

## PSALM XV.

**SUBJECT, &c.**—This Psalm of David bears no dedicatory title at all indicative of the occasion upon which it was written, but it is exceedingly probable that, together with the twenty-fourth Psalm, to which it bears a striking resemblance, its composition was in some way connected with the removal of the ark to the holy hill of Zion. Who should attend upon the ark was a matter of no small consequence, for because unauthorised persons had intruded into the office, David was unable on the first occasion to complete his purpose of bringing the ark to Zion. On the second attempt he is more careful, not only to allot the work of carrying the ark to the divinely appointed Levites (1 Chron. xv. 2), but also to leave it in charge of the man whose house the Lord had blessed, even Obededom, who, with his many sons, ministered in the house of the Lord. (1 Chron. xxvi. 8, 12.) Spiritually we have here a description of the man who is a child at home in the Church of God on earth, and who will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever above. He is primarily Jesus, the perfect man, and in him all who through grace are conformed to his image.

**DIVISION.**—The first verse asks the question; the rest of the verses answer it. We will call the Psalm **THE QUESTION AND ANSWER.**

### EXPOSITION.

**L**ORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

1.—**THE QUESTION.** *Jehovah.* Thou high and holy One, who shall be permitted to have fellowship with thee? The heavens are not pure in thy sight, and thou chargedst thine angels with folly, who then of mortal mould shall dwell with thee, thou dread consuming fire? A sense of the glory of the Lord and of the holiness which becomes his house, his service, and his attendants, excites the humble mind to ask the solemn question before us. Where angels bow with veiled faces, how shall man be able to worship at all? The unthinking many imagine it to be a very easy matter to approach the Most High, and when professedly engaged in his worship they have no questionings of heart as to their fitness for it; but truly humbled souls often shrink under a sense of utter unworthiness, and would not dare to approach the throne of the God of holiness if it were not for him, our Lord, our Advocate, who can abide in the heavenly temple, because his righteousness endureth for ever. “*Who shall abide in thy tabernacle?*” Who shall be admitted to be one of the household of God, to sojourn under his roof and enjoy communion with himself? “*Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*” Who shall be a citizen of Zion, and an inhabitant of the heavenly Jerusalem? The question is raised, because it is a question. All men have not this privilege, nay, even among professors there are aliens from the commonwealth, who have no secret intercourse with God. On the grounds of law no mere man can dwell with God, for there is not one upon earth who answers to the just requirements mentioned in the succeeding verses. The questions in the text are asked of the *Lord*, as if none but the Infinite Mind could answer them so as to satisfy the unquiet conscience. We must know from the Lord of the tabernacle what are the qualifications for his service, and when we have been taught of him, we shall clearly see that only our spotless Lord Jesus, and those who are conformed unto his image, can ever stand with acceptance before the Majesty on high.

Impertinent curiosity frequently desires to know who and how many shall be saved; if those who thus ask the question, “*Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*” would make it a soul-searching enquiry in reference to themselves they would act much more wisely. Members of the visible church, which is God’s tabernacle of worship, and hill of eminence, should diligently see to it, that they have the preparation of heart which fits them to be inmates of the house of God. Without the wedding-dress of righteousness in Christ Jesus, we have no right to sit at the banquet of communion. Without uprightness of walk we are not fit for the imperfect church on earth, and certainly we must not hope to enter the perfect church above.

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

3 *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.

5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

2.—THE ANSWER. The Lord in answer to the question informs us by his Holy Spirit of the character of the man who alone can dwell in his holy hill. In perfection this holiness is found only in the Man of Sorrows, but in a measure it is wrought in all his people by the Holy Ghost. Faith and the graces of the Spirit are not mentioned, because this is a description of outward character, and where fruits are found the root may not be seen, but it is surely there. Observe the accepted man's *walk, work and word*. "*He that walketh uprightly,*" he keeps himself erect as those do who traverse high ropes; if they lean on one side over they must go, or as those who carry precious but fragile ware in baskets on their heads, who lose all if they lose their perpendicular. True believers do not cringe as flatterers, wriggle as serpents, bend double as earth-grubbers, or crook on one side as those who have sinister aims; they have the strong backbone of the vital principle of grace within, and being themselves upright, they are able to walk uprightly. Walking is of far more importance than talking. He only is right who is upright in walk and downright in honesty. "*And worketh righteousness.*" His faith shows itself by good works, and therefore is no dead faith. God's house is a hive for workers, not a nest for drones. Those that rejoice that everything is done for them by another, even the Lord Jesus, and therefore hate legality, are the best doers in the world upon gospel principles. If we are not positively serving the Lord, and doing his holy will to the best of our power, we may seriously debate our interest in divine things, for trees which bear no fruit must be hewn down and cast into the fire. "*And speaketh the truth in his heart.*" The fool in the last Psalm spoke falsely in his heart; observe both here and elsewhere in the two Psalms, the striking contrast. Saints not only desire to love and speak truth with their lips, but they seek to be true within; they will not lie even in the closet of their hearts, for God is there to listen; they scorn double meanings, evasions, equivocations, white lies, flatteries, and deceptions. Though truths, like roses, have thorns about them, good men wear them in their bosoms. Our heart must be the sanctuary and refuge of truth, should it be banished from all the world beside, and hunted from among men; at all risk we must entertain the angel of truth, for truth is God's daughter. We must be careful that the heart is really fixed and settled in principle, for tenderness of conscience towards truthfulness, like the bloom on a peach, needs gentle handling, and once lost it were hard to regain it. Jesus was the mirror of sincerity and holiness. Oh, to be more and more fashioned after his similitude!

3. After the positive comes the negative. "*He that backbiteth not with his tongue.*" There is a sinful way of backbiting with the heart when we think too hardly of a neighbour, but it is the tongue which does the mischief. Some men's tongues bite more than their teeth. The tongue is not steel, but it cuts, and its wounds are very hard to heal; its worst wounds are not with its edge to our face, but with its back when our head is turned. Under the law, a night hawk was an unclean bird, and its human image is abominable everywhere. All slanderers are the devil's bellows to blow up contention, but those are the worst which blow at the back of the fire. "*Nor doeth evil to his neighbour.*" He who bridle his tongue will not give a licence to his hand. Loving our neighbour as ourselves will make us jealous of his good name, careful not to injure his estate, or by ill example to corrupt his character. "*Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*" He is a fool if not a knave who picks up stolen goods and harbours them; in slander as well as robbery, the receiver is as bad as the thief. If there were no gratified hearers of ill reports, there would be an end of the trade of spreading them. Trapp says, that "the tale-bearer carrieth the devil in his tongue, and the tale-hearer carries the devil in his ear." The original may be translated, "endureth;" implying that it is a sin to endure or tolerate tale-bearers. "Show that man out!" we should say of a drunkard, yet it is very questionable if his unmannerly behaviour will do us so much mischief

as the tale-bearer's insinuating story. "Call for a policeman!" we say if we see a thief at his business; ought we to feel no indignation when we hear a gossip at her work? Mad dog! Mad dog!! is a terrible hue and cry, but there are few curs whose bite is so dangerous as a busybody's tongue. Fire! fire!! is an alarming note, but the tale-bearer's tongue is set on fire of hell, and those who indulge it had better mend their manners, or they may find that there is fire in hell for unbridled tongues. Our Lord spake evil of no man, but breathed a prayer for his foes; we must be like him, or we shall never be with him.

4. "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord." We must be as honest in paying respect as in paying our bills. Honour to whom honour is due. To all good men we owe a debt of honour, and we have no right to hand over what is their due to vile persons who happen to be in high places. When bad men are in office, it is our duty to respect the office, but we cannot so violate our consciences as to do otherwise than condemn the men; and on the other hand, when true saints are in poverty and distress, we must sympathize with their afflictions and honour the men none the less. We may honour the roughest cabinet for the sake of the jewels, but we must not prize false gems because of their setting. A sinner in a gold chain and silken robes is no more to be compared with a saint in rags than a rushlight in a silver candlestick with the sun behind a cloud. The proverb says, that "ugly women, finely dressed, are the uglier for it," and so mean men in high estate are the more mean because of it. "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Scriptural saints under the New Testament rule "swear not at all," but their word is as good as an oath: those men of God who think it right to swear, are careful and prayerful lest they should even seem to overshoot the mark. When engagements have been entered into which turn out to be unprofitable, "the saints are men of honour still." Our blessed Surety swore to his own hurt, but how gloriously he stood to his suretiship! what a comfort to us that he changeth not, and what an example to us to be scrupulously and precisely exact in fulfilling our covenants with others! The most far-seeing trader may enter into engagements which turn out to be serious losses, but whatever else he loses, if he keeps his honour, his losses will be bearable; if that be lost all is lost.

5 "He that putteth not out his money to usury." Usury was and is hateful both to God and man. That a lender should share with the borrower in gains made by his money is most fitting and proper; but that the man of property should eat up the poor wretch who unfortunately obtained a loan of him is abominable. Those who grind poor tradesmen, needy widows, and such like, by charging them interest at intolerable rates, will find that their gold and their silver are cankered. The man who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord must shake off this sin as Paul shook the viper into the fire. "Nor taketh reward against the innocent." Bribery is a sin both in the giver and the receiver. It was frequently practised in Eastern courts of justice; that form of it is now under our excellent judges almost an unheard-of thing; yet the sin survives in various forms, which the reader needs not that we should mention; and under every shape it is loathsome to the true man of God. He remembers that Jesus instead of taking reward against the innocent died for the guilty.

5 "He that doeth these things shall never be moved." No storm shall tear him from his foundations, drag him from his anchorage, or uproot him from his place. Like the Lord Jesus, whose dominion is everlasting, the true Christian shall never lose his crown. He shall not only be on Zion, but like Zion, fixed and firm. He shall dwell in the tabernacle of the Most High, and neither death nor judgment shall remove him from his place of privilege and blessedness.

Let us betake ourselves to prayer and self-examination, for this Psalm is as fire for the gold, and as a furnace for silver. Can we endure its testing power?

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?"—In that the church of Christ upon earth is a "tabernacle," we may note, that neither the church itself nor the members of it, have any fixed or firm seat of habitation in this world: "Arise, depart, for this is not your rest." Micah ii. 10. "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Heb. xiii. 14. God's tabernacle, being a movable

temple, wandered up and down, sometimes in the desert, sometimes in Shiloh, sometimes among the Phillistines, sometimes in Kirjathjearim, and never found any settled place till it was translated into the mountain of God : even so the church of God wandereth as a straggler and a stranger in the wilderness of this world, being destitute, tormented, and afflicted on every side, persecuted from this city to that, and never enjoying any constant habitation of sound and sure rest until it be translated unto "*God's holy hill.*" The verb *gur* (as the learned in Hebrew note) signifying to dwell as a stranger, or a sojourner, imports that a citizen of heaven is a pilgrim on earth . . . . . In that the church is a *tabernacle*, we may see that it is not a fort, compassed about with any strong walls, armed with any human forces ; and yet such as keep within her are defended from heat of sun, and hurt of storms. Her strength is not here, but from above, for Christ her Head is in all her troubles a present help, a refuge against the tempest, a shadow against the heat. Isa. xxv. 4. The church on earth is indeed a *tabernacle*, but it is *God's tabernacle*, wherein he dwelleth as in his house ; " Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle ? " for to this end the Lord commanded the tabernacle to be made, that he might dwell among them ; and again, whereas he promised by Moses to set his tabernacle among them the blessed apostle construeth it of his dwelling among them. 2 Cor. vi. 16. " You are," saith he, " the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." To the same purpose, God is said elsewhere to dwell in Sion, and to walk in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, that is, in the midst of the seven churches in the midst of his city (Psa. xlvi. 5), in the midst of his people. Isa. xii. 6.—*John Boys, D.D., Dean of Canterbury, 1571—1625.*

*Verse 1.*—" *Lord, who shall abide,*" etc. If David, a man endued with an excellent and divine spirit, one in whom singular wisdom, rare knowledge, and deep understanding of hidden secrets appeared, who being taught of God in heavenly things, far surpassed and exceeded in wisdom all his teachers and counsellors, did notwithstanding desire to know the sheep from the goats, the good from the bad, the saints from the hypocrites, the true worshippers of God from dissemblers, the true inhabitants of the holy tabernacle from the intruders of the wicked, lest therein he should be deceived ; how great cause have we, in whom neither the like spirit, neither such wisdom, nor equal knowledge, nor comparable understanding, by many degrees appeareth to fear our own weakness, to doubt of our own judgments, to confess our own infirmity, and to suspect the subtle sleights and coloured pretences of men : and for further knowledge in hidden, deep, and secret things, with David to demand and ask this question, " Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle ? who shall dwell in thy holy hill ? " . . . . . Where David saith, " Who shall abide in thy holy hill ? " he giveth us to understand that there is no true and sound rest but in the *holy hill of the Lord*, which is the church. Then the wicked and ungodly which are not of God's house, of his *holy hill*, of the church, have no quiet, rest, nor sound peace ; but they are in continual perplexity, continual torment, continual disquietness of their minds.—*Richard Turnbull, 1606.*

*Verse 1.*—" *Abide in thy tabernacle,*" etc.—The worshippers in the outer court only will get their eternal abode without among the dogs, sorcerers, etc. ; but they that shall be inhabitants of heaven, come further in, even unto the tabernacle itself : their souls are fed at his table, they find the smell of his garments as of myrrh, aloes, and cassia ; and if they miss it at any time, it is the grief of their souls, and they are never at rest till they recover it again.—*Thomas Boston.*

*Verse 1.*—" *Who shall dwell,*" etc.

" Now, who is he ? Say, if ye can,  
Who so shall gain the firm abode ?  
Pilate shall say, ' Behold the Man ! '  
And John, ' Behold the Lamb of God ! ' "

*John Barclay, quoted by A. A. Bonar, in loc.*

*Verse 1.*—" *Holy Hill.*"—Heaven is aptly compared to a hill, hell to a hole. Now who shall ascend unto this holy mount ? None but those whom this mount comes down unto, that have sweet communion with God in this life present, whose conversation is in heaven, though their commoration be for awhile upon earth, who do here eat, and drink, and sleep, eternal life.—*John Trapp.*

*Verses 1, 2.*—The disguising and counterfeiting of hypocrites in all ages, occasioned haply this query : for, as Paul speaks, " all are not Israel that are of Israel," a great

many living in the church are not of the church, according to that of the doctors upon this place, *multi sunt corpore qui non sunt fide, multi nomine qui non sunt nomine*. Wherefore David, here perceiving that sundry people were shuffled into God's tabernacle like goats among the sheep, and tares among the corn, being Jews outwardly, but not inwardly, deceiving others often, and sometimes themselves also, with a bare profession of religion, and false opinion of true piety, cometh unto God (as to the searcher and trier of the hearts of men, acquainted with all secrets, and best understanding who are his own), saying unto him, O Lord, forso much as there is so much unsoundness and hypocrisy reigning among those that dwell in thy tabernacle, professing thy word, and frequenting the places of thy worship; beseech thee most humbly, to declare to thy people some tokens and cognizances by which a true subject of thy kingdom may be discerned from the children of this world. Here then, observe, that an external profession of faith, and outward communion with the church of God, is not sufficient unto salvation, unless we lead an incorrupt life correspondent to the same, doing the thing which is right, and speaking the truth in our heart. And, therefore, the silly Papist is exceedingly deceived in relying so much upon the church's outside, to wit upon the succession of Roman bishops, upon the multitudes of Roman Catholics, upon the power and pomp of the Roman synagogue, crying as the Jews in old time, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," our church is the temple of the Lord. The carnal and careless gospeller is deceived also, placing all his religion in the formal observation of outward service, for a mere verbal Christian is a real atheist, according to that of Paul (Titus i. 16), "In word they profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him;" and so many who seem to sojourn in God's tabernacle for a time, shall never rest upon his "*holy hill*;" and this assertion is expressly confirmed by Christ himself: "Not every one (saith he) that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 21—23. Consider this, all ye which are Christians in lip only, but not in life, making a mask of religion, or rather a very vizard, with eyes, and mouth, and nose, fairly painted and proportioned to all pretences and purposes. O think on this, all ye that forget God, he that dwelleth on high, and beholds the things here below, suffers none to rest upon the mountain of his holiness but such as walk uprightly, doing that which is just, and speaking that which is true.—*John Boys*.

Verse 2.—"*He that walketh uprightly,*" etc.—If neither the golden reason of excellency can move us, nor the silver reason of profit allure us, then must the iron reason of necessity enforce us to *integrity* and *uprightness of heart*. For first, such is the necessity thereof, that without integrity the best graces we seem to have are counterfeited, and, therefore, but glorious sins; the best worship we can perform is but hypocrisy, and therefore abominable in God's sight. For uprightness is the soundness of all grace and virtues, as also of all religion and worship of God, without which they are unsound and nothing worth. And first, as touching graces, if they be not joined with uprightness of heart, they are sins under the masks or vizards of virtue, yea, as it may seem, double sins: for as Augustine saith, *Simulata equitas est duplex iniquitas, quia et iniquitas est, et simulatio*: Feigned equity is double iniquity, both because it is iniquity, and because it is feigning.—*George Downname, D.D.*, 1604.

Verse 2.—"*He that walketh uprightly.*"—Here two questions are moved: First. Why David describes a sound member of the church, and inheritor of heaven, by works rather than by faith, seeing the kingdom of heaven is promised unto faith, and the profession thereof also maketh one a member of the visible church? Secondly. Why, among all the fruits of faith, almost innumerable, he makes choice of those duties especially which concern our neighbours? To the first, answer may be, that in this, and in all other places of Holy Scripture, where good works are commanded or commended in any, faith is ever presupposed, according to that apostolical maxim, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" "Without me," saith our blessed Saviour, "ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5); and without faith in him it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6); *fides est operum fomes*, as Paulinus wittily: "*Faith* (as our church speaks), *is the nest of good works*; albeit our birds

be never so fair, though haply we *do that which is right, and speak that which is true*, yet all these will be lost, except it be brought forth in a true belief." Aristides was so just in his government that he would not tread awry for any respect to friend or despite of foe. Pomponius is said to have been so true, that he never made lie himself, nor suffered a lie in other. Curtius at Rome, Menæceus at Thebes, Codrus at Athens, exposed themselves unto voluntary death, for the good of their neighbours and country : yet, because they wanted the rest of true faith in the world's Saviour where to lay their young, we cannot (if we speak with our prophet here from God's oracle), say that they shall ever rest upon his holy hill. Another answer may be, that faith is an inward and hidden grace, and many deceive themselves and others with a feigned profession thereof, and therefore the Holy Spirit will have every man's faith to be tried and known by their fruits, and howsoever eternal life be promised to faith, and eternal damnation be threatened against infidelity, yet the sentence of salvation and condemnation shall be pronounced according to works, as the clearest evidence of both. It is truly said, out of Bernard, that although our good works are not *causa regnandi*, yet they be *via regni*, the causeway wherein, albeit not the cause wherefore, we must ascend God's holy hill. To the second demand, why the duties immediately belonging to God, are not mentioned here, but only such as concern our brother ? Answer is made, that this question is propounded of such as, living in the visible church, openly profess the faith, and would seem to be devout, hearing the word of God, and calling upon his name ; for of such as are profane atheists, and do not so much as make a semblance of holiness, there is no question to be made, for, without all doubt, there can be no resting place for such in the kingdom of heaven. Now that we may discern aright which of those that profess religion are sound, and which unsound ; the marks are not to be taken from an outward hearing of the word, or receiving of the sacraments, and much less from a formal observation of human traditions in God's tabernacle (for all these things hypocrites usually perform), but from the duties of righteousness, giving every man his due, because the touchstone of piety towards God is charity towards our brother. "Herein," saith John, "are the children of God known, and the children of the devil : whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."—*John Bays*.

*Verse 2.*—There is no ascertaining the quality of a tree but by its fruits. When the wheels of a clock move within, the hands on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession. When the conduit is walled in, how shall we judge of the spring but by the waters which run through the pipes ?—*William Secker*.

*Verse 2.*—" *And worketh righteousness.*" A man must first be righteous before he can work righteousness of life. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." 1 John iii. 7. The tree makes the fruit, not the fruit the tree ; and therefore the tree must be good before the fruit can be good. Matt. vii. 18. A righteous man may make a righteous work, but no work of an unrighteous man can make him righteous. Now, we become righteous only by faith, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. Rom. v. 1. . . . . Wherefore let men work as they will, if they be not true believers in Christ, they are not workers of righteousness ; and, consequently they will not be dwellers in heaven. Ye must then close with Christ in the first place, and by faith receive the gift of imputed righteousness, or ye will never truly bear this character of a citizen of Zion. A man shall as soon force fruit out of a branch broken off from the tree and withered, as work righteousness without believing in, and uniting with Christ. These are two things by which those that hear the gospel are ruined.—*Thomas Boston*.

*Verse 2.*—" *Worketh righteousness.*" Jacob's ladder had stairs, upon which he saw none standing still, but all either ascending, or else descending by it. Ascend you likewise to the top of the ladder, to heaven, and there you shall hear one say, "My Father doth now work, and I work also." Whereupon Basil noteth that King David having first said, " *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle ?*" adds then, not he that hath wrought righteousness heretofore, but he that doth now work righteousness, even as Christ saith, "My Father doth now work, and I work also."—*Thomas Playfere*.

*Verse 2.*—But here observe David saith, "that *worketh* righteousness ;" not that talks about, thinks about, or hears of, righteousness ; because, "not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified." What then do we owe unto others ? That which Christ saith (Matt. vii.), "Whatsoever ye would that

men should do unto you, do ye also unto them," even unto your enemies : that is, to injure no one, to succour those that suffer injury, and to do good unto all men. But these things, I say, are spoken especially unto those who have respect of persons ; as if he had said, It is not because thou art a priest, nor because thou art of a religious order, nor because thou prayest much, nor because thou dost miracles, nor because thou teachest excellently, nor because thou art dignified with the title of father, nor because thou art the doer of any work (except righteousness), that thou shalt rest in the holy hill of the Lord ; for if thou be destitute of the work of righteousness, neither all thy good works, nor thy indulgences, nor thy votes and suffrages, nor thy intercessions, shall avail thee anything. Therefore, the truth is firm ; that it is the walker without spot, and the doer of righteousness, that shall rest in the tabernacle of the Lord. Yet how many are there, who build, increase and adorn churches, monasteries, altars, vessels, garments, etc., who, all the while never so much as think of the works of righteousness ; nay, who tread righteousness under foot that they may work these their own works, and because of them hope to gain the pardon of their unrighteousness, while thousands are deceived by these means ! Hence, in the last day, Christ will say, " I was an hungered, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was in prison, I was a stranger." He will not say one word about those works which are done and admired at this day. And on the other hand, it is of no account against thee that thou art a layman, or poor, or sick or contemptible, or how vile soever thou art, if thou werkest righteousness, thou shalt be saved. The only work that we must hope will be considered and accounted of, is the work of righteousness : all other works that either urge or allure us on under a show of godliness, are a thing of nought.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse 2.*—"And speaketh the truth in his heart." Anatomists have observed that the tongue in man is tied with a double string to the heart. And so in truth spoken there is necessary a double agreement of our words. 1. With our heart. That is, to the speaking of truth, it is necessary our words agree with our mind and thoughts about the thing. We must speak as we think, and our tongues must be faithful interpreters of our mind ; otherwise we lie, not speaking as we think. So what is truth in itself may be spoken by a man, and yet he be a liar ; namely, if he does not think as he speaks. 2. With the thing as it is in itself. Though we think a thing to be so, which is not so, we lie, when we affirm it ; because it is not as we say, though we really think it is so. For our mistaken notions of things can never stamp lies to pass current for truths. 2 Thess ii. 11.—*Thomas Boston.*

*Verse 2.*—I this day heard a sermon from Psalm xv. 2, " And speaketh the truth in his heart." . . . . O my soul, receive the admonition that has been given thee ! Study truth in the inward parts ; let integrity and truth always accompany thee, and preserve thee : speak the truth in thy heart. I am thankful for any conviction and sense I have of the evil of lying ; Lord, increase my abhorrence of it : as a further assistance and help against this mean, sordid, pernicious vice, I would endeavour, and resolve, in pursuit of the directions laid before us in the sermon, to mortify those passions and corruptions from whence this sin of lying more ordinarily flows, and which are the chief occasion of it, as " out of the heart proceed evil thoughts " (Matt. xv. 19) ; so, from the same fountain proceed evil words. And I would, with the greatest zeal, set myself against such corruptions as upon observation I find more commonly betray me into this iniquity : pride often indites our speech, and coins many a lie ; so envy, covetousness, malice, etc. I would endeavour to cleanse myself from all this filthiness : there never will be a mortified tongue while there is an unmortified heart. If I love the world inordinately, it is a thousand to one I shall be often stretching a point to promote a worldly interest ; and if I hate my brother, it is the same odds I shall reproach him. Lord, help me to purge the fountain, and then the streams will be pure. When the spring of a clock, and all the movements are right, the hand will go right ; and so it is here. The tongue follows the inward inclination. I would resolve to do nothing that may need a lie. If Gehazi's covetousness had not shamed him, he had not wanted a lie to excuse him, " He that walks uprightly, walks surely " and safely in this, as well as other respects. Prov. x. 9. May I do nothing that is dishonourable and mean, nothing that cannot bear the light, and then I shall have little temptation to lying. I would endeavour for a lively sense of the eye of God upon me, acting and speaking in his presence. Lord, I desire to set thee always before me ; thou understandest my thoughts as perfectly as others do my words. I would consider before I speak, and not speak much or rashly. Prov. xxix. 20. I would often think of the severity of a future

judgment, when every secret shall be made manifest, and the hypocrite and liar exposed before angels and men. Lastly, I would frequently beg divine assistance herein. Psalm cxix. 29; Prov. xxx. 8. O my God, help me in my future conduct, remove from me the way of lying; may the law of kindness and truth be in my tongue; may I take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I bewail my past miscarriages in this respect, and flee to thy mercy through the blood of Christ; bless to me the instructions that have been this day given me; let no iniquity prevail against me; "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, and cleanse me from secret faults." I commit my thoughts, desires, and tongue, to thy conduct and government; may I think and act in thy fear, and always speak the truth in my heart.—*Benjamin Bennet's "Christian Oratory,"* 1728.

Verses 2, 5.—As the eagle casteth off her beak, and so reneweth her youth, and the snake strippeth off her old skin, and so maketh herself smooth: even so he that will enter into the joys of God, and rest upon his holy mountain, must, as the Scripture speaks, put off the old man and put on the new, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, repenting truly, speedily, steadily.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 3.—"He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour." Lamentation for the gross neglect of this duty, or the frequent commission of this sin. What tears are sufficient to bewail it? How thick do censures and reproaches fly in all places, at all tables, in all conventions! And this were the more tolerable, if it were only the fault of ungodly men, of strangers and enemies to religion; for so saith the proverb, "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." When a man's heart is full of hell, it is not unreasonable to expect that his tongue should be set on fire of hell; and it is no wonder to hear such persons reproach good men, yea, even for their goodness. But alas! the disease doth not rest here, this plague is not only among the Egyptians but Israelites too. It is very doleful to consider how professors sharpen their tongues like swords against professors; and one good man censures and reproaches another, and one minister traduceth another; and who can say, "I am clean from this sin"? O that I could move your pity in this case! For the Lord's sake pity yourselves, and do not pollute and wound your consciences with this crime. Pity your brethren; let it suffice that godly ministers and Christians are loaded with reproaches by wicked men—there is no need that you should combine with them in this diabolical work. You should support and strengthen their hands against the reproaches of the ungodly world, and not add affliction to the afflicted. O pity the world, and pity the church which Christ hath purchased with his own blood, which methinks bespeaks you in the words, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." Job. xix. 21. Pity the mad and miserable world, and help it against this sin; stop the bloody issue; restrain this wicked practice amongst men as much as possibly you can, and lament it before God, and for what you cannot do yourselves, give God no rest until he shall please to work a cure.—*Matthew Poole, 1624—1679.*

Verse 3.—"He that backbiteth not," etc. Detraction or slander is not lightly to be passed over, because we do so easily fail in this point. For the good name of a man, as saith Solomon, is a precious thing to every one, and to be preferred before much treasure, inasmuch that it is no less grievous to hurt a man with the tongue than with a sword: nay, oftentimes the stroke of a tongue is grievous than the wound of a spear, as it is in the French proverb. And therefore the tongue must be bridled, that we hurt not in any wise the good name of our neighbour; but preserve it unto him safe and sound as much as in us shall lie. That which he addeth touching evil or injury not to be done to our neighbour, is like unto that which we have seen already concerning the working or exercising of righteousness. He would have us therefore so to exercise all upright dealing, that we might be far from doing any damage or wrong to our neighbours. And by the name of neighbour, is meant every man and woman, as it is plain and evident. For we are all created of God, and placed in this world that we might live uprightly and sincerely together. And therefore he breaketh the law of human society (for we are all tied and bound by this law of nature) that doth hurt or injury to another. The third member of this verse is, *nor that reproacheth another*, or, that maintaineth not a false report given one against another; which latter particle seemeth to be the better, since he had spoken before expressly, touching the good name of another, not to be hurt or wronged with our tongue. To the which fault this is next in degree, wherewith we are too



much encumbered, and which we scarce acknowledge to be a fault, when we further and maintain the slanders devised and given out by another against a man, either by hearing them or by telling them forth to others, as we heard them. For why? It seemeth for the most part to be enough for us if we can say, that we feign not this or that, nor make it of our own heads, but only tell it forth as we heard it of others, without adding anything of our own brain. But as oft as we do this we fail in our duty doing, in not providing for our neighbour's credit, as were requisite for the things, which being uttered by others ought to be passed over in silence and to lie dead, we gather up, and by telling them forth, disperse them abroad, which whether it be a sin or no, when as we ought by all means possible to wish and do well unto our neighbour, all men do see. And therefore thou that travellest towards eternal life, must not only not devise false reports and slanders against other men, but also not so much as have them in thy mouth being devised by others, neither by any means assist or maintain them in slandering; but by all honest and lawful means, provide for the credit and estimation of thy neighbour, so much as in thee lieth.—*Peter Baro, D.D., 1560.*

*Verse 3.*—"He that backbiteth not with his tongue." The Hebrew word לִיגִי signifieth to play the spy, and by a metaphor to *backbite* or *slander*, for *backbiters* and *whisperers*, after the manner of spies, go up and down dissembling their malice, that they may espy the faults and defects of others, whereof they may make a malicious relation to such as will give ear to their slanders. So that *backbiting* is a malicious defamation of a man behind his back . . . . And that the citizen of heaven doth and ought to abhor from *backbiting*, the horrible wickedness of this sin doth evince. For first, Lev. xix. 16, where it is straightly forbidden, the "*tale-bearer*" is compared to a pedlar: "Thou shalt not walk about with tales and slanders, as it were a pedlar among thy people." So much לִיגִי signifieth. For as the pedlar having bought his wares of some one or more goeth about from house to house that he may sell the same to others; so *backbiters* and *tale-bearers*, gathering together tales and rumours, as it were wares, go from one to another, that such wares as either themselves have invented, or have gathered by report, they may utter in the absence of their neighbour to his infamy and disgrace. Likewise Psalm l. 20, it is condemned as a notable crime, which God will not suffer to go unpunished; Ezek. xxii. 9, it is reckoned among the abominations of Jerusalem, for which destruction is denounced against it; and Rom. i. 29, 30, among the crimes of the heathen, given over unto a reprobate sense, this is placed: they were "*whisperers and backbiters.*"—*George Downname.*

*Verse 3.*—"He that backbiteth not." He that is guilty of backbiting, that speaks evil of another behind his back, if that which he speaks be false, is guilty of lying, which is prejudicial to salvation. If that which he speaks be true, yet he is void of charity in seeking to defame another. For as Solomon observes, "Love covereth all sins." Prov. x. 12. Where there is love and charity, there will be a covering and concealing of men's sins as much as may be. Now, where charity is wanting, their salvation is not to be expected. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, etc.; 1 John iii. 14, 15.—*Christopher Cartwright, 1602—1658.*

*Verse 3.*—"Backbiteth not." This crime is a conjugation of evils, and is productive of infinite mischiefs; it undermines peace, and saps the foundation of friendship; it destroys families, and rends in pieces the very heart and vitals of charity; it makes an evil man party, and witness, and judge, and executioner of the innocent. *Bishop Taylor.*

*Verse 3.*—"Backbiteth." The scorpion hurteth none but such as he toucheth with the tip of his tail; and the crocodile and basilisk slay none but such as either the force of their sight, or strength of their breath reacheth. The viper woundeth none but such as it biteth; the venomous herbs or roots kill none but such as taste, or handle, or smell them, and so come near unto them; but the poison of slanderous tongues is much more rank and deadly; for that hurteth and slayeth, woundeth and killeth, not only near, but afar off; not only at hand, but by distance of place removed; not only at home, but abroad, not only in our own nation but in foreign countries; and spareth neither quick nor dead.—*Richard Turnbull.*

*Verse 3.*—"Backbiteth." The word here used comes from a root signifying *fool*, and denotes a person who goes about from house to house, speaking things he should not (1 Tim. v. 13); and a word from this root signifies *spies*; and the phrase here may point at persons who creep into houses, pry into the secrets of families, divulge them, and oftentimes represent them in a false light. Such are ranked

among the worst of men, and are very unfit to be in the society of saints, or in a church of Christ. See Rom. i. 30.—*John Gill*.

Verse 3.—“*Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*” The saints of God must not be too light of hearing, much less of believing all tales, rumours, and reports of their brethren; and charity requireth that we do not only stop and stay them, but that we examine them before we believe them. Saul, the king, too light of belief in this point, believed the slanderous and false reports of David’s enemies, who put into Saul’s head that David imagined evil against him. Yea, David himself showed his great infirmity in that, that without due examination and proof of the matter, he believed the false report of Ziba against Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan; of whom to David the king, persecuted by Absalom his son, Ziba reported falsely, that he should say, “This day shall the house of Israel restore unto me the kingdom of my father.” The example of whose infirmity in Scripture reproved, must not we follow; but let us rather embrace the truth of that heavenly doctrine which, through God’s Spirit, here he preacheth, that we believe not false reports against our neighbours.—*Richard Turnbull*.

Verse 3.—Despise not thy neighbour, but think thyself as bad a sinner, and that the like defects may befall thee. If thou canst not excuse his doing, excuse his intent which may be good; or if the deed be evil, think it was done of ignorance; if thou canst no way excuse him, think some great temptation befell him, and that thou shouldst be worse if the like temptation befell thee; and give God thanks that the like as yet hath not befallen thee. Despise not a man being a sinner, for though he be evil to-day, he may turn to-morrow.—*Williams Perkins*, 1558—1602.

Verses 3, 4, 5.—They that cry down moral honesty, cry down that which is a great part of religion, my duty towards God, and my duty towards man. What care I to see a man run after a sermon, if he cozens and cheats as soon as he comes home? On the other side, morality must not be without religion, for it so, it may change as I see convenience. Religion must govern it. He that has not religion to govern his morality, is not a dram better than my mastiff-dog; so long as you stroke him, and please him, and do not pinch him, he will play with you as finely as may be, he is a very good moral mastiff; but if you hurt him, he will fly in your face, and tear out your throat.—*John Seldon*, 1584—1654.

Verse 4.—“*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned,*” etc. When wicked Jehoram, king of Israel, came to Eliseus, the prophet, to ask counsel of the Lord, and to entreat for waters, having in company Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, being virtuous; the prophet showeth his contempt to the one being wicked, and his reverence to the other, being godly, faithful and virtuous, said, “As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.” 2 Kings iii. 14. Thus was the wicked *vile* in his sight; thus did he not flatter the ungodly. In like manner godly Mordecai, the Jew, having Haman the ambitious and proud Agagite in contempt, would in no wise bow the knee unto him in sign of honour, as the rest of the people did; for which cause he was extremely hated, menaced and molested of proud and wicked Haman. To wink at their wickedness, to uphold them in their iniquity, to fawn upon them and flatter them, to praise them when they deserve just reproof, is, as it were, an honouring of them; to which, as to a most grievous sin, the prophet denounceth a most bitter curse: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” Isaiah v. 20.—*Richard Turnbull*.

Verse 4.—“*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.*” To *contemn* the wicked and honour the godly, are opposite the one to the other. But the former may seem not to be sufficiently befitting to a godly man. For why should he contemn or despise others, who is commanded by all means to care for the credit of others, as we heard even now? Nay, a godly man, letting others go, ought to search into himself, and to accuse himself, but not to judge of others. But this saying of the prophet is to be understood rather of the faults than of the person. As every man therefore is to be loved, so are the faults of every man to be hated of the godly. For so is God himself, whom we desire to be like unto, that we might dwell with him, affected and disposed. For why? he hateth no man, nay, he hateth nothing at all in this whole universal world, but only sin. For he is the author and preserver of all things that be; and therefore doth good and wisheth well to all; only of sin he is not the author, but the free and unconstrained will of man and

Satan. Notwithstanding God doth so greatly hate sin, that by reason thereof he doth sometimes neglect and forsake men, yea, and have them in contempt. So then a godly man hateth no man, nor contemneth any; but yet notwithstanding he disliketh sin in sinful men, and that he sticketh not to let them perceive either by reproving them, or shunning their company, or by doing of some other thing, whereby they may know they are misliked of good men for their enormities, and see themselves to be contemned of others for their wicked and ungodly life. A good man therefore must not flatter the ungodly in their ungracious attempts, but must freely declare that he disalloweth their course and conversation.—*Peter Baro.*

Verse 4.—“*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.*” Augustine, as Posidonius writeth, showing what hatred he had to tale-bearers and false reporters of others, had two verses written over his table; by translation these:—

“He that doth love with bitter speech the absent to defame,  
Must surely know that at this board no place is for the same.”

*Richard Turnbull.*

Verse 4.—“*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.*” The burghess of the New Jerusalem, *reprobos reprobat, et probos probat*; he cannot flatter any man, nor fancy such as in whom he findeth not *aliquid Christi*, something of the image of God. A golden Colosse stuffed with rubbish, he cannot stoop to, “*But he honoureth them that fear the Lord,*” as the only earthly angels, though never so mean and despicable in the world’s eye. Mr. Fox, being asked whether he remembered not such a poor servant of God who had received succour from him in time of trouble? answered “I remember him well; I tell you, I forget the lords and ladies, to remember such.”—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—“*He honoureth them that fear the Lord.*” Though the godly some way or other be injurious unto us, we ought nevertheless to honour and not to despise them. So Joseph did Mary, though he supposed her to have dealt injuriously with him; and she had done so, indeed, if it had been with her as he imagined. Calvin’s resolution concerning Luther was very admirable in this respect. They differed much about the presence of Christ in the sacrament; and Luther being of a vehement spirit, wrote bitterly against those that did hold otherwise in that point than himself did. This enforced some, who were more nearly concerned in the business, to prepare to answer Luther; which Calvin understanding, and fearing lest they, being provoked by Luther’s tartness, should deal with him in the like kind, he wrote unto Bullinger, a prime man among them, persuading and exhorting him to carry the business so as to show all due respect unto Luther, considering what worth and excellency there was in him, however he had demeaned himself in that particular. And he adds, that he often used to say, that although Luther should call him devil, yet he would do him that honour to acknowledge him a choice servant of God.—*Christopher Cartwright.*

Verse 4.—“*He honoureth them that fear the Lord.*” I have read of one that said, If he should meet a preacher and an angel together, he would first salute the preacher and then the angel.—*Charles Bradbury’s “Cabinet of Jewels,”* 1785.

Verse 4.—“*He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*”

“His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;  
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;  
His tears pure messengers, sent from his heart;  
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.”

*William Shakespere.*

Verse 5.—The Puritanic divines are almost all of them against the taking of any interest upon money, and go the length of saying that one penny per cent. per annum will shut a man out of heaven if persisted in. It appeared to me to be useless to quote opinions in which I cannot agree, especially as this would occupy space better employed. The demanding of excessive and grinding interest is a sin to be detested; the taking of the usual and current interest in a commercial country is not contrary to the law of love. The Jews were not engaged in commerce, and to lend money even at the lowest interest to their fellow farmers in times of poverty would have been usurious; but they might lend to strangers, who would usually be occupied in commerce, because in the commercial world, money is a fruitful thing, and the lender has a right to a part of its products; a loan to enable a non-trader to live over a season of want is quite another matter.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—“*He that putteth not out his money to usury.*” By usury is generally understood the gain of anything above the principal, or that which was lent, exacted only in consideration of the loan, whether it be in money, corn, wares, or the like. It is most commonly taken for an unlawful profit which a person makes of his money or goods. The Hebrew word for usury signifies biting. The law of God prohibits rigorous imposing conditions of gain for the loan of money or goods, and exacting them without respect to the condition of the borrower, whether he gain or lose; whether poverty occasioned his borrowing, or a visible prospect of gain by employing the borrowed goods. It is said in Exod. xxii. 25, 26, “If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury,” etc. And in Lev. xxv. 35, 36, 37, “If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner, that he may live with thee: take thou no usury of him,” etc. This law forbids the taking usury from a brother that was poor, an Israelite reduced to poverty, or from a proselyte; but in Deut. xxiii. 20, God seems to tolerate usury towards strangers; “Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury.” By *strangers*, in this passage, some understand the Gentiles in general, or all such as were not Jews, excepting proselytes. Others think that by *strangers* are meant the Canaanites, and the other people that were devoted to slavery and subjection; of these the Hebrews were permitted to exact usury, but not of such *strangers* with whom they had no quarrel, and against whom the Lord had not denounced his judgments. The Hebrews were plainly commanded in Exod. xxii. 25, etc., not to receive usury for money from any that borrowed from necessity, as in that case in Neh. v. 5, 7. And such provision the law made for the preserving of estates to their families by the year of jubilee; for a people that had little concern in trade, could not be supposed to borrow money but out of necessity; but they were allowed to lend upon usury to strangers, whom yet they must not oppress. This law, therefore, in the strictness of it, seems to have been peculiar to the Jewish state; but in the equity of it, it obligeth us to show mercy to those we have advantage against, and to be content to share with those we lend to in loss, as well as profit, if Providence cross them. And upon this condition, a valuable commentator says, “It seems as lawful for me to receive interest for money, which another takes pains with, improves, but runs the hazard of in trade, as it is to receive rent for my land, which another takes pains with, improves, but runs the hazard of in husbandry.”—*Alexander Cruden*, 1701—1770.

Verse 5.—“*He that putteth not out his money to usury.*” “If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee.” Exod. xxii. 25. Rather, according to the letter of the original, “If thou lend money to my people, even to a poor man with thee.” The Israelites were a people but little engaged in commerce, and therefore could not in general be supposed to borrow money but from sheer necessity; and of that necessity the lender was not to take advantage by usurious exactions. The law is not to be understood as a prohibition of interest at any rate whatever, but of excessive interest or usury. The clause, “Thou shalt not be to him as an usurer,” is equivalent to saying, “Thou shalt not domineer and lord it over him rigorously and cruelly.” That this class of men were peculiarly prone to be extortionate and oppressive in their dealings with debtors would seem to be implied by the etymology of the original term for usury (נֶשֶׁק, *neshék*), which comes from a root signifying *to bite*; and in Neh. v. 2—5, we have a remarkable case of the bitter and grinding effects resulting from the exercise of the creditor's rights over the debtor. A large portion of the people had not only mortgaged their lands, vineyards and houses, but had actually sold their sons and daughters into bondage, to satisfy the claims of their grasping creditors. In this emergency Nehemiah espoused the cause of the poor, and compelled the rich, against whom he called the people together, to remit the whole of their dues; and, moreover, exacted from them an oath that they would never afterwards oppress their poor brethren for the payment of those debts. This was not because every part of those proceedings had been contrary to the letter of the Mosaic law, but because it was a flagrant breach of equity under the circumstances. It was taking a cruel and barbarous advantage of the necessities of their brethren, at which God was highly indignant, and which his servants properly rebuked. From this law the Hebrew canonists have gathered a general rule, that “Whoso exacteth of a poor man, and knoweth that he hath not aught to pay with, he transgresseth against this prohibition, Thou shalt not be to him as an exacting creditor.” (*Maimonides*, in *Ainsworth*.) We

nowhere learn from the institutes delivered by Moses that the simple taking of interest, especially from the neighbouring nations (Deut. xxiii. 19, 20), was forbidden to the Israelites; but the divine law would give no countenance to the griping and extortionate practices to which miserly money-lenders are always prone. The deserving and industrious poor might sometimes be reduced to such straits, that pecuniary accommodations might be very desirable to them; and towards such God would inculcate a mild, kind, and forbearing spirit, and the precept is enforced by the relation which they sustained to him: *q.d.*, "Remember that you are lending to *my* people, *my* poor; and therefore take no advantage of their necessities. Trust me against the fear of loss, and treat them kindly and generously."—George Bush, in "*Notes on the Book of Exodus*," 1856.

Verse 5.—"*He that pulleth not out his money to usury.*" With respect to the first clause, as David seems to condemn all kinds of usury in general, and without exception, the very name has been everywhere held in detestation. But crafty men have invented specious names under which to conceal the vice; and thinking by this artifice to escape, they have plundered with greater excess than if they had lent on usury avowedly and openly. God, however, will not be dealt with and imposed upon by sophistry and false pretences. He looks upon the thing as it really is. There is no worse species of usury than an unjust way of making bargains, where equity is disregarded on both sides. Let us, then, remember that all bargains, in which the one party unrighteously strives to make gain by the loss of the other party, whatever name may be given to them, are here condemned. It may be asked, whether all kinds of usury are to be put into this denunciation, and regarded as alike unlawful? If we condemn all without distinction, there is a danger lest many, seeing themselves brought into such a strait as to find that sin must be incurred, in whatever way they can turn themselves, may be rendered bolder by despair, and may rush headlong into all kinds of usury without choice or discrimination. On the other hand, whenever we concede that something may be lawfully done in this way, many will give themselves loose reins, thinking that a liberty to exercise usury, without control or moderation, has been granted them. In the first place, therefore, I would, above all things, counsel my readers to beware of ingeniously contriving deceitful pretexts by which to take advantage of their fellow men, and let them not imagine that anything can be lawful to them which is grievous and hurtful to others. . . . It is not without cause that God has in Lev. xxv. 35, 36, forbidden usury, adding this reason: "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no usury of him, or increase." We see that the end for which the law was framed was that man should not cruelly oppress the poor, who ought rather to receive sympathy and compassion. This was, indeed, a part of the judicial law which God appointed for the Jews in particular; but it is a common principle of justice, which extends to all nations, and to all ages, that we should keep ourselves from plundering and devouring the poor who are in distress and want. Whence it follows, that the gain which he who lends his money upon interest acquires, without doing injury to any one, is not to be included under the head of unlawful usury. The Hebrew word נֶשֶׁק; *neshek*, which David employs, being derived from another word which signifies *to bite*, sufficiently shows that usuries are condemned in so far as they involve in them, or lead to, a license of robbing or plundering our fellow men. Ezekiel, indeed (chapters xviii. 17, and xxii. 12), seems to condemn the taking of any interest whatever upon money lent; but he, doubtless, has an eye to the unjust and crafty arts of gaining by which the rich devoured the poor people. In short, provided we had engraven on our hearts the rule of equity which Christ prescribes in Matt. vii. 12, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," it would not be necessary to enter into lengthened disputes concerning usury.—John Calvin, in *loc.*

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—The Mosaic law forbids the lending of money for interest to an Israelite. Exod. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 37; Deut. xxiii. 19; Prov. xxviii. 8; Ezek. xviii. 8. In several of the passages referred to, it is expressly supposed that money is lent only to the poor, a supposition which has its ground in the simple relations of the Mosaic times, in which lending, for the purpose of speculation and gain, had no existence. Such lending ought only to be a work of brotherly love; and it is a great violation of that if any one, instead of helping his neighbour, takes advantage of his need to bring him into still greater straits. The Mosaic regulation

In question has, accordingly, its import also for New Testament times. With the interest-lending of capitalists, who borrow for speculation, it has nothing to do. This belongs to a quite different matter, as is implied even by the name *ἄρα*, a *mordendo*, according to which only such usury can be meant as plagues and impoverishes a neighbour. By unseasonable comparison with our modes of speech, many would expound, "His money he puts not to interest."—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

*Verse 5 (first clause).*—The worm called in Latin *teredo*, whereof Pliny hath reported something in his story, breeding in wood, to the touch is soft, yet it hath such teeth as endeavoureth and consumeth the hard timber. So the usurer is a soft beast at first to handle, but in continuance of time the hardness of his teeth will eat thee up, both flesh and bone, if thou beware not. He pleadeth love, but not for thy sake, but for his own; for as the ivy colleth and claspeth the oak as a lover, but thereby it groweth up and overtoppeth the oak, and sucketh out the juice and sap thereof, that it cannot thrive nor prosper; so the usurer colleth, embraceth, and claspeth in arms the borrower, that thereby himself may grow richer, and suck all wealth, goods, and riches from him, that he never thriveth or prospereth after. The pleasure the usurer showeth is like the playing of the cat with the silly mouse: the cat playeth with the mouse, but the playing of the cat is the death of the mouse. The usurer pleasureth the borrower; but the pleasure of the usurer is the undoing of the borrower. The fox through craft slideth and tumbleth, and maketh much pastime till he come to the prey, then he devourereth: the usurer maketh many fair speeches, giveth out many fair promises, pretendeth very great kindness, until he have got thee within his compass, then he crusheth and crucieth thee. The usurer preyeth upon the poor, he waxeth rich of the penury of his brother, he clotheth himself with the coat of the naked, he gathereth riches of the indigency and want of his neighbour; he feedeth himself of the bread of the hungry, and devoureth his poor brother, as the great beasts do the smaller; than which, saith Ambrose, there is no greater inhumanity and cruelty, no greater wretchedness and iniquity, as Chrysostom in many places, and Basil upon this Psalm, have well observed.—*Richard Turnbull.*

*Verse 5.*—The rich make the poor to fill them; for *usurers* feed upon the poor, even as great fishes devour the small. Therefore, he which said, Let there not be a beggar in Israel (Deut. xv. 4), said too, Let there not be an usurer in Israel. For if there be usurers in Israel there will be beggars in Israel; for usurers make beggars, even as lawyers make quarrellers. . . . It is a miserable occupation to live by sin, and a great comfort to a man when he looketh upon his gold and silver, and his heart telleth him, All this is well gotten; and when he lieth upon his death-bed, and must leave all to his children, he can say unto them, I leave you mine own; but the usurer cannot say, I leave you mine own, but I leave you other men's; therefore the usurer can never die in peace, because if he die before he maketh restitution, he dieth in his sin.—*Henry Smith.*

*Verse 5.*—Biting *usurers* were so abhorred in the primitive church, that as they condemned the usurer himself, so they made the scribes, who wrote the bonds, and also the witnesses, incapable of any benefit; and that no testament or letter will, written by such should be valid. The house of the usurer was called *domus Satanæ*, the house of the devil; and they ordained that no man should eat or drink with such usurers, nor fetch fire from them; and after they were dead that they should not be buried in Christian burial. The conclusion of this is (Ezek. xviii. 13), this sin is matched with theft; and verse 11, with adultery; and verse 12, with violence; it is the daughter of oppression and sister to idolatry, and he that doth these things shall not dwell in God's holy hill. Albeit, these worldings think themselves more honest than thieves and adulterers, yet the Lord maketh their case all alike.—*John Weemse, 1366.*

*Verse 5.*—"Taketh reward against the innocent."—I am sure this is *scala inferni*, the right way to hell, to be covetous, to take bribes, and pervert justice. If a judge should ask me the way to hell, I should show him this way: First, let him be a covetous man; let his heart be poisoned with covetousness. Then let him go a little further and take bribes; and, lastly, pervert judgments. Lo, here is the mother, and the daughter, and the daughter's daughter. Avarice is the mother; she brings forth bribe-taking, and bribe-taking perverting of judgment. There lacks a fourth thing to make up the mess, which, so help me God, if I were judge, should be *hangum tuum*, a Tyburn tippet to take with him; an it were the judge

of the King's Bench, my Lord Judge of England, yea, an it were my Lord Chancellor himself, to Tyburn with him.—*Hugh Latimer.*

Verse 5.—“*Takeh reward against the innocent.*” I come to corrupt lawyers and advocates, who so often take rewards against the innocent, as they do take upon them the defence of such causes as they in their own conscience are persuaded to be evil and unjust. Which being so common a fault among lawyers, as that very few which plead causes, either in civil or ecclesiastical courts, do seem to make any conscience thereof, to whom all is fish that cometh to their nets; therefore all lawyers are to be exhorted to apply this note unto themselves.—*George Downame.*

Verse 5.—“*He that doeth.*” ’Tis not said he that professes this or that, or he that believes thus and thus, or he that is of such or such an opinion or way of worship, or he that sets up new lights, and pretends the Spirit for his immediate guide: ’tis not he that hears much or talks much of religion; no, nor he that preaches and prays much, nor he that thinks much of these things, and means well; but ’tis he that “doeth these things”—that is actually employed about them—that is the religious and truly godly man. ’Tis not, I say, a formal professor, a confident solifidian, a wild opinionist, a high flown perfectist; it is not a constant hearer, or a mighty talker, or a laborious teacher, or a gifted brother, or a simple well-wisher must pass; but ’tis the honest and sincere doer of these things, that will abide the test and stand the trial; when all other flashy pretences shall, in those searching flames, be burnt and consumed like “hay and stubble,” as the apostle expresses it. To wear Christ’s livery and to do him no service is but to mock a gracious Master; to own him in our profession and deny him in our practice, is, with Judas, to betray him with a kiss of homage; with the rude soldiers to bow the knee before him, and, in the meantime, to beat his sacred head with his redden sceptre, and with Pilate to crown him with thorns, to crucify the Lord and write over his head, “King of the Jews:” in a word, to grieve him with our honours, and wound him with our acknowledgments. A Christian profession without a life answerable, will be so far from saving any one, that ’twill highly aggravate his condemnation; when a dissembled friendship at the great day of discoveries shall be looked upon as the worst of enmities. A mere outside formality of worship, is at best but Prometheus’ sacrifice, a skeleton of bones and a religious cheat. . . . The harmless humour of meaning well is not enough to approve a man’s spiritual state, to acquit obligations, or to ascertain his expectations. For he that bids us “eschew evil” does immediately subjoin, that we must “follow” and “hold fast that which is good.” It will be no good account not to have done evil, unless we make it appear that we have been doing good too; since the non-commission of great sins will not excuse our omission of great duties. In the busy commonwealth of bees, the drone without a sting, as she has no weapon for mischief, so, wanting a tool for employ, is deservedly cashiered the hive.—*Condensed from Adam Littleton, D.D., 1627—1694.*

Verse 5.—“*He that doeth these things, shall never be moved.*” Mark how the prophet saith not, he that readeth these things, or he that heareth these things, but he that doth them, shall never be removed. For were it enough to read or hear these precepts, then should an infinite number of vain and wicked persons enter into, and continue in the church, which notwithstanding have no place therein; for there are very few, or none at all, which have not read, or at least have not heard these things, yet they will not do them. Neither doth he say, he that talketh of these things, but he that doth them; for many now in these days can talk gloriously of uprightness, justice, truth, in whom notwithstanding, there is neither upright dealings, nor sound righteousness, nor unfeigned truth to be found. Many can say that slander is sin, injury is iniquity, to receive false reports is uncharitable, that it becometh not the saints to flatter the wicked, that to break promise and falsify their oaths is unseemly, to give upon usury is oppression, to receive bribes against the innocent is extreme cruelty; yet themselves backbite and hurt their neighbour, they themselves believe every tale that is brought them, they flatter and fawn upon the wicked for advantage, they swear and forswear for commodity, they oppress through usury, and receive gifts of bribery against the innocent; and so in word they speak of these things, but do them not indeed. . . . Neither doth David say he that preacheth these, “shall never be removed,” for then not only many other wicked persons, which can speak of, yea many ungodly men which can also preach of virtue, should have the place in the Lord’s tabernacle, and rest upon his holy hill; but also among others, even Balaam the covetous prophet, should have a sure place in God’s tabernacle; for he could say,

' If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more " (Num. xxii. 18) ; yet he took rewards ; yet he was carried away with covetousness, as much as in him lay, to work the destruction of Israel, the innocent people of the Lord.—*Richard Turnbull*.

*Verse 5.*—" *Shall never be moved.*" Moved he may be for a time, but not removed for ever. His soul is bound up in the bundle of life, near unto the throne of glory ; when the souls of the wicked are restless as a stone in the midst of a sling, saith the Targum in 1 Sam. xxv.—*John Trapp*.

*Verse 5 (last clause).*—The holy soul is the love of God, the joy of angels ; her eyes dare look upon the glorious Judge whom she knows to be her Saviour. Her heart is courageous ; she dares stand the thunder ; and when guilty minds creep into corners, she is confident in him that he will defend her. She challengeth the whole world to accuse her of injustice, and fears not the subornation of false witnesses, because she knows the testimony of her own conscience. Her language is free and bold, without the guiltiness of broken stops. Her forehead is clear and smooth, as the brow of heaven. Her knees are ever bent to the throne of grace ; her feet travelling towards Jerusalem ; her hands weaving the web of righteousness. Good men bless her ; good angels guard her ; the Son of God doth kiss her ; and when all the world shall be turned to a burning pile, she shall be brought safe to the mountain of joy, and set in a throne of blessedness for ever.—*Thomas Adams*.

#### HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—Qualifications for church membership on earth and in heaven. A subject for self-examination.

*Verse 1.*—I. *Comparison of the church to the tabernacle.* God's presence manifested, sacrifice offered, and vessels of grace preserved in it ; mean externally, glorious within. II. *Comparison of its double position to that of the tabernacle.* Moving in the wilderness, and fixed on the hill. III. Enquire into qualifications for admittance into church and tabernacle. Parallel with the priests, etc.

*Verse 1.*—The great question. Asked by idle curiosity, despair, godly fear, earnest enquirer, soul troubled by falls of others, holy faith. Give answer to each.

*Verse 1.*—The citizen of Zion described.—*Thomas Boston's Sermons*.

*Verse 1.*—Anxiety to know the true saints, how far lawful and profitable.

*Verse 1.*—God the only infallible discerner of true saints.

*Verse 2.*—" *He that walketh uprightly.*" I. What he must be. He must be upright in heart. A man himself bent double cannot walk uprightly. II. How he must act. Neither from impulse, ambition, gain, fear, or flattery. He must not be warped in any direction, but stand perpendicularly. III. What he must expect. Snares, etc. to trip him. IV. Where he must walk. Path of duty, the only one in which he can walk uprightly. V. Where he must look. Up, right-up, and then he will be upright.

*Verse 2.*—" *Speaketh the truth in his heart.*" Subject :—Heart falsehood and heart truth.

*Verse 2 (first clause).*—The citizen of Zion an upright walker.

*Verse 2 (middle clause).*—The citizen of Zion, a worker of righteousness.

*Verse 2 (last clause).*—The citizen of Zion, a speaker of truth.—*Four Sermons in Thomas Boston's Works*.

*Verse 3.*—The evils of detraction. It affects three persons here mentioned : the backbiter, the suffering neighbour, and the taker-up of the reproach.

*Verse 3.*—" *Nor taketh up a reproach.*" The sin of being too ready to believe ill reports. Common, cruel, foolish, injurious, wicked.

*Verse 4.*—The duty of practically honouring those who fear the Lord. Commendation, deference, assistance, imitation, etc.

*Verse 4.*—The sin of estimating persons other than by their practical characters.

*Verse 4 (last clause).*—The Lord Jesus as our unchanging Surety, his oath and his hurt.

*Verse 5.*—The evidences and privileges of godly men.

*Verse 5 (last clause).*—The fixedness and safety of the godly.