieu thereof, accept a faith which demanded a pure heart and a holy morality. It could only make its way by "casting down imaginations," by telling men that they were deluded by sophistries, and further by destroying "every high thing" that exalted itself against the knowledge of God communicated to man by the revelation of the gospel. No compromise could be allowed; every thought was to be brought into "captivity" to the "obedience of Christ." What *captivity* meant they fully understood. It was a military word, and he uses such terms that they might have clear and vivid ideas of Christianity as a war, and nothing less than an exterminating war, on whatever stood opposed "to the obedience of Christ." The "weapons" he used were not "carnal." All the world knew his weapons. He made no disguise of them. Boldly, constantly, in every place, he proclaimed Christ, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, nor had a mob occurred, nor had perils gathered about him, nor had Roman officers interfered for his protection, except on the single issue of preaching Christ crucified. No heathen would charge him with using carnal weapons. Philosophers of Athens, inhabitants of Lycaonia, Demetrius and his workmen at Ephesus, would make no such accusation against his ministry. Only the Judaizers had done this thing. Let them understand that these weapons were "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Neither a false Judaism nor a colossal idolatry could offer any effective resistance to the gospel. Let these Judaizers know that his weapons were "mighty through God," and that in due time he would show "a readiness to revenge all disobedience." And let the Corinthian Church look deeper than the "outward appearance." To construe his manner of "meekness and gentleness" into imbecility and cowardice was not truth, but falsehood. And whence came this evil way of judging? Not from themselves, but from some wrong teacher who professed to have external advantages in favour of his teaching. Let that conceited man know that, if he is Christ's, so also am I.—L.

Vers. 8—11.—*Continuation of his defence.* What he had just claimed was no more than other apostles claimed. If he were to boast in stronger terms of the authority the Lord had conferred upon him, there would be no risk of personal shame by his overstating the matter. Power had been given, not for their destruction, but for their edification. It is his favourite figure once more—*edification*, building up, and that power should be used for this object. To terrify them by letters was not his aim; edification, not destruction, led him to write. By the admission of his enemies, the letters from him were "weighty and powerful." On the other hand, his "bodily presence" was "weak," and his "speech contemptible." This is the only notice we have in the New Testament of an apostle's personal appearance. Had it occurred in the case of St. Peter or St. John, we should have been surprised, but it falls in naturally with the order of events and the play of circumstances connected with St. Paul's apostleship. His call, position, and career were singular; the individuality gives a colouring to the minutest details of his life; and accordingly, as he was subjected to an exceptional kind and degree of criticism, even his bodily infirmities came under inspection and were made matters of public notoriety. By itself, this reference to his appearance would not attract more than a passing notice. Yet it has a broader meaning, since it serves to illustrate the fact that nothing about him escaped the closest scrutiny. Enemies in the Church, enemies out of the Church, officials, centurions, proconsuls, procurators, find something in the man to study, and their opinions of him come into the public thought of the day. The plan of Providence, we may infer, was that St. Paul should be well known, thoroughly well known, and that we should hear from both sides—friends and foes—all that could be known of him, even to his "presence" and "speech." He thought the matter of sufficient importance to recognize it so far as to say that, what he was in his letters, he would be in his deeds. Beyond this he has no concern about it.—L.

Vers. 12—18.—*Limits and labours.* Was the apostle a great letter-writer only? So his enemies had declared; but he would not put himself among those who had no higher standard of what they ought to be than what they were, nor would he compare himself

with such men. Instead of measuring themselves by a Divine rule, these persons thought it enough to measure themselves by themselves or by others; and this mode of judgment, originating in self and ending with self, was without understanding. Yet there was a measure, and he acknowledged it whenever he thought or spoke of himself. If he referred to his labours, if he enumerated his sacrifices, if he cited his sufferings, it was not with any human standard in view, but in the sight of God and with respect solely to the sphere of activity to which God had appointed him as an apostle. Had he come to Corinth? Corinth had been given him of God as a field of apostolic effort. "The surveyor's chain" had laid off the territory, and he had traversed Macedonia and Achaia only because Providence had assigned the ground to him, and the Holy Spirit had inspired him to undertake the task. "As far as to you;" so far in the warfare of the West the campaign had extended, so far had he gone in the great fight of *pulling down strongholds*, and in demonstrating that the *weapons were not carnal, but mighty through God*. If he had reached Corinth as a place within the boundaries of his province, would he pause there? Was this the outer line of the vast battle-field? He hoped not. There he was only waiting till another territory had been marked out, and he should hear the signal to arise and possess the land. Was he looking across the sea of Adria and wondering when he should visit Rome? And when would that glad opportunity come? But one thing was clear to him just then, and this was that, if the faith of the Corinthians were increased, he would have his own heart enlarged, and be further endowed and qualified for apostolic labour. One moment, a glance at the Judaizers and their presumptuous occupancy of fields delegated of God to him (ver. 15), "not boasting of things without measure, that is, of other men's labours;" the next moment, a thought of new work so soon as the Church at Corinth should recover from its troubles and he should find it safe to leave them. Already his heart was burning to preach the gospel in the regions beyond Corinth, and "not to glory in another's province in regard to things ready to our hand." Observe how often this last idea recurs: ver. 13, "We will not boast of things without our measure;" ver. 14, "We stretch not ourselves beyond our measure;" ver. 15, "Not boasting of things without our measure;" ver. 16, "Not to boast in another man's line of things [see Revised Version, above] made ready to our hand." Two things here are noteworthy. 1. The apostle is willing and ready to wage the holy war in new territories. He is not tired of fighting the Lord's battles. Nor is he afraid of greater and more numerous enemies. Probably his eye was on Rome. If God will, he shall go further West. His weapons have been tried and proved. He himself has been tested. Grace has been sufficient. Cast down, he has not been destroyed. Dying, he has lived. The promises of God have been *Yea* and *Amen* to his soul, nor could any experience happen that would not bring the strength and consolation of Christ to his heart. How much he had lived and how rapidly! What years had been compressed into each year! Before the dilating eye of intellect, what vistas had spread afar in the light that brightened towards the perfect day! And then the blessed realizations, ability increasing perpetually, and capacity growing even faster so as to supply fully the expanding spheres of ability, consciousness of self enlarging as self in Christ, deep opening into deep, wonder springing afresh from wonder, and, with every victory gained by the weapons of his warfare, a larger assurance that, if he had been "mighty through God" at Ephesus and Corinth, he should be mightier still "in the regions beyond." Here is a most useful lesson to teach us what we are slow to learn, namely, that no natural endowments, no amount of culture, no inspiration of knowledge, no miracles wrought in his behalf, can set aside the necessity of Christian experience, a personal work of grace in the soul, a profound sense of that work as from the Holy Spirit, in the case of one called to the highest office of ministration. 2. We see how we are, as Christians, "members one of another." Although St. Paul was so highly endowed and so remarkably successful in the apostleship, yet he depends on the Church at Corinth for his *enlargement* to the work opening before him in Europe. "We shall be *enlarged* by you." This was conditioned on their conduct. If their divisions were healed, their false teachers silenced, their energies set free from exhausting strife and concentrated on building up Christ's kingdom, would Corinth and Achaia be the only gainers? Nay; he himself would be liberated from restraints that clogged his feet. A fresh impulse would be given his apostleship. A new current of life would flow from their hearts into his heart, for it was not his working nor any

other apostle's working, but the co-working, the hearty union of Church and apostles, the co-operation of the "diversities of gifts," the oneness of the mystical body of Christ, by which the world was to be evangelized. The schism that had been threatened between the Asiatic and European Churches was in a fair way to be arrested. Jewish and Gentile believers were getting reconciled to the peculiarities of each other; the collection for the mother Church at Jerusalem was doing much to effect this most important unity. Yet this is not before him now. Nor does he allude to the singular advantages of Corinth as to geographical location and commercial opportunities. Situated on a narrow strip of land between northern and southern Greece, and connected with two seas by its harbours of Lechæum and Cenchreæ, it was a great emporium of trade for the East and West, and hence offered extraordinary facilities for the diffusion of Christianity. No doubt St. Paul felt that it was a centre of commanding influence. But he was extremely cautious as to using local motives, and in the present case he made no allusion to them. What occupied his whole thought was the increase of grace among them as a Christian community, and to this he looked for a happy furtherance in his contemplated missionary tour. If they were revived and consecrated anew to Christ, he knew well that, when obstacles were thrown in his future pathway, when persecutions even fiercer than those already undergone came upon him, they would afford him sympathy and assistance while getting foothold in "the regions beyond." Obviously a prevailing idea in his mind was that Christianity must have a central home in every great section of country, and thence draw its human supplies during its conquests of outlying territory. And he longed for the Corinthian brethren to attain a richer experience of grace, so that they might magnify his office. Instead of being independent of their fraternal support, the stronger he felt himself the more he leaned on their sympathies. Heaven never gets so close to a man that earth does not get closer also. How the blessed Jesus leaned on his friends in the Passion week! How he needed the chosen among them to watch with him in the garden for *one hour*! The weary days of the apostle had not yet come, and his soul was having glorious visions of apostolic work, but amid it all, the pressure of uncertainty was upon his hope, and he would gladly hasten away from the present scene of anxiety just as soon as Providence permitted. We can enter into his solitudes. We can imagine how Kirke White felt when he wrote the closing lines of the 'Christiad':—

"O thou who visitest the sons of men,
Thou who dost listen when the humble pray,
One little space prolong my mournful day!
One little lapse suspend thy last decree!"

And we can realize Dr. Arnold's emotions when he made the last entry in his diary: "Still there are works which, with God's permission, I would do before the night cometh; especially that great work, if I might be permitted to take part in it." So too we can form some conception of St. Paul's anxiety to widen the field of his ministrations. But he could not go alone; the heart of the Corinthian Church must go with him; and he must wait till they were sufficiently "increased" in "faith" to enter on the future enterprises of his universal apostleship. How humble in his greatness! Not what St. Paul accomplished, but what God accomplished in him, was his boast and commendation. This was his strength and glory, and therefore, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."—L.

Ver. 4.—*Spiritual weapons.* The Apostle Paul was naturally of a combative, soldier-like disposition. Before his conversion this temperament displayed itself in opposition to the cause of truth, to the Church of Christ. After his conversion his warfare was directed against the error, sin, and evil that afflicted and cursed mankind. As a soldier of Christ he fought a good fight and gained an honourable reputation. In the text we have, upon his own authority, the acknowledgment and explanation of his victories.

I. THE NATURE OF THE WEAPONS CHRISTIANITY EMPLOYS AND SANCTIONS. It is evident from this and other passages that Paul did not place his main reliance upon the miraculous and supernatural powers which he possessed, and sometimes wielded.

1. Carnal weapons are disclaimed; e.g. the appeal to force of arms or of law; the

appeal to the superstitious fears of men; the address to interest and selfishness, in the use of worldly policy and craft. 2. Spiritual weapons are relied upon. The truth of God, the gospel of Christ,—this was the arm in which inspired apostles were wont to trust. 3. These weapons are mighty. In fact, there are no means of combating error and sin, of promoting the cause of truth and righteousness, so powerful as those which are taken from the armoury of the New Testament. They are “mighty through God,” i.e. their power is of Divine origin, the Holy Spirit accompanying them to the souls of men.

II. THE EFFICACY OF THE WEAPONS WHICH CHRISTIANITY EMPLOYS AND SANCTIONS.

1. They are mighty to *demolish*. As in warfare fortresses and cities are taken by a victorious army, and are then demolished, razed to the ground, so when the religion of Jesus went forth, conquering and to conquer, it attacked and brought low every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. Thus sin, ignorance, error, superstition, vice, crime, bigotry, malice, were again and again vanquished by the victorious energy of the gospel. 2. They are mighty to *subjugate*. Captivity was the common lot of the conquered foe. And as *thoughts* are the motive power of life, the gospel attacked these; and rebellious, disobedient, indifferent, ungrateful thoughts were captured, and, by the gentle but mighty force of Divine truth, were brought into subjection to Christ, whom to obey is liberty, peace, and joy.—T.

Ver. 5.—*The captivity of the thoughts*. Spiritual warfare is represented as leading to spiritual victory, and this as involving spiritual captivity. As the Roman general, having vanquished his foe and taken multitudes of prisoners, reserved his captives to grace his triumph, so the apostle, commissioned by Christ, regards himself as contending with all lawless and rebellious forces, and as resolved with Divine help to bring all such forces into subjection to his great Commander and Lord.

I. THE FORCES WHICH ARE BROUGHT INTO CAPTIVITY. Christianity does not contend with physical powers, does not aim at the mere regulation of outward and bodily acts. It strikes at antagonists far more powerful than any which are dealt with by the powers of this world. *Thoughts*, i.e. the desires and purposes of the souls of men,—these are the foes with which the spiritual religion of the Lord Jesus contends. Disobedient thoughts, selfish thoughts, worldly thoughts, murmuring thoughts,—these it is that the religion of the Lord Jesus assails. These are the source and spring of all the outward evils that afflict and curse mankind. If these can be mastered, society may be regenerated and the world may be saved.

II. THE SUBJECTION AND SUBMISSION INTO WHICH THESE FORCES ARE TO BE BROUGHT.

1. It is to the obedience of Christ, the rightful Lord of thoughts and of hearts, that the spiritual forces of humanity are to be rendered subject. A grand future is in this view opened up before humanity. The Son of man is King of man; and he will then ascend his royal throne when men's hearts bow loyally before him, acknowledge his unique spiritual authority, and offer to him their grateful and cheerful allegiance. 2. It is a willing captivity into which human thoughts will be led. In this it is utterly unlike the subjection from which the metaphor is taken. Not brute force, but the convincing authority of reason, the sweet constraint of love, the admired majesty of moral excellence, secure the submission of man's nature to the control of the Divine Lord. 3. It is a lasting captivity, not temporary and brief. Whom Christ governs he governs for evermore. Time and earth cannot limit his empire. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.—T.

Ver. 8.—*Apostolic authority*. Paul had to contend with difficulties, not only from without, but also from within, the Churches. There were rivals to his authority and claims. It happened that sometimes these rivals met with a certain measure of success. And this drove the apostle into the assertion of his rightful position and demands.

I. THE SOURCE OF APOSTOLIC POWER AND AUTHORITY. 1. It was not in himself, in any personal gifts and qualifications, that this power lay. Paul was indeed by nature a highly gifted man; but he laid no stress upon his abilities. He was by education a man of learning and culture; but he did not rely upon his knowledge for his influence. 2. It was not in any human commission that Paul confided. A king commissions an ambassador; a university confers a degree and right to teach; a Church licenses and

authorizes a ministry. But the apostles were forward to declare that they had not received their commission from man. 3. It was by the Lord Jesus himself that the apostles were empowered and appointed to fulfil their high office. If Paul was the latest thus to be commissioned, none the less did he receive his authorization from the Divine Lord himself.

II. THE SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF APOSTOLIC POWER AND AUTHORITY. 1. As negatively described, it was not for casting down, for destruction. The power of the warrior is too often employed for this end. And even religious leaders and rulers—popes, defenders of the faith, and others—have too often bent their energies rather to destroy than to save. The apostle had occasion sometimes to threaten that he would put forth his power to silence and crush the rebellious. But he had no delight in “casting down,” neither did he regard this as the ultimate end of his ministry. 2. As positively described, it was for edification. We must understand by this the rearing of the structure of Christian doctrine, and at the same time the building up of Church life. And as doctrine is intended to produce results in character, and as every true Church is built up of renewed natures and holy lives, obviously edification is a moral and personal process.

APPLICATION. Apostolic power and authority give an assured basis for the faith of a Christian believer and for the teaching of a Christian minister. For the foundation is laid, not by human ignorance, but by Divine wisdom.—T.

Ver. 10.—*Letters, weighty and strong.* In this passage St. Paul records the impression which, according to his adversaries, was made by his personal presence and by his epistolary writings. Although the reference is to the feeling at Corinth as a result of his First Epistle to the Church in that city, the language applies to the apostle generally as a minister discharging his ministry by the pen. There was nothing commanding in Paul's appearance, and there were in his delivery some drawbacks to the impressiveness of his speech; but with regard to his letters, there was no room for difference of opinion. They were masterpieces, and their effectiveness was undeniable. In what does this effectiveness consist?

I. ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES ABOUND IN VIGOROUS REASONING. It is sufficient to refer to the First Epistle to the Corinthians in order to establish this assertion. On a doctrinal question such as the resurrection of the dead, on a practical question such as that connected with the sacrificial feasts, he proved himself a master of argument. As Christianity is a religion appealing to the intelligence, it has been wisely ordered that in its authoritative documents there should be much reasoning which commends itself to the wisest understanding and the soundest judgment.

II. ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES ABOUND IN MANIFESTATIONS OF THE FINEST FEELING. Far from sentimental, the apostle was yet a man of tender affections, of emotional susceptibilities. Take, for example, the panegyric of charity in his First Epistle to these Corinthians. Take the personal references to his friends and fellow-labourers, to be found in most of his letters. Many readers or hearers, who were not capable of appreciating his argumentative power, would feel deeply the appeals to their best and purest sentiments. If we feel thus now, at this distance of time, and when imagination is necessary in order to throw ourselves into the circumstances in which these letters were written and read, how much more must this have been the case when all was fresh and recent!

III. PAUL'S EPISTLES HAVE PROVED THEIR POWER BY THE PRACTICAL RESULTS THEY HAVE PRODUCED. They were not written to be approved and admired, but to convince, to persuade, to induce to prompt and cheerful action in compliance with their counsels. And this result followed these documents when first perused. And every age attests their moral authority, and proves that their weight and power are still undiminished.—T.

Ver. 17.—*Glorying in the Lord.* Boasting is universally denounced as a petty and a vulgar fault. Yet it is a fault not uncommon. It imposes upon the unthinking and the unwary, but it awakens the suspicion and the distrust of those who have a larger experience of life. But in the region of spiritual service, boastfulness is a serious offence, not only against society, but against God himself. The apostle protests against it, and in this verse exhibits the true remedy.

I. MEN ARE TEMPTED TO GLORY IN THEMSELVES. What men have they are in danger of over-estimating, and thus taking credit to themselves when no credit is due. Some glory in natural endowments, strength of body, or mental ability. Some in the accidents of birth or of fortune. Some in their position in society, etc.

II. FROM THIS TEMPTATION TO BOASTFULNESS SPIRITUAL LABOURERS ARE NOT FREE. Some religious teachers, preachers, writers, officials, pride themselves upon their "gifts," and the esteem in which they are held; boast of their credentials, their learning, their acceptance. If the persons to whom the apostle referred were the first, they were certainly not the last, of this order of men.

III. THE ONLY ADMISSIBLE GLORYING IS GLORYING IN THE LORD. 1. Christians may glory in the Divine grace to which they owe their spiritual position. This they do when they ask—What have we that we did not receive? Who hath made us to differ? 2. Christian ministers may glory in opportunity of service and in the Divine bestowal of ability for its fulfilment. The apostle felt that the Head of the Church had put honour upon him in commissioning him as the messenger of life to the Gentiles, and in qualifying him for a mission so sacred and glorious. Every bishop, pastor, and evangelist may well acknowledge the condescension of the Eternal in counting him faithful and putting him into the ministry. 3. All true labourers may glory in their success by attributing it to the Divine Author. Paul had abundant reason of this kind for glorying. He needed no letters of commendation; his own converts were epistles witnessing to his faithfulness and zeal, known and read of all men. Joy and thanksgiving, glorying and congratulation, may justly follow when Heaven has smiled upon the labourer's toil, and has suffered him not only to sow, but also to reap.—T.

Ver. 18.—Commendation, human and Divine. A good man's difficulties do not always come from avowed adversaries. It sometimes happens that those who are professedly upon his side trouble and harass him. So the Apostle Paul found it, for he had to complain of perils among false brethren, and he frequently had to contend with the undermining influence of those who disparaged his ability and authority, and asserted and praised themselves.

I. THE VANITY OF SELF-COMMENDATION ON THE PART OF CHRISTIAN LABOURERS. 1. Such a habit is a flaw in personal character. True dignity and self-respect dictate modesty in estimating one's self and reticence in speaking of one's self. 2. It has an injurious effect upon the ministry. They who commend themselves in words are not likely to commend themselves in deeds. The estimation in which others hold them is probably in inverse ratio to that in which they hold themselves. 3. It is displeasing to the Lord and Judge of all, who regards the lowly and meek and raises them up in due time.

II. THE LORD HIMSELF COMMENDS AND WILL COMMEND HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS. He is not unjust; he is not ungenerous; he is not unmindful.

"All works are good, and each is best
As most it pleases thee;
Each worker pleases when the rest
He serves in charity;
And neither man nor work unblest
Wilt thou permit to be."

1. This commendation is bestowed here and now. In the success of the labourer is evidence of the approbation of the Master. 2. Hereafter shall be a public and pronounced commendation. In the day of account those who have done their Lord's will shall be accepted. "Then shall every man have praise of God."

III. IT IS NOT THE SELF-COMMENDED, BUT THE COMMENDED OF THE LORD, WHO ENDURE THE TEST AND COME OUT FROM IT APPROVED. Work is put to the proof; and not only the work, but the workman, is thus submitted to a decisive trial. If it be asked—Who stand the test, and are brought out with honour and acceptance? the answer is—Not the boastful, the self-confident, those who are loud in their own praise; but those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, by diligent devotion to the service of the Lord, secure his commendation. Such shall abide in the judgment, and shall receive the recompense of reward.—T.

Ver. 1.—“*The meekness and gentleness of Christ.*” How different was Christ to (1) the anticipations of the chosen people! (2) the heathen conceptions of deity!

I. THE MEEKNESS OF CHRIST. Illustrated in: 1. *His lowly birth.* The manger pre-figured the whole life. 2. *His humble station.* Highest in heaven, lowliest on earth. 3. *His obedience to Joseph and Mary.* Obedience was new to him. He was *the Ruler*, and yet he submitted to be ruled. 4. *His manual toil.* The Jews looked for a conqueror and saw a carpenter. 5. *His endurance of scorn and insult.* Scorn and insult were much more to him than they ever can be to us. Remember he was the adored of heaven! 6. *His earthly poverty.* He possessed all things, and yet had nothing—not even a place where to lay his head. 7. *His bearing before the Sanhedrim, Pilate, Herod, the soldiers, etc.* How little and mean they must have seemed to him! and yet he did not crush them. 8. *His submission on the cross.* The infinitude of meekness! Nothing could transcend this. This was the culmination of a meekness which shone throughout the marvellous earthly life.

“Ride on, ride on in majesty;
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
Bow thy meek head to mortal pain;
Then take, O Christ, thy power and reign.”

9. *His burial.* He went, not only to death, but to the grave. He lay in a borrowed sepulchre.

II. THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST. Exhibited in: 1. *His treatment of children.* How immortal have those words become! how typical they are of the Christ-heart, “Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me” (Matt. xix. 14)! 2. *His conduct towards the poor, the sick, the bereaved, the penitent.* What compassion and tenderness! “A bruised reed shall he not break” (Isa. xlii. 3). 3. *His words.* “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street” (Isa. xlii. 2). Well might they marvel at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. 4. *His forbearance towards his disciples.* Few things illustrate his gentleness more strikingly than this. How much had he to bear from those nearest to him! How gentle he was to the impulsive, blundering, often almost insolent, Peter! How gentle even to Judas! 5. *His dealing with sinners.* Except to the hopelessly hardened, upon whom gentleness would have been thrown away, and to whom it would have been an evil rather than a good. His general attitude towards the sinful is expressed by those memorable words, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. xi. 29). 6. *His care of his mother.* History has no more touching incident than that at the cross, “Woman, behold thy son!” (John xix. 26).

III. THOUGH SO MEEK AND GENTLE, CHRIST WAS FULL OF POWER AND MAJESTY. No student of his life can question this; enemies and friends alike confess it. Force and noise are not synonymous. Silent forces are often mighty. To be meek is not to be weak. Simplicity, tenderness, humility, are marks of the truly great. These flowers grow upon the top of the mountain. A man who is ever anxious to “assert himself” usually shows how very little he has to assert.

IV. THOSE WHO BEAR CHRIST'S NAME SHOULD PARTAKE OF CHRIST'S NATURE. It is for us to be meek and lowly followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. When the apostle would be most forceful to the Corinthians, he claimed for himself these attributes of his Master. We are strongest when we are most like Christ. We shall be better, *live* better, *worship* better, *work* better, if we possess the “meekness and gentleness of Christ.”—H.

Ver. 4.—“*Our weapons.*” I. THEY ARE FOR USE IN THE GREATEST OF ALL CONFLICTS. 1. Not a physical conflict. These are poor, of comparative unimportance, often very contemptible, can effect little. 2. Not for the destruction of men. What labour, thought, skill, genius, are expended by man for man's destruction! 3. Not a mere mental conflict. Intellectual battles are not chief. 4. A spiritual conflict. 5. A conflict in which the honour and glory of the Eternal are contended for. 6. A conflict in which man's highest interests are sought. 7. A conflict against evil in every form.

II. THEY ARE HERE DESCRIBED. 1. *Negatively.* They are not carnal. (1) They are

not physical. Physical weapons have often been used in the cause of religion, but always by mistake. Peter's blunder in cutting off the ear of Malchus has had many repetitions. (2) They are not carnal, for they are not of man. The apostle did not carry on his conflict by using (a) cunning and trickery in order to secure converts. Some unwisely think that, if converts be obtained, it is no matter how. But Paul desired to "strive lawfully" (2 Tim. ii. 5). (b) Nor did he rely upon human eloquence. He came not with "wisdom of words" (1 Cor. i. 17). (c) Nor upon human reason. Philosophical subtleties he discarded. He had a revelation, and, whilst willing to demonstrate to human intelligence that this *was* a Divine revelation, he then employed it, and hoped for victory only as the Divine Spirit blessed his efforts. The apostle *preached the gospel* by his words, by his deeds, by his spirit, by his life; and using these weapons he relied pre-eminently upon that supreme weapon, Divine power, to secure the victory. 2. *Positively*. Carnal weapons seem strong. They impress men. Paul's weapons, which are ours, are apt to excite ridicule on the part of fleshly men, who judge by outward appearance. But the apostle contends that these weapons are mighty. They have done what all others have failed to do. (1) They cast down strongholds. By these Satan is hurled from his seats, from his fastnesses in the hearts of men. (2) They triumph over sceptical human philosophies and false religions (ver. 5). This is the conflict between truth and error. Truth *has* won. Truth *will* win. Though these are high things exalted against the knowledge of God (ver. 5), they find something higher and mightier in the gospel and in the accompanying power of God. They are but Dragons; before the ark they must fall. (3) They make captive human thought (ver. 5). Illustrated in a true conversion. Thought is then dominated by Christ—no more a boastful foe, but a servant, a captive. The wise man becomes a fool that he may be truly wise (1 Cor. iii. 18). Pride, boastful and arrogant in the realm of human thought, is smitten—smitten to the death. (4) They are mighty before God. *Through* God, but also *before* God, *i.e.* in his judgment. They come from his armoury. They are specially fashioned by him for this strife.

III. WE SHOULD RELY ONLY UPON THESE WEAPONS IN THE GREAT CONFLICT. Our strength is here. There are many temptations to use others. *The devil loves to furnish us with weapons wherewith to attack his kingdom!* With what strange weapons has the Church fought! No wonder the strife has so often gone against her. With what weapons are we fighting?

IV. WE SHOULD SEEK SKILL IN THEIR USE. 'Tis not enough to have good weapons, we must know how to employ them. The best weapons are the worst in unwise hands. We must enter the military school of Christ.—H.

Ver. 7.—*Judging from appearances*. I. A VERY EASY WAY OF JUDGING. A sound judgment often involves hard labour. Many jump to conclusions because the jump is so easy and so soon over. But a judgment lightly got may generally be lightly valued. Few things are more difficult than forming accurate judgments. The importance of correct judgment is, however, so all-important that we should spare no pains to secure it.

II. A VERY COMMON WAY OF JUDGING. Surface-judgments are popular. Many people are fatally prejudiced by appearance, whether good or bad; of the former they will hear no blame, of the latter no praise. We need remember this when we estimate human judgments generally.

III. A VERY PERILOUS WAY OF JUDGING. It leads to constant errors and evils. Note one or two. 1. *Gentleness is mistaken for weakness*. This was the case with the apostle. That which was kindest and best in him was esteemed a fault. 2. *The physical and external are over-estimated*. The voice, manner, appearance, language of a preacher are unduly regarded. The "outward appearance" often goes for much more than the inward grace and power. 3. *The flashy and dazzling are more esteemed than the solid and weighty*. Sensational religion triumphs in the realm of shallow judgment. 4. *The religious life suffers in comparison with the worldly*. The deep, quiet, permanent joys of the former are unconsidered. The pleasures of the latter are thought to be as great as they seem: a fatal blunder. 5. *God's dealings with us are misunderstood*. He is often kindest when he seems most unkind. God's "No" is often a far greater good than God's "Yes" could be; but a hasty superficial judgment does not perceive this. We often complain most when we have most cause to bless. 6. *The more striking forms of*

Christian worship and work eclipse other and more important. The shallow judgments of Corinth were all for speaking with tongues. "Prophecy" was little accounted of. "Giving money" is often attractive when true charity is not. The grand choral service is more popular than quiet consistent living. To be a "great preacher" is the object of ambition rather than to be a real teacher of men. 7. *Christ was rejected and is to-day by those who judge according to the outward appearance.* He is "a root out of a dry ground" to such; they have no spiritual insight. The Gospels which speak of him are full of inconsistencies to those who will not examine them. Yea, the Bible itself, which is one revelation of him, must be rejected by these weak surface-judges. But what said he? "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John vii. 24).—H.

Vers. 12—18.—*Boasting, wrong and right.* I. **WRONG BOASTING.** 1. *That we excel some others.* We are very apt, like some at Corinth, to compare ourselves with certain around us. This is measuring by a false standard, and measuring by a false standard is likely to lead to enormously erroneous results. The question is not whether we excel others, but whether we have attained to the measure for which God created and endowed us. The true measuring-rod is not found in the stature, physical, mental, or moral, of our fellows; the true measuring-rod is held in the hands of the Almighty. If a man were to judge of himself by comparing himself with a mouse or a molehill, we should say he was a fool; and the apostle says, "They themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding" (ver. 12). It has been said, "The one-eyed is easily king among the blind." 2. *That we possess what we are destitute of, and that we have done what we have not done.* Wrong boasting is the twin brother of downright lying. The false teachers at Corinth boasted of gifts which they did not possess, and took to themselves the credit of other men's labours. It is astonishing what powers of appropriation the boastful spirit possesses. When a man once gets addicted to vain-glory it is useless to attempt to predict to what excesses he will be led. He clears the barriers of truth as though they were straws. What he is, is what he can persuade people to think him; what he has done is what he can by any means induce them to credit. The braggart knows no restraint. His parish is the world—the worlds of fact and fiction rolled into one, and he is as much at home in the one as in the other. His domain has only one boundary—the credulity of his listeners. 3. *That the praise of our good actions is to be ascribed to us.* This strikes at the root of wrong boasting. A boasting which robs God must be of the devil. The man who knows himself knows that there is no good thing in him. If he finds anything good he immediately concludes that it did not spring from himself, and he looks about for the originator and owner. It is only the very bad who think themselves very good. If we are disposed to take the praise of our good actions to ourselves it is strong evidence that these actions were not really good. "Good" actions cannot be done by those who are so utterly out of true relation to God.

II. **RIGHT BOASTING.** This is boasting or glorying in the Lord (ver. 17). We may boast of God, and the more boastful we are in this direction the better. There will be no danger of running to excess; after we have boasted to our utmost we shall have fallen far short of the truth. Alas! few things are more uncommon than this boasting in God. Fallen human nature finds it easier and more reasonable to boast of the mud-puddle than of the crystal ocean—of the dim rushlight than of the glorious sun. 1. *We may well boast of the Divine perfections.* Here we shall find an inexhaustible subject. The glories of our God will exhaust our powers of glorying. Whilst carnal men applaud their little gods, the saints may well extol Jehovah. "Who is a God like unto our God?" we may proudly cry. Pride becomes one of the chiefest virtues when it is centred in God. Christians are not half boastful enough in the right direction, and twice too boastful in the wrong. Shame upon us that we boast so little of our God! 2. *We may well boast of the great redemptive work of God.* So loud should be our boasting as to make all men hear it. Here the perfection of God finds highest and most beautiful expression. Here each Person in the adorable Trinity works a matchless work of grace and power. Upon us especially, since we are the subjects of redemption, rests the burden of boasting respecting it. This is our peculiar province of glorying. Of all creatures in the universe we are bound to this service. If we were silent, surely the

stones would cry out. As God has wrought this great thing for us, we must never let men or God hear the last of it! What a subject for boast! Where is there aught that can for a moment compare with it? Boast, ye Christians, of redeeming love till all your powers of boasting fail. 3. *We may well boast of God's work in us and through us.* (1) *In us.* When we joyfully recognize that we are growing in grace we must exult in the God of all grace. This thing is not of us, but of him. To him must all the praise be accorded. The "old man" within us is the child of our fall and our folly; the "new man" is God's special creation. Clearly should we realize this, and concentrate all our boasting in him from whom this "unspeakable Gift" (which is "Christ in us") emanates. Humility and abasement in respect of ourselves; boastfulness in respect of him who has wrought the marvel in us. (2) *Through us.* To depreciate what is accomplished through us is but *lying humility*. Paul was not guilty of it. It is professedly abasing ourselves and really abasing God. When the work accomplished is undoubted, the only right course is to glory to our utmost in the God who has accomplished it. We must reserve no praise for ourselves, since we have deserved none; all the praise must be his. We need care, however, when glorying in God for what he has accomplished through us, lest, whilst ostensibly praising him, we should be covertly praising ourselves. There is a mouth of hell which lies near the gate of heaven. We must guard against feeding conceit by supposing that we are of ourselves instruments so fit that God could not have so well performed the work through others; or that through personal merit we are favourites of God, and that therefore he has specially wrought his will through us; or that, having been so honoured, we may now hold our heads high. Whilst extolling God we must abase ourselves; whilst boasting in him we must refuse to glory in the least in the unworthy instrument. That he has so greatly distinguished what was so greatly unworthy should but deepen and intensify our humility.—H.

Ver. 4.—*Holy weapons.* One style of weapon for one kind of conflict, another for another. For the common battle-field, cannon and rifle with their horrid din, the bayonet, and the sword. For contests of opinion, weapons of argument and intellectual precision—writings, lectures, and debates. For successes in the sphere of spiritual thought and life, spiritual weapons mighty through God. St. Paul was much addicted to the use of military metaphors. To him a zealous missionary was a good soldier of Christ; a well-equipped and disciplined Christian was a man armed in the panoply of God. His own course of service in combatting errors and publishing the truth of the gospel was as the march of a warrior, nay, of a victor, triumphing in every place. So he regarded both the ordering of things within the Church and the aggression of the Church on the world around as parts of his military duty, in which he was bound to war, but not according to the flesh. There is still need to make war. On every side are obstinate hindrances to the gospel of grace, and to the health and peace of the Church. The most formidable of these are in the region of thought and feeling; strongholds of prejudice and self-righteousness, and entrenchments of unbelief. And those who propagate the gospel, and guard the purity and peace of the Church, must surmount those obstacles, or pull down those strongholds, so as to lead away the convictions of the delivered ones as happy captives to the obedience of Christ.

I. NOT BY CARNAL WEAPONS OR ANY FORM OF PHYSICAL COACTION. Though St. Peter drew his sword to defend his heavenly Master, he was bidden at once restore it to its sheath. When Pontius Pilate interrogated our Lord about his being King of the Jews, he received for answer, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." Extremists have inferred from this language that the followers of Christ may not, in any circumstances, wield a weapon of war; but this is mere folly. The subjects of the kingdom of Christ are also for the time subjects of an earthly kingdom also, or citizens in an earthly community, and have the same natural and civil rights as other men, and the same warrant and obligation to defend them. They may not delight in war; but even to that dire extremity they may proceed if there be no other way to keep order and secure justice and liberty. To do otherwise would be tamely to surrender the earth to the most unscrupulous and aggressive of its inhabitants. But weapons of worldly warfare do not advance that spiritual power which is the highest of all; nor is it permitted to use them for direct furtherance of Christ's kingdom

of the truth. This, of course, condemns all forms of persecution; and when we say, "all forms," we mean, not merely imprisonment, pillage, and death, but the imposition of civil disabilities, or social and educational penalties, or any abridgment of political rights. On all such coercive measures the gospel frowns. Equally inadmissible is the use of misrepresentation. Those "pious frauds" which have been practised and propagated for the supposed glory of God have been very carnal weapons. So are all the misleading phrases and cajoleries by which it is still attempted to draw men into adherence to some form of religion without conviction of the understanding or real allegiance of the heart.

II. BUT BY WEAPONS THAT ARE AFTER THE MIND OF CHRIST. See the catalogue of such weapons as they had been used by St. Paul at Corinth: "In pureness, in knowledge," etc. (ch. vi. 6, 7). Come honour or dishonour in this world, good report or evil, with such weapons must all the soldiers of Christ be content in the warfare to which they are called. The strongholds they assail may make a formidable resistance, but nothing is gained by changing the spiritual weapons for the carnal. They are mighty in God's sight and in God's strength. Paul knew them to be so. With them, though he was but one man and a man reproached and afflicted, he had pulled down many strongholds and won many victories. It is not a simple question of conversion. The truth has many a struggle in the heart after conversion as well as before. When Jericho fell, the holy war of Israel was well begun; but there still remained many holds and fenced cities to be taken. So, when the first opposition is surmounted, and a sinner yields to the power of the saving truth as it is in Jesus, much is gained, but not everything. The work of grace has to be pressed further ere every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Little worldly stir or *éclat* attends the warfare of which we speak, but it awakens in heaven and through all the heavenly kingdom the liveliest interest and the noblest joy. There are shouts and *Te Deums* there, when evil is defeated and pulled down in the world, in the Church, in the breast of the individual man; when sinners repent; when rebels submit to God; when thoughts that were lifted up in scorn are cast down at the feet of Jesus, and affections that sin had beguiled and the pride of life enchanted, are fixed on truth, on duty, and on the things which are above.—F.

Ver. 1.—"The meekness and gentleness of Christ." It is important to notice that this chapter begins a new section of the Epistle. St. Paul has hitherto been addressing the better, the more spiritual, portion of the Corinthian Church; but now he turns to the section that impugned his authority, misrepresented his conduct, and spoke evil things of himself. Olshausen says, "Until now Paul has addressed himself pre-eminently to the better-intentioned in the Christian Church; but henceforth he addresses himself to those who had sought to lower his dignity and weaken his authority by representing him as weak in personal influence," as well as in bodily strength and consistency of purpose, "although courageous and full of self-commendation in his letters." Dean Plumptre says, "The stinging words which Titus has reported to him vex his soul. He speaks in the tone of the suppressed indignation which shows itself in a keen incisive irony. The opening formula is one which he reserves as emphasizing an exceptionally strong emotion (see Gal. v. 2; Eph. iii. 1; Philem. 19)." Conybeare indicates that the party with which St. Paul now deals was the Christian section of the Judaizing party—a section which, throwing off all authority, even though it was apostolic, declared that they received Christ alone as their Head, and that he alone should communicate truth directly to them. There is some ground for the supposition that "they were headed by an emissary from Palestine, who had brought letters of commendation from some members of the Church at Jerusalem, and who boasted of his pure Hebrew descent, and his especial connection with Christ himself. St. Paul calls him a false apostle, a minister of Satan disguised as a minister of righteousness, and hints that he was actuated by corrupt motives. He seems to have behaved at Corinth with extreme arrogance, and to have succeeded, by his overbearing conduct, in impressing his partisans with a conviction of his importance and of the truth of his pretensions. They contrasted his confident bearing with the timidity and self-distrust which had been shown by St. Paul. And they even extolled his personal advantages over those of their first teacher; comparing his

rhetoric with Paul's inartificial speech, his commanding appearance with the insignificance of Paul's 'bodily presence.'" Conybeare gives a translation of vers. 1 and 2, which effectively expresses the spirit in which the apostle began his pleading with this malicious party. "Now I, Paul, myself exhort you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—(I, who am mean, forsooth, and lowly in outward presence, while I am among you, yet treat you boldly when I am absent)—I beseech you (I say), that you will not force me to show, when I am present, the bold confidence in my power, wherewith I reckon to deal with some who reckon me by the standard of the flesh." Archdeacon Farrar says, "There is (in these closing chapters) none of the tender effusiveness and earnest praise which we have been hearing, but a tone of suppressed indignation, in which tenderness, struggling with bitter irony, in some places renders the language laboured and obscure, like the words of one who with difficulty restrains himself from saying all that his emotion might suggest. Yet it is deeply interesting to observe that the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ' reigns throughout all this irony, and he utters no word of malediction like those of the psalmists." By the term "meekness" we are to understand the habit of putting self aside, which was so characteristic of Moses, and the supreme grace of the Lord Jesus. By the term "gentleness" is not meant "softness of manner," but "fairness," "considerateness of the feelings of others." It indicates the habit of mind that is engendered by the practice of regarding the rights of others as well as our own. Meekness and gentleness belong to those *passive graces* which it was a great part of our Lord's mission to exemplify, to set in prominent place, and to commend. Bushnell speaks of the sublime efficacy of those virtues which belong to the receiving, suffering, patient side of character. They are such as meekness, gentleness, forbearance, forgiveness, the endurance of wrong without anger and resentment, contentment, quietness, peace, and unambitious love. These all belong to the more passive side of character, and are included, or may be, in the general and comprehensive term, "patience." "These are never barren virtues, as some are apt to imagine, but are often the most efficient and most operative powers that a true Christian wields; inasmuch as they carry just that kind of influence which other men are least apt and least able to resist." Considering St. Paul's naturally sensitive and impulsive temperament, it must have cost him much effort and prayer so to restrain himself that he could speak, even to such active enemies, with the "meekness and gentleness of Christ."

I. THE MEEKNESS OF CHRIST IN ST. PAUL. The word seems unsuitable for him unless we give it the proper meaning, which is—not self-assertive, willing to bear quietly, more anxious for others than for self. St. Paul was not even anxious, first of all, for his own imperilled reputation. The honour of Christ was involved in his self-vindication, and for Christ's sake he undertook it.

II. THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST IN ST. PAUL. Save to hardened scribes and Pharisees, our Lord ever spoke softly and persuasively, or, at most, reproachfully. He, in his considerateness for others, would not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. And nothing is more striking in the Apostle Paul than the gentlemanly delicacy with which he considers the feelings of others. His hand trembles when it holds the rod. And the words of reproof and reproach break forth from a grieved and troubled heart. F. W. Robertson says, "He vindicated his authority because he had been meek, as Christ was meek; for not by menace, nor by force, did he conquer, but by the might of gentleness and the power of love. On that foundation St. Paul built; it was the example of Christ which he imitated in his moments of trial, when he was reproved and censured. Thus it happened that one of the apostle's 'mightiest weapons' was the meekness and lowliness of heart which he drew from the life of Christ. So it ever is; humility, after all, is the best defence. It disarms and conquers by the majesty of submission. To be humble and loving—that is true life."—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*In the flesh, but not of it.* "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." This expression recalls the corresponding words of our Lord, with which we may assume that St. Paul was familiar. Addressing his disciples during those closing hours of communion with them in the "upper room," Jesus had said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." And,

in his sublime high-priestly prayer, Jesus spoke thus: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." The thought expressed in the passage now before us seems to have been a cherished one with the apostle. He enlarges upon it in writing to the Romans (viii. 4—9). He speaks of "us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He explains that "to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." And he firmly declares, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." By "living in the flesh" we are to understand simply our possessing this fleshly, bodily nature, with its frailties, limitations, and infirmities. By "living, or warring, after the flesh," we are to understand neglecting the higher dictates of the higher spiritual nature, and living as though the desires of the body were the only ones that needed satisfying. But the precise thought of the apostle here may be that he will not be moved against the evil party at Corinth by those natural feelings of indignation which their conduct towards him had aroused, but will reprove and exhort only upon the great Christian principles, and only in the Christly spirit. Self shall not rule even his warfare with such unreasonable foes. Christ shall rule.

I. THE CHRISTIAN POSSIBILITIES OF OUR FLESHLY CONDITION. "We walk in the flesh." God is pleased to set us in this human body, to give us this vehicle of communication with other men and with the surrounding world; and it is possible for us to win this body for Christ, to possess and rule it so that all its powers shall be used, and all its relations sustained, only in Christly service. In fact, the work of human life may be spoken of as this—winning our bodies and our life-spheres for Christ. Our bodies, our fleshly natures, include (1) natural faculties, such as eating and drinking; (2) passions, affecting the relationship of the sexes; (3) mental emotions; and (4) powers of acquiring knowledge. It is possible to dominate the whole machinery of the body with the sanctified and Christly will.

II. THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR FLESHLY CONDITION. It is not a merely dead machine that we have to move by the force of the regenerate life. Nor is it a machine in full efficiency and repair. If the figure may be used, the body is a machine of too limited capacity for the work which the renewed soul wants done; and even taking it for what it is, it is sadly out of repair, rusted and worn, so that we have continually to complain that "we cannot do the things that we would." Illustrate in St. Paul's case. The body would have so affected him, if he had yielded to it, that he could not have been noble towards his traducers at Corinth. The body would have urged a passionate reply. So we find the body such a drag upon the high and holy aims, purposes, and endeavours of the soul, that we are often saying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

III. THE CHRISTIAN MASTERY OF FLESHLY CONDITIONS. This is precisely the discipline of life. Christ wins our soul. Christ regenerates our will. Christ assures us of his own spiritual presence as our inspiration and strength; and then seems to say, "Go forth, win your flesh, your mind, your body, your associations, for me, so that henceforth no fleshly ends are sought, and no carnal, self-seeking tone rests on any of your doings and relations." It is inspiring to find how fully St. Paul could enter into Christ's thought for him, but it is comforting to observe how very near he was to failure in his endeavour to gain the mastery over self, again and again. Through much tribulation and conflict only can any one of us gain the mastery of the spirit over the flesh.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Captivity of thoughts for Christ.* Probably the apostle makes special reference to the confidence of Christians at Corinth in their learning and philosophizing; "to the efforts of human reason to deal with things beyond it, the best corrective of which is, and always will be, the simple proclamation of God's message to men." But our thoughts are the springs of action, as well as the means of acquiring knowledge; so they may be treated in a comprehensive way.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR THOUGHTS. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Note: 1. The defiling power of cherished evil thought. 2. The inspiring and ennobling power of cherished good thought. 3. The relation of thought to (1) conduct, (2) culture,

(3) associations. Right thoughts make openness to God, give graciousness to our conversation, enable us to be considerate of and helpful to others. As we must keep the fountain pure, if the stream is to run sweet and clear, we must recognize the supreme importance of taking heed to our thoughts.

II. OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR THOUGHTS. On this point a sentiment prevails which greatly needs correction. It is assumed that we cannot help thoughts coming up before us, and that they may be the suggestions of our soul's spiritual enemy, and so we cannot be held responsible for them. This is one of those half-truths that are oftentimes more mischievous than downright error. We are not responsible for the mere passing of thoughts, as in a panorama, before our mental vision; but we are responsible for what we select of them for consideration; we are responsible for what we cherish. We are further responsible for the *materials* of our thought, and for the circumstances in which we place ourselves, so far as they may suggest thought. Therefore we have the counsel so earnestly given us, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

III. THE SECRET OF CONTROLLING OUR THOUGHTS. That secret is made up of parts. It includes: 1. The full surrender of our will to Christ, so that he may rule all our choices and preferences, even the very choices of our thoughts. 2. The cherished consciousness of Christ's living presence with us gives tone and harmony with him, to all our preferences. 3. The culture of mind, disposition, and habits, which involves the resolute putting away from us of all associations and suggestions of evil. 4. The freeness of access to God in prayer for strength whenever temptation seems to have an overcoming power. 5. The occupying of heart, thought, and life so fully with the things of Christ that there can be no room for evil. There is no more practical way of mastering doubting, sensual, corrupt thought than by turning at once to good reading or engaging at once in works of charity. While we pray to God to "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit," we must also remember that the apostle teaches us to make personal efforts of watchfulness and good endeavour, and so "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." In every age sincere hearts have prayed the psalmist's prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Mistaken judgment by appearances.* "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" In the mind of the apostle was, no doubt, the evident disposition of the community at Corinth to "attach undue weight to the outward accidents of those who claimed their allegiance rather than to that which was of the essence of all true apostolic ministry." Bold and forward men, who make great boasting and pretension, whose appearance and manners are taking, often do incomparable mischief in Christian Churches. So easily are people carried away with the "outward appearance." The Divine teaching on this subject is given in connection with Samuel's visit to the house of Jesse, for the selection and anointing of Jehovah's new king. Samuel looked on the stately figure of Eliab, Jesse's firstborn, and said to himself, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Plutarch says, "We ought to be candid enough to extol the merits of him who speaks, but not suffer his address to lead into incaution; to regard his talents with pleasure, but investigate strictly the justness of his reasonings; not to be influenced by the authority of the speaker, but to scrutinize accurately the grounds of his argument; the orator's subject should be considered rather than his eloquence admired."

I. THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE OUGHT TO EXPRESS THE INWARD FACT. Outward and inward should be in perfect harmony. They should be related as are *thought* and *word*. A man's words should clearly, precisely, worthily, express to men his thought. And so his outward appearance should exactly correspond with his inward condition. Only then can a man be "sincere." We speak of a man as being "always the same." He can only be so if he will let what he really is find due expression in his life. The consciously sincere man makes no show. Without restraint he lets the life speak freely what message it pleases. The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is so sublimely attractive,

because we feel that it was through and through true; and whatever were its appearances they were but manifestations of his life.

II. THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE IS OFTEN UNTRUE TO THE INWARD FACT. Of this the familiar illustration is taken from the usual description of the fruit grown near the Dead Sea, and called "apples of Sodom." Beautiful to all appearance, but dry and unpleasant to the taste. Hypocrisy is real "part-acting," representing ourselves to be other than we are. It is a very subtle form of sin, especially in what are called "civilized times," when so much depends on "keeping up appearances." Illustrate in relation to house, dress, society; and show that it may even concern personal religion. The assumption and the show of piety are not always faithful transcripts of the heart's love and devotion. But sometimes the outward appearance is untrue by being *below* the reality. This seems to have been the case with St. Paul. His insignificant appearance, and his modesty and considerateness of manner, gave little indication of the force that was in him, or the bold and valiant defence of the truth which he could give upon occasion. So the outward appearance may be unworthy of the inward, without being wrongfully so; unworthy by reason of infirmity, and not of hypocrisy.

III. THEREFORE WE ARE ALWAYS BOUND TO TEST THE IMPRESSIONS MADE BY OUTWARD APPEARANCES. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The testings can often be done (1) by patient waiting; (2) by observing the *whole* of a man's conduct; (3) by comparing our impressions with those made on others' minds; (4) by the standards given us in Holy Scripture; (5) by cultivating our own sensitiveness to that which is truly Christ-like. In order to find unworthy men out, and in order to esteem aright good men, we must go beyond their form, feature, and outward show, and we must know *them*. St. Paul will bear thoroughly knowing.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The gospel for the regions beyond.* "To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you" (comp. Rom. xv. 19—24). The apostle, filled with the true missionary spirit, was longing to be free from the care of Churches already founded, so that he might be free to go again upon his journeyings, and preach the gospel in Western Greece, in Rome, and even away in distant Spain. St. Paul was first and chiefly a missionary. The genius of the missionary is a Divine restlessness, a constant impulse forward into new spheres, a passion for finding some one else to whom the gospel message might be told. The men who settle down in Churches situated in heathen districts are ministers and pastors and clergymen; they cannot properly be called missionaries, since these are men who are always hearing a call from "regions beyond," saying, "Come over and help us."

I. MISSIONARY WORK AS HERALDING A MESSAGE. The word for "preaching" properly means "heralding"—going forth to make a royal proclamation. Explain the work of the Eastern herald. He would go through the land, and, wherever he could find people, deliver the king's message. We need a fuller and worthier impression of the gospel, as the royal proclamation of the King of kings, entrusted to us for delivery to "all the world," to "every creature."

II. HERALDING WORK AS TEMPORARY. It is done when the message is declared and delivered. The herald—as a herald—has no more to do there; he must pass on his way. There is abundant work left behind for others to do; but his is over. And we are told that the gospel heralds will not have gone all over the world when the kingdom shall come. So we need fear no lack of work for missionaries and heralds.

III. HERALD'S DUTY TO FIND REGIONS BEYOND. A glance at the map of our world will show what vast masses of mankind have never heard of the true God, the redeeming Son, and the eternal life. We rejoice that, especially in Africa and China, the Christian Church is showing that it keeps the true missionary idea, and is even reaching out to "regions beyond."—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*Man's only true glorying.* "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The apostle used the simpler and stronger word, "boasteth." Dean Plumtree complains of the besetting weakness for variation which characterized our English translators. And oftentimes force of utterance is gained by dwelling on a word, even at the peril of tautology. Reference is made, no doubt, to the boastings of this leader of the party at Corinth that was antagonistic to St. Paul, and also to the accusation which

this man made against the apostle, that he was always boasting of his authority, his superior knowledge, and the great things he had done. St. Paul firmly urged the distinction between glorying in what a man is or in what a man has done, and glorying in what God has made a man to be and in what God has done by him. The first kind of boasting is wrong and dangerous. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The other kind is right, is honouring to God, and may be our proper form of testifying for him. There is then a *sin* of boasting, against which we require to be duly warned. And there is a *service* of boasting which may, under certain circumstances, be our most effective mode of resisting evil and witnessing for God. On the whole, however, it may be fully urged that a man's *life*, rather than his *lips*, should do all his boastings for him. These distinctions may be further elaborated and illustrated.

I. GLORYING IN WHAT WE ARE IS ALWAYS A SIGN OF CHRISTIAN WEAKNESS. A man had better not even think about himself, but put all his effort into higher attainments in the Divine life. There is danger for us when we find that we have anything in ourselves to talk about or to glory in. All the finest and most delicate Christian graces are so fragile that they break with a touch, so sensitive that they fade if we only look on them. Do not even think about what you *are*; fill your thoughts with what you *may be*, what you *may become*, in the grace and strength of Christ. Christian progress stops as soon as we begin to boast. He that is satisfied with his attainments falls from the Christian ideal, which is this, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 12, Revised Version). Show the peril that lies in habits of introspection and self-examination with a view to finding subjects of self-satisfaction. And also of meetings in which Christians are encouraged to boast of religious feelings and experiences. The text suggests an altogether "more excellent way." "Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord."

II. GLORYING IN WHAT WE HAVE DONE PUTS CHRISTIAN HUMILITY IN PERIL. Because it directs men's thoughts to *us*, sets them upon praising *us*, and so lifts up our minds, gives us undue notions of our own superiority and excellence. When he gains the applause of an unthinking multitude, Nebuchadnezzar can forget himself, and, in uttermost pride, cast God wholly away, and say, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have builded?" Boastfulness of our doings is always perilous. God does not need it, since he knows all about it. And man does not need it, for he can see the doings well enough without our telling. "Let thine own works praise thee." Let thine enemies praise thee. Let thy friends praise thee. But if you would keep fresh the great grace of humility, never *praise yourself*.

III. GLORYING IN WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US AND BY US IS ALWAYS INSPIRING AND HEALTHY. Such was the glorying of the apostle, and such are the narratives of labour given us by great missionaries. All true records of our life-work should lead men to say, "What hath *God* wrought?"—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

AN APOSTLE DRIVEN AGAINST HIS WILL INTO A SEMBLANCE OF BOASTING.

An apology for the "foolishness" of boasting (vers. 1—4). He is not afraid of comparisons (vers. 5, 6). He will not recede from his despised practice of teaching gratuitously (vers. 7—15). A second apology, drawn from the outrageous conduct of his opponents (vers. 16—20). His privileges, life, and labours (vers. 21—33).

Ver. 1.—Would to God; rather, *would that I* (comp. 1 Cor. iv. 8). You could bear;

rather, *ye would bear*. In my folly; rather, in a little foolishness. Namely, in this foolishness of boasting. "Fool" and "folly" are here haunting words (ch. i. 16, 17, 19, 21; xii. 6, 11). The article (*the* i.e. *my* folly) is omitted in κ , B, D, E. Bear with me. It is better to take this as an indicative. It would be meaningless to pass from an entreaty to a command. On the other hand, "Nay, ye do really bear with me" was a loving and delicate admission of such kindness as he had received from them.

Ver. 2.—For. This gives the reason why they bore with him. It was due to a reciprocity of affection. I am jealous over you. The word implies both jealousy and

zeal (ch. vii. 7; ix. 2). With a godly jealousy; literally, *with a jealousy of God*. My jealousy is not the poor earthly vice (Numb. v. 14; Ecclus. ix. 1), but a heavenly zeal of love. For I have espoused you; rather, *for I betrothed you*; at your conversion. I acted as the paranymp, or "bridegroom's friend" (John iii. 29), in bringing you to Christ, the Bridegroom. The metaphor is found alike in the Old and New Testaments (Isa. liv. 5; Ezek. xxiii.; Hos. ii. 19; Eph. v. 25—27). To one husband (Jer. iii. 1; Ezek. xvi. 15). Our Lord used an analogous metaphor in the parable of the king's wedding feast, the virgins, etc. That I may present you. The same word as in ch. iv. 14. The conversion of the Church was its betrothal to Christ, brought about by St. Paul as the paranymp; and, in the same capacity, at the final marriage feast, he would present their Church as a pure bride to Christ at his coming (Rev. xix. 7—9).

Ver. 3.—I fear. Even now he would only contemplate their defection as a future dread, not as a present catastrophe. Lest by any means; *lest haply* (ch. ii. 7; ix. 4). As the serpent beguiled Eve. St. Paul merely touches on the central moral fact of the temptation and the Fall (Gen. iii. 1—6). He enters into no speculation about the symbols, though, doubtless, like St. John (Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2), he would have identified the serpent with Satan (comp. ch. ii. 11 and Wisd. ii. 23). Through his subtlety. The word means "crafty wickedness." It is used in ch. xii. 16, and is found in ch. iv. 2; Luke xx. 23. Your minds; literally, *your thoughts* (ch. ii. 11). Should be corrupted (comp. Col. ii. 4—8; 1 Tim. iv. 1). The simplicity. The apostles always insisted on this virtue, but especially St. Paul, in whose Epistles the word (*ἀπλότης*) occurs seven times. That is in Christ; rather, *that is towards* (literally, *into*) *Christ*; as Cranmer rendered it, "The perfect fidelity which looks to him above."

Ver. 4.—He that cometh. Apparently an allusion to some recent and rival teacher. Another Jesus. The intruder preaches, not a *different* Jesus (*ἕτερον*) or a different gospel (comp. Gal. i. 6—8), but ostensibly the same Jesus whom St. Paul had preached. Another spirit . . . another gospel; rather, *a different spirit* (*ἕτερον*) . . . *a different gospel*. The Jesus preached was the same; tho gospel accepted, the Spirit received, were supposed to remain unaltered. Ye might well bear with him. This is not without a touch of irony. You are all set against me; and yet the new-comer does not profess to preach to you another Jesus, or impart a different Spirit! Had he done so, you might have had some excuse (*καλῶς*) for

listening to him. Now there is none; for it was I who first preached Jesus to you, and from me you first received the Spirit.

Ver. 5.—For. It cannot be that you received this rival teacher as being so much superior to me; *for*, etc. I suppose. Again, like the Latin *censeo* or *opinor*, with a touch of irony. I was not a whit behind; *in no respect have I come short of*. The **very** chiefest apostles. The word used by St. Paul for "very chiefest" is one which, in its strangeness, marks the vehemence of his emotion. It involves an indignant sense that he had been most disparagingly compared with other apostles, as though he were hardly a genuine apostle at all. Yet he reckons himself to have done as much as the "above-exceedingly"—or, as it might be expressed, the "out-and-out," "extra-super," or "super-apostolic," apostles. There is here no reflection whatever on the twelve; he merely means that, even if any with whom he was unfavourably contrasted were "apostles ten times over," he can claim to be in the front rank with them. This is no more than he has said with the utmost earnestness in 1 Cor. xv. 10; Gal. ii. 6. There is no self-assertion here; but, in consequence of the evil done by his detractors, St. Paul, with an utter sense of distaste, is forced to say the simple truth.

Ver. 6.—Rude in speech; literally, *a laio in discourse*; see ch. x. 10 and 1 Cor. ii. 13; and, for the word *ἰδιώτης*, a private person, and so "one who is untrained," as contrasted with a professor, see the only other places where it occurs in the New Testament (Acts iv. 13; 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 23, 24). St. Paul did not profess to have the trained oratorical skill of Apollos. His eloquence, dependent on conviction and emotion, followed none of the rules of art. Yet not in knowledge. Spiritual knowledge was a primary requisite of an apostle, and St. Paul *did* claim to possess this (Eph. iii. 3, 4). We have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. This would be an appeal to the transparent openness and sincerity of all his dealings, as in ch. iv. 20 and xii. 12; but the best reading seems to be the active participle, *phanerōsantes* (S, B, F, G), not the passive, *phanerōthentes*. The rendering will then be, *In everything making it* (my knowledge) *manifest among all men towards you*.

Ver. 7.—Have I? literally, *or have I?* An ironical exception to his manifestation of knowledge; "unless you think that I committed a sin in refusing to accept maintenance at your hands." It is clear that even this noble generosity had been made the ground for a charge against the apostle. "If he had not been conscious," they said, "that he has no real claims, he would not

have preached for nothing, when he had a perfect right to be supported by his converts" (1 Cor. ix. 1—15). Abasing myself. The trade of tentmaker was despised, tedious, and mechanical, and it did not suffice to provide even for Paul's small needs (Acts xviii. 3; xx. 34). That ye might be exalted; namely, by spiritual gifts (Eph. ii. 4—6). The gospel . . . freely. Some of them would feel the vast contrast between the words. The gospel was the most precious gift of God, and they had got it for nothing. Compare the fine lines of Lowell—

"For a cap and bella our lives we pay,
Bubbles we earn with our whole soul's
tasking;

'Tis only God who is given away,
'Tis only heaven may be had for the
asking."

To be a free and unpaid missionary was St. Paul's pride (ch. xii. 14; 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9; Acts xx. 33).

Ver. 8.—I robbed; literally, *I ravaged, or plundered*. The intensity of St. Paul's feelings, smarting under base calumny and ingratitude, reveals itself by the passionate expression which he here uses. Other Churches. The only Church of which we know as contributing to St. Paul's needs is that at Philippi (Phil. iv. 15, 16). Taking wages. The expression is again impassioned. It is meant rather ironically than literally. Literally it means *rations* (1 Cor. ix. 7).

Ver. 9.—And wanted. The aorist shows that this sad condition of extreme poverty was a crisis rather than chronic. Yet even at that supreme moment of trial, when from illness or accident the scanty income of his trade failed him, he would not tell them that he was starving, but rather accepted help from the Philippians, who, as he knew, felt for him an unfeigned affection. It is needless to point out once more how strong is the argument in favour of the genuineness of the Acts and the Epistles from the numberless undesigned coincidences between them in such passages as those to which I have referred in the foregoing notes. I was chargeable to no man; literally, *I did not benumb you*. The word *katenarkēsa*, which occurs only here and in ch. xii. 13, 14, is ranked by St. Jerome among St. Paul's *cilicisms*, i.e. the provincial expressions which he picked up during his long residence at Tarsus. *Narkē* (whence our *narcissus* and *narcotic*) means "paralysis," and is also the name given to the *gymnotus*, or electric eel—in Latin, *torpedo*, the cramp-fish—which benumbs with the shock of its touch. "I did not," he indignantly says, "cramp you with my torpedo-touch." Perhaps in a less vehement

mood he would have chosen a less picturesque or technical and medical term. That which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied; rather, *for the brethren, on their arrival from Macedonia, filled up my deficiency*. This must have been the third present which St. Paul received from Philippi (Phil. iv. 15, 16). These brethren from Macedonia accompanied Silas and Timotheus (Acts xviii. 5). And so will I keep myself (ch. xii. 14).

Ver. 10.—As the truth of Christ is in me. The strength of St. Paul's feelings on the subject has already been expressed in 1 Cor. ix. 15. We have a similar appeal in Rom. ix. 1. The "as" is not in the original, but evidently the words are meant for a solemn asseveration—"The truth of Christ is in me, that," etc. No man shall stop me of this boasting; literally, *this shall not be stopped as concerns me*. The verb means literally, "shall be fenced," and with that tendency to over-elaboration which is frequent in commentators, some suppose that St. Paul referred to the projected wall across the isthmus of Corinth, etc. But the same word is used for simply stopping the mouth in Rom. iii. 19; Heb. xi. 33. In the regions of Achaia. He would not apply the rule to Corinth only, but seems to have felt the need for the utmost circumspection, and for cutting off every handle for suspicion or slander among these subtle, loquacious, intellectual Greeks. He could act more freely among the more frank and generous Macedonians.

Ver. 11.—Wherefore? He cannot tell them the real *ultimate* reason, which is their whole character and nature. Because I love you not? He has already assured them of his deep affection (ch. vii. 2; comp. xii. 15).

Ver. 12.—Occasion; rather, *the occasion*. Wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. "These new teachers boast to you how disinterested they are. Well, then, I have proved myself to be equally disinterested." But the words apparently involve a most stinging sarcasm. For these teachers were *not* in reality disinterested, though they boasted of being so; on the contrary, they were exacting, insolent, and tyrannical (ver. 20), and did *not* preach gratuitously (1 Cor. ix. 12), though they sneered at the apostle for doing so. Being radically false (vers. 12, 13), "while they were," as Theodoret says, "openly boasting, they were secretly taking money," and therefore were *not* "even as we."

Ver. 13.—For such are false apostles. This, with 1 Thess. ii. 14—16 and Phil. iii. 2, is one of St. Paul's most passionate outbursts of plain speaking. "Now at length," says Bengel, "he calls a spade a spade."

They were "false apostles" (Rev. ii. 2), because a true apostle delivers the message of another, while these cared only for self (Rom. xvi. 18). Deceitful workers. Workmen who cheat their employers (ch. ii. 17; iv. 2). Transforming themselves. The verb is the same as in 1 Cor. iv. 6 and Phil. iii. 21, and does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Ver. 14.—Even Satan . . . angel of light. This is one of Satan's devices (ch. ii. 11). The allusion may be to the temptation (Matt. iv. 8, 9); or to the appearances of Satan with the angels before God in the Book of Job (ii. 1); or perhaps to the Jewish *hagadah*, that the "angel" who wrestled with Jacob was in reality Satan.

Ver. 15.—Whose end shall be according to their works. Whatever their fashion (*sehēma*), they shall be judged, not by what they seem, but by what they are, as shown by their works.

Vers. 16—33.—*Apology by contrast.*

Ver. 16.—I say again. St. Paul evidently feels an almost invincible repugnance to begin to speak of his own works. He has twice swerved away from the task (ch. x. 8; xi. 1, 6) to speak of collateral topics. Now at last he begins, but only (to our grievous loss) to break off abruptly in ver. 33, before the story of his past sufferings has been much more than begun. A fool . . . boast. Here, again, we have the two haunting words of this section (see note on ver. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 36; xiii. 3). "Boast" occurs sixteen times in these three chapters alone. That I; rather, *that I also*.

Ver. 17.—Not after the Lord. "Boasting," or what might be stigmatized as such, may become a sort of painful necessity, necessitated by human baseness; but in itself it cannot be "after the Lord." There is nothing Christ-like in it. It is human, not Divine; an earthly necessity, not a heavenly example; a sword of the giant Philistine, which yet David may be forced to use. Confidence; *hypostasis*, as in ch. ix. 4, where exactly the same phrase occurs.

Ver. 18.—After the flesh (see note ch. x. 3; comp. Phil. iii. 4). I will glory also. But, as Robertson admirably observes, he "does not glory in what he has done, but in what he has borne."

Ver. 19.—Seeing you yourselves are wise; ye gladly tolerate the senseless, being intellectual (comp. 1 Cor. iv. 10). The irony would be very scathing to those whose minds and consciences were sufficiently humble and delicate to feel it.

Ver. 20.—For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage. The verse gives us an unexpected and painful glimpse of the enslaving (Gal. ii. 4), greed-loving (Matt. xxiii. 14; Rom. xvi. 18), gain-hunting

(1 Pot. v. 2, 3), domineering (3 John 9), and even personally violent and insulting character of these teachers; whom yet, strange to say, the Corinthians seem to take at their own estimate, and to tolerate any extreme of insolence from them, while they were jealously suspicious of the disinterested, gentle, and humble apostle. If a man devour you. As the Pharisees "devoured" widows' houses (Matt. xxiii. 14). Take of you; rather, *seize you*; makes you his captives. The verb is the same as "caught you," in ch. xii. 16. Smite you on the face. They must have brought their insolence with them from Jerusalem, where, as we see, not only from the details of our Lord's various mockeries, but from the accounts of the priests in Josephus and the Talmud, the priests made free use of their fists and staves! The fact that so many of the converts were downtrodden slaves and artisans would make them less likely to resent conduct to which they were daily accustomed among the heathen. Neither Greeks nor Orientals felt to anything like the same extent as ourselves the disgrace of a blow. That sense of disgrace rises from the freedom which Christianity has gradually wrought for us, and the deep sense of the dignity of human nature, which it has inspired. Christ had been so smitten, and so was Paul himself long afterwards (Acts xxiii. 2), and he had to teach even Christian bishops that they must be "no strikers" (1 Tim. iii. 3; Titus i. 7). The "syllogism of violence" has, alas! been in familiar use among religious teachers in all ages (1 Kings xxii. 24; Neh. xiii. 25; Isa. lviii. 4; Matt. v. 39; Luke xxii. 64; 1 Cor. iv. 11).

Ver. 21.—I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. The sense is uncertain, but if with the Revised Version we render it, "I speak by way of disparagement," the verse may be understood as an ironical admission that, if absence from these violent and self-assertive proceedings be a sign of weakness, he has been weak. He proceeds to correct the ironical admission in the next clause. The meaning can hardly be, "I admit the disgraces I have suffered" (comp. ch. vi. 8), because he is speaking of the Corinthians, not of himself. I am bold also. If they derive their right to this audacious and overweening line of conduct from any privileges of theirs, there is not one of these privileges which I too may not claim.

Ver. 22.—Hebrews. In the strictest sense those who still understood and spoke Aramaic, not Hellenists of the dispersion, who no longer knew the sacred language. (For the use of the word, see Acts vi. 1; Phil. iii. 4.) Israelites. Jews, not only by nation, but in heart and feeling (see John i. 48; Acts ii.

22, etc.; Rom. ix. 4; xi. 1). The seed of Abraham. Alike literally and spiritually (see John viii. 33—53; Rom. ix. 7; xi. 1). It may seem strange that St. Paul should have found it necessary to make this statement; but his Tarsian birth and Roman franchise may have led to whispered insinuations which took form long afterwards in the wild calumny that he was a Gentile who had only got himself circumcised in order that he might marry the high priest's daughter (Epiplan., 'Hær.,' xxx. 16).

Ver. 23.—I speak as a fool. Not merely as before *aphrôn*, but *paraphronôn*, "I speak as a madman." It is downright insanity on my part to enter into this contest of rival egotism. The verb does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament; the substantive is used of "downright infatuation" in 2 Pet. ii. 16. I am more. I may claim to be something beyond an ordinary servant of Christ (comp. ch. xi. 5). This is the "frantio" boast which he proceeds to justify in a fragment of biography which must ever be accounted as the most remarkable and unique in the world's history. And when St. Paul lived the life was, as Dean Stanley says, "hitherto without precedent in the history of the world." No subsequent life of saint or martyr has ever surpassed St. Paul's, as here sketched, in self-devotion; and no previous life even remotely resembled it. The figure of the Christian missionary was, until then, unknown. In labours more abundant; literally, *more abundantly*. The best comment is 1 Cor. xv. 10. In stripes above measure. The expression is partly explained in the next verse. In prisons. St. Clement of Rome says that St. Paul was imprisoned seven times. The only imprisonment *up to this date* recorded in the Acts is that at Philippi (Acts xvi. 23). The imprisonments in Jerusalem, Cæsarea, and Rome all took place later. He says later, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and imprisonment await me" (Acts xx. 23). In deaths oft. He alludes to the incessant opposition, peril, and anguish which make him say in 1 Cor. xv. 31, "I die daily" (comp. ch. iv. 11; Rom. viii. 36). With the whole passage we may compare ch. vi. 4, 5.

Ver. 24.—Five times. Not one of these Jewish scourgings—which yet were so severe that the sufferer often died under them—is mentioned in the Acts. This paragraph is the most striking proof of the complete fragmentariness of that narrative, marvellous as it is. On the circumstances which probably led to these Jewish scourgings, see 'Life of St. Paul,' exo. xi.; and comp. Acts xxii. 19; xxvi. 11; Matt. xxiii. 34. The question arises—Was St. Luke entirely unaware of all these scenes of anguish and daily

martyrdom? Had St. Paul, in his humble reticence, never cared to speak of them? or were the Acts only intended for a sketch which made no pretension to completeness, and only related certain scenes and events by way of specimen and example? Forty stripes save one (Deut. xxv. 3). On this instance of Jewish scrupulosity, and for all that is known of the *rationale* of Jewish scourgings, see 'Life of St. Paul,' *ubi supra*.

Ver. 25.—Thrice was I beaten with rods. This alludes to scourgings inflicted by Gentile magistrates with the *vitis*, or vine-stick, of soldiers, or with the fasces of lictors. Only one of these horrible scourgings, which likewise often ended in death, is narrated in the Acts (xvi. 22). We do not know when the others were inflicted. In any case they were egregious violations of St. Paul's right of Roman citizenship; but this claim (as we see in Cicero's various orations) was often set at naught in the provinces. Once was I stoned. At Lystra (Acts xiv. 19). Thrice I suffered shipwreck. Not one of these shipwrecks is narrated in the Acts. The shipwreck of Acts xxvii. took place some years later. A night and a day I have been in the deep. An allusion, doubtless, to his escape from one of the shipwrecks by floating for twenty-four hours on a plank in the stormy sea. We have no right to assume that the deliverance was *miraculous*. The perfect tense shows St. Paul's vivid reminiscence of this special horror. "In the deep" means "floating on the deep waves." Theophylact explains the words *ἐν βυθῷ* to mean "in Bythos," and says that it was a place near Lystra, apparently like the Athenian *Barathrum* and the Spartan *Cæadas*—a place where the bodies of criminals were thrown. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Ver. 26.—In journeyings often. In those days and in those countries journeys were not only perilous and fatiguing, but also accompanied with many severe hardships and discomforts. In perils of waters; rather, *of rivers*. In all countries which, like parts of Greece and Asia Minor, abound in unbridged mountain torrents, journeys are constantly accompanied by deaths from drowning in the sudden rush of swollen streams. In perils of robbers. Then, as now, brigandage was exceedingly common in the mountains of Greece and Asia. In perils from mine own countrymen; literally, *from my race*. These are abundantly recorded in the New Testament (Acts ix. 23, 29; xiii. 50; xiv. 5, 19; xx. 3, etc.; 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16; Phil. iii. 2). From the heathen. They were generally *instigated* by the Jews (Acts xvi. 19—39; xvii. 5; xix. 23—34, etc.). In the city. As at Damascus, Jerusalem, Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, Ephesus, etc.—"in every

city" (Acts xx. 23). In the wilderness. As, for instance, in travelling through the wild waste tracts of land between Perga and Antioch in Pisidia, or thence to Lystra and Derbe; or over the mountain chains of Taurus to the cities of Galatia. In the sea. Storms, leaks, pirates, mutinies, etc. Among false brethren. The word only occurs elsewhere in Gal. ii. 4.

Ver. 27.—In weariness and painfulness; literally, *in toil and travail* (1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8). In watchings; literally, *in spells of sleeplessness* (Acts xx. 34). In hunger and thirst (ver. 8; 1 Cor. iv. 11; Phil. iv. 12). In fastings often. It is not clear whether this refers to voluntary fastings (ch. vi. 5; Acts xxvii. 9) or to general destitution short of the actual pangs of hunger. In cold and nakedness. St. Paul's ideal, like that of his Master Christ, was the very antithesis of that adopted by the wealthy, honoured, and full-fed Shammals and Hillels of Jewish rabbinism, who delighted in banquets, fine garments, pompous titles, domestic comforts, and stationary ease.

Ver. 28.—Those things that are without. The adverb thus rendered *parektos* only occurs in Matt. v. 32; Acts xxvi. 29. It may either mean "trials that come to me from external and extraneous sources (*quæ extrinsecus accedunt*) or things in addition to these (*præterea*), which I here leave unmentioned." The latter meaning is (as St. Chrysostom saw) almost certainly the correct one. That which cometh upon me. The word thus rendered is either *epistastis* (J, K), which means "hostile attack" or "tumult," as we talk of "a rush of trouble or business;" or *epistastis* (N, B, D, E, F, G), which may imply "halting, lingering thoughts;" "attention," and so "anxiety" (comp. Acts xxiv. 12, where there is the same various reading). Of all the Churches. No doubt he is thinking of his own Churches, the Churches of the Gentiles (Col. ii. 1).

Ver. 29.—Who is weak, and I am not weak? See, by way of example, 1 Cor. viii. 13; ix. 22; Rom. xiv. 21. Instead of stiffly maintaining my own prejudices, I am always ready to make concessions to weak brethren. Who is offended, and I burn not? That is, "who is ever caused to stumble without my burning with indignation?" In other words, "Is not the intensity of my sympathy whenever any scandal occurs an addition to the trials of my life?"

Ver. 30.—If I must needs. If boasting is forced on me as a moral necessity (*δει*). The things which concern mine infirmities. After all, St. Paul cannot keep up even for a few verses anything which can be regarded as "boasting after the flesh" (ver. 18). Practically his boasting has been only of those

afflictions which to others might sound like a record of disgraces, but which left on him the marks of the Lord Jesus. His hair-breadth escapes were to him, as Bosuet said of the wounds of the Prince of Condé, "marks of the protection of Heaven."

Ver. 31.—The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This solemn asseveration does not seem to be retrospective. It is used to preface what was perhaps intended to be a definite sketch of the most perilous incidents and trials of his life, which would have been to us of inestimable value. This awful attestation of his truthfulness was necessary, (1) because even the very little which we do know shows us that the tale would have been "passing strange;" and (2) because his base and shameless calumniators had evidently insinuated that he was not straightforward (ch. xii. 16). (On the phrases used, see ch. i. 23; 1 Cor. xv. 24; Eph. i. 3.)

Ver. 32.—In Damascus. (For the incident referred to, see Acts ix. 22—25.) The governor; literally, *the ethnarch*. This is obviously the title given to the commandant of the city (whether an Arabian or a Jew), left in charge by Aretas. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, but is found in 1 Macc. xiv. 47; Josephus, 'Ant.' xiv. 7, § 2. Under Aretas the king, Hareth, the Emir of Petra, father-in-law of Herod the Great. He had either seized the city during his war with Herod, to avenge the insult offered to his daughter by Herod's adultery with Herodias; or it may have been assigned to him by Caligula. His relations with Damascus are confirmed by coins (see 'Life of St. Paul,' exo. viii.). Kept . . . with a garrison; literally, *was guarding*. It is said in Acts ix. 24 that *the Jews* did this; but they could not in any case have done it without leave from the ethnarch, and *qui facit per alium, facit per se*. Desirous to apprehend me. Both words are a little stronger in the Greek—"determining to seize me."

Ver. 33.—Through a window. A "little door," or lattice in some house which abutted on the wall. In a basket (comp. Joah. ii. 15; 1 Sam. xix. 12). The word used by St. Luke in Acts ix. 25 is *spuris*, which is a general name for a large basket. The word here used is *sarganê*, which is defined by Hesychius to be a basket of wickerwork, but which may also mean a rope-basket. This particular incident, no doubt, seems to be less perilous and trying than many which St. Paul has already mentioned. We must, however, remember that escape from a window in the lofty wall of a city guarded by patrols was very perilous, and also that such a method of concealment was very trying to the dignity of an Oriental: *רחב*

such as St. Paul had been. Further, it is clear that St. Paul only mentions this as the earliest incident in a long line of perils which it had been his original intention to recount. But at this point he was interrupted, and laid aside his task of dictation—an incident which has not unfrequently had its effect in literature. When next he resumed the Epistle, he was no longer in the

mood to break through his rule of reticence on these subjects. He had played “the fool” and “the madman,” as he says of himself with indignant irony, enough; and he proceeds to speak of other personal claims which he regards as more important and more Divine. Of all “chapters of unwritten history,” not one is more deeply to be regretted than the one which we have thus lost.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Inviting men to Christ the supreme object of preaching.* “Would to God ye could bear with me a little,” etc. The purpose and spirit of this chapter are the same as the preceding one. The apostle proceeds against the charges which they had brought against him, and the same breeze of irony breathes through all. These verses seem to be his defence against the charge of his foolish boasting, “Would to God,” or rather would that ye could “bear with me a little in my folly,” or better, in a little foolishness. What I have said already you say is foolish boasting; be it so, bear with me whilst I proceed in the same strain of self-vindication; tolerate me a little further. It has been observed that no less than five times in this chapter does the expression “bearing with,” or “burden,” occur, and the word “folly” eight times; and the inference is that the expressions refer to something which he had heard of some of their remarks concerning him. Paul here seems to claim their continued attention on two grounds.

I. THE GREATNESS OF THE WORK HE HAD ACCOMPLISHED AMONGST THEM. “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” He had “espoused,” or united them, to Christ, as the bride to the Bridegroom—a relationship the most sacred, close, tender, and lasting. To unite men in *supreme affection* and *supreme purpose* is the grand work of the Christian minister, and what work on earth is so sublimely beneficent and glorious as to make men *one* with Christ? It is impossible to make men one with a creed or a Church, and were it possible it would be to the last degree undesirable. But to make men one with Christ is at once most *practical* and *urgent*—practical because God has established an infallible method, and urgent because souls disconnected from Christ are in a gully and ruined condition.

II. THE DREAD WHICH HE HAD LEST THAT WORK SHOULD BE UNDONE. “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety [craftiness], so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” It would seem from this that the *union of souls to Christ is not absolutely indissoluble*, that a *separation* is possible; and, in truth, were it not so, man would with the union lose his freedom of action, and would become a mere instrument. Angels fell from their primitive holiness, our first parents from innocence, and Peter for a time from connection with Christ. The holiest creature in the universe is conscious of a power by which he could break away from his orbit of purity and obedience; otherwise he would have no sense of personal virtuousness. The apostle here seems to ascribe the *possible dissolution of the marriage of souls to Christ to Satan*, whom he here represents as the “serpent,” implying his belief at once in the *personality, moral maliciousness, and mighty spiritual influence* of this superhuman intelligence. See how he does this. 1. *By insidiously corrupting the mind.* “I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” There can be no union between a soul morally corrupt and impure, and Christ. The moment those who are united to Christ become corrupted, the union is at an end; the rotten branch falls from the trunk. So Satan’s work is to “corrupt,” and thus undo the grandest of all works. This he does insidiously, or craftily, just as he dealt with Eve (Gen. iii.). How craftily this huge enemy of souls pursues his soul-corrupting work! “Beware of his devices.” 2. *By the agency of false teachers.* “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.” There is but one absolute Christ, but as many subjective ones as

call themselves Christians, and not a few of the *subjective* ones are pernicious caricatures of the true Jesus of Nazareth. These are preached, and the preaching of them corrupts souls and fulfils the purpose of the devil. There is as much difference between the Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of the creeds, as there is between the cedar growing in Lebanon and that cedar reduced to its primitive elements in the laboratory of the chemist; in the one form beautifully attractive, in the other hideously repulsive. Such Christs were preached in Corinth. Paul, perhaps, specially refers to some one who was preaching "another Jesus," and ironically he intimates that such preachers they tolerated. "Ye might well bear with him." As if he had said, "Such men who are doing the work of the devil ye would tolerate."

Vers. 5—12.—*The highest knowledge and the noblest generosity.* "For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other Churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we." Few things in human life are more distasteful than egotism or vanity. There are those in society whose chief delight is to parade their own imaginary merits and distinctions. We are wrong, however, if we regard the man who sometimes speaks about himself as an egotist. When a man is denied virtues which he knows he possesses, and charged with faults of which his conscience tells him he is not guilty, he is bound by the laws of his nature to stand up in self-defence. Every man is justified in fighting for his moral reputation, which is to him more precious than gold, and dear to him as life itself. This is just what Paul does here and in many other places in his letters to the Corinthians. He had slanderers at Corinth. Here he says, "For I suppose [reckon] I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." Two facts are here indicated which warranted his boasting.

I. He felt that, though he had not rhetorical accomplishments, HE HAD THE HIGHEST KNOWLEDGE. "Though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge." He was not trained in all the rhetorical parts of Grecian oratory, his periods were not polished, his sentences were not tuneful, and, perhaps, his utterances lacked flow and his voice music. This he seems to have felt; but what of that? He had the highest "knowledge." What is the grandest oratory without true knowledge? Clouds of golden splendour without water for the thirsty land. Paul's knowledge was of the highest kind. He knew Christ; he knew what Christ was to him; what he had done for him, as well as what he was in himself and in his relation to the Father and the universe. This is the science of all sciences; the science of which all other sciences are to it the mere leaf, or stem, or branch, of which this is the root. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

II. He felt that, though he consecrated himself to their highest interests, he RECEIVED FROM THEM NO REMUNERATION. What trials he endured for them! what perils he braved for them! what labours he prosecuted for them (see vers. 24—27)! All this was done and endured for what? Not for selfish ends, not for worldly gain. "Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?" Why did he not receive remuneration at their hands? Nay, why did he reject it? (1) Not because he did not need such a recompense. "And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man." He was dependent upon such contributions for his subsistence. He had received them at Thessalonica before his first visit to Corinth. (2) Not because he did not love them. "Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth." It would have been a *gratification* to those whom he had spiritually saved, to have

made some secular recompense for his labours, but he denied them this gratification, not because he did not love them. Why, then, did he reject their secular help? 1. *To furnish in his own life a proof of the benevolent terms of the gospel.* "I preach to you the gospel of God freely." The gospel is a free gift of God, and I present it to you as a free gift. The gospel should never be preached as a means of livelihood or for filthy lucre. 2. *To silence the tongue of his slanderers.* No doubt his enemies at Corinth sought in every way to degrade the apostle. The false apostles, no doubt, boasted that they did their work there as benefactors disinterestedly and without pay. Had Paul taken payment he would have given them some ground for boasting of their generosity. 3. *To compel his enemies by his example to act from generous impulses.* "That they may be found as we are." "Notice," says Mr. Beet, "the bitter irony of these words. Paul's opponents boasted their disinterestedness whilst making gain of the Corinthians, and eagerly watched him to detect self-enrichment, that they might boast of their own superiority. These have been the tactics of demagogues in all ages. But Paul resolved to refuse just recompense for real and great benefits, that thus by his example he may compel those who boasted their superiority to come up to his own level of working without pay, so that when his conduct and theirs are investigated, they may be found to be as disinterested as he was."

CONCLUSION. Truly that man might well exult who feels that, however deficient in mere verbal learning, he possesses the highest knowledge—the knowledge of Christ; and who also feels that he is rendering to men the highest service from kindly generous impulses without a desire for fee or reward, giving freely to men what God has given freely to all—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Vers. 13—15.—Self-misrepresentation. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Three thoughts are suggested by these words.

I. MAN HAS THE POWER OF MISREPRESENTING HIS CHARACTER TO OTHERS. Naturalists tell us of animals which have the power to appear what they really are not. Some feign sleep and death. Be this as it may, man has this power in an eminent degree—he can disguise himself and live in masquerade. Hence our Saviour speaks of "wolves in sheep's clothing." In fact, throughout all circles and populations those who appear to be what they really are have ever been in a miserable minority. As a rule men are not what they seem.

II. IN THE EXERCISE OF THIS POWER MAN CAN INVEST EVIL WITH THE HIGHEST FORMS OF GOOD. The "false apostles," to whom reference is here made, seem to have done so. Paul speaks of them as "deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." *The worse a man is the stronger the temptation he has to assume the forms of goodness.* Were corrupt men to show the state of their hearts to their contemporaries, they would recoil from them with horror and disgust, and they would be utterly unable to enjoy social intercourse or to transact their worldly business. As a rule, the worse a man is the more strenuous his efforts to assume the habiliments of virtue. Selfishness robes itself in the garbs of benevolence, error speaks in the language of truth. Hence it does not follow that a man is a true apostle or minister of Christ because he appears in the character. Some of the worst men on the earth have been deacons and priests, occupied pulpits and preached sermons. "No marvel," says the apostle; "for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." Hence it behoves us all to look well into the real moral character of those who set themselves up as the representatives of Christ and the teachers of religion. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

III. HE WHO EXERCISES THIS POWER IN THIS WAY RENDERS HIMSELF LIABLE TO TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT. "Whose end shall be according to their works." Of all characters the *hypocrite* is the most guilty and abhorrent. More terrible and more frequent were the denunciations Christ hurled against such than against the voluptuary, the gross sensualist, or the sordid worldling. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" etc. (see Matt. xxiii. 13—33) As such are the greatest sinners, such will

have the most terrible end; the "end shall be according to their works." They will reap the fruit of their own doings.

CONCLUSION. Learn: 1. The duty of *self-truthfulness*. Let us seek to be such true men, so true to self, society, and God, that we may have no temptation whatever to play the hypocrite or to appear to others what we are not.

"To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

2. The duty of *social caution*. Do not let us estimate men by their appearances, and take them into the circle of our confidence and friendship merely on account of what they appear to be. Often those whose outward garb is the most holy are inwardly the most corrupt, who outwardly move as angels of light are inwardly the greatest devils. Let us learn to take off the mask, to disrobe corruption of its external robes of purity, and to give neither our trust nor our sympathy until we are convinced that they have truth in the "inward parts."

Vers. 16—19.—*Man talking about himself, and the limitation of apostolic inspiration*. "I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise." Observe here—

I. MAN TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF. Paul had said a good many things about himself. Here again he takes up the subject, and his language suggests: 1. That the world is disposed to regard *such talk as foolish*. "Let no man think me a fool [or, 'foolish']." In this he recognizes the tendency of men to regard such self-reference and self-talk as weak and unwise. So in truth unsophisticated men do. When they hear a man talking about himself he impresses them with a sense of his folly. Inwardly they say, "What a fool that man is to be talking about himself!" It must be confessed that *generally* it is a very foolish thing—few things are more foolish. 2. That such conduct *may become a duty*. Paul felt it such an urgent obligation at this time that he begs them to bear with him. "Yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little." He was on his defence, and he felt that such self-references as he made he owed to himself, to the Christians at Corinth, and to the cause of his Master. Hence he seems to say, "Though you regard me as a fool whilst I thus talk about myself, yet do hear me." 3. That to attention to such talk about himself the apostle *had a special claim*. "Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise." As if he had said, "The false apostles amongst you talk about themselves; they boast of their merits and achievements, and you listen to them. I have a special claim to your attention because of the proofs of my apostleship amongst you."

II. THE LIMITATION OF APOSTOLIC INSPIRATION. "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting." As if he had said, "I do not talk of myself by 'commandment;' I have no special commission from Christ." How frequently does the apostle, in his communications to the Church at Corinth, guard against the impression that everything he wrote was divinely inspired! Indeed, in one case he indicates an imperfection of memory. "I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other" (1 Cor. i. 16). "I know not." What, an inspired apostle not knowing what he had done, forgetting the religious ordinances he had celebrated! In his letter to Timothy he himself says, "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching," implying that all Scripture is not inspired. It is for us to find out which the inspired ones are, to separate the human from the Divine. Whatever agrees with the character and the teaching of the Spirit of Christ we may rest assured is inspired of God. Who but God himself can tell the enormous amount of injury that has been done to sacred truth by the dogma of verbal inspiration, regarding all the imprecations of David, all the reasonings of Job's three friends, and even the utterances of Satan himself, as inspired by Heaven? The Scriptures *contain* the word of God, but they are not the word of God; the casket

is not the jewel, the shell is not the kernel. This by a devout and earnest study we must find out for ourselves.

CONCLUSION. The subject teaches: 1. That we must not *shrink from the discharge of a duty, however painful*. Paul, as a humble and modest man, felt it a very painful thing to talk about himself. His native modesty shrank from it; yet, though he would be considered a "fool," he did it. 2. That we must *study the Scriptures with a discriminating judgment*. We must penetrate through the "letter" that is human and reach the "spirit" that is Divine. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law."

Ver. 20.—*A picture of religious impostors*. "For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face." This verse suggests five things concerning religious impostors.

I. THEY ARE TYRANNIC. "For ye suffer [bear] if a man bring you into bondage." The reference is undoubtedly to those described in ver. 13, who were false teachers in Corinth. They were enslaving the souls of men with their dogmas and rites. False teaching always makes men spiritual serfs. Heathens are slaves to their priest, fanatics are slaves to their leader, papists are slaves to their pope. True teaching makes men free men. Spiritual bondage is infinitely worse than physical or political. A man's body may be in chains, yet he may be free in spirit; but if his spirit is enslaved, he himself is in captivity. The work of a false teacher is always to subdue souls to himself; the work of the true, to win souls to Christ. Even conventional Christianity is enslaving.

II. THEY ARE RAPAIOUS. "If a man devour you." False teachers devour widows' houses. They teach for money, turn temples and churches into shops. They shear the sheep instead of feeding them. Greed is their inspiration.

III. THEY ARE CRAFTY. "If a man take of you [taketh you captive]." The expression "of you" is not in the original. The idea to me seems to be—if a man takes you in, deceives and entraps you. This is just what religious impostors do—they "take men in," they cajole men, and make them their dupes.

IV. THEY ARE ARROGANT. "If a man exalt himself." It is characteristic of false teachers that they assume great superiority. With this they endeavour to impress men by their costume, their bearing, and their pompous utterances. They arrogate a lordship over human souls.

V. THEY ARE INSOLENT. "If a man smite you on the face." This is the last form of outrage; no greater insult could be offered to a man. The religious impostor has no respect for the rights and dignities of man as man. With his absurd dogmas and arrogances he is everlastingly smiting men on "their face," on their reason, their consciences, and their self-respect.

Vers. 21—33.—*Paul's avowal of his advantages and his history of his trials*. "I speak as concerning reproach," etc. The two subjects for thought that stand out conspicuously in these verses are Paul's manly avowal of his distinguished advantages and his historic sketch of his extraordinary trials.

I. HIS MANLY AVOWAL OF HIS DISTINGUISHED ADVANTAGES. There are three advantages which he here touches upon. 1. *His superior character*. "I speak as concerning reproach [by way of disparagement], as though we had been weak." Hitherto I have spoken of myself as if all the disparaging things you have said of me were true. The idea of Paul's language here seems to be this: "I have been speaking of reproach or disgrace, as if I was weak, *i.e.* as if I was disposed to admit as true all that has been said of me, as reproachful or disgraceful, all that has been said of my want of qualifications for the office, of my want of talent, my dignity of character, my folly. In all this I have been speaking ironically. I am superior to all; I am not ignorant, but learned; I am not foolish, but wise; not greedy, but generous; not proud, but humble; not ignoble, but dignified." How far his character transcended that of his traducers, history shows. 2. *His superior ancestry*. "Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I." His traducers, the false teachers, were, it would seem, Jews; probably boasted of their descent, and certainly implied that Paul was a mere Hellenistic Jew, born at Tarsus. If they gloried in their descent, so could he; the blood of Abraham quivered in his veins, he was a

lineal descendant of the man who wrestled with Jehovah and prevailed, an Israelite. 3. *His superior apostleship.* "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more." They called themselves "ministers of Christ," and belonged, perhaps, to the party in the Corinthian Church who said they were "of Christ"—Christites. But he was more an apostle of Christ than they were. Of this he was conscious. In touching this Paul says, "I speak as a fool," or as one beside myself. Here his great soul seems to flash out in the fire of indignant irony. There is an egotism here, say some. True, but it is a just, manly, necessary egotism.

II. *HIS HISTORIC SKETCH OF HIS EXTRAORDINARY TRIALS.* He was scourged "five times," in "prisons frequent" and in "deaths oft," thrice "beaten with rods," once "stoned," "thrice suffered shipwrecks," in "perils in the sea" and on land, midst foes and friends, in the "wilderness" and in cities, tried by "weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Besides all this, he refers to the trials that came "daily" upon him in "the care of all the Churches." The Churches were dear to his heart, and all the dissensions, heresies, unchastities, immoralities, that appeared from time to time in the Churches would carry anguish into his heart. Why he should refer in the last verse to the event that happened at Damascus, when he was let down "through a window in a basket," has been a puzzle to commentators. But as it was amongst his first trials as an apostle, it, perhaps, made the greatest impression on his mind. The trials here sketched indicate several things. 1. *The mysteriousness of God's procedure with his servants.* One might have thought that the man inspired with supreme love to God, and receiving a commission from him, involving the salvation of souls, would have had his way made clear and safe and even pleasant for him; that in his path no enemy should appear, no peril should threaten, no pain should be endured, that all things would be propitious; that he who embarked in such an enterprise as Paul's would sail in a bark absolutely secure, under a sky without a cloud, with every billow and every breeze propitious. But not so. The more important the Divine work entrusted to a man, and the more faithful he is in its discharge, the more trials will embarrass and distract him. For an explanation of this we must await the great explaining day. 2. *The unconquerableness of Christly love in the soul.* What stimulated Paul to embark in such an enterprise as this? What urged him on through innumerable difficulties and dangers? What bore him up under distressing and ever-thickening trials? Here is the answer: "The love of Christ constraineth me." This is the love that is unconquerable and all-conquering, the love that makes the true hero. 3. *The indelibility of the impressions which trials produce.* The trials in this long catalogue, so varied and tremendous, had long since transpired, but they were fresh in Paul's memory. Each one stood before the eye of his memory in living reality. It is a law in our nature that our trials make a deeper impression on us than our mercies. Why should this be so? Because they are the exceptions, not the rule. 4. *The blessedness which the memory of trials rightly endured produces.* In Paul's case it did two things. (1) It generated sympathy with the woes of others. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" No man can sympathize with the trials of others unless he has passed through trials himself. The sufferings that Christ endured qualified him to sympathize with the woes of the world. He who hungers for sympathy in his sufferings will go in vain to the man who has never suffered. (2) It inspired the soul with true rejoicing. "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." The reminiscence of the trials he had endured, the foes he had encountered, the perils he had braved, in the cause of Christ were now for him subjects for congratulation and glorifying. They had exerted such a beneficent influence on his character, and were endured in such a noble cause, that he rejoiced in them. In declaring all this Paul makes a solemn appeal for its truth. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Relations of the apostle to the Corinthians; ground of anxiety.* How shall we read this chapter? To read it aright it is certain that we must do more than

exercise the understanding on its contents; more than treat it as an argument intended to set forth a definite conclusion; and, especially, more than a defence, on any private grounds, of St. Paul's character and conduct. First of all, a general view of the situation is necessary. In this large, growing, and influential city, a bond of connection between Asia and Europe, a medium through which the most prominent agencies of the day operated over a very broad surface,—in this active and aspiring city a Christian Church had been founded by St. Paul on his first visit. It was an era in his apostleship. Of Greek intellect and habits, he had learned enough at least to give a special bias to his style of preaching. Thrown among a population of Jews, Romans, Greeks, and adventurers from every quarter of the globe, he found a degree of skill and prudence necessary in the management of his work that had not been required in any previous stage of his career. Shrewd money-lovers were all around him; he would practise his trade and support himself. Aquila and Priscilla had stood faithfully by his side and cheered his toil. He preached in the synagogue, trouble came, and he transferred his work to the house of Justus. A vision from God assured him of help and protection, and one of its fulfillments occurred when Gallio drove the apostle's persecutors, the turbulent Jews, from "the judgment-seat," and, in the subsequent tumult, "cared for none of these things." But it was more than an era in his ministry. It was an epoch in the history of the gospel. There had been something like a repetition of Pentecost. None of the outward symbols, and yet a mighty descent of the Holy Ghost in the number and variety of gifts. If the great Pentecost had been followed by sad lapses in the cases of Ananias and Sapphira, even by lying unto the Holy Ghost whose dispensation had just been inaugurated, could it be wondered at that disorder, misrule, heart-burnings, strife, immoralities, had sprung up as tares among the wheat in this luxuriant harvest? It was Corinth out and out. It was the excitable emporium in one of those ferments, good and evil intermixed, which have happened at intervals in the history of the Church. To check the unhealthy excitement, to purify the Church from corruption, to suppress rivalries and animosities between parties, St. Paul had put forth all his wisdom, energy, and fidelity, and, in large measure, had succeeded. At this point, a closer view of the situation becomes necessary. Looking at St. Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles, we see at once the significance of his relation to the Corinthian Church. Humanly speaking, he had fought here his greatest battle and had won a grand victory. Where was there a Church potentially of such promise? Where such an array of brilliant endowments? Where such a manifoldness and plenitude of captivating gifts? Here, in the very city where the Jews had required a sign and the Greeks had sought after wisdom; here, in the very metropolis of Achaia, where learning and culture and Jewish traditions were so strongly entrenched behind wealth and social influence, he had chosen to lay a peculiar and profound stress on "the foolishness of preaching." And the Christ crucified had suddenly revealed himself as the Christ glorified, had refilled his promise of the Holy Ghost, and a glorious Pentecostal season had been granted to Corinth. It was the miracle of all the miracles in his career. How personal it was to him as the apostle to the Gentiles is obvious. It was akin to the demonstration made before Jerusalem and her Sanhedrim in behalf of the twelve; and if that event gave St. Peter a commanding attitude at once, only second to that, if indeed second, was this outpouring of the Holy Spirit as an attestation from Christ the Lord of the special ministry of St. Paul. Amid these signs and wonders dissension and bitter strife had appeared at Corinth. Most alarming of all, Judaizers had come from Jerusalem to assail St. Paul's authority and destroy his influence. They had been zealous, unscrupulous, persistent, malignant. At every point they had attacked him, and they had a sufficient following to make the apostle apprehend serious damage. The persecution, he had hoped, was checked if not ended. But it had broken out anew, and that, too, while writing this Second Epistle. It was a severe blow. He was not prepared for it. Could it be possible that his work here was to be undone, or, if not that, to be arrested by these unprincipled adversaries? Corinth was the key to the vast citadel of the West should he lose it from his hand? It is in the light of these facts that we must read this eleventh chapter. And if we find him making a most vigorous and determined effort to reinstate his authority over the disaffected portion of the Corinthian Church, let us remember that it is not Paul as an individual, but St. Paul as an apostle—the apostle to the Gentiles—who pleaded for a cause far dearer to him than reputation, honour, or life

itself. It was not a party, however strong, but the Church he needed in his future work. The opening verse of the chapter indicates his sense of the embarrassing position. "Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness, nay indeed bear with me." To commend himself to them by this frequent recital of his labours and sufferings must have been exceedingly painful to one of his sensibility. Only as a duty to his apostleship and to them could he do it, and hence he says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy." The figure introduced is expressive of love and purity: "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." But what is the actual state of the Corinthian Church? Is it making ready for presentation as a bride to the Bridegroom when he shall appear in his glory? There is ground for his jealousy: "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Deception is plainly stated as the danger threatening them—no ordinary danger, for it had an infernal origin, one that had been successful even with Eve in Paradise; and as these new teachers were using just such insidious arts, he warns them lest they fall into the snare. The character to be maintained was virginal purity; the end to be kept in view was that Christ's betrothed Church might be worthy of her Lord at the marriage supper; the peril was the deceitfulness of agents who, under the mask of instructors and authoritative guides, were acting in the interest of Satan; and the enforcement of the warning was the success of the serpent as Satan's instrument in beguiling Eve. If Eve could be deceived in her purity, how great the danger to this chaste virgin! The "subtlety" had lost none of its persuasive arts; thorough the deception then, thorough would it be now, if they hearkened to these false teachers. To supplant the gospel by the Law, to sink the Christian Church in the Jewish Church, to rob him of his disciples and degrade them into the slaves of Pharisaic superstitions already in their dotage,—this was the mercenary aim of these emissaries of Satan. Such they were, as he would presently show. And what were the evidences of imminent danger? If this new preacher come to you preaching another Christ, another Spirit, another gospel, how would you receive him? Would you refuse to hear him? Nay; you would "bear with him," dallying with temptation, blinded, fascinated, opening your hearts to the "subtlety" of the "serpent." On this account he was unhappy. The chaste virgin should listen to no hints of another love. Aside from such conduct, as most evil in itself, what consistency had it with their relation to him as their apostle? He it was who had espoused them to Christ as the Bridegroom, and therefore his jealousy lest they should be "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." The passage is very difficult to understand, and we are by no means sure that we have caught the true meaning. But these seem to be the main points, viz.: 1. St. Paul claims that he has espoused them to Christ, and that he was anxious to present the Church as a chaste virgin to him. 2. There was great danger of their losing this virginal purity. 3. If this purity were lost, it would be through the subtlety of Satan acting by means of human agency. 4. This agency threatened the Corinthians even now, some of whom were inclined to reject his authority and become the disciples of these arrogant and self-sufficient teachers. 5. His authority was indisputable. "Not a whit" was he "behind the very chiefest apostles," and this had been demonstrated most signally by his apostolic labours in Corinth. "Rude in speech," according to the Grecian standard of rhetoric, but "not in knowledge;" so that if some of the Corinthians went after another preacher with a different Christ and Spirit and gospel, and would "bear with him" and "might well bear," it would be in contempt of him who had been "made thoroughly manifest" among them as "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," and that, too, "in all things." "Bear with him," the new teacher, weaning you away from your former love? Then "bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me." If you accede to his claims who comes to you with such a novel, presumptuous, and overbearing manner, then surely you can tolerate me in the *little folly* of lowering myself to a comparison with him. I condescend to it for your sakes and for my own. The equal of any apostle, I let myself down to this folly, and "would to God ye could bear with me" in it!—L.

Vers. 7—12.—*Questions asked and answered.* His enemies had charged that, if he were an apostle, he would have claimed a support from the Corinthians. Instead of

that, he had worked at his trade as a tentmaker, and done what he could to gain a livelihood. It had been used against him. Was it, then, beneath the dignity of an apostle to labour with his own hands? What his right was to a maintenance he knew and they knew. But he had waived this right for reasons most satisfactory to himself. Had he committed a sin in this voluntary abasement that they might be exalted by his preaching gratuitously the gospel of God? Was this at variance with his statement that he had been "thoroughly made manifest" among them "in all things," and was not "a whit behind the very chiefest apostles"? In coming to Corinth, and while labouring there, he had "robbed other Churches," and what he lacked in sustaining himself had been supplied from Macedonia. This was done that he might not be "burdensome" unto them. Would his opponents say that he would claim remuneration for the future, or that he was running up a debt against them? Nay; the future shall be as the past. "So will I keep myself." Speaking in accordance with Christ's truth in him, he would avow a fixed determination that this boasting should never be denied him in Achaia. But would they misinterpret this language and accuse him of wanting kind feelings towards them? "God knoweth." To be suspected of such a motive would do him wrong, since he meant it to be a proof of the sincerity and earnestness of his ministry in their behalf. No one should charge him with selfishness; he would be disinterested in all the services rendered to Corinth, that he might "cut off occasion from them" who were always eager to find or make an "occasion" against his apostleship. Had he, then, descended from the ordinary level of the apostolic office, and abased himself, that the Corinthians might be exalted by a special proof of his disinterested love? Further than this, he would protect the Church against these money-loving partisans, who, while standing in a hostile attitude towards him and his work, were looking after their own sordid interest, and intent on making a gain of godliness. "Wherein they glory, they may be found even as we." It was the spiritual intelligence of love. It was the prudence of sanctified worldly experience; and the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove were never more happily blended.—L.

Vers. 13—15.—*Character of these teachers.* Indications of a marked change in the apostle respecting these intruders at Corinth appear in the tenth chapter. Recent circumstances had aroused his attention to their acrid and persistent hostility as directed against him and the spiritual welfare of the Church. From the first he had not misjudged them. Under all their specious arts he had detected a low and carnal spirit, calculated to affect these volatile Corinthians and obstruct the progress of his ministry. Meantime they had increased in boldness and audacity, and assailed him with more impetuous virulence. Evidently, then, there was a growth in his convictions as to their mischief-making power, and of late these convictions had become very strong. The growth is apparent both in his thought and feeling, and in such a mind as St. Paul's it could not be long in reaching his will and shaping itself in a resolute purpose to put down the evil. So long as it was mainly a personal vexation, he had borne it patiently; but the hour had come when, while true to "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," he must show "the rod." Very clearly is the military attitude of his mind exhibited in the previous chapter. He speaks of "weapons," of their might to overthrow "strongholds" and "cast down imaginations," and of his readiness at the proper moment "to revenge all disobedience." This deepening intensity finds utterance in the paragraph now under consideration. Unable to repress his feelings any longer, he gives them expression in the most forcible form his language could assume as it regarded the religious pretensions of these men. They are "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves [by their own act] into the apostles of Christ." Looking at the matter from St. Paul's point of view, nothing worse could be said of them. What his description involved quickly appears. "No marvel;" how could there be any room for surprise? It was characteristic of him, the great adversary, to send just such "apostles;" for "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." Perfectly natural; sender and sent are one; and the union is seen in the transforming power. No great thing if "his ministers" should so fashion themselves as to seem "ministers of righteousness." And having stated who and what they were, he announces their future doom: "whose end shall be according to their works." We see now why he mentioned his fear in the

opening of the chapter, and referred to Eve as led into sin by the subtlety of the serpent, and we see also why he spoke of their bearing with these hypocrites. Hitherto some of the Church had been deceived by the plausible devices of these persons. But he had opened their eyes to the danger, and, if they continued to listen to these ministers of Satan, they themselves would be willing dupes and participants in their guilt "whose end shall be according to their works." The passage has a deep spiritual meaning. It shows us the great power of Satan in adapting himself to circumstances and using means suited to times and occasions. It shows him versatile, adroit, untiring in inventiveness as well as in energy, and able to impart to others this transforming or fashioning power which he pre-eminently possesses. Not only does the Pauline theology recognize the inherency of sin in our nature, but in addition thereunto it recognizes a mighty agent who employs the utmost skill and a prodigious strength of will and passion to call out and direct this indwelling evil. And it shows this Satanic agency working in the Church, and even counterfeiting the apostleship. The passage is full and explicit. Its force cannot be evaporated in rhetoric; its truth is the sternest reality in most earnest speech. A critical occasion had arisen, one of momentous interest in the history of Christianity, one that presented a turning-point in St. Paul's career, and he met this occasion by exposing the diabolical source of their conduct. From his course of action we may learn a very useful lesson. His way of dealing with sin looked to a personal agent beyond the sinner—one with the sinner and yet distinct and separate, and this agent exerting his tremendous ability in exciting all the latency of evil as unconscious to the sinner, and with it all his conscious susceptibility, so as to accomplish his eternal ruin. Too often with us this Satanic power in men is not duly estimated. In trying to save men, we should remember from whom we are delivering them, and what an awful hold Satan's tyranny has upon their souls. As a practical fact, this is a matter of vast importance. And, accordingly, we find the Lord Jesus impressing on the apostles that the Holy Ghost was not only to convince the world of "sin" and of "righteousness," but also of "judgment"—"because the prince of this world is judged." How else, indeed, could the work of *conviction* be consummated? Precisely here the Spirit perfects his gracious office as the Divine Convincer; and precisely here we must labour with all diligence and prayerfulness in order to convince men that they are by nature the subjects of this prince, and that only Christ, who has "judged" him, can deliver them from his bondage. No closeness of contact with man as mere man will meet the requirements of the case. It is man, the servant of sin because the slave of the devil, with whom the preacher of the gospel has to do, and unless he realize as far as may be the fearful import of Christ's words, "Ye are of your father the devil," it is not likely he will co-operate with the Holy Ghost in bringing men to that depth and thoroughness of repentance which go far to determine the stability and worth of future Christian character. Depend upon it, our danger at this point is real and serious. What is the human nature with which we are struggling in the daily endeavours of thought and in special sabbath efforts, praying, wrestling, agonizing, that it may be rescued from unbelief and restored to its Father? Inspiration is never content to portray it as merely far gone from original righteousness, dead in trespasses and sins, but the very phraseology takes its deepest import from ideas and images originally associated with Satan. If detached from Satan, such terms as "subtlety," "blindness," "deceitfulness," "bewitched," "craftiness," "beguiled," "wiles," "snares," "captivity," "bondage," would lose the peculiar force which always accompanies them in the Scriptures. And with this use of language the spirit of the New Testament accords when its writers are setting forth human depravity in its special relations to Christ's mediatorial work. Is Judas about to negotiate for the betrayal of Jesus of Nazareth? "Satan entered into him." Is St. Peter over-confident, proud of his devotion to Jesus, full of daring? "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." St. John: "He that committeth sin is of the devil." St. Peter: "Your adversary, the devil." St. James: "Resist the devil." St. Paul: "Recover themselves out of the snare of the devil." Surely, then, this uniform tenor of scriptural language, coupled with Christ's most emphatic declaration as to man's incapacity to see Satanic agency in its true light except through the convicting office of the Holy Ghost; surely, we say, this should impress us very deeply as to the urgent need of making prominent in our preaching and teaching the fact of

Satan's enormous power over the human soul. Time was when this truth was felt far more profoundly than now, or at least when it filled a much larger space in pulpit thought and Christian literature. And the fruits of it appeared everywhere, not only in a higher order of religious sentiment, but in the amenability of folly and vice to that moral fear which no community can afford to lose. Wickedness abounded then, as now, and yet wickedness was open to the probing of its conscience and to the disturbance of its sensibilities, nor did it commonly have the complacent hardness and the defiant attitude towards the solemn hereafter which it now wears as its familiar aspect. Communities had convictions then on moral and religious subjects, but only sections of communities (speaking generally) have such convictions now. Men of convictions were sure of an audience. Savonarola could not but be heard. Luther had an intense realization of an evil spirit; less of it would have made him less of a reformer. Milton and Bunyan, the two names that Englishmen would choose as the finest representatives of English genius and manhood in the literary spheres they filled, wrote as men who realized that Satan was something more in the affairs of the world than a subject for artistic treatment. We have come to the closing quarter of the nineteenth century, and within the century the land of Luther has given us 'Faust' with Mephistopheles, and the England of Milton and Bunyan has given us 'Festus' with Lucifer. Insensibly to itself, the pulpit has caught the effeminate spirit of the age, and it discusses sin much more than it grapples with Satan in sin. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." If the most tender and loving soul among inspired thinkers could lay such an emphasis on this truth, assuredly there is a way for this doctrine to be strenuously preached, free from every taint of extravagance and morbid imagination. Depend upon it, when we throw this doctrine into the background of set purpose, or when we let it lapse from our grasp by casual infirmity, we have nothing left but a fragmentary Christ and a depleted ethical Christianity.—L.

Vers. 16—20.—*Comparison of himself with his opponents.* The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, and yet he must use, under protest and with undissembled humiliation, the weapons of his enemies. Boasting was their favourite art. Would they think him a fool? Let him not be so considered. If, however, they would regard him in this light, nevertheless he must "boast a little." Only he would pray to be heard by the Corinthians, but, at the same time, he wished it understood that he was speaking as a man, not as an apostle. "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting." St. Paul is careful to state when he speaks from his own mind, and he is equally concerned to let his readers know that, if others boasted from mean and selfish motives, he boasted in a very different spirit from theirs. "Many glory after the flesh," referring to his adversaries, and "I will glory also," but not as they do. "After the Lord" and "after the flesh" are contrasted, and yet in doing this (boasting), if he imitated the manner of these "false apostles, deceitful workers," there was nothing false or deceitful in his conduct. What he boasted of was *matter of fact*; and then he remarks, continuing the ironical vein in which he had been arguing, that the Corinthians were well able to bear with his foolishness, since they *suffered fools gladly*, seeing that they were *wise*. "Wise," verily. Then he cites what they had endured from these new teachers. Where was their freedom? They had been brought into "bondage"—moral and ecclesiastical submission to tyrannical rulers. Where was their self-protection against imposition and craftiness, their discernment of men and motives? They had been taken in, captured, *devoured*, by these designing men. Where was their self-respect? These "fools," whom they suffered "gladly," had exalted themselves and humiliated a Church abounding in special endowments. Where, finally, was their manliness? They had borne insolence, personal ill treatment—had been *smitten on the face*. Such was his arraignment of these "false apostles," such his indictment of those Corinthians who had allowed themselves to be dominated by these insulting pretenders. Such, too, was the background for a vivid picture now to be sketched.—L.

Vers. 21—33.—*What St. Paul was and what he had suffered as an apostle of Christ.* If, indeed, the standard of strength which the deceiving ministers of Satan had set up

among them were a correct one, then he must say that he had been *weak* in his intercourse with them on his visit to Corinth. He had not abused them as slaves, nor been avaricious, nor offered them insults. Yes; he must admit that they were strong and he weak, they wise and he foolish, and he confesses the shame he felt. The sharp irony is now dropped, and he proceeds to show what reasons he had for genuine boasting. If he had to vindicate his claims against these men who had transformed themselves into "ministers of righteousness," it was extremely abasing, but he would be bold (boastful), since there was no escape from the painful task. And, as we shall see, he would do it with great deliberation, item by item, the points clearly made, and only such points as were capable of easy verification.

I. AS TO NATIONALITY. These Judaizers, seeking to prop up a sinking theocracy by means of a perverted Christianity, and putting a most inordinate and carnal estimate on their prerogatives as members of an elect race, had made on this score a very earnest appeal to the Corinthians, and especially to the converted Jews. "Are they Hebrews?" By this general race-title the chosen people had been early known, and it was still in vogue. If they are Hebrews, St. Paul says, "so am I." Again, "Are they Israelites?" That name was derived from Israel, the name given to Jacob after wrestling with the angel at Peniel, and designated, originally, the union of the tribes as one community under Jehovah's rule, and set apart to bear witness against all idolatry. "Israelite" carried in its import a reference to the nation as representative of the Divine unity, and was, therefore, distinctively religious. St. Paul responds again, "So am I." Finally, as to nationality. "Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I." One by one the honourable distinctions are mentioned, closing with the highest—a son of Abraham, and in them he claims equality with these pretentious teachers. There was an evident reason for this mode of procedure. No one suspected his devotion to the Gentiles and his zeal in behalf of the apostleship of the uncircumcision. But there were prejudices, strong and bitter, against him on his supposed want of fealty to his nation, and hence his anxiety to show on all occasions that he prized his blood and loved his people. We see from our standpoint that he was an *ideal* Jew, the truest and most sagacious Jew of his age; and yet it was a memorable part of his discipline, and a main factor in his fortunes, to be subjected to all sorts of vexations and persecutions on the ground of disloyalty to his nation. Other uses he subsequently made of these and similar facts, giving them an enlarged application (Phil. iii.), and directing them with exclusive intent to objects then engaging his thought; but, at present, he only individualizes far enough to prove that the "false apostles" had no advantage over him as to national ties.

II. AS TO THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS. Do these men claim to be Christ's ministers? Whatever they might assume to be in this regard, *he* (speaking as one beside himself) "was more." And what evidence shall he give of the fact that he *was more*? Shall he point to his wonderful successes? "He proceeds to mention, as the reason for his pre-eminence, no illustrious achievements or wonderful results he had accomplished, but difficulties, troubles, conflicts, perils" (Kling). Could more be condensed in the same number of words than he compresses in one short verse? The "more" means "in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." But he will furnish particular illustrations of the statement just made. His own countrymen head the list, for "of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one," thrice was he "beaten with rods," once stoned, thrice shipwrecked, "a night and a day in the deep." Yet this is only a partial account, and he offers other instances of his superior devotion as a minister of Christ. There were his frequent journeys, and what a history of perils!—perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils by his own countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea; did not this enumeration exhaust the sad experience? Nay; one pictures him pausing at this point and falling into a mood of most touching reflection. To one who loved the name of brother in Christ as he did, who recalled how Ananias had come to him at Damascus and addressed him as "Brother Saul," and who remembered how often it had cheered him to be recognized and honoured as a brother in the ministry, what could be more oppressive to his spirit than to write at the last, "perils among *false brethren*"? Thus closes the account of perils. Have his sorrows all been catalogued? The outward sufferings have been generalized in classes

of peril and in forms of physical torture. Enough has been said to make good his claim to pre-eminence in affliction for the cause of Christ. Outside of the duties he was discharging as the Lord's servant, not one of these evils had befallen him. It was the cross of Christ, and only the cross, which had brought all these upon him. But he had more to say. A man of feeble health, of acute nervous sensibility, struggling with disease and infirmity; who among us can enter into all he meant by "weariness and painfulness, watchings often, hunger and thirst, fastings often, cold and nakedness"? It is only a rude outline; imagine the details. But what were details to him? The rapid summation shows why he writes. Artistic effect offers him no temptation. Literary motives are impossible to his imagination and tastes. The eagerness of his spirit, approaching a topic most dear to his soul, hurries him to "the care of all the Churches." Ah! that was something transcendent. *Daily* it came upon him amidst weariness, painfulness, and other ills, and *daily* it came as a crowd pressing upon him with anxieties beyond utterance. Sympathy is incapable of complete expression. It cannot make itself known. It can only make itself felt, and therefore contents itself with hints. "Who is weak," sympathy asks, "and I am not weak?" And who is overcome by temptation (made to stumble), and I burn not? The sympathetic man is now deeply moved, and his heart breaks forth, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities [my weakness]."

III. THE TRUE NATURE OF HIS BOASTING. Examine this fragment of St. Paul's biography, and what do you find as the shaping thought? It is the idea of suffering as expressive of human infirmity. Suffering for a moral purpose is continually kept before the mind, and, agreeably to that end, it is suffering that not only humbles its subject in a spiritual point of view, but humiliates him in the eyes of the world. Hence the conclusion to which he brings the mournful narration, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my weakness." No doubt it seemed very strange to many that he should boast of these things, but this was its justification. Had it not appeared as "folly," it would not have vindicated him against the malicious taunts of his adversaries; for it is exactly such a "folly" as identifies his life and experience with the "foolishness" of the gospel, the preaching of Christ crucified, on which, at the outset, he had laid a very distinctive stress. Boast he must to meet the low state of intellect and spirituality in those of the Church who had fallen under the influence of these self-aggrandizing "apostles." Boast he would in defence of himself, of his motives and intentions. Yet, while stooping to such a worldly method, he would do so in no carnal spirit, but as one who had a profound sense of his own unworthiness. What did the Jewish world think of his apostleship? Let the five times "forty stripes save one" answer. What did the Roman world think of it? The thrice "beaten with rods" was the reply. No allusion is made to his having been a "blasphemer" and "persecutor," for this had no bearing on the question at issue. It is a contrast throughout of himself with the "deceitful workers." And, finally, to make the contrast as perfect as possible, he refers to "the care of all the Churches" among the Gentiles. This point reached, he shows why he had made these concessions to the folly of certain Corinthians, and his true heart exclaims, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my weakness." Here, then, we have the first distinct appearance of one among those great thoughts that we find frequently in various forms in his subsequent writings—the *idea of glorying in his infirmities*. Not enough is it for him to accept it as a burden and tolerate it as a thing providentially ordained to be borne. From this hour he enters on a higher experience, for he has learned to cherish a sentiment as well as find a duty and a principle in his infirmities. He will welcome them, he will press them to his heart as a treasure, he will "glory" in them. And if, hereafter, we shall often listen to his exultation when he rejoices in tribulation and glories in the cross, we can revert to the time and circumstances that first made this experience an era in his career. No wonder that he appeals with such solemnity to God for the truths asserted. It is a moment of impassioned thought which brings the past most vividly before his eye, and lo! the opening scene in a long series of afflictions for the gospel. There it was—the far-off Syrian city of the Damascenes, and the beginning of that persecution which the Jews had continued so unrelentingly. And there, too, it had been announced to Ananias in a vision that the Lord had made Saul of Tarsus "a chosen vessel" unto himself, and would show him

“how great things he must suffer.” Straightway the revelation of sorrow began, for the stay at Damascus was interrupted by a conspiracy of the Jews, and he sought refuge in Arabia. All the intervening years had been years of suffering, the first link of the unbroken chain forged by the hatred of the Jews at Damascus, the last up to this period forged by the same hands at Corinth, and the issue of his experience was that he had learned to glory in his weakness.—L.

Ver. 4.—A different gospel. That the apostle was pained, distressed, and mortified by the partial success with which the false teachers, his opponents, had met at Corinth, is very obvious from his bitter and sarcastic language. He reproached the Corinthians that, indebted as they were to his labours, and grateful as they had shown themselves for the benefits conferred upon them through him, they were nevertheless ready to forget the lessons they had learned and the teacher they had revered, and to allow themselves to be led away into false and delusive doctrines.

I. THAT IS A DIFFERENT GOSPEL WHICH PROCLAIMS ANOTHER JESUS. The Judaizing teachers acknowledged that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, but they seem to have represented him as merely human, as merely a prophet, as destitute of Divine claims upon the faith and reverence of men. The form of error changes, whilst the substance remains. In our own day there are public teachers who commend Jesus to the admiration and the imitation of men, but who ridicule or despise the notion that he is the one Saviour, that he is the rightful Lord, of humanity.

II. THAT IS A DIFFERENT GOSPEL WHICH BREATHEs ANOTHER SPIRIT THAN THAT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. The Judaizers taught the doctrine of the letter, the doctrine of bondage to the Law. In this their religion was contradictory to the religion of Jesus, of Paul, of John, who upheld the religion of liberty, who taught that the heart inflamed with Divine love will itself prompt to deeds of obedience, who discountenanced the merely formal and mechanical compliance with the letter of the Law, as altogether insufficient. In our own day there are those who lay all stress upon the form, upon that which is external and bodily; these proclaim a “different gospel.”

III. THAT IS A DIFFERENT GOSPEL WHICH NEGLECTS TO OFFER THE FREE SALVATION OF GOD TO SINFUL MAN. Whether this be the consequence of a defective view of man’s sinful condition, or of a failure to enter into the glorious counsels of Divine compassion, or of an unworthy desire to retain a priestly power in their own hands, the result is that, if there be anything that can be called a gospel, it is a different gospel. In truth, there is but one gospel—that which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, a gospel which is worthy of all love and of all acceptance.—T.

Ver. 7.—Gratuitous ministry. It has been usual for all communities who possess religious ordinances and organizations to set apart an order of men to officiate as the representatives of the people generally, and to maintain them either by voluntary offerings or by public provision. The Lord Jesus sanctioned the maintenance of the Christian ministry by his general principle, “The labourer is worthy of his hire.” And no one has more vigorously vindicated the right of spiritual teachers and preachers to live at the expense of those whom they benefit than has the Apostle Paul. Yet for himself, as the text and context prove, he was determined to waive this right, and to preach the gospel of God for nought. Why was this?

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF GRATUITOUS MINISTRY IS THE BENEVOLENCE AND SACRIFICE OF CHRIST. Of our Lord Jesus we know that, though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, that he had not where to lay his head, that he had no possessions in this world which was yet his own. The spirit of the Master has in a greater or less measure penetrated the disciples. They have felt the force of the appeal, “Freely ye have received, freely give.” No other religion has a supernatural power mighty enough to overcome the selfishness and self-seeking so characteristic of human nature.

II. THE AIM OF GRATUITOUS MINISTRY IS THE SALVATION OF MEN. It is not expected that men should labour without fee or reward in order to supply the ordinary bodily and social wants of their fellow-men. The apostle preached at Corinth amidst weakness, weariness, discouragement, and ingratitude, because he sought the spiritual welfare of the population of that wealthy, intellectual, but profligate city. His heart was moved by the spectacle of vice and idolatry which encumbered him on every side, and,

being in possession of the true and only remedy, he sought to bring it **within the reach** and urge it upon the acceptance of all.

III. THE SPECIAL PURPOSE OF GRATUITOUS MINISTRY IS TO REMOVE THE MINISTRY ABOVE THE SUSPICION OF INTERESTED MOTIVES. It is upon this that the Apostle Paul in this passage lays such stress. There were professing Christians who were ready enough to bring the charge of covetousness against the apostle of the Gentiles, and so to undermine his credit and authority. There was one way in which such designs might be surely and conclusively defeated, and, although this was a way involving self-denial to himself, Paul adopted it. He laboured with his hands, he accepted help from the poor Christians of Macedonia, so that he might hold himself altogether free from any suspicion of working at Corinth for the sake of anything he might receive from the Corinthians. Herein he exemplified his own axiom, "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient."

APPLICATION. 1. Learn the wonderful and unique power of the Christian religion, which alone is capable of vanquishing the sinful selfishness of human nature. 2. Learn the importance of so acting as not to leave room even for suspicion or calumny to injure Christian character and cripple Christian usefulness.—T.

Vers. 13—15.—*Hypocrisy.* Like his Divine Master, the Apostle Paul, although compassionate to the penitent, was severe with the hypocritical. The vehement language he here uses with reference to his opponents and detractors is not to be attributed to personal resentment, but to a stern and righteous indignation against those who sought to undermine his just influence, and so to hinder the progress of his gospel.

I. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF HYPOCRISY. 1. What these hypocrites professed to be: "ministers of righteousness," and "apostles of Christ." They posed as such, and with many of the guileless and unwary they passed as such. As far as profession, pretension, and language went, all was well. 2. What they really were: "false apostles," and "deceitful workers." They had no real grasp of Christian truth; they gave no real evidence of Christian principle; they consequently could do no real spiritual work for the good of the people.

II. THE MOTIVE OF HYPOCRISY. Some characters seem to find a pleasure in dissimulation and deception for their own sake; but usually the motive is (1) to gain influence over others, and enjoy their respect and support; and (2) in this way to exalt themselves and secure their own selfish ends.

III. THE GREAT PROTOTYPE OF HYPOCRISY. This is to be found in Satan himself, who "fashioneth himself into an angel of light." It is the wont of the tempter, the adversary of souls, to proceed by fraud, to invent specious pretexts for sin, and to give to vice the semblance of virtue. It is wise to bear in mind that, whilst we have sometimes to resist the devil and his open assaults, we have at other times to be wise as serpents, that we may "not be ignorant of his devices."

IV. THE DISCOMFITURE AND EXPOSURE OF HYPOCRISY. Hypocritical teachers of religion and pretenders to authority may for a time escape detection by their fellow-men, and may for a time be suffered by an overruling Providence to lead astray, if possible, the very elect. But the day is coming which shall test every man and shall try every man's work. The earthly course of the hypocrites may be according to their words, according to appearances. But their "end shall be according to their works." By these they must be judged, and, since these are evil, by these they shall be condemned.—T.

Ver. 23.—*Ministers of Christ.* It was not congenial to St. Paul's nature to boast. He would have preferred to keep himself in the background, that his Lord might be prominent and might attract the attention and the admiration of all men. But his apostolic authority and consequently the value of his life-work, the credibility of his doctrines, the soundness of the Churches he had founded, were all at stake. As to his national position, that was comparatively immaterial. But the great question was this—Was he, or was he not, a true minister of Christ? His adversaries made great pretensions; he had no choice but to overwhelm them with his own unrivalled credentials: "Are they ministers of Christ? . . . I more!"

I. TRUE MINISTERS ARE APPOINTED BY CHRIST. Whatever be the human, the

ecclesiastical agency by which men are summoned to, prepared for, employed in, the ministry of the gospel, all true Christians are agreed that the real appointment is by the Divine Head of the Church. It is he who, from the throne of his glory, places one minister in this position, and another in that, holding the stars in his right hand.

II. TRUE MINISTERS ARE WITNESSES TO CHRIST. It was Paul's justifiable boast "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." His ministry had for its one great theme the character, the life, the sacrifice, the redemption of the Divine Saviour. A ministry which, professing to be Christian, is concerned with anything rather than with Christ, discredits and condemns itself. Inadequate as is all human witness to our Lord, it is required to be sincere and outspoken.

III. TRUE MINISTERS ARE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. Upon this the apostle lays great stress. His own ministry was, in many of its circumstances, a copy of his Lord's. His labours, privations, and sufferings were all akin to those of the Lord whose spirit he shared, and in whose steps he trod. The outward circumstances of the ministerial life may vary, but the temper and aim must ever be those of the Divine Master.

IV. TRUE MINISTERS LOOK FOR THEIR REWARD TO CHRIST. Had the apostle expected an earthly recompense for all he undertook and underwent, bitter indeed would have been his disappointment. But he and every faithful minister must have one supreme desire and aim—to receive the approval and the acceptance of the Divine Lord himself.—T.

Ver. 23.—*Labours and prisons.* This is one of those passages which enable us to institute a comparison between the Book of the Acts and the apostolic Epistles. It is true that some of the circumstances alluded to in the context have nothing corresponding with them in St. Luke's narrative. But this exception proves the independence of the documents, whilst the coincidences, which are numerous and striking, confirm our faith in the authority and validity of both.

I. THE VARIOUS ENDURANCES INVOLVED IN THE APOSTOLIC LIFE. 1. *Labours* abounded, both of body and of mind; almost incessant toil was continued throughout long years. Journeyings, preaching, writing, were a constant strain upon his whole nature. 2. *Hardships, sufferings, perils,* and *persecutions* were even more painful to endure. There are many, especially in the prime of life, to whom toil and effort are congenial; but none can do other than shrink from pains and imprisonments. Paul's enumeration of his privations and afflictions shows how deep an impression they had made upon his nature.

II. THE AIM OF THE APOSTOLIC LIFE IN VIEW OF WHICH THESE EXPERIENCES WERE CHEERFULLY ACCEPTED. His purpose was, not his own exaltation, but the spread of the gospel and the salvation of his fellow-men. His benevolent heart found in the extension of that kingdom, which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," an object worthy of all his devotion and all his endurance.

III. THE MOTIVE OF THE APOSTOLIC LIFE. If it be asked—How came St. Paul to voluntarily engage in a service which involved experiences so bitter? there is but one solution of the problem, but that is a sufficient and satisfactory one: "The love of Christ constrained" him. No inferior motive can be relied upon for the production of such results.

IV. THE PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES ACCRUING TO MANKIND FROM THIS APOSTOLIC LIFE. 1. It has an *evidential* value. Why should such a man as Saul of Tarsus have lived a life of obloquy, poverty, and suffering? Is any other explanation credible than this—that he knew and felt that he was witnessing to the truth? 2. It has a *moral* value, both in the beneficent results of the ministry and in the illustration afforded of the power of the gospel and of the Spirit of Christ to raise a true Christian above the control of influences and interests merely earthly and human.—T.

Ver. 28.—*Anxiety for the Churches.* Bodily labour and even suffering are sometimes felt to be less oppressive than mental anxiety and care. The Apostle Paul was familiar with all alike; and in his case a peculiarly sensitive and sympathetic nature caused him to feel more keenly and constantly than others might have done the pressure of daily anxiety for the welfare of the converts he had made and the Churches he had founded.

I. THE REASONS FOR ANXIETY WITH REGARD TO THE CHURCHES. 1. Their immaturity

They had been in existence but a few years, and were subject to the natural disadvantages of youth and inexperience. They needed diligent watching and tender, fostering care. 2. Their exposure to the insidious efforts of false teachers. Some of these sought to lead the Christians of the first age back into Judaism, others strove to introduce licence and lawlessness. 3. Their constantly recurring needs. Some needed the visits of evangelists or the appointment of pastors. Others needed the instructions or counsels which circumstances might render appropriate.

II. THE PRACTICAL PROMPTINGS OF APOSTOLIC ANXIETY. We see the evidences of Paul's sincere solicitude for the Churches in : 1. His frequent visits, by which he brought his personal influence to bear upon those whose welfare he sought and who naturally looked to him for help. 2. His Epistles, full of clear statement, convincing reasoning, earnest persuasion, and faithful warning. 3. His selection and appointment of devoted fellow-labourers to assist him in the superintendence and edification of the youthful communities. 4. His fervent prayers, which abounded on behalf of all in whose spiritual well-being he was interested.

III. THE PROFITABLE LESSONS OF APOSTOLIC ANXIETY. 1. A general lesson of mutual interest and sympathy. Who can read this language without feeling to what an extent it enforces the scriptural precept?—"Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also upon the things of others." 2. A special lesson of mutual helpfulness as the duty and privilege of all who occupy positions of influence and authority in Christ's Church. Some forms of Church government tend rather to isolate Christian communities than to draw them together. This tendency may be happily counteracted by compliance with the precept implicitly contained in this declaration of the apostle.—T.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Pastoral anxiety.* How little understood by most believers! What strange notions many form of ministerial experience! To not a few the pastor appears a monarch with a minimum of duties and cares, and whose lot has thus fallen in singularly easy and pleasant places. But what a heavy burden is carried by the most prosperous minister! He who seems to be surrounded by all that can make his ministry cheering and his life happy is agitated by a host of disquieting thoughts and pressed upon by innumerable anxieties. So was it with that amazingly successful minister, the Apostle Paul. Following his line of thought, we may gain some knowledge of a true pastor's experience.

I. THE PASTOR'S EARNEST DESIRE. 1. *That his testimony may not be ineffective.* Sorely burdened is that pastor's heart whose words seem to fall to the ground. He has a great object in his earnest appeals; if these fail, his strength has been spent for nought, his life fails. To preach on and on, and yet to see no spiritual result, strains his heart-strings till they threaten to snap. Hope deferred makes the heart sick, and, if the people of his charge are merely interested or amused by his preaching, he cries, "Woe is me!" 2. *That those to whom he preaches may be truly converted.* He desires that they may be united to Christ as a bride to her husband (ver. 2). He is not satisfied with their thinking or speaking well of Christianity, or with their outward observance of religious duties; his longing is for their real redemption and for their thorough consecration to Christ. If he be faithful, he aims to attach them, not to himself, but to his Master. His joy is full only when they are married to Christ, and live as those who are no longer their own. For this he longs, prays, labours, agonizes. 3. *That at last they may appear in holiness before Christ.* "That I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (ver. 2). The true pastor desires, not only that his people should start in the Christian race, but that they should continue, and at last attain to the "crown of righteousness." Flash-in-the-pan conversions please none but fools. Pastoral anxiety is largely the anxiety of watching development. The man of God has the toil and care of building up spiritual life. He counts that labour lost, so far as the objects of it are concerned, which has no abiding effects. The merest flash of thought will reveal the multitude of disappointments certain to crowd upon his soul.

II. THE PASTOR'S CONSTANT DREAD. This dread is lest his converts should fall away. Lest it should be made evident that the good seed has, after all, fallen upon the wayside, or into stony places, or amongst destructive thorns. He remembers: 1. *The power of the tempter.* Perhaps, like Paul, he calls to mind the fall of Eve, and remembers how much the children are like their mother. He feels the power of tempta-

tion in himself; he sees others fall; he wonders whether his own converts will yield. They are his crown of rejoicing when they stand fast; his crown of thorns when they fall. 2. *The weakness of the human heart.* He remembers the old nature still within them—their infirmities, their tendencies to trust to their own strength. They seem to be easy prey for the devil. 3. *The subtlety of false human teachers.* So many other gospels besides the true will be preached to them—adroitly contrived, it may be, to pander to the carnality still remaining within them. Called by seductive names—bearing the name of Christ possibly, and yet inimical to his kingdom and person. Philosophies falsely so called, and philosophers as full of confidence and conceit as of emptiness, and yet presenting to shallow judgments the appearance of the fulness of wisdom.

III. THE PASTOR'S JEALOUSY. 1. *A watchful jealousy.* He will have to give account of the souls entrusted to his care, so dares not be careless. He loves his flock, and therefore watches over it. He watches for the approach of peril, if peradventure he may avert it. He jealously scrutinizes all influences affecting his charge. His Master is the shepherd; he is the watch-dog. 2. *A warning jealousy.* His keen feelings lead to solemn admonitions when needed. He barks, and, when occasion arises, even bites; faithful are the wounds of such a friend. A short shrift is the desert of a pastor who is but a dumb dog. Pity it is if our feelings are so fine that we cannot rebuke men to save them from perdition. Silver bells are all very well for seasons of festivity, but when the fire blazes forth we must swing lustily the rough alarm-bell in the turret. He is a poor surgeon who is too tender-hearted to use the knife. If we love people very much we shall be willing to hurt them that we may heal them. An unwarning jealousy is not worth a farthing a bushel. It is a poor sham. 3. *A godly jealousy.* (Ver. 2.) (1) Jealousy which centres in the *welfare of others* rather than in gratification at their attachment to the minister of Christ. (2) Jealousy which is concerned pre-eminently with the honour of God. The falls of professed Christians bring dishonour upon the cause of Christ. (3) Jealousy wrought in the heart by God himself. A right feeling, since God has given it place in the pastor's heart. (4) Jealousy which allies with God. Leading to prayer, communion with God, dependence upon him in every strait.—H.

Vers. 7—12.—*Misinterpretation.* I. OUR BEST ACTS MAY BE MISINTERPRETED. Acts of the greatest nobility and unselfishness have often been. The world's greatest benefactors have tasted the bitterness of being misunderstood. 1. We should not judge of our acts by man's estimate of them. 2. We should not be surprised by any interpretation put on them. 3. We should not be dismayed by any interpretation. 4. We should rejoice that we have a higher, wiser, and more impartial tribunal than the human. Our Master said, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!" (Luke vi. 26)—a pregnant warning to those who live upon the approval of men!

II. MISINTERPRETATION SHOULD NOT HINDER US FROM CONTINUING IN A RIGHT COURSE. 1. We have not to give account to men, but to God. 2. To change our conduct might not avoid misinterpretation, but rather give occasion for it (ver. 12).

III. MISINTERPRETATION MAY BE MET AT SUITABLE TIMES BY EXPLANATION AND JUSTIFICATION OF CONDUCT. 1. It is well to take away occasion for misinterpretation. Misinterpretation, like martyrdom, should not be courted. Both should be borne heroically when they meet us in the path of duty. 2. It is often well to show that misinterpretation is misinterpretation. We should not forget that misinterpretation may (1) injure our usefulness; (2) injure those who misinterpret us; (3) bring dishonour upon Christ. In this matter we have need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.—H.

Ver. 14.—*A very beautiful angel.* I. A STARTLING FACT. We learn from Paul that the most sable of Ethiopians can change his skin and the fiercest beast of prey throw off his warning garb. The blackest devil can appear as the brightest angel. This is, indeed, a transfiguration, the most marvellous of transformation scenes. As an angel of wisdom Satan appeared to Eve; as an angel versed in theology, to Christ, glibly crying, "It is written." Satan was an angel of light. He thus knows well how to play the angel. Herein is he to be feared. It is not the ugly devil we need dread so much as the pretty devil. The old Scotchman's comment on the horned and hooped Satan of a celebrated picture of "The Temptation" is full of point: "If that chiel cam' to me in sic an ugly shape, I think he wud hae a teach job wi' me too."

II. AN EXPLANATION OF SOME MYSTERIES. 1. *The power of temptation.* Men frequently fall before *white* temptations rather than *black* ones. Satan is an adept at whitewashing the sepulchre. The voice that calls us to sin sounds often more like the voice of an angel than the voice of a devil. The great adversary *transforms his temptations* as well as himself. 2. *That wrong often seems much like right.* Satan is a clever editor. 3. *That folly often seems wisdom.* A most dexterous counsel is the devil; as we listen to him, folly is evidently wisdom, and wisdom certainly folly. His splendid intellect overmasters ours when we cope with him alone.

III. AN IMPRESSIVE WARNING. 1. *To ever be on our guard.* We need have our wits about us whilst we have such an enemy about us. To be careless in such peril would be suicidal. Our guard should be severe; none should be admitted within the gates but proved friends. 2. *Not to judge by appearances.* Our tendency is to do so, and therefore the devil transforms himself. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. xiv. 12). We must get below the surface of things. We must *take pains* to ascertain the right and the good. Every trap is baited, and the fool who concludes that there can be no difference between a bait and a meal, is soon caught. 3. *To seek true wisdom and discernment.* Conceit in our own unaided powers is just what delights the devil, and he often preaches to us an angelic discourse upon the pleasing theme of our wonderful faculties, before demonstrating our unutterable folly and weakness. We need know that we are know-nothings. Self-distrust baulks Satan. When a man is on the pinnacle of pride he can easily deal with him, but when he is in the valley of humility and self-abnegation the enemy gets sorely perplexed. Let us empty ourselves of the wind of conceit and self-sufficiency, that God may fill us with his own wisdom. 4. *To ever abide with Christ.* Thus alone can we be truly safe. Here alone shall we secure the victory. Christ overcame the devil when he spake least like a devil, and, if we are truly *with Christ*, no disguise of Satan shall deceive us, and no might of his shall overthrow us. The cross of Christ is Ithuriel's spear, which, touching the tempter, reveals him in his true character.—H.

Vers. 23—33.—*Apostolic experiences on earth.* I. THESE EXPERIENCES, AS NARRATED HERE, ASSUME A GLOOMY CHARACTER. 1. *Painful.* (1) *Bodily suffering.* Excessive toil, prison privations, scourgings, stoning, shipwrecks, a night and day in the deep, sleeplessness, coldness, foodlessness, nakedness. (2) *Mental suffering.* (a) Persecution from Jews as well as Gentiles. His "own countrymen" hated him more fiercely than any. (b) Hostility of false brethren. Peculiarly painful to such a noble nature as Paul's. (c) Anxieties respecting the numerous Churches. (d) Acute sympathy with the weak and hindered ones (ver. 29). 2. *Perilous.* What a catalogue of perils in ver. 26! how extreme the one instanced in vers. 32, 33! how pathetic and suggestive the expression, "in deaths oft" (ver. 23)! Paul lived on the margin of the next world. Of him was it peculiarly true that he knew not what a day would bring forth.

II. MUCH OF THE PAINFUL AND PERILOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE APOSTLE AROSE FROM HIS MARVELLOUS ZEAL AND ENTERPRISE. He might have avoided not a little by: 1. *Being only moderately active.* That delightful "mean" coveted by so many—it was too mean for Paul! 2. *Being more compliant.* If he had been a man of expediency, and not, as he was, a man of principle. If he had bent to the storm; but he intended that the storm should bend to him, or rather to those God-truths which he proclaimed. 3. *Placing God's honour in the second place.* The servant was persecuted so vindictively because he would talk so much of his Master. It was not Paul that Jew and Gentile hated so much, but Christ; but where Paul was there men could hear of nothing but the contemned Nazarene. 4. *Loving himself more than a perishing world.* It was a question which should suffer, Paul or the world; Paul said, "I will." In his sphere he thus imitated his Lord, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor.

III. NO SUFFERING OR PERIL SUCCEEDED IN DAMPING THE APOSTOLIC ARDOUR. How keen must have been his love for Christ and for his fellow-men! Ever before him he had the future exaltation of Christ and the "saving some." We have here a marvellous triumph of mind over matter, and a still more marvellous one of spirituality over carnality. The life of the apostle was so vigorous that he could bear to die daily.

What little aches and pains stop us! An avalanche of grief and trial failed to arrest Paul!

IV. IT WAS ONLY WHEN SUBJECTED TO GREAT PRESSURE, AND THEN ONLY UNDER PROTEST, THAT THE APOSTLE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO DWELL UPON THIS PERPETUAL MARTYRDOM. He rejoiced in it; yet he did not like to speak about it. He almost calls himself a fool for doing so. The martyr has sometimes sullied his crown by pride; but the apostolic affliction seemed strangely sanctified to him. Some are *not great enough* to suffer much for Christ. God does not allow it. It would make them so intolerable that prayer would ascend on all hands for their transference to a world where they would have a humble opinion of themselves. Paul went through all the privation, anguish, peril, catalogued here, *and came out from it with the spirit of a little child.*—H.

Ver. 3.—*The simplicity in Christ.* “So your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Some manuscripts read, “simplicity and chastity.” By the term “simplicity” is first meant “singleness of affection,” “single-minded devotion to Christ,” and the word is used in connection with the marriage figure of vers. 1, 2. It should be remembered that, in the East, the time of espousal is regarded as sacred, and any infidelities during the time of espousal are treated as adulteries are after marriage. In St. Paul’s conception the Church is the espoused bride of Christ, and he had been the means of arranging the espousal in the case of the Church at Corinth. “What the apostle now urges is that it is as natural for him to be jealous for the purity of the Church which owes its birth to him, as it is for a father to be jealous for the chastity of the daughter whom he has betrothed as to a kingly bridegroom.” The older theocratic figure of idolatry as adultery, which so often appears in the books of the prophets, should be compared with this. The term “simplicity” may, however, be more full and suggestive to us, and mean singleness of devotion to Christ, entireness of service to him, unmixed love for him. F. W. Robertson says that the expression, “the simplicity of the gospel,” is constantly mistaken. “People suppose simplicity means what a child or a ploughman can understand. Now, if this be simplicity, evidently the simplicity of the gospel was corrupted by St. Paul himself; for he is not simple. Who understands his deep writings? Does one in a thousand? St. Peter says there are things hard to be understood in St. Paul’s Epistles. We often hear it alleged as a charge against a book, a lecture, or a sermon, that it is not simple. If we are told that what we are to preach must be on a level with the most inferior intellect, so that without attention or thought it may be plain to all, we are bound to disclaim any obligation to do this; if it is supposed that the mysteries of God, of which we are the stewards, can be made as easy of comprehension as an article in a newspaper or a novel, we say that such simplicity can only be attained by shallowness. There must be earnestness, candour, patience, and a certain degree of intelligence, as well as a sort of sympathy between the minds of the preacher and his hearers, and there must be a determination to believe that no man who endeavours to preach the gospel will deliberately and expressly say what he knows to be false or wrong. ‘Simple’ means, according to St. Paul, unmixed or unadulterated.”

I. THE PLACE OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH. It is as unique as that of the husband in relation to the wife. A place that can know no rivalry. Christ is Head, Lord, Husband. “One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” The old testimony is renewed for the Christian sphere, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is *one Lord.*” “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” No earthly teachers may push into his place. No claim of Judaic ceremonies may spoil the trust in and devotion to him. “Him first, him midst, him last, him all in all.” The bride has but one Husband, even Christ.

II. THE SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH TOWARDS CHRIST. It is that full loyalty which follows upon setting our whole affection on Christ, and which finds expression in all loving submissions and obediences. It is precisely set before us by the great apostle when he says, “To me to live in Christ.” “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

III. THE TEMPTATIONS TO WHICH THE CHURCH IS EXPOSED. Answering to the disloyalty of a wife. And such temptations may take forms of subtlety, like those presented by the serpent to Eve. In every age there are things which tend to take the

mind and heart from Christ. Nowadays it is worldliness, self-indulgence, the beautiful in art, and the fascination of scientific knowledge. We want now to love and serve so many things much and Christ a little, and still the old message sounds forth, "If a man forsake not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." St. Paul counted "all things loss for Christ," and would have nothing—Mosaic rite, human philosophy, or aught else—come between him and his one Lord.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*One Jesus, one Spirit, one gospel.* Evidently St. Paul recognized a vital distinction between the Christ whom he preached and the Christ preached by the teachers of the Judaic party. The Christ whom he preached was the "Friend and Brother of mankind, who had died for all men that he might reconcile them to God." The Christ whom they preached was the "head of a Jewish kingdom, requiring circumcision and all the ordinances of the Law as a condition of admission to it." St. Paul could see no gospel, no good news, in such a Christ as that. By "another Jesus" we may understand Jesus otherwise presented; "another spirit" is something opposed to the spirit of liberty in Christ from Mosaic ordinances; and by "another gospel" the apostle means something different from the good news of God reconciled to faith. "His gospel was one of pardon through faith working by love; theirs was based on the old Pharisaic lines of works, ritual, ceremonial and moral precepts, standing in their teaching on the same footing." Here St. Paul makes distinct claim to be the authorized teacher of the truth, and we consider this claim.

I. THE SENSE IN WHICH APOSTOLIC TEACHING WAS FINAL. In relation to this modern opinion differs from the older opinion, and therefore the subject needs to be treated with extreme care and prudence. When the generally received doctrine of inspiration was that known as the *verbal* theory, which affirmed the direct communication from God of every word of Scripture, the apostles were regarded as inspired for every detail of Gospels and Epistles, and appeal to their expressions was regarded as final. We now more clearly see that they were inspired to guide men's thoughts, but not to fetter them, or force them into precise moulds. The apostles do fix the lines along which Christian thought may safely run, but they leave full room for the diversities and idiosyncrasies of men to find free expression. They make a firm stand, and plainly show the boundaries of Christian thinking, but within the lines they leave us free. We properly use our own cultured Christian judgment—in the leadings of the Holy Ghost—upon the value of their arguments, and the precise applications of their counsels. And this appears to us quite consistent with a becoming reverence for these divinely endowed men, and necessary to that personal leading of the Holy Ghost, which we are permitted to realize as well as they. God's truth for the race can be set within no permanent bonds, even though men may call them apostolic.

II. THE LIMITS WITHIN WHICH DIVERSITY CAN BE PERMITTED. 1. There can be no dispute with regard to the great Christian *facts*. 2. There can be no attempt to alter the supreme position of Christ in his Church and relation to his Church. There is nothing so essentially Christian as the truth of the direct relation of the soul to Christ, a relation that is independent of doctrine, creed, ceremonial, or priesthood, though these all have their place. 3. There are great foundation truths and principles which may be stated in simple and comprehensive terms, but outside of which, or contrary to which, Christian thought cannot safely run. None may take from us our "liberty in Christ," but we may wisely "hold fast the form of sound words."

III. THE WAYS IN WHICH APOSTOLIC TEACHING MIGHT BE IMPERILLED. Unfold and illustrate the following ways. 1. By overloading it with the old. 2. By overstraining it to fit the new. 3. By applying it in a spirit that is out of harmony with its principles. 4. By the pressure of the peculiarities of men who are strongly self-willed. 5. By translating the claims into the things we should *like* to do, rather than into the things which we *ought* to do. 6. By permitting the common philosophy and sociology of men to give tone to the Christian revelation, rather than to make Christianity tone them.

IV. THE TESTS BY WHICH SUCH PERVERSIONS OF APOSTOLIC TEACHINGS MIGHT BE DISCOVERED. The all-sufficing tests of any teaching, under the influence of which we may come—whether it be teachings of the pulpit or of the press—are these. 1. Is it in harmony with the first truth of the Christian revelation—the fatherhood of God?

2. Does it uphold the honour, and the supreme administrative rights in souls, of the Lord Jesus Christ? 3. And does it practically tend towards the things that are pure, and true, and holy, and good? Everything godly is helpful to godliness. In conclusion, argue this point—Can we still safely receive truth upon the authority of men? and if so, are there any limitations under which such reception is properly placed? And are we still open and exposed to the persuasions of self-interested or self-deluded teachers? We have to find out for these times in which we live what is the secret of “holding fast the faith once delivered to the saints.”—R. T.

Vers. 10, 21—30.—*Apostolic boastings.* This is a most reproachful passage, and the intensity of St. Paul's feeling can only be accounted for by some knowledge of the bitter and shameful treatment he was receiving from the antagonistic Jewish party at Corinth. Archdeacon Farrar, in a very vivid and forcible manner, presents the kind of things that were being freely said at Corinth about the apostle. “He had shown feebleness in his change of plan; his personal appearance, feeble and infirm, did not match the authoritative tone of his letters; his speech had nothing in it to command admiration; he threatened supernatural punishments, but he did not dare to put his threats to the proof. What right had he to claim the authority of an apostle, when he had never seen the Christ in the flesh? Was it certain that he was a Hebrew, a Jew of the pure blood of Palestine, or even that he was of the seed of Abraham? Who was this Paul, who came without credentials, and expected to be received on the strength of his everlasting self-assertions? Was there not a touch of madness in his visions and revelations? Could he claim more than the tolerance which men were ready to extend to the insane?” “Conceive all these barbed arrows of sarcasm falling on the ears, and through them piercing the very soul, of a man of singularly sensitive nature, passionately craving for affection, and proportionately feeling the bitterness of loving with no adequate return; and we may form some estimate of the whirl and storm of emotion in which St. Paul began to dictate the Epistle.” As a rule, *boastings* are only evil both for him who boasts and for those who hear the boasting; but no rule is without exception, and there are times when a man is absolutely driven to boasting—it is the one thing that he can do, and that he ought to do. It becomes the plain duty of the hour. A man may never boast until he is thus driven to it, and then his boastings will have their foundation in his humility. The apostle's boastings had direct reference to the accusations made against him.

I. THERE WERE BOASTINGS OF HIS JEWISH BIRTH AND RIGHTS. These had been assailed. He was a foreign-born Jew, and the Palestine Jews rather looked down upon all such. It was easy to raise prejudice against the apostle on this ground. He therefore pleads the facts of his pure birth, his Pharisaic relationships, his Jerusalem training, and his manifest Jewish sympathies. He was proud of the fact that no Jew could plead superior Jewish birthrights to his. So far he did but boast of facts of his life that were beyond his own control.

II. THERE WERE BOASTINGS OF SUFFERINGS BORNE IN MINISTERING FOR CHRIST. See vers. 21—30, the most amazing catalogue of woes ever written. One wonders how so frail a body could have endured them all. But even this record we feel is holy boasting, for one can but feel that, under all the intensity of the utterance, there is a great sadness of heart in being thus compelled to speak of such things. He never would have said one word about them had it not been that attacks upon his apostleship meant dishonour to Christ, and mischievous hindrance to Christ's work. St. Paul never would have boasted if he had not thus been compelled to boast for *Christ's sake*. And this is the one law for us. Never put self in the front unless so putting self will glorify our Master. We may even boast if it is clear that our boasting will serve him.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Satanic subtleties.* “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” This expression suggests that the Judaic party at Corinth laid claim to some angel manifestations or revelations, and set these off against St. Paul's claim of apostolic inspiration and authority. He really asserts here that they are deluded. It is not Divine revelations which they have received. These things in which they boast are Satanic subtleties and transformations, by which they are deceived and ensnared.

There may, however, be a reference to what was so evidently in St. Paul's mind—the serpent's deception of Eve (ver. 3). The mode in which reference is made to the incident in the garden of Eden suggests to us that St. Paul thought the serpent put on some form of beauty, or that he, in a very subtle way, explained his superior wisdom and intelligence by the fact that he fed on the fruit of that forbidden tree.

I. THE SATANIC POWER OF DISGUISE. Illustrate the very various ways in which evil is made attractive. Apply to the temptations of vice and self-indulgence, to mental error, to religious wanderings and backslidings. He said a great thing, who, knowing much of the evils of Christian and Church life, exclaimed, "We are not ignorant of his [Satan's] devices."

II. SUCH POWER ILLUSTRATED IN RELIGIOUS LEADERS. Such as Joe Smith, the Mormon leader. All who seek to delude men for self-seeking ends are really Satanic; they are doing Satan's work. According to the standpoint of the preacher, it may be shown that the methods by which men are deluded still are (1) mental, (2) ritual, (3) moral. Therefore we have the very earnest advice, "Prove [test and try] all things; hold fast that which is good."—R. T.

Vers. 23—30.—*The evidential value of sufferings borne for Christ's sake.* Recall Paley's use of the labours and sufferings of the early Christians as an argument for the truth of Christianity. Carefully observe under what limitations such an argument must be set. There have been martyrs of all sorts of opinions. Men intense on any subject are usually willing to bear much for its sake; and the enthusiast or fanatic does not shrink from giving his life for his faith, though his faith may be unreasonable or absurd. We can only go so far as to say that willingness to bear suffering proves—

I. PERSONAL SINCERITY. Men's hearts must be in that which they will maintain at cost of toil, sorrow, disability, and pain. Christianity must be true to the man who can die for it; but it is not therefore proved to be absolutely true.

II. A DIVINE CALL OR COMMISSION. It is *one* of the indications of such a call. Not sufficient if it stands alone, but very helpful as a buttress to other arguments and considerations.

III. THAT THERE IS A FINE MORAL STRENGTH CULTURED BY CHRISTIANITY. This, perhaps, is its chief value. The noble endurance illustrates Christianity, and shows what the almighty grace in it can do. That must be worthy, and it may be Divine, which nerves men to such heroic labour, such patient submission, and such triumphs over ills and death. So, when kept within due limits and carefully combined with other considerations, the sufferings and martyrdoms of the Christian saints become an evidence of the Divine origin of Christianity.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

The revelations vouchsafed to him (vers. 1—6). The counteracting "thorn in the flesh" (vers. 7—10). One more apology for glorying (vers. 11, 12). His disinterestedness (vers. 13—15). Indignant refutation of the charge that he had made gain of them through the agency of subordinates (vers. 16—18). Caution and warnings (vers. 19—21).

Ver. 1.—It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. This rendering follows the best-attested reading; but it is at least doubtful whether, instead of *dei* or *de*, the ironic *de* of K, M, and the Greek Fathers is not the true reading. In mere vowel variations, especially in passages where

the meaning does not lie on the surface, the diplomatic (external) evidence is less important. If St. Paul wrote *de*, it means, "of course it is not expedient for me to boast." I will come; for I will come; if the reading of D is correct. In that case it is hardly possible to define the counter-currents of feeling which caused the use of the conjunction. Visions and revelations. The word used for "visions" means presentations perceived in a state which is neither sleeping nor waking, but which are regarded as objective; "revelations" are the truths apprehended as a result of the visions. *Optasia*, for "visions," only occurs elsewhere in Luke i. 22; xxiv. 23; Acts xxvi. 19 (comp. Gal. ii. 2).

Ver. 2.—I knew; rather, *I know*. A man. St. Paul speaks in this indirect way of himself (see vers. 5, 7). In Christ (I

Cor. i. 30). To St. Paul every true Christian was a man whose personal life was lost in the life of Christ. Above fourteen years ago. The note of time is very vague. If we are at all able to identify the vision alluded to, it must have been the vision in the temple, referred to in Acts xxii. 17, which was, roughly speaking, "about fourteen years" before this time. The vision on the road to Damascus had occurred about twenty years earlier than the date of this Epistle. Whether in the body, etc. A powerful description of the absorption of all conscious bodily modes of apprehension. In their comments on these verses, many commentators enter into speculations which seem to me to be so entirely arbitrary and futile that I shall not even allude to them. St. Paul's bodily and mental state during this vision is familiar to all who know the history of Oriental and mediæval mysticism. Caught up (Ezek. xi. 24; Acts viii. 39; Rev. iv. 1, 2). Into the third heaven. It is most unlikely that St. Paul is here in any way referring to the Jewish *hagadoth* about seven heavens. The expression is purely general, and even the rabbis did not expect to be taken *au pied de la lettre*. Hence all speculations about first, second, and third heavens are idle and useless. Even as late as the Clementine writings in the middle of the second century, an attempt is made, in reference to this passage, to disparage St. Paul by sneering at visions as a medium of revelation, on the ground that they may spring from self-deception; and this rapture of the "bald hook-nosed Galilean" to the third heaven is also sneered at in the 'Philopatris' of the pseudo-Lucian. Yet how modest and simple is St. Paul's awestruck reference to this event, when compared, not only with the lying details of Mohammed's visit to heaven, but even with the visions of St. Theresa or Swedenborg!

Ver. 4.—Into Paradise. Here, again, we encounter long speculations as to whether Paradise is the same as the third heaven; whether St. Paul is referring to two visions or two parts of one vision. Such questions are clearly insoluble, and I leave them where I find them. We shall never understand this passage otherwise than in the dim and vague outline in which St. Paul has purposely left it. All that we can know from the New Testament about Paradise must be learnt from this verse and Luke xxiii. 43 and Rev. ii. 7, and it is extremely little. Unspeakable words. A figure of speech called an oxymoron. Utterances (or "things") incapable of utterance. Not lawful for a man to utter. How futile, then, must be the attempt to guess what they were, or on what subject!

Ver. 5.—Of such a one. These are legitimate subjects of "boast," because they are heavenly privileges, not earthly grounds of superiority. Except in my infirmities (ch. xi. 30).

Ver. 6.—I forbear; literally, *I spare*; i. e. I refrain from boasting. Should think of me; literally, *that no man should estimate concerning me beyond what he sees me (to be), or hears at all from my own lips*. If he were to tell them more of his revelations, he might encourage them to think more of him than he deserves or wishes.

Vers. 7—10.—*The thorn in the flesh*.

Ver. 7.—Lest I should be exalted above measure; literally, *that I may not be over-exalted*. It was necessary to show St. Paul that he only held the treasure in an earthen vessel. There was given me. Even God's afflictions are meant for gifts. A thorn (*skolops*). The more usual meaning is, as Hesychius says, "a sharp stake" ('Sudes,' Tert.). Hence the word *skolopizō*, I impale or crucify. St. Paul's agony was an impalement or crucifixion of all sensual impulses and earthly ambitions. In the flesh. There have been endless conjectures as to the exact nature of this painful and most humbling physical affliction. It is only by placing side by side a great many separate passages that we are almost irresistibly led to the conclusion which is now most generally adopted, namely, that it was acute and disfiguring ophthalmia, originating in the blinding glare of the light which flashed round him at Damascus, and accompanied, as that most humiliating disease usually is, by occasional cerebral excitement. It would be impossible here to enter into the whole inquiry, for which I refer to my 'Life of St. Paul,' i. 214—226. The messenger of Satan; rather, *an angel of Satan*. By way of comment, see Matt. xxv. 41; Luke xiii. 16; Job ii. 7; Rev. xii. 7, 9. To buffet me. The verb is derived from *kolaphos*, a slap on the face, and would be suitable to such a disfigurement as ophthalmia (ch. x. 10).

Ver. 8.—For this thing. In reference to this or "to him," the angel of Satan. The Lord. That is, Christ (1 Cor. i. 3). Thrice (comp. Matt. xxvi. 44).

Ver. 9.—And he said unto me. The original is much more forcible: "And he has said to me." Is sufficient for thee. A similar phrase, though in a very different context, occurs in Deut. iii. 26. My strength is made perfect in weakness (comp. ch. iv. 7; Phil. iv. 13; 1 Cor. ii. 3—5). The verse contains a paradox, which yet describes the best history of the world. The paradox becomes more suggestive if, with N, A, B, D, F, G, we omit "my." May rest upon me; literally, *may tabernacle over me*. The compound verb occurs here alone,

but the simple verb and the substantive occur in similar meanings in John i. 14; Rev. vii. 15; xxi. 3 (comp. ch. v. 1).

Ver. 10.—I take pleasure in; *I am content to bear them cheerfully* (ch. vii. 4; Rom. v. 3). Strong; rather, *powerful, mighty*. The resemblance to Philo ('Vit. Mos.,' Opp., i. 613, "Your weakness is might") is probably accidental (see 1 Cor. xv. 54; Col. iii. 4).

Ver. 11.—A fool (see ch. xi. 16). For I ought. The "I" is emphatic. You compelled me to become senseless in boasting of myself to you, whereas I ought to have been commended by you. To have been commended. The verb gives one more side allusion, not without bitterness, to the *commendatory* epistles of which his adversaries boasted (ch. iii. 1; v. 12; x. 12—18). The very chiefest apostles. The same strange compound, "out-and-out apostles," is used as in ch. xi. 5; comp. Gal. ii. 6.

Ver. 12.—The signs of an apostle. St. Paul always claimed to have attested his mission by spiritual and miraculous gifts (Rom. xv. 19; Acts xv. 12).

Ver. 13.—I was not burdensome. The same word as in ch. xi. 9. Forgive me this wrong. There is an exquisite dignity and pathos mixed with the irony of this remark.

Ver. 14.—The third time I am ready to come to you. He had been ready *twice* before, though the second time his actual visit had been prevented by the scandals in their Church. That the visit which he now contemplates is a third visit, and that there was an unrecorded second visit, is a needless and improbable inference from this passage. Be burdensome (see ver. 13). Not yours, but you (1 Thes. ii. 8).

Ver. 15.—Spend and be spent; rather, *spend and be outspent, or spent to the uttermost* (Phil. ii. 17).

Ver. 16.—But be it so, I did not burden you. The "I" is emphatic. It is shocking to think that, even after Paul has so triumphantly cleared himself from the disgraceful charge of trying to make gain out of the Corinthians, he should still be obliged to

meet the slanderous innendo that, even if he had not personally tried to get anything out of them, still he had done so indirectly through the agency of Titus. Being crafty, I caught you with guile. He is here quoting the sneer of his enemies (see what he has already said in ch. i. 12; vii. 2). The word used for "being" means "being by my very nature."

Ver. 17.—Did I make a gain of you, etc.? The same verb as in ch. ii. 11. It means "to overreach" "to take unfair advantages."

Ver. 18.—Titus. This refers to the first visit of Titus. He was now on the eve of a second visit with two others (ch. viii. 6, 18, 22). A brother; rather, *the brother*. Who it was is entirely unknown. Perhaps Tychicus (Titus iii. 12). In the same Spirit; namely, in the Spirit of God.

Ver. 19.—Again, think you that we exouse ourselves unto you? The best reading is not *patin*, again, but *palat*, long ago. This word with the present is an elegant classical idiom, and means, "You have, perhaps, been imagining all this time that I am pleading with you by way of self-defence. Do not think it! You are no judges of mine. My only object is to speak before God in Christ, not to defend myself—since I need no defence so far as you are concerned—but to help in building you up, by removing the falsehoods that alienate you from me."

Ver. 20.—Such as ye would not (see 1 Cor. iv. 21). Debates. "Discords," "quarrels." Strifes. "Party-intrigues," "factious and emulous rivalries" (Rom. ii. 8). Backbiting. Detractions, talkings *against* one another. Swellings. Inflated conceit, pompous egotism (1 Cor. iv. 6, 18, 19; Col. ii. 18). Tumults. Disorderly excitement (ch. vi. 5; 1 Cor. xiv. 33; comp. 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 10).

Ver. 21.—Humble me among you; rather, *in my relation to you*. Many which have sinned already, and have not repented; rather, *who have sinned before and did not repent*. Many had sinned (1 Cor. vi. 12—20); some only had repented.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Apostolic piety and psychology*. "It is not expedient," etc. These verses present two subjects of thought.

I. APOSTOLIC PSYCHOLOGY. The words reveal certain ideas which Paul had concerning the human mind. He had the idea: 1. *That whilst here it is capable of existing separate from the body*. "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell." If he had been certain that the soul could not exist whilst here apart from the body, would he have spoken thus? And who is not conscious of the mind having experiences in which the body does not participate? Paul speaks of himself as entering regions far away. (1) The "third heaven." The Bible speaks of three heavens. (a) The atmospheric. There the clouds travel and perform their functions.

(b) The starry. There the sun, moon, and stars appear. (c) The heavens that lie beyond the heavenly orbs; where God and his holy angels are supposed to have their special residence. Up to this "third heaven" Paul was caught. (2) *Paradise*. "Caught up into Paradise." The word here denotes some place in the universe distinguished in beauty and fruitfulness. Paul regarded it possible for the soul to go away into those distant regions of supernal brightness and beauty. Who has not been conscious of being borne far away from the body on the wing of thought? 2. *That whilst here it is capable of receiving extraordinary revelations apart from the body*. "Heard unspeakable words." Things of the soul may be unutterable either from necessity or from impropriety. The deepest things of the heart are unutterable in any language. Perhaps what Paul saw and heard in the spirit was neither possible nor proper to communicate. There are but few of us who have not received impressions of distant things. We are often caught away to distant scenes, and see and hear extraordinary things. 3. *That whilst here it may exist apart from the body and the man not know it*. "Whether in the body, I cannot tell." He was so charged with spiritual things that he had lost all consciousness of matter and his relations to it. The man whose soul is flooded with the higher elements of being does not know for the time whether he is "in the body" or "out of the body." 4. *That wherever or however it exists it constitutes the man*. "I knew a man in Christ." That which had these wonderful revelations he regarded as the man. To the apostle the body was the costume of the man, which he put on at birth and took off at death. In fact, he regarded the body as his not him, the soul as himself.

II. APOSTOLIC PIETY. There are three things concerning piety here. 1. *Humility*. That the man of whom Paul here speaks is himself scarcely admits of a doubt. Why should he speak of himself in the third person? It is because of that modesty of nature which is ever the characteristic of a truly great soul. Humility is an essential attribute of piety. 2. *Christism*. "A man in Christ." To be in Christ is to live in his ideas, character, spirit, as the atmosphere of being. He who lives in the spirit of Christ becomes a man. 3. *Transport*. His soul was borne away in ecstasy. The time when the revelation occurred is specified—"fourteen years ago." Strange that he did not speak of it before. Piety has its hours of ravishments, ecstasies, and transfigurations.

Vers. 6—10.—*Soul-schooling*. "For though," etc. These words teach us several things concerning soul-discipline.

I. THAT THE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE IS EXPEDIENT FOR THE BEST OF MEN. Paul required it. He says, "Lest I should be exalted above measure." 1. *Pride is a great spiritual evil*. This is implied in the discipline with which the apostle was now visited. "To be exalted above measure [or, 'overmuch']" is, of course, to be proud, and to be proud is to be in a position inimical to soul-progress. 2. *Good men have sometimes great temptations to pride*. Paul's temptation seems to have arisen from the "abundance of the revelation" of which he speaks.

II. THAT THE MODE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE IS SOMETIMES VERY PAINFUL. Paul was visited with a "thorn in the flesh." What the thorn was is a question for speculation; our object is practical. Two things deserve notice here. 1. *That suffering stands connected with Satan*. This painful dispensation was a "messenger from Satan." The great original sinner is the father of suffering. 2. *Both suffering and Satan are under the direction of God*. He uses them as his instruments for good. Satan himself is the servant of the Holy One.

III. THAT THE MEANS OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE ARE SOMETIMES MISUNDERSTOOD. Paul prays to be delivered from that "thorn in the flesh" which was sent for his good, and he does so frequently—"thrice." Notice: 1. *The ignorance which sometimes marks our prayers*. We often pray against our own interests. There are some blessings which are positively promised by God, such as pardon for sin, etc., for which we may pray incessantly; and there are others which we may esteem desirable, but which are not promised. These we must seek in submission to his will. 2. *The kindness of God in not always answering our prayers*. He knows what is best. The great Father may refuse the cry of his children for toys here, but he will give them estates in the great hereafter.

IV THAT THE SUPPORTS UNDER SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE ARE ALWAYS ABUNDANT. "My

grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Observe: 1. The *nature* of the support. "Strength." What matters the weight of the burden if the strength is equal to bear it with ease? 2. The *principle* of the support. "Grace." It comes, not from merit, but from grace free and unbounded. 3. The *influence* of the support. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "Rest upon me." Spread over me like a tent to screen me from the scorching sun. "I glory in my infirmities." The cup may be bitter, but it has curative virtues. Tempests may toss, but those storms will purify the atmosphere round the heart and bear us away from scenes on which our hearts are set. All prayer is answered when the mind of the suppliant is brought into cordial submission to the Divine will.

Vers. 11—21.—*Paul's state of mind concerning his past and prospective connection with the Church at Corinth.* "I am become a fool in glorying," etc. These verses throw light upon Paul's state of mind, both in relation to his *past* and *prospective* connection with the Corinthian Church.

I. HIS STATE OF MIND CONCERNING HIS PAST CONNECTION WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH. 1. He remembers the *ill treatment which forced him to speak with apparent boastfulness of himself.* "I am become a fool [I am become foolish] in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." Dean Plumtre's remarks tend to illustrate Paul's state of mind. "The verse opens with a somewhat thrilling abruptness, 'I am become insane—it was you who compelled me.' The words are partly ironical, partly speak of an impatient consciousness, that what he had been saying would seem to give colour to the opprobrious epithets that had been flung at him. The passage on which we now enter, and of which we may think as begun after a pause, is remarkable for the production in a compressed form of most of the topics, each with its characteristic phrase, on which he had before dwelt. The violence of the storm is over, but the sky is not yet clear, and we still hear the mutterings of the receding thunder. He remembers once more that he has been called insane, that he has been taunted with commending himself, that he has been treated as 'nothing' in comparison with those apostles extraordinary, who were setting themselves up as his rivals. 'I,' he says, with an emphatic stress on the pronoun, 'ought to have had no need for this painful self-assertion. You ought to have acknowledged my labour and my love for you.'" 2. He remembers the *work which he had done amongst them, and which raised him above all the apostles.* "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." Paul possessed supernatural power and wrought supernatural results in their midst. Of this they must have been aware and could not deny. Referring to his ministry there he says elsewhere, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii. 4). In this respect he was, therefore, not only not behind "the very chiefest apostles," such as Peter, James, and John, but immeasurably superior to the false teachers, his traducers. Can a man who was conscious of such power as this be charged with egotism in proclaiming it in the presence of his detractors? Does he become "a fool in glorying"? Nay, nay, a wise man. 3. He remembers that for his labours amongst them *he had not sought any temporal assistance.* "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other Churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong." Probably it had been insinuated by his traducers that Paul cared less for the Churches at Corinth than for those at Macedonia, because he had maintained his independence and sought no gifts. He seems to intimate that this was some disadvantage to them, and he asks their forgiveness. And, indeed, it seems to me it is a spiritual disadvantage to any Church not to contribute to the support of its minister; for there is more good in giving than in receiving.

II. HIS STATE OF MIND CONCERNING HIS PROSPECTIVE CONNECTION WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH. 1. *Here are loving resolves.* "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you." We have no record of a second visit, but this does not disprove its existence; for no doubt there is more omitted of Paul's history than recorded. He resolves that

in this third visit he would not be burdensome to them, but pursue the same conduct of independency towards them as he had done all along, taking nothing from them, but giving to them. "I seek not yours, but you." Act as a father generally acts towards his "children," "lay up" for them, not they for him, and gladly spend and be spent for them. And all this, whether they love him or not. What noble generosity breathes in all these resolves! 2. *Here are painful memories.* "I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." This, again, is ironical. You say that, although I made no demand on your purses for myself, I want a collection for the "saints," and that out of that collection I will craftily take what I want. He seems to fling back upon them their accusation of his being crafty and catching them "with guile." "Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?" Nay, neither they nor he had ever sponged on them, but had maintained their high independency. In saying this he deprecates the idea that he was amenable to them for his conduct, but to God only. "Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." Thus, in the prospect of visiting Corinth once more, most painful memories of his traducers arose. 3. *Here are anxious apprehensions.* "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not." His tender nature seemed to shrink at the supposition of the old evils still rampant there. "Lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." He was too brave a man to dread perils, or toils, or death. "None of these things moved" him, but from such evils as "strifes," "envyings," "wraths," "backbitings," "whisperings," "swellings," "tumults," "uncleanness," "fornication," "lasciviousness," his pure and pious nature shrank with horror. The great thing to be dreaded is sin. It is the "abominable thing," the soul-destroying devil of humanity.

CONCLUSION. 1. Do not *judge any minister by the opinions of his brethren.* Paul was the best and the most useful of men, but the opinion of his brethren was that he was the worst and the most pernicious. 2. Do not *cease in your endeavours to benefit men because they calumniate you.* The worst men require your services most, the "whole need no physician." 3. Do not *sponge upon your congregation.* Do not seek theirs, but them. Do not study how to increase your pew-rents, swell your collections and offertories, but how to increase the spiritual intelligence, freedom, and true blessedness of the people. 4. Do not *cover before anything but sin.* Sin is the Apollyon of the universe.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Supernatural communications as evidences of his apostleship.* The old question as to his apostolic authority, which had recently been revived in a most exciting form, was not yet disposed of, and he must now discuss it in another aspect. So far as external circumstances were concerned, had not the prophetic declaration to Ananias been fulfilled?—"I will show him how great things he must suffer for my Name's sake." And, furthermore, he had proved that his own state of mind, the inward being of his soul, had corresponded with his call to suffer. The flesh had been subdued. Years of growth had brought him to a stage of experience that allowed him to speak of glorying in his infirmities. But he would now turn to another branch of experiences, viz. "visions and revelations of the Lord." Glorious as these exaltations were, they would see that, while they were exceptional in certain respects, yet they fell in with the providential discipline of his life, and opened the way for a keener sense of his infirmities by "a thorn in the flesh." All along St. Paul has been painfully aware that his enemies were using these infirmities to his official disparagement. Painfully, we say, for it is obvious that he was sensitive to the disadvantages under which he appeared before the public. "Humble," "rude in speech," "bodily presence weak," "speech contemptible," were things that had some foundation in fact. Of course, his adversaries exaggerated them, but the apostle could not escape instinctive feeling, and at times acute feeling, touching this matter. This, however, was only one source of depression. A fuller

account of his sufferings, physical and mental, than he had ever given had just now been presented, and the conclusion of it was that his bodily disadvantages as a speaker, his low repute as a public teacher, his constant endurance of pain and solicitude, had resulted in his realizing the fact that this very weakness was his strength. Could "visions and revelations" be entrusted to him—such visions and revelations—and he not be humbled by Divine direction? The more glorious the revelation, the greater the necessity for him to be reminded, and most painfully reminded, that the treasure was committed to an "earthen vessel." Witness the following: a man fourteen years ago—the memory of it still vividly present as a reality of to-day—such a man, whether in the body or out of the body it was impossible to tell, elevated to the third heaven, and hearing "unspeakable words not lawful for a man to utter." "Fourteen years ago" the fact now first divulged, and yet the fact alone; the secret disclosures still a secret and personal to the man alone; and the sanctity such that it would be profanation to make the contents of the communication known. "Caught up to the third heaven, caught up into Paradise," face to face with the Lord Jesus in his mediatorial glory; and there, the senses laid to rest and the body forgotten and the spirit opened to receive instruction and inspiration, the man taught what he was to be and what he was to do as the servant on earth of his Divine Master. Of this man, as a man in Christ, he would boast; of himself in the flesh and subject to its infirmities, he would not boast save of his weakness. Under grace, what a debtor was he to these humiliations! Intellectual pride and vanity, spiritual pride and vanity, pride and vanity as a Jew to whom the God of the fathers had manifested himself—how could these be kept down except by mortifications of the flesh? If, nevertheless, he were to boast of these revelations, he should do it truthfully. Suppose, then, that he should make this boast; who would be able to transfer himself into the proper attitude of a listener? It would not be *weakness*, but *power*, the observer would see. "I forbear," and I shrink from it, lest the contrast between this *power* and my visible *weakness*, this *glory* and my present *humiliation*, be too great for any man to bear.—L.

Vers. 7— 0.—*Need of humility and the means appointed to secure it.* If the Lord Jesus passed from the baptism in the Jordan, and the dovelike descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, to the solitude of the wilderness and the assaults of the tempter; if he came down from the mount of transfiguration to witness the failure of the disciples to heal the lunatic boy, and to give expression to his sorrow in the words, "O faithless and perverse generation!" etc.—it is not surprising that an apostle should be sorely tried after his exaltation. New endowments must have new tests. New and larger grace must be immediately put on probation, since there are many probations in this one probation that have eternal issues. "Lest I"—this man in Christ, who fourteen years ago was prepared by special revelation for the toil and trial of his Gentile apostleship—"lest I should be exalted above measure;" and what was the danger? "The abundance of the revelations." Against that danger he must be fortified. If new endowments and new graces are instantly put on trial, and the conditions of life's general probation changed, then, indeed, a new check to guard against abuse of increased gifts must not be lacking. The man is not precisely the same man as before, nor is he in the same world that he previously occupied. Accessions of outward advantages, such as wealth and social position, are full of risks, but accessions of inward power are far more perilous. To preserve St. Paul from self-glorification, there was given him "a thorn in the flesh." First of all, the revelations were as to the fact itself to be kept a secret, and this was a means of humility, but the thorn in the flesh was added. What it was we know not, but it was a bodily infirmity that caused him much suffering. "This is significant. It is of the very nature of thorns to be felt rather than seen, and to appear trifling evils to all but those directly stung by them" (Dr. Bellows). It was "a messenger of Satan," though this does not imply that it was not under God's direction. The idea is that this "angel of Satan" was an impaling stake that produced severe and continued pain, and the reason therefore is twice stated, "lest I should be exalted above measure." So, then, it was not as an apostle, but as *the apostle to the Gentiles*, that he was specially afflicted. Pain is instinctively resisted as an enemy to the activity, comfort, and pleasure of life. Naturally, therefore, St. Paul felt that it would interfere with his energy and happiness, and, of course, the *Satanic* side of the torture

would be uppermost in his thought. The evil in pain is what we see first. If this were not realized, it could not be an affliction. Hence he prayed thrice to the Lord that it might depart from him. But his prayer was denied. At the same time, the promise was given—a promise worth far more than the removal of the pain—"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The thorn was to continue—a lifelong suffering in addition to his other infirmities was to be fastened upon him, a special and grievous suffering. Yet, while it had to remain a sad memorial, not of his exaltation, but of human frailty in connection with great endowments, there was an assurance direct and specific of sustaining grace. Along with that a most important truth was taught him, namely, that the perfection of strength is attained through the consciousness of our utter weakness. First, then, the evil of pain; next, the good of pain under the agency of God's grace;—this is the method of providence and grace, for the two are one in the Divine purpose. Alas! had the prayer of those sensitive nerves of his been literally answered, what a loser would he and we have been! How much of his power would have vanished with the pain! How many thoughts and emotions that have cheered the afflicted and inspired the weak to be heroic, would have been unknown! Such Epistles as the apostle wrote (to say nothing of his other services to the world) could never have been written under the ordinary experience of the ills of life. All men have thorns in the flesh, for there is no perfect health, no human body free from ailments. But in St. Paul's case the thorn was a superaddition to existing infirmities. Nor is it difficult for us to see how this particular infirmity, sanctified by the Spirit, was specially adapted to guard him at a most exposed point. Inasmuch as he was the object of a peculiar and violent opposition, he was singularly liable to the temptation of over-asserting himself and his merits, the more so as his enemies took delight in taunting him with his personal defects as to manner and appearance. The safeguard was provided where it was most wanted. Such, in fact, was his own view of the matter: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "My infirmities," he argues, "instead of being the hindrance they would be if left to themselves, are helpers, since they are the occasions of grace, and this grace *rests* upon me, *i.e.* abides continually. The thought is precious; it must be repeated. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities," etc.; for the power of Christ had been imparted to him with such fulness as to transform pain into pleasure so far as his spiritual nature was concerned. The body continued to suffer, the humiliations were increased, but his soul was filled with Christ as the Christ of his pains and sorrows, and thus he had the victory, not only over physical misery, but over all pride and vanity that might have sprung up "through the abundance of the revelations." Glorious words are these: "When I am weak, then am I strong." Notice the clear view St. Paul has of the Divine hand in his thorn in the flesh. If he is perfectly assured of the abundance of the revelations, if he can locate the scene in Paradise, if he realizes the sanctity of these disclosures in the "unspeakable words," he is just as certain that the thorn "was given" him. He knew it was a "thorn," and he knew whence it came. He acknowledged God in it, and, in this feeling, prayed thrice for its removal. Christians often fail at this point. They doubt at times whether their afflictions come from God. Some Christians cannot be induced to believe that their sufferings are sent from above, and they see in them nothing more than evil casualties. But if they fail to recognize God in the sorrow, they will not find him in the joy of his blessed promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It was not merely the "thorn" that St. Paul had to endure. This was a source of pain, and it aggravated, doubtless, his other physical infirmities, and, in turn, was augmented by them. But we must not forget the state of mind such an affliction naturally produced—the surprise that it should follow such wonderful signs of God's favour as had been vouchsafed in the "abundance of the revelations," the temptation to a rebellious spirit and the occasion for unbelief it would furnish. A literal answer to his prayer was refused; a spiritual answer was granted. The "grace" bestowed was "sufficient," not only to bear the pain as a peculiar addition to his "infirmities" already existing, but to enable him to "glory" in it; and the providence of it was specially manifested in the power it had given him to be patient, forbearing, humble, in the late trouble with the Corinthians. O Christians, who are called to a lifelong discipline in the school of suffering, think of the measure

implied in the *sufficient grace!* Sufficient for what? Sufficient, not only to glory in pain and infirmity, but to glory "most gladly."—L.

Vers. 11—15.—*Recurrence to the former argument.* The intense feeling of St. Paul indicates itself by not continuing on one unvarying level. From the climax just reached he reverts to what had been previously discussed in ch. x. and xi. These reverberations are very characteristic of the man as a thinker, and they show how closely, in him, temperament was allied with intellect. If aroused, he never became artificial or unnatural, but was then most true to his organization. In the verses before us he resumes his ironical vein: "I am become a fool in glorying;" but not of his own accord, for "ye have compelled me." The disaffected party at Corinth had not respected his just claims, had not "commended" him, and they had failed in this matter when he had demonstrated that he was "in nothing behind the very chiefest of the apostles"—the same idea expressed in ch. xi. 5, adding in this instance, "though I be nothing." Was he thinking of the abundant revelations with which he could not have been entrusted save on the condition of a thorn in the flesh? Only a brief utterance, yet very sincere—"though I be nothing." It was safe for such a man in his impaled situation to dramatize the "fool," but he hastens to serious work and mentions that "the signs of an apostle" had been wrought among them. His language is full and earnest; "truly," "in all patience," "signs and wonders and mighty deeds," no lack, no irritating haste, no deception, number and variety and extraordinary power all provided for. Despite of the accumulation, the magnitude, the unimpeachable quality of these Divine evidences, God among you of a truth, Christ honouring his servant and his servant's work, ye Corinthians, or some of you, have not "commended" me! In what respect were ye inferior to other Churches? Look at Macedonia, look at Asia; wherein were you less favoured than they? They commended me; what have you done to exemplify your sense of my apostleship? I remember but one thing in which ye were "inferior"—and the irony is keen now—I remember that I preached the gospel gratuitously, so as not to be "burdensome to you;" and this is your acknowledgment, this your *commendation* of my course! What a mistake my disinterestedness was! What a "fool" in my goodness! "Forgive me this wrong!" Despite of it all, I am not weaned from Corinth. "The third time I am ready to come to you." Though my self-denying conduct has been used to bring me into contempt, I shall repeat it without any abatement, for "I will not be burdensome to you." And now his heart swells as he says, "I seek not yours, but you"—words that he bequeathed to the admiration of ages; for was he not their spiritual father? If, at the bidding of natural instinct, children were not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children, then it became him to provide for his spiritual children. But was this all that his love had to promise? Nay; what means he had or might have should not only be freely used in their behalf, but he would give his faculties, his heart, his whole self, to advance their well-being. "Signs of an apostle" had been wrought at Corinth, "wonders and mighty deeds," but the signs of a sublime moral manhood rise before us when he declares, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." Will this avail? "If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less?"—L.

Vers. 16—19.—*Forestalling false criticism.* What limit is there to the carping skill of envy and hatred! Some of this Judaizing party might say that, under cover of disinterestedness, he had acted cunningly in the matter of the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Was this so? Did the deputies make a gain of you? Did Titus abuse his position? One spirit, Christ's spirit, animated us, for we all "walked in the same steps." Think you that this has been said for self-justification? Do we excuse ourselves? Fears were oppressing him, fears that he would mention presently. Can it all be in vain? Assurances of fatherly regard, assurances of a willingness, ay, of a gladness, in giving all he had and all he was, even life itself, to their service and interest; would they pass for nought? And were there both history and prophecy in the melancholy words, "The more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"? The fervent appeal, the protracted argument, the action and reaction, the irony and the profound sincerity, the grieved tenderness, the sad ingratitude, the memory of noble self-sacrifice, gather into the climax, "We speak before God in Christ." There, at that bar of judgment,

he makes the solemn avowal, "We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." Once more he would conciliate, nor should this long and impassioned outburst come to a close without calling God in Christ to witness his deep-felt affection for these ungrateful Corinthians.—L.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Expression of his fears.* Why had he just spoken with so much earnestness? Why had St. Paul brought facts to their notice which he had never used in addressing his Churches? Why had he referred to that extraordinary event in his career, when he had been ushered into the secret chambers of Paradise and permitted to hear things which were not to be told? Why a revelation to be unrevealed? It was to teach the rebellious and evil-disposed among the Corinthians that he was Christ's apostle to them, and, as such, charged with maintaining the order, peace, and purity of the Churches entrusted to his oversight. Very tenderly had he appealed to the Corinthians, and now, having called God, even God in Christ, to witness the depth and sincerity of his love for them, he would entreat them not to drive him to extreme measures. To exercise stern authority gave him no pleasure. The greatest thing in an apostle was love, and he wished to restore harmony and prosperity to the Church by means of forbearance and affectionate counsel. Therefore he had pleaded so fervently; therefore he had condescended to boasting; therefore he had told them more of his infirmities than his enemies knew; therefore he had gloried in those things which these very men used to alienate his own spiritual children by putting contempt on him and his office. Fears he had, lest when he should come to Corinth, he should not find them such as he wished, and fears too that he would have to act in an apostolic way not agreeable to them, so that on their meeting together each party would be disappointed in the other. Hope he had, and so he speaks doubtfully. But the fatherly heart is overloaded with apprehensions and "lest" is thrice employed, for he would not conceal these apprehensions. What a dark list of vices and sins is spread out in the last two verses! If he should have to confront these evils, he will not find them such as he would and they will find him such as they would not. First comes the catalogue of moral evils such as originated in the factious spirit so rife in Corinth, viz. strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults. These things would require discipline. But, moreover, he feared the sensual wickedness which had such a hold on Corinth. For he might have to deal with gross offenders, men who had committed sins of "uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness," and had not repented. Such a state of things would grieve him. Disappointed and afflicted by a blight like this falling on his labours in the ministry of the gospel, he tells them, "My God will humble me among you." To avoid these distressing results, to restore peace and spiritual prosperity to a Church rent by faction and disgraced by immorality, he had written and laboured and prayed. If all failed, "my God will humble me among you."—L.

Ver. 2.—"*A man in Christ.*" When we consider what man is, and who Christ is, the conjunction seems wonderful indeed. Yet, when apprehended, this union appears one fraught with richest blessings for him who is the inferior and dependent member. The thought was one familiar to the apostle; himself "a man in Christ," he spoke of others who were "in Christ before" himself, and he designated Christian societies, "Churches in Christ Jesus."

I. THE NATURE OF THE UNION THUS DESCRIBED. 1. The Christian is grafted "in Christ" as a graft in a tree, joined to him as a branch to a vine. The union is thus a vital union, and is to the Christian the means and the occasion of spiritual life. 2. The Christian is accepted "in Christ," i.e. in the Beloved. For Christ's sake the Christian is received into Divine favour. The Saviour is in this capacity a Representative, a Mediator, an Advocate. 3. The Christian is incorporated "in Christ" as the member in the body, and has a new function to discharge in consequence of this relationship. 4. The Christian is hidden "in Christ" as the traveller in the cleft of the rock, as the voyager in the ark, when "the Lord shut him in." 5. The Christian dwells "in Christ" as in a house, a home appointed for him by Divine wisdom and goodness.

II. THE IMPORTANCE AND ADVANTAGES OF THIS UNION 1. As is apparent from considering the position of those who are *out of* Christ. For such, where is safety,

where is a law of life, where is a prospect for immortality? For to be out of Christ is to be without God, and so without hope. 2. From considering what in this life they possess who have Christ and are in him. Whilst, so far as the bodily life is concerned, they are in the world, they are in spirit in the Lord, and thus partake a higher nature and existence than belong to earth and to time. 3. From considering the imperishable character of this union. To be "in Christ" now is to be "with Christ" for ever. To those who are in him there is no condemnation now, and from him there shall be no separation hereafter. The visions which Paul beheld, and the declarations he heard when he was caught up into the third heaven, were to him, and may be to us, an earnest and promise of immortal union. Therefore "Abide in him."—T.

Ver. 5.—Glorifying in weaknesses. It is not to be wondered at that Paul boasted; the wonder is that, instead of boasting of the extraordinary visions he had experienced, the extraordinary commission he had received, the extraordinary success which had followed his labours, he boasted of what other men would have concealed or have lamented—his own infirmities, disadvantages, and troubles.

I. THE WEAKNESSES IN WHICH THE APOSTLE GLORIED. 1. His own bodily infirmity was especially present to his thoughts, when using this language. Whatever this was, whether general ill health or some special malady, as of the eyes, it was naturally distressing to himself, as it prevented him from doing his work with the ease and pleasure which he might have experienced had he possessed health and vigour of body. 2. The contempt he met with from some amongst whom he laboured was to Paul no cause of mortification, but cause of rejoicing. Let men despise him; if he was able to serve and please his Master, that was enough. 3. The hardships and privations and persecutions he endured in the fulfilment of his ministry were matter of glorying. In these he took pleasure, contrary as such a fact was to ordinary human experience.

II. THE GROUND OF THE APOSTLE'S GLORIFYING IN HIS WEAKNESSES. 1. There can be no doubt that the deepest ground lay in Paul's sympathy with his Divine Lord. The humiliation and obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus in order to secure man's salvation became a new source of inspiration, in the direction both of human action and of human suffering, and Paul was crucified with Christ unto the world. He bore about with him in the body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and of this he justly boasted. 2. Personal weakness was the occasion of the reception of new and spiritual strength. For Christ made his own grace sufficient when his servant's strength was gone. And by a sublime paradox the apostle learned that, when he was weak, then was he strong. And thus the very infirmities which seemed to disqualify for service became the occasion of the communication of such spiritual power and aid as rendered the apostle more efficient and successful in the service of the Lord.—T.

Ver. 9.—Sufficient grace. Perhaps there is no verse in Scripture which has brought more strength and comfort to the hearts of Christ's people than this. The explanation of its preciousness and its power is to be sought first in the spiritual, the revealed truth which it communicates, and secondly in the fact that it is the record of personal experience. There is an instinctive persuasion in the human mind that the experience which has been realized by one is possible to another. The grace which was actually bestowed upon Paul does not seem inaccessible to the feeble, the tempted, the overburdened Christian who cries to Heaven for help.

I. THE NEED FOR THIS SUFFICIENCY. 1. The manifold duties, the severe temptations, the varied sorrows and troubles, incidental to the Christian life. There are difficulties and trials common to the Christian with all men, but there are others peculiar to him, arising from the higher view he takes of life, both as a personal discipline and as an opportunity for serving and glorifying God. 2. The conscious insufficiency of human resources. This, indeed, accounts for the universal practice of prayer, frequent or occasional, deliberate or spontaneous. Men feel their utter helplessness in the presence of the demands of life, and therefore they call upon God. Much more keenly does the follower of the Lord Jesus realize his need of a higher than human aid. Conscious that only Divine grace has reconciled him to God, he daily acknowledges his dependence upon the same grace for the maintenance of his spiritual life and usefulness.

II. THE GROUND OF THIS SUFFICIENCY. 1. The divinity of the Saviour. Can we

imagine any other than Christ using this language, "My grace is sufficient"? It is becoming, it is possible, only to him who possesses Divine resources, who is spiritually present with all his people. 2. Christ's mediatorial position. This involves the possession and the disposal of whatsoever is necessary for the spiritual welfare of those whom the Lord Jesus saves. Accepted as our Representative, he has received gifts for men; and it is in the fulfilment of his mediatorial office that he imparts to each individual disciple and friend the specially needed grace. 3. The spiritual dispensation over which the Lord Jesus presides. He is Head over all things unto his Church. He distributes to every man severally as he will. His Spirit is the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of power.

III. THE EVIDENCE OF THIS SUFFICIENCY. 1. The personal experience of Paul as recorded in this passage. He tells us here, not only what Christ promised, but what he performed. He was perfectly satisfied with the course he had taken. He did not find his own personal weakness and insufficiency a barrier to his efficiency and usefulness. What he lacked, his Lord supplied. 2. The recorded experience of all who have trusted to the same Divine Source of all-sufficiency. There is no discordant note in the song of grateful, affectionate adoration which fills the Church of the Redeemer. All his people have known their own demerits, their own powerlessness, and all have known the sufficiency of their Lord. And every Christian has reason to acknowledge—

"And when my all of strength shall fail,
I shall with the God-Man prevail."

T.

Ver. 12.—Signs of apostleship. The evidences of deep feeling, which are manifest throughout this Epistle, are very prominent in this passage. There were special reasons why a sensitive man like Paul should lay to heart the treatment with which he met from the Corinthians. Considering what he had done among them and for them, he felt it hard that empty pretenders should be preferred to himself. And he was convinced that, in disregarding his authority, these members of the Corinthian congregation whom he had in view were doing injustice to his ministry among them. For all the proofs of a Divine commission had been exhibited in his ministry in their city. He appeals to—

I. MIRACULOUS EVIDENCES OF APOSTLESHIP. Upon due occasion the apostle did not hesitate to bring forward and adduce as proofs of his commission the supernatural gifts which had been bestowed upon him. How could he have publicly made such a claim as this in an authentic letter, unless the Corinthians, friendly and inimical, were ready to witness to the truth of his language? It would not be fanciful to discriminate among the terms which Paul in this passage applies to these miraculous evidences. Observe that they are designated: 1. *Powers*, as pointing to the heavenly and Divine source to which they must needs be traced. Whether exercised in controlling nature, in healing disease, or in inflicting punishment, they bore upon their very presence the evidences that they were of superhuman origin. 2. *Wonders*, as fitted and indeed intended to awaken the interest, the inquiry, the amazement, of all beholders. Wonder may be useful in leading to such reflection, such emotion, as may surpass itself in value. 3. *Signs*, as indicating the authority of those at whose prayer or command these marvels were wrought "among" the Corinthians.

II. THE MORAL EVIDENCE OF APOSTLESHIP. Nowhere in the New Testament is the portent placed above the spiritual. Christ's mighty works answered their purpose when they prompted the exclamation and inquiry, "What manner of man is this!" And in Paul's character there was seen an evidence of apostleship far more convincing and far more instructive than the most marvellous deeds which he performed. He justly claims to have exhibited *patience*, both in his continuing to work for the Corinthians and to interest himself in them notwithstanding their ingratitude, and in his tender and brotherly treatment of them with a view to their restoration to entire sympathy with himself.—T.

Ver. 15.—Ministerial devotion. Paul rejoices and boasts that, however the Corinthians may misunderstand him, he cannot be accused of having acted towards them in a mercenary spirit. Disinterestedness at all events he must claim, and they must concede. They are the debtors, not he. He is the parent who lays up for the children. This he does cheerfully, and is resolved that he will do in the future as in the past. His determination is to spend and to be spent for their souls.

I. A SINCERE PROFESSION. Had Paul been a stranger to his correspondents he could not have used such language as this. But he was well known to them, having lived and laboured in Corinth, working with his own hands for his maintenance, and putting forth every effort for the spiritual enlightenment and salvation of the citizens. 1. The minister of Christ *spends* for the enrichment of his people's souls. He has "treasure," though in earthen vessels. He has "the true riches" committed to his keeping. His aim is to bestow the choicest and most precious blessings upon the spiritually necessitous. All he has he longs to part with. 2. The minister of Christ is willing *to be spent* for his people's souls. Labour often involves suffering. Bodily powers may be exhausted; even the mind itself may give way under the strain of a toilsome, emotional, prolonged ministry. The missionary may sink beneath the burden of climate, of unrequited toil, of persecution. Every faithful minister must lay his account, not only with effort, but with self-denial and self-sacrifice.

II. AN ARDENT APPEAL. The Revisers adopt a rendering of the latter part of this verse which harmonizes with what we may well believe to have been the sentiment of the apostle. 1. Paul has proved the abundance of his love; and every true minister, animated by the love of Christ and by pity for souls, has shown himself to be a true lover and friend of his fellow-men. 2. Shall it, then, be the case that those whom the Christian minister loves, and whose welfare he seeks, shall be indifferent and ungrateful? It is sometimes so; the very faithfulness and earnestness of the minister may occasion the aversion of those who desire that he should "prophesy smooth things," and leave them to their sinful pursuits and pleasures uninterrupted. Yet the affection and devotion of spiritual workers deserve a very different return.—T.

Ver. 19.—Edification. The strain in which this portion of the Epistle is written may, the writer is conscious, mislead some readers. It displays a good deal of personal feeling; it reproaches those who have not shown themselves amenable to rightful influence and authority; it reveals a wounded heart. Some readers may misinterpret these signs and infer that the apostle regards himself as on his defence, as excusing and vindicating himself, as asking that the best construction possible may be forbearingly put upon his conduct. But all this is erroneous. Paul's one great aim is, not his own vindication, but, on the contrary, the edification of those to whom his Epistle is addressed.

I. IN WHAT DOES EDIFICATION CONSIST? 1. It has respect to those who are already built upon the one Foundation—Christ. The minister of Christ, like other workmen, must begin at the beginning. When men receive the gospel, then, and only then, are they in a position to be "edified." 2. It consists in the building up of the Christian character in the case of individuals. The resemblance to Christ is what is mainly to be sought. 3. And in the formation of solid and serviceable Christian societies, all of which are parts of the holy temple which is being reared to the glory of God.

II. BY WHAT MEANS IS EDIFICATION PROMOTED? 1. The means divinely appointed and approved are moral and spiritual. All employment of mechanical or political agency to secure such an end is to be condemned, as both inappropriate and useless. 2. Personal agency is that which the New Testament exemplifies and which experience approves. Living spirits, full of love and sympathy, are divinely qualified to engage in such a work as this. 3. The presentation of truth, the addressing of language of encouragement and promise, of admonition and rebuke,—these are emphatically the scriptural methods of edification. Of all these abundant and very instructive examples may be found in this very Epistle.

III. WHAT PURPOSES DOES EDIFICATION SUBSERVE? 1. The welfare, the highest spiritual development and happiness, of those who are edified. 2. The impression thus made upon the world by the presence in the midst of it of a Divine temple reared with human souls. 3. The honour and glory of the heavenly Architect himself.—T.

Vers. 1—4.—Apostolic experiences in heaven. **I. THE APOSTLE HAD A HEAVENLY EXPERIENCE DURING HIS EARTHLY LIFE.** His earthly experience was, very largely, dark and sorrowful; but amidst the darkness appears this brilliant flash of heavenly light. 1. *He gives us this experience as an actual fact, and as such we must receive it.* It was a reality to him. He records it that it may come before us as a reality, not as a mere

fancy or illusion. 2. *It furnished him with an opportunity of contrasting man's treatment and God's.* In the closing verses of the preceding chapter we have a catalogue of Paul's tribulations, many of these occasioned by human perversity and enmity. *Men treated Paul evilly; God gave him this special and marvellous heavenly experience!*

II. THE CHARACTER OF THIS EXPERIENCE. 1. *A real entrance into the heavenly world.* Paul has no doubt about this. His only doubt is whether he was in the body at the time. He most distinctly conveys that there was a removal of his spirit into another sphere; he is not sure whether his body accompanied his spirit. There could not have been a doubt as to whether he was "in the body" if his experience had been a mere trance or any special influence brought to bear upon his mind. There was a removal, but whether of body and spirit, or of spirit alone, the apostle cannot declare. We may note the apostolic belief that *conscious life is possible to us when we are "out of the body."* The apostle did not know whether his experience was of this order, but he evidently recognizes this order of experience as possible. We may note further that the apostle regarded heaven or paradise as a *place* as well as a *state*. "Third heaven" and "paradise" seem to be used synonymously—"third heaven" indicating the realm in which God's glory is pre-eminently manifested. The rabbins taught the existence of seven heavens, but it is not probable that Paul refers to their notions. 2. *An entrance effected by God.* It was not by the apostle's merit or power; it was by a Divine act—he was "caught up." Admittance to the heavenly world is in the hands of God; if we enter, then God must effect the entrance for us. Christ, *the Way*, is given to us by God. 3. *Astonishing visions.* Paul saw much (ver. 1). 4. *Wonderful revelations.* He heard much. "Unspeakable words," understood by him, but not to be repeated on earth. Possibly they would not have been intelligible to any who had not participated in the heavenly experience. Our curiosity craves to know what Paul saw and heard, but our needs do not demand it. We have the *speakeable* words of the gospel, which, rightly received, will prepare us to hear by-and-by the "unspeakable words" of heaven and to behold the heavenly glories.

III. THE OBJECT OF THIS EXPERIENCE. 1. *To encourage the apostle in his many labours and sufferings.* Christ took his disciples up into the mountain and was transfigured before them; then he brought them down into the world of men to toil and to endure. 2. *To quicken his faith in the unseen.* Great natures doing great works have often great trials of faith. A big devil always comes against a big Christian. 3. *To speed him onward to the final rest of God's people.* He was a much-loved child; the Father showed him special favour. 4. *That others to whom the experience should be recounted might participate in the benefit.* The experience was for us as well as for the apostle. From us its special features are largely hidden; but it is revealed to us, and this knowledge may well encourage us in the earthly service, quicken our faith, and hasten our footsteps towards the glories beyond the veil.

A general lesson may be learnt from the event that those who have special trials and sorrows experience also special comforts and helps.—H.

Ver. 7.—*The thorn in the flesh.* I. WHAT WAS IT? 1. *In itself.* There have been almost infinite conjectures. As to the *figure*: some prefer a "goad for the flesh," a sharpened stake; others, a rankling thorn; others, a stake on which offenders were impaled or the cross to which they were fastened. As to the *reality*: evil suggestions; fiery darts of Satan; some prominent adversary; some painful bodily affection, weak eyesight, defective speech, carnal cravings; whilst a bold imaginationist has had the temerity to suggest a termagant wife! Possibly the precise nature of the affliction is concealed that no one may say, "Ah, that is not my trouble." It was very grievous to the apostle whatever its precise nature. 2. *As Satan was concerned in it.* Paul recognized Satan's hand (see Job ii. 7; Luke xiii. 16). It was used of Satan to annoy, pain, depress, and harass Paul, and with the hope that it would hinder his great work. Satanic malice rejoiced in the anticipation that it might prove the last straw upon the camel's back. Paul interfered much with the devil's kingdom; it is no wonder that the devil sought to interfere with him. Satan can afford to leave some people alone; but if we faithfully attack his kingdom and his rule we may expect reprisals. Yet Satan is but a fool after all, and constantly overreaches himself. One has well said, "The devil drives but a poor trade by the persecution of the saints—he tears the nest, but

the bird escapes; he cracks the shell, but loses the kernel." 3. *As allowed by God.* God's hand was in it as well as Satan's. This is so with all our tribulations; in one aspect they are messengers of Satan, in the other messengers of God. *All depends upon which message we listen to.* Paul's thorn in the flesh was God's teacher of humility. There was danger that the extraordinary revelations made to the apostle might foster pride. Human nature is intensely susceptible to this temptation. Those who enjoy remarkable favours often experience remarkable affliction. The ship in the high wind needs plenty of ballast. When we build high we must also build low—the lofty building requires a deep foundation. It is well for us that God is not merely indulgent. God will not allow us to become spoilt children.

II. *THE APOSTLE'S RESTLESSNESS UNDER THE AFFLICTION.* Paul was very human. He would not have been so could he have borne this additional trouble with indifference. Remember his other troubles. If this special affliction seemed likely to hinder his life-work, how keenly would he feel it! "Tis hard to dance in chains. Heavy labour tries the healthy; how exceedingly burdensome to the sick! Yet he did not grumble, or make himself a nuisance, or find fault with God, or sit down in despair. It was said of him once, "Behold, he prayeth;" it may be said of him again.

III. *HIS PRAYER.* 1. *In his distress he betook himself to the mercy-seat.* Like Hezekiah, he spread the matter before the Lord. Affliction should drive us *to*, not *from*, God. And we should come to *pray*, not to *complain*. The throne of grace is sometimes turned into a bar of judgment, at which men arraign God. When some strange experience comes upon us we should *ask concerning it* in the audience-chamber. 2. *He prayed to the Lord Jesus.* This seems evident from ver. 9, "that the strength of Christ may rest upon me." The servant's difficulties may well be submitted to the Master. Christ had directly appointed the apostle; to Christ, therefore, Paul brings his seeming hindrance. Whilst usually we pray to the Father in the Name of Christ, we may at other times pray to Christ himself. 3. *He prayed with importunity.* There was no mistaking his earnestness. As Christ in Gethsemane prayed "the third time," so thrice did this Christ-like apostle knock at heaven's gate. He went on knocking until he got a response. Many in prayer want nothing, ask nothing, get nothing. Some are so polite that they dread lest they should disturb God, and knock so lightly and daintily that it would require a microphone to make the sound audible. Others ring and run away. The apostle stood at the gate till he was answered. Such holy boldness delights God instead of affronting him. 4. *He prayed definitely.* (1) For "this thing." Some pray for everything in general, and therefore get nothing in particular. (2) That it might depart. Here, perhaps, he went too far. If our troubles were sent away, our best friends might be sent away. The counterpart of "a thorn in the flesh" may be "grace in the spirit." It is a good thing that it does not rest with us to send away or to retain; we should often send away the good and draw to ourselves the injurious and evil.

IV. *THE ANSWER.* 1. *A true answer, yet not what was looked for.* (Ver. 9.) Such a prayer, offered in such a manner, was certain of a response, but not of the response anticipated. God often answers our prayers by not answering them. We get what we *want*, not what we *wish*. We dictate our prayer; God dictates the answer. Generally we do not *ask enough*—the apostle did not; to take away the thorn was small compared with sanctifying its presence. To eject the devil's messenger was poor compared with transforming it into a ministering spirit. 2. *A lesson of faith.* Paul's faith must transcend his feeling. He must lay hold of Christ with more tenacious grasp; he must believe that Christ can use this trouble for high purposes. Perhaps as he looked to Christ with stronger faith he could realize that, as great purposes were accomplished by the many thorns in the flesh of Christ (he was *crowned with thorns*), so the one thorn in his flesh should not prove unfruitful. Grapes might be gathered from this thorn. 3. *A definite assurance.* There was a *basis* for the faith demanded, as *there always is*. "My grace is sufficient for thee" (ver. 9). Christ engages to bear him through; can he believe this? The Lord's resources are boundless; they are *our* resources when strong faith binds us to their possessor. My "grace" may mean my "love," which secures all things needful for my servants; or the aid of the Holy Spirit, which will prove sufficient for every exigency. 4. *An intimation of purpose.* There was no *mistake* in sending or allowing the "thorn in the flesh." Prayer becomes blasphemous

when it proceeds upon the assumption that God has made a blunder! The thorn in the flesh was the stem upon which the flower of the Divine glory was to blossom. The "messenger of Satan" would be made a herald proclaiming the power of Christ. The apostle's flesh was to be a battle-field on which Christ would triumph.

V. THE ISSUE. A new thought has been given to Paul—Christ's glory will be enhanced. At once he begins to glory in this infirmity, "Most gladly" (ver. 9), or most *sweetly*; it became a delight of the highest kind. What he wanted to lose he now wants to keep. *With* the thorn in the flesh he can become, as he could not without it, the dwelling-place of the power of Christ. It is enough if through his humiliation Christ may be exalted, if through his suffering Christ may be glorified. Many are more than content with being *resigned* under suffering; to submit they think is a mark of highest grace. But the apostle is far beyond this. He can "take pleasure" (ver. 10) in troubles, because through his troubles the power of Christ is more strikingly and impressively exhibited.—H.

Ver. 11.—*Much, yet nothing.* I. THE APOSTLE'S CLAIM. A large claim, put strongly. Paul claimed to be on a perfect equality with the leading apostles. Unwillingly he referred to this matter, which might *look like* self-glorification; but when the occasion came, his utterance was full and unmistakable. There is nothing derogatory in magnifying our office, the evil lies in magnifying ourselves in it. It is not conceitedness but righteousness to assert for ourselves what God has already asserted for us. Paul felt that he must not lightly esteem, or allow others to lightly esteem, a high office conferred upon him by God, and an office in which God had signally witnessed to his efforts. Paul speaks about "the signs" of an apostle; the interesting question arises—What were these signs? We may note the following:—1. Knowledge of the gospel derived by immediate revelation from Christ (Gal. i. 12). 2. Being specially under the influence and teaching of the Divine Spirit, so as to be able to announce truth with authority (1 Cor. ii. 10—13; xii. 8, 29; xiv. 37). 3. External manifestations of Divine favour sanctioning claim to the apostleship. 4. Continued faithfulness to the gospel (Gal. i. 8, 9). 5. Success in preaching the gospel (1 Cor. ix. 2). 6. Power of communicating the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands (Acts viii. 18). 7. Power of working miracles (ver. 12; Rom. xv. 18, 19). 8. Holiness of life (ch. vi. 4). Such of these as could be exhibited to the Corinthians, had been, and there was one respect in which his readers would scarcely contest Paul's claim, and to this with his accustomed dexterity the apostle refers. If founding great Churches was a mark of great apostleship, what an apostle Paul must have been to found such a Church as the Corinthian (ver. 13)! This was a perfectly sound argument, but it was an *argumentum ad hominem* of a singularly happy character. There was only one thing lacking, and here the apostle blends irony with pathos—"I myself was not a burden to you: forgive me this wrong" (ver. 13). For reasons given elsewhere in the Epistle, he had resolved not to derive any part of his temporal support from them. They might esteem this a slight. Had they lived in later days they would have counted it a virtue!

II. THE APOSTLE'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT. Paul's humility is marvellous. Yet it was not one whit greater than it ought to have been. The "thorn in the flesh" (ver. 7) has accomplished a gracious work. Paul has at the same time the clearest view of the Divine power and glory, and of his own insignificance and impotence. He does not take to himself for a moment what was not of himself. Note in ver. 12 he says, not "I wrought," but "*were wrought*"—*he distinguishes between God and Paul!* We have a beautiful insight into the apostle's mind. He has risen too high to deck himself in plumes stolen from his Lord. Though divinely endowed, strikingly witnessed to in his labours, beyond question the pre-eminent apostle, he says, "I am *nothing*." We wonder not that God used such a man. We magnify God's grace in him. Truly the promise had been amply fulfilled, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (ver. 9). Our pride is our folly—it drives God out and lets the devil in. We cannot be great because we will be so great. The bag is full of wind, so that it cannot be filled.

III. LEARN: 1. *Humility becomes us.* It became Paul. If he had so lowly an estimate of himself, how little should we think of ourselves! Even if we are "great men," we are very small men compared with him. 2. *Humility is reasonable.* It is not

fiction, but fact, to say that we are *nothing*. Pride is based on a *lie*. 3. *Humility is generally associated with large usefulness.*—H.

Ver. 15.—*Self-expenditure*. I. A SPLENDID ILLUSTRATION OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. The apostle is carried beyond the thought of giving some time, or strength, or property, for his beloved Corinthians; he expresses his perfect willingness to *give himself*. He will not count it a grief, but a gladness, to *expend himself* for them. Whilst many find great difficulty in giving a little for others, the apostle seems to find none in giving all. Here we have: 1. *Whole-souled devotion*. Nothing can transcend the apostle's offer. And the voluntariness and the joy of the devotion place it in the first rank of excellence. 2. *Earnest desire for welfare*. The love of Paul for the Corinthians could not have been more forcibly expressed. Men gauge our love for them by what we are willing to give up for them; when we are willing to *give up ourselves* for them, they cannot but be convinced of our sincerity. 3. *Indication of the importance of Christian work*. For nothing else in the world would Paul have willingly spent himself. But Christian service more than justified the self-sacrifice. In his judgment nothing could compare with it for a moment. We may remember that in all departments of life we can render Christian service; spheres of labour become insignificant and mean only when Christian service is excluded from them. 4. *A striking imitation of Christ*. Paul has caught his Master's spirit. His Lord laid down his life for him; he will now lay down his life for his Lord. Christ "*gave himself*." The Lord's servant is most fitted to do his Lord's work when he is most like his Lord. 5. *A secret of success*. When we labour for Christ in such a spirit as this we are certain to prosper. Failure is the child of half-heartedness and selfishness. Christ honours an entire consecration to his service.

II. SELF-EXPENDING CHRISTIAN SERVICE PROMPTED BY A HIGH MOTIVE. The apostle was willing to spend himself for *the souls* of the Corinthians—"and be spent for your souls" (New Version). In this labour he was seeking at the same time the highest glory of God and Christ, and the truest welfare of men. These objects unite in Christian service, which aims pre-eminently to do good to *the souls* of men. The saving and perfecting of souls redounds supremely to the glory of the Divine Being, whilst it secures the highest good for humanity. So dominated was the apostle by the desire to do good to the souls of men, that what is usually a very strong motive for action, viz. the love of others for us, was quite swept away. He declares that he will expend himself for the Corinthians, though this strongest indication of his love to them should produce a decreasing love for him on their part. The *disinterested* character of true Christian service is here very strikingly displayed. It was by such self-expenditure as that of Paul's that early Christianity won its triumphs; it is for such self-expenditure that later Christianity pathetically calls. God is always thoroughly in earnest, but men are not. When men become so then "the arm of the Lord is revealed."—H.

Ver. 2.—"*A man in Christ.*" St. Paul spoke of himself. Once he had been out of Christ, though in a legal fashion very religious. But he gave up his legality when he found Christ. He looked to him for help, fled to him for defence, and thenceforward lived in him as a new creature. It is the best short description of every believer.

I. CHOSEN IN CHRIST. (Eph. i. 4.) We put this first, because this must come first in the Divine order and in the very nature of things. But man does not begin with any knowledge of this as affecting himself. He grounds his faith, not on the secret purpose, but on the revealed good will of God to all in the gospel. It is after he has believed that he learns gratefully to trace his own calling and salvation, in common with that of all his fellow-believers, to the gracious choice and purpose of God. Then, as the seventeenth Article of the Church of England expresses it, "The godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ."

II. FREELY GRACED IN THE BELOVED. (Eph. i. 6.) The man in Christ is embraced in the favour with which God regards his beloved Son. He has redemption and reconciliation to God, unsearchable riches, spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and continual freedom of access to the Father in heaven.

III. CREATED ANEW IN CHRIST JESUS. (Eph. ii. 10.) God begins this work, as of old,

by causing light to shine out of darkness; then he introduces a new order, peace and fertile life, and this is wrought on and in every genuine Christian. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." And therefore he does what is right, not by a continual strain and effort against nature, but spontaneously and naturally, because he has a clean heart and a right spirit.

IV. ESTABLISHED IN CHRIST. (Ch. i. 21.) He who comes to Christ under the drawing grace of the Spirit of God abides in him by the same Spirit, so as to imbibe his wisdom, experience his support, and learn what consolation there is in him, and what comfort of love. So God confirms and establishes his people in Christ, making good to them his promises, anointing them, sealing them, and giving "the earnest of the Spirit" in their hearts. This is much more than being settled in one's religious opinions and habits. It is the staying of the mind on Christ. And usually it is reached through conflicts and sufferings that compel the soul to grapple more firmly the reality of Christ and the security of Divine promises in him, just as trees rocked by the winds strike their roots the more widely and deeply into the ground (see 1 Pet. v. 10).

V. APPROVED IN CHRIST. (Rom. xvi. 10.) Establishment relates to faith, knowledge, and comfort; approval refers to service. Labour for the Lord ought to be rendered in the Lord, *i.e.* in virtue of union with him, and by the power derived from such union. But as there are gradations of faith and love among true Christians, so also there are degrees of diligence and thoroughness in service; and some servants are more approved than others, and shall have a more full reward. Oh to serve so as to have our Master's smile upon us now, and to be openly accepted of him at his coming as good and faithful servants!

VI. PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS: COMPLETE IN HIM. (Col. i. 28; ii. 10.) There is all-perfect resource in our Lord. But all have not attained. There are babes in Christ, not perfect or mature; let them go on to fuller stature and strength. It is an object to be desired and worked for, that every believing man may be presented perfect in Christ Jesus, *i.e.* ripe and mature, not crude or ill-developed in the Christian character.

VII. ASLEEP IN JESUS. (1 Cor. xv. 18; 1 Thess. iv. 14, 18.) If we are Christ's, death is ours. It cannot do us hurt or separate us from the love of God. For a man who is in Christ, the whole state of death is brightened by the love and faithfulness of the Lord. Blessed are the dead who die in him. Sweetly sleep the labourers who, when their day's work for Jesus is ended, fall asleep in him.

"Oh, never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
'He giveth his beloved sleep.'"

F.

Vers. 7—9.—*An instructive experience.* Like all true saints, Paul was modest about his own experience. He did not write down his heavenly rapture and what followed it, till fourteen years had passed, and then he wrote it only because he felt compelled to prove to the Corinthians that even "in visions and revelations of the Lord" he surpassed the false apostles as much as in labours and sufferings for Christ. Never did Christian tell an experience more useful and strengthening to the Church.

I. AFFLICTION THE ANTIDOTE TO PRIDE. We do not speak so much of the natural pride of men over personal advantages of body or mind, over rank or riches, as of that subtle pride which is apt to creep into the heart after a great influx of spiritual light and joy. One may be exalted overmuch on account of the clearer vision of heavenly things or the near access to the Lord which he has enjoyed. But there comes a timely affliction or rebuke, not merely to correct pride if it is indulged, but to anticipate and prevent its rising. "Lest I should be exalted." The wise man accepts this as a kindness from God. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh."

II. PRAYER THE ANTIDOTE TO DESPENDENCY. "I besought the Lord thrice." When one is cast down, worldly-wise friends can only bid him cheer up, cast off dull care, etc. But the resource of the Christian is to pray to the God of his life. And prayer must be repeated. The Saviour prayed thrice before the angel from heaven appeared to strengthen him. Paul prayed thrice before the answer of grace and peace fell upon his fainting soul.

III. CHRIST'S GRACE THAT SWEETENS ALL. He knows well the piercing of thorns, the fiery darts, and the "blast of the terrible ones," and he can have compassion. He did not, indeed, see fit to relieve his servant Paul at once of his distress, but assured him of compensative grace and sustaining strength; and so the apparent evil was turned into a blessing, the pain and sorrow into joy. Be of good comfort, O believers! Against your own felt weakness set Christ's strength; and against all malice of Satan and his messengers set Christ's sufficient grace.—F.

Ver. 1.—*Visions and revelations.* "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." The apostle had been dwelling on his personal experiences. He had been compelled by the evil things that were said of him to refer to his own life, conduct, and sufferings for Christ's sake, in self-vindication. He would, however, not have spoken one word about these things if the honour of Christ had not been bound up with his claim to apostleship. He had now said everything that needed to be said about himself; and it was every way pleasanter and healthier to turn away from his own doings and sufferings, and to fix his heart and his thoughts upon what God had done for him. Upon the Divine visions and revelations given to him he in great part rested his apostolic claim. To him an apostle was, just what a prophet of the olden time had been, a man who had direct and personal communications with the Lord Jesus, and received instructions immediately from him. For such instances in St. Paul's career, see Acts ix. 4—6; xvi. 9; xviii. 9; xxii. 18; xxiii. 11; xxvii. 23; Gal. ii. 2; and the scenes recorded in the chapter now before us. This claim to direct revelation the enemies of St. Paul denied, and laughed to scorn his pretensions as the indications of insanity. Dean Plumtre tells us that "in the Clementine Homilies—a kind of controversial romance representing the later views of the Ebionite or Judaizing party, in which most recent critics have recognized a thinly veiled attempt to present the characteristic features of St. Paul under the pretence of an attack on Simon Magus, just as the writer of a political novel in modern times might draw the portraits of his rivals under fictitious names—we find stress laid on the alleged claims of Simon to have had communications from the Lord through visions and dreams and outward revelations; and this claim is contrasted with that of Peter, who had personally followed Christ during his ministry on earth. What was said then, in the form of this elaborate attack, may well have been said before by the more malignant advocates of the same party. The charge of insanity was one easy to make, and of all charges, perhaps, the most difficult to refute by one who gloried in the facts which were alleged as its foundation—who did see visions and did 'speak with tongues' in the ecstasy of adoring rapture." Compare the expression, "whether we be beside ourselves," in ch. v. 13. When the particular visions came to which reference is made in the passage before us cannot certainly be known. St. Paul only aids us by referring to the time as "about fourteen years ago." The suggestion we prefer is that they were granted during the time of his fainting after the stoning at Lystra, and were the Divine comfortings of that hour of sorest peril and distress (Acts xiv. 19).

I. VISIONS AND REVELATIONS ARE AGENCIES WHICH GOD HAS ALWAYS USED. They do not belong to any one age. We have no right to say that they are limited to ancient times. There have always been the true and the counterfeit; but the true should not be missed or denied because the false have been found out. There are good gold coins, or men would not trouble to make spurious sovereigns. Fanaticism deludes its victims into imaginary visions, but souls that are kin with God, and open to him, can receive communications from him. Illustrate from all ages, e.g. Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Joseph (the husband of Mary), aged Simeon, Zacharias, etc. So in the Christian age we find visions granted to Cornelius, Philip, Peter, and John, as well as Paul, and traces of prophets, such as Agabus, and even of prophetesses. St. Paul's visions were probably of the nature of a trance; the mind being absorbed in contemplation may be prepared to receive Divine revealings. It is right to subject all claims to visions to careful scrutiny, and the things communicated to men at such times must be tested by their harmony with the written revelation; but we need not refuse to recognize the truth that God has direct relations to souls now as certainly as in past ages. Both truth and duty may still be directly revealed.

II. THEY COME TO CERTAIN PREPARED INDIVIDUALS. Not to masses, not to Churches, not to meetings. The vision is for individuals, who are thus made agents in the communication to men of the Divine thought and will. F. W. Robertson says, "To comprehend the visions we must comprehend the man. For God gives visions at his own will, and according to certain and fixed laws. He does not inspire every one. He does not reveal his mysteries to men of selfish, or hard, or phlegmatic temperaments. He gives preternatural communications to those whom he prepares beforehand by a peculiar spiritual sensitiveness. There are, physically, certain sensitivenesses to sound and colour that qualify men to become gifted musicians and painters; so, spiritually, there are certain strong original susceptibilities (I say *original*, as derived from God, the origin of all), and on these God bestows strange gifts and sights, deep feelings not to be uttered in human language, and immeasurable by the ordinary standard. Such a man was St. Paul—a very wondrous nature, the Jewish nature in all its strength. We know that the Jewish temperament fitted men to be the organs of a revelation. Its fervour, its moral sense, its veneration, its indomitable will, all adapted the highest sons of the nation for receiving hidden truths and communicating them to others."

III. THEY COME ON PARTICULAR OCCASIONS. By the law of Divine economy, only when they are the precise thing demanded, the only agency that will efficiently meet the case.

IV. THEY COME IN GRACIOUSLY ADAPTED FORMS. Heard voices sometimes, at other times dreams, ocular visions, symbols, trances, and mental panoramas. Close by showing that, because the modern mode is direct to souls, immediate to the shaping of men's thoughts, and not through symbols, or dreams, or visions, we need not lose the conviction that, upon due occasions still, God gives to some amongst us insight and revelation of his truth.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Satan's messenger; or, the thorn in the flesh.* It would be a grave mistake to make this description of St. Paul's affliction the basis of any argument for the personality or agency of Satan. He does but use the familiar Jewish figure of speech, which may or may not embody for him any doctrine concerning Satan. The figure is most strikingly used in the introduction to the Book of Job; but the following other passages illustrate how familiar it was to the Jewish mind: Luke xiii. 16; Acts x. 38; 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Thess. ii. 18; 1 Tim. i. 20. "These are enough to prove that, while men referred special forms of suffering of mind and body, chiefly the former, to the agency of demons, they were prepared to recognize the agency of Satan in almost every form of bodily calamity." No single description of Satan can cover the entire Scripture representation of him, but one aspect presented by it has not been duly considered. He is sometimes regarded as the agent, or executor, of the Divine purpose in physical calamity, and even in moral testings through temptation. We may think of an angel of temptation as well as of an angel of death. We may not even think of Satan as in any sense acting independently. He, too, comes fully within the Divine rulings and overrulings. What the nature of the apostle's affliction or temptation was cannot be certainly known from his descriptions of it. Many explanations have been suggested. Lightfoot summarizes them thus: (1) a bodily ailment of some kind; (2) some opposition encountered from his enemies, or suffering endured; (3) carnal longings; (4) spiritual trials, doubtings, etc. Archdeacon Farrar thinks the "thorn" must have been some physical malady, and suggests epilepsy, of which he says, "It is painful; it is recurrent; it opposes an immense difficulty to all exertion; it may at any time cause a temporary suspension of work; it is intensely humiliating to the person who suffers from it; it exercises a repellent effect on those who witness its distressing manifestations." But he adds that there can be no doubt that St. Paul also suffered from ophthalmia, and that this disease fulfils in every particular the conditions of the problem. Dean Plumptre favours the idea of corporeal rather than mental suffering, and says, "Nor need we be surprised that this infirmity—neuralgia of the head and face or inflammation of the eyes, perhaps in some measure the after-consequences of the blindness at Damascus—should be described as 'a messenger of Satan.'" Another suggestion has been made which is fresh and interesting, and worthy of very patient consideration. Professor Lias writes, "Our last alternative must be some defect of character, calculated to interfere with St. Paul's success as a minister of Jesus Christ. And the defect which

falls in best with what we know of St. Paul is an infirmity of temper. There seems little doubt that he gave way to an outbreak of this kind when before the Sanhedrim, though he set himself right at once by a prompt apology (Acts xxiii. 2—5). A similar idea is suggested by St. Paul's unwillingness to go to Corinth until the points in dispute between him and a considerable portion of the Corinthian Church were in a fair way of being settled. In fact, his conduct was precisely the reverse of that of a person who felt himself endowed with great tact, persuasiveness, and command of temper. Such a man would trust little to messages and letters, much to his own presence and personal influence. St. Paul, on the contrary, feared to visit Corinth until there was a reasonable prospect of avoiding all altercation. In fact, he could not trust himself there. He 'feared that God would humble him among them' (ch. xii. 21). He desired above all things to avoid the necessity of 'using sharpness,' very possibly because he feared that, when once compelled to assume a tone of severity, his language might exceed the bounds of Christian love. The supposition falls in with what we know of the apostle before his conversion (Acts vii. 58; ix. 1). It is confirmed by his stern language to Elymas the sorcerer (Acts xiii. 10), with which we may compare the much milder language used by St. Peter on a far more awful occasion (Acts v. 3, 9). The quarrel between St. Paul and St. Barnabas makes the supposition infinitely more probable. The passage, Gal. iv. 13, 14, may be interpreted of the deep personal affection which the apostle felt he had inspired in spite of his occasional irritability of manner. The expression (Gal. iv. 20), that he 'desired to be present with them, and to change his voice,' would seem to point in the same direction. And if we add to these considerations the fact, which the experience of God's saints in all ages has conclusively established, of the difficulty of subduing an infirmity of temper, as well as the pain, remorse, and humiliation such an infirmity is wont to cause to those who groan under it, we may be inclined to believe that not the least probable hypothesis concerning the 'thorn,' or 'stake,' in the flesh is, that the loving heart of the apostle bewailed as his sorest trial the misfortune that by impatience in word he had often wounded those for whom he would willingly have given his life." Whatever the form of the trial may have been, we note—

I. ST. PAUL'S THOUGHTS ABOUT IT. These may be unfolded and illustrated generally, in relation (1) to Christian culture; (2) to Christian work, and especially (3) in relation to peril of spiritual pride. St. Paul saw clearly that the humiliation came "through the abundance of the revelations;" and "lest he should be puffed up beyond measure."

II. ST. PAUL'S LESSON LEARNED FROM IT. It was mainly this—that the mission of suffering may be continuous through life. It may be the point of God's dealing with us that he does not sanctify us by sudden, occasional, and severe afflictions, but by calling us to bear a lifelong burden of disability or frailty. Troubles of this kind cannot be removed in response to prayer, because to remove them would be to check the sanctifying process. God, in sending a temporary affliction, may have a temporary end in view, and so, when that end is duly reached, the affliction may be removed. But if the work of our sanctification is, in the Divine wisdom, to be wrought by a continuous life-pressure, then the response to our prayer can only be this: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Dean Stanley points out that "St. Paul's sufferings were to him what the mysterious agony that used at times to seize on Alfred, in the midst of feast and revel, had been to the saintly and heroic king, a discipline working for his perfection."—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Sufficient grace.* The following incident from John Bunyan's experience may serve to introduce this subject. One evening, as Bunyan was in a meeting of Christian people, full of sadness and terror, suddenly there "brake in" upon him with great power, and three times together, the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my grace is sufficient for thee; my grace is sufficient for thee." And "Oh, methought," says he, "that every word was a mighty word unto me; as 'my,' and 'grace,' and 'sufficient,' and 'for thee,' they were then, and sometimes are still, far bigger than others be." The great practical question for us, in our endeavour to live the godly life, is not—What have we to bear? but—What strength have we for the bearing? God's help never comes first to a man in his *circumstances*, but always first *in him*. The

grace given is grace helping *him* in the circumstances. So the Christian often knows that he is helped when those around him can see no signs of the helping. God's promise from the olden time is this, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." In all our relations with human trouble, our attention is directed to the removal of the trouble itself or the change of the circumstances which occasioned the trouble. We move the pain-wearied sufferer into a position of greater ease. We soften and smoothe the pillow for the aching head. We offer temporary help to the man distressed in business. But God does not promise any man that he will alter his circumstances or altogether relieve him from his trouble. The economy of life is arranged, in the Divine wisdom, for the greatest good of the greatest number, and consequently some of those circumstances which bring trouble to Christian hearts cannot be altered without involving injury to others. God "strengthens with strength in the soul." To him body and circumstance are secondary things; souls are of the first importance, and bodies and circumstances gain their importance by their influence on souls. Inward strength to bear is a far higher provision than any mere mastery of the ills and troubles of the life. A man is never lost until he has lost heart. But if God supplies inward strength we never shall lose heart, and so we never shall be lost. Outwardly a man may be tossed about, worn, wearied, lost, wounded, almost broken, and yet inwardly he may be kept in perfect peace; his mind may be stayed on God; he may be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." We may say of this "sufficient grace" that it is—

I. ADAPTED. We are to conceive of the grace of God, not as a great mass, a quantity of which is duly measured out to meet our need, but rather as a treasury of various kinds and various colours, from which may be obtained just those threads that will match our circumstances and repair the disasters into which we have fallen.

II. TIMELY. Here we require to distinguish between what we think to be timely and what God thinks to be timely, remembering that God never delays, but is never hurried. He waits for the moment of extremity. "When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses." And it should also be shown that we may not look for some particular grace and help to-day, which God knows will only be required to-morrow. The very charm of "sufficient grace" is that it is precisely the thing for the occasion." Those who are looking for kinds of grace for which they have no immediate and pressing needs will be in danger of missing the gracious provisions which their Lord is ever making for them. The way between earth and heaven is a ladder—Jacob saw it—and the angels came up and down it. We cannot reach the top by looking up; only by putting our feet up one round after another. And God is willing to be ever close beside us, holding us with his hand and strengthening us for each uplifted step.

III. ABUNDANT. That is assured in the fact that it is the grace of God, who is able to do exceedingly abundantly for us above all that we ask or think. The man with "sufficient grace" is *efficient* to all work, whether it be *bearing* or *doing*. He is *nowhere* alone; grace is with him.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Glorying in infirmities*. In introduction should be given some high and noble instances of triumph over disease, pain, or disability, in doing philanthropic and Christian work; e.g. Baxter, Robert Hall, H. Martyn, C. Pattison, F. W. Robertson, etc. Show that, while bodily strength may be consecrated to God's service, it is also true that physical weakness may serve him, and a man's very frailty glorify his Lord. This may be further opened out by showing how—

I. IT BEARS UPON HUMILITY. The grace which is the necessary completion and final adornment of Christian character. The grace which puts on Christian fruitage all the bloom. Humility is won by the pressure of God's hand upon us.

II. IT NOURISHES DEPENDENCE ON GOD. "When I am weak, then am I strong." This is the Christian paradox. Such dependence is not easy; it is one of the things to which experience of failure and frailty alone can bring us. He is fitted for life and for heaven who from his deep heart says, "I cannot, but God can."

III. IT CULTIVATES CHARACTER. We know that physical weakness bears directly and continuously upon temper, disposition, and virtue. Afflictions never test us, never bear upon the whole culture of character, as does continuous pain or frailty. "As the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day."

IV. IT KEEPS A MAN OPEN TO God. By its constant reminder of the need of God. The frail man proves the preciousness of prayer. F. W. Robertson most forcibly says of prayer, "The true value of prayer is not this—to bend the eternal will to ours, but this—to bend our wills to it." Frail, ever-suffering Paul laboured "more abundantly than they all," and astonishing still is the soul-work that can be gotten out of feeble men and women—with God's grace.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Caught with guile.* "Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." This expression occasions serious difficulty to the exegete. It may be that St. Paul is referring to the accusation made against him that, being a crafty man, he had caught the Corinthians with guile. He repudiates altogether such a charge, and pleads, as a sufficient proof of his guilelessness, that no man could say he had ever used his official position to make personal gains. Archdeacon Farrar says, "Being confessedly one who strove for peace and unity, who endeavoured to meet all men half-way, who was ready to be all things to all men if by any means he might save some, he has more than once to vindicate his character from those charges of insincerity, craftiness, dishonesty, guile, man-pleasing, and flattery which are, perhaps, summed up in the general depreciation which he so indignantly rebuts, that 'he walked according to the flesh,' or in other words, that his motives were not spiritual, but low and selfish." He paraphrases the sentence taken as our text thus: "But stop! though I did not burden you, yet 'being a cunning person, I caught you with guile.' Under the pretext of a collection I got money out of you by my confederates! I ask you, is that a fact?" A possible insinuation of the Corinthians is hereby anticipated and refuted; and we need not treat the statement of the text as any acknowledgment by St. Paul that he had adopted any guileful schemes. No man could have been more thoroughly genuine, more honourably straightforward. The subject for our consideration may be treated under three divisions.

I. THE IDEA OF "CAUGHT WITH GUILF" THAT IS INADMISSIBLE IN CHRISTIAN WORK. 1. Anything approaching to "doing evil that good may come" is inadmissible. 2. So is any altering or qualifying the fundamental truths, claims, and duties of the gospel. 3. So is any kind of action that is immoral, or of which the morality is even doubtful. Illustrate by some of the guileful principles enunciated by the Jesuit fathers, and so mercilessly exposed by Pascal in the 'Provincial Letters.' Sincerity and simplicity are first virtues in Christian workers; both the man and his labours must be such as can be searched through and through. Guile, as the world understands the term, must not be once known among us, as becometh saints.

II. THE IDEA OF "CAUGHT WITH GUILF" THAT IS ADMISSIBLE IN CHRISTIAN WORK. In the sense of adaptation to capacity it is an essential feature of Christian service. This may sometimes appear to the onlooker as guile. In teaching children or uneducated people, truth has to be simplified, to be set in figure and parable, and broken up into parts and pieces, and such guilefulness St. Paul recognizes as valuable. He fed the people with "milk" when he knew that they were unfit to receive "strong meat" of truth. Our Lord himself was guileful in this good sense, for at the close of his intercourse with his disciples he said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." It may also be shown that there is a "quick-wittedness" and skillful seizing of opportunities, which are gifts finding honourable spheres in the Christian Church.

III. THE IDEA OF "CAUGHT WITH GUILF" THAT NOBLE-MINDED MEN SHRINK FROM EMPLOYING. Such are the various sensational devices of modern revivalism. The masses are to be caught with the guile of trumpet, and drum, and dress, and excited meetings. We need not say that such things are inadmissible, because they are not morally wrong. But where there is a full sympathy with the Divine Lord, who "did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets," all such guilefulnesses cannot but be painful. Anything approaching to an *advertising* of the gospel or the preachers of the gospel grieves the sensitive feeling of all who know that the gospel needs no such introductions, but is itself God's power unto salvation to every one that believes. Our "yea" had better be simple "yea;" with no blast of trumpet or roll of drum let us tell men of the life there is for all in Christ our living Saviour; and let our only guile be *adaptation*.—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*The humbling of God's ministers.* "I fear . . . lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you." "There is something almost plaintive in the tone in which the apostle speaks of the sin of his disciples as the only real 'humiliation' which he has to fear." The following points will be readily worked out and illustrated according to the experiences of the preacher:—

I. SUCH HUMBLINGS COME FROM SEEMING FAILURES. Compare our Lord's distressful approach of Capernaum and other towns on the shores of the lake of Galilee. See also St. Paul's trouble over the failure of the Galatians from their primitive faith: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" etc.

II. SUCH HUMBLINGS COME FROM STRIFE AND DIVISIONS. As illustrated in the Corinthian Church (see 1 Cor. ii.). Such strife may arise from (1) false teaching; (2) masterful individuals, who make parties; (3) misunderstandings; (4) exercise of necessary Church discipline.

III. SUCH HUMBLINGS COME FROM INDIVIDUAL BACKSLIDINGS. There is no sadder phase of experience for Christian ministers than the spiritual and moral failure of their converts, and of those whom they have most fully trusted in Christian life and work. So often men fall into temptation and are overcome in their middle life. When ministers look for the ripest fruitage, then there is blight and death; wealth, pleasure, vice, smite and kill the soul, and the pastor weeps over the toil of life that seems to have been all in vain. St. Paul spoke of the Corinthians as "his glory and joy;" and the things which he goes on to mention in this verse put shame on his work, for the gospel call is "not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." And ministers spend their strength for nought if those who believe are not "careful to maintain good works."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUDING APPEALS AND EXHORTATIONS.

Ver. 1.—This is the third time I am coming to you. I have thrice formed the intention, though the second time I had to forego my plan (ch. i. 15—17). In the mouth of two or three witnesses. The quotation is from Deut. xix. 15. It has been explained as a reference to *examinations* which he intended to hold on his arrival at Corinth. It is much more probable that St. Paul is representing his separate visits as separate *attestations* to the truths which he preaches.

Ver. 2.—I told you before; rather, *I have told you before*. As if I were present, the second time. The meaning seems to be, "You must understand this announcement as distinctly as if I were with you, and uttered it by word of mouth." And being absent now I write; rather, *so now being absent*. The verb "I write" is almost certainly an explanatory gloss. And to all other; rather, *and to the rest, all of them*. Namely, to those who, though they may not have fallen into gross sin, still rejected St. Paul's authority, and said that he was afraid to come in person. I will not spare (ch. i. 23; iv. 19, 21).

Ver. 3.—Of Christ speaking in me; rather, *of the Christ who speaketh in me*. Which; rather, *who*. But is mighty in you. The spirit of Christ, in spite of all their shortcomings, had not deserted them (see 1 Cor. i. 6, 7; ii. 4).

Ver. 4.—For though. The "though" should be omitted. Through weakness; literally, *out of weakness*; i.e. as a result of that human weakness of our nature which he took upon him, and which rendered him liable to agony and death (ch. viii. 9; Phil. ii. 7, 8; 1 Pet. iii. 18; Heb. ii. 10—18). But we shall live with him . . . toward you. This thought of participation alike in Christ's humiliation and his glory, alike in his weakness and his might, was very familiar to St. Paul (ch. iv. 10—12; Eph. i. 19, 20). Here, however, the following words, "toward you," i.e. "with reference to you," show that the life of which he is thinking is the vigorous re-establishment of his spiritual authority in Christ over the Church of Corinth.

Ver. 5.—Prove your own selves. In other words, "test your own sincerity." Jesus Christ is in you. To this truth—that the body of every Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit of Christ—St. Paul returns again and again (Gal. ii. 20; iv. 19; Eph. iii. 17; Col. i. 27). We find the same truth frequently in St. John (John xv. 4, 5; 1 John iii. 24, etc.). Except ye be reprobates. The Greek word *adokimoi*—from the same root as the verb "to test"—means tried and found to be worthless. "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them" (Jer. vi. 30). The word is found almost exclusively in St. Paul (ch. xiii. 5, 6, 7; Rom. i. 28; 1 Cor. ix. 27; 2 Thm. iii. 8; Titus i. 16). The only other passage of

the New Testament where it occurs is Heb. vi. 8; and the reader must not read Calvinistic horrors into an expression which gives no sanction to them.

Ver. 6.—That we are not reprobates. My power and faithfulness will be tested as well as yours, and I hope that it will stand the test.

Ver. 7.—Approved (*dokimoi*). The opposite of "reprobates." Though we be as reprobates; rather, [I pray] that ye may do what is excellent, and that we may be as reprobates. This is one of the intense expressions which, like Rom. ix. 8, spring from the earnest and passionate unselfishness of St. Paul. His anxiety is for them, not at all for himself. *As reprobates*; i. e. in the judgment of men (comp. Rom. ix. 8).

Ver. 8.—We can do nothing against the truth. I am powerless against anything which is true, real, sincere; I can exercise no power except in the cause of the truth. Be true to the gospel, and you will be mighty and I shall be powerless, and (as he proceeds to say) I shall rejoice at the result.

Ver. 9.—When we are weak, and ye are strong (comp. 1 Cor. iv. 8—10). *Strong*; "powerful" (ch. x. 4). We wish; rather, we pray. Your perfection; rather, your perfect union; "the readjustment of your disordered elements." A similar word occurs in Eph. iv. 10, and the verb in ver. 11; 1 Cor. i. 10; 1 Thess. iii. 10, etc. It is also used in the Gospels for "mending nets" (Mark i. 19, etc.).

Ver. 10.—I should use sharpness. The word rendered "sharpness" is an adverb, like our "abruptly" or "precipitately." The only other passage of the New Testament where it occurs is Titus i. 13; but the substantive *apotomia* occurs in Rom. xi. 22 for "severity."

Ver. 11.—Finally, brethren, farewell. His concluding words are marked by great gentleness, as though to heal the effects of the sharp rebuke and irony to which he has been compelled to have recourse. The word may also mean "rejoice" (Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4). Be perfect (see note on "perfection" in ver. 9). Be of one mind; literally, *think the same thing* (Phil. ii. 2; 1 Pet. iii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 10; Rom. xii. 16, 18). Be at peace (Eph. iv. 3).

Ver. 12.—Greet one another. The verb, being in the aorist, refers to a single act.

When the letter had been read in their hearing, they were, in sign of perfect unity and mutual forgiveness, to give one another the kiss of peace. With a holy kiss (see on 1 Cor. xvi. 20; comp. 1 Pet. v. 14).

Ver. 13.—All the saints; namely, in Philippi or Macedonia.

Ver. 14.—The grace of our Lord, etc. This is the only place where the full apostolic benediction occurs, and is alone sufficient to prove the doctrine of the Trinity. St. Paul seems to feel that the fullest benediction is needed at the close of the severest letter. With you all. The word "all" is here introduced with special tenderness and graciousness. Some have sinned before; some have not repented; yet he has for them all one prayer and one blessing and one "seal of holy apostolic love."

The superscription, though of no authority, may here correctly state that the letter was written at Philippi, and conveyed thence to Corinth by Titus and (possibly) Luke (see ch. viii. 16—22).

These are the last recorded words addressed by St. Paul to the Corinthian Church. The results produced by the letter and by his visit of three months (Acts xx. 2, 3) were probably satisfactory, for we hear no more of any troubles at Corinth during his lifetime, and the spirit in which he writes the letter to the Romans from Corinth seems to have been unwontedly calm. He had been kindly welcomed (Rom. xv. 23), and the collection, about which he had been so anxious, seems to have fully equalled his expectations, for as we know (Rom. xvi. 18; Acts xx. 4), he conveyed it to Jerusalem in person with the delegates of the Churches. We gain a subsequent glimpse of the Corinthian Church. Some thirty-five years later, when a letter, which is still extant, was addressed to them by St. Clement of Rome, they were still somewhat inclined to be turbulent, disunited, and sceptical (see 'Ep. ad Cor.' iii., iv., xiii., xiv., xxxvii., etc.); but still there are some marked signs of improvement. About A.D. 135 they were visited by Hegesippus (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.' iv. 22), who spoke very favourably of them, especially of their obedience and liberality. Their bishop, Dionysius, was at that time exercising a widespread influence (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.' iv. 23).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*Paul's epistolary farewell to the Corinthians.* "This is the third time I am coming to you," etc. This chapter concludes Paul's letters to the Corinthians. There is no evidence that he wrote a word to them after this. The letters had evidently been a task to him. To a man of his tender nature no duty could be more painful than that of censure and reproach. Nothing but a sense of loyalty to the holiness of Christianity could have urged him to it. No doubt he felt a burden rolled from his

heart, and a freer breath, when he dictated the last sentence. He was now to visit them for the third time, determined to execute the discipline that might be required, earnestly hoping at the same time that, when he was once more amongst them, the necessity for such discipline would not appear. In this concluding chapter we find words of *warning, exhortation, prayer, comfort, and benediction.*

I. WORDS OF WARNING. He warns them of a chastisement which he determined to inflict upon all offenders, both in doctrine and conduct, against the gospel of Christ. Four things are suggested here concerning the discipline he intended to prosecute. 1. *The discipline would be righteous.* "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." Here is a rule quoted and endorsed by Christ (Matt. xviii. 16), an axiom of the Jewish Law and a natural dictate of judicial policy. What he probably means to say, is, "I will not chastise any without proper evidence. I will not trust to rumours or surmises; I will test every case myself, so that justice shall be done. Therefore the true need not fear, the false alone need apprehend." 2. *The discipline would be rigorous.* "I told you before, and foretold you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare." He had threatened this in his former letter (1 Cor. iv. 13-19), in which he had also indicated severity (1 Cor. v. 5), and spoken of "delivering them to Satan"—an expression which probably means not only excommunication, but the infliction of corporal suffering. The blindness of Elymas and the death of Ananias and Sapphira are instances of the power of the apostles over the body of men. This chastisement would be dealt, not only to the notorious incestuous person often referred to, but to "all other;" he would "spare" none. "I will not spare." A more terrible chastisement know I not than entire excommunication from the fellowship of the good. 3. *The discipline would demonstrate the existence of Christ in him.* "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me." "They had called in question his apostolic authority, they had demanded the evidence of his Divine commission. He says he would now furnish such evidence by inflicting just punishment on all offenders, and they should have abundant proof that Christ spoke by him." He could have given this proof sooner, but he acted in this respect like Christ, and was content to appear "weak" amongst them, in order that his power might be more conspicuously displayed. "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you." "The thought," says Dean Plumtre, "that underlies the apparently hard saying is that the disciples of Christ share at once in their Lord's weakness and in his strength. We, too, are weak, says the apostle, we have our share in infirmities and sufferings, which are ennobled by the thought that they are ours because we are his, but we know that we shall live in the highest sense in the activities of the spiritual life, which also we shall share with him, and which comes to us by the power of God. This life will be manifested in the exercise of our spiritual power towards you and for your good." In the case of the truly good, in all weakness there is strength, and the weakness one day will disappear and the strength be manifest.

II. WORDS OF EXHORTATION. "Examine yourselves." Self-scrutiny is at once a duty the most urgent and the most neglected. Hence the universal prevalence of self-ignorance. Even men who know a very great deal of the world without are ignorant of the world within, the world of worlds. 1. *The momentous point to be tested in self-scrutiny.* "Whether ye be in the faith." Not whether you have faith in you, for all men are more or less credulous, and have some kind of faith in them; but whether you are "in the faith." The faith here is the gospel, or rather the Christ of the gospel; whether you are in Christ, in the character of Christ. Intellectually and morally, all men are living in the characters of others. The grand thing is to be in the character of Christ, in his principles, sympathies, aims, etc. 2. *The momentous conclusion to be reached by self-scrutiny.* "Know ye not [emphatic] your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" If you are in the faith, you are in his character, and he is in your life; nay, your life itself. Should you find you are not in the faith, ye are "reprobates," counterfeits, spurious, not genuine; tares, not wheat; hypocrites. Here, then, is a work for every man to do—"examine" himself, introspect, scrutinize, decide, and thus know his real moral condition.

III. WORDS OF PRAYER. "Now I pray to God," etc. For what does he pray? Not for his own reputation or himself. As if he had said, "I am not anxious about my own standing amongst you." He prays for two things. 1. *That they should be kept from the wrong.* "Now I pray to God that ye do no evil." "Do no evil," nothing inconsistent with the character and teaching of Christ. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." 2. *That they should possess the right.* "Not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates." "We pray not that we may gain a reputation as successful workers in your eyes or those of others, but that you may do that which is nobly good (may advance from a negative to a positive form of holiness), even though the result of that may be that we no longer put our apostolic supernatural powers into play, and so seem to fail in the trial to which you challenge us."

IV. WORDS OF COMFORT. "We can do nothing against the truth." There are two comforting ideas here. 1. *That truth is uninjurable.* "We can do nothing against the truth." Let the "truth" here stand for Jesus, who is the "Truth," the great moral Reality incarnated, all that is real in doctrine and duty embodied in him; who can injure such? Man can do much against theories of truth, conventional manifestations of truth, ecclesiastical representations of truth, verbal revelations of truth. The more he does against these, perhaps, the better; but he can do nothing against "the truth," its essence. Man may quench all the gas-lamps in the world, but he cannot dim one star. The great ethical and doctrinal truths embodied in the life and teaching of Christ are imperishable, they live in all religions. Men can destroy the forms of nature, level the mountains, dry up the rivers, burn the forests, but can do nothing against the imperishable elements of nature, and these elements will live, build up new mountains, open fresh rivers, and create new forests. You can do nothing against the truth. 2. *That goodness is unpunishable.* "For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection." It is unpunishable: (1) Because it is goodness. The best of men are too "weak" in authority to punish those who are "strong" in goodness. And in truth there is no authority in the universe, even God himself, to punish goodness. The stronger a man is in goodness, the weaker the power to chastise him. Hence Paul wishes to find them "strong" in goodness when he comes amongst them. He wishes this because goodness is their "perfection," or restoration. The way to paralyze all penal forces is to promote the growth of goodness. (2) Because it is restorative. "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction." Its destiny is "edification," not "destruction;" building up, not pulling down. Moral goodness is the restorative power in the universe.

V. WORDS OF BENEDICTION. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." His benedictory words imply: 1. *Be happy.* "Farewell," which means rejoice. To be happy they must be "perfect," "of good comfort," etc. 2. *Be blest of God.* "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Announcement of his purpose; Christ's power in him and in his apostleship.* About to visit the Corinthians "the third time," he informs them very distinctly what they had to expect. In the words of the Old Testament Law, he says, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." The strength of his resolution to punish impenitent offenders is declared—"I will not spare." A crisis was at hand, and he was fully prepared to meet the issue. He refers to the main source of all the trouble, viz. the disparagement of his office as Christ's apostle. Everything had been done by the Judaizers to put contempt on him and his official position. The forbearance he had shown, the patience under repeated and aggravated provocation, his deeds of self-denial, Christ's testimony to the greatness of the work done among them, had all been misconstrued and turned to his injury. Even his

infirmities, the defects of personal appearance, his conscientious avoidance of the least worldly art in his ministry, had been used to his disadvantage. Craft, falsehood, malignity, had followed him with persistent steps. Neither his private nor public life had escaped prying eyes and slanderous tongues. A man in feeble health, his strength constantly over-taxed, infirmities growing beyond his years as well as with his years, labouring to support himself, and thus making heavy drafts on his bodily powers, he had these ills daily augmented by annoyances and vexations from those who sought to come between him and his Churches. To undo his work was their aim and ambition. They hated him officially, they despised him personally, nor could they rest while he had friends to cheer him on in his labours. What is most noticeable is the utter blindness of these persecutors to the wonderful tokens of God's presence with him. It is to this fact he alludes in the words, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me." Remember, it was in this Corinth, where these turbulent spirits were most industrious to overthrow him, that Christ had given the most numerous and remarkable evidences of the favour bestowed on his apostle as the apostle of the Gentiles. "Seek a proof," to our ears sounds most strangely. "Signs and wonders and mighty deeds," and yet "seek a proof of Christ speaking in me"! It is well that there was an antecedent history, a fourfold history but one biography, and that this biography of the Lord Jesus opens to us a full view of man's capacity to disbelieve where Divine manifestations are concerned. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." So the Lord Jesus had foretold; so St. Paul had realized. And now, in the closing hour of writing this Epistle, the apostle identifies his condition with that of Christ in the days of the flesh. Years before, the great fact had occurred of which these recent facts were no more than exemplifications. Taking upon himself the lowly form of a servant and submitting to every kind of privation and sorrow, putting himself as to his circumstances in extreme contrast with his power and never exercising this power except under the agency of the Holy Ghost, men treated him, Son of God, Son of man, as one in their hands, over whom and his earthly destiny they had entire control. "He was crucified through weakness." He could have been crucified in no other way. The sole condition under which this event was possible is here stated, *viz. weakness*. The weakness was assumed voluntarily by him because it was necessary to the work of redemption. "Yet he liveth by the power of God." Even in the grave his body was treated as though men had it under mastery. Roman procurator and Jewish Sanhedrim held it as their own, and stationed a military guard at the sepulchre where his corpse, still their prisoner, lay till the third day ended the mystery of his weakness. Then came the triumph "of the power of God." Authority felt it and was abased. To its degradation it added the infamy of a lie, and to the lie the infamy of a money bribe. Guilt felt it and acknowledged its impending curse in the return of innocent blood as vengeance on its head. Sad as this hour was to St. Paul, his faith was never firmer. Had he not said just before, that if he should have to "bemoan many which have sinned already, and have not repented," he should accept the humiliation as a holy discipline? "My God will humble me among you." One had gone before him in weakness. But his Leader in trial would be his Leader in triumph. "For we also are weak in him." It is not our weakness. It wears a human look, speaks human words, trembles with human sensibility, sighs with human pathos, yearns for relief with human desires. Nevertheless it is a fact, "we also are weak *in him*." The weakness we share is that of the God-Man, the weakness of the Divine incarnation, so that we walk according to our small measure in the footsteps of him who "himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." "But we shall live," not in the resurrection, but in the day when we come to Corinth and vindicate our authority, "we shall live with him by the power of God *toward you*." Then, indeed, you who have taunted us as "weak and contemptible," shall see and know that this risen and exalted Christ is Christ in us, "the power of God *toward you*." Do you then "seek a proof of Christ speaking in me"? I shall come with "the power of God" and the "proof" shall be given.—L.

Vers. 5—10.—*Self-examination recommended; supremacy of Divine truth.* Proof of his apostleship had been the demand of the disaffected portion of the Corinthians; "but *prove your own selves*" is St. Paul's exhortation. "Examine not me, but yourselves, whether you are truly in the faith; put yourselves to the proof concerning

Christ's presence with you which you seek in me" (Conybeare and Howson). No one can help seeing how natural this advice was to the apostle, and how suitable to these noisy and fault-finding Corinthians. On the one hand, St. Paul was a man whom casual observers could easily misunderstand. His temperament, his habit of introversion, his intense self-consciousness, exposed him to constant misconception. Again, he was a born leader of men. Such a leader as he could not escape a severe probation while acquiring the ascendancy to which he was predestined. Leaders who adapt themselves unscrupulously to times and circumstances gain a quick mastery. Leaders that shape contingencies to their high purposes and bring men into sympathy with a lofty ideal in their own souls must have creative genius, and exert it under sharp and continual opposition. To this class of leaders the apostle belonged. Furthermore, his position was unique by reason of the fact that his apostleship necessarily placed him between the two great rival forces of the age, Judaism and Gentilism. To show what the Law meant as a Divine institution; to show what Gentile civilization and culture meant as a long-existing providence; to harmonize as far as might be the truths in each; in brief, to mediate between their claims as widely organized economies, and put them on common ground as it respected Christianity and its supreme authority, and do away with the distinction of Jew and Gentile as to the conditions of salvation;—this was the most difficult task ever committed to a man. Owing to its intrinsic character, it brought him at every turn in contact with prejudices and passions which justified themselves in the one case by the miracles of Jehovah, in the other by the prescripts of government, and in both by the venerable sanction of ages. What wonder, then, that his career as a public man among public men was specialized quite as much by systematic and vindictive misrepresentation as by a success unequalled in the influence exerted over the thought and morals of the world! On the other hand, look at these young Christian communities, situated often wide apart and unable to strengthen each others' hands, planted in the midst of peoples hostile to their creeds and still more to their virtues, and dependent in most instances on the nurture of a single apostle; look at them in a state hardly more than inchoate,—and can we be surprised that they were in some cases the subjects of intestine disturbance, nay, of violent commotion? "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," were "called;" but the "weak things of the world," "base things, and things despised," were "chosen," for the most part, as the original materials of that edifice which was to show in its proportions, its symmetry, its permanence, the workmanship of the Hand unseen. The "called" and the "chosen" were eventually to vindicate the wisdom of the call and the choice. Let us not overlook, however, the disadvantages inseparable at the time from the crude elements that constituted the early Churches. Without dwelling on these at length, suffice it to say that they were imperilled by a corrupt Judaism on the one side, and a most corrupt paganism on the other, the agencies and influences of which sought them as a prey to their lust of avarice and ambition. Now, the Church at Corinth was notably in this state of exposure. Gallio, the Proconsul of Achaia, had protected St. Paul against the fury of the Jews, and the Greeks had used the occasion to wreak their vengeance on the Jews. Retaliation was the order of the times. Baffled by a Roman official, insulted and beaten by a mob of Greeks, the Jews were not likely to forget the apostle, and we can imagine with what zest they would enjoy the zeal of the Judaizing emissaries, and how they would diligently foment the efforts made for his disgrace in Corinth. To what extent this was carried by the Jews as a body we can only conjecture. Certain it is, however, that for several years Corinth was the seat of a most active and uncompromising warfare on St. Paul. Once more, and finally, he comes before us in the passage under notice in an attitude unmistakably stern and authoritative. Is Christ in you, he asks the Corinthians, or are ye reprobates? Prove yourselves, apply the test, find out whether or not you are in Jesus Christ and share his spirit, and if you cannot stand the test, know then that you are reprobates. He expresses the hope that they will not find him a reprobate (unapproved or spurious) if they put him to the test of exercising his authority. Yet he trusts that the test of his power will be avoided, and prays that they may "do no evil." If they should act as he prayed they might, then there would be no necessity for him to demonstrate his authority, and, in that happy event, he would appear "unapproved," *i. e.* not tested as to the display of

his power. Welcome such unapproval! It would be in exact conformity to the spirit and end of his apostolic administration, which was in accordance with the truth of the gospel and designed to show forth that truth. What is the test of a great and wise ruler? The test is the uselessness of a punishing power (except in extreme cases and as an ultimate resort), because his subjects govern themselves. Such was the apostle's argument. Nothing against the truth, all for the truth, Christ the Truth; this was the beautiful summation in which he rested. If this should apparently exhibit his weakness, what a glorious weakness it would be! Apostolic judgment made needless by self-government; what could be a grander testimony to the truth and excellence of his work among them? Then, verily, they would be strong. "Perfection" in the order and unity of the Church, "perfection" of individual character, was the object of his prayer, and hence this Epistle. Whoever teaches Christianity as God's truth cannot fail to teach much else besides. These verses are maxims of infinite wisdom. What man in authority, what statesman in the affairs of a nation, what father at the head of a family, what office-holder in the Church, if he would bear his faculties so meekly and be thus "clear in his great office," would not be a providence of instruction and helpfulness in the world! Decay of reverence for law begins in decay of reverence for men who administer the law. Unhappily enough, this decline in reverence for law is one of the growing perils of the age. It is peculiar to no form of government. It is spreading everywhere as an atmospheric evil, and threatening like an epidemic to travel round the globe. Power to build up, not to destroy; this is St. Paul's idea of power divinely bestowed. And accordingly we see what a blessed discipline it was to him personally and officially; and having accomplished this result in his own soul, it is not remarkable that it achieved its ends in this distracted and corrupted Church at Corinth.—L.

Vers. 11—14.—*Parting tenderness.* If ever great principles of government were subjected to the severest of ordeals, it was in the instance which has been under review. If ever personal qualities and official prerogatives were inextricably mixed in pending issues, and those issues diffused over a vast surface, it was in this affair at Corinth. If ever the chief actor in the interest of tranquillity and social purity had to fight a battle absolutely single-handed and alone, it was St. Paul's fortune in this struggle to save a community from degradation and destruction. We have seen what he endured when endurance was probably harder than at any period of his life. What aids he summoned in these critical hours, what recourse he had to the past, what account he gave of the "thorn in the flesh" and its uses in his work, we have seen in the progress of this interesting section of his career. Most of all, we have seen how the man and the apostle, the tentmaker and the preacher, the liberal Jew and the sagacious Christian, were most happily interblended in the rarest harmony and unity while doing the work of pacification and reformation. And now that he comes before us in the last expression of himself as to this weighty controversy, it is ennobling to see how finely poised he is, and what anxiety he has "lest, being present," he should be compelled against all his prayers and hopes "to use sharpness according to the power which the Lord had given him." That miraculous gift was his as the apostle of Christ, but it was for "edification, and not to destruction." At the cost of personal humiliation, he would be "glad" if the Corinthians were "strong," and he "weak." How like his Master he was! "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Had he waved his hand, Jerusalem would have been darkened by the wings of gathering angels for his rescue; but he was to be crucified in "weakness" that the "power of God" might be the more gloriously manifested in his resurrection. Power denied in one of its uses, to be more signally displayed in another and higher use, was the lesson St. Paul had learned of his dying Lord. "I am crucified with Christ," said he on a subsequent occasion; but he shares that crucifixion word in one of its most painful forms by withholding the exertion of authority to punish his enemies till all other means had been exhausted. He preached Christ "the Wisdom of God," no less than Christ "the Power of God." Under circumstances of extreme hazard, reputation and influence and future success trembling in the balance, flesh and blood supplying clamorous reasons for a self-asserting course and the swift riddance of a most vexatious trouble, he abides with heroic fortitude by Christian principle in its demands for self-crucifixion, and makes everything yield to magnanimity in his ardent

desire for the "perfection" of the Church at Corinth. All this is admirable as a mere matter of congruity in respect to the laws of art. But it leaves the domain of art and rises to a realm infinitely more exalted when he comes before us "apparelled in celestial light," and completes the impression of one

" Whose high endeavours are an inward light,
That makes the path before him always bright."

Nothing in the apostle's life more became him than the tenderness in the parting words of this Epistle. "Finally, brethren, farewell." There have been throes of spirit during the birth of this Epistle, moments of vehemence, outbursts of indignation and menace; but they are over now. The sun sets in a sky that the storm has purified, and the last beams glide through an atmosphere of holy stillness. "Be perfect," or, be perfected, making up what ye lack; "be of good comfort," taking encouragement and hope from your trials that God would overrule them for your happiness; "be of one mind," by suppressing all selfishness and partiality and cultivating unity of interest; "live in peace," so that your outward life bears witness to the fact that ye have "one mind." So shall the "God of love and peace be with you." Let not the sign of your union in Christ as members of his Church be forgotten, and, accordingly, "greet one another with a holy kiss." Macedonian brethren salute you. And now, acknowledging with profoundest reverence the Holy Trinity, "in place of his own salutation, he gives us finally that precious benediction which has acquired such a liturgical use in every age and in every part of the Christian world" (Lange). *Grace, love, communion*,—these three, and each blessing and all the blessedness for every one, friends and enemies, since they are, in this touching moment, "brethren" to his heart. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" in the fulness of his mediatorial office, "the love of God" the Father revealed through that grace, and the "communion of the Holy Ghost" as the effect of the "grace" and the "love" in their fellowship with God and one another, "be with you all. Amen."

It pleased God to make St. Paul his own historian during the memorable period to which this Epistle belongs. No one was competent to this task, not even St. Luke, with all his skill and insight as a writer, and his close relations to the apostle. The inner life of the author was to be set forth with a force and vividness never equalled in sacred literature; and we were to have a section, and a most important section, of the New Testament as a Scripture of a private soul. For, indeed, the Holy Spirit would not limit the wonders of inspiration to the narration of outward events. Great as those events were in the midst of changes going on in the Roman empire, "the mingling and confusion of races, languages, and conditions," of which Dean Milman gives so eloquent a description ('Latin Christianity'), and vast as was the influence of the gospel in slowly transforming that "heterogeneous mass of a corrupted social system" by "instilling feelings of humanity," and giving "dignity to minds prostrated by years, almost centuries, of degrading despotism," it yet was vital to the purpose of the written Word that we should have the record of a human soul in the most typical period of its perplexity and conflict, and under just such circumstances as identified it most nearly with the sharpest trials of manly intelligence and courage. It is St. Luke who describes the one class of occurrences. Only a St. Paul was qualified for the other; and in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians he does this most interesting work. At no point are we left in dimness or obscurity as to what he felt and purposed. Every moment, as the eye follows his path, we see the end to which his steps are tending. "Faint, yet pursuing," often thwarted, often thrown back, often sorely embarrassed, without the lights of past experience, without the helps of brother apostles, alone and unaided, he had to solve those problems of Church order and discipline which involved all the future administrative policy of Christian communities. Throughout the struggle we accompany him. We know what he thought, and why. We mark his wisdom, earnestness, and fidelity. In the variety of his moods, in exaltation and depression, in the alternate predominance of very unlike states of consciousness, we find him the same man as to his ruling principle and aim, the same when he threatens and beseeches, the same when he unmasks "false apostles," that he is in prayers for peace and brotherhood. It was a most energetic and exciting portion of his career. But the man's heart is the chief interest as illustrative of the cardinal doctrines of grace. True,

we have invaluable contributions to theological truth, expositions of rare profundity and insight, contrasts between the Law and the gospel never surpassed in this favourite department of his intellectual work, references to the body that throw a new light on its relations to mind, and directions as to practical benevolence which cover the whole range, in this particular, of Christian obligation. Yet these are enhanced in value by the fact that the spirit of an intense living personality is ever present. We lose nothing of the logic and philosophy, nothing of the force in the historical allusions, nothing of the charm of metaphor and similitude. At the same time there runs through everything the subtle influence of an individual soul, so that the strength which throbs in doctrinal arguments is from a heart all alive with sensibility. "Men," says Foster ('First Essay on a Man's writing Memoirs of Himself'), "carry their minds as for the most part they carry their watches, content to be ignorant of the constitution and action within, and attentive only to the little exterior circle of things to which the passions, like indexes, are pointing." Not so St. Paul. Temperament, disease, special circumstances in his position, made him in an unusual degree a self-observing man. In this Epistle we have the richest fruits of his self-knowledge. Most of all, we see the meaning of that discipline of affliction by means of which the life of Christ in the soul is perfected. And we see, too, how our private history is far more than a personal concern, and widens out in connections no one could have foreseen. "A thorn in the flesh" becomes a part of St. Paul's public character; incidents that historians and philosophers and poets would have passed by as of little meaning, take on a most impressive significance, and endear an Epistle, great on other grounds and great as a work of art, to the struggling and sorrowing heart of every Christian.—L.

Ver. 4.—*Weakness and power.* It must have been very painful to the sensitive and benevolent mind of the apostle to have written thus to any congregation of Christians, especially to a congregation so intimately connected with him as was this at Corinth. The whole society was to blame for suffering the Judaizers and the questioners of St. Paul's authority; when they should have taken the part of their spiritual benefactor, and have indignantly resented the slights and misrepresentations which they tolerated. In the prospect of visiting Corinth, the apostle requires that the people shall put themselves to the test and shall give a proof of their reformation; otherwise, he will be compelled to give them a proof of his supernatural power and thus to silence calumny and opposition.

I. THE WEAKNESS OF CHRIST IS SHARED EVEN BY HIS SINCEREST AND MOST FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS. 1. In the Lord Jesus were, both in his person and in his ministerial career, many circumstances of humiliation. His helpless childhood; his subjection to hunger, thirst, and weariness; his liability to pain; his endurance of death, are instances of the former. His submission to calumny and insult, to betrayal and desertion, to hatred and rejection, are proofs of the latter. 2. Now, our Lord himself forewarned his disciples that they should share their Master's lot. Paul certainly took up the cross. The thorn or stake in the flesh, the scourgings and imprisonments which he was called upon to endure, were not regarded by him as accidents and misfortunes, but rather as proofs of true discipleship, as participations in the sufferings of the Lord. And this is the light in which all followers of the Lord Jesus are justified in regarding the endurances and calamities which befall them in treading in his steps and in executing his commission. It is the moral glory of Christianity that it dignifies the sufferings of those who partake their Leader's spirit in self-denying endeavours for the salvation of their fellow-men. Such servants of the Divine Master may well "glory in infirmity." Their wounds are the honourable scars telling of the severity of the conflict in which they have been engaged.

II. THE POWER OF GOD WHICH WAS UPON CHRIST SHALL BE DISPLAYED IN THOSE WHO, SHARING THE MASTER'S SERVICE, SHARE ALSO HIS WEAKNESS. Paul was content that men should perceive the weakness manifest in the crucifixion of the Redeemer; but he preached to them a risen, reigning, and glorified King. The resurrection and ascension of Christ were both proofs of the acceptance of the Son by the Father, and they were an inspiring omen of the approaching victory of the cause for which Jesus deigned to die. From the throne of might and dominion, possessed of all authority, the victorious Lord governs his Church on earth, and secures its safety and well-being.

St. Paul felt himself entrusted with abundant means of maintaining his spiritual authority as the "ambassador of Christ." He might possess marks of the dying of the Lord Jesus; but he wielded a might which no foe could resist. Let all faithful servants of Jesus and true soldiers of the cross be encouraged by the reflection that their Commander is omnipotent, and that he must reign until every foe is beneath his feet.—T.

Ver. 5.—"Prove yourselves." The apostle, before closing his Epistle, turned round upon his detractors. They had been questioning his authority and disparaging his claims, and he had been defending himself and asserting his apostolic rights. But was this as it should be? How was it with themselves? They were very anxious to test him, to compel him to verify his claims. Why should not they be asked whether their own position was assured, whether their own professions were justifiable? Let them examine, test, and prove themselves! The exhortation is one by which all professing Christians may profit.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-PROOF. This appears from the unquestionable fact that men generally are disposed to take too favourable a view of themselves, their own character, their own services, their own importance to the Church or the world. Illusion often becomes delusion. That which is nearest at hand, and which might be supposed, because most accessible, to be best known, is often judged with the least fairness and justice. Yet if we form a false estimate of ourselves, how disastrous the consequences may be!

II. THE METHOD AND SPIRIT OF SELF-PROOF. 1. There should be perfect candour. 2. The examination should be carried on as under the eye of the omniscient and all-searching God. 3. The standard by which we judge ourselves should be the high and infallible standard of God's own Word. 4. There should be no attempt to exalt self by depreciating others.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SELF-PROOF. 1. The process may reveal what is altogether unsatisfactory and lamentable. He who tests himself thoroughly may come to the conclusion that his life is all wrong from the very foundation. If this is so, it is well that it should be known, that a new basis for the moral life may be laid in the truth and righteousness of God himself. 2. The process may yield results partly gratifying and partly regrettable. If so, while there will be reason for gratitude and encouragement, there will be a call to repentance, reformation, and improvement. For a man to know his faults and errors is the first step towards what is better and nobler.—T.

Ver. 8.—*Invincible truth.* Paul boasted that he could do all things, *i.e.* through Christ who strengthened him. Let his adversaries rage and threaten, he had no fear. He would assert his authority, exercise his power, and reduce the proudest opponent to helplessness. For the truth's sake, for the gospel, there was nothing which he was not able to achieve. But if those whom he chided should submit, should return to their fidelity, not to him only, but to the gospel, then he was powerless to harm them. Nay, in such a case he was with them, on their side. Such appears to be the explanation of this grand utterance occurring in this connection.

I. THE POWERLESSNESS OF MAN WHEN IN OPPOSITION TO THE TRUTH OF GOD. 1. The avowed enemies of the truth have failed in their attacks upon it, whatever have been the resources upon which they have drawn, the arms upon which they have relied. Persecution has raged first against Christianity itself, and then against its purer representation in days of reformation. With what result? The blood of the martyrs has ever been the seed of the Church. "Truth, like a torch, the more it's shook it shines." 2. The false, hypocritical friends of the truth have never succeeded in exterminating it. Their efforts have often been insidious, and have often corrupted and ensnared individuals and even societies. But the pure truth of God has survived, whilst these attempts have again and again been foiled.

II. THE STRENGTH OF THOSE WHO WORK WITH AND FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD. 1. Their natural feebleness does not hinder the victory of the cause which they embrace. The ignorant, the poor, the young, the feeble, have done and are still doing great things for the gospel. As at first, so now, God chooses "the weak things of the world to confound the mighty." 2. The efficiency of the truth depends upon its Divine origin and source.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” Wherever God’s truth is proclaimed, there God’s Spirit works and God’s power is felt. 3. The efficiency of the truth lies in its harmony with the nature and constitution of man. With the use of this divinely tempered implement the divinely prepared soil of humanity may be rendered fruitful in great results. *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.*—T.

Ver. 11.—“*Live in peace.*” The Christian religion ever represents all true peace among men as taking its beginning in peace with God. This first creates peace of conscience, and then issues in harmony and concord in civil and ecclesiastical society. There can be no doubt that the apostle is here enjoining mutual good will, kindness, and amity.

I. CHRISTIAN PEACE IS IN CONTRAST TO THE ENMITY WHICH IS NATURAL TO SINFUL MEN. “Whence come,” asks the inspired writer—“whence come wars and fightings among you?” And the answer is that they may be traced to the lusts which are inherent in depraved human nature. In a more primitive state of society, mankind are actually and almost normally at war. In more civilized society, hatred, malice, envy, etc., prevail, and produce disastrous results, although the worst outward manifestations may be restrained.

II. CHRISTIAN PEACE IS OFTEN VIOLATED IN THE SOCIETIES WHICH ARE NAMED AFTER THE PRINCE OF PEACE. How signally this was the case with the Church at Corinth these Epistles make abundantly manifest. It was distracted by party spirit, by schism, by factions. Christ was “divided” in his body and members. And in this respect the example set at Corinth has, alas! too often been followed. The abode intended for peace has too often been converted into a scene of strife.

III. FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IS THE ONLY MEANS FOR RESTORING OR PRESERVING CHRISTIAN PEACE. Interest is not sufficient; external authority and advice continually fail. But if Christ be enthroned in each heart and in the society at large, then conflicts will be hushed and the peace of God prevail. Hence the need for all those exercises of prayer and meditation by which this truly Christian grace may be promoted.

IV. CHRISTIAN PEACE IS A CONDITION OF CHURCH PROSPERITY. Work and warfare are inimical. If there be strife, the vitality must needs be low, the witness must needs be marred, the work must needs suffer in all finer quality. On the other hand, harmony conduces to co-operation as well as to devotion. The world cannot fail to feel the effects of the presence and the testimony of a united and harmonious Church.—T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Salutation.* Among the various features which distinguish these apostolic documents from ordinary treatises must be noticed the prominence they attach to social greetings. The personal element mingles very beautifully with the doctrinal and the practical. The apostle’s theme may have been absorbing, but he usually, in bringing an Epistle to its close, refers to the individuals by whom he is himself surrounded—his companions and colleagues, and to such as were known to him among the community he is addressing.

I. UPON WHAT CHRISTIAN GREETINGS ARE BASED. They differ from common everyday salutations in this, that they are not mere forms, and are not exchanged as a matter of course. They presume a common relation to, a common interest in, the Divine Saviour. The vital union of Christ’s people to himself involves an inter-communion of sympathy amongst themselves.

II. IN WHAT CHRISTIAN SALUTATION FINDS EXPRESSION. **1.** In words and in messages of spiritual friendship, in the case of those who are absent from one another. It is thus proved that distance does not sunder hearts, that the spiritual family, dispersed through many places, is nevertheless but one. **2.** In the primitive Churches the Christian greeting took the form of the “holy kiss.” In this a common social usage was sanctified by a new and higher meaning. The custom was one which in some Churches was retained for centuries. The kiss of peace, brotherhood, and love was felt to be the appropriate symbol of the new and all-pervading sentiment of Christian kindness.

III. WHAT PURPOSES CHRISTIAN GREETINGS SUBSERVE. We may trace several very useful practical ends secured by them. **1.** They are evident tokens of the wide diffusion of the Saviour’s spiritual presence. It is because Christ is with and in his Church that

the living members of this Church, pervaded by one Spirit, show true unity and love. 2. They remove the distressing feeling of isolation from which Christ's people may in many circumstances grievously suffer. 3. They are an anticipation of the confidential and affectionate fellowship which is (next to the presence of the Redeemer) to be expected as the highest joy of the heavenly state.—T.

Ver. 14.—Benediction. When we remember what just cause of complaint Paul had against many members of the Corinthian Church, we cannot but regard this concluding benediction as an evidence of his large-hearted charity. There is no exception; his benevolent wishes and earnest intercessions are for *all*. And what fulness and richness of blessing is this which the apostle here implores!

I. TRUE BLESSING DOES NOT CONSIST IN EARTHLY ENJOYMENTS OR EVEN IN HUMAN FELLOWSHIP. Men's good wishes usually relate to these advantages, and as far as they go they are good, and may be very good. But the apostle took a higher view of the possibilities of human nature and life.

II. TRUE BLESSING CONSISTS IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF A DIVINE RELATIONSHIP. The three Persons of the Trinity are all concerned in the best and happiest experiences of the pious soul. It is a lofty view, it must be admitted, this which the apostle takes of religion, but not therefore unreasonable. It is all the worthier as evincing the interest of the Creator in the spiritual well-being of mankind.

III. TRUE BLESSING ASSUMES A DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN FORM. This is apparent from the remarkable fact that in this solemn formal language the Lord Jesus occupies the foremost place. Harmonious this with the Saviour's saying, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." The Mediator brings us into relation of sonship towards the Father and of participation in and with the Divine Spirit.

IV. TRUE BLESSING RESIDES IN THE REVELATION TO CHRISTIANS OF THE EMPHATICALLY BENIGNANT ASPECTS OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER. Observe that "favour," "love," and "communion" are here put forward as those attributes and relations in which it is chiefly desirable that the Eternal should manifest himself to his finite and dependent creatures.

V. TRUE BLESSING IS THE SUBJECT OF MUTUAL CHRISTIAN INTERCESSION. It is noticeable that, not only is this incomparable boon to be sought by each devout soul for itself; we have the example and the authority of the apostle for including it among the objects sought in intercessory supplications. Hence the appropriateness of this language for use at the close of devotional services.—T.

Ver. 4.—The death and resurrection of Christ contrasted. **I. THE FORMER WAS THROUGH WEAKNESS.** 1. *Christ assumed a nature which was capable of crucifixion.* Who could crucify God? But the God-Man might walk in weariness and weakness to Golgotha. What a pathetic consideration that Christ voluntarily chose a nature which was subject to suffering and death! 2. *Christ repressed his innate power.* (1) *His Divine power.* Thus he laid down his life; no man took it from him. But a flash of that power, and the cross would never have been reared. But a word from his lips, and his persecutors would have been dead men. But then the gospel would never have been told to man; so for man omnipotence became impotence. (2) *His human power.* Man-power as well as God-power was discarded. There was no resistance. He became "as a sheep before her shearers." He voluntarily became the weakest of the weak that he might be strong to redeem. Learn here that repression is often a triumph. Not always does the putting forth of power mean success. It is sometimes our wisdom to sit still, to submit, to be silent.

II. THE LATTER WAS IN POWER. 1. *A marvellous event.* What a contrast between the first day and the third! How mighty men seem on the former! how unutterably impotent on the latter! How weak Christ seems on the one! how omnipotent on the other! 2. *Demanding Divine energy.* This power was not of man. Man stands completely helpless at the grave. Here his boastings are silenced. But the Author of life can restore life. The Divine power manifested in our Lord's resurrection we find sometimes ascribed to God the Father (Eph. i. 20), sometimes to the Son (Mark xiv. 58); "I and my Father are one" (John x. 30). 3. *Complete.* (1) Christ arose in perfect power. The cross and the grave left no marks of weakness upon him. His

omnipotence was untainted. (2) He has reigned since in power above. (3) He works in power to-day on earth through his Word and Spirit.

III. THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, THOUGH IN CONTRAST, ARE IN CLOSE ASSOCIATION. They are in point of time. A few hours only separated the weakness of the cross from the power of the restoration. But there is real dependence also. In a certain sense the one was the natural result of the other. Without so perfect a crucifixion there could not have been so triumphant a resurrection. Christ was perfect alike when he was in weakness and when he was in power. Had there been any less "weakness" in the death, there had been less "power" in the resurrection. The humiliation was, in its order, as truly glorious as the exaltation. So with us—if we are abased with Christ here we shall be glorified with him hereafter. We have the cross—*must* have the cross—if we would have the crown.—H.

Ver. 5.—*Self-testing*. I. MANY ARE FOND OF TESTING OTHERS WHEN IT IS MORE NEEDFUL FOR THEM TO TEST THEMSELVES. "Beginning at Jerusalem" is beginning at the right place. "Know thyself" was a very wise exhortation. To ascertain the shortcomings of others is more pleasant, but not so profitable, as to ascertain our own. The matter of *first* importance to us is, not whether our neighbour's scales are true, but whether ours are. Men are singularly unselfish in some directions—in the directions of giving advice and passing condemnatory judgments.

II. THE TEST WHICH WE APPLY TO OTHERS WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO STAND OURSELVES. Paul was not what the Corinthians thought he ought to be, because they were not what they ought to have been. A blind man is a poor judge of colours. The beam must be taken out of our eyes before we shall be able to see clearly. An unclean man denouncing uncleanness is no very edifying spectacle. If we warn men against getting into the mire, they will expect us to come out of it. If we would be leaders, we must *lead*. "Come" is much more potent than "go."

III. THERE IS ONE POINT UPON WHICH WE SHOULD BE MOST DESIROUS OF TESTING OURSELVES. This is—whether we are "in the faith." Men test themselves frequently, but generally upon points of secondary importance. This is the question of questions. 1. *Do we truly repent of sin?* Do we grieve over evil as that which has been done against God? Do we hate it, loathe it, desire to be freed from it? 2. *Have we a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?* Do we gratefully receive him as our Redeemer, and believe that his blood cleanses us from all sin? Have we come to God by Christ and obtained his forgiveness? 3. *Is the vitality of our faith demonstrated by the fruits of holy living?* If our faith is not accompanied by works, it is no faith—we are "reprobates" still, and hypocritical reprobates into the bargain. If we are "in the faith," we shall be subject to God, striving daily to do his will, living and labouring to please him and to extend his glory in the earth. We may still be very imperfect, but, having been "born again," we shall walk in "newness of life."

IV. HOW WE MAY TEST OURSELVES UPON THIS VITAL POINT. 1. *By prayerful self-examination*. Prayer must come into this examination of ourselves because God must come. We need Divine help to aid us in knowing ourselves. 2. *By comparing head, heart, and life with God's Word*. In the Scriptures we have declared what those "in the faith" believe, feel, do. 3. *By pressing home the question—Is Christ in me?* "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. viii. 9). We are in the faith if the Lord of the faith is in us.

How earnestly should we examine ourselves! How restless should we be until we enter into the rest which comes from knowing that we are truly in the faith!—H.

Ver. 11, 12.—*A beautiful farewell*. I. RECOGNITION OF BROTHERHOOD In his letter the writer had been compelled to insist much upon his apostleship, but he now wisely and graciously stands upon common ground. He was compelled to magnify his office, but he was too good and too great to magnify himself. Amongst men there is a natural craving for equality; we resent a fellow-creature attempting to lord it over us. And in the realm of religion we have ever need to remember "all ye are brethren." What a poor fool a great man seems when he swells and struts in his miserable pomposity and conceit! he is *not* great—no one can persuade us that he is great—he is extremely little. How much greater our great men would be if they would not be

so great! One might imagine, sometimes, that our Lord had commanded those who would be chief to imitate turkey-cocks; but he said they must become **as** little children.

II. GOOD WISHES. "Farewell," or "Rejoice." All joy to you, all prosperity, all happy and profitable experience. Not a few of them had ill wishes for him; he had nothing but good wishes for friends and foes. This was a very real *fare well*. Upon our lips it often means too little—in fact, it has become but the barest signal for separation; but coming from Paul's heart it was full of earnest meaning. Possibly in his thought it took the form of "Rejoice in the Lord," as in Phil. iii. 1. Everything of value in the eyes of Paul was "in the Lord." And there is no real *far*ing well unless we are in Christ.

III. LOFTY AND GRACIOUS DESIRES. 1. *For spiritual growth*. "Be perfected." Correct the evils which I have pointed out. Reform yourselves. Seek to become more like your Lord. Strive to get rid of the "old things," and to become new in Christ. Rest not as long as any sin abides within you. This was desiring for them the very highest good. This was a practical suggestion of the way in which they might "fare well." 2. *For comfort*. "Be comforted." Paul's heart was tender towards them. They had caused him great discomfort; he desires their consolation. He had, indeed, wounded them himself in administering stern but necessary rebuke—but faithful were the wounds of such a friend; and now he desires that these wounds may be healed, trusting that the lancet has done its work. Note: he does not say, "Be comforted, be perfected," but "Be perfected, be comforted;" true comfort comes only as we strive for true holiness. The quickest way to bring comfort to men is to seek to make them better. To comfort men *in* sin is devil-like; to comfort men by bringing them *out* of sin is God-like. 3. *For unity*. "Be of the same mind." Disunited, they would be miserable and weak; united, they would be happy and strong. When we are drawn nearer to Christ we shall be drawn nearer to the brethren; if we quarrel with the members we shall soon quarrel with the Head. The Church has to fight united foes; union should not be the monopoly of the servants of the devil. 4. *For peace*. "Live in peace." Let peace be continuous, uninterrupted. Disunion will lead to civil war, and how can Christians fight the devil if they are fighting one another? If we have peace with God we should live in peace with his children, and be at war only with Satan and sin. 5. *For love*. Conveyed by the exhortation to "salute one another with a holy kiss." Union is not enough; peace is not enough; there must be heartfelt affection between the people of God. This is the only true basis of union and peace. An armed truce is sometimes worse than open battle. We must not "tolerate" the brethren—we must *love* them. A "Toleration Act" is a blasphemy against Christ.

IV. A STRENGTHENING PROMISE. "The God of love and peace shall be with you." What Wesley said in death is true for all life, "The best of all is—God is with us." "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence" (Exod. xxxiii. 15). If we have God with us, what can we lack? Perhaps we may regard this promise as *conditional*. If you sincerely strive to be holy, united, loving, God will abide with you; otherwise, he will depart. Like Israel of old, you may become desolate through carnality and hardness of heart. But if you desire to live in love and peace, the God of love and peace will presence himself with you. You must be workers together with him; from him you get desires for love and peace; but you must cultivate these, and be true and earnest in your religious life. It has been well said, "God's presence produces love and peace, and we must have love and peace in order to have his presence; God gives what he commands; God gives, but we must cherish his gifts."—H.

Ver. 14.—*The benediction*. These words have become the universal sanctuary utterance of the Christian Church. As Paul wrote them, how real and full of meaning they were! Now, alas! they have too much degenerated into a mere signal for terminating public worship, anxiously anticipated by the weary—an empty appendage, for which might adequately be substituted a bare announcement, "The meeting is over." Yet how beautiful is this benediction! how suggestive! how full of teaching! It is a summary of Christianity, a revelation of the Trinity and of the great threefold Divine work for human redemption and exaltation.

I. THE MATTER OF THE BENEDICTION. 1. "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

(1) Remark the title. *Lord*—the Divine One and the Master. *Jesus*—the Saviour and the Man. *Christ*—the Anointed of God, the long-promised Messiah. A trinity of qualification. (2) The grace. The favour, and all that the favour of such a Being involves. The blessings of Christ's rule as Master, of his redemption as Saviour, of his boundless resources as the Divine Messiah. If we are the objects of his favour, how inestimably rich we are! 2. "*The love of God.*" The apostle has just spoken of God as the God of love (ver. 11); now he desires for the Corinthians the love of this God of love. The riches of Divine love are the Christian's portion. Here is specially referred to the love of God as our *Father*. It was through the Father's love that the Saviour was given, but it is through the Saviour's work, and our participation in it, that we enter into the enjoyment of the love of God as the love of our Father. This is the covenanted love of God; his special fatherly affection for those who have become, through Christ, his sons and daughters. Thus "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" is made to precede "the love of God." 3. "*The communion of the Holy Ghost.*" The participation in the Holy Ghost. This we enjoy through Christ (Gal. iii. 13, 14). Who can estimate the value of this? The great work of sanctification, the constant effective teaching of the truth, preservation in times of spiritual peril, comfort in sorrow, ability to carry on Christian work,—all these depend upon our participating in the Holy Ghost. "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. v. 19). If in aught we hinder the Divine Spirit's working within us, in that measure we become spiritual suicides.

II. THE EXTENT OF THE BENEDICTION. It is for all Christians; it is not for any special order or class, but for every individual. Some privileges were associated with the apostleship, some with certain of mark and power in the early Church, but the privileges which are of supreme value have ever been the common heritage of God's people. Some smaller favours may be for the few, the greatest are for the many.

III. HOW MAY WE COME UNDER THIS BENEDICTION? A very important question. To be beyond its reach must be to be in peril and misery. As it is for all the people of the Lord, those must become the people of the Lord who would share in its blessings. If we are willing to be blessed, God is willing to let this benediction rest upon us. By the way of repentance and faith and sincere striving to do the Divine will we pass from under the curse and abide under the benediction.—H.

Ver. 5.—*Self-examination*. I. POINTS ON WHICH SELF-EXAMINATION IS REQUIRED. They relate to your connection with Jesus Christ—whether he is in you and you are in the faith. It is assumed that the word of faith has been preached; then follows the question—How does this Word affect or influence you? It is easy to hear it and give it a formal assent—but this is not enough. Are you really in the faith? Does the truth compass you about and impress itself on all your views, motives, and principles of action? If so, Christ is certainly in you. He dwells in your heart by faith, and by his Spirit vitalizes and purifies your spirit.

II. THE KIND OF EVIDENCE NEEDED. The thing is not to be assumed, but proved. There is a mode of proof which onlookers may read and estimate. It is that which appears in your temper, demeanour, and actions. If men see good fruit in you, they infer that you are a good tree. But self-scrutiny must go into the matter more deeply. Onlookers see actions, but not the motives from which they spring. Some of your words and deeds they know, but not all of them, and not your actuating dispositions. Examine yourselves by the double test of the inward and the outward life. Review your motives and secret desires, as well as the current of your tempers and the tenor of your lives.

III. THE DIFFICULTY OF CONDUCTING THIS EXAMINATION. 1. *In the nature of the case*. Genuine self-knowledge is perhaps a rare attainment. The moment we go beneath the surface and try to probe the hidden things of the heart, we find ourselves among intricacies hard to unravel—a review of motives, the detection of half-motives, and the analysis of transient thoughts and feelings as respects their moral complexion and significance. We are in a labyrinth of plans, wishes, imaginations, passions, caprices, and principles. One motive lurks behind another, one current of desire flows beneath another. And feeling, when subjected to analysis, ceases to be feeling, and it is only the recollection or the shadow of it which you can examine. 2. *Through the delusions of self-esteem*. Men shrink from a severe self-examination, lest the result

should be mortifying, if not alarming. And even so far as they go, they are influenced by a desire to think hopefully of their own state, and to apply to themselves easy and partial tests. Like a teacher who is partial to a particular scholar and asks him only those questions which he is sure to answer, or an unjust judge who gives ear only to the side that he favours, every man is apt in self-examination to be biased in his own favour and to dwell on his best points as though they formed the whole staple of his character. 3. *From exaggerated self-distrust.* Some minds are morbidly sensitive, and do not so much examine as torment themselves. They cannot own what Christ has done for them, through fear of presumption. And their self-judgment is hindered by over-caution and a dejection mistaken for humility.

IV. THE WAY TO REACH THE TRUTH ABOUT YOURSELVES. The Lord must be asked to preside over and direct the examination. It is he who looks upon the heart, and so it is he who can give you an insight into your real selves. Begin with the prayer in Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. The Spirit of the Lord then shows you what you are by means of the lamp of the Word. And with such guidance you ought to know whether you are the Lord's or no. But you must yourselves watch as well as read and pray. It is a good rule to note the significance of little things, in which the mind is less on its guard and so more freely reveals its bent. A physician watches slight symptoms in order to detect and cure disease. A judge takes note of small incidents in a case, and shows the jury how, on the combination of these, the verdict of guilt or innocence must turn. So also should he act who would diagnose or judge himself; though, on the other hand, one must not lay all the stress on minor points, but should rest the main conclusion on broad and comprehensive grounds.

V. THE CONDITION OF THOSE WHO CANNOT BEAR THE TRIAL. "Disapproved." There is no verdict of "not proven." Those who name the Name of Christ are approved or disapproved. Leave not your relation to Jesus Christ in doubt. Repair to him who can solve your doubt and give you the good part that shall not be taken away.—F.

Ver. 11.—"*The God of love and peace.*" Love is the nature, and peace the very element, of God. Whatever the detached indications of severity under his sway, whatever the calamities permitted or the penalties inflicted by God, there is love in, over, and under all. Whatever the trouble or turmoil in parts of creation, at the centre of the universe there is a perfect peace. It is the conviction of this which makes our Christian faith so powerful both to calm and to satisfy the soul. We can endure much if we have for our Friend and our eternal Portion the God of love and peace.

I. THE INITIAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. You become in your heart acquainted with God through the faith of the gospel. You hear and believe that he loves, and is so far from desirous that any should perish, that he has made provision in Jesus Christ for eternal life to all who confide in his Name. So you repent of your enmity to him and turn to the God of love. Not only so. The gospel, while a revelation of love, is also a message of peace. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Hearing this, you perceive that God is not pursuing you with an angry countenance and a terrible dart, but regards you with a face of sublime compassion and good-will, and bid you fight against him no more, but become his friend. So you repent of your ab-nation and turn to the God of peace. And all is changed in you. You also love. You also are in peace.

II. PROGRESSIVE FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. In order to abide with God, you must grow in those moral qualities which in their perfection make up his character. Thus you are to dwell in love, and to make peace. 1. *Dwell in love.* What notion can a hard-hearted, uncharitable man form of God? Faith needs love in order to the higher attainments of holy knowledge and holy fellowship. Only he who dwells in love dwells in God. The Divine Word is sweet to him. The Divine purposes are all good in his eyes; for love enters into the secret of love, and by a touch of sympathy recognizes its presence and strength. 2. *Cherish and make peace.* A quarrelsome Christian, a former of party, a fomentor of strife,—how can he know the God of peace? St. Paul by no means shrank from controversy, and made no truce with error or evil; but what a peacemaker he was in the Church! How impressive his appeals to the Corinthians to be of the same mind and at peace among themselves! It brings God into the heart to arrange disputes, to forgive offences, to bury prejudices, and to exhibit and foster

brotherly kindness in the Church. It is the dove that was made a symbol of the Spirit of God; and that is a bird which flees away from noise and tempest. So it is in the quiet heart, and in those Churches where the brethren are at peace with one another, that the Spirit of the God of peace, the Comforter, will dwell.

III. DEFEAT OF THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL. 1. *Hatred is a work of the flesh.* Love is part of the fruit of the Spirit; and he who is born of the Spirit ought to smile at provocation and forgive injury and even love his enemies, because the God whom he serves is love, the Father of whom he is begotten is merciful. 2. *Discord is a work of the devil.* And in breathing a spirit of mutual consideration and concord over his people, the God of peace bruises Satan under their feet (Rom. xvi. 20). He brings order out of confusion, and crushes the hissing serpents of dissension and malignity under the feet of his saints.—F.

Ver. 4.—“*Crucified through weakness.*” This is a very characteristic view of the crucifixion of our Lord. St. Paul never dwelt upon it complacently, as we do. There is no trace of his having ever elaborately described it, or endeavoured to move the feelings of his hearers or readers by the persuasions of his Lord’s dying distresses. The Crucifixion was a painful subject to him. It was Christ’s time of weakness. The apostle always seems to hasten away from that theme to what he can glory in, even Christ, the risen One, the living One, who now can save. Dean Plumptre explains the expression taken as our text thus: “*For even he was crucified.*” St. Paul seems to see in Christ the highest representative instance of the axiomatic law by which he himself had been comforted, that strength is perfected in infirmities. For he too lived encompassed with the infirmities of man’s nature, and the possibility of the Crucifixion flowed from that fact as a natural sequel.” Professor Lias says, “Our Lord assumed our human nature with all its infirmities (Heb. ii. 10—18; iv. 15; v. 2, 3), and although they were the result of sin, He bore all those infirmities, death itself included. And then he snook them all off for ever when he rose again ‘by the power of God.’”

I. CHRIST WAS BODILY WEAK. We may fairly assume that our Lord had a healthy body; but it was subject to ordinary human infirmities. He felt fatigue, hunger, thirst, need of sleep; and spiritual work exhausted his nervous system as it does ours. We may even assume that his must have been a nervously sensitive body, since this is found to be the characteristic of all highly intellectual and all highly spiritual men and women. It will be easy to show how St. Paul would feel a special sympathy with the Lord Jesus in all this, since his too was a frail, sensitively organized body. Those who are easily depressed, readily affected by outward circumstances, and conscious of physical frailty, seldom realize how near to them in sympathetic experience comes the Lord Jesus Christ, and, after him, the great apostle of the Gentiles.

II. CHRIST WAS SOUL-STRONG. And therefore he could go through all the lot which God appointed for him, even though that included the bitter and terrible experiences of the Crucifixion. The soul-strength St. Paul thought of as *Christ living* in the very midst of his weakness and suffering. His idea may be thus expressed: “We too are weak; we have our share in infirmities and sufferings, which are ennobled by the thought that they are ours because they are his; but we know that we shall live in the highest sense, in the activities of the spiritual life, which also we share with him, and which comes to us by the power of God; and this life will be manifested in the exercise of our spiritual power towards you and for your good.” Reference is to the present *ministry* and not to the *hereafter-time*. If Christ’s weakness was, like St. Paul’s, frailty of body, he might rejoice that Christ’s strength was *soul-strength*, and, like his, the strength of God made perfect in weakness.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Self-examination.* “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.” This is without question a necessary and practically important Christian duty. But the forms it takes and the estimates of its value differ according to the tones and peculiarities of Christian life and feeling in each age. When prominence is given to doctrine, and conflicts rage round precisions in the expression of opinion, self-examination is neglected, and, as a rebound, is unduly cultivated by the pietistic few. When feeling rather than truth is cultivated, and religion is conceived as a mood of mind rather than as a body of doctrines, self-examination is set forth

prominently as one of the essentials of Christian living. It must also be added that self-examination has always been urged by the priesthood as an agent in preserving for such priesthood the control of men's thoughts, opinions, conduct, and life. Recognizing its importance, but carefully avoiding exaggerations in reference to it, we notice—

I. WHAT IT MAY PROPERLY CONCERN. 1. *Conduct*. This may include (1) our mode of performing our ordinary life-duties; (2) the character of our relationship with others; (3) the wise use of our opportunities of usefulness; (4) the helpful occupation of our leisure hours; (5) and the worthy meeting of our life-responsibilities. 2. *Opinion*. St. Paul here enjoins a proving or testing of opinion, so that a man may know whether he is "holding fast the profession of his faith without wavering;" "holding fast the form of sound words." 3. *Feeling*. So far as this is related to the *motive* of conduct, and gives inspiration and character to the expressions of Christian life. Self-examination of feeling with a view to confidence of our state and satisfaction in our progress and attainment is always perilous and often ruinous. Watching frames and feelings is the most enervating thing a Christian can do. It never can culture humility; it often, in a very subtle way, nourishes spiritual pride and severs the soul from the simplicity of its dependence on Christ. It brings a false satisfaction in feeling right, or a needless distress in feeling wrong. It clouds the Christian life with hindering and weakening depressions, or it brings an extravagant joy which is really joy in self, not joy in God.

II. WHEN SHOULD IT BE UNDERTAKEN? Only occasionally, and under special pressure, such as comes with times of conscious weakness and failure; or times when error is being freely taught; or times when the Christian morality is imperilled; or times when the changes of life are bringing to us fresh responsibilities. St. Paul commends the duty in a special form in relation to the Communion of the Lord's Supper. And many Christian people have found special times of self-examination useful—at the New Year, at birthdays, etc. Where there is a natural tendency to morbid introspection the seasons should be very infrequent. Where the active side of Christian life is over-developed, the times for self-examination may safely be multiplied.

III. IN WHAT SPIRIT SHOULD IT BE CONDUCTED? There should be (1) great seriousness; (2) earnest prayer for a spirit of sincerity and faithfulness; (3) careful avoidance of any desire to test themselves by any human standards; (4) anxiously cherished dependence on the leadings and teachings of God the Holy Ghost; and (5) firm resolve to turn the conclusions of our self-examination into principles and directions for the guidance and the improvement of our practical life of godliness. Compare the psalmist, who prays, "Search me, O God," before attempting to search himself.

IV. HOW MAY THE POSSIBLE EVILS OF IT BE COUNTERACTED? 1. By making Holy Scripture the standard according to which we test ourselves. 2. By making conduct rather than feeling the subject of our review. 3. By turning the results of the examination into prayer for more grace. 4. By persisting in seeing the things that we may have to rejoice in, as well as those which we may have to groan over. 5. And by regarding the Lord Jesus Christ—and none but he—as our Model of the *interior*, as well as of the exterior, Christian life.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Who are the reprobates?* Essentially such as have not Christ in them. Those whose experience and conduct are not sufficient to prove the indwelling presence and sanctifying power of the living Christ. The word "reprobate" signifies those who have been *tried and found wanting*. Illustrations of the use of the term may be found in Rom. i. 28; 1 Cor. ix. 27; 2 Tim. iii. 8; Tit. i. 16; Heb. vi. 8. The subject may be effectively introduced by a description of the scene in Belshazzar's palace, with the mystic handwriting on the wall. Then it may be shown how the term may gain its application to—

I. INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS. Some such St. Paul refers to by name, as Alexander, Hermogenes, Demas, etc. Compare Peter's finding Simon the Sorcerer wanting. Individuals may be reprobate (1) intellectually, by accepting false and dishonouring doctrine; (2) morally, by yielding to temptations of self-indulgence, vice, or crime.

II. CHURCHES. This may be illustrated by the searching addresses sent by the glorified Christ to some of the seven Churches of Asia. The principles of the search may be effectively applied to modern Churches.

III. PASTORS. These fall from the pastoral ideal generally after they have failed from the private Christian ideal. Shepherds are reprobates when they neglect their duty to their flock; when they feed themselves and not the flock; when they see the wolf coming, and flee; and when they fail duly to honour the chief Shepherd before the flock. Illustration may be taken from the experiences of the City of Mansoul as figured by John Bunyan, in his 'Holy War.' Reprobates, such as are here dealt with, are recoverable by penitence, humiliation, and heart-return to Christ.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Final counsels.* What should the godly minister most desire for his people? All his best wishes for them can be gathered up in the word "unity." And the terms here used embody the idea of unity. And this was the supreme want of the Corinthian Church, which had been so broken up by (1) party feeling, (2) false teachings, (3) immoral members. As this subject has been so often taken as a theme for sermons preached at the close of ministries in particular places, we only give an outline from the point of view which regards *unity* as the central idea of the passage.

I. PERFECT. That is, exactly fitted together; a whole.

II. OF GOOD COMFORT. This would only come by the removal of the jealousies and envyings, which spoiled the unity and the brotherhood.

III. OF ONE MIND. Giving up individual preferences and peculiarities, so that they might agree together, think and plan the same things.

IV. LIVE IN PEACE. Or show that thoughtfulness for others which is the great secret of the peaceful life.

Upon such unity as the apostle thus commends the Divine benediction is sure to rest.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*The Christian benediction.* This is the closing sentence of a long letter. Letters bear the stamp of the age in which they are written. Their modes of beginning and ending, and their forms of salutation, are characteristic of nations and periods. This closing benediction may be compared with those of other Epistles. The most simple form is "Grace be with you," and this we find in Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and also in the Epistle to the Hebrews. A somewhat fuller but still very simple form is this: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." This is found in Romans, Philippians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. The Epistle to the Galatians closes thus: "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Philemon ends in a similar way. In Ephesians there is a peculiar form: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Comparing St. Paul's mode with that of the other apostles, we find similarity with distinctive differences. St. Peter closes his First Epistle thus: "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus;" and his Second Epistle thus: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." St. James has no greeting; nor has John, except to his Third Epistle, and there it is simply, "Peace be to thee." Jude closes with a doxology. From this comparison it appears that the Christian benediction, in its simplest form, is the wish that "grace" may be with the Church. The point of it lies in the word "grace," and in the ideas that St. Paul attached to the word "grace," and to its "being" or "continuing" with the believers.

I. THE MEANING OF THE TERM "GRACE." It must be distinguished from the word "graces," as meaning the special gifts and endowments granted to the early Church. As used in the singular number, it sometimes means the free favour and love of God as shown to us in our salvation by Christ. Then the full expression is, "the grace of God, and the gift by grace" (Rom. v. 15). A characteristic instance of this use of the word may be found in Titus ii. 11, 12. St. Paul, however, uses the term in quite another sense. He often means by it what we should call the *state of grace*, that condition of privilege and relation, that favour and acceptance with God, into which we are brought by Christ and in which we stand—a state of justification and acceptance; a state of rightness with God through faith. This state of favour he calls "grace." Illustrative references may be made to Rom. v. 1, 2; Gal. i. 6; Phil. i. 7, and also to a striking passage in 1 Pet. v. 12. It seems that the Lord Jesus Christ is regarded as the model or representative of this state or standing of acceptance and favour with God. The Father himself testified to it, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I

am well pleased." Christ declares it to be his abiding state, "I do always the things that please him." He was the perfect, obedient Son, in his trust, and love, and devotion, and obedience, and freeness of communion with the Father, giving us the very model and illustration of the state of rightness, of grace and favour, into which he brings us. St. Paul's burden of benediction is "grace," and he sometimes means by it the state of favour and acceptance with God into which we are brought by faith. Now, this state of grace is so thoroughly that in which Christ himself stands, and it is so manifestly the state into which we can only be brought by him, that it may properly be called the "grace of the Lord Jesus," or the "state of grace of the Lord Jesus." Sometimes this state is viewed on the side of the Spirit that brings us into it, and then it is called the state of *faith*; at other times it is viewed on the side of the privilege that belongs to it, and then it is called the state of *grace*. Reading St. Paul's benediction in the light of these explanations, it may run thus: "May you enjoy and enter yet more fully into that state of grace and favour with God which Christ has, by his sonship, and which you have, in measure also by yours: that state of grace, I mean, which consists in these things—an ever-deepening sense of the love of God, and feeling of the impulse of that love; and an abiding consciousness of the communion of the Holy Ghost, whereby ye are sealed."

II. THE CHRISTIAN STATE OF GRACE OR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. Surely no fact could be presented that is more calculated to fill our hearts with the "joy unspeakable" than this. No principle of Christian steadfastness can be of more practical value than this. If any one thing more than another is the burden of the Epistles, it is the right of the believer in Christ. In multiplied ways the apostle seems to say—Realize your sonship; enter into your privilege; use your right of access; live as restored and accepted ones; seek to know the spirit of your new state; lift yourselves up to meet the responsibilities resting on your privilege. Ye receive "now the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." "Now are ye the sons of God." Yet surely this is not the thought which, as Christians, we most readily cherish. Too often we encourage uncertainty as to our spiritual status; we hope that all will be well at last; we walk under clouds of doubt, and very feebly welcome even the salvation which God grants. The higher Christian life takes in simple trust, not only Christ, but all the status, rights, and privileges that come to us in Christ. It loses its fears, buries its questioning, and rejoices in having "passed from death unto life." If any longing for a more earnest religious life has been started in any of our hearts; if for our own cold lifeless souls we have been led to pray, "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years!"—then let us be assured that the beginning of better things is this—Enter into, possess, and enjoy your full rights in Christ; not your own rights, but Christ's, which are made yours on believing. Believe that you have been brought into, and do now stand in, a state of grace and favour with God, accepted by him in the Beloved. For assurances of present salvation and privilege, see Rom. viii. 1, 14—17; Eph. ii. 12, 13, 18—22; 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9, 10; 1 John iii. 1, 2, etc. But how is such a sense of our standing in Christ to be won? Faith—trust—is the answer. Trust is the attitude of our souls which God demands. Trust in his Son Jesus Christ, who "of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption." Simple, entire, perfect trust. Taking Christ as he is offered—as our "all in all," not for deliverance only, but also for standing and sanctification. United with Christ, his rights become ours. We are sons with God. We stand in the state of favour with God in which Jesus, the perfect Son, who is our life, stands.—B. T.

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