

PSALM CXXXIII.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees of David. We see no reason for depriving David of the authorship of this sparkling sonnet. He knew by experience the bitterness occasioned by divisions in families, and was well prepared to celebrate in choicest psalmody the blessing of unity for which he sighed, Among the “songs of degrees,” this hymn has certainly attained unto a good degree, and even in common literature it is frequently quoted for its perfume and dew. In this Psalm there is no wry word, all is “sweetness and light,”—a notable ascent from Psalm cxx. with which the pilgrims set out. That is full of war and lamentation, but this sings of peace and pleasantness. The visitors to Zion were about to return, and this may have been their hymn of joy because they had seen such union among the tribes who had gathered at the common altar. The previous Psalm, which sings of the covenant, had also revealed the centre of Israel’s unity in the Lord’s anointed and the promises made to him. No wonder that brethren dwell in unity when God dwells among them, and finds his rest in them. Our translators have given to this Psalm an admirable explanatory heading, “The benefit of the communion of saints.” These good men often hit off the meaning of a passage in a few words.

EXPOSITION.

BEHOLD, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore.

1. “Behold.” It is a wonder seldom seen, therefore behold it! It may be seen, for it is the characteristic of real saints,—therefore fail not to inspect it! It is well worthy of admiration; pause and gaze upon it! It will charm you into imitation, therefore note it well! God looks on with approval, therefore consider it with attention. “How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” No one can tell the exceeding excellence of such a condition; and so the Psalmist uses the word “how” twice;—Behold how good! and how pleasant! He does not attempt to measure either the good or the pleasure, but invites us to behold for ourselves. The combination of the two adjectives “good” and “pleasant,” is more remarkable than the conjunction of two stars of the first magnitude: for a thing to be “good” is good, but for it also to be pleasant is better. All men love pleasant things, and yet it frequently happens that the pleasure is evil; but here the condition is as good as it is pleasant, as pleasant as it is good, for the same “how” is set before each qualifying word.

For brethren according to the flesh to dwell together is not always wise; for experience teaches that they are better a little apart, and it is shameful for them to dwell together in disunion. They had much better part in peace like Abraham and Lot, than dwell together in envy like Joseph’s brothers. When brethren can and do dwell together *in unity*, then is their communion worthy to be gazed upon and sung of in holy psalmody. Such sights ought often to be seen among those who are near of kin, for they are brethren, and therefore should be united in heart and aim; they dwell together, and it is for their mutual comfort that there should be no strife; and yet how many families are rent by fierce feuds, and exhibit a spectacle which is neither good nor pleasant!

As to brethren in spirit, they ought to dwell together in church fellowship, and in that fellowship one essential matter is unity. We can dispense with uniformity if we possess unity: oneness of life, truth, and way; oneness in Christ Jesus; oneness of object and spirit—these we must have, or our assemblies will be synagogues

of contention rather than churches of Christ. The closer the unity the better; for the more of the good and the pleasant there will be. Since we are imperfect beings, somewhat of the evil and the unpleasant is sure to intrude; but this will readily be neutralized and easily ejected by the true love of the saints, if it really exists. Christian unity is good in itself, good for ourselves, good for the brethren, good for our converts, good for the outside world; and for certain it is pleasant; for a loving heart must have pleasure and give pleasure in associating with others of like nature. A church united for years in earnest service of the Lord is a well of goodness and joy to all those who dwell round about it.

2. "*It is like the precious ointment upon the head.*" In order that we may the better behold brotherly unity David gives us a resemblance, so that as in a glass we may perceive its blessedness. It has a *sweet perfume* about it, comparable to that precious ointment with which the first High Priest was anointed at his ordination. It is a *holy thing*, and so again is like the oil of consecration which was to be used only in the Lord's service. What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high-priest alone! It is a *diffusive* thing: being poured on his head the fragrant oil flowed down upon Aaron's head, and thence dropped upon his garments till the utmost hem was anointed therewith; and even so doth brotherly love extend its benign power and bless all who are beneath its influence. Hearty concord brings a benediction upon all concerned; its goodness and pleasure are shared in by the lowliest members of the household; even the servants are the better and the happier because of the lovely unity among the members of the family. *It has a special use* about it; for as by the anointing oil Aaron was set apart for the special service of Jehovah, even so those who dwell in love are the better fitted to glorify God in his church. The Lord is not likely to use for his glory those who are devoid of love; they lack the anointing needful to make them priests unto the Lord. "*That ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard.*" This is a chief point of comparison, that as the oil did not remain confined to the place where it first fell, but flowed down the High Priest's hair and bedewed his beard, even so brotherly love descending from the head distils and descends, anointing as it runs, and perfuming all it lights upon. "*That went down to the skirts of his garments.*" Once set in motion it would not cease from flowing. It might seem as if it were better not to smear his garments with oil, but the sacred unguent could not be restrained, it flowed over his holy robes; even thus does brotherly love not only flow over the hearts upon which it was first poured out, and descend to those who are an inferior part of the mystical body of Christ, but it runs where it is not sought for, asking neither leave nor license to make its way. Christian affection knows no limits of parish, nation, sect or age. Is the man a believer in Christ? Then he is in the one body, and I must yield him an abiding love. Is he one of the poorest, one of the least spiritual, one of the least lovable? Then he is as the skirts of the garment, and my heart's love must fall even upon him. Brotherly love comes from the head, but falls to the feet. Its way is downward. It "ran down," and it "went down": love for the brethren condescends to men of low estate, it is not puffed up, but is lowly and meek. This is no small part of its excellence: oil would not anoint if it did not flow down, neither would brotherly love diffuse its blessing if it did not descend.

3. "*As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.*" From the loftier mountains the moisture appears to be wafted to the lesser hills: the dews of Hermon fall on Zion. The Alpine Lebanon ministers to the minor elevation of the city of David; and so does brotherly love descend from higher to the lower, refreshing and enlivening in its course. Holy concord is as dew, mysteriously blessed, full of life and growth for all plants of grace. It brings with it so much benediction that it is as no common dew, but as that of Hermon which is specially copious, and far-reaching. The proper rendering is, "As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion," and this tallies with the figure which has been already used; and sets forth by a second simile the sweet descending diffusiveness of brotherly unity. "*For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*" That is, in Zion, or better still, in the place where brotherly love abounds. Where love reigns God reigns. Where love wishes blessing, there God commands the blessing. God has but to command, and it is done. He is so pleased to see his dear children happy in one another that he fails not to make them happy in himself. He gives especially his best blessing of eternal life, for love is life; dwelling together in love we have begun the enjoyments of eternity,

and these shall not be taken from us. Let us love for evermore, and we shall live for evermore. This makes Christian brotherhood so good and pleasant; it has Jehovah's blessing resting upon it, and it cannot be otherwise than sacred like "the precious ointment," and heavenly like "the dew of Hermon."

O for more of this rare virtue! Not the love which comes and goes, but that which dwells; not that spirit which separates and secludes, but that which dwells together; not that mind which is all for debate and difference, but that which dwells together in unity. Never shall we know the full power of the anointing till we are of one heart and of one spirit; never will the sacred dew of the spirit descend in all its fulness till we are perfectly joined together in the same mind; never will the covenanted and commanded blessing come forth from the Lord our God till once again we shall have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Lord, lead us into this most precious spiritual unity, for thy Son's sake. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is an effusion of holy joy occasioned by the sight of the gathering of Israel as one great household at the yearly feasts. . . . There might likewise be an allusion to the previous jealousies and alienations in the family of Israel, which seemed to be exchanged for mutual concord and affection, on David's accession to the throne of the whole nation.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"Behold how good and how pleasant it is," etc. There are three things wherein it is very pleasant to behold the people of God joining in one.

1. When they join or are *one in opinion* and judgment, when they all think the same thing, and are of one mind in the truth.

2. When they join together and are *one in affection*, when they are all of one heart, though possibly they are not all of one mind; or, when they meet in affection, though not in opinion. When David had spoken admiringly of this goodly sight, he spoke declaratively concerning the goodness of it (verse 2): "*It is like the precious ointment upon the head.*" 'Tis so, first, for the sweetness of it; 'tis so, secondly for the diffusiveness of it (as followeth), "*that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.*"

3. It is a blessed thing to see them joining *together in duty*, either as duty is considered—First, *in doing that which is good*; or, when, as the apostle's word is (2 Cor. vi. 1), they are, among themselves, "workers together" in any good work: we say (to fill up the text), "workers together with God." That's a blessed sight indeed, when we join with God, and God joineth with us in his work. It is also a blessed sight when all the ministers of Jesus Christ, and many as members of Jesus Christ, join in any good work, in this especially, to beseech all we have to do with "that they receive not the grace of God in vain." Secondly, *in turning from evil*, and putting iniquity far from them; in praying for the pardon of sin, and making their peace with God. 'Tis a good work to turn away from evil, especially when all who are concerned in it join in it. . . . As to join in sin, and to be brethren in iniquity, is the worst of unions, indeed, a combination against God; so to join as brethren in mourning for sin and repenting of our iniquities is a blessed union, and highly pleasing to God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1.—"How good and how pleasant it is," etc. The terms of this praise and commendation, or the particulars whereof it consists, is taken from a twofold qualification.

1. Brotherly concord and the improvement of it in all occasional expressions is a very great good. This is, and will appear to be so in sundry considerations.

As, *First*, in regard of the *Author* and *owner* of it, which is *God Himself*, who lays special claim hereunto. Therefore in Scripture we find him to be from hence denominated and intitled. 1 Cor. xiv. 33. "God is not the author of confusion (or of unquietness), but the author of peace. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. "The God of peace and love." Peace is called "the peace of God:" Phil. iv. 7. And God is called

the "God of peace;" each of which expressions does refer it and reduce it to him, and does thereby advance it. Look, then, how far forth God himself is said to be good, so far forth is this dwelling in unity good also, as it is commanded and owned by him, as it appears thus to be.

Secondly. It is good in the nature of it; it is good, as any grace is good. It is good morally. Love is a fruit of the Spirit: Gal. v. 22. And so to dwell in love and unity one with another is a goodness reducible thereunto. It is good spiritually; it is not only such a good as is taught by moral philosophy, and practised by the students thereof, but it is taught by the *Holy Ghost himself*, and is a part of the work of regeneration and of the new creature in us, especially if we take it in the full latitude and extent of it, as it becomes us to do.

Thirdly. It is good in the effects and consequences and concomitants of it: it has much good. It is *bonum utile*. A great deal of advantage comes by brethren's dwelling together in unity, especially *spiritual advantage*, and for the doing and receiving of good.

2. The second qualification is, the sweetness of it, because it is "*pleasant*:" it is not only *bonum utile*, and *bonum honestum*, but it is also *bonum jucundum*; it has a great deal of pleasure in it. Pleasure is such a kind of goodness, especially to some kind of persons, as that they care not almost what they do or part with to obtain it, and all other good besides is nothing to them, if it be devoid of this. Therefore for the further commendation of this fraternal unity to us, there is this also to be considered, that it is "*pleasant*." Thus it is with respect to all sorts of persons whatsoever, that are made sensible of it.

First. It is *pleasant to God*, it is such as is very acceptable to him; it is that which he much delights in, wheresoever he observes it; being himself a God of peace, he does therefore so much the more delight in peaceable Christians, and such as do relate to himself. How much do natural parents rejoice in the agreement of their children, to see them loving and friendly and kind and courteous to one another, oh, it pleases them and joys them at their very heart! and so it is likewise with God to those who are truly his.

Secondly. This brotherly unity is also *pleasant to ourselves*, who accordingly shall have so much the greater pleasure in it and from it.

Thirdly. It is also *pleasing to others*, indeed to all men else besides, that are standers-by and spectators of it. "*Behold, how pleasant it is,*" etc. It is pleasant to all beholders: "He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men," says the apostle: Rom. xiv. 18.—*Thomas Horton*,—1673.

Verse 1.—"Pleasant." It is a pleasant thing for the saints and people of God to agree together; for the same word which is used here for "*pleasant*," is used also in the Hebrew for a harmony of music, such as when they rise to the highest strains of the viol, when the strings are all put in order to make up a harmony; so pleasant is it, such pleasantness is there in the saints' agreement. The same word is used also in the Hebrew for the pleasantness of a corn field. When a field is clothed with corn, though it be cut down, yet it is very pleasant, oh, how pleasant is it; and such is the saints' agreement. The same word in the Psalmist is used also for the sweetness of honey, and of sweet things in opposition to bitter things. And thus you see the pleasantness of it, by its being compared to the harmony of music, to the corn field, to the sweetness of honey, to the precious ointment that ran down Aaron's beard, and to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: and all this to discover the pleasantness, profitableness, and sweetness of the saints' agreement. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, but it is much more pleasant to behold the saints' agreement and unity among themselves.—*William Bridge*.

Verse 1.—"Brethren." Abraham made this name, "*brethren*," a mediator to keep peace between Lot and him: "Are we not brethren?" saith Abraham. As if he should say, Shall brethren fall out for trifles, like infidels? This was enough to pacify Lot, for Abraham to put him in mind that they were brethren; when he heard the name of brethren, straight his heart yielded, and the strife was ended. So this should be the lawyer to end quarrels between Christians, to call to mind that they are brethren. And they which have spent all at law have wished that they had taken this lawyer, to think, with Lot, whether it were meet for brethren to strive like enemies.—*Henry Smith*.

Verse 1.—"Brethren." Some critics observe that the Hebrew word for a brother is of near brotherhood or alliance with two other words, whereof the first signifies one, and the other *alike* or *together*, to show that "*brethren*" ought to be as one,

and *alike*, or *together*; which latter is by an elegant *paranomasia* joined with it: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for *brethren* to dwell together in unity," or, as we put it in the margin, "*to dwell even together.*" So then, the very word whereby "*brethren*" are expressed notes that there ought to be a *nearness*, a *similitude*, *yea*, a *oneness* (if I may so speak) between them in their affections and actions.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 1.—*To dwell* is a word of residence, and abode, and continuation. There is also pertaining to the love and concord of brethren a perseverance and persistency in it; not only to be together, or to come together, or to meet together for some certain time; but *to dwell* together in unity, this is which is here so extolled and commended unto us. It seems to be no such great matter, nor to carry any such great difficulty in it, for men to command themselves to some expressions of peace and friendship for some short space of time (though there are many now and then who are hardly able to do that); but to hold out in it, and to continue so long, this endurance is almost impossible to them. Yet this is that which is required of them as *Christians* and as "*brethren*" one to another, even to "*dwell together in unity*;" to follow peace, and love, and concord, and mutual agreement, not only upon some occasional meetings, but all along the whole course of their lives, whilst they converse and live together.—*Thomas Horton*.

Verse 1.—"Together in unity." If there be but one God, as God is one, so let them that serve him be one. This is what Christ prayed so heartily for. "That they may be one": John xvii. 21. Christians should be one, 1. *In judgment*. The apostle exhorts to be all of one mind. 1 Cor. i. 10. How sad is it to see religion wearing a coat of divers colours; to see Christians of so many opinions, and going so many different ways! It is Satan that has sown these tares of division. Matt. xiii. 39. He first divided men from God, and then one man from another. 2. *One in affection*. They should have one heart. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul": Acts iv. 32. As in music, though there be several strings of a viol, yet all make one sweet harmony; so, though there are several Christians, yet there should be one sweet harmony of affection among them. There is but one God, and they that serve him should be one. There is nothing that would render the true religion more lovely, or make more proselytes to it, than to see the professors of it tied together with the heart-strings of love. If God be one, let all that profess him be of one mind, and one heart, and thus fulfil Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one."—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 2.—"Precious ointment upon the head." Though every priest was anointed, yet only the high priest was anointed on the *head*, and there is a tradition that this rite was omitted after the Captivity, so that there is a special stress on the name of Aaron.—*Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 2.—"The precious ointment . . . that ran down upon the beard . . . that went down to the skirts of his garments." Magnificence, misnamed by churls extravagance and waste, is the invariable attribute of all true love. David recognised this truth when he selected the profuse anointing of Aaron with the oil of consecration at his installation into the office of High Priest as a fit emblem of brotherly love. There was waste in that anointing, too, as well as in the one which took place at Bethany. For the oil was not *sprinkled* on the head of Aaron, though that might have been sufficient for the purpose of a mere ceremony. The vessel was emptied on the High Priest's person, so that its contents flowed down from the head upon the beard, and even to the skirts of the sacerdotal robes. In that very waste lay the point of the resemblance for David. It was a feature that was very likely to strike his mind, for he, too, was a wasteful man in his way. He had loved God in a manner which exposed him to the charge of extravagance. He had danced before the Lord, for example, when the ark was brought up from the house of Obededom to Jerusalem, forgetful of his dignity, exceeding the bounds of decorum, and, as it might seem, without excuse, as a much less hearty demonstration would have served the purpose of a religious solemnity.—*Alexander Balmain Bruce*, in "*The Training of the Twelve*," 1877.

Verse 2.—"The precious ointment . . . that ran down." Of the Hebrew perfumes an immense quantity was annually manufactured and consumed, of which we have a very significant indication in the fact that the holy anointing oil of the tabernacle and temple was never made in smaller quantities than 750 ounces of solids compounded with five quarts of oil, and was so profusely employed that when

applied to Aaron's head it flowed down over his beard and breast, to the very skirts of his garments.—*Hugh Macmillan*, in *"The Ministry of Nature,"* 1871.

Verse 2.—"That ran down . . . that went down," etc. Christ's grace is so diffusive of itself, that it conveys holiness to us, "running down from the head to the skirts," to all his members. He was not only anointed himself, but he is our anointer. Therefore it is called "the oil of gladness," because it rejoiceth our hearts, by giving us spiritual gladness, and peace of conscience.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 2.—"Down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." Not the extremity of them, as our version inclines to; for not so great a quantity of oil was poured upon him; nor would it have been decent to have his clothes thus greased from top to bottom; but the upper part of his garment, the top of his coat, on which the beard lay, as Zarchi; the neck or collar of it, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; the hole in which the head went through when it was put on, about which there was a band, that it might not be rent: Exod. xxviii. 32, and xxxix. 23; where the Septuagint use the same word as here.—*John Gill*.

Verses 2, 3.—In this prayer and song of the unity of the church, it is noteworthy how, commencing with the fundamental idea of "brethren," we rise to the realization of the Elder Brother, who is our common anointed High Priest. It is the bond of his priesthood which joins us together as brethren. It is the common anointing which flows down even to the skirts of the garment of our High Priest which marks our being brethren. Whether we dwell north or south, meeting in Zion, and sharing in the blessings of that eternal Priesthood of Christ, we form in reality, and before our Father, but one family—"the whole family in earth and heaven." Our real bond of union consists in the "flowing down," the "running down," or "descending" of the common blessing, which marks the steps in this Psalm of Degrees (verses 2, 3). And if "the dew of Hermon" has descended upon "the mountains of Zion," long after the sun has risen shall glad some fruit appear—in some twenty, in some thirty, and in some a hundredfold.—*Alfred Edersheim*.

Verse 3.—"As the dew of Hermon," etc. "What we read in the 133rd Psalm of the dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion," says Van de Velde in his "Travels" (Bd. i. S. 97), "is now become quite clear to me. Here as I sat at the foot of Hermon, I understood how the water-drops which rose from its forest-mantled heights, and out of the highest ravines, which are filled the whole year round with snow, after the sun's rays have attenuated them and moistened the atmosphere with them, descend at evening-time as a heavy dew upon the lower mountains which lie round about as its spurs. One sought to have seen Hermon with its white-golden crown glistening aloft in the blue sky, in order to be able rightly to understand the figure. Nowhere in the whole country is so heavy a dew perceptible as in the districts near to Hermon." To this dew the poet likens brotherly love. This is "as the dew of Hermon": of such pristine freshness and thus refreshing, possessing such pristine power and thus quickening, thus born from above (ex. 3), and in fact like the dew of Hermon which comes down upon the mountains of Zion—a feature in the picture which is taken from the natural reality; for an abundant dew, when warm days have preceded, might very well be diverted to Jerusalem by the operation of the cold current of air sweeping down from the north over Hermon. We know, indeed, from our own experience how far off a cold air coming from the Alps is perceptible, and produces its effects. The figure of the poet is therefore as true to nature as it is beautiful. When brethren bound together in love also meet together in one place, and, in fact, when brethren of the north unite with brethren in the south in Jerusalem, the city which is the mother of all, at the great Feasts, it is as when the dew of Mount Hermon, which is covered with deep, almost eternal snow, descends upon the bare, unfruitful—and therefore longing for such quickening—mountains round about Zion. In Jerusalem must love and all that is good meet.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 3.—"As the dew of Hermon," etc. As touching this similitude, I think the prophet useth the common manner of speaking. For whereas the mountains oftentimes seem to those that behold them afar off, to reach up even unto heaven, the dew which cometh from heaven seemeth to fall from the high mountains unto the hills which are under them. Therefore he saith that the dew descendeth from Hermon unto the mount Sion, because it so seemeth unto those that do behold it afar off.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 3.—"As the dew of Hermon." The dews of the mists that rose from the

watery ravines, or of the clouds that rested on the summit of Hermon, were perpetual witnesses of freshness and coolness—the sources, as it seemed, of all the moisture, which was to the land of Palestine what the fragrant oil was to the garments of the High Priest ; what the influence of brotherly love was to the whole community.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley* (1815-1881), in *“Sinai and Palestine.”*

Verse 3.—*“Dew of Hermon.”* We had sensibly proof at Rasheiya of the copiousness of the *“dew of Hermon,”* spoken of in Ps. cxxxiii. 3, where *“Zion”* is only another name for the same mountain. Unlike most other mountains which gradually rise from lofty table-lands and often at a distance from the sea, Hermon starts at once to the height of nearly ten thousand feet, from a platform scarcely above the sea level. This platform, too—the upper Jordan valley, and marshes of Merom—is for the most part an impenetrable swamp of unknown depth, whence the seething vapour, under the rays of an almost tropical sun, is constantly ascending into the upper atmosphere during the day. The vapour, coming in contact with the snowy sides of the mountain, is rapidly congealed, and is precipitated in the evening in the form of a dew, the most copious we ever experienced. It penetrated everywhere, and saturated everything. The floor of our tent was soaked, our bed was covered with it, our guns were dripping, and dewdrops hung about everywhere. No wonder that the foot of Hermon is clad with orchards and gardens of such marvellous fertility in this land of droughts.—*Henry Baker Tristram*, 1867.

Verse 3.—*“As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountain of Zion.”*—

So the dews on Hermon's hill
Which the summer clouds distil,
Floating southward in the night,
Pearly gems on Zion light.

William Digby Seymour.

Verse 3.—*“There the LORD commanded the blessing.”* God commands his blessing where peace is cultivated ; by which is meant, that he testifies how much he is pleased with concord amongst men, by showering down blessings upon them. The same sentiment is expressed by Paul in other words, (2 Cor. xiii. 11 ; Phil. iv. 9) *“Live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you.”*—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—*“The LORD commanded the blessing.”* By a bare word of command he blesseth : *“there he commands the blessing,”* that blessing of blessings, *“even life for evermore”* ; like as it is said, *“he commanded, and they were created”* : Ps. cxlviii. 5. So he commands and we are blessed.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 3.—*“The LORD commanded the blessing.”* It is an allusion possibly to great persons, to a general, or an emperor : *“Where the word of a king is, there is power.”* The centurion said, *“I say to one soldier, Go, and he goeth ; to another, Come, and he cometh ; to a third, Do this, and he doth it.”* So God commandeth one ordinance, *“Go and build up such a saint,”* and it goeth ; he saith to another ordinance, *“Come, and call home such a sinner,”* and it doth it ; God's words and work go together. Men cannot enable others, or give them power to obey them ; they may bid a lame man walk, or a blind man see ; but they cannot enable them to walk or see : God with his word giveth strength to do the thing commanded ; as in the old, so in the new creation, *“He spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast :”* Ps. xxxiii. 9. But there the Lord commands his blessing, *“even life for evermore.”* The stream of regeneration, or a spiritual life, which shall never cease, but still go forward and increase, till it swell to, and be swallowed up in the ocean of eternal life, *“even life for evermore.”*—*George Swinnoek.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Christian unity. I. Its admirable excellences. II. The signs of its existence. III. The causes of its decay. IV. The means of its renewal.

Verse 1.—The saints are here contemplated, I. In their brotherhood. II. In their concord. III. In their felicity.—*W. J.*

Verses 1—3.—Six blessings which dwell with unity. 1. Goodness. 2. Pleasure. 3. Anointing. 4. Dew. 5. God's blessing. 6. Eternal life.

Verses 1—3.—I. The contemplation: brethren dwelling together in unity. 1. In a family. 2. In a Christian church. 3. Brethren of the same denomination. 4. Of different denominations. II. Its commendation. 1. Literally: "good and pleasant." 2. Figuratively: fragrant as the priestly anointing; fruitful as the dew on Hermon. 3. Spiritually, it has a blessing from God, that gives life, and continues for evermore!—*G. R.*

Verses 1—3.—On Christians dwelling together in unity as a church. 1. *Its propriety*, on account of fraternal relationship: "For brethren." The Christian brotherhood is so unique, sacred and lasting, that a lack of unity is a disgrace. They are brethren, 1. Because born of God, who is "the God of peace." Their claim to the brotherhood is dependent upon likeness to Him: Matt. v. 9. 2. Because united to Christ, who as elder brother desires unity: John xvii. 20, 21. Not to seek it is virtually to disown Him. 3. Because "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13), wherein unity must be kept: Eph. iv. 3. 4. Because destined to "dwell together in unity," for ever in heaven; and therefore we should aim at it here. II. *Its peculiar excellency*: both "good and pleasant." 1. Good, in respect of church work and influence; of mutual edification and growth in grace (2 Cor. xiii. 11); of the success of prayer (Mat. xviii. 19); of recommending the gospel to others. 2. Pleasant, as productive of happiness: as pleasing to God. III. *Its promotion and maintenance*. 1. Seeking the glory of God unites; in opposition to self-honour which divides. 2. Love to Christ as a constraining power unites each to the other as it binds all closely to Christ. 3. Activity in ministering to others, rather than desiring to be ministered unto, binds heart to heart.—*J. F.*

Verse 2.—There must have been special reasons why a priestly anointing should be selected for the comparison, and why that of Aaron, rather than of any other of the high priests. They are these—I. *The ointment was "holy,"* prepared in accordance with the Divine prescription: Ex. xxx. 23—25. Church union is sacred. It must spring from the love commanded by God; be based on the principles laid down by God; and exist for the ends appointed of God. II. *The anointing was from God through Moses*, who acted on behalf of God in the matter. Church unity is of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xiii. 13), through Jesus as Mediator. Therefore it should be prayed for, and thankfully acknowledged. III. *By the anointing, Aaron became consecrated*, and officially qualified to act as priest. By unity the Church, as a whole, lives its life of consecration, and effectively ministers in the priesthood assigned it. IV. *The oil was diffusive*; it rested not on Aaron's head, but flowed down to the skirts of his garments. Unity will, in time, make its way from a few to the whole, especially from the leaders in a church to the rest of its members. Hence, it is a personal matter. Each should realize it, and by love and wise conduct diffuse it.—*J. F.*

Verses 2, 3.—Christian love scatters blessing by the way of down-coming: "ran down," "went down," "descended." I. God to his saints. II. Saint to saint. III. Saint to sinner.

Verse 3.—The chosen place for blessing. A church; a church united, a church bedewed of the Spirit. What a blessing for the world that there is a commanded place of blessing!

Verse 3 (first clause).—This should be rendered, "As the dew of Hermon, that cometh down on the mountains of Zion." From the snows upon the lofty Hermon, the moisture raised by the sun is carried in the form of vapour, by the wind towards the lesser elevations of Zion, upon which it falls as a copious dew. Thus, Christian concord in church-fellowship—I. Despises not the little ones, *i.e.* the mean, poor, and less gifted. It, 1. Recognises that God is the Father, and Christ is the Redeemer of all believers alike. 2. Acknowledges oneness of faith as the true basis of fellowship; not wealth, social position or talent. 3. Believes that the least member is essential to the completeness of Christ's body. 4. Realises that everything which renders

one in any way superior to another is the gift of God. II. Distributes of its abundance to the needy : Acts iv. 32—37. 1. The wealthy to the poor : 1 John iii. 17. 2. The learned to the ignorant. 3. The joyful to the sorrowing. 4. The steadfast to the erring : Jas. v. 19. III. Displays its value more by loving generosity, than by a conspicuous appearance before the world. As Hermon was more valuable to Zion for its dew than for its adornment of the landscape. 1. A generous activity exhibits and requires more real grace than showy architecture or ornate worship does. 2. Through it, godliness flourishes more than by a vaunted respectability. Zion was fertilized by the dew, not by the grandeur of Hermon. 3. By it the heart of Christ is touched and his reward secured : Mark ix. 40, 42.—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—Commanded Mercy. Elsewhere goodness is bestowed, but in Zion it is commanded. I. Commanded mercy implies that it must necessarily be given. II. Commanded mercy attends commanded unity. III. Commanded mercy secures life more abundantly, “life for evermore.”—*W. B. H.*
